

Our journey was not slacken'd by our talk,
Nor yet our talk by journeying. Still we spake,
And urg'd our travel stoutly, like a ship
When the wind sits astern. The shadowy forms,

That seem'd things dead and dead again, drew in
At their deep-delved orbs rare wonder of me,
Perceiving I had life; and I my words
Continued, and thus spake; "He journeys up
Perhaps more tardily than else he would,
For others' sake. But tell me, if thou know'st,
Where is Piccarda? Tell me, if I see
Any of mark, among this multitude,
Who eye me thus."—"My sister (she for whom,
'Twixt beautiful and good I cannot say
Which name was fitter) wears e'en now her crown,
And triumphs in Olympus." Saying this,
He added: "Since spare diet hath so worn
Our semblance out, 't is lawful here to name
Each one. This," and his finger then he rais'd,
"Is Buonaggiuna,—Buonaggiuna, he
Of Lucca: and that face beyond him, pierc'd
Unto a leaner fineness than the rest,
Had keeping of the church: he was of Tours,
And purges by wan abstinence away
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel."

He show'd me many others, one by one,
And all, as they were nam'd, seem'd well content;
For no dark gesture I discern'd in any.
I saw through hunger Ubaldino grind
His teeth on emptiness; and Boniface,
That wav'd the crozier o'er a num'rous flock.
I saw the Marquis, who tad time erewhile
To swill at Forli with less drought, yet so
Was one ne'er sated. I howe'er, like him,
That gazing 'midst a crowd, singles out one,
So singled him of Lucca; for methought
Was none amongst them took such note of me.
Somewhat I heard him whisper of Gentucca:
The sound was indistinct, and murmur'd there,
Where justice, that so strips them, fix'd her sting.

"Spirit!" said I, "it seems as thou wouldst fain
Speak with me. Let me hear thee. Mutual wish
To converse prompts, which let us both indulge."

He, answ'ring, straight began: "Woman is born,
Whose brow no wimple shades yet, that shall make
My city please thee, blame it as they may.
Go then with this forewarning. If aught false
My whisper too implied, th' event shall tell
But say, if of a truth I see the man
Of that new lay th' inventor, which begins

With 'Ladies, ye that con the lore of love'."

To whom I thus: "Count of me but as one
Who am the scribe of love; that, when he breathes,
Take up my pen, and, as he dictates, write."

"Brother!" said he, "the hind'rance which once held
The notary with Guittone and myself,
Short of that new and sweeter style I hear,
Is now disclos'd. I see how ye your plumes
Stretch, as th' inditer guides them; which, no question,
Ours did not. He that seeks a grace beyond,
Sees not the distance parts one style from other."
And, as contented, here he held his peace.

Like as the bird, that winter near the Nile,
In squared regiment direct their course,
Then stretch themselves in file for speedier flight;
Thus all the tribe of spirits, as they turn'd
Their visage, faster deaf, nimble alike
Through leanness and desire. And as a man,
Tir'd With the motion of a trotting steed,
Slacks pace, and stays behind his company,
Till his o'erbreathed lungs keep temperate time;
E'en so Forese let that holy crew
Proceed, behind them lingering at my side,
And saying: "When shall I again behold thee?"

"How long my life may last," said I, "I know not;
This know, how soon soever I return,
My wishes will before me have arriv'd.
Sithence the place, where I am set to live,
Is, day by day, more scoop'd of all its good,
And dismal ruin seems to threaten it."

"Go now," he cried: "lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes, that leaveth him
A corse most vilely shatter'd. No long space
Those wheels have yet to roll" (therewith his eyes
Look'd up to heav'n) "ere thou shalt plainly see
That which my words may not more plainly tell.
I quit thee: time is precious here: I lose
Too much, thus measuring my pace with shine."

As from a troop of well-rank'd chivalry
One knight, more enterprising than the rest,
Pricks forth at gallop, eager to display
His prowess in the first encounter prov'd
So parted he from us with lengthen'd strides,
And left me on the way with those twain spirits,

Who were such mighty marshals of the world.

When he beyond us had so fled mine eyes
No nearer reach'd him, than my thought his words,
The branches of another fruit, thick hung,
And blooming fresh, appear'd. E'en as our steps
Turn'd thither, not far off it rose to view.
Beneath it were a multitude, that rais'd
Their hands, and shouted forth I know not What
Unto the boughs; like greedy and fond brats,
That beg, and answer none obtain from him,
Of whom they beg; but more to draw them on,
He at arm's length the object of their wish
Above them holds aloft, and hides it not.

At length, as undeceiv'd they went their way:
And we approach the tree, who vows and tears
Sue to in vain, the mighty tree. "Pass on,
And come not near. Stands higher up the wood,
Whereof Eve tasted, and from it was ta'en
'this plant." Such sounds from midst the thickets came.
Whence I, with either bard, close to the side
That rose, pass'd forth beyond. "Remember," next
We heard, "those noblest creatures of the clouds,
How they their twofold bosoms overgorg'd
Oppos'd in fight to Theseus: call to mind
The Hebrews, how effeminate they stoop'd

To ease their thirst; whence Gideon's ranks were thinn'd,
As he to Midian march'd adown the hills."

Thus near one border coasting, still we heard
The sins of gluttony, with woe erewhile
Reguerdon'd. Then along the lonely path,
Once more at large, full thousand paces on
We travel'd, each contemplative and mute.

"Why pensive journey thus ye three alone?"
Thus suddenly a voice exclaim'd: whereat
I shook, as doth a scar'd and paltry beast;
Then rais'd my head to look from whence it came.

Was ne'er, in furnace, glass, or metal seen
So bright and glowing red, as was the shape
I now beheld. "If ye desire to mount,"
He cried, "here must ye turn. This way he goes,
Who goes in quest of peace." His countenance
Had dazzled me; and to my guides I fac'd
Backward, like one who walks, as sound directs.

As when, to harbinger the dawn, springs up
On freshen'd wing the air of May, and breathes
Of fragrance, all impregn'd with herb and flowers,
E'en such a wind I felt upon my front
Blow gently, and the moving of a wing

Perceiv'd, that moving shed ambrosial smell;
And then a voice: "Blessed are they, whom grace
Doth so illume, that appetite in them
Exhaleth no inordinate desire,
Still hung'ring as the rule of temperance wills."