

# **DIVINE COMEDY**

**Dante Alighieri**

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## SYNOPSIS OF THE DIVINE COMEDY

The Divine Comedy is a religious poem that marked a before and after in world literature. Not only does it represent the transition from medieval to Renaissance literature, but Dante contributed, with this work, to the consolidation of the Italian language. In it he collects all that up to that time was all human knowledge from the classical world.

It is divided into three parts: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, in that order. The poet visits each of these places, in his middle age. In Hell and Purgatory, he is accompanied by Virgil, the famous poet, and author of The Aeneid. The descriptions are loaded with allegories and symbols that help to understand the work in its full dimension. Finally, after cleansing his sins, Dante arrives in paradise accompanied by Beatrice.

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# INFERNO

## Canto I

Midway upon the journey of our life I found myself within a  
forest dark,

For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say What was this forest  
savage, rough, and stern,

Which in the very thought renews the fear.

So bitter is it, death is little more;

But of the good to treat, which there I found, Speak will I of the  
other things I saw there. I cannot well repeat how there I  
entered,

So full was I of slumber at the moment In which I had  
abandoned the true way. But after I had reached a mountain's  
foot, At that point where the valley terminated,

Which had with consternation pierced my heart, Upward I  
looked, and I beheld its shoulders, Vested already with that  
planet's rays

Which leadeth others right by every road.

Then was the fear a little quieted

That in my heart's lake had endured throughout The night, which  
I had passed so piteously.

And even as he, who, with distressful breath, Forth issued from  
the sea upon the shore, Turns to the water perilous and gazes;

So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,

Turn itself back to re-behold the pass Which never yet a living  
person left. After my weary body I had rested,

The way resumed I on the desert slope, So that the firm foot  
ever was the lower. And lo! almost where the ascent began, A  
panther light and swift exceedingly,

Which with a spotted skin was covered o'er! And never moved  
she from before my face, Nay, rather did impede so much my  
way, That many times I to return had turned.

The time was the beginning of the morning, And up the sun was  
mounting with those stars That with him were, what time the  
Love Divine At first in motion set those beauteous things; So  
were to me occasion of good hope,

The variegated skin of that wild beast, The hour of time, and the  
delicious season; But not so much, that did not give me fear

A lion's aspect which appeared to me.

He seemed as if against me he were coming With head uplifted,  
and with ravenous hunger, So that it seemed the air was afraid

of him; And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings Seemed to be  
laden in her meagreness,

And many folk has caused to live forlorn! She brought upon me  
so much heaviness, With the affright that from her aspect  
came, That I the hope relinquished of the height.

And as he is who willingly acquires,

And the time comes that causes him to lose, Who weeps in all  
his thoughts and is despondent, E'en such made me that beast  
withouten peace, Which, coming on against me by degrees

Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent. While I was  
rushing downward to the lowland, Before mine eyes did one  
present himself,

Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.

When I beheld him in the desert vast, "Have pity on me," unto  
him I cried, "Whiche'er thou art, or shade or real man!"

He answered me: "Not man; man once I was, And both my  
parents were of Lombardy, And Mantuans by country both of  
them. 'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late,

And lived at Rome under the good Augustus, During the time of  
false and lying gods.

A poet was I, and I sang that just

Son of Anchises, who came forth from Troy, After that Ilium the  
superb was burned.

But thou, why goest thou back to such annoyance?

Why climb'st thou not the Mount Delectable, Which is the source  
and cause of every joy?" "Now, art thou that Virgilius and that  
fountain Which spreads abroad so wide a river of speech?" I  
made response to him with bashful forehead. "O, of the other  
poets honour and light,

Avail me the long study and great love That have impelled me  
to explore thy volume!

Thou art my master, and my author thou,

Thou art alone the one from whom I took The beautiful style  
that has done honour to me. Behold the beast, for which I have  
turned back;

Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage, For she doth make  
my veins and pulses tremble."

"Thee it behoves to take another road," Responded he, when he  
beheld me weeping, "If from this savage place thou wouldst  
escape; Because this beast, at which thou criest out, Suffers not  
any one to pass her way,

But so doth harass him, that she destroys him; And has a nature  
so malign and ruthless, That never doth she glut her greedy will,  
And after food is hungrier than before.

Many the animals with whom she weds, And more they shall be  
still, until the Greyhound Comes, who shall make her perish in  
her pain.

He shall not feed on either earth or pelf, But upon wisdom, and  
on love and virtue; 'Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be; Of  
that low Italy shall he be the saviour, On whose account the  
maid Camilla died, Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus, of their wounds;  
Through every city shall he hunt her down, Until he shall have  
driven her back to Hell,

There from whence envy first did let her loose.

Therefore I think and judge it for thy best Thou follow me, and I  
will be thy guide,

And lead thee hence through the eternal place, Where thou shalt  
hear the desperate lamentations,

Shalt see the ancient spirits disconsolate, Who cry out each one  
for the second death; And thou shalt see those who contented  
are Within the fire, because they hope to come, Whene'er it may  
be, to the blessed people; To whom, then, if thou wishest to  
ascend, A soul shall be for that than I more worthy; With her at  
my departure I will leave thee; Because that Emperor, who  
reigns above, In that I was rebellious to his law,



Wills that through me none come into his city. He governs  
everywhere, and there he reigns; There is his city and his lofty  
throne;

O happy he whom thereto he elects!" And I to him: "Poet, I thee  
entreat,

By that same God whom thou didst never know, So that I may  
escape this woe and worse,

Thou wouldst conduct me there where thou hast said, That I  
may see the portal of Saint Peter,

And those thou makest so disconsolate." Then he moved on,  
and I behind him followed.

## Canto II

Day was departing, and the embrowned air Released the  
animals that are on earth From their fatigues; and I the only  
one Made myself ready to sustain the war, Both of the way and  
likewise of the woe, Which memory that errs not shall retrace.

O Muses, O high genius, now assist me!

O memory, that didst write down what I saw, Here thy nobility  
shall be manifest!

And I began: "Poet, who guidest me, Regard my manhood, if it  
be sufficient,

Ere to the arduous pass thou dost confide me.

Thou sayest, that of Silvius the parent, While yet corruptible,  
unto the world Immortal went, and was there bodily.

But if the adversary of all evil

Was courteous, thinking of the high effect That issue would  
from him, and who, and what,

To men of intellect unmeet it seems not; For he was of great  
Rome, and of her empire

In the empyreal heaven as father chosen; The which and what,  
wishing to speak the truth,

Were stablished as the holy place, wherein Sits the successor of  
the greatest Peter.

Upon this journey, whence thou givest him vaunt, Things did he  
hear, which the occasion were Both of his victory and the papal  
mantle.

Thither went afterwards the Chosen Vessel, To bring back  
comfort thence unto that Faith, Which of salvation's way is the  
beginning.

But I, why thither come, or who concedes it?

I not Aeneas am, I am not Paul, Nor I, nor others, think me  
worthy of it. Therefore, if I resign myself to come,

I fear the coming may be ill-advised; Thou'rt wise, and knowest  
better than I speak."

And as he is, who unwill's what he willed, And by new thoughts  
doth his intention change,

So that from his design he quite withdraws, Such I became,  
upon that dark hillside, Because, in thinking, I consumed the  
enterprise, Which was so very prompt in the beginning. "If I have  
well thy language understood," Replied that shade of the

Magnanimous,

"Thy soul attainted is with cowardice, Which many times a man  
encumbers so,

It turns him back from honoured enterprise, As false sight doth  
a beast, when he is shy.

That thou mayst free thee from this apprehension, I'll tell thee  
why I came, and what I heard

At the first moment when I grieved for thee.

Among those was I who are in suspense, And a fair, saintly  
Lady called to me

In such wise, I besought her to command me. Her eyes where  
shining brighter than the Star; And she began to say, gentle and  
low,

With voice angelical, in her own language: 'O spirit courteous of  
Mantua,  
Of whom the fame still in the world endures, And shall endure,  
long-lasting as the world;  
A friend of mine, and not the friend of fortune, Upon the desert  
slope is so impeded  
Upon his way, that he has turned through terror, And may, I  
fear, already be so lost,  
That I too late have risen to his succour, From that which I have  
heard of him in Heaven.

Bestir thee now, and with thy speech ornate, And with what  
needful is for his release, Assist him so, that I may be consoled.

Beatrice am I, who do bid thee go;

I come from there, where I would fain return; Love moved me,  
which compelleth me to speak.

When I shall be in presence of my Lord, Full often will I praise  
thee unto him.' Then paused she, and thereafter I began:

'O Lady of virtue, thou alone through whom The human race  
exceedeth all contained Within the heaven that has the lesser  
circles, So grateful unto me is thy commandment, To obey, if  
'twere already done, were late; No farther need'st thou ope to  
me thy wish.

But the cause tell me why thou dost not shun The here  
descending down into this centre, From the vast place thou  
burnest to return to.' 'Since thou wouldst fain so inwardly  
discern, Briefly will I relate,' she answered me,

'Why I am not afraid to enter here.

Of those things only should one be afraid Which have the power  
of doing others harm; Of the rest, no; because they are not  
fearful.

God in his mercy such created me That misery of yours attains  
me not,

Nor any flame assails me of this burning. A gentle Lady is in  
Heaven, who grieves At this impediment, to which I send thee,  
So that stern judgment there above is broken.

In her entreaty she besought Lucia,

And said, "Thy faithful one now stands in need Of thee, and unto  
thee I recommend him." Lucia, foe of all that cruel is,

Hastened away, and came unto the place Where I was sitting  
with the ancient Rachel. "Beatrice" said she, "the true praise of  
God,

Why succourest thou not him, who loved thee so, For thee he  
issued from the vulgar herd?

Dost thou not hear the pity of his plaint?

Dost thou not see the death that combats him Beside that  
flood, where ocean has no vaunt?" Never were persons in the  
world so swift

To work their weal and to escape their woe, As I, after such  
words as these were uttered, Came hither downward from my  
blessed seat, Confiding in thy dignified discourse,

Which honours thee, and those who've listened to it.' After she  
thus had spoken unto me,

Weeping, her shining eyes she turned away; Whereby she made  
me swifter in my coming; And unto thee I came, as she desired;

I have delivered thee from that wild beast, Which barred the  
beautiful mountain's short ascent.

What is it, then? Why, why dost thou delay? Why is such  
baseness bedded in thy heart? Daring and hardihood why hast  
thou not, Seeing that three such Ladies benedight

Are caring for thee in the court of Heaven, And so much good  
my speech doth promise thee?"

Even as the flowerets, by nocturnal chill, Bowed down and  
closed, when the sun whitens them,

Uplift themselves all open on their stems; Such I became with  
my exhausted strength,

And such good courage to my heart there coursed, That I  
began, like an intrepid person:

"O she compassionate, who succoured me, And courteous thou,  
who hast obeyed so soon The words of truth which she  
addressed to thee!

Thou hast my heart so with desire disposed To the adventure,  
with these words of thine, That to my first intent I have  
returned.

Now go, for one sole will is in us both, Thou Leader, and thou  
Lord, and Master thou." Thus said I to him; and when he had  
moved,

I entered on the deep and savage way.

### Canto III

"Through me the way is to the city dolent; Through me the way  
is to eternal dole; Through me the way among the people lost.

Justice incited my sublime Creator; Created me divine  
Omnipotence,

The highest Wisdom and the primal Love. Before me there were  
no created things, Only eterne, and I eternal last.

All hope abandon, ye who enter in!" These words in sombre  
colour I beheld Written upon the summit of a gate;

Whence I: "Their sense is, Master, hard to me!" And he to me, as  
one experienced:

"Here all suspicion needs must be abandoned, All cowardice  
must needs be here extinct.

We to the place have come, where I have told thee Thou shalt  
behold the people dolorous

Who have foregone the good of intellect." And after he had laid  
his hand on mine With joyful mien, whence I was comforted, He  
led me in among the secret things.

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud Resounded through  
the air without a star, Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.

Languages diverse, horrible dialects, Accents of anger, words of  
agony,

And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands, Made up a  
tumult that goes whirling on

For ever in that air for ever black,

Even as the sand doth, when the whirlwind breathes.

And I, who had my head with horror bound, Said: "Master, what  
is this which now I hear?

What folk is this, which seems by pain so vanquished?" And he  
to me: "This miserable mode



Maintain the melancholy souls of those Who lived withouten  
infamy or praise.

Commingled are they with that caitiff choir Of Angels, who have  
not rebellious been, Nor faithful were to God, but were for self.

The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair; Nor them the  
nethermore abyss receives,

For glory none the damned would have from them." And I: "O  
Master, what so grievous is

To these, that maketh them lament so sore?" He answered: "I  
will tell thee very briefly. These have no longer any hope of  
death; And this blind life of theirs is so debased, They envious  
are of every other fate.

No fame of them the world permits to be; Misericord and  
Justice both disdain them.

Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass." And I, who looked  
again, beheld a banner, Which, whirling round, ran on so rapidly,  
That of all pause it seemed to me indignant; And after it there  
came so long a train

Of people, that I ne'er would have believed That ever Death so  
many had undone.

When some among them I had recognised, I looked, and I  
beheld the shade of him

Who made through cowardice the great refusal. Forthwith I  
comprehended, and was certain, That this the sect was of the  
                  caitiff wretches Hateful to God and to his enemies.

These miscreants, who never were alive, Were naked, and were  
stung exceedingly By gadflies and by hornets that were there.

                  These did their faces irrigate with blood,

Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet By the  
                  disgusting worms was gathered up.

                  And when to gazing farther I betook me.

                  People I saw on a great river's bank;

Whence said I: "Master, now vouchsafe to me, That I may know  
who these are, and what law Makes them appear so ready to  
                  pass over,

                  As I discern athwart the dusky light."

And he to me: "These things shall all be known To thee, as soon  
                  as we our footsteps stay

                  Upon the dismal shore of Acheron."

Then with mine eyes ashamed and downward cast, Fearing my  
                  words might irksome be to him,

                  From speech refrained I till we reached the river.

And lo! towards us coming in a boat An old man, hoary with the  
                  hair of eld,

Crying: "Woe unto you, ye souls depraved! Hope nevermore to look upon the heavens; I come to lead you to the other shore,

To the eternal shades in heat and frost.

And thou, that yonder standest, living soul, Withdraw thee from these people, who are dead!" But when he saw that I did not withdraw,

He said: "By other ways, by other ports

Thou to the shore shalt come, not here, for passage; A lighter vessel needs must carry thee."

And unto him the Guide: "Vex thee not, Charon; It is so willed there where is power to do

That which is willed; and farther question not." Thereat were quieted the fleecy cheeks

Of him the ferryman of the livid fen, Who round about his eyes had wheels of flame. But all those souls who weary were and naked

Their colour changed and gnashed their teeth together,

As soon as they had heard those cruel words. God they blasphemed and their progenitors, The human race, the place, the time, the seed Of their engendering and of their birth!

Thereafter all together they drew back, Bitterly weeping, to the accursed shore, Which waiteth every man who fears not God.

Charon the demon, with the eyes of glade, Beckoning to them,  
collects them all together, Beats with his oar whoever lags  
behind.

As in the autumn-time the leaves fall off, First one and then  
another, till the branch Unto the earth surrenders all its spoils; In  
similar wise the evil seed of Adam

Throw themselves from that margin one by one, At signals, as a  
bird unto its lure.

So they depart across the dusky wave, And ere upon the other  
side they land, Again on this side a new troop assembles.

"My son," the courteous Master said to me, "All those who perish  
in the wrath of God Here meet together out of every land;

And ready are they to pass o'er the river, Because celestial  
Justice spurs them on, So that their fear is turned into desire.

This way there never passes a good soul;

And hence if Charon doth complain of thee, Well mayst thou  
know now what his speech imports."

This being finished, all the dusk champaign Trembled so  
violently, that of that terror

The recollection bathes me still with sweat. The land of tears  
gave forth a blast of wind, And fulminated a vermilion light,

Which overmastered in me every sense, And as a man whom  
sleep hath seized I fell.

#### Canto IV

Broke the deep lethargy within my head A heavy thunder, so  
that I upstarted,

Like to a person who by force is wakened; And round about I  
moved my rested eyes, Uprisen erect, and steadfastly I gazed,

To recognise the place wherein I was. True is it, that upon the  
verge I found me Of the abysmal valley dolorous,

That gathers thunder of infinite ululations. Obscure, profound it  
was, and nebulous, So that by fixing on its depths my sight  
Nothing whatever I discerned therein.

"Let us descend now into the blind world," Began the Poet, pallid  
utterly;

"I will be first, and thou shalt second be." And I, who of his  
colour was aware,

Said: "How shall I come, if thou art afraid, Who'rt wont to be a  
comfort to my fears?" And he to me: "The anguish of the people  
Who are below here in my face depicts That pity which for terror  
thou hast taken.

Let us go on, for the long way impels us."

Thus he went in, and thus he made me enter The foremost circle  
that surrounds the abyss.

There, as it seemed to me from listening, Were lamentations  
none, but only sighs, That tremble made the everlasting air.

And this arose from sorrow without torment, Which the crowds  
had, that many were and great, Of infants and of women and of  
men.

To me the Master good: "Thou dost not ask What spirits these,  
which thou beholdest, are? Now will I have thee know, ere thou  
go farther, That they sinned not; and if they merit had, 'Tis not  
enough, because they had not baptism Which is the portal of  
the Faith thou holdest; And if they were before Christianity,

In the right manner they adored not God; And among such as  
these am I myself. For such defects, and not for other guilt, Lost  
are we and are only so far punished, That without hope we live  
on in desire."

Great grief seized on my heart when this I heard, Because some  
people of much worthiness

I knew, who in that Limbo were suspended. "Tell me, my Master,  
tell me, thou my Lord," Began I, with desire of being certain  
Of that Faith which o'ercometh every error, "Came any one by  
his own merit hence,

Or by another's, who was blessed thereafter?" And he, who understood my covert speech, Replied: "I was a novice in this state,

When I saw hither come a Mighty One, With sign of victory incoronate.

Hence he drew forth the shade of the First Parent, And that of his son Abel, and of Noah,

Of Moses the lawgiver, and the obedient Abraham, patriarch, and David, king, Israel with his father and his children,

And Rachel, for whose sake he did so much, And others many, and he made them blessed; And thou must know, that earlier than these Never were any human spirits saved."

We ceased not to advance because he spake, But still were passing onward through the forest,

The forest, say I, of thick-crowded ghosts.

Not very far as yet our way had gone This side the summit, when I saw a fire That overcame a hemisphere of darkness.

We were a little distant from it still, But not so far that I in part discerned not That honourable people held that place.

"O thou who honourest every art and science, Who may these be, which such great honour have, That from the fashion of the rest it parts them?" And he to me: "The honourable name,

That sounds of them above there in thy life, Wins grace in  
Heaven, that so advances them." In the mean time a voice was  
heard by me: "All honour be to the pre-eminent Poet;  
His shade returns again, that was departed." After the voice  
had ceased and quiet was,

Four mighty shades I saw approaching us; Semblance had they  
nor sorrowful nor glad. To say to me began my gracious Master:

"Him with that falchion in his hand behold,

Who comes before the three, even as their lord.

That one is Homer, Poet sovereign; He who comes next is  
Horace, the satirist; The third is Ovid, and the last is Lucan.

Because to each of these with me applies The name that  
solitary voice proclaimed, They do me honour, and in that do  
well."

Thus I beheld assemble the fair school Of that lord of the song  
pre-eminent, Who o'er the others like an eagle soars.

When they together had discoursed somewhat, They turned to  
me with signs of salutation, And on beholding this, my Master  
smiled;

And more of honour still, much more, they did me, In that they  
made me one of their own band;



So that the sixth was I, 'mid so much wit. Thus we went on as  
far as to the light, Things saying 'tis becoming to keep silent, As  
was the saying of them where I was.

We came unto a noble castle's foot, Seven times encompassed  
with lofty walls,

Defended round by a fair rivulet; This we passed over even as  
firm ground;

Through portals seven I entered with these Sages; We came  
into a meadow of fresh verdure.

People were there with solemn eyes and slow,

Of great authority in their countenance; They spake but seldom,  
and with gentle voices.

Thus we withdrew ourselves upon one side Into an opening  
luminous and lofty,

So that they all of them were visible. There opposite, upon the  
green enamel, Were pointed out to me the mighty spirits, Whom  
to have seen I feel myself exalted.

I saw Electra with companions many, 'Mongst whom I knew  
both Hector and Aeneas,

Caesar in armour with gerfalcon eyes; I saw Camilla and  
Penthesilea

On the other side, and saw the King Latinus, Who with Lavinia  
his daughter sat;

I saw that Brutus who drove Tarquin forth, Lucretia, Julia,  
Marcia, and Cornelia,

And saw alone, apart, the Saladin.

When I had lifted up my brows a little, The Master I beheld of  
those who know, Sit with his philosophic family.

All gaze upon him, and all do him honour. There I beheld both  
Socrates and Plato, Who nearer him before the others stand;  
Democritus, who puts the world on chance, Diogenes,  
Anaxagoras, and Thales,

Zeno, Empedocles, and Heraclitus; Of qualities I saw the good  
collector, Hight Dioscorides; and Orpheus saw I,  
Tully and Livy, and moral Seneca, Euclid, geometrician, and  
Ptolemy,

Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna, Averroes, who the great  
Comment made.

I cannot all of them pourtray in full, Because so drives me  
onward the long theme, That many times the word comes short  
of fact.

The sixfold company in two divides; Another way my sapient  
Guide conducts me Forth from the quiet to the air that trembles;  
And to a place I come where nothing shines.

## Canto V

Thus I descended out of the first circle Down to the second, that  
less space begirds,

And so much greater dole, that goads to wailing.

There standeth Minos horribly, and snarls; Examines the  
transgressions at the entrance; Judges, and sends according as  
he girds him.

I say, that when the spirit evil-born Cometh before him, wholly it  
confesses; And this discriminator of transgressions Seeth what  
place in Hell is meet for it; Girds himself with his tail as many  
times

As grades he wishes it should be thrust down.

Always before him many of them stand; They go by turns each  
one unto the judgment;

They speak, and hear, and then are downward hurled. "O thou,  
that to this dolorous hostelry

Comest," said Minos to me, when he saw me, Leaving the  
practice of so great an office,

"Look how thou enterest, and in whom thou trustest; Let not the  
portal's amplitude deceive thee."

And unto him my Guide: "Why criest thou too?

Do not impede his journey fate-ordained; It is so willed there  
where is power to do

That which is willed; and ask no further question." And now  
begin the dolesome notes to grow Audible unto me; now am I  
come

There where much lamentation strikes upon me.

I came into a place mute of all light, Which bellows as the sea  
does in a tempest,

If by opposing winds 't is combated. The infernal hurricane that  
never rests Hurtles the spirits onward in its rapine;

Whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them.

When they arrive before the precipice, There are the shrieks, the  
plaints, and the laments,

There they blaspheme the puissance divine.

I understood that unto such a torment The carnal malefactors  
were condemned, Who reason subjugate to appetite.

And as the wings of starlings bear them on In the cold season in  
large band and full, So doth that blast the spirits maledict;

It hither, thither, downward, upward, drives them; No hope doth  
comfort them for evermore,

Not of repose, but even of lesser pain.

And as the cranes go chanting forth their lays, Making in air a  
long line of themselves, So saw I coming, uttering lamentations,

Shadows borne onward by the aforesaid stress.

Whereupon said I: "Master, who are those People, whom the  
black air so castigates?" "The first of those, of whom  
intelligence

Thou fain wouldst have," then said he unto me, "The empress  
was of many languages.

To sensual vices she was so abandoned, That lustful she made  
licit in her law,

To remove the blame to which she had been led.

She is Semiramis, of whom we read

That she succeeded Ninus, and was his spouse; She held the  
land which now the Sultan rules. The next is she who killed  
herself for love, And broke faith with the ashes of Sichaeus;  
Then Cleopatra the voluptuous."

Helen I saw, for whom so many ruthless Seasons revolved; and  
saw the great Achilles, Who at the last hour combated with  
Love.

Paris I saw, Tristan; and more than a thousand Shades did he  
name and point out with his finger, Whom Love had separated  
from our life.

After that I had listened to my Teacher, Naming the dames of  
eld and cavaliers, Pity prevailed, and I was nigh bewildered.

And I began: "O Poet, willingly Speak would I to those two, who  
go together,

And seem upon the wind to be so light." And, he to me: "Thou'lt  
mark, when they shall be

Nearer to us; and then do thou implore them By love which  
leadeth them, and they will come."

Soon as the wind in our direction sways them, My voice uplift I:  
"O ye weary souls!

Come speak to us, if no one interdicts it." As turtle-doves, called  
onward by desire,

With open and steady wings to the sweet nest Fly through the  
air by their volition borne, So came they from the band where  
Dido is, Approaching us athwart the air malign,

So strong was the affectionate appeal. "O living creature  
gracious and benignant, Who visiting goest through the purple  
air Us, who have stained the world incarnadine, If were the King  
of the Universe our friend, We would pray unto him to give thee  
peace,

Since thou hast pity on our woe perverse. Of what it pleases  
thee to hear and speak, That will we hear, and we will speak to  
you, While silent is the wind, as it is now.

Sitteth the city, wherein I was born, Upon the sea-shore where  
the Po descends

To rest in peace with all his retinue.

Love, that on gentle heart doth swiftly seize, Seized this man for  
the person beautiful

That was ta'en from me, and still the mode offends me.

Love, that exempts no one beloved from loving, Seized me with  
pleasure of this man so strongly, That, as thou seest, it doth not  
yet desert me; Love has conducted us unto one death;

Caina waiteth him who quenched our life!" These words were  
borne along from them to us.

As soon as I had heard those souls tormented, I bowed my  
face, and so long held it down Until the Poet said to me: "What  
thinkest?" When I made answer, I began: "Alas!

How many pleasant thoughts, how much desire, Conducted  
these unto the dolorous pass!" Then unto them I turned me, and  
I spake, And I began: "Thine agonies, Francesca,

Sad and compassionate to weeping make me. But tell me, at  
the time of those sweet sighs, By what and in what manner

Love conceded, That you should know your dubious desires?"  
And she to me: "There is no greater sorrow Than to be mindful  
of the happy time

In misery, and that thy Teacher knows. But, if to recognise the  
earliest root

Of love in us thou hast so great desire,

I will do even as he who weeps and speaks. One day we reading  
were for our delight Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthrall.

Alone we were and without any fear.

Full many a time our eyes together drew That reading, and  
drove the colour from our faces;

But one point only was it that o'ercame us.

When as we read of the much-longed-for smile Being by such a  
noble lover kissed,

This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided, Kissed me upon  
the mouth all palpitating.

Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it. That day no farther  
did we read therein."

And all the while one spirit uttered this, The other one did weep  
so, that, for pity, I swooned away as if I had been dying, And  
fell, even as a dead body falls.



## Canto VI

At the return of consciousness, that closed Before the pity of  
those two relations,

Which utterly with sadness had confused me, New torments I  
behold, and new tormented Around me, whichsoever way I  
move,

And whichsoever way I turn, and gaze.

In the third circle am I of the rain Eternal, maledict, and cold,  
and heavy; Its law and quality are never new.

Huge hail, and water sombre-hued, and snow, Athwart the  
tenebrous air pour down amain; Noisome the earth is, that  
receiveth this.

Cerberus, monster cruel and uncouth, With his three gullets like  
a dog is barking Over the people that are there submerged.

Red eyes he has, and unctuous beard and black, And belly large,  
and armed with claws his hands; He rends the spirits, flays, and  
quarters them.

Howl the rain maketh them like unto dogs; One side they make  
a shelter for the other; Oft turn themselves the wretched  
reprobates. When Cerberus perceived us, the great worm!

His mouths he opened, and displayed his tusks;

Not a limb had he that was motionless.

And my Conductor, with his spans extended, Took of the earth,  
and with his fists well filled, He threw it into those rapacious  
gullets.

Such as that dog is, who by barking craves, And quiet grows  
soon as his food he gnaws, For to devour it he but thinks and  
struggles, The like became those muzzles filth-begrimed Of  
Cerberus the demon, who so thunders Over the souls that they  
would fain be deaf.

We passed across the shadows, which subdues The heavy rain-  
storm, and we placed our feet Upon their vanity that person  
seems.

They all were lying prone upon the earth, Excepting one, who  
sat upright as soon As he beheld us passing on before him.

"O thou that art conducted through this Hell," He said to me,  
"recall me, if thou canst; Thyself wast made before I was  
unmade." And I to him: "The anguish which thou hast  
Perhaps doth draw thee out of my remembrance, So that it  
seems not I have ever seen thee.

But tell me who thou art, that in so doleful A place art put, and  
in such punishment,

If some are greater, none is so displeasing." And he to me: "Thy  
city, which is full

Of envy so that now the sack runs over, Held me within it in the  
life serene.

You citizens were wont to call me Ciacco; For the pernicious sin  
of gluttony

I, as thou seest, am battered by this rain. And I, sad soul, am  
not the only one, For all these suffer the like penalty

For the like sin;" and word no more spake he. I answered him:  
"Ciacco, thy wretchedness Weighs on me so that it to weep  
invites me;

But tell me, if thou knowest, to what shall come The citizens of  
the divided city;

If any there be just; and the occasion Tell me why so much  
discord has assailed it." And he to me: "They, after long  
contention, Will come to bloodshed; and the rustic party Will  
drive the other out with much offence.

Then afterwards behoves it this one fall Within three suns, and  
rise again the other By force of him who now is on the coast.  
High will it hold its forehead a long while, Keeping the other  
under heavy burdens, Howe'er it weeps thereat and is indignant.

The just are two, and are not understood there; Envy and  
Arrogance and Avarice

Are the three sparks that have all hearts enkindled." Here ended  
he his tearful utterance;

And I to him: "I wish thee still to teach me, And make a gift to me of further speech. Farinata and Tegghiaio, once so worthy,

Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo, and Mosca,

And others who on good deeds set their thoughts, Say where they are, and cause that I may know them; For great desire constraineth me to learn

If Heaven doth sweeten them, or Hell envenom." And he: "They are among the blacker souls;

A different sin downweighs them to the bottom; If thou so far descendest, thou canst see them. But when thou art again in the sweet world,

I pray thee to the mind of others bring me; No more I tell thee and no more I answer."

Then his straightforward eyes he turned askance, Eyed me a little, and then bowed his head;

He fell therewith prone like the other blind. And the Guide said to me: "He wakes no more This side the sound of the angelic trumpet; When shall approach the hostile Potentate, Each one shall find again his dismal tomb, Shall reassume his flesh and his own figure, Shall hear what through eternity re-echoes." So we passed onward o'er the filthy mixture Of shadows and of rain with footsteps slow, Touching a little on the future life.

Wherefore I said: "Master, these torments here,

Will they increase after the mighty sentence, Or lesser be, or will  
they be as burning?" And he to me: "Return unto thy science,  
Which wills, that as the thing more perfect is, The more it feels  
of pleasure and of pain.

Albeit that this people maledict To true perfection never can  
attain,

Hereafter more than now they look to be." Round in a circle by  
that road we went, Speaking much more, which I do not repeat;

We came unto the point where the descent is; There we found  
Plutus the great enemy.

## Canto VII

"Pape Satan, Pape Satan, Aleppo!" Thus Plutus with his clucking  
voice began;

And that benignant Sage, who all things knew, Said, to  
encourage me: "Let not thy fear

Harm thee; for any power that he may have Shall not prevent  
thy going down this crag." Then he turned round unto that  
bloated lip, And said: "Be silent, thou accursed wolf; Consume  
within thyself with thine own rage.

Not causeless is this journey to the abyss; Thus is it willed on  
high, where Michael wrought  
Vengeance upon the proud adultery." Even as the sails inflated  
by the wind

Involved together fall when snaps the mast, So fell the cruel  
monster to the earth.

Thus we descended into the fourth chasm, Gaining still farther  
on the dolesome shore Which all the woe of the universe  
insacks. Justice of God, ah! who heaps up so many New toils  
and sufferings as I beheld?

And why doth our transgression waste us so?

As doth the billow there upon Charybdis, That breaks itself on  
that which it encounters, So here the folk must dance their  
roundelay. Here saw I people, more than elsewhere, many,

On one side and the other, with great howls, Rolling weights  
forward by main force of chest.

They clashed together, and then at that point Each one turned  
backward, rolling retrograde,  
Crying, "Why keepest?" and, "Why squanderest thou?" Thus they  
returned along the lurid circle

On either hand unto the opposite point, Shouting their shameful  
metre evermore.

Then each, when he arrived there, wheeled about Through his  
half-circle to another joust;

And I, who had my heart pierced as it were, Exclaimed: "My  
Master, now declare to me What people these are, and if all  
were clerks, These shaven crowns upon the left of us." And he to  
me: "All of them were asquint

In intellect in the first life, so much

That there with measure they no spending made.

Clearly enough their voices bark it forth, Whene'er they reach  
the two points of the circle, Where sunders them the opposite  
defect.

Clerks those were who no hairy covering Have on the head, and  
Popes and Cardinals, In whom doth Avarice practise its excess."

And I: "My Master, among such as these

I ought forsooth to recognise some few, Who were infected with  
these maladies."

And he to me: "Vain thought thou entertainest; The undiscerning  
life which made them sordid Now makes them unto all  
discernment dim.

Forever shall they come to these two buttings;

These from the sepulchre shall rise again With the fist closed,  
and these with tresses shorn.

Ill giving and ill keeping the fair world

Have ta'en from them, and placed them in this scuffle; Whate'er  
it be, no words adorn I for it.

Now canst thou, Son, behold the transient farce Of goods that  
are committed unto Fortune, For which the human race each  
other buffet;

For all the gold that is beneath the moon, Or ever has been, of  
these weary souls Could never make a single one repose."

"Master," I said to him, "now tell me also

What is this Fortune which thou speakest of, That has the  
world's goods so within its clutches?"

And he to me: "O creatures imbecile, What ignorance is this  
which doth beset you? Now will I have thee learn my judgment  
of her. He whose omniscience everything transcends

The heavens created, and gave who should guide them, That  
every part to every part may shine, Distributing the light in  
equal measure;

He in like manner to the mundane splendours Ordained a  
general mistress and guide,

That she might change at times the empty treasures From race  
to race, from one blood to another, Beyond resistance of all  
human wisdom.



Therefore one people triumphs, and another Languishes, in  
pursuance of her judgment, Which hidden is, as in the grass a  
serpent.

Your knowledge has no counterstand against her;

She makes provision, judges, and pursues Her governance, as  
theirs the other gods.

Her permutations have not any truce; Necessity makes her  
precipitate,

So often cometh who his turn obtains.

And this is she who is so crucified Even by those who ought to  
give her praise,

Giving her blame amiss, and bad repute. But she is blissful, and  
she hears it not; Among the other primal creatures gladsome

She turns her sphere, and blissful she rejoices.

Let us descend now unto greater woe; Already sinks each star  
that was ascending When I set out, and loitering is forbidden."

We crossed the circle to the other bank, Near to a fount that  
boils, and pours itself Along a gully that runs out of it.

The water was more sombre far than perse; And we, in  
company with the dusky waves, Made entrance downward by a  
path uncouth. A marsh it makes, which has the name of Styx,

This tristful brooklet, when it has descended  
Down to the foot of  
the malign gray shores.

And I, who stood intent upon beholding, Saw people mud-  
besprent in that lagoon, All of them naked and with angry look.  
They smote each other not alone with hands, But with the head  
and with the breast and feet, Tearing each other piecemeal with  
their teeth. Said the good Master: "Son, thou now beholdest

The souls of those whom anger overcame; And likewise I would  
have thee know for certain

Beneath the water people are who sigh And make this water  
bubble at the surface, As the eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turns.  
Fixed in the mire they say, 'We sullen were

In the sweet air, which by the sun is gladdened, Bearing within  
ourselves the sluggish reek; Now we are sullen in this sable  
mire.'

This hymn do they keep gurgling in their throats, For with  
unbroken words they cannot say it." Thus we went circling round  
the filthy fen

A great arc 'twixt the dry bank and the swamp, With eyes  
turned unto those who gorge the mire; Unto the foot of a tower  
we came at last.

## Canto VIII

I say, continuing, that long before  
We to the foot of that high tower had come, Our eyes went  
upward to the summit of it,  
By reason of two flamelets we saw placed there, And from afar  
another answer them,  
So far, that hardly could the eye attain it. And, to the sea of all  
discernment turned,  
I said: "What sayeth this, and what respondeth That other fire?  
and who are they that made it?" And he to me: "Across the  
turbid waves  
What is expected thou canst now discern, If reek of the morass  
conceal it not."  
  
Cord never shot an arrow from itself That sped away athwart  
the air so swift, As I beheld a very little boat  
Come o'er the water tow'rds us at that moment, Under the  
guidance of a single pilot,  
Who shouted, "Now art thou arrived, fell soul?" "Phlegyas,  
Phlegyas, thou criest out in vain  
For this once," said my Lord; "thou shalt not have us Longer  
than in the passing of the slough."

As he who listens to some great deceit That has been done to  
him, and then resents it, Such became Phlegyas, in his gathered  
wrath.

My Guide descended down into the boat, And then he made me  
enter after him, And only when I entered seemed it laden.

Soon as the Guide and I were in the boat, The antique prow  
goes on its way, dividing More of the water than 'tis wont with  
others.

While we were running through the dead canal, Uprose in front  
of me one full of mire,

And said, "Who 'rt thou that comest ere the hour?" And I to him:

"Although I come, I stay not;

But who art thou that hast become so squalid?" "Thou seest  
that I am one who weeps," he answered.

And I to him: "With weeping and with wailing, Thou spirit  
maledict, do thou remain;

For thee I know, though thou art all defiled." Then stretched he  
both his hands unto the boat; Whereat my wary Master thrust  
him back, Saying, "Away there with the other dogs!"

Thereafter with his arms he clasped my neck; He kissed my  
face, and said: "Disdainful soul, Blessed be she who bore thee in  
her bosom.

That was an arrogant person in the world; Goodness is none,  
that decks his memory; So likewise here his shade is furious.

How many are esteemed great kings up there, Who here shall  
be like unto swine in mire, Leaving behind them horrible  
dispraises!" And I: "My Master, much should I be pleased, If I  
could see him soused into this broth, Before we issue forth out  
of the lake."

And he to me: "Ere unto thee the shore Reveal itself, thou shalt  
be satisfied;

Such a desire 'tis meet thou shouldst enjoy." A little after that, I  
saw such havoc

Made of him by the people of the mire, That still I praise and  
thank my God for it.

They all were shouting, "At Philippo Argenti!" And that  
exasperate spirit Florentine

Turned round upon himself with his own teeth. We left him there,  
and more of him I tell not; But on mine ears there smote a  
lamentation, Whence forward I intent unbar mine eyes.

And the good Master said: "Even now, my Son, The city draweth  
near whose name is Dis,

With the grave citizens, with the great throng." And I: "Its  
mosques already, Master, clearly Within there in the valley I  
discern

Vermilion, as if issuing from the fire

They were." And he to me: "The fire eternal That kindles them  
within makes them look red, As thou beholdest in this nether  
Hell."

Then we arrived within the moats profound, That circumvallate  
that disconsolate city; The walls appeared to me to be of iron.  
Not without making first a circuit wide, We came unto a place  
where loud the pilot

Cried out to us, "Debark, here is the entrance." More than a  
thousand at the gates I saw

Out of the Heavens rained down, who angrily Were saying,  
"Who is this that without death Goes through the kingdom of  
the people dead?" And my sagacious Master made a sign  
Of wishing secretly to speak with them.

A little then they quelled their great disdain, And said: "Come  
thou alone, and he begone Who has so boldly entered these  
dominions.

Let him return alone by his mad road; Try, if he can; for thou  
shalt here remain,

Who hast escorted him through such dark regions." Think,  
Reader, if I was discomforted

At utterance of the accursed words; For never to return here I  
believed.

"O my dear Guide, who more than seven times Hast rendered  
me security, and drawn me From imminent peril that before me  
stood, Do not desert me," said I, "thus undone;  
And if the going farther be denied us, Let us retrace our steps  
together swiftly."

And that Lord, who had led me thitherward, Said unto me: "Fear  
not; because our passage None can take from us, it by Such is  
given.

But here await me, and thy weary spirit Comfort and nourish  
with a better hope;

For in this nether world I will not leave thee." So onward goes  
and there abandons me My Father sweet, and I remain in  
doubt, For No and Yes within my head contend.

I could not hear what he proposed to them; But with them there  
he did not linger long, Ere each within in rivalry ran back.

They closed the portals, those our adversaries, On my Lord's  
breast, who had remained without And turned to me with  
footsteps far between.

His eyes cast down, his forehead shorn had he Of all its  
boldness, and he said, with sighs, "Who has denied to me the  
dolesome houses?" And unto me: "Thou, because I am angry,  
Fear not, for I will conquer in the trial, Whatever for defence  
within be planned. This arrogance of theirs is nothing new; For

once they used it at less secret gate, Which finds itself without a  
fastening still.

O'er it didst thou behold the dead inscription; And now this side  
of it descends the steep, Passing across the circles without  
escort,

One by whose means the city shall be opened." Canto IX

That hue which cowardice brought out on me, Beholding my  
Conductor backward turn, Sooner repressed within him his new  
colour.

He stopped attentive, like a man who listens, Because the eye  
could not conduct him far Through the black air, and through  
the heavy fog. "Still it behoveth us to win the fight,"

Began he; "Else. . .Such offered us herself. . .

O how I long that some one here arrive!" Well I perceived, as  
soon as the beginning He covered up with what came  
afterward,

That they were words quite different from the first; But none the  
less his saying gave me fear, Because I carried out the broken  
phrase, Perhaps to a worse meaning than he had.

"Into this bottom of the doleful conch Doth any e'er descend  
from the first grade, Which for its pain has only hope cut off?"  
This question put I; and he answered me: "Seldom it comes to  
pass that one of us Maketh the journey upon which I go.



True is it, once before I here below Was conjured by that pitiless  
Erictho,

Who summoned back the shades unto their bodies.

Naked of me short while the flesh had been, Before within that  
wall she made me enter, To bring a spirit from the circle of  
Judas; That is the lowest region and the darkest,

And farthest from the heaven which circles all.

Well know I the way; therefore be reassured. This fen, which a  
prodigious stench exhales, Encompasses about the city dolent,  
Where now we cannot enter without anger." And more he said,  
but not in mind I have it; Because mine eye had altogether  
drawn me

Tow'rds the high tower with the red-flaming summit, Where in a  
moment saw I swift uprisen

The three infernal Furies stained with blood, Who had the limbs  
of women and their mien, And with the greenest hydras were  
begirt; Small serpents and cerastes were their tresses,  
Wherewith their horrid temples were entwined.

And he who well the handmaids of the Queen Of everlasting  
lamentation knew,

Said unto me: "Behold the fierce Erinnyes. This is Megaera, on the  
left-hand side; She who is weeping on the right, Alecto;

Tisiphone is between;" and then was silent.

Each one her breast was rending with her nails; They beat them  
with their palms, and cried so loud, That I for dread pressed  
close unto the Poet. "Medusa come, so we to stone will change  
him!" All shouted looking down; "in evil hour

Avenged we not on Theseus his assault!" "Turn thyself round,  
and keep thine eyes close shut, For if the Gorgon appear, and  
thou shouldst see it,

No more returning upward would there be." Thus said the  
Master; and he turned me round Himself, and trusted not unto  
my hands

So far as not to blind me with his own. O ye who have  
undistempered intellects, Observe the doctrine that conceals  
itself Beneath the veil of the mysterious verses!

And now there came across the turbid waves The clangour of a  
sound with terror fraught, Because of which both of the margins  
trembled; Not otherwise it was than of a wind

Impetuous on account of adverse heats, That smites the forest,  
and, without restraint,

The branches rends, beats down, and bears away; Right  
onward, laden with dust, it goes superb,

And puts to flight the wild beasts and the shepherds.

Mine eyes he loosed, and said: "Direct the nerve Of vision now  
along that ancient foam,

There yonder where that smoke is most intense." Even as the  
frogs before the hostile serpent Across the water scatter all  
abroad,

Until each one is huddled in the earth. More than a thousand  
ruined souls I saw, Thus fleeing from before one who on foot  
Was passing o'er the Styx with soles unwet. From off his face he  
fanned that unctuous air,

Waving his left hand oft in front of him, And only with that  
anguish seemed he weary. Well I perceived one sent from  
Heaven was he,

And to the Master turned; and he made sign That I should quiet  
stand, and bow before him.

Ah! how disdainful he appeared to me! He reached the gate,  
and with a little rod

He opened it, for there was no resistance. "O banished out of  
Heaven, people despised!"

Thus he began upon the horrid threshold; "Whence is this  
arrogance within you couched?

Wherefore recalcitrate against that will, From which the end can  
never be cut off,

And which has many times increased your pain?  
What helpeth it to butt against the fates? Your Cerberus, if you  
remember well,  
For that still bears his chin and gullet peeled." Then he returned  
along the miry road,  
And spake no word to us, but had the look Of one whom other  
care constrains and goads  
Than that of him who in his presence is; And we our feet  
directed tow'rds the city, After those holy words all confident.  
Within we entered without any contest; And I, who inclination  
had to see  
What the condition such a fortress holds, Soon as I was within,  
cast round mine eye, And see on every hand an ample plain, Full  
of distress and torment terrible.  
Even as at Arles, where stagnant grows the Rhone, Even as at  
Pola near to the Quarnaro,  
That shuts in Italy and bathes its borders, The sepulchres make  
all the place uneven; So likewise did they there on every side,  
Saving that there the manner was more bitter;  
For flames between the sepulchres were scattered, By which  
they so intensely heated were,

That iron more so asks not any art. All of their coverings uplifted  
were,

And from them issued forth such dire laments, Sooth seemed  
they of the wretched and tormented.

And I: "My Master, what are all those people Who, having  
sepulture within those tombs, Make themselves audible by  
doleful sighs?" And he to me: "Here are the Heresiarchs, With  
their disciples of all sects, and much More than thou thinkest  
laden are the tombs.

Here like together with its like is buried; And more and less the  
monuments are heated." And when he to the right had turned,  
we passed

Between the torments and high parapets.

## Canto X

Now onward goes, along a narrow path Between the torments  
and the city wall, My Master, and I follow at his back.

"O power supreme, that through these impious circles Turnest  
me," I began, "as pleases thee,

Speak to me, and my longings satisfy; The people who are lying  
in these tombs, Might they be seen? already are uplifted The  
covers all, and no one keepeth guard." And he to me: "They all

will be closed up When from Jehoshaphat they shall return Here  
with the bodies they have left above.

Their cemetery have upon this side

With Epicurus all his followers, Who with the body mortal make  
the soul; But in the question thou dost put to me, Within here  
shalt thou soon be satisfied,

And likewise in the wish thou keepest silent." And I: "Good  
Leader, I but keep concealed From thee my heart, that I may  
speak the less, Nor only now hast thou thereto disposed me." "O  
Tuscan, thou who through the city of fire Goest alive, thus  
speaking modestly,

Be pleased to stay thy footsteps in this place. Thy mode of  
speaking makes thee manifest A native of that noble  
fatherland,

To which perhaps I too molestful was." Upon a sudden issued  
forth this sound

From out one of the tombs; wherefore I pressed, Fearing, a little  
nearer to my Leader.

And unto me he said: "Turn thee; what dost thou?

Behold there Farinata who has risen;

From the waist upwards wholly shalt thou see him." I had  
already fixed mine eyes on his,

And he uprose erect with breast and front E'en as if Hell he had  
in great despite.

And with courageous hands and prompt my Leader Thrust me  
between the sepulchres towards him, Exclaiming, "Let thy words  
explicit be."

As soon as I was at the foot of his tomb Somewhat he eyed me,  
and, as if disdainful, Then asked of me, "Who were thine  
ancestors?" I, who desirous of obeying was,

Concealed it not, but all revealed to him; Whereat he raised his  
brows a little upward. Then said he: "Fiercely adverse have they  
been To me, and to my fathers, and my party;  
So that two several times I scattered them."

"If they were banished, they returned on all sides," I answered  
him, "the first time and the second; But yours have not acquired  
that art aright." Then there uprose upon the sight, uncovered  
Down to the chin, a shadow at his side; I think that he had risen  
on his knees. Round me he gazed, as if solicitude

He had to see if some one else were with me, But after his  
suspicion was all spent, Weeping, he said to me: "If through this  
blind Prison thou goest by loftiness of genius,

Where is my son? and why is he not with thee?" And I to him: "I  
come not of myself;

He who is waiting yonder leads me here, Whom in disdain  
perhaps your Guido had." His language and the mode of  
punishment Already unto me had read his name;

On that account my answer was so full. Up starting suddenly, he  
cried out: "How Saidst thou,—he had? Is he not still alive?

Does not the sweet light strike upon his eyes?" When he became  
aware of some delay, Which I before my answer made, supine

He fell again, and forth appeared no more. But the other,  
magnanimous, at whose desire

I had remained, did not his aspect change, Neither his neck he  
moved, nor bent his side. "And if," continuing his first discourse,

"They have that art," he said, "not learned aright, That more  
tormenteth me, than doth this bed.

But fifty times shall not rekindled be

The countenance of the Lady who reigns here, Ere thou shalt  
know how heavy is that art; And as thou wouldst to the sweet  
world return, Say why that people is so pitiless

Against my race in each one of its laws?" Whence I to him: "The  
slaughter and great carnage Which have with crimson stained  
the Arbia, cause



Such orisons in our temple to be made." After his head he with a  
sigh had shaken, "There I was not alone," he said, "nor surely  
Without a cause had with the others moved.

But there I was alone, where every one Consented to the laying  
waste of Florence, He who defended her with open face." "Ah!  
so hereafter may your seed repose," I him entreated, "solve for  
me that knot,

Which has entangled my conceptions here. It seems that you  
can see, if I hear rightly, Beforehand whatsoe'er time brings  
with it, And in the present have another mode."

"We see, like those who have imperfect sight, The things," he  
said, "that distant are from us; So much still shines on us the  
Sovereign Ruler. When they draw near, or are, is wholly vain

Our intellect, and if none brings it to us, Not anything know we  
of your human state. Hence thou canst understand, that wholly  
dead Will be our knowledge from the moment when

The portal of the future shall be closed." Then I, as if  
compunctious for my fault,

Said: "Now, then, you will tell that fallen one, That still his son is  
with the living joined.

And if just now, in answering, I was dumb, Tell him I did it  
because I was thinking Already of the error you have solved

me." And now my Master was recalling me, Wherefore more  
eagerly I prayed the spirit

That he would tell me who was with him there. He said: "With  
more than a thousand here I lie; Within here is the second  
Frederick,

And the Cardinal, and of the rest I speak not." Thereon he hid  
himself; and I towards

The ancient poet turned my steps, reflecting Upon that saying,  
which seemed hostile to me. He moved along; and afterward  
thus going, He said to me, "Why art thou so bewildered?" And I  
in his inquiry satisfied him.

"Let memory preserve what thou hast heard Against thyself,"  
that Sage commanded me, "And now attend here;" and he  
raised his finger. "When thou shalt be before the radiance sweet  
Of her whose beauteous eyes all things behold, From her thou'lt  
know the journey of thy life." Unto the left hand then he turned  
his feet;

We left the wall, and went towards the middle, Along a path that  
strikes into a valley,

Which even up there unpleasant made its stench.

## Canto XI

Upon the margin of a lofty bank Which great rocks broken in a  
circle made,

We came upon a still more cruel throng; And there, by reason of  
the horrible

Excess of stench the deep abyss throws out, We drew ourselves  
aside behind the cover Of a great tomb, whereon I saw a  
writing, Which said: "Pope Anastasius I hold, Whom out of the  
right way Photinus drew." "Slow it behoveth our descent to be,

So that the sense be first a little used

To the sad blast, and then we shall not heed it." The Master thus;  
and unto him I said,

"Some compensation find, that the time pass not Idly;" and he:  
"Thou seest I think of that.

My son, upon the inside of these rocks," Began he then to say,  
"are three small circles,

From grade to grade, like those which thou art leaving.

They all are full of spirits maledict; But that hereafter sight alone  
suffice thee,

Hear how and wherefore they are in constraint.

Of every malice that wins hate in Heaven, Injury is the end; and  
all such end

Either by force or fraud afflicteth others.

But because fraud is man's peculiar vice, More it displeases  
God; and so stand lowest The fraudulent, and greater dole  
assails them.

All the first circle of the Violent is;

But since force may be used against three persons, In three  
rounds 'tis divided and constructed.

To God, to ourselves, and to our neighbour can we Use force; I  
say on them and on their things,

As thou shalt hear with reason manifest. A death by violence,  
and painful wounds,

Are to our neighbour given; and in his substance Ruin, and  
arson, and injurious levies;

Whence homicides, and he who smites unjustly, Marauders, and  
freebooters, the first round Tormenteth all in companies diverse.

Man may lay violent hands upon himself And his own goods;  
and therefore in the second

Round must perforce without avail repent Whoever of your  
world deprives himself, Who games, and dissipates his property,

And weepeth there, where he should jocund be.

Violence can be done the Deity,

In heart denying and blaspheming Him, And by disdain  
Nature and her bounty. And for this reason doth the smallest  
round Seal with its signet Sodom and Cahors,  
And who, disdain God, speaks from the heart. Fraud,  
wherewithal is every conscience stung,  
A man may practise upon him who trusts, And him who doth no  
confidence imbuse.

This latter mode, it would appear, dissevers Only the bond of  
love which Nature makes; Wherefore within the second circle  
nestle Hypocrisy, flattery, and who deals in magic, Falsification,  
theft, and simony,  
Panders, and barrators, and the like filth. By the other mode,  
forgotten is that love

Which Nature makes, and what is after added, From which  
there is a special faith engendered. Hence in the smallest circle,  
where the point is Of the Universe, upon which Dis is seated,  
Whoe'er betrays for ever is consumed."

And I: "My Master, clear enough proceeds Thy reasoning, and  
full well distinguishes This cavern and the people who possess it.

But tell me, those within the fat lagoon,

Whom the wind drives, and whom the rain doth beat, And who  
encounter with such bitter tongues, Wherefore are they inside of  
the red city

Not punished, if God has them in his wrath, And if he has not,  
wherefore in such fashion?" And unto me he said: "Why wanders

so

Thine intellect from that which it is wont?

Or, sooth, thy mind where is it elsewhere looking?

Hast thou no recollection of those words With which thine Ethics  
thoroughly discusses

The dispositions three, that Heaven abides not,— Incontinence,  
and Malice, and insane

Bestiality? and how Incontinence

Less God offendeth, and less blame attracts?

If thou regardest this conclusion well, And to thy mind recallest  
who they are That up outside are undergoing penance,

Clearly wilt thou perceive why from these felons They separated  
are, and why less wroth

Justice divine doth smite them with its hammer." "O Sun, that  
healest all distempered vision, Thou dost content me so, when  
thou resolvest, That doubting pleases me no less than knowing!

Once more a little backward turn thee," said I, "There where  
thou sayest that usury offends Goodness divine, and disengage  
the knot." "Philosophy," he said, "to him who heeds it, Noteth,  
not only in one place alone,

After what manner Nature takes her course From Intellect  
Divine, and from its art; And if thy Physics carefully thou notest,  
After not many pages shalt thou find,

That this your art as far as possible Follows, as the disciple doth  
the master;

So that your art is, as it were, God's grandchild. From these two,  
if thou bringest to thy mind Genesis at the beginning, it behoves  
Mankind to gain their life and to advance; And since the usurer  
takes another way, Nature herself and in her follower

Disdains he, for elsewhere he puts his hope.

But follow, now, as I would fain go on, For quivering are the  
Fishes on the horizon,

And the Wain wholly over Caurus lies,

And far beyond there we descend the crag." Canto XII

The place where to descend the bank we came Was alpine, and  
from what was there, moreover, Of such a kind that every eye  
would shun it.

Such as that ruin is which in the flank Smote, on this side of  
Trent, the Adige, Either by earthquake or by failing stay,  
For from the mountain's top, from which it moved, Unto the  
plain the cliff is shattered so,

Some path 'twould give to him who was above; Even such was  
the descent of that ravine, And on the border of the broken  
chasm

The infamy of Crete was stretched along, Who was conceived in  
the fictitious cow; And when he us beheld, he bit himself, Even  
as one whom anger racks within.

My Sage towards him shouted: "Peradventure Thou think'st that  
here may be the Duke of Athens, Who in the world above  
brought death to thee?

Get thee gone, beast, for this one cometh not Instructed by thy  
sister, but he comes

In order to behold your punishments."

As is that bull who breaks loose at the moment In which he has  
received the mortal blow, Who cannot walk, but staggers here  
and there, The Minotaur beheld I do the like;

And he, the wary, cried: "Run to the passage;

While he wroth, 'tis well thou shouldst descend." Thus down we  
took our way o'er that discharge Of stones, which oftentimes  
did move themselves Beneath my feet, from the unwonted  
burden.

Thoughtful I went; and he said: "Thou art thinking Perhaps upon  
this ruin, which is guarded



By that brute anger which just now I quenched.

Now will I have thee know, the other time I here descended to  
the nether Hell,

This precipice had not yet fallen down.

But truly, if I well discern, a little Before His coming who the  
mighty spoil Bore off from Dis, in the supernal circle,

Upon all sides the deep and loathsome valley Trembled so, that  
I thought the Universe

Was thrilled with love, by which there are who think The world  
ofttimes converted into chaos;

And at that moment this primeval crag Both here and elsewhere  
made such overthrow.

But fix thine eyes below; for draweth near The river of blood,  
within which boiling is Whoe'er by violence doth injure others." O  
blind cupidity, O wrath insane,

That spurs us onward so in our short life, And in the eternal then  
so badly steeps us!

I saw an ample moat bent like a bow, As one which all the plain  
encompasses, Conformable to what my Guide had said.

And between this and the embankment's foot Centaurs in file  
were running, armed with arrows,

As in the world they used the chase to follow. Beholding us  
descend, each one stood still,

And from the squadron three detached themselves, With bows  
and arrows in advance selected; And from afar one cried: "Unto  
what torment

Come ye, who down the hillside are descending?

Tell us from there; if not, I draw the bow." My Master said: "Our  
answer will we make To Chiron, near you there; in evil hour, That  
will of thine was evermore so hasty."

Then touched he me, and said: "This one is Nessus, Who  
perished for the lovely Dejanira,

And for himself, himself did vengeance take. And he in the  
midst, who at his breast is gazing, Is the great Chiron, who  
brought up Achilles; That other Pholus is, who was so wrathful.

Thousands and thousands go about the moat Shooting with  
shafts whatever soul emerges Out of the blood, more than his  
crime allots." Near we approached unto those monsters fleet;  
Chiron an arrow took, and with the notch Backward upon his  
jaws he put his beard.

After he had uncovered his great mouth, He said to his  
companions: "Are you ware That he behind moveth whate'er he  
touches? Thus are not wont to do the feet of dead men."

And my good Guide, who now was at his breast, Where the two  
natures are together joined, Replied: "Indeed he lives, and thus  
alone

Me it behoves to show him the dark valley;

Necessity, and not delight, impels us.

Some one withdrew from singing Halleluja, Who unto me  
committed this new office; No thief is he, nor I a thievish spirit.

But by that virtue through which I am moving My steps along  
this savage thoroughfare, Give us some one of thine, to be with  
us,

And who may show us where to pass the ford, And who may  
carry this one on his back;

For 'tis no spirit that can walk the air." Upon his right breast  
Chiron wheeled about,

And said to Nessus: "Turn and do thou guide them, And warn  
aside, if other band may meet you."

We with our faithful escort onward moved Along the brink of the  
vermilion boiling, Wherein the boiled were uttering loud laments.

People I saw within up to the eyebrows, And the great Centaur  
said: "Tyrants are these,

Who dealt in bloodshed and in pillaging.

Here they lament their pitiless mischiefs; here Is Alexander, and  
fierce Dionysius

Who upon Sicily brought dolorous years.

That forehead there which has the hair so black Is Azzolin; and  
the other who is blond,

Obizzo is of Esti, who, in truth,

Up in the world was by his stepson slain." Then turned I to the  
Poet; and he said, "Now he be first to thee, and second I." A  
little farther on the Centaur stopped Above a folk, who far down  
as the throat

Seemed from that boiling stream to issue forth.

A shade he showed us on one side alone, Saying: "He cleft  
asunder in God's bosom

The heart that still upon the Thames is honoured." Then people  
saw I, who from out the river Lifted their heads and also all the  
chest;

And many among these I recognised.

Thus ever more and more grew shallower That blood, so that the  
feet alone it covered; And there across the moat our passage  
was. "Even as thou here upon this side beholdest The boiling  
stream, that aye diminishes," The Centaur said, "I wish thee to

believe That on this other more and more declines Its bed, until  
it reunites itself

Where it behoveth tyranny to groan.

Justice divine, upon this side, is goading That Attila, who was a  
scourge on earth, And Pyrrhus, and Sextus; and for ever milks  
The tears which with the boiling it unseals In Rinier da Corneto  
and Rinier Pazzo,

Who made upon the highways so much war." Then back he  
turned, and passed again the ford.

### Canto XIII

Not yet had Nessus reached the other side, When we had put  
ourselves within a wood, That was not marked by any path  
whatever. Not foliage green, but of a dusky colour,

Not branches smooth, but gnarled and intertangled, Not apple-  
trees were there, but thorns with poison.

Such tangled thickets have not, nor so dense, Those savage wild  
beasts, that in hatred hold 'Twixt Cecina and Corneto the tilled  
places. There do the hideous Harpies make their nests, Who  
chased the Trojans from the Strophades, With sad  
announcement of impending doom;

Broad wings have they, and necks and faces human, And feet  
with claws, and their great bellies fledged; They make laments  
upon the wondrous trees.

And the good Master: "Ere thou enter farther, Know that thou  
art within the second round," Thus he began to say, "and shalt  
be, till

Thou comest out upon the horrible sand; Therefore look well  
around, and thou shalt see Things that will credence give unto  
my speech." I heard on all sides lamentations uttered,

And person none beheld I who might make them, Whence,  
utterly bewildered, I stood still.

I think he thought that I perhaps might think So many voices  
issued through those trunks

From people who concealed themselves from us; Therefore the  
Master said: "If thou break off Some little spray from any of  
these trees,

The thoughts thou hast will wholly be made vain." Then  
stretched I forth my hand a little forward, And plucked a  
branchlet off from a great thorn; And the trunk cried, "Why dost  
thou mangle me?" After it had become embrowned with blood,

It recommenced its cry: "Why dost thou rend me?

Hast thou no spirit of pity whatsoever?

Men once we were, and now are changed to trees; Indeed, thy  
hand should be more pitiful,

Even if the souls of serpents we had been." As out of a green  
brand, that is on fire

At one of the ends, and from the other drips And hisses with the  
wind that is escaping; So from that splinter issued forth  
together Both words and blood; whereat I let the tip Fall, and  
stood like a man who is afraid. "Had he been able sooner to  
believe,"

My Sage made answer, "O thou wounded soul, What only in my  
verses he has seen,

Not upon thee had he stretched forth his hand; Whereas the  
thing incredible has caused me To put him to an act which  
grieveth me.

But tell him who thou wast, so that by way Of some amends thy  
fame he may refresh Up in the world, to which he can return."

And the trunk said: "So thy sweet words allure me, I cannot  
silent be; and you be vexed not,

That I a little to discourse am tempted.

I am the one who both keys had in keeping Of Frederick's heart,  
and turned them to and fro

So softly in unlocking and in locking, That from his secrets most  
men I withheld;

Fidelity I bore the glorious office

So great, I lost thereby my sleep and pulses. The courtesan who  
never from the dwelling

Of Caesar turned aside her strumpet eyes, Death universal and  
the vice of courts, Inflamed against me all the other minds,  
And they, inflamed, did so inflame Augustus, That my glad  
honours turned to dismal mournings.

My spirit, in disdainful exultation, Thinking by dying to escape  
disdain, Made me unjust against myself, the just.

I, by the roots unwonted of this wood, Do swear to you that  
never broke I faith

Unto my lord, who was so worthy of honour; And to the world if  
one of you return,

Let him my memory comfort, which is lying Still prostrate from  
the blow that envy dealt it." Waited awhile, and then: "Since he  
is silent," The Poet said to me, "lose not the time,

But speak, and question him, if more may please thee." Whence  
I to him: "Do thou again inquire

Concerning what thou thinks't will satisfy me; For I cannot, such  
pity is in my heart." Therefore he recommenced: "So may the  
man Do for thee freely what thy speech implores, Spirit  
incarcerate, again be pleased



To tell us in what way the soul is bound Within these knots; and  
tell us, if thou canst, If any from such members e'er is freed."  
Then blew the trunk amain, and afterward The wind was into  
such a voice converted: "With brevity shall be replied to you.

When the exasperated soul abandons

The body whence it rent itself away, Minos consigns it to the  
seventh abyss.

It falls into the forest, and no part

Is chosen for it; but where Fortune hurls it, There like a grain of  
spelt it germinates.

It springs a sapling, and a forest tree; The Harpies, feeding then  
upon its leaves, Do pain create, and for the pain an outlet. Like  
others for our spoils shall we return;

But not that any one may them revest, For 'tis not just to have  
what one casts off.

Here we shall drag them, and along the dismal Forest our  
bodies shall suspended be,

Each to the thorn of his molested shade." We were attentive still  
unto the trunk,

Thinking that more it yet might wish to tell us, When by a tumult  
we were overtaken,

In the same way as he is who perceives The boar and chase  
approaching to his stand,

Who hears the crashing of the beasts and branches; And two  
behold! upon our left-hand side, Naked and scratched, fleeing  
so furiously, That of the forest, every fan they broke.

He who was in advance: "Now help, Death, help!" And the other  
one, who seemed to lag too much, Was shouting: "Lano, were  
not so alert

Those legs of thine at joustings of the Toppo!" And then,  
perchance because his breath was failing,

He grouped himself together with a bush. Behind them was the  
forest full of black

She-mastiffs, ravenous, and swift of foot

As greyhounds, who are issuing from the chain.

On him who had crouched down they set their teeth, And him  
they lacerated piece by piece,

Thereafter bore away those aching members.

Thereat my Escort took me by the hand, And led me to the bush,  
that all in vain Was weeping from its bloody lacerations. "O  
Jacopo," it said, "of Sant' Andrea,

What helped it thee of me to make a screen? What blame have  
I in thy nefarious life?" When near him had the Master stayed  
his steps,

He said: "Who wast thou, that through wounds so many Art  
blowing out with blood thy dolorous speech?"

And he to us: "O souls, that hither come To look upon the  
shameful massacre

That has so rent away from me my leaves, Gather them up  
beneath the dismal bush; I of that city was which to the Baptist  
Changed its first patron, wherefore he for this Forever with his  
art will make it sad.

