

His jaws uplifting from their fell repast,
That sinner wip'd them on the hairs o' th' head,
Which he behind had mangled, then began:
"Thy will obeying, I call up afresh
Sorrow past cure, which but to think of wrings
My heart, or ere I tell on't. But if words,
That I may utter, shall prove seed to bear
Fruit of eternal infamy to him,
The traitor whom I gnaw at, thou at once
Shalt see me speak and weep. Who thou mayst be
I know not, nor how here below art come:
But Florentine thou seemest of a truth,
When I do hear thee. Know I was on earth
Count Ugolino, and th' Archbishop he
Ruggieri. Why I neighbour him so close,
Now list. That through effect of his ill thoughts
In him my trust reposing, I was ta'en
And after murder'd, need is not I tell.
What therefore thou canst not have heard, that is,
How cruel was the murder, shalt thou hear,
And know if he have wrong'd me. A small grate
Within that mew, which for my sake the name
Of famine bears, where others yet must pine,
Already through its opening sev'ral moons
Had shown me, when I slept the evil sleep,
That from the future tore the curtain off.
This one, methought, as master of the sport,

Rode forth to chase the gaunt wolf and his whelps
Unto the mountain, which forbids the sight
Of Lucca to the Pisan. With lean brachs
Inquisitive and keen, before him rang'd
Lanfranchi with Sismondi and Gualandi.
After short course the father and the sons
Seem'd tir'd and lagging, and methought I saw
The sharp tusks gore their sides. When I awoke
Before the dawn, amid their sleep I heard
My sons (for they were with me) weep and ask
For bread. Right cruel art thou, if no pang
Thou feel at thinking what my heart foretold;
And if not now, why use thy tears to flow?
Now had they waken'd; and the hour drew near
When they were wont to bring us food; the mind
Of each misgave him through his dream, and I
Heard, at its outlet underneath lock'd up
The horrible tower: whence uttering not a word
I look'd upon the visage of my sons.
I wept not: so all stone I felt within.
They wept: and one, my little Anslem, cried:
'Thou lookest so! Father what ails thee?' Yet
I shed no tear, nor answer'd all that day
Nor the next night, until another sun
Came out upon the world. When a faint beam
Had to our doleful prison made its way,
And in four countenances I descry'd

The image of my own, on either hand
Through agony I bit, and they who thought
I did it through desire of feeding, rose
O' th' sudden, and cried, 'Father, we should grieve
Far less, if thou wouldst eat of us: thou gav'st
These weeds of miserable flesh we wear,

And do thou strip them off from us again.'
Then, not to make them sadder, I kept down
My spirit in stillness. That day and the next
We all were silent. Ah, obdurate earth!
Why open'dst not upon us? When we came
To the fourth day, then Geddo at my feet
Outstretch'd did fling him, crying, 'Hast no help
For me, my father!' There he died, and e'en
Plainly as thou seest me, saw I the three
Fall one by one 'twixt the fifth day and sixth:

Whence I betook me now grown blind to grope
Over them all, and for three days aloud
Call'd on them who were dead. Then fasting got
The mastery of grief." Thus having spoke,

Once more upon the wretched skull his teeth
He fasten'd, like a mastiff's 'gainst the bone
Firm and unyielding. Oh thou Pisa! shame
Of all the people, who their dwelling make

In that fair region, where th' Italian voice
Is heard, since that thy neighbours are so slack
To punish, from their deep foundations rise
Capraia and Gorgona, and dam up
The mouth of Arno, that each soul in thee
May perish in the waters! What if fame
Reported that thy castles were betray'd
By Ugolino, yet no right hadst thou
To stretch his children on the rack. For them,
Brigata, Ugaccione, and the pair
Of gentle ones, of whom my song hath told,
Their tender years, thou modern Thebes! did make
Uncapable of guilt. Onward we pass'd,
Where others skarf'd in rugged folds of ice
Not on their feet were turn'd, but each revers'd.

There very weeping suffers not to weep;
For at their eyes grief seeking passage finds
Impediment, and rolling inward turns
For increase of sharp anguish: the first tears
Hang cluster'd, and like crystal vizors show,
Under the socket brimming all the cup.

Now though the cold had from my face dislodg'd
Each feeling, as 't were callous, yet me seem'd
Some breath of wind I felt. "Whence cometh this,"
Said I, "my master? Is not here below

All vapour quench'd?"—"Thou shalt be speedily,"
He answer'd, "where thine eye shall tell thee whence
The cause descrying of this airy shower."

Then cried out one in the chill crust who mourn'd:
"O souls so cruel! that the farthest post
Hath been assign'd you, from this face remove
The harden'd veil, that I may vent the grief
Impregnate at my heart, some little space
Ere it congeal again!" I thus replied:
"Say who thou wast, if thou wouldst have mine aid;
And if I extricate thee not, far down
As to the lowest ice may I descend!"

"The friar Alberigo," answered he,
"Am I, who from the evil garden pluck'd
Its fruitage, and am here repaid, the date
More luscious for my fig."—"Hah!" I exclaim'd,
"Art thou too dead!"—"How in the world aloft
It fareth with my body," answer'd he,
"I am right ignorant. Such privilege
Hath Ptolomea, that ofttimes the soul
Drops hither, ere by Atropos divorc'd.
And that thou mayst wipe out more willingly
The glazed tear-drops that o'erlay mine eyes,
Know that the soul, that moment she betrays,
As I did, yields her body to a fiend

Who after moves and governs it at will,
Till all its time be rounded; headlong she
Falls to this cistern. And perchance above
Doth yet appear the body of a ghost,
Who here behind me winters. Him thou know'st,
If thou but newly art arriv'd below.
The years are many that have pass'd away,
Since to this fastness Branca Doria came."

"Now," answer'd I, "methinks thou mockest me,
For Branca Doria never yet hath died,
But doth all natural functions of a man,
Eats, drinks, and sleeps, and putteth raiment on."

He thus: "Not yet unto that upper foss
By th' evil talons guarded, where the pitch
Tenacious boils, had Michael Zanche reach'd,
When this one left a demon in his stead
In his own body, and of one his kin,
Who with him treachery wrought. But now put forth
Thy hand, and ope mine eyes." I op'd them not.
Ill manners were best courtesy to him.

Ah Genoese! men perverse in every way,
With every foulness stain'd, why from the earth
Are ye not cancel'd? Such an one of yours
I with Romagna's darkest spirit found,

As for his doings even now in soul

Is in Cocytus plung'd, and yet doth seem

In body still alive upon the earth.