LA DIVINA COMMEDIA,

DI DANTE ALIGHIERI,

Done into English by

EDWARD C. LOWE, D.D.,

Canon of Ely.

Sappia ciascuno, che nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può della sua loquela in altra trasmutare, senza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia.

Il Convito, Tratt: 1, Cap: vii.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE FRIENDS
WHO IN THE WINTER EVENINGS OF 1891-2-3,
UNDER THE PRESIDENCY
OF
ALWYNE, BISHOP OF ELY AND THE LADY ALWYNE COMPTON,
MET AT ELY,
IN THE HALL OF ALAN DE WALSINGHAM,
(DANTE’S CONTEMPORARY),
TO HELP ONE-ANOTHER
IN BETTER APPRECIATION OF
THE DIVINA COMMEDIA,
AND
TO A FULLER UNDERSTANDING
OF ITS MYSTERIES,
THIS ENGLISH VERSION IS SUBMITTED
BY THEIR “Cheerful Companion,”
AND AMANUENSIS,
E.C.I.

COLLEGE, ELY,
CHRISTMAS, 1902.
INFERNO.
INFERNO.

CANTO I.

The Proem—The Lost Path—The Wrong Road—The Safe Guide.

NOW half way through the journey of our life,
In a dark wood I to myself came back;
For lost had been the path of uprightness.
And ah! as hard indeed it is to tell
How savage, rough and dense that forest was,
Whereof the very thought reneweth the dread,
So bitter 'tis, that death is hardly more;
But to set forth the good that I found there,
I'll tell what other things I there beheld.
I cannot well recall how there I came,
So sunk was I in sleep the moment when
I at the first abandoned the true way;
But when I'd reached the bottom of a hill,
* The point where to an end the valley came,
Which had with terror pierced me to the heart,
Upward I looked, and saw its shoulders now
Clothed with the garment of that planet's rays,
Which guides all others straight on every road.
Then was the fear a little quieted,
INFERNO.

For this wild beast, which makes thee call for help,
   Ne'er lets another pass along her road,
   But meets him with such hindrance that he dies.
Her nature so malignant is and curst,
   Her greedy lust is never satisfied,
   And when well fed she's hungrier than before.
Many the animals with which she mates,
   And more they yet will be, until shall come
   The Greyhound, that will make her die in grief.
He will not batten upon lands or pelf,
   But will on wisdom, love and virtue feed;
   'Twixt the two Feltros will his people dwell.
Salvation of that humbled Italy
   He'll be, for which the maid Camilla died,
   Turnus, Euryalus and Nisus bled:
From every city will he hunt her forth,
   Until he shall have sent her back to hell,
   Whence Envy at the first did let her loose.
Better for thee then, so I think and judge,
   To follow me, and I will be thy guide,
   And lead thee hence through an eternal place,
Where thou wilt hear the wailing of despair,
   And see the ancient spirits in their pain,
   As each with shriek proclaims the second death.
And next shalt thou behold those, who in fire
   Contented are, in hope to pass one day,
   Come when it may, unto the Blessed Ones;
To whom if after thou would fain ascend,
   A soul there'll be, worthier than I for that;
   With her I'll leave thee when I go away;
For He, who reigns the King of Kings on high,
   Because I was rebellious 'gainst his laws,
   Wills not that I should to His city come.
He governs everywhere, and there He reigns.
   There His own City, there His lofty Throne:
   Happy the man, elected there to dwell!"
And I to him: "'Poet I thee entreat
CANTO I.

In name of Him thou knewest not as God,
That I may fly this and the worser ill,
Conduct me whither thou but now didst say,
That thus St. Peter's gate I may behold,
And those thou showest in such woeful case.

Then he moved on, and I behind him kept.
CANTO II.

Invocation of the Muses—Dante’s Misgivings and their Relief—The Three Blessed Ladies—The Journey begins.

The day was passing, and the darkling air
All living things upon the earth relieved
From their fatigues: and I the only one,
Was getting ready to sustain the fight
Both with the road, and with the pity too,
As memory shall retrace, that erreth not.
Ye Muses aid me, and high Genius now;
O Memory, that what I saw didst write,
Here will be shown thine own nobility.
"O Poet," I began, "who guidest me,
Note well my natural force, if power it have,
Ere thou commit me to this arduous path.
Thou say’st that Silvius’ father once went down
In mortal flesh to the immortal world,
And tarried there, his senses in full play.
And if the Mighty Foe of all that’s ill,
To him was gracious, weighing the high effect,
That should from him proceed, both who and what,
To man intelligent ’twould seem but just;
For he of sacred Rome and her empire
Was in the Empyrean chosen sire;
Which both alike, as I would speak the truth,
Established were to be the holy place,
Where sits the greater Peter’s successor.
Upon this journey, whence through thee he draws
His boast, things did he learn which brought about
His triumph and the Pope’s investiture.
Thither the Chosen Vessel later went
To bring back confirmation of the Faith,
Which is the first step on Salvation’s way.
But I—why go I there? or who permits?
Æneas I am not, nor Paul am I;
For this nor I, nor others deem me fit.
Wherefore if I surrender now, and come,
I fear the coming may my folly prove;
Thou know'st, as sage, better than I can state.”
And as is one, who un-wills what he willed,
And with new thoughts changeth a previous plan,
So that from first inception he withdraws,
Such on that dark hillside myself became;
For while I thought, the fire of enterprize
I quenched, which at the outset burned so quick.
“ If rightly I have understood thy words,”
Replied that shade of the Magnanimous,
“ Thy spirit is by cowardice assailed,
Which oft times so embarrasseth a man,
That from an honourable aim he swerves,
As through deceptive sight his horse will shy.
But that thou mayst relieve thee of this fear,
I’ll tell thee why I came and what I heard,
What time my pity was first stirred for thee.
I was ’mong those, who live in long suspense;
And me a Lady called, saintly as fair,
Such that I prayed her tell me her behests.
Her eyes did glisten brighter than the star:
Sweetly and softly she began in voice
Angelical to tell her tale to me.
“Hail courteous soul! O son of Mantua, hail!
Whose fame endures in honour in the world,
And will endure long as the world runs on,
One who, if not good fortune’s friend, is mine,
Upon the lonely hill is on his way
Obstructed so, that terror turns him back;
And he I fear already is so lost,
That all too late I rose to succour him,
By what concerning him in heav’n I’ve heard.
Bestir thee then, and with thine ornate speech,
And all that is required to rescue him,
Assist him so that I may be consoled.

I, who would have thee go, am Beatrice:
From whence I came there would I fain return:
Love moved me first, and prompts me now to speak.

When in the presence of my Lord I stand,
Thee will I name in oft repeated praise.”
She then was silent and I next began:

“Lady, whose virtue by itself alone
Exalts mankind ’bove all the heaven contains,
Which in the narrowest orbit circles round,
To me so grateful is this charge of thine,
That had I now obey’d, I’d been too slow;
No farther need thy wishes to disclose.
But tell me why thou dost not hesitate
To come down here into this central pit,
From those broad realms for which thine ardour burns.”

“Since ’tis thy wish inly to learn so much,
I’ll briefly tell thee,” she replied to me,
“Why I am not afraid to enter here.
Of those things only should we be afraid,
That have a power to do another ill,
Not of aught else; elsewhere is naught to fear.
I am made such by God, thanks be to Him,
That your calamities affect not me,
Nor flames of yonder burning me assail.
In Heaven a noble Lady is, who grieves
For this obstruction that I send thee to,
So that on High stern judgment breaketh down.
Lucia she besought, and in request
Spake thus: “Of thee thy faithful votary now
Hath need, and unto thee I him commend.”

Lucia, foe of all that cruel is,
Sped off, and to the place she came, where I
Was seated by the Rachel of old days.
“O Beatrice, true praise of God,” she said,
“Why go not to his aid, who loved thee so,
That for thy sake he left the vulgar herd?
Hearest thou not the anguish of his cry,
Nor seest him fighting hard with death upon
The flood, o'er which can ocean never boast?"
Ne'er in the world were people found so keen.
To make a profit or escape a loss.
As I upon the utt'ranee of such words.

Hither I came, down from my seat in bliss,
Confiding in thy stately eloquence,
Which honours thee, and those who it have heard.”

And after she had pleaded with me thus,
She turned her eyes away, bright e'en in tears,
Whereby she made me readier yet to start.

And thus I came to thee, as she would have;
I've borne thee from the presence of that beast,
Which to the fair hill barr'd the shorter way.

What is it then? why halting thus, O why?
Why in thy heart allow such cowardice?
This lack of courage and of venture, why?

When three such ladies from among the blest
In heaven's own court on thee bestow their care,
And my word voucheth thee so great a boon?"

As little flowerets, nipped by frosts of night,
Droop and close up, but in the clear sunshine
Stand up erect and open on their stems,

Such I became from my faintheartedness;
And courage such coursed up within my breast,
That I, as one enfranchisèd, began:

"O full of pity she, who succoured me;
And courteous thou in prompt obedience
To the true words that she addressed to thee!

Thou hast inspired my heart with such desire
To go with thee by force of thine appeal,
That to my first resolve am I returned.

On then: for one sole will impels us both;
Thou art my guide, my lord, my master, thou."
Such were my words to him, and as he moved,
I entered on the deep and savage road.
CANTO III.

The Gate of Hell—The Vestibule—Passage of Acheron.

"THROUGH me the way to City Dolorous,
Through me the way into eternal pain,
Through me the way amid the people lost.
Justice impelled my Maker in the height,
Omnipotence Divine created me,
The Highest Wisdom and Primeval Love.
Before me were there no created things,
Eternal all, and I eternal am.
All hope abandon, ye who enter here!"
These words in letters of a murky hue
I saw inscribed on lintel of a gate;
Whereon I said: "Master, their sense is hard."
And he to me, as quick to apprehend:
"All hesitation here must be dismissed;
All cowardice must here die utterly.
We to the place are come, where I have said
That in their suffering thou wilt see the race,
Who've lost the boon of their intelligence."
And after he had placed his hand in mine
With cheering look, wherein I comfort found,
He set me in among the secret things.
Here sighs and lamentations, and deep groans
Resounded through the starless atmosphere,
Whereat myself at first was moved to tears.
Confusèd tongues, and horrid ut'rances,
Words full of woe, and accents of wild rage,
Shrill cries and hoarse, and sound withal of blows
Made up a tumult, that for aye whirls round
Through that dark air beyond the guage of time,
As rolls the sand before the whirlwind's blast.
And I who felt my head with horror girt,
Said: "O my Master, what is this I hear? What people isn't that seems thus crushed in woe?"

And he to me: "This miserable state
The melancholy souls of those endure,
Who lived without disgrace or praise.
Mingled are they with all that caitiff band
Of angels, who not rebels, yet were not
Faithful to God, caring alone for self.

Hunted from heaven, lest heaven should be less fair,
The depth of hell receives them not, because
From them the guilty might some glory gain."

And I: "Master, what then so weighs on these,
That it should wring from them these loud laments?"
He answered me: "Thee will I briefly tell;
These spirits have not any hope of death,
And their blind life so abject seems to them,
That envious are they of all other lot.
The world allows no fame of them in it;
Mercy and Justice hold them in disdain:
Of them we speak no more; look and pass on."

And I, observant, an ensign beheld,
Which, as it whirled around, ran on so fast,
It seemed to me disdainful of repose.

And after it there came so long a trail
Of people, that I should not have believed
That death had e'er such multitudes undone.

And when among them some I recognized,
I saw, and knew again the ghost of him,
Whose coward heart the grand refusal made.
At once I understood, and was assured,
That this the party was of those caitiffs,
Hateful alike to God and to His foes.

These wretches, who had never lived a life,
All naked were, and goaded terribly
By wasps and monstrous flies, that there are found.
These caused their faces to run down in blood,
Which, mingled with their tears about the feet,
Was gathered up by worms of loathsome kind.  
And when I turned the distance to survey,  
People I saw on a great river's bank;  
Wherefore I said: "O Master, grant me now  
To know who these are, and the rule that makes  
Them seem so eager to be put across,  
As I perceive them in this dusky light."
And he to me: "Plainer will these things be,  
When presently our steps we stay upon  
The melancholy shore of Acheron."
Then with mine eyes bow'd in confusion low,  
Fearing my words to him were troublesome,  
Far as the river I refrained from speech;  
And lo! towards us in a boat there came  
An old man hoary with the locks of eld,  
Shouting: "A curse upon ye, wicked souls;  
Ne'er hope to look again upon the sky;  
I come to take you to the other side,  
To everlasting night in fire and ice.  
And thou, who standest there, a living soul,  
Get thee away from these, for they are dead."
But when he saw that I departed not,  
"Another way," said he; "From other ports  
Thou'lt reach the shore; not here for thee to cross.  
'Tis meet a lighter craft should carry thee."
To him my Guide: "Vex not thyself, Charon;  
Thus yonder is it willed, where Power avails  
For what it wills; and so enquire no more."
Quiet thereafter were the shaggy jaws  
Of the old pilot on the livid pool,  
Who round about his eyes showed wheels of fire.  
But the souls there, which tired and naked stood,  
Changed colour then, and chattered with their teeth,  
At the first hearing of his cruel words.  
God they blasphemed, and their own fathers cursed,  
The human race, the place, the hour, the seed  
Of their begetting, and their day of birth.
Then one and all together they repaired
With piercing shrieks unto the accursed shore,
Which waits for every man that fears not God.
Charon, with demon eyes, that blazed like brands,
Gives forth his signal and collects them all.
Who-ever lingers, with his oar he smites:
As when in autumn time the leaves drop off,
One thick upon another, till the bough
Sees its full tale of spoil upon the ground,
After like fashion, Adam's evil seed,
One after other, cast them from the shore,
Each at his signal, as the bird at call.
So all go off across the darkling wave;
And ere they've landed on the other shore,
Another throng assembles upon this.
"My son," said then the Master courteous,
"All they who die under the wrath of God,
From every land must all assemble here;
And eager are they to cross o'er the stream;
For Divine Justice doth so spur them on,
That fear with them is turned into desire.
This way ne'er passeth any good man's soul;
And so, if Charon chafe about thee now,
What his words mean, thou well canst understand."
As ended thus his words, the dusky plain
Trembled so fiercely, that its terrors still
In memory bathe me in a stream of sweat:
The land of tears exhaled a blast of wind,
Through which a vermil light like lightning flashed,
That all sensation overcame in me:
To Earth I fell, as one surprised by sleep.
Inferno.

Canto IV.

First Circle—Limbo.  
Innocents—Patriarchs—Illustrious Men.

The heavy slumber of my brain was broke
By a deep thunder crash; upstarted I,
As one who is with violence awoke:
I turned mine eyes, now rested, round the scene,
Standing erect; and careful survey made
To learn what place it was that I had reached.
In truth I found myself upon the brink
Of the sad vale, in whose abyss collects
The thunder roar of wailing infinite.
Obscure it was, profound and thick with cloud,
Such that with straining gaze adown its depth
No form could I discern of anything.
"Descend we now to the blind world below,"
Began the Poet, pale himself as death.
"I will go first, and second thou shalt be."
Quick to observe his colour change, I said:
"How shall I come if thou be terrified,
My wonted comfort in my every doubt?"
And he to me: "It is the agony
Of those below, that on my face depicts
The pity, which thou takest to be fear.
Let us proceed; the length of way constrains."
Thus passed he in, and made me enter thus
The circle which first girds th' abyss around.
And here, so far at least as reached the ear,
There was no plaint, only the sound of sighs,
That caused a tremor through the eternal air;
And this from sadness without torment came,
That filled the many throngs that crowded there.
Of children, and of women, and of men.

Said the kind Master: "Dost thou not enquire
What spirits these are, that thou seest here?
Now would I have thee know, ere thou proceed,
These sinned not, and if they some merits have,
'Tis not enough; for Baptism they lacked,
Which of the Creed thou holdest is the gate.
And if before the Christian Faith they lived,
They did not with due worship honour God;
And of these last myself am such an one.
For such defects, and not for other guilt,
Have we been lost; only so far chastised,
That without hope we live in fond desire."

Great grief seized me at heart, when this I learned,
Seeing that persons of high worth, whom I
Did know, were in that Limbo in suspense.
"Tell me, O Master mine, tell me, my Lord:"
Thus I began in wish to be assured
About that Faith, which conquers all untruth;
"Did ever any by his own desert,
Or others', hence go forth and join the Blest?"
And he, who understood my covert speech,
Replied: "I was but new in this estate,
When I saw come to us a Mighty One,
Who with the sign of victory was crowned.
The shade of the first parent He withdrew,
And his son Abel's, that of Noah too,
With Moses too, Lawgiver, ever meek;
Abram the Patriarch, David the King,
Israel with his father and his sons,
And Rachel, for whose sake he toiled so long;
With many more, and made them blessed Saints:
And I would have thee know, that afore these
No human spirits were there that were saved."

We slackened not our pace, the while he spake,
But ever through the forest made our way,
Forest, I mean, of spirits crowded thick.
As yet we had not far advanced from where
   I dropped asleep, when I observed a fire,
   Which overspread a hemisphere of gloom.
A little distant from it were we still,
   But not so far I could not partly see
   That honourable persons held the spot:
   "O Thou who honour bring’st to every art
   And science, say who these are, that enjoy
   An honour such as parts them from the rest."
And he to me: "The honour of renown,
   That echoes of them in thy life above,
   With heaven wins favour that promotes them thus."
In the meantime by me a voice was heard;
   "Due honour to our chiefest poet give;
   His shade comes back, that from us went away."
After the voice had ceased and all was still,
   I saw four stately shades toward us approach;
   In semblance neither glad nor sorrowful.
The gracious Master then began to say:
   "Him well observe, who bears that sword in hand,
   And as their sire, precedes the other three.
Homer is he, of poets sovran Lord;
   Horace, the Satirist, as second comes;
   The third is Ovid, Lucan is the last.
Because with me all of them rightly share
   The name that with one voice they all proclaimed,
   They do me honour, and therein do well."
Assembled thus I saw the glorious school
   Of that great lord of most exalted song,
   Who as an eagle soars above the rest.
When they together briefly had conferred,
   They turned to me and signs of welcome gave,
   And my good Master kindly smiled thereat.
And greater honour still they paid to me,
   For of their company they made me one,
   And I was reckoned ’mid such wisdom sixth.
So walked we on as far as to the light,
CANTO IV.

Talking of things which silence here befits,
As where we were, it seemly was to treat.
Under a stately castle we arrived,
Compassed by sevenfold girth of lofty walls,
Which a fair streamlet guarded all around.
O'er this we went, as it had been dry land;
Through sevenfold gates I with those sages passed;
We reached a meadow of the freshest green.
Persons were there, whose grave eyes slowly moved;
Their mien was that of high authority:
Seldom they spoke, and then with gentle voice.
Forth from one side we then withdrew ourselves
Toward a wide space, raised up and full of light,
So that the whole assembly was in view.
There straight before me on the enamelled green
To me were shewn the mighty spirits, whom
Once to have seen exalts me in myself.
I saw Electra and her many friends,
And 'mong them Hector and Æneas knew,
And hawk-eyed Cæsar in full armour clad;
On th' other side I saw Camilla and
Pentesilea, and Latinus, King,
Sitting beside his child, Lavinia.
I saw that Brutus, who drove Tarquin out,
Cornelia, Julia, Marcia and Lucrece;
And by himself the Saladin apart.
Then, as I raised my brows a little more,
I saw the Master of all them that "know,"
Seated amid the philosophic clan.
On him all gaze: honour all pay to him.
There Socrates I saw and Plato, who,
Before the others, nearest stand to him.
Democritus, who says chance made the world,
The Cynic, Thales, Anaxagoras,
Zeno, Empedocles and Heraclite;
The good collector of the Qualities,
Named Dioscorides; Orpheus I saw,
Tully and Linus, moral Seneca, 142
Euclid, geometer; and Ptolemy,
Galen, Hippocrates and Avicen;
Averrhoes, who the great comment made.
I cannot write the catalogue of all,
In that my lengthy theme so hunts me down,
That short of fact my record oft must fall.
The company of six grows less by two:
The guiding Sage leads me, another way,
Forth from that calm back to the trembling air;
And to a part I come, where no light shines.
CANTO V.

Second Circle—The Wanton.

Minos—Carnal Sinners—Francesca da Rimini.

FROM the first circle thus I lower went
    Down to the second of a narrower girth,
    But so much greater pain as goads to shrieks.
There Minos stands and horribly he grins:
    He sifts all sins at entrance, judgment gives,
    And sentences by coils around him wound.
I mean that when the soul of evil birth
    Before him comes, a full confession's made;
    And shrewdly knowing all the sins of men,
He notes what place in hell is its desert,
    And girds him with his tail as many times
    As mark the grade to which he wills it sent.
Before him numbers stand continuously;
    For judgment in its turn each soul comes up;
    They tell, they hear, and down are hurled below.
"O thou, who comest to this grim hospice,"
    Said Minos, as he caught the sight of me,
    Suspending his high office for the nonce,
"Beware how here thou enter; whom thou trust:
    Let not this spacious entrance play thee false."
    My Guide replied: "From thee, too, why this cry?"
His visit hinder not, ordained by fate:
    So yonder is it willed, where power avails
    For all that's willed; no further question then."
Already sounds of agony begin
    To break upon mine ear; anon I reach
    A place where great lamenting thrills me through.
I came unto a spot devoid of light,
    Which bellows like a tempest-stricken sea,
    When by conflicting winds it is assailed.
This hurricane of hell, which never rests,
Carries along the spirits in its sweep,
Whirling and smiting, as it harries them.

But when they come to face the shattered cliff,
Then shrieks break forth, and howls and great laments;
The mighty power of God they there blaspheme.

To torment thus contrived I understood
That for their carnal sins are men condemned,
Who subject reason to the appetite.

And as the wings of starlings bear them off,
'Mid winter's cold, in flocks widespread and dense,
So with those evil spirits doth that blast.

This way and that it drives them up and down;
Hope with its comfort never visits them,
Not of repose, but of diminished pain.

And as the cranes move on with dirge-like chant,
Forming in th' air a long protracted line,
So in a trail of woe I saw approach

Ghosts driven onward in that raging storm;
Whereon I asked: "Master, what souls are these,
That here the blackened air chastiseth thus?"

"The first of these, particulars of whom
Thou fain wouldst learn," said he thereon to me,
"An Empress was of many languages;
Corrupted so in sensuality,
That by her edict lust was made the law,
Thus to escape the blast of her disgrace.

Semiramis is she, who as we read,
Was wife of Ninus, and his successor;
She held the land that now the Soldan rules.
The next is she who slew herself for love,
And to Sichæus' ashes broke her faith;
The wanton Cleopatra follows her.

See Helen, for whose sake so long a time
Of strife rolled on; the great Achilles too,
Who to the end was fighting still for love.

See Paris, Tristan,"—and a thousand more
He with his finger marked, and named their names,
CANTO V.

Whom love had parted from this life of ours.
And as I heard my Teacher close the roll
Of knights and ladies of the olden time,
Such pity rose, that I was well nigh lost.
“Poet,” I next began, “gladly would I
Address the pair who hand in hand approach.
And seem to float so lightly on the wind.”
And he to me: “Thou’lt see, when they shall draw
Nearer to us; and then conjure them by
The love which leads them on, and they will come.”
Soon as the wind inclined their course to us,
I raised my voice: “O ye exhausted souls,
Come speak with us, if Other say not nay.”

As doves at prompting of a soft desire,
Steady on open wing to their sweet nest
Speed through the air, by their own instinct borne;
So from the group, where Dido is, did these
Hasten toward us through the malignant air;
So mighty with them was the kindly call.
“O living soul, benign and full of grace,
Who in thy passage through the empurpled air
Dost visit us, who stained the earth with blood,
Were but the Sovran of the universe
Our Friend, Him would we pray to grant thee peace,
Since thou hast pity for our perverse fate.
What thou would’st learn, and what thou fain would’st say,
This will we hear, and that will tell to thee,
So long as now, the wind is hush’d awhile.
The land where I was born, is situate
Upon the sea shore where the Po comes down
With all his affluents to rest in peace.
Love, ever quick to seize a gentle heart,
Him by my side possessed for the fair form,
That they tore from me, and the mode still galls;
Love, that from love excuseth none beloved,
Possessed me in his charm with such delight
That as thou seest, he leaves me not e’en here.
Love led us both unto a common death; Caïna waits the man who quenched our life.”
Such were the words borne from them unto us.
Soon as I’d learned who were those stricken souls, I bowed my head, and so long held it down,
The poet said at last: “What is thy thought?”
And as I answered, I began: “Alas! Alas!
What thoughts of sweetness, and what fond desire,
Must to this dolorous pass have led them on!”
Again I turned to them, and as I spake,
Began: “Francesca, this thy punishment
Makes me weep tears of pity and distress;
But tell me; in the hour of those sweet sighs,
How and by what did Love grant you to know
The purport of desires not yet declared.”
And she to me: “No pain more bitter is
Than to remember hours of happiness
In time of mis’ry, as your teacher knows.”
But if to learn from its first root the growth
Of this our love, thou have so great a wish,
Like one who weeps and speaks, I’ll tell it thee.
One day for pastime we together read
Of Lancelot, how by love he was enthralled.
We were alone without distrust of aught.
The reading oft times caused us to exchange
Glances that brought a flush upon the cheek;
But one point only vanquished us at last.
When we read how the lady’s longed-for smile
By such a lover was with passion kissed,
He who from me shall ne’er be separate,
Trembling the while, pressed on my lips a kiss.
The book and writer were our Galahad.
That day did we no further read in it.”
The while one spirit thus her story told,
The other sobbed aloud, so that in sympathy
I swooned away, as if about to die;
And down I fell, as a dead body falls.
RETURNING to my senses, which had closed
Before the anguish of the kinsfolk twain,
So that with sadness I was wholly stunned,
I see new tortures, and new tortured souls
Around me on all sides, move where I may,
Or turn, or wheresoe’r I set my eyes.
In the third circle am I, in a rain
   Eternal, cursed, drenching, icy cold,
Its rule ne’er broken, quality ne’er changed.
Foul water, huge hailstones, and flakes of snow
   Pour down in torrents through the darkened air;
And the earth stinks, that sucks this deluge in.
There Cerberus, a fierce and uncouth beast,
   With triple gullet, doglike barks and bays
Over the people, lying there submerged.
Eyes vermil red, a greasy beard he hath
   And black, with belly huge and hooked paws.
He claws the spirits, flays and quarters them.
In such a downpour they too howl like dogs:
   Screen for one side they of the other make,
And oft the godless wretches change about.
When Cerberus, the monster worm, saw us,
   He opened wide his mouths, and showed their fangs,
While not a limb of him could he keep still.
My leader spread the span of his two hands,
   Caught up the earth, and from his well filled fists
Flung it right down into the ravening throats.
As hungry dog, that barking craves his food,
INFERNO.

Grows quiet as he gnaws the bone, whereon
Intent he strains and fights alone with it,

Such did the foul and slobbering jaws become
Of demon Cerberus, whose thundering roar
So stuns the souls, that fain would they be deaf.

Over the ghosts we passed, whom the fierce rain
Beats to the ground, and set our feet upon
Their emptiness, which bore the form of men.

They all were lying stretched upon the ground,
Save one, which to a sitting posture rose
Quick, as he saw us pass in front of him.

"O thou," he said, "Who through this hell art led,
Own my acquaintance, if thou know me still.
Or ever I was unmade, thou wast made."

And I to him: "This agony of thine
Takes thee perchance beyond my memory's range,
So that messeems, I ne'er saw thee before;"

But tell me who thou art, that to a place
Thus sad art sent, and to such punishment,
That e'en a greater not so noisome were."

And he to me: "Thy city which is full
Of envy, like an overrunning sack,
Held me within it in the life serene.

Ciaccio did you citizens call me:
For sin of gluttony most ruinous
Beneath this rain, as thou dost see, I pine;

Nor in this sorrow is my soul alone,
For these all lie under like penalty
For the like sin." No other word he spake.

"Ciaccio," I replied, "Thy grievous state
So weighs on me, that it invites to tears.
But tell me, if thou know, to what will come

The citizens of city thus distraught?
Is there a just man left? tell me the cause
Of discord such as hath assailed her."

And he: "After the tension of long strife
They'll come to bloodshed; and the woodsmen then
CANTO VI.

Will hunt the others forth with great outrage.
Then soon, within three suns, must these again
Fall to the ground, their rivals be supreme,
By force of one who in the offing tacks.
Long time will they hold up their heads on high,
Keeping the others under heavy weights,
Howe'er they smart thereat, and inly chafe.
Two righteous men there are, unheeded there:
Pride, envy, avarice the three sparks are,
That set afire the hearts of all the rest.”
Here ended he his melancholy dirge.
And I to him: “I would thou teach me more,
And further parley grant. Tegghiaio say,
And Farinata, worthies both, Mosca,
Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo,
And others who applied their minds to good,
Say where they are, and tell me about them,
For strong desire constraineth me to learn
Is heaven’s own sweetness, or hell’s poison theirs.”
And he: “They are among the blackest souls:
Another crime sinks them to lower depths;
If thou descend so far thou'lt see them there.
But when in the sweet world thou art once more,
To men’s remembrance call me back I pray.
I tell no more, nor more do I reply.”
From look direct he rolled his eyes askance;
A moment’s glance, and then he bowed his head,
And with it fell among the other blind.
My Leader said: “He riseth not again
On this side of the Angel’s trumpet call,
When Sovran Justice as a foe will come,
And each find then his own sad tomb again;
Again resume his flesh and form, and hear
The doom that echoes through eternity.”
So passed we on with tardy step across
The noisome medley of the ghosts and rain,
Touching a little on the future life;
Whereof I asked: "Master, will punishments
After the great Doom's day for them increase,
Or become less, or will they burn as now?"
And he to me: "Back to thy science go,
Which rules that as a thing more perfect is,
Greater with it the sense of joy or pain.
And now although these folk, for ever cursed,
To true perfection never can arrive,
Nearer than here they then expect to be."
Onward we wound about that circling road,
Speaking much more than I do now repeat:
We reached the point where the descent begins:
Here found we Plutus, the arch-enemy.
CANTO VII.

Fourth Circle—The Covetous and the Prodigal.

Plutus—The Penalty of the Miserly and the Prodigal—Fortune.

Fifth Circle—The Wrathful.

"PAPÈ Satan, pape Satan aleppe,"

Plutus with hoarse and clucking voice began;
Whereon that courteous Sage, who all things knew,
Said to encourage me: "Let not thy fear
At all disturb thee, for whate'er his power,
He shall not bar thy way adown this rock."

He turned him then to that inflated face,
And said: "Be silent, thou accursed wolf;
In thine own vitals burn thy fury up:
Not without cause this journey to the deep:
Such is the Will on high, where Michael took
Due vengeance on the proud adultery."

As sails of vessel, bellying in the wind,
Fall down in tangled heaps, when snaps the mast,
So fell the savage monster to the ground.

Thus to the fourth pit went we down, our steps
Gaining the more upon the doleful bank,
That shuts in all the sin of all the world.

Justice of God! Who is't that piles up toil
So strange, and torments such as I beheld?
Why doth our sin such havoc make of us?

As yonder 'bove Charybdis rolls the surge,
That breaks on that which 'gainst it dashes in,
So here must folk keep up their counter dance.

Here more than any elsewhere saw I crowds,
From one side and the other, with loud yells,
Roll heavy weights by strain of chest alone:
With wild encounter dashed they in, and then
Each group turned backward, rolling to the rear
With cries, "Why hoarding," and "why squand'ring ye?"
So kept they turning in the dismal round
On either hand to the point opposite,
With still the cry of their reproachful gibe.
And then as to the circle's half-way point
They came, each for another joust wheeled round.
And I with heart in pity well nigh rent,
Said; "Master, show me now what people here
These be, and say if clergy all of these,
Who on our left appear with shaven crowns,"
And he to me: "All these in their first life
Were in their mental vision so squint-eyed,
In spending they no just proportion kept,
Clearly enough their snarling cry says this,
When at the two points of their round they meet,
Where the offence contrariant parts them off.
Those, who no covering have of hair on head,
Where clerics, popes and cardinals alike,
'Mong whom works avarice its worst excess."
And I: "Master, among such forms as these,
Some ought I well myself to recognize,
Who were polluted by this kind of sin."
And he to me: "A vain conclusion thine;
Th' ignoble life, that once befoul'd them,
Past recognition leaves them in the dark.
Ever in mutual buffets will they meet;
Forth from the sepulchre will these rise up
With closed fist, and those with hair cropped short.
Ill giving and ill saving have from them
Ta'en the fair world, and fixed them in this fray:
And what this is I need not dress with words.
Now can'st thou see, my son, how brief the puff
Of all the good that Fortune holds in charge.
For which mankind strives in such buffetings.
For all the gold that is below the moon,
Or ever was, could not to any one
Of these poor weary souls procure repose."

"Master," said I, "Speak yet again to me:
This Fortune, on which thou didst touch but now,
That holds the world's wealth in her clutch, what is't?"
And he to me: "O silly creatures, ye,
How vast the ignorance that trips you up!
Now will I that my doctrine thou chew well.
He, Who in wisdom doth all things transcend,
Did make the heavens, and set in each a guide,
So that all parts, each upon each, should shine
By equal distribution of the light.
And likewise for the splendours of the world,
One general minister and guide He gave,
Who, in due permutation, should vain wealth
'Mong nations share, and pass from house to house,
Beyond the wit of man to countercheck;
'Tis thus one nation reigns, and one decays,
According to the sentence passed by her,
Who, as a snake in grass, lies hid from view.
Your wisdom cannot against her contend;
She foresees all things, judges, and maintains
Her rule, as other Deities their own.
Incessant change with her knows no repose;
Necessity keeps her on rapid wing;
So quickly one arrives to claim his turn.
And this is she, to curses oft consigned
By those, who rather should accord her praise,
Than blame her wrongly with reproachful words.
Happy herself, she hears them not, and glad,
With all the other first created things
She rolls her wheel, rejoicing in her bliss.
But now descend we to more piteous scenes;
Already sinks each star, that rose, as I
Set forth; forbidden is too long a stay."

We crossed the circle to the other bank
Above a spring that boils and finds a vent
Along a runlet hollowed by itself.
Darker than any perse the water was:
   And we alongside of its dusky waves
   The bottom reached over an awkward path.
A swamp, that bears the name of Styx, is formed
   By this sad stream at point, where at the edge
   Of those malignant, dark grey shores it falls.
And I, who stood intent upon the scene,
   Saw people in the slough, o’erlaid with mud,
   All naked, and of angry mien withal.
They fought with blows, and not with fist alone,
   But with the head and chest and with their feet,
   Rending each other piecemeal with their teeth.
Spake the good Master then: “Thou seest, my son,
   The souls of those whom anger overcame:
   And I would have thee well assured too,
That ’neath the water others are who sigh,
   And make this water bubble on the top,
   As the eye tells thee, turn it where you may.
Fixed in the mire they say: “Morose were we
   In the sweet air, that sunshine maketh glad,
   Harbouring within the fumes of sullenness;
Now sullen lie we in the black morass.”
   This is the dirge they gurgle in the throat,
   Which they cannot in full formed speech express.”
Thus round the noisome pool did we describe
   A wide curve ’tween the dry bank and the swamp,
   With eyes turned towards those who suck up the mire:
Beneath a tower we at the last arrived.
CANTO VIII.

Fifth Circle—The Wrathful.


My tale pursuing, long I say ere we
Had reached the basement of the lofty tower,
Our eyes towards its summit had been raised
By two small flames that we saw stationed there,
And from afar another signal back,
At distance that the eye could barely catch,
To the deep sea of all sound sense I turned,
Asking: "What saith this light, and what replies
That other fire, and by whom is it made?"
And he: "On surface of the slimy wave
What is expected thou mayst now discern,
If the swamp's mist conceal it not from thee."
Bow-string ne'er shot an arrow from itself,
That through the air as quickly made its way,
As did a little boat that I discerned
Coming that moment towards us o'er the pool,
Steer'd by a single boatman all alone,
Who cried: "Already come, thou felon soul?"
"Phlegyas, Phlegyas, thy cry is all in vain,
This time at least," was then my lord's reply:
"Thou'lt have us only while we cross the mire."
As one who hears that some great fraud hath been
Practised upon him, and who chafes thereat,
Such in his smothered rage was Phlegyas.
My leader then went down into the bark,
And made me enter by his side, and when
I was aboard, I seemed its only freight.
Soon as my guide and I were in the boat,
Off goes the ancient prow, cleaving its way,
Deeper in water than with other souls.

As through the dead canal we hurried on,
Uprose there one before me drenched in mire,
And said: “Who art thou, coming ere thy time?”
And I to him: “I stay not, if I come.
But who art thou, changed to this hideous form?”
He answer made: “Thou seest I’m one that weeps.”
And I to him: “In weeping and in woe,
Accursèd spirit, do thou then remain;
I know thee well, all filthy as thou art.”

Then to the boat he stretched out both his hands:
Whereon the quick eyed Master thrust him off,
And said: “Hence, yonder to the other dogs.”
And then around my neck he threw his arms,
And kissed my cheek; “Rightly indignant soul,”
He said, “Blest be the mother that bare thee.
That man was in the world most arrogant;
No deed of worth adorns his memory.
And so his ghost in fury rages here.

How many up there deem themselves great kings,
Who here like swine will wallow in the mire,
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise.”
And I: “Now Master, would I be right glad
To see the wretch immersed in this hell-broth,
Or ever from the lake we issue forth.”
And he to me: “Or ever now the shore
Be in thy view, thou shalt be satisfied.
Right will it be to gratify such wish.”

And speedily I saw him undergo
Such handling from the gentry of the swamp,
That to this day I thank and praise the Lord.
“Philip Argenti, have at thee,” yelled all;
And the fierce spirit of the Florentine
Turned on himself and rent him with his teeth.
There left we him; of him I say no more.
But on my ears there fell such strains of woe,
CANTO VIII.

That with wide open eyes I forward gaze.

"The City namèd Dis," the Master said,

"Is nigh, my Son, and mighty throngs within

Of citizens, sin-laden heavily."

And I: "Master, e'en now its minarets

Plain in the valley, yonder I discern,

Bright red, as though from furnace just put forth."

To me he said: "The fire eternal, which

Glows hot within them, shows them ruddy thus,

As thou dost see in this the nether hell."

At length within the deep moats we arrived,

Which compass round that land disconsolate;

The wall seemed to me as of iron made.

Not without fetching first a compass wide,

We reached a point, where loud the boatman called

To us: "Begone, yonder the entrance gate."

More than a thousand 'bove the gates I saw,

Once poured from heaven like rain, who savagely

Hissed out: "And who is this, that ere his death

Moves through the kingdom of th' already dead?"

My Master, ever wise, made them a sign

That secret parley he desired with them;

A little then they checked their high disdain,

And said: "Come thou alone, let him begone,

Who has presumed this realm to enter thus;

Let him return on his fool's road alone,

And prove if he know how: thou shalt remain,

Who hast through this dark land escorted him."

Think Reader, how I stood discomfited,

At the bare sound of these accursèd words;

For thought I to return no more to earth.

"O Guide beloved, who more than seventold times

Hast brought me safety, and hast rescued me

From peril that rose high in front of me,

Leave me not now," I prayed him, "in despair;

And if the farther passage be denied,

Let us retrace our steps together quick."
That Lord, who me had thither brought, replied:

"Fear not, for this our course can none deny
To us; by Such hath it been granted us.
But wait me here; and with sure hope that I
Will not forsake thee in this nether world,
Thy weared spirit comfort and refresh."

And so he goes; and me that father dear
Leaves all alone, and in suspense I stay;
For "yes" and "no" keep on the stretch my brain.
I could not hear what he proposed to them,
But no long time among them did he stay,
For one and all rushed in as 'twere a race.
Right on my Lord's own breast our enemies
Did close the gates, and he remained outside,
And back to me returned with tardy steps,
His eyes to earth were cast, his brow all shorn
Of show of boldness, as with sighs he said:
"Who hath denied me these abodes of woe?"
And then to me: "Be not dismayed that I
Should thus be wroth; master this strife I will,
Prepare who may resistance from within.
This insolence of theirs is nothing new;
They showed it once at a less secret gate,
Which to this day remains without a bolt:
On it thou saw't the characters of death:
E'en now on this side of it down the steep,
Passing these circles without escort, one
Descends, by whom this place shall open fly."
At the Gate of Dis—The Alarm—The Three Furies—
God’s Messenger.
The Sixth Circle.
Heretics—Heresiarchs.

The pallor that betrayed my coward fear,
As I beheld my Guide come back, at once
With him repressed his own unwonted flush.
He paused attentive, as one listening hard;
For there the eyes could travel little way
Through the black air and density of fog.
“Ours it must be this contest still to win,”
’Gan he: "Unless... But one the offer made...
Still oh! how long ere yet that other comes!"
Well did I note, as he again wrapped up
What he began in what came afterwards,
His later words were from the first diverse.
But none the less his utt’rance caused alarm,
Because I drew into his broken speech
A something worse perchance than what it meant.
“Far as the bottom of this dismal cone
Doth any from the first grade e’er descend,
Whose only penalty is bootless hope?”
My question such: “Rarely is any found,”
He said in answer, “who from out our ranks
Maketh the journey on which I am bound.
’Tis true that I another time was here,
Conjured by arts of that grim Erichtho,
Who to their bodies would the shades recall.
Short while had been my flesh deprived of me,
When she made me enter within that wall
To fetch a spirit back from Judas’ ward.
That is the lowest and the blackest place,
Farthest from heaven that encircles all.
The road I know full well, so rest assured.
This swamp, which aye exhales the noisome stench,
Girdeth this City of distress all round,
Where without wrath we may not enter now.”
And more he said, that I have not in mind;
For now mine eyes had drawn me wholly to
The lofty tower with its crest of fire;
Where in a moment suddenly up rose
Infernal Furies, Three, besmeared with blood,
Whose limbs like woman’s had her attitudes.
With greenest hydias were their waists engirt,
Small serpents and horned snakes served them for hair,
Plaited in wreaths around their savage brows.
And he, well knowing the handmaidens, who
Wait on the queen of woe eternal, said:
“Before thee lo! the fierce Erinnys stand.
Megaera this upon the left hand side;
Alecto weeping there upon the right;
Tisiphone between.” He said no more.
Each with her claws was tearing her own breast;
Self smiting with their palms they shrieked so loud,
That in alarm I to the Poet clung.
“Medusa come: so him we’ll turn to stone,”
They all cried out, with faces fixed below,
“Theseus’ assault but poorly we avenged.”
“Now turn thee backward; keep thine eyes shut close,
For if the Gorgon shew herself, and thou
See her, no hope of a return above.”
Such were the Master’s words, and he himself
Turned me about, nor trusted to my hands,
But with his own as well blindfolded me.
O ye, who have a sound intelligence,
Note well the doctrine which conceals itself
Beneath the veil of my mysterious lines,
CANTO IX.

As now across the turbid waves there swept
The crashing of a sound with terror filled,
Whereat did quake the shores on either side;
Not otherwise than when a mighty wind
With rush impetuous 'gainst opposing heats,
Crashes on the grove; and held by no restraint,
Crashes, breaks down, and whirls away the boughs;
Onward it proudly sweeps in clouds of dust,
And from it fly wild beasts, the shepherds too.
Mine eyes set free, he said: "Thy visual nerve
Now fix along that ancient foam towards
The point when fiercest drives the stinging mist."

As frogs before their foe, the watersnake,
Are scattered everywhere across the pool,
Until they lie all huddled in the mud,
So did I see of ruined souls more than
A thousand, flying at the face of One,
Who at the Ferry crossed the Styx dryshod.

From off his brow drove he the close, thick air,
Waving his left hand oft in front of him;
And only by this trouble seemed distress'd.
Well I perceived that he from Heaven was sent,
And to the Master turned; who signed to me
Calmly to stand, and in due reverence bend.
Ah me! how full of high disdain he seemed!
He reached the gate, and to his slender rod
It open flew; no fastening held it back.

"Outcasts of heaven, ye despised race,"
So on the horrid threshold he began,
"Why harbour ye such insolence within?
Why thus recalcitrant before His Will,
Which from its purpose never is disturbed,
And which ofttimes hath made your pain more sharp?
What boots it thus to dash yourselves 'gainst fate?
Your Cerberus, if well you recollect,
For this still shows a jaw and gullet peeled."

Then back he turned along the swampy way;
INFERNO.

No word he spake to us, but bore the look
Of one constrained, and spurred by other care
Than of the man present in fact with him.
On toward the City then we moved our steps,
At once secure after the holy words.
Without resistance entered we within;
And I who was desirous to behold
What state of things such fortress might enclose,
When once within, let mine eyes range around,
And see on either side an open plain,
With anguish and with grievous torments filled,
E'en as at Arles, where stagnant spreads the Rhone,
And as at Pola near Quarnaro's gulf,
Which bounds Italia, and her frontier bathes,
The ground is all uneven made with tombs,
Just so on all sides was the aspect here,
Except that here the mode was sadder still;
For mid the sepulchres spread flames of fire,
Wherein they glowed with so intense a heat,
That in no craft is more required for iron.
The lids of all of them were lifted up,
And forth there issued lamentations such
As plainly came from wretches in their pain.
And I: "Who, Master, may the people be,
That buried in recesses of these vaults,
Make themselves heard in sighs of such distress?"
And he to me: "Here lie Arch-heretics
With their disciples of all sects, their tombs
More laden much than thou could'st have supposed:
Like here with like entombed lie; and in
The monuments the heat is less or more."
Then turning to the right hand on we passed
Between the tortures and the lofty walls.
CANTO X.

The Sixth Circle—Heretics.
Farinata degli Uberti—Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti and the Emperor Frederick.

NOW on his way along a secret path,  
'Tween the tormented and the City wall  
My Master goes, I in his steps behind.  
"Virtue supreme, who round these godless paths  
Dost turn me," I began, "speak as to thee  
It seemeth good, and satisfy my wish.  
The people, who are lying in these tombs,  
Might they be seen? The lids already now  
Are all upraised, and no one is on guard."
And he to me: "All will be closed up fast,  
When from Jehoshaphat they here return,  
Bringing the bodies they have left up there.  
On this side in their cemetry are housed  
With Epicurus all his followers,  
Who with the body make the soul die too.  
Therefore the question that thou askest me,  
Shall here within be quickly satisfied,  
As the wish too whereon thou art silent."
And I: "My heart, dear Guide, nowise from thee  
I hide, except for brevity of speech;  
Whereto already hast thou me disposed."
"O Tuscan, who through this City of fire  
In modest parlance movest on alive,  
Thy pleasure be it at this place to halt.  
The accent of thy speech declares thee well  
Native of that most noble Fatherland,  
To which it may be I too harmful was."
These sounds quite suddenly had issued from
One of those tombs; whereon unto my Guide
Somewhat more closely in alarm I drew.
He said to me: "Turn round; what doest thou?
See Farinata there, who stands erect;
Upward from belt thou'llt see him at full length."
Already I had fixed mine eyes on his;
Upright he rose with brow and breast aloft,
As though he entertained great scorn of Hell.
My Guide with ready hands and resolute
Pushed me amid the sepulchres toward him,
Saying: "Explicit let thy words be now."
When at the foot before his tomb I stood,
Awhile he eyed me, and almost with scorn
He asked me then: "Who were thine ancestors?"
And I, desirous only to obey,
Concealed them not, but told him of them all:
Whereat he somewhat lifted up his brows;
Then said: "Fierce enemies indeed they were
To me, my fathers and my partizans,
So that twice over I put them to flight."
"If hunted forth, they from all sides again
Returned," said I, "the first and second time;
That art your friends however learned not well."
Then there rose up to unobstructed view
A ghost beside him so far as the chin;
I trow he'd raised himself upon his knees.
He looked all round me, as though with the wish
To see if any other were with me;
But when he found his half-formed hope was vain,
With tears he said: "If now thou passest through
This darksome jail by force of genius high,
Where is my son, and wherefore not with thee?"
And I to him: "I come not of myself;
He who awaits me yonder, leads me here,
Whom in disdain perhaps your Guido held."
His words, and mode of punishment beside
Already had revealed to me his name:
So was mine answer fully thus expressed.

Full length he suddenly drew up, and cried:

"Held didst thou say? then is he not alive?
Upon his eyes doth not the sweet light fall?"

And when he noted somewhat of delay,

And that in answer I did hesitate,
Backward he fell, and never re-appeared.

The other lofty soul, at whose desire
I halted first, changed not in look the while,
Nor turned his head, nor e'en inclined aside.

"And if," as he took up our first discourse,

"They have but poorly learned that art,
More torture 'tis to me than e'en this bed.

But fifty times shall not be re-illumed

That lady's face, who in this realm is queen,

An' would'st thou yet to the sweet world return,

Why, tell me, is that people so unjust
In all its several laws against my house?"

Then I: "The slaughter and the grand defeat,

That crimson dyed the stream of Arbia,

A sanction give to such prayers in our church."

As with a sigh he shook his head, he said,

"There I was not the only one, and sooth
Not without cause might I have joined the rest:

But there I stood alone, when each of them

Agreed to raze Firenze to the ground,

And I with open face defended her."

"So may thy seed be yet sometime in peace,"

Him I besought, "Unloose for me this knot,

Wherein my judgment is entangled here.

It seems that ye foresee, if well I hear,

That in advance, which time brings with itself;

And the things present ye see otherwise."

"We see, as men with sight imperfect see

Things," said he; "that from us are far removed;
Such glimmering light the most High still vouchsafes:

D
As nearer they approach, or are, a blank
Is our perception then, and if none bring
The news, we nothing know of your estate.
Hence thou canst apprehend that utterly
Will all our knowledge from that moment die,
When of futurity the gate is closed.”
Then in distress at thought of my mistake,
I said; “Now shall you say to him who fell,
That ’mong the living still abides his son.
And if just now for answer I was mute,
Explain to him it was because e’en then
My thoughts were in the error you have solved.”
And now my Master was recalling me;
So I in greater haste the spirit prayed
That he would tell me who were with him there.
He said: “More than a thousand lie with me:
The second Frederick here within is set;
Also the Cardinal: untold the rest.”
Thereon he vanished; and my steps I turned
Towards the ancient Bard, revolving still
The words which seemed disastrous to myself.
Forward he moved, and as we then walked on,
He said: “Why art thou thus in mind distraught?”
His question I did fully satisfy.
“Let memory retain what thou hast heard
Adverse unto thyself;” so urged the Sage;
“And now take note;” his finger then he raised:
“When thou shalt stand in her sweet radiance,
Unto whose lovely eye all things are clear,
From her shalt thou learn thy life’s pilgrimage.”
Towards the left anon he moved his foot;
Quitting the wall, we for the centre made
Along a path, that to a valley struck,
Which far as to our heights sent up its stench.
ON the extreme edge of a lofty bank,
    Formed in a circle of huge broken stones,
    We reached a prison house more piteous still.
And there by force of horrible excess
    Of stench, which the profound abyss casts up,
    We sheltered close behind an upraised lid
Of a great tomb, letters on which I saw,
    That said: "Pope Anastasius I hold,
    Whom from the way of Truth Photinus drew."
"Needs must we in descent be slow, that sense
    Be first a little used to the foul blast,
    Which by and by we shall no more regard."
Thus far the Master: and, "Some recompense"
    Said I, "provide, that so the time pass not
    As lost." And he: "Thou seest my very thought,
My Son. Within the rocks before us here,
    Three lessening circles in gradation fall,
    Like those thou leavest now;" so he began;
"They all are full of spirits reprobate:
    But that mere sight may afterward suffice,
    Hear how and why they are imprisoned thus.
Of all ill deeds, which Heaven the most abhors,
    The end is injury, and all such end,
    By force or fraud, leads to a neighbour's hurt.
But in that fraud is man's peculiar vice,
    It more displeaseth God; so lowest lie
The fraudulent, and theirs the greater pain.
All the first circle for the violent is:
    But since three persons are subject to force,
It is constructed in three separate rounds.

'Gainst God, ourselves, our neighbour, violence
In person or on chattels can be done,
As thou shalt hear in open argument.

By violence and grievous wounds may death
Upon a neighbour fall; and on his goods
Rapine or fire or tolls extortionate:
So whoso kills or deals malicious blows,
Freebooters, robbers, all in this first ring
Their torments find, each in his separate group.

A man against himself can lift his hand,
And 'gainst his goods; and in the second ring
'Tis meet that he a bootless penance find,
Whoever of your world deprives himself,
Or substance wastes, or gambles it away,
Turning to grief what should have brought him joy.

Man too can outrage Deity Itself,
In heart denying and blasphemying Him,
And by despising Nature, and her Gifts.

So with its own signet the narrowest Round
Seals Sodom and Cahors and whosoe'er
Says in his heart's contempt there is no God.

Fraud, whereof each man's conscience feels some sting,
A man can practice on confiding friend,
And upon one who confidence withholds.

The latter method seems at least to snap
The link of love which nature makes 'mong men;
Wherefore in second circle go to roost
Hypocrites, flatterers, dealers in witchcraft,
Forgers, and thieves, users of simony,
Pandlers, extortioners and all such scum.

The other mode forgets both natural love,
And that which afterwards is joined to it,
From which is formed a personal good faith.
Hence in the straitest circle, central point
Of the whole universe, where Dis presides,
Whoe'er betrays, for ever is consumed.'
And I: "Most clearly, Master, onward runs
Thy argument, and well distinguisheth
This gulf, and all such as inhabit it.
But tell me: those in the thick pool, and they
Whom the wind drives, and whom the rain beats down,
And those who meet exchanging bitter gibes—
Why in the flame-red City are not they
Tormented, if in anger God hold them;
And if not so, why then in such a plight?"
And he to me: "Why doth thine intellect
Thus from the line diverge beyond its wont?
Or doth thy mind fix somewhere else its eyes?
Doth not thy memory recall the words,
Wherein thy Ethics treat at length upon
The dispositions three, which Heaven wills not,
Incontinence and malice and a mad
Brutality? and how incontinence
Offends God less, and censure less incurs?
If thou keep well this principle in view,
And call to mind who those are up outside,
And now are undergoing chastisement,
Thou wilt see well, why from the felons here
They are withdrawn, and why less angrily
Justice Divine them with its hammer smites."
"O Sun, true salve of all distempered sight,
Thou so contentest me, solving my doubt,
That doubt is welcome, e'en as knowledge is.
Yet now again," I said, "Turn back thy thought
To what thou said'st of usury, that it
Offends God's goodness, and untie this knot."
"Philosophy," he said, "for him who hears,
Shows, and not merely in one case alone,
How Nature from Divine Intelligence
Derives her course, and by Its art proceeds.
And if thy Physics thou examine well,
Thou'llt find, ere many pages thou hast turned,
That your art follows too, as best it can,
Her art, as learner on the master waits,
So that your art a grandchild is of God.
From these two things, if to thy mind thou bring
Some early words in Genesis, needs must
Man work to live, and to advance his race.
But as the usurer goes another way,
Nature herself he scorns, and her handmaid,
Because he sets his hope on something else.
But forward, follow me, I fain would on:
The Fishes quiver on the horizon line,
And due Nor’West now lies the Greater Bear,
And far on yonder we descend the mount.
CANTO XII.

Seventh Circle—First Ring—Outrage against Neighbours.

The Minotaur—The Ruins of Hell—Phlegethon and the Centaurs.

Various Characters.

THE place we reached, whence to descend the steep,
   Was Alpine, and, by what was there beside,
   Such as would scare the eye of any man.
As in the landslip, which upon the flank,
   On this side Trento, struck the Adigè
   By earthquake, or the lack of underprop—
For from the mountain top, from whence it moved,
   Down to the plain the cliff is shattered so,
   It might to one above afford a way;
Such the descent into the chasm there:
   And at the point above the open slope,
   There lay outstretched the infamy of Crete,
Which in fictitious heifer was conceived:
   When he saw us, he rent him with his teeth
   As one, whom fury inwardly consumes.
Loudly towards him shouted the Sage: "Perhaps
   Thou think'st the Duke of Athens may be here,
   Who in the upper world brought death to thee.
Out of my way! foul beast, for here comes one
   Without tuition in thy sister's art,
   Who travelling here beholds your punishments."
As is the bull that wildly breaketh loose,
   The moment he receives the fatal blow
   And cannot go, but staggers here and there,
So likewise did I see the Minotaur.
   My wary Guide cried out: "Make for the pass;
   While thus he raves, 'tis well thou get thee down."
So sped we onward o'er that avalanche
Of stones, which ever and anon gave way,  
Under th' unwonted burthen of my feet.  

Wrapped in my thoughts I went, and he began:  
"Thy thoughts are fixed perhaps upon this wreck,  
O'er which the furious beast I've quelled, keeps guard."

Now would I have thee know, that other while  
When to the lower hell I made my way,  
This rock had not as yet been shattered thus.

But if I judge aright, short while indeed  
Before He came, Who carried off from Dis  
The mighty spoil the upper circle held,

On all sides of the valley deep and foul,  
Such quaking was, I thought the Universe  
Thrilled with that love, which there are some who teach

Hath oftentimes into Chaos changed the world:  
And at that moment this most ancient rock,  
Both here and elsewhere, in this ruin fell:

But fix thine eyes below, for nigh at hand  
The river runs of blood, wherein must boil  
All who do others hurt with violence.

O blind cupidity, guilty and mad withal,  
That in brief life so goadest us, and in  
Th' Eternal seethes us in misery!

I saw a broad fosse fashioned like a bow,  
As though it would embrace the plain all round,  
Just as mine escort had described to me.

Between the basement of the cliff and it  
Centaurs in file, equipped with arrows, rode,  
As to the chace they went i'th' world above.

Perceiving us descend, they halted each,  
And from the group detached, three forward came,  
With bows and arrows chosen previously.

And at a distance one cried out: "To what  
Torment come ye, who here descend the steep?  
Stand and declare: if not, I draw the bow."

My Master said: "In Chiron's presence there,  
The answer we return you shall be made.
CANTO XII.

E'en to thy hurt thy will was ever prompt.”
He touched me then, and said: “Tis Nessus this,
Who for the lovely Deianira died,
And his own vengeance for himself prepared:
The middle one with eye fixed on his breast,
Is the great Chiron, who Achilles reared:
Pholus the other, ever full of wrath.”
All round the moat these in their thousands ride,
Shooting each soul that from the bloody pool
Emerges further than his crime permits.”
Nearer to these fleet monsters we approached;
An arrow Chiron drew, and with its notch
Backward behind his jaws he tossed his beard.
When his great mouth he had exposèd thus,
He to his comrades said: “Have ye observed
The man behind makes what he touches move;
This dead men's feet are never wont to do.”
And my kind Guide, who now had reached the breast,
Where the two natures find their common bond,
Replied: “He lives indeed, and right it is
Through the dark vale I guide him thus alone:
Necessity brings him, and no caprice.
From hymns of Alleluia came there one,
Who this strange office did to me confide.
No robber he, nor I a runaway.
But in that Virtue's Name whereby I move
My onward steps along this savage road,
Grant of thy troop some one of these at hand,
To show us where 'tis safe to take the ford,
And on the crupper set this man behind;
For he no spirit is to float through air.”
Chiron then turning round towards the right,
Charged Nessus thus: “Go back, show them the way,
And bid what troop you chance to meet give place.”
We with this trusty escort forward moved
Along the edge of that red bubbling pool,
Whence from the scalded issued rending shrieks.
People I saw up to their eyebrows plunged,
    And the huge Centaur said: "Tyrants are these,
    Who set their hands to rapine and to blood.
Here they bewail their merciless misdeeds:
    Here's Alexander, Dionysius too,
    Who years of suffering brought to Sicily;
And yonder brow, o'erhung by those dark locks,
    Is Azzolin; the other fair one there
    Obizzo is of Estè, whom in truth
His stepson murdered in the world above."
    Then as to him I turned, the Poet said:
    "Let him the first place take, the second me."
A little farther on the Centaur stopped
    Beside a group, who far as to the throat
    Seemed from the bubbling caldron to emerge.
A Ghost he showed us by himself apart,
    Saying: "In God's own bosom he stabbed through
    That heart, which on the Thames is still revered."
Next saw I people, who above the stream
    Held head and chest entirely lifted out,
    More than a few of whom I recognized.
And thus went on in ever sinking flood
    The pool of blood, till but the feet it boiled:
    And there our passage lay across the moat.
"Just as thou seest that ever at this end
    The boiling flood grows shallower, even so,"
    The Centaur said, "I would that thou believe,
That towards the other end with gradual fall
    The bottom sinks, until it settles down,
    Where it behoves that tyranny should mourn.
God's Justice there plagues with due recompence
    The Attila, who was on earth a scourge;
    Pyrrhus and Sextus too; and evermore
Drains off the tears, that boiling heat unlocks
    From Rinier of Corneto, and Rinier
    Named Pazzo, who on the highways waged such wars."
Then he turned back, and crossed the ford again.
CANTO XIII.

Seventh Circle—Second Ring.

Outrage upon Self—The Dolorous Grove—Pier della Vigne—Suicides.

Lano da Siena—Jacopo da Sant' Andrea—A Florentine Suicide.

NOT yet had Nessus reached the other side,
    When we had thrown ourselves into a grove,
        Where not a vestige of a path was traced.

Not green the foliage, but of dusky hue,
    Not smooth the branches, but twisted and gnarled;
        No apples there, but only poisonous haws.

Thickets so rough and dense 'tween Cecina
    And Corneto the wild beasts cannot find,
        That shun with hate a cultivated space.

Here do the hideous harpies make their nests,
    Who drove the Trojans from the Strophades,
        Mid dire presages of impending woe.

Broad wings they have, faces and necks of men,
    Claws on their feet, huge bellies feathered o'er,
        And screech their dirges mid the strange tree tops.

And the good Master: “Ere thou farther go,
    Know that thou art within the second ring,”
        So he began to say, “and wilt be till

Unto a place of horrid sand thou come.
    Wherefore take note, and so things thou wilt see,
        Which did I tell thee would o'ertax belief.”

On every side I heard continuous moans,
    But saw I none from whom they might proceed:
        Whereon I stood still in bewilderment.

I think that he was thinking that I thought
    So many sounds amid those trunks must come
From some, who fain would hide themselves from us.
Wherefore the Master said: "If thou break off
Some little twig from any of these trees,
Idle surmises will thy thoughts be found."
Then forth I put my hand a little way,
And from a great thorn pluck'd a slender twig;
When loudly shrieked its trunk: "Why strip me thus?"
And when it had become all dark with blood,
It then renewed its cry: "Why rend me so?
Hast thou no spirit of compassion left?
Men were we once, but now are turned to stocks:
More pitiful thy hands might surely be,
If we'd been nothing but the souls of snakes."
As with green sapling which is set on fire
At one end, and the other drips in tears,
And hisses with the air that rushes out,
So from that fracture came there out at once
Both words and blood, whereat I let the tip
Droop toward the ground, and terror-struck I stood.
"O wounded soul," such answer made my Sage,
"Had he been able to believe at first
What he had seen though only in my verse,
'Gainst thee he would not have stretched out his hand;
But so incredible a thing made me
Suggest an act, of which I feel the weight.
But tell him who thou wast; so that to make
Thee some amends, he may thy name revive
Up in the world, where he may still return."
And then the tree: "Me thy sweet speech allures
Silence to break; and may it not tire you,
If to thy bait I rise for brief discourse.
I am the man, who erst kept both the keys
Of Frederick's heart, and them I used to turn
So deftly, locking and unlocking it,
That from his secrets I shut most men out.
At this high post I served so faithfully,
That sleep and energy alike gave way.
CANTO XIII.

The strumpet, who her eyes of wantonness
From palace of a Cæsar ne’er withdrew,
The common vice and bane of every court,
Inflamed ’gainst me the hearts of all around;
And they inflamed, inflamed Augustus so,
That my glad honours turned to dismal griefs.

My soul in sentiment of high disdain,
Thinking by death it would escape disdain,
Made me, though just, against myself unjust.

By this tree’s new-formed roots I swear to you,
That never from true fealty did I swerve
To my liege lord, who honour aye deserved;
And if unto the world either of you
Return, restore my memory that still lies
Smitten beneath the blow that envy struck.”

He paused awhile; and then the Poet said:
“Silent he is; lose not the moment then,
But speak, and ask him if thou wouldst know more.”

And I replied: “Do thou again ask him,
What thou dost think will satisfy me most;
Self I cannot: pity so wrings my heart.”

Then he again began: “So may the man
For thee do gladly, what thy words implore,
Spirit incarcerate, be pleasèd still
To tell us how the soul imprisoned is
Within these knots; and tell us, if thou may,
Is ever any from such limbs set free.”

First with a rushing gust the trunk replied,
And next that wind changed to a voice like this:
“Briefly my answer shall be made to you.
Soon as the desperate soul in passion goes
Forth from the body, sever’d by wilful act,
Minos remits it to the seventh gulf.
Into the wood it drops, not on a spot
Chosen afore, but as chance haps to fling;
And there it germinates like grain of spelt.
The sapling sprouts, and grows to forest tree:
The Harpies, feeding then upon its leaves,
Both cause a pang; and for the pang a vent.

Like others we shall seek the spoils we cast,
But none of us to clothe himself therewith;
Not meet for man to don what man had doffed.

But hither shall we drag them, and throughout
The dolorous grove our bodies will be hung,
Each on the thorn of its tormented ghost.”

Attentive at the tree we waited still,
Thinking that it had more it wished to say,
When by a rushing sound we were surprised;
E’en as the man, who at his post, perceives
The boar approach, and in full cry the field,
And hears the bay of hounds and crash of boughs.

And lo! upon our left the forms of two,
Naked, with scratches torn, and flying hard,
Dashed through the trellis of the tangled wood.

The one in front: “Now come, come quick, O death!”
The other seeming to himself too slow,
Cried out: “Not nimble thus thy legs, Lano,
The day thou didst in joust of Toppo fight.”

And then, perhaps because his breath ran short,
He crept in one heap, tangled with a bush.
Behind them was the wood, scoured by full pack
Of hounds, black, ravenous, and rushing on,
Like greyhounds which from leash have just been slipped.

As there he squatted, upon him they fixed
Their teeth, and tore him piecemeal limb from limb,
Which off they carried quivering in their pain.

Thereon mine escort took me by the hand,
And led me to the bush, which all in vain
Bewailed its fractures streaming forth in blood.

“James of S. Andrew,” it cried out, “to thee
What boots it to make me thy hiding place?
What blame have I for thy abandoned life?”

And when my Master halted over it,
He said: “Who wast thou, who at all these points
CANTO XIII.

Breathest in blood thy dolorous appeal?"
And he to us: "Ye souls, who have arrived
To witness this foul outrage of disgrace,
Which hath from me my branches thus torn off,
Collect them at the foot of this sad bush:
Mine was the City, for the Baptist which
Changed her first Patron, who thenceforth for this
Will with his own art make her ever sad:
And did there not on Bridge of Arno stand
Some semblance of him yet in open view,
Those citizens, who built her up again
Upon the ashes left by Attila,
Had in their labour found a bootless task.
I of my own rooftree a gibbet made.
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CANTO XIV.

Seventh
Second Circle—Third Ring.

Outrage against God—Capaneus—The Old Man of Crete—The Rivers of Hell.

STIRRED by affection for my native place,
I gathered in a heap the scattered fronds,
And gave them him, whose voice began to fail.

From thence we reached the limit, where divides
The second round from third, and where indeed
Justice reveals her work most horribly.

The strange new scene more clearly to describe,
I say we came unto a barren plain,
Which on its surface not a blade allows.

The dolorous grove stands like a garland round,
As by the dismal fosse itself is girt;
Here on its utmost edge our steps we stayed.

One deep and arid sand was all the expanse,
Nor formed in other fashion than was that,
Which by the feet of Cato once was trod.

Vengeance of God! how fearful should'st thou seem
To every man, who in my story reads
What now unto mine eyes was manifest!

Of souls quite naked saw I many a herd,
Who all bemoaned a common misery;
Yet seemed they subject to distinctive rules.

Some on the ground lay stretched upon their backs;
Seated were some, huddled in crouching form,
While others wandered in continuous tramp.

They, who thus moved above, more numerous were;
Those fewer, who in torment lay prostrate,
But to a fiercer wail their tongues were loosed.

O'er all the sand there fell in slow descent
A steady downpour of broad flakes of fire,
Like Alpine snow that falls when winds are still.

As Alexander on the heated plains
CANTO XIV.