And were it not that on the pass of Arno Some glimpses of him  
are remaining still, Those citizens, who afterwards rebuilt it  
Upon the ashes left by Attila,

In vain had caused their labour to be done. Of my own house I  
made myself a gibbet."

#### Canto XIV

Because the charity of my native place Constrained me,  
gathered I the scattered leaves, And gave them back to him,  
who now was hoarse.

Then came we to the confine, where departed The second  
round is from the third, and where A horrible form of Justice is  
beheld.

Clearly to manifest these novel things, I say that we arrived  
upon a plain,

Which from its bed rejecteth every plant; The dolorous forest is  
a garland to it

All round about, as the sad moat to that; There close upon the  
edge we stayed our feet.

The soil was of an arid and thick sand, Not of another fashion  
made than that

Which by the feet of Cato once was pressed. Vengeance of God,  
O how much oughtest thou By each one to be dreaded, who  
doth read That which was manifest unto mine eyes!

Of naked souls beheld I many herds, Who all were weeping very  
miserably, And over them seemed set a law diverse.

Supine upon the ground some folk were lying; And some were  
sitting all drawn up together, And others went about continually.  
Those who were going round were far the more, And those were  
less who lay down to their torment, But had their tongues more  
loosed to lamentation.

O'er all the sand-waste, with a gradual fall, Were raining down  
dilated flakes of fire, As of the snow on Alp without a wind.

As Alexander, in those torrid parts Of India, beheld upon his  
host

Flames fall unbroken till they reached the ground.

Whence he provided with his phalanxes To trample down the  
soil, because the vapour Better extinguished was while it was  
single;

Thus was descending the eternal heat, Whereby the sand was  
set on fire, like tinder Beneath the steel, for doubling of the dole.  
Without repose forever was the dance Of miserable hands, now  
there, now here,

Shaking away from off them the fresh gleeds. "Master," began  
I, "thou who overcomest

All things except the demons dire, that issued Against us at the  
entrance of the gate,

Who is that mighty one who seems to heed not The fire, and  
lieth lowering and disdainful, So that the rain seems not to ripen  
him?" And he himself, who had become aware

That I was questioning my Guide about him, Cried: "Such as I  
was living, am I, dead.

If Jove should weary out his smith, from whom He seized in  
anger the sharp thunderbolt, Wherewith upon the last day I was  
smitten, And if he wearied out by turns the others

In Mongibello at the swarthy forge, Vociferating, 'Help, good  
Vulcan, help!' Even as he did there at the fight of Phlegra, And  
shot his bolts at me with all his might,

He would not have thereby a joyous vengeance."

Then did my Leader speak with such great force, That I had  
never heard him speak so loud: "O Capaneus, in that is not  
extinguished

Thine arrogance, thou punished art the more; Not any torment,  
saving thine own rage, Would be unto thy fury pain complete."

Then he turned round to me with better lip, Saying: "One of the  
Seven Kings was he

Who Thebes besieged, and held, and seems to hold God in  
disdain, and little seems to prize him;

But, as I said to him, his own despites Are for his breast the  
fittest ornaments.

Now follow me, and mind thou do not place As yet thy feet  
upon the burning sand,

But always keep them close unto the wood." Speaking no word,  
we came to where there gushes Forth from the wood a little  
rivulet,

Whose redness makes my hair still stand on end.

As from the Bulicame springs the brooklet, The sinful women  
later share among them,

So downward through the sand it went its way.

The bottom of it, and both sloping banks, Were made of stone,  
and the margins at the side; Whence I perceived that there the  
passage was.

"In all the rest which I have shown to thee Since we have  
entered in within the gate Whose threshold unto no one is  
denied, Nothing has been discovered by thine eyes So notable  
as is the present river,

Which all the little flames above it quenches."

These words were of my Leader; whence I prayed him That he  
would give me largess of the food,

For which he had given me largess of desire. "In the mid-sea  
there sits a wasted land,"

Said he thereafterward, "whose name is Crete, Under whose  
king the world of old was chaste. There is a mountain there, that  
once was glad

With waters and with leaves, which was called Ida; Now 'tis  
deserted, as a thing worn out.

Rhea once chose it for the faithful cradle Of her own son; and to  
conceal him better,

Whene'er he cried, she there had clamours made.

A grand old man stands in the mount erect, Who holds his  
shoulders turned tow'rds Damietta,

And looks at Rome as if it were his mirror.

His head is fashioned of refined gold, And of pure silver are the  
arms and breast; Then he is brass as far down as the fork. From  
that point downward all is chosen iron, Save that the right foot  
is of kiln-baked clay, And more he stands on that than on the  
other.

Each part, except the gold, is by a fissure Asunder cleft, that  
dripping is with tears, Which gathered together perforate that  
cavern.

From rock to rock they fall into this valley; Acheron, Styx, and  
Phlegethon they form; Then downward go along this narrow  
sluice Unto that point where is no more descending. They form  
Cocytus; what that pool may be Thou shalt behold, so here 'tis  
not narrated."

And I to him: "If so the present runnel Doth take its rise in this  
way from our world,

Why only on this verge appears it to us?" And he to me: "Thou  
knowest the place is round,



And notwithstanding thou hast journeyed far, Still to the left  
descending to the bottom, Thou hast not yet through all the  
circle turned.

Therefore if something new appear to us, It should not bring  
amazement to thy face." And I again: "Master, where shall be  
found

Lethe and Phlegethon, for of one thou'rt silent, And sayest the  
other of this rain is made?"

"In all thy questions truly thou dost please me," Replied he; "but  
the boiling of the red

Water might well solve one of them thou makest.

Thou shalt see Lethe, but outside this moat, There where the  
souls repair to lave themselves, When sin repented of has been  
removed."

Then said he: "It is time now to abandon The wood; take heed  
that thou come after me; A way the margins make that are not  
burning, And over them all vapours are extinguished."

## Canto XV

Now bears us onward one of the hard margins, And so the  
brooklet's mist o'ershadows it, From fire it saves the water and  
the dikes.

Even as the Flemings, 'twixt Cadsand and Bruges, Fearing the  
flood that tow'rds them hurls itself,

Their bulwarks build to put the sea to flight; And as the Paduans  
along the Brenta,

To guard their villas and their villages, Or ever Chiarentana feel  
the heat;

In such similitude had those been made, Albeit not so lofty nor  
so thick,

Whoever he might be, the master made them.

Now were we from the forest so remote, I could not have  
discovered where it was, Even if backward I had turned myself,

When we a company of souls encountered, Who came beside  
the dike, and every one Gazed at us, as at evening we are wont

To eye each other under a new moon, And so towards us  
sharpened they their brows

As an old tailor at the needle's eye. Thus scrutinised by such a  
family,

By some one I was recognised, who seized

My garment's hem, and cried out, "What a marvel!" And I, when  
he stretched forth his arm to me, On his baked aspect fastened  
so mine eyes,

That the scorched countenance prevented not His recognition  
by my intellect;

And bowing down my face unto his own, I made reply, "Are you  
here, Ser Brunetto?"

And he: "May't not displease thee, O my son, If a brief space  
with thee Brunetto Latini Backward return and let the trail go  
on."

I said to him: "With all my power I ask it; And if you wish me to  
sit down with you,

I will, if he please, for I go with him." "O son," he said, "whoever  
of this herd

A moment stops, lies then a hundred years, Nor fans himself  
when smiteth him the fire. Therefore go on; I at thy skirts will  
come, And afterward will I rejoin my band, Which goes  
lamenting its eternal doom."

I did not dare to go down from the road Level to walk with him;  
but my head bowed I held as one who goeth reverently.

And he began: "What fortune or what fate Before the last day  
leadeth thee down here? And who is this that showeth thee the  
way?" "Up there above us in the life serene,"

I answered him, "I lost me in a valley, Or ever yet my age had  
been completed. But yestermorn I turned my back upon it; This  
one appeared to me, returning thither, And homeward leadeth

me along this road." And he to me: "If thou thy star do follow,  
Thou canst not fail thee of a glorious port,  
If well I judged in the life beautiful. And if I had not died so  
prematurely,  
Seeing Heaven thus benignant unto thee,  
I would have given thee comfort in the work.  
But that ungrateful and malignant people, Which of old time  
from Fesole descended,  
And smacks still of the mountain and the granite, Will make  
itself, for thy good deeds, thy foe; And it is right; for among  
crabbed sorbs  
It ill befits the sweet fig to bear fruit.  
Old rumour in the world proclaims them blind; A people  
avaricious, envious, proud;  
Take heed that of their customs thou do cleanse thee.  
Thy fortune so much honour doth reserve thee, One party and  
the other shall be hungry  
For thee; but far from goat shall be the grass.  
Their litter let the beasts of Fesole  
Make of themselves, nor let them touch the plant, If any still  
upon their dunghill rise,

In which may yet revive the consecrated Seed of those Romans,  
who remained there when

The nest of such great malice it became." "If my entreaty wholly  
were fulfilled," Replied I to him, "not yet would you be In  
banishment from human nature placed; For in my mind is fixed,  
and touches now

My heart the dear and good paternal image Of you, when in the  
world from hour to hour You taught me how a man becomes  
eternal; And how much I am grateful, while I live Behoves that  
in my language be discerned.

What you narrate of my career I write, And keep it to be  
glossed with other text By a Lady who can do it, if I reach her.

This much will I have manifest to you;

Provided that my conscience do not chide me, For whatsoever  
Fortune I am ready.

Such handsel is not new unto mine ears; Therefore let Fortune  
turn her wheel around

As it may please her, and the churl his mattock." My Master  
thereupon on his right cheek

Did backward turn himself, and looked at me; Then said: "He  
listeneth well who noteth it." Nor speaking less on that account,

I go

With Ser Brunetto, and I ask who are

His most known and most eminent companions.

And he to me: "To know of some is well; Of others it were  
laudable to be silent,

For short would be the time for so much speech. Know them in  
sum, that all of them were clerks, And men of letters great and  
of great fame,

In the world tainted with the selfsame sin.

Priscian goes yonder with that wretched crowd, And Francis of  
Accorso; and thou hadst seen there If thou hadst had a  
hankering for such scurf,

That one, who by the Servant of the Servants From Arno was  
transferred to Bacchiglione, Where he has left his sin-excited  
nerves.

More would I say, but coming and discoursing Can be no  
longer; for that I behold

New smoke uprising yonder from the sand. A people comes with  
whom I may not be; Commended unto thee be my Tesoro,

In which I still live, and no more I ask." Then he turned round,  
and seemed to be of those

Who at Verona run for the Green Mantle Across the plain; and  
seemed to be among them The one who wins, and not the one  
who loses.

## Canto XVI

Now was I where was heard the reverberation Of water falling  
into the next round,

Like to that humming which the beehives make, When shadows  
three together started forth, Running, from out a company that  
passed Beneath the rain of the sharp martyrdom.

Towards us came they, and each one cried out: "Stop, thou; for  
by thy garb to us thou seemest To be some one of our depraved  
city."

Ah me! what wounds I saw upon their limbs, Recent and ancient  
by the flames burnt in!

It pains me still but to remember it.

Unto their cries my Teacher paused attentive; He turned his  
face towards me, and "Now wait," He said; "to these we should  
be courteous.

And if it were not for the fire that darts The nature of this  
region, I should say

That haste were more becoming thee than them." As soon as we  
stood still, they recommenced The old refrain, and when they  
overtook us, Formed of themselves a wheel, all three of them.

As champions stripped and oiled are wont to do, Watching for  
their advantage and their hold,

Before they come to blows and thrusts between them, Thus,  
wheeling round, did every one his visage Direct to me, so that in  
opposite wise

His neck and feet continual journey made.

And, "If the misery of this soft place

Bring in disdain ourselves and our entreaties," Began one, "and  
our aspect black and blistered, Let the renown of us thy mind  
incline

To tell us who thou art, who thus securely Thy living feet dost  
move along through Hell.

He in whose footprints thou dost see me treading, Naked and  
skinless though he now may go, Was of a greater rank than  
thou dost think;

He was the grandson of the good Gualdrada; His name was  
Guidoguerra, and in life Much did he with his wisdom and his  
sword.

The other, who close by me treads the sand, Tegghiaio  
Aldobrandi is, whose fame

Above there in the world should welcome be. And I, who with  
them on the cross am placed, Jacopo Rusticucci was; and truly  
My savage wife, more than aught else, doth harm me." Could I  
have been protected from the fire,



Below I should have thrown myself among them, And think the  
Teacher would have suffered it; But as I should have burned  
and baked myself, My terror overmastered my good will,

Which made me greedy of embracing them.

Then I began: "Sorrow and not disdain Did your condition fix  
within me so, That tardily it wholly is stripped off, As soon as  
this my Lord said unto me

Words, on account of which I thought within me That people  
such as you are were approaching.

I of your city am; and evermore

Your labours and your honourable names I with affection have  
retraced and heard.

I leave the gall, and go for the sweet fruits Promised to me by  
the veracious Leader; But to the centre first I needs must  
plunge." "So may the soul for a long while conduct

Those limbs of thine," did he make answer then, "And so may  
thy renown shine after thee, Valour and courtesy, say if they  
dwell

Within our city, as they used to do, Or if they wholly have gone  
out of it;

For Guglielmo Borsier, who is in torment With us of late, and  
goes there with his comrades,

Doth greatly mortify us with his words." "The new inhabitants  
and the sudden gains,

Pride and extravagance have in thee engendered, Florence, so  
that thou weep'st thereat already!" In this wise I exclaimed with  
face uplifted;

And the three, taking that for my reply, Looked at each other,  
as one looks at truth. "If other times so little it doth cost thee,"  
Replied they all, "to satisfy another, Happy art thou, thus  
speaking at thy will!

Therefore, if thou escape from these dark places, And come to  
rebehold the beauteous stars, When it shall pleasure thee to  
say, 'I was,' See that thou speak of us unto the people."

Then they broke up the wheel, and in their flight It seemed as if  
their agile legs were wings.

Not an Amen could possibly be said

So rapidly as they had disappeared; Wherefore the Master  
deemed best to depart.

I followed him, and little had we gone, Before the sound of  
water was so near us,

That speaking we should hardly have been heard. Even as that  
stream which holdeth its own course The first from Monte Vesò  
tow'rds the East, Upon the left-hand slope of Apennine,

Which is above called Acquacheta, ere It down descendeth into  
its low bed, And at Forli is vacant of that name, Reverberates  
there above San Benedetto From Alps, by falling at a single  
leap,

Where for a thousand there were room enough; Thus downward  
from a bank precipitate,

We found resounding that dark-tinted water, So that it soon the  
ear would have offended.

I had a cord around about me girt, And therewithal I whilom  
had designed To take the panther with the painted skin.

After I this had all from me unloosed, As my Conductor had  
commanded me,

I reached it to him, gathered up and coiled, Whereat he turned  
himself to the right side, And at a little distance from the verge,

He cast it down into that deep abyss. "It must needs be some  
novelty respond," I said within myself, "to the new signal The  
Master with his eye is following so." Ah me! how very cautious  
men should be

With those who not alone behold the act, But with their wisdom  
look into the thoughts! He said to me: "Soon there will upward  
come What I await; and what thy thought is dreaming

Must soon reveal itself unto thy sight."

Aye to that truth which has the face of falsehood, A man should  
close his lips as far as may be, Because without his fault it  
causes shame;

But here I cannot; and, Reader, by the notes Of this my Comedy  
to thee I swear,

So may they not be void of lasting favour, Athwart that dense  
and darksome atmosphere I saw a figure swimming upward  
come, Marvellous unto every steadfast heart,

Even as he returns who goeth down Sometimes to clear an  
anchor, which has grappled

Reef, or aught else that in the sea is hidden, Who upward  
stretches, and draws in his feet.

## Canto XVII

"Behold the monster with the pointed tail,  
Who cleaves the hills, and breaketh walls and weapons, Behold  
him who infecteth all the world."

Thus unto me my Guide began to say,  
And beckoned him that he should come to shore, Near to the  
confine of the trodden marble;  
And that uncleanly image of deceit Came up and thrust ashore  
its head and bust,

But on the border did not drag its tail.

The face was as the face of a just man, Its semblance  
outwardly was so benign, And of a serpent all the trunk beside.  
Two paws it had, hairy unto the armpits; The back, and breast,  
and both the sides it had Depicted o'er with nooses and with  
shields. With colours more, groundwork or broidery  
Never in cloth did Tartars make nor Turks, Nor were such tissues  
by Arachne laid.

As sometimes wherries lie upon the shore, That part are in the  
water, part on land; And as among the guzzling Germans there,  
The beaver plants himself to wage his war; So that vile monster  
lay upon the border, Which is of stone, and shutteth in the sand.  
His tail was wholly quivering in the void, Contorting upwards the  
envenomed fork, That in the guise of scorpion armed its point.  
The Guide said: "Now perforce must turn aside Our way a little,  
even to that beast

Malevolent, that yonder coucheth him." We therefore on the  
right side descended, And made ten steps upon the outer verge,  
Completely to avoid the sand and flame; And after we are come  
to him, I see

A little farther off upon the sand

A people sitting near the hollow place. Then said to me the  
Master: "So that full Experience of this round thou bear away,  
Now go and see what their condition is.

There let thy conversation be concise; Till thou returnest I will  
speak with him,

That he concede to us his stalwart shoulders." Thus farther still  
upon the outermost Head of that seventh circle all alone

I went, where sat the melancholy folk.

Out of their eyes was gushing forth their woe; This way, that  
way, they helped them with their hands

Now from the flames and now from the hot soil.

Not otherwise in summer do the dogs, Now with the foot, now  
with the muzzle, when By fleas, or flies, or gadflies, they are  
bitten. When I had turned mine eyes upon the faces Of some,  
on whom the dolorous fire is falling,

Not one of them I knew; but I perceived That from the neck of  
each there hung a pouch, Which certain colour had, and certain  
blazon; And thereupon it seems their eyes are feeding. And as I  
gazing round me come among them,

Upon a yellow pouch I azure saw That had the face and posture  
of a lion. Proceeding then the current of my sight,

Another of them saw I, red as blood, Display a goose more  
white than butter is. And one, who with an azure sow and gravid  
Emblazoned had his little pouch of white, Said unto me: "What  
dost thou in this moat?

Now get thee gone; and since thou'rt still alive, Know that a  
neighbour of mine, Vitaliano, Will have his seat here on my left-  
hand side.

A Paduan am I with these Florentines; Full many a time they  
thunder in mine ears, Exclaiming, 'Come the sovereign cavalier,  
He who shall bring the satchel with three goats;" Then twisted  
he his mouth, and forth he thrust His tongue, like to an ox that  
licks its nose.

And fearing lest my longer stay might vex Him who had warned  
me not to tarry long, Backward I turned me from those weary  
souls.

I found my Guide, who had already mounted Upon the back of  
that wild animal,

And said to me: "Now be both strong and bold. Now we  
descend by stairways such as these; Mount thou in front, for I  
will be midway,

So that the tail may have no power to harm thee." Such as he is  
who has so near the ague

Of quartan that his nails are blue already, And trembles all, but  
looking at the shade; Even such became I at those proffered  
words; But shame in me his menaces produced,  
Which maketh servant strong before good master.

I seated me upon those monstrous shoulders; I wished to say,  
and yet the voice came not

As I believed, "Take heed that thou embrace me." But he, who  
other times had rescued me

In other peril, soon as I had mounted, Within his arms encircled  
and sustained me, And said: "Now, Geryon, bestir thyself; The  
circles large, and the descent be little;

Think of the novel burden which thou hast."

Even as the little vessel shoves from shore, Backward, still  
backward, so he thence withdrew; And when he wholly felt  
himself afloat,

There where his breast had been he turned his tail, And that  
extended like an eel he moved,

And with his paws drew to himself the air.

A greater fear I do not think there was What time abandoned  
Phaeton the reins,

Whereby the heavens, as still appears, were scorched; Nor when  
the wretched Icarus his flanks



Felt stripped of feathers by the melting wax, His father crying,  
"An ill way thou takest!" Than was my own, when I perceived  
myself On all sides in the air, and saw extinguished The sight of  
everything but of the monster. Onward he goeth, swimming  
slowly, slowly; Wheels and descends, but I perceive it only By  
wind upon my face and from below.

I heard already on the right the whirlpool Making a horrible  
crashing under us;

Whence I thrust out my head with eyes cast downward.

Then was I still more fearful of the abyss; Because I fires  
beheld, and heard laments, Whereat I, trembling, all the closer  
cling.

I saw then, for before I had not seen it, The turning and  
descending, by great horrors

That were approaching upon divers sides. As falcon who has  
long been on the wing, Who, without seeing either lure or bird,

Maketh the falconer say, "Ah me, thou stoopest,"

Descendeth weary, whence he started swiftly, Thorough a  
hundred circles, and alights

Far from his master, sullen and disdainful; Even thus did Geryon  
place us on the bottom, Close to the bases of the rough-hewn  
rock, And being disencumbered of our persons,

He sped away as arrow from the string.

### Canto XVIII

There is a place in Hell called Malebolge, Wholly of stone and of  
an iron colour,

As is the circle that around it turns. Right in the middle of the  
field malign

There yawns a well exceeding wide and deep, Of which its place  
the structure will recount. Round, then, is that enclosure which  
remains

Between the well and foot of the high, hard bank, And has  
distinct in valleys ten its bottom.

As where for the protection of the walls Many and many moats  
surround the castles, The part in which they are a figure forms,  
Just such an image those presented there;

And as about such strongholds from their gates Unto the outer  
bank are little bridges,

So from the precipice's base did crags Project, which  
intersected dikes and moats,

Unto the well that truncates and collects them. Within this place,  
down shaken from the back Of Geryon, we found us; and the

Poet

Held to the left, and I moved on behind. Upon my right hand I  
beheld new anguish, New torments, and new wielders of the  
lash, Wherewith the foremost Bolgia was replete. Down at the  
bottom were the sinners naked; This side the middle came they  
facing us, Beyond it, with us, but with greater steps; Even as the  
Romans, for the mighty host, The year of Jubilee, upon the  
bridge,

Have chosen a mode to pass the people over; For all upon one  
side towards the Castle Their faces have, and go unto St.  
Peter's;

On the other side they go towards the Mountain.

This side and that, along the livid stone Beheld I horned demons  
with great scourges, Who cruelly were beating them behind.

Ah me! how they did make them lift their legs At the first blows!  
and sooth not any one The second waited for, nor for the third.

While I was going on, mine eyes by one Encountered were; and  
straight I said: "Already With sight of this one I am not unfed."

Therefore I stayed my feet to make him out, And with me the  
sweet Guide came to a stand, And to my going somewhat back  
assented;

And he, the scourged one, thought to hide himself, Lowering his  
face, but little it availed him;

For said I: "Thou that castest down thine eyes, If false are not  
the features which thou bearest, Thou art Venedico  
Caccianimico;

But what doth bring thee to such pungent sauces?" And he to  
me: "Unwillingly I tell it;

But forces me thine utterance distinct, Which makes me  
recollect the ancient world.

I was the one who the fair Ghisola Induced to grant the wishes  
of the Marquis, Howe'er the shameless story may be told. Not  
the sole Bolognese am I who weeps here;

Nay, rather is this place so full of them, That not so many  
tongues to-day are taught 'Twixt Reno and Savena to say 'sipa';

And if thereof thou wishest pledge or proof, Bring to thy mind  
our avaricious heart."

While speaking in this manner, with his scourge A demon smote  
him, and said: "Get thee gone Pander, there are no women here  
for coin."

I joined myself again unto mine Escort; Thereafterward with  
footsteps few we came To where a crag projected from the  
bank.

This very easily did we ascend, And turning to the right along its  
ridge, From those eternal circles we departed.

When we were there, where it is hollowed out Beneath, to give a  
passage to the scourged,

The Guide said: "Wait, and see that on thee strike The vision of  
those others evil-born,

Of whom thou hast not yet beheld the faces, Because together  
with us they have gone." From the old bridge we looked upon  
the train Which tow'rds us came upon the other border,

And which the scourges in like manner smite. And the good  
Master, without my inquiring, Said to me: "See that tall one who  
is coming, And for his pain seems not to shed a tear; Still what a  
royal aspect he retains!

That Jason is, who by his heart and cunning The Colchians of  
the Ram made destitute. He by the isle of Lemnos passed along  
After the daring women pitiless

Had unto death devoted all their males.

There with his tokens and with ornate words Did he deceive  
Hypsipyle, the maiden

Who first, herself, had all the rest deceived. There did he leave  
her pregnant and forlorn; Such sin unto such punishment  
condemns him, And also for Medea is vengeance done.

With him go those who in such wise deceive; And this sufficient  
be of the first valley

To know, and those that in its jaws it holds." We were already  
where the narrow path Crosses athwart the second dike, and  
forms Of that a buttress for another arch.

Thence we heard people, who are making moan In the next  
Bolgia, snorting with their muzzles, And with their palms beating  
upon themselves The margins were incrustated with a mould  
By exhalation from below, that sticks there, And with the eyes  
and nostrils wages war. The bottom is so deep, no place suffices  
To give us sight of it, without ascending

The arch's back, where most the crag impends. Thither we  
came, and thence down in the moat I saw a people smothered  
in a filth

That out of human privies seemed to flow; And whilst below  
there with mine eye I search, I saw one with his head so foul  
with ordure,

It was not clear if he were clerk or layman.

He screamed to me: "Wherefore art thou so eager To look at me  
more than the other foul ones?" And I to him: "Because, if I  
remember,

I have already seen thee with dry hair, And thou'rt Alessio  
Interminei of Lucca;

Therefore I eye thee more than all the others." And he thereon,  
belabouring his pumpkin: "The flatteries have submerged me  
here below, Wherewith my tongue was never surfeited."

Then said to me the Guide: "See that thou thrust Thy visage  
somewhat farther in advance,

That with thine eyes thou well the face attain Of that uncleanly  
and dishevelled drab,

Who there doth scratch herself with filthy nails, And crouches  
now, and now on foot is standing.

Thais the harlot is it, who replied Unto her paramour, when he  
said, 'Have I

Great gratitude from thee?'—'Nay, marvellous;' And herewith let  
our sight be satisfied."

## Canto XIX

O Simon Magus, O forlorn disciples,

Ye who the things of God, which ought to be The brides of  
holiness, rapaciously

For silver and for gold do prostitute, Now it behoves for you the  
trumpet sound,

Because in this third Bolgia ye abide. We had already on the  
following tomb Ascended to that portion of the crag  
Which o'er the middle of the moat hangs plumb. Wisdom  
supreme, O how great art thou showest In heaven, in earth, and  
in the evil world,  
And with what justice doth thy power distribute!  
I saw upon the sides and on the bottom The livid stone with  
perforations filled, All of one size, and every one was round.  
To me less ample seemed they not, nor greater Than those that  
in my beautiful Saint John Are fashioned for the place of the  
baptisers, And one of which, not many years ago,  
I broke for some one, who was drowning in it; Be this a seal all  
men to undeceive.  
Out of the mouth of each one there protruded The feet of a  
transgressor, and the legs  
Up to the calf, the rest within remained. In all of them the soles  
were both on fire; Wherefore the joints so violently quivered,  
They would have snapped asunder withes and bands.  
Even as the flame of unctuous things is wont To move upon the  
outer surface only,  
So likewise was it there from heel to point. "Master, who is that  
one who writhes himself,



More than his other comrades quivering,"

I said, "and whom a redder flame is sucking?" And he to me: "If thou wilt have me bear thee Down there along that bank which lowest lies, From him thou'lt know his errors and himself." And I:

"What pleases thee, to me is pleasing; Thou art my Lord, and knowest that I depart not From thy desire, and knowest what is not spoken." Straightway upon the fourth dike we arrived;

We turned, and on the left-hand side descended Down to the bottom full of holes and narrow. And the good Master yet from off his haunch Deposed me not, till to the hole he brought me Of him who so lamented with his shanks. "Whoe'er thou art, that standest upside down, O doleful soul, implanted like a stake,"

To say began I, "if thou canst, speak out." I stood even as the friar who is confessing The false assassin, who, when he is fixed, Recalls him, so that death may be delayed.

And he cried out: "Dost thou stand there already, Dost thou stand there already, Boniface?"

By many years the record lied to me.

Art thou so early satiate with that wealth, For which thou didst not fear to take by fraud The beautiful Lady, and then work her woe?"

Such I became, as people are who stand, Not comprehending what is answered them, As if bemocked, and know not how to answer. Then said Virgilius: "Say to him straightway,

'I am not he, I am not he thou thinkest.'" And I replied as was  
imposed on me.

Whereat the spirit writhed with both his feet, Then, sighing, with  
a voice of lamentation Said to me: "Then what wantest thou of  
me? If who I am thou carest so much to know,

That thou on that account hast crossed the bank, Know that I  
vested was with the great mantle; And truly was I son of the  
She-bear,

So eager to advance the cubs, that wealth Above, and here  
myself, I pocketed.

Beneath my head the others are dragged down Who have  
preceded me in simony,

Flattened along the fissure of the rock.

Below there I shall likewise fall, whenever That one shall come  
who I believed thou wast, What time the sudden question I  
proposed.

But longer I my feet already toast,

And here have been in this way upside down, Than he will  
planted stay with reddened feet; For after him shall come of  
fouler deed

From tow'rds the west a Pastor without law, Such as befits to  
cover him and me.

New Jason will he be, of whom we read In Maccabees; and as  
his king was pliant,  
So he who governs France shall be to this one." I do not know if  
I were here too bold,

That him I answered only in this metre:

"I pray thee tell me now how great a treasure Our Lord  
demanded of Saint Peter first,

Before he put the keys into his keeping? Truly he nothing asked  
but 'Follow me.' Nor Peter nor the rest asked of Matthias Silver  
or gold, when he by lot was chosen Unto the place the guilty  
soul had lost.

Therefore stay here, for thou art justly punished, And keep safe  
guard o'er the ill-gotten money, Which caused thee to be valiant  
against Charles.

And were it not that still forbids it me The reverence for the keys  
superlative

Thou hadst in keeping in the gladsome life,

I would make use of words more grievous still; Because your  
avarice afflicts the world, Trampling the good and lifting the  
depraved.

The Evangelist you Pastors had in mind, When she who sitteth  
upon many waters To fornicate with kings by him was seen;

The same who with the seven heads was born, And power and  
strength from the ten horns received,

So long as virtue to her spouse was pleasing.

Ye have made yourselves a god of gold and silver; And from the  
idolater how differ ye,

Save that he one, and ye a hundred worship? Ah, Constantine!  
of how much ill was mother, Not thy conversion, but that  
marriage dower Which the first wealthy Father took from thee!"  
And while I sang to him such notes as these, Either that anger  
or that conscience stung him, He struggled violently with both  
his feet.

I think in sooth that it my Leader pleased,

With such contented lip he listened ever Unto the sound of the  
true words expressed. Therefore with both his arms he took me  
up, And when he had me all upon his breast, Remounted by the  
way where he descended.

Nor did he tire to have me clasped to him; But bore me to the  
summit of the arch

Which from the fourth dike to the fifth is passage.

There tenderly he laid his burden down, Tenderly on the crag  
uneven and steep,

That would have been hard passage for the goats: Thence was  
unveiled to me another valley.

## Canto XX

Of a new pain behoves me to make verses And give material to  
the twentieth canto

Of the first song, which is of the submerged.

I was already thoroughly disposed To peer down into the  
uncovered depth, Which bathed itself with tears of agony;

And people saw I through the circular valley, Silent and  
weeping, coming at the pace Which in this world the Litanies  
assume.

As lower down my sight descended on them, Wondrously each  
one seemed to be distorted From chin to the beginning of the  
chest;

For tow'rds the reins the countenance was turned, And  
backward it behoved them to advance,

As to look forward had been taken from them.

Perchance indeed by violence of palsy Some one has been thus  
wholly turned awry;

But I ne'er saw it, nor believe it can be. As God may let thee,  
Reader, gather fruit From this thy reading, think now for thyself  
How I could ever keep my face unmoistened,

When our own image near me I beheld Distorted so, the  
weeping of the eyes Along the fissure bathed the hinder parts.  
Truly I wept, leaning upon a peak Of the hard crag, so that my  
Escort said

To me: "Art thou, too, of the other fools? Here pity lives when it  
is wholly dead; Who is a greater reprobate than he

Who feels compassion at the doom divine? Lift up, lift up thy  
head, and see for whom Opened the earth before the Thebans'  
eyes;

Wherefore they all cried: 'Whither rushest thou, Amphiaraus?  
Why dost leave the war?'

And downward ceased he not to fall amain As far as Minos, who  
lays hold on all.

See, he has made a bosom of his shoulders! Because he wished  
to see too far before him Behind he looks, and backward goes  
his way: Behold Tiresias, who his semblance changed, When  
from a male a female he became,

His members being all of them transformed; And afterwards  
was forced to strike once more The two entangled serpents with  
his rod,

Ere he could have again his manly plumes.

That Aruns is, who backs the other's belly, Who in the hills of  
Luni, there where grubs The Carrarese who houses underneath,

Among the marbles white a cavern had

For his abode; whence to behold the stars And sea, the view  
was not cut off from him. And she there, who is covering up her  
breasts, Which thou beholdest not, with loosened tresses,

And on that side has all the hairy skin,

Was Manto, who made quest through many lands, Afterwards  
tarried there where I was born; Whereof I would thou list to me  
a little.

After her father had from life departed, And the city of Bacchus  
had become enslaved, She a long season wandered through the  
world.

Above in beauteous Italy lies a lake At the Alp's foot that shuts  
in Germany Over Tyrol, and has the name Benaco.

By a thousand springs, I think, and more, is bathed, 'Twixt  
Garda and Val Camonica, Pennino, With water that grows  
stagnant in that lake.

Midway a place is where the Trentine Pastor, And he of Brescia,  
and the Veronese

Might give his blessing, if he passed that way.

Sitteth Peschiera, fortress fair and strong, To front the Brescians  
and the Bergamasks,

Where round about the bank descendeth lowest.

There of necessity must fall whatever In bosom of Benaco  
cannot stay,

And grows a river down through verdant pastures.

Soon as the water doth begin to run, No more Benaco is it  
called, but Mincio,

Far as Governo, where it falls in Po. Not far it runs before it  
finds a plain

In which it spreads itself, and makes it marshy, And oft 'tis wont  
in summer to be sickly.

Passing that way the virgin pitiless Land in the middle of the fen  
descried, Untilled and naked of inhabitants; There to escape all  
human intercourse,

She with her servants stayed, her arts to practise And lived, and  
left her empty body there.

The men, thereafter, who were scattered round, Collected in that  
place, which was made strong By the lagoon it had on every  
side;

They built their city over those dead bones, And, after her who  
first the place selected, Mantua named it, without other omen.



Its people once within more crowded were, Ere the stupidity of  
Casalodi

From Pinamonte had received deceit.

Therefore I caution thee, if e'er thou hearest Originate my city  
otherwise,

No falsehood may the verity defraud." And I: "My Master, thy  
discourses are To me so certain, and so take my faith,

That unto me the rest would be spent coals. But tell me of the  
people who are passing, If any one note-worthy thou beholdest,

For only unto that my mind reverts."

Then said he to me: "He who from the cheek Thrusts out his  
beard upon his swarthy shoulders Was, at the time when Greece  
was void of males, So that there scarce remained one in the  
cradle, An augur, and with Calchas gave the moment,

In Aulis, when to sever the first cable. Eryphylus his name was,  
and so sings My lofty Tragedy in some part or other;

That knowest thou well, who knowest the whole of it.

The next, who is so slender in the flanks, Was Michael Scott, who  
of a verity

Of magical illusions knew the game. Behold Guido Bonatti,  
behold Asdente, Who now unto his leather and his thread

Would fain have stuck, but he too late repents. Behold the  
wretched ones, who left the needle, The spool and rock, and  
made them fortune-tellers;

They wrought their magic spells with herb and image.

But come now, for already holds the confines Of both the  
hemispheres, and under Seville Touches the ocean-wave, Cain  
and the thorns, And yesternight the moon was round already;  
Thou shouldst remember well it did not harm thee From time to  
time within the forest deep."

Thus spake he to me, and we walked the while.

## Canto XXI

From bridge to bridge thus, speaking other things Of which my  
Comedy cares not to sing,

We came along, and held the summit, when We halted to behold  
another fissure

Of Malebolge and other vain laments; And I beheld it  
marvellously dark.

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians Boils in the winter the  
tenacious pitch

To smear their unsound vessels o'er again, For sail they cannot;  
and instead thereof One makes his vessel new, and one recaulks  
The ribs of that which many a voyage has made; One hammers  
at the prow, one at the stern,

This one makes oars, and that one cordage twists, Another  
mends the mainsail and the mizzen; Thus, not by fire, but by the  
art divine,

Was boiling down below there a dense pitch Which upon every  
side the bank belimed.

I saw it, but I did not see within it Aught but the bubbles that  
the boiling raised, And all swell up and resubside compressed.

The while below there fixedly I gazed, My Leader, crying out:  
"Beware, beware!" Drew me unto himself from where I stood.

Then I turned round, as one who is impatient

To see what it behoves him to escape, And whom a sudden  
terror doth unman,

Who, while he looks, delays not his departure; And I beheld  
behind us a black devil, Running along upon the crag, approach.

Ah, how ferocious was he in his aspect!

And how he seemed to me in action ruthless,

With open wings and light upon his feet!

His shoulders, which sharp-pointed were and high, A sinner did  
encumber with both haunches, And he held clutched the sinews  
of the feet.

From off our bridge, he said: "O Malebranche, Behold one of the  
elders of Saint Zita;

Plunge him beneath, for I return for others Unto that town,  
which is well furnished with them.

All there are barrators, except Bonturo; No into Yes for money  
there is changed."

He hurled him down, and over the hard crag Turned round, and  
never was a mastiff loosened In so much hurry to pursue a  
thief.

The other sank, and rose again face downward; But the  
demons, under cover of the bridge, Cried: "Here the Santo Volto  
has no place!

Here swims one otherwise than in the Serchio; Therefore, if for  
our gaffs thou wishest not, Do not uplift thyself above the  
pitch."

They seized him then with more than a hundred rakes; They  
said: "It here behoves thee to dance covered, That, if thou  
canst, thou secretly mayest pilfer."

Not otherwise the cooks their scullions make Immerse into the  
middle of the caldron

The meat with hooks, so that it may not float. Said the good  
Master to me: "That it be not Apparent thou art here, crouch  
thyself down Behind a jag, that thou mayest have some screen;

And for no outrage that is done to me

Be thou afraid, because these things I know,

For once before was I in such a scuffle." Then he passed on  
beyond the bridge's head, And as upon the sixth bank he  
arrived,

Need was for him to have a steadfast front. With the same fury,  
and the same uproar, As dogs leap out upon a mendicant,

Who on a sudden begs, where'er he stops, They issued from  
beneath the little bridge,

And turned against him all their grappling-irons; But he cried  
out: "Be none of you malignant! Before those hooks of yours lay  
hold of me,

Let one of you step forward, who may hear me, And then take  
counsel as to grappling me." They all cried out: "Let Malacoda  
go;" Whereat one started, and the rest stood still, And he came  
to him, saying: "What avails it?" "Thinkest thou, Malacoda, to  
behold me Advanced into this place," my Master said, "Safe  
hitherto from all your skill of fence, Without the will divine, and  
fate auspicious?"

Let me go on, for it in Heaven is willed That I another show this  
savage road." Then was his arrogance so humbled in him, That  
he let fall his grapnel at his feet,

And to the others said: "Now strike him not." And unto me my  
Guide: "O thou, who sittest

Among the splinters of the bridge crouched down, Securely now  
return to me again."

Wherefore I started and came swiftly to him; And all the devils  
forward thrust themselves,

So that I feared they would not keep their compact.

And thus beheld I once afraid the soldiers Who issued under  
safeguard from Caprona, Seeing themselves among so many  
foes.

Close did I press myself with all my person Beside my Leader,  
and turned not mine eyes From off their countenance, which  
was not good.

They lowered their rakes, and "Wilt thou have me hit him," They  
said to one another, "on the rump?"

And answered: "Yes; see that thou nick him with it." But the  
same demon who was holding parley With my Conductor turned  
him very quickly, And said: "Be quiet, be quiet, Scarmiglione;"

Then said to us: "You can no farther go Forward upon this crag,  
because is lying All shattered, at the bottom, the sixth arch. And  
if it still doth please you to go onward, Pursue your way along  
upon this rock; Near is another crag that yields a path.

Yesterday, five hours later than this hour, One thousand and  
two hundred sixty-six

Years were complete, that here the way was broken.

I send in that direction some of mine To see if any one doth air  
himself;

Go ye with them; for they will not be vicious.

Step forward, Alichino and Calcabrina," Began he to cry out,  
"and thou, Cagnazzo; And Barbariccia, do thou guide the ten.

Come forward, Libicocco and Draghignazzo, And tusked  
Ciriatto and Graffiacane,

And Farfarello and mad Rubicante; Search ye all round about  
the boiling pitch;

Let these be safe as far as the next crag, That all unbroken  
passes o'er the dens." "O me! what is it, Master, that I see?

Pray let us go," I said, "without an escort,

If thou knowest how, since for myself I ask none.

If thou art as observant as thy wont is, Dost thou not see that  
they do gnash their teeth,

And with their brows are threatening woe to us?" And he to me:

"I will not have thee fear;

Let them gnash on, according to their fancy, Because they do it  
for those boiling wretches." Along the left-hand dike they  
wheeled about; But first had each one thrust his tongue  
between His teeth towards their leader for a signal;

And he had made a trumpet of his rump.

## Canto XXII

I have erewhile seen horsemen moving camp, Begin the  
storming, and their muster make, And sometimes starting off  
for their escape; Vaunt-couriers have I seen upon your land,  
O Aretines, and foragers go forth, Tournaments stricken, and  
the joustings run,

Sometimes with trumpets and sometimes with bells, With kettle-  
drums, and signals of the castles, And with our own, and with  
outlandish things,

But never yet with bagpipe so uncouth

Did I see horsemen move, nor infantry, Nor ship by any sign of  
land or star.



We went upon our way with the ten demons; Ah, savage  
company! but in the church

With saints, and in the tavern with the gluttons!

Ever upon the pitch was my intent,

To see the whole condition of that Bolgia, And of the people  
who therein were burned. Even as the dolphins, when they make  
a sign To mariners by arching of the back,

That they should counsel take to save their vessel, Thus  
sometimes, to alleviate his pain,

One of the sinners would display his back, And in less time  
conceal it than it lightens.

As on the brink of water in a ditch

The frogs stand only with their muzzles out, So that they hide  
their feet and other bulk, So upon every side the sinners stood;

But ever as Barbariccia near them came, Thus underneath the  
boiling they withdrew. I saw, and still my heart doth shudder at  
it, One waiting thus, even as it comes to pass One frog remains,  
and down another dives; And Graffiacan, who most confronted  
him,

Grappled him by his tresses smeared with pitch, And drew him  
up, so that he seemed an otter.

I knew, before, the names of all of them, So had I noted them  
when they were chosen,

And when they called each other, listened how. "O Rubicante,  
see that thou do lay

Thy claws upon him, so that thou mayst flay him," Cried all  
together the accursed ones.

And I: "My Master, see to it, if thou canst, That thou mayst know  
who is the luckless wight,

Thus come into his adversaries' hands." Near to the side of him  
my Leader drew,

Asked of him whence he was; and he replied: "I in the kingdom  
of Navarre was born; My mother placed me servant to a lord,  
For she had borne me to a ribald knave, Destroyer of himself  
and of his things.

Then I domestic was of good King Thibault; I set me there to  
practise barratry,

For which I pay the reckoning in this heat." And Ciriatto, from  
whose mouth projected, On either side, a tusk, as in a boar,

Caused him to feel how one of them could rip. Among malicious  
cats the mouse had come; But Barbariccia clasped him in his  
arms,

And said: "Stand ye aside, while I enfork him." And to my Master  
he turned round his head; "Ask him again," he said, "if more  
thou wish

To know from him, before some one destroy him." The Guide:  
"Now tell then of the other culprits; Knowest thou any one who  
is a Latian,

Under the pitch?" And he: "I separated Lately from one who was  
a neighbour to it; Would that I still were covered up with him,  
For I should fear not either claw nor hook!" And Libicocco: "We  
have borne too much;"

And with his grapnel seized him by the arm, So that, by rending,  
he tore off a tendon.

Eke Draghignazzo wished to pounce upon him Down at the legs;  
whence their Decurion Turned round and round about with evil  
look.

When they again somewhat were pacified, Of him, who still was  
looking at his wound, Demanded my Conductor without stay:  
"Who was that one, from whom a luckless parting Thou sayest  
thou hast made, to come ashore?" And he replied: "It was the  
Friar Gomita,

He of Gallura, vessel of all fraud, Who had the enemies of his  
Lord in hand, And dealt so with them each exults thereat; Money  
he took, and let them smoothly off,

As he says; and in other offices

A barrator was he, not mean but sovereign.

Foregatherers with him one Don Michael Zanche Of Logodoro;  
and of Sardinia

To gossip never do their tongues feel tired. O me! see that one,  
how he grinds his teeth; Still farther would I speak, but am  
afraid Lest he to scratch my itch be making ready." And the  
grand Provost, turned to Farfarello, Who rolled his eyes about  
as if to strike,

Said: "Stand aside there, thou malicious bird." "If you desire  
either to see or hear,"

The terror-stricken recommenced thereon, "Tuscans or  
Lombards, I will make them come.

But let the Malebranche cease a little,

So that these may not their revenges fear, And I, down sitting in  
this very place, For one that I am will make seven come, When I  
shall whistle, as our custom is To do whenever one of us comes  
out."

Cagnazzo at these words his muzzle lifted, Shaking his head,  
and said: "Just hear the trick Which he has thought of, down to  
throw himself!" Whence he, who snares in great abundance had,

Responded: "I by far too cunning am,

When I procure for mine a greater sadness." Alichin held not in,  
but running counter Unto the rest, said to him: "If thou dive,

I will not follow thee upon the gallop, But I will beat my wings  
above the pitch; The height be left, and be the bank a shield To  
see if thou alone dost countervail us."

O thou who readest, thou shalt hear new sport!

Each to the other side his eyes averted; He first, who most  
reluctant was to do it. The Navarrese selected well his time;

Planted his feet on land, and in a moment

Leaped, and released himself from their design. Whereat each  
one was suddenly stung with shame, But he most who was

cause of the defeat;

Therefore he moved, and cried: "Thou art o'ertakern." But little it  
availed, for wings could not

Outstrip the fear; the other one went under, And, flying, upward  
he his breast directed; Not otherwise the duck upon a sudden

Dives under, when the falcon is approaching, And upward he  
returneth cross and weary.

Infuriate at the mockery, Calcabrina Flying behind him followed  
close, desirous The other should escape, to have a quarrel.

And when the barrator had disappeared, He turned his talons  
upon his companion,

And grappled with him right above the moat. But sooth the  
other was a doughty sparhawk To clapperclaw him well; and  
both of them Fell in the middle of the boiling pond.

A sudden intercessor was the heat;  
But ne'ertheless of rising there was naught, To such degree they  
had their wings belimed.

Lamenting with the others, Barbariccia Made four of them fly to  
the other side With all their gaffs, and very speedily  
This side and that they to their posts descended; They stretched  
their hooks towards the pitch-ensnared,  
Who were already baked within the crust, And in this manner  
busied did we leave them.

### Canto XXIII

Silent, alone, and without company We went, the one in front,  
the other after, As go the Minor Friars along their way.  
Upon the fable of Aesop was directed My thought, by reason of  
the present quarrel, Where he has spoken of the frog and  
mouse;

For 'mo' and 'issa' are not more alike Than this one is to that, if  
well we couple End and beginning with a steadfast mind.

And even as one thought from another springs, So afterward  
from that was born another, Which the first fear within me  
double made.

Thus did I ponder: "These on our account Are laughed to scorn,  
with injury and scoff

So great, that much I think it must annoy them.

If anger be engrafted on ill-will, They will come after us more  
merciless

Than dog upon the leveret which he seizes," I felt my hair stand  
all on end already

With terror, and stood backwardly intent, When said I: "Master,  
if thou hidest not Thyself and me forthwith, of Malebranche

I am in dread; we have them now behind us; I so imagine them,  
I already feel them." And he: "If I were made of leaded glass,  
Thine outward image I should not attract Sooner to me than I  
imprint the inner.

Just now thy thoughts came in among my own, With similar  
attitude and similar face,

So that of both one counsel sole I made. If peradventure the  
right bank so slope That we to the next Bolgia can descend, We  
shall escape from the imagined chase." Not yet he finished  
rendering such opinion,

When I beheld them come with outstretched wings, Not far  
remote, with will to seize upon us.

My Leader on a sudden seized me up, Even as a mother who by  
noise is wakened,

And close beside her sees the enkindled flames, Who takes her  
son, and flies, and does not stop, Having more care of him than  
of herself,

So that she clothes her only with a shift; And downward from  
the top of the hard bank

Supine he gave him to the pendent rock, That one side of the  
other Bolgia walls. Ne'er ran so swiftly water through a sluice To  
turn the wheel of any land-built mill, When nearest to the  
paddles it approaches, As did my Master down along that  
border, Bearing me with him on his breast away, As his own son,  
and not as a companion.

Hardly the bed of the ravine below

His feet had reached, ere they had reached the hill Right over  
us; but he was not afraid;

For the high Providence, which had ordained To place them  
ministers of the fifth moat, The power of thence departing took  
from all.

A painted people there below we found, Who went about with  
footsteps very slow,

Weeping and in their semblance tired and vanquished.



They had on mantles with the hoods low down Before their eyes,  
and fashioned of the cut That in Cologne they for the monks are  
made.

Without, they gilded are so that it dazzles; But inwardly all  
leaden and so heavy

That Frederick used to put them on of straw.

O everlastingly fatiguing mantle!

Again we turned us, still to the left hand Along with them, intent  
on their sad plaint; But owing to the weight, that weary folk  
Came on so tardily, that we were new

In company at each motion of the haunch. Whence I unto my  
Leader: "See thou find Some one who may by deed or name be  
known, And thus in going move thine eye about."

And one, who understood the Tuscan speech, Cried to us from  
behind: "Stay ye your feet, Ye, who so run athwart the dusky air!  
Perhaps thou'lt have from me what thou demandest." Whereat  
the Leader turned him, and said: "Wait, And then according to  
his pace proceed."

I stopped, and two beheld I show great haste Of spirit, in their  
faces, to be with me;

But the burden and the narrow way delayed them.

When they came up, long with an eye askance They scanned me  
without uttering a word.

Then to each other turned, and said together: "He by the action  
of his throat seems living; And if they dead are, by what  
privilege

Go they uncovered by the heavy stole?" Then said to me:  
"Tuscan, who to the college Of miserable hypocrites art come,  
Do not disdain to tell us who thou art." And I to them: "Born was  
I, and grew up In the great town on the fair river of Arno, And  
with the body am I've always had.

But who are ye, in whom there trickles down Along your cheeks  
such grief as I behold?

And what pain is upon you, that so sparkles?" And one replied  
to me: "These orange cloaks Are made of lead so heavy, that  
the weights Cause in this way their balances to creak.

Frati Gaudenti were we, and Bolognese; I Catalano, and he  
Loderingo

Named, and together taken by thy city, As the wont is to take  
one man alone,

For maintenance of its peace; and we were such That still it is  
apparent round Gardingo."

"O Friars," began I, "your iniquitous. . ." But said no more; for to  
mine eyes there rushed One crucified with three stakes on the  
ground. When me he saw, he writhed himself all over,  
Blowing into his beard with suspirations; And the Friar Catalan,  
who noticed this,  
Said to me: "This transfixed one, whom thou seest, Counsell'd  
the Pharisees that it was meet  
To put one man to torture for the people. Crosswise and naked  
is he on the path,  
As thou perceivest; and he needs must feel, Whoever passes,  
first how much he weighs; And in like mode his father-in-law is  
punished Within this moat, and the others of the council, Which  
for the Jews was a malignant seed." And thereupon I saw  
Virgilius marvel  
O'er him who was extended on the cross So vilely in eternal  
banishment.

Then he directed to the Friar this voice: "Be not displeas'd, if  
granted thee, to tell us  
If to the right hand any pass slope down By which we two may  
issue forth from here, Without constraining some of the black  
angels

To come and extricate us from this deep." Then he made  
answer: "Nearer than thou hopest There is a rock, that forth  
from the great circle

Proceeds, and crosses all the cruel valleys, Save that at this 'tis  
broken, and does not bridge it;

You will be able to mount up the ruin, That sidelong slopes and  
at the bottom rises."

The Leader stood awhile with head bowed down; Then said:  
"The business badly he recounted Who grapples with his hook  
the sinners yonder." And the Friar: "Many of the Devil's vices  
Once heard I at Bologna, and among them, That he's a liar and  
the father of lies."

Thereat my Leader with great strides went on, Somewhat  
disturbed with anger in his looks; Whence from the heavy-laden  
I departed After the prints of his beloved feet.

#### Canto XXIV

In that part of the youthful year wherein The Sun his locks  
beneath Aquarius tempers, And now the nights draw near to  
half the day, What time the hoar-frost copies on the ground

The outward semblance of her sister white,

But little lasts the temper of her pen, The husbandman, whose  
forage faileth him, Rises, and looks, and seeth the champaign  
All gleaming white, whereat he beats his flank, Returns in doors,  
and up and down laments, Like a poor wretch, who knows not  
what to do; Then he returns and hope revives again,  
Seeing the world has changed its countenance In little time, and  
takes his shepherd's crook, And forth the little lambs to pasture  
drives.

Thus did the Master fill me with alarm, When I beheld his  
forehead so disturbed, And to the ailment came as soon the  
plaster.

For as we came unto the ruined bridge, The Leader turned to  
me with that sweet look Which at the mountain's foot I first  
beheld. His arms he opened, after some advisement  
Within himself elected, looking first Well at the ruin, and laid  
hold of me. And even as he who acts and meditates,  
For aye it seems that he provides beforehand, So upward lifting  
me towards the summit Of a huge rock, he scanned another  
crag, Saying: "To that one grapple afterwards,  
But try first if 'tis such that it will hold thee." This was no way for  
one clothed with a cloak; For hardly we, he light, and I pushed  
upward, Were able to ascend from jag to jag.  
And had it not been, that upon that precinct Shorter was the  
ascent than on the other,

He I know not, but I had been dead beat. But because  
Malebolge tow'rds the mouth Of the profoundest well is all  
inclining, The structure of each valley doth import That one bank  
rises and the other sinks. Still we arrived at length upon the  
point

Wherefrom the last stone breaks itself asunder. The breath was  
from my lungs so milked away, When I was up, that I could go  
no farther,

Nay, I sat down upon my first arrival. "Now it behoves thee thus  
to put off sloth," My Master said; "for sitting upon down, Or  
under quilt, one cometh not to fame, Withouten which whoso his  
life consumes Such vestige leaveth of himself on earth, As  
smoke in air or in the water foam.

And therefore raise thee up, o'ercome the anguish With spirit  
that o'ercometh every battle,  
If with its heavy body it sink not.

A longer stairway it behoves thee mount; 'Tis not enough from  
these to have departed; Let it avail thee, if thou understand  
me." Then I uprose, showing myself provided Better with breath  
than I did feel myself, And said: "Go on, for I am strong and  
bold." Upward we took our way along the crag, Which jagged  
was, and narrow, and difficult, And more precipitous far than  
that before.

Speaking I went, not to appear exhausted; Whereat a voice  
from the next moat came forth,

Not well adapted to articulate words.

I know not what it said, though o'er the back I now was of the  
arch that passes there;

But he seemed moved to anger who was speaking.

I was bent downward, but my living eyes Could not attain the  
bottom, for the dark; Wherefore I: "Master, see that thou arrive

At the next round, and let us descend the wall; For as from  
hence I hear and understand not, So I look down and nothing I  
distinguish." "Other response," he said, "I make thee not, Except  
the doing; for the modest asking Ought to be followed by the  
deed in silence." We from the bridge descended at its head,  
Where it connects itself with the eighth bank, And then was  
manifest to me the Bolgia;

And I beheld therein a terrible throng Of serpents, and of such a  
monstrous kind,

That the remembrance still congeals my blood Let Libya boast  
no longer with her sand;

For if Chelydri, Jaculi, and Phareae

She breeds, with Cenchri and with Amphisbaena, Neither so  
many plagues nor so malignant

E'er showed she with all Ethiopia, Nor with whatever on the Red  
Sea is!

Among this cruel and most dismal throng People were running  
naked and affrighted.

Without the hope of hole or heliotrope.

They had their hands with serpents bound behind them; These  
riveted upon their reins the tail

And head, and were in front of them entwined.

And lo! at one who was upon our side There darted forth a  
serpent, which transfixed him There where the neck is knotted to  
the shoulders.

Nor 'O' so quickly e'er, nor 'I' was written, As he took fire, and  
burned; and ashes wholly

Behoved it that in falling he became.

And when he on the ground was thus destroyed, The ashes drew  
together, and of themselves Into himself they instantly returned.

Even thus by the great sages 'tis confessed The phoenix dies,  
and then is born again, When it approaches its five-hundredth  
year; On herb or grain it feeds not in its life,

But only on tears of incense and amomum, And nard and myrrh  
are its last winding-sheet. And as he is who falls, and knows not  
how,



By force of demons who to earth down drag him, Or other  
    oppilation that binds man,  
When he arises and around him looks, Wholly bewildered by the  
    mighty anguish Which he has suffered, and in looking sighs;  
    Such was that sinner after he had risen.

    Justice of God! O how severe it is,  
    That blows like these in vengeance poureth down!  
The Guide thereafter asked him who he was; Whence he replied:  
    "I rained from Tuscany A short time since into this cruel gorge.  
A bestial life, and not a human, pleased me, Even as the mule I  
    was; I'm Vanni Fucci,

    Beast, and Pistoia was my worthy den." And I unto the Guide:  
    "Tell him to stir not,

And ask what crime has thrust him here below, For once a man  
of blood and wrath I saw him." And the sinner, who had heard,  
    dissembled not, But unto me directed mind and face,

    And with a melancholy shame was painted.

Then said: "It pains me more that thou hast caught me Amid  
    this misery where thou seest me,

    Than when I from the other life was taken.

What thou demandest I cannot deny; So low am I put down  
    because I robbed The sacristy of the fair ornaments,

And falsely once 'twas laid upon another; But that thou mayst  
not such a sight enjoy, If thou shalt e'er be out of the dark  
places,

Thine ears to my announcement ope and hear: Pistoia first of  
Neri groweth meagre;

Then Florence doth renew her men and manners; Mars draws a  
vapour up from Val di Magra, Which is with turbid clouds  
enveloped round, And with impetuous and bitter tempest  
Over Campo Picen shall be the battle; When it shall suddenly  
rend the mist asunder, So that each Bianco shall thereby be  
smitten. And this I've said that it may give thee pain."

## Canto XXV

At the conclusion of his words, the thief

Lifted his hands aloft with both the figs, Crying: "Take that, God,  
for at thee I aim them." From that time forth the serpents were  
my friends;

For one entwined itself about his neck As if it said: "I will not  
thou speak more;"

And round his arms another, and rebound him, Clinching itself  
together so in front,

That with them he could not a motion make.

Pistoia, ah, Pistoia! why resolve not To burn thyself to ashes and  
so perish,

Since in ill-doing thou thy seed excellest? Through all the  
sombre circles of this Hell, Spirit I saw not against God so  
proud,

Not he who fell at Thebes down from the walls!

He fled away, and spake no further word; And I beheld a  
Centaur full of rage

Come crying out: "Where is, where is the scoffer?" I do not think  
Maremma has so many Serpents as he had all along his back,

As far as where our countenance begins. Upon the shoulders,  
just behind the nape, With wings wide open was a dragon lying,  
And he sets fire to all that he encounters. My Master said: "That  
one is Cacus, who Beneath the rock upon Mount Aventine  
Created oftentimes a lake of blood.

He goes not on the same road with his brothers, By reason of  
the fraudulent theft he made

Of the great herd, which he had near to him; Whereat his  
tortuous actions ceased beneath

The mace of Hercules, who peradventure Gave him a hundred,  
and he felt not ten." While he was speaking thus, he had passed  
by, And spirits three had underneath us come,

Of which nor I aware was, nor my Leader, Until what time they  
shouted: "Who are you?" On which account our story made a  
halt,

And then we were intent on them alone. I did not know them;  
but it came to pass, As it is wont to happen by some chance,  
That one to name the other was compelled, Exclaiming: "Where  
can Cianfa have remained?" Whence I, so that the Leader might  
attend, Upward from chin to nose my finger laid.

If thou art, Reader, slow now to believe What I shall say, it will  
no marvel be, For I who saw it hardly can admit it.

As I was holding raised on them my brows, Behold! a serpent  
with six feet darts forth In front of one, and fastens wholly on  
him.

With middle feet it bound him round the paunch, And with the  
forward ones his arms it seized;

Then thrust its teeth through one cheek and the other; The  
hindermost it stretched upon his thighs, And put its tail through  
in between the two,

And up behind along the reins outspread it.

Ivy was never fastened by its barbs Unto a tree so, as this  
horrible reptile

Upon the other's limbs entwined its own. Then they stuck close,  
as if of heated wax

They had been made, and intermixed their colour; Nor one nor  
other seemed now what he was;

E'en as proceedeth on before the flame Upward along the  
paper a brown colour, Which is not black as yet, and the white  
dies.

The other two looked on, and each of them Cried out: "O me,  
Agnello, how thou changest!

Behold, thou now art neither two nor one." Already the two  
heads had one become,

When there appeared to us two figures mingled Into one face,  
wherein the two were lost.

Of the four lists were fashioned the two arms, The thighs and  
legs, the belly and the chest Members became that never yet  
were seen. Every original aspect there was cancelled; Two and  
yet none did the perverted image Appear, and such departed  
with slow pace. Even as a lizard, under the great scourge

Of days canicular, exchanging hedge, Lightning appeareth if  
the road it cross; Thus did appear, coming towards the bellies  
Of the two others, a small fiery serpent, Livid and black as is a  
peppercorn.

And in that part whereat is first received Our aliment, it one of  
them transfixed;

Then downward fell in front of him extended. The one transfixed  
looked at it, but said naught; Nay, rather with feet motionless  
he yawned, Just as if sleep or fever had assailed him.

He at the serpent gazed, and it at him;

One through the wound, the other through the mouth Smoked  
violently, and the smoke commingled.

Henceforth be silent Lucan, where he mentions Wretched  
Sabellus and Nassidius,

And wait to hear what now shall be shot forth.

Be silent Ovid, of Cadmus and Arethusa; For if him to a snake,  
her to fountain, Converts he fabling, that I grudge him not;  
Because two natures never front to front Has he transmuted, so  
that both the forms To interchange their matter ready were.

Together they responded in such wise, That to a fork the serpent  
cleft his tail,

And eke the wounded drew his feet together. The legs together  
with the thighs themselves Adhered so, that in little time the  
juncture No sign whatever made that was apparent. He with the  
cloven tail assumed the figure The other one was losing, and his  
skin Became elastic, and the other's hard.

I saw the arms draw inward at the armpits, And both feet of the  
reptile, that were short, Lengthen as much as those contracted  
were. Thereafter the hind feet, together twisted, Became the  
member that a man conceals, And of his own the wretch had  
two created.

While both of them the exhalation veils With a new colour, and  
engenders hair On one of them and depilates the other, The one  
uprose and down the other fell,

Though turning not away their impious lamps, Underneath  
which each one his muzzle changed. He who was standing drew  
it tow'rds the temples, And from excess of matter, which came  
thither, Issued the ears from out the hollow cheeks;

What did not backward run and was retained Of that excess  
made to the face a nose,

And the lips thickened far as was befitting.

He who lay prostrate thrusts his muzzle forward, And backward  
draws the ears into his head, In the same manner as the snail  
its horns;

And so the tongue, which was entire and apt For speech before,  
is cleft, and the bi-forked In the other closes up, and the smoke  
ceases. The soul, which to a reptile had been changed, Along the  
valley hissing takes to flight,

And after him the other speaking sputters.

Then did he turn upon him his new shoulders, And said to the  
other: "I'll have Buoso run, Crawling as I have done, along this  
road."

In this way I beheld the seventh ballast Shift and reshift, and  
here be my excuse The novelty, if aught my pen transgress.

And notwithstanding that mine eyes might be Somewhat  
bewildered, and my mind dismayed, They could not flee away  
so secretly

But that I plainly saw Puccio Sciancato; And he it was who sole  
of three companions,

Which came in the beginning, was not changed; The other was  
he whom thou, Gaville, weepest.

## Canto XXVI

Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great, That over sea and  
land thou beatest thy wings, And throughout Hell thy name is  
spread abroad!

Among the thieves five citizens of thine

Like these I found, whence shame comes unto me, And thou  
thereby to no great honour risest.

But if when morn is near our dreams are true, Feel shalt thou in  
a little time from now What Prato, if none other, craves for thee.



And if it now were, it were not too soon; Would that it were,  
seeing it needs must be, For 'twill aggrieve me more the more I  
age. We went our way, and up along the stairs The bourns had  
made us to descend before, Remounted my Conductor and  
drew me.

And following the solitary path Among the rocks and ridges of  
the crag, The foot without the hand sped not at all. Then  
sorrowed I, and sorrow now again,

When I direct my mind to what I saw, And more my genius curb  
than I am wont, That it may run not unless virtue guide it; So  
that if some good star, or better thing,

Have given me good, I may myself not grudge it.

As many as the hind (who on the hill Rests at the time when he  
who lights the world His countenance keeps least concealed  
from us,

While as the fly gives place unto the gnat) Seeth the glow-  
worms down along the valley,

Perchance there where he ploughs and makes his vintage; With  
flames as manifold resplendent all

Was the eighth Bolgia, as I grew aware As soon as I was where  
the depth appeared.

And such as he who with the bears avenged him Beheld Elijah's  
chariot at departing,

What time the steeds to heaven erect uprose, For with his eye  
he could not follow it

So as to see aught else than flame alone, Even as a little cloud  
ascending upward,

Thus each along the gorge of the intrenchment Was moving; for  
not one reveals the theft, And every flame a sinner steals away.

I stood upon the bridge uprisen to see, So that, if I had seized  
not on a rock, Down had I fallen without being pushed.

And the Leader, who beheld me so attent, Exclaimed: "Within  
the fires the spirits are;

Each swathes himself with that wherewith he burns." "My  
Master," I replied, "by hearing thee

I am more sure; but I surmised already

It might be so, and already wished to ask thee Who is within  
that fire, which comes so cleft At top, it seems uprising from the  
pyre Where was Eteocles with his brother placed." He answered  
me: "Within there are tormented Ulysses and Diomed, and thus  
together

They unto vengeance run as unto wrath.

