

“O thou Almighty Father, who dost make  
The heavens thy dwelling, not in bounds confin’d,  
But that with love intenser there thou view’st  
Thy primal effluence, hallow’d be thy name:  
Join each created being to extol  
Thy might, for worthy humblest thanks and praise  
Is thy blest Spirit. May thy kingdom’s peace  
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,  
With all our striving thither tend in vain.  
As of their will the angels unto thee  
Tender meet sacrifice, circling thy throne  
With loud hosannas, so of theirs be done  
By saintly men on earth. Grant us this day  
Our daily manna, without which he roams  
Through this rough desert retrograde, who most  
Toils to advance his steps. As we to each  
Pardon the evil done us, pardon thou  
Benign, and of our merit take no count.  
’Gainst the old adversary prove thou not  
Our virtue easily subdu’d; but free  
From his incitements and defeat his wiles.  
This last petition, dearest Lord! is made  
Not for ourselves, since that were needless now,  
But for their sakes who after us remain.”

Thus for themselves and us good speed imploring,  
Those spirits went beneath a weight like that

We sometimes feel in dreams, all, sore beset,  
But with unequal anguish, wearied all,  
Round the first circuit, purging as they go,  
The world's gross darkness off: In our behalf  
If there vows still be offer'd, what can here  
For them be vow'd and done by such, whose wills  
Have root of goodness in them? Well beseems  
That we should help them wash away the stains  
They carried hence, that so made pure and light,  
They may spring upward to the starry spheres.

"Ah! so may mercy-temper'd justice rid  
Your burdens speedily, that ye have power  
To stretch your wing, which e'en to your desire  
Shall lift you, as ye show us on which hand  
Toward the ladder leads the shortest way.  
And if there be more passages than one,  
Instruct us of that easiest to ascend;  
For this man who comes with me, and bears yet  
The charge of fleshly raiment Adam left him,  
Despite his better will but slowly mounts."  
From whom the answer came unto these words,  
Which my guide spake, appear'd not; but 'twas said.

"Along the bank to rightward come with us,  
And ye shall find a pass that mocks not toil  
Of living man to climb: and were it not

That I am hinder'd by the rock, wherewith  
This arrogant neck is tam'd, whence needs I stoop  
My visage to the ground, him, who yet lives,  
Whose name thou speak'st not him I fain would view.  
To mark if e'er I knew him? and to crave  
His pity for the fardel that I bear.  
I was of Latiun, of a Tuscan horn  
A mighty one: Aldobranlesco's name  
My sire's, I know not if ye e'er have heard.  
My old blood and forefathers' gallant deeds  
Made me so haughty, that I clean forgot  
The common mother, and to such excess,  
Wax'd in my scorn of all men, that I fell,  
Fell therefore; by what fate Sienna's sons,  
Each child in Campagnatico, can tell.  
I am Omberto; not me only pride  
Hath injur'd, but my kindred all involv'd  
In mischief with her. Here my lot ordains  
Under this weight to groan, till I appease  
God's angry justice, since I did it not  
Amongst the living, here amongst the dead."

List'ning I bent my visage down: and one  
(Not he who spake) twisted beneath the weight  
That urg'd him, saw me, knew me straight, and call'd,  
Holding his eyes With difficulty fix'd  
Intent upon me, stooping as I went

Companion of their way. "O!" I exclaim'd,

"Art thou not Oderigi, art not thou  
Agobbio's glory, glory of that art  
Which they of Paris call the limmer's skill?"

"Brother!" said he, "with tints that gayer smile,  
Bolognian Franco's pencil lines the leaves.  
His all the honour now; mine borrow'd light.  
In truth I had not been thus courteous to him,  
The whilst I liv'd, through eagerness of zeal  
For that pre-eminence my heart was bent on.  
Here of such pride the forfeiture is paid.

Nor were I even here; if, able still  
To sin, I had not turn'd me unto God.  
O powers of man! how vain your glory, nipp'd  
E'en in its height of verdure, if an age  
Less bright succeed not! Cimabue thought  
To lord it over painting's field; and now  
The cry is Giotto's, and his name eclips'd.

Thus hath one Guido from the other snatch'd  
The letter'd prize: and he perhaps is born,  
Who shall drive either from their nest. The noise  
Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,  
That blows from divers points, and shifts its name  
Shifting the point it blows from. Shalt thou more  
Live in the mouths of mankind, if thy flesh

Part shrivel'd from thee, than if thou hadst died,  
Before the coral and the pap were left,  
Or ere some thousand years have passed? and that  
Is, to eternity compar'd, a space,  
Briefer than is the twinkling of an eye  
To the heaven's slowest orb. He there who treads  
So leisurely before me, far and wide  
Through Tuscany resounded once; and now  
Is in Sienna scarce with whispers nam'd:  
There was he sov'reign, when destruction caught  
The madd'ning rage of Florence, in that day  
Proud as she now is loathsome. Your renown  
Is as the herb, whose hue doth come and go,  
And his might withers it, by whom it sprang  
Crude from the lap of earth." I thus to him:  
"True are thy sayings: to my heart they breathe  
The kindly spirit of meekness, and allay  
What tumours rankle there. But who is he  
Of whom thou spak'st but now?"—"This," he replied,  
"Is Provenzano. He is here, because  
He reach'd, with grasp presumptuous, at the sway  
Of all Sienna. Thus he still hath gone,  
Thus goeth never-resting, since he died.  
Such is th' acquittance render'd back of him,  
Who, beyond measure, dar'd on earth." I then:  
"If soul that to the verge of life delays  
Repentance, linger in that lower space,

Nor hither mount, unless good prayers befriend,  
How chanc'd admittance was vouchsaf'd to him?"

"When at his glory's topmost height," said he,  
"Respect of dignity all cast aside,  
Freely He fix'd him on Sienna's plain,  
A suitor to redeem his suff'ring friend,  
Who languish'd in the prison-house of Charles,  
Nor for his sake refus'd through every vein  
To tremble. More I will not say; and dark,  
I know, my words are, but thy neighbours soon  
Shall help thee to a comment on the text.  
This is the work, that from these limits freed him."