Of India saw descend upon his host
Flames that came down unbroken to the ground,
And so provided that with heel his troops
Should stamp the soil in, easier to put out
Each single flame, while it was still alone;
E'en so fell evermore the eternal heat,
Which set the sand afire, as tinder is
'Neath flint and steel, to add a double woe.
In restless dance of blows their wretched hands
Sought first on this side, then on that to drive
Away from them the aye fresh falling fires.
"Master," 'gan I, "who all things dost o'ercome,
Save and alone the demons obstinate
That rushed against us at the entrance gate,
Who is yon giant that seems not to heed
The fire, and lies the while in brutal scorn,
Defiant so, no downpour softens him?"
And he himself, who was aware that I
Was questioning the Master about him,
Cried out: "What when alive, such am I dead.
Though at the anvil Jove tire out his smith,
From whom in wrath he snatched the sharpened bolt,
Wherewith on my last day I was struck down;
Or though in turn he tire out all the rest
In Mongibello at the dusky forge,
Crying: Good Vulcan, to the rescue come,
As erst he did on Phlegra's battlefield;
Though with full force he hurl his shafts at me,
He shall not taste the pleasure of revenge."
Then spake my Guide with emphasis so stern,
I ne'er had heard such force from him before:
"O Capaneus, in that thy pride is still
Untamed, so greater grows thy punishment.
No torture, save the frenzy of thy rage,
Would for thy fury be due penalty."
To me he turned again with gentler look,
And said: "One of the seven kings was he,
Who Thebes besieged; he held, and seems to hold
God in disdain, and count Him little worth.
But, as I said to him, his blasphemies
Are ornaments that well befit his breast.
Now follow me, and yet once more beware
Thou press not with thy feet the red-hot sand,
But keep them close within the forest verge."
In silence then we came where breaketh out
Forth from the grove a rivulet, so red,
Its tint e'en now makes my hair stand on end.
As from the Bulicamé starts a rill,
Which 'mong themselves the sinful women share,
Such downward through the sand that streamlet ran.
The bottom and the slopes on either hand,
And causeways 'long the side were petrified;
Whereby I judged our passage lay that way.
"Amid all else that I have shewn to thee,
Since first we made our entrance through the gate,
Whereof the threshold is to none denied,
There hath not been unto thine eyes disclosed
A thing so notable as is this stream,
Which quenches all the flamelets over it."
Such were the words my Guide addressed to me:
Whereon I begg'd him grant the full repast,
For which he'd given me the appetite.
"Far out mid-sea there lies a wasted land,"
Said he continuing, "which is known as Crete,
Under whose king the world was one time chaste.
A mountain rises there, which erst rejoiced
In stream and woodland; Ida is its name;
'Tis now deserted like a worn out thing.
Rhea once chose it as a cradle safe
For her young son, whom better to conceal,
She bade loud shouts be raised, whene'er he cried.
Within the mountain stands a grand Old Man,
Erect, his back to Damietta turned,
His eyes, as on his mirror, fixed on Rome.
His head is fashioned of the finest gold;
   And of pure silver are his arms and chest,
Thereafter bronze as far as to the fork;
From thence still downward of the choicest iron,
   Save that the right foot is of baken clay,
On which, more than the other, straight he stands.
Each of these parts, except the gold, is by
   A fissure cleft, that distils tears in drops,
And these collected perforate that grot.
Down to this valley o'er the rocks they run,
   Form Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, and then
Through this contracted channel they descend
At last to point where nothing lower sinks,
   There form Cocytus; and what that pool is,
Thyself wilt see, so now ’tis not described.’’
And I to him: “If the stream present here
   Thus takes its rise within that world of ours,
Why at this forest’s edge is it first seen?”
And he to me: “Thou know’st this place is round,
   And though thou now hast travelled far through it,
Descending by the left to lower depths,
Its circle hast thou yet not fully turned;
   Therefore if something do appear that’s new,
It need not spread amazement o’er thy face.”
And I again: “Where, Master, then are found
   Lethe and Phlegethon? silent on one,
Thou say’st the other by this rain is formed.”
“With all thy questions truly am I pleased,”
   He said, “But the red bubbling of the pool
Should answer well that which thou makest now.
Lethe thou’lt see, but outside this abyss,
   There, where the souls repair to wash them clean,
When sin repented of has been removed.”
He added then: “’Tis time we turn aside
   Now from the grove; so follow me behind;
These causeways form our path, for they burn not,
And over them extinguished is all fire.”
Of the hard causeways one now carries us,
   While the o'erhanging mist above the stream
   Shelters from fire the water and the banks.
Just as the Flemings 'twixt Wissant and Bruges,
   Fearing the tide which rushes in toward them.
   Raise a defence to hold the sea in check;
As too, along the Brenta, Paduans
   Seek shelter for their castles and their farms,
Ere Chiarentana feels the summer heat,
So in like fashion were the structures here;
   Although, whoe'er he was, in height and breath
   The Master built them to a smaller scale.
Already were we distant from the wood
   So far that I should not have seen its place,
   If backward I had thither turned my eyes,
When on our way we met a troop of souls,
Coming along the bank side; and each one
   Peered in our faces, as by night men may
Eye one another in a new moon's light;
   And looking towards us, these pursed up their lids,
   Like an old tailor at his needle's eye.
Thus scrutinised by such a party, I
   Was recognised by one, who on my skirt
   Laid hold, and loudly cried: "What marvel's this?"
And, when towards me he had outstretched his arm,
   I fixed mine eyes hard on his baked aspect,
   So that his smoke-dried visage hindered not
The recognition of him in my mind;
And I, stooping my hand down to his face,
Made answer: "Ser Brunetto, are you here?"

And he: "My son, let it not thee displease,
If now awhile Brunetto Latini
With thee return, and let his file go on."

I said: "With all my heart I pray you come:
And if you will that I sit down with you,
'Tis well, if he agree with whom I go."

"My Son," he said, "Whoever of this herd
One moment halts, lies then a hundred years
Without a sheltering screen, when strikes the fire.

Wherefore proceed; I at thy skirts will come,
And afterward my company rejoin,
Which goes lamenting their eternal loss."

I did not dare to step down off the path
To walk beside him, but I kept my head
Bow'd low, as one who goes respectfully.

'Gan he: "What destiny, or fortune what,
'Ere thy last day, doth hither bring thee down?
And who is this that shows thee thus the way?"

"Yonder above us in the life serene,"
I answered him, "ere yet my full tale told
Of years, I in a valley lost myself;
On it but yestermorn I turned my back;
Then, ready to relapse, this one appeared,
Who homeward now conducts me by this path."

And he to me: "But follow thine own star,
And thou a glorious haven canst not miss,
If in the fairer life I judged aright.

And had not death called me too soon away,
Seeing that heaven to thee is so benign,
In all thy work would I have cheered thee on.

But that ungrateful people and malign,
Which from Fièsolè came down of old,
And savours still of mountain and of rock,
Will for thy good deeds be thine enemy:
With reason too: for midst the harsh wine-sours
It is not seemly that the sweet fig fruit.
By old repute the world held them as blind,
A people greedy, envious and proud;
From all their habits see that thou keep clean.
Reserved for thee Fortune such honour holds,
That either side will hunger after thee;
But from the goat the grass must be far off.
Let beasts of Fiesole their litter find
Among themselves, nor let them touch the plant,
If on their dunghill any should spring up,
In which once more the holy seed revives
Of Romans, such as 'mong them still were left,
When it became the nest of so much sin."
"If what I prayed for had been all fulfilled,"
My answer was "you would not yet have been
Thus banished from the race of living men.
For in my mind is fixed, and wounds my heart
The image of your goodness in the world,
As of a father dear, when hour by hour
You taught me how the man eternal grows:
And while I live the gratitude I feel
For this 'tis right my tongue should well declare:
What of my future you foretell I write,
And keep it with like words for her to solve,
If I a Lady reach, who will explain.
Thus much I would make manifest to you;
If only conscience do not me upbraid,
Come Fortune as she will, ready am I.
Such earnest to my ear is nothing new,
Therefore let Fortune turn her wheel about
At will, and let the boar his mattock ply,"
My Master then, turning upon his right,
Behind him looked, and fixed his eye on me;
Then said: "He listens well, who makes his note."
And talking none the less I onward go
With Ser Brunetto; and I ask who 'mong
His comrades are the highest and best known.
CANTO XV.

And he to me: 'Tis well that some you know;
Others 'tis better we in silence leave,
For time would fail to tell the roll of all.
In fine however know they all were clerks,
Great men of letters, and of great repute,
But in the world all with the same sin stained.
Priscian tramps on in that unhappy gang,
Francesco d'Accorso with him; and if
For such a scurvy rascal thou should'st care,
Him mayst thou see, whom Servus Servorum
From Arno to Bacchiglione sent,
Where in ill plight he left his misused limbs.
More could I name, but our discourse and walk
May not be now prolonged, and that I see
New smoke arising yonder from the sand.
Persons approach, with whom I may not be:
To thy care let me my Tesoro leave;
In it I'm still alive; no more I ask.
Then he turned round, and seemed like one of those,
Who at Verona for the green cloth run
Across the plain; and seemed withal the one
That wins the race, and not the one that fails.
Already I was where upon mine ear
The sound of water tumbling to the round
Below boomed like the humming of a hive;
When three ghosts all together started forth,
Running at speed, from out a group that passed
Beneath the downpour of the torturing fire.
Toward us they came, and loudly each cried out:
"Halt thou, who by thy raiment seem'st to be
A denizen of our depravèd land."
Ah me! what wounds I saw upon their limbs,
Recent and old, burnt in by scorching fire!
It pains me still even to think of them.
My Teacher paused, attentive to their cries;
He turned his face toward me, and "Wait awhile,"
He said: "To these some courtesy is due.
But for the fire indeed, which in this place
Nature shoots forth, I should have said for thee
'Twere fitter than for them to hasten on."
As now we paused, again did they renew
Their old refrain, and coming up to us,
They formed themselves all three into a wheel,
As champions stripped and oiled are wont to do,
Watching to get their vantage and a grip,
Before they yet have come to blows or thrusts.
So each with face fixed steadily on me,
They wheeled in course continuous with neck
Ever outstretched reversely to the feet.
"And if the misery of this shifting plain,"
CANTO XVI.

So one began, "and our black, blistered forms
Bring us and our entreaties to contempt,
Let our past fame incline thy heart to us,
And tell us who thou art, that safely thus
On living feet art tramping on through hell.
This one, in whose footsteps thou seest me tread,
Blistered and naked though he travel on,
Was once of nobler rank than thoud’st suppose.

Of good Gualdrada he the grandson was:
Guida Guerra his name, who in his life
Did much by prudence and no less with sword.
And he, who through the sand follows my track,
Is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, name
That should be welcome in the upper world.
Myself, the partner of their torment, was
Jacopo Rusticucci; whom indeed
A savage wife wounds the most cruelly."

Had I but been protected from the fire,
I would have flung myself mid them below,
And think the Master would have suffered it.

But as I should have been there baked and broiled,
Terror o’ercame my kindlier desire,
That made me greedy to embrace them all.

Then I began: "It was not scorn, but grief,
Such that I do not quickly shake it off,
That your condition inly pierced me with,

Soon as from this my Lord I heard the words
From which I did in thought divine that some,
Such as yourselves, were on the way to us.

Of your own land am I; and at all times
Your exploits and your honoured names have I
Recalled and listened to with love sincere.

Flying from gall, I seek the sweeter fruit,
Promised by this my truthful guide; but first
Down to mid centre must I make my plunge."

"So may thy soul! for long years still direct
Thy mortal limbs," said he in answer then,
"And so thy fame shine glorious after thee,
Tell me, do courtesy and valour dwell
Within our city, as was wont of yore,
Or are they utterly cast out of her?
For William Borsierè, who but now
Joined us in woe, and yonder with our mates
Moves on, doth by his tidings vex us sore."

"The upstart people and their sudden gains
Pride and extravagance have bred in thee,
For which e'en now, O Florence, thou dost weep."

Such was my cry, raising my face aloft:
The three, who took this for my answer, stared
One at the other, as one stares at Truth.

"If other times as little it cost thee,"
Answered they all, "others to satisfy,
Happy art thou, thus speaking at thy will.

So if from these dark regions thou escape,
 Returned to see the lovely stars again,
When thought 'I was there once' will joyous be,
Mind to our neighbours that thou mention us."

Then breaking up their ring, away they fled;
Rapid as wings their legs appeared to us.

An "Amen" could not one more quickly say,
Than from our view they vanished out of sight;
Wherefore the Master thought it well to move.

I followed him, and short way had we gone,
When now the water sounded so near us,
That had we spoken, scarce had we been heard.

E'en as the stream that from Mount Viso first
Holds its own course towards the Eastern shore,
Flowing on left hand of the Apennines,
Called Acquacheta in the upper heights,
Ere in the vale it finds a lower bed,
And at Forli loses its previous name,
Above St. Benet of the Alp resounds,
As in one leap it tumbles to the plain,
Where full a thousand might be housed well;
CANTO XVI.

So from the bottom of a broken cliff
We heard the echoes of the lurid flood
In tones that quickly would have stunned the ear.

A cord I carried girt around my waist;
Once on a time I thought I might with it
Have caught the leopard with the dappled hide.

When I had quite unloosed this from myself,
As had my Leader bidden me to do,
To him I held it, rolled and twisted up.

Thereon he turned him to the right, and then
At some slight distance outward from the edge,
He flung it down into the deep abyss.

Now something strange I thought within myself,
Must to so strange a signal answer make,
Which with his eye the Master follows thus.

Ah! Ah! how very cautious men should be
With those who see not outward acts alone,
But with discernment scan the inner thought.

He said to me: “Soon to the top will come
What I await; and what thou dreamest of,
Should to thy vision soon disclose itself.”

Always should man to truth, that hath a form
Of falsehood, close his lips long as he can,
For it without his fault may bring him shame.

But silent here I cannot be, and swear,
Reader, by rhymes of this my Comedy,
So may they not be void of lasting fame,

Through that obscure and heavy air I saw
The figure of a swimmer upward rise;
A marvel even to a steadfast heart;

Just as a man returns, who sometime dives
Below to clear an anchor, which has caught
A reef, or something hidden in the sea,
With head erect, and feet well gathered up.
CANTO XVII.

Seventh Circle—Third Ring—Outrage on Social Life—
Geryon—Scrovigno—Buiamonte—Descent into the Eighth Circle.

"Behold the savage beast with pointed tail,
That scales the heights, through wall and weapon bursts,
Behold him, who with taint infects the world."

Thus did my Guide begin his speech to me,
And motioned it with sign to come ashore,
Near where the stone-built quay we'd traversed ends.

And onward came that loathsome image of
Deceit, and landed with his head and breast;
But to the bank he drew up not his tail.

His face was face as of an honest man;
So kindly seemed its surface outwardly,
But trunk and all the rest was serpent-like.

Two paws he had, shaggy to shoulder blade;
The back, the breast, and both the two sides were:
Painted with nooses and with little wheels.

More colours upon web and woof of cloth
Never did Turk or Tartar interweave,
Nor tissues such Arachne overlay.

As boats sometimes upon the beach are hauled,
And half on land and half in water lie,
And as down there where guzzling Germans dwell,
The beaver squats to carry on his war,
So this most evil beast planted himself
On the stone kerb that holds the sand in check.

In empty space he twirled his length of tail,
Twisting in th' air aloft its venomed fork,
Wherewith like scorpion's it was armed at point.

My Leader said: "Needs must we now somewhat
Divert our course so far at least as where
That savage beast across it lies outstretched."

And therefore to the right hand we went down,
And moved ten paces to the utmost verge,
Careful to clear alike the sand and fire.

And when to him we now had nearly come,
A little farther off upon the sand
I see folks seated near the open space.

The Master then: "In order that a full
Acquaintance with this Round thou bear away,
Go now," he said, "and their demeanour note;
There let thine intercourse with them be brief.
Till thou return, I will persuade this beast
To lend his brawny shoulders to our use."

Thus once again at now the farthest point
Of this the seventh circle I, alone
Moved toward the persons who in sorrow sat.

From out their eyes was gushing forth their woe:
Waving their hands on this side and on that,
Shelter they sought from flame or burning soil.

Just as in summer season do the dogs
With paws or muzzle, when they feel the bite
Of fleas, or are by flies and hornets teazed.

On certain faces when I'd set mine eyes,
On whom the dolorous fire is raining down,
None did I recognize; but I observed
That from the neck of each there hung a pouch,
Of hue distinctive with a special badge,
Whereon their eyes seem greedily to gloat;
And as I pass along them, noting each,
On yellow purse I saw an azure sign,
Which of a lion bore the face and form.

And as I push my observation on,
Another I beheld, as red as blood,
Display a goose whiter than butter far;
And one who bore in azure the device
On his white satchel of a pregnant sow,
Said to me: "What in this ditch dost thou here?
Now go thy way, and since thou livest still,
Know that Vitaliano, my neighbour,
Shall here sit down beside me on my left.
With these Florentines Paduan am I;
Oft and again they deafen quite mine ears,
Shouting, "Come, sovran prince of all of us,
Who wilt with thee the pouch and three beaks bring."
Then twisted he his mouth awry, and forth
He shot his tongue, like ox that licks his nose.
In fear that longer stay might him displease,
Who of a short stay had admonished me,
I turned my back upon those weary souls.
I found the Leader mounted even now
Upon the crupper of the savage beast;
He said to me; "Now brave and bold be thou;
By stair-way such must we just now descend:
Mount thou in front; I in the midst would sit;
So shall the tail do thee no injury."
As one who feels so near the shivering fit
Of quartan ague that his nails are blanched,
And shudders merely at the sight of shade,
Such I became at utterance of these words;
But his reproach brought me the shame that makes
A servant brave before a valiant lord.
Upon those monstrous shoulders I sat down;
"Only," I would have said, but no words came,
As I had hoped, "be sure thou hold me fast."
But he who had helped me in other straits
At other times, soon as I mounted now,
Clasped me within his arms, and held me up,
"Now Geryon," said he, "forward, and move off;
Thy sweep be wide, and gentle thy descent;
Think what a strange load thou upon thee hast."
As from its mooring backs a little boat,
Stern first, so he likewise got off from thence.
But when he felt he now could make good play,
CANTO XVII.

To where his breast was, twisted he his tail,
    Then thrust it out and worked it like an eel,
    And with his paws drew to himself the air.
No greater fear, I deem, could that have been
    Of Phaeton, when away he flung the reins,
    And th' heaven caught fire, as to this day is seen:
Nor when from off his back poor Icarus
    Felt his wings fall, as melted the hot wax,
    While cried his father: "Thou art going wrong,"
Than was my own, when on all sides I found
    Only the air, and all things visible
    Vanish from view, except the beast alone.
Slowly it swims, slowly it onward goes,
    Wheels and descends, but nought do I perceive,
    Save that a wind drives upward on my face.
Already on my right I heard the pool
    Raging beneath us with a horrid roar,
    Whereat with head outstretched I downward gazed.
With greater fear the precipice filled me:
    For fires I saw and lamentations heard,
    And in alarm more tightly gripped my seat.
And then I saw, what I had not before,
    How we went down in curves, by the sad scenes,
    That from alternate sides came into view.
As falcon, which hath been long time on wing,
    And seen no bird nor lure of any kind,
    Makes falconer cry: "Stooping already, Eh?"
And weary drops, with many a hundred curves,
    At point, whence she had been so keen to start,
    And far from falconer sullenly alights,
So at the bottom Geryon landed us,
    Close by the basement of the jagged rock,
    And having now discharged him of our load,
As arrow from the string, he disappeared.
CANTO XVIII.

_Eighth Circle—First Crevasse—Panders and Seducers—_  
_Venedico Caccianimico—Jason—Second Crevasse—_  
_Flatterers—Alessio Interminei._

A PLACE there is in hell, Sin-pouches called,  
All of hard rock, in hue ferruginous,  
Like the engirding zone that round it curves.  
Right in the centre of this sinful garth  
There yawns a pit both very wide and deep:  
Of its construction I in place will speak.  
The precinct then, which 'tween this pit remains  
And foot of the high, rocky cliff is round;  
Its surface by ten separate valleys cleft.  
As is the form presented to the eye  
By places, where for safety of their walls  
Our castles are by many moats girt round,  
Such here the aspect, which by these was borne;  
And as from threshold of such fortresses,  
Small bridges run far as the outmost bank,  
So from the base of cliff ran shelving reefs,  
That crossed the banks down to the pit,  
Which finally collects and cuts them off.  
'Twas in such place, shaken off Geryon’s back,  
That we did find ourselves; and to the left  
The Poet held his way, I after him.  
On the right hand new sufferings I beheld,  
New torments, and new executioners,  
With whom the first crevasse was overrun.  
Naked the sinners were down in the depth:  
Our side the midway they came facing us;  
On 'th 'other went our way, at quicker pace.  
In year of Jubilee the Romans thus,
By reason of the hosts upon the bridge,
Arranged for passengers to make their way:
On one side all who to St. Peter's go,
Pass with their faces toward the Castle set;
But on the other to the Mount proceed.

On either side over the murky stone,
Demons with horns I saw, armed with huge whips,
Wherewith they scourged them fiercely from behind.

Ah! how they made them nimble on their shanks
At the first lash; not one of them there was,
Who for a second stayed, still less a third.

As on my way I went along, mine eye
Encountered one, and on the spot I said:
"Not for the first time see I this man now;"
Wherefore I stopped his features to observe,
And with me my kind Leader too remained,
And gave me leave to fall a little back.

The one thus lashed thought to conceal himself
By bending low his face; 'twas no avail;
For I began: "Thou, that dost droop thine eyes
To earth, if these thy features cheat me not,
Venedico Caccianimico art;
But what brings thee to pickling such as this?"

And he to me: "With no good will I speak;
But thy clear idiom constraineth me.
Recalling to my mind the ancient world.

I was the man, who the fair Ghisola
Did to the marquis for his pleasure bring;
However else the scandal may be told.

Nor I, the only Bolognese, that here
Doth wail; nay this place is so full of us,
That not so many tongues now learn between
Savena and Reno to say: "Sipa;"
And would'st thou proof on evidence demand,
Call to thy mind our covetous desires."

As thus he spake, a demon with his thong
Lashed him, and said: "Base pander, hence away;
Here are no women to be hired for coin."

Back to my escort's side I made my way;
And with a few steps afterwards we came
Where from the bank there jutted out a ridge.

Nimbly enough we mounted to the top,
And turning to the right, o'er a jagged reef,
We left th' eternal wall of cliffs behind.

When we had reached a point, where, underneath,
A space is left as passage for the scourged,
The leader said: "Hold hard, and with thine eye
Try 'mong these other miscreants to catch
Some faces thou hast not examined yet,
Seeing their line of road was one with ours."

From the old bridge above we watched the file,
That came towards us on the other side,
In the same manner driven by the lash.

'Gan the good master, ere I asked of him,
"Observe the giant form approaching us,
That seems not for its pain to shed a tear.

How royal a presence this he still retains!
'Tis Jason, who by wit and courage too
The Colchians left defrauded of the Ram.

He by the isle of Lemnos passed along,
After the daring women ruthlessly
Had all their male kind giv'n up to death.

With signs of love and by his specious words
He there deceived Hypsipyle, the girl,
Who all her sisters had before deceived.

With child he left her there in solitude;
Such sin condemns him to such penalty;
And vengeance due requites Medea's wrong.

With him goes whosoe'er, as he, deceives;
And of the first crevasse suffice it this
To know, as well as whom its fangs hold fast."

Already were we, where the narrow path
Runs on across the second bank, which forms
The pier from which another arch is thrown.
There heard we people moaning heavily
   I'th' next crevasse, snorting from nose and mouth,
       And with their hands inflicting heavy blows.
Encrusted were the banks with moisture, which,
   Exhaled below, did there condense, and cling
       In substance noisome both to sight and smell.
So deep the bottom lies, that to look down
   There is no place save at the crown of arch,
       Where at its highest point the rock o'erhangs.
Thither we came, and thence down in the moat
   People I saw all stifling in one filth,
       Which from men's privies might have been removed.
And as I peer down to the depth below,
   A head I saw with ordure so o'erlaid,
       That none could say was he lay man or clerk.
He shrieked at me: "Why stare thus greedily
   At me, more than at others as befouled?"
       And I to him: "If I remember well,
Thee have I whilom seen with cleanly locks;
   Alessio Interminei of Lucca thou;
       Therefore I watch thee closer than the rest."
And he with blows upon his poll replied;
   "Down here those flatteries have plunged me deep,
       With which my tongue was never surfeited."
And then my leader: "Farther on now try
   Thy vision to extend," he said, "that so
       The better with thine eyes thou catch the face
Of that dishevelled hussy and obscene,
   Who yonder rends herself with filthy nail,
       Now crouching down, and now on foot erect.
Thaïs the harlot 'tis, who answer made
   Unto her lover, when he asked, "do I
       Great thanks deserve from thee?"    Prodigious ay."
Herewith our visions may be satisfied."
CANTO XIX.

 Eighth Circle—Third Crevasse—Simony—
 Pope Nicolas III.

O SIMON Magus, and thy wretched train,
Who in your greed for silver and for gold
Do prostitute the things of God, that ought
The Brides of Holiness to be, meet 'tis
That now for you the trumpet sound its call,
Since in the third crevasse your portion is.
We to the tomb that next in order came
Had climbed, far as the point of rock, which in
Plumb-line o'erhangs the middle of the moat.
Wisdom Supreme, how great thy skill, revealed
In heaven, and earth, and in the evil world!
Thy power how just in Its award to each.
Along its sides and over all its floor
I saw the dusky rock pierced full of holes,
All of one size, and each of them was round.
Not less, nor greater, did they seem to me,
Than those in mine own beautiful St. John,
Which for the priests in baptism are made.
'Twas one of such, not many years ago,
I broke to save a child drowning therein;
Be this a seal to undeceive all men.
Forth from the orifice of each the feet
Protruded of a sinner, and his legs
Far as the calves; the rest enclosed within.
The soles of all were both of them afire,
Whereby their joints in such contortions writhed,
As would have broken withes and plaited bands.
As with things unctuous the flame is wont
Only to flicker on the outer side,
So was it there from heel to point of toe.

"O master, who is it tormented thus,
There writhing more than any of its mates,"
Said I, "and whom a ruddier flame sucks dry?"

And he to me: "If willing that adown
That bank, which easier slopes, I carry thee,
Thou'lt learn from him his story and his sins."

And I: "What pleaseth thee, to me is good;
Thou art my lord, and know'st I ne'er depart
From wish of thine; and know'st what I speak not."

Thereon upon the fourth rampart we came;
We turned, and to the left went down far as
The narrow bottom, which was drilled with holes.

Nor off his hip did the good master me
Set down, till we had reached the orifice
Of him, whose shank bespoke such agony.

"Whoe'er thou art, thus standing upside down,
Unhappy soul, fixed like a stake in th' earth,"
Thus my address began, "If able, speak."

There like the friar I stood, called in to shrive
The treach'rous murderer, who, now fixed down,
Calls him once more, delay from death to gain.

And he shrieked out: "Already standing here?
Already here, I say, O Boniface?
By many a year the book of fate's belied.

Art thou so soon contended with the pelf,
For which thou didst not fear by fraud to wed
The Lady Fair, and then dishonour her?"

I stood like those, who do not understand
Some answer made to them, and think themselves
Bemocked and at a loss how to reply.

Then Virgil said "Tell him the truth at once:
Say I am not that man, the man thou think'st."
And as directed, such was my reply.

Whereat the spirit writhed with both his feet,
And then with groans and lamentable voice,
Ask'd me: "What is't then thou would'st have of me?
If to know who I am thou have such care,
    That for this purpose thou hast crossed the bank,
Know that I was with the great mantle clothed;
And truly son of the She-Bear I was,
    So eager to enrich the cubs, that there
My wealth, but here myself I stowed away.
Beneath my head down are the others dragged,
    Who before me in simony transgressed,
Now in the fissures of the rock laid flat.
And down there I shall one day drop, whene'er
    He comes, whom I supposed thee to be,
When so abruptly I my question put:
Already longer are my feet in flames,
    And I in this inverted posture placed,
Than planted will he stand with feet afire.
For after him, with deeds still uglier,
    Shall from the west a lawless shepherd come,
One justly fit to cover him and me.
A second Jason he; of such we read
    In Maccabees, and as to him his king
Gave way, e'en so the King of France to this."
I know not if too foolish I was then
    In framing the reply I thus returned:
"Ah! tell me now what treasure did our Lord
Demand at first from Blessed Peter, when
    He handed over to his charge the keys?
Surely, He asked for nought save, Follow Me;
Nor gold nor silver from Matthias asked
    Peter and all the rest, when fell by lot
To him the place lost by the guilty soul.
Here stay thou then, for thou art punished well;
    Keep safe the money thou didst ill take up,
Which prompted thine audacity 'gainst Charles;
And if it were not that I am withheld
    E'en still by rev'rence for the keys supreme,
Which thou didst carry in the happier life,
Words would I utter heavier than I speak:
CANTO XIX.

For avarice like yours saddens the world,
Crushing the good and lifting up the bad.
Shepherds like you were those th' Evangelist
Perceived, when on the waters he beheld
The woman sit, the paramour of Kings;
Who at her birth was crowned with seven heads,
And her credentials in ten horns displayed,
Long as her virtue pleasèd well her spouse.
Of gold and silver ye have made a god,
And from idolaters how differ ye,
Save that they one invoke, and hundreds ye?
Ah Constantine! parent of how great ill,
Not thy conversion, but that dowry was,
Which from thy hand the first rich father took!"
And while before him in such strain I sang,
Either in anger, or by conscience stung,
He with both feet in fierce convulsion writhed.
Well I believe it pleased my guide to hear
The sound of words expressive of these truths,
Whereto he listened with contented smile.
And so in both his arms he caught me up;
And when he'd raised me high upon his breast,
Again he mounted by the way he came;
Nor weary was he of this close embrace,
Until he'd reached the summit of the arch,
Which from the fourth unto the fifth bank leads.
There dld he gently set his burthen down,
Gently by reason of the rugged steep,
Where e'en a goat had found the passage hard:
Thence a broad valley opened to my view.
OF a new punishment my verse must speak,
And furnish matter for the twentieth book
Of the first lay, which tells of the submerged.
Already had I set myself to gaze
With all my force into the open depth,
Which in the tears of agony was steeped;
And round the curve of the vast valley saw,
Weeping in silence, people come at pace,
At which in this world litanies proceed.
And as mine eyes fell to still lower depths,
Each seemed to be distorted wondrously
Between the chin and where the chest begins:
For to the loins the face was twisted round,
And backward only needs could they advance,
Because in front all sight was ta'en away.
Perchance already in paralysis
Some may have been wholly distorted thus,
But such I have not seen, nor think there be.
So may God grant thee, Reader, to collect
Fruit from thy reading, think within thyself,
How an unmoistened face I could retain,
When our own image close to me I saw
So twisted round, that from their eyes the tears
Ran down the spine and bathed the hinder parts.
I wept indeed, as 'gainst a point I leaned
Of the hard rock, so that my escort said:
"Art thou too one among the other fools?"
Here piety revives, when pity dies.
For who can be more impious than the man,
Whom God's just judgments stir to sympathy?
Raise, raise thy head, and see the man for whom
Earth opened once before the Thebans' eyes,
And with one shout they cried: Where dost thou fall,
Amphiaraüs? why the battle leave?"
Yet stayed he not his headlong rush below,
Till Minos he had reached, who all arrests.
See, of his shoulders he hath made a breast;
Because he fain would see too far ahead,
Backward he looks; advance is retrograde.
Tiresias see, who his appearance changed.
When for a man's a woman's form he took,
Transformed entirely in his every limb;
And needed after that he first should smite
The pair of twisted serpents with his rod,
Ere plumes of manly sex he could resume.
His belly Aruns with his back confronts,
Who on the Luni hills, where now are fields,
Tilled by the Carrarese that dwells below,
Mid the white marbles occupied a cave,
From whence, surveying sea and stars alike,
His vision swept in unimpeded range.
And she, who with her tresses flowing down
Hides from thy sight her breasts, and hath her form
On th' other side veiled 'neath a robe of hair,
Was Manto, who, first searching many lands,
At last there settled, where myself was born;
Wherefore I would thou hear me yet awhile.
When from this life her father passed away,
And Bacchus' city into bondage came,
She for a long time roamed about the world.
Up in fair Italy there lies a lake,
Beneath the Alp that locks Germania in,
Above the Tyrolese, Benaco named.
'Tween Garda and the Val Camonica
More than a thousand springs water, I trow,
Mount Apennine, and in that lake collect.
Midway a spot there is, where bishop from Brescia, Verona, Trent a blessing night Pronounce, if on his way he take that road. And where the shore around it lowest falls, Sits Peschiera, fortress fair and strong, Confronting Brescia, and the Bergamasks. There finds an outlet all such water as Benaco cannot in his bosom hold, And flows below, a river through green fields. Soon as the current on its course makes head, No more Benaco, Mincio it is called, Far as Governo, where it joins the Po. Nor runs it far, ere it a level finds, O'er which it spreads, and forms a swampy pool, That doth in summer breathe unwholesome airs. As thereby passed the harsh, ungenial maid. Midway across the marsh she spied a spot, A barren waste, void of inhabitants; There to escape all human intercourse, She halted with her slaves to ply her arts, There lived, and there she left her empty corse. Men afterwards from scattered points around Collected in this place, as one secure, By reason of the swamps on every side. They built the city over her dead bones, And after her, who first chose out the place, They called it Mantua without augur's aid. Already dwelt in it a numerous race, Or ever Casalodi's folly had Been played upon by Pinamonte's guile. So I apprize thee, if thou ever hear My native home had other origin, That never can a lie gainsay the truth.” "Master," said I, "these arguments of thine So cogent are, and so constrain my faith, That other would with me be but spent coals. But tell me of these people passing by,
CANTO XX.

If any thou observe of special note;  
For only unto such my mind responds.

He said to me: "He yonder, from whose cheek  
The beard o'er his brown'd shoulders floweth down,  
What time Greece was of sons so far bereft,
That scarce in cradle was a manchild found,  
Was augur, and with Chalcas fixed the hour  
At Aulis to let slip the cable first.

Eurypylus his name, and thus of him  
In one place sings my own high tragedy;  
This thou know'st well, thou, who dost know it all.

The other, so contracted in the flank,  
Was Michael Scott, who in good sooth knew how  
To play the trick of a magician's fraud.

Guido Bonatti see; Asdente see,  
Who now to leather and to twine would fain  
Have stuck, but his repentance comes too late.

The wretched women see, who witches turned,  
And needle, spool and spindle cast away  
To work black arts with images and herbs.

But onward now, for with his thorns doth Cain  
Now touch the confine of both hemispheres,  
And below Seville dips into the wave,
And only yesternight the moon was full,  
As thou should'st well recall, for no ill friend  
Was she ofttimes to thee in the dark wood."

So spake he to me, as the while we moved.
CANTO XXI.

The Eighth Circle—Fifth Crevasse—Swindlers and Rogues—
A Magistrate of Lucca—A Constabulary of Demons—
A Comedy of Hell.

DISCOURSING upon other things whereof
My Comedy cares not to sing, we thus [height.
From bridge to bridge advanced and reached the
Where paused we to observe the next crevasse
Of the Sin pouches, and their vain laments.
And this I saw in wondrous darkness wrapped.
As the Venetians in their arsenal
In winter time boil the tenacious pitch
Their unsound shipping to repair, which they
Dare not send out to sea; or in its stead
A new ship one constructs, while one recaulks
The ribs of that which many a trip has made,
One hammering forward, and another aft;
And fashion some the oars, or twine the shrouds,
And others patch the mizzen or mainsail;
So not by fire, but power of art Divine,
There boiled below a pitch-like substance thick,
That, as with glue, besmeared the banks all round.
This I beheld, but nothing else therein
Save bubbles, which the boiling brought to top,
And watched the whole swell up, contract and sink.
While I was gazing hard down on the depth,
My Leader with the cry “Beware, Beware,”
Dragged me, from where I stood, up to himself.
I turned me then as one who hastes to catch
A sight of what he rather would escape,
Whom sudden fear leaves in bewilderment;
Who, while he looks, is hurrying to begone.
For a black devil I behind us saw
Running above us o'er the bridge of rock.
Ah me! how savage in aspect was he!
And in his gestures no less fierce he seemed,
With wings outspread, and nimble on his feet:
His shoulder, high and pointed sharp, was with
A sinner charged, whose either haunch he held,
Gripped tightly by the tendons of the feet.
“Ho! Bloodyclaws,” he cried, “that keep our bridge,
One of St. Zita’s elders hither comes;
Send him well under, for I now go back
To that place, which is full of such, where, save
Bonturo, all are venal knaves and rogues.
Where for a penny yes will change to no.”
He tossed him down, and over the hard rock
Himself returned, and ne’er was mastiff slipp’d
At greater speed upon a robber’s track.
Down sank the wretch, and rose all doubled up!
The demons, under cover of the bridge,
Yelled out: “No Santo Volto for thee here;
Folks swim not here as in the Serchio;
So, an’ thou would’st escape our grappling-hook,
Don’t let thyself appear above the pitch.”
Then tearing him with more than hundred rakes,
“Here under cover,” said they, “thou must dance,
And so, if able, filch thy stealthy gains.”
Just so the cooks unto their scullions give
Orders within the cauldron to keep down
The flesh with prongs, lest to the top it float.
Said the good Master: “That it may not be
Observed, that thou art here, crouch down behind
Some jutting rock, which may a screen afford;
And for offence that may to me occur,
Be not alarmed; I understand it all;
In such a scuffle have I been before”
O’er the bridge head then went he on his way;
And when upon the sixth bank he arrived,
Need had he then a steadfast front to show.
With all the fury and the storm of rage
With which dogs rush upon a beggarman,
Who, as he halts, begins his tale of want,
So rushed they from beneath the little bridge,
And turned against him all their grappling hooks;
But shouted he: “Let none be mischievous;
Ere with your hooks ye make attack on me,
Let one of you advance to hear my words;
And then advise ye how ye use your forks.”
They all cried out: “Tailstinger, now go thou:”
Whereon one moved; steady the rest remained;
Said he, as he came up: “What use is this”? 
“Tailstinger, dost thou think thou’dst see me here
Arrived,” said then my master, “thus far safe,
Despite the violence of your rude attacks,
Save by the Will Divine and favouring fate?
For me make way; in heaven ’tis willed that I
Should to another show this savage road.”
Then in his pride was he crest-fallen so,
That to his feet forthwith down dropped his prong;
And to the rest he said: “No blows just yet.”
To me my Guide called out: “Thou, who dost sit
Crouching amid the juttings of the bridge,
Rejoin me now in full security.”
At once I rose and quickly came to him;
And in a line the devils all advanced,
So that I feared they would the compact break.
In like alarm I saw the soldiers once
Forth from Caprona coming under bond,
Finding themselves among so many foes.
With my whole person I drew closely to
My Leader’s side, nor did I take mine eyes
From off the looks which boded me no good.
They sloped their prongs; and, “Shall I touch him up
Over the crupper,” said they ’mong themselves.
“Ay, Ay, let fly at him,” they answered all.
But then the demon, who my Leader held
In parley with him, turned him sharply round.
And said: "Now quiet, Bullybrawl, keep still."
And then to us: "Farther advance across
This rock there cannot be, for the sixth arch
In utter ruin at the bottom lies.
But an it please ye forward still to go,
Then up along this causeway lies your path,
When soon another reef will put you o'er.
But yesterday later five hours than this,
A thousand years, two hundred, sixty-six
Were told in full, since broken was this road.
Thither I send these pursuivants of mine
To see who may be snuffing fresher air.
Go ye with them; not spiteful will they be.
Wingflapper to the front and Frostyfoot;"
So he began to call, "Uglydog next,
And Frizzlybeard, be captain of the ten.
Step forward Gorymoor and Dragonsnout,
Dogskinner and Hogbristle with thy tusks,
Cockchafer and mad Ruddyface the last.
All round the seething glue make careful search!
Convey these safely to the other reef,
Which all unbroken spans the dens beneath."
"Master, woe's me; what is it I behold?"
Said I, "O without escort let us go,
For I ask none, if thou but know the way.
If thou art now quick to observe as erst,
Dost thou not see them grimly grind their teeth,
And threaten with their frowns our injury."
And he to me: "I would not have thee fear:
Leave them to grind their teeth, as pleaseth them;
Such signs they mean for wretches boiling there."
Along the left embankment they wheeled round,
But first each one, with tongue squeezed tight between
The teeth, thus to his Leader gave a sign,
And from the rear with trumpet he replied.
CANTO XXII.

Eight Circle—Fifth Crevasse—Swindlers and Rogues—
Ciampolo of Navarre—Fra Gomita—Michael Zanche—
A Demon Scuffle.

I HAVE ere now seen Cavalry strike camp,
Begin the charge, or in full line deploy,
Or in retreat sometimes e'en quicken pace;
Scouts have I seen scouring across your plains,
Ye Aretines; seen foragers go forth,
Tournaments fought, and tiltings in the joust,
To sound of trumpets, and anon of bells,
With drums and signals from the battlements,
And fashions of our own and foreign lands,
But ne'er with such strange bagpipes have I seen
Or horse or foot in motion set, as there,
Nor ship at signal from the shore or star.
On with the demon ten we made our way;
Ah me! what savage comrades! but in church
With saints—in tavern with the revellers!
Yet my attention on the pitch was fixed
To see the whole condition of the pool,
And of the people that in it were boiled.
As do the dolphins, when with archèd backs
To sailors they a sign of warning give,
Who then bethink them to secure their boat,
So sometimes to alleviate his pain
Might there a sinner show his back, and then
Quick as the lightning draw it in again;
And as in ditches by the water's edge
The frogs will range with but their noses out,
And thus conceal their feet and larger parts,
E'en so on all sides were the sinners ranged;
But as towards them Frizzlybeard approached,  
Beneath the bubbles quick they darted in.  
And one I saw, and shudders still my heart,  
Who waited, e'en as it might happen that  
One frog remains, while dives another down.  
Dogskinner then, who nearest was to him,  
Caught with his hook the hair besmeared with pitch,  
And held him like an otter up to view:  
I had already learned the names of all,  
For I had noted them as they were picked,  
And after marked how each addressed his mate.  
"Now, Ruddyface, be sure that in his back  
Thou fix thy claws, and strip him of his skin;"  
So shouted all the accursed fiends at once.  
And I: "O Master if thou can, by all means do  
Find out who this unlucky wight may be,  
That thus has fallen into adverse hands."  
My Leader to his side drew near, and asked,  
From whence he came: to him the other said:  
"My birthplace was the kingdom of Navarre.  
My mother placed me servant to a lord,  
For by a ribald had she me conceived,  
Who all his substance and himself destroyed.  
Domestic to good King Tybalt then I was;  
To bribery there and fraud I gave myself,  
For which in this stew now I give account."  
Hogbristle then, from out whose mouth there thrust,  
On each side one, a pair of hoglike tusks,  
Let him feel well how one of these could rend.  
The mouse had fallen among cruel cats;  
But in his arms him Frizzlybeard snatched up:  
"Stand off," he said, "long as he's in my grip;"  
And to my Master he then turned his face:  
"Ask him again," he said, "if more thou'dst learn,  
Before another gives him his dispatch."  
My Leader then: "Among thy fellows here  
In guilt, know'st thou if any Latin be
Beneath the pitch?" And he: "But now I left One, who erewhile was living near those parts.
And would I were with him well covered up,
So should I fear neither their hooks nor claws!"
And Gorymoor: "Too long have we been kept,"
He said, and with a-prong he caught his arm,
And tore it so, he carried off a slice.
And Dragonsnout wished too to give a tweak
Down on the legs, but the decurion
With angry glance turned round upon them all:
And when they had somewhat been pacified,
From him, who still was looking at his gash,
My Leader promptly asked without delay:
"Who was the man, that in an evil hour
Thou say'st thou left to land thee on this shore?"
And answered he: "Friar Gomita 'twas;
He of Gallura, vessel of all fraud,
Who kept his master's enemies in hand,
And so dealt with them that they bless him all.
He took their coin, and let them slip away;
Such his expression, and in other ways
He was no petty jobber, but a prince.
Michael Zanche, of Logodoro lord,
Is his companion, and their tongues ne'er tire
While of Sardinia they together talk.
Ah me! see there another grinds his teeth:
More would I say, but fear me now that he
His preparation makes to scratch my skin."
Then said th' Arch-Provost, to Cockchafer turned,
Who rolled his eyes as if about to strike,
"Bird of ill omen, yonder stand aside."
"If ye do wish to see, and also hear,"
Thereon resumed the terror stricken wretch,
"Tuscans or Lombards, I'll make some appear;
But let the Bloodyclaws draw off a space,
That those may fear no chastisement from them;
And I here seated on this very spot,
For one that I am, will make seven come,
   Soon as I whistle, which is here our use,
     When one of us makes bold to get outside.”
At these words, Uglydog pricked up his ears,
   Shaking his head and said: “Hark at the trick,
     His own device for jumping in again!”
And he thereon from his great store of frauds
   Replied: “Too tricksome verily I am,
     When for my friends I scheme their greater woe.”
Wingflapper then could not refrain, but said,
   At variance with the rest, “If now thou stoop,
     I will not come at gallop in thy rear,
But o'er thee 'bove the pitch I'll flap my wings:
   Leave we the hill, and make its ridge a screen;
     We'll see can'st thou alone outwit us all.”
A novel sport, O Reader, now thou'lt hear!
   Each turned his face toward the other side,
     He first, who for the plan was least disposed.
The Navarrese chose well his time; with feet
   Firm planted on the ground, he in a trice
     Sprang forward, and eluded thus their schemes.
They, one and all, were with vexation galled,
   But he the most, who the mishap had caused,
     And up he started with a cry “Thou’rt caught.”
But no avail: the wings ill matched 'gainst fear,
   Made little way. Down went the one below,
     The other raised his breast in upright flight.
Not with more rapid plunge the duck, when stoops
   The falcon from above, dives down below,
     While up the latter mounts, ruffled and spent.
But Frostyfoot in fury at the trick
   Kept after him on wing, not sorry he
     In this escape to find pretext to fight;
And as the broker disappeared from view,
   On his own comrade he his talons turned,
     And o'er the pool grappled the two in strife.
The other proved a true bred sparrow hawk,
And gripped him tight, and both together rolled
Into the middle of the boiling pool.
A sudden mediator was the heat;
But to rise up again they had no means,
So well besmeared and clogged their pinions were.
Then Frizzlybeard chafing like all the rest,
Sent four of them on wing to th' other side,
All with their rakes, and quick enough they went,
This way and that to their appointed posts:
Their hooks they stretched out to the pitch-bound pair,
Who through their skins were now well nigh par-boiled:
And of them in this plight we took our leave.
CANTO XXIII.

Eighth Circle—Sixth Crevasse—Hypocrites—Frati Godenti—
Caiaphas—Fra Catalano.

SILENT, alone, and without escort now,
   One in the front and one behind we went,
   As Minor Friars travel on the road;
The while, by reason of the recent fray,
   On Æsops' fable were my thoughts engaged,
   Wherein he tells the tale of frog and mouse.
For "Mo" and "Issa" mean as much the same
   As these two cases are coincident,
   If first and last we well compare them both.
And as from one thought will another spring,
   So out of this another had its birth,
   Whereby my first fear in me double grew.
My thought was this: these demons have through us
   Been flouted, and with hurt and ridicule
   So great, that they, I deem, are sorely vexed.
If with their evil will wrath be conjoined,
   In mood more savage they will follow us,
   Than greyhound seizing on the leveret.
Already every hair I felt on end
   With fear; and said, as halting I looked back,
   "Master, if speedily thou do not hide
Thyself and me, I very greatly dread
   The Bloodyclaws: we have them in our rear;
   I fancy I can hear them even now."
And he replied: "Were I of leaded glass,
   Thine outward form I could not sooner catch,
   Than of thine inner mind I am possessed.
E'en now thy thoughts run evenly with mine,
   In action and resemblance uniform,
   So that from both one counsel I have formed.
If on the right this steep should so incline,
That to the next crevasse we can descend,
We shall escape the chase thy fancy fears.”

His plan he had not yet set forth in full,
When on extended wings I saw them come,
And not far off, with will to capture us.

In haste my Leader caught me up, e’en as
A mother, who awakened by their roar,
Sees, close upon her, flames of blazing fire,
Catches her boy, and flies so quickly off,
Of him so much more careful than of self,
That e’en her smock she barely stays to don.

And from the summit of the rugged bank,
Supine he slid adown the hanging rock,
Which on one side shuts in the next crevasse.

So swiftly never stream through conduit ran
To turn the wheel of any mill on land,
Where nearest to the paddles it pours in,
As did my master o’er that boundary edge,
Bearing me with him to his bosom clasped,
Not as companion, but his very son.

Scarcely with his feet had he now touched the bed
Of depth below, when they the summit reached
Just overhead, but nought had he to fear;

For Providence on high, Who willed that they
In the fifth pit His ministers should be,
Withdraws from all the power of quitting it.

People we found down there disguised with paint,
Who at a creeping pace pursued their round,
Seeming in tears both tired and overcome.

Mantles they wore with large hoods drawn down low
Before their eyes, and cut in fashion such
As those that in Cologne are made for monks.

Gilded outside were these, dazzling to see,
But underneath of lead, and of a weight,
That Frederick’s cowl had seemed to them of straw.

And oh! the eternal burthen of that cloak!
We, as before, turned with them to the left,  
Intent to hear their melancholy plaint.

But by the weight they bore, these weary folk  
So slowly came, that at our every step  
We found ourselves in a new company.

So to my Guide I said: "Try now to find  
Some one, well known by name or by his deeds,  
And as thou goest, cast thine eyes around."

And one that understood the Tuscan speech,  
Cried out behind us: "Stay awhile your feet,  
Ye who run thus athwart the dusky air;  
Perchance thou'llt have from me what thou dost seek."

Thereon my Guide turned round, and "Wait," to me  
He said, "and by his pace then measure thine."

I stopped; and two I saw display in look  
A mind to get to me with all their speed,  
But by their load and the strait path were slow.

When they came up, askance they fixed their eyes  
Long time on me, but uttered not a word;  
Then to themselves they turned, and spoke aside:

"By movement of the throat that man's alive;  
And by what license, if they both are dead,  
Do they pass on without the heavy cloak?"

To me they said then: "Tuscan, who art come  
Unto the college of sad hypocrites,  
Disdain not to declare who thou may'st be."

And I to them: "Born was I and grew up  
In the great City on fair Arno's stream,  
And bear the body I have ever had.

But who are ye, from whom, so far as I  
Can see, such sorrow down your cheeks distils?  
And what the penalty that sparkles thus?"

And one replied to me: "These orange cloaks  
Are made of lead; so heavily they weigh,  
They make the balances thus harshly creak.

We Joyous Brothers were, and Bolognese,  
I Catalano, he Loderingo named,
Whom, both of us at once, your City chose,
Where commonly but one elected is,
To keep the peace; and were in office such
As round Gardingo may be seen to-day."

"Frati," 'gan I, "your sins," but said no more;
For on mine eyes there fell a sight, which showed
One crucified with three stakes in the ground,
Who, when he saw me, writhed in every limb,
Breathing out heavy sighs into his beard:
And Catalan, the friar, who noted this,
Told me: "The man thou seest thus transfixed,
Counseled the Pharisees that expedient 'twere
That one should suffer for the nation's sake.
Naked he lies, outstretched across the road,
As thou dost see, and needs must he first feel
The weight of each that passes over him.
And his wife's father likewise in this ditch
Is stretched with all who in that council sat,
Which to the Jews proved but the seed of woe."

Then saw I Virgil in astonishment
Gaze on the man extended on the cross,
Thus shamefully, in exile evermore.
And to the Friar he next addressed himself:
"Be pleased, if 'tis allowed, to tell us now
If to the right some outlet there may lie,
Whereby we both may make our way outside,
Without constraining the black angels' aid
To extricate us from this deep defile."

He answered him: "Much nearer than you hope,
A reef runs from the great encircling cliff,
And all these sad crevasses bridges o'er;
Save that here shatter'd, it no passage gives;
Yet o'er the ruins you can clamber, which
Slope down the side, and form at base a pile."

The Leader stood awhile with head bent down;
Then said: "He told us wrong what we required,
Who yonder claws the sinner with his hook."
And then the Friar: "'Twas in Bologna said
The devil's sins are many, and 'mong them
Liar is he, and father too of lies."

At once with mighty strides my Guide moved on,
Perturb'd somewhat by anger in his look.
The sufferers 'neath their load I left behind,
Treading in prints of the belovèd feet.
WHILE still the year is young, what time the sun Warmeth his locks beneath Aquarius,
And long nights now are moving to the south,
When on the ground the hoar frost would portray
The outline of her whiter sister's face,
Though brief the endurance of her pencil's point:
The husbandman, whose fodder 'gins to fail,
Rises, looks out, and sees the countryside
Whiten'd all round, and smiting on his thigh,
Returns indoors, and grumbles up and down,
Like the poor wretch that knows not what to do;
Then looks again, and in his budget finds
Fresh hope, seeing the world has changed its face
Within the hour, and straightway takes his staff,
And forth to the pasture drives his little flock:
So did the Master strike me with dismay,
When I beheld his much disturbèd brow,
While to my wound as soon the plaster came.
For when we reached the ruins of the bridge,
My Guide turned toward me with the same sweet look
That at the mountain foot I first beheld.
Brief counsel with himself he took; anon
The ruins carefully surveyed, and then
His arms he opened wide, and me embraced;
And like the man who works, and calculates,
And ever seems in thought to look ahead,
So, as he raised me upward toward the top
Of one great block, his eye another caught.
"Lay hold of yonder next," he said; "but first
Make trial if it can support thy weight."
No road was this for any clad in cope;
    For scarce could we, light as he was, and I,
    Pushed upward, make from point to point our way.
And had not here the slope of this precinct
    Been shorter much than on the other side,
    I say not he, but I had been o'ercome.
But as Sinpouches with continuous slope
    Sinks to the entrance of the lowest pit,
    Each hollow in position is so placed,
That one bank rises and the other falls.
    At length we reached the summit at the point,
    From which the last stone had been broken off.
My breath from out my lungs was so drained off,
    When I was up, no farther could I go,
    But rather on arrival sat me down.
"Now must thou needs throw off all slothfulness,"
    Said then the Master; "on a bed of down,
    Or under coverlets, no man wins fame;
Withouten which whoso doth spend his life,
    Leaves of himself on earth such trace behind,
    As smoke in air, and on the water foam.
Then raise thee to thy feet; surmount fatigue
    With spirit such as every battle wins,
    If it succumb not to the weight of flesh.
A longer ladder thine ascent awaits:
    Those yonder to have left sufficeth not.
    My meaning if thou catch, use it for good."
Then I arose in form as if equipped
    With stock of breath that I by no means felt;
    "Go on," I said; "I'm stout and resolute."
Up o'er the reef we set forth on our way,
    Which rugged was, narrow and difficult,
    And steeper far than was the one before:
Talking I went, my weariness to hide;
    And from the next crevasse came forth a voice,
    Broken in speech and inarticulate.
I know not what it said, although I'd reached
The keystone of the arch that crosses there:
But he who spake, seem'd as if stirred in wrath.

Downward I'd bent the while; but living eyes
Might such obscurity ne'er penetrate.
Therefore I said: "Try, Master, and make for
The other bank, and from this wall descend,
For as I hear, and nothing understand,
So I look down, and nothing can discern."

"No answer I return,' he said, "save that
I do thy will; a just demand should aye
Be followed by prompt action silently."

We from the bridge went down hard by the head,
Where with the eighth rampart it doth unite,
And open there lay the crevasse in view.

Within I saw in mass most horrible
Serpents entwined, and so diverse in form,
They even now in memory chill my blood.

No more may Libya of her sands make boast;
For if they swarm with hydrias, vipers too,
And amphisbaenas, asps and rattlesnakes,
Ne'er did they show reptiles so pestilent,
And fierce, with Ethiopia to boot,
Nor all the land along the Red Sea shore.

Amid this savage and most dismal swarm
Were people running, naked, terrified,
No hope of hiding place, nor heliotrope.
Upon their backs their hands were bound with snakes;
These with the head and tail pierced through the loins,
And in the front were twisted into knots.

And lo! on one, who stood upon our side,
Outrushed a serpent, and transfixed him there,
Where to the shoulders is the neck attached.

Nor e'er was I or O so quickly writ,
As he caught fire and burned; and as he fell
A heap of ashes needs must he become.
When on the ground he wholly was consumed,
His dust all of itself together came,
And he at once returned to his own form.
E'en so by sages great it is confessed
The Phoenix dies, and then is born again,
As it approaches the five hundredth year.
Nor blade nor grain doth it in lifetime eat,
But tears of incense and amomum juice;
And myrrh and spikenard are its shroud at last.
And as is one who falls, and knows not how,
By demon force that drags him to the ground,
Or some obstruction that may seize a man,
Who when he rises, gazes all around,
Wholly bewildered by the great distress
He had endured, and sighs, as he looks up,
Such was that sinner after he arose.
Almighty God! Thy Power how sternly just,
Which in its Vengeance deals such strokes as these!
My Leader asked him then, who once he was;
And he replied: "From Tuscany I fell
But short while since into this cruel gulf.
A brutish, not a human life pleased me,
Mule as I was I Vanni Fucci am,
A beast; Pistoia was my fitting den."
And to my Leader I: "Bid him not budge;
And ask what crime it was that sent him here;
For him I've seen, a man of wrath and blood."
The sinner understood, made no pretence,
But straight on me he fixed his thought and face;
And with a melancholy shame suffused,
He said: "More painful 'tis that thou'st found me
In misery, wherein thou seest me here,
Than what I felt, when torn from former life.
What thou demandest I may not refuse:
My place is thus deep down because I once
Stole from the Sacristy its precious things,
And this upon another falsely laid.
But that this sight may never make thee glad,
If from these haunts of gloom thou e'er emerge,
Ope to my message now thine ears, and hear:
   Pistoia first thins out from her the Black;
   Florence adopts new men, reforms her laws:
From Val di Magra Mars a vapour draws,
   Which comes envelopèd in turbid clouds,
   And amid tempest fiercely raging o'er
Piceno's plain a battle shall be fought:
   Forth from the mist the sudden vapour bursts,
   And every White by it is smitten down.
And this I've said to gall thee all the more."
CANTO XXV.

Eighth Circle—Seventh Crevasse—Robbers—Cacus—
Five Robbers of Florence and their Transmutations.

THE robber, ending thus his words, upraised
Both fists, and with the foulest gestures yelled:
"Take that, O God, which I square up at Thee."
From that day unto this have serpents been
To me as friends, for round his neck coiled one,
As if 'twould say: "I will thou speak no more."
Another on the arms doubled his bonds,
Knotting itself in front upon his breast,
So that with them he could not even twitch.
Pistoia, ah Pistoia! why no law
That thou to ashes turn and cease to be,
When now thy sons in sin outrun their sires?

Through all the circles of infernal gloom
No spirit saw I of such pride toward God;
Not him who fell down from the walls of Thebes.
So swift he fled, he spake no other word:
And I beheld a furious Centaur come,
Shouting aloud. "Where is the savage, where?"

I do not think Maremma's self contains
So many snakes as on his loins he bore,
Far as the point where 'gins our human form.

Upon his shoulders just behind the nape
There lay a dragon with extended wings,
Which sets on fire whome'er it haps to meet.

To me my Master said: "Cacus is this,
Who underneath the rock of Aventine
Made oftentimes the place a pool of blood.
Not with his comrades on one path goes he,
By reason of the stealthy theft he made
Of the great herd, that near his quarters lay;
For which his double dealings were cut short
'Neath club of Hercules, who dealt perchance
Some hundred blows of which he felt not ten.
While thus he spake, lo! he had passed us by;
And spirits three had risen at our feet,
Of whom my guide and I were not aware,
Until they shouted to us: "Who are ye?"
Whereon our further converse we broke off,
And then attended only unto them.
I knew them not, but so it followed now,
As oft will follow by an accident,
That one had need to drop another's name,
Saying: "Where has Cianfa stopped behind?"
Whereat, that on the watch my Guide should stand,
I raised my finger up from chin to nose.
If Reader, thou be slow now to believe
What I shall tell, will it no wonder be,
For I, who saw it, scarce allow it now.
While I towards them kept my eyebrows raised,
Behold a serpent with six feet springs up
In front of one, and fastens on him close.
Its middle feet it fixed upon his paunch,
And with the foremost held him by the arms,
And then in both cheeks set at once his teeth.
The hinder feet it stretched out o'er its thighs,
And thrusting 'tween the two its tail, it drew
It high upon the back across the loins.
Never more tightly did the ivy grip
The trunk of tree, than did this horrid beast
Its limbs upon the other intertwine.
Then each the other penetrating, like
Hot wax, their several colours blent in one,
And neither seemed what it had been before;
Just as with paper, ere it catches fire,
A brownish tint creeps on and over it,
And 'tis not yet full black, but the white dies.
CANTO XXV.

The other two looked on, and each cried out:
“Agnello, ah what change is this we see!
Lo! even now thou art nor two nor one.”

Already two heads had in one conjoined,
And doubled features mingled in one face,
Common to both, wherein the two were lost.
The four lines of their joints were merged in two:
The thighs and legs, the belly with the chest
Became such limbs as ne’er were seen before.
All trace of previous aspect disappeared:
It seemed the form of two, and yet of none;
Distorted thus it slowly moved away.
As when a lizard ’neath the burning scourge
Of dogday heat, shifting from hedge to hedge,
Like lightning seems to flash across the way,
Such a small reptile seemed, which all afire,
Made for the bellies of the other two,
Livid and black as any peppercorn
And at that part wherein man first receives
His aliment, it one of them transfixed,
Then down it dropped, stretched out in front of him:
The one transfixed in silence stared at it;
His feet unmoved, half drowsily he yawned,
As though by sleep or fever he were caught.
He on the serpent gazed, and it on him:
One through the wound, the other from the mouth
Poured out dense smoke in intermingling clouds.
Silent be Lucan now, where he tells of
Wretched Sabellus and Nassidius,
And wait to hear what now my bow shoots forth.
Of Cadmus and of Arethusa must
Ovid be silent; if in fable he
Change one to serpent and to fountain one,
I grudge it not: two natures, front to front,
He ne’er so metamorphosed, that they both
Were ready to exchange their substances.
Such correspondence ’tween them wrought by rule,
That as the serpent's tail was cleft fork-like,  
The wounded ghost's two feet grew into one;  
The legs and thighs together did cohere  
In fashion such, that speedily they left  
No trace of their conjunction visible.  
The cloven tail withal assumed the form  
The other lost, and while its skin at once  
Grew soft, the other's hardened into scales.  
I saw the arms up through the armpits drawn;  
The two feet of the reptile, which were short,  
Lengthened inversely, as the others shrank.  
The hinder feet next, twisted into one,  
Became the part which men conceal from view;  
And with the wretch that part split into two.  
The while the smoke forms for them both a veil  
Of colour new to each, the hair upon  
The one sprouts forth, and off the other peels;  
The one stood up; prostrate the other fell;  
The savage glare unaltered in their eyes,  
Underneath which their muzzles each exchanged.  
He who stood up, his toward the temples drew;  
And from excess of swollen substance there  
The ears protruded from the unfurnished cheeks.  
So much as ran not back and still remained,  
Of that remainder gave the face a nose,  
And made the thicker lips that were required.  
He who lay prostrate, pushes forth a snout,  
And back into his head withdraws his ears,  
As with its horns a snail is wont to do;  
The tongue, which was before entire, and apt  
To speak, divides; and with the other one  
The forkèd fangs close up; smoke ceaseth now.  
The soul that had become a brute takes flight,  
And through the valley hissing speeds its way;  
The other splutters, calling after it.  
His new made shoulders then he turned on it,  
And to the other said: "Let Buoso run,
As whilom I, on all fours 'long the road."
The seventh hold thus its ballast did I see
Shift and reshift: in my excuse I plead
These marvels, if my pen have run afield.
And though mine eyes were in no small degree
Confused, and all my mind bewilderèd,
Those spirits could not part so secretly
That Puccio Sciancato I should miss:
And of the three, who first in company
Appeared, he only had not been transformed.
The other one, Gaville, dost thou lament.
CANTO XXVI.

_Eighth Circle—Eighth Crevasse—Fraudulent Counsellors._

_Ulysses and Diomede—Voyages and death of Ulysses._

_EXULT_ Firenze, in that thou so great,
Canst flap thy wings o'er land and sea alike,
And that thy name expands itself through hell.

Among the thieves five of thy citizens
I found of station such as brought me shame,
And no great honour dost thou reach by them.

But if the dreams of early morn come true,
Only a short while hence, and thou wilt feel
What Prato, others not to name, for thee
Doth crave: and none too soon, if soon it come;
And would e'en now 'twere come, since come it must!
For more 'twill grieve me, as I age the more.

Thence we moved on; and o'er the steps, which first
The jutting rocks had made for our descent,
My Guide remounted, drawing me with him.

And as along the lonely way we went
Among the stones and splinters of the rock,
The foot without the hand made small advance.

Grieved was I then, and now again I grieve,
As memory recalls the sight I saw;
And tighter than my wont my genius curb,
Lest it run on where Virtue guides it not;
So that if some good Star or better thing
Have given me good, myself I grudge it not.

As oft the peasant resting on the hill,
What time the orb, that all the world illumes,
Hides his face from us for the shortest space,
When now the fly gives way unto the gnat,
Sees countless fire-flies in the vale below,
There, where perchance he ploughs, or gathers grapes,
With flames as many, all in brightest glow,
The eighth crevasse was shining in full view,
Soon as I came, where open'd out its depth.
And as the prophet, whom the bears avenged,
Beheld the parting of Elijah's car,
When up to heaven the horses mounted straight,
And he could only follow with his eye,
So that he saw nought but the flame alone,
Which like a little cloud floated aloft,
E'en so each flame along the moat's gorge moved;
For none discloses whom it steals away,
And yet each flame a sinner hides within.
Tiptoe upon the bridge I stood to view,
And if I had not clutched a jutting stone,
I should have fallen in without a push.
My Guide, who saw me thus intent, said then:
"Within the fires the spirits are contained;
Each wraps himself in that wherein he burns."
"My Master," answered I, "in hearing thee,
I am the more assured; I thought but now
That thus it was, and wished e'en now to ask,
Who in that fire may be, which comes so cleft
At top, that from the pyre it seems to rise,
Where with his brother Eteocles was laid."
And he: "Tortured within Ulysses is,
With Diomede; in company they go
To vengeance now, as erst to deeds of wrath;
And in their flame enveloped, they bewail
The ambush of the horse, that made the gate,
Through which passed forth the noble stock of Rome.
Therein they weep the fraud, which still in death
Makes Deidamia for Achilles mourn;
And forfeit pay for the Palladium."
"If, Master, from within those fires they are
Allowed to speak at all," said I, "I pray,
And beg this prayer may for a thousand stand,
Refuse me not thy leave to stay awhile,
Until the horned flame shall this way come;
See how in eagerness toward it I stretch.
And he: "Truly this prayer of thine deserves
My highest praise, and therefore I accede;
But careful be thine own tongue to restrain.
Leave speech to me, for well do I surmise
What thou would'st learn; as they perhaps might be,
Since they were Greeks, churlish to words of thine."
When now the flame had reached a point, that seemed
In time and place convenient to my guide,
After this fashion did I hear him speak:
"Ye spirits, both imprisoned in one flame,
If I deserved it of you, while I lived,
If aught deserved, be it or more or less,
When in the world I wrote my lofty verse,
Move not away, but of you let the one
Say where, misled by self he went to die."
Hereon the greater horn of th' ancient flame
Began to wave about with murmuring sound,
Like fire tormented by a draught of wind.
And then the tip of it, moving this way
And that, as though it were the tongue that spoke,
Threw forth abroad a voice, and said: "What time
I left Circe, who for a year and more
Nigh Gaeta detained me in retreat,
Before Æneas thus that city named,
No sweet thought of my son, nor duty to
My aged sire, not e'en the love wherewith
I should have gladdened my Penelope,
Could overbear in me the ardent wish
I had to make experience of the world,
And all the vice and virtue of mankind;
But to the depths of open sea myself
I trusted in one single ship with that
Small crew, that never had deserted me.
The coast on either side as far as Spain,
Morocco and Sardinia's isle I saw,
And all the rest which that sea washes round.
My comrades now and I were stiff and old,
When to that narrow strait we came, where stand
The landmarks, which by Hercules were fixed,
That man no farther should presume to pass.
On my right hand I left Seville, and had
Already on the other Ceuta passed.
“Brothers, who through a hundred thousand risks,”
I said to them, “have reached the western main,
For such brief span as still remains to you
To try your senses’ vigilance, grudge not
A hearty will to make behind the sun
Acquaintance with the lands untrod by man.
Consider now the stock from whence ye spring:
Ye were not made to live the brute beasts’ lives,
But knowledge to pursue and valour’s fame.”
So keen I made my comrades to push on
A farther voyage by this brief appeal,
That scarce could I have after held them back.
And with stern set against the morning sun,
We made our oars the wings of our fools’ flight,
Always advancing with the helm to port.
The stars already of the other pole
At night I saw; our own was sunk so low,
It rose no more above the ocean floor.
Five times enkindled, and as oft extinct
Had been the light shed from beneath the moon,
Since we had entered on our arduous course;
When darkly to our view in distance far
A mountain rose, that seemed to me so high,
Methought the like I never had beheld.
Great was the joy; a joy soon turned to grief:
From the new land a hurricane burst forth,
And smote upon the fore part of our ship.
Three times the swirl of water whirled her round;
The fourth on high raised up the poop in air,
Down went the prow, such was Another’s Will,
Until above us all the sea closed in.”
CANTO XXVII.

Eighth Circle—Eighth Crevasse—Fraudulent Advisers—
Guido da Montefeltro.