And there within their flame do they lament The ambush of the  
horse, which made the door Whence issued forth the Romans'

gentle seed; Therein is wept the craft, for which being dead  
Deidamia still deplores Achilles,  
And pain for the Palladium there is borne." "If they within those  
sparks possess the power To speak," I said, "thee, Master, much  
I pray,  
And re-pray, that the prayer be worth a thousand, That thou  
make no denial of awaiting  
Until the horned flame shall hither come; Thou seest that with  
desire I lean towards it." And he to me: "Worthy is thy entreaty  
Of much applause, and therefore I accept it; But take heed that  
thy tongue restrain itself. Leave me to speak, because I have  
conceived That which thou wishest; for they might disdain  
Perchance, since they were Greeks, discourse of thine." When  
now the flame had come unto that point, Where to my Leader it  
seemed time and place,  
After this fashion did I hear him speak: "O ye, who are twofold  
within one fire, If I deserved of you, while I was living, If I  
deserved of you or much or little  
When in the world I wrote the lofty verses, Do not move on, but  
one of you declare Whither, being lost, he went away to die."  
Then of the antique flame the greater horn, Murmuring, began  
to wave itself about  
Even as a flame doth which the wind fatigues.

Thereafterward, the summit to and fro Moving as if it were the  
tongue that spake, It uttered forth a voice, and said: "When I  
From Circe had departed, who concealed me More than a year  
there near unto Gaeta,

Or ever yet Aeneas named it so, Nor fondness for my son, nor  
reverence For my old father, nor the due affection

Which joyous should have made Penelope, Could overcome  
within me the desire

I had to be experienced of the world, And of the vice and virtue  
of mankind; But I put forth on the high open sea

With one sole ship, and that small company By which I never  
had deserted been.

Both of the shores I saw as far as Spain, Far as Morocco, and  
the isle of Sardes,

And the others which that sea bathes round about.

I and my company were old and slow When at that narrow  
passage we arrived

Where Hercules his landmarks set as signals, That man no  
farther onward should adventure.

On the right hand behind me left I Seville, And on the other  
already had left Ceuta. 'O brothers, who amid a hundred  
thousand Perils,' I said, 'have come unto the West, To this so  
inconsiderable vigil

Which is remaining of your senses still Be ye unwilling to deny  
the knowledge,

Following the sun, of the unpeopled world.

Consider ye the seed from which ye sprang; Ye were not made  
to live like unto brutes, But for pursuit of virtue and of  
knowledge.' So eager did I render my companions,

With this brief exhortation, for the voyage, That then I hardly  
could have held them back. And having turned our stern unto  
the morning, We of the oars made wings for our mad flight,  
Evermore gaining on the larboard side.

Already all the stars of the other pole The night beheld, and ours  
so very low It did not rise above the ocean floor.

Five times rekindled and as many quenched Had been the  
splendour underneath the moon, Since we had entered into the  
deep pass, When there appeared to us a mountain, dim From  
distance, and it seemed to me so high As I had never any one  
beheld.

Joyful were we, and soon it turned to weeping; For out of the  
new land a whirlwind rose, And smote upon the fore part of the  
ship.

Three times it made her whirl with all the waters, At the fourth  
time it made the stern uplift,

And the prow downward go, as pleased Another, Until the sea  
above us closed again."

## Canto XXVII

Already was the flame erect and quiet,  
To speak no more, and now departed from us

With the permission of the gentle Poet; When yet another, which  
behind it came, Caused us to turn our eyes upon its top By a  
confused sound that issued from it. As the Sicilian bull (that  
bellowed first

With the lament of him, and that was right, Who with his file had  
modulated it) Bellowed so with the voice of the afflicted, That,  
notwithstanding it was made of brass, Still it appeared with  
agony transfixed; Thus, by not having any way or issue  
At first from out the fire, to its own language Converted were  
the melancholy words.

But afterwards, when they had gathered way Up through the  
point, giving it that vibration The tongue had given them in their  
passage out, We heard it said: "O thou, at whom I aim

My voice, and who but now wast speaking Lombard, Saying,  
'Now go thy way, no more I urge thee,' Because I come  
perchance a little late,

To stay and speak with me let it not irk thee; Thou seest it irks  
not me, and I am burning.

If thou but lately into this blind world Hast fallen down from  
that sweet Latian land,

Wherefrom I bring the whole of my transgression, Say, if the  
Romagnuols have peace or war,

For I was from the mountains there between Urbino and the  
yoke whence Tiber bursts." I still was downward bent and  
listening,

When my Conductor touched me on the side,

Saying: "Speak thou: this one a Latian is." And I, who had  
beforehand my reply

In readiness, forthwith began to speak:

"O soul, that down below there art concealed, Romagna thine is  
not and never has been Without war in the bosom of its tyrants;

But open war I none have left there now.

Ravenna stands as it long years has stood; The Eagle of Polenta  
there is brooding, So that she covers Cervia with her vans.

The city which once made the long resistance, And of the French  
a sanguinary heap, Beneath the Green Paws finds itself again;  
Verrucchio's ancient Mastiff and the new, Who made such bad  
disposal of Montagna,

Where they are wont make wimbles of their teeth.

The cities of Lamone and Santerno Governs the Lioncel of the  
white lair,

Who changes sides 'twixt summer-time and winter; And that of  
which the Savio bathes the flank, Even as it lies between the  
plain and mountain,

Lives between tyranny and a free state. Now I entreat thee tell  
us who thou art;

Be not more stubborn than the rest have been, So may thy  
name hold front there in the world." After the fire a little more  
had roared

In its own fashion, the sharp point it moved This way and that,  
and then gave forth such breath:

"If I believed that my reply were made To one who to the world  
would e'er return,

This flame without more flickering would stand still; But  
inasmuch as never from this depth



Did any one return, if I hear true, Without the fear of infamy I  
answer, I was a man of arms, then Cordelier,

Believing thus begirt to make amends; And truly my belief had  
been fulfilled

But for the High Priest, whom may ill betide, Who put me back  
into my former sins;

And how and wherefore I will have thee hear. While I was still  
the form of bone and pulp My mother gave to me, the deeds I  
did

Were not those of a lion, but a fox.

The machinations and the covert ways

I knew them all, and practised so their craft, That to the ends of  
earth the sound went forth.

When now unto that portion of mine age I saw myself arrived,  
when each one ought To lower the sails, and coil away the  
ropes,

That which before had pleased me then displeased me; And  
penitent and confessing I surrendered,

Ah woe is me! and it would have bestead me; The Leader of the  
modern Pharisees

Having a war near unto Lateran, And not with Saracens nor with  
the Jews,

For each one of his enemies was Christian, And none of them  
had been to conquer Acre, Nor merchandising in the Sultan's  
land,

Nor the high office, nor the sacred orders, In him regarded, nor  
in me that cord

Which used to make those girt with it more meagre; But even as  
Constantine sought out Sylvester

To cure his leprosy, within Soracte, So this one sought me out as  
an adept To cure him of the fever of his pride.

Counsel he asked of me, and I was silent, Because his words  
appeared inebriate.

And then he said: 'Be not thy heart afraid; Henceforth I thee  
absolve; and thou instruct me How to raze Palestrina to the  
ground.

Heaven have I power to lock and to unlock, As thou dost know;  
therefore the keys are two, The which my predecessor held not  
dear.' Then urged me on his weighty arguments There, where  
my silence was the worst advice; And said I: 'Father, since thou  
washest me

Of that sin into which I now must fall, The promise long with the  
fulfilment short Will make thee triumph in thy lofty seat.' Francis  
came afterward, when I was dead, For me; but one of the black  
Cherubim

Said to him: 'Take him not; do me no wrong; He must come  
down among my servitors, Because he gave the fraudulent  
advice

From which time forth I have been at his hair; For who repents  
not cannot be absolved, Nor can one both repent and will at  
once,

Because of the contradiction which consents not.' O miserable  
me! how I did shudder

When he seized on me, saying: 'Peradventure

Thou didst not think that I was a logician!' He bore me unto  
Minos, who entwined Eight times his tail about his stubborn  
back, And after he had bitten it in great rage, Said: 'Of the  
thievish fire a culprit this;' Wherefore, here where thou seest, am  
I lost, And vested thus in going I bemoan me." When it had thus  
completed its recital,

The flame departed uttering lamentations, Writhing and  
flapping its sharp-pointed horn. Onward we passed, both I and  
my Conductor, Up o'er the crag above another arch,  
Which the moat covers, where is paid the fee By those who,  
sowing discord, win their burden.

## Canto XXVIII

Who ever could, e'en with untrammelled words, Tell of the blood  
and of the wounds in full Which now I saw, by many times  
narrating?

Each tongue would for a certainty fall short By reason of our  
speech and memory,

That have small room to comprehend so much.

If were again assembled all the people Which formerly upon the  
fateful land

Of Puglia were lamenting for their blood Shed by the Romans  
and the lingering war That of the rings made such illustrious  
spoils, As Livy has recorded, who errs not,

With those who felt the agony of blows

By making counterstand to Robert Guiscard, And all the rest,  
whose bones are gathered still At Ceperano, where a renegade  
Was each Apulian, and at Tagliacozzo, Where without arms the  
old Alardo conquered,

And one his limb transpierced, and one lopped off, Should show,  
it would be nothing to compare With the disgusting mode of the  
ninth Bolgia.

A cask by losing centre-piece or cant Was never shattered so,  
as I saw one

Rent from the chin to where one breaketh wind. Between his  
legs were hanging down his entrails; His heart was visible, and  
the dismal sack

That maketh excrement of what is eaten. While I was all  
absorbed in seeing him,

He looked at me, and opened with his hands His bosom, saying:

"See now how I rend me; How mutilated, see, is Mahomet;

In front of me doth Ali weeping go, Cleft in the face from  
forelock unto chin;

And all the others whom thou here beholdest, Disseminators of  
scandal and of schism

While living were, and therefore are cleft thus.

A devil is behind here, who doth cleave us Thus cruelly, unto the  
falchion's edge Putting again each one of all this ream, When  
we have gone around the doleful road; By reason that our  
wounds are closed again Ere any one in front of him repass.

But who art thou, that musest on the crag,

Perchance to postpone going to the pain That is adjudged upon  
thine accusations?"

"Nor death hath reached him yet, nor guilt doth bring him," My  
Master made reply, "to be tormented;

But to procure him full experience,

Me, who am dead, behoves it to conduct him Down here  
through Hell, from circle unto circle; And this is true as that I  
speak to thee."

More than a hundred were there when they heard him, Who in  
the moat stood still to look at me,

Through wonderment oblivious of their torture. "Now say to Fra  
Dolcino, then, to arm him, Thou, who perhaps wilt shortly see the  
sun,

If soon he wish not here to follow me, So with provisions, that  
no stress of snow

May give the victory to the Novarese, Which otherwise to gain  
would not be easy." After one foot to go away he lifted,

This word did Mahomet say unto me, Then to depart upon the  
ground he stretched it.

Another one, who had his throat pierced through, And nose cut  
off close underneath the brows, And had no longer but a single  
ear,

Staying to look in wonder with the others, Before the others did  
his gullet open, Which outwardly was red in every part,

And said: "O thou, whom guilt doth not condemn, And whom I  
once saw up in Latian land, Unless too great similitude deceive  
me,

Call to remembrance Pier da Medicina,

If e'er thou see again the lovely plain That from Vercelli slopes  
to Marcabo,

And make it known to the best two of Fano, To Messer Guido  
and Angiolello likewise, That if foreseeing here be not in vain,  
Cast over from their vessel shall they be, And drowned near  
unto the Cattolica, By the betrayal of a tyrant fell.

Between the isles of Cyprus and Majorca Neptune ne'er yet  
beheld so great a crime, Neither of pirates nor Argolic people.

That traitor, who sees only with one eye, And holds the land,  
which some one here with me

Would fain be fasting from the vision of, Will make them come  
unto a parley with him;

Then will do so, that to Focara's wind They will not stand in need  
of vow or prayer."

And I to him: "Show to me and declare,

If thou wouldst have me bear up news of thee, Who is this  
person of the bitter vision." Then did he lay his hand upon the  
jaw

Of one of his companions, and his mouth Oped, crying: "This is  
he, and he speaks not.

This one, being banished, every doubt submerged In Caesar by  
affirming the forearmed Always with detriment allowed delay."

O how bewildered unto me appeared, With tongue asunder in  
his windpipe slit, Curio, who in speaking was so bold!

And one, who both his hands dissevered had,

The stumps uplifting through the murky air, So that the blood  
made horrible his face, Cried out: "Thou shalt remember Mosca  
also, Who said, alas! 'A thing done has an end!' Which was an ill  
seed for the Tuscan people." "And death unto thy race," thereto  
I added; Whence he, accumulating woe on woe, Departed, like a  
person sad and crazed.

But I remained to look upon the crowd; And saw a thing which I  
should be afraid, Without some further proof, even to recount,  
If it were not that conscience reassures me, That good  
companion which emboldens man

Beneath the hauberk of its feeling pure.

I truly saw, and still I seem to see it,

A trunk without a head walk in like manner As walked the others  
of the mournful herd. And by the hair it held the head  
dissevered, Hung from the hand in fashion of a lantern, And  
that upon us gazed and said: "O me!" It of itself made to itself a  
lamp,

And they were two in one, and one in two; How that can be, He  
knows who so ordains it. When it was come close to the bridge's  
foot, It lifted high its arm with all the head,



To bring more closely unto us its words, Which were: "Behold  
now the sore penalty,  
Thou, who dost breathing go the dead beholding; Behold if any  
be as great as this.  
And so that thou may carry news of me,  
Know that Bertram de Born am I, the same Who gave to the  
Young King the evil comfort.  
I made the father and the son rebellious; Achitophel not more  
with Absalom  
And David did with his accursed goadings.  
Because I parted persons so united, Parted do I now bear my  
brain, alas!  
From its beginning, which is in this trunk. Thus is observed in me  
the counterpoise."

### Canto XXIX

The many people and the divers wounds These eyes of mine  
had so inebriated,  
That they were wishful to stand still and weep; But said Virgilius:  
"What dost thou still gaze at?"

Why is thy sight still riveted down there Among the mournful,  
mutilated shades? Thou hast not done so at the other Bolge;  
Consider, if to count them thou believest, That two-and-twenty  
miles the valley winds, And now the moon is underneath our  
feet; Henceforth the time allotted us is brief,

And more is to be seen than what thou seest." "If thou hadst," I  
made answer thereupon, "Attended to the cause for which I  
looked,

Perhaps a longer stay thou wouldst have pardoned." Meanwhile  
my Guide departed, and behind him

I went, already making my reply, And superadding: "In that  
cavern where

I held mine eyes with such attention fixed, I think a spirit of my  
blood laments

The sin which down below there costs so much." Then said the  
Master: "Be no longer broken Thy thought from this time  
forward upon him; Attend elsewhere, and there let him remain;

For him I saw below the little bridge, Pointing at thee, and  
threatening with his finger Fiercely, and heard him called Geri  
del Bello.

So wholly at that time wast thou impeded By him who formerly  
held Altaforte,

Thou didst not look that way; so he departed." "O my  
Conductor, his own violent death, Which is not yet avenged for  
him," I said, "By any who is sharer in the shame,  
Made him disdainful; whence he went away, As I imagine,  
without speaking to me,

And thereby made me pity him the more." Thus did we speak as  
far as the first place Upon the crag, which the next valley shows  
Down to the bottom, if there were more light. When we were  
now right over the last cloister Of Malebolge, so that its lay-  
brothers

Could manifest themselves unto our sight, Divers lamentings  
pierced me through and through, Which with compassion had  
their arrows barbed,

Whereat mine ears I covered with my hands. What pain would  
be, if from the hospitals Of Valdichiana, 'twixt July and  
September, And of Maremma and Sardinia

All the diseases in one moat were gathered, Such was it here,  
and such a stench came from it As from putrescent limbs is  
wont to issue.

We had descended on the furthest bank From the long crag,  
upon the left hand still, And then more vivid was my power of  
sight

Down tow'rds the bottom, where the mistress Of the high  
Lord, Justice infallible,

Punishes forgers, which she here records.

I do not think a sadder sight to see Was in Aegina the whole  
people sick, (When was the air so full of pestilence, The animals,  
down to the little worm,

All fell, and afterwards the ancient people, According as the  
poets have affirmed, Were from the seed of ants restored  
again,)

Than was it to behold through that dark valley The spirits  
languishing in divers heaps.

This on the belly, that upon the back One of the other lay, and  
others crawling Shifted themselves along the dismal road.

We step by step went onward without speech, Gazing upon and  
listening to the sick

Who had not strength enough to lift their bodies.

I saw two sitting leaned against each other, As leans in heating  
platter against platter, From head to foot bespotted o'er with  
scabs; And never saw I plied a currycomb

By stable-boy for whom his master waits, Or him who keeps  
awake unwillingly,

As every one was plying fast the bite Of nails upon himself, for  
the great rage Of itching which no other succour had.

And the nails downward with them dragged the scab, In fashion  
as a knife the scales of bream,

Or any other fish that has them largest.

"O thou, that with thy fingers dost dismail thee," Began my  
Leader unto one of them,

"And makest of them pincers now and then, Tell me if any  
Latian is with those

Who are herein; so may thy nails suffice thee To all eternity unto  
this work."

"Latians are we, whom thou so wasted seest, Both of us here,"  
one weeping made reply; "But who art thou, that questionest  
about us?" And said the Guide: "One am I who descends Down  
with this living man from cliff to cliff, And I intend to show Hell  
unto him."

Then broken was their mutual support, And trembling each one  
turned himself to me, With others who had heard him by  
rebound.

Wholly to me did the good Master gather, Saying: "Say unto  
them whate'er thou wishest." And I began, since he would have  
it so:

"So may your memory not steal away

In the first world from out the minds of men, But so may it  
survive 'neath many suns, Say to me who ye are, and of what  
people;

Let not your foul and loathsome punishment Make you afraid to  
show yourselves to me."

"I of Arezzo was," one made reply, "And Albert of Siena had me  
burned;

But what I died for does not bring me here. 'Tis true I said to  
him, speaking in jest, That I could rise by flight into the air, And  
he who had conceit, but little wit,

Would have me show to him the art; and only Because no  
Daedalus I made him, made me Be burned by one who held him  
as his son.

But unto the last Bolgia of the ten,

For alchemy, which in the world I practised, Minos, who cannot  
err, has me condemned." And to the Poet said I: "Now was ever

So vain a people as the Sienese?

Not for a certainty the French by far." Whereat the other leper,  
who had heard me, Replied unto my speech: "Taking out Stricca,  
Who knew the art of moderate expenses, And Niccolo, who the  
luxurious use

Of cloves discovered earliest of all Within that garden where  
such seed takes root;

And taking out the band, among whom squandered Caccia  
d'Ascian his vineyards and vast woods, And where his wit the  
Abbagliato proffered!

But, that thou know who thus doth second thee Against the  
Sienese, make sharp thine eye Tow'rds me, so that my face well  
answer thee, And thou shalt see I am Capocchio's shade, Who  
metals falsified by alchemy;

Thou must remember, if I well descry thee,

How I a skilful ape of nature was."

### Canto XXX

'Twas at the time when Juno was enraged, For Semele, against  
the Theban blood,

As she already more than once had shown, So reft of reason  
Athamas became,

That, seeing his own wife with children twain Walking  
encumbered upon either hand,

He cried: "Spread out the nets, that I may take The lioness and  
her whelps upon the passage;" And then extended his unpitied  
claws, Seizing the first, who had the name Learchus,  
And whirled him round, and dashed him on a rock; And she, with  
the other burthen, drowned herself;— And at the time when  
fortune downward hurled

The Trojan's arrogance, that all things dared, So that the king  
was with his kingdom crushed, Hecuba sad, disconsolate, and  
captive,

When lifeless she beheld Polyxena, And of her Polydorus on the  
shore

Of ocean was the dolorous one aware, Out of her senses like a  
dog she barked,

So much the anguish had her mind distorted; But not of Thebes  
the furies nor the Trojan Were ever seen in any one so cruel

In goading beasts, and much more human members, As I  
beheld two shadows pale and naked,

Who, biting, in the manner ran along

That a boar does, when from the sty turned loose.

One to Capocchio came, and by the nape Seized with its teeth  
his neck, so that in dragging

It made his belly grate the solid bottom.



And the Aretine, who trembling had remained, Said to me: "That  
mad sprite is Gianni Schicchi, And raving goes thus harring  
other people." "O," said I to him, "so may not the other  
Set teeth on thee, let it not weary thee To tell us who it is, ere it  
dart hence." And he to me: "That is the ancient ghost Of the  
nefarious Myrrha, who became Beyond all rightful love her  
father's lover.

She came to sin with him after this manner, By counterfeiting of  
another's form;

As he who goeth yonder undertook, That he might gain the lady  
of the herd, To counterfeit in himself Buoso Donati, Making a  
will and giving it due form." And after the two maniacs had  
passed

On whom I held mine eye, I turned it back To look upon the  
other evil-born.

I saw one made in fashion of a lute, If he had only had the  
groin cut off

Just at the point at which a man is forked. The heavy dropsy,  
that so disproportions

The limbs with humours, which it ill concocts, That the face  
corresponds not to the belly, Compelled him so to hold his lips  
apart

As does the hectic, who because of thirst

One tow'rds the chin, the other upward turns. "O ye, who without  
any torment are,

And why I know not, in the world of woe," He said to us,  
"behold, and be attentive Unto the misery of Master Adam;  
I had while living much of what I wished, And now, alas! a drop  
of water crave.

The rivulets, that from the verdant hills Of Cassentin descend  
down into Arno,

Making their channels to be cold and moist, Ever before me  
stand, and not in vain; For far more doth their image dry me up

Than the disease which strips my face of flesh.

The rigid justice that chastises me Draweth occasion from the  
place in which I sinned, to put the more my sighs in flight.

There is Romena, where I counterfeited The currency imprinted  
with the Baptist, For which I left my body burned above. But if I  
here could see the tristful soul

Of Guido, or Alessandro, or their brother, For Branda's fount I  
would not give the sight.

One is within already, if the raving Shades that are going round  
about speak truth; But what avails it me, whose limbs are tied?

If I were only still so light, that in

A hundred years I could advance one inch, I had already  
started on the way,

Seeking him out among this squalid folk, Although the circuit be  
eleven miles,

And be not less than half a mile across.

For them am I in such a family; They did induce me into coining  
florins,

Which had three carats of impurity."

And I to him: "Who are the two poor wretches That smoke like  
unto a wet hand in winter, Lying there close upon thy right-hand  
confines?" "I found them here," replied he, "when I rained Into  
this chasm, and since they have not turned, Nor do I think they  
will for evermore.

One the false woman is who accused Joseph, The other the  
false Sinon, Greek of Troy; From acute fever they send forth  
such reek." And one of them, who felt himself annoyed At being,  
peradventure, named so darkly, Smote with the fist upon his  
hardened paunch.

It gave a sound, as if it were a drum; And Master Adam smote  
him in the face, With arm that did not seem to be less hard,  
Saying to him: "Although be taken from me

All motion, for my limbs that heavy are, I have an arm  
unfettered for such need."

Whereat he answer made: "When thou didst go Unto the fire,  
thou hadst it not so ready:

But hadst it so and more when thou wast coining." The  
dropsical: "Thou sayest true in that;

But thou wast not so true a witness there, Where thou wast  
questioned of the truth at Troy."

"If I spake false, thou falsifiedst the coin," Said Sinon; "and for  
one fault I am here,

And thou for more than any other demon." "Remember, perjurer,  
about the horse,"

He made reply who had the swollen belly, "And rueful be it thee  
the whole world knows it."

"Rueful to thee the thirst be wherewith cracks Thy tongue," the  
Greek said, "and the putrid water

That hedges so thy paunch before thine eyes." Then the false-  
coiner: "So is gaping wide Thy mouth for speaking evil, as 'tis  
wont; Because if I have thirst, and humour stuff me

Thou hast the burning and the head that aches, And to lick up  
the mirror of Narcissus

Thou wouldst not want words many to invite thee." In listening  
to them was I wholly fixed,

When said the Master to me: "Now just look, For little wants it  
that I quarrel with thee." When him I heard in anger speak to  
me,

I turned me round towards him with such shame That still it  
eddies through my memory.

And as he is who dreams of his own harm, Who dreaming  
wishes it may be a dream, So that he craves what is, as if it  
were not; Such I became, not having power to speak, For to  
excuse myself I wished, and still Excused myself, and did not  
think I did it.

"Less shame doth wash away a greater fault," The Master said,  
"than this of thine has been; Therefore thyself disburden of all  
sadness, And make account that I am aye beside thee, If e'er it  
come to pass that fortune bring thee

Where there are people in a like dispute; For a base wish it is to  
wish to hear it."

### Canto XXXI

One and the selfsame tongue first wounded me, So that it  
tinged the one cheek and the other, And then held out to me the  
medicine;

Thus do I hear that once Achilles' spear, His and his father's,  
used to be the cause First of a sad and then a gracious boon.

We turned our backs upon the wretched valley, Upon the bank  
that girds it round about, Going across it without any speech.  
There it was less than night, and less than day, So that my sight  
went little in advance;  
But I could hear the blare of a loud horn, So loud it would have  
made each thunder faint,  
Which, counter to it following its way, Mine eyes directed wholly  
to one place.

After the dolorous discomfiture When Charlemagne the holy  
emprise lost,

So terribly Orlando sounded not.

Short while my head turned thitherward I held When many lofty  
towers I seemed to see, Whereat I: "Master, say, what town is  
this?" And he to me: "Because thou peerest forth Athwart the  
darkness at too great a distance, It happens that thou errest in  
thy fancy.

Well shalt thou see, if thou arrivest there,

How much the sense deceives itself by distance; Therefore a  
little faster spur thee on."

Then tenderly he took me by the hand, And said: "Before we  
farther have advanced,

That the reality may seem to thee

Less strange, know that these are not towers, but giants, And  
they are in the well, around the bank,  
From navel downward, one and all of them." As, when the fog is  
vanishing away, Little by little doth the sight refigure  
Whate'er the mist that crowds the air conceals, So, piercing  
through the dense and darksome air, More and more near  
approaching tow'rd the verge,  
My error fled, and fear came over me; Because as on its circular  
parapets Montereccione crowns itself with towers, E'en thus the  
margin which surrounds the well With one half of their bodies  
turreted  
The horrible giants, whom Jove menaces E'en now from out the  
heavens when he thunders.  
And I of one already saw the face, Shoulders, and breast, and  
great part of the belly,  
And down along his sides both of the arms. Certainly Nature,  
when she left the making Of animals like these, did well indeed,  
By taking such executors from Mars; And if of elephants and  
whales she doth not  
Repent her, whosoever looketh subtly More just and more  
discreet will hold her for it;  
For where the argument of intellect

Is added unto evil will and power,  
No rampart can the people make against it. His face appeared  
to me as long and large As is at Rome the pine-cone of Saint  
Peter's, And in proportion were the other bones;  
So that the margin, which an apron was Down from the middle,  
showed so much of him  
Above it, that to reach up to his hair Three Frieslanders in vain  
had vaunted them;  
For I beheld thirty great palms of him  
Down from the place where man his mantle buckles. "Raphael  
mai amech izabi almi,"  
Began to clamour the ferocious mouth, To which were not  
befitting sweeter psalms.  
And unto him my Guide: "Soul idiotic, Keep to thy horn, and vent  
thyself with that, When wrath or other passion touches thee.  
Search round thy neck, and thou wilt find the belt Which keeps it  
fastened, O bewildered soul, And see it, where it bars thy mighty  
breast." Then said to me: "He doth himself accuse; This one is  
Nimrod, by whose evil thought One language in the world is not  
still used.  
Here let us leave him and not speak in vain; For even such to  
him is every language



As his to others, which to none is known." Therefore a longer  
journey did we make, Turned to the left, and a crossbow-shot  
off We found another far more fierce and large. In binding him,  
who might the master be

I cannot say; but he had pinioned close Behind the right arm,  
and in front the other, With chains, that held him so begirt  
about

From the neck down, that on the part uncovered It wound itself  
as far as the fifth gyre.

"This proud one wished to make experiment Of his own power  
against the Supreme Jove,"

My Leader said, "whence he has such a guerdon. Ephialtes is his  
name; he showed great prowess.

What time the giants terrified the gods; The arms he wielded  
never more he moves."

And I to him: "If possible, I should wish That of the measureless  
Briareus

These eyes of mine might have experience." Whence he replied:  
"Thou shalt behold Antaeus Close by here, who can speak and is  
unbound, Who at the bottom of all crime shall place us. Much  
farther yon is he whom thou wouldst see, And he is bound, and  
fashioned like to this one, Save that he seems in aspect more

ferocious." There never was an earthquake of such might That it  
could shake a tower so violently,

As Ephialtes suddenly shook himself.

Then was I more afraid of death than ever, For nothing more  
was needful than the fear, If I had not beheld the manacles.

Then we proceeded farther in advance, And to Antaeus came,  
who, full five ells

Without the head, forth issued from the cavern. "O thou, who in  
the valley fortunate,

Which Scipio the heir of glory made, When Hannibal turned  
back with all his hosts, Once brought'st a thousand lions for thy  
prey, And who, hadst thou been at the mighty war Among thy  
brothers, some it seems still think

The sons of Earth the victory would have gained: Place us  
below, nor be disdainful of it,

There where the cold doth lock Cocytus up.

Make us not go to Tityus nor Typhoeus;

This one can give of that which here is longed for; Therefore  
stoop down, and do not curl thy lip.

Still in the world can he restore thy fame; Because he lives, and  
still expects long life, If to itself Grace call him not untimely."

So said the Master; and in haste the other His hands extended  
and took up my Guide,— Hands whose great pressure Hercules  
once felt.

Virgilius, when he felt himself embraced, Said unto me: "Draw  
nigh, that I may take thee;"

Then of himself and me one bundle made.

As seems the Carisenda, to behold Beneath the leaning side,  
when goes a cloud

Above it so that opposite it hangs; Such did Antaeus seem to  
me, who stood Watching to see him stoop, and then it was I  
could have wished to go some other way. But lightly in the  
abyss, which swallows up

Judas with Lucifer, he put us down;

Nor thus bowed downward made he there delay, But, as a mast  
does in a ship, uprose.

## Canto XXXII

If I had rhymes both rough and stridulous, As were appropriate  
to the dismal hole Down upon which thrust all the other rocks, I  
would press out the juice of my conception More fully; but  
because I have them not, Not without fear I bring myself to  
speak; For 'tis no enterprise to take in jest,

To sketch the bottom of all the universe, Nor for a tongue that  
cries Mamma and Babbo. But may those Ladies help this verse  
of mine,

Who helped Amphion in enclosing Thebes, That from the fact  
the word be not diverse.

O rabble ill-begotten above all, Who're in the place to speak of  
which is hard, 'Twere better ye had here been sheep or goats!

When we were down within the darksome well, Beneath the  
giant's feet, but lower far,

And I was scanning still the lofty wall,

I heard it said to me: "Look how thou steppest! Take heed thou  
do not trample with thy feet The heads of the tired, miserable  
brothers!" Whereat I turned me round, and saw before me And  
underfoot a lake, that from the frost

The semblance had of glass, and not of water.

So thick a veil ne'er made upon its current In winter-time  
Danube in Austria,

Nor there beneath the frigid sky the Don,

As there was here; so that if Tambernich Had fallen upon it, or  
Pietrapana,

E'en at the edge 'twould not have given a creak.

And as to croak the frog doth place himself With muzzle out of  
water,—when is dreaming Of gleaning oftentimes the peasant-  
girl,— Livid, as far down as where shame appears, Were the  
disconsolate shades within the ice, Setting their teeth unto the  
note of storks.

Each one his countenance held downward bent; From mouth the  
cold, from eyes the doleful heart Among them witness of itself  
procures.

When round about me somewhat I had looked, I downward  
turned me, and saw two so close, The hair upon their heads  
together mingled.

"Ye who so strain your breasts together, tell me," I said, "who  
are you;" and they bent their necks, And when to me their faces  
they had lifted, Their eyes, which first were only moist within,  
Gushed o'er the eyelids, and the frost congealed The tears  
between, and locked them up again.

Clamp never bound together wood with wood So strongly;  
whereat they, like two he-goats, Butted together, so much wrath  
o'ercame them.

And one, who had by reason of the cold

Lost both his ears, still with his visage downward, Said: "Why  
dost thou so mirror thyself in us?"

If thou desire to know who these two are, The valley whence  
Bisenzio descends Belonged to them and to their father Albert.

They from one body came, and all Caina  
Thou shalt search through, and shalt not find a shade More  
worthy to be fixed in gelatine;  
Not he in whom were broken breast and shadow At one and the  
same blow by Arthur's hand; Focaccia not; not he who me  
encumbers  
So with his head I see no farther forward, And bore the name of  
Sassol Mascheroni;  
Well knowest thou who he was, if thou art Tuscan.  
And that thou put me not to further speech, Know that I  
Camicion de' Pazzi was, And wait Carlino to exonerate me."  
Then I beheld a thousand faces, made  
Purple with cold; whence o'er me comes a shudder, And  
evermore will come, at frozen ponds.  
And while we were advancing tow'rds the middle, Where  
everything of weight unites together,  
And I was shivering in the eternal shade, Whether 'twere will, or  
destiny, or chance, I know not; but in walking 'mong the heads I  
struck my foot hard in the face of one.  
Weeping he growled: "Why dost thou trample me?"

Unless thou comest to increase the vengeance of Montaperti,  
why dost thou molest me?" And I: "My Master, now wait here for  
me, That I through him may issue from a doubt;

Then thou mayst hurry me, as thou shalt wish." The Leader  
stopped; and to that one I said Who was blaspheming  
vehemently still:

"Who art thou, that thus reprehendest others?"

"Now who art thou, that goest through Antenora Smiting,"  
replied he, "other people's cheeks, So that, if thou wert living,  
'twere too much?"

"Living I am, and dear to thee it may be," Was my response, "if  
thou demandest fame, That 'mid the other notes thy name I  
place." And he to me: "For the reverse I long;

Take thyself hence, and give me no more trouble; For ill thou  
knowest to flatter in this hollow." Then by the scalp behind I  
seized upon him, And said: "It must needs be thou name thyself,

Or not a hair remain upon thee here." Whence he to me:

"Though thou strip off my hair,

I will not tell thee who I am, nor show thee, If on my head a  
thousand times thou fall."

I had his hair in hand already twisted, And more than one shock  
of it had pulled out, He barking, with his eyes held firmly down,

When cried another: "What doth ail thee, Bocca?

Is't not enough to clatter with thy jaws, But thou must bark?  
what devil touches thee?" "Now," said I, "I care not to have thee  
speak,

Accursed traitor; for unto thy shame I will report of thee  
veracious news."

"Begone," replied he, "and tell what thou wilt, But be not silent, if  
thou issue hence,

Of him who had just now his tongue so prompt; He weepeth  
here the silver of the French;

'I saw,' thus canst thou phrase it, 'him of Duera There where the  
sinners stand out in the cold.'

If thou shouldst questioned be who else was there, Thou hast  
beside thee him of Beccaria,

Of whom the gorget Florence slit asunder; Gianni del Soldanier,  
I think, may be Yonder with Ganellon, and Tebaldello Who oped  
Faenza when the people slep." Already we had gone away from  
him, When I beheld two frozen in one hole,

So that one head a hood was to the other; And even as bread  
through hunger is devoured,

The uppermost on the other set his teeth, There where the brain  
is to the nape united.



Not in another fashion Tydeus gnawed The temples of  
Menalippus in disdain,  
Than that one did the skull and the other things. "O thou, who  
showest by such bestial sign  
Thy hatred against him whom thou art eating, Tell me the  
wherefore," said I, "with this compact,  
That if thou rightfully of him complain,  
In knowing who ye are, and his transgression, I in the world  
above repay thee for it,  
If that wherewith I speak be not dried up." Canto XXXIII  
His mouth uplifted from his grim repast, That sinner, wiping it  
upon the hair  
Of the same head that he behind had wasted.  
Then he began: "Thou wilt that I renew  
The desperate grief, which wrings my heart already  
To think of only, ere I speak of it;  
But if my words be seed that may bear fruit Of infamy to the  
traitor whom I gnaw, Speaking and weeping shalt thou see  
together.  
I know not who thou art, nor by what mode Thou hast come  
down here; but a Florentine Thou seemest to me truly, when I

hear thee. Thou hast to know I was Count Ugolino, And this one  
was Ruggieri the Archbishop;

Now I will tell thee why I am such a neighbour.

That, by effect of his malicious thoughts, Trusting in him I was  
made prisoner, And after put to death, I need not say;  
But ne'ertheless what thou canst not have heard, That is to say,  
how cruel was my death,

Hear shalt thou, and shalt know if he has wronged me.

A narrow perforation in the mew, Which bears because of me  
the title of Famine,

And in which others still must be locked up, Had shown me  
through its opening many moons Already, when I dreamed the  
evil dream

Which of the future rent for me the veil.

This one appeared to me as lord and master, Hunting the wolf  
and whelps upon the mountain For which the Pisans cannot  
Lucca see.

With sleuth-hounds gaunt, and eager, and well trained, Gualandi  
with Sismondi and Lanfianchi

He had sent out before him to the front.

After brief course seemed unto me forespent The father and the  
sons, and with sharp tushes

It seemed to me I saw their flanks ripped open.

When I before the morrow was awake, Moaning amid their  
sleep I heard my sons Who with me were, and asking after  
bread. Cruel indeed art thou, if yet thou grieve not, Thinking of  
what my heart foreboded me,

And weep'st thou not, what art thou wont to weep at?

They were awake now, and the hour drew nigh At which our  
food used to be brought to us,

And through his dream was each one apprehensive; And I heard  
locking up the under door

Of the horrible tower; whereat without a word I gazed into the  
faces of my sons.

I wept not, I within so turned to stone; They wept; and darling  
little Anselm mine

Said: 'Thou dost gaze so, father, what doth ail thee?' Still not a  
tear I shed, nor answer made

All of that day, nor yet the night thereafter, Until another sun  
rose on the world.

As now a little glimmer made its way Into the dolorous prison,  
and I saw Upon four faces my own very aspect, Both of my  
hands in agony I bit; And, thinking that I did it from desire Of  
eating, on a sudden they uprose,

And said they: 'Father, much less pain 'twill give us If thou do  
eat of us; thyself didst clothe us

With this poor flesh, and do thou strip it off.' I calmed me then,  
not to make them more sad.

That day we all were silent, and the next.

Ah! obdurate earth, wherefore didst thou not open?

When we had come unto the fourth day, Gaddo Threw himself  
down outstretched before my feet, Saying, 'My father, why dost  
thou not help me?' And there he died; and, as thou seest me,

I saw the three fall, one by one, between The fifth day and the  
sixth; whence I betook me,

Already blind, to groping over each,

And three days called them after they were dead; Then hunger  
did what sorrow could not do." When he had said this, with his  
eyes distorted, The wretched skull resumed he with his teeth,

Which, as a dog's, upon the bone were strong.

Ah! Pisa, thou opprobrium of the people

Of the fair land there where the 'Si' doth sound, Since slow to  
punish thee thy neighbours are, Let the Capraia and Gorgona  
move,

And make a hedge across the mouth of Arno That every person  
in thee it may drown!

For if Count Ugolino had the fame Of having in thy castles thee  
betrayed,

Thou shouldst not on such cross have put his sons.

Guiltless of any crime, thou modern Thebes! Their youth made  
Ugucione and Brigata, And the other two my song doth name  
above!

We passed still farther onward, where the ice Another people  
ruggedly enswathes,

Not downward turned, but all of them reversed. Weeping itself  
there does not let them weep, And grief that finds a barrier in  
the eyes

Turns itself inward to increase the anguish; Because the earliest  
tears a cluster form, And, in the manner of a crystal visor,

Fill all the cup beneath the eyebrow full. And notwithstanding  
that, as in a callus, Because of cold all sensibility

Its station had abandoned in my face, Still it appeared to me I  
felt some wind;

Whence I: "My Master, who sets this in motion?

Is not below here every vapour quenched?" Whence he to me:  
"Full soon shalt thou be where Thine eye shall answer make to  
thee of this, Seeing the cause which raineth down the blast."

And one of the wretches of the frozen crust Cried out to us: "O  
souls so merciless

That the last post is given unto you, Lift from mine eyes the  
rigid veils, that I

May vent the sorrow which impregns my heart A little, e'er the  
weeping recongeal."

Whence I to him: "If thou wouldst have me help thee Say who  
thou wast; and if I free thee not,

May I go to the bottom of the ice." Then he replied: "I am Friar  
Alberigo; He am I of the fruit of the bad garden, Who here a  
date am getting for my fig."

"O," said I to him, "now art thou, too, dead?" And he to me:  
"How may my body fare Up in the world, no knowledge I  
possess.

Such an advantage has this Ptolomaea, That oftentimes the  
soul descendeth here

Sooner than Atropos in motion sets it.

And, that thou mayest more willingly remove From off my  
countenance these glassy tears, Know that as soon as any soul  
betrays

As I have done, his body by a demon Is taken from him, who  
thereafter rules it, Until his time has wholly been revolved.

Itself down rushes into such a cistern; And still perchance above  
appears the body Of yonder shade, that winters here behind  
me.

This thou shouldst know, if thou hast just come down; It is Ser  
Branca d' Oria, and many years

Have passed away since he was thus locked up." "I think," said I  
to him, "thou dost deceive me; For Branca d' Oria is not dead as  
yet,

And eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and puts on clothes." "In moat  
above," said he, "of Malebranche, There where is boiling the  
tenacious pitch,

As yet had Michel Zanche not arrived, When this one left a devil  
in his stead In his own body and one near of kin,

Who made together with him the betrayal.

But hitherward stretch out thy hand forthwith, Open mine  
eyes;"—and open them I did not, And to be rude to him was  
courtesy.

Ah, Genoese! ye men at variance With every virtue, full of every  
vice

Wherefore are ye not scattered from the world?

For with the vilest spirit of Romagna

I found of you one such, who for his deeds

In soul already in Cocytus bathes, And still above in body seems  
alive!

#### Canto XXXIV

"Vexilla Regis prodeunt Inferni' Towards us; therefore look in  
front of thee," My Master said, "if thou discernest him."

As, when there breathes a heavy fog, or when Our hemisphere is  
darkening into night, Appears far off a mill the wind is turning,  
Methought that such a building then I saw; And, for the wind, I  
drew myself behind

My Guide, because there was no other shelter.

Now was I, and with fear in verse I put it, There where the  
shades were wholly covered up, And glimmered through like  
unto straws in glass.

Some prone are lying, others stand erect, This with the head,  
and that one with the soles;

Another, bow-like, face to feet inverts.

When in advance so far we had proceeded, That it my Master  
pleased to show to me

The creature who once had the beauteous semblance, He from  
before me moved and made me stop, Saying: "Behold Dis, and  
behold the place



Where thou with fortitude must arm thyself." How frozen I  
became and powerless then, Ask it not, Reader, for I write it not,

Because all language would be insufficient.

I did not die, and I alive remained not;

Think for thyself now, hast thou aught of wit, What I became,  
being of both deprived.

The Emperor of the kingdom dolorous From his mid-breast forth  
issued from the ice;

And better with a giant I compare Than do the giants with those  
arms of his; Consider now how great must be that whole,

Which unto such a part conforms itself. Were he as fair once, as  
he now is foul, And lifted up his brow against his Maker, Well  
may proceed from him all tribulation.

O, what a marvel it appeared to me, When I beheld three faces  
on his head! The one in front, and that vermilion was;

Two were the others, that were joined with this Above the  
middle part of either shoulder, And they were joined together at  
the crest;

And the right-hand one seemed 'twixt white and yellow; The left  
was such to look upon as those

Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward. Underneath  
each came forth two mighty wings, Such as befitting were so  
great a bird;

Sails of the sea I never saw so large. No feathers had they, but  
as of a bat

Their fashion was; and he was waving them, So that three winds  
proceeded forth therefrom.

Thereby Cocytus wholly was congealed.

With six eyes did he weep, and down three chins Trickled the  
tear-drops and the bloody drivel. At every mouth he with his  
teeth was crunching

A sinner, in the manner of a brake, So that he three of them  
tormented thus. To him in front the biting was as naught  
Unto the clawing, for sometimes the spine Utterly stripped of all  
the skin remained.

"That soul up there which has the greatest pain," The Master  
said, "is Judas Iscariot;

With head inside, he plies his legs without. Of the two others,  
who head downward are,

The one who hangs from the black jowl is Brutus; See how he  
writhes himself, and speaks no word. And the other, who so  
stalwart seems, is Cassius.

But night is reascending, and 'tis time That we depart, for we  
have seen the whole."

As seemed him good, I clasped him round the neck, And he the  
vantage seized of time and place, And when the wings were  
opened wide apart,

He laid fast hold upon the shaggy sides; From fell to fell  
descended downward then Between the thick hair and the  
frozen crust.

When we were come to where the thigh revolves Exactly on the  
thickness of the haunch,

The Guide, with labour and with hard-drawn breath, Turned  
round his head where he had had his legs, And grappled to the  
hair, as one who mounts,

So that to Hell I thought we were returning. "Keep fast thy hold,  
for by such stairs as these," The Master said, panting as one  
fatigued, "Must we perforce depart from so much evil." Then  
through the opening of a rock he issued,

And down upon the margin seated me; Then tow'rds me he  
outstretched his wary step.

I lifted up mine eyes and thought to see Lucifer in the same  
way I had left him; And I beheld him upward hold his legs.

And if I then became disquieted, Let stolid people think who do  
not see

What the point is beyond which I had passed. "Rise up," the  
Master said, "upon thy feet; The way is long, and difficult the  
road,

And now the sun to middle-tierce returns." It was not any  
palace corridor

There where we were, but dungeon natural, With floor uneven  
and unease of light. "Ere from the abyss I tear myself away, My  
Master," said I when I had arisen,

"To draw me from an error speak a little; Where is the ice? and  
how is this one fixed Thus upside down? and how in such short  
time

From eve to morn has the sun made his transit?" And he to me:  
"Thou still imaginest

Thou art beyond the centre, where I grasped The hair of the fell  
worm, who mines the world.

That side thou wast, so long as I descended; When round I  
turned me, thou didst pass the point To which things heavy  
draw from every side, And now beneath the hemisphere art  
come Opposite that which overhangs the vast

Dry-land, and 'neath whose cope was put to death The Man who  
without sin was born and lived.

Thou hast thy feet upon the little sphere Which makes the other  
face of the Judecca. Here it is morn when it is evening there;

And he who with his hair a stairway made us Still fixed  
remaineth as he was before.

Upon this side he fell down out of heaven; And all the land, that  
whilom here emerged, For fear of him made of the sea a veil,

And came to our hemisphere; and peradventure To flee from  
him, what on this side appears Left the place vacant here, and  
back recoiled." A place there is below, from Beelzebub

As far receding as the tomb extends, Which not by sight is  
known, but by the sound

Of a small rivulet, that there descendeth Through chasm within  
the stone, which it has gnawed

With course that winds about and slightly falls.

The Guide and I into that hidden road Now entered, to return to  
the bright world; And without care of having any rest

We mounted up, he first and I the second, Till I beheld through  
a round aperture

Some of the beauteous things that Heaven doth bear; Thence  
we came forth to rebehold the stars.

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## PURGATORIO

### Canto I

To run o'er better waters hoists its sail The little vessel of my  
genius now, That leaves behind itself a sea so cruel; And of that  
second kingdom will I sing

Wherein the human spirit doth purge itself, And to ascend to  
heaven becometh worthy.

But let dead Poesy here rise again, O holy Muses, since that I  
am yours, And here Calliope somewhat ascend,

My song accompanying with that sound, Of which the miserable  
magpies felt

The blow so great, that they despaired of pardon.

Sweet colour of the oriental sapphire, That was upgathered in  
the cloudless aspect

Of the pure air, as far as the first circle, Unto mine eyes did  
recommence delight Soon as I issued forth from the dead air,

Which had with sadness filled mine eyes and breast.

The beauteous planet, that to love incites, Was making all the  
orient to laugh, Veiling the Fishes that were in her escort.

To the right hand I turned, and fixed my mind Upon the other  
pole, and saw four stars

Ne'er seen before save by the primal people. Rejoicing in their  
flamelets seemed the heaven.

O thou septentrional and widowed site, Because thou art  
deprived of seeing these! When from regarding them I had  
withdrawn, Turning a little to the other pole,

There where the Wain had disappeared already, I saw beside  
me an old man alone,  
Worthy of so much reverence in his look, That more owes not to  
father any son.

A long beard and with white hair intermingled He wore, in  
semblance like unto the tresses, Of which a double list fell on his  
breast.

The rays of the four consecrated stars Did so adorn his  
countenance with light, That him I saw as were the sun before  
him.

"Who are you? ye who, counter the blind river, Have fled away  
from the eternal prison?" Moving those venerable plumes, he  
said: "Who guided you? or who has been your lamp In issuing  
forth out of the night profound,

That ever black makes the infernal valley? The laws of the  
abyss, are they thus broken?

Or is there changed in heaven some council new, That being  
damned ye come unto my crags?" Then did my Leader lay his  
grasp upon me,

And with his words, and with his hands and signs, Reverent he  
made in me my knees and brow; Then answered him: "I came  
not of myself;

A Lady from Heaven descended, at whose prayers I aided this  
one with my company.

But since it is thy will more be unfolded Of our condition, how it  
truly is,

Mine cannot be that this should be denied thee.

This one has never his last evening seen, But by his folly was so  
near to it

That very little time was there to turn. As I have said, I unto him  
was sent

To rescue him, and other way was none Than this to which I  
have myself betaken. I've shown him all the people of perdition,  
And now those spirits I intend to show

Who purge themselves beneath thy guardianship. How I have  
brought him would be long to tell thee.

Virtue descendeth from on high that aids me To lead him to  
behold thee and to hear thee.



Now may it please thee to vouchsafe his coming; He seeketh  
Liberty, which is so dear,

As knoweth he who life for her refuses.

Thou know'st it; since, for her, to thee not bitter Was death in  
Utica, where thou didst leave The vesture, that will shine so, the  
great day.

By us the eternal edicts are not broken; Since this one lives, and  
Minos binds not me;

But of that circle I, where are the chaste Eyes of thy Marcia,  
who in looks still prays thee,

O holy breast, to hold her as thine own; For her love, then,  
incline thyself to us.

Permit us through thy sevenfold realm to go; I will take back  
this grace from thee to her,

If to be mentioned there below thou deignest." "Marcia so  
pleasing was unto mine eyes While I was on the other side,"  
then said he, "That every grace she wished of me I granted;  
Now that she dwells beyond the evil river, She can no longer  
move me, by that law

Which, when I issued forth from there, was made. But if a Lady  
of Heaven do move and rule thee, As thou dost say, no flattery  
is needful;

Let it suffice thee that for her thou ask me. Go, then, and see  
thou gird this one about

With a smooth rush, and that thou wash his face, So that thou  
cleanse away all stain therefrom, For 'twere not fitting that the  
eye o'ercast

By any mist should go before the first Angel, who is of those of  
Paradise. This little island round about its base

Below there, yonder, where the billow beats it, Doth rushes bear  
upon its washy ooze;

No other plant that putteth forth the leaf, Or that doth indurate,  
can there have life, Because it yieldeth not unto the shocks.

Thereafter be not this way your return;

The sun, which now is rising, will direct you To take the mount by  
easier ascent."

With this he vanished; and I raised me up Without a word, and  
wholly drew myself Unto my Guide, and turned mine eyes to  
him.

And he began: "Son, follow thou my steps; Let us turn back, for  
on this side declines The plain unto its lower boundaries."

The dawn was vanquishing the matin hour Which fled before it,  
so that from afar

I recognised the trembling of the sea.

Along the solitary plain we went As one who unto the lost road  
returns,

And till he finds it seems to go in vain.

As soon as we were come to where the dew Fights with the sun,  
and, being in a part Where shadow falls, little evaporates,

Both of his hands upon the grass outspread In gentle manner  
did my Master place; Whence I, who of his action was aware,  
Extended unto him my tearful cheeks; There did he make in me  
uncovered wholly That hue which Hell had covered up in me.

Then came we down upon the desert shore Which never yet saw  
navigate its waters Any that afterward had known return.

There he begirt me as the other pleased; O marvellous! for even  
as he culled

The humble plant, such it sprang up again Suddenly there where  
he uprooted it.

## Canto II

Already had the sun the horizon reached Whose circle of  
meridian covers o'er Jerusalem with its most lofty point,

And night that opposite to him revolves Was issuing forth from  
Ganges with the Scales That fall from out her hand when she  
exceedeth;

So that the white and the vermilion cheeks Of beautiful Aurora,  
where I was,

By too great age were changing into orange.

We still were on the border of the sea,

Like people who are thinking of their road, Who go in heart and  
with the body stay;

And lo! as when, upon the approach of morning, Through the  
gross vapours Mars grows fiery red Down in the West upon the  
ocean floor, Appeared to me—may I again behold it!—

A light along the sea so swiftly coming, Its motion by no flight  
of wing is equalled; From which when I a little had withdrawn  
Mine eyes, that I might question my Conductor, Again I saw it  
brighter grown and larger.

Then on each side of it appeared to me

I knew not what of white, and underneath it Little by little there  
came forth another.

My Master yet had uttered not a word While the first whiteness  
into wings unfolded;

But when he clearly recognised the pilot,

He cried: "Make haste, make haste to bow the knee!

Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands!

Henceforward shalt thou see such officers! See how he scorneth  
human arguments, So that nor oar he wants, nor other sail  
Than his own wings, between so distant shores. See how he  
holds them pointed up to heaven, Fanning the air with the  
eternal pinions,

That do not moult themselves like mortal hair!" Then as still  
nearer and more near us came The Bird Divine, more radiant he  
appeared, So that near by the eye could not endure him,

But down I cast it; and he came to shore

With a small vessel, very swift and light, So that the water  
swallowed naught thereof.

Upon the stern stood the Celestial Pilot; Beatitude seemed  
written in his face,

And more than a hundred spirits sat within. "In exitu Israel de  
Aegypto!"

They chanted all together in one voice, With whatso in that  
psalm is after written. Then made he sign of holy rood upon  
them, Whereat all cast themselves upon the shore, And he  
departed swiftly as he came.

The throng which still remained there unfamiliar Seemed with  
the place, all round about them gazing, As one who in new  
matters makes essay.

On every side was darting forth the day.

The sun, who had with his resplendent shafts From the mid-  
heaven chased forth the Capricorn, When the new people lifted  
up their faces Towards us, saying to us: "If ye know,  
Show us the way to go unto the mountain." And answer made  
Virgilius: "Ye believe

Perchance that we have knowledge of this place, But we are  
strangers even as yourselves.

Just now we came, a little while before you, Another way, which  
was so rough and steep, That mounting will henceforth seem  
sport to us." The souls who had, from seeing me draw breath,  
Become aware that I was still alive,

Pallid in their astonishment became; And as to messenger who  
bears the olive

The people throng to listen to the news, And no one shows  
himself afraid of crowding,

So at the sight of me stood motionless Those fortunate spirits,  
all of them, as if Oblivious to go and make them fair.

One from among them saw I coming forward, As to embrace  
me, with such great affection, That it incited me to do the like.

O empty shadows, save in aspect only!

Three times behind it did I clasp my hands, As oft returned with  
them to my own breast!

I think with wonder I depicted me; Whereat the shadow smiled  
and backward drew;

And I, pursuing it, pressed farther forward. Gently it said that I  
should stay my steps; Then knew I who it was, and I entreated  
That it would stop awhile to speak with me. It made reply to me:

"Even as I loved thee In mortal body, so I love thee free;  
Therefore I stop; but wherefore goest thou?" "My own Casella!  
to return once more

There where I am, I make this journey," said I; "But how from  
thee has so much time be taken?" And he to me: "No outrage  
has been done me,

If he who takes both when and whom he pleases Has many  
times denied to me this passage,

For of a righteous will his own is made.

He, sooth to say, for three months past has taken Whoever  
wished to enter with all peace; Whence I, who now had turned  
unto that shore

Where salt the waters of the Tiber grow, Benignantly by him  
have been received. Unto that outlet now his wing is pointed,  
Because for evermore assemble there

Those who tow'rds Acheron do not descend." And I: "If some  
new law take not from thee Memory or practice of the song of  
love, Which used to quiet in me all my longings, Thee may it  
please to comfort therewithal Somewhat this soul of mine, that  
with its body Hitherward coming is so much distressed."

"Love, that within my mind discourses with me,"

Forthwith began he so melodiously, The melody within me still is  
sounding.

My Master, and myself, and all that people Which with him were,  
appeared as satisfied As if naught else might touch the mind of  
any.

We all of us were moveless and attentive Unto his notes; and lo!  
the grave old man, Exclaiming: "What is this, ye laggard spirits?

What negligence, what standing still is this? Run to the  
mountain to strip off the slough, That lets not God be manifest  
to you."

Even as when, collecting grain or tares, The doves, together at  
their pasture met, Quiet, nor showing their accustomed pride, If  
aught appear of which they are afraid, Upon a sudden leave  
their food alone, Because they are assailed by greater care; So  
that fresh company did I behold



The song relinquish, and go tow'rds the hill, As one who goes,  
and knows not whitherward; Nor was our own departure less in  
haste.

### Canto III

Inasmuch as the instantaneous flight Had scattered them  
asunder o'er the plain,

Turned to the mountain whither reason spurs us, I pressed me  
close unto my faithful comrade, And how without him had I  
kept my course?

Who would have led me up along the mountain?

He seemed to me within himself remorseful; O noble conscience,  
and without a stain, How sharp a sting is trivial fault to thee!

After his feet had laid aside the haste Which mars the dignity of  
every act,

My mind, that hitherto had been restrained, Let loose its  
faculties as if delighted, And I my sight directed to the hill

That highest tow'rds the heaven uplifts itself.

The sun, that in our rear was flaming red, Was broken in front of  
me into the figure Which had in me the stoppage of its rays;

Unto one side I turned me, with the fear Of being left alone,  
when I beheld

Only in front of me the ground obscured. "Why dost thou still  
mistrust?" my Comforter Began to say to me turned wholly  
round;

"Dost thou not think me with thee, and that I guide thee?

'Tis evening there already where is buried The body within which  
I cast a shadow;

'Tis from Brundusium ta'en, and Naples has it.

Now if in front of me no shadow fall, Marvel not at it more than  
at the heavens, Because one ray impedeth not another

To suffer torments, both of cold and heat, Bodies like this that  
Power provides, which wills

That how it works be not unveiled to us. Insane is he who  
hopeth that our reason Can traverse the illimitable way,

Which the one Substance in three Persons follows!

Mortals, remain contented at the 'Quia;' For if ye had been able  
to see all,

No need there were for Mary to give birth; And ye have seen  
desiring without fruit, Those whose desire would have been  
quieted, Which evermore is given them for a grief.

I speak of Aristotle and of Plato,

And many others;"—and here bowed his head, And more he said  
not, and remained disturbed. We came meanwhile unto the  
mountain's foot; There so precipitate we found the rock,  
That nimble legs would there have been in vain. 'Twixt Lerici and  
Turbia, the most desert,  
The most secluded pathway is a stair Easy and open, if  
compared with that.

"Who knoweth now upon which hand the hill Slopes down," my  
Master said, his footsteps staying,  
"So that who goeth without wings may mount?"

And while he held his eyes upon the ground Examining the  
nature of the path,

And I was looking up around the rock, On the left hand  
appeared to me a throng

Of souls, that moved their feet in our direction, And did not  
seem to move, they came so slowly. "Lift up thine eyes," I to the  
Master said; "Behold, on this side, who will give us counsel, If  
thou of thine own self can have it not."

Then he looked at me, and with frank expression Replied: "Let  
us go there, for they come slowly, And thou be steadfast in thy  
hope, sweet son." Still was that people as far off from us,

After a thousand steps of ours I say,

As a good thrower with his hand would reach, When they all  
crowded unto the hard masses  
Of the high bank, and motionless stood and close, As he stands  
still to look who goes in doubt.

"O happy dead! O spirits elect already!" Virgilius made  
beginning, "by that peace Which I believe is waiting for you all,  
Tell us upon what side the mountain slopes, So that the going  
up be possible,

For to lose time irks him most who most knows." As sheep come  
issuing forth from out the fold

By ones and twos and threes, and the others stand Timidly,  
holding down their eyes and nostrils, And what the foremost  
does the others do, Huddling themselves against her, if she  
stop, Simple and quiet and the wherefore know not;

So moving to approach us thereupon I saw the leader of that  
fortunate flock, Modest in face and dignified in gait.

As soon as those in the advance saw broken The light upon the  
ground at my right side, So that from me the shadow reached  
the rock,

They stopped, and backward drew themselves somewhat; And  
all the others, who came after them,

Not knowing why nor wherefore, did the same. "Without your asking, I confess to you This is a human body which you see,

Whereby the sunshine on the ground is cleft.

Marvel ye not thereat, but be persuaded

That not without a power which comes from Heaven Doth he endeavour to surmount this wall."

The Master thus; and said those worthy people: "Return ye then, and enter in before us," Making a signal with the back o' the hand And one of them began: "Whoe'er thou art, Thus going turn thine eyes, consider well

If e'er thou saw me in the other world."

I turned me tow'rds him, and looked at him closely; Blond was he, beautiful, and of noble aspect, But one of his eyebrows had a blow divided.

When with humility I had disclaimed E'er having seen him, "Now behold!" he said,

And showed me high upon his breast a wound.

Then said he with a smile: "I am Manfredi, The grandson of the Empress Costanza; Therefore, when thou returnest, I beseech thee

Go to my daughter beautiful, the mother Of Sicily's honour and of Aragon's,

And the truth tell her, if aught else be told.

After I had my body lacerated

By these two mortal stabs, I gave myself Weeping to Him, who  
willingly doth pardon.

Horrible my iniquities had been;

But Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms, That it receives  
whatever turns to it.

Had but Cosenza's pastor, who in chase Of me was sent by  
Clement at that time, In God read understandingly this page,  
The bones of my dead body still would be At the bridge-head,  
near unto Benevento, Under the safeguard of the heavy cairn.

Now the rain bathes and moveth them the wind, Beyond the  
realm, almost beside the Verde, Where he transported them  
with tapers quenched.

By malison of theirs is not so lost Eternal Love, that it cannot  
return,

So long as hope has anything of green.

True is it, who in contumacy dies

Of Holy Church, though penitent at last, Must wait upon the  
outside this bank Thirty times told the time that he has been In  
his presumption, unless such decree

Shorter by means of righteous prayers become. See now if thou  
hast power to make me happy, By making known unto my good  
Costanza How thou hast seen me, and this ban beside,

For those on earth can much advance us here." Canto IV

Whenever by delight or else by pain, That seizes any faculty of  
ours, Wholly to that the soul collects itself,

It seemeth that no other power it heeds; And this against that  
error is which thinks One soul above another kindles in us.

And hence, whenever aught is heard or seen Which keeps the  
soul intently bent upon it, Time passes on, and we perceive it  
not, Because one faculty is that which listens, And other that  
which the soul keeps entire; This is as if in bonds, and that is  
free.

Of this I had experience positive In hearing and in gazing at  
that spirit;

For fifty full degrees uprisen was The sun, and I had not  
perceived it, when

We came to where those souls with one accord Cried out unto  
us: "Here is what you ask."

A greater opening oft-times hedges up With but a little forkful of  
his thorns

The villager, what time the grape imbrowns, Than was the  
passage-way through which ascended

Only my Leader and myself behind him, After that company  
departed from us. One climbs Sanleo and descends in Noli, And  
mounts the summit of Bismantova,

With feet alone; but here one needs must fly; With the swift  
pinions and the plumes I say Of great desire, conducted after  
him

Who gave me hope, and made a light for me. We mounted  
upward through the rifted rock, And on each side the border  
pressed upon us, And feet and hands the ground beneath  
required.

When we were come upon the upper rim Of the high bank, out  
on the open slope,

"My Master," said I, "what way shall we take?" And he to me:  
"No step of thine descend; Still up the mount behind me win thy  
way, Till some sage escort shall appear to us."

The summit was so high it vanquished sight, And the hillside  
precipitous far more

Than line from middle quadrant to the centre.

Spent with fatigue was I, when I began: "O my sweet Father!  
turn thee and behold How I remain alone, unless thou stay!"



"O son," he said, "up yonder drag thyself," Pointing me to a  
terrace somewhat higher, Which on that side encircles all the  
hill. These words of his so spurred me on, that I  
Strained every nerve, behind him scrambling up, Until the circle  
was beneath my feet.

Thereon ourselves we seated both of us Turned to the East,  
from which we had ascended,

For all men are delighted to look back.

To the low shores mine eyes I first directed, Then to the sun  
uplifted them, and wondered

That on the left hand we were smitten by it. The Poet well  
perceived that I was wholly Bewildered at the chariot of the  
light, Where 'twixt us and the Aquilon it entered.

Whereon he said to me: "If Castor and Pollux Were in the  
company of yonder mirror,

That up and down conducteth with its light, Thou wouldst  
behold the zodiac's jagged wheel Revolving still more near unto  
the Bears, Unless it swerved aside from its old track.

How that may be wouldst thou have power to think, Collected in  
thyself, imagine Zion

Together with this mount on earth to stand, So that they both  
one sole horizon have, And hemispheres diverse; whereby the

road Which Phaeton, alas! knew not to drive, Thou'lt see how of  
necessity must pass

This on one side, when that upon the other, If thine intelligence  
right clearly heed." "Truly, my Master," said I, "never yet  
Saw I so clearly as I now discern, There where my wit appeared  
incompetent,

That the mid-circle of supernal motion, Which in some art is the  
Equator called,

And aye remains between the Sun and Winter, For reason which  
thou sayest, departeth hence Tow'rds the Septentrion, what  
time the Hebrews Beheld it tow'rds the region of the heat.

But, if it pleaseth thee, I fain would learn How far we have to  
go; for the hill rises

Higher than eyes of mine have power to rise." And he to me:  
"This mount is such, that ever At the beginning down below 'tis  
tiresome, And aye the more one climbs, the less it hurts.

Therefore, when it shall seem so pleasant to thee, That going up  
shall be to thee as easy

As going down the current in a boat, Then at this pathway's  
ending thou wilt be; There to repose thy panting breath expect;  
No more I answer; and this I know for true."

And as he finished uttering these words, A voice close by us  
sounded: "Peradventure

Thou wilt have need of sitting down ere that." At sound thereof  
each one of us turned round, And saw upon the left hand a  
great rock, Which neither I nor he before had noticed.

Thither we drew; and there were persons there Who in the  
shadow stood behind the rock, As one through indolence is wont  
to stand.

And one of them, who seemed to me fatigued, Was sitting  
down, and both his knees embraced, Holding his face low down  
between them bowed. "O my sweet Lord," I said, "do turn thine  
eye

On him who shows himself more negligent Then even Sloth  
herself his sister were."