Erect and steady pointed up the flame,
   Speaking no more, about to move away,
   As our sweet Poet his permission gave;
When yet another, that behind it came,
   Caused us to turn our eyes toward its tip,
   By a confused sound that issued thence.
As the Sicilian bull, which bellowed first
   With roar of him ('twas just it should be thus)
   Who with his file himself had tuned it so,
Bellowed with moanings of its sufferers,
   Such, that although 'twas only made of brass,
   It seemed itself transfixed with agony;
So, from the lack of exit and a vent,
   At their beginning in the fire the words
   Of grief came rendered in the fire's own speech;
But when they had their passage forced up through
   The point, giving to it vibration such
   As in their course the tongue had given them,
We heard: "O thou, towards whom I now direct
   My voice, and who in Lombard phrase just now
   Didst say, 'Now go, I trouble thee no more,'
Though I perchance may somewhat late arrive,
   Begrudge me not to halt and talk with me;
   Thou seest I grudge it not, although on fire,
If thou, but lately on this blind world cast,
   From Latium hail, the sweetest of all lands,
   From whence my load of guilt I hither bring,
Say, have the Romagnoles or peace or war;
   For from the heights between Urbino and
The ridge, where Tiber is unlocked, I come."
I was the while attentive bending down,
When my Guide touched me lightly on my side,
Saying: "A Latian this, so speak thyself."
And I, who ready was with the reply,
Without delay began at once to speak:
"O soul, that in yon depth art hid below,
Thine own Romagna in her tyrants' hearts
Now is not, nor was ever without war;
But open warfare 'twas not, when I left.
Ravenna stands, as she long years hath stood;
The eagle of Polenta hovers there,
So that his pinions shadow Cervia.
The city, which so long was put to proof,
And of the French piled up a gory heap,
Under the Green Paws finds itself as yet.
The Mastiffs of Verrucchio, old and young,
Who to Montagna sorry jailers proved,
Still as they're wont, like augers, ply their teeth.
The towns Lamone and Santerno lave
The lion-cub on argent field directs,
And as the seasons change, he changes sides.
The City too, whose flank the Savio bathes,
As between plain and mountain she is set;
So between tyranny and freedom lives.
Now say, I pray thee, who thou art: nor be
More hard than has another been to thee;
So may thy name on earth hold up its front."
After the flame awhile had roared again
In its own way, it waved its sharpened point
This way and that, and thus gave forth its breath.
"If I supposed I answer had to make
To one who should some day return to earth,
Without more quiverings should this flame abide:
But in that never from this depth did one
Return alive, if what I hear be true,
I answer without fear of infamy.
A man of arms I was; then Cordelier,
   Trusting, so girt, to make the full amends;
   And certes well nigh was this trust made good,
But for the Great High Priest, whom ill betide,
   That sent me back to my first evil ways:
   And how and why, I would thou hear from me.
While yet I bore the form of flesh and bone
   My mother gave to me, mine were the deeds
   Not of a lion, rather of a fox.
All stratagems and every covert path
   I knew full well, and so employed these arts,
   The sound of them went out to the world's end:
But when I found that I had that point reached
   Of life, where it behoves men, one and all,
   To shorten sail, and gather tackle in,
That, which before was pleasant, now displeased;
   Repentant, to confession I repaired,
   And might, wretch that I am, have saved myself.
But of your modern Pharisees the Prince,
   Engaged in war hard by the Lateran,
   And not with Saracens, nor yet with Jews,
(For all his enemies were Christian men;
   Not one had been at capture of Acre,
   Nor e'en a trader in the Soldan's land,)
His Supreme Office he regarded not,
   His Holy Orders, nor in me the cord,
   Which used to make those girt with it more lean.
But as within Soractë Constantine
   Prayed Sylvester to heal his leprosy,
   So this man prayed me as a tried expert,
To heal him of the fever of his pride:
   Advice he sought from me! I held my tongue;
   For as one drunk with wine he seemed to speak.
'Let not thy heart misgive thee,' said he then;
   'This moment I absolve thee; only show
   How Penestrino I may lay in dust.
Heaven can I or ope or shut to thee,
As thou dost know; therefore the keys are two,
Held by my predecessor not too dear.'

His weighty arguments thus pushed me on,
Till silence seemed my less wise course.
So then I said: If, Father, from this sin,
Wherein I now must fall, thou wash me clean,
A promise large and its observance small
Will bring thee triumph on thy lofty Chair.'

So soon as I was dead, came Francis then
For me, but one of the black cherubim
Cried out: 'Take him not thou, nor me defraud.
He must come down among my slaves below,
Because he offered counsel of deceit,
For which since then I've held him by the hair.
Absolved is none, who is not penitent;
And none can both repent and lust at once:
Such contradictions never can agree.'

What anguish then! what an awakening mine!
When he laid hold of me, and said: 'Perhaps
Thou didst not think I was so logical.'

He bore me off to Minos, who entwined
Eight times his tail upon his stubborn back,
And as he bit it in sheer rage, he said:
'This is a sinner for the thievish fire.'

So as thou seest, here for ever lost,
And clothèd thus, I wander in remorse.'

When he his story had completed thus,
The flame moved off with shrieks of agony,
Twisting and tossing up its pointed horn.

Onward we passed, my Guide and I, along
The reef, up to the other arch which spans
The fosse, where the due wage is paid to such
As sow discord, and house a load of guilt.
CANTO XXVIII.

Eighth Circle—Ninth Crevasse—Disseminators of Discord—
Mahomet—Fra Dolcino—Pier da Medicina—Curio—
Mosca—Bertram del Bormio.

Who could prevail, e’en in unfettered prose,
To tell in full by oft repeated tale
The sum of what I saw of wounds and blood?

All tongues together would indeed fall short,
For neither speech expressed, nor silent thought,
Has the capacity to embrace so much.

If were collected once again all those,
Who in old times lay groaning in the blood
Poured out upon Apulia’s fateful plains
By Trojans, and in that protracted war,
Wherein the heavy spoil of rings was ta’en,
As Livy writes, who never goes astray;
As well as they, who felt the smart of blows,
That Robert Guiscard dealt in strenuous fight;
And they whose bones are picked up still to-day
At Ceperanno, where Apulians each
Proved false; and there at Tagliacozzo too,
Where old Alardo conquered without arms;
And all, who limbs, or maimed, or wounded, can
Display, would no way be equivalent
To th’ hideous aspect of the ninth crevasse.

A barrel by the loss of central or
Side stave ne’er gaping so wide, as one I saw
Cleft from the chin down to the fundament.
Between his legs hung his intestines down,
Exposed the liver and the dismal bag,
Which what is swallowed turns to excrement.

While on the sight of him I stand engaged,
He looked at me, and open tore his breast
With his own hands; "See how I rend myself;"

He said: "See Mahomet dismembered thus.
Before me Ali goes his way in tears,
His visage from the chin to forelock cleft.

And all the others that thou seest here
Sowers of scandal and schismatics were
In life, and therefore now are thus split up.

A devil here behind this schism makes
In us, remitting to the cruel edge
Of his sharp sword each one of this our band,

Oft as the dismal circuit we complete,
By reason that the wounds have healèd up,
Before we pass again in front of him.

But who art thou, there pensive on the rock,
Perhaps awhile the sentence to delay,
Adjudged upon thine own acknowledgement?"

"Death hath not reached him yet, nor him doth guilt
Bring here to torment," so my Master said;
"But to give him a full experience,
To me, who now am dead, appointed 'tis
From round to round to lead him here through hell:
And this is true, as that I speak to thee."

More were they than a hundred, who upon
Such words paused in the moat to gaze at me,
Forgetting torture in astonishment.

"Thou, who perchance ere long wilt see the sun,
Tell Fra Dulcino, if he would not soon
Follow me hither, to provide himself
With store of victual, lest the stress of snow
Should leave a victory to the Novarese,
Not easy for them otherwise to gain."

With one foot ready to resume his round,
This charge did Mahomet address to me;
Then to proceed he set it on the ground.
Another who appeared with throat pierced through,
Whose nose down from the eyebrows had been slit
And of whose ears but one alone remained,
Pausing to gaze in wonder upon me
With all the rest, in presence of them all,
Open'd his wesand, vermil-red outside,
And said: "Thou, whom no guilt hath sentenced here,
And whom I saw above on Latian soil,
If a too strong resemblance cheat me not,
Remember Pier da Medicina, if
Once more to see the fair plain thou return,
That from Vercelli slopes to Mercabò;
And let the two best men in Fano know,
Lord Angiolello and Guido I mean
That if prevision here be not in vain,
They from their ship will be cast overboard,
And near Cattolica be drowned in sacks,
Through the betrayal of a felon prince.
'Twixt isle of Cyprus and Majolica
Never hath Neptune witnessed crime so foul,
No not by pirates nor by Argives e'en.
That traitor, who with but one eye doth see,
And holds the land, which one near me could wish
He'd hunger'd long ere he had ever seen,
Will make them come to conference with him,
And then will do a deed, that will require
No prayer nor vow against Focara's gales."
And I to him: "Show and declare to me,
An' thou would' st have me mention thee above,
Who is't that found that land a sorry sight?"
He laid his hand then on the jaw of one
Of his own company, and open'd wide
His mouth, and cried: "He's here, and he is dumb:
An exile, he in Cæsar overcame
All doubt, affirming that, if well prepared,
A man by waiting turns his chance to loss."
CANTO XXVIII.

Indeed dumbfoundered did he seem to me
   With tongue from wesand sever'd utterly,
   The Curio of old so bold in speech!
Another who was maimed of both his hands,
   Raising their stumps athwart the dusky air,
   So that his face was foulèd with their blood,
Cried out: “The Mosca too thou’lt recollect,
   Who said, Alas! What’s done is ne’er undone,
   Which for the Tuscans proved a sorry seed.”
“And death,” I added, “unto all thy father’s race.”
   Whereon in sorrow upon sorrow heaped,
   In melancholy madness he moved off.
But I remained, observing still the crowd,
   And saw a thing, that I should be afraid
   Without a voucher to relate myself;
If not by Conscience reassured, which aye
   The good companion is, that sets man free
   Beneath the breastplate of a clean record.
I saw indeed, and think I see it still,
   The headless trunk of one advance, who walked
   E’en as the others of the dismal herd.
The sever’d head, held by the hair, swung in
   The hand, just as a lantern’s wont to swing:
   And as on us it gazed, it said: “Ah me!”
Of his own self he made for self a lamp,
   And two there were in one, and one in two;
   How which can be, He knows, Who so ordains.
And when he stood erect below the bridge,
   He lifted high his arm, with it the head,
   Nearer to bring its utterance to us,
Which was: “See now this grievous penalty,
   Thou, who, yet breathing, visitest the dead;
   See if there be any as great as this.
And that thou mayst bear news of me above,
   Know that Bertram dal Bormio am I,
   Who to the young king did ill counsel give.
Father and son rebels to each I made:
Ahitophel by base suggestions ne'er
To Absalom and David wrought worse ill.
Because I severed men so near allied,
My brain I carry, severed ah! from its
Initial root, planted within this trunk;
\textit{Lex Talionis} thus in me observed."
CANTO XXIX.

Eighth Circle—Ninth Crevasse—Disseminators of Discord—Gerì del Bello—Tenth Crevasse—Forgers of every kind—Alchemists—Griñfolino and Capocchio.

Those many people and their diverse wounds
Had made mine eyes so drunken with their tears,
That all their wish was to stay there and weep.
But Virgil said: "Why gazing still?
Thy vision why thus resting here, upon
These mutilated ghosts in gloom below?
Not such thine action in the pits we've passed.
Think if thou hope to count them all, that yet
This valley winds for two and twenty miles;
And 'neath our feet already is the moon;
Short now the time that is allotted us,
And more there is to see than what thou seest."
"If thou had turned," such was my prompt reply,
"Thy thought unto the cause, that fixed my gaze,
Thou hadst perchance a longer stay allowed."
My Leader was already moving on,
And I behind him walked, as I replied,
Adding withal: "In yonder den, on which
I kept mine eyes in such attention fixed,
I think a spirit of my own kin weeps
The sin, which there below costs him so dear."
Then said the Master: "Let not now thy thoughts
Henceforth be harassed any more by him:
Elsewhere give heed, and let him there remain;
For at the foot of the small bridge I saw
His finger mark thee with fierce menaces,
And Gerì del Bello I heard him called.
Thou at the moment wast so deep engaged
With him, who once did Altaforte hold,
Thou didst not look that way; so on he passed."

"O Leader mine, the outrage of his death,
Still unavenged," said I, "by anyone,
Who is, as kinsman, partner in his shame,
Made him disdain me; wherefore he withdrew
Without a word to me, as I suppose;
And so has made me pity him the more."

Such our discourse up to the point first reached,
Which from the rock commands the next crevasse
To bottom quite, had light been fuller there.

When 'bove the cloister now we stood, which is
Of Sinpouches the last, so that within
Our ken its lay brethren were visible,
Divers laments like arrows pierced me through
With winged shafts, that came with pity barbed,
Such that with both mine hands I stopped my ears.

If 'twixt July and September from forth
The hospitals of Valdichiana, and
Maremma and Sardinia, all the sick
Were in one ditch together laid, what pain
Were there, such was it here; and stench came up,
Such as from gangrened limbs is wont to rise.

Downward we passed over the final ridge
Of the long cliff, yet ever to the left;
And clearer then became my vision down
Towards the bottom, where the minister
Of the High Lord, Justice infallible,
Visits the forgers, here enregister'd.

I trow it was no sorrier sight to see
The people of Egina, all plague struck,
When the whole air so reeked with pestilence,
That living things, down to the little worm.
All dropped; and the whole race was afterward,
As sing the Poets in full confidence,
Anew created from the seed of ants,
Than 'twas to see through that lugubrious vale.
CANTO XXIX.

The spirits wasting in their several heaps.
One on the other lay, on belly one,
One on his neighbour's back, while yet a third
Upon all fours dragged on his dismal way.
On went we step by step, without a word,
Watching and listening to the sick, who were
Unable quite to lift their bodies up.
Two I beheld, seated and leaning each
  'Gainst each, like plates set down before the fire,
  From head to foot spotted with noisome scab.
And never saw I curry-comb so plied
  By groom, awaited by impatient lord,
  Or 'gainst his will detained from longed for bed,
As each upon himself plied oft the scrape
  Of nail in fury at the maddening itch,
  For which by other means was no relief.
So from the skin the nails scraped down the scabs,
  As a knife scrapes the scales of a great carp,
  Or of a fish of a yet coarser grain.
"O thou, whose fingers thus dismantle thee,"
  My Guide to one of them began to say,
  "And who to pincers turnest them at times,
Tell us if any Latian be of these
  Enclosed therein, so may thy nail be found
  Sufficient through all ages for such toil."
"Latians are we, whom wasted thus thou seest,
  Here, both of us," so one replied in tears.
  "But who art thou, that askest this of us?"
My Leader said: "One am I that descends
  From ledge to ledge here with this living man,
  And purpose to show him the realms of hell."
Their mutual support forthwith gave way:
  Trembling, each of them turned him round to me,
  With those, whom echoes of our words had reached.
Close to my side my kindly Master drew,
  And said: "Speak to them as thy will suggests."
  And as he willed it so, I thus began:
"So your remembrance ne'er shall fleet away
In the first world from memory of men,
Rather may live through many suns afresh,
Say who ye are, and of what family;
Your penalty, noisome and foul as 'tis,
May not deter you from declaring this."

"I of Arezzo was, whom," so said one,
"Albert the Sienese burned at the stake:
But what I died for does not bring me here.
'Tis true I said to him, speaking in jest,
That I knew how to fly i' th' air; and he
With curious eagerness and little wit
Would have me shew the trick; and but that I
Did not make him a Dædalus, he made
One, whom he accounted as his son, burn me.
But to this evil pouch, last of the ten,
For alchemy I practised in the world,
Minos, who may not err, did sentence me."

I to the Poet then: "Now was there e'er
A race more vain than are the Sienese?
Certes they leave the French long way behind."

The other leper hearing then my words,
Replied to them: Stricca thou must except,
Who simple living understood so well;
And Niccolò, the first to introduce
Luxurious use of clove-pink flavour from
The garden, where its seed unbidden springs;
Except the club too, where his vineyard and
Broad forests Caccia d'Asciano lost,
And the Abbagliato flashed his wit.
But that thou know who seconds thee against
The Sienese, sharpen thine eye on me,
So that my face may give a true response,
And thou wilt see I am Capocchio's ghost,
Whose alchemy the metals falsified;
And if mine eye tell true, thou must recall,
How good an ape I was of Nature's work.
WHAT time that Juno 'gainst the Theban race
In fury raged, because of Semele,
As she once and again made manifest,
In frenzy Athamas became so mad,
That as he saw his wife pass by in charge
Of their two boys, one in her either hand,
He shrieked: "Spread we the nets that I may catch
The lioness and cubs, as they pass out;"
And then stretched forth his unrelenting claws,
And seizing one, Learchus was his name,
He whirled him round, and dashed him 'gainst a stone;
And with her other charge she drowned herself:
And when the wheel of Fortune overturned
The vaulting loftiness of Trojan pride
And king and kingdom in one ruin fell,
Sad Hecuba, a wretched captive now,
After she saw Polyxena was dead,
And broken hearted on the sea-shore had
Made the discovery of her Polydore,
In stress of hapless fate barked like a dog,
Her grief had so her reason overborne.
But not in Thebes nor Troy were furies seen
At any time on anything so fierce
In torturing beasts, not to say limbs of men,
As in two ghosts I saw, naked and wan,
Who gnashing with their teeth, in fashion ran
As of a hog that from the sty escapes.
One on Capocchio seized, and at the nape
Fixed in the neck his tusks, so that he dragged Him on, grazing his belly on the ground.

Said then the Aretin, who trembling stood:

"This goblin is Gian Schicchi; and he goes
In fury dressing any hide he meets."

"Ah," said I, "so may ne'er the other fix
Its teeth into thy back, grudge not to tell,
Who may it be, ere hence it slip away."

And he to me: "This is the old world soul
Of that abandoned Mirra, who in love
Unnatural was her father's paramour.

She to her sin with him did only come
In false disguise, bearing a stranger's form;
As did the other, who goes there, when he
To win the prize mare of the stud, made bold
Buoso Donati's person to assume,
Forging a will in all the forms of law."

When the two furies now had passed away
On whom the while I'd kept mine eye intent,
I turned it to the other sons of sin.

One did I see in fashion of a lute,
If only at the groin, where man is fork'd,
The lower limbs had there been taken off.

The load of dropsy, which, with humours ill
Digested, doth the members so distort,
That face and belly no proportion bear,
Caused him to keep his lips apart, as doth
The hectic patient, who in thirst droops one
Towards the chin, and curls the other up.

"O ye, who come exempt from punishment,
Wherefore I know not, to this gruesome world,"
Said he to us: "Look well, and give good heed
To Master Adam in his misery:
Plenty in life had I of all I wished;
And ah! one drop of water now I crave.

The rivulets, that from the verdant hills
Of Casentino to the Arno run,
Keeping their channels always, cool and moist,
Before me ever stand; and not in vain;
For greater thirst their image doth excite,
Than the disease which wastes my cheeks away.
And thus stern justice, which torments me here,
Finds in the place, wherein I sinned, a means
To force these sighs of mine in swifter flight.
There stands Romena, where in counterfeit
I coined the money with the Baptist's stamp,
For which I left my body at the the stake.
But might I see the wretched soul of Guy,
Or Alexander, or their brother here,
For Branda's fount I'd not forego the sight.
Already one is here within, if those
Fierce Ghosts that ever made the round, speak true;
But with my pinioned limbs what boots me this?
If I were only now so light of foot,
That in a hundred years I could one inch
Advance, e'en now were I upon his track,
In search of him through these misshapen folk,
With its full circuit of eleven miles,
Nor less in breadth than half a mile across.
Through them I'm here amid this company:
'Twas they persuaded me to stamp florins,
That did three carats of alloy contain.'
And I to him: "Who are the abject pair
That steam like moist hand on a winter's day,
Lying together, near thee on the right?"
"I found them here, and since they have not turned,"
He said, "what time I sank into this ditch,
Nor will they, I suppose, for evermore.
The traitress one, who did accuse Joseph;
The other, Sinon, the false Greek from Troy:
Burning in fever they exhale this stench."
The one of them, who took it ill perchance
That he should be thus darkly spoken of,
Smote him with fist on his distended paunch,
Which rattled then, as though it were a drum;
And Master Adam struck him with his arm,
Which seemed to be not less hard, on the face,
Saying to him: "Though power be gone from me
To move with these o'erweighted limbs of mine,
I have an arm free for such use as this."
And he replied: "But on thy journey to
The stake, thou had'st it not so ready then;
Though ready thus, and readier still to coin."
He with the dropsy then: "Thou say'st the truth;
But witness true as this, thou didst not bear,
When of the truth they questioned thee at Troy."
"If I spake falsely, thou false coin didst make,"
Said Sinon, "and for one sin I am here,
But thou for more than any devil else."
"But recollect, thou perjured soul, the horse,"
Was his reply, who bore the swollen paunch,
"And be't thy doom that all the world knows this."
"Thy tortue be the thirst that cracks thy tongue,"
Rejoined the Greek: "and thy foul humours swell
Thy belly as a hedge before thine eyes."
The Coiner then: "As is its wont, thy mouth
Gapes only to let out insulting words;
Yet if I thirst, and water puff me up,
Fever burns thee, and racks thine aching head;
Few words indeed were needed to invite
Thee to drink up Narcissus' looking glass."
Listening to them I had been all intent,
When said my Master: "An thou wilt, stare on;
But little more, and 'tween us there'll be strife."
When thus I heard him in displeasure speak,
Towards him I turned, so utterly abashed,
That in remembrance haunts me still the shame.
And as is one who dreams of some mishap,
And dreaming, wishes it were but a dream,
So that he craves what is, as though 'twere not,
Such was myself, unable to find words,
Wishing to make excuse, and all the while
Excusing, though I thought I did it not.
"Less shame doth wash away a greater fault,"
The Master said, "than this hath been of thine;
So of all sadness now unload thyself;
And take account that ever at thy side
Am I, if chance again should set thee where
Folks are engaged in wrangle of this sort:
The wish to hear it is a vulgar wish."
ONE and the self same tongue first stung me so,
    That both my cheeks with blushes it suffused,
    And then again the remedy supplied.
Thus do I hear it said Achilles’ spear,
    His father’s heirloom, had the power to give
    At first a sorry, then a gracious boon.
Our backs we turned on the great vale of woe,
    Up o’er the bank that girdles it about,
    And made our way across without a word.
Here it was less than night, and less than day,
    So that my vision reached short way ahead;
    But the loud winding of a horn I heard,
Such as had made thunder itself seem faint;
    And to one point it drew my straining eyes,
    As counter to it, they traced back its course.
No blast so terrible Orlando blew,
    After the dolorous rout upon that day,
    When great Charles lost his holy warrior-band.
Thither had I a short while turned my head,
    When many lofty towers I seemed to see:
    Then I: “What city, Master say, is this?”
And he to me: “In that thy sight runs on
    Through dimness from a distance too remote,
    It happens that thy fancy goes astray.
Well wilt thou see, if thither thou arrive,
    How much the sense by distance is deceived:
    Wherefore push on somewhat more briskly now.”
Then tenderly he took me by the hand,
AND said: "Before much farther we advance,
   So that the fact may after seem less strange,
Know that no towers are these, but Giants they:
   Around the bank, each in the pit, they stand,
   From navel downwards buried out of sight."

As when the fogs disperse, the eye once more
   Can by degrees discern in outline what
The vapour in the thickened air conceals,
   So piercing through that heavy atmosphere
   Obscure, as slowly I approach the brink,
My error fled, and greater grew my fear.

For as above its circular precinct
   The towers of Montereggio crown-like rise,
So on the bank that girdles round the pit,
   With bodies half exposed, uprose like towers
   The dreadful Giants, whom, when he thunders,
Jove from high heaven still threatens with his bolts.

Already I discerned the face of one,
   His chest, his shoulders, of his belly much,
   And both his arms down hanging by his sides.
Certes, when Nature from the art surceased
   Of making creatures such, she did right well
To take from Mars such ministers of war.
And if of elephants and of great whales
   She still repents not, whoso closely looks,
Holds her in them more just and more discreet:

For where the force of mind intelligent
   To power is added with an ill design,
   No place of refuge then can man provide.
His face appeared to me as long and broad,
   As at St Peter's is the Pine at Rome,
   And all his limbs to it proportioned well;
So that the bank, which as an apron served
   From middle to the feet, still showed above
   So much, that to reach high as to his hair,
'Twere vain for Frisons three to 'tempt th' exploit.
   Thirty full palms of him did I behold
Down from the point where men their mantles clasp.

"Rafel mai amech zabi almi;"

That savage mouth began to bellow forth,
To which no sweeter psalms were suitable.

My Guide towards him turned: "Thou stupid soul,
Keep to thy horn; with it relieve thyself,
When wrath or other passion seizes thee.

Feel round thy neck, and thou wilt find the cord,
Which holds it tied to thee, thou muddled soul,
Where it encompasses thy monstrous breast."

And then to me: "A self accuser this;
Nimrod it is, by whose accursed scheme
A common language to the world is lost:
We pass him by; on him we waste no words,
For unto him all speech is as his own
To others, which by none is understood."

Our farther journey then we onward pushed,
Turned to the left, and at a cross-bowshot
We found the next, more fierce, and huger far.

Whose was the master hand to bind him first,
I cannot tell, but tightly lashed in front
Was his left arm, the right upon his back,
With chain, which kept him pinioned from the neck
Low down, so that in parts exposed above
Five times it twisted round his frame.

"He in his pride once wished to put to test
His own prowess against high Jove himself;"
Thus spake my Guide, "so this reward he earned,"

Ephialtes is his name, and his grand proof
Was made, when Giants roused the fear of Gods:
The arms he lifted then, he ne'er moves now."

And I to him: "If so might be, I would
That of stupendous Briareus himself
Mine eyes their own experience might have."

And he replied: "Antœus thou wilt see,
And not far hence; he speaks and is not bound.
To depth of all guilt he will let us down."
Far hence is he, whom thou wouldst fain behold;  
He stands in bonds, and is like this in form,  
Save that in aspect he seems fiercer still.”

Ne'er did impetuous earthquake in its mightiest throe  
Make steeple rock with a like vehemence,  
As forthwith Ephialtes shook himself.

Greater than ever was my dread of death,  
And for my death that fear had well sufficed,  
Had I not seen the bonds that held him fast.

Onward advancing, we proceeded then,  
And to Antœus came, who five good ells,  
Without the head, rose up above the pit.

“O thou, who in that fateful valley once,  
Where Scipio found himself the heir of fame,  
When Hannibal and all his host took flight,

For booty took'st a thousand lions once,  
Of whom some think, hadst thou the battle joined,  
When war against high heaven thy brothers made,

The sons of earth had won the victory;  
Set us below, and show thyself no churl,  
Where cold locks up Cocytus; send us not

On to Typhœus, nor to Tityos.  
What most is here desired, this man can give:  
So stoop to us, nor curl thy lip in scorn.

Still can he in the world restore thy fame;  
He is alive, and length of days expects,  
If ere his time Grace call him not to her.”

So spake the Master, and the other prompt  
Put forth the hands, of which once Hercules  
Felt the tight grip, and in them took my Guide.

When Virgil felt himself thus held, to me  
He said: “Come near that I take hold of thee,”  
And made me then one bundle with himself.

E'en as the Carisend appears to one  
Who stands beneath her slope, when clouds pass o'er  
From quarter opposite to her incline,

Such did Antœus seem to me, who stood
Watching him stoop; and for the nonce
I could have wished to go some other way.
But gently in the depth, that swallows up
Judas and Lucifer, he set us down;
Nor long did he remain thus bending low,
But as ship's mast erect he rose again.
CANTO XXXII.

Ninth Circle—Traitors and Betrayers of Trust.
First Round—Caina.
Traitors to Kinsmen—Conti di Mangona—Camicion de' Pazzi.
Second Round—Antenora—Betrayers of their Country—
Bocca degli Abati—
Buoso da Duero—Ugolino.

If rhymes I had as strident and as harsh,
   As would befit the dismal vault, whereon
   The weight of all the other rocks collects,
The juices of my thoughts I would express
   More fully still, but since I have them not,
   Not without fear I bring myself to speak.
For to describe the whole world's lowest depth
   Is no emprize to undertake in sport,
   Nor with a tongue that "Daddy, Mammy" lisps.
But may those Ladies now assist my verse
   That helped Amphion raise round Thebes her walls;
   So shall my story to its facts respond.
Ah, misgotten herds, beyond all else,
   Fixed in the place whereof to speak is hard,
   Better had ye on earth been sheep or goats.
When in the darksome pit below we stood
   Beneath the Giant's feet, much lower down,
   And I still gazing at the lofty wall,
A voice I heard: "Take heed, how here thou pass;
   Move on, that with the feet thou tread not on
   The herds worn out in brotherhood of woe."
Whereon I turned, and saw in front of me
And underfoot a lake, which, frozen hard,
In glass, not water, had its counterpart.
So thick a covering ne'er upon its stream
In winter time did Austrian Danube form,
Nor Tanais yonder 'neath the frozen zone,
As there was seen; for e'en had Tambernich,
Or Pietrapano fallen upon it,
At the mere edge it had not made a crack.
And as the frog its station takes to croak,
With snout outside the water, when ofttimes
The housewife dreams of gleaning in the fields;
Livid as far as where the blush of shame
Is seen, were moaning ghosts within the ice,
While their teeth chattered like the bills of cranes.
The countenance of each was downward held;
Of cold the mouth, of sadder heart the eyes
With all are forward to give evidence.
When from a rapid glance around I turned,
Down at my feet two did I see, so locked,
The hair upon their heads was intermixed.
"Tell me, O ye with breasts thus close compressed,
Who are ye?" said I: they bent back their necks;
And when their faces were towards me raised,
Their eyes, till then moistened alone within,
Welled over through the lids, and frost congealed
The tears betwixt, and locked them up again.
Never did clamp two beams together bind
In grip so tight; and then, as might two rams,
They butted one the other, in fierce rage.
And one, who was bereft of both his ears,
Frost bitten, said (he too with face down cast)
"Why dost thou closely thus examine us?
If't be thy wish to know who these two are,
The valley, whence Bisenzio floweth down,
Their father Albert and themselves once owned.
Born of one mother both, Caïna through
Shalt thou search well, and never find a ghost,
CANTO XXXII.

More worthy in this jelly to be fixed;
Not him, whose breast and shadow by the hand
Of Arthur once were shattered at one blow;
Not e’en Focaccia, nor yet him, whose head
Obstructs me so, that nought beyond I see,
And Sassal Mascheroni was his name;
If Tuscan, thou know’st well what sort he was.
And that thou need no more from me, know that
Camicion de’ Pazzi I was once,
And wait for Carlin my excuse to plead.”
A thousand faces then I saw, like dogs
Grinning with cold: a shiver through me runs,
And ever will at sight of frozen pools.
And while towards the centre we advanced,
Where to the weight of all things gravitates,
And I stood shivering in the eternal chill,
Whether ’twere will, or destiny, or chance
I know not, but as ’midst the heads I passed,
I struck with heavy foot the face of one,
Who in reproach cried out: “Why spurn me thus?
Unless thou come the vengeance to enhance
Of Mont ’Aperti, why molest me here?”
And I: “Await me, Master, here awhile,
So shalt I solve a doubt anent this ghost;
Then will I make what haste shall be thy will.”
My Leader stopped; and to the ghost I said,
Who roundly still assailed me with abuse,
“Who art thou thus a stranger to revile?”
“And what art thou, that Antenora wouldst
Pass through, smiting the cheeks of others so
That wert thou living, such deed were too much?”
“I am alive, and it may serve thee well,”
My answer thus, “if fame be thy desire,
That mid my other notes I write thy name.”
And he to me: “My wish is the reverse;
Take thyself hence; torment me now no more;
Useless thy skill in flattery in this hole.”
By nape of neck I caught him up, and said:

"Now must and shalt thou tell thy name to me,
Or on thy head shall not a hair be left."

Then he to me: "Tear from its roots my hair,
I will not tell nor show thee who I am,
Though on my head thou fall a thousand times."

His hair e'en now I'd twisted in my hand,
And more than one tuft from it had I plucked,
While with his eyes downcast he howled aloud;
When, "Bocca," cried another, "what ails thee?
Is't not enough to chatter with thy jaws?
Need'st bark as well? what devil hath thee now?"

"Ah, now," I said, thy name I need no more,
Malicious traitor, for unto thy shame,
A true report of thee I'll carry off."

"Begone," he said, "and what thou wilt relate:
But be not silent, if thou get out hence,
Of him, whose tongue but now so ready was.
He for the Frenchmen's "argent" weeps; and thou
Can'st say, 'Him of Duera once I saw
There, where the sinners in a cold bath sit.'

And if some one should ask, who else was here,
Beside thee he of Beccheria lies,
For whom Firenze once did slit the throat.
Gian Soldanier, I trow, is farther on,
With Ganellon, and Tribaldello too,
Who did unbar Faenza, while men slept."

From him had we already gone away,
When two I saw close frozen in one hole;
The head of one served for the other's cap.
And just as bread in hunger is devoured,
The one atop in th' other set his teeth,
Just where the brain doth with the nape unite.
Not otherwise did Tydeus once the brows
Of Melanippus gnaw in high disdain,
Than did this ghost the skull and all the rest.
"O thou! who by such bestial sign dost show
CANTO XXXII.

Thy hate for him, whom thou devourest now,
Tell me," I said, "why this? and I agree,
If thou with reason do complain of him,
When I know who ye are, and his offence,
I will requite thee in the world above,
If that I speak with, be not then dried up."
INFERNO.

CANTO XXXIII.

Ninth Circle—Betrayers of Confidence—Second Round—Antenora.

Betrayers of Country—Death of Count Ugolin—Third Round—Tolomea—Betrayers of Comrades—Frate Alberigo and Branca d’Orio.

THAT sinner from his savage meal raised up
His mouth, and wiped it on the hair of him,
Whose head he had behind to pieces torn.

Then he began: "Thou wouldst that I revive
The desperate grief, that in mere thought alone
Crusheth my heart, ere I its story tell.

But if my words be seeds of infamy
Unto the traitor on whose bones I feed,
Thou then shalt see me speak and weep at once.

I know not who thou art, nor by what means
Thou cam'st down here, but Florentine in truth
To me thou seemest, as I hear thee speak.

And thou must know I was Count Ugolin,
And Ruggieri, the Archbishop, this;
Now why to him a neighbour such I'll tell.

That, as the outcome of his ill designs,
While fully trusting him, in prison I
Was cast, and murdered there, no need to say.

But still, what thou as yet canst not have heard,
And that is, how malignant was my death,
Thou shalt hear now, and know if he wronged me.

A narrow slit within that walled cage,
Which after me is called Starvation Tower,
And in which others must be yet shut up,
Already through its chink had shown to me
The light of many moons, when the bad_dream
CANTO XXXIII.

I had tore off the veil of what should be.  
This man appeared to me as lord and chief,  
Hunting the wolf and whelps upon the heights,  
That shut out Lucca from the Pisans' view.  
With rav'rous hounds, eager and well in hand,  
Gualandi, Sismondi and Lanfranchi  
He had dispatched before him to the front.  
After short run the sire and cubs appeared  
To me tired out, and with well whetted fangs,  
Methought I saw the hounds rip up their flanks.  
When, ere the morrow dawned, myself awoke,  
I heard my children moaning in their sleep,  
For they were with me, and they asked for bread.  
Right cruel art thou, if not wrung with grief,  
Thinking already what my heart surmised:  
And if thou weepest not, when dost thou weep?  
They now had woke, and it was nigh the hour,  
When food was wont to be served out to us,  
Yet doubted each by reason of his dream.  
Below I heard the nailing of the door  
Of the dread tower, and looked thereon into  
The faces of my boys without a word.  
I did not weep; within I was as stone;  
They wept, and darling little Anselm said,  
"Father, thou lookest so; what aileth thee?"  
But I wept not, nor answer made to him  
That livelong day, nor e'en th' ensuing night,  
Until the next sun on the world came forth.  
As with thin ray the sun stole in athwart  
Our doleful cell, and I discovered then  
In their four faces what my own look was,  
I bit my own two hands in agony,  
They thinking that I did this in distress,  
And pang of hunger, suddenly sprang up,  
And cried: "Father, less pain to us by much,  
If thou eat us; with this our wretched flesh  
Thou didst clothe us; then from us strip it off."
I calmed me then, to heighten not their woe.  
That day and next in silence we remained. 
Hard hearted Earth!  Why opened not thy mouth? 
But when unto the fourth day we had come, 
At full length Gaddo fell down at my feet, 
And cried: "Why, Father dost Thou not help me?"
And there he died; and as thou seest me now, 
I saw the three drop down, one after one, 
Between the fifth day and the sixth: whereon
Already blind, I 'gan to grope towards each, 
And for two days called them by name, though dead: 
Hunger at last prevailed, where grief could not."
His tale was told; he with distorted eyes, 
Seized on the wretched skull again with teeth, 
That fastened on the bone, strong as a dog's. 
Ah Pisa! shame indeed of every tribe 
In that fair land where sound of "Si" is heard; 
Since to chastise thee neighbours are too slow.
Let the Caprara and Gorgona shift, 
And dam up Arno at its very mouth, 
So may each living soul in thee be drowned. 
For if 'twere rumoured that Count Ugolin 
Betrayed thy fortresses, thou should'st not have 
Exposed his children upon such a cross, 
O younger Thebes! their young days guiltless left, 
Uguccion, Brigata and the two 
Whose names are written in my song above. 
Further we went, where still the frozen pool 
In rigorous bonds holds yet another tribe, 
Not downward bent, but all thrown on their backs. 
Weeping with them allows them not to weep, 
And grief which finds a block upon the eyes, 
Turns inly to increase their agony. 
For in hard clusters first their tears collect, 
And, as with visors of clear crystal, thus 
Fill up the hollows underneath the brow. 
And now although by reason of the cold
CANTO XXXIII. 143

All my sensations, as if callous grown,
Had from position in my face withdrawn,
Me thought already that I felt a breeze.
Whereon I said: "Master, who stirreth this?
Is not all vapour quite exhausted here?"
And he to me: "Right soon wilt thou arrive,
Where to thy question shall thine eyes reply,
Seeing the cause that pours this current down."
And from the wretches in the frozen crust
Cried one to us: "O souls, so cruel that
To you this lowest post hath been adjudged,
Lift from mine eyes the hardness of these veils,
So that awhile I may discharge the pain
Which swells my heart, ere freeze my tears again."
Wherefore I said: "If thou would have mine aid
Say who thou art, and if I ease thee not,
To bottom of the ice 'twere fit I sink."
He answered then: "Fra Alberigo I;
Fruit of sin's orchard here am I, as one
Who for a fig with date am recompensed."
"Oh," said I, "art thou then already dead?"
And he to me: "How fares my body in
The world above, no knowledge I possess.
Such privilege this Tolomea hath,
That oftentimes a soul will drop down here,
Ere by the push of Atropos impelled.
And that thou mayst more readily for me
Remove from off my face these glazed tears,
Know that soon as a soul a traitor proves,
As did my own, its body then is seized,
And by some demon is thereafter held,
Until its own time hath run out its course.
The soul itself into this cistern drops;
And still perhaps the flesh is seen above
Of this ghost too which winters in my rear.
Him thou should'st know, if but just now arrived;
Ser Branca D'Oria 'tis, and years not few
Have passed away, since he was thus shut in."

"I trow," said I, "herein thou play'st me false;"
For Branca Doria never yet hath died;
He eats, he drinks, he sleeps and weareth clothes."

"Into the moat above of Bloody claws,"

Said he, "where bubbling boils the sticky pitch,
Michael Zanche had not as yet arrived,
When this one in his stead a devil left
In his own body, as with the kinsman too,
Who with him did the deed of treachery.
But hither now to me extend thine hand,
And ope mine eyes." But them I opened not,
And courteous 'twas with him to play the churl.

Ah Genoese! strangers are ye to all
That's good in practice, full of every vice!
Why are ye not hunted from off the earth?
For with the vilest of the Romagnese,
One of yourselves I found, whose soul e'en now
By its ill deeds is in Cocytus plunged,
Who in the flesh above seems yet alive.
CANTO XXXIV.

Ninth Circle—Betrayers of Confidence—Fourth Round—Guidecca.

Traitors to Benefactors—Lucifer—The Mouths of Lucifer—Lèse-Majesté—Judas Iscariot—Brutus—Cassius—From the Centre of the Universe to the Southern Hemisphere.

"\textit{VEXILLA regis prodeunt inferni}

Toward us," the Master said, "so forward turn
Thy looks, and see if thou discernest him."

As when the breath of mist is thickly spread,
Or in our hemisphere when night draws on,
A mill appears far off, turned by the wind,
Such structure then methought came into view;
Whereon by rush of wind I backward shrank
Below my Guide, no other shelter there.

Already I, (with fear I write the verse)
Stood where the ghosts were wholly cover'd o'er,
Transparent in the ice like straws in glass.

Some lie full length, others stand up erect:
This on its head, and that upon its feet:
A third its face bows archwise to the toes.

When we had made advance so far, that now
It pleased my Master to point out to me
The being, who had once been beauty's type,
From front of me he stepped, and bade me halt:
"See here is Dis," he said; "the place behold,
Where thou need'st arm thyself with fortitude."

How icy cold I grew, and faint in speech,
Ask not, O Reader; this I cannot write;
For language would be all inadequate.

I did not die, nor yet remain alive.

Think, if a grain of fancy thou possess,
What I became, of either state deprived.

The emp'ror there of all the realms of woe
Forth from the ice with half his breast emerged;
And better with a giant I compare,

Than giants with the measure of his arms:

Judge then how vast the whole of him must be,
Framed thus in due proportion to such parts.

If once as glorious as he now is foul,
And 'gainst his Maker lifted up his brow,
All tribulation must from him proceed.

And oh! what marvel it appeared to me,
When faces three I saw upon his head!
One fronted us, and this was vermil red;
The other two, which were with it conjoined,
Above the middle of each shoulder rose,
And all united in the crown at top.

That on the right 'twixt white and yellow seemed;
The left to look on bore the tint of such
As come from regions whence the Nile descends.

Underneath each issued two mighty wings,
Of size befitting bird of such estate.
No sail afloat I've seen of sweep so broad.

They were not feather'd; rather like the bat's
In form; and these he fan-like flapped in air;
So that from him three winds in currents rushed,
Whereby Cocytus was all frozen o'er.

Forth from six eyes rolled tears, which o'er three chins
Trickled slow down in slaver mixed with blood.

In every mouth he with his teeth crushed up
A sinner's bones, like hemp-stalks crushed by brakes,
So that he thus tormented three at once.

The munching of the mouth for him in front
Was naught compared to clawing, when the spine
Was left at times denuded of the skin.

"That soul up there in fiercest agony,"
The Master said: "Judas Iscariot is,
His head within, his legs convulsed outside.

Of those two with their heads towards the ground,
Brutus is he, who from the black jaw hangs;
Mark how he writhes, and utters not a sound:
And Cassius is the other with huge limbs.
But once again night rises, and 'tis time
Now to depart, for we have seen the whole."
Then as desired, I clasped him round the neck;
Thereon he marked with care both time and place,
And when the wings were widest spread apart,
He fastened tight upon the shaggy flanks;
And downward then descended tuft by tuft,
Between the thick hair, and the frozen crusts.
But when we reached the point, whereat the thigh
Hinges exactly on the thickest haunch,
My Guide with effort and with hard fetched breath
Turned his head round to where the heels had been,
And grappled with the hair as one who climbs,
So that I thought him bound for hell again.
"Hold tightly on, for by such stairs as these,"
The Master said, panting as one tired out,
"Must we escape from ill so great as this."
Then through a cleft within a rock he passed;
And having seated me upon its edge,
Up to my side he came with cautious step.
I raised mine eyes, and Lucifer I thought
To see, as I had left him at the first,
And saw his legs hanging above my head.
And that I felt myself then sore perplexed,
Let stupid folk suppose, who do not see
What point it is that I had overpassed.
"Rise up," the Master said, "upon thy feet:
Long is the journey, and the road unkind;
The sun e'en now returns half way from tierce."
No saunter was it through palatial halls,
Where we then were, but through a natural cave,
With floor uneven, and but scanty light.
"Ere from th' abyss I now make my escape,
O Master mine," said I, as to my feet I rose,
"A word I pray mine error to correct:
Where is the ice? and how hath he become
Thus upside down? and how in space so brief
Has the sun passed from evening into morn?"

And he to me: "Thou think'st thyself to be
On that side of the centre, where I caught
The foul worm's hide, that perforates the world.

While I descended, there indeed thou wast:
But when I turned, then thou hadst passed the point,
Whereeto all weights from every quarter tend;
And now beneath that hemisphere art come,
Right opposite to that, o'er which spreads out
The great dry land, below whose highest point
Was slain the Man, sinless in birth and life.
Thy foot now stands upon a little sphere,
Which is the counterface of Giudecca.
Here it is morning, when 'tis evening there;
And he, whose hair for us a ladder formed,
Remains still fixed just as he was before:
'Twas on this side that down from heaven he fell:
The land which formerly extended here,
In fear of him veiled itself 'neath the sea;
Entered your hemisphere; and then perchance
Him to escape, that, which on this side shows,
Left here an empty space, and rose aloft."

A place there is below, from Beelzebub
Removed as far as depth of his own tomb,
Which not by sight is known, but by the sound
Of a small rivulet, that hither falls
Through cleft in rock which it has worn away,
As on its course it winds in gentle slope.
My Guide and I upon that hidden path
Entered, to reach the world of light again;
And without thought of taking any rest,
We climbed, he first, and after him myself,
Until through a round aperture I saw
Some of those beauteous things that heaven bears on,
And thence came forth once more to see the stars.
PURGATORIO.
PURGATORIO.

CANTO I.

Proem to the Purgatory—The Four Stars.

Cato, Guardian of Purgatory.

O'ER kindlier waves to speed, the little bark
Of my intelligence now hoists its sail,
And leaves behind it a so cruel sea.

And of that second kingdom will I sing,
Wherein the human soul is purified,
And worthy grows for the ascent to Heaven.

But here let poetry from death once more
Rise up, ye Sacred Muses, for your own
I am; and here Calliope awhile
Rise too, attending on my song with strain
Like that, which when the wretched magpies heard,
'Neath such a blow, of pardon they despaired.

A soft blue tint of sapphire from the east,
Which was collecting o'er the calm aspect
Of the pure air, far as the horizon curve,
Unto my vision brought renewed delight,
Soon as I left the atmosphere of death,
Which eyes and breast alike had steeped in grief.

The beauteous planet that invites to love,
Filled the wide orient with her radiant smiles,
Veiling the Fishes in her escort train.

I to the right hand turned, and fixed my thoughts
Upon the other pole, and saw four stars,
Ne'er seen before save by the primal pair.

Their flamelets seem'd to make the heavens rejoice;
Widowed art thou, O region of the north,
In that of sight of these thou art deprived.

When from regarding them I had withdrawn,
Turning a little toward the other pole,
Whence had the Wain already disappeared,

Near me I saw an old man all alone,
Worthy in aspect of a reverence such,
That ne'er did son more to a father owe.

A flowing beard he wore, commingled with
White hairs, like to the locks upon his head,
Which on his breast fell down in twofold strand.

The rays that beamed from the four holy stars
Adorned his face with such a glow of light,
That as the sun before me he appeared.

"Who may ye be, that up the darkling stream
Have from the eternal prison made escape?"

Waving those honourable locks, he said:
"Who was your guide? or who your lantern here,
Emerging from the depth of night profound,
That blackens hell's dark valley evermore?
Thus broken are the laws of the abyss?
Or is there change in heaven of counsel new,
That to my caves, though damnèd, ye repair?"

My leader twitched me by the garment then,
And with his words, and hand, and other signs
Made me do reverence both with knee and brow,

And answering, said: "I came not of myself:
From heaven a lady did descend, whose prayers
Made me help this man with my company.

But since thou wlt that I should more explain
Of our condition, as it truly is,
My wish it cannot be thine to refuse.
Not yet hath this man seen his latest night,
But by his folly was so near to it,
That very little time was there to turn.
So, as I said, to him was I dispatched
To rescue him, and other way was none,
Than this to which I have applied myself.
To him I've shown the guilty in their tribes;
And now I purpose to show him the souls,
That here are purified beneath thy charge.
How I have brought him it were long to tell:
Strength from on high comes down, assisting me
To lead him on to see thee and to hear.
Be pleasèd now to welcome his approach:
He goes in search of liberty; who life
For her refused, knows how dear she is.
Thou knowest it; nor bitter was thy death
For her in Utica, where thou didst leave
The robe, that on the Great Day shall shine bright:
Th' eternal edicts we have not infringed;
For this man lives, and Minos binds not me,
Who of the circle am, where the chaste eyes
Of thine own Marcia are, who in her look
Still prays thee, saintly heart, to keep her thine.
For love of her incline then unto us;
Leave grant us through thy sevenfold realm to pass:
Thanks due to thee I will report to her,
If to be named below thou condescend.'"
"Marcia was so delightsome to mine eyes,
Long as I yonder dwelt," so said he then,
I granted every grace she asked of me.
Now that she dwells beyond the evil stream,
No longer can she move me, by that law
That was imposed, when thence I issued forth.
Be it of heaven a lady, as thou say'st,
Send and rule thee, no need of compliment;
'Tis all sufficient, if thou plead her name.
Go then, and be’t thy care to gird this man
   With a smooth rush, and then to bathe his face,
   So that from it all stain may be removed:
For ’twere not fitting that an eye o’ercast
   By any film should meet the first who comes
Of those who minister in Paradise.
This little islet round its lowest base,
   Down yonder where the waves beat in on it,
   Doth rushes bear upon the oozy mud;
No other plant, that might break forth in leaf,
   Or stiffen into stalk, can there find life,
   Because it yields not to the rolling surf.
Hither thereafter ye may not return;
   The sun, which riseth now, will show you where
To take the mountain at an easier slope.”
So vanish’d he; and I rose up again
   Without a word, and closely drew me back
   Unto my Guide, and fixed mine eyes on him.
And he began: “Follow my steps, my son;
   Backward we turn, for from this point declines
The open plain far as its limits stretch.”
The dawn was driving off the morning breeze,
   Which fled before it, so that far away
   I recognized the rippling of the sea.
Along the solitary plain we went,
   As one returning to the path he’d missed,
   Who, till he finds it deems his wandering vain.
Arriving at a place whereon the dew
   Defies the sun, and being in a spot
O’erhung with shade, slowly evaporates,
His two hands out upon the short grass spread
   In gentle movement did my Master lay;
And I, who well his purpose understood,
Extended unto him my tear stained cheeks;
   And on them he disclosed once more for me
The full tint, which hell’s smoke had hidden o’er,
Thereon we came unto the lonely shore,
CANTO I.

Which ne'er saw man over its waters sail,
Who afterward accomplished a return.
There did he gird me as the other willed:
And, wondrous sight, lo! as uprooted he
The humble plant, new-born upsprang its like
Upon the instant, where he plucked the first.
CANTO II.

Ante-Purgatory—The Little Island—The Angel Helmsman—
The Arrival of Souls—Casella—Reappearance of Cato.

The sun had now to the horizon come,
The curve meridian of which o'erhangs,
When at its highest point, Jerusalem:
And night, which opposite to him revolves,
Forth from the Ganges issued with the Scales,
Which her hands drop, as she predomina ines;
So that the white and vermil tinted cheeks
Of beautiful Aurora, where I stood,
With the advancing hour to orange turned.
We still were standing 'longside of the sea,
Like folks, who pondering on the road to take,
Move on in heart, but with the body halt;
And lo! as at the near approach of morn
Mars through thick vapour gleams in fiery red,
Down in the West over the ocean floor,
Such seemed to me, (so may I see't again!)
A light so swift in motion o'er the sea,
No flight of wing could equal it in speed;
From which when I a moment had withdrawn
Mine eye to make inquiry from my Guide,
I saw't again more bright and larger grown.
Then on its either side to me there seemed
A something white, I knew not what; and next
Another by degrees 'neath this loom'd forth.
As yet my Master utter'd not a word,
Till the first whiteness open'd into wings;
Then as the pilot well he recognised,
"Down, down," he cried, "and quickly bend the knee;
Behold, 'tis God's own Angel; fold thy hands;
Henceforth such messengers thou oft wilt see.
Mark, he disdains machinery of men,
   So that no oar wills he, nor other sail
   Than his own wings 'twixt shores so far apart.
See how he holds them heavenward set direct,
   Beating the air with their eternal pens,
   Which never moult, as mortal plumage doth."

Then as to us nearer and nearer drew
   The bird divine, the brighter he appeared,
   So that the eye could not endure him near,
But dropped to earth, while to the shore he came
   In a small galley, very swift and light,
   Such that the water swallowed none of it.
Upon the poop the heavenly helmsman stood;
   Beatitude seemed written on his brow;
   More than a hundred spirits sat within.

"In Exitu Israel de Egitto"
   They all, as with one voice, together sang,
   With what of that Psalm afterwards is writ,
Then o'er them made he sign of Holy Cross;
   Whereon they cast them all upon the shore,
   And he departed, as he came, with speed.
The throng, that there remained, seemed to the place
   Like strangers, gazing round them and behind,
   As one who tastes the first time something new.
On every side the sun was darting forth
   The arrows of the day, and his bright shafts
   Had from mid Heaven chased the Capricorn,
When the new comers lifted up their heads
   Toward us, and said: "If ye indeed do know,
   Show us the way whereby to reach the hill."
And Virgil answer'd them; "Ye think perchance
   That of this place we have experience.
   But we are pilgrims even as yourselves.
Just now, but just before you, we arrived
   Another way, which was so rough and hard,
   That climbing henceforth will to us seem play."
The souls which by my breathing had of me
Ta'en cognizance that I was still alive,
In their astonishment turned pale as death.

As, when with olive branch an envoy comes,
A crowd collects, all eager for the news,
And none is shy his neighbour's heels to press,

So, fixed in scrutiny upon my face,
Stood one and all those spirits fortunate,
As though forgetful of the fairer life.

Towards me I saw one of them dart forth
To clasp me in his arms so lovingly,
It moved me too like welcome to accord.

Ah! empty shades, naught but the show of form!
Three times behind him did I clasp my hands,
And turned as oft with them upon my breast.

Wonder, I trow, depicted was on me,
So that the shadow smiled, and backward drew,
And farther on I pushed pursuing him,

In gentle accents bade he me be still:
And who he was, well then I knew, and prayed
For converse with me he awhile would stay.

He answered me: "Just as I loved thee well
In mortal coil, I love thee now released.
Therefore I halt; but why thy journey here?"

"My own Casella, to return once more
To where I stand, I journey thus," said I:
"But how from thee has so much time been ta'en?"

And he to me: "No wrong is done to me,
If he, who takes both when and whom he will,
Have many times my passage here denied;

For from the Righteous Will his own proceeds.
In truth for three months had he taken off
In all good will all who to enter wished.

So I, who now had turned my face seaward,
Where Tiber's waters to grow salt begin,
By him was welcomed with benignity

At that outlet, for which his wing now sets;
For ever at that point is gathered in
Each who to Acheron doth not sink down."
And I: "If no new law from thee doth take
The memory or practice of Love's songs,
Which could of yore my every passion calm,
Therewith be pleased now somewhat to refresh
My soul, which in its mortal body clothed,
Is wearied sadly in its journey here."
"Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,"
Began he then to sing with sweetness such,
The dulcet strain within me echoes still.
My Master, and myself, and all the group
That were with him, appeared in such content,
As if the mind could care for nothing else.
In close attention fixed upon his notes
We stood, and lo! the reverend old man
Cried out: "Ye loitering spirits, what is this?
What means this negligence, this halting here?
Haste to the hill to strip you of the scales,
That let not God be manifest to you."
Even as when collecting grain or tares,
The doves assembled on their feeding ground,
Quiet, without display or wonted strut,
If aught appear to cause them an alarm,
Upon a sudden leave their food alone,
Because assailed by a greater care,
So that new company did I behold
Leave off their song, and hasten to the hill,
As one who goes, not knowing to what goal;
Nor was our own departure less abrupt.
CANTO III.

Ante Purgatory — The little Island.
Souls dying in excommunication — King Manfred.

ALTHOUGH it happened that the sudden flight
Across the open plain dispersed the rest,
Bound for the Mount where Justice sifteth us,
I to my trusty comrade closely drew;
And how without him had I held my course?
Who o'er the mountain would have been my guide?
In self reproach he seemed to blame himself.
O conscience, full of dignity and pure,
To thee how small an error brings remorse!
Soon as his feet began to slacken haste,
Which dignity impairs in every act,
My mind, at first absorbed within itself,
Resumed a wider range, as eagerly
I set my face towards the hill in front,
Which heavenward soareth highest from the sea.
The sun, which blazed behind us red as fire,
In front of me was broken to the form
Of what in me was hindrance to its rays.
I turned me to one side in the full fear
That I had been abandoned, when I saw
The ground was dark only in front of me:
"Why still mistrust?" my comforter hereon,
Turning full round on me, began to say:
"Think'st not that I am with thee, and thy guide?
Evening already 'tis, where buried lies
The body, whence I once a shadow cast;
Naples holds it; from Brindisi 'twas ta'en.
Now if in front of me no shadow fall,
Marvel no more than at the heavens themselves,
Where one ray ne'er another intercepts.

To suffer torments both of heat and cold
Bodies like mine the Power disposeth thus,
Who, how He works, wills not should be revealed.

Mad is the man who by our reason hopes
To travel o'er Infinity's long road,
Which the One Substance in Three persons holds.

O Race of Men, at "'Tis so" pause content;
For could ye ever have discerned the whole,
No need had been for Mary to bring forth;
And ye have seen some who desire in vain
That this desire might be appeased, to whom
'Tis given as their grief for evermore.

I speak of Aristotle, Plato too,
And not a few beside." He bowed his head
In silence then, and deeply stirred remained.

We to the mountain foot the while had come;
And found the cliff there so precipitous,
The nimblest legs had been of no avail.

'Tween Lerici and Turbia what path
Most wild and desert is, a stairway were
Easy and ample, when compared with that.

"Who knows now on which hand the cliff declines,"
The master said, as his advance he stayed,
"So one may mount that travels without wings?"

And while, with eyes fixed closely on the ground,
He studied well the nature of the road,
And I was looking upward round the rock,
Upon the left to me appeared a group
Of souls, whose feet were moving on toward us,
Yet seemed not so, so slowly they approached.

"Master," said I, "lift up thine eyes awhile:
See some are yonder who advice will give,
If this from thine own self thou canst not draw."

He looked at them, and with a lightened air
Replied: "Go we to them; they slowly come:
And thou, sweet son, abide secure in hope."

Those people still were so far off, I mean
When we a thousand paces had advanced,
As a skilled slinger with his hand might throw,
When all drew up against the massive wall
Of the high cliff, and still and stiff they stood,
As one in doubt stands looking at his way.

"Spirits, e'en now elect, your course complete,"

Virgil began, "I pray ye by that peace,
Which I believe is looked for by you all,
Tell us, where so the mountain side slopes back,
As to afford a possible ascent;
For who knows most, him lost time vexeth most."

As from the fold a flock of sheep comes forth,
By ones, and twos, and threes, and the rest stand,
Timidly keeping nose and eyes on earth,
And what the foremost does the others do,
Huddling themselves against her, if she stop,
Quiet and simple, and they know not why,
So saw I then in motion toward us come
The first line of that highly favoured flock,
Modest in mien and stately in their gait.

Soon as the foremost of them saw upon
My right, that light was broken on the ground,
So that my shadow stretched up to the rock,
They paused, and backward drew themselves a space:
And all the rest who followed hard on them,
Not knowing why they did so, did the same.

"Without your asking, I confess to you,
This is a human body that ye see,
Whereby the sunlight on the earth is cleft.
Marvel ye not hereat, but well believe,
Not without Power that comes from Heaven down,
Doth he endeavour to surmount this wall."

Thus far the Master: and that worthy band
Replied: "Turn back then, and before us pass."
Making a signal with the hand reversed.
And one of them began: "Be who thou may,
Going with us, turn thy face round this way;
Think, if thou yonder ever didst see me."
To him I turned, and eyed him fixedly:
Comely he was, fair, and of noble mien,
But of his eyebrows one a gash had cleft.
When with all modesty I had disclaimed
Seeing him ever, he replied: "Now look:"
And showed me high upon his breast a wound.
Then with a smile he said: "Manfred am I,
The grandson of the Empress Costanza:
Wherefore, when thou returnest, thee I pray,
Unto my beauteous daughter go, who bare
The pride of Sicily and Aragon;
Tell her the truth, if men say otherwise.
After my body by two mortal thrusts
Had been pierced through, I rendered up myself
With tears to Him, Who pardoneth willingly.
Exceeding horrible had been my sins,
But Goodness Infinite hath arms so wide,
They all embrace who trust themselves to It.
If but Cosenza's shepherd, who in chace
Of me was sent by Clement, in that hour
Had duly read this passage of God's word,
The bones of my dead body still had been
At Benevento by the Bridge's head,
Beneath the keeping of the heavy cairn.
Rains drench them now, and tempests drive them on
Outside the realm, hard by the Verde's banks,
Whither he moved them with extinguished lights.
Eternal love by malison of such
Is not so lost, that it cannot return,
So long as hope retains but one green leaf.
True is't that whoso contumacious dies
To Holy Church, though penitent at last,
Rightly outside this cliff must still remain
For all the time, told thirtyfold, that he
In his presumption stood, if such decree
Be shorten'd not by aid of faithful prayers,
See now if happy thou canst render me,
Revealing to my good Costanza how
Thou'st seen me, and what ban lies on me still,
For here through those down there much way is made."
WHEN by a pleasure, or indeed a pain,  
That seizes on some faculty of ours,  
The soul is centred on this faculty,  
It seems all powers else to disregard ;  
Which contradicts in fact the error that  
Believes more souls than one within us burn.  
And hence when anything is heard or seen,  
That keeps the soul engrossed in it alone,  
Time runs away, and one observes it not :  
For one thing is the faculty engaged,  
Another that the soul retains intact,  
One held as if in bonds, the other free.  
Of this I had a true experience,  
While wonder-struck I listened to that shade :  
For fifty full degrees had risen now  
The sun, and I had not perceived it, when  
We reached a point, where all those spirits cried,  
As with one voice to us : "Here what you ask for is."  
Larger ofttimes the gap, which on a farm  
The hedger mends with small forkful of thorns,  
When ’gins the grape already to embrown,  
Than was the byeway, where my leader now  
Went up, and I close to him, only we,  
After that band from us had gone away.  
Sanleo climb, at Noli make descent,  
And scale the summit of Bismantova  
On foot alone, but here a man need fly,  
On the swift wings I mean, and with the plumes
Of keen desire, and following such a guide
As gave me hope, and to my path was light.
Upward we clambered through the broken rock;
   Its walls on each side grazed us as we passed,
   Its floor beneath required both hands and feet.
When we had reached the upmost edge at top
   Of the high cliff, now on the open slope,
"O master," said I: "what way shall we take?"
And he to me: "Downward not e'en a step;
   Ever behind me up the hill push on,
   Until for us some wise escort appears."
The summit vanquished all the power of sight,
   And hautily its side rose steeper e'en
   Than line to centre from mid-quadrant drawn,
Weary was I, as I began to say:
   "Sweet Father, turn and give one look behind;
   See, if thou stay not, I am left alone."
   "My son," said he, "but yonder drag thyself,"
   With finger pointing me a ledge somewhat
   Above, which at that point runs round the mount.
These words of his so spurr'd me on, that I
   The effort made, scrambling behind him close,
   Till 'neath my feet I found the girdling ledge.
To sit us down we two composed ourselves,
   Our faces toward the East, whence we had climbed.
   For to look back delights all travellers.
Mine eyes I turned first to the lowland shores;
   Then raised them sunward, and in wonder saw
   That by him we were smitten on the left.
Well did the Poet understand that I
   Found myself dazed before the Car of Light,
   As it came in 'tween us and Aquilo.
Whereon he said, "If on that mirror now,
   Which up and down carries its guiding light,
   Castor and Pollux in attendance were,
Thou then would'st see the reddened Zodiac
   Wheeling its course still nearer to the Bears,
CANTO IV.

If from its ancient path it have not swerved.
How this should be, if thou wilt try to think,

Iuly collected, picture Sion's mount
Together with this hill placed on the earth,
So that they both but one horizon have,
And hemispheres distinct; and thus the path,
To drive whereon Phaeton was poorly trained,
Thou'lt see must needs here upon this side run,
    While there upon the other lies its course,
    If clearly thy intelligence takes note.
"Truly, my Master, I have never seen"
Said I, "so clearly as I now discern,
The point where my sagacity had failed,
That the midcircle of the heavenly course,
    Which in one science is Equator termed,
    And between heat and cold abideth fixed,
For reason stated, from our standpoint here,
    Tends northward just as far as Hebrews saw
    It moving on towards the warmer zone.
But if it please thee, gladly would I learn
How far we still must go, for the hill mounts
    Much higher than these eyes of mine can rise.
And he to me: "Such is this mountain, that,
    At starting, ever at the base 'tis hard;
    But as man higher goes, he fares less ill.
And when to thee it shall appear so smooth,
    That going up as easy is to thee,
    As sailing in a boat adown the stream,
The end of this path thou shalt have achieved,
    And there for thine exhaustion look for rest.
    No more I answer; this I know is true."
And when he thus had ended his reply,
A voice quite close to us was heard: "Perchance
Ere then thou'lt find the need to sit thee down."
At sound of this we both of us turned round,
And on our left saw a huge block of stone,
Of which before nor he nor I was 'ware.
Thither we drew, and people there we found
Collected in the shade behind the stone,
As when folks loll about in listlessness.

And one of them, who very weary seemed,
Was sitting down, his arms about his knees,
Keeping his face between them very low.

“O my sweet Lord,” I said, “just cast thine eye,
Here on this one, who looks more indolent
Than if his own sister were Sloth itself.”

Then he turned round, and calmly noted us,
Raising his eyes hardly above the hip;
“Go up thyself,” he said, “brave as thou art.”

I knew then who he was, and that distress,
Which left me still a little short of breath,
Checked nowise my approach to him; and when
I came to him, he scarcely raised his head,
Saying, “Hast thou well made out how the sun
Directs his chariot here upon thy left?”

His lazy attitude and curt address
Just moved my lips into a little smile;
Then I began: “Belacqna, now for thee
I grieve not; but say why precisely here
Thou hast thy seat; an escort dost thou wait?
Or has old habit caught thee once again?

And he: “Brother, what boots it me to climb?
As yet no leave to meet my discipline
God’s Angel gives, who sits above the gate.

For heaven must first so long revolve round me
Outside the gate, as it did in my life,
Since pious sighs I put off to the last,

Unless meanwhile assisted by the prayer,
That goes up from a heart that lives in grace:
What profits other since in heaven unheard?”

And now before me up the Poet goes:
“Forward,” he says, “see how the sun hath reached
Meridian height, and from the River’s bank
Far as Morocco, night extends her foot.”
CANTO V.

Ante-Purgatory—The Second Terrace.
The Careless who met a Violent Death—Two Messengers—
Jacopo del Cassero—Buonconte da Montefeltro—Pia de' Tolomei.

ALREADY had I parted from those shades,
       And in my leader's steps was following on,
       When from behind, with finger stretched toward me,
One cried; "Look, for 'twould seem that the sun's ray
       Shines not to left of him, who lower stands,
       And as a living man he seems to act."
At sound of utterance such I turned mine eyes,
       And in astonishment I saw them look
       At me, me only, and the broken light.
"Why doth thy spirit thus concern itself,"
       The Master said "that thou should'st slacken pace?
       What is to thee the whispering of these folk?"
On after me, and let the people talk:
       Firm as a tower abide, of which ne'er sag
       The battlements for bluster of the wind.
The man, in whom thought upon thought springs up,
       Ever puts further from himself his aim;
       The second damps the ardour of the first."
What could I say in answer save: "I come."
       I said it somewhat with the blush suffused,
       That wins at times forgiveness for a man.
Meanwhile along the hillside and across
       Our path came people somewhat in our front,
       Singing the Miserere verse by verse.
When they perceived that I no place allowed
       For passage through my body of the rays,
       They changed their chant into a long deep "Oh!"
And two of them in form of messengers
Ran forth to meet us, and enquiry sought:

"Of your condition make us well informed."

My Master then: "You can go back," he said,

"And unto those that sent you may report,
That this man's body is indeed of flesh.

If when they saw his shadow, they did halt,
As I opine, this answer is enough:
Let them do honour: he may prove a friend."

No fiery vapours have I seen so swift,
Cleaving the sky in calm of early night,
Or clouds in August when the sun goes down,
As them, returning upward in less time.

Arriving there with all the rest, they wheeled
Towards us, like cavalry with loosened rein.

"A great assemblage this, that presseth on,
And with some prayer they come," the Poet said;
"Wherefore go on, and listen as thou go'st."

"O Soul, that movest on to happiness
With the same limbs wherewith thou first wast born,"
Cried they advancing, "stay awhile thy steps.
Look if of us thou e'er hast any seen,
So that of him news yonder thou may'st bear.
Ah! wherefore going on? wilt thou not stay?
By violence we all were done to death,
And sinners were we to our latest hour:
E'en then a light from heaven instructed us;
So that repenting and forgiving both,
From life we issued reconciled to God,
Who with desire to see Him drives us on."

"Although into your faces I have looked"
I said, "none do I know; but, an ye please,
What I can do, ye spirits of new birth,
Tell me, and I will do it by that peace,
Of which in steps of my appointed guide,
From world to world I go in careful search."

And one began: "Each of us here confides
In thy good service, and without a pledge,
If but "I cannot," cut not off "I will."
And therefore I alone before the rest
Pray thee, if ever thou that country see,
Which 'twixt Romagna lies and Carlo's land,
That, thou for me be gracious with thy prayers
In Fano, so due rites may there be done,
That I may purge away my heavy sins.
From thence I came; but the deep wounds, from which
Ebbed out the blood that was my life, were struck
Within the shelter of Antenor's sons,
Where above all I deemed myself secure;
The man of Estè prompted to the deed,
Enraged with me more than was justly due.
Yet had I made my flight but Mira-wards,
When I at Oriago was o'erta'en,
I should be still where men draw life in breath.
To the lagoon I ran, and reeds and bog
Entangling me, I fell; and there I saw
Form on the ground a pool from out my veins."
Then said another: "So may accomplish'd be
The wish that draws thee to this lofty mount,
In pity help me to achieve my own.
Buonconte I, of Montefeltro once:
For me Giovanna cares not; nor the rest;
And so with these I tramp with downcast brow."
And I to him: "What force or evil chance
From Campaldino led thee so astray,
That never hath thy burial place been known?"
"Ah!" he replied, "at Casentino's foot
A stream named Archiano runs, with springs
Above the Hermitage i' th' Apennines;
There, where this river loses first its name,
Did I arrive, transfixed in the throat,
Flying afoot, and weltering o'er the plain.
The powers of vision failed me there; and speech
In name of Mary ceased; and in that spot
I fell, and nothing save my flesh remained.
The truth I’ll tell, repeat it where men live;  
God’s Angel caught me, and the fiend of hell  
Yell’d out: ‘Why sent from heaven to cheat me thus?  
Thou bearest off the eternal part of him  
For one poor tear, that snatches him from me:  
This other part I’ll deal with otherwise.’  
Thou knowest well how in the air collects  
That humid vapour which to water turns,  
Soon as it rises, now by cold condensed.  
That evil will, which only evil seeks,  
He joined with cunning, stirring mist and wind,  
Through the prerogative his nature gave.  
Then when the day was spent, the vale he wrapped  
From Pratomagno to the mountain range  
In fog; the sky above he clouded o’er,  
So that the pregnant air to water changed:  
Down fell the rain, and to the runlets came  
So much of it, as earth could not retain:  
And as it mingled with the mightier streams,  
Towards the Royal River with such speed  
It headlong rushed, that nought could stay its course.  
Impetuous Archian above its fall  
My frozen body found, and swept it on  
Towards Arno, loosening on my breast the Cross  
I made of me, when Agony set in;  
Rolled me along the banks and depths below;  
Then with its wreckage girt and covered me.”  
“Ah! when unto the world thou hast returned,  
And from thy tedious journey rested well,”  
After the second spirit said a third,  
“Recall me to thee, me La Pia named:  
Siena made me, Maremma unmade me;  
As well he knows, who wedded with his ring  
Me, whom another had before espoused.
WHEN from a game of hazard men break up,
   The loser in vexation stays behind,
   Repeats the throws and a sad lesson learns;
But with the winner off go all the rest;
   One walks in front, one plucks his gown behind,
   One at his side would recognition claim.
He taries not; listens to this and that;
   They crowd no more to whom he gives his hand,
   And from the crush he thus protects himself.
So did I find myself in that dense crowd,
   This way and that, turning my face to them,
   And by a promise getting clear away.
There was the Aretin, who from the arm
   Of grim Ghin Tacco his death-blow received;
   The other too who in hot chase was drowned.
There in entreaty stood with outspread palms
   Frederic Novello, and the Pisan, who
   Made good Marzucco show his fortitude.
I saw Count Orso; and the soul divorced
   From its own body by an envious hate
   He said; and not for any deed of guilt;
Pier della Brosse I mean; and, while on earth,
   The Lady of Brabant should well provide
   That she therefore do not a worse herd join.
Freed altogether from this band of shades,
   Whose only prayer was for the prayer of friends
   That they the sooner might be changed to Saints,
Myself began: "Light of my soul, to me
Thou seem'st in one text plainly to deny, 31
That heaven's decree can bend to mortal prayer, 34
And yet for this alone these people pray. 37

Can then it be that this their hope is vain? 40
Or are thy words by me ill understood?”
And he to me: “That which I wrote is plain; 43
And as for these their hope deceives them not,
If with a sound mind thou consider well.

For Justice is not from her height abased, 46
When in one moment fire of love fills up 49
All that each inmate here must satisfy.
And in the place where I laid down this point,
Defect could not by prayer amended be,
Because the suppliant was not one with God.

Indeed on speculation high as this
No judgment form, if she to thee speak not,
Who light will be ’twixt truth and intellect.
I know not if thou understand; I speak
Of Beatrice: her thou wilt see above,
Smiling, and blessèd on this mountain’s top.”

“My Lord,” said I, “On quickly let us haste,
I am not weary, as I was erewhile;
And see; e’en now the hill a shadow casts.”

“On we will push, long as the daylight lasts,”
He answered, “far as we shall be allowed.
But other than thou thinkest stands the case.
Before thou gain the height, thou’lt see return
Him, whom the hill already hides from view,
So that his rays thou dost not intercept.

But yonder see a soul, who sits alone,
Quite by himself, whose looks toward us are turned.
He will instruct us of the shortest way.”

To him we came: O soul, true Lombard born,
How lofty was thine air, and nobly proud;
Thine eye slow moving, calm in dignity!
No word of any kind did he vouchsafe;
Approach allowed only with watchful eye,
As might a lion couchant at his rest.
Still Virgil drew towards him with request,
   That he would show to us the best ascent:
   To this enquiry he did not reply;
But of our country and our mode of life
   He asked. My gentle leader had begun:
"Mantua"—and the shade till then self-wrapped,
Towards him rose from where he was before;
"O Mantuan," said he, "I Sordello am,
   Of thine own land."  And one the other clasped.
Ah servile Italy, a hostelry of woe,
   Ship without pilot in a mighty storm,
No queen of nations, but a bordel thou!
So promptly eager was this noble soul,
   At the sweet sound of his own land alone,
   To give his countryman a welcome there!
And now thy living sons within thee are
   Ne'er without war; one on the other preys;
   L'en they, whom the same wall and moat enclose.
Search, wretched land, thy cities round the shores
   Of thy whole seaboard, and then inland turn;
   See if one spot there be, that peace makes glad,
What boots it that Justinian did for thee
   The bridle mend, if void the saddle be?
   Without him surely had thy shame been less.
Ah! ye who should a pious people be,
   And Cæsar leave firm in the saddle set,
If well ye read what God prescribes to you,
Mark how this beast hath fierce and fell become,
   No longer now corrected by the spur,
   Since on the bridle ye did lay the hand.
Albert of Germany, who in neglect
   Dost leave the horse intractable and wild,
   Which in the saddle thou should'st have bestrode,
May judgment fall in justice from the stars,
   Wondrous and manifest upon thy seed,
   Such as may terrify thy successor.
For in your greed engrossed of lands beyond
The Alps, thou and thy father have allowed
The garden of the Empire to lie waste.

Come see the Montagus and Capulets,
Monaldi, Filippeschi too; in grief
Are those; these full of fear, thou reckless man.

Come cruel one, come and th' oppression see
Of thine own chiefs; their outrages redress;
And see withal how safe is Sanfior.

Rome too, that is thine own, see in her tears,
Widowed, alone, as day and night she cries;
"My Cæsar, why thus absent from my side?"

Come, see what love among thy people dwells;
And if no pity for us stir thy soul,
O come for very shame of thy repute.

If lawful 'tis for me, O God, most High,
Who upon earth wast crucified for us.
Why are Thine eyes of Justice turned elsewhere?

Or is it preparation made in depths
Of thine own counsel for some good, which is
From our perception utterly cut off;

For cities all of Italy are full
Of tyrant lords, and a Marcellus now
Each boor is hailed, that shouts a party cry.

Firenze mine, well mayst thou be content
With this digression that concerns thee not;
Thanks to the prudence of thy people's plans.

In many hearts is Justice found, her shaft
Held back, till counsel shall discharge the bow:
But with thy sons on the tongue's tip she sits.

Many refuse the load of public cares;
But eagerly thy citizens respond,
Uncalled, and shout: "Set it upon my back."

Rejoice then now, good cause thou hast indeed!
Wealthy thou art; peace and sound sense are thine.
That I speak truth, the facts make evident.

Athens and Lacedemon, which did frame
The ancient laws, well versed in civil arts,
Of upright living gave but the mere hint,
Compared with thee, who dost thy policy
So finely spin, that of October's web
In mid November nothing hath survived.

How oft within the time thou canst thyself
Recall, coinage and office, custom, laws
Hast thou reformed, thy citizens renewed!

If thou recall, and have the light to see,
Thy likeness thou wilt find in that sick girl,
Who upon downy pillow finds no rest,
But parries pain shifting from side to side.
CANTO VII.

Ante-Purgatory—The Sweet Valley—
Princes set on Earthly Glory.

AFTER their stately greetings with much joy
Had been repeated three and four times o’er,
Sordello, drawing back, said: “Who are ye?”
“Or ever to this hill had souls been sent,
Accounted worthy to ascend to God,
My bones were buried by Octavian.
Virgil am I, and for no other sin
‘Did I lose heav’n, than for the lack of faith.’"
Such answer then my leader made to him.
As one who something suddenly perceives
In front of him, and wonderstruck believes,
Then doubts again, says, “’tis, no, it is not,”
Such did he seem, and then with brow bent low,
Returning to him in humility,
He clasped him where a servant would embrace:
“O Glory of the Latin race,” he said,
By whom our tongue its fullest power displayed;
Eternal glory of my native place!
What merit, or what grace shows thee to me?
If I be worthy words of thine to hear,
Say if thou come from hell, and from which ward.”
“Through all the circles of the doleful realm,”
He answered him, “hither am I arrived:
Virtue from heaven moved me; by it I come.
Not for deeds done, but left undone, have I
Lost sight of that high Sun, which thou dost crave,
And which too late by me was understood.
A place there is down there, not dismal made
CANTO. VII.

By torment, only dark, where our laments
Sound not in groans, but only breathe in sighs.

There I abide with little innocents,
Caught by the fangs of death, or ever they
From common guilt of man had been set free.

There I abide 'mong such as ne'er were clothed
In the three holy Graces; but the rest
They knew without defect, and practised all.

But if thou know, and may, some guidance give
To us, how we more quickly may arrive
Where Purgatory truly first begins."

Said he: "No limit here for us is set;
Upward and round am I allowed to pass;
As guide I join thee far as I may go.

But see already how the day declines;
Impossible by night is all ascent,
'Twere well we think then of some fair retreat.

Souls are there in retirement on our right:
If thou consent, thee will I lead to them,
And to know them will no displeasure be."

"But how is this?" was then the answer, "if
One wish to mount by night, would he be stopped
By others, or unable find himself?"

And good Sordello then his fingers rubbed
Along the ground, saying: "This line alone
Thou couldst not cross after the sun were down:
Not that aught else an obstacle would raise
To thy ascent, save the dark cloud of night,
Which with "Thou canst not" doth enthrall "I would."

Thou mightest well through it descend below,
And take thy walk, rambling around the hill,
Long as the horizon keeps the day shut out."

My lord thereon in wonderment replied:
"Then lead us to the point, where thou dost say
We may enjoyment find, while thus delayed."

A little distance had we thence removed,
When I observed the mountain hollowed out,
As hollowed out are valleys down below,
"Yonder," that shade said then, "will we repair,
Where of itself the hillside forms a lap,
And there will we await the day's return."
A winding path, not level yet not steep,
Led us along the margin of the glen
To where the edge dies more than half away.
Gold and fine silver, scarlet and dead white,
The wood of India, lustrous and serene,
And emerald fresh, as when it first is split,
These, in that dell if placed, in colour would
Be by its grass and flowers as far surpassed,
As by its greater is the less o'ercome.
Nor was this painting nature's only work;
But of the perfume of a thousand scents
She made a mingled sweetness never known.
Shades I beheld, who seated on the sward
Amid the flowers Salve Regina sang,
Invisable to those outside the vale.
"Before the fading sun sinks to his rest."
Began the Mantuan, who had led us there,
"Wish not among those spirits to be brought.
Here from this terrace will you better note,
In act and feature, the assembly there,
Than welcomed by them in the glade below:
He who sits highest, and like one appears,
Who failed in duty that he should have done,
And whose lips move not with the other's song,
The Emperor Rudolph was; he, who might once
Have healed the wounds that Italy have slain,
Whom to revive another slowly comes.
The next, who by his look doth comfort him,
Once ruled the land from whence the waters spring,
Which Moldaw bears to Elbe, Elbe to the Sea.
His name was Ottocar; in swaddling clothes
Far better he, than bearded Wenceslas,
His son, pampered in ease and luxury.
He with small nose, who seems in counsel close
With him who bears the aspect so benign,
Deflowering his own lily, fell in flight.
Behold him there, how on his breast he smites.
The other mark, who for his cheek hath made
Amidst his sighs a bed of his own palm.

Father, and father-in-law of him, who is
The curse of France, they know his vicious life,
And foul; thence comes the grief that pierces them.

He, who displays that stalwart frame, and who
Attunes his song with him of manly nose,
Was with the cord of every virtue girt.
And if the youth had after him remained
As King, who in the back ground takes his seat,
From vase to vase well had that virtue passed;
Which cannot of the other heirs be said.

Frederick and Giacomo the kingdoms hold,
But neither shares the better heritage.

For seldom in the branches sprouts again
The probity of man; such is His Will
Who gives it, that from Him it may be sought.

Again to yon huge nose my words apply,
(As too to Piero, who sings with him,)
For whom Apulia and Provence do mourn.

So much the plant is meaner than its seed,
As more than Beatrice and Margaret can,
Costanza of her husband still may boast.

See how the monarch of the simple life,
Harry of England, yonder sits alone:
He in his branches nobler issue hath.

He, who 'mong them sits humbly on the ground,
With eyes upraised, is William the Margrave,
For whose sake Allessandria and her war
Cause Monserrat and Canavese their tears.
'Twas now the hour, when homeward fond desire
Returns to sailors, and a tender heart
Melts, on the day it said to friends "Goodbye;"
When the young pilgrim too is thrill'd with love,
As from afar he hears the belfry chime,
That seems the knell of the expiring day;
And I began all listening to suspend,
As I observed among the spirits, one
Rise up, and with his hand attention crave.
Both palms it joined, and lifted them on high,
Fixing its eyes towards the East, as though
'Twould say to God: "No care, but only Thou."
With such devotion from its mouth went forth
Te lucis ante, and in strain so sweet,
That sense of self I lost in ecstasy.
The others after in sweet piety
Followed its leading through the entire hymn,
With eyes upraised to the supernal spheres.
Reader, here sharpen to the truth thine eyes,
For now indeed so subtle is the veil,
That easy 'tis to penetrate within.
That high born army did I then behold,
In silence after gaze up toward the sky
As if expectant, modestly and pale:
And from on high I saw come forth, and down
Descend two Angels, with two flaming swords,
Broken short off, deprived of the point.
Green as the little leaves, just opening fresh
Their garments were, which, with their pinions green
Wafted and waving, they trailed after them.
One took his post a little o'er our heads;
One 'lighted on the bank just opposite,
So that between the two the people stood.
I well discerned the fair locks of the head,
But in their faces baffled was mine eye,
As faculty confounded by excess.
"From Mary's bosom hither they both come,"
Sordello said, "as guardians of the dell
Against the serpent that will soon appear."
Whereupon I, who knew not by what path,
Turned me about, and frozen in alarm
Up to the trusty shoulders closely drew.
Again Sordello spake: "Descend we now
'Mong the great shades, and we will talk with them:
To see you will to them most grateful be."
Only three steps, I think, did I descend,
And stood below; and one I saw, who gazed
On me, as though he would acquaintance claim.
Already now the air was dark'ning o'er,
But not so dark, that 'tween his eyes and mine
Could not be seen what had before been hid.
Towards me he made his way, and I toward him:
O Nino, noble Judge, how glad was I
To see that thou wert not among the lost.
No kindly greeting 'tween us left unsaid,
Inquired he then: "How long since thou arrived
O'er the far waters at the mountain foot?"
"Oh! from the haunts of woe this morning 'twas
I came," said I, "and in the first life still,
That I may yet as pilgrim win the next."
And when mine answer to him thus was heard,
He and Sordello starting back retired,
As folk, whom something suddenly confounds.
The one to Virgil turned, the other to a shade
There seated, with a cry, "Up, Conrad up;
Come see what God most graciously hath willed."

Then turned to me: "By that rare favour, which
Thou ow'rt to Him, who hideth aye so deep
His first Wherefore, that no ford leads to it,
When cross the wide waves thou shalt yonder be,
Bid my Giovanna there to pray for me,
Whence to the innocent an answer comes.
I think her mother loves me now no more
Since the white weeds of mourning she hath changed,
The which poor soul she needs must yet desire.
Easy it is from her to understand
How long in woman burns the fire of love,
When fed no more by sight and oft embrace?
No funeral pomp for her the Viper will
Provide that leads the Milanese afield;
Such as Gallura's Cock would have arrayed.''
Such words he spake, marked plainly with the stamp
Upon his features of that upright zeal,
Which in due measure sets a heart aglow.
My greedy eyes now turned towards Heaven alone,
There only, where the stars the slowest turn,
As nearest to the axle rolls the wheel.
My leader then: "My son, what dost thou see
Up there?" and I to him: "Those torches three,
With which this hither pole is all ablaze.''
And he to me: "The four resplendent stars
Thou didst this morning see have yonder sunk,
And these have risen where the others were.''
As thus he spake, Sordello drew him close,
Saying: "Behold our adversary there,''
And with his finger pointing where to look;
Upon the side, where no embankment girds
The little valley, lay a serpent; such
Perchance as gave to Eve the bitter fruit.
Amid the grass and flowers with baneful trail
The reptile came, turning anon its head
To lick its back, like beast that smooths itself.
CANTO VIII.

I did not see, and therefore cannot tell
   How the celestial eagles 'gan to move
But when in motion well I saw them both.

Hearing their green wings as they cleft the air,
   The serpent fled; the angels wheeling round
Up to their posts returned in even flight.

The shade which to the Judge's side had drawn,
   Prompt at his call, throughout the whole attack
Not for a moment ceased to gaze on me.

"So may the torch that guideth thee on high
   Find in thy resolution so much wax,
As needed is to reach the enamelled height,"

Thus he began; "if veritable news
   Of Valdimacra, or its neighbourhood
Thou know, tell me, for there I once was great.

Corrado Malaspina was my name;
   Not the old man am I: but sprung from him:
Mine own I loved with love here purified.

"Oh!" said I to him, "through those lands of yours
   I never passed; but where dwells there a man
To whom through Europe's range they are unknown?

The glory which brings honour to your house,
   Proclaims its lords, proclaims its countryside,
So that one knows it, who was never there.

To you I swear, so may I upward mount,
   That in your honoured race no tarnish soils
The lustre of its purse, nor of its sword.

Nature and nurture have endowed it so,
   Albeit the guilty head pervert the world,
It only keeps the right, and scorns the wrong."

And he: "Now go; not seventimes more the sun
   Shall to the bed return, which the Great Ram
With all his four feet covers and bestrides,

Ere thy opinion, courteous thus and kind,
   Shall in the middle of thy head be nailed
With stronger nails than words of any man,

Unless the course of Justice cease to run."
CANTO IX.

Ante-Purgatory—The Sweet Valley—Dante's Dream—
The Eagle and Lucia—The Gate of Purgatory—
The Angel Janitor.

The concubine of old Tithonus now
Upon the Eastern terrace gimmer'd white,
Forth from the arms of her sweet paramour:
Her forehead gleamed with light of jewels, set
In form of the chill reptile that with sting
Of tail envenomed smites the nations through:
And of the steps wherewith the night ascends,
Where we were standing, she had taken two,
And now the third began to droop its wings;
When I, who in me so much Adam had,
O'ercome by sleep, sank down upon the grass,
Just where the five of us together sat.
About the hour when now her plaintive lay
The little swallow 'gins, as morning dawns,
Perchance in mem'ry of her former woes,
And when on pilgrimage our mind goes forth
Farthest from flesh, and hampered least by thought,
Prophetic almost in its visions then,
An eagle in the sky appeared in dream,
Hovering above me with her plumes of gold,
And wings outspread, as ready for the swoop;
And for myself it seemed that I was there,
Where Ganymede abandoned his own friends,
Borne off to the Consistory above.
I thought within me that perchance of wont
She stoops but here, and from elsewhere disdains
To carry in her talons aught aloft.
Me seemed that after wheeling round awhile,
Downward she swooped, as lightning terrible,
And bore me off far as the sphere of fire.

There she and I were burning, as it seemed,
And the imagined furnace scorched me so,
Need was that broken should my slumber be.

Not otherwise Achilles shook himself,
Rolling his wakened eyes in survey round,
And knowing nothing of the place he'd reached,
When in his mother's arms from Chiron's care
He was to Scyros borne away asleep,
From whence the Greeks removed him afterwards,

Than I did shake myself, as from my face
Sleep fled away, and pale I grew as death,
Like one whose blood in terror turns to ice.

There by my side stood my sole comforter;
More than two hours the sun had risen now,
And to the open sea my face was turned.

"Be not afraid," the Elder said to me,
"Be reassured; a good point we have reached:
Restrain not, but redouble all thy force:

At Purgatory art thou now arrived:
See there the parapet that girds it round;
See there the entrance where yon rift appears.

Just now at flush of dawn preceding day,
While within thee thy soul was wrapped in sleep
Upon the flowers, which down there deck the ground,

A Lady came; "Lucia I," she said;
"This sleeper let me take into my arms,
So will I make his journey easier."

Sordello stayed, and th' other noble forms:
She raised thee up, and as day clearer grew,
Hither she rose, I following in her wake.

Here did she set thee down, but first to me
Her beauteous eyes yon open entrance showed.
Then she and sleep together went away."

Like one in doubt, who reassures himself,
And who for confidence exchanges fear,
Soon as the truth hath been to him made plain,
I too was changed; and as my Leader saw
Me free from care, up o'er the slope above
He moved, and I behind him towards the height.

Reader, thou seest well how I exalt
My theme; and if with greater art I seek
To underprop its weight, be not surprised.

Nearer we drew, and at a point arrived,
Where what at first no greater had appeared
Than fissure in a wall that starts away,
I saw to be a gateway, by three steps
Approached below, each of a diverse tint;
A warder too, who spake not yet a word;
And as I opened more and more mine eyes,
I saw him seated on the topmost step,
Of aspect such I dared not look upon him,
A naked sword too in his hand he held,
Which so reflected the sun's rays on us,
That oft toward him in vain I turned my eyes.

"Tell me, where there you stand, what is your will,"
So did his speech begin, "The escort where?
Beware that this ascent work you no hurt."

"From heaven a Lady," said my Master, "skilled
In all these things, but a few hours ago
Spake to us thus: Go up, the gate is there."

"And to your good may she advance your steps,"
Began the courteous Janitor again;
"So forward to these steps of ours advance."

Thither we came unto the first step, which
Of marble was, white, smooth and polished so,
That mirror'd in it I my likeness saw.
The second was in tint darker than perse,
Compact of small stones, rough and scorched by fire,
With cracks athwart it in its length and breadth.
The third, which rested ponderously at top,
Of porphyry me-thought it, fiery red,
Like blood, which from a vein spurts freshly forth.
On this God's Angel rested both his feet,
   Seated the while upon the threshold floor,
   Which seemed to me a block of adamant.
Up the three steps, and with my hearty will,
   My Leader drew me, saying: "Thy request
   Make humbly, that the bolt may be withdrawn."
Devout I cast me at the holy feet.
   In mercy's name I prayed him ope to me:
   But first upon the breast I smote me thrice.
A P upon my brow he seven times traced
   With the sword's point. "Give heed that thou do wash
   These wounds, when once thou art within," he said.
Ashes, or earth which has been dug out dry,
   Would of one colour with his garment be,
   From 'neath the folds of which he drew two keys.
Of gold the one, silver the other was:
   First with the white, and with the yellow next
   He plied the door, so that I was content.
"Whenever faileth either of these keys,
   So that it turns not rightly in the lock,"
   Said he to us, "this passage opens not.
More precious is the one; but th' other needs
   Discernment and much skill ere it unlocks;
   For this is it which must untie the knot.
From Peter I hold both; he bade me err
   Rather in opening than in keeping shut,
   If only at my feet men humbly kneel."
The wicket of the holy portal he
   Thrust back; "Enter," he said, "but be assured
   That forth departs, whoever looketh back."
And when upon their hinges were swung round
   The swivels of that consecrated gate,
   Which are of metal resonant and strong,
Tarpeia did not roar so loud, nor show
   Herself so shrill, when good Metellus thence
   Was dragged, and lean and hungry she was left.
Attentive turned to the first thunder roll,
Te Deum Laudamus I seemed to catch
In vocal strain mingled with dulcet notes.
What I then heard the impress reproduced
In me, precisely such as oft is formed,
When with the organs men stand up and sing,
And now the words are heard, and now are not.
WHEN now within the threshold of the gate
Which souls use seldom, by an evil love
Misled, that makes the crooked path seem straight,
By its loud slam I knew that it was closed:
And had I then turned back mine eyes toward it,
For error such what had been fit excuse?
We mounted, climbing through a hollowed rock,
Which shifted zigzag out from either side,
Somewhat as wave that flows and ebbs again.

"Here is there need to use a little skill,"
Began my guide, "in keeping ourselves close
Now here, now there to the retiring side."
This made our steps so tardy and so short,
That now the waning moon already had
Regained her bed, once more to take her rest,
Ere we had issued from that needle's eye:
But when above, open and free, we reached
A point, where sloping back the cliff recedes,
Myself worn out, uncertain both of us
Which way to turn, upon a level road,
More lonely than a desert track, we paused.
From edge of this, where borders it on space,
To foot of the high cliff, which sheer ascends,
Might be three times the measure of a man:
And far as eye could forward wing its flight,
Now to the right, and now upon the left,
This ledge seemed to me uniform in breadth.
We had not yet upon it moved a foot,
When I observed the circle of the cliff,
Which, perpendicular, cut off ascent,
To be of whitest marble, and adorned
With bas-reliefs, that there would put to shame
Not Polycletus, but e'en Nature's self.
The Angel, who to earth with warrant came
Of peace, which, sought for many a year with tears,
Re-opened Heaven, freed from the ancient ban,
Before us showed so truthfully in form
Incised there, in attitude so sweet,
That he no silent portraiture displayed;
But one had sworn: Surely he saith "Ave,"
Such the resemblance imaged forth of Her,
Who turned the key to open Love on high.
And in her gesture was the legend stamped
Ecce ancilla Dei, as exact
As is a figure upon wax impressed.
"Keep not the mind set on one spot alone,"
Said the sweet Master, as I stood by him
On that side where with men the heart is found;
Whereon I shifted my regard, and saw
In rear of Mary and upon that side
Where in respect of me my Leader stood,
Another story graven on the rock;
Virgil I therefore passed, and closer drew,
So that for view it might be well in sight.
There chiselled in the self same marble were
The cart and holy Ark by oxen drawn,
Dread warning 'gainst an office self imposed.
In front were people seen, who, one and all,
In seven choirs grouped, of my two senses made
The one say "No," the other "Yes, they sing."
And the smoke too from out the thuribles
Depicted there, made nose and eyes at once
In no and yes divergent judgment give.
Going before the consecrated shrine
There did the humble Psalmist dance, high girt;
And more and less than King he shewed herein.
In face of him Michal, in outline seen,
As from a palace window she looked forth,
In wonder gazed, disdainful and displeased.
I moved my feet away from where I stood,
Better to scrutinize another scene,
Which behind Michal gleamed on me in white.
And there was chronicled the glorious tale
Of that great Roman Prince, by whose desert
Was Gregory stirred to his high victory:
'Tis of the Emperor Trajan that I speak;
And at his bridle a poor widow stood,
Displayed in attitude of grief and tears.
Around him the space seemed trampled by throngs
Of knights and horses; eagles wrought in gold
Were seen above him waving in the wind.
The wretched woman in the midst of these,
"My Sovran," seemed to say, "Vengeance grant me
For a slain son, who fills my heart with grief."
And he appeared to answer her: "Wait yet,
Till I return again: "My lord," said she,
As one whom anguish maketh bold to speak,
"If thou return not?" He: "Who fills my place,
Will do it then." And she: "Others' good deeds
What gain to thee, if thou forget thine own?"
And he: "Take comfort then, for meet it is,
Before I stir, my duty I discharge;
Justice demands, and pity bids me halt."
He in whose sight nothing is ever new,
Himself produced this speech made visible,
New but to us, since 'tis not found on earth.
While I, enraptured with delight, beheld
These portraits of so great humility,
And for the Artist's sake so dear to view;
"See on this side, though with but tardy steps,"
Whispered the Poet, "numerous people come:
They to the stair aloft will speed our way."
Mine eyes, that in their gaze were on the stretch
To see new things, wherein is their delight,
To turn around towards him were not slow. Yet Reader, I would not thou turn aside From aught thou purpose well, because thou hear'st How God doth will that debt should be discharged. Attend not to the form of suffering: Think what comes afterwards; think that at worst, Beyond the great doomsday it cannot run. “My Master,” I began, “what I perceive Moving toward us, seems not to me like men; What ’tis I know not, so confused my sight.” And he to me: “The grievous circumstance Of torment here so crusheth them to earth, That mine own eyes at first were sorely strained. But closer look, and disentangle with Thy sight what underneath those stones draws nigh; Thou now canst see each smiting on his breast.” O ye proud Christians, wretched and worn out, Who in the feeble foresight of your minds Have set your trust upon a backward course, Perceive ye not that we are only worms, Born to become the angelic butterfly, That without subterfuge to Judgment soars? Why thus inflated floats your soul aloft, When but defective insects are ye all, And short of full perfection like the grub? As to sustain a ceiling or a roof, For corbel a man’s figure sometimes serves, And shows the knees contracted to the chest, Whereat the untrue causes true concern To spring in whoso sees it, even such Did I see them, as I the closer looked. True is it they were more or less bowed down, As on their backs they bore or more or less; Yet he who had most patience in his mien, Seemed to sob forth in tears, “I can no more.”
CANTO XI.

The First Circle—Pride—A Prayer.
Humbert of Santiflore—Oderisi d'Agubbio.
Provenzan Salvani.

"O THOU, our Father, which in heaven art,
Not there confined, but in the greater love
Thou hast for Thy first handiwork above,
Praised be Thy Name and Thy Almighty work
By every creature, as tis' meet indeed
To render thanks to Thy sweet effluence.
Grant that Thy kingdom's Peace to us may come,
For we to it can ne'er ourselves attain
With all our powers, if it come not to us;
As of their own free will Thine Angels make
To Thee an offering with Hosannas sung,
So may mankind of their's another make.
Give us this day the Manna of to-day,
Withouten which through this rude wilderness
He backward falls, who toils most to advance.
And as for ill that others do to us
We forgive each, to us in mercy grant
Forgiveness, and regard not our deserts.
Our virtue, which so soon is beaten down,
Put not to trial with the ancient foe,
But set us free from him, who galls it sore.
This last petition for ourselves, dear Lord,
We make not now, because we need it not,
But for all those, whom we have left behind."
A prosperous course thus for themselves and us
Those shades did pray, moving beneath a load,
Like th' incubus we sometimes feel in dreams;
Not all in equal pain and weariness,
As on the first ledge round and round they pace,
Purging away the black smoke of the world.
If yonder good prayers aye for us are said,
What cannot here be said or done for them
By such as have the root of a good will?

Well ought we then to help wash out the stains,
Which they bore hence, so that agile and clean
They may pass forth into the starry spheres.

"Ah! so may righteousness and mercy soon
Disburthen you, enabling you to wing
A speedy flight whither your longings yearn,

Show on which side towards the stair above
The path is shortest, and if more than one,
That teach, which with the easier steep inclines;
For he who comes with me beneath the load
Of Adam's flesh, wherein he still is clothed,
In this ascent, against his will, is slow."

Their words, which came in answer unto these
Spoken by him, whose steps I waited on,
From whom proceeding were not manifest;
But I heard say: "To right along the bank
In company with us you'll find the pass
Available for living man to scale;
And were I not encumbered with this stone,
Which doth my proud neck in abasement bend,
So that needs must I bear my visage low,
On him who liveth, but tells not his name,
I fain would look, to see if I know him,
And make him of my load compassionate.

Latian I was, a noble Tuscan's son;
My father, William Aldobrandesco
I know not if his name e'er came to you.

My ancient blood and all the knightly deeds
Of my forefathers bred such arrogance,
That heeding not the mother of us all,
I bore myself so scornfully to men
That death came thence, as know the Sienese,
And ev'ry boy in Campagnatico.

Humbert am I: and not to me alone
Is pride my loss, for all my kindred too
Hath it dragged with it to calamity.
And here for it must I this weight endure,
Until to God the compensation's made
Amid the dead, which living I made not.”
And as I listened with my head bowed low,
One of the shades, not he that spake with me,
Twisted him 'neath the weight that hampers him,
And saw, and knew me, and gave forth a cry,
Keeping his eyes with effort fixed on me,
Who all bowed down was walking by their side.

"Ah! Oderisi," said I, "is it thou,
Agubbio's honour, honour of the art,
Which Paris now Illumination styles?"
"Brother," said he, "more brightly smile the leaves,
Which Franco Bolognese's pencil paints:
Full honour now is his, but partial mine.
And not indeed thus courteous had I been,
While that I lived, so great was the desire
Of eminence on which my heart was set.
For all such pride the forfeit here is paid,
And even here I should not be, but that
While able still to sin, I turned to God.

O the vain glory of all human power,
How shortlived is the green leaf of thy wreath,
Unless an age of grosser taste ensue!
In painting Cimabue used to think
He held the field; Giotto is now the cry,
So that the other's fame is overcast.
One Guido likewise from the other takes
The fame of letters, and perhaps is born
Some one that from the nest shall thrust them both.
The uproar of the world is but a puff
Of wind, which blows now this way, and now that,
Changing its name, its quarter as it shifts.

What greater fame for thee, if in old age
Thou shed thy flesh, than hadst thou died ere yet
Daddy and Geegee thou had'st dropped, when pass
A thousand years which, to eternity,
Are shorter far than twinkling of an eye
To slowest circle that in heaven revolves,
With him, who here takes up so little road
In front of me, all Tuscany once rang;
To-day Siena hardly breathes his name,
Where he was lord, what time was overthrown
Florentine fury, which in its height of pride
Stood at that day, as prostituted now.
Your high renown is coloured like the grass;
It comes and goes, and he its verdure steals,
By whom it springs in freshness from the soil.”
And I to him: “Thy truthful words plant in
My heart humility, and pride abase:
But who is he of whom thou spak’st but now?”
He answered: “Provenzàn Salvani he;
And he is here, in that he did presume
To his own hands Siena to reduce.
Thus hath he gone, and without respite goes
Since first he died. Such is the coin he pays
In recompense, who aims too high down there.”
And I again: “If that soul which awaits,
Ere he repent, the selvedge of his life,
Tarry down there, and do not here ascend,
If unassisted by friends’ fervent prayers,
Till time have passed, long as the years he lived,
By what largess is he already here?”
“While living yet, “he said,” in high estate,
He in Siena’s public square took up
His post, and there of his free will, all shame
Dismissed, to liberate a friend from fine
He smarted for in Carlo’s jail, he dared
A deed that made him shiver through his veins:
I’ll say no more; what’s said, I know is dark:
But short the time ere thine own neighbours shall
So deal, that thou wilt well interpret this:
That deed from you confines deliver’d him.
CANTO XII.

The First Circle—Pride—Examples of the Penalty of Pride.
The Angel of Humility—Ascent to the Second Circle.

ABREAST, as oxen go, together yoked,
With that sore laden soul I made my way,
While my sweet tutor so permitted it.
But when he said, "Leave him, and now pass on,
For here 'tis well with studding sail and oar,
For each, as best he can, to urge his boat,"
Erect, as should be for a march, once more
I raised my body up, although within
My thoughts remained depressed, and humbly set.
I had moved on, and followed cheerily
My master's footsteps; and the two of us
Already showed how light we were of foot,
When he said to me: "Turn thine eyes below;
Good will it be as solace on the way,
To note the bed, which gives thy feet support."
As, that remembrance of them may endure,
On level tombstones 'bove the buried dead
The form is traced of what they were in life,
(Whence there to tenderest tears we oft are drawn
In the compunction of remembered worth,
Which to a pitying heart applies the spur,
So saw I there the full breadth of the road
From the hillside adorned with outlined forms,
Though in their art of finer portraiture.
I saw on one side him, who, of all things
E'er made, the noblest creature was, from height
Of heaven hurled down mid flash of lightning fires;
I saw Briareus, pierced with the bolt
Celestial, lie right opposite to him,
Ponderous on earth, stiff in the chill of death.
I saw Thymbrocus, Mars and Pallas saw
In armour still around their father stand,
Contemplating the Giants' scattered limbs.

I saw Nimrod at foot of his huge pile
In consternation gazing on the tribes,
Whose pride on plain of Shinar wrought with his.

O Niobe! with eyes how tearful I
Beheld thy woes upon the pathway traced,
Amidst thy children in their seven-fold groups.

O Saul! how plainly, lying on thy sword,
Didst thou appear in death on Gilboa's hill,
Which felt thereafter neither rain nor dew.

O fond Arachne! thee too I beheld,
Half spider now, in sorrow mid the rags
Of broidery thou in evil hour hast wrought.

O Rehoboam! now no threatening mien
Thy portrait shows, but all aghast, a car
Bears thee away ere any yet pursue.

Showed the hard pavement furthermore how dear
The price Alcmœon made his mother pay
In forfeit for her ill starr'd ornament.

It showed too how upon Sennacherib
His sons within the temple threw themselves,
And how they left him there alone with death.

It showed the rout and cruel butchery
By Tomyris wrought, as she to Cyrus said:
"Blood was thy thirst, with blood I glut thee now."

It showed again th' Assyrians in their rout,
And after Holofernes had been slain,
Showed too what of the massacre remained.

I saw in ashes Troy, a den of caves:
O Ilion, in case how vile and low
The sculpture show'd thee, as 'twas there pourtrayed.

What master of the pencil or of style
The traits and shadows could retrace, which there
Might fix the eye of subt'lest genius?
The dead were dead, the living seemed alive.
CANTO XII.

Who saw the deeds, no better saw than I
In all I trod on, as I passed bowed low.

So vaunt your pride, and foot it with high looks,
Ye sons of Eve, nor lower at all your heads
To see the evil of the path ye tread.

More of the mount already we had turned,
And of the sun's course still more had been spent,
Than could a mind preoccupied have thought,

When he who went alway with watchful heed
In front of me, began: "Lift up thy head;
No time is there to travel thus engrossed.

An Angel yonder see, who forward hastes
Coming towards us: see, e'en now returns
The sixth handmaid from service of the day.

With reverence due prepare thine acts and looks,
So may it please him well to speed us up;
Think that to-day will never dawn again."

Well used was I to admonition such
Against the loss of time, so that to me
Herein no riddle could it be he spake.

Toward us the beauteous being nearer drew,
Vested in white, and such the face he bore,
As may be seen in glint of morning star.

His arms he opened wide, and opened then
His wings, and said; "Come, for the stair is nigh,
And easy henceforth the ascent becomes.

Unto this message very few respond.
O race of men, born for a flight aloft,
Why falter thus before a passing breeze?"

He led us where the rock was hewn away;
There with his wing he touched me on the brow,
And pledged to me a journey thence secure.

As on the right, when one ascends the hill,
Where sits the Church which dominates the town,
Order'd so well, 'bove Rubaconte's bridge,
The arduous steep of the ascent is broke
By sets of stairs, which were first made in days
When gauge and ledger happily were safe,  
E'en so the slope is easier made that falls  
Abruptly from the circle next above;  
Though the high cliff grazes on either side.

As thitherward we turned our steps, we heard  
\textit{Beati pauperes spiritu} sung  
By voices such as story could not tell.

And oh! how different are the defiles here,  
From those in hell; here amidst song we find  
Our entrance, but down there mid savage howls.

The sacred stairs we had begun to mount,  
And lighter much I seemed myself to be,  
E'en than before, along the level plain;

When I: "My Master say, what heavy thing  
Have I been lightened of, for I perceive,  
As 'twere, no weariness in walking now."

He answered: "When the Ps which still remain  
Upon thy brow, though well nigh faded off,  
Shall be, as one is, totally erased,

Thy feet by such good will shall be constrained,  
That not alone will they feel no fatigue,  
But 'twill delight them to be upward urged."

Then was my act like theirs, who pass along  
With something on the head they know not of,  
Unless, by others' signs, suspicion 's roused;

Whereon the hand helps to give certainty,  
Feeling and finding, and that service lends,  
Which all unable is the eye to give;

So with the fingers of my right hand spread,  
I found but six the letters he had carved  
Above my temples, who the keys did bear:  
And as he noted this, my Leader smiled.
CANTO XIII.

The Second Circle—Envy—Examples of Charity—

*Sapia da Siena.*

The summit of the stairway we had reached,
Where for a second time the mount is cut,
Ascent of which frees every one from ill.

There too a circling ledge surrounds the hill,
Enclosing it all round just like the first,
Save that its arc more quickly curveth in,
No outlined form, nor graven, there appears,
And so the bank and the bare road are seen
Alike in livid hue of native rock.

"If here we wait to ask of anyone"
Argued the Poet then, "I fear perchance
Our choice of path will cause too long delay."

Then on the sun he fixed a steady eye,
Made his right foot the centre whence to move,
And wheeled the left side of himself full round.

"Sweet Light, with confidence in whom I now
Enter an untried road, guide us," he said,
"As guided here within one needs to be:
The world thou warmest, and its light thou art;
If other reason urge not other course,
Thy beams at all times ought to be our guide."

Far as we reckon here a mile to be,
Yonder so far had we our way pursued
In little time by force of vigorous will;

And flying now toward us, there were heard,
Not seen however, spirits who proclaimed
A courteous summons to Love's banquet hall.

The first voice, which upon the wing passed by,
In clearest tones cried: "*Vinum non habent*",
And onward went behind repeating this.
And ere we ceased wholly its distant tones
   To catch, a second voice, "Orestes I,"
With shout went by, and it too tarried not.
"What voices Father," I exclaimed, "are these?"
   And, as I asked, lo! yet a third that said,
"Love him from whom thou hast received a wrong."
"This circle scourges," so the Master said,
   "The sin of Envy, for which reason here
The lashes of the whip are drawn from Love.
The curb needs must be of contrariant tone,
   And this, if I judge right, I trow thou'lt hear,
Ere to the pass of pardon thou attain;
But through the air keep now thine eye well fixed,
   And people thou wilt see before us set,
Each in his place seated along the cliff."
Then with eyes opened wider than before,
   Forward I looked, and shadows I discerned,
Mantled in hue not other than the rock.
And when a little farther we'd advanced,
   I heard "Ora pro nobis Maria,
   And Michael too, Peter and all the Saints."
Believe I do not, that on earth there walks
   A man so hard, who would not have been wrung
With deep compassion by what next I saw:
For when I had to them so near approached,
   That all their gestures came to me distinct,
Freely mine eyes milked out my grief in tears.
In coarse sackcloth they seemed to me arrayed;
   Each on his shoulder held another up,
While 'gainst the cliff all found a full support.
E'en so blind men, in destitution left,
   Stand, where the Pard'ner comes, to ask for alms,
And one upon another leans his head,
That pity sooner may in others rise,
   Not by mere sound of the imploring words,
   But by the sight, which pleads as earnestly:
And as the sun avails nought to the blind,
CANTO XIII.

So to the shades, of whom but now I spake,
The light of heaven wills not to give itself.
For thread of iron pierceth the lids of all,
With stitches such as with the wild spar-hawk
Are made, because she will not be at rest.

An outrage seemed it, as I passed along,
To see live people, who could not see me:
Wherefore I turned to my sage counsellor.
Well did he know what was the dumb man's wish;
And therefore waited no demand from me;
But said: "Speak, and speak briefly to the point."

Virgil near me was walking on that side
Of the curved ledge, from which a man might fall,
Because it is not compassed by a fence:
On th' other side of me the suppliant shades
Were ranged, who through the horrid sutures poured
A stream of tears, that trickling bathed their cheeks.

To them I turned: "Good people, now secure,"
'Gan I, "one day to see the light above,
Desire whereof is now your only care,
May grace so speedily disperse all scum
From off your consciences, that clear through them
The stream of memory with you may flow,
Tell me, and it a welcome boon will be,
If soul there be 'mong you of Latin stock;
Well it may be for such, if so I learn."

"O Brother mine, each here is citizen
Of one true City; you would ask, did one
Of us, as pilgrim live in Italy."
I seemed to catch this answer, as it came
A little further off than where I stood;
So moved I thither to be better heard.

Among the rest one shade I saw, whose looks
Expectant seemed, and should one ask, "How so?"
It held the chin upraised, as blind folk do,
"Spirit," I said, "who to ascend dost here
Thyself subdue, if thine the answer were,
Acquaint me with thy birthplace or thy name."

"A Sienese I was," it said, "and with

The rest here cleanse life's guilty stains away
With tears to Him to grant to us Himself.

Wise I was not, although Sophia named;
And when misfortune to a neighbour came,
More I rejoiced than in mine own welfare;
And that thou may not think I play thee false,
Hear, were I not the fool I say I was.
Myself now on the downgrade of life's arc,
My countrymen not far from Collè were
In combat with their foe, and I prayed God
To do the thing, which He already willed.
Routed they were, and driven in their flight
To bitter straits, and seeing them pursued,
A joy I felt 'bove aught that I had known:
So that with daring face I upward looked,
And cried: O God, I fear thee now no more,
As doth the blackbird on a chance fine day.
Peace with my God in the last hour of life
I sought, but yet the debt I owed e'en now
By such repentance had not been cancelled,
If with compassion in his holy prayers
Pier Pettignano had not mentioned me,
And of his charity had pitied me.
But who art thou, that com'st inquiring thus
Of our estate, and, with thine eyes unclosed,
As I believe, and breathing dost converse?"

"Mine eyes will yet be taken from me here,"
I said, "but for short while; for small the wrong
They've done through being enviously turned.
Much greater is the fear, in which my soul
Hangs in suspense, of torment further down,
The load of which e'en now weighs heavily?"
And she to me: "Who then hath led thee up
'Mongst us, if to return below thou think?"
And I: "He who is with me, and speaks not:
CANTO XIII.

I am alive, and so make thy request,
Spirit elect, if yonder 'tis thy will
I move my mortal feet in thy behalf."

"Oh! this is thing so strange to hear," she said,
"That great sign is it of God's love for thee;
Therefore assist me sometimes with thy prayers.
And this I ask by what thou most wouldst have;
If e'er thou tread the soil of Tuscany,
Restore my good repute among my kin.
Them thou wilt find among those silly folk
Who trust in Talamon, and there will waste
More hopes than they on the Diana spent;
But there the Admirals will lose the most."
CANTO XIV.

Second Round—Envy—Guido del Duca and Rinier da Calboli—

The Romagna in MCCC. Examples of Envious in Penance.

"WHO may this be that circleth round our hill,
Or ever death hath bidden him take flight;
Who opes his eyes at will, and closeth them?"

"I know him not, but know he's not alone:
Ask him thyself, who nearer art to him,
And greet him kindly, that he speak to thee."

Two spirits thus, one o'er the other bent,
Of me were speaking there upon my right;
And to address me threw their faces back:
Said one of them: "O Soul, that still enclosed
In mortal body—movest heavenward on,
Of charity console us, and declare
Who and from whence thou art; for thou mak'st us
As much to wonder at thy favoured state,
As must a thing that ne'er occurred before."

And I: "Through midst of Tuscany there winds
A streamlet that in Falterona springs;
A hundred miles suffice not for its course.
From o'er its banks do I this body bring.
To tell you who I am would useless be;
My name as yet makes no great noise abroad."

"If now thy meaning well I penetrate
With my intelligence," he answered then,
Who spake the first, "the Arno thou must mean."

To him the other said: "But why did he
The river's name thus hide away from us,
As one might do, were't something horrible?"

The shade to whom this question was addressed,
Repaid the answer due; "I know not; but
'Tis right such valley's name should be forgot:
For from its earliest source, (where swells so big
The Alp-like range from which Peloro broke,
That in few places is its bulk surpassed)
Until it falls, to render back the loss
Of what the sky dries up from out the sea,
Whence rivers draw what flows along in them,
Virtue, as if a foe, by every one
Is like a snake chased off, through some ill chance
Of place, or evil habit goading them.
Wherefore the dwellers in the wretched vale
Their nature have so utterly transformed,
That Circe it might seem had pastured them.
'Mong filthy swine for acorns better fit,
Than other meat prepared for human use,
One sees it first direct its starveling course.
Next wretched curs it finds, as down it flows,
Snarling more fiercely than becomes their strength,
From whom it turns its muzzle in disdain.
Descending still, the more it widens out,
The cursed and ill fated ditch the more
Finds that the whilom dogs are turned to wolves.
Then as it falls through many a deep ravine,
Foxes it finds with cunning so possessed,
No fear have they of wit to match their own.
Nor, though another hears, will I forbear
To speak; and good for that man will it be
To mind what a true spirit now unfolds.
I see thy grandson in his turn become
The hunter of those wolves upon the bank
Of the fierce river, terrifying all.
Their flesh he sells, while it is still alive;
Then butchers them like ancient beeves; many
He robs of life, and of renown himself.
Blood stained he issues from the dismal grove;
And leaves it such, that hence a thousand years
Will not replant it in its pristine form."
As at the news of some distressful loss.
The face of him who hears is greatly moved,
Come whence it may, the danger that assails,
So did I see the other soul, who stood
Turned round to hear, perturbed and sore distressed,
After he had this utterance gathered in.
The words of one, the other's countenance
Made me desire to learn the name of each,
And such request entreatingly I urged.
Whereon the spirit, who addressed me first,
Began: "Thou wouldest that I condescend
To do for thee, what thou wilt not for me;
But since God willeth that in thee His grace.
Should shine so full, no niggard will I be.
Know then that Guido del Duca am I.
So hot with envy was my blood inflamed,
That did I see a man in mirthful mood,
Thou would'st have seen me livid in my spite.
From mine own sowing reap I here this straw.
O race of men, why set the heart on aught
That disallows the right of fellowship?
This is Rinier, the pride and honour he
Of the da Calboli, a house, where none
Has since inherited his goodly worth.
And not his race alone hath been despoil'd,
'Tween Po and mountains, Reno and the shore,
Of means required for truth and chivalry;
For all within these confines is filled full
Of poisonous roots, so that long time 'twill be,
Ere cultivation can extirpate them.
Good Lizio where? Harry Manardi where?
Pier Traversaro and Carpigna's Guy?
Ye Romagnole, a bastard brood become.
When in Bologna shall a Fabbro rise,
Or in Faenza Bernard di Fosco
A noble scion of a modest stock?
Marvel not, Tuscan, at the tears I shed,
When Guy of Prata I recall to mind,
And Ugolin d'Azzo, who lived with us;
Frederick Tignoso and his company,
The Traversari, th' Anastagi too,
The races both left now without an heir;
The ladies and the knights, the toil and ease,
Which stirr'd us all to love and courtesy
There, where men's hearts are now so wicked grown.
O Brettinoro, why not disappear,
Since from thy House thy retinue hath fled,
And many with it to escape from guilt?
Bagnacaval! well done! still without heir;
But ill doth Castrocaro, Conio worse,
That such a breed of Counts still strive to keep.
A happier fortune the Pagani waits,
When once their demon goes, but not for that
Can e'er the record of their house be pure.
O Ugolin de' Fantolin, thy name
Is safe, for thee no scion doth await,
Who may besmirch the lustre of thy line.
But Tuscan hence, away; for my desire
Is now much more to weep than to converse:
This our discourse my spirit hath so wrung."
Well did we understand that those kind souls
Perceived our going, and their silence thus
Gave us assurance in the path we took.
Then, as now left alone, we onward went,
Like thunder, when it cleaves the air, so seemed
A voice, that come towards us and proclaimed:
"Slay me will any one that findeth me;"
It passed, re-echoing in a distant roll,
As when the storm-cloud suddenly is rent.
Then as a respite to the ear ensued,
Lo! yet another with a crash as loud,
Like thunder following fast, roll upon roll:
"I am Aglauros who was turned to stone."
To draw me nearer to the Poet then
Backward, not forward, did I take a step.
Once more on every side the air was still,
   And unto me he said: "The sharp curb that,
   Which ought to keep a man within his bounds.
But to the bait you rise, so that the hook
   Of the old enemy draws you to him,
   And little then avails or curb or call.
The heavens are telling, and round you revolve,
   Opening th' eternal beauties to your view;
   While upon earth alone your eye is fixed;
Wherefore He smites you, Who discerneth all."
CANTO XV.

Second Round—Envy—The Angel of Brotherly Love—
Ascent to Third Round—Wrath—Visions of Meekness—
Penance of the Wrathful.

As much as 'tween the third hour's close and dawn
Of opening day appeareth of the sphere,
Which like a child is ever on the move,
So much towards eventide already seemed
Remaining to the sun of his full course:
There 'twas the vespers hour, and midnight here.
And the rays smote us midway on the nose,
For we had so encompassèd the hill,
That now due westward we were moving on;
When on my brow I felt oppression of
A brightness greater than at first, and I
Was lost in stupor, at the unknown cause.
Whereon I raised my hands above my brow,
Providing for myself the sunshade thus
That turns the edge of an excessive glare.
As when from water, or a mirror's face
The ray rebounds contrary to its fall,
Ascending upward in the self same mode
In which it falls, divergent just so far
From perpendicular, through equal space,
As knowledge and experience declare,
So did I think that I was smitten there
By a reflected light in front of me:
Wherefore my sight was quick to make escape.
"Dear Father, what is this, that I cannot
To any purpose screen my eyes from it,"

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I said, "and it toward us seems to move?"

"No marvel if the Family of Heaven
With glory still confound thee," answered he:
"He comes an envoy, bidding us go up.
And soon thou'lt find the sight of visions such
Will not be grievous to thee, but delight
As sweet, as Nature gave thee power to feel."

Soon as the blessed Angel we had reached,
With gladsome voice he said: "Here enter in
Upon a stair than others much less steep."

Mounting were we, already on our way,
When from behind was chanted "Beati
Misericordes" and "To Conqueror Joy!"

My master and myself, we two alone,
Were going up; and as I went, I thought
To gain advantage from converse with him;
And straight to him I turned, inquiring thus:
"What might that spirit from Romagna mean,
Who spake of interdict and partnership?"

"Then he to me: Of his own greatest sin
He knows the penalty; and no wonder then,
If he reprove, that others weep the less.
Because your wishes all converge on things
Of which by fellowship a part is lost,
Envy applies her bellows to your sighs.
But if the love of the supernal sphere
Turned your affection unto things above,
Within your breast that fear would have no place;
For in so far as there they call aught "ours,"
So much the more of good doth each possess,
And in that cloister love glows all the more."

"For full contentment I still hungrier am,
Than if at first I silent had remained,
And greater doubt collects within my mind
How it can be that good distributèd
Makes partners richer as they number more,
Than if by fewer it had been possessed?"
And he to me: "Because again thy mind
Is fixed upon the things of earth alone,
From light itself thou dost extract darkness.
That Good, ineffable and infinite,
Which is above, so hastest to welcome love,
As to a shining substance comes the ray.
A warmth it gives, measured by what it finds,
So that the wider Charity expands,
The mightier grows th' Eternal Potency.
And as the more there are agreed above,
More is there to love well, and more 'tis loved,
And mirrorwise each other they reflect.
And if my reasons have not satisfied
Thy hunger, Beatrice thou'lt see, who will
All this remove, and all thy craving else.
Only strive on, that soon may disappear
All the five wounds, as have already two,
Which in the smart they cause are closed up.
And as I would have said, "Content I am,"
I saw that I had reached the next cornice,
So that my eager eyes silence constrained.
There did it seem to me that suddenly
I was in ecstasy of vision caught,
And in a temple many persons saw;
And on the threshold one, a Lady, stood
In the sweet form of Mother: "O my Son,"
She said, "Wherefore hast thou thus dealt with us?
Thy father, see, and I in sorrow went
In search of thee." And as she ceased to speak,
All that at first appeared, had disappeared.
Whereon was seen another, down whose cheeks
Those waters ran in streams, that grief distils,
When by resentment 'gainst another roused;
Said she: "If of this city thou be lord,
The name of which caused contest 'mong the gods,
And whence all science radiates abroad,
Vengeance from thee I ask upon those arms
That dared, Pisistratus, embrace our girl.”
Kindly and gently seemed to me the Chief
To answer her with looks of calm restraint:
“What shall we do with him, who seeks our hurt,
If he who loves us, is by us condemned?”
Next saw I crowds inflamed with fire of rage,
Stoning with stones a youth amid loud cries
Among themselves: “Away with him, away.”
And him I saw kneel down upon the earth
Beneath the weight of death that lay on him;
But opening still his eyes, as gates to heaven,
In all this strife he prayed the Lord on high,
That He would pardon these his enemies,
With aspect such as pity aye unlocks.
When my mind turned again to outside things,
Which, if external to it, still are true,
I knew that my illusions were not false.
Said then my Guide, who well could see that I
Bore me like one just out of sleep aroused,
“What ails thee, that thou canst not hold thee up?
Nay, thou hast gone for more than half a league
With eyes half closed, and tottering legs cross-wise,
Like one whom wine or sleep hath overcome?”
“Sweet father mine, but lend thine ear to me,
And I will tell,” said I, “what ’twas I thought
I saw, when under me my legs gave way.”
And he: “If thou a hundred masks did wear
Upon thy face, from me would not be hid
Thy inmost thoughts however small they were.
The vision came, that thou should’st not refuse
Thy heart to open to the streams of peace,
Which from th’ Eternal Fount are shed abroad.
I did not ask what ails thee, as might he,
Who looks but with the eye that sees no more,
When without soul the body lifeless lies.
I asked but to give vigour to thy feet:
The idle dreamer thus ’tis well to rouse
To use his waking hours, when they return.”
Onward we went in twilight with outlook
   Cast forward far as eye could penetrate,
   In face of sunbeams, brilliant still, if late:
And lo! by slow degrees a smoke rolls in,
   Driving towards us, and obscure as night,
   Nor place of refuge from it might we find.
It took from us our eyes and the pure air.
The Third Round—Wrath—Marco Lombardo—Free Will—
The Corruption of the World—Corrada da Palazzo—

A FOG of hell, and of a night bereft
Of every planet ’neath a starveling sky,
And thick as could be, darkened o'er with cloud,
Spread not upon my face a veil so dense,
As did the smoke which there enveloped us;
Nor stung sensation with such pungency;
For open in it could no eye abide;
Whereon mine escort, ever wise and true,
Proffered his shoulder, drawing to my side.
And as a blind man goes behind his guide,
Thus not to lose his way, nor run against
Aught that may hurt, or possibly may kill,
So through the foul and bitter air I passed,
Hearing my Leader's oft repeated charge,
"Be careful that thou lose not touch of me."
Voices the while I heard, and each appeared
For mercy and for peace to supplicate
The Lamb of God Who taketh sins away.
Ever with Agnus Dei they began;
The words with all were one, the measure one,
So that among them all seemed harmony.
"Master," I said, "Spirits are these I hear?"
And he to me: "The truth thou dost divine,
And on they go, loosening the knot of wrath."
"Now who art thou that cleavest thus our smoke,
And in converse dost speak of us, as if
By Calends thou dost still divide the time?"
These words were apoken by one voice alone;
CANTO XVI.

Whereon the Master said to me: "Reply,
And ask if this way lie the upper road."
And I: "O being, that art cleansing thee,
All comely to thy Maker to return,
If me thou follow, a strange thing thou'lt hear."

"Thee will I follow far as is allowed,"
He said; "and if the smoke permit us not
To see, the ear will keep us well in touch."

Then I began: "Swathed in those bands, which death
Dissolves, my upward way I here pursue,
And hither came through all th' anguish of hell;
And if in grace God so enfoldeth me,
That 'tis His Will I should His courts behold,
By means unknown to us of later day,
Hide not from me, who before death thou wast;
This say, and say if this road to the pass
Lead well, and thy words shall our escort be."

"Lombard I was, and Marco was my name,
The world I knew, and that high standard loved,
For which each one leaves now his bow unstrung.
For the ascent thou goest quite direct."

His answer such, but added: "Thee I pray
To pray for me when thou shalt reach the height."

And I to him: "I pledge me by my faith
To do thy will; but with an inner doubt
I burst, if of it I be unrelieved;
First 'twas a single doubt, but doubled now
By thy opinion, which, with the other joined
Whereto I couple it, leaves me assured.
The world is thus indeed wholly bereft
Of every virtue, as thou dost propound,
Is big with malice, and by it o'erspread.
The cause of this I pray thee to point out,
That I may see it, and to others show;
One puts it in heaven, and one on earth."

A deep drawn sigh, which grief constrained to "Ah",
At first he fetched; then, "Brother," he began,
"The world is blind, and plainly thence thou com'st:
Ye, who are living, every cause refer,
Up to the stars alone, as if all things
They with themselves moved of necessity.
But were it thus, in you would be destroyed
Free will, nor any justice would there be
In having joy for good, or woe for sin.
The heav'ns your first movements initiate,
I say not all, but granted that I do,
For good and evil there was given light,
And free will too, which if it hold out in
The toil of its first struggles with the stars,
Conquers them all at last, when nurtured well.
To nobler force and better nature ye
Are subject, though freemen; 'tis this that forms
In you a mind beyond the stars' control.
If then the present world do go astray,
The cause is in yourselves; there search it out.
This will I now truly explore with you.
Forth from the hand of Him, Who fondles it,
Ere it exist, like to a little child,
That childishly now laughs, and cries anon,
Issues the simple soul, that nothing knows
Save that as moved by a glad Maker's will,
It freely turns to what best pleases it.
The flavour of some trivial good at first
It tastes, and cheated, this pursues,
If neither guide nor curb divert its love.
Hence it behoved, as briddles, to set laws;
Behoved to have a king, who at the least
The towers of Truth's own City should discern.
The laws are there, but who takes them in hand?
None; for the Shepherd who precedes the flock,
Albeit he chew the cud, divides no hoof.
And so the people, who behold their guide
Strike only at the good for which he lusts,
Feed on that too, and ask for nothing else.
CANTO XVI.

Well canst thou see that ill direction is
The cause that hath so evil made the world,
And not a nature hopelessly corrupt.

Time was when Rome, that led the world to good,
Shone with two suns, which either road to all
Made plain, the way of God, and of the world.

One hath the other quenched, and now the sword
Is with the crozier joined, the two needs must
Move on together, in ill suited yoke,
Because combined, respective fear is lost.
If thou believe not, note the corn in ear,
For every plant is by its seed made known.

Where Po and Adige irrigate the plain,
Valour and courtesy there always dwelt,
Or ever Frederick found himself in strife.

Now in security may there pass on,
Who'er for very shame should fain avoid
Good men's society or neighbourhood.

Three old men are there still, in whom old days
Reprove the new, to whom it seems o'er long,
Ere in the better life God harvests them:

Corrado da Palazzo, good Gerard;
And Guida da Castel, though better named
The simple Lombard, in the Frenchmen's style.

Confess henceforth that now the Church of Rome,
Confounding in herself two regimens,
Falls in the mire, and fouls her charge and self."

"O Marco mine," I said "thou reasonest well;
And now I see why from inheritance
The sons of Levi were of old debarred:

But who may Gerard be, who, as thou sayst,
Is left as sample of a vanished race,
In stern reproof of this most barbarous age?"

"Thy words deceive, or put me to the proof;"

He answered me, "for though of Tuscan speech,
'Twould seem the good Gerard thou dost not know:

No other surname do I know him by,
Unless his daughter Gaia furnish it.

Now God be with you; further I go not,
For see the brightness gleaming through the smoke
   Already whitens; needs must I depart—
   The Angel stands there—ere he me perceive.”
So turned he back, and would not hear me more.
CANTO XVII.

The Third Round—Anger—Exit from the Smoke—

Reader, recall if ever in the Alps
A mist have caught thee, when thou could'st not see
In other way than like a mole through film;
How, as the vapours thick, with moisture charged,
Begin their first dispersion, the sun's orb
Feebly through them a struggling entrance makes,
And thy imagination easily
Will come to see how at the first the sun
Now sinking to his rest, I saw again.
Thus at pace measured by the trusty steps
Of my own Master, from such cloud I passed
To beams already on the low shores dead.
O Phantasy, that dost sometimes steal us
So far outside ourselves, one notes them not,
Although a thousand trumpets bray around,
Who stirs thee, when the senses nought present?
A light it is in heaven that stirs thee, there
Self formed, or by a Will that sends it down.
Of her ferocity, who changed her form
Into the bird, that most delights in song,
Upon my fancy the outline appeared:
And here my mind so straitly was shut up
Within itself, that from without there came
Nothing that could by it be entertained.
On my exalted fancy next there poured
A figure crucified, scornful and fierce
In countenance, and dying in such form.
Around him great Ahasuerus stood,
Esther his wife, and Mordecai the just,
Of pure integrity in word and deed.
And as this vision of itself dispersed,
Broken in fashion of a bubble, when
The water fails, beneath which it was formed,
Uprose a maiden then into my view,
That weeping bitterly exclaimed: "O Queen,
In wrath why would'st thou into nothing pass?
Thyself thou'st slain, Livinia not to lose;
Now me thou'st lost, and I am she, who mourn,
Mother, for thine, ere yet another's fall."
As when beneath a sudden ray of light,
That early strikes on closed eyes, sleep breaks,
And broken, quivers ere it wholly dies,
So sank the vision of my fancy down,
Soon as upon my face there smote a light,
Brighter than any our experience knows.
I turned me round to see where I might be;
When spake a voice that said: "Th' ascent is here;"
Which from all object else withdrew my thought,
And made my will so eager in desire
To see who it could be that spake but now,
It would not rest till it confronted him.
But as our sight is by the sun o'erwhelmed,
That in excess of splendour hides its form,
E'en so did here my faculties give way.
"A spirit this, divine; who shows to us
The upward path, ere we have made request,
And who in his own light conceals himself;
He deals with us, as doth a man with self:
For he who sees a need, and waits request,
Prepares himself malignly to refuse.
With such a call let now our feet accord,
And forward push th' ascent, ere it be dark,
For then we cannot, until day returns."
So said my Guide, and he and I forthwith
Turned both of us our steps to a stairway;
And soon as on the first step I arrived,
Near me I felt the waving of a wing,
That fanned my face, and "Beati" I heard
"Pacifici," from sinful anger free.
Already over us so high had shot
The latest rays, whereon ensues the night,
That stars were shining on all sides of us.

"Ye powers of mine, why melt ye thus away?"
Within myself I said, as I perceived
Ability to use my legs was gone.
We had arrived where farther mounted not
The stair, and at a standstill found ourselves,
E'en as a ship, that's hauled up on the beach.
Awhile I listened closely, might I hear
Perchance on the new circle any sound.
Then to the Master I turned round, and said:

"Sweet Father, tell me what offence it is,
That in this circle, where we are, is purged:
If halt our feet, let not thy converse halt."

And he to me: "The Love of good remiss
In duty practical, is strengthened here;
Here works with double stroke the sluggish oar.
But that more clearly still thou understand,
Direct to me thy thoughts, and thou wilt find
Some profitable fruit in our delay.
Neither Creator, nor created thing,
My son," 'gan he, "was ever without love,
Instinctive or deliberate, as you know.
Th' instinctive ever is from error free;
The other by an evil aim can err,
Or by its lack, or its excess of force.
While it is led aright to the first Good,
And in the second moderates itself,
It cannot be the cause of ill delight.
But when to ill it swerves, or with desire,
Greater or less than right, runs after good,
Against its Maker works the thing that's made.
Hence thou canst comprehend, needs must it be,
Love is in you the seed of all virtue,
And of all acts that merit punishment.

Now in that Love can never turn its face
From welfare of the thing wherein it dwells,
From hatred of themselves all things are safe.

And since from the First Cause none thinks himself
Cut off, or standing by himself alone,
All feeling alien is from hate of It.

Remains then this, if my division's true,
The ill man loves his neighbour must concern;
And in three modes this love springs in your clay.

There is, who in a neighbour's fall hopes for
His own preeminence, and only longs
That from his high estate he be brought down.

There is, who fears grace, honour, power or fame
To lose, if others rise above himself
And sadder'd thus, desires the contrary.

There is who by some outrage is so galled,
That for revenge he hungers greedily,
And such needs must gloat on another's ill.