Then he turned round to us, and he gave heed, Just lifting up his  
eyes above his thigh,

And said: "Now go thou up, for thou art valiant." Then knew I  
who he was; and the distress, That still a little did my breathing  
quicken,

My going to him hindered not; and after I came to him he  
hardly raised his head,

Saying: "Hast thou seen clearly how the sun O'er thy left  
shoulder drives his chariot?" His sluggish attitude and his curt  
words

A little unto laughter moved my lips; Then I began: "Belacqua, I  
grieve not

For thee henceforth; but tell me, wherefore seated In this place  
art thou? Waitest thou an escort?

Or has thy usual habit seized upon thee?" And he: "O brother,  
what's the use of climbing?

Since to my torment would not let me go The Angel of God, who  
sitteth at the gate.

First heaven must needs so long revolve me round Outside  
thereof, as in my life it did,

Since the good sighs I to the end postponed, Unless, e'er that,  
some prayer may bring me aid Which rises from a heart that  
lives in grace; What profit others that in heaven are heard not?"

Meanwhile the Poet was before me mounting, And saying:  
"Come now; see the sun has touched Meridian, and from the  
shore the night

Covers already with her foot Morocco."

## Canto V

I had already from those shades departed, And followed in the  
footsteps of my Guide, When from behind, pointing his finger at  
me, One shouted: "See, it seems as if shone not

The sunshine on the left of him below, And like one living seems  
he to conduct him." Mine eyes I turned at utterance of these  
words,

And saw them watching with astonishment But me, but me, and  
the light which was broken!

"Why doth thy mind so occupy itself,"

The Master said, "that thou thy pace dost slacken? What  
matters it to thee what here is whispered?"

Come after me, and let the people talk; Stand like a steadfast  
tower, that never wags Its top for all the blowing of the winds;

For evermore the man in whom is springing Thought upon  
thought, removes from him the mark, Because the force of one  
the other weakens."

What could I say in answer but "I come"? I said it somewhat  
with that colour tinged

Which makes a man of pardon sometimes worthy.

Meanwhile along the mountain-side across Came people in  
advance of us a little, Singing the Miserere verse by verse.

When they became aware I gave no place For passage of the  
sunshine through my body,

They changed their song into a long, hoarse "Oh!" And two of  
them, in form of messengers,

Ran forth to meet us, and demanded of us, "Of your condition  
make us cognisant." And said my Master: "Ye can go your way  
And carry back again to those who sent you, That this one's  
body is of very flesh.

If they stood still because they saw his shadow,

As I suppose, enough is answered them; Him let them honour, it  
may profit them." Vapours enkindled saw I ne'er so swiftly At  
early nightfall cleave the air serene, Nor, at the set of sun, the  
clouds of August, But upward they returned in briefer time, And,  
on arriving, with the others wheeled

Tow'rds us, like troops that run without a rein. "This folk that  
presses unto us is great,

And cometh to implore thee," said the Poet; "So still go onward,  
and in going listen." "O soul that goest to beatitude

With the same members wherewith thou wast born," Shouting  
they came, "a little stay thy steps,

Look, if thou e'er hast any of us seen, So that o'er yonder thou  
bear news of him;

Ah, why dost thou go on? Ah, why not stay? Long since we all  
were slain by violence, And sinners even to the latest hour;

Then did a light from heaven admonish us, So that, both  
penitent and pardoning, forth From life we issued reconciled to  
God,

Who with desire to see Him stirs our hearts." And I: "Although I  
gaze into your faces, No one I recognize; but if may please you  
Aught I have power to do, ye well-born spirits, Speak ye, and I  
will do it, by that peace Which, following the feet of such a  
Guide,

From world to world makes itself sought by me." And one  
began: "Each one has confidence

In thy good offices without an oath, Unless the I cannot cut off  
the I will;

Whence I, who speak alone before the others, Pray thee, if ever  
thou dost see the land

That 'twixt Romagna lies and that of Charles, Thou be so  
courteous to me of thy prayers In Fano, that they pray for me  
devoutly, That I may purge away my grave offences.

From thence was I; but the deep wounds, through which Issued  
the blood wherein I had my seat,

Were dealt me in bosom of the Antenori, There where I thought  
to be the most secure; 'Twas he of Este had it done, who held  
me In hatred far beyond what justice willed.

But if towards the Mira I had fled, When I was overtaken at  
Oriaco,

I still should be o'er yonder where men breathe.

I ran to the lagoon, and reeds and mire Did so entangle me I  
fell, and saw there

A lake made from my veins upon the ground." Then said  
another: "Ah, be that desire Fulfilled that draws thee to the lofty  
mountain, As thou with pious pity aidest mine.

I was of Montefeltro, and am Buonconte; Giovanna, nor none  
other cares for me;

Hence among these I go with downcast front." And I to him:  
"What violence or what chance Led thee astray so far from  
Campaldino,

That never has thy sepulture been known?" "Oh," he replied, "at  
Casentino's foot

A river crosses named Archiano, born Above the Hermitage in  
Apennine.

There where the name thereof becometh void Did I arrive,  
pierced through and through the throat,



Fleeing on foot, and bloodying the plain; There my sight lost I,  
and my utterance Ceased in the name of Mary, and thereat I  
fell, and tenantless my flesh remained. Truth will I speak, repeat

it to the living; God's Angel took me up, and he of hell

Shouted: 'O thou from heaven, why dost thou rob me?

Thou bearest away the eternal part of him, For one poor little  
tear, that takes him from me;

But with the rest I'll deal in other fashion!' Well knowest thou  
how in the air is gathered That humid vapour which to water  
turns, Soon as it rises where the cold doth grasp it.

He joined that evil will, which aye seeks evil, To intellect, and  
moved the mist and wind

By means of power, which his own nature gave; Thereafter,  
when the day was spent, the valley From Pratomagno to the  
great yoke covered With fog, and made the heaven above  
intent,

So that the pregnant air to water changed; Down fell the rain,  
and to the gullies came Whate'er of it earth tolerated not;

And as it mingled with the mighty torrents, Towards the royal  
river with such speed

It headlong rushed, that nothing held it back.

My frozen body near unto its outlet

The robust Archian found, and into Arno Thrust it, and loosened  
from my breast the cross

I made of me, when agony o'ercame me; It rolled me on the  
banks and on the bottom, Then with its booty covered and  
begirt me."

"Ah, when thou hast returned unto the world, And rested thee  
from thy long journeying," After the second followed the third  
spirit, "Do thou remember me who am the Pia; Siena made me,  
unmade me Maremma;

He knoweth it, who had encircled first, Espousing me, my finger  
with his gem."

## Canto VI

Whene'er is broken up the game of Zara, He who has lost  
remains behind despondent, The throws repeating, and in  
sadness learns;

The people with the other all depart;

One goes in front, and one behind doth pluck him, And at his  
side one brings himself to mind;

He pauses not, and this and that one hears; They crowd no  
more to whom his hand he stretches,

And from the throng he thus defends himself.

Even such was I in that dense multitude, Turning to them this way and that my face, And, promising, I freed myself therefrom.

There was the Aretine, who from the arms Untamed of Ghin di Tacco had his death,

And he who fleeing from pursuit was drowned.

There was imploring with his hands outstretched Frederick Novello, and that one of Pisa

Who made the good Marzucco seem so strong.

I saw Count Orso; and the soul divided By hatred and by envy from its body,

As it declared, and not for crime committed, Pierre de la Brosse I say; and here provide While still on earth the Lady of Brabant, So that for this she be of no worse flock!

As soon as I was free from all those shades Who only prayed that some one else may pray, So as to hasten their becoming holy,

Began I: "It appears that thou deniest, O light of mine, expressly in some text, That orison can bend decree of Heaven;

And ne'ertheless these people pray for this. Might then their expectation bootless be? Or is to me thy saying not quite clear?" And he to me: "My writing is explicit, And not fallacious is the hope of these,

If with sane intellect 'tis well regarded; For top of judgment doth  
not veil itself, Because the fire of love fulfils at once

What he must satisfy who here installs him. And there, where I  
affirmed that proposition, Defect was not amended by a prayer,  
Because the prayer from God was separate.

Verily, in so deep a questioning Do not decide, unless she tell it  
thee,

Who light 'twixt truth and intellect shall be.

I know not if thou understand; I speak Of Beatrice; her shalt  
thou see above,

Smiling and happy, on this mountain's top." And I: "Good  
Leader, let us make more haste, For I no longer tire me as  
before;

And see, e'en now the hill a shadow casts." "We will go forward  
with this day" he answered,

"As far as now is possible for us;

But otherwise the fact is than thou thinkest. Ere thou art up  
there, thou shalt see return Him, who now hides himself behind  
the hill, So that thou dost not interrupt his rays.

But yonder there behold! a soul that stationed All, all alone is  
looking hitherward;

It will point out to us the quickest way." We came up unto it; O  
Lombard soul,

How lofty and disdainful thou didst bear thee, And grand and  
slow in moving of thine eyes!

Nothing whatever did it say to us, But let us go our way, eying  
us only After the manner of a couchant lion;

Still near to it Virgilius drew, entreating That it would point us  
out the best ascent; And it replied not unto his demand,

But of our native land and of our life

It questioned us; and the sweet Guide began: "Mantua,"—and  
the shade, all in itself recluse, Rose tow'rds him from the place  
where first it was, Saying: "O Mantuan, I am Sordello  
Of thine own land!" and one embraced the other.

Ah! servile Italy, grief's hostelry!

A ship without a pilot in great tempest! No Lady thou of  
Provinces, but brothel! That noble soul was so impatient, only  
At the sweet sound of his own native land, To make its citizen  
glad welcome there; And now within thee are not without war  
Thy living ones, and one doth gnaw the other Of those whom  
one wall and one fosse shut in! Search, wretched one, all round  
about the shores Thy seaboard, and then look within thy bosom,  
If any part of thee enjoyeth peace!

What boots it, that for thee Justinian The bridle mend, if empty  
be the saddle?

Withouten this the shame would be the less. Ah! people, thou  
that oughtest to be devout, And to let Caesar sit upon the  
saddle,

If well thou hearest what God teacheth thee, Behold how fell  
this wild beast has become, Being no longer by the spur  
corrected,

Since thou hast laid thy hand upon the bridle.

O German Albert! who abandonest Her that has grown  
recalcitrant and savage, And oughtest to bestride her saddle-  
bow,

May a just judgment from the stars down fall Upon thy blood,  
and be it new and open, That thy successor may have fear  
thereof; Because thy father and thyself have suffered,  
By greed of those transalpine lands distrained, The garden of  
the empire to be waste.

Come and behold Montecchi and Cappelletti, Monaldi and  
Fillippeschi, careless man!

Those sad already, and these doubt-depressed!

Come, cruel one! come and behold the oppression Of thy  
nobility, and cure their wounds,

And thou shalt see how safe is Santafiore!

Come and behold thy Rome, that is lamenting, Widowed, alone,  
and day and night exclaims, "My Caesar, why hast thou  
forsaken me?" Come and behold how loving are the people; And  
if for us no pity moveth thee,

Come and be made ashamed of thy renown!

And if it lawful be, O Jove Supreme! Who upon earth for us wast  
crucified, Are thy just eyes averted elsewhere? Or preparation  
is 't, that, in the abyss

Of thine own counsel, for some good thou makest From our  
perception utterly cut off?

For all the towns of Italy are full Of tyrants, and becometh a  
Marcellus

Each peasant churl who plays the partisan! My Florence! well  
mayst thou contented be With this digression, which concerns  
thee not,

Thanks to thy people who such forethought take!

Many at heart have justice, but shoot slowly, That unadvised  
they come not to the bow, But on their very lips thy people have  
it!

Many refuse to bear the common burden; But thy solicitous  
people answereth Without being asked, and crieth: "I submit."

Now be thou joyful, for thou hast good reason; Thou affluent,  
thou in peace, thou full of wisdom!

If I speak true, the event conceals it not. Athens and  
Lacedaemon, they who made The ancient laws, and were so  
civilized, Made towards living well a little sign

Compared with thee, who makest such fine-spun Provisions,  
that to middle of November

Reaches not what thou in October spinnest. How oft, within the  
time of thy remembrance, Laws, money, offices, and usages

Hast thou remodelled, and renewed thy members?

And if thou mind thee well, and see the light, Thou shalt behold  
thyself like a sick woman, Who cannot find repose upon her  
down,

But by her tossing wardeth off her pain.

## Canto VII

After the gracious and glad salutations Had three and four  
times been reiterated,

Sordello backward drew and said, "Who are you?" "Or ever to  
this mountain were directed

The souls deserving to ascend to God, My bones were buried by  
Octavian. I am Virgilius; and for no crime else



Did I lose heaven, than for not having faith;" In this wise then  
my Leader made reply.

As one who suddenly before him sees Something whereat he  
 marvels, who believes

And yet does not, saying, "It is! it is not!"

So he appeared; and then bowed down his brow, And with  
humility returned towards him,

And, where inferiors embrace, embraced him. "O glory of the  
Latians, thou," he said,

"Through whom our language showed what it could do O pride  
eternal of the place I came from,

What merit or what grace to me reveals thee?

If I to hear thy words be worthy, tell me

If thou dost come from Hell, and from what cloister." "Through  
all the circles of the doleful realm," Responded he, "have I come  
hitherward;

Heaven's power impelled me, and with that I come.

I by not doing, not by doing, lost

The sight of that high sun which thou desirest, And which too  
late by me was recognized.

A place there is below not sad with torments, But darkness only,  
where the lamentations Have not the sound of wailing, but are  
sighs.

There dwell I with the little innocents Snatched by the teeth of  
Death, or ever they Were from our human sinfulness exempt.

There dwell I among those who the three saintly Virtues did not  
put on, and without vice

The others knew and followed all of them. But if thou know and  
can, some indication Give us by which we may the sooner come  
Where Purgatory has its right beginning."

He answered: "No fixed place has been assigned us; 'Tis lawful  
for me to go up and round;

So far as I can go, as guide I join thee. But see already how the  
day declines, And to go up by night we are not able;

Therefore 'tis well to think of some fair sojourn. Souls are there  
on the right hand here withdrawn; If thou permit me I will lead  
thee to them,

And thou shalt know them not without delight." "How is this?"  
was the answer; "should one wish To mount by night would he  
prevented be

By others? or mayhap would not have power?" And on the  
ground the good Sordello drew

His finger, saying, "See, this line alone Thou couldst not pass  
after the sun is gone;

Not that aught else would hindrance give, however, To going  
up, save the nocturnal darkness;

This with the want of power the will perplexes.

We might indeed therewith return below, And, wandering, walk  
the hill-side round about, While the horizon holds the day  
imprisoned."

Thereon my Lord, as if in wonder, said: "Do thou conduct us  
thither, where thou sayest

That we can take delight in tarrying." Little had we withdrawn us  
from that place,

When I perceived the mount was hollowed out In fashion as the  
valleys here are hollowed. "Thitherward," said that shade, "will  
we repair, Where of itself the hill-side makes a lap,

And there for the new day will we await." 'Twixt hill and plain  
there was a winding path Which led us to the margin of that  
dell,

Where dies the border more than half away.

Gold and fine silver, and scarlet and pearl-white, The Indian  
wood resplendent and serene, Fresh emerald the moment it is  
broken,

By herbage and by flowers within that hollow Planted, each one  
in colour would be vanquished, As by its greater vanquished is  
the less.

Nor in that place had nature painted only, But of the sweetness  
of a thousand odours

Made there a mingled fragrance and unknown. "Salve Regina,"  
on the green and flowers There seated, singing, spirits I beheld,  
Which were not visible outside the valley. "Before the scanty sun  
now seeks his nest," Began the Mantuan who had led us thither,  
"Among them do not wish me to conduct you. Better from off  
this ledge the acts and faces Of all of them will you  
discriminate,

Than in the plain below received among them. He who sits  
highest, and the semblance bears Of having what he should  
have done neglected, And to the others' song moves not his lips,  
Rudolph the Emperor was, who had the power To heal the  
wounds that Italy have slain,

So that through others slowly she revives. The other, who in look  
doth comfort him, Governed the region where the water springs,  
The Moldau bears the Elbe, and Elbe the sea.

His name was Ottocar; and in swaddling-clothes Far better he  
than bearded Winceslaus

His son, who feeds in luxury and ease.

And the small-nosed, who close in council seems With him that  
has an aspect so benign, Died fleeing and disflowering the lily;

Look there, how he is beating at his breast! Behold the other  
one, who for his cheek Sighing has made of his own palm a bed;

Father and father-in-law of France's Pest

Are they, and know his vicious life and lewd, And hence  
proceeds the grief that so doth pierce them.

He who appears so stalwart, and chimes in, Singing, with that  
one of the manly nose, The cord of every valour wore begirt;

And if as King had after him remained The stripling who in rear  
of him is sitting,

Well had the valour passed from vase to vase, Which cannot of  
the other heirs be said.

Frederick and Jacomo possess the realms, But none the better  
heritage possesses.

Not oftentimes upriseth through the branches The probity of  
man; and this He wills

Who gives it, so that we may ask of Him.

Eke to the large-nosed reach my words, no less Than to the  
other, Pier, who with him sings; Whence Provence and Apulia  
grieve already The plant is as inferior to its seed,

As more than Beatrice and Margaret Costanza boasteth of her  
husband still. Behold the monarch of the simple life, Harry of  
England, sitting there alone;

He in his branches has a better issue.

He who the lowest on the ground among them Sits looking  
upward, is the Marquis William, For whose sake Alessandria and  
her war Make Monferrat and Canavese weep."

### Canto VIII

'Twas now the hour that turneth back desire In those who sail  
the sea, and melts the heart,

The day they've said to their sweet friends farewell, And the new  
pilgrim penetrates with love,

If he doth hear from far away a bell That seemeth to deplore  
the dying day, When I began to make of no avail

My hearing, and to watch one of the souls Uprisen, that begged  
attention with its hand. It joined and lifted upward both its  
palms, Fixing its eyes upon the orient,

As if it said to God, "Naught else I care for." "Te lucis ante" so  
devoutly issued

Forth from its mouth, and with such dulcet notes, It made me  
issue forth from my own mind.

And then the others, sweetly and devoutly, Accompanied it  
through all the hymn entire, Having their eyes on the supernal  
wheels. Here, Reader, fix thine eyes well on the truth, For now  
indeed so subtile is the veil,

Surely to penetrate within is easy. I saw that army of the gentle-  
born

Thereafterward in silence upward gaze, As if in expectation,  
pale and humble;

And from on high come forth and down descend, I saw two  
Angels with two flaming swords, Truncated and deprived of  
their points.

Green as the little leaflets just now born

Their garments were, which, by their verdant pinions Beaten and  
blown abroad, they trailed behind.

One just above us came to take his station, And one descended  
to the opposite bank,

So that the people were contained between them.

Clearly in them discerned I the blond head; But in their faces  
was the eye bewildered, As faculty confounded by excess.

"From Mary's bosom both of them have come," Sordello said,  
"as guardians of the valley Against the serpent, that will come  
anon." Whereupon I, who knew not by what road, Turned round  
about, and closely drew myself, Utterly frozen, to the faithful  
shoulders.

And once again Sordello: "Now descend we 'Mid the grand  
shades, and we will speak to them;

Right pleasant will it be for them to see you." Only three steps I  
think that I descended,

And was below, and saw one who was looking Only at me, as if  
he fain would know me.

Already now the air was growing dark, But not so that between  
his eyes and mine It did not show what it before locked up.

Tow'rds me he moved, and I tow'rds him did move;

Noble Judge Nino! how it me delighted, When I beheld thee not  
among the damned! No greeting fair was left unsaid between  
us;

Then asked he: "How long is it since thou camest O'er the far  
waters to the mountain's foot?" "Oh!" said I to him, "through the  
dismal places

I came this morn; and am in the first life, Albeit the other, going  
thus, I gain."



And on the instant my reply was heard, He and Sordello both  
shrank back from me, Like people who are suddenly bewildered.

One to Virgilius, and the other turned

To one who sat there, crying, "Up, Currado!

Come and behold what God in grace has willed!" Then, turned to  
me: "By that especial grace

Thou owest unto Him, who so conceals His own first wherefore,  
that it has no ford, When thou shalt be beyond the waters wide,

Tell my Giovanna that she pray for me, Where answer to the  
innocent is made.

I do not think her mother loves me more, Since she has laid  
aside her wimple white, Which she, unhappy, needs must wish  
again.

Through her full easily is comprehended How long in woman  
lasts the fire of love, If eye or touch do not relight it often.  
So fair a hatchment will not make for her The Viper marshalling  
the Milanese

A-field, as would have made Gallura's Cock." In this wise spake  
he, with the stamp impressed

Upon his aspect of that righteous zeal Which measurably  
burneth in the heart.

My greedy eyes still wandered up to heaven, Still to that point  
where slowest are the stars, Even as a wheel the nearest to its  
axle.

And my Conductor: "Son, what dost thou gaze at Up there?"  
And I to him: "At those three torches With which this hither pole  
is all on fire."

And he to me: "The four resplendent stars Thou sawest this  
morning are down yonder low, And these have mounted up to  
where those were."

As he was speaking, to himself Sordello Drew him, and said, "Lo  
there our Adversary!"

And pointed with his finger to look thither.

Upon the side on which the little valley No barrier hath, a  
serpent was; perchance The same which gave to Eve the bitter  
food.

'Twixt grass and flowers came on the evil streak, Turning at  
times its head about, and licking Its back like to a beast that  
smoothes itself.

I did not see, and therefore cannot say How the celestial  
falcons 'gan to move,

But well I saw that they were both in motion. Hearing the air  
cleft by their verdant wings,

The serpent fled, and round the Angels wheeled, Up to their  
stations flying back alike.

The shade that to the Judge had near approached  
When he had called, throughout that whole assault  
Had not a moment loosed its gaze on me.

"So may the light that leadeth thee on high

Find in thine own free-will as much of wax  
As needful is up to the highest azure,"  
Began it, "if some true intelligence

Of Valdimagra or its neighbourhood

Thou knowest, tell it me, who once was great there.

Currado Malaspina was I called;

I'm not the elder, but from him descended;  
To mine I bore the love which here refineth."  
"O," said I unto him, "through your  
domains I never passed, but where is there a dwelling

Throughout all Europe, where they are not known?

That fame, which doeth honour to your house,  
Proclaims its Signors and proclaims its land,  
So that he knows of them who ne'er was there.

And, as I hope for heaven, I swear to you  
Your honoured family in naught abates  
The glory of the purse and of the sword.

It is so privileged by use and nature,  
That though a guilty head misguide the world,

Sole it goes right, and scorns the evil way." And he: "Now go; for  
the sun shall not lie Seven times upon the pillow which the Ram

With all his four feet covers and bestrides, Before that such a  
courteous opinion

Shall in the middle of thy head be nailed With greater nails than  
of another's speech, Unless the course of justice standeth still."

### Canto IX

The concubine of old Tithonus now Gleamed white upon the  
eastern balcony, Forth from the arms of her sweet paramour;  
With gems her forehead all relucent was, Set in the shape of  
that cold animal

Which with its tail doth smite amain the nations, And of the  
steps, with which she mounts, the Night Had taken two in that  
place where we were,

And now the third was bending down its wings; When I, who  
something had of Adam in me, Vanquished by sleep, upon the  
grass reclined, There were all five of us already sat.

Just at the hour when her sad lay begins The little swallow, near  
unto the morning, Perchance in memory of her former woes,  
And when the mind of man, a wanderer

More from the flesh, and less by thought imprisoned, Almost  
prophetic in its visions is,

In dreams it seemed to me I saw suspended An eagle in the  
sky, with plumes of gold, With wings wide open, and intent to  
stoop,

And this, it seemed to me, was where had been By Ganymede  
his kith and kin abandoned, When to the high consistory he was  
rapt.

I thought within myself, perchance he strikes From habit only  
here, and from elsewhere Disdains to bear up any in his feet.

Then wheeling somewhat more, it seemed to me, Terrible as the  
lightning he descended,

And snatched me upward even to the fire.

Therein it seemed that he and I were burning, And the imagined  
fire did scorch me so, That of necessity my sleep was broken.

Not otherwise Achilles started up, Around him turning his  
awakened eyes,

And knowing not the place in which he was, What time from  
Chiron stealthily his mother Carried him sleeping in her arms to  
Scyros, Wherefrom the Greeks withdrew him afterwards, Than I  
upstarted, when from off my face

Sleep fled away; and pallid I became, As doth the man who  
freezes with affright.

Only my Comforter was at my side,

And now the sun was more than two hours high, And turned  
towards the sea-shore was my face. "Be not intimidated," said  
my Lord,

"Be reassured, for all is well with us;

Do not restrain, but put forth all thy strength.

Thou hast at length arrived at Purgatory; See there the cliff that  
closes it around;

See there the entrance, where it seems disjoined. Whilom at  
dawn, which doth precede the day, When inwardly thy spirit was  
asleep

Upon the flowers that deck the land below, There came a Lady  
and said: 'I am Lucia; Let me take this one up, who is asleep;  
So will I make his journey easier for him.' Sordello and the other  
noble shapes

Remained; she took thee, and, as day grew bright, Upward she  
came, and I upon her footsteps.

She laid thee here; and first her beauteous eyes That open  
entrance pointed out to me;

Then she and sleep together went away." In guise of one whose  
doubts are reassured, And who to confidence his fear doth  
change, After the truth has been discovered to him, So did I  
change; and when without disquiet

My Leader saw me, up along the cliff

He moved, and I behind him, tow'rd the height.

Reader, thou seest well how I exalt My theme, and therefore if  
with greater art

I fortify it, marvel not thereat.

Nearer approached we, and were in such place, That there,  
where first appeared to me a rift Like to a crevice that disparts  
a wall,

I saw a portal, and three stairs beneath, Diverse in colour, to go  
up to it,

And a gate-keeper, who yet spake no word. And as I opened  
more and more mine eyes, I saw him seated on the highest  
stair,

Such in the face that I endured it not. And in his hand he had a  
naked sword,

Which so reflected back the sunbeams tow'rds us, That oft in  
vain I lifted up mine eyes.

"Tell it from where you are, what is't you wish?" Began he to  
exclaim; "where is the escort?

Take heed your coming hither harm you not!" "A Lady of  
Heaven, with these things conversant,"

My Master answered him, "but even now Said to us, 'Thither go;  
there is the portal.'"

"And may she speed your footsteps in all good," Again began  
the courteous janitor;

"Come forward then unto these stairs of ours." Thither did we  
approach; and the first stair Was marble white, so polished and  
so smooth, I mirrored myself therein as I appear.

The second, tinct of deeper hue than perse, Was of a calcined  
and uneven stone, Cracked all asunder lengthwise and across.

The third, that uppermost rests massively, Porphyry seemed to  
me, as flaming red As blood that from a vein is spiriting forth.

Both of his feet was holding upon this The Angel of God, upon  
the threshold seated,

Which seemed to me a stone of diamond. Along the three stairs  
upward with good will Did my Conductor draw me, saying: "Ask  
Humbly that he the fastening may undo." Devoutly at the holy  
feet I cast me,

For mercy's sake besought that he would open, But first upon  
my breast three times I smote. Seven P's upon my forehead he  
described

With the sword's point, and, "Take heed that thou wash These  
wounds, when thou shalt be within," he said.

Ashes, or earth that dry is excavated, Of the same colour were  
with his attire,



And from beneath it he drew forth two keys. One was of gold,  
and the other was of silver; First with the white, and after with  
the yellow, Plied he the door, so that I was content.

"Whenever faileth either of these keys So that it turn not rightly  
in the lock,"

He said to us, "this entrance doth not open. More precious one  
is, but the other needs More art and intellect ere it unlock,  
For it is that which doth the knot unloose. From Peter I have  
them; and he bade me err Rather in opening than in keeping  
shut,

If people but fall down before my feet." Then pushed the portals  
of the sacred door, Exclaiming: "Enter; but I give you warning  
That forth returns whoever looks behind."

And when upon their hinges were turned round The swivels of  
that consecrated gate,

Which are of metal, massive and sonorous, Roared not so loud,  
nor so discordant seemed Tarpeia, when was ta'en from it the  
good Metellus, wherefore meagre it remained.

At the first thunder-peal I turned attentive, And "Te Deum  
laudamus" seemed to hear In voices mingled with sweet  
melody.

Exactly such an image rendered me That which I heard, as we  
are wont to catch, When people singing with the organ stand;

For now we hear, and now hear not, the words.

### Canto X

When we had crossed the threshold of the door Which the  
perverted love of souls disuses,

Because it makes the crooked way seem straight, Re-echoing I  
heard it closed again;

And if I had turned back mine eyes upon it, What for my failing  
had been fit excuse? We mounted upward through a rifted rock,  
Which undulated to this side and that, Even as a wave receding  
and advancing. "Here it behoves us use a little art,"

Began my Leader, "to adapt ourselves Now here, now there, to  
the receding side." And this our footsteps so infrequent made,  
That sooner had the moon's decreasing disk

Regained its bed to sink again to rest, Than we were forth from  
out that needle's eye;

But when we free and in the open were, There where the  
mountain backward piles itself,

I wearied out, and both of us uncertain About our way, we  
stopped upon a plain More desolate than roads across the  
deserts.

From where its margin borders on the void, To foot of the high  
bank that ever rises,

A human body three times told would measure; And far as eye  
of mine could wing its flight, Now on the left, and on the right  
flank now, The same this cornice did appear to me.

Thereon our feet had not been moved as yet, When I perceived  
the embankment round about, Which all right of ascent had  
interdicted,

To be of marble white, and so adorned With sculptures, that not  
only Polycletus,

But Nature's self, had there been put to shame. The Angel, who  
came down to earth with tidings Of peace, that had been wept  
for many a year, And opened Heaven from its long interdict,

In front of us appeared so truthfully There sculptured in a  
gracious attitude, He did not seem an image that is silent.

One would have sworn that he was saying, "Ave;" For she was  
there in effigy portrayed

Who turned the key to ope the exalted love, And in her mien this  
language had impressed, "Ecce ancilla Dei," as distinctly

As any figure stamps itself in wax. "Keep not thy mind upon one  
place alone," The gentle Master said, who had me standing  
Upon that side where people have their hearts;

Whereat I moved mine eyes, and I beheld In rear of Mary, and  
upon that side

Where he was standing who conducted me, Another story on  
the rock imposed; Wherefore I passed Virgilius and drew near,  
So that before mine eyes it might be set.

There sculptured in the self-same marble were The cart and  
oxen, drawing the holy ark, Wherefore one dreads an office not  
appointed.

People appeared in front, and all of them In seven choirs  
divided, of two senses

Made one say "No," the other, "Yes, they sing." Likewise unto  
the smoke of the frankincense, Which there was imaged forth,  
the eyes and nose

Were in the yes and no discordant made.

Preceded there the vessel benedight, Dancing with girded loins,  
the humble Psalmist,

And more and less than King was he in this.

Opposite, represented at the window

Of a great palace, Michal looked upon him, Even as a woman  
scornful and afflicted.

I moved my feet from where I had been standing, To examine  
near at hand another story,

Which after Michal glimmered white upon me.

There the high glory of the Roman Prince Was chronicled, whose  
great beneficence Moved Gregory to his great victory;

'Tis of the Emperor Trajan I am speaking; And a poor widow at  
his bridle stood, In attitude of weeping and of grief.

Around about him seemed it thronged and full Of cavaliers, and  
the eagles in the gold

Above them visibly in the wind were moving. The wretched  
woman in the midst of these Seemed to be saying: "Give me  
vengeance, Lord,

For my dead son, for whom my heart is breaking." And he to  
answer her: "Now wait until

I shall return." And she: "My Lord," like one In whom grief is  
impatient, "shouldst thou not Return?" And he: "Who shall be  
where I am

Will give it thee." And she: "Good deed of others What boots it  
thee, if thou neglect thine own?" Whence he: "Now comfort thee,  
for it behoves me That I discharge my duty ere I move;

Justice so wills, and pity doth retain me." He who on no new  
thing has ever looked Was the creator of this visible language,  
Novel to us, for here it is not found.

While I delighted me in contemplating The images of such  
humility,

And dear to look on for their Maker's sake, "Behold, upon this  
side, but rare they make Their steps," the Poet murmured,  
"many people; These will direct us to the lofty stairs."

Mine eyes, that in beholding were intent To see new things, of  
which they curious are, In turning round towards him were not  
slow.

But still I wish not, Reader, thou shouldst swerve From thy good  
purposes, because thou hearest How God ordaineth that the  
debt be paid;

Attend not to the fashion of the torment, Think of what follows;  
think that at the worst It cannot reach beyond the mighty  
sentence. "Master," began I, "that which I behold Moving  
towards us seems to me not persons, And what I know not, so in  
sight I waver." And he to me: "The grievous quality

Of this their torment bows them so to earth, That my own eyes  
at first contended with it; But look there fixedly, and disentangle

By sight what cometh underneath those stones; Already canst  
thou see how each is stricken." O ye proud Christians! wretched,  
weary ones!

Who, in the vision of the mind infirm

Confidence have in your backsliding steps, Do ye not  
comprehend that we are worms, Born to bring forth the angelic  
butterfly That flieth unto judgment without screen? Why floats  
aloft your spirit high in air?

Like are ye unto insects undeveloped, Even as the worm in  
whom formation fails!

As to sustain a ceiling or a roof,

In place of corbel, oftentimes a figure Is seen to join its knees  
unto its breast, Which makes of the unreal real anguish Arise in  
him who sees it, fashioned thus

Beheld I those, when I had ta'en good heed. True is it, they were  
more or less bent down, According as they more or less were  
laden; And he who had most patience in his looks Weeping did  
seem to say, "I can no more!"

## Canto XI

"Our Father, thou who dwellest in the heavens, Not  
circumscribed, but from the greater love Thou bearest to the  
first effects on high, Praised be thy name and thine  
omnipotence By every creature, as befitting is

To render thanks to thy sweet effluence. Come unto us the  
peace of thy dominion, For unto it we cannot of ourselves,

If it come not, with all our intellect. Even as thine own Angels of  
their will

Make sacrifice to thee, Hosanna singing, So may all men make  
sacrifice of theirs. Give unto us this day our daily manna,  
Withouten which in this rough wilderness

Backward goes he who toils most to advance. And even as we  
the trespass we have suffered Pardon in one another, pardon  
thou

Benignly, and regard not our desert. Our virtue, which is easily  
o'ercome, Put not to proof with the old Adversary,  
But thou from him who spurs it so, deliver.

This last petition verily, dear Lord, Not for ourselves is made,  
who need it not,

But for their sake who have remained behind us." Thus for  
themselves and us good furtherance Those shades imploring,  
went beneath a weight Like unto that of which we sometimes  
dream, Unequally in anguish round and round

And weary all, upon that foremost cornice, Purging away the  
smoke-stains of the world. If there good words are always said  
for us, What may not here be said and done for them, By those  
who have a good root to their will? Well may we help them wash  
away the marks That hence they carried, so that clean and light  
They may ascend unto the starry wheels!





with you. The ancient blood and deeds of gallantry Of my  
progenitors so arrogant made me

That, thinking not upon the common mother, All men I held in  
scorn to such extent

I died therefor, as know the Sienese, And every child in  
Campagnatico. I am Umberto; and not to me alone

Has pride done harm, but all my kith and kin Has with it  
dragged into adversity.

And here must I this burden bear for it

Till God be satisfied, since I did not Among the living, here  
among the dead."

Listening I downward bent my countenance; And one of them,  
not this one who was speaking,

Twisted himself beneath the weight that cramps him, And  
looked at me, and knew me, and called out, Keeping his eyes  
laboriously fixed

On me, who all bowed down was going with them. "O," asked I  
him, "art thou not Oderisi, Agobbio's honour, and honour of that  
art Which is in Paris called illuminating?"

"Brother," said he, "more laughing are the leaves Touched by  
the brush of Franco Bolognese; All his the honour now, and mine  
in part.

In sooth I had not been so courteous While I was living, for the  
great desire

Of excellence, on which my heart was bent.

Here of such pride is paid the forfeiture; And yet I should not be  
here, were it not That, having power to sin, I turned to God. O  
thou vain glory of the human powers, How little green upon thy  
summit lingers, If't be not followed by an age of grossness!

In painting Cimabue thought that he Should hold the field, now  
Giotto has the cry,

So that the other's fame is growing dim. So has one Guido from  
the other taken The glory of our tongue, and he perchance

Is born, who from the nest shall chase them both.

Naught is this mundane rumour but a breath

Of wind, that comes now this way and now that, And changes  
name, because it changes side.

What fame shalt thou have more, if old peel off From thee thy  
flesh, than if thou hadst been dead Before thou left the 'pappo'  
and the 'dindi,'

Ere pass a thousand years? which is a shorter Space to the  
eterne, than twinkling of an eye Unto the circle that in heaven  
wheels slowest.

With him, who takes so little of the road In front of me, all  
Tuscany resounded; And now he scarce is lisp'd of in Siena,  
Where he was lord, what time was overthrown The Florentine  
delirium, that superb

Was at that day as now 'tis prostitute. Your reputation is the  
colour of grass

Which comes and goes, and that discolours it By which it issues  
green from out the earth." And I: "Thy true speech fills my heart  
with good Humility, and great tumour thou assuagest;

But who is he, of whom just now thou spakest?" "That," he  
replied, "is Provenzan Salvani, And he is here because he had  
presumed

To bring Siena all into his hands.

He has gone thus, and goeth without rest E'er since he died;  
such money renders back In payment he who is on earth too  
daring." And I: "If every spirit who awaits

The verge of life before that he repent, Remains below there  
and ascends not hither, (Unless good orison shall him bestead,)

Until as much time as he lived be passed, How was the coming  
granted him in largess?" "When he in greatest splendour lived,"  
said he,

"Freely upon the Campo of Siena,

All shame being laid aside, he placed himself; And there to draw  
his friend from the duress Which in the prison-house of Charles  
he suffered, He brought himself to tremble in each vein.

I say no more, and know that I speak darkly; Yet little time shall  
pass before thy neighbours

Will so demean themselves that thou canst gloss it. This action  
has released him from those confines."

## Canto XII

Abreast, like oxen going in a yoke, I with that heavy-laden soul  
went on,

As long as the sweet pedagogue permitted; But when he said,  
"Leave him, and onward pass,

For here 'tis good that with the sail and oars, As much as may  
be, each push on his barque;" Upright, as walking wills it, I  
redressed

My person, notwithstanding that my thoughts Remained within  
me downcast and abashed.

I had moved on, and followed willingly The footsteps of my  
Master, and we both Already showed how light of foot we were,

When unto me he said: "Cast down thine eyes; 'Twere well for thee, to alleviate the way, To look upon the bed beneath thy feet."

As, that some memory may exist of them, Above the buried dead their tombs in earth Bear sculptured on them what they were before; Whence often there we weep for them afresh, From pricking of remembrance, which alone To the compassionate doth set its spur; So saw I there, but of a better semblance In point of artifice, with figures covered Whate'er as pathway from the mount projects.

I saw that one who was created noble More than all other creatures, down from heaven

Flaming with lightnings fall upon one side.

I saw Briareus smitten by the dart Celestial, lying on the other side, Heavy upon the earth by mortal frost.

I saw Thymbraeus, Pallas saw, and Mars, Still clad in armour round about their father, Gaze at the scattered members of the giants. I saw, at foot of his great labour, Nimrod, As if bewildered, looking at the people Who had been proud with him in Sennaar.

O Niobe! with what afflicted eyes Thee I beheld upon the pathway traced,

Between thy seven and seven children slain! O Saul! how fallen  
upon thy proper sword Didst thou appear there lifeless in  
Gilboa, That felt thereafter neither rain nor dew!

O mad Arachne! so I thee beheld E'en then half spider, sad upon  
the shreds Of fabric wrought in evil hour for thee!

O Rehoboam! no more seems to threaten Thine image there;  
but full of consternation A chariot bears it off, when none  
pursues! Displayed moreo'er the adamantine pavement How  
unto his own mother made Alcmaeon Costly appear the luckless  
ornament;

Displayed how his own sons did throw themselves Upon  
Sennacherib within the temple,

And how, he being dead, they left him there; Displayed the ruin  
and the cruel carnage

That Tomyris wrought, when she to Cyrus said, "Blood didst  
thou thirst for, and with blood I glut thee!"

Displayed how routed fled the Assyrians After that Holofernes  
had been slain,

And likewise the remainder of that slaughter.

I saw there Troy in ashes and in caverns; O Ilium! thee, how  
abject and debased,

Displayed the image that is there discerned!

Whoe'er of pencil master was or stile,  
That could portray the shades and traits which there Would  
cause each subtle genius to admire?  
Dead seemed the dead, the living seemed alive; Better than I  
saw not who saw the truth,  
All that I trod upon while bowed I went.

Now wax ye proud, and on with looks uplifted, Ye sons of Eve,  
and bow not down your faces So that ye may behold your evil  
ways!

More of the mount by us was now encompassed, And far more  
spent the circuit of the sun, Than had the mind preoccupied  
imagined,

When he, who ever watchful in advance Was going on, began:  
"Lift up thy head, 'Tis no more time to go thus meditating. Lo  
there an Angel who is making haste To come towards us; lo,  
returning is

From service of the day the sixth handmaiden.

With reverence thine acts and looks adorn, So that he may  
delight to speed us upward; Think that this day will never dawn  
again." I was familiar with his admonition



Ever to lose no time; so on this theme He could not unto me  
speak covertly. Towards us came the being beautiful Vested in  
white, and in his countenance

Such as appears the tremulous morning star.

His arms he opened, and opened then his wings; "Come," said  
he, "near at hand here are the steps, And easy from henceforth  
is the ascent."

At this announcement few are they who come!

O human creatures, born to soar aloft, Why fall ye thus before a  
little wind?

He led us on to where the rock was cleft; There smote upon my  
forehead with his wings, Then a safe passage promised unto  
me.

As on the right hand, to ascend the mount Where seated is the  
church that lordeth it O'er the well-guided, above Rubaconte,  
The bold abruptness of the ascent is broken

By stairways that were made there in the age When still were  
safe the ledger and the stave,

E'en thus attempered is the bank which falls Sheer downward  
from the second circle there; But on this, side and that the high  
rock graze. As we were turning thitherward our persons, "Beati  
pauperes spiritu," voices

Sang in such wise that speech could tell it not.

Ah me! how different are these entrances From the Infernal! for  
with anthems here One enters, and below with wild laments. We  
now were hunting up the sacred stairs, And it appeared to me  
by far more easy Than on the plain it had appeared before.

Whence I: "My Master, say, what heavy thing Has been uplifted  
from me, so that hardly Aught of fatigue is felt by me in  
walking?"

He answered: "When the P's which have remained Still on thy  
face almost obliterate

Shall wholly, as the first is, be erased, Thy feet will be so  
vanquished by good will,

That not alone they shall not feel fatigue, But urging up will be  
to them delight." Then did I even as they do who are going

With something on the head to them unknown, Unless the signs  
of others make them doubt, Wherefore the hand to ascertain is  
helpful, And seeks and finds, and doth fulfill the office Which  
cannot be accomplished by the sight; And with the fingers of  
the right hand spread

I found but six the letters, that had carved Upon my temples he  
who bore the keys;

Upon beholding which my Leader smiled.

## Canto XIII

We were upon the summit of the stairs, Where for the second  
time is cut away

The mountain, which ascending shriveth all.

There in like manner doth a cornice bind The hill all round about,  
as does the first, Save that its arc more suddenly is curved.

Shade is there none, nor sculpture that appears; So seems the  
bank, and so the road seems smooth, With but the livid colour  
of the stone.

"If to inquire we wait for people here," The Poet said, "I fear  
that peradventure Too much delay will our election have."

Then steadfast on the sun his eyes he fixed, Made his right side  
the centre of his motion, And turned the left part of himself  
about.

"O thou sweet light! with trust in whom I enter Upon this novel  
journey, do thou lead us," Said he, "as one within here should be  
led.

Thou warmest the world, thou shinest over it; If other reason  
prompt not otherwise,

Thy rays should evermore our leaders be!" As much as here is  
counted for a mile, So much already there had we advanced

In little time, by dint of ready will;  
And tow'rds us there were heard to fly, albeit They were not  
visible, spirits uttering  
Unto Love's table courteous invitations, The first voice that  
passed onward in its flight,  
"Vinum non habent," said in accents loud, And went reiterating  
it behind us.  
And ere it wholly grew inaudible Because of distance, passed  
another, crying,  
"I am Orestes!" and it also stayed not.  
"O," said I, "Father, these, what voices are they?" And even as I  
asked, behold the third,  
Saying: "Love those from whom ye have had evil!" And the good  
Master said: "This circle scourges The sin of envy, and on that  
account  
Are drawn from love the lashes of the scourge.  
The bridle of another sound shall be; I think that thou wilt hear  
it, as I judge,  
Before thou comest to the Pass of Pardon.  
But fix thine eyes athwart the air right steadfast, And people  
thou wilt see before us sitting,

And each one close against the cliff is seated." Then wider than  
at first mine eyes I opened;

I looked before me, and saw shades with mantles Not from the  
colour of the stone diverse.

And when we were a little farther onward, I heard a cry of,  
"Mary, pray for us!"

A cry of, "Michael, Peter, and all Saints!" I do not think there  
walketh still on earth

A man so hard, that he would not be pierced With pity at what  
afterward I saw.

For when I had approached so near to them That manifest to  
me their acts became,

Drained was I at the eyes by heavy grief.

Covered with sackcloth vile they seemed to me, And one  
sustained the other with his shoulder, And all of them were by  
the bank sustained.

Thus do the blind, in want of livelihood, Stand at the doors of  
churches asking alms, And one upon another leans his head,  
So that in others pity soon may rise, Not only at the accent of  
their words,

But at their aspect, which no less implores. And as unto the blind  
the sun comes not, So to the shades, of whom just now I spake,

Heaven's light will not be bounteous of itself; For all their lids an  
iron wire transpierces, And sews them up, as to a sparrowhawk wild

Is done, because it will not quiet stay.

To me it seemed, in passing, to do outrage, Seeing the others  
without being seen; Wherefore I turned me to my counsel sage.

Well knew he what the mute one wished to say, And therefore  
waited not for my demand,

But said: "Speak, and be brief, and to the point." I had Virgilius  
upon that side

Of the embankment from which one may fall, Since by no  
border 'tis engarlanded;

Upon the other side of me I had

The shades devout, who through the horrible seam Pressed out  
the tears so that they bathed their cheeks.

To them I turned me, and, "O people, certain," Began I, "of  
beholding the high light,

Which your desire has solely in its care, So may grace speedily  
dissolve the scum Upon your consciences, that limpidly

Through them descend the river of the mind, Tell me, for dear  
'twill be to me and gracious, If any soul among you here is

Latian,

And 'twill perchance be good for him I learn it." "O brother mine,  
each one is citizen

Of one true city; but thy meaning is, Who may have lived in Italy  
a pilgrim." By way of answer this I seemed to hear A little  
farther on than where I stood, Whereat I made myself still  
nearer heard. Among the rest I saw a shade that waited In  
aspect, and should any one ask how, Its chin it lifted upward  
like a blind man. "Spirit," I said, "who stoopest to ascend, If  
thou art he who did reply to me,

Make thyself known to me by place or name." "Sienese was I," it  
replied, "and with

The others here recleanse my guilty life, Weeping to Him to lend  
himself to us. Sapient I was not, although I Sapia

Was called, and I was at another's harm More happy far than at  
my own good fortune.

And that thou mayst not think that I deceive thee, Hear if I was  
as foolish as I tell thee.

The arc already of my years descending, My fellow-citizens near  
unto Colle

Were joined in battle with their adversaries,

And I was praying God for what he willed. Routed were they,  
and turned into the bitter Passes of flight; and I, the chase  
beholding, A joy received unequalled by all others;

So that I lifted upward my bold face Crying to God, 'Henceforth  
I fear thee not,' As did the blackbird at the little sunshine. Peace  
I desired with God at the extreme Of my existence, and as yet  
would not

My debt have been by penitence discharged, Had it not been  
that in remembrance held me Pier Pettignano in his holy  
prayers,

Who out of charity was grieved for me. But who art thou, that  
into our conditions

Questioning goest, and hast thine eyes unbound As I believe,  
and breathing dost discourse?"

"Mine eyes," I said, "will yet be here ta'en from me, But for short  
space; for small is the offence Committed by their being turned  
with envy.

Far greater is the fear, wherein suspended My soul is, of the  
torment underneath,

For even now the load down there weighs on me." And she to  
me: "Who led thee, then, among us Up here, if to return below  
thou thinkest?"

And I: "He who is with me, and speaks not; And living am I;  
therefore ask of me,

Spirit elect, if thou wouldst have me move O'er yonder yet my  
mortal feet for thee." "O, this is such a novel thing to hear,"

She answered, "that great sign it is God loves thee;



Therefore with prayer of thine sometimes assist me.  
And I implore, by what thou most desirest, If e'er thou treadest  
the soil of Tuscany, Well with my kindred reinstate my fame.  
Them wilt thou see among that people vain Who hope in  
Talamone, and will lose there More hope than in discovering the  
Diana; But there still more the admirals will lose."

#### Canto XIV

"Who is this one that goes about our mountain, Or ever Death  
has given him power of flight, And opes his eyes and shuts them  
at his will?" "I know not who, but know he's not alone;  
Ask him thyself, for thou art nearer to him, And gently, so that  
he may speak, accost him." Thus did two spirits, leaning tow'rds  
each other, Discourse about me there on the right hand; Then  
held supine their faces to address me.

And said the one: "O soul, that, fastened still Within the body,  
tow'rds the heaven art going, For charity console us, and  
declare

Whence comest and who art thou; for thou mak'st us As much  
to marvel at this grace of thine

As must a thing that never yet has been." And I: "Through midst  
of Tuscany there wanders

A streamlet that is born in Falterona, And not a hundred miles of  
course suffice it;

From thereupon do I this body bring.

To tell you who I am were speech in vain, Because my name as  
yet makes no great noise." "If well thy meaning I can penetrate

With intellect of mine," then answered me He who first spake,  
"thou speakest of the Arno."

And said the other to him: "Why concealed This one the  
appellation of that river, Even as a man doth of things horrible?"

And thus the shade that questioned was of this Himself  
acquitted: "I know not; but truly 'Tis fit the name of such a valley  
perish;

For from its fountain-head (where is so pregnant The Alpine  
mountain whence is cleft Peloro That in few places it that mark  
surpasses)

To where it yields itself in restoration Of what the heaven doth  
of the sea dry up,

Whence have the rivers that which goes with them, Virtue is like  
an enemy avoided

By all, as is a serpent, through misfortune Of place, or through  
bad habit that impels them;

On which account have so transformed their nature The  
dwellers in that miserable valley,

It seems that Circe had them in her pasture. 'Mid ugly swine, of  
acorns worthier

Than other food for human use created, It first directeth its  
impoverished way.

Curs findeth it thereafter, coming downward, More snarling than  
their puissance demands, And turns from them disdainfully its  
muzzle.

It goes on falling, and the more it grows,

The more it finds the dogs becoming wolves, This maledict and  
misadventurous ditch.

Descended then through many a hollow gulf, It finds the foxes  
so replete with fraud,

They fear no cunning that may master them. Nor will I cease  
because another hears me; And well 'twill be for him, if still he  
mind him Of what a truthful spirit to me unravels.

Thy grandson I behold, who doth become A hunter of those  
wolves upon the bank Of the wild stream, and terrifies them all.

He sells their flesh, it being yet alive; Thereafter slaughters them  
like ancient beeves; Many of life, himself of praise, deprives.

Blood-stained he issues from the dismal forest; He leaves it  
such, a thousand years from now In its primeval state 'tis not  
re-wooded."

As at the announcement of impending ills The face of him who  
listens is disturbed, From whate'er side the peril seize upon him;  
So I beheld that other soul, which stood

Turned round to listen, grow disturbed and sad, When it had  
gathered to itself the word.

The speech of one and aspect of the other Had me desirous  
made to know their names,

And question mixed with prayers I made thereof, Whereat the  
spirit which first spake to me

Began again: "Thou wishest I should bring me To do for thee  
what thou'lt not do for me;

But since God willeth that in thee shine forth

Such grace of his, I'll not be chary with thee; Know, then, that I  
Guido del Duca am.

My blood was so with envy set on fire, That if I had beheld a  
man make merry,

Thou wouldst have seen me sprinkled o'er with pallor.

From my own sowing such the straw I reap! O human race! why  
dost thou set thy heart Where interdict of partnership must be?

This is Renier; this is the boast and honour Of the house of  
Calboli, where no one since Has made himself the heir of his  
desert.

And not alone his blood is made devoid, 'Twixt Po and mount,  
and sea-shore and the Reno,

Of good required for truth and for diversion; For all within these  
boundaries is full

Of venomous roots, so that too tardily By cultivation now would  
they diminish. Where is good Lizio, and Arrigo Manardi, Pier  
Traversaro, and Guido di Carpigna,

O Romagnuoli into bastards turned? When in Bologna will a  
Fabbro rise? When in Faenza a Bernardin di Fosco, The noble  
scion of ignoble seed?

Be not astonished, Tuscan, if I weep, When I remember, with  
Guido da Prata, Ugolin d' Azzo, who was living with us, Frederick  
Tignoso and his company,

The house of Traversara, and th' Anastagi, And one race and the  
other is extinct;

The dames and cavaliers, the toils and ease

That filled our souls with love and courtesy, There where the  
hearts have so malicious grown!

O Brettinoro! why dost thou not flee, Seeing that all thy family is  
gone,

And many people, not to be corrupted? Bagnacaval does well in  
not begetting And ill does Castrocaro, and Conio worse, In  
taking trouble to beget such Counts.

Will do well the Pagani, when their Devil Shall have departed;  
but not therefore pure Will testimony of them e'er remain.

O Ugolin de' Fantoli, secure

Thy name is, since no longer is awaited One who, degenerating,  
can obscure it!

But go now, Tuscan, for it now delights me To weep far better  
than it does to speak,

So much has our discourse my mind distressed." We were aware  
that those beloved souls

Heard us depart; therefore, by keeping silent, They made us of  
our pathway confident.

When we became alone by going onward, Thunder, when it doth  
cleave the air, appeared A voice, that counter to us came,  
exclaiming: "Shall slay me whosoever findeth me!"

And fled as the reverberation dies If suddenly the cloud asunder  
bursts.

As soon as hearing had a truce from this, Behold another, with  
so great a crash,

That it resembled thunderings following fast: "I am Aglaurus,  
who became a stone!"

And then, to press myself close to the Poet, I backward, and not  
forward, took a step. Already on all sides the air was quiet;

And said he to me: "That was the hard curb That ought to hold a  
man within his bounds; But you take in the bait so that the hook  
Of the old Adversary draws you to him, And hence availeth little  
curb or call.

The heavens are calling you, and wheel around you, Displaying  
to you their eternal beauties,

And still your eye is looking on the ground; Whence He, who all  
discerns, chastises you."

## Canto XV

As much as 'twixt the close of the third hour And dawn of day  
appeareth of that sphere Which aye in fashion of a child is  
playing, So much it now appeared, towards the night, Was of  
his course remaining to the sun;

There it was evening, and 'twas midnight here; And the rays  
smote the middle of our faces, Because by us the mount was so  
encircled,

That straight towards the west we now were going When I  
perceived my forehead overpowered Beneath the splendour far  
more than at first, And stupor were to me the things unknown,

Whereat towards the summit of my brow

I raised my hands, and made myself the visor Which the  
excessive glare diminishes.

As when from off the water, or a mirror, The sunbeam leaps  
unto the opposite side, Ascending upward in the selfsame  
measure That it descends, and deviates as far

From falling of a stone in line direct, (As demonstrate  
experiment and art,) So it appeared to me that by a light  
Refracted there before me I was smitten; On which account my  
sight was swift to flee.

"What is that, Father sweet, from which I cannot So fully screen  
my sight that it avail me,"

Said I, "and seems towards us to be moving?" "Marvel thou not,  
if dazzle thee as yet

The family of heaven," he answered me; "An angel 'tis, who  
comes to invite us upward.



Soon will it be, that to behold these things Shall not be grievous,  
but delightful to thee As much as nature fashioned thee to feel."  
When we had reached the Angel benedight, With joyful voice he  
said: "Here enter in

To stairway far less steep than are the others." We mounting  
were, already thence departed, And "Beati misericordes" was  
Behind us sung, "Rejoice, thou that o'ercomest!" My Master and  
myself, we two alone

Were going upward, and I thought, in going, Some profit to  
acquire from words of his; And I to him directed me, thus  
asking: "What did the spirit of Romagna mean, Mentioning  
interdict and partnership?"

Whence he to me: "Of his own greatest failing He knows the  
harm; and therefore wonder not If he reprove us, that we less  
may rue it.

Because are thither pointed your desires Where by  
companionship each share is lessened,  
Envy doth ply the bellows to your sighs. But if the love of the  
supernal sphere Should upwardly direct your aspiration,  
There would not be that fear within your breast; For there, as  
much the more as one says 'Our,' So much the more of good  
each one possesses, And more of charity in that cloister burns."

"I am more hungering to be satisfied," I said, "than if I had  
before been silent,

And more of doubt within my mind I gather.

How can it be, that boon distributed

The more possessors can more wealthy make Therein, than if by

few it be possessed?" And he to me: "Because thou fixest still

Thy mind entirely upon earthly things,

Thou pluckest darkness from the very light.

That goodness infinite and ineffable Which is above there,  
runneth unto love, As to a lucid body comes the sunbeam. So  
much it gives itself as it finds ardour, So that as far as charity  
extends,

O'er it increases the eternal valour.

And the more people thitherward aspire,

More are there to love well, and more they love there, And, as a  
mirror, one reflects the other.

And if my reasoning appease thee not, Thou shalt see Beatrice;  
and she will fully Take from thee this and every other longing.

Endeavour, then, that soon may be extinct,

As are the two already, the five wounds That close themselves  
again by being painful." Even as I wished to say, "Thou dost  
appease me,"

I saw that I had reached another circle, So that my eager eyes  
made me keep silence.

There it appeared to me that in a vision Ecstatic on a sudden I  
was rapt,

And in a temple many persons saw; And at the door a woman,  
with the sweet

Behaviour of a mother, saying: "Son, Why in this manner hast  
thou dealt with us?

Lo, sorrowing, thy father and myself

Were seeking for thee;"—and as here she ceased, That which  
appeared at first had disappeared.

Then I beheld another with those waters Adown her cheeks  
which grief distils whenever From great disdain of others it is  
born,

And saying: "If of that city thou art lord,

For whose name was such strife among the gods, And whence  
doth every science scintillate, Avenge thyself on those  
audacious arms

That clasped our daughter, O Pisistratus;" And the lord seemed  
to me benign and mild To answer her with aspect temperate:  
"What shall we do to those who wish us ill, If he who loves us be  
by us condemned?"

Then saw I people hot in fire of wrath, With stones a young man  
slaying, clamorously Still crying to each other, "Kill him! kill him!"

And him I saw bow down, because of death That weighed  
already on him, to the earth, But of his eyes made ever gates to  
heaven, Imploring the high Lord, in so great strife, That he  
would pardon those his persecutors, With such an aspect as  
unlocks compassion.

Soon as my soul had outwardly returned To things external to it  
which are true, Did I my not false errors recognize.

My Leader, who could see me bear myself Like to a man that  
rouses him from sleep,

Exclaimed: "What ails thee, that thou canst not stand?

But hast been coming more than half a league Veiling thine  
eyes, and with thy legs entangled, In guise of one whom wine or  
sleep subdues?" "O my sweet Father, if thou listen to me,

I'll tell thee," said I, "what appeared to me, When thus from me  
my legs were ta'en away." And he: "If thou shouldst have a  
hundred masks Upon thy face, from me would not be shut

Thy cogitations, howsoever small.

What thou hast seen was that thou mayst not fail To ope thy  
heart unto the waters of peace, Which from the eternal fountain  
are diffused.

I did not ask, 'What ails thee?' as he does Who only looketh with  
the eyes that see not When of the soul bereft the body lies,

But asked it to give vigour to thy feet; Thus must we needs urge  
on the sluggards, slow

To use their wakefulness when it returns." We passed along,  
athwart the twilight peering Forward as far as ever eye could  
stretch Against the sunbeams serotine and lucent; And lo! by  
slow degrees a smoke approached In our direction, sombre as  
the night,

Nor was there place to hide one's self therefrom.

This of our eyes and the pure air bereft us.

#### Canto XVI

Darkness of hell, and of a night deprived Of every planet under  
a poor sky,

As much as may be tenebrous with cloud, Ne'er made unto my  
sight so thick a veil,

As did that smoke which there enveloped us, Nor to the feeling  
of so rough a texture; For not an eye it suffered to stay open;  
Whereat mine escort, faithful and sagacious, Drew near to me  
and offered me his shoulder. E'en as a blind man goes behind  
his guide, Lest he should wander, or should strike against Aught  
that may harm or peradventure kill him, So went I through the

bitter and foul air, Listening unto my Leader, who said only,  
"Look that from me thou be not separated." Voices I heard, and  
every one appeared

To supplicate for peace and misericord

The Lamb of God who takes away our sins.

Still "Agnus Dei" their exordium was; One word there was in all,  
and metre one, So that all harmony appeared among them.

"Master," I said, "are spirits those I hear?" And he to me: "Thou  
apprehendest truly, And they the knot of anger go unloosing."

"Now who art thou, that cleavest through our smoke And art  
discoursing of us even as though

Thou didst by calends still divide the time?" After this manner by  
a voice was spoken; Whereon my Master said: "Do thou reply,  
And ask if on this side the way go upward." And I: "O creature  
that dost cleanse thyself To return beautiful to Him who made  
thee, Thou shalt hear marvels if thou follow me." "Thee will I  
follow far as is allowed me,"

He answered; "and if smoke prevent our seeing, Hearing shall  
keep us joined instead thereof." Thereon began I: "With that  
swathing band Which death unwindeth am I going upward, And  
hither came I through the infernal anguish.

And if God in his grace has me infolded, So that he wills that I  
behold his court By method wholly out of modern usage,

Conceal not from me who ere death thou wast, But tell it me,  
and tell me if I go

Right for the pass, and be thy words our escort." "Lombard was  
I, and I was Marco called;

The world I knew, and loved that excellence,

At which has each one now unbent his bow. For mounting  
upward, thou art going right."

Thus he made answer, and subjoined: "I pray thee To pray for  
me when thou shalt be above." And I to him: "My faith I pledge  
to thee

To do what thou dost ask me; but am bursting Inly with doubt,  
unless I rid me of it.

First it was simple, and is now made double By thy opinion,  
which makes certain to me,

Here and elsewhere, that which I couple with it.

The world forsooth is utterly deserted By every virtue, as thou  
tellest me, And with iniquity is big and covered;

But I beseech thee point me out the cause, That I may see it,  
and to others show it;

For one in the heavens, and here below one puts it." A sigh  
profound, that grief forced into Ai!

He first sent forth, and then began he: "Brother, The world is  
blind, and sooth thou comest from it!

Ye who are living every cause refer Still upward to the heavens,  
as if all things They of necessity moved with themselves. If this  
were so, in you would be destroyed Free will, nor any justice  
would there be In having joy for good, or grief for evil. The  
heavens your movements do initiate,

I say not all; but granting that I say it, Light has been given you  
for good and evil, And free volition; which, if some fatigue

In the first battles with the heavens it suffers,

Afterwards conquers all, if well 'tis nurtured.

To greater force and to a better nature, Though free, ye subject  
are, and that creates

The mind in you the heavens have not in charge.

Hence, if the present world doth go astray, In you the cause is,  
be it sought in you; And I therein will now be thy true spy.

Forth from the hand of Him, who fondles it Before it is, like to a  
little girl

Weeping and laughing in her childish sport, Issues the simple  
soul, that nothing knows, Save that, proceeding from a joyous  
Maker, Gladly it turns to that which gives it pleasure.



Of trivial good at first it tastes the savour; Is cheated by it, and  
runs after it,

If guide or rein turn not aside its love.

Hence it behoved laws for a rein to place, Behoved a king to  
have, who at the least Of the true city should discern the tower.

The laws exist, but who sets hand to them?

No one; because the shepherd who precedes Can ruminates, but  
cleaveth not the hoof; Wherefore the people that perceives its  
guide Strike only at the good for which it hankers, Feeds upon  
that, and farther seeketh not.

Clearly canst thou perceive that evil guidance The cause is that  
has made the world depraved, And not that nature is corrupt in  
you.

Rome, that reformed the world, accustomed was Two suns to  
have, which one road and the other,

Of God and of the world, made manifest.

One has the other quenched, and to the crosier The sword is  
joined, and ill beseemeth it That by main force one with the  
other go,

Because, being joined, one feareth not the other; If thou believe  
not, think upon the grain, For by its seed each herb is  
recognized.

In the land laved by Po and Adige, Valour and courtesy used to  
be found,

Before that Frederick had his controversy; Now in security can  
pass that way

Whoever will abstain, through sense of shame, From speaking  
with the good, or drawing near them.

True, three old men are left, in whom upbraids The ancient age  
the new, and late they deem it That God restore them to the  
better life: Currado da Palazzo, and good Gherardo,

And Guido da Castel, who better named is, In fashion of the  
French, the simple Lombard:

Say thou henceforward that the Church of Rome, Confounding  
in itself two governments,

Falls in the mire, and soils itself and burden." "O Marco mine," I  
said, "thou reasonest well; And now discern I why the sons of  
Levi Have been excluded from the heritage.

But what Gherardo is it, who, as sample Of a lost race, thou  
sayest has remained In reprobation of the barbarous age?"

"Either thy speech deceives me, or it tempts me," He answered  
me; "for speaking Tuscan to me,

It seems of good Gherardo naught thou knowest.

By other surname do I know him not, Unless I take it from his  
daughter Gaia.

May God be with you, for I come no farther.

Behold the dawn, that through the smoke rays out, Already  
whitening; and I must depart— Yonder the Angel is—ere he  
appear."

Thus did he speak, and would no farther hear me.

## Canto XVII

Remember, Reader, if e'er in the Alps

A mist o'ertook thee, through which thou couldst see Not  
otherwise than through its membrane mole, How, when the  
vapours humid and condensed Begin to dissipate themselves,  
the sphere

Of the sun feebly enters in among them, And thy imagination  
will be swift

In coming to perceive how I re-saw The sun at first, that was  
already setting.

Thus, to the faithful footsteps of my Master Mating mine own, I  
issued from that cloud To rays already dead on the low shores.

O thou, Imagination, that dost steal us

So from without sometimes, that man perceives not, Although  
around may sound a thousand trumpets, Who moveth thee, if  
sense impel thee not?

Moves thee a light, which in the heaven takes form, By self, or  
by a will that downward guides it.

Of her impiety, who changed her form

Into the bird that most delights in singing, In my imagining  
appeared the trace;

And hereupon my mind was so withdrawn Within itself, that  
from without there came Nothing that then might be received  
by it.