Such triform Love is punished down below.
I now would have you know the other Love,
Which rushes after good disorderly.

Each hazily a chief good apprehends,
Wherein the soul may rest, and longs for it;
And so to reach it each applies himself.

If but a torpid love draw thee to look
On this, or win its grace, this ledge will then
After due penitence, inflict its pain.

Another good there is, which happy makes
No man; itself not happiness, still less
The Essence, root and fruit, of every good.

The love, which gives itself too much to this,
Above us in three circles is bewailed;
But why 'tis right it be tripartite thus.

I say not, that thou search it for thyself.'
CANTO XVIII.

The Fourth Round—Spiritual Indifference.
Nature of Love—Love and Free Will—Examples of Activity and Zeal—
Abbot of San Zeno—The Scaligers—Punishment of Indifference—Dante falls asleep.

THE lofty Teacher to an end had brought
His argument, and now attentively
Looked in my face, were I well satisfied.
And I, whom yet a new thirst farther urged,
Kept silence outwardly, but inly said:
"Perhaps too much inquiry wearies him."
But that true Father, who in me perceived
The timid wish that was not yet disclosed,
Speaking himself, embolden'd me to speak.
Then I: "Master, my sight so lively grows
In light from thee, that clearly I discern
How much thy reasoning doth imply or tell:
Wherefore dear, gentle Father, I entreat,
Define the love, to which thou dost refer
Every good work, and what is contrary."
"Direct to me the keenest eyes," he said,
"Of thy intelligence, and plain will be
The error of the blind, that would be guides.
The soul, which is created prompt to love,
To all that pleaseth moveth readily,
Soon as by pleasure 'tis to action roused.
Your apprehension from real substance draws
An image, and develops it within,
So that it makes the mind toward it turn;
And if thus turned, it do incline to it,
That inclination's love; 'tis nature too,
Which is by pleasure bound anew in you.

Then as the fire doth ever upward rise,
By its own essence thither born to mount,
Where in its element 'tis most at home,
E'en so the captured soul begins to yearn
In motion spiritual, and never rests,
Until the thing beloved, becomes its joy.

Now may it well appear to thee how truth
Is hidden from the people, that aver
That each love in itself is laudable:
For though perchance in matter love may seem
To be good always, yet not every seal
Is good, however good the wax may be."

"Thy words and my attendant wit on them,"
My answer thus, "have love revealed to me;
But have withal bred in me greater doubt;
For if from outside love present itself,
And if the soul move only on this foot,
Right way or wrong, no merit it deserves."

And he to me: "What reason here can see,
'Tis mine to say: for more wait Beatrice;
For beyond this, the work is work of Faith.
Every substantial form, that is distinct
From matter, but which with it is combined,
Specific virtue hath, bound up in it,
The which except in action is unknown;
And only in effect doth show itself,
As by green leaves life in a plant appears.
Therefore whence comes the apprehension of
Our primal notions, no man knows; nor whence
The first attractions to what men desire;
Which are in you like instinct in the bees
To make their honey; and this primal wish
No merit hath of either praise or blame.
Now that round this the other may collect,
An innate power you have, advising you,
That ought to guard the threshold of assent.
This is the principle, wherein is found
Cause of desert in you, according as
It sifts and winnows love, or good or ill.
They, whose researches have the bottom plumbed,
Clearly perceived this innate liberty,
And in it left the world morality.
Let us then grant that of necessity
All love arises, that within you burns,
Restraining power abides within you still.
This noble faculty doth Beatrice
Mean by Free Will; so give good heed that thou
Remember this, if of it she should speak."
The moon belated, midnight almost now,
Left to our view but scanty show of stars,
Herself become like brazier all aglow;
And counter to the heavens moved in the track
The sun inflames, what time the Roman sees
Him 'tween Sardinia set and Corsica;
That high born shade, who more illustrious makes
Pietola, than Mantua’s city e’en,
Had of my burthen lifted off the load,
While I, who plain and open arguments
Had well stored up, upon the points I’d raised,
Stood as a man who drowsily drops off.
But all such drowsiness was borne away
From me by persons, who in rear of us
Wheeled on a sudden round, making our way.
And as of old Ismenus and Asopus
Saw 'long their banks by night a rushing crowd,
If but the Thebans needed Bacchus’ aid,
Such was the throng, so far as I could see,
Whom a good will and righteous love bestrode,
As round that circle on the curve they swept.
Quickly they reached us, for as runners at
Full speed, that mighty multitude rushed on,
And two in front in saddened tone called out:
"Mary with haste to the hill country sped!"
And, "Caesar, bent Ilerda to subdue,
Struck at Marseilles, and pushed on thence for Spain."
"On, quickly on, that no time may be lost
Through lack of love," cried out the rest behind;
"For grace grows green again in zeal for good."
"Good people all, whose fervent spirit now
Redeems perhaps the negligence and sloth
Displayed in past lukewarmness for good works,
This man, who lives, and I indeed lie not,
Would fain go up, when shines the sun again;
Wherefore tell us, if near the passage be."
These were the words my Leader spake to them:
And of those spirits one did say: "With us
Come on behind; the opening thou wilt find.
We are so full of purpose to push on,
That stay we cannot; wherefore pardon us,
If in our righteousness thou deem us churls.
San Zeno's Abbot in Verona I,
What time the worthy Barbarossa reigned,
Of whom Milan still speaks in doleful strain.
A man there is with one foot in the grave,
Who for that convent soon will groan in tears,
And sad will be, that he its patron was;
Because his son in body all deformed,
And worse in mind, dishonoured in his birth,
He put into the rightful shepherd's place."
If he said more, or if he ceased to speak,
I know not, so far had he now run on;
But this I heard, and gladly noted it.
And he, who in all need my succour was,
Said: "This way turn, see toward us coming two,
Who mourn their sloth in biting self reproach."
Behind the rest they cried: "Dead were they all,
For whom the sea had once a highway cleared,
Ere yet their heirs the banks of Jordan saw."
And, "They, who would not with Anchises' son
CANTO XVIII.

The toil of travel to the end endure,
Gave themselves up to an inglorious life.”
When after this, those shades so far from us
Were parted, that they could no more be seen,
Within me a new thought its entrance made,
From which yet more were born, diverse from it.
From one to other I so wandered on,
That to find comfort I mine eyelids closed,
And into dream I changed by reveries.
Fourth Round—Symbolism of Dante's Dream—
The Angel of Activity—Ascent to Fifth Round.

ABOUT the hour, when heat of day, o'ercome
By Earth, or Saturn sometimes, can no more
Prevail to warm the beams of a chill moon;
When in the East the geomancers see,
Ere dawn appears, Fortuna Major rise
On path that but short while remaineth dark,
To me in dream a stuttering woman came,
With eyes asquint and on distorted feet,
With maimèd hands and of a sallow hue:
On her I stared; and as the sun doth cheer
The shivering limbs benumbed by chills of night,
So did that look of mine for her unloose
The tongue, and made her to her full height rise,
E'en in a trice, and her scared countenance
Assumed the tint that love delights to wear.
Soon as her power of speech was thus unloosed,
She 'gan to sing so that I scarcely could
My rapt attention have from her withheld.
"I am," sang she, "I am the sweet Siren,
Who in mid seas the mariners mislead,
So full of pleasantness am I to hear.
Ulysses in his wandering by my song
I turned aside, and whoso with me 'bides,
Rarely departs, so well I him content."
Her mouth as yet was hardly closed again,
When prompt appeared a Saintly Dame in haste,
Close at my side the other to confound.
"Virgilius, O Virgilius, who is this?"
Indignantly she asked, and he drew near
With eyes fixed only on that honoured form.
She seized the other, and her breast laid bare,
Tearing her garments, and her belly showed,
Which woke me with the stench that issued thence.
I turned mine eyes, and the good Virgil said:
"Thrice at the least I've called, Arise and come;
Find we the opening, where thine entrance lies."
I rose, and filled already with broad day
Were all the circuits of the sacred hill,
We going with the young sun at our backs.
As him I followed, I did bear my brow,
As one who carries there a load of thought,
And makes himself the half arch of a bridge;
When heard I: "This way come, the passage here,"
Spoken in accents sweet, and so benign,
As mortals in our confines never hear.
With open wings, which swan-like seemed to spread,
He, who thus spake, directed us upwards
'Tween the two walls of rocky masonry,
He waved his pinions, and he fanned us then,
Affirming Qui lugent are blest, for they
Will in their souls ladies of comfort find.
"What ails thee that thy looks are fixed on earth?"
To me my Leader thus began to say,
As we above the Angel somewhat climbed.
And I: "A recent vision so haunts me,
And makes me with so much misgiving go,
That from it I cannot withdraw my thoughts."
"That old enchantress hast thou seen," he said,
"Who higher up alone makes souls lament?
And hast thou seen how man escapes from her?
Suffice it so; strike thy heels firmly down;
Lift up thine eyes unto the lure, which on
Its mighty wheels the King Eternal rolls."
As falcon, which first to its feet directs
Its eye, then at the call looks up again,
And eager stretches to the enticing bait,
So did I too, and so far as the rock
Is cleft to make a path for him who mounts,
Went I right up to where the circle starts.
When I upon the fifth round was set free,
Persons I saw along it plunged in grief,
Prostrate on earth, all on their faces laid,

*Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*

I heard them cry mid sighs so deeply drawn,
That scarcely was their utterance understood.

“O ye elect of God, whose sufferings here
Justice and hope do render less severe,
Direct us now towards the heights above.”

“ If here ye come from our prostration free,
With the desire to find the readiest way,
Keep your right hands aye to the outer side.”

Such was the Poet’s prayer, its answer such,
Which reached us somewhat from the front, whereby
The voice advised me of the one concealed;

I to my Lord turned an enquiring look;
And he with gladsome sign gave his assent
To what the gesture of my wish implied.

Now that I could my own desire indulge,
I nearer drew, and o’er that being stood,
Whose words first made me note him, and I said:

“Spirit, in whom sorrow doth now mature
That without which is no return to God,
Suspend awhile for me thy greater care.

Who wast thou? and with backs inverted thus,
Say, why ye lie, and wouldst thou have me win
Aught for thee there, whence still alive I’m come?”

And he: “Why heaven thus turns our hinder parts
Unto itself thou shalt be told, but first

*Scias quod ego fui successor Petri.*

Between Chiaveri and Sestri falls
A river beautiful, and in its name
The title of my house originates.
Within a month or little more, I learned
How the great cope weights him, who from the mire
Guards it; lighter than feathers all load else.

Tardy, alas! my own conversion was;
But when of Rome the Shepherd I became,
Then I found out the falsehood of our life.

I saw that there heart never found its rest,
And in that life I could no higher rise;
So love for this life then in me took fire.

Up to that time I was a wretched soul,
Estranged from God, the prey of avarice:
Now, as thou seest, am I punished here.

What avarice works, is here made manifest
In the purgation of converted souls;
No pain more bitter hath the mount than this:

Just as our eye did never raise itself
To heaven on high, fixed on the things of earth,
So to the earth hath Justice sunk it here.

As avarice quenched our love for everything
That's good, whence all our labour was in vain,
So Justice holds us here in tightest bonds,

Fettered and handcuffed, feet and hands alike;
And long as to the Just Lord it seems good,
Thus shall we lie stretched out and motionless."

I had knelt down by him, and wished to speak;
But e'en as I began, and he was 'ware,
Only by hearing, of my reverence,

“What cause,” said he, “hath made thee thus bend down?”

And I: “By reason of your dignity
Conscience reproached me sharply that I stood.”

“Straighten thy legs, my Brother; lift thee up;”

He said; “err not; a fellow servant I,
With thee and with the rest, to one liege Lord.

If in th’ Evangelist those holy words,
Neque nubent, thou e'er hast understood,
Thou well canst see why thus I speak to thee.

Now go thy way; thy stay is not my wish,
For here thy presence doth disturb the grief,
By which I ripen what thou spakest of.
Yonder I have a niece, Alagia named,
Good in herself, provided that our house
By its example turn her not to ill;
And she remains all that is left me there."
CANTO XX.

Fifth Round—Avarice and Prodigality—
Examples of Poverty and Liberality—Hugh Capet and the Capetians—Examples of Base Avarice—A Soul set free—
The Mountain quakes.

ILL fights the will against a better will,
   Wherefore, against my pleasure to please him,
   My sponge, ere filled with water, I withdrew.
Onward I went; on went my Leader too
   Along the open spaces neath the rock,
   As on the walls one hugs the rampart close;
For they, who drop by drop from out their eyes
   Pour forth the sin, which the whole world infects,
   On th' outer side approached too near the edge.
A curse befall thee, O thou old she-wolf,
   That ravenest more than all the beasts beside,
   In depth of endless greed insatiable!
O Heaven, in whose rotation it is thought
   That men's conditions here below change too,
   When will He come, before whom she takes flight?
Onward we went with tardy steps and short,
   Myself attentive to the shades I heard
   Bemoaning and lamenting piteously.
And by a chance in front of me I caught
   Dolce Maria, invoked in strain as sad,
   As of a woman in her childbed pangs;
And then there followed, "Poor indeed thou wast,
   As the rude shelter of the stable shows,
   Where thou did'st lay thy Holy Burden down."
And next I heard: "O good Fabricius,
   Who poverty with virtue didst prefer,
Rather than riches and a vicious life."

Such pleasure to me did these words convey,
That I drew farther on to ascertain
Who the soul was, from whom they seemed to come:
And yet again he spoke of the largess,
Which on the maidens Nicolas bestowed,
To rear in honesty their youthful years.

"O Soul, that speakest words so wise and good,
Tell me," I said, "who wast thou, and why thou
Alone these worthy praises dost renew?
Not without profit shall thy words be found,
If I return the short course to complete
Of life, which towards its end now wings its way."

"Tell thee I will, not for the help," he said,
"Which thence I might expect, but for the grace
Which shines so bright in thee, ere thou art dead.
The root I was of that most baneful tree,
Which so o'er shadows the whole Christian world,
That good fruit is from thence but seldom plucked.

But if Douay, Ghent, Lille and Bruges
Had but the power, vengeance would quickly come:
For this I pray to Him that judgeth all.

Down yonder was I as Hugh Capet known:
From me the Philips sprang, and Louis too,
By whom in recent times France hath been ruled.

Myself a butcher's son in Paris was.
When the old line of kings came to an end,
All save the one, who donned the habit grey,

Tight in my hands I found the sovran reins
Of government, and power so great of new Possessions, and myself so rich in friends,
That to the widowed crown promoted was
The head of my own son, and from his blood
The consecrated bones of these began.

Till the grand dowry of Provence removed
From off my race the shame of its descent,
It was of little worth, still wrought no ill.
Then it began by violence and lies
   Its work of rapine; and to make amends,
Seized Ponthieu, Gascony and Normandy.
To Italy came Charles, and for amends,
   A victim made of Conradin; and next
Sent Thomas back to heaven for amends.
A time I see ensue soon after this,
   That draweth forth from France another Charles,
Still better to make known his house and self.
Alone he comes, unarmed save with the lance
   That Judas jousted with; and wields it so,
   That under it the paunch of Florence bursts.
From this no lands, but sin and great disgrace
   Will he acquire, the heavier all to him,
As of such damage he makes small account.
The other, who as prisoner, left his ship,
   I see selling his daughter, haggling too
   About her price, like pirates with their slaves.
O Av'rice, what is left thee more to do,
   After thou hast my blood so drawn to thee,
   That for its own flesh it no longer cares?
But that sin past and future seem the less,
   I see the Fleur-de-Lys in Anagna,
   And in His vicar Christ a prisoner made.
I see Him now a second time bemocked,
   I see the vinegar and gall renewed,
   And between living thieves Him crucified.
I see the new Pilate, relentless so,
   That still unsated, without warrant he
Against the Temple sets his greedy sail.
O Lord, my God, in gladness when shall I
   Behold the vengeance, which, while hidden still,
   Sweetens Thine anger in its secrecy?
What I was saying of that only Bride
   Of th' Holy Ghost, that causèd thee just now
To turn to me for some enlightenment,
Is for our prayer appointed just so long,
As lasts the day; but when night closeth in,
We then take up instead a counter strain.

Pygmalion's tale at that hour we relate,
Whom his own greedy lust of gold at once
Made traitor, thief, and parricide to boot;
And sordid Midas' miserable fate,
Which followed his inordinate request,
For which he must men's laughing-stock remain.

Of foolish Achan then each mention makes;
How he the booty stole, so that e'en here
The wrath of Joshua seems to gall him still.

Sapphira and her husband we arraign—
And hoof that Heliodorus smote extol;
Around the mount goes Polymnestor's name
In infamy, who Polydorus slew.
And last of all cometh the cry, "Crassus!
Tell us, thou know'st, what is the taste of gold?"

Sometimes we speak, one loud, another low,
As impulse urges at one time our steps,
Now at a slower, then more rapid pace;
However, telling of the good just now,
To which day prompts us, I was not alone,
But near me then none other raised his voice."

From him already had we gone some way,
And hard were struggling to surmount the path
With all the force our powers permitted us,
When I did feel the mountain quake, as thing
About to fall; through me a shiver ran,
As that whichseizes one led forth to death.
Sure not so violently did Delos quake,
Before Latona made therein the nest,
Wherein she laid the twin born eyes of heav'n.

From every side uprose there then a shout,
Such that the Master nearer drew to me,
And said: "Doubt nothing while I am thy guide."

Then "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" all
Rang out, as far as I could tell from those
CANTO XX.

Close by, whose shout 'twas possible to hear.
We in suspense and motionless stood still,
   E'en as the shepherds, who first heard that song,
Until the quaking ceased, and the hymn closed.
Resumed we then our holy pilgrimage,
   Noting the shades that lay upon the ground,
   Returned already to their wonted plaint.
Never did ignorance in strife so keen
   Stir within me of knowledge such desire,
   If recollection here go not astray,
As I seemed then in thought to undergo.
   By reason of our haste I dared not ask,
   And for myself could nothing there descry;
So went I on in fear and full of thought.
THE innate thirst, which ne'er is satisfied,
Save with that water, for the grace of which
The woman of Samaria once prayed,

Sorely distressed me, and haste urged me on
Behind my guide o'er the encumbered path,

To pity stirred by the just penalty;

When lo! just as S. Luke for us records
That Christ appeared to two upon the way,

Uprisen now from the sepulchral cave,

To us a shade appeared that from behind

Came up, noting the throng about his feet;
Nor him had we observed: so he spake first,

Saying: "My Brothers, God grant you His peace."

At once we turned us round, and Virgil gave
The countersign respondent thereunto,

Then he began: "In the Assembly Blest

May the High Court of Truth assign thee peace,
Which to eternal exile me remits."

"How now," said he, the while we briskly moved,
"If ye are shades, whom God disowns above,
Who thus far up His stair hath been your guide?"

My teacher then: "If thou regard the marks,

Which this man bears, and which the Angel signs,
Thou'lt see 'tis right that 'mong the good he reign.

But because she, who spinneth day and night,

Had not for him as yet drawn off the skein,
Which Clotho deals, and straitly packs for each,

His soul, which sister is to thine and mine,
In mounting upward could not mount alone,
Because its eye sees not in mode like ours.
Wherefore from Hell's wide jaws was I drawn forth,
As guide to show the way, and show I will,
Onward, as far as my school can conduct.
But tell us, if thou know, why but just now
The Mountain shook and rocked, and one and all
Down to its watery base seemed to cry out."
So well his question hit the needle's eye
Of my desire, that by the hope it gave,
It made the craving of my thirst less fierce.
"Thing there is not," 'gan he, "that e'er, save in
Due order, can the holy influence move
Of this our mountain, or its usage change.
From all disturbance all up here is free;
Of this, what heaven from self in self receives,
Alone, and nothing else, can be the cause.
Hence neither rain, nor hail, nor snow, nor dew,
Nor hoar frost falleth any higher up
Than the short stairway of the three degrees.
Clouds, neither dense nor rare, do here appear,
No lightning flash, not Thaumas' daughter e'en,
Who yonder oftentimes her station shifts
Dry vapour never riseth in advance
Above the top of the three steps I named,
Whereon S. Peter's Vicar sets his feet.
Earthquakes perchance, more or less, lower down
Occur; but from winds hidden in the earth,
I know not how, up here it ne'er hath quaked.
The quaking here is when some soul perceives
That it is cleansed, so that it mounts, or starts
To rise; whereon the shout ye heard ensues.
The proof of cleansing is the will alone.
Which seizes the astonished soul, now free
To change her home, and helps the wish in her,
From first her will was good, but choice holds back,
Which God in Justice, counter to the will,
Inclines to penance, as it once chose sin.
And I, who in this sorrow have been laid
Five hundred years and more, felt only now
My will enfranchised for a better home.
Therefore the quaking thou didst feel, and heard'st
Good spirits through the mountain praise the Lord,
Whom may He speed soon on their way aloft."
Thus he; and as the pleasure is as great
In a fresh draught, as was the thirst before,
I could not say the boon he granted me.
And my sage Guide: "Now see I well the net
That holds you here, and how the escape is made;
The quaking why, and why your common joy.
But who thou wast, be pleased that I should learn;
And why so many ages here thou’st lain,
This also in reply to me comprize."
"What time good Titus with the aiding grace
Of heaven’s high King took vengeance for the Wounds,
Whence flowed the Blood, that was by Judas sold,
That name, which longest lasts, and honours most,
Yonder I bore," the spirit’s answer such,
"Famous enough, but a believer no.
So sweet the genius of my tuneful song,
That from Toulouse, Rome drew me to herself,
Where for my brow I earned the myrtle wreath.
Statius the people yonder name me still:
Of Thebes I sang; of great Achilles next,
But on the way sank 'neath the second task.
As seeds unto mine ardour were the sparks,
That warmed me, of that heaven-enkindled flame,
Whence many thousands have their light derived;
I mean the Æneid, which a mother was
To me, to me a nurse in poesy.
Without it weighed I not a drachma’s worth;
And to have yonder lived in those days, when
Virgil was living, I would gladly pass
A year more than I owe for my release."
CANTO XXI.

These words made Virgil turn to me a look,
Which silently did say: "Silence awhile;"
But force of will cannot all things control;
For smiles and tears so closely follow on
The passion, by which either is aroused,
That the sincerest it obey the least.
I did but smile, as if with twinkling eye,
Whereon the shade was silent; but he looked
Straight in my eyes, expression's fixed abode.
"So mayst thou well thine arduous task complete,"
He said: "Yet tell me why thy face but now
Bestowed on me the glimmer of a smile?"
And now on both sides am I fairly caught:
Silence one bids, the other me conjures
To speak; I sigh; my Master understood
My meaning, and "Be not afraid," he said,
"To speak to him; yea speak, and plainly tell
What he so curiously demands of us."
Whereupon I: "Perchance thou marvellest,
O elder Spirit, at the smile I showed;
But greater wonder still will thee possess.
He, who directs mine eyes to look aloft,
The Virgil is, from whom thyself didst draw
The power to sing alike of gods and men.
If to my smile thou gave some other cause,
Abandon it as false, and now believe
'Twas in those words, which thou didst speak of him."
Already did he stoop to clasp the feet
Of my Instructor, who exclaimed; "Brother,
Not so, for shade art thou, and shade dost see."
Then as he rose, he said; "How vast the love
Thou now can'st measure, that within me glows
For thee, when I forget our emptiness,
And treat our shadows as corporeal things."
CANTO XXII.

Ascent into the Sixth Round—The Sin and Conversion of Statius—Illustrious Personages in Limbo—The Sixth Round—Gluttony—Examples of Temperance.

The Angel had we now behind us left,
Th' Angel who us had turned to the sixth round
After erasing from my brow one scar;
And them, who yearn for righteousness, had he
Pronounced Beati, and with Sitiunt,
Ended the sentence, adding nothing more.
And up I went much lighter than elsewhere
Through other passes; and without distress
Aloft I followed the swift moving sprites:
When thus began Virgilius: "A love
By virtue fired, doth aye another fire,
If but its flame be manifest abroad.
And so, from that hour when amongst us first
Into hell's limbo Juvenal came down,
And thy affection for me did disclose,
My own goodwill for thee hath ever been
Such as ne'er bound me to a man unseen,
So that these stairs will now seem short to me.
But tell me, and forgive me as a friend,
If too familiar I relax the rein,
And as a friend do thou converse with me:
Within thy breast how could a place be found!
For avarice, amid the stock of sense
Wherewith thy diligence had stored thee well?"
These words with Statius at first produced
A gentle smile: and answer then he made:
"Thine every word is a dear sign of love.
Ofttimes in verity do things appear
Which furnish doubt with false material,
Since the true reasons in concealment lie.

Thy question voucheth for thy full belief
That I in former life was covetous,
By reason p'rhaps of circle where I was.

Now be assured that av'rice was removed
Too far from me, and disproportion such
Thousands of lunar months have punishèd.

And had I not my care directed right,
When the appeal I heard that thou dost make,
As though in anger with the race of men,

Where dost thou not, accursed greed of gold,
Drive on the appetite of mortal man?
I might be rolling weights in dismal joust.

Then I perceived our hands can spread their wings
Too wide in waste, and as of other sins,
Of this also I then repented me.

How many with cropped polls will rise again
In ignorance, which leaves them of this sin
Impenitent in life, and their last hour!

Now learn that the transgression, which flings back
By its clear contrary another sin,
Along with that dries up its verdure here.

Wherèfore if with this people I have dwelt,
Who for their avarice weep, to purge myself
From sin to theirs contrary this befell."

"Now when thy muse did sing the cruel arms
Which twofold sorrow to Jocasta wrought,"
Said the great songman of Bucolic verse,

"Seeing that Clio strikes the string with thee,
'Twould seem the Faith, without which works, though
Are vain, had not as faithful 'stablish'd thee.

If so it be, what sun, or tapers what
Thy darkness so dispersed, that afterwards
Thou didst behind the Fisherman set sail?"

And he to him: "Thou first didst point my way
Towards Parnassus in its grots to drink; 67
And then, next after God, didst give me light.
Thou wast as one that walks by night, and bears 70
A lamp behind him, to himself no help,
But well instructing those that follow him,
What time thou saidst: The Ages are renewed; 73
Justice returns, and man's primeval days;
And a new progeny from heaven descends,
Poet and Christian I became through thee;
But that thou may'st more clearly see my sketch, 76
I will put forth my hand to colour it.
Already the whole world was pregnant with
The true Belief, which messengers, sent forth
From the Eternal King had sown broadcast;
And thy own words, quoted by me before, 79
With the new preachers were so consonant,
That 'twas my custom to resort to them.
They came before me in such saintly guise, 82
That when Domitian persecuted them,
Their sorrows were not left unwept by me;
And long as I still sojourned upon earth 85
I succoured them; and their just rule of life
Made me disparage every other sect:
And ere unto the streams of Thebes I led 88
My Greeks in Poetry, I was baptized;
But through my fears was Christian secretly,
And long time showed as Pagan outwardly;
For this lukewarmness the fourth circle was 91
My round for more than full four hundred years,
And now do thou, who didst lift up the veil, 94
Which hid from me the good I tell thee of,
While in the leisure still of our ascent,
Tell me where Terence is, our ancient friend, 97
Cœcilius, Plautus, Varro, if thou know;
Tell me if they are damned, and where their haunt."
"All these, Persius, and I, and many more" 100
My Leader thus replied, "are with that Greek,
Whom more than any else the Muses nursed,
In the first ward of the dark prison house.
About the mountain oft times we converse,
Which ever keeps our nurses with itself.
Euripides and Antipho with us
Are there, Simonides and Agatho,
With many a Greek that won the laurel wreath.
Of thine own characters may there be seen
Antigone, Argia and Deiphyle,
Ismene too in wonted sadness wrapped.
There is she seen who did Langia show;
Teiresias' daughter there, Thetis as well,
And with her sisters Deidamia too."
And now in silence stood the Poets twain,
Eager anew to make a full survey,
Freed now at length from walls and steep ascent.
Already of the day's handmaidens four
Were left behind, and at the chariot pole
Pointed the fifth its flaming horn aloft;
When my Guide said: "I trow that towards the edge
'Tis well we keep the right-hand shoulder turned,
Circling the mount, as we are wont to do."
So custom here our best instructor was,
And on our way we went less doubtingly
In the approval of that worthy soul.
They moved in front, and I alone behind,
Lending an ear attentive to their words,
Which in the poet's art informed my mind.
But soon did interrupt the sweet discourse
A tree, which midway in our path we found,
With apples pleasant in their scent, and good;
And as contracts a fir-tree, tapering up
Branch after branch, so downward this drew in,
That none, I ween, might o'er it upward climb.
Upon the side, which to our path was barr'd,
From the high rock there fell a limpid stream,
And o'er the upper leaves diffused its spray.
The poets both unto the tree drew near, 139
And from within the leaves there came a voice
That cried: "For this food ye shall hunger still."
Again: "Mary thought rather how complete,
And honoured most the marriage feast should be,
Than for her own mouth, which now pleads for you.
The dames of ancient Rome were well content 145
With water for their drink, and Daniel too,
To meat indifferent, wisdom gained instead.
The first age, which was beautiful as gold, 148
By hunger made the acorns savoury,
And in its thirst found nectar in each stream.
Locusts and honey were the dainties which
Nourished the Baptist in the wilderness;
Wherefore is he in glory, and so great,
As in the Gospel is set forth to you."
WHILE through the green leaves with mine eyes I pried,
As we may see a man will often do,
Who wastes his life after the little birds,
My more than father said to me: "My son,
Now onward, for the time allotted us
Must be more usefully distributed."
I turned my face, and not less quick my steps,
Up to the Sages, who conversed so well,
They made the journey no account to me.
And lo! in tones of wailing chant was heard
"Labia mea Domine," in fashion such
As brought forth joy and sorrow in one birth.
"O dearest Father, what is this I hear?"
So I began; and he: "Shadows that pass,
The knot perchance unloosening of their debt."
As pilgrims, who, in meditation bent,
O'ertaking on the road a stranger band,
Will turn towards it, but without a halt,
So from behind us, at a quicker pace,
Coming, and passing by, a throng of souls,
Silent, in holy wonder gazed at us.
With each the eye was dull and sunken deep,
Pallid the face, and wasted so the flesh
That from the bones the skin assumed its form.
I trow that thus to utter cuticle
Not Erysichon was so withered up
By hunger, when in greatest fear of it.
Within myself I said in thought: "Behold
The folk who whilom lost Jerusalem,
When Mary in her own son fleshed her teeth."

Their eyeholes were like rings stripped of their gems.
Who in the face of man can read \textit{OMO},
Might there well recognise the letter \textit{M}.

Who would believe an apple's fragrance could,
Breeding desire, inflict such chastisement,
Or scent of water, if he knew not why?

I still was wondering whence such hunger came,
For not as yet was manifest the cause
Of their sad leanness and the shrivelled skin,
And lo! a shade toward me turned his eyes,
From deep within his head, and looking hard,
Cried loudly then: "What grace to me is this?

Never should I have recognized the face,
But by the voice to me was clearly shown,
That which in feature was entirely lost.
This spark within me lighted up at once
My recognition of the altered mouth,
And once again I saw Forese's face.

"Ah! question not this shrivelled leprosy,
Which doth my skin discolour," so he prayed,
"Nor yet the lack of flesh, that I may have;
But tell me truly of thyself, and who
Those two souls are that form thine escort there:
Delay not ere thy story thou relate."

"Thy face, which I bewept, already dead,
Gives me no less a grief to mourn for now,"
I answered him, "seeing it so deformed.

But say, in God's Name, what denudes you thus;
Nor bid me speak, while still in wonder lost,
For ill speaks he, whom other thought absorbs."

And he: "'Tis by Eternal Counsel that
A virtue falls upon the stream and tree
We've left behind, whereby I'm wasted thus.
This people all, who mingle tears and chant,
For the excess indulged in appetite,
In thirst and hunger here are sanctified.

In us desire to eat and drink takes fire
From scent exhaled from apple, and from spray,
Which o'er the foliage is diffused abroad.

And not once only, but as we pursue
Our round, afresh springs up our punishment;
Not punishment, but solace I should say;
For to the tree the same Will draweth us,
That drew the Christ with joy to cry "Eli,"
When by His opened veins He set us free.

And I to him: "Forese, from that day
When thou didst change the world for better life,
Five years till now have not yet rolled around.

If then the power to sin had ceased in thee,
Ere yet the hour of godly sorrow, which
Re-marries us to God, had supervened,

How com'st thou here so high? For I had thought
To find thee still abiding down below,
Where time for time doth restitution make"?

And he to me: "Thus quickly was I brought
To drink the sweet wormwood of suffering
By my own Nella's overflowing tears.

By her devoted prayers and by her sighs
She drew me from the hill of hope deferred,
And from the other circles set me free.

So much to God the dearer, and more prized
My widowed darling is, whom I so loved,
As in good works she still more lonely is;

For the Barbagia of Sardinia.
More modest in its women is by far,
Than the Barbagia I have left her in.

O my dear Brother, what would'st have me say?
A time already comes into our sight,
At which to-day will be no ancient date,

When dames of Florence from the pulpit shall,
Unto their shame, forbidden be to walk
Abroad with bosom and the paps exposed.
Were e'er Barbarians known, or Saracens,
   Who were in need, to make them cover'd go,
   Of canon law, or other discipline?
But if the shameless wretches were assured
   Of what swift heaven doth for them prepare,
   In howling would their mouths be open now.
For if prevision here deceive me not,
   Sooner on them will sorrow fall, than chin
   Be bearded of the babe now sung to sleep.
Ah! Brother, now no longer hide thyself;
   See how not I alone, but all these folk
   Gaze on the spot from which thou hid'st the sun."

Then I to him: "If thou recall to mind
   What with me thou wast once, and I with thee,
   Present remembrance will be grievous still.
From that life he, who walks in front, turned me
   But two days since, when in full rounded orb
   The sister of him yonder showed herself;
(I pointed to the sun,) he from the depth
   Of night hath brought me from the truly dead
   In this true flesh, that follows in his steps.
Thence have his cheering counsels led me up,
   Scaling and compassing this mountain height,
   Which now sets right you, whom the world set wrong.
So far, he says, he'll bear me company,
   Till I arrive where Beatrice shall be;
   And there needs must I without him remain.
Virgil it is, who doth instruct me thus,
   (And him I pointed to) the other is
   That Shade, for whom just now, o'er every slope,
   Your kingdom quaked, which now discharges him.
O UR words checked not our course, nor it our words,
But, still conversing, on we stoutly pushed,
As ship impelled before a favouring breeze.
The shades the while, which looked like things twice dead,
Glared through the caverns of their eyes, amazed
At me, when they perceived I was alive.
And I, proceeding with my story, said,
"He peradventure moves more slowly up,
Than he had done but for another's sake.
But if thou know, say where Piccarda is:
Say too if any one I see of note
Among these people that observe me thus."
"My sister, all so fair and virtuous,
Which most I know not, weareth now her crown
In high Olympus mid triumphant joy."
So far at first; and then: "Here nought forbids
Our naming each, so utterly is drain'd
All semblance of ourselves by this poor fare.
This one," he pointed with his finger, "See,
Is Bonagiunta da Lucca; the face
Beyond him, still more pinched than all the rest,
Held once the Holy Church within his arms:
He came from Tours, and purgeth now with fast
Eels of Bolsena and Vernaccian wine."
And many more he named me, one by one;
And to be named I thought them so content,
That I observed for this not one black look.

I saw the lord of Pila, Ubaldin,
In hunger grind his teeth, and Boniface,
Who with his crosier pastured many flocks.

Messer Marchese too I saw, who erst
At Forlì did carouse at ease, and though
Less thirsty there, he never had enough.

But as a man looks round, and from the rest
Makes choice of one, so him of Lucca I,
Who seemed to have more cognizance of me.

He muttered; and some sound of "Gentucca"
I heard proceed from where he felt the wound
Of Justice, which there wastes them so away.

"O Soul," I said, "that eager seem' st to speak—
With me, speak so that I may understand,
And with thy speech content thyself and me."

"A girl is born, that wears not wimple yet,"
'Gan he, "who unto thee most pleasant will
My city make, howe'er by men reviled.

With this prevision thou shalt go thy way;
If in my muttering thou have been at fault,
The true events will make all clear to thee.

But tell me if I here see him, whose pen
First brought to light the new rhymes, that begin:
"Ladies, who have Intelligence of Love."

And I to him: "A man am I, who, when
Love breathes on me, take note; and in the mode
He speaks within, I go declaring it."

"Brother," said he, "I see at once the knot
Which me, the Notary, and Guittone held
So far behind the sweet new style I hear.

And well I see too how the pen with you
Runs closely after him who thus dictates,
Which surely with our own was not the case.

And he who strives farther than this to look,
No difference sees 'tween one and other style."
And then, as well content, he held his peace.
As birds that winter on the banks of Nile,
   In airy squadron sometimes form themselves,
Then faster fly, and move in single file,
So all the people that were gathered there,
   With faces turned from us, quickened their pace,
   By leanness nimble and a hearty will.
An as the runner, when fatigued he is,
   Lets his companions pass and slowly walks,
   Till from his chest he blows the tightness off,
So did Forese let the pious flock
   Sweep by, while he came on behind with me,
   Saying: "When shall I see thee yet again?"
Said I: "I know not how long I may live;
   Yet my return cannot so speedy be,
   But my desire will first have reached this shore:
Because the place, wherein my life was set,
   Each day sheds off its goodness more and more,
   And to a grievous downfall seems ordained."
"Now go," he said, "for him, who guiltiest is
   Of all, I see dragged at a horse's tail
   Down to the valley where no pardon is.
At every stride the beast speeds faster on,
   Swifter and swifter, until with a blow
   It leaves the body there vilely undone;
And not much longer have those wheels to turn."
   (To heaven he raised his eyes) "ere clear to thee
   Is what my words cannot more clearly say.
Stay thou then here, for time so precious is
   Within this realm, that I do lose too much,
   Thus walking with thee at thy even pace."
As from advancing cavalcade sometimes
   The captain of a troop will gallop forth,
   And rides to win the honour of first blow;
So with more bounding strides he went from us;
   And on the road I with the two remained,
   Who were such mighty marshals of the world.
And when before us he had pushed so far,
That in pursuit of him mine eyes became
What my mind was to apprehend his words,
I saw with heavy boughs and full of life
Another apple tree, and not far off;
For by a sudden turn I came on it.
People beneath I saw with hands outstretched,
I know not what imploring, towards the boughs,
Like little children vainly clamouring,
Who beg; and he they beg from, answers not;
But to give keener edge to their desire,
Dangles the thing they want, and hides it not.
As disenchanted, they went on their way.
And we forthwith to the great tree came up,
Which prayers so many and such tears rejects:
"Pass onward ye, nor nearer seek to come;
Up higher is the tree of which Eve ate,
An offshoot from it did this plant grow up."
From out the leaves thus spoke I know not who;
So Virgil, Statius and I, drawn up
In order close, passed on the rising side.
"Remember," said the voice, "the accursèd ones,
Conceivèd in a cloud, who, drunk with wine,
Fought against Theseus with their bifold breasts;
The Hebrews too, luxurious as they drank,
Whom Gideon would not for his comrades own.
When towards Midian down the hills he came."
Thus closely skirting one of the two sides,
We passed, hearing the sins of gluttony,
Followed already by their wretched wage.
Then opening out along the lonely road,
For a good thousand paces on we went,
Without a word, in meditation each.
"What think ye, as ye go, ye three alone?"
Exclaimed a sudden voice, that startled me,
As terrified and coward beasts will shy.
I raised my head to see who it might be,
And ne’er in burning furnace was there seen
Metal or glass, so glittering and so red,
As one I saw, who said: “If you it please
To mount above, here it behoves to turn;
This way the road for him who seeketh peace.”
His aspect had deprived me of my sight;
Wherefore behind my masters I retired,
Like one who follows by the sound he hears.
And as, when heralding the dawn of day,
The breath of May is stirred, and sheds perfume
Impregnate all with herbage and with flowers,
Such did I feel a breeze, that on my brow
Played full, and well I felt the pinion wave,
That shed the effluence of ambrosia round;
And I heard say: “Blessed are they whom grace
So great illumes, that love of palate ne’er
Creates the fume of passionate desire,
Who hunger only so far as is just.”
CANTO XXV.

Ascent to the Seventh Round—Theory of Generation—Infusion of the Soul into the body—Bodies aerial after Death—The Seventh Round—Examples of Chastity.

A

N hour it was when the ascent ill brook'd
Delay; for now the sun his noontide round
Had left to Taurus, and to Scorpio night;
Wherefore as doth the man that halteth not,
But pusheth on, whate'er may catch his eye,
If pierced by goad of sharp necessity,
So through the gap did we our entrance make,
One before other, clambering up the stair,
So strait, it forceth climbers to divide.
As the young stork doth upward raise its wing,
In the desire to fly, but ventures not
To leave the nest, and lets it droop again,
Such was myself, with wish inflamed, then quenched,
To ask, till finally I showed the form
Of one, who hath made up his mind to speak.
And not that we sped quickly on, forbore
The father sweet, who said: "My son, let fly
The bow of speech, thou to the barb hast drawn."
Assured thus, I opened then my mouth,
And I began: "How in a place where need
Of nourishment is not, can one grow lean?"
"If Meleager thou recall, and how
He wasted in the wasting of a brand,
This would not seem to thee so dour a thing:
And wouldst thou think how at thy quiver will
Thine image in the mirror quiver too,
What now seems stiff, would pliant seem to thee;
CANTO XXV.

But that thou find the inner rest thou would'st,
Lo! here is Statius, whom I call, and beg
That he be now the healer of thy wounds."

"If I unveil to him the things eterne
Seen here, where thou art present," Statius said,
"No blame to me; thee may I not deny."

Then he began: "My Son, if now thy mind
Observe, and to itself receive my words,
They for the "How" thou askest, will be Light.
A perfect blood, which never is absorbed
By thirsty veins, and as remainder stays,
Like food which from the table is removed,
Receives creative virtue in the heart
For all the limbs of man, like that blood which
Flows through the veins to change itself to them.
Again digested, this sinks where not speech,
But silence best befits, and thence distils
Upon another's blood, in Nature's vase.
Together these, one with the other meet,
One to be acted on, and one to act,
By the perfection of its primal source.
Joined to the other, this begins to work,
Coagulating first, and quickening then
What for material it solidified.
The active virtue, now become a soul,
As of a plant, (but so far different,
One's on its way, the other at the goal)
Worketh so far, that now it moves and feels,
Like a sea fungus; and next sets itself
To shape the powers whereof it hath the germ.
Taller and broader now the virtue spreads,
That springs, my son, from the engenderer's heart,
Wherein for all the limbs nature provides.
But how the animal a speaking child
Becomes, thou seest not yet; and this it was
That erst misled one wiser than thyself,
In that the doctrine held by him disjoined
The soul and the potential intellect,  
Since he no organ saw assumed by this.  
But open to the coming truth thy breast,  
And know that soon as in the embryo  
The brain-articulation is complete,  
With joy the Primal Mover turns to it,  
As masterpiece of Nature's skill, and breathes  
On it new spirit, with a virtue filled,  
That draws to its own substance all found there  
Of active force, and with it forms one soul,  
That lives, and feels and on itself re-acts.  
And that thou mayst less wonder at my words,  
Consider the sun's heat, which becomes wine,  
Joined with the juices which the vine distils.  
And when the thread of Lachesis is spent,  
The soul released from flesh, by innate force  
Bears off with it the human and divine.  
The other faculties are wholly mute,  
But memory, intelligence and will  
Are keener much in action than before.  
Without a pause most wondrously it falls  
Of its own self on one or other shore,  
And here first learns its own allotted path.  
Soon as by place it hath been circumscribed,  
A plastic virtue sheds its rays around  
In form and measure like the limbs in life;  
And as the air, when it is full of rain,  
And upon it another pours its beams,  
With divers colours shows itself adorned,  
So the surrounding air doth there assume  
The form, which virtually the soul, when now  
Established in its place, imprints on it.  
And thenceforth like the little points of flame,  
Which follow fire, wherever it is moved,  
Upon the spirit this new form attends.  
And since by it the soul its presence shows,  
'Tis called henceforth a shade, and by it too
Each sense is organized, e'en sight itself.
From it we have a voice, by it we laugh,
Or by it shed our tears, and vent our sighs,
As thou could'st hear in passing o'er the mount.
And as a wish and each emotion else
Affect us in their turn, such the shade's form,
And such the cause of what perplexes thee."
And now the last bend of the road we'd reached,
And to the right hand we had turned our steps,
When our attention a new care engaged.
There the high cliff shoots forth in flames of fire,
And from the roadway blasts of wind blow in,
Which drive them back, and clear the path of them.
So it behoved us on the open side
To move in single file; the fire I feared
On this side, and on that a fall below.
My Leader said: "As by this place we pass,
Needs must we keep a tight check on our eyes;
A little thing might to great error lead."
"Summae Deus clementiae in chant
Forth from the bosom of the flames I heard,
Which made me no less careful to turn round.
And spirits walking in the fires I saw;
Wherefore I looked at their steps and my own,
From time to time dividing my regard:
Upon the words which close the hymn, straightway
They cried aloud: "Virum non cognosco;"
And then in low tones re-commenced the hymn.
This ended, yet once more they cried: "In grove
Diana dwelt, and banished Helice,
Who had the poison felt of Venus' cup."
Their song they then resumed, and shouted names
Of women and of husbands that were chaste,
As virtue and the marriage bond impose.
Such method, as I trow, sufficient is,
For all the time the fire is scorching them:
With such a cure and diet such 'tis fit.
That the last wound of all should be closed up.
CANTO XXVI.

The Seventh Round—Wantonness.
The Two Groups of Wantons—Examples of Wantonness—
Guido Guinicelli—Arnaldo Daniello.

While thus along the edge in single file
We were advancing, the good Master oft
Did say: "Beware, 'tis well I warn thee here."

On my right shoulder now the sun struck down,
And with his streaming rays o'er all the west
Changed into white the azure of the sky;
And with my shadow I the ruddier made
The fire appear, at the mere sight of which
I saw shades many, as they passed, take note.
This was the cause that an occasion gave
For them to speak of me: and they began
To say: "No phantom body this of his."

Then toward me, near as they were able, some
Approached, but ever with a due regard
Not to transgress the bounds, wherein they burned,
"O thou, who movest, not through idleness,
Behind the other two, but from respect perchance,
Reply to me, who burn in thirst and fire:
Not I alone of thy reply have need,
For all these thirstier are for it, than e'er
Was Æthiop or Indian for cool draught,
Tell us how thou makest thyself a wall
Against the Sun, as if thou hadst not yet
Within the meshes of death's net been caught?"

So did one speak, and I already had
Myself explained, had I not now been fixed
On an appearance of yet stranger form:
For in the middle of the burning path
    A group came facing opposite the first,
    That fixed my gaze upon them in suspense.
From either side I saw the shades pass on,
    And each the other with a hurried kiss
    Embrace, contented with this brief salute.
E'en so amid their dusky troop one ant
    Muzzle to muzzle doth another greet,
    Perhaps to learn its route, or how each fares.
Soon as the friendly greeting is despatched,
    Or ever they have thence a first step ta'en,
    Each party strives the other's shout to drown.
"Sodom, Gomorrha," the new comers cried;
    And those: "Pasiphaë enters the cow;
    So to her pleasure the young bull may rush."
And then as cranes, when to Riphean heights
    Some wing their way, and to the desert some,
    Those fighting shy of sunshine, these of ice,
So goes one company, the other comes,
    Returning both in tears to their first chants,
    And to the cry that best becomes them each.
And once again near to me, as before,
    The very same, who had besought me, drew,
    With looks expressive of desire to hear.
I, who had now their wishes noted twice,
    Began: "O souls, secure one day, come when
    It may, to enter on a life of peace,
Not in raw youth nor full ripe age remain
    My limbs on earth, but with me they are here,
    With their own blood and every ligature.
Up here I go to be no longer blind:
    On high a Lady dwells, who wins us grace,
    Whereby this mortal through your world I bear.
But to your dearest wish so may content
    Quickly arrive, and Heaven receive you home,
    Where all is love, in ampler space outspread,
Tell me, that I thereof may make my note,
PURGATORIO.

Who are ye; and the other crowd, what is't,
That rearward goes direct away from you?"

Not otherwise in stupor stands perplexed
The mountaineer, who all dumb-foundered stares,
When rough and rude into the town he comes,
Than those shades in their several looks appeared;
But as the weight of wonderment passed off,
Which in the nobler heart is soon allayed,
"Blessed be thou," so he began that first
The question asked, "who would'st from these confines
Freight an experience for a better life!
The folk, who come not with us, did offend
In that for which triumphant Cæsar once
Heard himself hailed insultingly as Queen;
Wherefore they leave us crying Sodoma,
In self reproach, as thou didst hear thyself,
And by their shame heighten the glow of fire.
Our sin however was hermaphrodite;
But in that we outraged humanity,
Like brute beasts following our appetite,
To our disgrace by us recited is,
Whene'er we part from them, the name of her
Who bestialized herself in wicker beast.
Our deeds thou knowest now, and what our guilt;
But if perchance thou'dst know the names we bear,
No time is there, nor know I how to tell.
But for myself I'll meet thy wish: and I
Am Guido Guinicelli; ere mine end
Repenting well, I now do wash me clean."
What in Lycurgus' frenzy his two sons
Became when they again their mother saw,
Such I became, (but rise not to their height),
When I heard him my father style himself,
As of the others, better far than I,
Who practice the sweet rhymes of playful love,
Nought hearing, saying nought, pensive I moved,
In backward gaze fixed long time upon him,
CANTO XXVI.

But for the fire no nearer I approached.  
Still when mine eyes had feasted to the full,  
I to his service promptly gave myself,  
And all I had, with pledge that sanctions trust.  
And he to me: "Thou leavest an impress  
So clear, in what I hear, that it  
Lethe shall ne'er erase, nor even dim.  
But if thy words indeed have truly sworn,  
Tell me the cause, why thou dost show to me,  
By word and look, that thou hold'st me thus dear."  
And I to him: "Those your sweet ditties, which,  
Long as the modern use shall last, will make  
The very ink that writes them dear to me."  
"Brother," he said, "you spirit that I mark  
With finger now," (he pointed one in front)  
"A better workman was i'th' mother tongue.  
In verse of love and in romance of prose  
He surpassed all; and let the idiots talk,  
Who think the man of Limoges him excels.  
Hearsay, not truth, attracts the ear of such,  
And so they settle in opinion down,  
Ere art or reason hath by them been heard.  
Thus many ancients with Guittone did,  
With shout on shout adjudging him the prize,  
Till with most persons Truth hath gained the day.  
And now, if privilege thou have so great,  
That entrance to the Cloister is vouchsafed,  
Where of the College Christ Lord Abbot is,  
One Paternoster say to Him for me,  
For all that we may need in this our world,  
Where power to sin no longer is with us."  
And then perchance to give the other place,  
Who had pressed close, he vanished in the fire,  
As fish in water disappears below.  
I drew a little nearer to the form  
He'd pointed me; and said my strong desire  
Had ready for his name an honoured place.
He with prompt courtesy at once began:

"So pleasant is your courteous request,
Nor can, nor will I, who I am, conceal.
Arnaud am I, who move in tears and song;
Contrite, I see the folly of the past,
And joyous see the longed for day advance.
Therefore do I implore thee by that Power,
Which guides thee to the summit of the stairs,
Be mindful in due time of my distress;"

He hid him then in the refining fire.
CANTO XXVII.

The Seventh Round—Wantonness—The Angel of Purity—
Passage through the Fire—Ascent into the Earthly Paradise—
Virgil's Last Words.

As when his earliest rays are quiv'ring there,
Where once his Maker pour'd out His blood,
While Ebro falls with Libra overhead,
And since noontide the Ganges' waves have boiled;
So stood the sun, and daylight so declined,
When God's glad Angel unto us appeared.

Outside the flame upon the verge he stood,
While he "Beati mundo corde" sang
In voice more living far than is our own.

"Farther none goes but through the biting fire:
So therein enter, O ye holy souls,
And to the hymns beyond turn no deaf ear,"

Such were his words as close to him we stood.
When them I understood, such I became
As one, who in the felon's ditch is laid.

My claspèd hands I stretched on high, and gazed
Upon the fire, and vividly recalled
The bodies I had seen of men in flames.

Towards me then my kindly escorts turned,
And unto me said Virgil: "O my son,
Here may be torture, but it is not death.

Remember, O remember; and if I
Led thee in safety e'en on Geryon's back,
What shall I now do, nearer unto God?

Be well assured, if in the very heart
Of this flame thou should'st stand a thousand years,
Thou should'st not be the balder by a hair.

And if perchance thou think I play thee false,
Draw near, and test it, for full certainty,
With thine own hands upon thy mantle's hem.

Then cast away, away I say, all fear;
Turn hitherward, and fearlessly advance."
Yet still I halt, to voice of conscience deaf.
When he saw me stand obstinately thus;
Somewhat disturbed he said: "Now look my son,
Only this wall 'tween thee and Beatrice."
As at the name of Thisbe, Pyramus
Opened his eyes in death, and gazed on her,
What time the mulberry to vermilion turned,
E'en so relaxing my obduracy,
I turned to my sage Guide, hearing the name,
Which ever in my mind is shooting up.
Whereon with kindly nod, he said: "How's this?
Should we remain here now?" and then he smiled,
As on a child that's with an apple won.
Into the fire, in front of me, he went,
Praying that Statius would behind me come,
Who for a long way had between us walked.
When once within, I could have cast myself
In boiling glass, to find a cooler place,
Such the immeasureable burning there.
My gentle Father, to encourage me,
Spake only as we went of Beatrice,
Saying: "Methinks e'en now I see her eyes."
A voice beyond kept guiding us, that aye
Sang on the while; and we attent to it
Alone, emerged where the ascent began.
"Venite, Benedicti Patris mei,"
Sounded within a light that shone around,
Such as o'erwhelmed me, and I could not look.
"The sun departs," it added; "evening comes;
Stay ye not here, but hasten on your steps,
While yet the West is not in blackness hid."
Straight upward rose the passage through the rock,
In such direction that in front of me
I blocked the rays of the now setting sun.
But little of the stair had we essayed,
When as my shadow failed, the sages knew,
And I, the sun behind us had gone down.
And ere all round its vast immensity
Th' horizon had become one stretch of gloom,
And night was everywhere distributed,
Each of us of a stairstep made a bed;
For such the nature of the hill, from us
It took the power more than the will to mount.
As while they chew the cud, the gentle goats
Lie still, nimble afore in sauciness
On mountain height, as yet unfilled with food,
All silent in the shade, while glows the sun,
Watched by the shepherd, who upon his staff
Leans, and thus leaning waits on their repose;
And as the herdsman lodges in the field,
Watching all night alongside of his flock,
That no wild beast break in to scatter it,
Such were we then ourselves, the three of us,
I like the goat, and shepherds they to me,
Pent in on either side by the high cliff.
Little from thence could be discerned outside;
But in that little could I see the stars,
Brighter and larger shine than is their wont.
Thus pondering, and with gaze fixed thus on them,
Sleep seized on me, sleep that doth oftentimes,
Ere the event occurs, know its report.
What time I think as from the east her rays
First on the mountain Cytherea shed,
Who ever seems aglow in fire of love,
Youthful and fair, me-thought I saw in dream
A Lady o'er a meadow pass along,
Collecting flowers, and in her song she said,
"Let one, who fain would ask my name, know well,
I Leah am, and busy go around
With my fair hands to gather me a wreath.
To please me with reflection in the glass
I deck me here; my sister Rachel ne'er
Through all the livelong day her mirror leaves;
To see her own fair eyes is her delight,
As mine with busy hand to deck me fair:
Her Contemplation, Action me contents.”

And now through brightness in advance of dawn,
Which unto pilgrims aye more welcome breaks,
As on returning nearer home they lodge,
The shades of darkness fled on every side;
And with them went my sleep; so I arose,
Finding the mighty masters risen too.

“That pleasant apple, in pursuit of which
The care of mortals climbs so many boughs,
To-day will give to all thy hunger peace.”

These and like words, as towards me he looked,
Did Virgil speak, and never were there gifts,
That could a pleasure yield of equal charm.

So eagerly did wish on wish crowd in
To reach the goal above, that at each step,
I felt my wings grow stronger for the flight.

When the whole stairway from below was scaled,
And we now stood upon the topmost tread,
Virgil then fixed on me a stedfast eye,
And said: “The temporal and the eternal fire
Thou'st seen, my son, and to a place art come,
Where of myself nought further I discern.
I've brought thee here by knowledge and with skill;
Henceforth thy pleasure for thy leader take:
Steep paths and narrow thou hast left behind.
Behold the sun, which shines upon thy brow,
See the fine grass, the flowers and all the shrubs,
Which of itself alone this land brings forth.

Until in gladness those fair eyes arrive,
Which by their tears drew me at first to thee,
Here canst thou sit, and 'midst it all canst walk.

No further word nor sign from me expect;
Free and upright and sound is now thy will,
And sin 'twould be its bidding not to do;
Bishop and King of self I hail thee now.”
CANTO XXVIII.

The Earthly Paradise—Lethe—The Solitary Lady—
Origin of Water and Wind in the Divine Grove—
Character of the Place.

EAGER already in and round to search
The grove divine, thick planted, full of life,
That to mine eyes tempered the young day's glare,
Without delay I passed the boundary line,
And step by step paced slowly o'er the plain,
Across the sward mid fragrance on all sides.
Softly a breeze, that in itself had nought
To change its course, upon my forehead played
With stroke no heavier than a gentle breath;
Wherewith the fronds in easy tremor waved,
Inclining all together to the point
Whence first the holy mount its shadow casts;
And yet from their erect position not
So sway'd, that little birds on topmost spray
Should cease to practice all their various skill;
But filled with joy, the early breezes they
With singing welcomed, hidden in the leaves,
Which to their treble murmuring bass supplied,
Such as is that, which swells from bough to bough,
Through the deep pine grove on Chiassi's shore,
When Æolus lets the Scirocco loose.
Already my slow pace had carried me,
So far within the ancient grove that I
Could see no longer where I entered in.
And lo! a streamlet checked my forward path,
Which with its tiny waves towards the left
The herbage bent, that grows out from the bank.
All waters, that the purest are on earth,
   Would seem some mixture in themselves to hold,
Compared to this, which in it nought conceals;
Browner although than brown it runs its way
   'Neath the perpetual shade, which never there
Allows or sun or moon to penetrate.
My feet I stayed, and with mine eyes I passed
   Beyond the brook in admiration of
The vast variety of fresh blown sprays;
And there appeared to me (as when appears
   Something quite suddenly, that doth displace
In wonderment our every other thought)'
A solitary damsel, who her way
   Pursued with song, selecting flower on flower,
Wherewith her path was painted all along.
"Ah! Lady fair, who in the beams of love
   Art warmed, if I may trust the semblances,
That are the wonted tell-tales of the heart,
Be it thy will more forward to advance,"
I said to her, "towards the river's edge,
   So far, that I may hear what thou dost sing.
To me thou dost recall, where, and how fair,
   Was Proserpine, what time the mother lost
The child, and child let fall her primrose wreath."
As in the dance a Lady turns with feet
   Pressed to the ground, and close together held,
And one foot scarce before the other sets,
So o'er the scarlet and the yellow flowers
   She turned to me with grace none other than
A maid's, who downward droops her modest eyes;
And my petition met to heart's content,
   Drawing thus near me that her dulcet notes
And words reached me with meaning full expressed.
Arrived already where the grasses are
   Bathed by the rippling of the beauteous stream,
She granted me the boon of upraised eyes.
I do not think such radiance beamèd forth
Beneath the lids of Venus, when her son
Her bosom pierced with inadvertent shaft,

Erect upon the farther bank, she smiled,
As with her hands she culled yet brighter blooms,
Which on that lofty land spring up unsown.

Three paces 'tween us did the river set;
But Hellespont, where Xerxes crossed, (a curb
E'en still on all the pride of men,) was ne'er

So hateful to Leander for the tide
That between Sestos and Abydos rolls,
As was this stream that opened not to me.

"New comers are ye, and perchance because
I smile," 'gan she, "in this spot, chosen first
To be the nest for all the human race,
Ye in astonishment remain perplexed;
But Delectasti in the Psalm may give
Light, that shall clear the mists from off your minds;
And thou, who foremost art, and me didst pray,
Say if aught else thou'dst hear; ready I come
For all you ask, as far as may suffice."

"This stream," I said, "and rustling of the grove
Impugn within me a new faith in what
I heard declared, which these things contravene"

Then she: "Thee will I tell what the cause is,
Whence this proceeds, whereat thou art amazed,
And so dispel the mist in which thou 'rt caught.
The Supreme Good, whom Self alone contents,
Made mankind good for good, and gave this place
To him as earnest of eternal peace.

By man's default he tarried here short while,
By his default to tears and sweat of toil
His honest laugh and happy mirth were changed.

Now that the perturbations caused below
By vapours, breathed from water and the earth,
Which, far as may be, follow upon heat,

Might never here have been adverse to man,
This mountain top soared up to Heaven thus high,
From them set free at point where thus enclosed.
And now, because in circle everywhere
  Air moves obedient to the first impulse.
  Unless its circuit be at some point checked,
In this high region, which is disengaged
  In living ether, such an impulse strikes,
  And makes the forest, densely set, resound;
The plant thus smitten hath an innate strength,
  That with its virtue impregnates the air,
  Which as it whirls its course, diffuseth this:
And then your earth according as 'tis found
  In self and climate fit, conceives and bears
  Its diverse trees of properties diverse.
No wonder should it then appear down there,
  If this be understood, when e'er some tree
  Without apparent seed should germinate.
And thou must know, this holy plain, where thou
  Dost stand, is full of seed of every kind,
  And contains fruit, that yonder is not plucked.
The water that thou seest springs not from vein,
  That vapours may recruit, condensed by cold,
  Like stream that swells and sinks as though it breathed;
But issues from a fount unchangeable
  And sure, which by God's Will as much receives
  As it pours forth, opening in double stream.
On this side it comes down with virtue such
  As takes away the memory of sin,
  On that restores remembrance of good deeds,
'Tis Lethe here, but on the other side
  Eunoë called; yet works this virtue not
  Save by a draught taken in turn from each;
All other flavours this, the last, transcends.
  And although now well satisfied may be
  Thy thirst, so that I need no more unfold,
Of grace I still add a corollary,
  Nor deem I that my words less prized will be
  By thee, if what I promised they exceed.
The ancient poets, who ere while did sing
The golden age and its felicity,
Dreamed on Parnassus haply of this place.
Here was the human stock in innocence,
And here perpetual spring, and every fruit;
This stream the nectar, whereof each doth tell."
I turned me full round to my poets then
Behind, and by their smile discerned that they
The final sentence well had understood.
Then to the fair Ladye mine eyes returned.
CANTO XXIX.

The Earthly Paradise—The Banks of Lethe.
The Mystic Procession of the Church Triumphant.

The Lady, as one rapt in love, sang on
Continuous with the close of her own words,
Beati, quorum tecta, sunt peccata.

And life the nymphs that in seclusion roamed
Through woodland shades, desiring one to fly,
And one to see the brightness of the sun,
So moved she up the stream, making her way,
Along the bank, myself in line with her,
With like steps waiting on her little steps.

A hundred counted not her steps and mine,
When either bank made equally a curve,
In fashion such that now I faced the East,
Nor yet indeed had we so far advanced,
When fully round to me the Lady turned,
And said: "My Brother, look, and listen well."

And lo! a sudden brightness sped across
On every side through the broad forest depth,
Such that I doubted an 'twere lightning flash.
Yet since the lightning stays but as it comes,
And this abiding more intensely glowed,
I said in thought within, "What thing is this?"

And a sweet melody diffused itself
Through the illumined air; whence righteous zeal
Made me reproach the hardihood of Eve,
Who, heaven and earth obedient still, herself
A woman only, she just newly formed,
Brooked no delay 'neath veil of any kind,
Under the which had she devoutly stayed,
All these ineffable delights had I
CANTO XXIX.

Enjoyed at first, and ages afterward.
While I was moving on mid such first fruits
Of th' everlasting bliss, lost in suspense,
And eager for still greater joys to come,
In front of us, like an enkindled fire
Became the air beneath the verdant boughs,
And the sweet sounds now reached us as a chant.
Ye Virgins sacrosanct, if ever fasts,
Or cold, or vigils I have borne for you,
Cause is there spurring me to crave reward.
Meet 'tis that Helicon flow now for me,
And that Urania aid me with her choir
To put in verse things e'en for thought too hard.
Farther a little the wide interval
'Tween them and us a false presentment gave,
As though were coming seven trees all of gold;
But when I had so nearly reached them that
The vague similitude, that cheats the sense,
Lost not in distance its specific form,
The virtue, which to reason fits the word,
Learned them to be the candlesticks they were,
And in the voices heard Hosanna sung,
Bravely this furniture sent up a flame
Brighter by far than moon in the serene
Of midnight in the mid course of her month.
Filled with amazement backward did I turn
To good Virgilius, who replied to me
With look o'er-borne by wonderment no less.
I raised mine eyes again to those tall forms,
Which toward us moved in measured step so slow,
That newly wedded brides had passed them by.
The Lady chid me, "Why this eagerness
Of love towards the living lamps alone,
Without a look to what comes on behind?"
People I then saw pressing close to them
As to their marshalls, clad in garments white,
So glistening that this world ne'er saw the like;
Resplendent shone the water on the left,
And back to me reflected my left side,
As in a glass, when into it I looked.

Taking upon my bank a station, where
Only the stream between us intervened,
For better view I halted there my steps;
And in advance I saw the flambeau come,
Leaving the air behind with colour decked,
In semblance like to lines from painter's brush,
So that o'erhead the atmosphere was streaked
With all the hues, in seven stripes traced, whereof
The Sun his bow, Delia her girdle makes.

These streamers to the rear reached farther back
Than could mine eyes, and so far as I judged,
Betwixt the outermost ten paces ran.

Beneath so fair a sky, as I describe,
Came four-and-twenty elders, two and two,
All wearing coronets of fleur de lys;
And sang they all: "Among the daughters born
Of Adam, blest art thou, and blessed shall
To all eternity thy beauties be."

And when the flowers, and all the fresh green grass
In front of me upon the further bank
Were by this band of the elect left clear,
As star in heaven follows upon star,
Four living creatures after them came next,
Crowned one and all with chaplets of green leaves.

With six wings each of them was featherèd;
The plumes were full of eyes, and such had been
The eyes of Argus, had they been alive.

Reader, to tell their forms no further rhymes
I spend, for other outlay me constrains
So vast, that more I may not here disburse,
But read Ezekiel, who describeth how
He them beheld forth from the North arrive,
In whirlwind, clouds, and flame of fire enwreathed,
And as thou'lt find it in his pages writ,
Such were they here, save as concerns their wings
John is with me, from him dissentient.

Within this group of four the space contained
A car triumphal, borne upon two wheels,
Which came along yoked to a Gryphon’s neck.

Two wings he bore aloft, and between them
Rose the mid band, and on each side the three,
So of their sequence thus no breach he made.

Upmounted they beyond the range of sight;
As far as it was bird, the wings were gold,
The rest was white and with vermilion striped.

Never in Rome did chariot as proud
An Africanus or Augustus greet:
Yea the Sun’s car were poor compared to this!

The car, which driven from its course was burned
At supplication of a pious world,
While Jove in hidden council still was just.

Three Ladies circled at the wheel on right
In measure of a dance, the first so red
That scarce had she been visible in fire;
The next did seem as though both flesh and bone
Had of pure emerald been fashioned;
The third appeared like newly fallen snow.

Now seemed the Dame in white to lead the group,
And then the crimson-clad, and by her note
The others took the step, rapid or slow;
At the left wheel did four hold festival,
Arrayed in purple, following the beat
Of one, who in her forehead had three eyes.

In order close upon the group just sketched,
I saw two ancients in their garb unlike,
But of like mien, each dignified and calm.
The one was plainly a disciple of
Hippocrates, the chief, whom nature made
To serve the beings that she holds most dear.
The other showed the contrary intent,
Girt with a brightly gleaming sword and sharp,
Such as across the stream filled me with fear.
Next saw I four of meek exterior;
And behind all, an old man by himself,
Walking asleep, but with expressive face.
Like the first company these seven too
Were habited; but of the lily's bloom
No chaplets on the head a garden made,
But rather of the rose, and such red flowers.
Seen at a little distance one had sworn
That 'bove the brow all was aglow with fire.
And when the car over against me stood,
Thunder was heard; and for that stately throng
Further advance seemed to be dis-allowed,
As with the vanguard ensigns they stood still.
The Earthly Paradise—Apparition of Beatrice—
Disappearance of Virgil—Beatrice's reproof of Dante.

When the first Heaven's Septentrion, which ne'er
Hath known or rise or setting in its course,
Nor veil of other cloud than mists of sin,
And there was making everyone alive
To call of duty, as the Wain below
Guides into port whoever turns the helm,
Stood firmly fixed, those ministers of truth,
Which 'twixt it and the Gryphon first advanced,
Turned to the Car, as to their source of peace.
And one of them, as if by Heaven sent down,
Precented thrice in chant, that all the rest
Took up, "Veni sponsa de Libano."
As at the last great trump the blest will each
Rise quickly from their graves, with voice once more
Reclothed in flesh, in Alleluias heard,
E'en so above the heavenly chariot there,
Ad vocem tanti senis, hundreds rose,
Servants and heralds of eternal life,
All shouting "Benedictus qui venis;"
And, flinging flowers aloft and all around,
Manibus o date lilia plenis.
Ere now I've seen at dawning of the day
The Orient all bedight with roseate hues,
The rest of heaven adorned in fair serene;
And the sun's face o'er shadowed at his birth,
So that attempered by a veiling mist,
The eye long time its brightness could endure;
E'en so, embosomed in a cloud of flowers,
Which from the hands angelical went up,
And downward fell within and all around,
With olive wreath upon a white veil laid,
Appeared a Lady 'neath a mantle green,
Clothed in the colour of a living flame.
My spirit that already had been left
Through length of years so many, nor had felt
Crushed in her presence, overwhelm'd with awe,
Without the knowledge that the eye conveys,
By secret virtue from herself diffused,
Felt now the mighty power of bygone love.
Soon as the influence sublime upon
My vision fell, which me had pierced of yore,
Ere I had passed the term of boyhood's age,
I turned me to the left with such regard,
As when the infant to its mother runs,
If terrified, or if in pain he be,
To say to Virgil: "Not a drachma e'en
Is left of blood, that thrills not now in me;
I recognize the sparks of th' ancient fire."
But Virgil had left us, us all bereft
Of him, of Virgil, sweetest father mine,
Virgil, to whom my soul's health I gave up;
Nor all that once our ancient mother lost,
Could so avail the cheeks erst cleansed in dew,
That they should not be soiled again with tears.
"Dante, because Virgilius goes away,
Weep not as yet, I say again, not yet,
For weep thou must, but by another sword."
As admiral, who upon poop and prow
Comes to inspect the men that serve aboard
His other ships, and cheers them to brave deeds,
When at the sound of my own name I turned
Which of necessity finds record here,
Above the chariot rail upon the left,
I saw the Lady, who at first appeared
Veiled in the welcome of the angels' joy,
Direct her eyes toward me across the stream.
Albeit the veil, which from her head flowed down
And was encircled with Minerva’s wreath,
Allow her not to be entirely seen,
In regal state, with bearing still reserved,
Continued she, as one who speaks indeed,
But whose most burning words are yet restrained,
“Look on us well! We are Beatrice;
How didst thou deign this mountain to ascend?
Didst thou not know that man is happy here?”
Mine eyes I drooped to the clear stream, but at
The sight of self I turned them to the grass,
So deep the shame that weighed upon my brow:
So to her son, the mother seems but hard,
As she to me, for some what bitter is
The flavour which a stern compassion hath.
Silent was she: but prompt the Angels’ chant
Began: “Speravi in te Domine,”
Though beyond “Pedes meos” they went not.
Just as the snow amidst the living trunks
Upon the spine of Italy congeals,
Stiffened in blast of the Sclavonian winds,
And then dissolving trickles through itself,
Soon as the land, that knows no shadow, breathes,
So that it seems fire that a taper melts;
Such was myself, without or tear or sigh,
Until I caught the song of those, whose notes
Follow the notes of the eternal spheres.
But when in their sweet harmony I felt
Their sympathy with me, more than if they
Had said: “Lady, wherefore so stern to him?”
The ice, which round my heart was tightly bound,
Water and breath became, and through my mouth
And eyes rushed from my breast in agony.
Still on the same side of the car unmoved
She stood, and to those holy essences
Turned thereupon with words to this effect.
"Ye through the eternal day your vigil keep,
So that from you nor night nor sleep doth steal
A single step that time makes in its course;
Therefore I answer make with greater care.
That he who yonder weeps may hear it well,
And thus his sin and grief may equal be.

Not by the work of the great wheels alone,
Which every seed direct to a fixed end
According to the stars that wait on it,
But by the bounty of celestal grace,
Which comes in showers down from clouds so high
Our vision may not unto them approach,

This man was such in days of his young life
Potentially, that all good habits might
In him have made an admirable proof.
But so much more unkindly and more rank
Becomes the land with bad seed, and untilled,
As stronger is the vigour of its soil.

Him for a while my countenance sustained;
Showing to him the light of girlish eyes,
I led him with me towards the goal of right.
But soon as to the threshold I had come
Of second age, and had exchanged my life,
Me he forsook, and gave himself elsewhere.

From flesh to spirit when I mounted up,
Beauty and virtue waxing more in me,
To him was I less dear, and pleased him less;
He turned his steps to ways that were not true;
False images of good did he pursue,
Which ne'er repay the promises they make.

Availed it nought by prayer to win for him
Good thoughts, inspired in dream and other ways,
With which to call him back; so little he
Gave heed, and fell so low, all arguments
Proved short of what his soul's health needed still,
Except the vision of the lost below.
For this I visited the gate of death,
CANTO XXX. 289

And to the Guide, who hither led him up,
My prayers with tears abundant were addressed.
Broken would be the high decree of God,
Should Lethe now be passed, and her sweet food
Be tasted, without forfeit duly paid
Of Penance, such as gusheth forth in tears.” 142

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CANTO XXXI.

The Earthly Paradise—Dante's Confession and his Plunge in Lethe—Beatrice's Handmaidens—Beatrice Unveiled—

"O THOU, on yon side of the sacred stream,"
Turning to me the point of her address,
Of which me seemed the side blow was too sharp,
In sequel she began without delay,
"Say, say, if this be true; to charges such
Thine own confession needs must be conjoined."
Confounded so were all my faculties,
Voice made an effort, and was spent, ere it
By its own organs could disclosed be.
Awhile she paused; then said; "What thinkest thou?
Reply to me, for sad remembrances
The water hath not yet effaced from thee."
Fear and confusion mingling both at once
Forced from between my lips so faint a "yes,"
'Twas for the eye to read its purport right.
As cross-bow snaps with string and bow alike,
When bolt with too great tension is discharged,
And with less force the arrow hits the mark;
So 'neath that grievous load myself broke down,
Both tears and sighs together bursting forth,
While the voice faltered, as it strove to pass.
Then she: "Amidst the yearnings I inspired,
Which led thee to affection for that Good,
Beyond which there is nothing to desire,
What cross-cut trenches, or what chains didst thou
Encounter, that thou should'st have thus cast off
The hope to make thy onward journey good?
And what allurement or advantages
In other objects were there so displayed,
That thou midst them should loiter up and down?"

And when I'd drawn a deep and bitter sigh,
Voice scarcely had I left to answer with,
As painfully my lips did utter it.

With tears I said: "Things of the present life
By their false pleasure turned my steps aside.
Soon as thy face was hidden from my sight."

And she: "Hadst thou been silent, or denied
What thou hast now confessed, thy full offence
Had still been clear: by such a Judge 'tis known.

But when from man's own mouth bursts forth of sin
Self accusation, in this court of ours,
Against the edge the grinder's wheel turns back.

Yet that still nobler shame thou bear away
From this thine error, and another time
Hearing the Sirens, thou may braver be,

Throw off this seed of weeping, and give ear:
So wilt thou learn how quite the other way
My buried body should have guided thee.

Nature or art did ne'er to thee present
Delight so great as those fair limbs, wherein
I was enclosed, now scattered in the dust.

And if this chief delight did fail thee thus,
When I was dead, what mortal thing remained,
That should have thee beguiled to love of it?

Rightly should'st thou, when first by arrow struck
Of things fallacious, have thyself upraised
In chace of me, who was no longer such.

Thou shouldest not have earthward dropt thy wing,
To wait more shots, be it from foolish girl,
Or other vain thing of as brief a joy.

Two or three times a fledgling may abide;
But in the sight of the full feather'd bird
In vain the net is spread, or arrow shot."

As little boys, ashamed and speechless, all
With eyes abashed, stand listening to reproof,
Owing themselves at fault and penitent,
So did I stand, and she continued thus:
"Since if to hear be pain, lift up thy beard,
And thou wilt find 'tis greater pain to see."
With less resistance may uprooted be
A sturdy oak, whether by our North wind,
Or that which bloweth from Iarba's land,
Than I at her command raised up my chin:
And since in saying beard she meant the face,
I felt the full sting of her argument.
And as my countenance exposed itself,
Mine eye perceived creation's first born Sons
Were now at rest, and scattered flowers no more;
And little re-assured as yet, mine eyes
Saw Beatrice turned towards the Beast, wherein
Two natures in One only Person join.
Beneath her veil, and 'cross the streamlet's breadth,
She seemed to me her old self to surpass,
As it surpassed all others, when with us.
The nettle of repentance stung me so,
That 'bove all else, whate'er by love of it
Had most perverted me, was most my hate.
Compunction gnawed so deeply in my heart,
That overcome, I sank. What then I did,
She knows, who wrought in me the cause of it.
But when the heart restored my outward sense,
The Lady, whom at first I'd found alone,
I saw bend over me, saying: 'Hold fast.'
She through the stream up to my neck had drawn
Me on, and, drawing me behind her, moved
Over the wave, swift as the shuttle flies.
As nearer to the blessed shore I came,
"Asperges me," I heard in notes so sweet,
That memory fails, still more the power to write.
The winsome Lady opened then her arms,
Clasped them around my head, and plunged it down,
So that needs must I of the water drink:
She drew me forth, presenting me thus bathed
To the fair circle of the four that danced,
Who each around me threw her arm in turn.

"Here we are nymphs; in heaven above are stars;
Ere Beatrice into the world went down,
We as handmaidens were appointed her.
We'll lead thee to her eyes; but for the light
And gladsomeness therein, the yonder Three,
Who more profoundly gaze, will quicken thine."

In song they thus began, and led me then
Up with themselves unto the Gryphon's breast,
Where Beatrice was standing, turned towards us.

"Spare not," they said, "to satisfy thy gaze;
We've placed thee here, fronting the emeralds,
Whence Love of old 'gainst thee shot forth his darts."

A thousand longings, hotter far than flame,
Fastened mine eyes on her's, which beamed with light,
Fixed on the Gryphon still in steadfast gaze.

As on a mirror doth the sun, e'en so
The two-fold Beast flashed in her eyes His rays,
In acts alternate of His either form.

Think, Reader, how within I wondered then,
Seeing the Thing Itself in calm repose,
Yet in Its image ever changing form;
The while with joy and with amazement filled,
My spirit feasted on that Mystic Food,
Which as it satisfies, provokes desire.

In stately movement came the other Three,
Themselves approving of the highest grade,
Dancing to measure of their angel song.

"Turn, Beatrice, O turn thy saintly eyes
To thine own liegeman," such their burden was,
"Who to see thee, hath trod so many a step.

Of Grace grant us this grace, that thou unveil
To him thy mouth, that so he may behold
The second beauty that thou dost conceal."

O Splendour of Eternal, Living Light,
Who is there that beneath Parnassus' shade
Hath pallid grown, or of its waters drunk,
That would not find his mind obscured in cloud,
Striving to show thee, as thou didst appear,
Where Heaven around thee weaves its harmonies,
As in clear air thou didst thyself reveal?
CANTO XXXII.

The Earthly Paradise—The Vicissitudes of the Sacred Car—
Symbolical Tree—The Eagle—The Fox—The Dragon—
The Monstrous Transformation of the Car—
The Harlot and the Giant.

So close mine eyes were fixed and rivetted,
Greedy to slake the thirst of ten long years,
That all my other senses were extinct;
And walls on either side of them rose up
Of sheer indifference; so did the saintly smile
With the old net draw them to it alone;
When forcibly my gaze was turned aside
Towards my left hand by the god-like Three,
Hearing from all the one cry, "Too intent."
And that condition which affects the sight
Of eyes just dazzled by the solar rays,
Left me of vision for the nonce bereft.
But when for lesser objects sight returned,
Lesser I say, as measured by the vast
Vision of light from which perforce I'd turned,
I saw the glorious army had wheel'd round
Upon the right, and thus returning, had
The sun and seven flames in face of it.
As a battalion underneath its shields
Turns in retreat, and by its standard wheels
Before the whole as yet has changed its front,
So the militia of the heavenly King,
Which led the van, had all in file passed by,
Before the pole had swung the chariot round.
Then to the wheels the Ladies turned again,
And His blest burthen on the Gryphon bore,
So that however not a feather stirred.
The Lady fair, who drew me through the ford,
   And I and Statius followed at the wheel,
   Which in its orbit formed the lesser curve.
Through the tall grove we passed, left void by sin
   Of her who to the serpent lent her ear,
   Marching in measure to an angel strain.
Perhaps in three flights so much ground had ta'en
   An arrow from the bowstring sped, as we
   Had traversed now, when Beatrice stepped down.
"Adam," I heard whisper'd by all around;
   A tree theycompassed then, entirely stripped
   Of leaves and blossom on its ev'ry bough.
Its crowning branches, which the wider spread,
   As higher it grew, had to the Indian seemed
   A marvel in their height amid his groves.
"Blest art Thou, Gryphon, who dost not with beak
   Pluck from this tree, what to the taste is sweet,
   Since by it after is the belly wrung."
So cried the rest, circling the sturdy tree;
   And, said the Being of two natures formed:
   "Thus is preserved the seed of Righteousness."
And turning to the pole which he had drawn,
   To foot he dragged it of the widowed stem,
   And to its parent stock he left it bound.
As with our trees, when downward here below
   The great light pours its flood, mingling with that
   Which beams abroad behind the heavenly fish,
The buds swell out, and then once more is each
   In its own tint renewed, ere yet the sun
   Hath yoked his coursers 'neath another star;
So less than rose, and more than violet,
   Disclosing its own hue, the tree grew young.
   Which ere while showed its boughs so desolate.
Ne'er had I heard, on earth it is not sung,
   The hymn then chanted by that company,
   Nor could I bear its music to the end.
Could I paint how at story of Syrinx
CANTO XXXII.

The unrelenting eyes dropped off to sleep,  
Those eyes which longer vigil cost so dear,  
Like painter, who from living model paints  
I would portray how then I fell asleep:  
Who would do this, must drowsiness depict.  
So I pass on to when I woke again,  
And say, a splendour rent the veil of sleep,  
And a loud call: "Arise, what doest thou?"

As to behold the Appletree in bloom,  
The fruit whereof fills Angels with desire,  
And spreads in Heaven perpetual bridal feasts,  
Peter and John and James were led apart,  
And overpowered at the Word awoke,  
By which profounder slumbers have been broke,  
And saw their company diminished  
As well by Moses as Elias too  
And all the raiment of the Master changed:

So I revived, and standing over me  
Beheld the kindly spirit, who had led  
My steps at first along the river side.  
"Where's Beatrice?" I said in anxious doubt:  
And she: "Behold her 'neath the foliage  
But now fresh opened, seated on the root.  
See the companions that encircle her,  
The others mounting in the Gryphon's train  
With sweeter song, of import more profound."

And if her speech went on to greater length,  
I cannot tell, for now before mine eyes  
Was she, who closed perception of all else.  
Alone she sat upon the very earth,  
As if left there, the Guardian of the Car,  
Which I had seen the bifold being bind.  
Environment around her of themselves  
The seven nymphs formed, all with those lamps in hand,  
Which from the blasts of North or South are safe.  
"Here wilt thou be short while a forester,  
And shalt with me for aye be citizen
In that Rome where the Christ a Roman is.
Wherefore for that world's weal, which lives so ill,
Fix on the Car thine eyes, and what thou seest,
Returning thither, fail not to write down."
Thus Beatrice: and I who at the feet
Of her commands in full devotion knelt,
Set mind and eyes alike where she enjoined.
Never descended in a flash so swift
From out thick cloud the fire, when streams the rain
Down from that sphere which far away revolves,
As I beheld the bird of Jove swoop down
Athwart the tree, tearing the very bark,
Not its mere buds alone, and tender leaves;
And with full force it dashed upon the Car,
That reeled beneath it like a storm-tossed ship,
Drifted by waves to starboard, then to port.
And next into the cradle of the Car
Triumphal, a she fox I saw creep in,
Which seemed from good food to have fasted long.
But it upbraiding for its hideous sins,
My Lady turned it to as swift a flight
As its bare bones, devoid of flesh, allowed.
And once again from point whence first she came,
I saw the eagle drop into the Car,
And leave it with her feathers overstrewn.
And then, as wrung from heart with sorrow pierced,
A voice from heaven came forth, and thus it spake:
"Ah, little boat how evil is thy freight!"
The earth then seemed to me to ope her mouth
'Twixt the two wheels, and forth a dragon came,
Which upward through the Car did thrust its tail;
And like a wasp, that draweth back its sting,
Drawing again its baleful tail, dragg'd out
Part of the floor, and went away in glee.
That which remained, as with its blades of grass
The living earth, with plumage, first bestowed,
Perchance, for purposes benign and pure,
Covered itself again, and covered too
   Were either wheel and pole so quickly, that
   A sigh doth longer keep the lips apart.
The holy structure now transformèd thus
   Burst out with heads at all its several points,
   Three 'bove the pole, and at each corner one;
The first were horned as oxen, but the four
   Bore on the forehead each a single horn:
   Like prodigy was never seen before.
Firm as a don-jon tower on mountain top,
   Seated upon it, there appeared to me
   A shameless whore, who ready glances cast
Around; and, as with mind to keep her his,
   I saw a giant at her side erect,
   And ever and anon the two did kiss.
But because she her lustful, wanton eye
   Turned upon me, that savage paramour
   Lashed her with scourge from head down to the feet.
Then filled with jealousy, and fierce with rage,
   The monster he unloosed, and dragged it off
   Far in the wood, which of itself sufficed
To hide the harlot and the strange new beast.
Purgatorio.

CANTO XXXIII.


DEUS venerunt gentes; thus in turn

The Ladies three, and then the four began
With mingling tears sweet Psalmody to sing;
And in compassion Beatrice with sighs

Listened with aspect such, that hardly more
Was Mary changed, when by the Cross she stood.

But when to her the other maidens gave

Place for her words, then rising to her feet,
She answer made with count'nance flushed like fire:

"Modicum et non videbitis me;
Et iterum, my sisters well beloved,
Modicum et vos videbitis me."

All seven then she placed in front of her;

And after her, by sign alone, she drew
Myself, the Lady, and the sage who stayed.

So went she on, and not I think had yet

Her tenth step forward on the ground been set,
When with her eyes upon my eyes she smote;
And with a tranquil look: "More quickly come,"

She said to me, "so much, that if I speak
With thee, thou may'st for listening be well placed."

Soon as I joined her, as in duty bound,

She said to me: "Why, Brother, carest thou not
To question me, now walking by my side?"

As 'tis with them, who reverent in excess

In presence of superiors speak, so that
Ne'er to the teeth the living voice is dragg'd,
Thus it befell me; for in faltering tones,
"My Lady," I began, "my every need
You know, and what is good for it withal."
Then she to me: "From fear and from all shame
My will is now thou disembarres thee,
So that thou speak no more as one who dreams.
Know that the vessel, which the serpent broke,
Was and is not; but let the guilty one
Know well, God's vengeance by no sops is scared.
Not for all time without an heir will be
Th' eagle that left his feathers in the Car,
Whence it a monster, then a prey became.
For I see surely, and therefore announce,
Stars even now are near, which bring to us
A time safe from assault and every check,
In which a Five Hundred, a Ten and Five
Sent forth by God, shall slay th' adult'ress and
The giant too, the partner of her guilt.
And should perchance my message, thus obscure
As Themis and the Sphinx, persuade thee less,
Since in their style it clouds intelligence;
Events will soon the son of Laius prove,
Who shall this hard enigma well explain,
Without the loss of cattle or of crops.
Note all this well, and as from me these words
Proceed, so teach them unto those that live
The life which only is a race to death;
And bear in mind, when thou dost write them down,
That thou hide nought that'in the tree thou'st seen,
Which twice hath now in this place been despoiled.
Whoe'er spoils that, or doth those branches strip,
By deed of blasphemy outrageth God,
Who made it holy for His only use.
For biting it in pain and long desire
Five thousand years and more the first man yearned
For Him, who punished on Himself that bite.
Thine observation sleeps, if it note not,
That for rare purpose it grows very high,
And that its summit too spreads widely out,
And if vain thoughts had not around thy mind
Been to it as the Elsa spring, and their delights
What to the mulberry was Pyramus,
By circumstances such alone wouldst thou
Have seen God's Justice morally display'd.
When on the tree He laid His interdict.
But as I see thee in intelligence
Hardened to stone, and with its colour stained,
So that my speech but blinds thee by its light.
I will that, if unwritten, in outline,
Thou carry it away within thee stored,
As with palm leaves the pilgrim binds his staff."
And I, "Just as the wax, with signet stamped,
Doth never change the form impressed on it,
So likewise now by you my brain is stamped.
But why thus far above my vision's range
Should words longed for by me so pitch their flight,
That more I lose, as more I strive to grasp?"
"That thou may'st recognize," she said, "the school
Which thou hast followed, and its doctrine see,
How to my teaching it can ne'er attain;
And see how from the path divine your road
Is as far distant, as from earth is far
The highest heaven that swiftly hastens round."
Whereon I answered: "I remember not
That from you I did e'er estrange myself,
Nor doth my conscience touch me with remorse."
"And if thou canst not thine own self recall,"
She answered with a smile, "remember now,
That but to-day thou hast of Lethe drunk.
And if from smoke a fire may be inferred,
This thy oblivion clearly doth conclude
Fault in thy will, engaged by something else.
But henceforth shall my words denuded be,
So far as it shall fittingly suffice
For thy crude vision to discover them."
Meanwhile with brighter fires and tardier step
The sun was holding his meridian round,
Which, as 'tis viewed, now here, now there appears,
When, as an escort halts, who in advance
Precedes a convoy, if he on the track
Sees aught that's strange, so to a standstill came
The Ladies seven on verge of a dim shade,
Such as 'neath foliage green and branches black,
The Alp may cast o'er banks of icy stream.
In front of them methought, as from one fount,
I saw Euphrates and the Tigris flow,
And like good friends slow to part company.

"O Light, O Glory of the human race,
What is this water, which doth here expand
From one prime source, and from itself divide?"

To this my prayer in answer came: "Beseech
Matilda to explain." And then replied,
As one who hastes to clear herself from blame,
That fair Ladye: "This and much more beside
Hath he by me been told, and sure I am
That Lethe's water hid not this from him."

And Beatrice: "Some greater care perchance,
That ofttime robs us of our memory,
Hath dimmed the vision of his mental eye.
But yonder see Eunoê flowing down;
There lead him, and as thou art wont to do,
His half dead powers to their full life recall."

Like gentle soul that proffers no excuse,
But as its own adopts another's will,
As soon as this by outward sign is shown,
So straightway, as she took me by the hand,
Moved the fair Ladye on; and "With him come;"
She said to Statius with true, woman's grace.

If, Reader, I had but a broader page
To write on, I would sing to thee in part
Of the sweet draught, which ne'er had sated me:
But because now the pages are filled full,
Prepared for this my second canticle,
The curb of art lets me no farther go.
Back I returned from that most holy stream,
Regenerate in fashion of young trees,
Freshly revived in their new foliage,
Pure, and disposed to mount up to the stars.
PARADISO.
PARADISO.

CANTO I.

The Proem—Opening Invocation—Ascent into the Sphere of Fire.

Mode of Ascent—Order of the Universe.

His Glory, Who in motion sets all things,
Pervades the Universe; in one place more,
In other less, His Splendour shineth back.
Within that heaven, which of His Light receives
The most, I've been, and things beheld, which one
Who thence descends, nor knows nor can relate;
Because approaching to its own Desire,
Our understanding plungeth in so deep,
That memory cannot from so far return.
Yet still whatever of that holy realm
I could store up as treasure in my mind,
Shall now the matter be of this my song.
Gracious Apollo, for my final task
Make me such vessel of thy power, as thou
Dost claim, ere thy loved laurel thou bestow.
Thus far the one peak of Parnassus hath
For me sufficed; but now I need them both
To enter the arena that remains.
Enter my breast, and breathe there now, as erst
Thou breathed’st on the day, when Marsyas
Thou from the scabbard of his limbs didst draw.
O Power Divine, if of Thyself thou lend
So much, that but a shadow I may show
Of that blest realm, which on my brain is stamped,
Me shalt thou see thine own loved tree approach,
And crown me then with leaves, to which the theme
And thy own Self may have entitled me.
At times so rare, O Father, are these culled
For poet’s or a Cæsar’s triumph day,
(Fault of men’s wills unto their utter shame)
That from Peneian wreath a new born joy
To Delphic Deity’s own joy should spring,
When e’er for it a man thirsts eagerly.
A mighty flame follows a little spark:
Perchance when I am gone, in better words
Prayers may go up that Cirrha shall accept.
Through divers outlets riseth unto men
The world’s great lamp; but from that one, wherein
Four circles with three crosses are combined,
On better course, with more propitious star
Conjoined, it goeth forth, and to its mood
Adjusts and stamps with seal the wax of earth.
Such outlet there had made it almost morn,
And almost evening here; one hemisphere
Was there all white, and black the other half,
When Beatrice I saw, turned round towards
The left; in steadfast gaze upon the sun,
Thereon did eagle ne’er so fix his eye.
And as a second ray forth from the first
Is wont to issue, and reboundeth then
Upward, like pilgrim longing to return,
Such as her act, which through mine eyes poured in
Upon my phantasy, was mine; and I
Fixed on the sun my gaze beyond our wont.
Yonder is much allowed, allowed not here,
Unto our powers, by favour of the place
Created for the home of all mankind.

Not long I bore it, yet not so short while,
As not to see it throw off sparks all round,
Like iron that issues glowing from the fire.

And suddenly it seemed that day on day
Was superadded, as though He, Who can,
Had with a second sun adorned the sky.

With eyes full set upon the Eternal Spheres
Stood Beatrice; on her alone were fixed
Mine own, wholly withdrawn from higher range.

In view of her I inly felt, as did
Glaucus, who tasting of the herb, became
With th’ other Gods co-partner in the sea.

To be trans-humanized none can in words
Express, so let my instance him content,
For whom Grace holds th’ experience in reserve.

If of me there were only what Thou didst
Create the last, Thou know’st, O Love, that heaven
Dost sway, and with Thy Light didst lift me up.

When now the Sphere, which Thou, Desire of all,
Makest eternal, my attention fixed
By notes attuned, and measured by Thyself,
So much of heaven seemed then to be aglow
With the sun’s fire, that neither rain nor flood
E’er formed a lake so vast in its expanse.

The strange new sound I heard, and the great Light
Kindled desire in me to know their cause,
Such as before I ne’er had felt so keen.

Whence she, who saw me as I see myself,
To quiet the disturbance of my soul,
Open’d her mouth, ere I could mine to ask;
And she began: “Thou dost so dull thyself
With false imagining, as not to see
What thou might’st see, if this thou’d’st shaken off.
Thou art not upon earth, as thou dost deem;
Yet lightning flashed forth from its proper home
Ne'er passed so swift as thy arrival here."

If of first doubts I were divested then
By the brief words, accented by her smiles,
A new one held me in a closer net.
I said: "But now I rested in content
From great amazement; yet again am lost,
How through these airy substances I mount."

Thereon with something of a pitying sigh,
She turned on me her eyes with such a look
As mother casts on a delirious child;
And she began: "All things of every kind
Due order keep among themselves; this is
The form which makes the Universe like God.

Herein the higher natures see th' imprint
Of the Eternal Power, who is the End
Whereunto is made the Law just touched upon.

In order, such as I describe, incline
All natures, in their various destinies,
More near or less unto their primal Source;

So move they on, to its own haven each,
O'er the great sea of being, each impelled
By special instinct bearing it along.

'Tis this that carries fire towards the moon,
This stirs the impulse of the mortal heart,
This in itself unites and binds the earth.

Nor creatures outside of intelligence
Alone doth this bow with its arrows reach,
But those that have intelligence and love.

The Providence, that doth all this adjust,
Stills with its Light that calm of Heaven alway,
Wherein revolves that which hath swiftest speed.

And thither now, as our appointed bourne,
The virtue of the string bears us, which guides
Unto a goal of bliss what it propels.

True is't, that as the form ofttimes doth not
Accord with the intention of the art,
Because material to respond is deaf,
CANTO I.

E'en so from this direction may depart
Sometimes the creature, that hath power to swerve,
Impell'd it may be in another way,
(So may be seen downfalling from a cloud
The flash of fire) if the first impetus
Be wrested earthward by a false delight.
Nor shouldst thou wonder more, if well I judge,
At thine ascent, than at the rivulet
From a high hill descending to the plain.
Wonder 'twould be at thee, if now released,
From hindrance, thou had'st settled down below;
As though a living flame could rest on earth."
And Heavenward then she turned her face again.
CANTO II.

The first Heaven of the Moon—Imperfect Vows—Admonition to Readers—Ascent into the Moon—The Lunar Spots—The Influences of the Stars.

O YE, who seated in your little boat,
Eager to hear my tale, pursue your course
In my ship's wake, as she with song rides on,
Turn back to visit your own shores again;
Not yours to tempt the open sea; for p'rhaps
In losing me, you might your reckoning lose.
None hath e'er crossed the waters I now hold;
Minerva breathes, Apollo at the helm,
And Muses nine are pointing me the Bears.
But ye, ye other few, who have outstretched
The neck betimes to feed on Angels' Bread,
Which here is Life, though with It none fulfilled,
Well may ye launch upon the deep salt sea
Your vessel, waiting close upon my wake,
As in your front the waters re-unite.
The glorious heroes, who to Colchis sailed,
Ne'er in amazement gazed, as ye will do,
When they saw Jason to a ploughman changed.
The thirst perpetual, innate from our birth,
Bore us towards the Realm of God's own Form,
Well nigh as swift, as Heaven ye see revolve.
Upward gazed Beatrice, and I on her,
And quick perhaps as arrow hits the mark,
Winging its flight, when from the notch discharged,
I saw myself arrived; where a strange thing
Diverted to itself mine eyes: whereon
She, whom no act of mine could e'er escape,
Turned to me joyous as she beauteous was;
   "Lift up to God a thankful heart," she said,
   "Who with the first star hath united us."
It seemed to me a cloud enveloped us,
   Luminous, dense, solidified and smooth,
   As 'twere a diamond smitten by the sun.

Into itself the everlasting pearl
   Received us, e'en as water doth receive
   A ray of light, itself remaining one.

If I were body then (and here none knows
   How one dimension can another hold,
   As must be, if two bodies coalesce,)

Intense desire should hotter burn in us
   That Essence to behold, Wherein is seen
   How our own nature is made one with God.

What now we hold by Faith, will there be seen
   By intuition, 'not by argument,
   As is the first truth that a man believes.

I in reply: "Lady, as best I can,
   To Him I render my devoutest thanks,
   Who hath withdrawn me from the mortal world.

But tell me what the dusky spots may be
   Upon this substance, which down there on earth
   Makes folks repeat their fables about Cain?"

Somewhat she smiled, and, "If opinion," then
   She said, "with mortal men doth err in things
   Their senses cannot, as with key, unlock,

Surely the shafts of wonderment should not
   Wound thee henceforth, when in the track of sense
   Reason, thou seest, wings but a sorry flight.

But say what of thyself thou think'st hereon."
   And I: "The difference we observe up here
   Is caused I think by bodies dense and rare."

And she: "Surely thou'lt find this faith of thine
   Full steeped in error, if thou wisely hear
   The arguments I shall oppose thereto.

The eighth sphere showeth many lights to you,
Which in their quality and quantity
May noted be of various semblances.

If dense and rare alone could this effect,
One virtue only would there be in all,
Diffused, or more, or less, or equally.

But diverse virtues need must be the fruits
Of formal principles, and these, save one,
By argument of thine would be destroyed.

Again, if rarity were now the cause
We seek of this brown tint, either in parts
This planet would of matter fail right through;

Or like the fat and lean distributed
Through bodies in their turn, so too in this,
The pages of its book would alternate.

Were the first true, it would in sun's eclipse
Be manifest by the translucent light,
As when thrown in on any thin substance.

This is not so: therefore must we look at
The other case, and should it chance that this
I quash, false thy conjecture will be proved.

Be it this rarity reach not right through,
A limit of necessity it hath,
Where passage by its contrary is barr'd,

And whence the other's rays would be thrown back,
As is the colour that a glass reflects,
The which behind it hides a plate of lead.

Now thou wilt say that darker shows itself
The ray on this spot than appears elsewhere,
Because reflected there from farther back.

From this objection, if thou use the test,
Experiment some day will set thee free,
Familiar source of all your streams of art.

Three mirrors take, and equidistant two,
From thee remove; a third thine eye shall catch
Between the first two placed, but farther off.

Turning to these, mind that behind thee stands
A lamp, which on the mirrors three may shine,
And reach to thee reflected from them all.
Although in quantity expandeth not
  So wide the distant image, thou wilt see
    That with an equal brightness its rays shine.
Now as by contact with the warmer beams
  What lay beneath denuded is of snow,
    Both as to colour and the previous chill,
So thy intelligence, left open now,
  Will I instruct with such a living light,
    As shall appear to thee like twinkling star.
Within the heaven of Divine Repose
  Revolves a body, in whose virtue lies
      The being of all things that it enfolds.
The heaven next this, that hath so much to show,
  This being shares 'mong essences diverse,
      Distinct from it, but in it all contained;
The other spheres, by various differences,
  All the distinctions proper to themselves
    Dispose unto their ends and fruitfulness.
Thus do these organs of the world go on,
  As clearly now thou seest from grade to grade,
      And work below with what comes from above.
Observe me well, how from this point I move
  On to the truth thou'dst learn, so that henceforth
      Thou mayst know how to cross the ford alone.
The motion of these holy spheres and all
  Their virtue, as the hammer's art from smith,
      Must by some blessed Motors be inspired;
And thus the heaven, which stars so many grace,
  The Image grasps of the Deep Mind, which first
      Its motion gave, and thereof forms a seal.
And as the soul, encased in your dust,
  Through different members, all with aptitude
      For diverse faculties is self-diffused,
So That Intelligence likewise unfolds
  Its Goodness, multiplied through all the stars,
      Revolving aye on its own Unity.
Virtue diverse in diverse blend compacts
   The precious body that it vivifies,
   Wherein, like life in you, it is bound up.
By the glad Nature, whence it is derived,
   The mingled virtue through the body shines,
   As gladness beameth through the living eye.
From this proceeds what between light and light
   May different seem, and not from dense and rare;
   This is the formal principle that makes
To its own goodness dark and bright conform.
CANTO III.


THAT Sun, which early fired my heart with love,
The sweet aspect of beauteous Truth to me
By proof and refutation had unveiled;
And to confess myself corrected now
And well convinced, I lifted up my head,
As far as for avowal such was meet.
But there appeared a vision which held me
In scrutiny of it so closely fixed,
That my confession I remembered not.
As when through polished and transparent glass,
Or yet through waters gleaming bright and calm,
But not so deep, their depths are lost to sight,
The outlines of our features are returned
So faintly, that a pearl on forehead white
Upon the pupil not more slowly comes;
Such saw I many faces prompt to speak;
Whereby I ran in error counter to
That which ’twixt man and fountain kindled love.
At once, soon as I was of them aware,
Deeming them only mirror’d semblances,
To see whose image they reflected, I
Turned mine eyes round, saw no one, and again
Turned straightway to the light of my sweet Guide,
Whose holy eyes glowed warmly as she smiled.
"Now marvel not why thus I smile on thee,"
She said, "in presence of thy childish thought,
Since still its foot distrusts the solid truth,
But, as ’tis wont, turns round to emptiness."
True substances are these thou lookest on,
Here relegated for imperfect vows.

Wherefore speak with them; listen, and believe;
The Light of truth, which fills them with content,
Allows them not from it to turn their feet.”

I to the shade, that the most eager seemed
To talk, myself addressing, thus began,
As one whom too great eagerness confounds;
“Spirit, newborn to bliss, who in these rays
Dost feel the sweetness of Eternal Life,
Which, until tasted ne’er is understood,
Gracious ’twould be to me, if with thy name
And lot assigned thee, thou would’st me content.”

Whereon with readiness and glistening eyes:
“Our Charity her portals never bars
To just desire, save as may His direct,
Who willeth all His court to be like Him.
A virgin sister upon earth I was;
And if thy mem’ry be examined well,
My fairer state will not hide me from thee,
But thou wilt recognize Picarda here,
Who stationed now among these other blest,
Am myself blest in this the tardiest sphere.
Our own affections, which enkindled are
In the sole pleasure of the Holy Ghost,
Find in conformity with Him their joy.
And this our lot which seemeth so low down,
Hath been assigned us, since neglected were
Our vows, and in some measure rendered void.”

Then I to her: “Forth from your wond’rous forms
There something shines, I know not what, divine,
Changing th’ impressions of an earlier life.
Hence did I not recall thee readily;
But what thou sayest cometh now in aid;
So easier ’tis thy features to retrace.
But tell me, ye who here find happiness,
Do ye desire a more exalted place
Of wider scope, or there to find more friends?"

Smiles she exchanged at first with th' other shades;
And then made answer to me with such joy,
That she did seem to burn in love's first fire.

"Brother, our wills the grace of charity
Keeps ever calm, and makes us only wish
For what we have, and thirst for nothing else.

Did we desire a station higher still,
Such a desire in us would not accord
With will of Him, Who here assigns our place;
Which thou wilt see in these spheres cannot be,
If life in love be here necessity,
And love's own nature thou examine well.

Nay, 'tis the formal cause of this our bliss
To keep ourselves within the will of God,
Whereby the wills of all of us are one.

That thus we dwell, all in gradation due
Throughout the realm, is to the realm its joy,
As to its King, Who wills our will be His;
And in this Will indeed is all our peace;
It is that sea, whereto all things flow on,
That it creates, and nature fashioneth."

Clear was it then to me how everywhere
In Heaven 'tis Paradise, e'en though the grace
Of Good Supreme falls not in equal showers.

But as occurs, if sated with one dish,
And for another appetite remains,
This is requested, that declined with thanks,
E'en so did I by gesture and in word,
To learn from her what web it was, through which
She had not drawn the shuttle to the head.

"In life perfected, and by her desert
High heaven enfolds a Lady, by whose rule,"
She said, "some clothe and veil themselves on earth,
That until death they may both watch and sleep
Beside that Spouse, Who every vow accepts,
Which charity conformeth to His will.
To follow her, forth from the world, a girl,
I fled, and in her habit cloister’d me,
And vowed the life demanded by her rule.

Men, practised more in evil than in good,
From the sweet cloister tore me then away;
God knows, what afterward my life became.

This other splendour too, which shows herself
To thee upon my right, enkindled there
With all the fire that glows in this our sphere,
Doth to herself apply, what of myself I say:
She too a sister was; and from her head
Was torn the shadow of the sacred veil.

But still, when to the world she’d been fetched back
Against her will, and all good usage else,
She never from her heart removed the veil.

Of great Costanza this the light, who by
The second Suabian in his stormy pride
Conceived the third, the last of all his line.”

Thus did she speak, and *Ave Maria*
Began to sing; and singing, as a weight
Sinks in deep water, vanished from my sight.

My gaze, which followed in her track far as
Was possible, when she was lost to view,
Turned to the target of a fonder love,

Directed wholly upon Beatrice.
But she upon mine eyes such radiance flashed,
That at the first my sight endured it not,
And this made me yet slower to ask more.
CANTO IV.

The first Heaven of the Moon—Imperfect Vows—The Seat of the Blessed—The Return of Souls to the Stars—Free Will—Broken Vows and Restitution.

BETWEEN two morsels, tempting both alike,
A man left free, might of starvation die,
Ere he could either take between his teeth.
So 'tween the ravenous of two savage wolves
A lamb would stand in equal dread of both,
As too would stand a hound between two hinds;
And thus, if I were silent 'mid my doubts,
Urged equally by both, no blame to me,
Nor praise, under a like necessity.
I held my peace, but on my face, my wish
Depicted was, and my request thereby
Expressed more warmly much than if in words.
For me did Beatrice, what Daniel once
Did when he calmed Nebuchadnezzar's rage,
What time it made him cruelly unjust.
Said she: "I see how this desire and that
Distracts thee, and thine own solicitude
Itself restrains thy breath from uttering it.
Thou arguest: if the good will hold on,
By what right should another's violence
Curtail the measure of my own desert?
Again thou hast a cause of doubt, in that
It seems men's souls return unto the stars,
As Plato in his judgment lays it down.
These are the questions, which on thy desire
Press with an equal weight, and therefore first
With that I deal, which hath the greater gall.
Of Seraphim who deepest sinks in God,
Moses and Samuel, and of either John
Choose which thou wilt, not Mary e'en herself,
None have their seats in any heaven else,
Than these blest spirits which appeared but now;
Nor have they more nor fewer years of life.
But all make beautiful the primal Sphere;
And diversely enjoy the Blessed Life.
As more or less they draw th' Eternal Breath.
Here these revealed themselves, not that this sphere
Is their especial lot; but as the sign
Of heav'n first reached in speediest ascent,
Thus to address thee suits thy power of mind,
Which only through the sensuous apprehends
What then it makes meet for the intellect.
'Tis thus that Holy Scripture condescends
To your capacity, and hands and feet
To God attributes, meaning something else.
And Holy Church likewise with man's aspect
Doth Gabriel and Michael represent,
And him who Tobit's sight made sound again.
Timœus' argument about men's souls
No likeness hath to that which here is seen,
In that he seems to speak his real belief.
He says the soul to its own star returns,
Believing it had been from thence detached,
When Nature gave it as the body's Form.
Yet may his doctrine bear another sense
Than words in sound express, and possibly
His purpose is what we may not deride.
If he intend that to these spheres return
The honour of their influence and the blame,
His bow perchance a partial truth may hit.
This principle, misunderstood, misled
Well nigh the whole world, till it lost its way,
CANTO IV.

Invoking Jove, and Mercury and Mars.
The second doubt, that is disturbing thee,
Less poison hath, because its ill effects
Could ne'er lead thee elsewhere away from me.
If justice among us appear unjust
In sight of mortals, 'tis an argument
For faith, and not for sin heretical.
But since your apprehension can avail
Into this verity to penetrate,
As is thy wish, so will I thee content.
If violence 'tis, when he who suffers it
Contributes naught to him who useth force,
These souls were not on this ground held excused;
For if it will not, Will is never crushed,
But acts, as doth the natural force of fire,
Though violence beat it down a thousand times.
Hence if Will more or less gives way, it yields
To force, as these did, who the power still had
To turn again back to the holy place,
If they had still unshaken kept a will,
Such as held Laurence to the gridiron bound,
And to his hand made Mucius pitiless.
So had it driv'n them back upon the road,
Whence they were dragged, as soon as they were loose;
But Will so resolute is all too rare.
And by these words, if duly thou hold them
Garner'd in mind, down falls the argument,
That ofttimes might again have troubled thee.
But yet another strait obstructs thy path
Before thy very eyes, from which thyself
Could'st not escape, ere thou wert wearied out.
I have most surely pressed it on thy mind
That soul beatified can never lie,
Because 'tis ever close to Primal Truth;
And yet thou must have heard Piccarda say
That for the veil Costanza kept her love,
So that she seems to contradict me here.
Brother, ere this, oft has it come to pass,
From danger to escape, against the grain,
Something is done, that was not right to do.

Just as Alcmæon, who, thereto besought
By his own father, his own mother slew,
In act of duty was undutiful.

On this point I would have thee well reflect,
That violence and will may both combine,
And leave offences inexcusable.

The will, if free, withholds consent from ill,
Which it consents to, so far as it fears,
If it refuse, in worser straits to fall.

So when Piccarda speaks, as we have heard,
Will absolutely free she means, and I
The other mean, so speak we both the Truth.”

Such was the current of that sacred stream,
Which issued from the Fount, whence all Truth flows,
That now my either wish it left in peace.

“Lady Divine, Love of the Primal Love,”
Said I forthwith, “whose words flow in as waves,
Yet warm as with an ever quickening life,
There is not in my love a depth profound
Enough to render grace of thanks for grace;
May He, Who sees and can, to it respond.

Well do I note, if Truth illume it not,
Outside of which naught that is true expands,
Our intellect can ne’er be satisfied.

On Truth it rests, as wild beast in his lair,
Soon as it reacheth it; and reach it can;
If not, such longing would be mockery.

Doubt for this cause, like sucker from the stock,
Springs at the foot of Truth, and nature ’tis,
That spurs us upward, on from height to height.

This prompts me, and a confidence inspires,
With reverence due, My Lady, to ask thee
Of still another truth, as yet obscure.

I fain would know if man can satisfy
Vows unfulfilled by other pious works,
Which in your scales shall not be found too light."
On me looked Beatrice with eyes brimfull
Of sparkling love, and so divine withal,
That all my force gave way; I turned aside,
Almost bewildered, with mine eyes downcast.
CANTO V.

The first Heaven of the Moon—Imperfect Vows—Their Sanctity and the Possibility of their Commutation.

Ascent into the Second Heaven of Mercury—Saints Active and Beneficent—The Emperor Justinian.

"If with the fire of love I flame on thee
Beyond the measure seen on earth below,
So that thy powers of vision I transcend,
No marvel for thee, for from perfect sight
Proceedeth this, which, as it apprehends,
To good thus apprehended moves its foot.
Clearly I see how the Eternal Light
Already shines in thy intelligence,
Which, only seen, ever enkindleth love;
And if some other thing your love seduce,
Naught is it but some vestige of this Light,
Ill understood, that shineth through therein.
Thou fain wouldst know if by some service else
Shortcoming of a vow thou canst amend,
So that the soul be safe from counter plea."

This Canto thus did Beatrice begin,
And like to one that cuts not short his speech,
Continued thus her holy argument.

"The greatest gift which in His Bounty God
Made in Creation, and the most conformed
To His own Goodness, and by Him most prized,
Was the full liberty of Will, wherewith
The creatures of intelligence alike,
All, and they only, were and are endowed.
Now will be seen, if here thou reason well,
A vow's high value, if it be so made,
That God consents, when thou consentest too.
For in the compact made 'tween God and man,
This treasure makes a victim of itself,
Such as I say; and makes the act its deed.

What compensation then can any give?
Think'st thou to use well, what thou hast giv'n away,
'Twould be to turn ill gains to good account.

On the main question now thou art assured;
But since herein dispenseth Holy Church,
Which counter seems to what I have declared,
Needs must thou yet awhile at table sit,
In that the tough meat thou hast fed upon
Requires for thy digestion further help.

Open thy mind to what I now explain,
And keep it fixed within, for to have heard
And not remember, doth no knowledge make.

Two things combine to form the essence of
This sacrifice; the first the matter is,
Whereof 'tis made; the compact is the next.

This last at no time can be cancellèd,
It not observed; and in respect of this,
It has above been laid precisely down.

Hence with the Jews necessity there was
The offerings still to make, though some of these
Might be commuted, as thou well must know.

The other, being matter, as was shown,
May well be such that there shall be no fault,
If it for other matter be exchanged.

Yet from his shoulder let none lift the load
At his mere choice, until for him has turned
As well the golden as the silver key;

And all exchange as only folly deem,
If in the substitute the thing dismissed
Be not contained as four is found in six.

Therefore what thing so e'er doth so much weigh
In its own worth as aye to turn the scale,
Can ne'er be satisfied by other fine.

Let mortals ne'er at hazard risk a vow;
If made, stand to't; but first be wide awake;
Not like Jephthah, with pledge of what first comes;
Whom it behoved rather to say, "I'm wrong,"
Than keeping faith do worse: as foolish too
The Greeks' great Captain thou wilt find, by whom
For her fair face Iphigenia wept,
And for her too made fools and sages weep,
Who heard the story of the cruel rite.
Tread, O ye Christians, with a graver step:
Be not as feathers sport of every breeze,
Nor think that every water cleanseth you.
Ye have the Testament, the Old and New,
And for your guide the Shepherd of the Church;
For your salvation this sufficeth you.
If evil appetite call otherwise,
Be ye as men, and not like foolish sheep,
So that no Jew among you may deride;
Act not, as doth the lamb, that leaves the milk
Of its own dam, in silly wantonness,
And fights with its own shadow in disport."
Thus Beatrice to me, as now I write:
Then turned she round, with longing filled, towards
That Point, where finds the world fulness of life.
Her pause in speech and her transfigured form
Silence imposed on my own eager mind,
Which had new questions ready to advance;
And as an arrow, which upon the mark
Strikes, ere vibration of the string hath ceased,
So sped we on into the second realm.
My Lady I saw there so jubilant,
Soon as she passed into that heaven's light,
That brighter than itself the planet shone.
And if the star were changed thus, and smiled,
What could I be, who by mere nature am
Susceptible to change in any form!
As in a fish-pond, when 'tis calm and clear,
The fishes rush to what from outside falls,
As though they counted it their feeding-time,
So splendours in their thousands I beheld
Collect around us, while from each was heard:
"One comes, who will our sev'ral loves increase."
And as to us they one by one approached,
Each shade appeared with joy and gladness filled,
By the bright glory that flashed forth from it.
Think, Reader, if the tale, that here begins,
No further should proceed, how thou wouldst feel
An agonizing dearth of further news;
And by thyself thou’lt see my own desire
To hear the lot and circumstance of all,
As to mine eyes they became manifest.
"O happy born art thou, to whom Grace grants
To see th’ Eternal Triumph and its Thrones,
Ere yet thy warfare is accomplished.
We with the Light, which through all heaven expands,
Are here enkindled; if thy wish it be
To know us clearly, satisfy thy wish."
Thus by some one among those holy sprites
Was I addressed; and "Speak," said Beatrice,
"Yea, freely speak, and trust all these as Gods."
"Well do I see how thou hast made thy nest [draw’st,
In light thine own, which through thine eyes thou
As in thy smiles they flash their sparkling beams:
But thee I know not, nor wherefore thou hast,
O worthy soul, thy place within the sphere
Veilèd from mortals in Another’s rays."
Such were my words, directed towards the light,
That first addressed me, whereupon it grew
Brighter by far than it had been before.
Just as the sun, that hideth its own self
In light excessive, as its heat dries up
The tempering virtues of the denser airs,
So in access of joy was hid from me
In its own glorious rays the holy form,
That, closely thus invested, answered me
In mode, wherein the following canto sings.
"WHEN Constantine had wheeled the Eagle’s course
Counter to that of heaven, till then pursued
Behind the Ancient, who Lavinia took,
A hundred and a hundred years and more
God’s Bird on Europe’s farthest point remained
Near to the hills, from which It issued first;
And ’neath the shadow of the sacred Wings
It there through hands successive ruled the world,
And changing thus, alighted upon mine.
Caesar I was, and am Justinian,
Who, as Prime Love did will, as now I feel,
Abolished laws superfluous and vain.
And ere I set upon this work, my faith
Was in one nature, and no more, in Christ,
In which belief, contented I abode.
But blessèd Agapetus, he who was
The supreme Shepherd, to the purer Faith
Directed me aright by his discourse.
Him I believed, and what his faith contained,
I now see clearly, as for thyself thou seest
All contradictories are false and true.
Soon as I walked in steps of Holy Church,
It pleased God’s Grace the great emprize on me
To breathe, and my whole self I gave to it;
And to my Belisarius left the troops,
CANTO VI.

With whom God's Hand in such conjunction wrought,
That sign it was to me I might repose.
Reply to thy first question endeth here;
But yet it is of such a character,
That somewhat more it me constrains to add.
That thou may'st estimate with how much right
Men rise against that Standard Sacrosanct,
As well usurping, as resisting it,
Mark its high Virtue, worthy to command
All reverence:" and from the hour 'gan he
When Pallas died to 'stablish it supreme.
"Thou know'st how it made Alba its abode
Three hundred years and more, up to the end,
When champions three 'gainst three still fought for it.
Thou know'st its deeds from wrong to Sabine wives
Unto Lucretia's woe, on through the seven kings,
Conquering the neighbour nations all around;
Thou know'st its deeds by matchless Romans wrought,
First against Brennus, against Pyrrhus next,
And other chiefs and their confederates;
From whence Torquatus, Quinctius too surnamed
From untrimmed locks, the Decü and Fabü,
Achieved the fame, which proudly I embalm.
Down to the dust it cast Arabian pride,
Which marching after Hannibal o'erpassed
The Alpine rocks, whence Po, thou glidest down;
Scipio and Pompey yet in youth 'neath it
Their triumphs won; and bitter to the hill,
At foot of which thy birthplace stands, it proved.
Then as drew nigh the time when Heaven would bring
The whole world back to Its own mood of peace,
Cesar, at Rome's behest, bore it aloft:
What it achieved from Var unto the Rhine
Isère and Arar saw, Seine saw it too,
And every valley whence the Rhone is filled.
What it achieved when he Ravenna left,
And leaped the Rubicon, was of a flight
Nor tongue nor pen could in pursuit o'ertake.
Toward Spain then it wheeled the legions round;
Next to Durazzo; and Pharsalia struck
With shock, that e'en to torrid Nile was felt.
Antandros, and Simoïs, whence it came,
It saw once more, the spot where Hector lies;
Then roused itself to Ptolemy's ill fate.
Like lightening it on Juba straightway swooped,
And to your Western shore wheeled back again,
Where blare of Pompey's trumpet it had heard.
By what it did in the next marshal's hand,
Brutus and Cassius doglike howl in hell;
And Modena and Perugia mourned in woe;
Because of it still Cleopatra wails,
Who, as she fled before it, by the asp
Was carried off in black and sudden death.
With him it hurried to the Red Sea's shore;
With him it calmed the whole world to such peace,
That Janus self found his own temple barr'd.
But what this ensign, which now prompts my words,
Had earlier done, and was about to do
Throughout the mortal realm beneath its sway,
Shows in appearance only small and dim,
If we behold it in third Cæsar's hand
With a clear eye, and with affection pure;
For living Justice, that inspireth me,
In hand of him I speak of, granted it
The glory of the vengeance of Its wrath.
Yet marvel now at what I further state;
It sped with Titus afterward to deal
Vengeance for vengeance on the ancient sin.
And when the tooth of Longobards had torn
The Holy Church, then, underneath its wings
Victorious Charlemagne to her succour came.
Now canst thou judge of what sort were the men,
Whom whilom I accused; and their misdeeds,
Which are the cause of all your present ills.
The golden lilies one sets up against
The public flag; and one for party ends
Claims it; 'tis hard to see which most offends.
Let Ghibellines ply, ah! ply their stratagems
Beneath some other badge; who severs this
From Right, doth ever follow it to ill.
Nor let this new Charles with his Guelphs to earth
Abase it; but those talons rather dread,
Which from a mightier lion stripped its fell.
Oft-times already have sons had to wail
The father's sins, and be it ne'er supposed
God for the lilies will His scutcheon change.
This little planet doth adorn itself
With such good spirits as have striven well,
That fame and honour should live after them;
And when for these alone desire mounts high,
Missing the true way thus, needs must the rays
Of true love mount with a less living force.
But just commensuration of rewards
To merit is a portion of our joy,
Because we see them nowise less nor more.
Hence our affection living Justice doth
In us so sweeten, that it never can
Perverted be to an iniquity.
Voices diverse below sweet music make;
So in our life gradations various
Give forth sweet harmony amid these spheres.
And from within this present pearl of ours
With glorious sheen Romèo shines, whose work,
So grand and goodly, ill requital found.
But the Provençals, who 'gainst him conspired,
No laugh may have therein; for ill he fares,
Who counts another's good deeds his own loss.
Four daughters, and each one a queen, Raymond
Beringhieri had; and this for him
A humble stranger won, Romèo hight.
Ambiguous words moved afterwards the Count
To bring to reckoning this most honest man,
Who seven and five laid down, when ten were asked.
Thence he departed, penniless and old;
And did the world but know the heart he bore,
Begging by mouthfuls for a livelihood,
Much as it lauds him, it would laud him more."
CANTO VII.

Second Heaven of Mercury—Spirits Active and Beneficent—
The Death of Christ—Redemption—Immortality of the Soul.

"Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth,  
Superillustrans claritate tua  
Felices ignes horum malachoth."

Thus, as in cadence with his notes he wheeled,  
That Substance, over whom a double light  
Sheds twofold beams, was seen by me to sing.  
He and the others in their dance moved off;  
And, as it were a shower of swiftest sparks,  
In sudden distance veiled them from my view.

In hesitation to myself I said:  
"Tell her, ay tell it out, my Lady tell,  
Who with her sweet outpourings slakes my thirst."

But reverence, which as mistress of my soul,  
At sound of Be and Ice bows me down,  
Again possessed me, as a man asleep.

Short while did Beatrice allow me thus;  
And she began, beaming on me with smile,  
That might a man enrapture e'en in flames:
"By a discernment, that ne'er plays me false,  
In thought thou hast it, how just vengeance could  
Ever with justice be in turn avenged.

But quickly will I set thy mind at rest:  
And give me now thine ear, for these my words  
The boon of grave decision shall impart.

Brooking no curb upon his power of will,  
E'en for his good, the man, who never was  
Of woman born, self damning, damned his race;
And so mankind below in sickness lay  
For many ages in great error sunk,
Until it pleased the Word of God to come, Where in One Person to Himself He joined, By the sole act of His Eternal Love, The nature from its Maker long estranged. Now well observe my present argument: This nature, long as with its Maker one, As first created, was sincere and good; But through itself alone had been exiled From Paradise, because it turned aside Out of the way of Truth, and its own Life. Therefore the pains inflicted by the Cross, If measured by the nature now assumed, Never more justly tortured any man; And none were e'er of injury so great In the regard of Person suff'ring them, In whom that nature had been taken up. Thus from one Act issued effects diverse: God and the Jews consented to one death, Whereat Earth quaked, and Heaven was open'd wide. Henceforth should it no more seem hard to thee, When 'tis asserted that a vengeance just Was by a just court afterward avenged. But now I see thy mind in bonds of thought On thought entangled in a knot within, Of which it waits th' unrav'lling with desire. Thou say'st: Well understood is all I hear: But hid from me it is, why God should will This method of Redemption and none else. My brother, that decree lies buried from The eyes of each man, whose intelligence Hath not been ripen'd in the flame of Love. But in that to this goal long time have men Their gaze directed, and but little seen, I'll tell thee. why this was the worthier mode. Goodness Divine, which spurneth all ill will, Forth from its inner fires so scintillates, As its eternal beauties to display.
CANTO VII.

Whate’er from it immediately distills,
Endures for aye, because It ne’er withdraws
Its own impress from substance sealed by It.

Whate’er from It like rain comes down direct,
Is wholly free, for ’tis not liable
To influence of anything that’s change.

More this conforms to It, it pleaseth more:
For Heav’n’s own Glow, which shines on everything,
Shows fullest life in that most like Itself,

Of all these things the human creature doth
The privilege enjoy, and if one fail,
He needs must fall from his nobility.

Sin only ’tis that doth disfanchise him,
And render him unlike the Good Supreme,
Whose light doth then but faintly shine on him;

Nor to his dignity can he return,
If with just penance for his ill delights
He fill not up the void his sin hath made.

Your nature, when it wholly sinned in all
Its progeny, from these high dignities,
E’en as from Paradise, was banished:

Nor can recovery be, if thou give heed
With nice distinction, anyway at all,
Unless by crossing one of these two fords:

Either God only, of His free largess,
Should have absolved; or man by penitence
Have for his folly satisfaction made.

Fix now thine eyes deep down in the abyss
Of the Eternal plan, far as thou canst,
Fastening in close attention on my words.

Within the limits of his nature man
By self abasement and obedience ne’er
Could satisfaction make, sinking as low,

As by transgression he aspired to rise.
And this the reason is, why by himself
Man was shut off from power to make amends.

To God then it belonged by His own ways
Man to restore to his own perfect life,
I mean by one, or both the two indeed.
But as to workman pleaseth best the work,
In just proportion as it represents
The goodness of the heart whence it proceeds,
Goodness Divine, which of Itself imprints
A seal upon the world, by all His means
Well pleaséd was to lift you up again;
'Tween final night and primal day no plan
So lofty and magnificent hath been,
In one or other way, nor e'er shall be.
For God's gift of Himself more generous was,
Making man able to lift up himself,
Than had He pardoned of His own free will.
Nor had all other means been adequate
Justice to meet, had not the Son of God
In deep humility incarnate been.
And now to gratify thy every wish,
Backward I turn a passage to explain,
That thou mays't see it eye to eye with me.
Thou say'st: I see the water, fire I see,
The earth, the air, and their commingled forms
Turn to corruption and short while endure.
Yet these were none the less created things.
Therefore, if what I stated had been true,
These from corruption should be all secure.
Brother, the Angels and this pure country
Wherein thou art, can say that they were made,
As now they are, in essence perfect all.
But all the elements that thou hast named,
And those things also that of them are made,
From a created virtue take their form
Created was the matter they contain,
Created was their virtue formative
Within these stars, which round them aye revolve.
The Rays and Motion of these holy Lights
Draw forth the soul of every brute and plant
CANTO VII.

From matter thus potentially endowed.
But this your life Goodness Supreme inspires
   Itself direct, and fills it with such love
   Of It that for It you thenceforward yearn.
And further, justly may be hence inferred
   Your Resurrection, if thou but recall,
   How man’s flesh was created at the time
When our first parents both of them were formed.”
PARADISO.

CANTO VIII.

Third Heaven of Venus—Spirits of Lovers—The Planet's Name—Charles Martel of Hungary—Robert of Naples—
Variety of Character discussed.

The world once thought in its old dangerous days
That the fair Cyprian's rays bred reckless love,
As she in the third Epicycle rolled:
So not alone to her were honours paid
Of sacrifice and votive litanies
By men of old in the old misbelief,
But to Dione and to Cupid too,
The one her mother, and him as her son,
Telling how he had sat in Dido's lap
From her, with whom I my beginning make,
They took their title for the star, which courts
The sun alike in sequence or advance.
Of my ascent to her I nothing knew;
But a full faith, that I was there within,
My Lady gave in superadded charms.
And as in flame a spark is visible,
And voice from voice in concert is distinct,
Sustained the one, another comes and goes,
So in that light lamps other I beheld,
Revolving with a less or greater speed,
Measured, I trow, by sight of things eterne.
From chilling cloud never did winds sweep down,
Seen or unseen, so rapid in their course,
Which had not seemed encumberèd and slow
To whoso had those heavenly Lights beheld,
As nearer us they came, closing the round
Begun at first 'mid Seraphim on high.
And within those, that seemed most in advance,
Sounded Hosanna such, that never since
Hath failed my wish to hear it yet again.

Then closer to us one approached, alone.
Who said, as he began; “Ready all we
To please thee so, that in us thou find joy.

With Principalities of Heaven we here
Revolve in space and time, and thirst as they,
To whom, when in the world, thyself didst sing;
Ye whose intelligence the third heaven moves;
And love so fills us, that to pleasure thee,
To rest awhile will not displeasure us.”

And after to my Lady I mine eyes
In reverence had submitted, and she’d made them
Contented in assurance from herself,

They turned again unto the Light which had
Promised so much, and: "Tell me who are ye;"
Said I in tones impressed with deepest love.

How great and bright I saw it in th' increase
Of new gladness, which, in the words I spake,
To its own gladness in accretion came.

Transfigured thus, it said: "Short while below
The world held me, and great will be the ill,
That had not been, if longer I had stayed.

My very joy, that with encircling rays
Hides me from view, keeps me concealed from thee,
Like living insect swathed in its own silk.

Well didst thou love me, and thou hadst wherefore:
For had I been below, my true love would
Have shown for thee much more than mere green leaves.

That bank, which bathed is upon the left
By Rhone, after with it the Sorgue is blent,
Awaited me one day as sovran lord;

As did the Ausonian horn with cities filled
Of Gaeta, Catona and Bari,
Whence Tronto and Verde seaward discharge.

Already gleamed upon my brow the crown
Of that land, which the Danube irrigates,
After it hath the German confines left.
And fair Trinacria above the gulf
Where Eurus fiercest drives, capped with dark cloud,
Betwixt Pachino and Peloro, not
By Typhus, but by native sulphur breathed,
Would have expected still, as its own kings,
Charles' and Ridolfo's sons in line through me,
If mischievous misrule, that ever chafes
The heart of subject peoples, had not roused
Palermo to the cry: "To death, to death."
And could my brother this beforehand see,
The grasping beggary of Catalans
Ere now he'd fled, lest it work ill for him;
For in good sooth need is there he provide,
By self or others, that no heavier load
His overladen bark should yet receive.
His nature, which, received from generous sire,
In him is niggard, of such soldiery
Hath need, as shall not care to hoard in chest."
"Because I doubt not that the lofty joy
Which thy speech, Sire, infuseth into me,
Is seen by thee, e'en where I see it too,
There, where all good begins, and finds its end,
More grateful 'tis; and dearer still is this,
That looking upon God thou seest it.
Glad hast thou made me; so to me make plain,
Since by thy words thou'lt raised in me the doubt,
How from sweet seed a bitter root can spring."
Thus I to him; and he: "If I one truth
Can show to thee in answer to thy quest,
Thou'lt fix thine eyes, where now thy back is set.
The good Supreme, Who all this realm thou climbs't,
Moves and contents, makes His own Providence
The living force in these great substances;
And not the natures only are foreseen
In that Mind, which is perfect in Itself,
But their welfare together with themselves.
Wherefore whate'er is from that Bow discharged,
    Straight as an arrow at the target aimed,
    Falls in due order on the end foreseen:
If it were otherwise, the heaven thou tread'st
    Would in such fashion work out its effects,
    That ruin these would be, not Artist's work.
Such cannot be, if the angelic minds,
    That in their courses move these stars, fail not;
    And fails the Primal, if imperfect they.
Wilt thou that this truth should yet clearer be?"
    And I: "No more; for 'tis impossible
    In aught that's needful, nature e'er should tire."
And he again: "Now say, if worse 'twould be
    If men on earth lived not as citizens."
    "Yes," I replied, "no reasons here I seek."
"And could this be, if men lived not below,
    In diverse states, with diverse offices?
No, if your Master write correctly here."
Thus leading on deduction to this point,
    Concluded he: "'Tis necessary then
    The roots of your effects should diverse be.
Therefore a Solon one; another born
    A Xerxes, and Melchisedech the next;
    Or he, who lost in airy flight his son.
Nature, who sets her seal, as she revolves,
    On men as wax, works her art well, but yet
    Makes no selection as to where it's housed.
Hence comes it that Esau from Jacob is
    Quite of another breed; Quirinus too
    Of sire so mean, that unto Mars he's traced.
Engendered nature would pursue its way
    True to the nature of its ancestry,
    If Providence Divine did not o'errule.
So what was in the rear confronts thee now;
    But to assure thee that I like thee well,
    With a corollary will I clothe thee.
Nature always, if by a fortune met
Discordant with herself, like other seeds
In soil unsuitable, results in ill;
And if the world below would set its mind
On the foundation nature layeth down,
And follow it, its people would be good.
But you into religion twist awry
One meant by birth to gird him with a sword;
And one make king, more fit to sermonize;
And thus your footsteps wander off the road."
CANTO IX.


AFTER thy Carlo, beautiful Clemence,

Had me enlightened, he set forth th’ intrigues,

Which his posterity would have to face;

“But silence,” said he; “let the years roll on.”

So I no more can tell, save that remorse

Shall justly come in sequel of your wrongs.

The life already of that saintly light

Had to the Sun turned back, Which filleth it,

As to the Good, that satisfieth all.

Ah! cheated souls, and creatures impious,

Who from such Good do twist the heart aside,

Fixing your faces upon vanity!

And lo! another of those glorious lights

To me drew near, and signified its wish,

By its effulgent beams, to pleasure me.

The eyes of Beatrice, fixed steadfastly

On me, to my desire, e’en as afore,

Gave the assurance of her dear assent.

“Ah! to my wish quick satisfaction give,

Blest sprite,” I said, “and proof withal, that I

Can upon thee my inner thought reflect.”

Hereon the Light, stranger to me as yet,

From out the depth from whence afore it sang,

Sang on as one, whom to do good delights.