Then reigned within my lofty fantasy One crucified, disdainful  
and ferocious In countenance, and even thus was dying. Around  
him were the great Ahasuerus, Esther his wife, and the just  
Mordecai, Who was in word and action so entire.

And even as this image burst asunder Of its own self, in fashion  
of a bubble In which the water it was made of fails,

There rose up in my vision a young maiden Bitterly weeping,  
and she said: "O queen, Why hast thou wished in anger to be  
naught?"

Thou'st slain thyself, Lavinia not to lose; Now hast thou lost me;  
I am she who mourns, Mother, at thine ere at another's ruin."

As sleep is broken, when upon a sudden New light strikes in  
upon the eyelids closed, And broken quivers ere it dieth wholly,  
So this imagining of mine fell down As soon as the effulgence  
smote my face, Greater by far than what is in our wont.

I turned me round to see where I might be, When said a voice,  
"Here is the passage up;" Which from all other purposes  
removed me, And made my wish so full of eagerness

To look and see who was it that was speaking, It never rests till  
meeting face to face;

But as before the sun, which quells the sight, And in its own  
excess its figure veils,

Even so my power was insufficient here. "This is a spirit divine,  
who in the way Of going up directs us without asking,

And who with his own light himself conceals. He does with us as  
man doth with himself;

For he who sees the need, and waits the asking, Malignly leans  
already tow'rds denial.

Accord we now our feet to such inviting, Let us make haste to  
mount ere it grow dark; For then we could not till the day  
return." Thus my Conductor said; and I and he Together turned  
our footsteps to a stairway; And I, as soon as the first step I  
reached, Near me perceived a motion as of wings, And fanning

in the face, and saying, "'Beati Pacifici,' who are without ill  
anger."

Already over us were so uplifted

The latest sunbeams, which the night pursues, That upon many  
sides the stars appeared.

"O manhood mine, why dost thou vanish so?" I said within  
myself; for I perceived

The vigour of my legs was put in truce.

We at the point were where no more ascends The stairway  
upward, and were motionless, Even as a ship, which at the shore  
arrives; And I gave heed a little, if I might hear

Aught whatsoever in the circle new; Then to my Master turned  
me round and said:

"Say, my sweet Father, what delinquency Is purged here in the  
circle where we are?

Although our feet may pause, pause not thy speech." And he to  
me: "The love of good, remiss

In what it should have done, is here restored; Here plied again  
the ill-belated oar;

But still more openly to understand, Turn unto me thy mind, and  
thou shalt gather

Some profitable fruit from our delay. Neither Creator nor a creature ever, Son," he began, "was destitute of love Natural or spiritual; and thou knowest it.

The natural was ever without error; But err the other may by evil object, Or by too much, or by too little vigour. While in the first it well directed is, And in the second moderates itself,

It cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure; But when to ill it turns, and, with more care Or lesser than it ought, runs after good, 'Gainst the Creator works his own creation.

Hence thou mayst comprehend that love must be The seed within yourselves of every virtue,

And every act that merits punishment. Now inasmuch as never from the welfare Of its own subject can love turn its sight, From their own hatred all things are secure; And since we cannot think of any being

Standing alone, nor from the First divided, Of hating Him is all desire cut off.

Hence if, discriminating, I judge well, The evil that one loves is of one's neighbour, And this is born in three modes in your clay.

There are, who, by abasement of their neighbour, Hope to excel, and therefore only long

That from his greatness he may be cast down; There are, who  
power, grace, honour, and renown Fear they may lose because  
another rises,

Thence are so sad that the reverse they love; And there are  
those whom injury seems to chafe, So that it makes them  
greedy for revenge,

And such must needs shape out another's harm. This threefold  
love is wept for down below; Now of the other will I have thee  
hear,

That runneth after good with measure faulty.

Each one confusedly a good conceives Wherein the mind may  
rest, and longeth for it; Therefore to overtake it each one strives.  
If languid love to look on this attract you, Or in attaining unto it,  
this cornice,

After just penitence, torments you for it.

There's other good that does not make man happy; 'Tis not  
felicity, 'tis not the good

Essence, of every good the fruit and root. The love that yields  
itself too much to this Above us is lamented in three circles;  
But how tripartite it may be described, I say not, that thou seek  
it for thyself."

Canto XVIII



An end had put unto his reasoning The lofty Teacher, and attent  
was looking

Into my face, if I appeared content; And I, whom a new thirst  
still goaded on,

Without was mute, and said within: "Perchance The too much  
questioning I make annoys him." But that true Father, who had  
comprehended The timid wish, that opened not itself,

By speaking gave me hardihood to speak. Whence I: "My sight  
is, Master, vivified So in thy light, that clearly I discern

Whate'er thy speech importeth or describes. Therefore I thee  
entreat, sweet Father dear, To teach me love, to which thou  
dost refer Every good action and its contrary." "Direct," he said,  
"towards me the keen eyes Of intellect, and clear will be to thee

The error of the blind, who would be leaders.

The soul, which is created apt to love, Is mobile unto everything  
that pleases,

Soon as by pleasure she is waked to action. Your apprehension  
from some real thing

An image draws, and in yourselves displays it So that it makes  
the soul turn unto it.

And if, when turned, towards it she incline, Love is that  
inclination; it is nature,

Which is by pleasure bound in you anew

Then even as the fire doth upward move By its own form, which  
to ascend is born, Where longest in its matter it endures,

So comes the captive soul into desire, Which is a motion  
spiritual, and ne'er rests Until she doth enjoy the thing beloved.

Now may apparent be to thee how hidden The truth is from  
those people, who aver All love is in itself a laudable thing;  
Because its matter may perchance appear Aye to be good; but  
yet not each impression Is good, albeit good may be the wax."

"Thy words, and my sequacious intellect," I answered him, "have  
love revealed to me;

But that has made me more impregnated with doubt; For if love  
from without be offered us,

And with another foot the soul go not,

If right or wrong she go, 'tis not her merit." And he to me: "What  
reason seeth here, Myself can tell thee; beyond that await For  
Beatrice, since 'tis a work of faith.

Every substantial form, that segregate From matter is, and with  
it is united, Specific power has in itself collected, Which without  
act is not perceptible, Nor shows itself except by its effect,

As life does in a plant by the green leaves. But still, whence  
cometh the intelligence Of the first notions, man is ignorant,

And the affection for the first allurements,

Which are in you as instinct in the bee To make its honey; and  
this first desire Merit of praise or blame containeth not.

Now, that to this all others may be gathered, Innate within you  
is the power that counsels, And it should keep the threshold of  
assent.

This is the principle, from which is taken Occasion of desert in  
you, according

As good and guilty loves it takes and winnows. Those who, in  
reasoning, to the bottom went, Were of this innate liberty  
aware,

Therefore bequeathed they Ethics to the world.

Supposing, then, that from necessity Springs every love that is  
within you kindled, Within yourselves the power is to restrain it.

The noble virtue Beatrice understands By the free will; and  
therefore see that thou Bear it in mind, if she should speak of  
it." The moon, belated almost unto midnight, Now made the  
stars appear to us more rare,

Formed like a bucket, that is all ablaze,

And counter to the heavens ran through those paths Which the  
sun sets aflame, when he of Rome Sees it 'twixt Sardes and

Corsicans go down; And that patrician shade, for whom is  
named

Pietola more than any Mantuan town, Had laid aside the burden  
of my lading; Whence I, who reason manifest and plain In  
answer to my questions had received, Stood like a man in  
drowsy reverie.

But taken from me was this drowsiness Suddenly by a people,  
that behind

Our backs already had come round to us.

And as, of old, Ismenus and Asopus Beside them saw at night  
the rush and throng, If but the Thebans were in need of  
Bacchus,

So they along that circle curve their step, From what I saw of  
those approaching us,

Who by good-will and righteous love are ridden. Full soon they  
were upon us, because running Moved onward all that mighty  
multitude,

And two in the advance cried out, lamenting, "Mary in haste  
unto the mountain ran, And Caesar, that he might subdue  
Ilerda,

Thrust at Marseilles, and then ran into Spain." "Quick! quick! so  
that the time may not be lost By little love!" forthwith the others  
cried,

"For ardour in well-doing freshens grace!" "O folk, in whom an  
eager fervour now Supplies perhaps delay and negligence,  
Put by you in well-doing, through lukewarmness, This one who  
lives, and truly I lie not,  
Would fain go up, if but the sun relight us; So tell us where the  
passage nearest is."

These were the words of him who was my Guide; And some one  
of those spirits said: "Come on Behind us, and the opening shalt  
thou find;

So full of longing are we to move onward, That stay we cannot;  
therefore pardon us, If thou for churlishness our justice take.

I was San Zeno's Abbot at Verona, Under the empire of good  
Barbarossa,

Of whom still sorrowing Milan holds discourse; And he has one  
foot in the grave already, Who shall erelong lament that  
monastery, And sorry be of having there had power, Because  
his son, in his whole body sick,

And worse in mind, and who was evil-born, He put into the place  
of its true pastor."

If more he said, or silent was, I know not, He had already  
passed so far beyond us; But this I heard, and to retain it  
pleased me.

And he who was in every need my succour Said: "Turn thee  
hitherward; see two of them Come fastening upon slothfulness  
their teeth." In rear of all they shouted: "Sooner were  
The people dead to whom the sea was opened, Than their  
inheritors the Jordan saw;  
And those who the fatigue did not endure Unto the issue, with  
Anchises' son, Themselves to life withouten glory offered." Then  
when from us so separated were  
Those shades, that they no longer could be seen, Within me a  
new thought did entrance find, Whence others many and  
diverse were born; And so I lapsed from one into another,  
That in a reverie mine eyes I closed, And meditation into dream  
transmuted.

## Canto XIX

It was the hour when the diurnal heat  
No more can warm the coldness of the moon, Vanquished by  
earth, or peradventure Saturn, When geomancers their Fortuna  
Major  
See in the orient before the dawn Rise by a path that long  
remains not dim,

There came to me in dreams a stammering woman, Squint in  
her eyes, and in her feet distorted, With hands dissevered and  
of sallow hue.

I looked at her; and as the sun restores The frigid members  
which the night benumbs,

Even thus my gaze did render voluble Her tongue, and made her  
all erect thereafter

In little while, and the lost countenance As love desires it so in  
her did colour.

When in this wise she had her speech unloosed, She 'gan to sing  
so, that with difficulty

Could I have turned my thoughts away from her. "I am," she  
sang, "I am the Siren sweet Who mariners amid the main  
unman,

So full am I of pleasantness to hear.

I drew Ulysses from his wandering way Unto my song, and he  
who dwells with me Seldom departs so wholly I content him."  
Her mouth was not yet closed again, before Appeared a Lady  
saintly and alert

Close at my side to put her to confusion. "Virgilius, O Virgilius!  
who is this?" Sternly she said; and he was drawing near

With eyes still fixed upon that modest one. She seized the other  
and in front laid open,

Rending her garments, and her belly showed me; This waked me  
with the stench that issued from it.

I turned mine eyes, and good Virgilius said: "At least thrice have  
I called thee; rise and come; Find we the opening by which thou  
mayst enter."

I rose; and full already of high day Were all the circles of the  
Sacred Mountain, And with the new sun at our back we went.  
Following behind him, I my forehead bore Like unto one who  
has it laden with thought, Who makes himself the half arch of a  
bridge,

When I heard say, "Come, here the passage is," Spoken in a  
manner gentle and benign, Such as we hear not in this mortal  
region.

With open wings, which of a swan appeared, Upward he turned  
us who thus spake to us, Between the two walls of the solid  
granite.

He moved his pinions afterwards and fanned us, Affirming  
those 'qui lugent' to be blessed,

For they shall have their souls with comfort filled. "What aileth  
thee, that aye to earth thou gazest?" To me my Guide began to  
say, we both Somewhat beyond the Angel having mounted.



And I: "With such misgiving makes me go A vision new, which  
bends me to itself,

So that I cannot from the thought withdraw me." "Didst thou  
behold," he said, "that old enchantress, Who sole above us  
henceforth is lamented?"

Didst thou behold how man is freed from her? Suffice it thee,  
and smite earth with thy heels, Thine eyes lift upward to the lure,  
that whirls The Eternal King with revolutions vast." Even as the  
hawk, that first his feet surveys,

Then turns him to the call and stretches forward, Through the  
desire of food that draws him thither, Such I became, and such,  
as far as cleaves

The rock to give a way to him who mounts, Went on to where  
the circling doth begin. On the fifth circle when I had come  
forth, People I saw upon it who were weeping,

Stretched prone upon the ground, all downward turned.

"Adhaesit pavimento anima mea,"

I heard them say with sighings so profound, That hardly could  
the words be understood. "O ye elect of God, whose sufferings  
Justice and Hope both render less severe, Direct ye us towards  
the high ascents."

"If ye are come secure from this prostration, And wish to find  
the way most speedily, Let your right hands be evermore  
outside."

Thus did the Poet ask, and thus was answered By them  
somewhat in front of us; whence I

In what was spoken divined the rest concealed, And unto my  
Lord's eyes mine eyes I turned; Whence he assented with a  
cheerful sign

To what the sight of my desire implored. When of myself I could  
dispose at will, Above that creature did I draw myself,

Whose words before had caused me to take note, Saying: "O  
Spirit, in whom weeping ripens That without which to God we  
cannot turn,

Suspend awhile for me thy greater care.

Who wast thou, and why are your backs turned upwards, Tell  
me, and if thou wouldst that I procure thee Anything there  
whence living I departed."

And he to me: "Wherefore our backs the heaven Turns to itself,  
know shalt thou; but beforehand 'Scias quod ego fui successor  
Petri.'

Between Siestri and Chiaveri descends A river beautiful, and of  
its name



I on my knees had fallen, and wished to speak; But even as I  
began, and he was 'ware,  
Only by listening, of my reverence,  
"What cause," he said, "has downward bent thee thus?" And I to  
him: "For your own dignity,  
Standing, my conscience stung me with remorse." "Straighten  
thy legs, and upward raise thee, brother," He answered: "Err not,  
fellow-servant am I  
With thee and with the others to one power.  
If e'er that holy, evangelic sound, Which sayeth 'neque nubent,'  
thou hast heard, Well canst thou see why in this wise I speak.  
Now go; no longer will I have thee linger, Because thy stay doth  
incommode my weeping, With which I ripen that which thou  
hast said.  
On earth I have a grandchild named Alagia, Good in herself,  
unless indeed our house Malevolent may make her by example,  
And she alone remains to me on earth."

## Canto XX

Ill strives the will against a better will;

Therefore, to pleasure him, against my pleasure I drew the  
sponge not saturate from the water.

Onward I moved, and onward moved my Leader, Through  
vacant places, skirting still the rock,

As on a wall close to the battlements;

For they that through their eyes pour drop by drop The malady  
which all the world pervades,

On the other side too near the verge approach. Accursed mayst  
thou be, thou old she-wolf, That more than all the other beasts  
hast prey, Because of hunger infinitely hollow!

O heaven, in whose gyrations some appear To think conditions  
here below are changed,

When will he come through whom she shall depart? Onward we  
went with footsteps slow and scarce, And I attentive to the  
shades I heard

Piteously weeping and bemoaning them; And I by peradventure  
heard "Sweet Mary!" Uttered in front of us amid the weeping  
Even as a woman does who is in child-birth; And in continuance:

"How poor thou wast Is manifested by that hostelry

Where thou didst lay thy sacred burden down." Thereafterward  
I heard: "O good Fabricius, Virtue with poverty didst thou prefer

To the possession of great wealth with vice." So pleasurable  
were these words to me

That I drew farther onward to have knowledge Touching that  
spirit whence they seemed to come.

He furthermore was speaking of the largess

Which Nicholas unto the maidens gave, In order to conduct  
their youth to honour. "O soul that dost so excellently speak,  
Tell me who wast thou," said I, "and why only Thou dost renew  
these praises well deserved? Not without recompense shall be  
thy word,

If I return to finish the short journey Of that life which is flying  
to its end."

And he: "I'll tell thee, not for any comfort I may expect from  
earth, but that so much Grace shines in thee or ever thou art  
dead.

I was the root of that malignant plant Which overshadows all  
the Christian world, So that good fruit is seldom gathered from  
it; But if Douay and Ghent, and Lille and Bruges

Had Power, soon vengeance would be taken on it; And this I  
pray of Him who judges all.

Hugh Capet was I called upon the earth; From me were born  
the Louises and Philips,

By whom in later days has France been governed.

I was the son of a Parisian butcher, What time the ancient kings  
had perished all,

Excepting one, contrite in cloth of gray. I found me grasping in  
my hands the rein

Of the realm's government, and so great power Of new acqurest,  
and so with friends abounding, That to the widowed diadem  
promoted

The head of mine own offspring was, from whom The  
consecrated bones of these began.

So long as the great dowry of Provence

Out of my blood took not the sense of shame, 'Twas little worth,  
but still it did no harm.

Then it began with falsehood and with force Its rapine; and  
thereafter, for amends,

Took Ponthieu, Normandy, and Gascony. Charles came to Italy,  
and for amends A victim made of Conradin, and then

Thrust Thomas back to heaven, for amends.

A time I see, not very distant now,

Which draweth forth another Charles from France, The better to  
make known both him and his.

Unarmed he goes, and only with the lance That Judas jousted  
with; and that he thrusts

So that he makes the paunch of Florence burst.

He thence not land, but sin and infamy, Shall gain, so much  
more grievous to himself As the more light such damage he  
accounts. The other, now gone forth, ta'en in his ship,

See I his daughter sell, and chaffer for her As corsairs do with  
other female slaves. What more, O Avarice, canst thou do to us,  
Since thou my blood so to thyself hast drawn, It careth not for  
its own proper flesh?

That less may seem the future ill and past, I see the flower-de-  
luce Alagna enter,

And Christ in his own Vicar captive made.

I see him yet another time derided; I see renewed the vinegar  
and gall,

And between living thieves I see him slain.

I see the modern Pilate so relentless,

This does not sate him, but without decretal He to the temple  
bears his sordid sails!

When, O my Lord! shall I be joyful made By looking on the  
vengeance which, concealed,

Makes sweet thine anger in thy secrecy?

What I was saying of that only bride



Of the Holy Ghost, and which occasioned thee To turn towards  
me for some commentary, So long has been ordained to all our  
prayers

As the day lasts; but when the night comes on, Contrary sound  
we take instead thereof.

At that time we repeat Pygmalion, Of whom a traitor, thief, and  
parricide

Made his insatiable desire of gold; And the misery of avaricious  
Midas, That followed his inordinate demand,

At which forevermore one needs but laugh. The foolish Achan  
each one then records, And how he stole the spoils; so that the  
wrath Of Joshua still appears to sting him here.

Then we accuse Sapphira with her husband, We laud the hoof-  
beats Heliodorus had, And the whole mount in infamy encircles  
Polymnestor who murdered Polydorus.

Here finally is cried: 'O Crassus, tell us, For thou dost know, what  
is the taste of gold?' Sometimes we speak, one loud, another  
low, According to desire of speech, that spurs us

To greater now and now to lesser pace.

But in the good that here by day is talked of,

Erewhile alone I was not; yet near by No other person lifted up  
his voice." From him already we departed were,

And made endeavour to o'ercome the road As much as was  
permitted to our power,

When I perceived, like something that is falling, The mountain  
tremble, whence a chill seized on me, As seizes him who to his  
death is going.

Certes so violently shook not Delos, Before Latona made her  
nest therein

To give birth to the two eyes of the heaven.

Then upon all sides there began a cry, Such that the Master  
drew himself towards me,

Saying, "Fear not, while I am guiding thee." "Gloria in excelsis  
Deo," all

Were saying, from what near I comprehended, Where it was  
possible to hear the cry.

We paused immovable and in suspense, Even as the shepherds  
who first heard that song, Until the trembling ceased, and it was  
finished.

Then we resumed again our holy path, Watching the shades  
that lay upon the ground, Already turned to their accustomed  
plaint.

No ignorance ever with so great a strife Had rendered me  
importunate to know, If erreth not in this my memory,

As meditating then I seemed to have; Nor out of haste to  
question did I dare,  
Nor of myself I there could aught perceive; So I went onward  
timorous and thoughtful.

### Canto XXI

The natural thirst, that ne'er is satisfied Excepting with the water  
for whose grace The woman of Samaria besought,  
Put me in travail, and haste goaded me Along the encumbered  
path behind my Leader And I was pitying that righteous  
vengeance; And lo! in the same manner as Luke writeth  
That Christ appeared to two upon the way From the sepulchral  
cave already risen,  
A shade appeared to us, and came behind us, Down gazing on  
the prostrate multitude, Nor were we ware of it, until it spake,  
Saying, "My brothers, may God give you peace!" We turned us  
suddenly, and Virgilius rendered To him the countersign thereto  
conforming.

Thereon began he: "In the blessed council, Thee may the court  
veracious place in peace, That me doth banish in eternal exile!"

"How," said he, and the while we went with speed, "If ye are shades whom God deigns not on high, Who up his stairs so far has guided you?"

And said my Teacher: "If thou note the marks Which this one bears, and which the Angel traces Well shalt thou see he with the good must reign.

But because she who spinneth day and night For him had not yet drawn the distaff off, Which Clotho lays for each one and compacts,

His soul, which is thy sister and my own, In coming upwards could not come alone, By reason that it sees not in our fashion. Whence I was drawn from out the ample throat Of Hell to be his guide, and I shall guide him As far on as my school has power to lead.

But tell us, if thou knowest, why such a shudder Erewhile the mountain gave, and why together All seemed to cry, as far as its moist feet?"

In asking he so hit the very eye Of my desire, that merely with the hope My thirst became the less unsatisfied.

"Naught is there," he began, "that without order May the religion of the mountain feel,

Nor aught that may be foreign to its custom.

Free is it here from every permutation; What from itself heaven  
in itself receiveth Can be of this the cause, and naught beside;  
Because that neither rain, nor hail, nor snow, Nor dew, nor hoar-  
frost any higher falls Than the short, little stairway of three  
steps.

Dense clouds do not appear, nor rarefied, Nor coruscation, nor  
the daughter of Thaumias,

That often upon earth her region shifts; No arid vapour any  
farther rises

Than to the top of the three steps I spake of, Whereon the Vicar  
of Peter has his feet.

Lower down perchance it trembles less or more, But, for the  
wind that in the earth is hidden

I know not how, up here it never trembled.

It trembles here, whenever any soul Feels itself pure, so that it  
soars, or moves To mount aloft, and such a cry attends it.

Of purity the will alone gives proof, Which, being wholly free to  
change its convent,

Takes by surprise the soul, and helps it fly. First it wills well; but  
the desire permits not, Which divine justice with the self-same  
will There was to sin, upon the torment sets.

And I, who have been lying in this pain Five hundred years and  
more, but just now felt

A free volition for a better seat.

Therefore thou heardst the earthquake, and the pious Spirits  
along the mountain rendering praise

Unto the Lord, that soon he speed them upwards." So said he to  
him; and since we enjoy

As much in drinking as the thirst is great, I could not say how  
much it did me good. And the wise Leader: "Now I see the net

That snares you here, and how ye are set free, Why the earth  
quakes, and wherefore ye rejoice. Now who thou wast be  
pleased that I may know; And why so many centuries thou hast  
here

Been lying, let me gather from thy words." "In days when the  
good Titus, with the aid Of the supremest King, avenged the  
wounds Whence issued forth the blood by Judas sold,

Under the name that most endures and honours, Was I on  
earth," that spirit made reply,

"Greatly renowned, but not with faith as yet.

My vocal spirit was so sweet, that Rome Me, a Thoulousian,  
drew unto herself,

Where I deserved to deck my brows with myrtle.

Statius the people name me still on earth;  
I sang of Thebes, and then of great Achilles; But on the way fell  
with my second burden. The seeds unto my ardour were the  
sparks Of that celestial flame which heated me,  
Whereby more than a thousand have been fired; Of the Aeneid  
speak I, which to me  
A mother was, and was my nurse in song; Without this weighed  
I not a drachma's weight.

And to have lived upon the earth what time Virgilius lived, I  
would accept one sun More than I must ere issuing from my  
ban."

These words towards me made Virgilius turn With looks that in  
their silence said, "Be silent!" But yet the power that wills cannot  
do all things; For tears and laughter are such pursuivants  
Unto the passion from which each springs forth, In the most  
truthful least the will they follow.

I only smiled, as one who gives the wink; Whereat the shade  
was silent, and it gazed Into mine eyes, where most expression  
dwells;

And, "As thou well mayst consummate a labour So great," it  
said, "why did thy face just now Display to me the lightning of a  
smile?"

Now am I caught on this side and on that; One keeps me silent,  
one to speak conjures me,

Wherefore I sigh, and I am understood.

"Speak," said my Master, "and be not afraid Of speaking, but  
speak out, and say to him What he demands with such  
solicitude." Whence I: "Thou peradventure marvellest, O antique  
spirit, at the smile I gave;

But I will have more wonder seize upon thee.

This one, who guides on high these eyes of mine, Is that  
Virgilius, from whom thou didst learn  
To sing aloud of men and of the Gods.

If other cause thou to my smile imputedst, Abandon it as false,  
and trust it was

Those words which thou hast spoken concerning him." Already  
he was stooping to embrace

My Teacher's feet; but he said to him: "Brother, Do not; for  
shade thou art, and shade beholdest." And he uprising: "Now  
canst thou the sum

Of love which warms me to thee comprehend, When this our  
vanity I disremember,

Treating a shadow as substantial thing." Canto XXII

Already was the Angel left behind us,



The Angel who to the sixth round had turned us, Having erased  
one mark from off my face; And those who have in justice their  
desire

Had said to us, "Beati," in their voices, With "sitio," and without  
more ended it.

And I, more light than through the other passes, Went onward  
so, that without any labour

I followed upward the swift-footed spirits; When thus Virgilius  
began: "The love Kindled by virtue aye another kindles, Provided  
outwardly its flame appear.

Hence from the hour that Juvenal descended Among us into the  
infernal Limbo,

Who made apparent to me thy affection, My kindness towards  
thee was as great As ever bound one to an unseen person,

So that these stairs will now seem short to me.

But tell me, and forgive me as a friend, If too great confidence  
let loose the rein,

And as a friend now hold discourse with me; How was it  
possible within thy breast

For avarice to find place, 'mid so much wisdom As thou wast  
filled with by thy diligence?" These words excited Statius at first

Somewhat to laughter; afterward he answered: "Each word of  
thine is love's dear sign to me.

Verily oftentimes do things appear Which give fallacious matter  
to our doubts, Instead of the true causes which are hidden!

Thy question shows me thy belief to be That I was niggard in  
the other life,

It may be from the circle where I was; Therefore know thou,  
that avarice was removed Too far from me; and this  
extravagance Thousands of lunar periods have punished.

And were it not that I my thoughts uplifted, When I the passage  
heard where thou exclaimest,

As if indignant, unto human nature,

'To what impellest thou not, O cursed hunger Of gold, the  
appetite of mortal men?' Revolving I should feel the dismal  
joustings.

Then I perceived the hands could spread too wide Their wings in  
spending, and repented me

As well of that as of my other sins; How many with shorn hair  
shall rise again Because of ignorance, which from this sin Cuts  
off repentance living and in death!

And know that the transgression which rebuts By direct  
opposition any sin

Together with it here its verdure dries. Therefore if I have been  
among that folk Which mourns its avarice, to purify me, For its  
opposite has this befallen me."

"Now when thou sangest the relentless weapons Of the twofold  
affliction of Jocasta,"

The singer of the Songs Bucolic said, "From that which Clio  
there with thee preludes, It does not seem that yet had made  
thee faithful That faith without which no good works suffice.

If this be so, what candles or what sun Scattered thy darkness  
so that thou didst trim Thy sails behind the Fisherman  
thereafter?" And he to him: "Thou first directedst me Towards  
Parnassus, in its grots to drink,

And first concerning God didst me enlighten. Thou didst as he  
who walketh in the night,

Who bears his light behind, which helps him not,

But wary makes the persons after him, When thou didst say:  
'The age renews itself, Justice returns, and man's primeval time,  
And a new progeny descends from heaven.'

Through thee I Poet was, through thee a Christian; But that thou  
better see what I design,

To colour it will I extend my hand. Already was the world in  
every part Pregnant with the true creed, disseminated By

messengers of the eternal kingdom; And thy assertion, spoken  
of above,

With the new preachers was in unison; Whence I to visit them  
the custom took. Then they became so holy in my sight, That,  
when Domitian persecuted them,

Not without tears of mine were their laments; And all the while  
that I on earth remained, Them I befriended, and their upright  
customs Made me disparage all the other sects.

And ere I led the Greeks unto the rivers Of Thebes, in poetry, I  
was baptized, But out of fear was covertly a Christian, For a  
long time professing paganism;

And this lukewarmness caused me the fourth circle To circuit  
round more than four centuries.

Thou, therefore, who hast raised the covering That hid from me  
whatever good I speak of, While in ascending we have time to  
spare, Tell me, in what place is our friend Terentius, Caecilius,  
Plautus, Varro, if thou knowest;

Tell me if they are damned, and in what alley." "These, Persius  
and myself, and others many," Replied my Leader, "with that  
Grecian are Whom more than all the rest the Muses suckled, In  
the first circle of the prison blind;

Ofttimes we of the mountain hold discourse Which has our  
nurses ever with itself.

Euripides is with us, Antiphon, Simonides, Agatho, and many  
other

Greeks who of old their brows with laurel decked.

There some of thine own people may be seen, Antigone,  
Deiphile and Argia,

And there Ismene mournful as of old.

There she is seen who pointed out Langia; There is Tiresias'  
daughter, and there Thetis, And there Deidamia with her  
sisters."

Silent already were the poets both, Attent once more in looking  
round about,

From the ascent and from the walls released; And four  
handmaidens of the day already Were left behind, and at the  
pole the fifth Was pointing upward still its burning horn,

What time my Guide: "I think that tow'rds the edge Our dexter  
shoulders it behoves us turn, Circling the mount as we are wont  
to do." Thus in that region custom was our ensign;

And we resumed our way with less suspicion For the assenting  
of that worthy soul They in advance went on, and I alone

Behind them, and I listened to their speech,

Which gave me lessons in the art of song. But soon their sweet  
discourses interrupted A tree which midway in the road we  
found, With apples sweet and grateful to the smell.

And even as a fir-tree tapers upward From bough to bough, so  
downwardly did that;

I think in order that no one might climb it.

On that side where our pathway was enclosed Fell from the  
lofty rock a limpid water, And spread itself abroad upon the  
leaves.

The Poets twain unto the tree drew near, And from among the  
foliage a voice

Cried: "Of this food ye shall have scarcity." Then said: "More  
thoughtful Mary was of making

The marriage feast complete and honourable, Than of her  
mouth which now for you responds; And for their drink the  
ancient Roman women With water were content; and Daniel  
Disparaged food, and understanding won.

The primal age was beautiful as gold; Acorns it made with  
hunger savorous, And nectar every rivulet with thirst. Honey and  
locusts were the aliments That fed the Baptist in the wilderness;  
Whence he is glorious, and so magnified As by the Evangel is  
revealed to you."

### Canto XXIII

The while among the verdant leaves mine eyes

I riveted, as he is wont to do

Who wastes his life pursuing little birds, My more than Father  
said unto me: "Son,

Come now; because the time that is ordained us More usefully  
should be apportioned out."

I turned my face and no less soon my steps Unto the Sages,  
who were speaking so They made the going of no cost to me;  
And lo! were heard a song and a lament, "Labia mea, Domine,"  
in fashion

Such that delight and dolence it brought forth. "O my sweet  
Father, what is this I hear?" Began I; and he answered: "Shades  
that go Perhaps the knot unloosing of their debt."

In the same way that thoughtful pilgrims do, Who, unknown  
people on the road o'ertaking, Turn themselves round to them,  
and do not stop, Even thus, behind us with a swifter motion  
Coming and passing onward, gazed upon us

A crowd of spirits silent and devout.

Each in his eyes was dark and cavernous, Pallid in face, and so  
emaciate

That from the bones the skin did shape itself.

I do not think that so to merest rind Could Erisichthon have  
been withered up By famine, when most fear he had of it.  
Thinking within myself I said: "Behold, This is the folk who lost  
Jerusalem,

When Mary made a prey of her own son." Their sockets were like  
rings without the gems;

Whoever in the face of men reads 'omo' Might well in these have  
recognised the 'm.' Who would believe the odour of an apple,  
Begetting longing, could consume them so, And that of water,  
without knowing how?

I still was wondering what so famished them, For the occasion  
not yet manifest

Of their emaciation and sad squalor; And lo! from out the hollow  
of his head

His eyes a shade turned on me, and looked keenly; Then cried  
aloud: "What grace to me is this?" Never should I have known  
him by his look;

But in his voice was evident to me

That which his aspect had suppressed within it.

This spark within me wholly re-enkindled My recognition of his  
altered face,



And I recalled the features of Forese. "Ah, do not look at this dry  
leprosy,"

Entreated he, "which doth my skin discolour, Nor at default of  
flesh that I may have;

But tell me truth of thee, and who are those Two souls, that  
yonder make for thee an escort; Do not delay in speaking unto  
me."

"That face of thine, which dead I once bewept, Gives me for  
weeping now no lesser grief,"

I answered him, "beholding it so changed!

But tell me, for God's sake, what thus denudes you?

Make me not speak while I am marvelling, For ill speaks he  
who's full of other longings." And he to me: "From the eternal  
council

Falls power into the water and the tree Behind us left, whereby I  
grow so thin. All of this people who lamenting sing, For following  
beyond measure appetite In hunger and thirst are here re-  
sanctified.

Desire to eat and drink enkindles in us The scent that issues  
from the apple-tree,

And from the spray that sprinkles o'er the verdure; And not a  
single time alone, this ground Encompassing, is refreshed our  
pain,—

I say our pain, and ought to say our solace,— For the same wish  
doth lead us to the tree Which led the Christ rejoicing to say 'Eli,'  
When with his veins he liberated us."

And I to him: "Forese, from that day When for a better life thou  
changedst worlds, Up to this time five years have not rolled  
round.

If sooner were the power exhausted in thee Of sinning more,  
than thee the hour surprised Of that good sorrow which to God  
reweds us, How hast thou come up hitherward already? I  
thought to find thee down there underneath, Where time for  
time doth restitution make." And he to me: "Thus speedily has  
led me

To drink of the sweet wormwood of these torments, My Nella  
with her overflowing tears;

She with her prayers devout and with her sighs  
Has drawn me from the coast where one where one awaits, And  
from the other circles set me free.

So much more dear and pleasing is to God

My little widow, whom so much I loved, As in good works she is  
the more alone; For the Barbagia of Sardinia

By far more modest in its women is Than the Barbagia I have  
left her in.

O brother sweet, what wilt thou have me say?

A future time is in my sight already, To which this hour will not  
be very old, When from the pulpit shall be interdicted

To the unblushing womankind of Florence To go about  
displaying breast and paps. What savages were e'er, what  
Saracens,

Who stood in need, to make them covered go, Of spiritual or  
other discipline?

But if the shameless women were assured

Of what swift Heaven prepares for them, already Wide open  
would they have their mouths to howl; For if my foresight here  
deceive me not,

They shall be sad ere he has bearded cheeks Who now is  
hushed to sleep with lullaby.

O brother, now no longer hide thee from me; See that not only I,  
but all these people

Are gazing there, where thou dost veil the sun." Whence I to  
him: "If thou bring back to mind What thou with me hast been  
and I with thee, The present memory will be grievous still.

Out of that life he turned me back who goes In front of me, two  
days ago when round The sister of him yonder showed  
herself," And to the sun I pointed. "Through the deep

Night of the truly dead has this one led me, With this true flesh,  
that follows after him. Thence his encouragements have led me  
up, Ascending and still circling round the mount

That you doth straighten, whom the world made crooked.

He says that he will bear me company, Till I shall be where  
Beatrice will be;

There it behoves me to remain without him.

This is Virgilius, who thus says to me," And him I pointed at; "the  
other is

That shade for whom just now shook every slope Your realm,  
that from itself discharges him."

#### Canto XXIV

Nor speech the going, nor the going that Slackened; but talking  
we went bravely on, Even as a vessel urged by a good wind.

And shadows, that appeared things doubly dead, From out the  
sepulchres of their eyes betrayed Wonder at me, aware that I  
was living.

And I, continuing my colloquy,  
Said: "Peradventure he goes up more slowly Than he would do,  
for other people's sake.

But tell me, if thou knowest, where is Piccarda; Tell me if any  
one of note I see

Among this folk that gazes at me so." "My sister, who, 'twixt  
beautiful and good,

I know not which was more, triumphs rejoicing Already in her  
crown on high Olympus."

So said he first, and then: "'Tis not forbidden To name each  
other here, so milked away

Is our resemblance by our dieting.

This," pointing with his finger, "is Buonagiunta, Buonagiunta, of  
Lucca; and that face

Beyond him there, more peaked than the others, Has held the  
holy Church within his arms; From Tours was he, and purges by  
his fasting Bolsena's eels and the Vernaccia wine."

He named me many others one by one; And all contented  
seemed at being named, So that for this I saw not one dark  
look.

I saw for hunger bite the empty air Ubaldin dalla Pila, and  
Boniface,

Who with his crook had pastured many people.

I saw Messer Marchese, who had leisure Once at Forli for  
drinking with less dryness, And he was one who ne'er felt  
satisfied.

But as he does who scans, and then doth prize One more than  
others, did I him of Lucca, Who seemed to take most  
cognizance of me. He murmured, and I know not what  
Gentucca

From that place heard I, where he felt the wound Of justice, that  
doth macerate them so.

"O soul," I said, "that seemest so desirous To speak with me, do  
so that I may hear thee, And with thy speech appease thyself  
and me." "A maid is born, and wears not yet the veil," Began he,  
"who to thee shall pleasant make

My city, howsoever men may blame it.

Thou shalt go on thy way with this prevision; If by my  
murmuring thou hast been deceived, True things hereafter will  
declare it to thee.

But say if him I here behold, who forth Evoked the new-invented  
rhymes, beginning, 'Ladies, that have intelligence of love?'"

And I to him: "One am I, who, whenever Love doth inspire me,  
note, and in that measure

Which he within me dictates, singing go." "O brother, now I see,"  
he said, "the knot Which me, the Notary, and Guittone held  
Short of the sweet new style that now I hear.

I do perceive full clearly how your pens Go closely following  
after him who dictates,

Which with our own forsooth came not to pass; And he who sets  
himself to go beyond,

No difference sees from one style to another;" And as if  
satisfied, he held his peace.

Even as the birds, that winter tow'rds the Nile, Sometimes into a  
phalanx form themselves, Then fly in greater haste, and go in  
file;

In such wise all the people who were there, Turning their faces,  
hurried on their steps, Both by their leanness and their wishes  
light.

And as a man, who weary is with trotting, Lets his companions  
onward go, and walks, Until he vents the panting of his chest;

So did Forese let the holy flock

Pass by, and came with me behind it, saying, "When will it be  
that I again shall see thee?"

"How long," I answered, "I may live, I know not; Yet my return  
will not so speedy be,

But I shall sooner in desire arrive; Because the place where I  
was set to live From day to day of good is more depleted, And  
unto dismal ruin seems ordained."

"Now go," he said, "for him most guilty of it At a beast's tail  
behold I dragged along Towards the valley where is no  
repentance.

Faster at every step the beast is going, Increasing evermore  
until it smites him, And leaves the body vilely mutilated.

Not long those wheels shall turn," and he uplifted His eyes to  
heaven, "ere shall be clear to thee That which my speech no  
farther can declare.

Now stay behind; because the time so precious Is in this  
kingdom, that I lose too much

By coming onward thus abreast with thee." As sometimes issues  
forth upon a gallop

A cavalier from out a troop that ride, And seeks the honour of  
the first encounter, So he with greater strides departed from us;  
And on the road remained I with those two, Who were such  
mighty marshals of the world.

And when before us he had gone so far Mine eyes became to  
him such pursuivants As was my understanding to his words,  
Appeared to me with laden and living boughs Another apple-  
tree, and not far distant,

From having but just then turned thitherward.



People I saw beneath it lift their hands, And cry I know not what  
towards the leaves,

Like little children eager and deluded, Who pray, and he they  
pray to doth not answer,

But, to make very keen their appetite, Holds their desire aloft,  
and hides it not. Then they departed as if undeceived; And now  
we came unto the mighty tree

Which prayers and tears so manifold refuses. "Pass farther  
onward without drawing near; The tree of which Eve ate is  
higher up,

And out of that one has this tree been raised." Thus said I know  
not who among the branches; Whereat Virgilius, Statius, and  
myself

Went crowding forward on the side that rises. "Be mindful," said  
he, "of the accursed ones Formed of the cloud-rack, who  
inebriate Combated Theseus with their double breasts;

And of the Jews who showed them soft in drinking, Whence  
Gideon would not have them for companions When he tow'rds  
Midian the hills descended."

Thus, closely pressed to one of the two borders, On passed we,  
hearing sins of gluttony, Followed forsooth by miserable gains;  
Then set at large upon the lonely road,

A thousand steps and more we onward went, In contemplation,  
each without a word. "What go ye thinking thus, ye three  
alone?" Said suddenly a voice, whereat I started  
As terrified and timid beasts are wont.

I raised my head to see who this might be, And never in a  
furnace was there seen Metals or glass so lucent and so red  
As one I saw who said: "If it may please you To mount aloft,  
here it behoves you turn; This way goes he who goeth after  
peace." His aspect had bereft me of my sight,  
So that I turned me back unto my Teachers, Like one who goeth  
as his hearing guides him.

And as, the harbinger of early dawn,  
The air of May doth move and breathe out fragrance,  
Impregnate all with herbage and with flowers,  
So did I feel a breeze strike in the midst My front, and felt the  
moving of the plumes That breathed around an odour of  
ambrosia;

And heard it said: "Blessed are they whom grace So much  
illumines, that the love of taste  
Excites not in their breasts too great desire, Hungering at all  
times so far as is just."

## Canto XXV

Now was it the ascent no hindrance brooked, Because the sun  
had his meridian circle

To Taurus left, and night to Scorpio; Wherefore as doth a man  
who tarries not, But goes his way, whate'er to him appear, If of  
necessity the sting transfix him,

In this wise did we enter through the gap, Taking the stairway,  
one before the other,

Which by its narrowness divides the climbers.

And as the little stork that lifts its wing With a desire to fly, and  
does not venture

To leave the nest, and lets it downward droop, Even such was I,  
with the desire of asking Kindled and quenched, unto the  
motion coming He makes who doth address himself to speak.

Not for our pace, though rapid it might be, My father sweet  
forbore, but said: "Let fly

The bow of speech thou to the barb hast drawn." With  
confidence I opened then my mouth, And I began: "How can  
one meagre grow

There where the need of nutriment applies not?" "If thou  
wouldst call to mind how Meleager Was wasted by the wasting  
of a brand,

This would not," said he, "be to thee so sour; And wouldst thou  
think how at each tremulous motion

Trembles within a mirror your own image; That which seems  
hard would mellow seem to thee.

But that thou mayst content thee in thy wish Lo Statius here;  
and him I call and pray

He now will be the healer of thy wounds." "If I unfold to him the  
eternal vengeance," Responded Statius, "where thou present  
art, Be my excuse that I can naught deny thee." Then he began:

"Son, if these words of mine Thy mind doth contemplate and  
doth receive, They'll be thy light unto the How thou sayest. The  
perfect blood, which never is drunk up Into the thirsty veins, and  
which remaineth

Like food that from the table thou removest, Takes in the heart  
for all the human members Virtue informative, as being that  
Which to be changed to them goes through the veins Again  
digest, descends it where 'tis better

Silent to be than say; and then drops thence Upon another's  
blood in natural vase.

There one together with the other mingles, One to be passive  
meant, the other active

By reason of the perfect place it springs from; And being  
conjoined, begins to operate, Coagulating first, then vivifying

What for its matter it had made consistent.

The active virtue, being made a soul As of a plant, (in so far  
different,

This on the way is, that arrived already,) Then works so much,  
that now it moves and feels

Like a sea-fungus, and then undertakes To organize the powers  
whose seed it is. Now, Son, dilates and now distends itself The  
virtue from the generator's heart,

Where nature is intent on all the members.

But how from animal it man becomes Thou dost not see as yet;  
this is a point

Which made a wiser man than thou once err So far, that in his  
doctrine separate

He made the soul from possible intellect, For he no organ saw  
by this assumed.

Open thy breast unto the truth that's coming, And know that,  
just as soon as in the foetus

The articulation of the brain is perfect, The primal Motor turns to  
it well pleased At so great art of nature, and inspires

A spirit new with virtue all replete, Which what it finds there  
active doth attract Into its substance, and becomes one soul,  
Which lives, and feels, and on itself revolves. And that thou less  
may wonder at my word, Behold the sun's heat, which becometh  
wine, Joined to the juice that from the vine distils.

Whenever Lachesis has no more thread, It separates from the  
flesh, and virtually Bears with itself the human and divine; The  
other faculties are voiceless all;

The memory, the intelligence, and the will In action far more  
vigorous than before.

Without a pause it falleth of itself

In marvellous way on one shore or the other; There of its roads  
it first is cognizant.

Soon as the place there circumscribeth it, The virtue informative  
rays round about, As, and as much as, in the living members.

And even as the air, when full of rain, By alien rays that are  
therein reflected, With divers colours shows itself adorned,

So there the neighbouring air doth shape itself Into that form  
which doth impress upon it Virtually the soul that has stood still.

And then in manner of the little flame, Which followeth the fire  
where'er it shifts,

After the spirit followeth its new form.

Since afterwards it takes from this its semblance, It is called  
shade; and thence it organizes Thereafter every sense, even to  
the sight.

Thence is it that we speak, and thence we laugh; Thence is it  
that we form the tears and sighs, That on the mountain thou  
mayhap hast heard.

According as impress us our desires And other affections, so the  
shade is shaped, And this is cause of what thou wonderest at."

And now unto the last of all the circles Had we arrived, and to  
the right hand turned,

And were attentive to another care.

There the embankment shoots forth flames of fire, And upward  
doth the cornice breathe a blast

That drives them back, and from itself sequesters.

Hence we must needs go on the open side, And one by one; and  
I did fear the fire

On this side, and on that the falling down. My Leader said:  
"Along this place one ought To keep upon the eyes a tightened  
rein, Seeing that one so easily might err." "Summae Deus  
clementiae," in the bosom Of the great burning chanted then I

heard, Which made me no less eager to turn round; And spirits  
saw I walking through the flame;

Wherefore I looked, to my own steps and theirs Apportioning  
my sight from time to time.

After the close which to that hymn is made, Aloud they shouted,  
"Virum non cognosco;"

Then recommenced the hymn with voices low.

This also ended, cried they: "To the wood Diana ran, and drove  
forth Helice

Therefrom, who had of Venus felt the poison." Then to their song  
returned they; then the wives They shouted, and the husbands  
who were chaste.

As virtue and the marriage vow imposes. And I believe that  
them this mode suffices, For all the time the fire is burning  
them; With such care is it needful, and such food,

That the last wound of all should be closed up.

## Canto XXVI

While on the brink thus one before the other We went upon our  
way, oft the good Master



Said: "Take thou heed! suffice it that I warn thee." On the right  
shoulder smote me now the sun, That, raying out, already the  
whole west

Changed from its azure aspect into white. And with my shadow  
did I make the flame Appear more red; and even to such a sign  
Shades saw I many, as they went, give heed. This was the cause  
that gave them a beginning To speak of me; and to themselves  
began they

To say: "That seems not a factitious body!" Then towards me, as  
far as they could come, Came certain of them, always with  
regard

Not to step forth where they would not be burned. "O thou who  
goest, not from being slower

But reverent perhaps, behind the others, Answer me, who in  
thirst and fire am burning.

Nor to me only is thine answer needful; For all of these have  
greater thirst for it Than for cold water Ethiop or Indian. Tell us  
how is it that thou makest thyself A wall unto the sun, as if thou  
hadst not Entered as yet into the net of death."

Thus one of them addressed me, and I straight Should have  
revealed myself, were I not bent On other novelty that then  
appeared.

For through the middle of the burning road There came a  
people face to face with these, Which held me in suspense with  
gazing at them.

There see I hastening upon either side Each of the shades, and  
kissing one another Without a pause, content with brief salute.

Thus in the middle of their brown battalions  
Muzzle to muzzle one ant meets another Perchance to spy their  
journey or their fortune.

No sooner is the friendly greeting ended, Or ever the first  
footstep passes onward, Each one endeavours to outcry the  
other;

The new-come people: "Sodom and Gomorrah!" The rest: "Into  
the cow Pasiphae enters,

So that the bull unto her lust may run!" Then as the cranes, that  
to Rhiphaean mountains Might fly in part, and part towards the  
sands, These of the frost, those of the sun avoidant,

One folk is going, and the other coming,

And weeping they return to their first songs, And to the cry that  
most befitteth them;

And close to me approached, even as before, The very same  
who had entreated me, Attent to listen in their countenance.

I, who their inclination twice had seen, Began: "O souls secure in  
the possession, Whene'er it may be, of a state of peace, Neither  
unripe nor ripened have remained

My members upon earth, but here are with me With their own  
blood and their articulations.

I go up here to be no longer blind; A Lady is above, who wins  
this grace,

Whereby the mortal through your world I bring.

But as your greatest longing satisfied

May soon become, so that the Heaven may house you Which  
full of love is, and most amply spreads,

Tell me, that I again in books may write it, Who are you, and  
what is that multitude Which goes upon its way behind your  
backs?" Not otherwise with wonder is bewildered

The mountaineer, and staring round is dumb, When rough and  
rustic to the town he goes, Than every shade became in its  
appearance;

But when they of their stupor were disburdened, Which in high  
hearts is quickly quieted, "Blessed be thou, who of our border-  
lands,"

He recommenced who first had questioned us, "Experience  
freightest for a better life.

The folk that comes not with us have offended

In that for which once Caesar, triumphing, Heard himself called  
in contumely, 'Queen.' Therefore they separate, exclaiming,  
'Sodom!' Themselves reproofing, even as thou hast heard, And  
add unto their burning by their shame.

Our own transgression was hermaphrodite; But because we  
observed not human law, Following like unto beasts our  
appetite,

In our opprobrium by us is read, When we part company, the  
name of her Who bestialized herself in bestial wood.

Now knowest thou our acts, and what our crime was; Wouldst  
thou perchance by name know who we are, There is not time to  
tell, nor could I do it.

Thy wish to know me shall in sooth be granted; I'm Guido  
Guinicelli, and now purge me, Having repented ere the hour  
extreme."

The same that in the sadness of Lycurgus Two sons became,  
their mother re-beholding, Such I became, but rise not to such  
height, The moment I heard name himself the father Of me and  
of my betters, who had ever

Practised the sweet and gracious rhymes of love; And without  
speech and hearing thoughtfully For a long time I went,  
beholding him,

Nor for the fire did I approach him nearer.

When I was fed with looking, utterly Myself I offered ready for  
his service, With affirmation that compels belief.

And he to me: "Thou leavest footprints such

In me, from what I hear, and so distinct, Lethe cannot efface  
them, nor make dim.

But if thy words just now the truth have sworn, Tell me what is  
the cause why thou displayest In word and look that dear thou  
holdest me?" And I to him: "Those dulcet lays of yours

Which, long as shall endure our modern fashion, Shall make for  
ever dear their very ink!"

"O brother," said he, "he whom I point out," And here he pointed  
at a spirit in front, "Was of the mother tongue a better smith.

Verses of love and proses of romance, He mastered all; and let  
the idiots talk, Who think the Lemosin surpasses him.

To clamour more than truth they turn their faces, And in this  
way establish their opinion,

Ere art or reason has by them been heard. Thus many ancients  
with Guittone did, From cry to cry still giving him applause,

Until the truth has conquered with most persons.

Now, if thou hast such ample privilege 'Tis granted thee to go  
unto the cloister Wherein is Christ the abbot of the college, To  
him repeat for me a Paternoster,

So far as needful to us of this world, Where power of sinning is  
no longer ours." Then, to give place perchance to one behind,

Whom he had near, he vanished in the fire

As fish in water going to the bottom.

I moved a little tow'rds him pointed out,

And said that to his name my own desire An honourable place  
was making ready. He of his own free will began to say:

So pleases me your courteous demand, I cannot and I will not  
hide me from you. I am Arnaut, who weep and singing go;

Contrite I see the folly of the past,

And joyous see the hoped-for day before me. Therefore do I  
implore you, by that power Which guides you to the summit of  
the stairs, Be mindful to assuage my suffering!

## Canto XXVII

As when he vibrates forth his earliest rays, In regions where his  
Maker shed his blood, (The Ebro falling under lofty Libra,

And waters in the Ganges burnt with noon,) So stood the Sun;  
hence was the day departing, When the glad Angel of God

appeared to us.

Outside the flame he stood upon the verge, And chanted forth,  
"Beati mundo corde," In voice by far more living than our own.

Then: "No one farther goes, souls sanctified, If first the fire bite  
not; within it enter, And be not deaf unto the song beyond."

When we were close beside him thus he said; Wherefore e'en  
such became I, when I heard him, As he is who is put into the  
grave.

Upon my clasped hands I straightened me,

Scanning the fire, and vividly recalling The human bodies I had  
once seen burned.

Towards me turned themselves my good Conductors, And unto  
me Virgilius said: "My son,

Here may indeed be torment, but not death.

Remember thee, remember! and if I On Geryon have safely  
guided thee, What shall I do now I am nearer God?

Believe for certain, shouldst thou stand a full Millennium in the  
bosom of this flame,

It could not make thee bald a single hair.

And if perchance thou think that I deceive thee, Draw near to it,  
and put it to the proof

With thine own hands upon thy garment's hem.

Now lay aside, now lay aside all fear, Turn hitherward, and  
onward come securely;"

And I still motionless, and 'gainst my conscience! Seeing me  
stand still motionless and stubborn, Somewhat disturbed he  
said: "Now look thou, Son, 'Twixt Beatrice and thee there is this  
wall."

As at the name of Thisbe oped his lids The dying Pyramus, and  
gazed upon her, What time the mulberry became vermilion,

Even thus, my obduracy being softened,

I turned to my wise Guide, hearing the name That in my  
memory evermore is welling.

Whereat he wagged his head, and said: "How now?

Shall we stay on this side?" then smiled as one Does at a child  
who's vanquished by an apple. Then into the fire in front of me  
he entered,

Beseeching Statius to come after me, Who a long way before  
divided us. When I was in it, into molten glass

I would have cast me to refresh myself, So without measure  
was the burning there!

And my sweet Father, to encourage me, Discoursing still of  
Beatrice went on, Saying: "Her eyes I seem to see already!" A



voice, that on the other side was singing, Directed us, and we,  
attent alone

On that, came forth where the ascent began. "Venite, benedicti  
Patris mei,"

Sounded within a splendour, which was there Such it o'ercame  
me, and I could not look. "The sun departs," it added, "and night  
cometh; Tarry ye not, but onward urge your steps,

So long as yet the west becomes not dark." Straight forward  
through the rock the path ascended

In such a way that I cut off the rays Before me of the sun, that  
now was low. And of few stairs we yet had made assay,

Ere by the vanished shadow the sun's setting Behind us we  
perceived, I and my Sages.

And ere in all its parts immeasurable The horizon of one aspect  
had become,

And Night her boundless dispensation held, Each of us of a stair  
had made his bed; Because the nature of the mount took from  
us The power of climbing, more than the delight.

Even as in ruminating passive grow

The goats, who have been swift and venturesome Upon the  
mountain-tops ere they were fed, Hushed in the shadow, while  
the sun is hot, Watched by the herdsman, who upon his staff

Is leaning, and in leaning tendeth them; And as the shepherd,  
lodging out of doors, Passes the night beside his quiet flock,  
Watching that no wild beast may scatter it, Such at that hour  
were we, all three of us, I like the goat, and like the herdsmen  
they, Begirt on this side and on that by rocks.

Little could there be seen of things without;

But through that little I beheld the stars More luminous and  
larger than their wont.

Thus ruminating, and beholding these, Sleep seized upon me,—  
sleep, that oftentimes

Before a deed is done has tidings of it.

It was the hour, I think, when from the East First on the  
mountain Citherea beamed,

Who with the fire of love seems always burning; Youthful and  
beautiful in dreams methought

I saw a lady walking in a meadow, Gathering flowers; and  
singing she was saying:

"Know whosoever may my name demand That I am Leah, and  
go moving round

My beauteous hands to make myself a garland.

To please me at the mirror, here I deck me, But never does my  
sister Rachel leave

Her looking-glass, and sitteth all day long. To see her beauteous  
eyes as eager is she,

As I am to adorn me with my hands; Her, seeing, and me, doing  
satisfies."

And now before the antelucan splendours That unto pilgrims the  
more grateful rise, As, home-returning, less remote they lodge,  
The darkness fled away on every side,

And slumber with it; whereupon I rose, Seeing already the great  
Masters risen.

"That apple sweet, which through so many branches The care of  
mortals goeth in pursuit of,

To-day shall put in peace thy hungerings." Speaking to me,  
Virgilius of such words

As these made use; and never were there guerdons That could  
in pleasantness compare with these.

Such longing upon longing came upon me To be above, that at  
each step thereafter For flight I felt in me the pinions growing.  
When underneath us was the stairway all Run o'er, and we were  
on the highest step, Virgilius fastened upon me his eyes,

And said: "The temporal fire and the eternal, Son, thou hast  
seen, and to a place art come Where of myself no farther I  
discern.

By intellect and art I here have brought thee; Take thine own  
pleasure for thy guide henceforth; Beyond the steep ways and  
the narrow art thou.

Behold the sun, that shines upon thy forehead; Behold the grass,  
the flowerets, and the shrubs Which of itself alone this land  
produces.

Until rejoicing come the beauteous eyes

Which weeping caused me to come unto thee, Thou canst sit  
down, and thou canst walk among them.

Expect no more or word or sign from me; Free and upright and  
sound is thy free-will, And error were it not to do its bidding;

Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre!" Canto XXVIII

Eager already to search in and round

The heavenly forest, dense and living-green, Which tempered to  
the eyes the new-born day, Withouten more delay I left the  
bank,

Taking the level country slowly, slowly Over the soil that  
everywhere breathes fragrance.

A softly-breathing air, that no mutation Had in itself, upon the  
forehead smote me No heavier blow than of a gentle wind,  
Whereat the branches, lightly tremulous,

Did all of them bow downward toward that side Where its first  
shadow casts the Holy Mountain; Yet not from their upright  
direction swayed,

So that the little birds upon their tops Should leave the practice  
of each art of theirs; But with full ravishment the hours of prime,  
Singing, received they in the midst of leaves,

That ever bore a burden to their rhymes, Such as from branch to  
branch goes gathering on Through the pine forest on the shore  
of Chiassi,

When Eolus unlooses the Sirocco.

Already my slow steps had carried me Into the ancient wood so  
far, that I

Could not perceive where I had entered it. And lo! my further  
course a stream cut off, Which tow'rd the left hand with its little  
waves Bent down the grass that on its margin sprang.

All waters that on earth most limpid are Would seem to have  
within themselves some mixture

Compared with that which nothing doth conceal, Although it  
moves on with a brown, brown current Under the shade  
perpetual, that never

Ray of the sun lets in, nor of the moon.

With feet I stayed, and with mine eyes I passed Beyond the  
rivulet, to look upon

The great variety of the fresh may.

And there appeared to me (even as appears Suddenly  
something that doth turn aside Through very wonder every  
other thought) A lady all alone, who went along

Singing and culling floweret after floweret, With which her  
pathway was all painted over. "Ah, beauteous lady, who in rays  
of love Dost warm thyself, if I may trust to looks, Which the  
heart's witnesses are wont to be, May the desire come unto thee  
to draw

Near to this river's bank," I said to her,

"So much that I might hear what thou art singing.

Thou makest me remember where and what Proserpina that  
moment was when lost

Her mother her, and she herself the Spring."

As turns herself, with feet together pressed And to the ground, a  
lady who is dancing, And hardly puts one foot before the other,  
On the vermilion and the yellow flowerets She turned towards  
me, not in other wise

Than maiden who her modest eyes casts down; And my  
entreaties made to be content,

So near approaching, that the dulcet sound Came unto me  
together with its meaning As soon as she was where the grasses  
are. Bathed by the waters of the beauteous river, To lift her eyes  
she granted me the boon.

I do not think there shone so great a light Under the lids of  
Venus, when transfixed By her own son, beyond his usual  
custom!

Erect upon the other bank she smiled, Bearing full many colours  
in her hands, Which that high land produces without seed.

Apart three paces did the river make us; But Hellespont, where  
Xerxes passed across,

(A curb still to all human arrogance,) More hatred from Leander  
did not suffer For rolling between Sestos and Abydos,

Than that from me, because it oped not then. "Ye are new-  
comers; and because I smile," Began she, "peradventure, in this  
place Elect to human nature for its nest,

Some apprehension keeps you marvelling; But the psalm  
'Delectasti' giveth light

Which has the power to uncloud your intellect.

And thou who foremost art, and didst entreat me, Speak, if thou  
wouldst hear more; for I came ready To all thy questionings, as  
far as needful."

"The water," said I, "and the forest's sound, Are combating  
within me my new faith

In something which I heard opposed to this." Whence she: "I will  
relate how from its cause Proceedeth that which maketh thee to  
wonder, And purge away the cloud that smites upon thee.

The Good Supreme, sole in itself delighting, Created man good,  
and this goodly place Gave him as hansom of eternal peace.

By his default short while he sojourned here; By his default to  
weeping and to toil

He changed his innocent laughter and sweet play.

That the disturbance which below is made By exhalations of the  
land and water, (Which far as may be follow after heat,) Might  
not upon mankind wage any war,

This mount ascended tow'rds the heaven so high, And is  
exempt, from there where it is locked.

Now since the universal atmosphere Turns in a circuit with the  
primal motion Unless the circle is broken on some side, Upon  
this height, that all is disengaged In living ether, doth this  
motion strike

And make the forest sound, for it is dense; And so much power  
the stricken plant possesses

That with its virtue it impregns the air, And this, revolving,  
scatters it around;



And yonder earth, according as 'tis worthy In self or in its clime,  
conceives and bears Of divers qualities the divers trees;

It should not seem a marvel then on earth, This being heard,  
whenever any plant Without seed manifest there taketh root.  
And thou must know, this holy table-land In which thou art is full  
of every seed, And fruit has in it never gathered there.

The water which thou seest springs not from vein Restored by  
vapour that the cold condenses, Like to a stream that gains or  
loses breath;

But issues from a fountain safe and certain, Which by the will of  
God as much regains As it discharges, open on two sides.

Upon this side with virtue it descends, Which takes away all  
memory of sin;

On that, of every good deed done restores it.

Here Lethe, as upon the other side Eunoe, it is called; and  
worketh not If first on either side it be not tasted.

This every other savour doth transcend; And notwithstanding  
slaked so far may be Thy thirst, that I reveal to thee no more, I'll  
give thee a corollary still in grace,

Nor think my speech will be to thee less dear If it spread out  
beyond my promise to thee.

Those who in ancient times have feigned in song The Age of  
Gold and its felicity,  
Dreamed of this place perhaps upon Parnassus.

Here was the human race in innocence; Here evermore was  
Spring, and every fruit; This is the nectar of which each one  
speaks." Then backward did I turn me wholly round  
Unto my Poets, and saw that with a smile They had been  
listening to these closing words;  
Then to the beautiful lady turned mine eyes.

### Canto XXIX

Singing like unto an enamoured lady She, with the ending of her  
words, continued:

"Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata."

And even as Nymphs, that wandered all alone Among the  
sylvan shadows, sedulous One to avoid and one to see the sun,  
She then against the stream moved onward, going Along the  
bank, and I abreast of her,  
Her little steps with little steps attending.

Between her steps and mine were not a hundred, When equally  
the margins gave a turn,

In such a way, that to the East I faced. Nor even thus our way  
continued far Before the lady wholly turned herself

Unto me, saying, "Brother, look and listen!" And lo! a sudden  
lustre ran across

On every side athwart the spacious forest, Such that it made  
me doubt if it were lightning.

But since the lightning ceases as it comes, And that continuing  
brightened more and more,

Within my thought I said, "What thing is this?" And a delicious  
melody there ran

Along the luminous air, whence holy zeal Made me rebuke the  
hardihood of Eve;

For there where earth and heaven obedient were, The woman  
only, and but just created, Could not endure to stay 'neath any  
veil;

Underneath which had she devoutly stayed, I sooner should  
have tasted those delights Ineffable, and for a longer time.

While 'mid such manifold first-fruits I walked Of the eternal  
pleasure all enrapt,

And still solicitous of more delights, In front of us like an  
enkindled fire

Became the air beneath the verdant boughs, And the sweet  
sound as singing now was heard.

O Virgins sacrosanct! if ever hunger, Vigils, or cold for you I  
have endured,

The occasion spurs me their reward to claim! Now Helicon must  
needs pour forth for me, And with her choir Urania must assist  
me, To put in verse things difficult to think.

A little farther on, seven trees of gold

In semblance the long space still intervening Between ourselves  
and them did counterfeit; But when I had approached so near  
to them The common object, which the sense deceives, Lost not  
by distance any of its marks,

The faculty that lends discourse to reason Did apprehend that  
they were candlesticks,

And in the voices of the song "Hosanna!" Above them flamed  
the harness beautiful, Far brighter than the moon in the serene  
Of midnight, at the middle of her month. I turned me round,  
with admiration filled, To good Virgilius, and he answered me  
With visage no less full of wonderment.

Then back I turned my face to those high things, Which moved  
themselves towards us so sedately, They had been distanced by  
new-wedded brides.

The lady chid me: "Why dost thou burn only So with affection for  
the living lights,

And dost not look at what comes after them?" Then saw I  
people, as behind their leaders, Coming behind them,  
garmented in white, And such a whiteness never was on earth.

The water on my left flank was resplendent, And back to me  
reflected my left side, E'en as a mirror, if I looked therein.

When I upon my margin had such post That nothing but the  
stream divided us, Better to see I gave my steps repose; And I  
beheld the flamelets onward go,

Leaving behind themselves the air depicted, And they of trailing  
pennons had the semblance, So that it overhead remained  
distinct

With sevenfold lists, all of them of the colours Whence the sun's  
bow is made, and Delia's girdle.

These standards to the rearward longer were Than was my  
sight; and, as it seemed to me,

Ten paces were the outermost apart. Under so fair a heaven as  
I describe

The four and twenty Elders, two by two, Came on incoronate  
with flower-de-luce.

They all of them were singing: "Blessed thou Among the  
daughters of Adam art, and blessed For evermore shall be thy  
loveliness."

After the flowers and other tender grasses In front of me upon  
the other margin Were disencumbered of that race elect,

Even as in heaven star followeth after star, There came close  
after them four animals, Incoronate each one with verdant leaf.