“Amid that part of the corrupted land
Of Italy, which 'twixt Rialto sits
And the Piave and the Brenta springs,
Riseth a hill, not mounting very high,
From which there once descended a firebrand
That made great havoc of that country side.
From one and the same root sprang it and I;
Cunizza was my name, and here I shine
Again, because by this bright star o'ercome.
But gladly I forgive myself the cause
That here assigned my lot; nor pains it me;
Which to your vulgar may perhaps seem bold.
Of this dear Jewel, lustrous in its light,
The nearest unto me, our heaven's own joy,
Great fame abideth still; and ere it die,
This hundredth year shall five times multiply.
See what the man should be in excellence,
Whose first life leaves a second to ensue.
Of this recks not the present herd enclosed
'Tween Tagliamento and the Adigè,
Nor doth the scourge yet bring them to repent.
But soon 'twill be that Padua in the marsh
Will change the water that Vicenza bathes,
Races to duty aye refractory.
And where the Silè and Cagnano meet,
There lords it one, marching with head on high,
To capture whom the net is weaving now.
The crime of its ungodly Shepherd yet
Shall Feltro mourn: his sin so infamous,
That none e'er entered Malta for the like.
Broad beyond measure should the caldron be,
That of the Ferrarese can hold the blood;
And weary he, who weighs it ounce by ounce;
Of which this gracious priest will make a gift
To show which side he takes; and such largess
Well to the living of that land conforms.
Above are Mirrors, and you call them Thrones,
From whence in Judgment God shines down on us,
So that such words as these to us seem good."
Here she was silent, and to me appeared
To turn her thoughts elsewhere, as once again
Her former revolution she resumed.
The other Joy, already marked by me
As something glorious, glowed in my vision now,
Like a fine ruby smitten by the sun.
On High fresh lustre marks access of joy,
As smiles on earth; but lower down the shade
Thickens without, as sadness broods within.
"God seeth all, and Spirit Blest," I said,
"Thy vision is translated into His,
So that no Will of His can thee escape.
Thy voice then, which delighteth heaven alway,
Singing in concert with those flames devout,
Who of their six wings make themselves a cowl,
Why doth it not my longing satisfy?
I would not thus await request of thine,
If I were one in thee, as thou in me."
"The broadest valley, wherein water spreads,"
Such the beginning of his words, "except
That sea, which all the earth engarlandeth,
Between discordant shores runs in so far
Against the sun, that it meridian finds,
Where at his rise th' horizon's wont to be.
Upon this valley's shore had I my home
'Tween Ebro and the Macra, whose brief course
Divides the Tuscan from the Genoese.
With the same set and well nigh rise of sun
Buggea lies, and city whence I sprang,
Which with its blood once made the harbour warm.
Folco they called me unto whom my name
Was known, and now this heav' n imprints itself
With me, as once I did myself with it.
For not more hotly Belus' daughter burned,
Wronging Sichœus and Creusa both,
Than I, while such love my young locks became;
Nor maid of Rhodope beguilèd by Demopheoën, nor yet Alcides e'en,
When he had locked Iole in his heart.
Yet here it is not penitence, but smiles,
Not for the sin, which comes not back to mind,
But for the Grace which ordered and foresaw.
Here gaze we on the skill, which beautiful
Makes such effects, and here discern the Good,
That to the world above lifts that below.
But that contented to the full thou bear
Thy wishes hence, which in this sphere are born,
It is befitting that I still speak on:
Thou would'st fain know who in the light abides,
That sparkles at my side with radiance such
As might a sunbeam in the limpid stream.
Now know that there within in perfect peace
Is Rahab, who, unto our order join'd,
Imprints her stamp upon our highest grade.
Into this sphere, whereon the shadow ends,
Which your world casts, first of all other souls,
In Christ's own Triumph was she taken up.
Meet 'twas that in some heaven she be left,
A palm for aye of the high victory,
Which the two palms, uplifted both, had won.
For by her favouring aid did Joshua first
Achieve his glory in that holy land,
Which little touches the Pope's memory.
Thy city, which an offset is of his,
Who first upon his Maker turned his back,
Whose envy costs the world so many a tear,
Brings forth and spreads abroad th' accursed flower,
Which sheep and lambs alike hath sent astray,
For of the shepherd it hath made a wolf.
For this the Gospel and great Doctors are
Set on one side, and the Decretals now
Studied alone, as well their margins show.
Intent on this the Pope and Cardinals
CANTO IX.

Ne'er pass in thought to Nazareth, the place
Whither on open wings came Gabriel.
But Vatican and other chosen spots
Of Rome, wherein the Warrior host, who trode
In Peter's steps, once found their sepulchres,
Shall soon be freed from this adultery."
CANTO X.

Fourth Heaven of the Sun—Doctors in Philosophy and Theology—God the Supreme Artificer—Order of Creation—
Ascent into the Fourth Heaven—Spirits of Wisdom—
Theologians and Philosophers of the Ancient Schools.

CONTEMPLATING His Son with all the Love
That One and Other breathe eternally,
The first creating Power, ineffable,
Made in such order whatsoever in mind
Or space revolves, that none can ever be,
Who this beholds, and fails to taste of Him.
With me then, Reader, to the wheels on high
Lift up thy vision straight unto the point
Where the two movements mutually impinge;
And there begin on the Great Master's art
Fondly to gaze, Who in Himself loves it
So that from it He ne'er withdraws his eye.
See how from thence obliquely brancheth off
The circle that sustains the planets course,
To satisfy the world that them invokes;
And if their pathway did not thus deflect,
In heaven much force were spent in vain, and here
Below, all potency were well nigh dead.
And had departure from the straight line swerved,
Or more or less in either hemisphere,
Great loss to mundane order had ensued.
Reader pause here; and inly on thy bench
Reflect on what as foretaste comes to thee,
If joy thou'dst find, or ever thou art tired.
Thy table I have spread: to feast is thine;
For to itself the theme, of which I am
The scribe, constrains my each and every care.
The chiefest minister in nature's realm,
That with celestial virtue stamps the world,
And by his light measures out time to us,
Conjoinèd with the part already named
Above, was circling on the spiral lines
By which each day he earlier appears;
And I was with him; yet of my ascent
Had nought perceived, save as a man perceives
A thought, ere of its coming he's aware.
'Tis Beatrice, none else, that speeds us on
From good to better, and so suddenly,
That her mere act anticipateth time.
How lucent in itself must needs be each
That dwells within the sun I entered then,
Revealèd, not by tint, but its own light!
Though genius, art and practice I invoke,
I ne'er could picture it to mind of man:
Believe he may; but for the sight must long.
And if our phantasies be pitched too low
For heights so great, no marvel is in this,
For ne'er was eye that passed above the Sun.
Such the fourth family, whose Father, there
Supreme, aye fills it with the vision full
Of Breathed Spirit and Begotten Son.
And Beatrice began: "Give thanks, give thanks,
Unto the Sun of Angels, Who to this,
Perceived by sense, hath raised thee by His Grace."
Never was mortal heart so well disposed
Devoutly unto God to give itself
With thankfulness and with entire consent,
As stirred by this appeal I was myself;
And all my love in Him was so absorbed,
That Beatrice in oblivion was eclipsed;
Yet not displeased she; thereat she smiled,
So that the radiance of her laughing eyes
Dispersed to many things my centred thoughts.
Vivid, surpassing, many lights I saw
Of us their centre make themselves a crown,
Sweeter in voice than radiant to the sight.
Latona's daughter thus sometimes we see
Encircled, when the air so pregnant is,
That it retains the thread that weaves her belt.
Within the heavenly court, whence I return,
Are many jewels, rare and beautiful,
Which from that kingdom cannot here be brought;
And among them the song those lights did sing:
Who doth not plume his wing to soar so high,
Must wait the story till the dumb man speaks.
With strains of song those burning suns did then
In thrice repeated circle round us wheel,
Like neighbouring stars around their firm-set poles.
They seemed as ladies, not withdrawn from dance,
Who pause in silence, till with ear attent,
They catch again the notes of a new strain.
And from within one did I hear begin:
"Since now the ray of Grace, whereat True Love
Takes fire, and then in loving finds increase,
So brightly shines, self multiplied, in thee,
That up that stairway it leads thee aloft,
Whence, save to reascend, descendeth none,
He who would wine deny thee from his cup,
Thy thirst to slake, would have no liberty,
Save as a stream that flows not to the sea.
Thou fain would'st know the plants and flowers that deck
This garland, which encircles lovingly
The Lady Fair, who gives thee strength for heaven.
I was a lamb among that sacred flock,
Which Dominic leads by a way whereon
Each fattens well, that goeth not astray.
This, who the nearest stands upon my right,
Albert, my brother and my master, was;
He of Cologne, Thomas Aquinas I.
If of the rest thou would be certified,
Let thine eyes follow upward on my words,
Making the circuit of the blessed wreath.  
That second glow of fire issues from smiles  
Of Gratian, who to either court did give  
Such help as favour finds in Paradise.  
The other, who next him adorns our choir,  
The Peter was, who, like the poor widow,  
Bestowed his treasure upon Holy Church.  
The fifth light, which 'mong us the fairest is  
Breathes forth such love, that the whole world below  
Tidings of him doth greedily desire.  
Within it is the lofty mind, where dwelt  
Such depth of wisdom, that if truth be true,  
No second e'er arose to see so much.  
Beside him note the shining taper's flame,  
That e'en in flesh below inly discerned  
The Angels' nature and their ministry.  
Within the little sparkling fire there smiles  
That brave defender of the Christian days,  
Whose classic treatise served Augustine well.  
And if with the mind's eye thou follow on  
From light to light in sequence of my praise,  
Already thou dost thirst to know the eighth.  
In vision of all Good that holy soul  
Inly rejoiceth, and makes manifest  
The world's deceit to all who listen well.  
The body, whence 't was hunted forth, now lies  
Down in Cieldauro; and from martyrdom  
And from exile itself this peace attained.  
And yonder see what glow of ardour breathes  
From Isidore, and Bede, and Richard, who  
In meditation deep was more than man:  
The one, from whom to me thine eye comes back,  
The brightness of a spirit is, to whom  
In his deep thoughts death seemed to come too slow.  
'Tis the eternal Light of Sigier,  
Who, reading lectures in the Street of Straw,  
In syllogism pressed unwelcome truths."
Then as the belfry chimes that summon us
   At early Prime, when God’s own Bride doth rise,
   With morning hymn to stir her Spouse’s love,
And with alternate stroke the hammer swings,
   Sounding ding, ding in notes of music sweet,
   Such that the pious soul expands in love,
So did I see the glorious wheel move off,
   Voice echoing back in harmony with voice,
   And with a sweetness that can ne’er be known,
Save only there, where joy endures for aye.
CANTO XI.

Fourth Heaven of the Sun—Doctors in Philosophy and Theology—Vanity of Earthly Care—Two Doubts.
Life of S. Francis—Reproof of Dominicans.

O THE insensate care of mortal men!
Their syllogisms how defective all,
Leaving thy wings to flutter on the ground!
One after law, to aphorisms one
   Was going, and a third the priesthood seeks;
One strives to rule by force or sophistry,
By plunder one, or craft of state affairs;
   Or one, in pleasures of the flesh immersed,
Wears himself out, or sits down one in sloth;
The while, released from all such things as these,
   With Beatrice in heaven above had I
   In glorious welcome my reception found.
When each to point in circle had again
   Returned, where his position was before,
As lighted taper on its sconce, he stood.
And from within I heard the glowing flame,
   That with me whilom spake, begin afresh,
Smiling withal, as it more radiant grew:
"E'en as my own fire kindles in Its ray,
   So with my gaze fixed on the Eternal Light,
Thy thoughts I catch and what occasions them.
Doubts hast thou, and the wish that I clear up,
   In language open and explicit, that
Shall to the level of thy mind make plain
What but just now I said: "Where fattens well,"
   And what I said: "No second e'er arose;"
And here must we a plain distinction draw.
The Providence, which governeth the world
With counsel such, that each created eye
Is baffled, ere it penetrate Its depth,
In order that to her Beloved the Bride
Might nearer draw of Him, Who her betrothed
In His blest Blood, and with a mighty cry,
Safe in herself and truer still to Him
In her behoof two Princes did ordain
To be on this side and on that her guides.
The one was all aglow with Seraph’s fire;
The other in his wisdom was on earth
In splendour one with light of Cherubim.
Of one will I now speak, though of them both
We speak, extolling one, whiche’er it be,
For with one purpose did they strive alike.
Between Tupino and the stream which flows
Down from the blest Ubaldo’s chosen hill,
A fertile slope from a high mountain hangs,
From whence Perugia feels the cold and heat
Through Porta Sole; Gualdo in its rear,
And Nocera bewail a heavy yoke.
Forth from the point, where most the steepness breaks
Of its decline, there dawned on earth a Sun,
Such as our own sometimes from Ganges bursts.
Whoever therefore of this place would speak,
May not Assisi call it, name too mean;
The Orient rather were its proper style.
Nor from his rising had he far advanced,
Ere he began to make the earth perceive
Some comfort from his mighty virtue flow.
For yet a boy, his father’s wrath he braved
For such a Lady, as to whom, like death,
The gate of pleasure none doth e’er unbar;
And fronting both his spiritual court,
Et coram patre made her one with him,
Day after day aye loving her the more.
She of her first Spouse for a thousand years
And hundred more bereft, despised, obscure,
Remained without a suitor till he came;
Naught did report avail, that undismayed
With Amyclas in calm, there found her one,
Whose voice with terror shook th' affrighted world;
Naught it availed that firm in constancy,
When Mary even at the foot remained,
She climbed with Christ the summit of the Cross.
But not to speak in too much mystery,
Francis and Poverty for these lovers take,
Of whom I sing in too diffusive verse.
Their harmony and gladsomesemblances
Caused love and wonderment and interchange
Of look to stir in others holy thoughts;
So that the venerable Bernard first
Cast off his shoon, and in pursuit of peace
So great, ran forth, and running seemed too slow.
Oh! unknown riches, oh! prolific good!
Egidius barefoot, barefoot Silvester
Follow the spouse, so winsome is the bride.
Onward he goes, father and master both,
With his dear Lady and that family,
Already now with humble cord begirt:
No cowardice of heart abashed his brow,
As being son of Peter Bernardone,
Nor that he seemed in presence wondrous mean.
But royally his stern intention he
To Innocent propounded, and from him
First held the seal of his religious rule.
And when the poor and little flock increased
In steps of one, whose admirable life
In heaven's high glory would be better sung,
With yet a second crown Honorius,
Moved by the Eternal Spirit from on high,
Engirt this Archimandrite's holy wish.
And after in the thirst of martyrdom
He'd preached of Christ, and those who followed Him,
E'en in the presence of the proud Soldan,
Finding that people still were immature
For their conversion, idly not to stay,
Back to Italian fields he turned for fruit;
There on rude rock 'twixt Tiber and Arno,
From Christ Himself he took the final seal,
Which in his body for two years he bore;
When He, Who to such good elected him,
Was pleased to draw him up to the reward
He'd earned in making no account of self,
Unto his brethren, as his rightful heirs,
His dearest Lady he did recommend,
And bade them love her with true fealty:
And from her bosom his illustrious soul
Willed to depart, returning to its realm;
Nor for its body would he other bier.
Bethink thee now what he was, worthy found
As his colleague to steer S. Peter's ship
Across the deep sea straight upon her course!
And such an one was our great Patriarch;
So canst thou see, Who follows well the rule
He gives, takes in a cargo of good wares.
And yet his flock for fields and pastures new
Hath grown so greedy, that it cannot be
But that through devious glades it wanders wide:
And as his sheep the more remotely stray,
And wander idly farther from his track,
Emptier of milk return they to the fold.
There are of them who dread impending harm,
And to the shepherd clinging; but these so few,
That scanty cloth will furnish all with gowns.
Now if my words have not been indistinct,
If with due heed thou well hast given ear,
If to thy mind thou call back what I said,
Thy wish in part should now be satisfied,
For thou wilt see the stock from which they split,
And the rebuke too of the belted monk,
"Where fattens well whoso goes not astray."
CANTO XII.

The Fourth Heaven of the Sun—Doctors in Philosophy and Theology—A Second Coronet of Living Fires—Life of S. Dominic—Reproach of the Franciscans—Bonaventure and his Companions.

Soon as the blessed flame had taken up
Its final word to speak, at once began
The holy millstone to revolve again,
And had not yet its circuit fully made,
Ere around it a second circle closed
In just accord of movement and of song,
Song, that in its melodious tones as far
Transcends or Muse or Siren known to us,
As primal splendour its reflected light.
As in a tender cloud two arches curve
In outline parallel, and of one tint,
When Juno to her handmaid gives command,
The one without born from the one within,
(Like the voice echoed of the wandering maid,
Whom love consumed, as mist before the sun;)
Making mankind regard it as presage
That never shall the world be drowned again,
Through covenant that God with Noah made;
So circling round us wheeled the garlands twain
Of roses sempiternal, and likewise
The outer to the inner made response.
Then as the dance and high festivity
As well of song as of scintillant fire,
Light upon light, gladsome in mellowed joy,
Rested in unison of time and will,
As the two eyes, when pleasure moveth them,
Together need must open or must shut;
Forth from the heart of one of those new lights
   Issued a voice, that made me turn to it,
   Prompt as the needle to the polestar darts;
And it began: “The Love that makes me fair
   Stirs me to celebrate the other Chief,
   Who nobly spoke my own Chief’s eulogy.
’Tis meet with one the other should appear,
   That as in brotherhood of arms they fought,
   In glory they should both in union shine.
Christ’s army, which to re-quip it cost
   So dear a price, behind its Ensign moved
   Laggard, half heartedly, in number few;
When th’ Emperor, Who ever reigns, found means
   To aid His soldiers, in their jeopardy,
   Of His sole Grace, no merit of their own;
And, as was said, brought succour to His Bride
   By champions twain, the words and deeds of whom
   The straggling forces brought again in line.
In that direction where sweet Zephyr first
   Upsprings to bid the young leaves burst their buds,
   Wherein is seen Europa fresh arrayed,
Not very far from where the waves break in,
   Behind which, ending now his lengthen’d course
   The sun at times from all men hides himself,
Lies Calaroga, city fortunate,
   Protected by the mighty shield which shows
   The lion a subject, but a sovereign still.
Therein was born the am’rous lover of
   The Christian Faith, the sanctified athlete,
   Benign to friends, to enemies a scourge;
And from its first creation was his mind
   So filled with quickening virtue that he made,
   Yet in the womb, his mother prophesy.
After th’ espousals had been solemnized
   At holy Font between himself and Faith,
   Where each to each pledged safety mutual,
The lady, who for him gave the assent,
Saw in her sleep the admirable fruit,
Destined to issue from him and his heirs;
And that plain words should tell what kind he was,
A spirit from up here chose him a name
From His possessive, Whose he wholly was.
Domenico his name; and of him I
Speak as the husbandman elect of Christ,
To dress His garden and help on His work.
True messenger and confidant of Christ;
For the first love made manifest in him
Was for the counsel given first by Christ.
Many the time, in silence and awake,
That he was found by nurse upon the ground,
As though he'd say: “For this end ’twas, I came.”
O thou, his father, verily Felix;
His mother, too, Joanna verily;
If her name mean, translated, what men say!
Not for this world, as nowadays men pore
On Ostiense and on Taddeo,
But loving Truth, the Manna of the soul,
Within brief space a doctor great he grew,
Such that he ’gan the vineyard to go round,
Which soon grows white, if dresser be remiss.
And from the Chair, which was of yore more kind
To the poor saints, (not through its own default,
But his, who seated there traduces it,) No dispensation of a third or half,
Nor yet the luck of a first vacancy.
Non decimas quae sunt pauperum Dei,
Did he demand; but ’gainst an erring world
License to fight for that true seed of Faith,
From which these twice twelve trees enclose thee round.
With doctrine and a hearty will combined,
With apostolic mission clothed, he went
Like torrent bursting from deep reservoir;
Against the stumps of heresy he dashed
With force impetuous, more eager there,
Where the resistance was more obstinate.
From him then divers streamlets flowed, wherewith
The Garden Catholic is waterèd,
And in more vigorous life its saplings stand.
If such were one wheel of the two-wheeled car,
Wherein the Holy Church made her defence,
And in the field subdued her civil strife,
To thee should now be manifest what was
The other’s excellence, whereof, before
I came, in words so gracious Thomas spake.
But the wheel’s track, marked by the highest part
Of its circumference, is now effaced,
And crusted wine to mouldiness is turned.
His very children, who once walked right on,
With feet in his footsteps, now backward tread,
And with their toes press where his heels had stood:
And soon the harvest will be manifest
Of this ill tillage, when the tares lament
That unto them the granary is denied.
But whoso sifts our record leaf by leaf,
Assured I speak, may yet some page discern.
Where he may read: “I am what I was wont.”
Yet not from Acquasparta nor Casal
Come such; thence rather to the rule come they,
Of whom one shirks, another tightens it.
Bonaventura’s living soul am I,
Of Bagnoregis, who in great emprize
Set ever on one side the left hand’s work.
Illuminato, Agostino too
Are here, who with the first bare-footed friars
Beneath the cord became the friends of God.
Hugh of San Victor is among them here,
Pier Mangiador, and Peter too, of Spain,
Who still in his twelve volumes shines below;
Nathan, the Seer of old, and Chrysostom
The Patriarch, Anselm, Donato too,
Who to the primer deign’d to set his hand;
Here is Rabanus; and beside me shines
The Abbot of Calabria, Joachim,
Who with prophetic spirit was endowed.
To rivalry of such a Paladin
Stirred was I by the glowing courtesy
Of Brother Thomas and his choice address;
And stirred with me was all this company.
CANTO XIII.

The Fourth Heaven of the Sun—Doctors in Philosophy and Theology.
A New Dance and a New Song—The Wisdom of Solomon—Adam and Christ—Men's Vanity and Study in Understanding Scripture, and in Judging of Others' Salvation.

Let one imagine, who would well conceive
What now I saw, (and th' image keep in mind
Fix'd as a rock before him, while I speak,)
The fifteen stars, which in their several fields
The sky enliven with a brilliancy,
Outshining far all density of air;
Let him imagine then the Wain, which finds
In bosom of our sky space day and night,
So that, as sweeps its pole, it ne'er is lost;
Let him the mouth imagine of that horn
That close begins upon the axle point,
Round about which circles the Primal Wheel,
Together forming two celestial signs,
Such as were those that Minos' daughter made,
What time she felt the icy chill of death;
One within other pouring forth its rays,
And both of them revolving in such wise,
One takes the lead, the other in the rear;
And shadow will he have, as 'twere, of that
True constellation and the twofold dance,
That circled round the point whereat I stood.
For all we know is there as far surpassed,
As current of Chiana is outstripped
By that Sphere which all motion else transcends.
CANTO XIII.

No Pæan there, nor Bacchic hymn is sung,
But Persons Three, Divine in nature, and
This in One Person with the Human joined.
The song and dance their measure had fulfilled,
And upon us those saintly lights were fixed,
Happy in duties alternating thus.

Consentient silence mid those godlike saints
That Light first broke, from whence the wondrous life
Of God’s own poor man had been shown to me;
And said: “Since now one straw has been well rubbed,
And all its grain has now been storèd up,
To thresh the other out sweet Love invites.

Thine the belief that in the breast from whence
The rib was drawn to form her beauteous cheek,
Whose palate’s pleasure costs the world so dear.

And in that Breast, which pierced by the spear,
For past and future, satisfaction such
Did make, as turns the scale of all our guilt,

Whate’er of Light to human nature is
Vouchsafed, in fullest measure was infused
By the same Virtue, Who created both;

Wherefore thou wond’rest at what I above
Declared, stating no second e’er possessed
The Good, which in the Fifth Light is enclosed.

But open now thine eyes to my reply,
And thou wilt see my words and thy belief
Set in the Truth, like centre in an orb.

That which can die, and that which cannot die,
Are but the lustre of the Ideal Form
Which in the act of Love our Sire begets;
Because that Living Light, which floweth out
From Fount of Light, and never disunites
From Him, nor from the Love, which makes the Three,
Of His own Bounty concentrates His rays,
As in a mirror, in nine Substances,
Himself eternally remaining One.

Thence through remotest possibilities,
It comes in acts successive to a depth,
Where only brief contingencies it makes.
By these contingencies I understand
The things engendered, with seed or without,
That heavenly bodies in their courses form.
These in their wax, and that which mouldeth it,
In action vary, and therefore more or less
Beneath the seal shines out the Archetype:
Hence happens it that trees, one and the same
In species, bear a better or worse fruit;
Yourselves too born with diverse powers of mind.
If to perfection were the wax prepared,
And heaven's full virtue in supremacy,
The signet's light would in full glory shine:
But nature aye presents this in defect,
Working as doth the artist, who in art
Is fully trained, but paints with trembling hand.
So if the warmth of Love, and Vision clear
Of Primal Virtue do dispose and seal,
The fulness of perfection then is gained.
E'en so the dust of earth was worthy deemed
Of full perfection in the living man;
E'en so the Virgin in her womb conceived.
Therefore thine own opinion I commend,
That ne'er hath been a human nature such,
Nor shall be, as was in those persons twain.
And now, if I no farther should proceed,
"How was this other without equal then?"
Would be the first words of your utterance.
But to make clear what seems by no means clear,
Think who he was, and by what motive stirred
To frame his prayer, when he was bidden, "Ask."
I have not spoken so that thou could'st not
Well see he was a King, who wisdom asked,
That he might be an all sufficient King:
Not curious he to know the number of
Motors in heaven, nor if necessity
Can with contingent make necessity;
Not si est dare primum motum esse,
Nor if in semicircle can be drawn
Triangle such as no right angle hath.
Now if thou note both what I say and said,
Thou'lt see the matchless prudence of a King
Is what the arrow of my meaning hits.
And if to "surse" thou direct keen eyes,
Thou'lt see it hath respect to Kings alone,
Who many are indeed, though few the good.
With this distinction take then what I said:
And thus can it stand well with thy belief
In the first father, and our Well Beloved.
And let this be as lead unto thy feet,
To make thee, like a tired man, slow to move
Both to the yes and no which thou seest not;
For very low among the fools lies he,
Who unconditioned "yea" or "nay" asserts,
As well in one as in the other case;
Because it happens oft, opinion formed
In haste will to a false conclusion lean,
And prejudice then binds intelligence.
Much worse than vainly from the shore he starts,
Who without training fishes for the Truth,
Because he comes back other than he went,
Whereof proofs manifest are seen abroad;
Melissus, Brissus and Parmenides,
And many more going, they knew not where:
So did Sabellius, Arius and those fools
Who to the Scriptures placed themselves like swords,
That show fair faces in distorted forms.
Nor yet again let people be too sure
In forming judgment, like a man who counts
The ears in corn field, ere they yet are ripe:
For I have seen the livelong winter through
A wild briar show prickly and stiff at first,
Yet later bearing roses to the top;
And ship I've seen trimly ere while and swift 136
    Skimming her passage o'er the open sea,
    Founder at last upon the haven's mouth.
No Mistress Bertha nor Sir Martin may, 139
    Seeing one steal, and one give alms, suppose
    They see the inner purposes of God,
For one may rise, the other fall away. 142
CANTO XIV.


FROM centre to the rim and from the rim
To centre in a round bowl water moves,
As smitten from outside, or from within.

Unto my mind did suddenly occur
The figure I employ, so soon as did
The living voice of Glorious Thomas cease,
By the similitude which had its birth
From his discourse, and that of Beatrice,
Whom after him it pleased thus to begin.

"This man hath need, although he tell you not
Either by voice or e'en as yet in thought,
To reach the root of still another truth.

Say, if the light, which with its bloom bedecks
Your substance, will with you for aye remain
Eternally the same, as it is now;
And if remaining, say, how afterward,

When in form visible you are renewed,
This can be so without distress to sight."

As they, who in the dance together wheel,
And urged and drawn by stir of quickened joy,
Lift up the voice with signs of livelier mirth,

So at her prayer, promptly and humbly made,

A new delight the holy spheres displayed
In their gyrations and their wondrous notes.

Whoso laments that man hath here to die
Yonder above to live, hath never there
Seen the refreshment of the eternal rain.
The One, the Two, the Three, Who ever lives
And ever reigns in Three and Two and One,
Not circumscribed, and circumscribing all,
They praised in threefold chant, sung by each one
Of all those spirits with such melody
As for all merit 'twere a full reward.
And in the Light that more divinely glowed
Forth from the lesser round a modest voice—
To Mary so perchance the Angel spake—
I heard reply: "Long as the festival
Of Paradise endures, so long our love
Shall in its rays weave round us such a robe;
Its brightness to our ardour correspond,
The ardour to our vision; this as full
As Grace shall supplement its own deserts.
When we in flesh, holy and glorified,
Shall be re-clothed, our person shall
Be then more pleasing, because then complete.
Hereby will increase come unto the Light
Which the Chief Good of His free Grace imparts;
Light that befits us to behold Himself.
Greater therein needs must our vision grow,
Greater the ardour, which from that takes fire,
Greater the lustre, which from this proceeds.
But as the coal, which sendeth up a flame,
In incandescent glow surpasseth it,
And thus maintains itself in evidence,
So shall the splendour now encircling us
Be far outshone when re-appears the flesh
Now hidden underground the livelong day.
Nor shall such light to us o'erwhelming be;
For every organ of the body will
Be strong to bear all that shall give delight."
Promptly and briskly, as it seemed to me,
Each choir assented with an *Amen* that
Well showed how they for their dead bodies yearned;
Not for themselves perchance alone, but for
Their mothers, fathers, and all dear to them,
Or ever they became eternal fires.
And lo! all round in equal brightness sprang
A glory that encompassed what was there,
Like an horizon that begins to clear.
And as at rise of evening's first twilight
New forms in heaven begin to show, so that
To sight they seem untrue, though very true,
New substances did there appear to me
To come in view, and form a circle round
Outside the other two circumferences.
O true effulgence of the Holy Breath!
How dazzling 'twas, as suddenly it fell
Upon mine eyes with light they could not bear!
But Beatrice vouchsafed to me her smiles
In beauty such, that with what other sights
Beyond my memory reach, must it be left.
Gaining from her the strength to raise mine eyes,
I saw me with my Lady borne aloft,
Alone with her, to more exalted bliss.
That higher I'd been raised, I well perceived
By smiles of fiery brightness in the star,
Which showed a ruddier than its wonted red.
With my whole heart and with the tongue that's one
With all of us, I made a holocaust
To God for such a grace newly vouchsafed.
Nor in my breast had yet burnt out the flame
Of this my sacrifice, ere well I knew
My prayer with favour had acceptance found:
For of such brightness and so ruby-red
Splendours appeared to me within two rays,
"O God!" I cried, "Who thus bedeckest them!"
As whitens 'tween the poles of our own world
The milky way, marked out by lights, or less
Or greater, whereof sages rest in doubt,
So did those rays form in the depth of Mars
In starry groups the venerable Sign,
Which conjoined quadrants in the circle make.
Wit lacks the words to tell what thought recalls:
For from the Cross like lightning gleamed the Christ,
So that no fit similitude I find:
But whoso takes his Cross and follows Christ,
Will yet forgive me, that I falter here,
When in that Dawn he sees flash forth the Christ.
From horn to horn, from summit to the base,
Lights shot in dazzling scintillations, as
They met, conjoined, and sped in onward flight.
So see we here in straight or devious course,
Now swift, now slow, in ever shifting form,
Atoms minute, some long and shorter some,
Dance in the sunbeam that with streak of light
Breaks sometimes through the shade, that for defence
Men make with thought and curious artifice.
And as the harp and viol, strung to tune,
Of many strings make a sweet harmony
To one that understandeth not the words;
So from the lights, which there appeared to me,
Gathered about the Cross a melody,
Which left me rapt, the hymn not understood.
Well I perceived the strains were of high praise,
For the words reached me, "Rise, O Conqueror, rise,"
As one that understands not, though he hears.
So much was I thereof enamourèd,
That till that hour there never had been aught,
That held me captive in so sweet a thrall.
Perhaps my words may seem somewhat too bold,
Postponing yet the charm of those fair eyes,
Gazing whereon my longing finds repose;
But who considers that the Living Seals
Of all that's fair, wax mightier as they rise,
And that I had not yet turned round to these,
May me excuse, where I myself accuse
In self excuse; and see I speak the Truth;
For saintly joy is not excluded here.
Since as it rises, less th' alloy it shows.
THE kindly will that ever shows itself
    In love, that only breathes in righteousness,
As doth an evil will in selfishness,
Silence imposed upon that sweet-toned lyre;
    And in their stillness left the holy cords
Which Heaven's right hand relaxes and contracts.
How shall those substances a deaf ear turn
    To righteous prayer, who to give me desire
To pray to them, with one consent were hushed?
'Tis right the man for evermore should mourn,
    Who, for the love of something of no stay,
Of that Love strips himself eternally.
As in the calm and pure serene of night,
    Now and again, shoots forth a sudden fire
Startling the eyes that were before at rest,
And seems a star that changeth its abode,
    Save that at point where it breaks forth in fire,
No star is lost, and this short while endures;
Such from the horn extending on the right
    To foot of that Cross sped a star from forth
The constellation, that is there aglow;
Nor from its riband did the jewel drop,
    But traversed in full length the radiant line,
Which showed like fire through alabaster seen.
So hastened once Anchises' pious shade,
    If credit here our greater Muse deserve,
When in Elysium he perceived his son.

"O sanguis meus, O superinfusa
  Gratia Dei, sicut tibi, cui
Bis unquam coeli janua reclusa?"

So spake that Light: whereat I marked him well;
Then to my Lady turned mine eyes once more,
Lost in amazement upon either side.
For from within her eyes there glowed a smile,
Such that I thought mine own had plumbed the depth
Both of my grace and of my Paradise.
And gladsome then to hear and look upon,
The spirit added to his opening words
Things of such depth I could not fathom them.
And not of choice did he thus hide from me,
But of necessity, because his thought
Beyond the mark of mortal mind was pitched.
And when the high strung bow of ardent love
Relaxed so far, that it in speech came down
Within the mark of our intelligence;
The first thing, that by me was understood,
Was this: "Blessed be Thou, the Three and One,
Who show'st Thyself so gracious to my seed."
Then he went on: "A long and grateful fast,
Spent in perusal of the mighty tome,
Wherein ne'er changeth either white or black,
Hast thou, my son, for me dispensed within
This Light, wherein I speak thee, thanks to her,
Who for the lofty flight clothed thee with wings.
Thou deemest that thy thought to me makes way
From primal Thought, as from the unit, if
This first be known, issue the five and six.
So who I am, and why I show myself
More glad to thee, than any other midst
This mirthful throng, thou askest not of me.
Thou thinkest well, for all, greater or less,
In this life on that Mirror fix their gaze,
Whereon, ere thought, thy thought lies full outspread.
But that the sacred Love, wherein I watch
In gaze continuous, and which makes me thirst
In sweet desire, may be more fully filled,
Let now thy voice, happy, secure and bold,
Tell out thy wish, yea tell thy whole desire,
Whereunto my answer is e'en now decreed.”

To Beatrice I turned, and me she’d heard
Ere yet I spake, and added an assent
That made my wings of will the stronger grow.

Then I began: “Soon as to you appeared
The Prime Equality, wisdom and love
Were found by each of you in weight alike:
For in the Sun, which warmed you and illumed
With heat and light, equality is such,
Similitudes are all inadequate.
But among men will and its utterance,
For causes that are manifest to you,
Are feathered diversely upon their wings.

Hence I, who mortal am, feel in myself
This inequality, and but in heart
Can for a father’s welcome speak my thanks.
Yet thee, O Living Topaz, I implore,
Set in this precious Jewel as a gem,
That with thy name, thou satisfy my prayer.”

“Branch of my tree, the mere expectancy
Of whom hath been my joy, I was thy root:”
Such the beginning he in answer made.

Then he resumed: “He, from whom first thy house
Its surname takes, and who a hundred years
And more hath circled round the Mount’s first ledge,
Was my own son, and thy great grandfather:
Most fitting ’twere that his long weariness
Thou shorten for him by thine own good works.

Florence in circuit of her ancient walls,
Whence still she hears the call of tierce and nones,
In chaste sobriety abode in peace.

There was no necklet and no coronet;
No buskined ladies with their stomachers,
A sight more wondrous than the dames themselves.
Never as yet did daughter’s birth alarm
A father's heart, in that nor age nor dower
On either side just moderation spurned.

No houses had she void of families;
Sardanapalus had not yet arrived
To show what folks in privacy could dare.

Not yet had Montemalo been out done
By your Uccellatoio; but surpassed
In height, so shall it be in ruin too.

I saw Bellincion Berti go engirt
With leather and with bone; from mirror too
His wife return, her face untouched by paint.

Him of the Nerli, and of Vecchio him
I saw contented in a suit of buff,
As were their wives with spindle and with flax.

O happy they, each one assured to find
Her grave in the familiar spot; none yet
For sake of France left in a lonely bed.

One by the cradle kept her loving watch,
Soothing her babe with fond and childish words,
To fathers and to mothers their first joy.

Another, from her distaff drawing threads,
Told to her family her old world tales
Of Trojans and Fièsolè and Rome.

To such as great a marvel had been then
A Cianghella or Lapo Salterel,
As Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.

To life thus tranquil and thus beautiful
Of citizens, and to community
So true, into a resting-place so sweet,

Mary brought me, invoked in birth-pang cry;
And in your ancient Baptistry at once
Christian and Cacciaguida I became.

Moronto was my brother and Eliseo;
My wife from Val di Pado came to me;
From her didst thou receive thine own surname.

Then in the Emperor Conrad's train I marched,
Who girt me as a knight of chivalry,
So had I pleased him by my valiant deeds.
I followed him against the infamy
Of that decree, which by the Shepherd’s sin
Sets a usurping people in your rights.
There was I by that shameful race of men
From the deceptions of the world set free,
The love of which debaseth many a soul,
And came from martyrdom unto this peace.”
Poor thing is our nobility of blood! 
Yet if thou make the people boast of thee 
Down here, where our affections are but frail,
No marvel henceforth will it be with me,
Since there, where inclination is not warp'd,
In heaven I mean, I found my boast in thee.
A mantle art thou, soon cut short indeed,
If not from day to day repieced, as Time
Plies in his constant round his busy shears.
With plural "You," which Rome permitted first,
A use her sous but little now retain,
The words of my address once more began;
When Beatrice, who stood somewhat apart,
Seemed by her smile like her, who by her cough
Marks in the story Guinevere's first fall.
"You my own Father are;" thus I began,
You give to me all hardihood of speech;
You exalt me, till more than self I am;
Joy from so many sources fills my mind,
That in itself it finds a happiness,
In that it holds all this, and bursteth not.
Tell me then, you, my dear progenitor,
Who your forefathers were, and what the years,
Which of your boyhood bear the first record.
And tell me of the sheepfold of St. John;
What at that time its size, and who were then
Worthy within it of the higher seats."
As at the breathing of the wind a brand
REVIVES in flame, so saw I then that Light
The brighter shine at my endearing words.
And as before mine eyes it fairer grew,
So in a voice still gentler and more sweet,
But not in dialect of modern use,
It said: “From day when Ave first was heard,
To birthday, when my mother, now a Saint,
Of me was lightened, with whom she was great,
Five hundred times, fifty and thirty more,
This fiery Star had to its Lion come,
Its flame once more to kindle 'neath his paw.
My ancestors and I were all born there,
Where enters first upon the last town's-ward
Whoever races in your annual games.
Suffice it of my elders now so much:
Who they were first, and whence they thither came
Is better left in silence than discussed.
All those, who in that day could carry arms
Between Mars' statue and the Baptist'ry
Where but a fifth of those who live there now.
But our free citizens, with Campi since,
Certaldo and Fighine intermixed,
Were thoroughbred to humblest artizan.
Far better, if as neighbours they had stayed,
The folk I speak of, with the bound'ry line
At Trespiano and Galuzzo fixed,
Than to have them inside, and bear the stench
Of the Aguglion boor, or one that brings
Keen eyes from Signa, set on jobbery.
If but the sect, degenerate most of all,
Had not to Cæsar a mere stepdame been,
But as a mother kindly to her son,
There's one, made Florentine, who trades on change,
That back to Simifonti had been sent,
Where once his grandsire went his begging round;
In Montemurlo still might Conti be;
Acone parish of the Cerchi too;
CANTO XVI.

And Buondelmontio p'rhaps in Valdigreve.
Persons of mixèd breed have ever been
  The first beginning of a city’s woe,
As with the body loads of divers meats.
And a blind bull falls headlong quicker much
  Than the blind lamb, and ofttimes and again
One sword will better cut, and more, than five.
Luni recall, and Urbisaglia on,
  How both are gone; and Chiusi after them
With Sinigaglia is following on:
So that to hear that families run out
  Will not appear aught strange or difficult,
Seeing that Cities even have their term.
All things of yours await their time of death,
  E’en as yourselves; yea, and it lurks in what
To you seems long lived, ’cause your lives are short;
And as the changes of the Moon on high
  Work on the shore a ceaseless ebb and flow,
So likewise with Firenze fortune deals.
Wherefore it should not seem aught wonderful,
  That I shall tell of the great Florentines,
Whose fame is hidden in the lapse of time.
I saw the Ughi, Catellini too,
  Filippi, Alberichi, Ormanni,
And Greci fade, famed burghers to the end.
I saw in greatness equal to their birth
  The houses of Sanella and Arca,
Bostichi, Soldanier and Ardinghi.
Above the Gate, which nowadays is charged
  With a new perfidy in weight so gross,
It soon will be the foundering of the ship,
The Ravignani dwelt, from whom there sprang
  The County Guy, and all who from the proud
Bellincione after took their name.
The della Pressa knew already how
  Men ought to rule, and Galigaio had
The gilded hilt and pommel in his house.
Famed was the Column with the ermine pale,
Giuochi, Sacchetti, Fifanti, Galli,
Barucci, and the house the bushel shames.
The stock, from which the Calfucci first sprang,
E'en then was great; e'en then to curule chairs
Were Arrigucci and the Sizii drawn.
Oh! what were those I saw, but now undone
By their own pride! Oh! how the golden balls
Made Florence flourish in her grand exploits.
Such were the deeds of men, whose sons to-day,
Soon as the throne is vacant in your Church,
Throng the consistory and batten there.
The breed of insolence, which dragon-like
Fastens on him that flies, but let one show
Tooth or e'en purse, 'tis gentle as a lamb,
Was rising up, but of such humbler sort,
That Ubertin Donato brook'd it ill,
When his wife's father made him kin with them.
Down to the Market from Fièsolè
E'en now had Caponsacco come; Giuda
And Infangato now good burghers held.
A thing incredible, but true, I tell:
Into the little circuit by a gate,
Named from the della Pera, folk came in.
Each on whose shield is borne the fair device
Of the great Baron, whose repute and fame
The feast of Thomas keepeth ever fresh,
Knighthood received and privilege;
Although to-day with common folk unites
One, who himself bears arms in fringe of gold.
The Gualterotti, Importuni too
Were there e'en now; but calmer Borgo were,
If for new immigrants 'twere fasting still.
The house, from whence your sorrow had its birth,
Through just resentment, which hath been your death
And put an end to all your joys of life,
With all its clansmen was in honour held.
O Buondelmonte, ill didst thou to break,  
When others urged, the troth thou'dst plighted once.  
Happy had many been, who now are sad,  
If God to Ema had consignèd thee,  
When first unto the city thou didst come.  
But fated 'twas, that to the mouldering stone  
Which guards her bridge, Florence should immolate  
A victim in her latest days of peace.  
With these and other families like them  
I saw Firenze lapped in such repose,  
That there was nought, whereof she'd cause to grieve.  
With these I saw her people growing up  
So glorious and so just, that never was  
Her lily seen reversed upon the lance  
Nor e'er by party spirit turned to gules.
PARADISO.

CANTO XVII.


As, to assure himself of what he heard
Against himself, to Clymene once came
He, who makes fathers still reserved with sons,
Such was myself, and such perceived to be
By Beatrice and by the saintly Lamp,
Which had already for me changed its place.
Whereon my Lady: "Let the fire break forth
Of thy desire," she said, "that it issue
Well stamped with impress of thy inner self.
Not that our knowledge can an increase gain
From speech of thine, but that thyself grow used
To tell thy thirst, so one may fill thy cup."
"Root of my clan, beloved, who reachest up
So high, that as on earth our minds see well!
Two obtuse angles no triangle holds,
So our contingencies dost thou perceive,
Ere in themselves existent, watching aye
The Point, where in one present all times meet;
Whilst at the side of Virgil I moved on
Up o'er the mount, which healeth stricken souls,
As when descending to the world of death,
To me were said anent my future life
Words of grave import, though I feel myself
Proof in foursquare against the blows of chance.
My wish would therefore well contented be
To learn the fortune that is drawing on,
CANTO XVII.

For arrow, if foreseen, more gently falls.”
Thus spake I unto that same Light that me
Before addressed; and as by Beatrice
Desired, my wish was openly expressed.

Nor in those words ambiguous that fools
Of old besmeared their meaning with, ere slain
The Lamb of God, that taketh sin away;
But in clear terms and homely mother tongue
To me did love paternal answer make,
Veiled, but apparent in his own bright smile.

"Contingency, which ne'er extends beyond
The "daybook" of your own material world,
Is full depicted in the Eternal View.
Yet no necessity is thence implied
More than by eye, which on itself reflects
A ship that drifts its course adown the stream.

From thence, e'en as upon the ear there comes
Sweet music from an organ, so in sight
To me there comes what time prepares for thee.

As one Hippolytus from Athens fled
Through a step-mother's spiteful calumny,
From Florence likewise needs must thou go forth.

This is decreed, the means already sought,
Soon to be done by him, who schemes it there,
Where all day Christ as merchandize is sold.

Blame will pursue the injured party still
With wonted outcry, but due vengeance shall
Attest in truth Whose minister it is.
Thou shalt abandon all that most of all
Thy dearest is; and this the arrow, which
The bow of banishment dischargeth first;
Thou shalt have proof how salt the savour is
Of others' bread; and how the way is hard
That leadeth up and down another's stair;
And what shall gall thy shoulder worst of all
Will be the senseless and malignant mates,
With whom into this valley thou wilt fall ;
For ingrates all, all mad and impious,
They'll range themselves 'gainst thee; but very soon
Their's and not thine shall be the reddened brow.

The issue of their brutish policy
Will be a proof, that it was well for thee
To form thy party of thyself alone.

Thy first retreat and shelter first will be
In the great Lombard's hospitality,
Who on the ladder bears the holy bird;

So kindly will be his regard for thee,
That 'tween you two, in act and in request,
That will be first, which others make the last.

With him thou'lt see the one, on whom at birth
This valiant star so stamped its character,
That notable will be his great exploits.

Of him the nations are not yet aware
In his first tender age, since but nine years
These wheels around him in their course have rolled.

But ere the Gascon noble Henry fools,
Some sparkles of his valour will appear
In his indifference to pelf and toil.

His oft magnificence, when known to men,
Will yet be such that e'en his enemies
Cannot of this to silence bind their tongues.

On him wait thou, and on his kindnesses:
By him shall many folk transposed be,
Rich men and beggars interchanging place:

And thou shalt carry off on mem'ry writ
Of him—but silence here.” Things then he told
Past all belief, even when seen fulfilled.

“Such,” added he, “the glosses are, my son,
On what was said to thee; these the intrigues
That lurk behind a few revolving years.

Yet would I have thee grudge no neighbour's lot,
For to a future reacheth on thy life
Outstretching far their doom of perfidy.”

When by its silence showed the holy soul
CANTO XVII.

Itself discharged from farther work of woof
Into the web I'd offered it in warp,

’Gan I, as one that eagerly desires
Amid his doubts a counsellor’s advice,
Who hath discernment, honesty and love:

“Clearly I see, my Father, how towards me
Pricks on the time, hastening to strike a blow
That heaviest falls on whoso most despongs:
Wherefore ’tis well with foresight to be armed,
That, if from me the dearest spot be reft,
All else I lose not by mischance of song.

Down in the world of endless pain below,
And on the mountain from whose summit fair
My Lady’s eyes did hither lift me up,

And later through this heaven from light to light,
That have I learned, which if I tell again,
To many will it prove a bitter draught!

And if to Truth I prove a timid friend,
I fear that I may lose a life mid those,
Who in their time will call these ancient days.”

The smiles of Light, wherein my treasure glowed.

Whom there I’d found, at first with radiance shone,
Like golden mirror smitten by the sun;

Then he replied: “A conscience overcast
Or by its own, or by another’s shame,

Alone shall feel a roughness in thy words,

But none the less, setting all lies aside,
All thou hast seen make clear and manifest,

And leave the scratching where the itching is.

For if this voice of thine shall noisome be

At the first taste, a vital nutriment
’Twill leave behind, when once digested well.
This cry of thine will work, as doth the wind,

That beats the hardest on the highest points:

And no small sign of honour will this be.

Therefore have been, amid the circles here,
Up on the Mount, and in the dismal vale,
Souls only shown thee, that are known to fame;
For in his heart the hearer finds no rest,
Nor faith confirmed by instance that is based
On root unknown, and hidden out of view,
Nor by such reas'ning as lacks evidence."
CANTO XVIII.


In his own thoughts alone that mirror blest
    Found now his joy; and I my own did taste,
    The bitter intermingling with the sweet;
When the Lady, who Godward led me on,
    Said then: “Change now thy thoughts! bethink thee that
    I stand near Him, Who lightens every load.”
Toward Comfort’s loving voice I turned me round,
    And what love then I in her saintly eyes
    Beheld, I leave without attempt to tell;
Not only that I now distrust my speech,
    But mem’ry faileth to go back so far
    Above itself, unless by Other led.
Of such a moment can I but relate,
    That gazing on her once again, my heart
    From ev’ry longing else was wholly freed.
While thus Eternal Joy, streaming direct
    On Beatrice, wholly contented me,
    With Its reflection from her beauteous face
O’erpowering me with one bright beam of smile,
    She said: “Now turn thee and give ear; for not
    Within mine eyes alone is Paradise.”
As sometimes here is seen forth from the eyes
    A glance of love that, be it great enough,
    Will carry off the entire soul with it,
So by the flashes from the holy fire
    Whereeto I turned, I recognized the wish
    In him of further converse with me yet;
And he began; "On this the fifth stage of
The tree, which from its summit draws its life,
And ever fruits, and never sheds its leaf;
Are blessed spirits, who below, or e'er
To heaven they came, were of such fame possessed,
That every muse had found rich theme in them
Look on the Cross; fix on its arms thine eyes:
He, that I now shall name, will there enact
That which the cloud doth with its own swift fire.
And o'er the Cross a trail of light I saw
At sound of Joshua's name, swift as he spoke;
The word scarce uttered, e'er I saw the fact.
And at the name of the great Maccabee
I saw another wheel in circles round,
And rapture was the lash that spun the top.
So with Orlando and with Charlemagne,
In close attention I pursued them both
Like one, whose eye follows his falcon's flight.
And William next, Rainard, and Gottifried,
The Duke, successively athwart the Cross
Drew my regard, and Robert Guiscard too.
In movement mingling with the other Lights,
The soul, who with me spake, showed them how great
An artist was he in the heavenly choir.
I turned me on the right to Beatrice
To see in her, what duty, signified
By word or gesture, she required of me;
And in her eyes I saw so pure a light,
Brimming with Joy, that she in form outshone
As well her earlier as her latest self.
And as in finding ever new delight
In honest work, a man from day to day
Is conscious that his inner powers advance,
So was I conscious, as I circled round
In heaven's own course, of an enlarged arc,
Seeing that Miracle more glorified.
And rapid as the change in briefest space
Of time on a pale woman's cheek, whose face
Is from the load of bashful flush relieved;
Such to mine eyes, as I looked round, appeared
The glistening whiteness of the attempered star,
The sixth, which had received me in itself.
Within the joy of Jove's own star I saw
The sparkling of the Love, that it enshrined,
Take shape in letters of our alphabet.
And as birds risen from the river's bank,
As if each greeting other at their feast,
Form into circles, or in other groups,
E'en so did saintly beings in their lights
Hover around in song, and range themselves
In letter'd form of D, or I, or L.
At first they moved in cadence to their song;
Then in these symbols taking each their form
Awhile they halted, and in silence paused.
O muse of Pegasus, who genius
Dost glorify and crown with lasting fame,
As it through thee for realms and cities doth,
With thine own self enlighten me, that now,
As I conceived them, I may trace their forms:
In these brief verses thine own powers display.
Vowels and consonants appeared to me
In numbers seven times five; and I marked off;
The several parts, as into words they grouped.
Diligite Jusitiam were first
The verb and noun of all depicted there:
Qui judicatis terram were the last.
And then within the M of the fifth word
Remainèd they in order, so that Jove
Shone there in silver, crossed, with lines of gold.
And other Lights I saw descending on
The head of M, and there repose, I trow.
Singing the Good, Who draws them to Himself.
And next, as when we stir up burning logs,
There upward fly innumerable sparks,
Whereby fools are accustomed to divine,
More than a thousand Lights appeared from thence
To rise and higher mount, some more, some less,
As did the Sun allot, Who kindles them.
And as each calmly its position took,
I saw an eagle’s head and neck emerge,
Presented plainly in its separate fire.

He, Who is there the Painter, hath no guide,
Is His own Guide, of Whom the instinct that
Constructs the bird’s nest a remembrance is.

The other blessed group, that seemed at first
Content like lilies to entwine the M,
By a slight movement filled the outline up.

Sweet Star what jewels, and how great, showed me
That all our justice is the sole effect
Of th’ Heav’n, wherein thou art the shining gem.

Wherefore I pray the Mind, wherein begin
Thy motion and thy force, that It take note
Whence the smoke comes, that overcasts thy rays;

So yet again Its Wrath may be aroused
’Gainst those, who in the Temple buy and sell,
That first was reared mid Blood and martyrdoms.

Soldiers of heaven, whom here I contemplate,
Send forth your prayers for those upon our earth,
All, after ill example gone astray.

Men used of old in war to fight with swords,
But now ’tis waged by seizing here and there
The Bread a pitying Father bars to none.

But thou, who writest only to cancel,
In mind bethink thee Peter lives, and Paul,
Who, for the vine thou rootest up, once died.
Well can’st thou say; “So fixed my longing is
On him, who chose the solitary’s life,
And by a dancer’s art was led to death,
That nought know I of Fisherman or Paul.”
Sixth Heaven of Jove—Princes Wise and Just—The Eagle speaks—Necessity of Faith—Divine Justice Inscrutable—
Faith and Works.

BEFORE me on extended wings was seen
The fair presentation which those spirits made,
As in their garland groups they sweetly joyed.
Each like a little ruby, whereon gleamed
A sunbeam, burned with so intense a fire,
The Sun itself seemed on mine eyes to flash.
And what it now behoves me to pourtray,
No voice e'er told, nor ever ink did write,
Nor force of fancy in its range e'er catch.
For I did see the beak in act of speech,
And heard its voice in sound say "I" and "My,"
Which as in thought conceived was "We" and "Our."
And it began: "In that I was both just
And dutiful, am I exalted here
To glory, which no longing may surpass;
And left on earth remembrance of me such
That even ill disposed men below
Commend it, though they let its record pass."
As out of many brands one single heat
Makes itself felt, so from the many loves
Within that image issued that one voice;
And straightway I: "O ye perpetual flowers
Of Joy eternal, who unto my sense
Make all your perfumes seem as only one;
With breathed words dispense this tedious fast,
Wherein long time have I been famishing,
Not finding for it any food on earth.
Full well I know, if in another realm
Of heaven, God's Justice hath its mirror set,  
In this of yours 'tis seen without a veil.  
Ye know how readily attentive I  
As listener am; ye know the doubt too, which  
Hath of old kept me in a lengthened fast.  
E'en as the falcon from her hood released,  
Doth shake her head, with wing approval show,  
Display her instinct and her bravery vaunt,  
So did I see that Symbol woven with  
Praises of Grace Divine, break forth in songs,  
Which all know well, whoe'er on high rejoice.  
Then it began: "He, Who His compass turned  
To the world's farthest bound, and there marked off  
So much that's hidden, and so much that's clear,  
Could not imprint His Power Almighty so  
On the whole universe, that His own Word  
Should not abide in infinite excess:  
And this shows plainly how that first proud sprite,  
Who of all creatures was the masterpiece,  
By not awaiting light, fell immature,  
And hence the lesser natures are each found  
A vessel all too narrow for that Good,  
Which hath no end, and measures Self in Self.  
It follows hence, our vision, which must be  
One of the rays proceeding from the Mind,  
Wherewith all things existent are fulfilled,  
Cannot so powerful in its nature be,  
But that its Origin should much discern  
Remoter far than our phenomena.  
Wherefore perceptions in your world received  
The depth of sempiternal Justice reach,  
Only as eye can penetrate the sea,  
Which, while ashore the bottom it discerns,  
In the mid ocean sees it not, and yet  
'Tis there, though buried in profundity.  
Light there is none, save coming from that Calm  
Which never is perturbed; nay, darkness 'tis,
The shadow or the poison of the flesh.

But duly open'd now the hiding place,
Where Living Justice was from thee conceal'd,
Whereof so many questions thou hast put.

Thou said'st: A man is born upon the banks
Of Indus, where is none who telleth him of Christ,
Nor any who doth read or write of Him;
His every wish and all his actions are
Good, far as human judgment can discern,
Faultless alike in practice and in word;
But unbaptized he dies, without the Faith;
Where is the Justice that condemneth him?
Wherein his sin, if he do not believe?

But who art thou that on the bench would'st sit,
And at the distance of a thousand miles,
Judge with short sight that reacheth but a span?
Certes, to one who subtilities would weave
With me, if over you were Scripture not Outspread, for doubting there'd be wond'rous room.

O creatures of brute earth, O carnal minds!
The Primal Will, which in Itself is good,
From Self, the Chiepest Good, hath never moved.

That which with It accords, alone is just;
The goodness of no creature draws It forth,
But rather by Its Ray is this evoked." As wheels the stork in circles overhead
Above her nest, when she hath fed her brood,
And each well satisfied looks up at her,
E'en so like her, (and so I raised my brow)
The blessed Image into motion stirr'd
Its wings, as prompted by the vast conclave.

Wheeling around, it said in song: "Such as To thee my notes, by thee ill understood,
To mortals such Eternal Judgment is."

When in repose once more the lucent fires
Of th' Holy Ghost were stilled upon the Sign,
Which won for Rome the reverence of the world,
It once again began: "Unto this realm
None ever rose, who had not faith in Christ,
Before or since He to the Tree was nailed.
But lo! how many cry "O Christ, O Christ,"
Who will in Judgment be far less near Him
Than one, who never knew the Name of Christ.
Such Christians will by Ethiop be condemned,
When the two flocks shall be divided off,
The one for ever rich, the other poor,
What will the Persians say unto your kings,
When they shall see the volume open laid,
Wherein is writ the tale of their disgrace?
There shall be seen on roll of Albert's deeds
The act, which soon the pen will register,
That into desert turns the realm of Prague.
There shall be seen distress upon the Seine,
That he brings in by falsifying coin,
Who soon shall perish by the wild boar's tusk.
There shall be seen the thirsty pride that goads
The Scot and Englishman to madness such,
That his own bound'ries neither can content.
There shall be seen the soft luxurious lives
Of him of Spain, and the Bohemian,
Who valour never knew, nor wished to know.
Seen too the Cripple of Jerusalem;
His roll of virtues all summed up in I,
Their opposites in number marked by M.
And seen as well the greed and cowardice
Of him, the guardian of the Isle of Fire,
Where his protracted life Anchises closed;
And to express how pitiful he is,
Contracted letters shall sufficient be,
Much to record in their brief chronicle.
And to all men the foul deeds shall appear
Of uncle and of brother, who defamed
A noble lineage, and two crowns disgraced.
And he of Portugal, Norway as well,
CANTO XIX.

Shall there be known; the man of Rascia too,
Who in ill hour sighted Venetia's coin.
O happy Hungary, if no longer left
To evil rule! and happy too Navarre,
If self protected by her girdling hills!
And everyone must hold in pledge of this,
That Nicosia now and Famagosta
Bewail and curse the rule of their wild beast,
That from the other beasts departeth not.
WHEN he, who all the world illuminates,
    Below our hemisphere so far descends,
    That on all sides the daylight fades away,
The sky, which he alone had lighted up,
    Doth suddenly a new aspect present
With many lights, reflections all of one.
This movement in the sky came to my mind,
    When th' ensign of the world, and its heroes
Within the blessed beak silent remained;
For then those living Lights together all,
The while they brighter glowed, began their songs,
Fleeting and fading from my memory.
O gentle love, that mantlest thee in smiles,
    What glow was thine, displayed in those sweet notes,
Which inspiration drew from holy thoughts.
Aud when those precious and translucent gems,
    That I beheld studding the sixth bright orb,
In silence closed their peal of angel chimes,
Meseemed to hear the murmuring of a stream,
    That falls transparent down from rock to rock,
Showing th' abundance of its upper spring;
And as the sound from cithern at the neck
    Takes there its tone, or as with rustic pipe
The passing air shapes at the vent its note,
So with no tedious of expectancy,
    Did that deep murmuring through the eagle rise
Up through the neck, as 'twere a hollow tube:
There into voice it shaped, and issued prompt,
Forth from its beak, in form of words such as
The heart awaited, where I wrote them down.

"The part in me that sees, which on the sun
Eagles of earth can fix unmoved, claims, now."
So the address began, "thy stedfast gaze.
For of the fires, whereby my form is traced,
Those, whence the eye doth sparkle in my head,
Are the supreme of all their various grades:
He in the midst, as pupil gleaming forth,
The Psalmist of the Holy Spirit was,
Who through successive cities bare the ark.
Now knoweth he the merit of his song,
So far as 'twas the work of his own plan,
In a reward proportioned to its worth.
Of five, who of the eyebrow form the curve,
He, who is stationed nearest to my beak,
Did the poor widow for her son console:
Now knoweth he how dear a loss it is
Not to be Christ's disciple, by the proof
Of this sweet life and of its opposite.
He who comes next on the circumference
Whereof I speak, along its rising arc,
By true repentance respite gained from death.
Eternal Judgment now he knows unchanged,
Abideth still, when worthy prayers down there
Shift till to-morrow what is due to-day.
The next who follows, with a good intent
That ill fruit bore with law and me, became,
To give the Shepherd place, himself a Greek.
Now knoweth he, how evil, though deduced
From his good works, no evil works for him,
Albeit a world's destruction thence ensue.
And he, whom on the sloping curve thou seest,
Was William, whom that country now deplores, [groans:
Which, while they live, 'neath Charles and Frederick
Now knoweth he how heaven doth dearly love
A righteous King, and this he manifests
Still in the radiance that he flasheth forth.
Who in the erring world below would think
That in this circle Trojan Ripheus should
Be of these holy Lights himself the fifth?
Now knoweth he much more than what the world
Is able to discern of grace divine,
Though e'en his vision may not guage its depth."
Like to the lark which freely soars in space
With song at first, and then in silence drops,
Content and sated with its last sweet trill,
Such seemed to me that image, imprint of
Th' Eternal Pleasure, in desire of Whom
Each thing becomes that which it really is.
And notwithstanding I was to my doubt
Almost as glass to colour which it clothes,
Delay in silence I could not endure,
But from my mouth, "What things are these?" forth
Thrust by the force of its oppressive weight:
Whereat I saw high jubilee of fires.
Then quick with eye kindling in brighter glow,
The blessed Sign to me in answer said,
Not to detain me wondering in suspense:
"I see that thou believest in these things,
Because I tell thee, but seest not the how:
So, though believed, hidden they still remain.
Thou art as one, who by its name a thing
Well apprehendeth, but its quiddity
Sees not, if by another not drawn out.
Regnum Calorum suffereth violence
By fervent love and by a vivid hope,
Whereby the Will Divine is vanquished;
Not in the way that man subdueth man,
But conquered, since the conquest is His Will,
And conquer'd, conquers by benignity.
The first life of the eyebrow and the fifth
With wonder fill thee, since thou seest with them
The habitation of the Angels decked.
CANTO XX.

Not Gentiles, as thou deem'st, but Christians both
Died in firm faith in those Blest Feet, which had
Bled for the one, and should for th' other bleed.

For one of them from hell, where never man
Regains good will, did to his bones come back;
And this of lively hope was the reward;
I say of lively hope that flung its force
So mightily in prayer on God to raise
Him up, that it prevailed to move God's Will.

The glorious soul, concerning whom we speak,
To flesh returning only for a while,
Believed in Him, Who could afford it help,
And thus believing, kindled in such fire
Of truest love, that at his second death
Worthy was he to join this festival.

The other by the Grace, which from a fount
So deep wells up, that no created thing
With eye hath ever reached its primal source,
Set his whole love below on righteousness;
Wherefore from Grace to Grace God opened
His eyes to our Redemption yet to come:

So in it he believed, and brooked no more
The ill disfavour of the Pagan life,
And the perverted ways of men rebuked.

More than ten ages ere Baptismal days
To him for Baptism those Ladies three
Were giv'n, whom at the right wheel thou didst see.

Predestination! ah! how far removed
Thy root doth lie from speculations such
As see not fully the First cause of all!

And mortals, hold yourselves straitly restrained
In judging; for e'en we, who see God's Face,
Know not as yet the number of the Elect.

And ah! how sweet is this defect of ours!
For our good is in this good perfected,
That what God willeth is our own will too."
Thus by that image in its form divine,
To clear the short range of my visual sense,
  Was this sweet medicine administered.
And as with songman good the harper good
  Makes the vibration of his strings agree,
  Whereby the song is more delectable,
So while he spake, my memory recalls
  How I beheld those two most favoured lights,
  Just as the eyelids close in unison,
Beat with their flamelets to the words in time.
CANTO XXI.

The Heaven of Saturn—Spirits of Contemplation—Ascent into the Seventh Heaven—The Celestial Stair—Pier Damiano—Luxury of Prelates Denounced.

Mine eyes were fixed already once again
Upon my Lady's face, my soul with them
From all attention else wholly withdrawn;
And she smiled not, but: "If I were to smile,"
So she began, "None other would'st thou be,
Than Semele, when she to ashes turned.
Because my beauty, as it mounts the stair
Of the Eternal Palace, brighter burns,
As thou hast seen, the higher its ascent;
And if not tempered, in such splendour glows,
That in its flash thy mortal faculties
Would shattered be, as branch by thunderbolt
We to the seventh glory have been raised,
Which underneath the fiery Lion's breast,
Mingled with his, now shoots its virtue down.
Fix now thy mind in sequence of thine eyes,
And of them make thee mirrors for the form,
Which in this mirror will appear to thee."
Whoso could know the feast of vision I
Found in the sight of that blest countenance,
Would, as I turned me to another care,
Know well the happiness it was to me
To yield obedience to my heavenly guide,
One side against the other balanced thus.
Within the crystal, which, as it revolves
Around the world, bears its bright leader's name,
Beneath whose sway all wickedness lay dead,
Coloured like gold whereon a sunbeam falls,
A ladder I beheld, that reached aloft.
So high, my vision could not follow it:
Adown its steps also I saw descend
Splendours so many, that I deemed all light
Seen in the sky must needs from thence pour down.
And as by habit of their nature led,
The daws together at the break of day
Fly to and fro their shivering plumes to warm,
And some go off with no sign of return,
Others turn back to their first starting place,
And others tarry, wheeling round and round,
Such seemed to me was there the mode, in which
That sparkling cloud in company approached,
Soon as it lighted on a certain step;
And one that kept the nearest unto us,
Shone forth so brightly, that I said in thought:
“I well discern thou show'st the sign of love;”
But she, from whom I wait the how and when
To speak, or silence keep, pauseth; and I,
Again my wish, do well and nothing ask.
When she my attitude of silence saw
I’th’ sight of Him, by Whom all things are seen,
She said to me: “Let loose thy fervent wish.”
And I began: “No merit of my own
Makes me deserving of reply from thee;
But for her sake, who gives me leave to ask,
O happy soul, hid in the deep abode
Of thine own joy, make known to me the cause,
That placeth thee so closely at my side;
And tell me, why within this sphere is hushed
The dulcet symphony of Paradise,
Which through the rest below devoutly sounds.”
“Thou hast the ear of mortal, as the eye,”
It answered; “here no song is heard, just as
No smile from Beatrice is vouchsafed here.
Adown the steps of this most holy stair
I came thus far only to welcome thee
With words, and with the light that mantleth me.

No greater love sent me in greater haste;
For love as much and more gloweth up there,
As this fire-flashing manifests to thee;
But the deep charity that prompts us all
To serve the Counsel that directs the world,
As thou dost see, allots our duties here."

"I see it well," I said, "O sacred Lamp,
How Love left free sufficeth in these courts
For service of Eternal Providence.

But what to me seems hard to understand
Is, why thou only 'mong thy comrades here
Hast to this service been predestinate."

Nor had I reached as yet my final word,
Ere its mid point the Light a centre made,
Whirling around it like a swift millstone.

Then answer made the love which dwelt within:
"Divine Light centres on me from above,
Entering by this in which I am enclosed;
Whereof the virtue, with my sight conjoined,
Exalts me, 'bove myself, to where I see
The Supreme Essence, whence its milk is drawn.

Hence comes the mirthfulness, that feeds my flame,
Because to what I see, far as 'tis clear,
The brightness of my fire I equalize.

But not the soul in Heaven that brightest shines,
Nor Seraph fixed in nearest gaze on God,
Could satisfaction give to thy demand;
For what thou askest lies so far deep down
In the abyss of the Eternal Law,
That from created vision 'tis cut off.

And thou returning to the mortal world,
This carry back, that none may there presume
Toward such a mark again to move his foot.

The mind here radiant doth on earth give smoke;
Consider how can it do that below,
If when in Heaven received, 'tis impotent.''

Such limitation by these words imposed,
I left my question, and fell merely back
In all humility to ask his name;

"'Tween the two shores of Italy there rise
Cliffs, not far distant from thy home, so high
Their summits leave the thunder oft below:
They form a hump, which men call Catria;
Beneath it lies a holy hermitage,
That is for worship only set apart."

Thus he began his third address to me:
And added furthermore: "'Twas there that I
In service bound myself to God so close,
Seasoning my food with olive juice alone,
That with light heart I passed through heat and cold,
Contented well in thought contemplative.

In those days to this heaven that cloister gave
A plenteous harvest; now 'tis barren grown,
And soon 'twere meet that this should be exposed.
As Peter Damiano there I dwelt;
Known as Peccator on the Adrian shore,
When there an inmate in our Lady's house.

Little of mortal life remained to me,
When I was called, nay dragged, to wear the hat,
Which ever passeth from the bad to worse.
Came Cephas once, the Chosen Vessel came
Of th' Holy Ghost, in fastings and barefoot,
The food sufficient any shelter gave.

A beadle now on each side must support
Our shepherds of to-day; one leads in front,
And one, so burly they, supports behind.

Their flowing robes cover their palfreys' backs;
So move they on, two beasts beneath one hide.
O Patience, that all this must tolerate!'
I saw at these words fires more numerous
From step to step descend and whirl around,
And at each whirl still fairer shone they forth.
About him these collecting halted there,
And raised a shout sonorous and so loud,
That no similitude could here be found:
Stunned by its thunder, I its purport missed.
CONFOUNDED, in amazement, to my guide
I turned me, as the little one that runs
Ever to her, in whom he most confides;
And she, as mother, who with succour prompt
Hastes to her breathless, pallor-stricken boy,
With tones familiar of encouragement,
Said: “Know'st thou not that here in heav'n thou art?
And know'st thou not that heav'n all holy is,
And all done here, cometh of righteous zeal?
What change in thee the song would have produced,
Or by my smile should I, thou now canst judge,
Since their shout only hath perturbed thee thus;
Wherein hadst thou but understood their prayers,
Already hadst thou known the avenging doom,
Which ere thou die, thine eyes shall yet behold.
The sword above us here smites not in haste,
Nor with delay, save in the view of him,
Who with desire or fear awaits its fall.
But now elsewhere turn thee to something else;
For many glorious spirits wilt thou see,
If as I bid thee, thou look round again.”
As she would have it, so I set mine eyes,
And hundreds saw of little spheres, that each
With mutual rays their glory magnified.
Like one I stood, who in himself subdues
The goad of strong desire, and ventures not
To ask, fearing in speech to go too far:
In front of me did then of all those pearls
The largest and most lucent place itself,
Itself to satisfy my full desire;
And from within I heard: "If thou couldst see,
As I, the charity that glows in us,
Thine inner thoughts expression would have found;
But that expectancy detain thee not
Too long from thy high aim, answer I make
E'en to the thought thou cherishest within.
The mountain, on whose slope Casino stands,
Was once frequented on its very top
By men deceived and ill disposed in mind;
And I am he, who up there carried first
The Name of Him, who to the earth brought down
The truth, that lifts us to these heights sublime;
And over me such beams of grace shone forth,
That I the neighbouring villages drew back
From th' impious worship that seduced the world.
These other fires were men devoted all
To contemplation, with the warmth inflamed
That maketh flowers and holy fruits spring up.
Here is Maccario, Romualdo here;
Here are my brothers, in the cloisters who
Kept sure their foothold, and made fast the heart."
And I to him; "The love that thou dost show
With me in converse, and the kindly mien
Which I observe and note in all your fires,
Have in me so enlarged confidence,
E'en as the sunshine makes the rose expand
In open bloom, wide as its powers allow.
Wherefore I pray, and, Father, assure me,
If grace so great I may receive, that I
May see thine own true form with open face."
"Brother," he said, "this high desire of thine
Shall be fulfilled above in the last sphere,
Where are fulfilled all other and my own.
Perfected there, completed and mature
Is every yearning found: therein alone
Each part abides, where it hath ever been;
It knows not space, nor turneth it on poles;
And this our ladder passeth into it,
And so beyond thy vision vanisheth.
Upward so high Jacob, the Patriarch,
Beheld it once its utmost summit rear,
When it appeared laden with Angel throngs.
But to rise there no man doth now uplift
A foot from earth; the charter of my Rule
Remains below, its pages left to waste.
The walls, which used an Abbey to be held,
Are dens of thieves, and the monks' cowls become
Sacks lined well with store of worthless meal.
But crushing usury lifts no such front
Against God's ordinance, as doth the fruit,
Which with its madness fills the heart of monks.
For whatso'er the Church doth hold in trust,
Is for the folk, who beg in name of God,
And not for kinsmen, nor for something worse.
The flesh of mortals is so soft that no
Mere good beginning can below last out
From germ of sapling to the acorn age.
No gold nor silver Peter had at first;
With prayer and fasting I began; Francis
His convent laid in deep humility;
And if thou think of each as he began,
And see since then, whither our line has swerved,
Thou'lt see our whiteness hath grown somewhat brown.
And yet forsooth, Jordan in backward course,
And sea retreating at the Will of God
Were wonders greater than a rescue here."
So spake he; then his company he joined;
His comrades gathered close to him around,
And like a whirlwind swept they all aloft.
My Lady Dear by force of sign alone
Up by that stair drew me to follow them,
My nature by her virtue thus o'erruled.
And ne'er below by natural rise or fall,
    Was a velocity of motion known
That with the movement of my flight could vie.
Reader! as I may yet return to that
    Triumphant holiness, for which ofttimes
I mourn my sins, and smite upon my breast,
Not with such speed hadst thou thy finger placed
    In flame and snatched it back, as I beheld
The sign that follows Taurus,—and went in.
O Glorious Stars, O Constellation big
With mighty virtue, whence I recognize
    All genius of my own, be't what it may,
With you was dawning and with you did set
    He, who is Father of all mortal life,
What time I first drew breath from Tuscan air.
And then, when came largess of grace to me
    To enter the high sphere, wherein ye wheel,
Your region was allotted unto me.
To you in sighs of aspiration now
    Turneth my soul for virtue to achieve
The arduous pass, that draws it to itself.
"Thou art so near Salvation's final goal."
    So Beatrice began, "that here thou wilt
A vision need, clear and acute withal,
And therefore, ere thou enter farther in,
    Look down, and see how vast the universe
I have already set beneath thy feet;
So that thy heart to the triumphant throng,
    Which comes in joy through this ethereal sphere,
May show itself exultant to the full."
In backward glance o'er all the seven-told spheres
    I turned mine eyes; and saw this globe of ours
Such, that its mean appearance caused a smile:
And that opinion I approve as best,
    Which takes of it least count; and whoso sets
His mind elsewhere, may be deemed truly wise.
I saw Latona's daughter gleaming bright,
Without the shadow, that had caused me once
To think she was composed of dense and rare.
The aspect of thy son, Hyperion,
   Here I could bear, and round and near to him,
   I marked how Maia and Dione move;
From thence appeared the tempering star of Jove,
   'Twixt son and father; and from thence were clear
   To me the changed positions that they take,
And all the seven made quite plain to me
   Their vast dimensions, at what speed impelled,
   And how remote their situations are.
This little plat, which makes us all so proud,
   As with the Eternal Twins I circled round,
   Was seen spread out from hill top to the shore:
Back to the fair eyes then I turned mine own.
E'EN as the bird amid the boughs she loves,
   Sitting upon the nest of her sweet brood
The livelong night that hides all things from us,
Who to behold the longed-for sight of them,
   And find the morsels needed for their meal,
Where heavy toil to her is only joy,
On open spray anticipates the time,
   And sunrise waits in ardent eagerness,
Watching with steadfast gaze the birth of dawn,
So was my Lady standing now erect;
   And in attention toward the quarter turn'd,
'Neath which the sun seems to display least speed;
And as I marked her longing and suspense,
   I was myself as one, who with desire
For something yearns, and pays himself with hope.
Brief was the interval 'tween either state,
   I mean of expectation, and the sight
Of heav'n, as it brighter and brighter grew.
"Behold the Legions," then said Beatrice,
  "Of Christ's high Triumph, and the harvest see,
Ingathered by the circling of these spheres."
It seemed to me her face was all aglow,
   And her eyes brimming with such happiness,
As needs must be without description left.
As in the calm serene of the full moon
  Smiles Trivia 'mid the everlasting nymphs,
Who in its every nook bedeck the sky,
So did I see, above ten thousand lamps,
   One Sun, which did illume the host of them,
E'en as our own the stars above our heads;
And through the living light transparent shone
The lucent Substance of a glory such
As my own powers of sight could not endure.
"O Beatrice, sweet guide, beloved of me!"
When she broke in: "That which o'erwhelms thee now,
A Virtue is, from which is no retreat.
Here is the Wisdom, and the Power here
That open'd wide 'tween Heaven and earth the road,
For which long time men yearned in desire."
As fire, imprisoned in a cloud, bursts forth
In self expansion, and demands more space,
And counter to its nature falls to earth,
E'en so my soul 'mid this delightsome feast,
Expanding in its range passed beyond self,
And what befell it, can no more recall.
"Now ope thine eyes, and see me as I am;
Things thou hast seen, whereby thou art become
Able to bear the radiance of my smile."
I was as one, who of forgotten dream
Feels himself conscious, and ransacks his brain
In vain to call it back to memory,
When this appeal I heard, which merits well
A gratitude, that from the book shall nought
Erase, that seals the record of the past.
If now should sound together all the tongues
That Polyhymnia and her sisters e'er
With sweetest milk in most abundance fed,
To help me sing the saintly smile, and how
It made the saintly face pure light itself,
Not to a thousandth of the Truth 'twould mount.
So then while representing Paradise,
Needs must the sacred poem take a leap,
As doth a man that finds his road cut off.
But who bethinks him of the weighty theme,
The shoulder mortal too that bears the load,
Should blame it not if stagg'ring under this;
CANTO XXIII.

No passage this for a mere cockle shell,
Through which my daring prow now cleaves its way,
Nor for a helmsman lolling at his ease.

"Why doth my face enchant thee thus with love,
That to the beauteous garden thou turn not,
Which 'neath the beams of Christ now bursts in bloom?
Here is the Rose, wherein the Word Divine
Our Flesh became, and here the lilies are,
Which traced the good way by their sweet perfume."

Thus Beatrice; and I to her advice
Eager to yield, gave up myself again
To brave the struggle of my feeble eyes.

As 'neath a sunbeam, streaming down direct
From broken cloud, mine eyes ere now have seen,
Sheltered themselves in shade, a field of flowers,
So saw I yet more hosts resplendent still,
'Neath ardent rays down flashing from on high,
And yet discerned not whence the radiance came.

Virtue benign, whose mark on these is stamped,
Thou didst uplift Thyself to give mine eyes
Scope to see there, what they'd been weak to catch.

The name of that fair flower, which I invoke
Morning and evening, held me there enthralled
In soul, contemplating the Chiefest Fire.

And as on both mine eyes the living star
In quality and size its image flashed,
That triumphs there as erst it triumphed here,
Athywart the heaven down came a little torch
Formed like a ring and fashioned as a crown,
That wreathed about her, and then circled round.

What melody soe'er sounds sweetest here
Below, and to itself attracts the soul,
Would seem like burst of cloud in thunder crash,
If with the strains of that sweet lyre compared,
Mid which the Sapphire fair was there encrowned,
Whose azure makes the Sapphire Heav'n more blue.

" Angelic Love am I, Who hover round
That Joy sublime, which from the Womb exhales
That was the Hostelry of our Desire;
And o'er Thee will I hover, heavenly Queen,
Till to thy Son thou come, and thine entrance
Shall make the Sphere Supreme diviner still.”
Thus did the music as it circled round,
Seal up its final strain, and Mary’s name
Shouted the other lights in one acclaim.
The regal mantle, which the rolling spheres
Of all the world enfolds, and liveth most,
And gloweth most in God’s own breath and laws,
Held over us its inner lining so
Outstretched in distance that its presence e’en,
Where yet I stood, reached far beyond my sight.
And thus mine eyes had not the potency
To follow in its course the crownèd flame,
Which in its Offspring’s wake went up on high.
And as a sucking child to mother turns
Its outspread arms, when it her milk has drawn,
Inflamed by love to show an outward sign,
Each of those glistening spirits upward shot
Its point of fire, so that to me was plain,
How strong to Mary their affection was.
And there they halted still within my view,
Singing Regina Cæli in such strains,
That never hath their sweetness passed from me.
Oh! the abundance of the harvest here
Pressed down in the rich coffers, that on earth
Had been in seedtime worthy husbandmen!
Here life and joy are in the treasure found,
Which was their gain, when mourning exiles once
In Babylon, they left its gold untouched.
Here in his triumph ’neath th’ Exalted Son
Of God and Mary in his victory,
Amid the councils old and new alike,
Sits he who of this Glory holds the keys.
CANTO XXIV.

Eighth Heaven of the Fixed Stars—Spirits Triumphant—
S. Peter—Dante's Examination in the Faith.

"O BAND of Fellows, to the supper called
Of the Blest Lamb, Who all of you so feeds
That every wish is ever satisfied,
If by God's Grace this man a foretaste hath
Of that which from your table falleth down,
Ere yet the day that death prescribes for him,
Attention give to his boundless desire;
Bedew somewhat his thirst: ye ever drink
From that fount, whence flows what he hath in thought."
Thus Beatrice: and then those happy sprites
Made themselves spheres, revolving round fixed poles,
Forth flashing, comet like, their mighty flames.
And as in clocks the wheels co-ordinate
Move round, so that the one we first observe
Seems to stand still, and the last seems to fly,
So did those circling bands in festive dance,
Some swift in motion, and some slow, help me
To estimate their wealth of happiness.
Forth from one group I noted as most fair,
I saw a flame emerge in happiness,
Such as left none more brilliant than itself;
And three times did it wheel round Beatrice
With song of so divine a strain, that fails
My power of fancy to recall its notes;
So my pen skips it, and I write it not;
To paint such folds imagination e'en,
Not to say words, hath colours all too crude.
"O Saintly Sister mine, who prayest me
Devoutly thus, by this thy fervant prayer
Thou dost detach me from yon beauteous sphere."

Soon as the blessed flame its movement ceased,
Unto my Lady it breathed forth in voice.
That spake the words, as I have set them down.
And she: "Eternal Light of the great man,
Under whose charge our Lord did leave the keys,
That He brought down, of this our wondrous Joy,
Prove now this man with easy points and hard,
As seems thee best, concerning the true Faith,
In strength whereof thou on the sea didst walk.
If He love well, Hope well, in Creed be sound,
From thee 'tis not concealed, since there thine eye
Doth reach, where in true colour all is seen.
But as this realm its citizens enrols
On their true faith, its glory to enhance,
'Tis well it fall to him to speak thereof."

As silently the bachelor prepares,
Until the master puts his question forth,
Not to determine, but to argue it;
So with all reasoning I equipped myself,
The while she spake, to be in readiness
At once for questions and profession such.
"Good Christian speak: show plainly what thou art:
Say what is Faith?" whereon I raised my brow [breathed:
Towards that Light, from whence these words were
And unto Beatrice I turned, and she
Gave me prompt signs, that I the waters should
Let loose abroad forth from my fount within.
"May that grace, which permits me to confess,"
'Gan I, "before our chief Centurion,
Explicit make th' expression of my thoughts."
And I went on: "Father, thy Brother dear,
Who with thee set Rome in the line of Truth,
Wrote thus for us with his veracious pen;
Faith is the substance of things hopèd for,
The evidence of things as yet unseen:
And this appears to me its quiddity."
Then did I hear: "Right thine opinion is,
If understanding well, why he set Faith
'Mid substances and then with evidence."

And I forthwith: "The truths profound, which here
Make of their presence a free gift to me,
Are hid so far away from eyes below,
That their existence is but on belief;
On which foundation rests the lofty Hope,
And the idea of substance thus comes in:
And from this credence it becomes us well
With nothing more in sight to syllogize,
And so comes next th' idea of Evidence."

Again I heard: "If whatsoe'er below
Is gained as doctrine were thus understood,
The sophist's wit would there be out of place."

Thus did that burning Love breathe out its thought;
And added then: "Right good by assay now
Is passed this coinage in alloy and weight;
But tell me if in thine own purse 't is found."

Then said I: "Yes, so round and bright it is,
That nothing in its image hints perhaps."

Then forth at once from out the depth of Light
Resplendent there, was heard: "This precious gem,
Whence hadst thou it?" Then I: "The copious shower
Of Holy Ghost, which sheds itself abroad
Upon the parchments, old as well as new,
A syllogism is, which this for me
Concludes with keenness such, that before it
All demonstration seems to lose its point."

I further heard; "The propositions, which,
Both old and new, to this conclusion lead,
Why deem'st thou these an utterance divine?"

And I: "The proof, which opes this Truth to me
Are the works consequent, for which nature
Never forged iron, nor upon anvil smote."

"And say," he added, "who assures thee then,
That these deeds e'er were done? The very thing,
That needs be proved, alone swears to their truth."

"If the world turned to Christianity,"
Said I, "without a miracle, this one
Is such, the rest are not its hundredth part.
For thou, hungry and poor, didst enter in
Upon a field to sow the good seed there.
Which once grew up a vine, a bramble now."

This ended, the exalted court of Saints
Through all the spheres rang a _Te Deum_ out
In melodies such as above are sung.

And that great Lord, who in his scrutiny
Had led me, as it were, from branch to branch,
Until we now approached the topmost spray,
Again began: "The Grace which tenderly
Doth woo thy mind, hath opened now thy mouth
Thus far to speak, as it became thee best;
So far what thou hast uttered I approve.
But now behoves it thee to state thy Creed,
And why 'twas offered unto thy belief."

"O Holy Father, Spirit, Who seest now
What erst thou so believedst, that towards
The tomb thou didst the younger feet outrun,"

So I began: "Thou wilt I here declare
The formal substance of my willing Faith;
And more, the cause of it thou'dst further ask.
And I reply: In One God I believe,
Sole and Eternal, Who the whole heaven moves
With love and with desire, Himself unmoved.
And for this Faith I have not merely proof
In physics and in metaphysics, but
Truth gives it me, which hence is rainèd down
Through Moses, through the Prophets and through Psalms,
Through Gospel story, and through you, who wrote,
After the Spirit's Fire had made you blest.
In Three Eternal Persons I believe;
One Essence I believe, One and Threefold,
CANTO XXIV.

So that in them are *Sunt* and *Est* conjoined.

Of this divine condition thus profound,

Whereof I speak, a seal upon my mind

Ofttimes the gospel doctrine doth impress.

This is the principle, and this the spark,

Which after into living fire expands,

And like a star in heaven shines forth in me.”

As when the master hearing welcome news,

Embraces him, who brought the tidings in,

With grateful thanks soon as his tale is told,

E’en so with blessings chanted over me,

Soon as I ceased, the Apostolic Light

Three times encircled me, at Whose command

I’d said my say; so well my say pleased Him.
CANTO XXV.

Eighth Heaven of The Fixed Stars—Spirits Triumphant—
A Sigh for Home—S. James—Examination on Hope—
S. John—Heavenly Light overpowers the Terrestrial Eye.

SHOULD it e'er hap this sacred Poem, which
Both heaven and earth have taken so in hand,
That it for many a year hath made me lean,
Should tame the savag'ry that bars me out
From the fair fold, where as a lamb I slept,
Foe to the wolves that upon it wage war,
With other voice and other fleece will I
Return a Poet; and at Font where I
Baptizèd was, will I my chaplet take;
For there I entered on the Faith, which makes
Our souls known unto God; and for its sake
Did Peter after circle thus my brow.
Toward us thereon there moved another Light
Forth from the same sphere, whence had issued he,
Whom Christ of all His vicars Primate left.
Thereon my Lady, with great gladness filled,
Cried: "Look, O look, the great lord comes, to whom
The pilgrims of Galicia flock below."
As when the dove beside its mate alights,
And each to other, as they wheel around,
And coo, makes manifest their mutual love,
So of those glorious princes did I see
With welcome each receive his great compeer,
Lauding the banquet of the Saints on high.
But when their greetings had been now exchanged,
Silent each of them halted coram me,
In glow of fire that bowed my face low down.
Thereon with gracious smile said Beatrice:
"World-famèd Life, by whom the wide largess
Of this our Palace erst was written down,
Make now these lofty heights resound with Hope;
Thou know'st that this thou representest oft
As Jesus to the Three gave fullest light."

"Lift up thy head, and fully be assured;
For all, who come from mortal world up here,
Our rays must ripen to maturity."

Such comfort reached me from the second Fire:
And I did lift mine eyes unto those hills,
Which had at first abashed them to the ground.

"Since of His Grace our Sovran Lord doth will
That ere thy death thou shouldest here confront
In this most secret chamber all His lords;
So that the sight of this His very Court
May strengthen thee and others in their Hope
Of it, the source of all right Love below;
Say what it is, and how within thy soul
It blooms; and say too whence it came to thee."

Thus did the second Light his speech pursue.

And she, who in her mercy was the guide
Of my wing's pinion through its lofty flight,
With answer thus anticipated me:

"No son of hers doth the Church Militant
Possess of livelier hope, as in that Sun
'Tis writ, who all our company illumes:
Wherefore from Egypt is it granted him
That he should come into Jerusalem,
Ere yet his warfare is accomplishèd.
The two remaining points, thou askest of,
Not to learn aught thyself, but that he may
Report, how pleasing to thee is this grace,
I leave to him, for not to him will they
Prove hard, nor boasting show; let him reply,
And God assist him with His grace therein."

As the disciple, wherein he's expert,
Answers the master willingly and prompt,
That manifest may be his excellence;
"Hope is," said I, "the sure expectancy
Of future glory: and the product too
Of Grace divine, and previous desert.
From many a star this Light descends on me;
But he instilled it first into my heart,
Who the great songman was of the Great King.
"Let all," as in God's Songbook may be read,
"Put hope in Thee, who know Thy holy Name:"
And this who knows not, if he have my Faith?
To his instilling thou didst more instil
By thine Epistle, so am I full filled,
And upon others shed your rain in turn."
While thus I spake, within the living breast
Of that great fire a flame was quivering.
Sudden and oft, like play of lightning gleam.
Then breathed a voice: "The Love wherewith I burn
Towards this virtue still, which followed me
E'en to the palm, and issue from the fight,
Would have me breathe it thee again, that thou
In it mayst joy; and me 'twill pleasure much,
If thou wilt say, what promise hope affords"
And I: "The Scriptures, old and new, set up
The Sign-post, which with finger points it me,
Of souls, whom God hath called to be his friends,
Isaiah saith, that each shall be arrayed
In its own country in a two-told robe,
And its own country is this happy life.
This revelation too thy Brother makes
Much clearer, and in better order set,
There where he treateth of the white robed throng."
At once, and close upon the ending of my words,
Above our heads was heard, Sperent in Te,
And all the choirs to this made full response:
And then amidst them shone a light so clear,
That if but one such crystal Cancer had,
A winter's month would be one single day.
And as a blithesome maid stands up, and moves,  
And mingles in the dance, only to pay  
Court to the bride, unconscious of herself,  
So did I see the unveiled splendour come  
Unto the twain, who wheeled in circles round  
In speed proportioned to their ardent love.  
Into their notes and words he threw himself;  
And upon them my Lady fixed her gaze,  
E'en as a bride, silent and motionless.  
"'Tis he, who once upon the Breast reclined  
Of our own Pelican; and he it was,  
Who on the Cross was to the high charge called."

Thus spake my Lady, nor the more for this  
Moved she her eyes, in close attention rapt,  
After her words, as they had been afore.  
As one who looks and straineth with his eyes,  
And strives to see the sun when half eclipsed,  
And in his seeing loses sense of sight,  
Such was myself in presence of that fire,  
That last arrived, until was said: "Wherefore  
Thus blind thyself to see what is not here?  
My flesh is earth in earth, and so will be  
With all the rest, until our number hath  
Made up the sum eternally decreed.  
In their two robes to cloister of the Blest  
Two Lights alone have thither made ascent;  
And this unto your world shall you report."

At these words halted then the whirling groups  
Of flame, and therewith ceased the melody,  
Formed in the concert of the trinal breath;  
As when, fatigue or danger to avoid,  
The oars that whilom through the water clave,  
Halt easy all upon the whistle's sound.  
Ah! the commotion of my mind how great,  
When as I turned to look on Beatrice,  
I could not see her, though I was the while  
Close by her side, and in the Happy Land.
Eighth Heaven of The Fixed Stars—Spirits Triumphant—
Examination on Charity—Adam—The First Sin—The
First Exile—The First Language—The First Sojourn.

While still in doubt, if sight were wholly gone,
From out the blaze that had extinguished it,
There breathed a voice, which my attention fixed,
And said: "Until thy vision is restored
To thee, which thou in me hast burnèd up,
'Tis well in converse thou find recompense.
Begin then, and declare the point, which is
Thy soul's true aim, and well assure thyself
Thy sight is only dazzled, and not dead;
Because the Lady, who conducts thee through
This realm divine hath in her glance the power,
Which erst the hand of Ananias had."
"As pleaseth her," said I, "or soon or late
Be the eyes healed, that were the gates, through which
She passed in fire where-with I ever burn.
The Good, that with contentment fills this court,
The Alpha is and Omega of all
The scripture Love reads to me, loud or low."
That self same voice, which had dispelled the fear
The sudden dazzlement had caused in me,
Again in argument engaged my thought;
And said: "Surely in finer sieve should'st thou
This matter sift; 'tis well that thou declare
Who to such target did direct thy bow."
And I: "By reasons of philosophy,
And by authority that hence descends,
Needs must such Love be printed upon me;  
For Good, so far as Good, when understood,  28
Enkindleth Love, and this so much the more,  
As more of good it in itself contains.  
To th' Essence then, which by prerogative  31
Claims as Its own all good outside Itself,  
As nothing but a ray of Its own Light,  
More than elsewhere must needs in act of love  34
Be drawn the mind of every one who sees  
The truth, on which this demonstration rests.  
Such truth to my intelligence he shows,  37
Who demonstrates to me that Love is first  
Of all the sempiternal Substances.  
Shows it again the Author of all truth  40
In words to Moses, speaking of Himself,  
"I will my goodness unto thee reveal."  
Thou show'st it too, opening in lofty words,  43
Above all edict else, the message which  
Proclaims the mystery here to all below."  
And then I heard: "By man's intelligence,  46
And by authorities at one with it,  
Of all thy loves, thy Sovran Love is God.  
But tell me yet if other cords thou feel,  49
That draw thee to Him, and thereby declare  
With teeth how many this love grippeth thee."  
The holy purpose nowise was concealed  52
Of this, Christ's Eagle; rather I quickly caught  
Whither he would my declaration lead.  
So I resumed: "All craving stimulus,  55
That can incite the heart to turn to God,  
Hath been concurrent to my charity.  
For the world's being, and my being too,  58
The Death, which He endured that I may live,  
And what myself and all believers hope,  
These, with the living knowledge named before,  61
Have, from the sea of a perverted love,  
Drawn me, safe landed on the shore of Right.
The fronds, wherewith the garden is all green
Of the Eternal Gardener, I so love,
As what is good in them proceeds from Him.”
As I in silence ceased athwart the sky
Sounded a hymn most sweet; and with the rest
My Lady sang, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.
As when beneath a piercing light sleep flies,
And in its glare the visual sense revives,
As runs the brightness on from nerve to nerve,
The awakened slumberer starts at what he sees,
All undiscerning, roused thus suddenly,
Till the appraising judgment comes in aid,
So from mine eyes all dark secretions did
One ray from Beatrice’s eyes disperse,
Which trailed in light more than a thousand miles;
Whence now more clearly than before I saw;
And as one in bewilderment I asked,
Who was a fourth light that I saw with us.
My Lady then: “Within those beams in joy
Upon his Maker gazeth the first soul,
That Primal Virtue ever called to life.”
Like branch of tree which bendeth its high top
Before the passing wind, and then erect
In innate virtue riseth up aloft,
E’en so what time she spake, did I myself,
In stupor lost; then self restored, the glow
Of hot desire made me with freedom speak;
And I began: “O Fruit, the only one
Created ripe, first Father of mankind,
To whom each bride is daughter, and withal
Daughter-in-law, thee I devoutly pray,
As best I can, to speak with me; my wish
Thou see’st: sooner to hear I tell it not.”
Sometimes a living thing, though covered o’er,
By restless movement manifests its wish,
In that the wrapper from thing wrapped takes form.
And in such wise the first created soul,
Beneath its veil made evident to me
How glad he was to show his complaisance.
Then breathed he forth: "That wish of thine, not yet
Expressed by thee, more clearly I discern
Than thou, whate'er to thee the clearest is.
For in truth's Mirror I do it behold,
That makes Itself Reflector of all else;
Though nothing is there that can It reflect.
Thou fain would'st know how long since God placed me
In the high garden, where the Lady here
Prepared thee to make the grand ascent;
And how long time I feasted there mine eyes,
And the true reason of the dire disdain,
And what the language that I used and formed.
'Twas not the tasting of the tree, my son,
That in itself caused me my long exile,
But the transgression of the appointed mark,
There, whence thy Lady drew Virgilius,
Four thousand times, three hundred more and two
The sun rolled round, while for these courts I yearned;
And him I saw return, what time on earth
I was alive, through all the fires that light
His path, nine hundred times and thirty more:
The language that I spake was quite worn out,
Or ever Nimrod and his people had
Engaged in their impracticable work.
For nought that human reason can effect,
For ever hath endured, since man's caprice
Is set on change, in sequence of the stars.
A work of nature 'tis that man should speak;
But in this form or that nature leaves you
In action free, as pleaseth you the best.
Ere to the prison house of hell I went,
JAH was on earth the name of the Chief Good,
From Whom proceeds the Joy that swathes me round.
But after changed to EL, so seemed it right;
For usage among men is as the leaf
On bough, which goeth and another comes.
Upon the Mount, which loftiest soars above
The sea, I lived, in innocence and guilt,
From the first hour to that which, as the sun
Moves from the quadrant, follows on the sixth."
CANTO XXVII.

Eighth Heaven of Fixed Stars—Spirits Triumphant—
St. Peter's Denunciation of Roman Pontiffs—Woe in
Heaven—Ascent to Ninth Heaven—Hierarchy of Angels—
Primum Mobile—Celestial Beauty and Earthly Corruption.

GLORY to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
All Paradise began to sing, in strains
So sweet they did my soul intoxicate.
What I beheld appeared to me one smile 4
Of the whole Universe, so that through eye
And ear poured in th' inebriating joy.
O Joy, O Gladness all ineffable!
An entire Life of Love and Peacefulness!
Riches made sure, and not a wish beyond!
Before mine eyes the torches four remained 10
In steadfast glow, when that, which first arrived,
Began to brighten in more living form,
And in its aspect such it now became,
As Jupiter might well become, if he 13
And Mars were birds, and plumage interchanged.
The Providential care, which there assigns
Office and order in the Blessed Choir,
Had silence upon every side imposed;
When now I heard: "If I my colour change, 19
No marvel here, for as my speech proceeds,
Thou'lt see their colour change in all of these.
He that on earth usurpeth now my place,
My place, my place I say, which vacant is 22
In sight and presence of the Son of God,
Hath of my sepulchre a sewer made
Of blood and stench, wherein the Evil One, 25
Who fell from here, finds satisfaction there."
PARADISO.

A colour such, as from sun opposite
A cloud presents at evening or at morn,
I now beheld o'er the whole heaven diffused
And as a modest lady, who abides
Safe in herself, but at another's fall,
Only at news of it is terrified,
So was the face of Beatrice transformed;
A like eclipse in heaven, I ween, took place,
When the Omnipotent was crucified.
Then he continued his deliverance
In voice from its own tone so greatly changed,
His change of countenance no greater was.
"Ne'er was the Spouse of Christ brought up and reared
On blood of Linus, Cletus, or mine own,
To be made use of in the quest of gold;
But in the quest of this most blissful life
Calixtus, Pius, Sextas, Urban too,
Much tribulation ended, shed their blood.
Ne'er did we think that with our successors
Christ's people should one part upon the right
Be seated, and the other on the left.
Nor that the keys, committed once to me,
Should on a standard in full blazonry
Be borne in battle 'gainst baptized men;
Nor that my likeness should imprint its seal
On venal and mendacious privilege,
Whereat I redden oft in flashing fire.
From here rapacious wolves in shepherd's garb
Are rav'ning seen o'er all the pasturage.
God, our defence! in slumber wherefore lie?
Gascons and Caorsines their tables spread
To banquet on our blood; to end how vile,
Must thou O good beginning, come at last!
But the high Providence, that saved to Rome
By Scipio's arms the glory of the world,
Will, as I judge, a speedy succour bring.
And thou, my son, who in thy weight of flesh
Wilt yet return below, open thy mouth,  
And hide not there, what I hide not from thee.'"

Just as our lower atmosphere sends down  
Its flakes of frozen vapour, when the horn  
Of Goat celestial by the Sun is touched,

So did I see on high the other decked;  
And, thick as snowflakes, in their triumph rise  
The hosts, that with us there had sojourned.

My eyes were following their semblances,  
And followed, till the intervenient space,  
Too far extended, barred remoter view.

Whereon my Lady, who saw me relieved  
From upward gaze, said unto me: "Bend down  
Thy looks, and note the compass thou hast fetched."

I saw that since the hour I first looked down,  
I had from centre to the edge moved on  
O'er all the arc which the first climate forms;

So that past Gades I there tracked the course  
Of mad Ulysses, and here almost the shore,  
O'er which Europa, a sweet burthern, passed.

And more had I discovered of the site  
Of this our threshing floor, but 'neath my feet  
The sun went on, a sign and more removed.

My soul, love's bondman, which aye wooingly  
Waits on my Lady, ne'er, as now, desired  
With ardent eyes to see her once again.

And if a feast nature or art would spread  
In human form or in its counterfeit,  
To catch the mind by capturing the eye,

All this together would as nothing seem,  
Beside the heavenly joy, which shone on me,  
When to her face, I turned, that beamed with smiles.

The virtue, which a glance of her's vouchsafed,  
From the fair nest of Leda tore me off,  
And to the swiftest heaven transported me.

In every part sublime, replete with life,  
'Tis all so uniform that I cannot
Say what place Beatrice there chose for me.
But she, observant of my keen desire,
Began, in smiles of gladsomeness so great,
That in her face God's own joy seemed revealed:
"Here the world's system, which its centre keeps
Unmoved, while round it all things else revolve,
As from its starting point, begins its course.
Nor is this heaven enclosed in other space
Than God's own mind, wherein the Love takes fire
That moves it, and the Power it raineth down.
A ring of light and love embraces it,
As it the other spheres; and this precinct,
He, who encircles it, alone directs.
None else than He its motion regulates,
But others all by it their measure take,
As ten is measured by its half and fifth.
And how in such a vessel time doth fix
Its roots, and in the others show its leaves,
May well henceforth to thee be manifest.
O lust of greed, that sinkest men so deep
Beneath thy waves, that none the power retains
From out thy waters to lift up his eyes!
Fair blossom in their wishes men display,
But rain continuous doth oft reduce
To shrivelled sloes the veritable plum.
In little children only can we find
True faith and innocence; and by and by
Will both take flight, ere down on chin appears;
One, who still lisping, had begun to fast,
His tongue now loosened, later on devours
Food of all kind, regardless of the moon;
Another lisping too, loves and obeys
The mother, whom, his speech now fully formed,
He longs soon after in her grave to see.
Thus from the whiteness of its first aspect
The skin turns dark of the fair child of him,
Who ushers in the morn, and leaves us night.
And that this may no wonder stir in thee,
Think how on earth there's none to govern now,
And so the human race goeth astray.
But ere from winter January hath slipped,
By the neglected hundredth down below,
These spheres above will with a roar proclaim
The good time come, long waited for, that shall
Whirl round the poops to where now point the prows,
So that the fleet shall run its course ahead,
And true fruit follow as the blossom dies.
AF TER in contrast with the present life
Of wretched mortals She'd set forth the truth,
Who of my mind a paradise creates,
As in a mirror one may see the flame
Of torch that has been lighted at his back,
Ere of itself he hath or sight or thought,
And round he turns to see if in good sooth
The glass tells true, and finds between the two
Accord complete as that 'tween song and note,
F' en so my memory recalls to me
That this did I, when the fair eyes I saw,
From which Love twined the cord to capture me.
And as I turned me round, and mine were caught
By what that orb's rotation manifests,
Oft as its wheeling is with rev' rence viewed,
A point I saw of radiating light
So dazzling, that the eye it flashes on,
Must needs close up 'neath its intensity;
And star that looks the smallest here to us
Would seem a very moon, if set by it,
As one star by another star is set.
Near as perhaps the halo which we see
In cincture round the light that colours it,
When thick the vapour hangs, wherein 'tis formed,
No farther from this point a ring of fire
So rapidly revolved, it had outstripped
What motion swiftest girds the universe;
And by another this was compassed round,
This by a third, the third again by fourth,  
By fifth the fourth, and then by sixth the fifth.

Beyond ensued the seventh, so far outspread
  In breadth of scope, that Juno's messenger
Complete had failed to comprehend its span.
Likewise the eighth and ninth; and each of them
  More slowly moved, according as each was
In order farther distant from the One.
And of them all that gave the clearest light,
  Which from the pure spark was the least removed,
Because I trow, plunged deepest in its Truth.

My Lady, who observed the anxious strain
  Of my suspense, said then: “From yonder point
Hangs heaven itself and nature aggregate.
Note well the circle with it close conjoined,
  And know that its rapid motion finds
In th' ardent fire of Love that speeds it on.”

And I: “Were the whole world in order thus
  Disposed, as here I see among these wheels,
Arrangement such would leave me satisfied.
But in the world of sense we all can see
  The orbs are of diviner excellence,
As from the centre farther they recede.
Wherefore if wish of mine be rightly met,
  Here in this Angel-shrine most wonderful,
Which knows no confines but of light and love,
I fain would know why the example there
  In mode agrees not with the exemplar here,
For upon this I meditate in vain.”

“ If thy own fingers to untie this knot
  All insufficient be, no marvel 'tis;
For left unhandled, it hath grown thus hard.”

My Lady thus; then she resumed: “Accept,
  An thou'dst be satisfied, all I shall say,
And to my words apply thy subt'lest wit.
The orbs material widen and contract,
  As with the virtue more or less endowed,
Which spreads itself in them through all their parts.
Greater perfection greater weal effects;
And greater weal in greater body dwells,
If all its parts are equally complete.
This circle then, which with itself sweeps on
The entire universe, doth correspond
Unto the sphere which loving most, most knows.
Wherefore if to the virtue, not the form,
Of the surrounding substances that in
Their circles stand, thou bring thy measuring line,
A marvellous proportion thou wilt see
Of more to greater, and to smaller less,
In every heaven, with its Intelligence.”
As all resplendent and serene remains
The hemisphere of air, when Boreas blows
Forth from the cheek, which gentler breeze exhales,
Because the haze is cleared and melts away,
That erewhile blurred it, and the heavens smile
With all the beauties of their retinue,
E’en such was I, soon as my Lady had
Provided me with a response so clear;
And like a star in heaven the truth was seen.
And as her words now to an ending came,
Not otherwise doth molten iron emit
Its sparks, than did those circles scintillate.
The sparks in sequence of the initial fire
In thousands multiplied in numbers more
Than doubled squares on chess board ever told.
I heard Hosannas ring from choir to choir,
Praising the One Point, which their “Ubi” sets,
And will for ever hold them as of old.
And she, who saw my thoughts perplexed in doubt
Within me, said: “The circles first in rank
Reveal the Seraphim and Cherubim.
At this great speed, drawn by their cords, they haste
Like the One Point to grow as most they can,
And so much can they, as their vision mounts.
CANTO XXVIII.

Those other Loves that around them revolve,
Are styled the Thrones of the Divine Aspect,
For the first Triad was with them complete.
And thou should'st know that all find their delight
Proportioned as their vision penetrates
The Truth, where all intelligence finds rest
Hence may be seen how their Beatitude
Hath its foundation in the act of Sight,
Not in the act of Love, which follows next.
The measure of the Sight is the reward,
Which is the child of Grace and a Good will;
And progress thus from grade to grade proceeds.
The second Triad, which in such wise here
Buds and sprouts forth in this eternal spring,
That Aries by night may ne'er despoil,
Untouched by winter, sings Hosanna aye
In threefold melody, that sounds in three
Orders of joy, wherein it triplicates.
A God-like Three this hierarchy hold;
Dominions first, the Virtues after them;
The Powers in order this Triad complete.
Archangels then and Principalities
In twofold dance revolve, the last save one;
The last is wholly for the Angels' mirth.
These Orders all look upward with fixed gaze,
And downward so prevail, that unto God
Themselves attracted, they attract all else.
And Dionysius once with fervent will
To contemplate these orders so applied,
That he arranged and named them, as have I.
Other division Gregory after made;
But such, that soon as opened were his eyes
Within this heaven, at himself he laughed.
And if the secret of such Truth by man
On earth was published, marvel not, for he
Who taught him this, himself had seen it here,
And of these circles much more truth beside.
WHEN the two children of Latona both,
One by the Ram o'erhung, one by the Scales,
In the horizon make a common zone,
Brief as the moment, while the Zenith holds
Them both in equipoise, till from that belt
They change their hemisphere and balance shift,
So long the space, her features bright with smiles,
That Beatrice in silence paused, her gaze
Fixed on the Point, which me had overcome.
Then she began: "I tell, I do not ask,
What thou wouldst hear, for There I've seen it all,
Where each ubi and every quando meet.
Not for increase of Good unto Himself,
That could not be, but that His Splendour might
In its resplendency declare "I Am;"
In His Eternity outside of time,
Outside all limit else, as pleased Him,
Into new Loves Eternal Love spread forth.
Not that before did He in torpor lie;
For not afore or after o'er the face
Of the dark waters was God's going forth.
Essence and matter, simple and combined,
Issued in act, complete without a flaw,
As arrows three from bow of triple strings:
And as on amber, crystal or on glass
A ray so shines, that 'tween its first contact
And full diffusion interval is none,
So the threefold effect flashed forth into
Existence from its Father all at once,
Without distinction of progressive acts.
Of all the substances was order part,
   Constituent and concreate; but whom
Pure act produced, crown of the world were they;
The lowest mere potentiality;
'Tween these, potentiality and act
Were joined by bond that never is unbound.
Jerome hath written you about Angels,
   That they created were long centuries,
Or ever yet the other world was made;
But truth hereon on many pages is
Set down by writers of the Holy Ghost,
   As thou wilt see, if carefully thou look;
And reason too in measure this perceives;
   For it would not allow that motors such
Should wait so long ere perfecting their end.
Thou knowest now both where and when these Loves
Created were, and how; so that three fires
Of thy desire are quenched now in thee.
Nor could one, as he counts, to twenty come
So speedily, as of the Angels some
Disturbed the basis of your elements:
The rest stood firm, and action such began,
   As here thou seest; and with such delight,
That never from their circuits they diverge.
The first beginning of the fall was caused
   By cursed pride of him, whom thou didst see
Compressed beneath the weight of the whole world.
Those whom thou seest here, with modesty
Confessed themselves children of Goodness, Who
   Thus prompt had made them in intelligence;
Therefore in them was visual force enhanced
   With Light of Grace to their own merit joined,
So that they have a full and steadfast will.
I would not have thee doubt, rather assured,
   That there is merit in receiving Grace,
According as affection welcomes it.
And now concerning this consistory,
   Much may'st thou contemplate, if once my words
   Are garnered well, without another's help.
But inasmuch as in your schools on earth
   'Tis taught of Angels that their nature is
   Such, that they hear and recollect and will,
I will still speak, so may'st thou simply see
   The Truth, which men below sophisticate
   By words equivocal in lecturing thus.
These substances, since happy first in sight
   Of God's own Face, have never turned their gaze
   From That, wheresfrom can nothing be concealed.
Their vision cannot intercepted be
   By any new object, and thus no need
   Of memory, as though a thought were lost.
So that down there men dream, tho' not asleep,
   Believing some, some not, their dream speaks true;
   But with the last is greater fault and shame.
Below you tread not in one single path
   As you philosophize, but are borne off
   By love of vain display and thoughts of it.
Yet even this is here above endured
   With less disdain, than when God's written word
   Is set aside or twisted to abuse.
Men think not there what blood it cost to spread
   This seed abroad, nor how well pleasing is
   The man, who humbly stands closest by it.
To make a show each racks his wit, and seeks
   Inventions of his own, and preachers dwell
   On these, and leave the Gospel tale untold;
One tells us that the moon turned back her course
   In the Christ's Passion, and so interposed
   That the sun's light fell not upon the earth;
And others, that this light withdrew itself:
   And thus to Spaniards and to Indians,
   As to the Jews th' eclipse was uniform.
Lapi and Bendi are in Florence not
As numerous, as like fables, year by year
Shouted aloud in pulpits on all sides.

So the poor sheep, left in their ignorance
Come home from pasture fed on wind alone,
Yet not excused for seeing not their loss.

Christ said not to His college at the first:
Go forth, and to the world preach idle tales,
But gave them the Foundation of the Truth;

And from their mouths so went this sound alone,
That as they fought to light the fires of Faith,
They made the Gospel both their shield and spear.

But men go now with quibble and with jest
To preach, and can they only raise a laugh,
The hood is swollen, and they ask no more.

But in its lappet nestles there a bird,
Which if the vulgar saw, they'd see the worth
Of pardons they so confidently trust,

Whereby such folly hath grown up on earth,
That without proof of any evidence
To any promise people give assent.

Thus does the pig of Anthony grow fat:
And others too, more swinish much themselves,
Paying in coin that lacks the current stamp.

But long enough have we digressed: so now
Turn thine eyes back to the straight way again,
So may our road grow shorter with our time.

This nature here in number multiplies
So high, that never was there form of speech,
Or thought in men, that could its sum attain.

And if you look at that which is revealed
By Daniel, in his thousands thou wilt see,
That a determined number there lies hid.

The Primal Light, which shines upon all these,
By them in modes as many is received,
As are the splendours, wherewith It unites;

And thence, just as upon conceiptive act
Affection follows, so in modes diverse,
Fervid or cooler, doth Love's sweetness glow.
See now th' exceeding height, and see the breadth
  Of the Eternal Worth, which mirrors made
    So many, wherein 'tis distributed,
Remaining as before One in Itself.”
PERCHANCE six thousand miles from us noontide
Is blazing, and this world e'en now inclines
Its shadow almost to the level plane,
When the mid vault of heaven, profound above,
'Gins to show such that here and there a star
Is lost to vision at our depth below;
And as the brightest handmaid of the sun
Yet nearer comes, the sky shuts out from view
Stars in succession, till the fairest pales;
Not otherwise that Triumph, which disports
Itself around the Point that o'erwhelmed me,
Seeming contained in what Itself contains,
Little by little faded from my sight,
Whereat the blank, and love's own impulse then,
Constrained mine eyes to turn to Beatrice.
If all that thus far hath been said of her,
Were now compressed into one eulogy,
'Twould serve but little for the present turn.
The beauty I beheld so far transcends
All measure known to us, that sure I am
Only her Maker can enjoy it all.
Vanquished at this point I confess myself,
More than himself o'er-master'd by his theme
Tragic or Comic Poet ever found;
For as the sun dazzles unsteady sight,
So the remembrance of her gracious smile
Blots out the power of memory itself.
From the first day on which I saw her face
In life below up to its vision now,
The sequence of my verse hath not been checked.
But sequence such, as Poet, henceforth I
Must leave, far, far behind her loveliness,
As every artist at the last is foiled.
Such, as I leave her waiting an award
Far nobler than my trumpet can proclaim,
Which to a close now draws its arduous theme,
With voice and gesture of a ready guide,
'Gan she: "We from the greatest sphere emerge,
And reach the Heaven that is pure Light alone,
Light intellectual, replete with Love;
Love of true Good itself, replete with joy;
Joy that transcends all sweetness of delight.
Here wilt thou see arrayed the armies twain
Of Paradise, and one of them in form,
That on the Judgment Day thou'lt see again."
Like to a sudden flash that shattereth
The powers of vision, when upon the eye
The strongest objects leave their image blank,
Round me likewise a living splendour shone,
That left me blindfold, swathed in such a veil
Of its own glow, that nothing else appeared.
"Aye doth the Love, that holds this Heaven in calm,
With salutation such its welcome give,
So to adapt the taper to its flame."
No sooner in mine ear had these brief words
Their entrance made, than I perceived myself
Upraised beyond all forces of my own;
New sense of sight within me had caught fire,
Such, that no light there is however pure
Mine eyes would not have then been proof against.
And like a river I beheld a light,
Refulgent in its flow between two banks,
Decked with the blossoms of a wondrous spring.
Forth from its flood there issued living sparks,
Which all around commingled with the flowers,
Like rubies set in circumscribing gold.
Then as inebriate with the sweet perfumes,
  Into the wondrous flood they plunged again;
  And as one sank, issued another forth.

"The high desire, which burns and spurs thee now
  Fully to understand what thou dost see,
  Pleaseth the more, the more intense it is.

But of this water thou perforce must drink,
  Ere thirst so great in thee is satisfied."

So spake to me the Sunshine of my eyes:
Yet added she: "This stream, these topazes
  Which come and go, this smiling of the grass
  Are but in shadow preludes of their truth.

Not that these things are austere in themselves;
  But the defect is on thy side alone,
  Whose vision hath not yet attained such heights."

With prompter movement ne'er doth infant turn
  Its face to fount of milk, when it awakes
  Some day long time after the wonted hour,

Than I to make a better mirror of
  Mine eyes, as o'er the wave I bent, the which
  Flows only for the betterment of life.

No sooner with but eyelid fringe had I
  Drunk of the stream, than it at once appeared
  Changed into roundness from a lengthened line.

Then as the folk, who have been wearing masks,
  Change their appearance when they cast away
  The form assumed, wherein they were concealed,

So to yet higher festival did change
  For me the flowers and sparkles, that I saw
  Both courts of heaven in them made manifest.

O splendour of our God, whereby I saw
  The reign triumphant of exalted Truth!
  Grant me the power to tell how it I saw.

A Light above makes the Creator's Self
  To creature visible who, seeing Him,
  In sight of Him Alone findeth full peace;
And circle-wise itself it so expands
   In form, that its circumference would be
   A cincture far too wide to gird the sun.
All that is seen of it is as a ray
   Reflected on the Primum Mobile,
   That draweth thence its life and potency.
And as a hill in water at its base
   Mirrors itself, as if to see its charms,
   When richest in its verdure and its flowers,
So 'bove the light o'erhead and all around,
   Mirror'd in more than thousand ranks I saw
   All who above from us have there returned.
And if the lowest step collect on it
   So vast a light, what must the expanse be
   Of this rose to its utmost petals spread.
My vision nor in sweep, nor yet in height
   Did lose itself, but to the full took in
   That joy, in quality and quantity:
There near nor far nor adds nor takes away:
   For where God rules immediately Himself,
   No law of Nature there is relevant.
Into the yellow of the Eternal Rose,
   Which spreads, mounts up, and in perfume exhales
   Praise to the Sun that cheers perpetual Spring,
As one in silence, yet who longs to speak,
   Me Beatrice led on, and said: "Observe
   How vast the concourse of the white-robed throng!
Our City see, how great its circuit round!
   See too the multitudes that fill our ranks,
   So that for but few more is place reserved.
In that proud chair whereon thy gaze is fixed,
   By reason of the crown e'en now placed there,
   Ere yet thyself sup at this marriage feast,
Great Harry's soul will sit, who shall on earth
   Th' imperial title bear, and Italy
   Redress, ere she with welcome is prepared.
The blind cupidity, that casts its spell on you
Below, hath made you like the little child,  
Dying of hunger, that repels the nurse;  
And in the Sacred Court a President  
Will sit, who overtly or covertly  
Will not walk with him on the road he takes.  
Yet but a little while, and God will not  
Endure his sacred office, but will thrust  
Him down, where Simon Magus earned his place,  
And deeper still will sink the Anagnese."
CANTO XXXI.

The Empyrean—God—The Angels and the Blest—The White Rose and the Angel Bees—S. Bernard—Prayer to Beatrice—The Glory of B.V.M.

IN form then of a white and glistening Rose
The army of the Saints displayed itself,
    Which in His own Blood Christ Himself espoused.
The other, which on wing beholds and sings
    His Glory, Who enamours all of them,
    And His Goodness, which thus exalted them,
E'en as a swarm of bees, that cluster now
    Upon the flowers, and anon return,
Where honied sweetness is their toil’s reward,
On the great flower alighted, that bedecks
    Itself with many leaves, and thence again
    Rose to the place, where aye their Love abides.
Their faces glowed all with a living flame,
    Their wings were gold, and all the rest so white,
    Not e’en may snow to such a point attain.
Alighting on the flower, from rank to rank,
    They shed abroad the peace and burning love,
    Which, as they fanned their sides, themselves acquired.
And this intrusion ’twixt the flower and Him
    Oh High of all this wingèd plenitude
Nowise the vision nor its splendour dimmed.
For Light Divine throughout the universe
    Reacheth to each in measure of its worth;
So nothing is there that can It obstruct.
This Kingdom free from care and full of joy,
    Peopled by throngs of ancient days and new,
Fixed on one Point its gaze and all its love.
O Threefold Light, that, in One single Star
Shining upon their sight, contentest them,
Cast Thy bright beams upon our storms below.
If e'er barbarians coming from the land
Which Helicè day after day o'erhangs,
Revolving ever with her darling son,
At sight of Rome and all her mighty works,
Paused in amazement, as the Lateran
Rose towering 'bove all other things of men;
I, who from human things to things divine
Had come, into Eternity from time,
Ay, from Firenze to the Just and Wise,
With what amazement must I have been filled!
In sooth, between it and the joy I felt,
I had no mind to hear, and self was dumb.
And as a pilgrim finds himself refreshed,
While he surveys the temple of his vow,
And hopes one day to tell how fair it stood,
So traversing the line of living Light,
I ran my eye along the tiers of steps,
Now up, now down, now making the whole round.
Faces I saw persuasive to dear love,
Graced in Another's light, with their own smile,
Each movement with all dignity adorned.
The form in general of Paradise
My survey now had fully taken in;
Sight not yet fixed on any special point;
And to my Lady I turned round with wish
Re-kindled to inquire from her of things,
Whereon my mind was hanging in suspense.
One thing I sought; another took its place.
'Twas Beatrice I thought to see, and saw
An old man clothed in glory like the Saints.
Over his eyes and cheeks there was suffused
A kindly joy and air of sympathy,
Such as a tender father well becomes.
And, "She, where is she?" I enquired in haste.

Then he: "This thy desire to satisfy,
Did Beatrice remove me from my place;
And if you look to circle, now third from
The highest grade, her thou wilt see again,
Upon the throne her merits have assigned."

Without reply upward I raised mine eyes,
And saw her fashion for herself a crown
In the Eternal rays that she flashed back.
From highest peak where thunder roll is heard,
The mortal eye, that's lost in lowest depth
Of sea, is not in distance so remote,
As I was there with Beatrice in view:

But this was nothing; for her image came
Down to me straight, no medium interposed.
"Lady, in whom my hope expands in bloom,
Who didst for my salvation condescend
To leave the traces of thy steps in hell,
In all the wondrous things that I have seen,
I recognize their grace and influence
By thy great bounty and prerogative.
Me, a bondslave, thou'st drawn to liberty
By every path, and all the methods that
Thou had'st for this end due authority.
Gift so magnificent keep safe in me,
So that my soul which thou hast healed, may be
Loosed from the body, as thou'dst have it pass."

So did I pray; and she so far away,
It seemed me thus, looked down on me and smiled;
Then to the eternal Fount she turned again.

And the old Saint: "That thou accomplish now
Thy journey to its goal," such were his words,
"For which a holy love and prayer sent me,
Over this garden cast a flying glance;
In seeing it thy sight will fitter grow
To mount still higher through the ray Divine;
And heaven's own Queen, from whom proceeds the love,
CANTO XXXI.

That burns in me, will pour all grace on us;
For I am Bernard, her own faithful son."

As one, who from Croatia, it may be,
Our *Vera Icon* comes to contemplate,
Not satisfied to hear the ancient tale,
Says in his thought, while 'tis to view exposed,
"My Lord, Christ Jesus, Very God indeed,
And is it thus Thy semblance once appeared?"

Such was myself, as on the living love
I gazed of him, who in this world below
In contemplation found the peace of that.

"O Son of Grace, this glad estate of ours"
So he began: "will ne'er be known to thee
If thine eyes tarry only at its base.

But mark these circles to their farthest range,
Till seated on her throne thou see the Queen,
To whom this realm devout subjection makes."

I raised mine eyes; and as in early morn
We see the horizon on the eastern side
Outshining that whereon the sun declines,

So, as from vale rising to mountain top,
With eyes uplift, I saw a part far off
Surpass in brightness all the rest in front.

And as where we await the Car, so ill
By Phaeton steered, a fiery redness glows,
While to the right and left light shows more faint,

So in the centre did the Oriflamme
Beam forth in peaceful glow, and on each side
In equal measure tempering its flame.

And at that centre with their wings outspread
Thousands of Angels jubilant I saw
In splendour and in movement each distinct.

There at those sportive motions and those songs
A Smile of Beauty I beheld, which was
In eyes of all the other Saints their joy.

And if of words I had as great a wealth
As of imagining, I would not dare
'Tempt the least part of Her delightsomeness.
When Bernard saw mine eyes intent and fixed
    On Her, Whose glow fired his own glowing warmth,
    His too he turned to Her so lovingly
That mine in fonder yearning gazed again.
The Empyrean—GOD—The Angels and the Blest—The Assembly of the Celestial Rose—The Innocents—Mary and Gabriel—The High Patricians of the New Jerusalem.

A

BSORBED in joy, that meditative saint
The teacher's office freely undertook,
And with these holy words he thus began:
"The Wound, that Mary closed and dressed with oil,
She, who now sits in beauty at her feet,
Is she, who ope'd it first, and drove it deep.
There in the order, which the third row marks,
Sits Rachel, placed directly under her,
With Beatrice beside her, as thou seest.
Sarah, Rebekah, Judith, and her too,
Ancestress of the Songman, who in grief
For sin his Miserere mei sang,
These thou canst see, as thus from tier to tier
They sink, and with the name of each I pass
Adown the Rose o'er its successive leaves.
And from the seventh stage down, as from the first
To it, come Hebrew women in a line,
Dividing thus the petals of the flower;
Because accordant with the view their faith
Gave them of Christ, they form the wall by which
Partition down the sacred stair is made.
On this side, where the flower is seen complete
In fulness of its leaves, are seated they,
Who in a Christ believed that was to come.
The semicircles on the other side,
By vacant spaces interrupted, hold
Them, whose eyes turned to Christ, already come.
And as on this side the most glorious throne
Tempt the least part of Her delightsomeness.
When Bernard saw mine eyes intent and fixed
On Her, Whose glow fired his own glowing warmth,
His too he turned to Her so lovingly
That mine in fonder yearning gazed again.
The Empyrean—GOD—The Angels and the Blest—The Assembly of the Celestial Rose—The Innocents—Mary and Gabriel—The High Patricians of the New Jerusalem.

A BSORBED in joy, that meditative saint
The teacher's office freely undertook,
And with these holy words he thus began:
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She, who now sits in beauty at her feet,
Is she, who ope'd it first, and drove it deep.
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Sits Rachel, placed directly under her,
With Beatrice beside her, as thou seest.
Sarah, Rebekah, Judith, and her too,
Ancestress of the Songman, who in grief
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Gave them of Christ, they form the wall by which
Partition down the sacred stair is made.
On this side, where the flower is seen complete
In fulness of its leaves, are seated they,
Who in a Christ believed that was to come.
The semicircles on the other side,
By vacant spaces interrupted, hold
Them, whose eyes turned to Christ, already come.
And as on this side the most glorious throne
Of Heaven's high Queen, and all the other stools
Beneath her feet, a grand division form,
So opposite stands that of the great John,
Who, ever Saint, endured the wilderness,
And martyrdom, and then two years in hell;
And below him, placed in alloted line
Augustine, Benedict and Francis sit,
With others down to here round after round.
Now mark the depth of Providence Divine,
That one and other aspect of the Faith
Shall in equality this garden fill;
And know that lower than the halfway step
Which strikes across the separating lines,
None are there placed by merit of their own,
But by Another's on conditions fixed.
For these are spirits that were all released,
Ere they had made the true choice for themselves.
This by their faces thou canst well discern,
No less than by their tones of childish voice,
If well thou look and listen to them well.
Thou doubtest still, and doubting, silent art:
But I will loose for thee these knotted bonds,
Wherein thy subtle searchings hold thee fast.
Within the amplitude of this wide realm
No casual point can ever have a place,
No more than sorrow, thirst or hunger can:
For by Eternal Law, whate'er thou seest,
Establish'd is, so that precisely here,
As ring to finger all things correspond.
Wherefore the little folk, thus hurried off
To true life, are non sine causă here;
Among themselves more and less excellent.
The King, through Whom this kingdom rests in peace,
Amid such love and manifold delight
No will hath ever dared to wish for more,
Creating in His own glad Presence all
Men's souls, as pleaseth Him, with grace endows
Them differently: let th' effect suffice.
And clearly and expressly this is shown
In Holy Scripture's story of the twins,
To anger roused e'en in their mother's womb.
And thus, as in the colour of their hair,
So in grace too, the Light most High, as Him
Seems best, doth worthily their crown adorn.
Without desert of their own character
Are these then ranged in various degrees,
Differing alone in force of primal sight.
Sufficed it in the earliest times to win
Salvation, that with innocence conjoined,
The faith of parents only should appear.
After the earlier days had been fulfilled,
To give due strength unto the wings of innocence,
It was required that males be circumcised.
But after that the day of Grace arrived,
Lacking the perfect Baptism of Christ,
Such innocence was left in ward below.
And now regard the Face, which unto Christ
Is the most like, for glory such as Its
Alone enables thee to look on Christ."
Upon Her I beheld such gladsomeness
Rain down in showers, borne by the holy Minds,
Created through those heights to fly abroad,
That whatsoever I had seen before,
Ne'er thus detained me in amazed suspense,
Nor such resemblance showed to me of God.
And that same Love, which came to Her below,
Singing, Ave Maria gratia plena,
There in Her presence spreads his wings abroad.
To this divine anthem response arose
From every part of the Assembly Blest,
And a serener calm possessed each face.
"O Saintly Father, Who for my sake art
Contented here in absence from the spot,
Where by decree eternal is thy seat,
What is that Angel, that thus jubilant
Gazeth into the eyes of our great Queen,
Enamoured so, he seems like glowing fire?

Thus to his teaching I again repaired,
Who stood in Mary’s beauty glorified,
Like morning star before the rising sun.

And he: “What confidence and playfulness
Is possible in Angel and in Soul,
Is all in him, and we would have it so;
For he it is, who carried down the palm
To Mary, when the Son of God was pleased,
The burthen of our load to undergo.
But with thine eyes now follow me, as I
In words proceed, and the Patricians note
Of this most holy and most just empire.
Those two seated on high, and happier still,
As being nearest to the august Queen,
Are, as it were, two main roots of this Rose;
He, who upon Her left approaches Her,
The father is, by whose presumptuous taste
So much of bitter tastes the human race.
Upon Her right the ancient Father see
Of Holy Church, whom Christ entrusted with
The keys of access to this beauteous flower.
And he, who witnessed all the grievous days
Ere death came to him of the Fair Betrothed,
That once was purchased by the Spear and Nails,
Sits by his side: and by the other rests
The Leader, under whom the thankless race,
Fickle, backsliding, was with Manna fed.
To Peter opposite see Anna sits,
Content to gaze upon her Child, from whom
Her eyes ne’er move throughout th’ Hosanna song.
And opposite the father of us all
Lucia sits, who did thy Lady move,
When to thy ruin thou hadst stooped thy brow.
But time allotted to this trance runs on;
Here will we pause, as the shrewd tailor doth,
Who cuts the coat according to his cloth;
And turn our eyes direct to Primal Love;
So gazing toward Him, thou may'st penetrate,
Far as allowed, the Splendour of His Light.
But yet lest backward thou perchance should'st fall,
While on thine own wings thinking to advance,
Need 'tis by prayer thou win the help of Grace;
Of Grace from Her, who able is to aid:
With due intention then now follow me,
That from my words thy heart turn not aside.''
And he thereon began this holy prayer.
"O VIRGIN Mother, Daughter of thy Son,  
Lowly and loftier than all creature else,  
Predestined Term of Purposes Divine,  
Thyself it is, that human nature hast  
Ennobled so, that its Creator e'en  
Disdained not His Own Creature to become.  
Within Thy womb the fire of love revived,  
By warmth whereof, here in Eternal Peace  
This flower hath grown, expanding thus in bloom.  
Here art Thou unto us the noontide torch  
Of Charity; to mortals down below  
The living Fountain of perennial Hope.  
Lady, so great art Thou, Thy might so great,  
That who would grace desire, and not to Thee  
Refer his wish, would fly without a wing.  
Thine own benignity brings succour, not  
To him alone that asks, but oftentimes  
Doth liberally the prayer anticipate.  
In Thee are clemency and pity found;  
In Thee munificence; in Thee combines  
Whate’er in creature can be found of good.  
Now this man, who from lowest pit of all  
The Universe up to this point hath seen  
All forms of spiritual life in turn,  
To Thee entreaty makes, of grace, for strength  
So great, that higher yet he may towards  
Supreme Salvation dare to lift his eyes.  
And I, who ne’er burned more to see this sight
Myself, than now for him, present to Thee
My every prayer, and pray they're not fruitless:
That Thou do now from him all cloud dispel
Of his mortality, that by Thy prayers
The Joy Supreme may be to him unveiled.
And still, O Queen, I pray, (for all Thou wilt
Thou canst) that Thou in perfect soundness keep
After such vision his affections safe.
All human passions may thy charge subdue;
See Beatrice, and all the many Saints,
Who with clasped hands unite to urge my suit.'
Those eyes, revered of God, and seen with love,
Fixed on her suppliant, made it plain to us
How dear to Her are prayers of the devout.
Then to the Eternal Light they turned direct,
Where to let none suppose a creature's eye
So pure in brightness ever wins its way.
And as unto the Goal of all desires
I nearer drew, I felt, as needs I must,
The yearning of desire had ended too.
Bernard gave me a sign, and smiled on me,
That I should upward look, but self prompted,
Already was I doing, what he bade;
Because my sight, as now it purer grew,
Farther and farther pierced into that Ray
Of Light Supreme, which in Itself is Truth.
From now henceforward all that I beheld,
No speech can tell; it fails at such a sight;
And fails the mem'ry too in its excess.
As one, who has in dream a vision seen,
Retains a fixed impression of a dream,
But nothing more to memory returns,
Such am I now, for almost as 'twould seem,
The vision fades; yet still within my heart
Distils the sweetness that was born of it.
E'en thus before the sun snow breaks its seal;
Thus in the wind upon the fluttering leaves
The Sibyl's sentence in oblivion lost.
O Light Supreme, Thyself exalted far
'Bove reach of human thought, one gleam alone
Of what Thou didst appear, to memory lend;
And make my tongue so mightily prevail,
That of Thy Glory at the least it may
One sparkle leave to races yet to come;
For if something unto my mind return,
And through these verses a faint sound be heard,
More of thine excellence will men conceive.
I think, if from th' intensity I felt
Of Living Light, I had withdrawn mine eyes,
Lost in amazement must I have remained.
And I remember I the bolder was
To bear so much, in that I now had joined
My vision with the Essence Infinite.
O Grace o'erflowing, in the strength whereof
I dared to penetrate Eternal Light,
So that its vision to the full I drank!
In its Profundity I saw enclosed,
And into one volume bound up with love,
All that through nature is dispersed in leaves:
Substance and accident, and all their laws
Together fused, and in a mode so strange,
That all I tell of is one simple light.
I think I saw the universal form
Of this entanglement; for saying this,
I feel within a more abundant joy.
A single moment more oblivion brings,
Than five and twenty ages to th' emprize
That startled Neptune with the Argo's shade.
Thus my soul gazed, lost in suspended thought,
Rapt in attention and immovable,
And as it gazed, gazed with intenser glow.
In presence of this Light a man becomes
Such, that to turn from It to other light,
It is impossible he could consent:
CANTO XXXIII.

Because the Good, Sole Object of the will
Is there stored up; and outside It all is
Defective, which in It is perfected.
Henceforth my story will far shorter be,
So far as recollection goes, than tale
Of babe, that moistens at the breast its tongue.
Not that more than One Semblance did appear
Within the Living Light I gazed upon;
For that is ever as It was before;
But as my visual sense received new force,
And I on One Appearance only gazed,
Changed in myself, I thought 'twas It that changed.
Within the Substance bright and most profound
Of the exalted Light, three circles formed
Of triple tint, but in dimension one;
As Iris upon Iris, seemed the first
Upon the next reflected, and the third
A fire breathed equally from both of them.
How mean my words, my utterance how weak
To tell my thought, and this to grasp the sight;
To call it little would not be enough.
Eternal Light, Thyself Thy sole repose,
Thou only know'st Thyself, and thus Self-known
And knowing, smilest upon Self in Love.
That circling, which, as thus conceived, appeared
In Thee as a reflected Light, surveyed
In measure by mine eyes that traced its orb,
Within Itself, of Its own proper hue,
Seemed to depict an image of our form,
So that on it mine eyes were rivetted.
As the geometer, who sets himself
To square the circle, finding not the means,
Broods on the principle he fails to reach,
Such was I then at this new spectacle:
I fain would see by what means did agree
Image with circle, and how there conjoined.
But for such flight mine were no proper wings,
Had it not been that on my mind there smote
A flash that with it brought the thing desired.
For such high Phantasy my powers fell short;
But wish and will in me already, like
A wheel that rolls in even motion on,
The same Love moved, that moves the sun and stars.
FOR ERRATA SEE NEXT PAGE.
ERRATA.

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beon been
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Guido
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