Plumed with six wings was every one of them, The plumage full  
of eyes; the eyes of Argus If they were living would be such as  
these.

Reader! to trace their forms no more I waste My rhymes; for  
other spendings press me so, That I in this cannot be prodigal.

But read Ezekiel, who depicteth them As he beheld them from  
the region cold

Coming with cloud, with whirlwind, and with fire; And such as  
thou shalt find them in his pages, Such were they here; saving  
that in their plumage John is with me, and differeth from him.

The interval between these four contained A chariot triumphal  
on two wheels,

Which by a Griffin's neck came drawn along; And upward he  
extended both his wings Between the middle list and three and  
three,

So that he injured none by cleaving it.

So high they rose that they were lost to sight; His limbs were  
gold, so far as he was bird, And white the others with vermilion  
mingled.

Not only Rome with no such splendid car E'er gladdened  
Africanus, or Augustus, But poor to it that of the Sun would  
be,—

That of the Sun, which swerving was burnt up At the  
importunate orison of Earth, When Jove was so mysteriously  
just.

Three maidens at the right wheel in a circle Came onward  
dancing; one so very red That in the fire she hardly had been  
noted.

The second was as if her flesh and bones Had all been  
fashioned out of emerald;

The third appeared as snow but newly fallen. And now they  
seemed conducted by the white, Now by the red, and from the  
song of her

The others took their step, or slow or swift.

Upon the left hand four made holiday Vested in purple,  
following the measure

Of one of them with three eyes in her head.

In rear of all the group here treated of Two old men I beheld,  
unlike in habit, But like in gait, each dignified and grave.

One showed himself as one of the disciples Of that supreme  
Hippocrates, whom nature Made for the animals she holds most  
dear; Contrary care the other manifested,

With sword so shining and so sharp, it caused

Terror to me on this side of the river. Thereafter four I saw of  
humble aspect, And behind all an aged man alone Walking in  
sleep with countenance acute.

And like the foremost company these seven Were habited; yet  
of the flower-de-luce

No garland round about the head they wore, But of the rose,  
and other flowers vermilion; At little distance would the sight  
have sworn That all were in a flame above their brows.

And when the car was opposite to me Thunder was heard; and  
all that folk august Seemed to have further progress interdicted,  
There with the vanward ensigns standing still.

### Canto XXX

When the Septentrion of the highest heaven (Which never either  
setting knew or rising, Nor veil of other cloud than that of sin,



And which made every one therein aware Of his own duty, as  
the lower makes Whoever turns the helm to come to port)

Motionless halted, the veracious people,

That came at first between it and the Griffin, Turned themselves  
to the car, as to their peace. And one of them, as if by Heaven  
commissioned, Singing, "Veni, sponsa, de Libano"

Shouted three times, and all the others after. Even as the  
Blessed at the final summons

Shall rise up quickened each one from his cavern, Uplifting light  
the reinvested flesh,

So upon that celestial chariot

A hundred rose 'ad vocem tanti senis,' Ministers and messengers  
of life eternal.

They all were saying, "Benedictus qui venis," And, scattering  
flowers above and round about, "Manibus o date lilia plenis."

Ere now have I beheld, as day began, The eastern hemisphere  
all tinged with rose,

And the other heaven with fair serene adorned; And the sun's  
face, uprising, overshadowed So that by tempering influence of  
vapours

For a long interval the eye sustained it; Thus in the bosom of a  
cloud of flowers Which from those hands angelical ascended,

And downward fell again inside and out, Over her snow-white  
veil with olive cinct Appeared a lady under a green mantle,  
Vested in colour of the living flame.

And my own spirit, that already now

So long a time had been, that in her presence Trembling with  
awe it had not stood abashed, Without more knowledge having  
by mine eyes, Through occult virtue that from her proceeded Of  
ancient love the mighty influence felt.

As soon as on my vision smote the power Sublime, that had  
already pierced me through Ere from my boyhood I had yet  
come forth, To the left hand I turned with that reliance

With which the little child runs to his mother, When he has fear,  
or when he is afflicted,

To say unto Virgilius: "Not a drachm

Of blood remains in me, that does not tremble; I know the  
traces of the ancient flame."

But us Virgilius of himself deprived Had left, Virgilius, sweetest  
of all fathers, Virgilius, to whom I for safety gave me: Nor  
whatsoever lost the ancient mother Aailed my cheeks now  
purified from dew,

That weeping they should not again be darkened. "Dante,  
because Virgilius has departed

Do not weep yet, do not weep yet awhile; For by another sword  
thou need'st must weep."

E'en as an admiral, who on poop and prow Comes to behold the  
people that are working In other ships, and cheers them to well-  
doing, Upon the left hand border of the car,

When at the sound I turned of my own name, Which of  
necessity is here recorded,

I saw the Lady, who erewhile appeared Veiled underneath the  
angelic festival, Direct her eyes to me across the river.

Although the veil, that from her head descended, Encircled with  
the foliage of Minerva,

Did not permit her to appear distinctly, In attitude still royally  
majestic

Continued she, like unto one who speaks, And keeps his  
warmest utterance in reserve: "Look at me well; in sooth I'm  
Beatrice!

How didst thou deign to come unto the Mountain?

Didst thou not know that man is happy here?" Mine eyes fell  
downward into the clear fountain, But, seeing myself therein, I  
sought the grass, So great a shame did weigh my forehead  
down.

As to the son the mother seems superb, So she appeared to me;  
for somewhat bitter Tasteth the savour of severe compassion.

Silent became she, and the Angels sang Suddenly, "In te,  
Domine, speravi:" But beyond 'pedes meos' did not pass.

Even as the snow among the living rafters Upon the back of  
Italy congeals,

Blown on and drifted by Sclavonian winds, And then, dissolving,  
trickles through itself Whene'er the land that loses shadow  
breathes, So that it seems a fire that melts a taper;

E'en thus was I without a tear or sigh, Before the song of those  
who sing for ever After the music of the eternal spheres.

But when I heard in their sweet melodies Compassion for me,  
more than had they said,

"O wherefore, lady, dost thou thus upbraid him?" The ice, that  
was about my heart congealed, To air and water changed, and  
in my anguish

Through mouth and eyes came gushing from my breast.

She, on the right-hand border of the car Still firmly standing, to  
those holy beings Thus her discourse directed afterwards: "Ye  
keep your watch in the eternal day,

So that nor night nor sleep can steal from you One step the  
ages make upon their path; Therefore my answer is with greater

care, That he may hear me who is weeping yonder, So that the  
sin and dole be of one measure.

Not only by the work of those great wheels, That destine every  
seed unto some end, According as the stars are in conjunction,

But by the largess of celestial graces, Which have such lofty  
vapours for their rain That near to them our sight approaches  
not, Such had this man become in his new life Potentially, that  
every righteous habit Would have made admirable proof in him;

But so much more malignant and more savage Becomes the  
land untilled and with bad seed, The more good earthly vigour it  
possesses.

Some time did I sustain him with my look; Revealing unto him  
my youthful eyes,

I led him with me turned in the right way.

As soon as ever of my second age

I was upon the threshold and changed life, Himself from me he  
took and gave to others.

When from the flesh to spirit I ascended, And beauty and virtue  
were in me increased, I was to him less dear and less delightful;

And into ways untrue he turned his steps, Pursuing the false  
images of good,

That never any promises fulfil; Nor prayer for inspiration me  
availed,

By means of which in dreams and otherwise I called him back,  
so little did he heed them.

So low he fell, that all appliances For his salvation were already  
short,

Save showing him the people of perdition.

For this I visited the gates of death, And unto him, who so far  
up has led him, My intercessions were with weeping borne.

God's lofty fiat would be violated,

If Lethe should be passed, and if such viands Should tasted be,  
withouten any scot

Of penitence, that gushes forth in tears."

### Canto XXXI

"O thou who art beyond the sacred river," Turning to me the  
point of her discourse,

That edgewise even had seemed to me so keen, She  
recommenced, continuing without pause, "Say, say if this be  
true; to such a charge,

Thy own confession needs must be conjoined." My faculties  
were in so great confusion,

That the voice moved, but sooner was extinct Than by its  
organs it was set at large.

Awhile she waited; then she said: "What thinkest?  
Answer me; for the mournful memories In thee not yet are by  
the waters injured." Confusion and dismay together mingled  
Forced such a Yes! from out my mouth, that sight Was needful  
to the understanding of it.

Even as a cross-bow breaks, when 'tis discharged Too tensely  
drawn the bowstring and the bow, And with less force the arrow  
hits the mark,

So I gave way beneath that heavy burden, Outpouring in a  
torrent tears and sighs,

And the voice flagged upon its passage forth. Whence she to  
me: "In those desires of mine Which led thee to the loving of  
that good, Beyond which there is nothing to aspire to, What  
trenches lying traverse or what chains Didst thou discover, that  
of passing onward

Thou shouldst have thus despoiled thee of the hope?

And what allurements or what vantages Upon the forehead of  
the others showed,

That thou shouldst turn thy footsteps unto them?" After the  
heaving of a bitter sigh,

Hardly had I the voice to make response, And with fatigue my  
lips did fashion it.

Weeping I said: "The things that present were With their false  
pleasure turned aside my steps, Soon as your countenance  
concealed itself." And she: "Shouldst thou be silent, or deny

What thou confessest, not less manifest

Would be thy fault, by such a Judge 'tis known.

But when from one's own cheeks comes bursting forth The  
accusal of the sin, in our tribunal

Against the edge the wheel doth turn itself. But still, that thou  
mayst feel a greater shame For thy transgression, and another  
time Hearing the Sirens thou mayst be more strong,

Cast down the seed of weeping and attend; So shalt thou hear,  
how in an opposite way My buried flesh should have directed  
thee.

Never to thee presented art or nature Pleasure so great as the  
fair limbs wherein

I was enclosed, which scattered are in earth. And if the highest  
pleasure thus did fail thee By reason of my death, what mortal  
thing Should then have drawn thee into its desire?

Thou oughtest verily at the first shaft Of things fallacious to  
have risen up

To follow me, who was no longer such.



Thou oughtest not to have stooped thy pinions downward To  
wait for further blows, or little girl,  
Or other vanity of such brief use.

The callow birdlet waits for two or three, But to the eyes of  
those already fledged, In vain the net is spread or shaft is shot."  
Even as children silent in their shame

Stand listening with their eyes upon the ground, And conscious  
of their fault, and penitent; So was I standing; and she said: "If  
thou

In hearing sufferest pain, lift up thy beard And thou shalt feel a  
greater pain in seeing." With less resistance is a robust holm  
Uprooted, either by a native wind

Or else by that from regions of Iarbas, Than I upraised at her  
command my chin;

And when she by the beard the face demanded, Well I  
perceived the venom of her meaning.

And as my countenance was lifted up, Mine eye perceived those  
creatures beautiful Had rested from the strewing of the flowers;

And, still but little reassured, mine eyes Saw Beatrice turned  
round towards the monster,

That is one person only in two natures.

Beneath her veil, beyond the margent green, She seemed to me  
far more her ancient self

To excel, than others here, when she was here.

So pricked me then the thorn of penitence, That of all other  
things the one which turned me

Most to its love became the most my foe. Such self-conviction  
stung me at the heart O'erpowered I fell, and what I then  
became She knoweth who had furnished me the cause.

Then, when the heart restored my outward sense, The lady I had  
found alone, above me

I saw, and she was saying, "Hold me, hold me." Up to my throat  
she in the stream had drawn me, And, dragging me behind her,  
she was moving Upon the water lightly as a shuttle.

When I was near unto the blessed shore, "Asperges me," I heard  
so sweetly sung, Remember it I cannot, much less write it. The  
beautiful lady opened wide her arms,

Embraced my head, and plunged me underneath, Where I was  
forced to swallow of the water.

Then forth she drew me, and all dripping brought Into the dance  
of the four beautiful,

And each one with her arm did cover me.

'We here are Nymphs, and in the Heaven are stars; Ere Beatrice  
descended to the world,

We as her handmaids were appointed her.

We'll lead thee to her eyes; but for the pleasant Light that within  
them is, shall sharpen thine The three beyond, who more  
profoundly look.' Thus singing they began; and afterwards

Unto the Griffin's breast they led me with them, Where Beatrice  
was standing, turned towards us. "See that thou dost not spare  
thine eyes," they said; "Before the emeralds have we stationed  
thee, Whence Love aforetime drew for thee his weapons." A  
thousand longings, hotter than the flame, Fastened mine eyes  
upon those eyes relucant,

That still upon the Griffin steadfast stayed.

As in a glass the sun, not otherwise Within them was the twofold  
monster shining, Now with the one, now with the other nature.

Think, Reader, if within myself I marvelled,

When I beheld the thing itself stand still, And in its image it  
transformed itself.

While with amazement filled and jubilant, My soul was tasting of  
the food, that while It satisfies us makes us hunger for it,  
Themselves revealing of the highest rank In bearing, did the  
other three advance, Singing to their angelic saraband.

"Turn, Beatrice, O turn thy holy eyes," Such was their song, "unto  
thy faithful one, Who has to see thee ta'en so many steps.

In grace do us the grace that thou unveil Thy face to him, so  
that he may discern

The second beauty which thou dost conceal." O splendour of the  
living light eternal!

Who underneath the shadow of Parnassus Has grown so pale,  
or drunk so at its cistern,

He would not seem to have his mind encumbered Striving to  
paint thee as thou didst appear,

Where the harmonious heaven o'ershadowed thee, When in the  
open air thou didst unveil?

### Canto XXXII

So steadfast and attentive were mine eyes In satisfying their  
decennial thirst,

That all my other senses were extinct, And upon this side and on  
that they had Walls of indifference, so the holy smile Drew them  
unto itself with the old net When forcibly my sight was turned  
away Towards my left hand by those goddesses, Because I  
heard from them a "Too intently!"

And that condition of the sight which is

In eyes but lately smitten by the sun Bereft me of my vision  
some short while; But to the less when sight re-shaped itself, I  
say the less in reference to the greater  
Splendour from which perforce I had withdrawn, I saw upon its  
right wing wheeled about  
The glorious host returning with the sun  
And with the sevenfold flames upon their faces.  
As underneath its shields, to save itself,  
A squadron turns, and with its banner wheels, Before the whole  
thereof can change its front, That soldiery of the celestial  
kingdom  
Which marched in the advance had wholly passed us Before the  
chariot had turned its pole.  
Then to the wheels the maidens turned themselves, And the  
Griffin moved his burden benedight,  
But so that not a feather of him fluttered. The lady fair who  
drew me through the ford Followed with Statius and myself the  
wheel Which made its orbit with the lesser arc.  
So passing through the lofty forest, vacant By fault of her who  
in the serpent trusted, Angelic music made our steps keep time.

Perchance as great a space had in three flights An arrow  
loosened from the string o'erpassed, As we had moved when  
Beatrice descended.

I heard them murmur altogether, "Adam!" Then circled they  
about a tree despoiled

Of blooms and other leafage on each bough. Its tresses, which  
so much the more dilate As higher they ascend, had been by  
Indians Among their forests marvelled at for height. "Blessed  
art thou, O Griffin, who dost not

Pluck with thy beak these branches sweet to taste, Since  
appetite by this was turned to evil." After this fashion round the  
tree robust

The others shouted; and the twofold creature:

"Thus is preserved the seed of all the just." And turning to the  
pole which he had dragged, He drew it close beneath the  
widowed bough, And what was of it unto it left bound.

In the same manner as our trees (when downward Falls the  
great light, with that together mingled Which after the celestial  
Lasca shines)

Begin to swell, and then renew themselves, Each one with its  
own colour, ere the Sun Harness his steeds beneath another  
star: Less than of rose and more than violet

A hue disclosing, was renewed the tree That had erewhile its  
boughs so desolate. I never heard, nor here below is sung,  
The hymn which afterward that people sang, Nor did I bear the  
melody throughout.

Had I the power to paint how fell asleep Those eyes  
compassionless, of Syrinx hearing, Those eyes to which more  
watching cost so dear,

Even as a painter who from model paints I would portray how I  
was lulled asleep; He may, who well can picture drowsihood.

Therefore I pass to what time I awoke, And say a splendour  
rent from me the veil

Of slumber, and a calling: "Rise, what dost thou?" As to behold  
the apple-tree in blossom

Which makes the Angels greedy for its fruit, And keeps  
perpetual bridals in the Heaven, Peter and John and James  
conducted were, And, overcome, recovered at the word

By which still greater slumbers have been broken, And saw their  
school diminished by the loss

Not only of Elias, but of Moses, And the apparel of their Master  
changed;

So I revived, and saw that piteous one Above me standing, who  
had been conductress

Aforetime of my steps beside the river, And all in doubt I said,  
"Where's Beatrice?" And she: "Behold her seated underneath  
The leafage new, upon the root of it.

Behold the company that circles her; The rest behind the Griffin  
are ascending

With more melodious song, and more profound." And if her  
speech were more diffuse I know not, Because already in my  
sight was she

Who from the hearing of aught else had shut me.

Alone she sat upon the very earth, Left there as guardian of the  
chariot

Which I had seen the biform monster fasten. Encircling her, a  
cloister made themselves

The seven Nymphs, with those lights in their hands Which are  
secure from Aquilon and Auster. "Short while shalt thou be here  
a forester,

And thou shalt be with me for evermore

A citizen of that Rome where Christ is Roman. Therefore, for  
that world's good which liveth ill, Fix on the car thine eyes, and  
what thou seest, Having returned to earth, take heed thou  
write." Thus Beatrice; and I, who at the feet

Of her commandments all devoted was,



My mind and eyes directed where she willed.

Never descended with so swift a motion Fire from a heavy  
cloud, when it is raining From out the region which is most  
remote, As I beheld the bird of Jove descend

Down through the tree, rending away the bark, As well as  
blossoms and the foliage new, And he with all his might the  
chariot smote, Whereat it reeled, like vessel in a tempest

Tossed by the waves, now starboard and now larboard.

Thereafter saw I leap into the body Of the triumphal vehicle a  
Fox,

That seemed unfed with any wholesome food.

But for his hideous sins upbraiding him, My Lady put him to as  
swift a flight

As such a fleshless skeleton could bear. Then by the way that it  
before had come, Into the chariot's chest I saw the Eagle

Descend, and leave it feathered with his plumes.

And such as issues from a heart that mourns, A voice from  
Heaven there issued, and it said: "My little bark, how badly art  
thou freighted!"

Methought, then, that the earth did yawn between Both wheels,  
and I saw rise from it a Dragon, Who through the chariot  
upward fixed his tail, And as a wasp that draweth back its sting,  
Drawing unto himself his tail malign,

Drew out the floor, and went his way rejoicing. That which  
remained behind, even as with grass A fertile region, with the  
feathers, offered

Perhaps with pure intention and benign, Re clothed itself, and  
with them were re clothed The pole and both the wheels so  
speedily,

A sigh doth longer keep the lips apart.

Transfigured thus the holy edifice Thrust forward heads upon  
the parts of it, Three on the pole and one at either corner. The  
first were horned like oxen; but the four

Had but a single horn upon the forehead; A monster such had  
never yet been seen! Firm as a rock upon a mountain high,  
Seated upon it, there appeared to me

A shameless whore, with eyes swift glancing round, And, as if  
not to have her taken from him,

Upright beside her I beheld a giant; And ever and anon they  
kissed each other. But because she her wanton, roving eye  
Turned upon me, her angry paramour Did scourge her from her  
head unto her feet. Then full of jealousy, and fierce with wrath,  
He loosed the monster, and across the forest

Dragged it so far, he made of that alone

A shield unto the whore and the strange beast.

## Canto XXXIII

"Deus venerunt gentes," alternating Now three, now four,  
melodious psalmody The maidens in the midst of tears began;  
And Beatrice, compassionate and sighing,

Listened to them with such a countenance, That scarce more  
changed was Mary at the cross.

But when the other virgins place had given For her to speak,  
uprisen to her feet

With colour as of fire, she made response: "'Modicum, et non  
videbitis me;

Et iterum,' my sisters predilect, 'Modicum, et vos videbitis me.'"

Then all the seven in front of her she placed; And after her, by  
beckoning only, moved Me and the lady and the sage who  
stayed. So she moved onward; and I do not think

That her tenth step was placed upon the ground, When with her  
eyes upon mine eyes she smote, And with a tranquil aspect,  
"Come more quickly," To me she said, "that, if I speak with thee,

To listen to me thou mayst be well placed." As soon as I was  
with her as I should be, She said to me: "Why, brother, dost thou  
not

Venture to question now, in coming with me?" As unto those  
who are too reverential, Speaking in presence of superiors,  
Who drag no living utterance to their teeth, It me befell, that  
without perfect sound Began I: "My necessity, Madonna,  
You know, and that which thereunto is good." And she to me:  
"Of fear and bashfulness Henceforward I will have thee strip  
thyself,

So that thou speak no more as one who dreams. Know that the  
vessel which the serpent broke

Was, and is not; but let him who is guilty Think that God's  
vengeance does not fear a sop.

Without an heir shall not for ever be The Eagle that left his  
plumes upon the car, Whence it became a monster, then a prey;  
For verily I see, and hence narrate it, The stars already near to  
bring the time, From every hindrance safe, and every bar,  
Within which a Five-hundred, Ten, and Five,

One sent from God, shall slay the thievish woman And that  
same giant who is sinning with her.

And peradventure my dark utterance,

Like Themis and the Sphinx, may less persuade thee, Since, in  
their mode, it clouds the intellect;

But soon the facts shall be the Naiades Who shall this difficult  
enigma solve,

Without destruction of the flocks and harvests.

Note thou; and even as by me are uttered These words, so  
teach them unto those who live

That life which is a running unto death; And bear in mind,  
whene'er thou writest them, Not to conceal what thou hast seen  
the plant,

That twice already has been pillaged here.

Whoever pillages or shatters it, With blasphemy of deed  
offendeth God,

Who made it holy for his use alone. For biting that, in pain and  
in desire

Five thousand years and more the first-born soul Craved Him,  
who punished in himself the bite.

Thy genius slumbers, if it deem it not

For special reason so pre-eminent

In height, and so inverted in its summit. And if thy vain  
imaginings had not been Water of Elsa round about thy mind,  
And Pyramus to the mulberry, their pleasure, Thou by so many  
circumstances only

The justice of the interdict of God Morally in the tree wouldst  
recognize. But since I see thee in thine intellect Converted into  
stone and stained with sin,

So that the light of my discourse doth daze thee, I will too, if not  
written, at least painted,

Thou bear it back within thee, for the reason That cinct with  
palm the pilgrim's staff is borne." And I: "As by a signet is the  
wax

Which does not change the figure stamped upon it, My brain is  
now imprinted by yourself.

But wherefore so beyond my power of sight Soars your  
desirable discourse, that aye

The more I strive, so much the more I lose it?" "That thou mayst  
recognize," she said, "the school Which thou hast followed, and  
mayst see how far Its doctrine follows after my discourse,

And mayst behold your path from the divine Distant as far as  
separated is

From earth the heaven that highest hastens on." Whence her I  
answered: "I do not remember That ever I estranged myself  
from you,

Nor have I conscience of it that reproves me." "And if thou art  
not able to remember,"

Smiling she answered, "recollect thee now That thou this very  
day hast drunk of Lethe; And if from smoke a fire may be  
inferred, Such an oblivion clearly demonstrates Some error in  
thy will elsewhere intent.

Truly from this time forward shall my words Be naked, so far as  
it is befitting

To lay them open unto thy rude gaze." And more coruscant and  
with slower steps The sun was holding the meridian circle,  
Which, with the point of view, shifts here and there When halted  
(as he cometh to a halt,

Who goes before a squadron as its escort, If something new he  
find upon his way) The ladies seven at a dark shadow's edge,  
Such as, beneath green leaves and branches black, The Alp  
upon its frigid border wears.

In front of them the Tigris and Euphrates Methought I saw forth  
issue from one fountain, And slowly part, like friends, from one  
another. "O light, O glory of the human race!

What stream is this which here unfolds itself From out one  
source, and from itself withdraws?" For such a prayer, 'twas  
said unto me, "Pray Matilda that she tell thee;" and here  
answered,

As one does who doth free himself from blame, The beautiful  
lady: "This and other things

Were told to him by me; and sure I am

The water of Lethe has not hid them from him." And Beatrice:

"Perhaps a greater care,

Which oftentimes our memory takes away, Has made the vision  
of his mind obscure.

But Eunoe behold, that yonder rises; Lead him to it, and, as thou  
art accustomed, Revive again the half-dead virtue in him."

Like gentle soul, that maketh no excuse, But makes its own will  
of another's will As soon as by a sign it is disclosed, Even so,  
when she had taken hold of me,

The beautiful lady moved, and unto Statius Said, in her  
womanly manner, "Come with him."

If, Reader, I possessed a longer space For writing it, I yet would  
sing in part

Of the sweet draught that ne'er would satiate me; But inasmuch  
as full are all the leaves Made ready for this second canticle,

The curb of art no farther lets me go. From the most holy water  
I returned Regenerate, in the manner of new trees That are  
renewed with a new foliage,

Pure and disposed to mount unto the stars.

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# PARADISO

## Canto I

The glory of Him who moveth everything Doth penetrate the  
universe, and shine

In one part more and in another less.

Within that heaven which most his light receives Was I, and  
things beheld which to repeat

Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends; Because in  
drawing near to its desire

Our intellect ingulphs itself so far, That after it the memory  
cannot go. Truly whatever of the holy realm

I had the power to treasure in my mind Shall now become the  
subject of my song.

O good Apollo, for this last emprise Make of me such a vessel of  
thy power As giving the beloved laurel asks!

One summit of Parnassus hitherto

Has been enough for me, but now with both I needs must enter  
the arena left.

Enter into my bosom, thou, and breathe As at the time when  
Marsyas thou didst draw

Out of the scabbard of those limbs of his. O power divine,  
lend'st thou thyself to me So that the shadow of the blessed  
realm Stamped in my brain I can make manifest, Thou'lt see me  
come unto thy darling tree,

And crown myself thereafter with those leaves Of which the  
theme and thou shall make me worthy.

So seldom, Father, do we gather them For triumph or of Caesar  
or of Poet,

(The fault and shame of human inclinations,) That the Peneian  
foliage should bring forth Joy to the joyous Delphic deity,

When any one it makes to thirst for it. A little spark is followed  
by great flame;

Perchance with better voices after me Shall prayer be made  
that Cyrrha may respond!

To mortal men by passages diverse Uprises the world's lamp;  
but by that one

Which circles four uniteth with three crosses, With better course  
and with a better star Conjoined it issues, and the mundane wax  
Tempers and stamps more after its own fashion.

Almost that passage had made morning there And evening  
here, and there was wholly white That hemisphere, and black  
the other part, When Beatrice towards the left-hand side  
I saw turned round, and gazing at the sun; Never did eagle  
fasten so upon it!

And even as a second ray is wont To issue from the first and  
reascend,

Like to a pilgrim who would fain return, Thus of her action,  
through the eyes infused In my imagination, mine I made,  
And sunward fixed mine eyes beyond our wont. There much is  
lawful which is here unlawful Unto our powers, by virtue of the  
place

Made for the human species as its own. Not long I bore it, nor  
so little while But I beheld it sparkle round about

Like iron that comes molten from the fire; And suddenly it  
seemed that day to day Was added, as if He who has the power

Had with another sun the heaven adorned.

With eyes upon the everlasting wheels Stood Beatrice all intent,  
and I, on her Fixing my vision from above removed, Such at her  
aspect inwardly became

As Glaucus, tasting of the herb that made him Peer of the other  
gods beneath the sea.

To represent transhumanise in words Impossible were; the  
example, then, suffice Him for whom Grace the experience  
reserves.

If I was merely what of me thou newly Createdst, Love who  
governest the heaven, Thou knowest, who didst lift me with thy  
light!

When now the wheel, which thou dost make eternal Desiring  
thee, made me attentive to it

By harmony thou dost modulate and measure, Then seemed to  
me so much of heaven enkindled By the sun's flame, that  
neither rain nor river

E'er made a lake so widely spread abroad. The newness of the  
sound and the great light Kindled in me a longing for their  
cause, Never before with such acuteness felt; Whence she, who  
saw me as I saw myself, To quiet in me my perturbed mind,  
Opened her mouth, ere I did mine to ask, And she began: "Thou  
makest thyself so dull With false imagining, that thou seest not

What thou wouldst see if thou hadst shaken it off.

Thou art not upon earth, as thou believest; But lightning, fleeing  
its appropriate site,

Ne'er ran as thou, who thitherward returnest." If of my former  
doubt I was divested

By these brief little words more smiled than spoken, I in a new  
one was the more ensnared;

And said: "Already did I rest content From great amazement;  
but am now amazed In what way I transcend these bodies  
light."

Whereupon she, after a pitying sigh, Her eyes directed tow'rds  
me with that look

A mother casts on a delirious child; And she began: "All things  
whate'er they be

Have order among themselves, and this is form, That makes the  
universe resemble God.

Here do the higher creatures see the footprints Of the Eternal  
Power, which is the end Whereto is made the law already  
mentioned.

In the order that I speak of are inclined All natures, by their  
destinies diverse, More or less near unto their origin;

Hence they move onward unto ports diverse O'er the great sea  
of being; and each one With instinct given it which bears it on.

This bears away the fire towards the moon; This is in mortal  
hearts the motive power This binds together and unites the  
earth.

Nor only the created things that are Without intelligence this  
bow shoots forth, But those that have both intellect and love.

The Providence that regulates all this Makes with its light the  
heaven forever quiet,

Wherein that turns which has the greatest haste.

And thither now, as to a site decreed, Bears us away the virtue  
of that cord Which aims its arrows at a joyous mark.

True is it, that as oftentimes the form Accords not with the  
intention of the art, Because in answering is matter deaf,

So likewise from this course doth deviate Sometimes the  
creature, who the power possesses, Though thus impelled, to  
swerve some other way, (In the same wise as one may see the  
fire

Fall from a cloud,) if the first impetus Earthward is wrested by  
some false delight.

Thou shouldst not wonder more, if well I judge, At thine ascent,  
than at a rivulet

From some high mount descending to the lowland.

Marvel it would be in thee, if deprived Of hindrance, thou wert  
seated down below,

As if on earth the living fire were quiet." Thereat she  
heavenward turned again her face.

## Canto II

O Ye, who in some pretty little boat, Eager to listen, have been following Behind my ship, that singing sails along, Turn back to look again upon your shores; Do not put out to sea, lest peradventure,

In losing me, you might yourselves be lost. The sea I sail has never yet been passed;

Minerva breathes, and pilots me Apollo, And Muses nine point out to me the Bears. Ye other few who have the neck uplifted Betimes to th' bread of Angels upon which One liveth here and grows not sated by it, Well may you launch upon the deep salt-sea

Your vessel, keeping still my wake before you Upon the water that grows smooth again.

Those glorious ones who unto Colchos passed Were not so wonder-struck as you shall be, When Jason they beheld a ploughman made!

The con-created and perpetual thirst For the realm deiform did bear us on,

As swift almost as ye the heavens behold.

Upward gazed Beatrice, and I at her; And in such space perchance as strikes a bolt And flies, and from the notch unlocks itself,

Arrived I saw me where a wondrous thing Drew to itself my  
sight; and therefore she

From whom no care of mine could be concealed, Towards me  
turning, blithe as beautiful, Said unto me: "Fix gratefully thy  
mind

On God, who unto the first star has brought us." It seemed to  
me a cloud encompassed us, Luminous, dense, consolidate and  
bright

As adamant on which the sun is striking.

Into itself did the eternal pearl Receive us, even as water doth  
receive A ray of light, remaining still unbroken. If I was body,  
(and we here conceive not

How one dimension tolerates another, Which needs must be if  
body enter body,) More the desire should be enkindled in us  
That essence to behold, wherein is seen How God and our own  
nature were united. There will be seen what we receive by faith,  
Not demonstrated, but self-evident

In guise of the first truth that man believes.

I made reply: "Madonna, as devoutly As most I can do I give  
thanks to Him

Who has removed me from the mortal world.



But tell me what the dusky spots may be Upon this body, which  
below on earth

Make people tell that fabulous tale of Cain?" Somewhat she  
smiled; and then, "If the opinion Of mortals be erroneous," she  
said,

"Where'er the key of sense doth not unlock, Certes, the shafts of  
wonder should not pierce thee Now, forasmuch as, following the  
senses,

Thou seest that the reason has short wings. But tell me what  
thou think'st of it thyself." And I: "What seems to us up here  
diverse,

Is caused, I think, by bodies rare and dense." And she: "Right  
truly shalt thou see immersed In error thy belief, if well thou  
hearest

The argument that I shall make against it.

Lights many the eighth sphere displays to you Which in their  
quality and quantity

May noted be of aspects different.

If this were caused by rare and dense alone,

One only virtue would there be in all Or more or less diffused, or  
equally.

Virtues diverse must be perforce the fruits Of formal principles;  
and these, save one,

Of course would by thy reasoning be destroyed.

Besides, if rarity were of this dimness

The cause thou askest, either through and through This planet  
thus attenuate were of matter,

Or else, as in a body is apportioned The fat and lean, so in like  
manner this

Would in its volume interchange the leaves.

Were it the former, in the sun's eclipse

It would be manifest by the shining through Of light, as through  
aught tenuous interfused. This is not so; hence we must scan the  
other, And if it chance the other I demolish,

Then falsified will thy opinion be.

But if this rarity go not through and through, There needs must  
be a limit, beyond which Its contrary prevents the further  
passing, And thence the foreign radiance is reflected, Even as a  
colour cometh back from glass, The which behind itself  
concealeth lead.

Now thou wilt say the sunbeam shows itself More dimly there  
than in the other parts,

By being there reflected farther back.

From this reply experiment will free thee If e'er thou try it, which  
is wont to be The fountain to the rivers of your arts.

Three mirrors shalt thou take, and two remove

Alike from thee, the other more remote Between the former two  
shall meet thine eyes. Turned towards these, cause that behind  
thy back

Be placed a light, illuming the three mirrors And coming back to  
thee by all reflected. Though in its quantity be not so ample  
The image most remote, there shalt thou see How it perforce is  
equally resplendent.

Now, as beneath the touches of warm rays Naked the subject of  
the snow remains Both of its former colour and its cold, Thee  
thus remaining in thy intellect, Will I inform with such a living  
light,

That it shall tremble in its aspect to thee. Within the heaven of  
the divine repose Revolves a body, in whose virtue lies The  
being of whatever it contains.

The following heaven, that has so many eyes, Divides this being  
by essences diverse, Distinguished from it, and by it contained.

The other spheres, by various differences, All the distinctions  
which they have within them

Dispose unto their ends and their effects. Thus do these organs  
of the world proceed, As thou perceivest now, from grade to  
grade; Since from above they take, and act beneath.

Observe me well, how through this place I come Unto the truth  
thou wishest, that hereafter

Thou mayst alone know how to keep the ford The power and  
motion of the holy spheres,

As from the artisan the hammer's craft, Forth from the blessed  
motors must proceed.

The heaven, which lights so manifold make fair, From the  
Intelligence profound, which turns it, The image takes, and  
makes of it a seal.

And even as the soul within your dust Through members  
different and accommodated

To faculties diverse expands itself, So likewise this Intelligence  
diffuses Its virtue multiplied among the stars.

Itself revolving on its unity.

Virtue diverse doth a diverse alloyage Make with the precious  
body that it quickens,

In which, as life in you, it is combined. From the glad nature  
whence it is derived, The mingled virtue through the body  
shines, Even as gladness through the living pupil. From this

proceeds whate'er from light to light Appeareth different, not  
from dense and rare:

This is the formal principle that produces, According to its  
goodness, dark and bright."

### Canto III

That Sun, which erst with love my bosom warmed, Of beauteous  
truth had unto me discovered,

By proving and reproof, the sweet aspect. And, that I might  
confess myself convinced And confident, so far as was befitting,  
I lifted more erect my head to speak.

But there appeared a vision, which withdrew me So close to it,  
in order to be seen,

That my confession I remembered not.

Such as through polished and transparent glass, Or waters  
crystalline and undisturbed,

But not so deep as that their bed be lost, Come back again the  
outlines of our faces So feeble, that a pearl on forehead white  
Comes not less speedily unto our eyes; Such saw I many faces  
prompt to speak, So that I ran in error opposite

To that which kindled love 'twixt man and fountain.

As soon as I became aware of them, Esteeming them as  
mirrored semblances,  
To see of whom they were, mine eyes I turned, And nothing saw,  
and once more turned them forward  
Direct into the light of my sweet Guide, Who smiling kindled in  
her holy eyes. "Marvel thou not," she said to me, "because I  
smile at this thy puerile conceit,  
Since on the truth it trusts not yet its foot, But turns thee, as 'tis  
wont, on emptiness.

True substances are these which thou beholdest, Here relegate  
for breaking of some vow.

Therefore speak with them, listen and believe; For the true light,  
which giveth peace to them, Permits them not to turn from it  
their feet." And I unto the shade that seemed most wishful To  
speak directed me, and I began,

As one whom too great eagerness bewilders:

"O well-created spirit, who in the rays Of life eternal dost the  
sweetness taste

Which being untasted ne'er is comprehended, Grateful 'twill be  
to me, if thou content me Both with thy name and with your  
destiny." Whereat she promptly and with laughing eyes: "Our  
charity doth never shut the doors Against a just desire, except  
as one

Who wills that all her court be like herself.

I was a virgin sister in the world;

And if thy mind doth contemplate me well, The being more fair  
will not conceal me from thee,

But thou shalt recognise I am Piccarda, Who, stationed here  
among these other blessed,

Myself am blessed in the slowest sphere. All our affections, that  
alone inflamed Are in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost, Rejoice at  
being of his order formed;

And this allotment, which appears so low, Therefore is given us,  
because our vows Have been neglected and in some part void."

Whence I to her: "In your miraculous aspects There shines I  
know not what of the divine,

Which doth transform you from our first conceptions.

Therefore I was not swift in my remembrance; But what thou  
tellest me now aids me so,

That the refiguring is easier to me.

But tell me, ye who in this place are happy, Are you desirous of  
a higher place,

To see more or to make yourselves more friends?"

First with those other shades she smiled a little; Thereafter  
answered me so full of gladness, She seemed to burn in the first  
fire of love: "Brother, our will is quieted by virtue

Of charity, that makes us wish alone

For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more.

If to be more exalted we aspired, Discordant would our  
aspirations be

Unto the will of Him who here secludes us; Which thou shalt see  
finds no place in these circles,

If being in charity is needful here, And if thou lookest well into  
its nature; Nay, 'tis essential to this blest existence

To keep itself within the will divine, Whereby our very wishes are  
made one; So that, as we are station above station

Throughout this realm, to all the realm 'tis pleasing, As to the  
King, who makes his will our will.

And his will is our peace; this is the sea To which is moving  
onward whatsoever It doth create, and all that nature makes."  
Then it was clear to me how everywhere In heaven is Paradise,  
although the grace

Of good supreme there rain not in one measure.

But as it comes to pass, if one food sates, And for another still  
remains the longing, We ask for this, and that decline with  
thanks, E'en thus did I; with gesture and with word, To learn



from her what was the web wherein She did not ply the shuttle  
to the end.

"A perfect life and merit high in-heaven A lady o'er us," said she,  
"by whose rule

Down in your world they vest and veil themselves, That until  
death they may both watch and sleep Beside that Spouse who  
every vow accepts

Which charity conformeth to his pleasure. To follow her, in  
girlhood from the world I fled, and in her habit shut myself,

And pledged me to the pathway of her sect.

Then men accustomed unto evil more Than unto good, from the  
sweet cloister tore me;

God knows what afterward my life became. This other  
splendour, which to thee reveals Itself on my right side, and is  
enkindled With all the illumination of our sphere, What of myself  
I say applies to her;

A nun was she, and likewise from her head Was ta'en the  
shadow of the sacred wimple. But when she too was to the  
world returned Against her wishes and against good usage, Of  
the heart's veil she never was divested.

Of great Costanza this is the effulgence, Who from the second  
wind of Suabia Brought forth the third and latest puissance."

Thus unto me she spake, and then began "Ave Maria" singing,  
and in singing

Vanished, as through deep water something heavy.

My sight, that followed her as long a time As it was possible,  
when it had lost her Turned round unto the mark of more desire,

And wholly unto Beatrice reverted;

But she such lightnings flashed into mine eyes, That at the first  
my sight endured it not;

And this in questioning more backward made me.

#### Canto IV

Between two viands, equally removed And tempting, a free man  
would die of hunger

Ere either he could bring unto his teeth. So would a lamb  
between the ravenings

Of two fierce wolves stand fearing both alike; And so would  
stand a dog between two does. Hence, if I held my peace,  
myself I blame not, Impelled in equal measure by my doubts,  
Since it must be so, nor do I commend.

I held my peace; but my desire was painted Upon my face, and  
questioning with that More fervent far than by articulate  
speech.

Beatrice did as Daniel had done Relieving Nebuchadnezzar  
from the wrath Which rendered him unjustly merciless, And said:  
"Well see I how attracteth thee One and the other wish, so that  
thy care Binds itself so that forth it does not breathe.

Thou arguest, if good will be permanent, The violence of others,  
for what reason Doth it decrease the measure of my merit?

Again for doubting furnish thee occasion Souls seeming to  
return unto the stars,

According to the sentiment of Plato.

These are the questions which upon thy wish Are thrusting  
equally; and therefore first Will I treat that which hath the most  
of gall.

He of the Seraphim most absorbed in God, Moses, and Samuel,  
and whichever John Thou mayst select, I say, and even Mary,  
Have not in any other heaven their seats,

Than have those spirits that just appeared to thee, Nor of  
existence more or fewer years;

But all make beautiful the primal circle, And have sweet life in  
different degrees, By feeling more or less the eternal breath.

They showed themselves here, not because allotted This sphere  
has been to them, but to give sign

Of the celestial which is least exalted. To speak thus is adapted  
to your mind,

Since only through the sense it apprehendeth What then it  
worthy makes of intellect.

On this account the Scripture condescends Unto your faculties,  
and feet and hands

To God attributes, and means something else; And Holy Church  
under an aspect human Gabriel and Michael represent to you,

And him who made Tobias whole again. That which Timæus  
argues of the soul Doth not resemble that which here is seen,

Because it seems that as he speaks he thinks.

He says the soul unto its star returns, Believing it to have been  
severed thence

Whenever nature gave it as a form. Perhaps his doctrine is of  
other guise

Than the words sound, and possibly may be With meaning that  
is not to be derided.

If he doth mean that to these wheels return The honour of their  
influence and the blame, Perhaps his bow doth hit upon some

truth. This principle ill understood once warped The whole world  
nearly, till it went astray Invoking Jove and Mercury and Mars.

The other doubt which doth disquiet thee Less venom has, for  
its malevolence

Could never lead thee elsewhere from me.

That as unjust our justice should appear In eyes of mortals, is  
an argument Of faith, and not of sin heretical.

But still, that your perception may be able To thoroughly  
penetrate this verity,

As thou desirest, I will satisfy thee. If it be violence when he who  
suffers

Co-operates not with him who uses force, These souls were not  
on that account excused; For will is never quenched unless it  
will,

But operates as nature doth in fire If violence a thousand times  
distort it.

Hence, if it yieldeth more or less, it seconds The force; and these  
have done so, having power

Of turning back unto the holy place.

If their will had been perfect, like to that Which Lawrence fast  
upon his gridiron held,

And Mutius made severe to his own hand, It would have urged  
them back along the road

Whence they were dragged, as soon as they were free; But such  
a solid will is all too rare.

And by these words, if thou hast gathered them As thou  
shouldst do, the argument is refuted That would have still  
annoyed thee many times.

But now another passage runs across Before thine eyes, and  
such that by thyself

Thou couldst not thread it ere thou wouldst be weary.

I have for certain put into thy mind That soul beatified could  
never lie, For it is near the primal Truth,

And then thou from Piccarda might'st have heard Costanza  
kept affection for the veil,

So that she seemeth here to contradict me. Many times, brother,  
has it come to pass, That, to escape from peril, with reluctance  
That has been done it was not right to do, E'en as Alcmaeon  
(who, being by his father Thereto entreated, his own mother  
slew) Not to lose pity pitiless became.

At this point I desire thee to remember

That force with will commingles, and they cause That the  
offences cannot be excused.

Will absolute consenteth not to evil; But in so far consenteth as  
it fears, If it refrain, to fall into more harm.

Hence when Piccarda uses this expression, She meaneth the will  
absolute, and I

The other, so that both of us speak truth." Such was the flowing  
of the holy river

That issued from the fount whence springs all truth; This put to  
rest my wishes one and all.

"O love of the first lover, O divine," Said I forthwith, "whose  
speech inundates me

And warms me so, it more and more revives me, My own  
affection is not so profound

As to suffice in rendering grace for grace; Let Him, who sees  
and can, thereto respond.

Well I perceive that never sated is Our intellect unless the Truth  
illumine it,

Beyond which nothing true expands itself. It rests therein, as  
wild beast in his lair, When it attains it; and it can attain it;

If not, then each desire would frustrate be. Therefore springs  
up, in fashion of a shoot, Doubt at the foot of truth; and this is  
nature, Which to the top from height to height impels us.

This doth invite me, this assurance give me With reverence,  
Lady, to inquire of you Another truth, which is obscure to me.

I wish to know if man can satisfy you For broken vows with  
other good deeds, so That in your balance they will not be light."

Beatrice gazed upon me with her eyes Full of the sparks of love,  
and so divine,

That, overcome my power, I turned my back And almost lost  
myself with eyes downcast.

### Canto V

"If in the heat of love I flame upon thee Beyond the measure  
that on earth is seen, So that the valour of thine eyes I  
vanquish, Marvel thou not thereat; for this proceeds From  
perfect sight, which as it apprehends To the good apprehended  
moves its feet.

Well I perceive how is already shining Into thine intellect the  
eternal light, That only seen enkindles always love;

And if some other thing your love seduce, 'Tis nothing but a  
vestige of the same,

Ill understood, which there is shining through. Thou fain wouldst  
know if with another service For broken vow can such return be  
made



As to secure the soul from further claim." This Canto thus did  
Beatrice begin;

And, as a man who breaks not off his speech, Continued thus  
her holy argument:

"The greatest gift that in his largess God Creating made, and  
unto his own goodness Nearest conformed, and that which he  
doth prize Most highly, is the freedom of the will, Wherewith the  
creatures of intelligence

Both all and only were and are endowed. Now wilt thou see, if  
thence thou reasonest, The high worth of a vow, if it he made

So that when thou consentest God consents: For, closing  
between God and man the compact,

A sacrifice is of this treasure made, Such as I say, and made by  
its own act.

What can be rendered then as compensation?

Think'st thou to make good use of what thou'st offered, With  
gains ill gotten thou wouldst do good deed.

Now art thou certain of the greater point; But because Holy  
Church in this dispenses,

Which seems against the truth which I have shown thee,  
Behoves thee still to sit awhile at table,

Because the solid food which thou hast taken Requireth further  
aid for thy digestion.

Open thy mind to that which I reveal, And fix it there within; for  
'tis not knowledge,

The having heard without retaining it. In the essence of this  
sacrifice two things

Convene together; and the one is that

Of which 'tis made, the other is the agreement.

This last for evermore is cancelled not Unless complied with,  
and concerning this With such precision has above been spoken.

Therefore it was enjoined upon the Hebrews

To offer still, though sometimes what was offered Might be  
commuted, as thou ought'st to know. The other, which is known  
to thee as matter,

May well indeed be such that one errs not If it for other matter  
be exchanged.

But let none shift the burden on his shoulder At his arbitrament,  
without the turning Both of the white and of the yellow key; And  
every permutation deem as foolish,

If in the substitute the thing relinquished, As the four is in six, be  
not contained.

Therefore whatever thing has so great weight In value that it  
drags down every balance, Cannot be satisfied with other  
spending.

Let mortals never take a vow in jest; Be faithful and not blind in  
doing that, As Jephthah was in his first offering,

Whom more beseemed to say, 'I have done wrong, Than to do  
worse by keeping; and as foolish Thou the great leader of the  
Greeks wilt find,

Whence wept Iphigenia her fair face, And made for her both  
wise and simple weep, Who heard such kind of worship spoken  
of.'

Christians, be ye more serious in your movements; Be ye not like  
a feather at each wind,

And think not every water washes you. Ye have the Old and the  
New Testament,

And the Pastor of the Church who guideth you Let this suffice  
you unto your salvation.

If evil appetite cry aught else to you, Be ye as men, and not as  
silly sheep,

So that the Jew among you may not mock you.

Be ye not as the lamb that doth abandon Its mother's milk, and  
frolicsome and simple

Combats at its own pleasure with itself." Thus Beatrice to me  
even as I write it; Then all desireful turned herself again  
To that part where the world is most alive. Her silence and her  
change of countenance

Silence imposed upon my eager mind, That had already in  
advance new questions;  
And as an arrow that upon the mark Strikes ere the bowstring  
quiet hath become,  
So did we speed into the second realm.

My Lady there so joyful I beheld,  
As into the brightness of that heaven she entered, More  
luminous thereat the planet grew;  
And if the star itself was changed and smiled, What became I,  
who by my nature am Exceeding mutable in every guise!  
As, in a fish-pond which is pure and tranquil, The fishes draw to  
that which from without

Comes in such fashion that their food they deem it; So I beheld  
more than a thousand splendours Drawing towards us, and in  
each was heard: "Lo, this is she who shall increase our love."

And as each one was coming unto us, Full of beatitude the  
shade was seen,

By the effulgence clear that issued from it. Think, Reader, if  
what here is just beginning

No farther should proceed, how thou wouldst have An agonizing  
need of knowing more;

And of thyself thou'lt see how I from these Was in desire of  
hearing their conditions, As they unto mine eyes were manifest.

"O thou well-born, unto whom Grace concedes To see the  
thrones of the eternal triumph,

Or ever yet the warfare be abandoned

With light that through the whole of heaven is spread

Kindled are we, and hence if thou desirest To know of us, at  
thine own pleasure sate thee."

Thus by some one among those holy spirits Was spoken, and by  
Beatrice: "Speak, speak Securely, and believe them even as  
Gods." "Well I perceive how thou dost nest thyself

In thine own light, and drawest it from thine eyes, Because they  
coruscate when thou dost smile, But know not who thou art, nor  
why thou hast, Spirit august, thy station in the sphere

That veils itself to men in alien rays." This said I in direction of  
the light

Which first had spoken to me; whence it became By far more  
lucent than it was before.

Even as the sun, that doth conceal himself By too much light,  
when heat has worn away The tempering influence of the  
vapours dense,  
By greater rapture thus concealed itself In its own radiance the  
figure saintly,  
And thus close, close enfolded answered me In fashion as the  
following Canto sings.

### Canto VI

"After that Constantine the eagle turned Against the course of  
heaven, which it had followed  
Behind the ancient who Lavinia took, Two hundred years and  
more the bird of God  
In the extreme of Europe held itself, Near to the mountains  
whence it issued first;

And under shadow of the sacred plumes  
It governed there the world from hand to hand, And, changing  
thus, upon mine own alighted.  
Caesar I was, and am Justinian, Who, by the will of primal Love  
I feel,

Took from the laws the useless and redundant; And ere unto the  
work I was attent,

One nature to exist in Christ, not more, Believed, and with such  
faith was I contented.

But blessed Agapetus, he who was The supreme pastor, to the  
faith sincere Pointed me out the way by words of his. Him I  
believed, and what was his assertion

I now see clearly, even as thou seest Each contradiction to be  
false and true.

As soon as with the Church I moved my feet, God in his grace it  
pleased with this high task To inspire me, and I gave me wholly  
to it, And to my Belisarius I commended

The arms, to which was heaven's right hand so joined It was a  
signal that I should repose.

Now here to the first question terminates My answer; but the  
character thereof Constrains me to continue with a sequel,

In order that thou see with how great reason Men move against  
the standard sacrosanct, Both who appropriate and who  
oppose it. Behold how great a power has made it worthy Of  
reverence, beginning from the hour

When Pallas died to give it sovereignty.

Thou knowest it made in Alba its abode Three hundred years  
and upward, till at last The three to three fought for it yet again.

Thou knowest what it achieved from Sabine wrong Down to  
Lucretia's sorrow, in seven kings O'ercoming round about the  
neighboring nations; Thou knowest what it achieved, borne by  
the Romans Illustrious against Brennus, against Pyrrhus,

Against the other princes and confederates.

Torquatus thence and Quinctius, who from locks Unkempt was  
named, Decii and Fabii, Received the fame I willingly embalm;

It struck to earth the pride of the Arabians, Who, following  
Hannibal, had passed across The Alpine ridges, Po, from which  
thou glidest; Beneath it triumphed while they yet were young  
Pompey and Scipio, and to the hill

Beneath which thou wast born it bitter seemed; Then, near unto  
the time when heaven had willed To bring the whole world to its  
mood serene,

Did Caesar by the will of Rome assume it. What it achieved from  
Var unto the Rhine, Isere beheld and Saone, beheld the Seine,  
And every valley whence the Rhone is filled; What it achieved  
when it had left Ravenna, And leaped the Rubicon, was such a  
flight That neither tongue nor pen could follow it.

Round towards Spain it wheeled its legions; then Towards  
Durazzo, and Pharsalia smote That to the calid Nile was felt the  
pain.



Antandros and the Simois, whence it started, It saw again, and  
there where Hector lies, And ill for Ptolemy then roused itself.

From thence it came like lightning upon Juba; Then wheeled  
itself again into your West, Where the Pompeian clarion it  
heard.

From what it wrought with the next standard-bearer Brutus and  
Cassius howl in Hell together,

And Modena and Perugia dolent were; Still doth the mournful  
Cleopatra weep

Because thereof, who, fleeing from before it, Took from the  
adder sudden and black death. With him it ran even to the Red  
Sea shore; With him it placed the world in so great peace, That  
unto Janus was his temple closed.

But what the standard that has made me speak Achieved  
before, and after should achieve Throughout the mortal realm  
that lies beneath it, Becometh in appearance mean and dim,  
If in the hand of the third Caesar seen With eye unclouded and  
affection pure, Because the living Justice that inspires me  
Granted it, in the hand of him I speak of,

The glory of doing vengeance for its wrath.

Now here attend to what I answer thee; Later it ran with Titus to  
do vengeance Upon the vengeance of the ancient sin.

And when the tooth of Lombardy had bitten The Holy Church,  
then underneath its wings Did Charlemagne victorious succor  
her.

Now hast thou power to judge of such as those Whom I  
accused above, and of their crimes, Which are the cause of all  
your miseries.

To the public standard one the yellow lilies Opposes, the other  
claims it for a party,

So that 'tis hard to see which sins the most. Let, let the  
Ghibellines ply their handicraft Beneath some other standard;  
for this ever Ill follows he who it and justice parts.

And let not this new Charles e'er strike it down, He and his  
Guelfs, but let him fear the talons That from a nobler lion  
stripped the fell.

Already oftentimes the sons have wept The father's crime; and  
let him not believe

That God will change His scutcheon for the lilies.

This little planet doth adorn itself With the good spirits that  
have active been,

That fame and honour might come after them; And whensoever  
the desires mount thither, Thus deviating, must perforce the  
rays

Of the true love less vividly mount upward.

But in commensuration of our wages With our desert is portion  
of our joy,

Because we see them neither less nor greater.

Herein doth living Justice sweeten so Affection in us, that for  
evermore

It cannot warp to any iniquity.

Voices diverse make up sweet melodies; So in this life of ours  
the seats diverse

Render sweet harmony among these spheres;

And in the compass of this present pearl Shineth the sheen of  
Romeo, of whom

The grand and beauteous work was ill rewarded. But the  
Provincals who against him wrought, They have not laughed,  
and therefore ill goes he Who makes his hurt of the good deeds  
of others. Four daughters, and each one of them a queen, Had  
Raymond Berenger, and this for him

Did Romeo, a poor man and a pilgrim; And then malicious  
words incited him To summon to a reckoning this just man,  
Who rendered to him seven and five for ten. Then he departed  
poor and stricken in years, And if the world could know the  
heart he had, In begging bit by bit his livelihood,

Though much it laud him, it would laud him more."

## Canto VII

"Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth, Superillustrans claritate tua  
Felices ignes horum malahoth!"

In this wise, to his melody returning, This substance, upon which  
a double light

Doubles itself, was seen by me to sing, And to their dance this  
and the others moved, And in the manner of swift-hurrying  
sparks

Veiled themselves from me with a sudden distance.

Doubting was I, and saying, "Tell her, tell her," Within me, "tell  
her," saying, "tell my Lady,"

Who slakes my thirst with her sweet effluences; And yet that  
reverence which doth lord it over The whole of me only by B and  
ICE,

Bowed me again like unto one who drowns.

Short while did Beatrice endure me thus; And she began,  
lighting me with a smile Such as would make one happy in the  
fire: "According to infallible advisement,

After what manner a just vengeance justly Could be avenged  
has put thee upon thinking, But I will speedily thy mind unloose;  
And do thou listen, for these words of mine Of a great doctrine  
will a present make thee.

By not enduring on the power that wills Curb for his good, that  
man who ne'er was born,

Damning himself damned all his progeny; Whereby the human  
species down below Lay sick for many centuries in great error,  
Till to descend it pleased the Word of God

To where the nature, which from its own Maker Estranged itself,  
he joined to him in person

By the sole act of his eternal love.

Now unto what is said direct thy sight; This nature when united  
to its Maker, Such as created, was sincere and good; But by  
itself alone was banished forth From Paradise, because it  
turned aside Out of the way of truth and of its life. Therefore the  
penalty the cross held out, If measured by the nature thus  
assumed,

None ever yet with so great justice stung, And none was ever of  
so great injustice,

Considering who the Person was that suffered, Within whom  
such a nature was contracted. From one act therefore issued  
things diverse; To God and to the Jews one death was pleasing;

Earth trembled at it and the Heaven was opened.

It should no longer now seem difficult To thee, when it is said  
that a just vengeance

By a just court was afterward avenged. But now do I behold thy  
mind entangled

From thought to thought within a knot, from which With great  
desire it waits to free itself.

Thou sayest, 'Well discern I what I hear; But it is hidden from  
me why God willed For our redemption only this one mode.'  
Buried remaineth, brother, this decree Unto the eyes of every  
one whose nature Is in the flame of love not yet adult.

Verily, inasmuch as at this mark One gazes long and little is  
discerned,

Wherefore this mode was worthiest will I say. Goodness Divine,  
which from itself doth spurn All envy, burning in itself so  
sparkles

That the eternal beauties it unfolds. Whate'er from this  
immediately distils Has afterwards no end, for ne'er removed Is  
its impression when it sets its seal.

Whate'er from this immediately rains down Is wholly free,  
because it is not subject

Unto the influences of novel things.

The more conformed thereto, the more it pleases; For the blest  
ardour that irradiates all things

In that most like itself is most vivacious.

With all of these things has advantaged been The human  
creature; and if one be wanting, From his nobility he needs must  
fall.

'Tis sin alone which doth disfranchise him, And render him unlike  
the Good Supreme, So that he little with its light is blanched,  
And to his dignity no more returns,

Unless he fill up where transgression empties With righteous  
pains for criminal delights.

Your nature when it sinned so utterly In its own seed, out of  
these dignities Even as out of Paradise was driven, Nor could  
itself recover, if thou notest With nicest subtilty, by any way,

Except by passing one of these two fords: Either that God  
through clemency alone Had pardon granted, or that man  
himself Had satisfaction for his folly made.

Fix now thine eye deep into the abyss Of the eternal counsel, to  
my speech As far as may be fastened steadfastly! Man in his  
limitations had not power To satisfy, not having power to sink  
In his humility obeying then,

Far as he disobeying thought to rise; And for this reason man  
has been from power

Of satisfying by himself excluded.

Therefore it God behoved in his own ways Man to restore unto  
his perfect life,

I say in one, or else in both of them. But since the action of the  
doer is

So much more grateful, as it more presents The goodness of the  
heart from which it issues, Goodness Divine, that doth imprint  
the world, Has been contented to proceed by each

And all its ways to lift you up again; Nor 'twixt the first day and  
the final night Such high and such magnificent proceeding

By one or by the other was or shall be; For God more bounteous  
was himself to give

To make man able to uplift himself, Than if he only of himself  
had pardoned; And all the other modes were insufficient For  
justice, were it not the Son of God

Himself had humbled to become incarnate.

Now, to fill fully each desire of thine, Return I to elucidate one  
place,

In order that thou there mayst see as I do. Thou sayst: 'I see the  
air, I see the fire,

The water, and the earth, and all their mixtures Come to  
corruption, and short while endure; And these things



notwithstanding were created;' Therefore if that which I have  
said were true,

They should have been secure against corruption.

The Angels, brother, and the land sincere In which thou art,  
created may be called

Just as they are in their entire existence; But all the elements  
which thou hast named,

And all those things which out of them are made, By a created  
virtue are informed.

Created was the matter which they have; Created was the  
informing influence

Within these stars that round about them go.

The soul of every brute and of the plants By its potential  
temperament attracts The ray and motion of the holy lights; But  
your own life immediately inspires Supreme Beneficence, and  
enamours it So with herself, it evermore desires her.

And thou from this mayst argue furthermore Your resurrection,  
if thou think again

How human flesh was fashioned at that time When the first  
parents both of them were made."

## Canto VIII

The world used in its peril to believe That the fair Cypria  
delirious love Rayed out, in the third epicycle turning;  
Wherefore not only unto her paid honour Of sacrifices and of  
votive cry

The ancient nations in the ancient error, But both Dione  
honoured they and Cupid, That as her mother, this one as her  
son, And said that he had sat in Dido's lap;  
And they from her, whence I beginning take,

Took the denomination of the star

That woos the sun, now following, now in front.

I was not ware of our ascending to it; But of our being in it gave  
full faith

My Lady whom I saw more beauteous grow.

And as within a flame a spark is seen, And as within a voice a  
voice discerned,

When one is steadfast, and one comes and goes, Within that  
light beheld I other lamps

Move in a circle, speeding more and less, Methinks in measure  
of their inward vision. From a cold cloud descended never  
winds, Or visible or not, so rapidly

They would not laggard and impeded seem To any one who had  
those lights divine Seen come towards us, leaving the gyration  
Begun at first in the high Seraphim.

And behind those that most in front appeared Sounded  
"Osanna!" so that never since  
To hear again was I without desire.

Then unto us more nearly one approached, And it alone began:  
"We all are ready Unto thy pleasure, that thou joy in us.

We turn around with the celestial Princes, One gyre and one  
gyration and one thirst, To whom thou in the world of old didst  
say,

'Ye who, intelligent, the third heaven are moving;' And are so full  
of love, to pleasure thee

A little quiet will not be less sweet."

After these eyes of mine themselves had offered

Unto my Lady reverently, and she Content and certain of herself  
had made them,

Back to the light they turned, which so great promise Made of  
itself, and "Say, who art thou?" was

My voice, imprinted with a great affection.

O how and how much I beheld it grow With the new joy that  
superadded was Unto its joys, as soon as I had spoken!

Thus changed, it said to me: "The world possessed me Short  
time below; and, if it had been more,

Much evil will be which would not have been. My gladness  
keepeth me concealed from thee, Which rayeth round about  
me, and doth hide me Like as a creature swathed in its own silk.

Much didst thou love me, and thou hadst good reason; For had  
I been below, I should have shown thee Somewhat beyond the  
foliage of my love.

That left-hand margin, which doth bathe itself In Rhone, when it  
is mingled with the Sorgue, Me for its lord awaited in due time,  
And that horn of Ausonia, which is town'd With Bari, with Gaeta  
and Catona,

Whence Tronto and Verde in the sea disgorge.

Already flashed upon my brow the crown Of that dominion  
which the Danube waters After the German borders it  
abandons; And beautiful Trinacria, that is murky 'Twixt Pachino  
and Peloro, (on the gulf

Which greatest scath from Eurus doth receive,) Not through  
Typhoeus, but through nascent sulphur,

Would have awaited her own monarchs still, Through me from  
Charles descended and from Rudolph,

If evil lordship, that exasperates ever The subject populations,  
had not moved Palermo to the outcry of 'Death! death!' And if  
my brother could but this foresee, The greedy poverty of  
Catalonia

Straight would he flee, that it might not molest him; For verily  
'tis needful to provide,  
Through him or other, so that on his bark Already freighted no  
more freight be placed.

His nature, which from liberal covetous Descended, such a  
soldiery would need

As should not care for hoarding in a chest." "Because I do  
believe the lofty joy

Thy speech infuses into me, my Lord, Where every good thing  
doth begin and end Thou seest as I see it, the more grateful  
Is it to me; and this too hold I dear, That gazing upon God thou  
dost discern it.

Glad hast thou made me; so make clear to me, Since speaking  
thou hast stirred me up to doubt, How from sweet seed can  
bitter issue forth." This I to him; and he to me: "If I

Can show to thee a truth, to what thou askest Thy face thou'lt  
hold as thou dost hold thy back. The Good which all the realm  
thou art ascending Turns and contents, maketh its providence

To be a power within these bodies vast; And not alone the  
natures are foreseen

Within the mind that in itself is perfect, But they together with  
their preservation. For whatsoever thing this bow shoots forth  
Falls foreordained unto an end foreseen, Even as a shaft  
directed to its mark.

If that were not, the heaven which thou dost walk Would in such  
manner its effects produce, That they no longer would be arts,  
but ruins.

This cannot be, if the Intelligences  
That keep these stars in motion are not maimed, And maimed  
the First that has not made them perfect.

Wilt thou this truth have clearer made to thee?" And I: "Not so;  
for 'tis impossible

That nature tire, I see, in what is needful." Whence he again:  
"Now say, would it be worse For men on earth were they not  
citizens?" "Yes," I replied; "and here I ask no reason." "And can  
they be so, if below they live not Diversely unto offices diverse?

No, if your master writeth well for you." So came he with  
deductions to this point; Then he concluded: "Therefore it  
behoves The roots of your effects to be diverse.

Hence one is Solon born, another Xerxes, Another Melchisedec,  
and another he

Who, flying through the air, his son did lose.

Revolving Nature, which a signet is To mortal wax, doth practise  
well her art, But not one inn distinguish from another;

Thence happens it that Esau differeth

In seed from Jacob; and Quirinus comes From sire so vile that  
he is given to Mars.

A generated nature its own way Would always make like its  
progenitors, If Providence divine were not triumphant.

Now that which was behind thee is before thee; But that thou  
know that I with thee am pleased, With a corollary will I mantle  
thee.

Evermore nature, if it fortune find Discordant to it, like each  
other seed Out of its region, maketh evil thrift;

And if the world below would fix its mind On the foundation  
which is laid by nature, Pursuing that, 'twould have the people  
good.

But you unto religion wrench aside

Him who was born to gird him with the sword, And make a king  
of him who is for sermons; Therefore your footsteps wander  
from the road."

Canto IX

Beautiful Clemence, after that thy Charles Had me enlightened,  
he narrated to me The treacheries his seed should undergo;  
But said: "Be still and let the years roll round;" So I can only say,  
that lamentation

Legitimate shall follow on your wrongs. And of that holy light  
the life already Had to the Sun which fills it turned again,  
As to that good which for each thing sufficeth.

Ah, souls deceived, and creatures impious, Who from such good  
do turn away your hearts, Directing upon vanity your foreheads!

And now, behold, another of those splendours Approached me,  
and its will to pleasure me

It signified by brightening outwardly. The eyes of Beatrice, that  
fastened were Upon me, as before, of dear assent

To my desire assurance gave to me. "Ah, bring swift  
compensation to my wish,

Thou blessed spirit," I said, "and give me proof That what I  
think in thee I can reflect!" Whereat the light, that still was new  
to me,

Out of its depths, whence it before was singing, As one  
delighted to do good, continued: "Within that region of the land  
depraved

Of Italy, that lies between Rialto



And fountain-heads of Brenta and of Piava, Rises a hill, and  
mounts not very high, Wherefrom descended formerly a torch  
That made upon that region great assault. Out of one root were  
born both I and it; Cunizza was I called, and here I shine

Because the splendour of this star o'ercame me.

But gladly to myself the cause I pardon Of my allotment, and it  
does not grieve me;

Which would perhaps seem strong unto your vulgar.

Of this so luculent and precious jewel, Which of our heaven is  
nearest unto me, Great fame remained; and ere it die away

This hundredth year shall yet quintupled be.

See if man ought to make him excellent, So that another life the  
first may leave! And thus thinks not the present multitude Shut  
in by Adige and Tagliamento,

Nor yet for being scourged is penitent. But soon 'twill be that  
Padua in the marsh Will change the water that Vicenza bathes,  
Because the folk are stubborn against duty;

And where the Sile and Cagnano join One lordeth it, and goes  
with lofty head,

For catching whom e'en now the net is making.

Feltro moreover of her impious pastor

Shall weep the crime, which shall so monstrous be That for the  
like none ever entered Malta.

Ample exceedingly would be the vat That of the Ferrarese could  
hold the blood,

And weary who should weigh it ounce by ounce, Of which this  
courteous priest shall make a gift To show himself a partisan;  
and such gifts

Will to the living of the land conform.

Above us there are mirrors, Thrones you call them, From which  
shines out on us God Judicant,

So that this utterance seems good to us." Here it was silent, and  
it had the semblance Of being turned elsewhither, by the wheel  
On which it entered as it was before.

The other joy, already known to me, Became a thing  
transplendent in my sight, As a fine ruby smitten by the sun.

Through joy effulgence is acquired above, As here a smile; but  
down below, the shade Outwardly darkens, as the mind is sad.

"God seeth all things, and in Him, blest spirit, Thy sight is," said  
I, "so that never will

Of his can possibly from thee be hidden; Thy voice, then, that  
for ever makes the heavens

Glad, with the singing of those holy fires Which of their six wings  
make themselves a cowl,

Wherefore does it not satisfy my longings? Indeed, I would not  
wait thy questioning

If I in thee were as thou art in me." "The greatest of the valleys  
where the water Expands itself," forthwith its words began,

"That sea excepted which the earth engarlands, Between  
discordant shores against the sun Extends so far, that it  
meridian makes

Where it was wont before to make the horizon.

I was a dweller on that valley's shore 'Twixt Ebro and Magra  
that with journey short

Doth from the Tuscan part the Genoese.

With the same sunset and same sunrise nearly Sit Buggia and  
the city whence I was,

That with its blood once made the harbour hot.

Folco that people called me unto whom

My name was known; and now with me this heaven Imprints  
itself, as I did once with it;

For more the daughter of Belus never burned, Offending both  
Sichaeus and Creusa, Than I, so long as it became my locks,

Nor yet that Rodophean, who deluded was by Demophoon, nor  
yet Alcides, When Iole he in his heart had locked. Yet here is no  
repenting, but we smile,

Not at the fault, which comes not back to mind, But at the  
power which ordered and foresaw.

Here we behold the art that doth adorn With such affection, and  
the good discover Whereby the world above turns that below.

But that thou wholly satisfied mayst bear

Thy wishes hence which in this sphere are born, Still farther to  
proceed behoveth me.

Thou fain wouldst know who is within this light That here beside  
me thus is scintillating, Even as a sunbeam in the limpid water.

Then know thou, that within there is at rest Rahab, and being to  
our order joined,

With her in its supremest grade 'tis sealed.

Into this heaven, where ends the shadowy cone Cast by your  
world, before all other souls First of Christ's triumph was she  
taken up.

Full meet it was to leave her in some heaven, Even as a palm of  
the high victory

Which he acquired with one palm and the other, Because she  
favoured the first glorious deed

Of Joshua upon the Holy Land, That little stirs the memory of  
the Pope. Thy city, which an offshoot is of him  
Who first upon his Maker turned his back, And whose ambition  
is so sorely wept,

Brings forth and scatters the accursed flower Which both the  
sheep and lambs hath led astray Since it has turned the  
shepherd to a wolf.

For this the Evangel and the mighty Doctors Are derelict, and  
only the Decretals

So studied that it shows upon their margins.

On this are Pope and Cardinals intent; Their meditations reach  
not Nazareth, There where his pinions Gabriel unfolded; But  
Vatican and the other parts elect

Of Rome, which have a cemetery been Unto the soldiery that  
followed Peter Shall soon be free from this adultery."

## Canto X

Looking into his Son with all the Love Which each of them  
eternally breathes forth, The Primal and unutterable Power

Whate'er before the mind or eye revolves With so much order  
made, there can be none Who this beholds without enjoying  
Him.

Lift up then, Reader, to the lofty wheels With me thy vision  
straight unto that part Where the one motion on the other  
strikes, And there begin to contemplate with joy That Master's  
art, who in himself so loves it That never doth his eye depart  
therefrom.

Behold how from that point goes branching off The oblique  
circle, which conveys the planets,

To satisfy the world that calls upon them; And if their pathway  
were not thus inflected, Much virtue in the heavens would be in  
vain, And almost every power below here dead.

If from the straight line distant more or less Were the departure,  
much would wanting be Above and underneath of mundane  
order. Remain now, Reader, still upon thy bench, In thought  
pursuing that which is foretasted, If thou wouldst jocund be  
instead of weary. I've set before thee; henceforth feed thyself,  
For to itself diverteth all my care

That theme whereof I have been made the scribe.

The greatest of the ministers of nature,  
Who with the power of heaven the world imprints And measures  
with his light the time for us, With that part which above is

called to mind Conjoined, along the spirals was revolving, Where  
each time earlier he presents himself;

And I was with him; but of the ascending I was not conscious,  
saving as a man

Of a first thought is conscious ere it come; And Beatrice, she  
who is seen to pass From good to better, and so suddenly  
That not by time her action is expressed, How lucent in herself  
must she have been! And what was in the sun, wherein I  
entered, Apparent not by colour but by light,

I, though I call on genius, art, and practice, Cannot so tell that it  
could be imagined;

Believe one can, and let him long to see it.

And if our fantasies too lowly are For altitude so great, it is no  
marvel,

Since o'er the sun was never eye could go. Such in this place  
was the fourth family Of the high Father, who forever sates it,  
Showing how he breathes forth and how begets. And Beatrice  
began: "Give thanks, give thanks Unto the Sun of Angels, who to  
this

Sensible one has raised thee by his grace!" Never was heart of  
mortal so disposed To worship, nor to give itself to God With all  
its gratitude was it so ready,

As at those words did I myself become; And all my love was so  
absorbed in Him, That in oblivion Beatrice was eclipsed. Nor this  
displeased her; but she smiled at it So that the splendour of her  
laughing eyes My single mind on many things divided. Lights  
many saw I, vivid and triumphant, Make us a centre and  
themselves a circle,

More sweet in voice than luminous in aspect.

Thus girt about the daughter of Latona We sometimes see,  
when pregnant is the air,

So that it holds the thread which makes her zone.

Within the court of Heaven, whence I return, Are many jewels  
found, so fair and precious They cannot be transported from  
the realm; And of them was the singing of those lights. Who  
takes not wings that he may fly up thither,

The tidings thence may from the dumb await! As soon as  
singing thus those burning suns

Had round about us whirled themselves three times, Like unto  
stars neighbouring the steadfast poles, Ladies they seemed, not  
from the dance released, But who stop short, in silence listening  
Till they have gathered the new melody. And within one I heard  
beginning: "When The radiance of grace, by which is kindled  
True love, and which thereafter grows by loving, Within thee  
multiplied is so resplendent



That it conducts thee upward by that stair, Where without  
reascending none descends, Who should deny the wine out of  
his vial Unto thy thirst, in liberty were not

Except as water which descends not seaward.

Fain wouldst thou know with what plants is enflowered This  
garland that encircles with delight

The Lady fair who makes thee strong for heaven.

Of the lambs was I of the holy flock Which Dominic conducteth  
by a road Where well one fattens if he strayeth not.

He who is nearest to me on the right

My brother and master was; and he Albertus Is of Cologne, I  
Thomas of Aquinum.

If thou of all the others wouldst be certain, Follow behind my  
speaking with thy sight Upward along the blessed garland  
turning. That next effulgence issues from the smile Of Gratian,  
who assisted both the courts

In such wise that it pleased in Paradise. The other which near by  
adorns our choir

That Peter was who, e'en as the poor widow, Offered his  
treasure unto Holy Church.

The fifth light, that among us is the fairest, Breathes forth from  
such a love, that all the world Below is greedy to learn tidings of  
it.

Within it is the lofty mind, where knowledge So deep was put,  
that, if the true be true, To see so much there never rose a  
second.

Thou seest next the lustre of that taper, Which in the flesh below  
looked most within The angelic nature and its ministry.

Within that other little light is smiling The advocate of the  
Christian centuries,

Out of whose rhetoric Augustine was furnished.

Now if thou trainest thy mind's eye along From light to light  
pursuant of my praise, With thirst already of the eighth thou  
waitest.

By seeing every good therein exults The sainted soul, which the  
fallacious world Makes manifest to him who listeneth well; The  
body whence 'twas hunted forth is lying

Down in Cieldauro, and from martyrdom And banishment it  
came unto this peace. See farther onward flame the burning  
breath Of Isidore, of Beda, and of Richard

Who was in contemplation more than man. This, whence to me  
returneth thy regard, The light is of a spirit unto whom

In his grave meditations death seemed slow.

It is the light eternal of Sigier,

Who, reading lectures in the Street of Straw, Did syllogize  
invidious verities." Then, as a horologe that calleth us

What time the Bride of God is rising up With matins to her  
Spouse that he may love her,

Wherein one part the other draws and urges, Ting! ting!  
resounding with so sweet a note, That swells with love the spirit  
well disposed, Thus I beheld the glorious wheel move round, And  
render voice to voice, in modulation

And sweetness that can not be comprehended, Excepting there  
where joy is made eternal.

## Canto XI

O Thou insensate care of mortal men, How inconclusive are the  
syllogisms

That make thee beat thy wings in downward flight!

One after laws and one to aphorisms Was going, and one  
following the priesthood,

And one to reign by force or sophistry, And one in theft, and one  
in state affairs, One in the pleasures of the flesh involved  
Wearied himself, one gave himself to ease; When I, from all

these things emancipate, With Beatrice above there in the  
Heavens With such exceeding glory was received! When each  
one had returned unto that point

Within the circle where it was before, It stood as in a  
candlestick a candle;

And from within the effulgence which at first Had spoken unto  
me, I heard begin

Smiling while it more luminous became: "Even as I am kindled in  
its ray,

So, looking into the Eternal Light, The occasion of thy thoughts I  
apprehend.

Thou doubttest, and wouldst have me to resift In language so  
extended and so open

My speech, that to thy sense it may be plain, Where just before  
I said, 'where well one fattens,' And where I said, 'there never  
rose a second;' And here 'tis needful we distinguish well.

The Providence, which governeth the world With counsel,  
wherein all created vision

Is vanquished ere it reach unto the bottom, (So that towards  
her own Beloved might go The bride of Him who, uttering a loud  
cry, Espoused her with his consecrated blood, Self-confident  
and unto Him more faithful,) Two Princes did ordain in her  
behoof,

Which on this side and that might be her guide.

The one was all seraphical in ardour; The other by his wisdom  
upon earth A splendour was of light cherubical.

One will I speak of, for of both is spoken In praising one,  
whichever may be taken, Because unto one end their labours  
were. Between Tupino and the stream that falls

Down from the hill elect of blessed Ubald, A fertile slope of lofty  
mountain hangs, From which Perugia feels the cold and heat  
Through Porta Sole, and behind it weep Gualdo and Nocera  
their grievous yoke.

From out that slope, there where it breaketh most Its steepness,  
rose upon the world a sun

As this one does sometimes from out the Ganges; Therefore let  
him who speaketh of that place, Say not Ascési, for he would  
say little,

But Orient, if he properly would speak. He was not yet far  
distant from his rising Before he had begun to make the earth  
Some comfort from his mighty virtue feel. For he in youth his  
father's wrath incurred For certain Dame, to whom, as unto  
death, The gate of pleasure no one doth unlock;

And was before his spiritual court

'Et coram patre' unto her united;

Then day by day more fervently he loved her. She, reft of her  
first husband, scorned, obscure, One thousand and one hundred  
years and more, Waited without a suitor till he came.

Naught it availed to hear, that with Amyclas Found her  
unmoved at sounding of his voice He who struck terror into all  
the world;

Naught it availed being constant and undaunted, So that, when  
Mary still remained below,

She mounted up with Christ upon the cross.

But that too darkly I may not proceed,

Francis and Poverty for these two lovers Take thou  
henceforward in my speech diffuse. Their concord and their  
joyous semblances, The love, the wonder, and the sweet regard,  
They made to be the cause of holy thoughts;

So much so that the venerable Bernard First bared his feet, and  
after so great peace

Ran, and, in running, thought himself too slow.

O wealth unknown! O veritable good!

Giles bares his feet, and bares his feet Sylvester Behind the  
bridegroom, so doth please the bride! Then goes his way that  
father and that master, He and his Lady and that family

Which now was girding on the humble cord; Nor cowardice of  
heart weighed down his brow At being son of Peter Bernardone,

Nor for appearing marvellously scorned; But regally his hard  
determination

To Innocent he opened, and from him Received the primal seal  
upon his Order. After the people mendicant increased Behind  
this man, whose admirable life Better in glory of the heavens  
were sung, Incoronated with a second crown

Was through Honorius by the Eternal Spirit The holy purpose of  
this Archimandrite.

And when he had, through thirst of martyrdom, In the proud  
presence of the Sultan preached Christ and the others who  
came after him, And, finding for conversion too unripe

The folk, and not to tarry there in vain, Returned to fruit of the  
Italic grass,

On the rude rock 'twixt Tiber and the Arno From Christ did he  
receive the final seal,

Which during two whole years his members bore.

When He, who chose him unto so much good, Was pleased to  
draw him up to the reward That he had merited by being lowly,

Unto his friars, as to the rightful heirs, His most dear Lady did  
he recommend,

And bade that they should love her faithfully; And from her  
bosom the illustrious soul Wished to depart, returning to its  
realm, And for its body wished no other bier.

Think now what man was he, who was a fit Companion over the  
high seas to keep The bark of Peter to its proper bearings.

And this man was our Patriarch; hence whoever Doth follow him  
as he commands can see That he is laden with good  
merchandise.

But for new pasturage his flock has grown So greedy, that it is  
impossible

They be not scattered over fields diverse; And in proportion as  
his sheep remote And vagabond go farther off from him, More  
void of milk return they to the fold.

Verily some there are that fear a hurt, And keep close to the  
shepherd; but so few, That little cloth doth furnish forth their  
hoods.

Now if my utterance be not indistinct,

If thine own hearing hath attentive been, If thou recall to mind  
what I have said, In part contented shall thy wishes be;

For thou shalt see the plant that's chipped away, And the  
rebuke that lieth in the words,

'Where well one fattens, if he strayeth not.'" Canto XII



Soon as the blessed flame had taken up  
The final word to give it utterance, Began the holy millstone to  
revolve,  
And in its gyre had not turned wholly round, Before another in a  
ring enclosed it,  
And motion joined to motion, song to song; Song that as greatly  
doth transcend our Muses, Our Sirens, in those dulcet clarions,  
As primal splendour that which is reflected. And as are spanned  
athwart a tender cloud Two rainbows parallel and like in colour,  
When Juno to her handmaid gives command, (The one without  
born of the one within, Like to the speaking of that vagrant one  
Whom love consumed as doth the sun the vapours,) And make  
the people here, through covenant God set with Noah,  
presageful of the world That shall no more be covered with a  
flood,  
In such wise of those sempiternal roses The garlands twain  
encompassed us about, And thus the outer to the inner  
answered.

After the dance, and other grand rejoicings, Both of the singing,  
and the flaming forth Effulgence with effulgence blithe and  
tender, Together, at once, with one accord had stopped, (Even  
as the eyes, that, as volition moves them, Must needs together

shut and lift themselves,) Out of the heart of one of the new  
lights

There came a voice, that needle to the star Made me appear in  
turning thitherward. And it began: "The love that makes me fair  
Draws me to speak about the other leader, By whom so well is  
spoken here of mine. 'Tis right, where one is, to bring in the  
other, That, as they were united in their warfare, Together  
likewise may their glory shine.

The soldiery of Christ, which it had cost So dear to arm again,  
behind the standard

Moved slow and doubtful and in numbers few, When the  
Emperor who reigneth evermore Provided for the host that was  
in peril,

Through grace alone and not that it was worthy; And, as was  
said, he to his Bride brought succour

With champions twain, at whose deed, at whose word The  
stragglers were together drawn.

Within that region where the sweet west wind Rises to open the  
new leaves, wherewith Europe is seen to clothe herself afresh,  
Not far off from the beating of the waves, Behind which in his  
long career the sun Sometimes conceals himself from every  
man,

Is situate the fortunate Calahorra, Under protection of the  
mighty shield

In which the Lion subject is and sovereign. Therein was born the  
amorous paramour Of Christian Faith, the athlete consecrate,  
Kind to his own and cruel to his foes;

And when it was created was his mind Replete with such a living  
energy,

That in his mother her it made prophetic. As soon as the  
espousals were complete Between him and the Faith at holy  
font,

Where they with mutual safety dowered each other, The  
woman, who for him had given assent,

Saw in a dream the admirable fruit

That issue would from him and from his heirs; And that he might  
be construed as he was,

A spirit from this place went forth to name him With His  
possessive whose he wholly was.

Dominic was he called; and him I speak of Even as of the  
husbandman whom Christ Elected to his garden to assist him.

Envoy and servant sooth he seemed of Christ, For the first love  
made manifest in him

Was the first counsel that was given by Christ.

Silent and wakeful many a time was he Discovered by his nurse  
upon the ground, As if he would have said, 'For this I came.' O  
thou his father, Felix verily!

O thou his mother, verily Joanna, If this, interpreted, means as  
is said!

Not for the world which people toil for now In following Ostiense  
and Taddeo,

But through his longing after the true manna, He in short time  
became so great a teacher, That he began to go about the  
vineyard, Which fadeth soon, if faithless be the dresser; And of  
the See, (that once was more benignant Unto the righteous  
poor, not through itself, But him who sits there and  
degenerates,)

Not to dispense or two or three for six, Not any fortune of first  
vacancy,

'Non decimas quae sunt pauperum Dei,' He asked for, but  
against the errant world Permission to do battle for the seed,

Of which these four and twenty plants surround thee.

Then with the doctrine and the will together, With office  
apostolical he moved,

Like torrent which some lofty vein out-presses; And in among  
the shoots heretical

His impetus with greater fury smote, Wherever the resistance  
was the greatest. Of him were made thereafter divers runnels,  
Whereby the garden catholic is watered,

So that more living its plantations stand. If such the one wheel  
of the Biga was,

In which the Holy Church itself defended And in the field its civic  
battle won, Truly full manifest should be to thee

The excellence of the other, unto whom Thomas so courteous  
was before my coming.

But still the orbit, which the highest part Of its circumference  
made, is derelict,

So that the mould is where was once the crust. His family, that  
had straight forward moved With feet upon his footprints, are  
turned round So that they set the point upon the heel.

And soon aware they will be of the harvest Of this bad  
husbandry, when shall the tares Complain the granary is taken  
from them.

Yet say I, he who searcheth leaf by leaf

Our volume through, would still some page discover Where he  
could read, 'I am as I am wont.' 'Twill not be from Casal nor  
Acquasparta,

From whence come such unto the written word That one avoids  
it, and the other narrows.

Bonaventura of Bagnoregio's life Am I, who always in great  
offices Postponed considerations sinister. Here are Illuminato  
and Agostino,

Who of the first barefooted beggars were That with the cord the  
friends of God became.

Hugh of Saint Victor is among them here, And Peter Mangiador,  
and Peter of Spain,

Who down below in volumes twelve is shining; Nathan the seer,  
and metropolitan

Chrysostom, and Anselmus, and Donatus Who deigned to lay  
his hand to the first art; Here is Rabanus, and beside me here  
Shines the Calabrian Abbot Joachim,

He with the spirit of prophecy endowed.

To celebrate so great a paladin

Have moved me the impassioned courtesy And the discreet  
discourses of Friar Thomas, And with me they have moved this  
company."

Canto XIII

Let him imagine, who would well conceive What now I saw, and  
let him while I speak Retain the image as a steadfast rock,  
The fifteen stars, that in their divers regions The sky enliven with  
a light so great

That it transcends all clusters of the air; Let him the Wain  
imagine unto which

Our vault of heaven sufficeth night and day, So that in turning  
of its pole it fails not; Let him the mouth imagine of the horn  
That in the point beginneth of the axis

Round about which the primal wheel revolves,— To have  
fashioned of themselves two signs in heaven,

Like unto that which Minos' daughter made, The moment when  
she felt the frost of death; And one to have its rays within the  
other,

And both to whirl themselves in such a manner That one should  
forward go, the other backward; And he will have some  
shadowing forth of that True constellation and the double  
dance

That circled round the point at which I was; Because it is as  
much beyond our wont, As swifter than the motion of the  
Chiana

Moveth the heaven that all the rest outspeeds. There sang they  
neither Bacchus, nor Apollo, But in the divine nature Persons  
three,

And in one person the divine and human.

The singing and the dance fulfilled their measure, And unto us  
those holy lights gave need, Growing in happiness from care to  
care.

Then broke the silence of those saints concordant The light in  
which the admirable life

Of God's own mendicant was told to me, And said: "Now that  
one straw is trodden out Now that its seed is garnered up  
already, Sweet love invites me to thresh out the other.

Into that bosom, thou believest, whence Was drawn the rib to  
form the beauteous cheek

Whose taste to all the world is costing dear, And into that which,  
by the lance transfixed, Before and since, such satisfaction  
made That it weighs down the balance of all sin, Whate'er of  
light it has to human nature Been lawful to possess was all  
infused

By the same power that both of them created; And hence at  
what I said above dost wonder, When I narrated that no second  
had



The good which in the fifth light is enclosed. Now ope thine eyes  
to what I answer thee, And thou shalt see thy creed and my  
discourse Fit in the truth as centre in a circle.

That which can die, and that which dieth not, Are nothing but  
the splendour of the idea

Which by his love our Lord brings into being; Because that living  
Light, which from its fount Effulgent flows, so that it disunites  
not

From Him nor from the Love in them intrined, Through its own  
goodness reunites its rays

In nine subsistences, as in a mirror, Itself eternally remaining  
One.

Thence it descends to the last potencies, Downward from act to  
act becoming such That only brief contingencies it makes; And  
these contingencies I hold to be

Things generated, which the heaven produces By its own  
motion, with seed and without. Neither their wax, nor that which  
tempers it, Remains immutable, and hence beneath

The ideal signet more and less shines through; Therefore it  
happens, that the selfsame tree After its kind bears worse and  
better fruit, And ye are born with characters diverse.

If in perfection tempered were the wax, And were the heaven in  
its supremest virtue, The brilliance of the seal would all appear;

But nature gives it evermore deficient, In the like manner  
working as the artist,

Who has the skill of art and hand that trembles.

If then the fervent Love, the Vision clear, Of primal Virtue do  
dispose and seal, Perfection absolute is there acquired.

Thus was of old the earth created worthy Of all and every  
animal perfection;

And thus the Virgin was impregnate made; So that thine own  
opinion I commend, That human nature never yet has been,

Nor will be, what it was in those two persons.

Now if no farther forth I should proceed, 'Then in what way was  
he without a peer?' Would be the first beginning of thy words.

But, that may well appear what now appears not, Think who he  
was, and what occasion moved him To make request, when it  
was told him, 'Ask.'

I've not so spoken that thou canst not see Clearly he was a king  
who asked for wisdom, That he might be sufficiently a king;

'Twas not to know the number in which are The motors here  
above, or if 'necesse' With a contingent e'er 'necesse' make,

'Non si est dare primum motum esse,'

Or if in semicircle can be made Triangle so that it have no right  
angle.

Whence, if thou notest this and what I said, A regal prudence is  
that peerless seeing

In which the shaft of my intention strikes. And if on 'rose' thou  
turnest thy clear eyes, Thou'lt see that it has reference alone

To kings who're many, and the good are rare. With this  
distinction take thou what I said, And thus it can consist with  
thy belief

Of the first father and of our Delight.

And lead shall this be always to thy feet, To make thee, like a  
weary man, move slowly

Both to the Yes and No thou seest not; For very low among the  
fools is he

Who affirms without distinction, or denies, As well in one as in  
the other case; Because it happens that full often bends Current  
opinion in the false direction,

And then the feelings bind the intellect.

Far more than uselessly he leaves the shore, (Since he returneth  
not the same he went,) Who fishes for the truth, and has no skill;  
And in the world proofs manifest thereof Parmenides, Melissus,  
Brissus are,

And many who went on and knew not whither; Thus did  
Sabellius, Arius, and those fools

Who have been even as swords unto the Scriptures In rendering  
distorted their straight faces.

Nor yet shall people be too confident In judging, even as he is  
who doth count

The corn in field or ever it be ripe.

For I have seen all winter long the thorn First show itself  
intractable and fierce, And after bear the rose upon its top; And  
I have seen a ship direct and swift

Run o'er the sea throughout its course entire, To perish at the  
harbour's mouth at last.

Let not Dame Bertha nor Ser Martin think, Seeing one steal,  
another offering make, To see them in the arbitrament divine;

For one may rise, and fall the other may."

#### Canto XIV

From centre unto rim, from rim to centre, In a round vase the  
water moves itself,

As from without 'tis struck or from within.

Into my mind upon a sudden dropped What I am saying, at the  
moment when Silent became the glorious life of Thomas,  
Because of the resemblance that was born Of his discourse and  
that of Beatrice, Whom, after him, it pleased thus to begin:

"This man has need (and does not tell you so, Nor with the voice, nor even in his thought) Of going to the root of one truth  
more.

Declare unto him if the light wherewith Blossoms your  
substance shall remain with you Eternally the same that it is  
now;

And if it do remain, say in what manner, After ye are again  
made visible,

It can be that it injure not your sight." As by a greater gladness  
urged and drawn They who are dancing in a ring sometimes  
Uplift their voices and their motions quicken; So, at that orison  
devout and prompt, The holy circles a new joy displayed  
In their revolving and their wondrous song.

Whoso lamenteth him that here we die That we may live above,  
has never there Seen the refreshment of the eternal rain.

The One and Two and Three who ever liveth,

And reigneth ever in Three and Two and One, Not circumscribed  
and all things circumscribing, Three several times was chanted  
by each one Among those spirits, with such melody  
That for all merit it were just reward; And, in the lustre most  
divine of all The lesser ring, I heard a modest voice,

Such as perhaps the Angel's was to Mary, Answer: "As long as  
the festivity

Of Paradise shall be, so long our love Shall radiate round about  
us such a vesture. Its brightness is proportioned to the ardour,  
The ardour to the vision; and the vision Equals what grace it has  
above its worth. When, glorious and sanctified, our flesh Is  
reassumed, then shall our persons be More pleasing by their  
being all complete; For will increase whate'er bestows on us Of  
light gratuitous the Good Supreme, Light which enables us to  
look on Him;

Therefore the vision must perforce increase, Increase the  
ardour which from that is kindled, Increase the radiance which  
from this proceeds.

But even as a coal that sends forth flame, And by its vivid  
whiteness overpowers it So that its own appearance it  
maintains, Thus the effulgence that surrounds us now Shall be  
o'erpowered in aspect by the flesh, Which still to-day the earth  
doth cover up; Nor can so great a splendour weary us,

For strong will be the organs of the body  
To everything which hath the power to please us." So sudden  
and alert appeared to me

Both one and the other choir to say Amen, That well they  
showed desire for their dead bodies;

Nor sole for them perhaps, but for the mothers, The fathers, and  
the rest who had been dear

Or ever they became eternal flames.

And lo! all round about of equal brightness Arose a lustre over  
what was there, Like an horizon that is clearing up.

And as at rise of early eve begin Along the welkin new  
appearances,

So that the sight seems real and unreal, It seemed to me that  
new subsistences

Began there to be seen, and make a circle Outside the other  
two circumferences. O very sparkling of the Holy Spirit,

How sudden and incandescent it became Unto mine eyes, that  
vanquished bore it not!

But Beatrice so beautiful and smiling Appeared to me, that with  
the other sights

That followed not my memory I must leave her. Then to uplift  
themselves mine eyes resumed The power, and I beheld myself  
translated

To higher salvation with my Lady only. Well was I ware that I  
was more uplifted By the enkindled smiling of the star,

That seemed to me more ruddy than its wont.

With all my heart, and in that dialect

Which is the same in all, such holocaust To God I made as the  
new grace beseemed; And not yet from my bosom was  
exhausted

The ardour of sacrifice, before I knew This offering was  
accepted and auspicious;

For with so great a lustre and so red Splendours appeared to  
me in twofold rays, I said: "O Helios who dost so adorn them!"  
Even as distinct with less and greater lights

Glimmers between the two poles of the world The Galaxy that  
maketh wise men doubt, Thus constellated in the depths of  
Mars, Those rays described the venerable sign That quadrants  
joining in a circle make.

Here doth my memory overcome my genius; For on that cross  
as levin gleamed forth Christ, So that I cannot find ensample  
worthy;

But he who takes his cross and follows Christ Again will pardon  
me what I omit, Seeing in that aurora lighten Christ.

From horn to horn, and 'twixt the top and base, Lights were in  
motion, brightly scintillating As they together met and passed  
each other; Thus level and aslant and swift and slow

We here behold, renewing still the sight, The particles of bodies  
long and short,



Across the sunbeam move, wherewith is listed Sometimes the  
shade, which for their own defence People with cunning and  
with art contrive.

And as a lute and harp, accordant strung

With many strings, a dulcet tinkling make

To him by whom the notes are not distinguished, So from the  
lights that there to me appeared Upgathered through the cross  
a melody,

Which rapt me, not distinguishing the hymn.

Well was I ware it was of lofty laud, Because there came to me,  
"Arise and conquer!" As unto him who hears and comprehends  
not.

So much enamoured I became therewith, That until then there  
was not anything

That e'er had fettered me with such sweet bonds. Perhaps my  
word appears somewhat too bold, Postponing the delight of  
those fair eyes,

Into which gazing my desire has rest; But who bethinks him that  
the living seals Of every beauty grow in power ascending,

And that I there had not turned round to those, Can me excuse,  
if I myself accuse

To excuse myself, and see that I speak truly: For here the holy  
joy is not disclosed, Because ascending it becomes more pure.

### Canto XV

A will benign, in which reveals itself Ever the love that  
righteously inspires, As in the iniquitous, cupidity,  
Silence imposed upon that dulcet lyre, And quieted the  
consecrated chords,

That Heaven's right hand doth tighten and relax.

How unto just entreaties shall be deaf Those substances, which,  
to give me desire

Of praying them, with one accord grew silent? 'Tis well that  
without end he should lament, Who for the love of thing that  
doth not last Eternally despoils him of that love!

As through the pure and tranquil evening air There shoots from  
time to time a sudden fire, Moving the eyes that steadfast were  
before, And seems to be a star that changeth place, Except that  
in the part where it is kindled Nothing is missed, and this  
endureth little; So from the horn that to the right extends Unto  
that cross's foot there ran a star

Out of the constellation shining there; Nor was the gem  
dissevered from its ribbon,

But down the radiant fillet ran along, So that fire seemed it  
behind alabaster.

Thus piteous did Anchises' shade reach forward, If any faith our  
greatest Muse deserve, When in Elysium he his son perceived.

"O sanguis meus, O superinfusa Gratia Dei, sicut tibi, cui  
Bis unquam Coeli janua reclusa?" Thus that effulgence; whence  
I gave it heed; Then round unto my Lady turned my sight,  
And on this side and that was stupefied; For in her eyes was  
burning such a smile

That with mine own methought I touched the bottom Both of  
my grace and of my Paradise!

Then, pleasant to the hearing and the sight, The spirit joined to  
its beginning things

I understood not, so profound it spake; Nor did it hide itself  
from me by choice, But by necessity; for its conception Above  
the mark of mortals set itself.

And when the bow of burning sympathy Was so far slackened,  
that its speech descended

Towards the mark of our intelligence, The first thing that was  
understood by me Was "Benedict be Thou, O Trine and One,

Who hast unto my seed so courteous been!" And it continued:

"Hunger long and grateful, Drawn from the reading of the  
mighty volume Wherein is never changed the white nor dark,

Thou hast appeased, my son, within this light

In which I speak to thee, by grace of her Who to this lofty flight  
with plumage clothed thee.

Thou thinkest that to me thy thought doth pass From Him who  
is the first, as from the unit, If that be known, ray out the five  
and six;

And therefore who I am thou askest not, And why I seem more  
joyous unto thee Than any other of this gladsome crowd.

Thou think'st the truth; because the small and great Of this  
existence look into the mirror

Wherein, before thou think'st, thy thought thou showest.

But that the sacred love, in which I watch With sight perpetual,  
and which makes me thirst

With sweet desire, may better be fulfilled,

Now let thy voice secure and frank and glad Proclaim the  
wishes, the desire proclaim, To which my answer is decreed  
already." To Beatrice I turned me, and she heard Before I  
spake, and smiled to me a sign, That made the wings of my  
desire increase;

Then in this wise began I: "Love and knowledge, When on you  
dawned the first Equality,

Of the same weight for each of you became; For in the Sun,  
which lighted you and burned With heat and radiance, they so  
equal are, That all similitudes are insufficient.

But among mortals will and argument, For reason that to you is  
manifest, Diversely feathered in their pinions are.

Whence I, who mortal am, feel in myself This inequality; so give  
not thanks,

Save in my heart, for this paternal welcome.

Truly do I entreat thee, living topaz! Set in this precious jewel as  
a gem,

That thou wilt satisfy me with thy name." "O leaf of mine, in  
whom I pleasure took E'en while awaiting, I was thine own  
root!" Such a beginning he in answer made me.

Then said to me: "That one from whom is named Thy race, and  
who a hundred years and more Has circled round the mount on  
the first cornice, A son of mine and thy great-grandsire was;  
Well it behoves thee that the long fatigue Thou shouldst for him  
make shorter with thy works.

Florence, within the ancient boundary From which she taketh  
still her tierce and nones,

Abode in quiet, temperate and chaste. No golden chain she had,  
nor coronal,

Nor ladies shod with sandal shoon, nor girdle That caught the  
eye more than the person did. Not yet the daughter at her birth  
struck fear Into the father, for the time and dower

Did not o'errun this side or that the measure.

No houses had she void of families, Not yet had thither come  
Sardanapalus To show what in a chamber can be done; Not yet  
surpassed had Montemalo been By your Uccellatojo, which  
surpassed

Shall in its downfall be as in its rise.

Bellincion Berti saw I go begirt

With leather and with bone, and from the mirror His dame  
depart without a painted face;

And him of Nerli saw, and him of Vecchio, Contented with their  
simple suits of buff

And with the spindle and the flax their dames. O fortunate  
women! and each one was certain Of her own burial-place, and  
none as yet

For sake of France was in her bed deserted. One o'er the cradle  
kept her studious watch, And in her lullaby the language used

That first delights the fathers and the mothers; Another,  
drawing tresses from her distaff, Told o'er among her family the  
tales

Of Trojans and of Fesole and Rome.

As great a marvel then would have been held A Lapo Salterello,  
a Cianghella,

As Cincinnatus or Cornelia now. To such a quiet, such a beautiful  
Life of the citizen, to such a safe Community, and to so sweet  
an inn,

Did Mary give me, with loud cries invoked, And in your ancient  
Baptistery at once Christian and Cacciaguida I became.

Moronto was my brother, and Eliseo; From Val di Pado came to  
me my wife,

And from that place thy surname was derived.

I followed afterward the Emperor Conrad, And he begirt me of  
his chivalry,

So much I pleased him with my noble deeds.

I followed in his train against that law's Iniquity, whose people  
doth usurp

Your just possession, through your Pastor's fault.

There by that execrable race was I Released from bonds of the  
fallacious world,

The love of which defileth many souls, And came from  
martyrdom unto this peace."

### Canto XVI

O thou our poor nobility of blood,  
If thou dost make the people glory in thee Down here where our  
affection languishes, A marvellous thing it ne'er will be to me;  
For there where appetite is not perverted,

I say in Heaven, of thee I made a boast!  
Truly thou art a cloak that quickly shortens, So that unless we  
piece thee day by day Time goeth round about thee with his  
shears!

With 'You,' which Rome was first to tolerate, (Wherein her family  
less perseveres,)

Yet once again my words beginning made; Whence Beatrice,  
who stood somewhat apart, Smiling, appeared like unto her  
who coughed At the first failing writ of Guenever.

And I began: "You are my ancestor, You give to me all  
hardihood to speak, You lift me so that I am more than I. So  
many rivulets with gladness fill My mind, that of itself it makes a  
joy



Because it can endure this and not burst. Then tell me, my  
beloved root ancestral, Who were your ancestors, and what the  
years That in your boyhood chronicled themselves?

Tell me about the sheepfold of Saint John, How large it was,  
and who the people were Within it worthy of the highest seats."

As at the blowing of the winds a coal Quickens to flame, so I  
beheld that light Become resplendent at my blandishments. And  
as unto mine eyes it grew more fair, With voice more sweet and  
tender, but not in This modern dialect, it said to me:

"From uttering of the 'Ave,' till the birth In which my mother,  
who is now a saint,

Of me was lightened who had been her burden, Unto its Lion  
had this fire returned

Five hundred fifty times and thirty more, To reinflame itself  
beneath his paw.

My ancestors and I our birthplace had Where first is found the  
last ward of the city By him who runneth in your annual game.

Suffice it of my elders to hear this;

But who they were, and whence they thither came, Silence is  
more considerate than speech.

All those who at that time were there between Mars and the  
Baptist, fit for bearing arms, Were a fifth part of those who now  
are living; But the community, that now is mixed  
With Campi and Certaldo and Figghine, Pure in the lowest  
artisan was seen.

O how much better 'twere to have as neighbours The folk of  
whom I speak, and at Galluzzo

And at Trespiano have your boundary, Than have them in the  
town, and bear the stench

Of Aguglione's churl, and him of Signa Who has sharp eyes for  
trickery already.

Had not the folk, which most of all the world Degenerates, been  
a step-dame unto Caesar, But as a mother to her son  
benignant,

Some who turn Florentines, and trade and discount, Would have  
gone back again to Simifonte

There where their grandsires went about as beggars.

At Montemurlo still would be the Counts, The Cerchi in the parish  
of Acone,

Perhaps in Valdigueve the Buondelmonti.

Ever the intermingling of the people Has been the source of  
malady in cities, As in the body food it surfeits on;

And a blind bull more headlong plunges down Than a blind  
lamb; and very often cuts Better and more a single sword than  
five.

If Luni thou regard, and Urbisaglia,  
How they have passed away, and how are passing Chiusi and  
Sinigaglia after them,  
To hear how races waste themselves away, Will seem to thee no  
novel thing nor hard, Seeing that even cities have an end.

All things of yours have their mortality, Even as yourselves; but  
it is hidden in some That a long while endure, and lives are  
short; And as the turning of the lunar heaven Covers and bares  
the shores without a pause,

In the like manner fortune does with Florence. Therefore should  
not appear a marvellous thing What I shall say of the great  
Florentines

Of whom the fame is hidden in the Past.

I saw the Ughi, saw the Catellini, Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, and  
Alberichi, Even in their fall illustrious citizens; And saw, as  
mighty as they ancient were,

With him of La Sannella him of Arca, And Soldanier, Ardinghi,  
and Bostichi. Near to the gate that is at present laden With a  
new felony of so much weight

That soon it shall be jetsam from the bark, The Ravignani were,  
from whom descended The County Guido, and whoe'er the  
name Of the great Bellincione since hath taken.

He of La Pressa knew the art of ruling Already, and already  
Galigajo

Had hilt and pommel gilded in his house.

Mighty already was the Column Vair, Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifant,  
and Barucci,

And Galli, and they who for the bushel blush. The stock from  
which were the Calfucci born Was great already, and already  
chosen

To curule chairs the Sizii and Arrigucci. O how beheld I those  
who are undone

By their own pride! and how the Balls of Gold Florence  
enflowered in all their mighty deeds!

So likewise did the ancestors of those Who evermore, when  
vacant is your church,

Fatten by staying in consistory.

The insolent race, that like a dragon follows Whoever flees, and  
unto him that shows His teeth or purse is gentle as a lamb,  
Already rising was, but from low people; So that it pleased not  
Ubertain Donato

That his wife's father should make him their kin.

Already had Caponsacco to the Market From Fesole descended,  
and already Giuda and Infangato were good burghers.

I'll tell a thing incredible, but true; One entered the small circuit  
by a gate

Which from the Della Pera took its name! Each one that bears  
the beautiful escutcheon Of the great baron whose renown and  
name The festival of Thomas keepeth fresh, Knighthood and  
privilege from him received; Though with the populace unites  
himself

To-day the man who binds it with a border. Already were  
Gualterotti and Importuni; And still more quiet would the Borgo  
be If with new neighbours it remained unfed.

The house from which is born your lamentation, Through just  
disdain that death among you brought And put an end unto  
your joyous life,

Was honoured in itself and its companions.

O Buondelmonte, how in evil hour

Thou fled'st the bridal at another's promptings!

Many would be rejoicing who are sad, If God had thee  
surrendered to the Ema The first time that thou camest to the  
city.

But it behoved the mutilated stone

Which guards the bridge, that Florence should provide A victim  
in her latest hour of peace.

With all these families, and others with them, Florence beheld I  
in so great repose,

That no occasion had she whence to weep; With all these  
families beheld so just And glorious her people, that the lily  
Never upon the spear was placed reversed, Nor by division was  
vermilion made."

### Canto XVII

As came to Clymene, to be made certain Of that which he had  
heard against himself, He who makes fathers chary still to  
children, Even such was I, and such was I perceived

By Beatrice and by the holy light

That first on my account had changed its place.

Therefore my Lady said to me: "Send forth The flame of thy  
desire, so that it issue Imprinted well with the internal stamp;

Not that our knowledge may be greater made By speech of  
thine, but to accustom thee

To tell thy thirst, that we may give thee drink." "O my beloved  
tree, (that so dost lift thee, That even as minds terrestrial  
perceive

No triangle containeth two obtuse, So thou beholdest the  
contingent things

Ere in themselves they are, fixing thine eyes Upon the point in  
which all times are present,) While I was with Virgilius conjoined

Upon the mountain that the souls doth heal, And when  
descending into the dead world, Were spoken to me of my  
future life

Some grievous words; although I feel myself In sooth  
foursquare against the blows of chance.

On this account my wish would be content To hear what fortune  
is approaching me,

Because foreseen an arrow comes more slowly." Thus did I say  
unto that selfsame light

That unto me had spoken before; and even As Beatrice willed  
was my own will confessed. Not in vague phrase, in which the  
foolish folk Ensnared themselves of old, ere yet was slain

The Lamb of God who taketh sins away, But with clear words  
and unambiguous Language responded that paternal love, Hid  
and revealed by its own proper smile: "Contingency, that  
outside of the volume Of your materiality extends not,

Is all depicted in the eternal aspect. Necessity however thence it  
takes not,

Except as from the eye, in which 'tis mirrored, A ship that with  
the current down descends. From thence, e'en as there cometh  
to the ear Sweet harmony from an organ, comes in sight To me  
the time that is preparing for thee.

As forth from Athens went Hippolytus, By reason of his step-  
dame false and cruel, So thou from Florence must perforce  
depart. Already this is willed, and this is sought for;  
And soon it shall be done by him who thinks it, Where every day  
the Christ is bought and sold.

The blame shall follow the offended party In outcry as is usual;  
but the vengeance

Shall witness to the truth that doth dispense it.

Thou shalt abandon everything beloved Most tenderly, and this  
the arrow is

Which first the bow of banishment shoots forth.

Thou shalt have proof how savoureth of salt

The bread of others, and how hard a road The going down and  
up another's stairs.

And that which most shall weigh upon thy shoulders Will be the  
bad and foolish company

With which into this valley thou shalt fall; For all ingrate, all mad  
and impious



Will they become against thee; but soon after They, and not  
thou, shall have the forehead scarlet.

Of their bestiality their own proceedings Shall furnish proof; so  
'twill be well for thee A party to have made thee by thyself.

Thine earliest refuge and thine earliest inn Shall be the mighty  
Lombard's courtesy, Who on the Ladder bears the holy bird,  
Who such benign regard shall have for thee

That 'twixt you twain, in doing and in asking, That shall be first  
which is with others last. With him shalt thou see one who at his  
birth Has by this star of strength been so impressed, That  
notable shall his achievements be.

Not yet the people are aware of him Through his young age,  
since only nine years yet Around about him have these wheels  
revolved.

But ere the Gascon cheat the noble Henry, Some sparkles of his  
virtue shall appear In caring not for silver nor for toil.

So recognized shall his magnificence Become hereafter, that his  
enemies

Will not have power to keep mute tongues about it.

On him rely, and on his benefits;

By him shall many people be transformed, Changing condition  
rich and mendicant;

And written in thy mind thou hence shalt bear Of him, but shalt  
not say it"—and things said he Incredible to those who shall be  
present.

Then added: "Son, these are the commentaries On what was  
said to thee; behold the snares That are concealed behind few  
revolutions;

Yet would I not thy neighbours thou shouldst envy, Because thy  
life into the future reaches

Beyond the punishment of their perfidies." When by its silence  
showed that sainted soul That it had finished putting in the  
woof

Into that web which I had given it warped, Began I, even as he  
who yearneth after, Being in doubt, some counsel from a person  
Who seeth, and uprightly wills, and loves: "Well see I, father  
mine, how spurreth on The time towards me such a blow to deal  
me As heaviest is to him who most gives way.

Therefore with foresight it is well I arm me, That, if the dearest  
place be taken from me, I may not lose the others by my songs.

Down through the world of infinite bitterness, And o'er the  
mountain, from whose beauteous summit

The eyes of my own Lady lifted me,

And afterward through heaven from light to light, I have  
learned that which, if I tell again,

Will be a savour of strong herbs to many.

And if I am a timid friend to truth,

I fear lest I may lose my life with those Who will hereafter call  
this time the olden."

The light in which was smiling my own treasure Which there I  
had discovered, flashed at first As in the sunshine doth a golden  
mirror;

Then made reply: "A conscience overcast Or with its own or with  
another's shame, Will taste forsooth the tartness of thy word;  
But ne'ertheless, all falsehood laid aside, Make manifest thy  
vision utterly,

And let them scratch wherever is the itch; For if thine utterance  
shall offensive be At the first taste, a vital nutriment

'Twill leave thereafter, when it is digested. This cry of thine shall  
do as doth the wind, Which smiteth most the most exalted  
summits, And that is no slight argument of honour.

Therefore are shown to thee within these wheels, Upon the  
mount and in the dolorous valley, Only the souls that unto fame  
are known; Because the spirit of the hearer rests not,

Nor doth confirm its faith by an example Which has the root of  
it unknown and hidden, Or other reason that is not apparent."

### Canto XVIII

Now was alone rejoicing in its word That soul beatified, and I  
was tasting

My own, the bitter tempering with the sweet,

And the Lady who to God was leading me Said: "Change thy  
thought; consider that I am Near unto Him who every wrong  
disburdens." Unto the loving accents of my comfort

I turned me round, and then what love I saw Within those holy  
eyes I here relinquish; Not only that my language I distrust,

But that my mind cannot return so far Above itself, unless  
another guide it. Thus much upon that point can I repeat, That,  
her again beholding, my affection From every other longing was  
released.

While the eternal pleasure, which direct Rayed upon Beatrice,  
from her fair face Contented me with its reflected aspect,  
Conquering me with the radiance of a smile, She said to me,  
"Turn thee about and listen; Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise."

Even as sometimes here do we behold The affection in the look,  
if it be such That all the soul is wrapt away by it,

So, by the flaming of the effulgence holy To which I turned, I  
recognized therein

The wish of speaking to me somewhat farther.

And it began: "In this fifth resting-place Upon the tree that  
liveth by its summit, And aye bears fruit, and never loses leaf,  
Are blessed spirits that below, ere yet

They came to Heaven, were of such great renown That every  
Muse therewith would affluent be.

Therefore look thou upon the cross's horns; He whom I now shall  
name will there enact What doth within a cloud its own swift  
fire." I saw athwart the Cross a splendour drawn By naming  
Joshua, (even as he did it,)

Nor noted I the word before the deed; And at the name of the  
great Maccabee I saw another move itself revolving,  
And gladness was the whip unto that top. Likewise for  
Charlemagne and for Orlando, Two of them my regard attentive  
followed As followeth the eye its falcon flying.

William thereafterward, and Renouard, And the Duke Godfrey,  
did attract my sight Along upon that Cross, and Robert  
Guiscard. Then, moved and mingled with the other lights,  
The soul that had addressed me showed how great An artist  
'twas among the heavenly singers.

To my right side I turned myself around, My duty to behold in  
Beatrice

Either by words or gesture signified; And so translucent I beheld  
her eyes,

So full of pleasure, that her countenance Surpassed its other  
and its latest wont. And as, by feeling greater delectation, A  
man in doing good from day to day Becomes aware his virtue is  
increasing, So I became aware that my gyration  
With heaven together had increased its arc, That miracle  
beholding more adorned.

And such as is the change, in little lapse Of time, in a pale  
woman, when her face Is from the load of bashfulness unladen,  
Such was it in mine eyes, when I had turned, Caused by the  
whiteness of the temperate star, The sixth, which to itself had  
gathered me.

Within that Jovial torch did I behold The sparkling of the love  
which was therein

Delineate our language to mine eyes.

And even as birds uprisen from the shore, As in congratulation  
o'er their food,

Make squadrons of themselves, now round, now long, So from  
within those lights the holy creatures

Sang flying to and fro, and in their figures Made of themselves  
now D, now I, now L. First singing they to their own music  
moved; Then one becoming of these characters,

A little while they rested and were silent.

O divine Pegasea, thou who genius Dost glorious make, and  
render it long-lived,

And this through thee the cities and the kingdoms, Illume me  
with thyself, that I may bring

Their figures out as I have them conceived! Apparent be thy  
power in these brief verses!

Themselves then they displayed in five times seven Vowels and  
consonants; and I observed

The parts as they seemed spoken unto me. 'Diligite justitiam,'  
these were

First verb and noun of all that was depicted; 'Qui judicatis  
terram' were the last.

Thereafter in the M of the fifth word Remained they so  
arranged, that Jupiter Seemed to be silver there with gold  
inlaid. And other lights I saw descend where was The summit of  
the M, and pause there singing The good, I think, that draws  
them to itself.

Then, as in striking upon burning logs Upward there fly  
innumerable sparks, Whence fools are wont to look for auguries,

More than a thousand lights seemed thence to rise, And to  
ascend, some more, and others less, Even as the Sun that lights  
them had allotted;

And, each one being quiet in its place, The head and neck  
beheld I of an eagle Delineated by that inlaid fire.

He who there paints has none to be his guide; But Himself  
guides; and is from Him remembered

That virtue which is form unto the nest. The other beatitude,  
that contented seemed At first to bloom a lily on the M,

By a slight motion followed out the imprint.

O gentle star! what and how many gems Did demonstrate to  
me, that all our justice

Effect is of that heaven which thou ingemmest!

Wherefore I pray the Mind, in which begin Thy motion and thy  
virtue, to regard

Whence comes the smoke that vitiates thy rays; So that a  
second time it now be wroth

With buying and with selling in the temple Whose walls were  
built with signs and martyrdoms!

O soldiery of heaven, whom I contemplate, Implore for those  
who are upon the earth All gone astray after the bad example!

Once 'twas the custom to make war with swords; But now 'tis  
made by taking here and there

The bread the pitying Father shuts from none.



Yet thou, who writest but to cancel, think That Peter and that  
Paul, who for this vineyard

Which thou art spoiling died, are still alive! Well canst thou say:

"So steadfast my desire Is unto him who willed to live alone,

And for a dance was led to martyrdom, That I know not the  
Fisherman nor Paul."

### Canto XIX

Appeared before me with its wings outspread The beautiful  
image that in sweet fruition Made jubilant the interwoven souls;

Appeared a little ruby each, wherein

Ray of the sun was burning so enkindled That each into mine  
eyes refracted it.

And what it now behoves me to retrace Nor voice has e'er  
reported, nor ink written, Nor was by fantasy e'er  
comprehended;

For speak I saw, and likewise heard, the beak, And utter with its  
voice both 'I' and 'My,' When in conception it was 'We' and 'Our.'

And it began: "Being just and merciful

Am I exalted here unto that glory

Which cannot be exceeded by desire; And upon earth I left my  
memory Such, that the evil-minded people there

Commend it, but continue not the story." So doth a single heat  
from many embers Make itself felt, even as from many loves  
Issued a single sound from out that image. Whence I thereafter:

"O perpetual flowers Of the eternal joy, that only one  
Make me perceive your odours manifold, Exhaling, break within  
me the great fast Which a long season has in hunger held me,  
Not finding for it any food on earth.

Well do I know, that if in heaven its mirror Justice Divine  
another realm doth make, Yours apprehends it not through any  
veil. You know how I attentively address me To listen; and you  
know what is the doubt That is in me so very old a fast."

Even as a falcon, issuing from his hood,  
Doth move his head, and with his wings applaud him, Showing  
desire, and making himself fine,  
Saw I become that standard, which of lauds Was interwoven of  
the grace divine,

With such songs as he knows who there rejoices.

Then it began: "He who a compass turned On the world's outer  
verge, and who within it Devised so much occult and manifest,  
Could not the impress of his power so make On all the universe,  
as that his Word

Should not remain in infinite excess.

And this makes certain that the first proud being, Who was the  
paragon of every creature,

By not awaiting light fell immature.

And hence appears it, that each minor nature Is scant  
receptacle unto that good

Which has no end, and by itself is measured. In consequence  
our vision, which perforce Must be some ray of that intelligence

With which all things whatever are replete, Cannot in its own  
nature be so potent, That it shall not its origin discern

Far beyond that which is apparent to it. Therefore into the  
justice sempiternal

The power of vision that your world receives, As eye into the  
ocean, penetrates;

Which, though it see the bottom near the shore, Upon the deep  
perceives it not, and yet 'Tis there, but it is hidden by the depth.

There is no light but comes from the serene That never is  
o'ercast, nay, it is darkness Or shadow of the flesh, or else its  
poison. Amply to thee is opened now the cavern

Which has concealed from thee the living justice Of which thou  
mad'st such frequent questioning.

For saidst thou: 'Born a man is on the shore Of Indus, and is  
none who there can speak

Of Christ, nor who can read, nor who can write; And all his  
inclinations and his actions

Are good, so far as human reason sees,

Without a sin in life or in discourse: He dieth unbaptised and  
without faith;

Where is this justice that condemneth him? Where is his fault, if  
he do not believe?'

Now who art thou, that on the bench wouldst sit In judgment at  
a thousand miles away, With the short vision of a single span?

Truly to him who with me subtilizes, If so the Scripture were not  
over you,

For doubting there were marvellous occasion.

O animals terrene, O stolid minds, The primal will, that in itself is  
good,

Ne'er from itself, the Good Supreme, has moved.

So much is just as is accordant with it; No good created draws  
it to itself,

But it, by raying forth, occasions that." Even as above her nest  
goes circling round The stork when she has fed her little ones,  
And he who has been fed looks up at her, So lifted I my brows,

and even such Became the blessed image, which its wings Was  
moving, by so many counsels urged.

Circling around it sang, and said: "As are  
My notes to thee, who dost not comprehend them, Such is the  
eternal judgment to you mortals." Those lucent splendours of  
the Holy Spirit Grew quiet then, but still within the standard That  
made the Romans reverend to the world.

It recommenced: "Unto this kingdom never Ascended one who  
had not faith in Christ,

Before or since he to the tree was nailed.

But look thou, many crying are, 'Christ, Christ!' Who at the  
judgment shall be far less near

To him than some shall be who knew not Christ.

Such Christians shall the Ethiop condemn, When the two  
companies shall be divided, The one for ever rich, the other  
poor.

What to your kings may not the Persians say, When they that  
volume opened shall behold In which are written down all their  
dispraises?

There shall be seen, among the deeds of Albert, That which ere  
long shall set the pen in motion, For which the realm of Prague

shall be deserted. There shall be seen the woe that on the Seine

He brings by falsifying of the coin,

Who by the blow of a wild boar shall die.

There shall be seen the pride that causes thirst, Which makes

the Scot and Englishman so mad That they within their

boundaries cannot rest; Be seen the luxury and effeminate life

Of him of Spain, and the Bohemian, Who valour never knew and

never wished;

Be seen the Cripple of Jerusalem, His goodness represented by

an I,

While the reverse an M shall represent; Be seen the avarice and

poltroonery

Of him who guards the Island of the Fire, Wherein Anchises

finished his long life; And to declare how pitiful he is

Shall be his record in contracted letters

Which shall make note of much in little space. And shall appear  
to each one the foul deeds Of uncle and of brother who a nation

So famous have dishonoured, and two crowns.

And he of Portugal and he of Norway Shall there be known, and

he of Rascia too, Who saw in evil hour the coin of Venice.

O happy Hungary, if she let herself

Be wronged no farther! and Navarre the happy, If with the hills  
that gird her she be armed!

And each one may believe that now, as hanel Thereof, do  
Nicosia and Famagosta

Lament and rage because of their own beast, Who from the  
others' flank departeth not."

### Canto XX

When he who all the world illuminates Out of our hemisphere so  
far descends That on all sides the daylight is consumed,  
The heaven, that erst by him alone was kindled, Doth suddenly  
reveal itself again

By many lights, wherein is one resplendent. And came into my  
mind this act of heaven, When the ensign of the world and of its  
leaders Had silent in the blessed beak become; Because those  
living luminaries all,

By far more luminous, did songs begin Lapsing and falling from  
my memory.

O gentle Love, that with a smile dost cloak thee,

How ardent in those sparks didst thou appear, That had the  
breath alone of holy thoughts! After the precious and pellucid  
crystals,

With which begemmed the sixth light I beheld, Silence imposed  
on the angelic bells,

I seemed to hear the murmuring of a river That clear  
descendeth down from rock to rock, Showing the affluence of  
its mountain-top.

And as the sound upon the cithern's neck Taketh its form, and  
as upon the vent Of rustic pipe the wind that enters it,

Even thus, relieved from the delay of waiting, That murmuring  
of the eagle mounted up Along its neck, as if it had been hollow.

There it became a voice, and issued thence From out its beak, in  
such a form of words As the heart waited for wherein I wrote  
them. "The part in me which sees and bears the sun In mortal  
eagles," it began to me,

"Now fixedly must needs be looked upon; For of the fires of  
which I make my figure,

Those whence the eye doth sparkle in my head Of all their  
orders the supremest are.

He who is shining in the midst as pupil Was once the singer of  
the Holy Spirit, Who bore the ark from city unto city; Now  
knoweth he the merit of his song, In so far as effect of his own



counsel, By the reward which is commensurate. Of five, that  
make a circle for my brow,

He that approacheth nearest to my beak Did the poor widow  
for her son console; Now knoweth he how dearly it doth cost  
Not following Christ, by the experience Of this sweet life and of  
its opposite.

He who comes next in the circumference Of which I speak, upon  
its highest arc, Did death postpone by penitence sincere; Now  
knoweth he that the eternal judgment Suffers no change, albeit  
worthy prayer Maketh below to-morrow of to-day.

The next who follows, with the laws and me, Under the good  
intent that bore bad fruit Became a Greek by ceding to the  
pastor; Now knoweth he how all the ill deduced From his good  
action is not harmful to him,

Although the world thereby may be destroyed. And he, whom in  
the downward arc thou seest, Guglielmo was, whom the same  
land deplores That weepeth Charles and Frederick yet alive;  
Now knoweth he how heaven enamoured is With a just king;  
and in the outward show

Of his effulgence he reveals it still.

Who would believe, down in the errant world, That e'er the  
Trojan Ripheus in this round Could be the fifth one of the holy  
lights?

Now knoweth he enough of what the world Has not the power  
to see of grace divine,

Although his sight may not discern the bottom." Like as a lark  
that in the air expatiates,

First singing and then silent with content Of the last sweetness  
that doth satisfy her, Such seemed to me the image of the  
imprint

Of the eternal pleasure, by whose will Doth everything become  
the thing it is. And notwithstanding to my doubt I was As glass  
is to the colour that invests it, To wait the time in silence it  
endured not,

But forth from out my mouth, "What things are these?" Extorted  
with the force of its own weight; Whereat I saw great joy of  
coruscation.

Thereafterward with eye still more enkindled The blessed  
standard made to me reply,

To keep me not in wonderment suspended: "I see that thou  
believest in these things Because I say them, but thou seest not  
how;

So that, although believed in, they are hidden. Thou doest as he  
doth who a thing by name Well apprehendeth, but its quiddity

Cannot perceive, unless another show it. 'Regnum coelorum'  
suffereth violence

From fervent love, and from that living hope That overcometh  
the Divine volition;

Not in the guise that man o'ercometh man, But conquers it  
because it will be conquered, And conquered conquers by  
benignity.

The first life of the eyebrow and the fifth Cause thee  
astonishment, because with them Thou seest the region of the  
angels painted.

They passed not from their bodies, as thou thinkest,

Gentiles, but Christians in the steadfast faith Of feet that were  
to suffer and had suffered.

For one from Hell, where no one e'er turns back Unto good will,  
returned unto his bones, And that of living hope was the  
reward,—

Of living hope, that placed its efficacy In prayers to God made  
to resuscitate him, So that 'twere possible to move his will.

The glorious soul concerning which I speak, Returning to the  
flesh, where brief its stay, Believed in Him who had the power to  
aid it; And, in believing, kindled to such fire

Of genuine love, that at the second death Worthy it was to  
come unto this joy.

The other one, through grace, that from so deep A fountain  
wells that never hath the eye  
Of any creature reached its primal wave, Set all his love below  
on righteousness;  
Wherefore from grace to grace did God unclothe His eye to our  
redemption yet to be,  
Whence he believed therein, and suffered not From that day  
forth the stench of paganism, And he reprov'd therefor the folk  
perverse.  
Those Maidens three, whom at the right-hand wheel Thou didst  
behold, were unto him for baptism More than a thousand years  
before baptizing.  
O thou predestination, how remote Thy root is from the aspect  
of all those  
Who the First Cause do not behold entire!  
And you, O mortals! hold yourselves restrained  
In judging; for ourselves, who look on God, We do not know as  
yet all the elect;  
And sweet to us is such a deprivation, Because our good in this  
good is made perfect,  
That whatsoever God wills, we also will." After this manner by  
that shape divine,

To make clear in me my short-sightedness, Was given to me a  
pleasant medicine;

And as good singer a good lutanist Accompanies with  
vibrations of the chords, Whereby more pleasantness the song  
acquires, So, while it spake, do I remember me

That I beheld both of those blessed lights, Even as the winking  
of the eyes concords, Moving unto the words their little flames.

### Canto XXI

Already on my Lady's face mine eyes Again were fastened, and  
with these my mind, And from all other purpose was withdrawn;

And she smiled not; but "If I were to smile,"

She unto me began, "thou wouldst become Like Semele, when  
she was turned to ashes.

Because my beauty, that along the stairs Of the eternal palace  
more enkindles,

As thou hast seen, the farther we ascend, If it were tempered  
not, is so resplendent That all thy mortal power in its effulgence

Would seem a leaflet that the thunder crushes.

We are uplifted to the seventh splendour, That underneath the  
burning Lion's breast

Now radiates downward mingled with his power.

Fix in direction of thine eyes the mind, And make of them a mirror for the figure That in this mirror shall appear to thee."

He who could know what was the pasturage My sight had in that blessed countenance, When I transferred me to another care, Would recognize how grateful was to me Obedience unto my celestial escort,

By counterpoising one side with the other. Within the crystal which, around the world Revolving, bears the name of its dear leader, Under whom every wickedness lay dead,

Coloured like gold, on which the sunshine gleams, A stairway I beheld to such a height Uplifted, that mine eye pursued it not.

Likewise beheld I down the steps descending So many splendours, that I thought each light That in the heaven appears was there diffused. And as accordant with their natural custom The rooks together at the break of day

Bestir themselves to warm their feathers cold; Then some of them fly off without return, Others come back to where they started from, And others, wheeling round, still keep at home; Such fashion it appeared to me was there Within the sparkling that together came,

As soon as on a certain step it struck,

And that which nearest unto us remained Became so clear, that  
in my thought I said, "Well I perceive the love thou showest me;  
But she, from whom I wait the how and when Of speech and  
silence, standeth still; whence I Against desire do well if I ask  
not."

She thereupon, who saw my silentness In the sight of Him who  
seeth everything, Said unto me, "Let loose thy warm desire."

And I began: "No merit of my own Renders me worthy of  
response from thee; But for her sake who granteth me the  
asking, Thou blessed life that dost remain concealed

In thy beatitude, make known to me

The cause which draweth thee so near my side; And tell me why  
is silent in this wheel

The dulcet symphony of Paradise,

That through the rest below sounds so devoutly." "Thou hast thy  
hearing mortal as thy sight,"

It answer made to me; "they sing not here, For the same cause  
that Beatrice has not smiled.

Thus far adown the holy stairway's steps Have I descended but  
to give thee welcome

With words, and with the light that mantles me; Nor did more  
love cause me to be more ready, For love as much and more up  
there is burning, As doth the flaming manifest to thee.

But the high charity, that makes us servants Prompt to the  
counsel which controls the world, Allotteth here, even as thou  
dost observe."

"I see full well," said I, "O sacred lamp! How love unfettered in  
this court sufficeth To follow the eternal Providence;

But this is what seems hard for me to see, Wherefore  
predestinate wast thou alone Unto this office from among thy  
consorts." No sooner had I come to the last word, Than of its  
middle made the light a centre, Whirling itself about like a swift  
millstone.

When answer made the love that was therein: "On me directed  
is a light divine,

Piercing through this in which I am embosomed, Of which the  
virtue with my sight conjoined Lifts me above myself so far, I  
see

The supreme essence from which this is drawn. Hence comes  
the joyfulness with which I flame, For to my sight, as far as it is  
clear,

The clearness of the flame I equal make.

But that soul in the heaven which is most pure, That seraph  
which his eye on God most fixes, Could this demand of thine not  
satisfy; Because so deeply sinks in the abyss



Of the eternal statute what thou askest, From all created sight it  
is cut off.

And to the mortal world, when thou returnest, This carry back,  
that it may not presume Longer tow'rd such a goal to move its  
feet.

The mind, that shineth here, on earth doth smoke; From this  
observe how can it do below

That which it cannot though the heaven assume it?"

Such limit did its words prescribe to me, The question I  
relinquished, and restricted Myself to ask it humbly who it was.  
"Between two shores of Italy rise cliffs, And not far distant from  
thy native place, So high, the thunders far below them sound,  
And form a ridge that Catria is called, 'Neath which is  
consecrate a hermitage Wont to be dedicate to worship only."

Thus unto me the third speech recommenced, And then,  
continuing, it said: "Therein

Unto God's service I became so steadfast, That feeding only on  
the juice of olives Lightly I passed away the heats and frosts,  
Contented in my thoughts contemplative.

That cloister used to render to these heavens Abundantly, and  
now is empty grown,

So that perforce it soon must be revealed.

I in that place was Peter Damiano; And Peter the Sinner was I in  
the house

Of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore. Little of mortal life remained  
to me,

When I was called and dragged forth to the hat Which shifteth  
evermore from bad to worse. Came Cephas, and the mighty  
Vessel came Of the Holy Spirit, meagre and barefooted,  
Taking the food of any hostelry.

Now some one to support them on each side The modern  
shepherds need, and some to lead them,  
So heavy are they, and to hold their trains.

They cover up their palfreys with their cloaks, So that two  
beasts go underneath one skin;

O Patience, that dost tolerate so much!" At this voice saw I  
many little flames

From step to step descending and revolving, And every  
revolution made them fairer.

Round about this one came they and stood still, And a cry  
uttered of so loud a sound,

It here could find no parallel, nor I Distinguished it, the thunder  
so o'ercame me.

## Canto XXII

Oppressed with stupor, I unto my guide Turned like a little child  
who always runs For refuge there where he confideth most; And  
she, even as a mother who straightway Gives comfort to her  
pale and breathless boy With voice whose wont it is to reassure  
him,

Said to me: "Knowest thou not thou art in heaven, And knowest  
thou not that heaven is holy all And what is done here cometh  
from good zeal?"

After what wise the singing would have changed thee And I by  
smiling, thou canst now imagine, Since that the cry has startled  
thee so much,

In which if thou hadst understood its prayers Already would be  
known to thee the vengeance Which thou shalt look upon before  
thou diest.

The sword above here smiteth not in haste Nor tardily, howe'er  
it seem to him

Who fearing or desiring waits for it.

But turn thee round towards the others now, For very illustrious  
spirits shalt thou see,

If thou thy sight directest as I say."

As it seemed good to her mine eyes I turned, And saw a  
hundred spherules that together With mutual rays each other  
more embellished.

I stood as one who in himself represses The point of his desire,  
and ventures not To question, he so feareth the too much. And  
now the largest and most luculent

Among those pearls came forward, that it might Make my  
desire concerning it content.

Within it then I heard: "If thou couldst see Even as myself the  
charity that burns Among us, thy conceits would be expressed;  
But, that by waiting thou mayst not come late To the high end, I  
will make answer even Unto the thought of which thou art so  
chary.

That mountain on whose slope Cassino stands Was frequented  
of old upon its summit

By a deluded folk and ill-disposed; And I am he who first up  
thither bore

The name of Him who brought upon the earth The truth that so  
much sublimateth us.

And such abundant grace upon me shone That all the  
neighbouring towns I drew away

From the impious worship that seduced the world.

These other fires, each one of them, were men Contemplative,  
enkindled by that heat

Which maketh holy flowers and fruits spring up.

Here is Macarius, here is Romualdus, Here are my brethren, who  
within the cloisters

Their footsteps stayed and kept a steadfast heart." And I to  
him: "The affection which thou showest Speaking with me, and  
the good countenance Which I behold and note in all your  
ardours,

In me have so my confidence dilated As the sun doth the rose,  
when it becomes

As far unfolded as it hath the power.

Therefore I pray, and thou assure me, father, If I may so much  
grace receive, that I

May thee behold with countenance unveiled." He thereupon:

"Brother, thy high desire

In the remotest sphere shall be fulfilled, Where are fulfilled all  
others and my own. There perfect is, and ripened, and complete,  
Every desire; within that one alone

Is every part where it has always been; For it is not in space, nor  
turns on poles, And unto it our stairway reaches up,

Whence thus from out thy sight it steals away. Up to that height  
the Patriarch Jacob saw it Extending its supernal part, what  
time

So thronged with angels it appeared to him.

But to ascend it now no one uplifts

His feet from off the earth, and now my Rule Below remaineth  
for mere waste of paper. The walls that used of old to be an  
Abbey

Are changed to dens of robbers, and the cowls

Are sacks filled full of miserable flour.

But heavy usury is not taken up

So much against God's pleasure as that fruit Which maketh so  
insane the heart of monks; For whatsoever hath the Church in  
keeping Is for the folk that ask it in God's name,

Not for one's kindred or for something worse.

The flesh of mortals is so very soft,

That good beginnings down below suffice not From springing of  
the oak to bearing acorns.

Peter began with neither gold nor silver, And I with orison and  
abstinence,

And Francis with humility his convent.

And if thou lookest at each one's beginning, And then regardest  
whither he has run,

Thou shalt behold the white changed into brown.

In verity the Jordan backward turned,

And the sea's fleeing, when God willed were more A wonder to  
behold, than succour here." Thus unto me he said; and then  
withdrew

To his own band, and the band closed together; Then like a  
whirlwind all was upward rapt.

The gentle Lady urged me on behind them Up o'er that stairway  
by a single sign, So did her virtue overcome my nature;  
Nor here below, where one goes up and down By natural law,  
was motion e'er so swift That it could be compared unto my  
wing.

Reader, as I may unto that devout Triumph return, on whose  
account I often

For my transgressions weep and beat my breast,— Thou hadst  
not thrust thy finger in the fire

And drawn it out again, before I saw The sign that follows  
Taurus, and was in it.

O glorious stars, O light impregnated With mighty virtue, from  
which I acknowledge

All of my genius, whatsoe'er it be,  
With you was born, and hid himself with you, He who is father of  
all mortal life,  
When first I tasted of the Tuscan air; And then when grace was  
freely given to me  
To enter the high wheel which turns you round, Your region was  
allotted unto me.  
To you devoutly at this hour my soul Is sighing, that it virtue  
may acquire  
For the stern pass that draws it to itself. "Thou art so near unto  
the last salvation," Thus Beatrice began, "thou oughtest now To  
have thine eyes unclouded and acute; And therefore, ere thou  
enter farther in,  
Look down once more, and see how vast a world Thou hast  
already put beneath thy feet;  
So that thy heart, as jocund as it may, Present itself to the  
triumphant throng  
That comes rejoicing through this rounded ether." I with my  
sight returned through one and all The sevenfold spheres, and I  
beheld this globe Such that I smiled at its ignoble semblance;  
And that opinion I approve as best Which doth account it least;  
and he who thinks



Of something else may truly be called just.

I saw the daughter of Latona shining Without that shadow,  
which to me was cause That once I had believed her rare and  
dense.

The aspect of thy son, Hyperion,

Here I sustained, and saw how move themselves Around and  
near him Maia and Dione.

Thence there appeared the temperateness of Jove 'Twixt son  
and father, and to me was clear

The change that of their whereabouts they make; And all the  
seven made manifest to me

How great they are, and eke how swift they are, And how they  
are in distant habitations.

The threshing-floor that maketh us so proud, To me revolving  
with the eternal Twins, Was all apparent made from hill to  
harbour!

Then to the beauteous eyes mine eyes I turned.

### Canto XXIII

Even as a bird, 'mid the beloved leaves, Quiet upon the nest of  
her sweet brood

Throughout the night, that hideth all things from us, Who, that  
she may behold their longed-for looks And find the food  
wherewith to nourish them,

In which, to her, grave labours grateful are, Anticipates the time  
on open spray

And with an ardent longing waits the sun, Gazing intent as soon  
as breaks the dawn: Even thus my Lady standing was, erect

And vigilant, turned round towards the zone Underneath which  
the sun displays less haste; So that beholding her distraught  
and wistful, Such I became as he is who desiring

For something yearns, and hoping is appeased. But brief the  
space from one When to the other; Of my awaiting, say I, and  
the seeing

The welkin grow resplendent more and more. And Beatrice  
exclaimed: "Behold the hosts Of Christ's triumphal march, and  
all the fruit Harvested by the rolling of these spheres!"

It seemed to me her face was all aflame; And eyes she had so  
full of ecstasy

That I must needs pass on without describing.

As when in nights serene of the full moon Smiles Trivia among  
the nymphs eternal Who paint the firmament through all its  
gulfs, Saw I, above the myriads of lamps,

A Sun that one and all of them enkindled, E'en as our own doth  
the supernal sights,

And through the living light transparent shone The lucent  
substance so intensely clear Into my sight, that I sustained it  
not.

O Beatrice, thou gentle guide and dear! To me she said: "What  
overmasters thee

A virtue is from which naught shields itself. There are the  
wisdom and the omnipotence

That oped the thoroughfares 'twixt heaven and earth, For which  
there erst had been so long a yearning." As fire from out a cloud  
unlocks itself,

Dilating so it finds not room therein, And down, against its  
nature, falls to earth,

So did my mind, among those aliments Becoming larger, issue  
from itself,

And that which it became cannot remember. "Open thine eyes,  
and look at what I am:

Thou hast beheld such things, that strong enough Hast thou  
become to tolerate my smile."

I was as one who still retains the feeling Of a forgotten vision,  
and endeavours In vain to bring it back into his mind, When I

this invitation heard, deserving Of so much gratitude, it never  
fades Out of the book that chronicles the past.

If at this moment sounded all the tongues That Polyhymnia and  
her sisters made Most lubrical with their delicious milk, To aid  
me, to a thousandth of the truth

It would not reach, singing the holy smile And how the holy  
aspect it illumed.

And therefore, representing Paradise, The sacred poem must  
perforce leap over, Even as a man who finds his way cut off; But  
whoso thinketh of the ponderous theme,

And of the mortal shoulder laden with it, Should blame it not, if  
under this it tremble.

It is no passage for a little boat

This which goes cleaving the audacious prow, Nor for a pilot  
who would spare himself. "Why doth my face so much enamour  
thee,

That to the garden fair thou turnest not, Which under the rays of  
Christ is blossoming? There is the Rose in which the Word Divine  
Became incarnate; there the lilies are

By whose perfume the good way was discovered." Thus  
Beatrice; and I, who to her counsels Was wholly ready, once  
again betook me

Unto the battle of the feeble brows.

As in the sunshine, that unsullied streams Through fractured  
cloud, ere now a meadow of flowers

Mine eyes with shadow covered o'er have seen, So troops of  
splendours manifold I saw Illumined from above with burning  
rays, Beholding not the source of the effulgence.

O power benignant that dost so imprint them! Thou didst exalt  
thyself to give more scope There to mine eyes, that were not  
strong enough.

The name of that fair flower I e'er invoke Morning and evening  
utterly enthralled My soul to gaze upon the greater fire.

And when in both mine eyes depicted were The glory and  
greatness of the living star Which there excelleth, as it here  
excelled, Athwart the heavens a little torch descended Formed  
in a circle like a coronal,

And cinctured it, and whirled itself about it. Whatever melody  
most sweetly soundeth On earth, and to itself most draws the  
soul,

Would seem a cloud that, rent asunder, thunders, Compared  
unto the sounding of that lyre

Wherewith was crowned the sapphire beautiful, Which gives the  
clearest heaven its sapphire hue. "I am Angelic Love, that circle  
round

The joy sublime which breathes from out the womb That was  
the hostelry of our Desire;  
And I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, while Thou followest thy Son,  
and mak'st diviner  
The sphere supreme, because thou enterest there." Thus did the  
circulated melody  
Seal itself up; and all the other lights Were making to resound  
the name of Mary.

The regal mantle of the volumes all  
Of that world, which most fervid is and living With breath of  
God and with his works and ways, Extended over us its inner  
border,  
So very distant, that the semblance of it There where I was not  
yet appeared to me.  
Therefore mine eyes did not possess the power Of following the  
incoronated flame,  
Which mounted upward near to its own seed. And as a little  
child, that towards its mother Stretches its arms, when it the  
milk has taken, Through impulse kindled into outward flame,  
Each of those gleams of whiteness upward reached So with its  
summit, that the deep affection They had for Mary was  
revealed to me.

Thereafter they remained there in my sight, 'Regina coeli'  
singing with such sweetness, That ne'er from me has the delight  
departed.

O, what exuberance is garnered up

Within those richest coffers, which had been Good husbandmen  
for sowing here below! There they enjoy and live upon the  
treasure Which was acquired while weeping in the exile Of  
Babylon, wherein the gold was left.

There triumpheth, beneath the exalted Son Of God and Mary, in  
his victory,

Both with the ancient council and the new, He who doth keep  
the keys of such a glory.

#### Canto XXIV

"O company elect to the great supper Of the Lamb benedight,  
who feedeth you

So that for ever full is your desire,

If by the grace of God this man foretaste Something of that  
which falleth from your table, Or ever death prescribe to him the  
time,

Direct your mind to his immense desire, And him somewhat  
bedew; ye drinking are  
For ever at the fount whence comes his thought." Thus Beatrice;  
and those souls beatified  
Transformed themselves to spheres on steadfast poles, Flaming  
intensely in the guise of comets.  
And as the wheels in works of horologes Revolve so that the first  
to the beholder Motionless seems, and the last one to fly, So in  
like manner did those carols, dancing In different measure, of  
their affluence  
Give me the gauge, as they were swift or slow.

From that one which I noted of most beauty Beheld I issue  
forth a fire so happy  
That none it left there of a greater brightness; And around  
Beatrice three several times  
It whirled itself with so divine a song, My fantasy repeats it not  
to me;  
Therefore the pen skips, and I write it not, Since our imagination  
for such folds,  
Much more our speech, is of a tint too glaring. "O holy sister  
mine, who us implorest



With such devotion, by thine ardent love Thou dost unbind me  
from that beautiful sphere!"

Thereafter, having stopped, the blessed fire Unto my Lady did  
direct its breath,

Which spake in fashion as I here have said. And she: "O light  
eterne of the great man To whom our Lord delivered up the  
keys He carried down of this miraculous joy, This one examine  
on points light and grave, As good beseemeth thee, about the  
Faith

By means of which thou on the sea didst walk.

If he love well, and hope well, and believe, From thee 'tis hid not;  
for thou hast thy sight There where depicted everything is seen.

But since this kingdom has made citizens By means of the true  
Faith, to glorify it

'Tis well he have the chance to speak thereof." As baccalaureate  
arms himself, and speaks not Until the master doth propose the  
question,

To argue it, and not to terminate it,

So did I arm myself with every reason, While she was speaking,  
that I might be ready

For such a questioner and such profession. "Say, thou good  
Christian; manifest thyself; What is the Faith?" Whereat I raised  
my brow

Unto that light wherefrom was this breathed forth.

Then turned I round to Beatrice, and she Prompt signals made  
to me that I should pour The water forth from my internal  
fountain.

"May grace, that suffers me to make confession," Began I, "to  
the great centurion,

Cause my conceptions all to be explicit!" And I continued: "As  
the truthful pen, Father, of thy dear brother wrote of it,

Who put with thee Rome into the good way, Faith is the  
substance of the things we hope for, And evidence of those that  
are not seen;

And this appears to me its quiddity." Then heard I: "Very rightly  
thou perceivest, If well thou understandest why he placed it

With substances and then with evidences." And I  
thereafterward: "The things profound, That here vouchsafe to  
me their apparition,

Unto all eyes below are so concealed, That they exist there only  
in belief,

Upon the which is founded the high hope, And hence it takes the  
nature of a substance.

And it behoveth us from this belief To reason without having  
other sight,

And hence it has the nature of evidence."

Then heard I: "If whatever is acquired Below by doctrine were  
thus understood,

No sophist's subtlety would there find place." Thus was breathed  
forth from that enkindled love; Then added: "Very well has been  
gone over Already of this coin the alloy and weight;

But tell me if thou hast it in thy purse?" And I: "Yes, both so  
shining and so round That in its stamp there is no  
peradventure." Thereafter issued from the light profound

That there resplendent was: "This precious jewel, Upon the which  
is every virtue founded,

Whence hadst thou it?" And I: "The large outpouring Of Holy  
Spirit, which has been diffused

Upon the ancient parchments and the new, A syllogism is, which  
proved it to me

With such acuteness, that, compared therewith, All  
demonstration seems to me obtuse."

And then I heard: "The ancient and the new Postulates, that to  
thee are so conclusive,

Why dost thou take them for the word divine?" And I: "The proofs, which show the truth to me, Are the works subsequent, whereunto Nature Ne'er heated iron yet, nor anvil beat."

'Twas answered me: "Say, who assureth thee That those works ever were? the thing itself

That must be proved, nought else to thee affirms it." "Were the world to Christianity converted,"

I said, "withouten miracles, this one

Is such, the rest are not its hundredth part;

Because that poor and fasting thou didst enter Into the field to sow there the good plant, Which was a vine and has become a thorn!" This being finished, the high, holy Court

Resounded through the spheres, "One God we praise!" In melody that there above is chanted.

And then that Baron, who from branch to branch, Examining, had thus conducted me,

Till the extremest leaves we were approaching, Again began: "The Grace that dallying

Plays with thine intellect thy mouth has opened, Up to this point, as it should opened be,

So that I do approve what forth emerged; But now thou must express what thou believest,

And whence to thy belief it was presented." "O holy father, spirit  
who beholdest

What thou believedst so that thou o'ercamest, Towards the  
sepulchre, more youthful feet," Began I, "thou dost wish me in  
this place The form to manifest of my prompt belief,

And likewise thou the cause thereof demandest.

And I respond: In one God I believe, Sole and eterne, who  
moveth all the heavens With love and with desire, himself  
unmoved;

And of such faith not only have I proofs Physical and  
metaphysical, but gives them

Likewise the truth that from this place rains down Through  
Moses, through the Prophets and the Psalms, Through the  
Evangel, and through you, who wrote After the fiery Spirit  
sanctified you;

In Persons three eterne believe, and these One essence I  
believe, so one and trine

They bear conjunction both with 'sunt' and 'est.' With the  
profound condition and divine

Which now I touch upon, doth stamp my mind Ofttimes the  
doctrine evangelical.

This the beginning is, this is the spark Which afterwards dilates  
to vivid flame,

And, like a star in heaven, is sparkling in me." Even as a lord who  
hears what pleaseth him His servant straight embraces,  
gratulating For the good news as soon as he is silent;

So, giving me its benediction, singing, Three times encircled me,  
when I was silent, The apostolic light, at whose command  
I spoken had, in speaking I so pleased him.

### Canto XXV

If e'er it happen that the Poem Sacred,

To which both heaven and earth have set their hand, So that it  
many a year hath made me lean, O'ercome the cruelty that bars  
me out

From the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered, An enemy  
to the wolves that war upon it,

With other voice forthwith, with other fleece Poet will I return,  
and at my font

Baptismal will I take the laurel crown; Because into the Faith  
that maketh known All souls to God there entered I, and then

Peter for her sake thus my brow encircled. Thereafterward  
towards us moved a light

Out of that band whence issued the first-fruits Which of his  
vicars Christ behind him left, And then my Lady, full of ecstasy,

Said unto me: "Look, look! behold the Baron For whom below  
Galicia is frequented." In the same way as, when a dove alights

Near his companion, both of them pour forth, Circling about  
and murmuring, their affection, So one beheld I by the other  
grand

Prince glorified to be with welcome greeted, Lauding the food  
that there above is eaten. But when their gratulations were  
complete, Silently 'coram me' each one stood still,

So incandescent it o'ercame my sight. Smiling thereafterwards,  
said Beatrice: "Illustrious life, by whom the benefactions Of our  
Basilica have been described, Make Hope resound within this  
altitude; Thou knowest as oft thou dost personify it

As Jesus to the three gave greater clearness."— "Lift up thy  
head, and make thyself assured; For what comes hither from  
the mortal world Must needs be ripened in our radiance."

This comfort came to me from the second fire; Wherefore mine  
eyes I lifted to the hills,

Which bent them down before with too great weight. "Since,  
through his grace, our Emperor wills that thou Shouldst find  
thee face to face, before thy death,

In the most secret chamber, with his Counts, So that, the truth  
beholden of this court, Hope, which below there rightfully  
enamours, Thereby thou strengthen in thyself and others, Say  
what it is, and how is flowering with it

Thy mind, and say from whence it came to thee." Thus did the  
second light again continue.

And the Compassionate, who piloted The plumage of my wings  
in such high flight,

Did in reply anticipate me thus: "No child whatever the Church  
Militant Of greater hope possesses, as is written In that Sun  
which irradiates all our band; Therefore it is conceded him from  
Egypt

To come into Jerusalem to see,  
Or ever yet his warfare be completed.

The two remaining points, that not for knowledge Have been  
demanded, but that he report

How much this virtue unto thee is pleasing, To him I leave; for  
hard he will not find them, Nor of self-praise; and let him answer  
them; And may the grace of God in this assist him!" As a  
disciple, who his teacher follows,

Ready and willing, where he is expert, That his proficiency may  
be displayed, "Hope," said I, "is the certain expectation Of  
future glory, which is the effect



Of grace divine and merit precedent.

From many stars this light comes unto me; But he instilled it first  
into my heart

Who was chief singer unto the chief captain. 'Sperent in te,' in  
the high Theody

He sayeth, 'those who know thy name;' and who Knoweth it not,  
if he my faith possess?

Thou didst instil me, then, with his instilling In the Epistle, so that  
I am full,

And upon others rain again your rain." While I was speaking, in  
the living bosom Of that combustion quivered an effulgence,  
Sudden and frequent, in the guise of lightning; Then breathed:  
"The love wherewith I am inflamed Towards the virtue still which  
followed me

Unto the palm and issue of the field, Wills that I breathe to thee  
that thou delight

In her; and grateful to me is thy telling Whatever things Hope  
promises to thee." And I: "The ancient Scriptures and the new  
The mark establish, and this shows it me,

Of all the souls whom God hath made his friends.

Isaiah saith, that each one garmented

In his own land shall be with twofold garments, And his own  
land is this delightful life.

Thy brother, too, far more explicitly, There where he treateth of  
the robes of white,

This revelation manifests to us."

And first, and near the ending of these words, "Sperent in te"  
from over us was heard,

To which responsive answered all the carols. Thereafterward a  
light among them brightened, So that, if Cancer one such  
crystal had,

Winter would have a month of one sole day. And as uprises,  
goes, and enters the dance A winsome maiden, only to do  
honour

To the new bride, and not from any failing, Even thus did I  
behold the brightened splendour Approach the two, who in a  
wheel revolved

As was beseeming to their ardent love. Into the song and music  
there it entered; And fixed on them my Lady kept her look, Even  
as a bride silent and motionless. "This is the one who lay upon  
the breast Of him our Pelican; and this is he

To the great office from the cross elected." My Lady thus; but  
therefore none the more Did move her sight from its attentive  
gaze Before or afterward these words of hers. Even as a man

who gazes, and endeavours To see the eclipsing of the sun a  
little,

And who, by seeing, sightless doth become, So I became before  
that latest fire,

While it was said, "Why dost thou daze thyself To see a thing  
which here hath no existence? Earth in the earth my body is,  
and shall be With all the others there, until our number With the  
eternal proposition tallies.

With the two garments in the blessed cloister Are the two lights  
alone that have ascended: And this shalt thou take back into  
your world." And at this utterance the flaming circle

Grew quiet, with the dulcet intermingling

Of sound that by the trinal breath was made, As to escape from  
danger or fatigue

The oars that erst were in the water beaten Are all suspended at  
a whistle's sound.

Ah, how much in my mind was I disturbed, When I turned round  
to look on Beatrice, That her I could not see, although I was  
Close at her side and in the Happy World!

## Canto XXVI

While I was doubting for my vision quenched, Out of the flame  
    refulgent that had quenched it Issued a breathing, that  
attentive made me, Saying: "While thou recoverest the sense  
    Of seeing which in me thou hast consumed, 'Tis well that  
    speaking thou shouldst compensate it.

Begin then, and declare to what thy soul Is aimed, and count it  
    for a certainty, Sight is in thee bewildered and not dead;

Because the Lady, who through this divine Region conducteth  
    thee, has in her look The power the hand of Ananias had."

I said: "As pleaseth her, or soon or late Let the cure come to  
    eyes that portals were When she with fire I ever burn with  
    entered.

The Good, that gives contentment to this Court, The Alpha and  
    Omega is of all

The writing that love reads me low or loud." The selfsame voice,  
    that taken had from me

The terror of the sudden dazzlement, To speak still farther put it  
    in my thought;

And said: "In verity with finer sieve Behoveth thee to sift; thee it  
    behoveth

To say who aimed thy bow at such a target." And I: "By  
    philosophic arguments,

And by authority that hence descends, Such love must needs  
imprint itself in me;

For Good, so far as good, when comprehended Doth straight  
enkindle love, and so much greater As more of goodness in  
itself it holds;

Then to that Essence (whose is such advantage That every good  
which out of it is found

Is nothing but a ray of its own light) More than elsewhere must  
the mind be moved

Of every one, in loving, who discerns The truth in which this  
evidence is founded.

Such truth he to my intellect reveals Who demonstrates to me  
the primal love Of all the sempiternal substances.

The voice reveals it of the truthful Author, Who says to Moses,  
speaking of Himself,

'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' Thou too  
revealest it to me, beginning

The loud Evangel, that proclaims the secret Of heaven to earth  
above all other edict." And I heard say: "By human intellect

And by authority concordant with it,

Of all thy loves reserve for God the highest.

But say again if other cords thou feelest,

Draw thee towards Him, that thou mayst proclaim With how  
many teeth this love is biting thee." The holy purpose of the  
Eagle of Christ

Not latent was, nay, rather I perceived Whither he fain would  
my profession lead. Therefore I recommenced: "All of those  
bites Which have the power to turn the heart to God Unto my  
charity have been concurrent.

The being of the world, and my own being, The death which He  
endured that I may live, And that which all the faithful hope, as  
I do, With the forementioned vivid consciousness Have drawn  
me from the sea of love perverse, And of the right have placed  
me on the shore.

The leaves, wherewith embowered is all the garden Of the  
Eternal Gardener, do I love

As much as he has granted them of good." As soon as I had  
ceased, a song most sweet

Throughout the heaven resounded, and my Lady Said with the  
others, "Holy, holy, holy!"

And as at some keen light one wakes from sleep By reason of  
the visual spirit that runs

Unto the splendour passed from coat to coat, And he who  
wakes abhorreth what he sees, So all unconscious is his sudden  
waking, Until the judgment cometh to his aid,

So from before mine eyes did Beatrice Chase every mote with  
radiance of her own, That cast its light a thousand miles and  
more.

Whence better after than before I saw,

And in a kind of wonderment I asked About a fourth light that I  
saw with us.

And said my Lady: "There within those rays Gazes upon its  
Maker the first soul

That ever the first virtue did create." Even as the bough that  
downward bends its top

At transit of the wind, and then is lifted By its own virtue, which  
inclines it upward,

Likewise did I, the while that she was speaking, Being amazed,  
and then I was made bold By a desire to speak wherewith I  
burned.

And I began: "O apple, that mature Alone hast been produced,  
O ancient father,

To whom each wife is daughter and daughter-in-law, Devoutly  
as I can I supplicate thee

That thou wouldst speak to me; thou seest my wish; And I, to  
hear thee quickly, speak it not." Sometimes an animal, when  
covered, struggles

So that his impulse needs must be apparent, By reason of the  
wrappage following it; And in like manner the primeval soul  
Made clear to me athwart its covering How jubilant it was to  
give me pleasure.

Then breathed: "Without thy uttering it to me, Thine inclination  
better I discern

Than thou whatever thing is surest to thee; For I behold it in the  
truthful mirror,

That of Himself all things parhelion makes, And none makes  
Him parhelion of itself.

Thou fain wouldst hear how long ago God placed me

Within the lofty garden, where this Lady Unto so long a stairway  
thee disposed.

And how long to mine eyes it was a pleasure, And of the great  
disdain the proper cause, And the language that I used and  
that I made.

Now, son of mine, the tasting of the tree Not in itself was cause  
of so great exile, But solely the o'erstepping of the bounds.

There, whence thy Lady moved Virgilius,

Four thousand and three hundred and two circuits Made by the  
sun, this Council I desired;

And him I saw return to all the lights



Of his highway nine hundred times and thirty, Whilst I upon the  
earth was tarrying.

The language that I spake was quite extinct Before that in the  
work interminable

The people under Nimrod were employed;

For nevermore result of reasoning (Because of human pleasure  
that doth change,

Obedient to the heavens) was durable. A natural action is it that  
man speaks;

But whether thus or thus, doth nature leave To your own art, as  
seemeth best to you. Ere I descended to the infernal anguish,

'El' was on earth the name of the Chief Good, From whom  
comes all the joy that wraps me round 'Eli' he then was called,  
and that is proper,

Because the use of men is like a leaf

On bough, which goeth and another cometh. Upon the mount  
that highest o'er the wave

Rises was I, in life or pure or sinful, From the first hour to that  
which is the second,

As the sun changes quadrant, to the sixth."

## Canto XXVII

"Glory be to the Father, to the Son, And Holy Ghost!" all  
Paradise began, So that the melody inebriate made me. What I  
beheld seemed unto me a smile Of the universe; for my  
inebriation

Found entrance through the hearing and the sight.

O joy! O gladness inexpressible!

O perfect life of love and peacefulness!

O riches without hankering secure!

Before mine eyes were standing the four torches Enkindled, and  
the one that first had come Began to make itself more  
luminous;

And even such in semblance it became As Jupiter would  
become, if he and Mars

Were birds, and they should interchange their feathers.

That Providence, which here distributeth Season and service, in  
the blessed choir Had silence upon every side imposed. When I  
heard say: "If I my colour change, Marvel not at it; for while I  
am speaking

Thou shalt behold all these their colour change.

He who usurps upon the earth my place, My place, my place,  
which vacant has become

Before the presence of the Son of God,

Has of my cemetery made a sewer  
Of blood and stench, whereby the Perverse One, Who fell from  
here, below there is appeased!" With the same colour which,  
through sun adverse, Painteth the clouds at evening or at morn,

Beheld I then the whole of heaven suffused.

And as a modest woman, who abides Sure of herself, and at  
another's failing, From listening only, timorous becomes,  
Even thus did Beatrice change countenance; And I believe in  
heaven was such eclipse, When suffered the supreme  
Omnipotence; Thereafterward proceeded forth his words With  
voice so much transmuted from itself, The very countenance  
was not more changed. "The spouse of Christ has never  
nurtured been On blood of mine, of Linus and of Cletus,  
To be made use of in acquest of gold; But in acquest of this  
delightful life Sixtus and Pius, Urban and Calixtus,  
After much lamentation, shed their blood. Our purpose was not,  
that on the right hand Of our successors should in part be  
seated The Christian folk, in part upon the other; Nor that the  
keys which were to me confided  
Should e'er become the escutcheon on a banner, That should  
wage war on those who are baptized; Nor I be made the figure  
of a seal

To privileges venal and mendacious, Whereat I often redden  
and flash with fire.

In garb of shepherds the rapacious wolves Are seen from here  
above o'er all the pastures! O wrath of God, why dost thou  
slumber still? To drink our blood the Caorsines and Gascons  
Are making ready. O thou good beginning, Unto how vile an end  
must thou needs fall! But the high Providence, that with Scipio  
At Rome the glory of the world defended, Will speedily bring aid,  
as I conceive;

And thou, my son, who by thy mortal weight Shalt down return  
again, open thy mouth; What I conceal not, do not thou  
conceal." As with its frozen vapours downward falls

In flakes our atmosphere, what time the horn Of the celestial  
Goat doth touch the sun, Upward in such array saw I the ether  
Become, and flaked with the triumphant vapours, Which there  
together with us had remained.

My sight was following up their semblances, And followed till the  
medium, by excess, The passing farther onward took from it;  
Whereat the Lady, who beheld me freed From gazing upward,  
said to me: "Cast down

Thy sight, and see how far thou art turned round." Since the first  
time that I had downward looked,

I saw that I had moved through the whole arc Which the first  
climate makes from midst to end; So that I saw the mad track  
of Ulysses

Past Gades, and this side, well nigh the shore Whereon became  
Europa a sweet burden.

And of this threshing-floor the site to me Were more unveiled,  
but the sun was proceeding

Under my feet, a sign and more removed. My mind enamoured,  
which is dallying At all times with my Lady, to bring back

To her mine eyes was more than ever ardent.

And if or Art or Nature has made bait To catch the eyes and so  
possess the mind,

In human flesh or in its portraiture,

All joined together would appear as nought To the divine delight  
which shone upon me When to her smiling face I turned me  
round. The virtue that her look endowed me with From the fair  
nest of Leda tore me forth,

And up into the swiftest heaven impelled me.

Its parts exceeding full of life and lofty Are all so uniform, I  
cannot say

Which Beatrice selected for my place. But she, who was aware  
of my desire, Began, the while she smiled so joyously

That God seemed in her countenance to rejoice: "The nature of  
that motion, which keeps quiet The centre and all the rest about  
it moves, From hence begins as from its starting point.

And in this heaven there is no other Where Than in the Mind  
Divine, wherein is kindled The love that turns it, and the power it  
rains.

Within a circle light and love embrace it, Even as this doth the  
others, and that precinct He who encircles it alone controls.

Its motion is not by another meted, But all the others measured  
are by this, As ten is by the half and by the fifth. And in what  
manner time in such a pot

May have its roots, and in the rest its leaves, Now unto thee can  
manifest be made.

O Covetousness, that mortals dost ingulf Beneath thee so, that  
no one hath the power Of drawing back his eyes from out thy  
waves!

Full fairly blossoms in mankind the will; But the uninterrupted  
rain converts Into abortive wildings the true plums.

Fidelity and innocence are found Only in children; afterwards  
they both

Take flight or e'er the cheeks with down are covered.

One, while he prattles still, observes the fasts, Who, when his  
tongue is loosed, forthwith devours Whatever food under  
whatever moon;

Another, while he prattles, loves and listens Unto his mother,  
who when speech is perfect Forthwith desires to see her in her  
grave.

Even thus is swarthy made the skin so white In its first aspect of  
the daughter fair

Of him who brings the morn, and leaves the night.

Thou, that it may not be a marvel to thee, Think that on earth  
there is no one who governs;

Whence goes astray the human family.

Ere January be unwintered wholly By the centesimal on earth  
neglected, Shall these supernal circles roar so loud

The tempest that has been so long awaited Shall whirl the  
poops about where are the prows;

So that the fleet shall run its course direct, And the true fruit  
shall follow on the flower."

### Canto XXVIII

After the truth against the present life Of miserable mortals was  
unfolded By her who doth imparadise my mind, As in a looking-  
glass a taper's flame

He sees who from behind is lighted by it, Before he has it in his  
sight or thought, And turns him round to see if so the glass Tell  
him the truth, and sees that it accords Therewith as doth a  
music with its metre, In similar wise my memory recollecteth  
That I did, looking into those fair eyes,

Of which Love made the springes to ensnare me. And as I  
turned me round, and mine were touched By that which is  
apparent in that volume, Whenever on its gyre we gaze intent,  
A point beheld I, that was raying out Light so acute, the sight  
which it enkindles

Must close perforce before such great acuteness.

And whatsoever star seems smallest here Would seem to be a  
moon, if placed beside it.

As one star with another star is placed. Perhaps at such a  
distance as appears

A halo cincturing the light that paints it,

When densest is the vapour that sustains it, Thus distant round  
the point a circle of fire



So swiftly whirled, that it would have surpassed Whatever  
motion soonest girds the world;

And this was by another circumcinct, That by a third, the third  
then by a fourth,

By a fifth the fourth, and then by a sixth the fifth; The seventh  
followed thereupon in width

So ample now, that Juno's messenger Entire would be too  
narrow to contain it.

Even so the eighth and ninth; and every one More slowly moved,  
according as it was In number distant farther from the first.

And that one had its flame most crystalline From which less  
distant was the stainless spark, I think because more with its  
truth imbued.

My Lady, who in my anxiety

Beheld me much perplexed, said: "From that point Dependent is  
the heaven and nature all.

Behold that circle most conjoined to it, And know thou, that its  
motion is so swift

Through burning love whereby it is spurred on." And I to her: "If  
the world were arranged

In the order which I see in yonder wheels, What's set before me  
would have satisfied me; But in the world of sense we can  
perceive That evermore the circles are diviner

As they are from the centre more remote Wherefore if my desire  
is to be ended In this miraculous and angelic temple,

That has for confines only love and light, To hear behoves me  
still how the example And the exemplar go not in one fashion,  
Since for myself in vain I contemplate it." "If thine own fingers  
unto such a knot

Be insufficient, it is no great wonder, So hard hath it become for  
want of trying." My Lady thus; then said she: "Do thou take  
What I shall tell thee, if thou wouldst be sated, And exercise on  
that thy subtlety.

The circles corporal are wide and narrow According to the more  
or less of virtue Which is distributed through all their parts.

The greater goodness works the greater weal, The greater weal  
the greater body holds,

If perfect equally are all its parts.

Therefore this one which sweeps along with it The universe  
sublime, doth correspond

Unto the circle which most loves and knows.

On which account, if thou unto the virtue Apply thy measure,  
not to the appearance Of substances that unto thee seem  
round, Thou wilt behold a marvellous agreement, Of more to  
greater, and of less to smaller, In every heaven, with its

Intelligence." Even as remaineth splendid and serene The  
hemisphere of air, when Boreas  
Is blowing from that cheek where he is mildest, Because is  
purified and resolved the rack That erst disturbed it, till the  
welkin laughs

With all the beauties of its pageantry; Thus did I likewise, after  
that my Lady Had me provided with her clear response,  
And like a star in heaven the truth was seen. And soon as to a  
stop her words had come, Not otherwise does iron scintillate  
When molten, than those circles scintillated. Their coruscation all  
the sparks repeated, And they so many were, their number  
makes More millions than the doubling of the chess.

I heard them sing hosanna choir by choir  
To the fixed point which holds them at the 'Ubi,' And ever will,  
where they have ever been.

And she, who saw the dubious meditations Within my mind,  
"The primal circles," said, "Have shown thee Seraphim and  
Cherubim. Thus rapidly they follow their own bonds, To be as  
like the point as most they can, And can as far as they are high  
in vision.

Those other Loves, that round about them go, Thrones of the  
countenance divine are called, Because they terminate the  
primal Triad.

And thou shouldst know that they all have delight As much as  
their own vision penetrates

The Truth, in which all intellect finds rest. From this it may be  
seen how blessedness Is founded in the faculty which sees,  
And not in that which loves, and follows next; And of this seeing  
merit is the measure,

Which is brought forth by grace, and by good will;

Thus on from grade to grade doth it proceed.

The second Triad, which is germinating In such wise in this  
sempiternal spring, That no nocturnal Aries despoils, Perpetually  
hosanna warbles forth

With threefold melody, that sounds in three Orders of joy, with  
which it is intrined.

The three Divine are in this hierarchy, First the Dominions, and  
the Virtues next; And the third order is that of the Powers.

Then in the dances twain penultimate The Principalities and  
Archangels wheel; The last is wholly of angelic sports.

These orders upward all of them are gazing, And downward so  
prevail, that unto God They all attracted are and all attract.

And Dionysius with so great desire To contemplate these Orders  
set himself,

He named them and distinguished them as I do. But Gregory  
afterwards dissented from him; Wherefore, as soon as he  
unclosed his eyes Within this heaven, he at himself did smile.  
And if so much of secret truth a mortal Proffered on earth, I  
would not have thee marvel,  
For he who saw it here revealed it to him, With much more of  
the truth about these circles."

### Canto XXIX

At what time both the children of Latona,  
Surmounted by the Ram and by the Scales, Together make a  
zone of the horizon,  
As long as from the time the zenith holds them In equipoise, till  
from that girdle both Changing their hemisphere disturb the  
balance, So long, her face depicted with a smile,  
Did Beatrice keep silence while she gazed Fixedly at the point  
which had o'ercome me.  
Then she began: "I say, and I ask not What thou dost wish to  
hear, for I have seen it Where centres every When and every  
'Ubi.'

Not to acquire some good unto himself, Which is impossible, but  
that his splendour In its resplendency may say, 'Subsisto,'  
In his eternity outside of time, Outside all other limits, as it  
pleased him, Into new Loves the Eternal Love unfolded.  
Nor as if torpid did he lie before; For neither after nor before  
proceeded

The going forth of God upon these waters. Matter and Form  
unmingled and conjoined Came into being that had no defect,  
E'en as three arrows from a three-stringed bow.

And as in glass, in amber, or in crystal A sunbeam flashes so,  
that from its coming

To its full being is no interval,

So from its Lord did the triform effect Ray forth into its being all  
together, Without discrimination of beginning. Order was con-  
created and constructed

In substances, and summit of the world Were those wherein the  
pure act was produced.

Pure potentiality held the lowest part; Midway bound  
potentiality with act

Such bond that it shall never be unbound.

Jerome has written unto you of angels Created a long lapse of  
centuries

Or ever yet the other world was made; But written is this truth in  
many places By writers of the Holy Ghost, and thou Shalt see it,  
if thou lookest well thereat.

And even reason seeth it somewhat, For it would not concede  
that for so long

Could be the motors without their perfection.

Now dost thou know both where and when these Loves Created  
were, and how; so that extinct

In thy desire already are three fires.

Nor could one reach, in counting, unto twenty So swiftly, as a  
portion of these angels Disturbed the subject of your elements.

The rest remained, and they began this art Which thou  
discernest, with so great delight That never from their circling  
do they cease. The occasion of the fall was the accursed  
Presumption of that One, whom thou hast seen By all the  
burden of the world constrained.

Those whom thou here beholdest modest were To recognise  
themselves as of that goodness

Which made them apt for so much understanding; On which  
account their vision was exalted

By the enlightening grace and their own merit, So that they  
have a full and steadfast will.

I would not have thee doubt, but certain be, 'Tis meritorious to  
receive this grace, According as the affection opens to it.

Now round about in this consistory

Much mayst thou contemplate, if these my words Be gathered  
up, without all further aid.

But since upon the earth, throughout your schools, They teach  
that such is the angelic nature That it doth hear, and recollect,  
and will,

More will I say, that thou mayst see unmixed The truth that is  
confounded there below, Equivocating in such like prelections.

These substances, since in God's countenance They jocund  
were, turned not away their sight From that wherefrom not  
anything is hidden; Hence they have not their vision intercepted

By object new, and hence they do not need

To recollect, through interrupted thought. So that below, not  
sleeping, people dream,

Believing they speak truth, and not believing; And in the last is  
greater sin and shame.

Below you do not journey by one path Philosophising; so  
transporteth you

Love of appearance and the thought thereof.

And even this above here is endured With less disdain, than  
when is set aside The Holy Writ, or when it is distorted.



They think not there how much of blood it costs

To sow it in the world, and how he pleases Who in humility  
keeps close to it.

Each striveth for appearance, and doth make His own  
inventions; and these treated are

By preachers, and the Evangel holds its peace. One sayeth that  
the moon did backward turn, In the Passion of Christ, and  
interpose herself So that the sunlight reached not down below;  
And lies; for of its own accord the light

Hid itself; whence to Spaniards and to Indians, As to the Jews,  
did such eclipse respond.

Florence has not so many Lapi and Bindi As fables such as  
these, that every year Are shouted from the pulpit back and  
forth,

In such wise that the lambs, who do not know, Come back from  
pasture fed upon the wind, And not to see the harm doth not  
excuse them.

Christ did not to his first disciples say, 'Go forth, and to the  
world preach idle tales,'

But unto them a true foundation gave; And this so loudly  
sounded from their lips, That, in the warfare to enkindle Faith,

They made of the Evangel shields and lances. Now men go forth  
with jests and drolleries To preach, and if but well the people  
laugh,

The hood puffs out, and nothing more is asked.

But in the cowl there nestles such a bird, That, if the common  
people were to see it,

They would perceive what pardons they confide in, For which so  
great on earth has grown the folly,

That, without proof of any testimony,

To each indulgence they would flock together.

By this Saint Anthony his pig doth fatten, And many others, who  
are worse than pigs, Paying in money without mark of coinage.

But since we have digressed abundantly,

Turn back thine eyes forthwith to the right path, So that the way  
be shortened with the time.

This nature doth so multiply itself

In numbers, that there never yet was speech Nor mortal fancy  
that can go so far.

And if thou notest that which is revealed By Daniel, thou wilt see  
that in his thousands

Number determinate is kept concealed. The primal light, that all  
irradiates it, By modes as many is received therein,

As are the splendours wherewith it is mated. Hence, inasmuch  
as on the act conceptive The affection followeth, of love the  
sweetness Therein diversely fervid is or tepid.

The height behold now and the amplitude Of the eternal power,  
since it hath made Itself so many mirrors, where 'tis broken,  
One in itself remaining as before."

### Canto XXX

Perchance six thousand miles remote from us Is glowing the  
sixth hour, and now this world Inclines its shadow almost to a  
level,

When the mid-heaven begins to make itself So deep to us, that  
here and there a star Ceases to shine so far down as this depth,  
And as advances bright exceedingly

The handmaid of the sun, the heaven is closed Light after light  
to the most beautiful;

Not otherwise the Triumph, which for ever Plays round about  
the point that vanquished me, Seeming enclosed by what itself  
encloses,

Little by little from my vision faded; Whereat to turn mine eyes  
on Beatrice

My seeing nothing and my love constrained me.

If what has hitherto been said of her Were all concluded in a  
single praise,

Scant would it be to serve the present turn.

Not only does the beauty I beheld Transcend ourselves, but  
truly I believe Its Maker only may enjoy it all.

Vanquished do I confess me by this passage More than by  
problem of his theme was ever O'ercome the comic or the tragic  
poet;

For as the sun the sight that trembles most, Even so the  
memory of that sweet smile My mind depriveth of its very self.

From the first day that I beheld her face In this life, to the  
moment of this look,

The sequence of my song has ne'er been severed; But now  
perforce this sequence must desist From following her beauty  
with my verse,

As every artist at his uttermost.

Such as I leave her to a greater fame Than any of my trumpet,  
which is bringing

Its arduous matter to a final close, With voice and gesture of a  
perfect leader

She recommenced: "We from the greatest body Have issued to  
the heaven that is pure light; Light intellectual replete with love,

Love of true good replete with ecstasy, Ecstasy that  
transcendeth every sweetness. Here shalt thou see the one host  
and the other Of Paradise, and one in the same aspects Which  
at the final judgment thou shalt see." Even as a sudden lightning

that disperses The visual spirits, so that it deprives

The eye of impress from the strongest objects,

Thus round about me flashed a living light, And left me swathed  
around with such a veil Of its effulgence, that I nothing saw.

"Ever the Love which quieteth this heaven Welcomes into itself  
with such salute,

To make the candle ready for its flame." No sooner had within  
me these brief words An entrance found, than I perceived  
myself To be uplifted over my own power,

And I with vision new rekindled me, Such that no light whatever  
is so pure

But that mine eyes were fortified against it.

And light I saw in fashion of a river Fulvid with its effulgence,  
'twixt two banks

Depicted with an admirable Spring.

Out of this river issued living sparks, And on all sides sank down  
into the flowers,

Like unto rubies that are set in gold; And then, as if inebriate  
with the odours,

They plunged again into the wondrous torrent, And as one  
entered issued forth another.

"The high desire, that now inflames and moves thee To have  
intelligence of what thou seest,

Pleaseth me all the more, the more it swells.

But of this water it behoves thee drink Before so great a thirst in  
thee be slaked." Thus said to me the sunshine of mine eyes; And  
added: "The river and the topazes

Going in and out, and the laughing of the herbage, Are of their  
truth foreshadowing prefaces;

Not that these things are difficult in themselves, But the  
deficiency is on thy side,

For yet thou hast not vision so exalted." There is no babe that  
leaps so suddenly With face towards the milk, if he awake Much  
later than his usual custom is,

As I did, that I might make better mirrors Still of mine eyes,  
down stooping to the wave Which flows that we therein be  
better made. And even as the penthouse of mine eyelids Drank  
of it, it forthwith appeared to me

Out of its length to be transformed to round. Then as a folk who  
have been under masks Seem other than before, if they divest

The semblance not their own they disappeared in,

Thus into greater pomp were changed for me The flowerets and  
the sparks, so that I saw Both of the Courts of Heaven made  
manifest. O splendour of God! by means of which I saw The  
lofty triumph of the realm veracious, Give me the power to say

how it I saw!

There is a light above, which visible Makes the Creator unto  
every creature, Who only in beholding Him has peace, And it  
expands itself in circular form To such extent, that its  
circumference Would be too large a girdle for the sun. The  
semblance of it is all made of rays

Reflected from the top of Primal Motion, Which takes therefrom  
vitality and power.

And as a hill in water at its base Mirrors itself, as if to see its  
beauty

When affluent most in verdure and in flowers, So, ranged aloft  
all round about the light, Mirrored I saw in more ranks than a  
thousand All who above there have from us returned.

And if the lowest row collect within it So great a light, how vast  
the amplitude Is of this Rose in its extremest leaves! My vision

in the vastness and the height Lost not itself, but comprehended  
all

The quantity and quality of that gladness. There near and far  
nor add nor take away;

For there where God immediately doth govern, The natural law  
in naught is relevant.

Into the yellow of the Rose Eternal

That spreads, and multiplies, and breathes an odour Of praise  
unto the ever-vernal Sun,

As one who silent is and fain would speak, Me Beatrice drew on,  
and said: "Behold

Of the white stoles how vast the convent is!

Behold how vast the circuit of our city! Behold our seats so filled  
to overflowing,

That here henceforward are few people wanting! On that great  
throne whereon thine eyes are fixed For the crown's sake  
already placed upon it, Before thou suppest at this wedding  
feast

Shall sit the soul (that is to be Augustus On earth) of noble  
Henry, who shall come To redress Italy ere she be ready.

Blind covetousness, that casts its spell upon you, Has made you  
like unto the little child,



Who dies of hunger and drives off the nurse.

And in the sacred forum then shall be A Prefect such, that  
openly or covert

On the same road he will not walk with him.

But long of God he will not be endured In holy office; he shall be  
thrust down Where Simon Magus is for his deserts, And make  
him of Alagna lower go!"

### Canto XXXI

In fashion then as of a snow-white rose Displayed itself to me  
the saintly host,

Whom Christ in his own blood had made his bride, But the other  
host, that flying sees and sings

The glory of Him who doth enamour it, And the goodness that  
created it so noble,

Even as a swarm of bees, that sinks in flowers One moment,  
and the next returns again

To where its labour is to sweetness turned, Sank into the great  
flower, that is adorned With leaves so many, and thence  
reascended To where its love abideth evermore.

Their faces had they all of living flame, And wings of gold, and  
all the rest so white No snow unto that limit doth attain.

From bench to bench, into the flower descending, They carried  
something of the peace and ardour Which by the fanning of  
their flanks they won.

Nor did the interposing 'twixt the flower And what was o'er it of  
such plenitude

Of flying shapes impede the sight and splendour; Because the  
light divine so penetrates

The universe, according to its merit, That naught can be an  
obstacle against it. This realm secure and full of gladsomeness,  
Crowded with ancient people and with modern, Unto one mark  
had all its look and love.

O Trinal Light, that in a single star Sparkling upon their sight so  
satisfies them, Look down upon our tempest here below! If the  
barbarians, coming from some region That every day by Helice  
is covered,

Revolving with her son whom she delights in, Beholding Rome  
and all her noble works, Were wonder-struck, what time the  
Lateran Above all mortal things was eminent,—

I who to the divine had from the human, From time unto  
eternity, had come, From Florence to a people just and sane,

With what amazement must I have been filled!

Truly between this and the joy, it was My pleasure not to hear,  
and to be mute.

And as a pilgrim who delighteth him In gazing round the temple  
of his vow, And hopes some day to retell how it was,

So through the living light my way pursuing Directed I mine  
eyes o'er all the ranks,

Now up, now down, and now all round about.

Faces I saw of charity persuasive, Embellished by His light and  
their own smile, And attitudes adorned with every grace.

The general form of Paradise already My glance had  
comprehended as a whole,

In no part hitherto remaining fixed, And round I turned me with  
rekindled wish

My Lady to interrogate of things Concerning which my mind  
was in suspense.

One thing I meant, another answered me; I thought I should  
see Beatrice, and saw

An Old Man habited like the glorious people. O'erflowing was he  
in his eyes and cheeks With joy benign, in attitude of pity

As to a tender father is becoming.

And "She, where is she?" instantly I said; Whence he: "To put an end to thy desire, Me Beatrice hath sent from mine own place.

And if thou lookest up to the third round Of the first rank, again shalt thou behold her Upon the throne her merits have assigned her."

Without reply I lifted up mine eyes, And saw her, as she made herself a crown Reflecting from herself the eternal rays.

Not from that region which the highest thunders Is any mortal eye so far removed,

In whatsoever sea it deepest sinks, As there from Beatrice my sight; but this Was nothing unto me; because her image

Descended not to me by medium blurred. "O Lady, thou in whom my hope is strong, And who for my salvation didst endure

In Hell to leave the imprint of thy feet, Of whatsoever things I have beheld,

As coming from thy power and from thy goodness I recognise the virtue and the grace.

Thou from a slave hast brought me unto freedom, By all those ways, by all the expedients, Whereby thou hadst the power of doing it.

Preserve towards me thy magnificence,

So that this soul of mine, which thou hast healed, Pleasing to  
thee be loosened from the body." Thus I implored; and she, so  
far away,

Smiled, as it seemed, and looked once more at me;

Then unto the eternal fountain turned.

And said the Old Man holy: "That thou mayst Accomplish  
perfectly thy journeying, Whereunto prayer and holy love have  
sent me, Fly with thine eyes all round about this garden; For  
seeing it will discipline thy sight

Farther to mount along the ray divine.

And she, the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn Wholly with  
love, will grant us every grace, Because that I her faithful  
Bernard am."

As he who peradventure from Croatia Cometh to gaze at our  
Veronica,

Who through its ancient fame is never sated, But says in  
thought, the while it is displayed, "My Lord, Christ Jesus, God of  
very God, Now was your semblance made like unto this?" Even  
such was I while gazing at the living Charity of the man, who in  
this world

By contemplation tasted of that peace. "Thou son of grace, this  
jocund life," began he,

"Will not be known to thee by keeping ever Thine eyes below  
here on the lowest place; But mark the circles to the most  
remote, Until thou shalt behold enthroned the Queen To whom  
this realm is subject and devoted." I lifted up mine eyes, and as  
at morn

The oriental part of the horizon Surpasses that wherein the sun  
goes down, Thus, as if going with mine eyes from vale To  
mount, I saw a part in the remoteness

Surpass in splendour all the other front. And even as there  
where we await the pole That Phaeton drove badly, blazes more  
The light, and is on either side diminished, So likewise that  
pacific oriflamme

Gleamed brightest in the centre, and each side In equal  
measure did the flame abate.

And at that centre, with their wings expanded, More than a  
thousand jubilant Angels saw I, Each differing in effulgence and  
in kind.

I saw there at their sports and at their songs A beauty smiling,  
which the gladness was Within the eyes of all the other saints;

And if I had in speaking as much wealth As in imagining, I  
should not dare

To attempt the smallest part of its delight. Bernard, as soon as  
he beheld mine eyes Fixed and intent upon its fervid fervour, His

own with such affection turned to her That it made mine more  
ardent to behold.

### Canto XXXII

Absorbed in his delight, that contemplator Assumed the willing  
office of a teacher, And gave beginning to these holy words:

"The wound that Mary closed up and anointed, She at her feet  
who is so beautiful,

She is the one who opened it and pierced it. Within that order  
which the third seats make

Is seated Rachel, lower than the other, With Beatrice, in manner  
as thou seest. Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and her who was  
Ancestress of the Singer, who for dole Of the misdeed said,  
'Miserere mei,'

Canst thou behold from seat to seat descending Down in  
gradation, as with each one's name

I through the Rose go down from leaf to leaf. And downward  
from the seventh row, even as Above the same, succeed the  
Hebrew women, Dividing all the tresses of the flower; Because,  
according to the view which Faith In Christ had taken, these are  
the partition

By which the sacred stairways are divided. Upon this side,  
where perfect is the flower With each one of its petals, seated  
are

Those who believed in Christ who was to come.

Upon the other side, where intersected With vacant spaces are  
the semicircles,

Are those who looked to Christ already come.

And as, upon this side, the glorious seat Of the Lady of Heaven,  
and the other seats Below it, such a great division make,  
So opposite doth that of the great John, Who, ever holy, desert  
and martyrdom Endured, and afterwards two years in Hell.

And under him thus to divide were chosen Francis, and  
Benedict, and Augustine,

And down to us the rest from round to round.

Behold now the high providence divine;

For one and other aspect of the Faith In equal measure shall  
this garden fill.

And know that downward from that rank which cleaves Midway  
the sequence of the two divisions,

Not by their proper merit are they seated; But by another's  
under fixed conditions; For these are spirits one and all assoiled  
Before they any true election had.



Well canst thou recognise it in their faces, And also in their  
voices puerile,

If thou regard them well and hearken to them. Now doubttest  
thou, and doubting thou art silent; But I will loosen for thee the  
strong bond

In which thy subtile fancies hold thee fast.

Within the amplitude of this domain No casual point can  
possibly find place,

No more than sadness can, or thirst, or hunger; For by eternal  
law has been established Whatever thou beholdest, so that  
closely

The ring is fitted to the finger here.

And therefore are these people, festinate Unto true life, not 'sine  
causa' here

More and less excellent among themselves.

The King, by means of whom this realm reposes In so great love  
and in so great delight

That no will ventureth to ask for more, In his own joyous aspect  
every mind

Creating, at his pleasure dowers with grace Diversely; and let  
here the effect suffice. And this is clearly and expressly noted

For you in Holy Scripture, in those twins Who in their mother  
had their anger roused.

According to the colour of the hair, Therefore, with such a grace  
the light supreme

Consenteth that they worthily be crowned. Without, then, any  
merit of their deeds, Stationed are they in different gradations,  
Differing only in their first acuteness.

'Tis true that in the early centuries, With innocence, to work out  
their salvation

Sufficient was the faith of parents only. After the earlier ages  
were completed, Behoved it that the males by circumcision  
Unto their innocent wings should virtue add; But after that the  
time of grace had come Without the baptism absolute of Christ,  
Such innocence below there was retained.

Look now into the face that unto Christ

Hath most resemblance; for its brightness only Is able to  
prepare thee to see Christ."

On her did I behold so great a gladness Rain down, borne  
onward in the holy minds Created through that altitude to fly,  
That whatsoever I had seen before Did not suspend me in such  
admiration, Nor show me such similitude of God.

And the same Love that first descended there, "Ave Maria,  
gratia plena," singing,

In front of her his wings expanded wide.

Unto the canticle divine responded

From every part the court beatified, So that each sight became  
serener for it.

"O holy father, who for me endurest To be below here, leaving  
the sweet place

In which thou sittest by eternal lot, Who is the Angel that with so  
much joy Into the eyes is looking of our Queen,

Enamoured so that he seems made of fire?" Thus I again  
recourse had to the teaching Of that one who delighted him in  
Mary As doth the star of morning in the sun.

And he to me: "Such gallantry and grace As there can be in  
Angel and in soul,

All is in him; and thus we fain would have it; Because he is the  
one who bore the palm Down unto Mary, when the Son of God

To take our burden on himself decreed.

But now come onward with thine eyes, as I Speaking shall go,  
and note the great patricians Of this most just and merciful of  
empires.

Those two that sit above there most enrapture As being very  
near unto Augusta,

Are as it were the two roots of this Rose. He who upon the left is  
near her placed The father is, by whose audacious taste The  
human species so much bitter tastes.

Upon the right thou seest that ancient father Of Holy Church,  
into whose keeping Christ The keys committed of this lovely  
flower.

And he who all the evil days beheld,

Before his death, of her the beauteous bride Who with the spear  
and with the nails was won, Beside him sits, and by the other  
rests

That leader under whom on manna lived The people ingrate,  
fickle, and stiff-necked.

Opposite Peter seest thou Anna seated, So well content to look  
upon her daughter,

Her eyes she moves not while she sings Hosanna.

And opposite the eldest household father Lucia sits, she who thy  
Lady moved

When to rush downward thou didst bend thy brows.

But since the moments of thy vision fly, Here will we make full  
stop, as a good tailor Who makes the gown according to his  
cloth, And unto the first Love will turn our eyes, That looking  
upon Him thou penetrate

As far as possible through his effulgence.

Truly, lest peradventure thou recede, Moving thy wings believing  
to advance,

By prayer behoves it that grace be obtained; Grace from that  
one who has the power to aid thee;

And thou shalt follow me with thy affection That from my words  
thy heart turn not aside." And he began this holy orison.

### Canto XXXIII

"Thou Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son, Humble and high  
beyond all other creature, The limit fixed of the eternal counsel,

Thou art the one who such nobility To human nature gave, that  
its Creator

Did not disdain to make himself its creature. Within thy womb  
rekindled was the love, By heat of which in the eternal peace

After such wise this flower has germinated.

Here unto us thou art a noontday torch Of charity, and below  
there among mortals Thou art the living fountain-head of hope.  
Lady, thou art so great, and so prevailing, That he who wishes  
grace, nor runs to thee,

His aspirations without wings would fly.

Not only thy benignity gives succour To him who asketh it, but  
oftentimes

Forerunneth of its own accord the asking.

In thee compassion is, in thee is pity, In thee magnificence; in  
thee unites

Whate'er of goodness is in any creature.

Now doth this man, who from the lowest depth Of the universe  
as far as here has seen

One after one the spiritual lives, Supplicate thee through grace  
for so much power

That with his eyes he may uplift himself Higher towards the  
uttermost salvation.

And I, who never burned for my own seeing More than I do for  
his, all of my prayers Proffer to thee, and pray they come not  
short, That thou wouldst scatter from him every cloud Of his  
mortality so with thy prayers,

That the Chief Pleasure be to him displayed.

Still farther do I pray thee, Queen, who canst Whate'er thou wilt,  
that sound thou mayst preserve After so great a vision his  
affections.

Let thy protection conquer human movements; See Beatrice  
and all the blessed ones

My prayers to second clasp their hands to thee!" The eyes  
beloved and revered of God, Fastened upon the speaker,  
showed to us How grateful unto her are prayers devout; Then  
unto the Eternal Light they turned,

On which it is not credible could be By any creature bent an eye  
so clear. And I, who to the end of all desires Was now  
approaching, even as I ought The ardour of desire within me  
ended.

Bernard was beckoning unto me, and smiling, That I should  
upward look; but I already Was of my own accord such as he  
wished;

Because my sight, becoming purified, Was entering more and  
more into the ray Of the High Light which of itself is true.

From that time forward what I saw was greater Than our  
discourse, that to such vision yields, And yields the memory  
unto such excess.

Even as he is who seeth in a dream, And after dreaming the  
imprinted passion

Remains, and to his mind the rest returns not, Even such am I,  
for almost utterly Ceases my vision, and distilleth yet

Within my heart the sweetness born of it;

Even thus the snow is in the sun unsealed, Even thus upon the  
wind in the light leaves Were the soothsayings of the Sibyl lost.

O Light Supreme, that dost so far uplift thee From the conceits  
of mortals, to my mind Of what thou didst appear re-lend a  
little, And make my tongue of so great puissance, That but a  
single sparkle of thy glory

It may bequeath unto the future people; For by returning to my  
memory somewhat, And by a little sounding in these verses,  
More of thy victory shall be conceived!

I think the keenness of the living ray Which I endured would  
have bewildered me,

If but mine eyes had been averted from it; And I remember that  
I was more bold On this account to bear, so that I joined  
My aspect with the Glory Infinite.

O grace abundant, by which I presumed To fix my sight upon  
the Light Eternal, So that the seeing I consumed therein! I saw  
that in its depth far down is lying

Bound up with love together in one volume, What through the  
universe in leaves is scattered; Substance, and accident, and  
their operations, All interfused together in such wise  
That what I speak of is one simple light.

The universal fashion of this knot Methinks I saw, since more  
abundantly In saying this I feel that I rejoice.



One moment is more lethargy to me, Than five and twenty  
centuries to the emprise That startled Neptune with the shade  
of Argo!

My mind in this wise wholly in suspense, Steadfast, immovable,  
attentive gazed, And evermore with gazing grew enkindled.

In presence of that light one such becomes, That to withdraw  
therefrom for other prospect It is impossible he e'er consent;  
Because the good, which object is of will, Is gathered all in this,  
and out of it

That is defective which is perfect there.

Shorter henceforward will my language fall Of what I yet  
remember, than an infant's

Who still his tongue doth moisten at the breast. Not because  
more than one unmingled semblance Was in the living light on  
which I looked,

For it is always what it was before; But through the sight, that  
fortified itself In me by looking, one appearance only To me  
was ever changing as I changed. Within the deep and luminous  
subsistence

Of the High Light appeared to me three circles, Of threefold  
colour and of one dimension, And by the second seemed the  
first reflected

As Iris is by Iris, and the third Seemed fire that equally from  
both is breathed.

O how all speech is feeble and falls short  
Of my conceit, and  
this to what I saw Is such, 'tis not enough to call it little!

O Light Eterne, sole in thyself that dwellest, Sole knowest  
thyself, and, known unto thyself And knowing, lovest and smilest  
on thyself! That circulation, which being thus conceived  
Appeared in thee as a reflected light,

When somewhat contemplated by mine eyes, Within itself, of its  
own very colour Seemed to me painted with our effigy,

Wherefore my sight was all absorbed therein.

As the geometrician, who endeavours To square the circle, and  
discovers not,

By taking thought, the principle he wants, Even such was I at  
that new apparition;

I wished to see how the image to the circle Conformed itself,  
and how it there finds place; But my own wings were not  
enough for this, Had it not been that then my mind there smote

A flash of lightning, wherein came its wish.

Here vigour failed the lofty fantasy: But now was turning my  
desire and will, Even as a wheel that equally is moved,

The Love which moves the sun and the other stars.

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