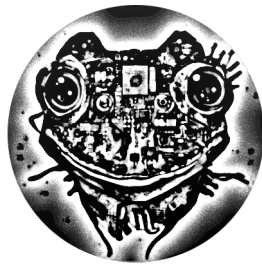


Dante Alighieri's  
**DIVINE COMEDY**

Translated by Laurence Binyon

with notes from C. H. Grandgent.

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# INFERNO

# Canto I

*It is the eve of Good Friday, 1300, and Dante is thirty-five years old. He comes to himself in the darkness of the wood of Error, not knowing how he had lost the true way. Gaining the foot of a hill, the Delectable Mountain, or hill of virtue, he is cheered by the morning sun, and begins the ascent, but is baffled by a Leopard (Lust), then dismayed by a Lion (Pride), and a She-Wolf (Avarice). Turning to run back to the valley, he is met by the spirit of Virgil, the poet of his adoration, who in the Vision typifies human wisdom. Virgil tells him that he cannot pass the She-Wolf, though a saviour of Italy is one day to arise who will chase her into Hell; and Dante is to follow him and be shown the spirits who are in pain and have no hope, and the spirits who through pain are to come to bliss; and from these he will be led by another (Beatrice, Dante's early love, typifying Heavenly Wisdom) to see the spirits in Paradise. Dante follows in Virgil's steps.*

MIDWAY life's journey I was made aware  
That I had strayed into a dark forest,  
And the right path appeared not anywhere.  
Ah, tongue cannot describe how it oppressed,  
This wood, so harsh, dismal and wild, that fear  
At thought of it strikes now into my breast.  
So bitter it is, death is scarce bitterer.  
But, for the good it was my hap to find,  
I speak of the other things that I saw there.  
I cannot well remember in my mind [10]  
How I came thither, so was I immersed  
In sleep, when the true way I left behind.  
But when my footsteps had attained the first  
Slope of a hill, at the end of that drear vale  
Which with such terror had my spirit pierced,  
I looked up, and beheld its shoulders pale

Already in clothing of that planet's light<sup>i</sup>  
 Which guideth men on all roads without fail.  
 Then had my bosom a little of respite  
 From what had all the pool of my heart tost [20]  
 While I so piteously endured the night.  
 As one, whom pantings of his breath exhaust,  
 Escaped from the deep water to the shore,  
 Turns back and gazes on the danger crost,  
 So my mind, fleeing still and stricken sore,  
 Turned back to gaze astonished on that pass  
 Which none hath ever left alive before.  
 When my tired body had rested a brief space  
 I trod anew the slope, desert and bare, [30]  
 With the firmer foot still in the lower place.<sup>ii</sup>  
 And at the ascent, as 't were on the first stair,  
 Behold! a Leopard, very swift and light<sup>iii</sup>  
 And covered with a hide of mottled hair.  
 And it would not depart, but opposite  
 On my path faced me, so that many a time  
 I turned me to go back, because of it.  
 The moment was the morning's earliest prime,  
 And the sun mounted up, accompanied  
 By those stars that with him began to climb<sup>iv</sup>  
 When divine Love first made through heaven to glide [40]  
 Those things of beauty, so that hope I caught  
 Of that wild creature with the gaudy hide.

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<sup>i</sup> 17. "That planet": the sun, which is just rising. The sun, here and elsewhere, typifies enlightenment, perhaps righteous choice, the intelligent use of the free will.

<sup>ii</sup> 30. This perplexing and much discussed line seems to describe the act of cautiously feeling one's way up a slope.

<sup>iii</sup> 32. When Dante tries to scale the hill, three beasts beset his path. These animals evidently stand for Dante's vicious habits, which prevent his reform. The ravening wolf is Incontinence of any kind, the raging lion is Violence, the swift and stealthy leopard is Fraud. We may understand, from the episode, that Dante could perhaps have overcome the graver sins of Fraud and Violence, but was unable, without heavenly aid, to rid himself of some of the habits of Incontinence.

<sup>iv</sup> 39-41. It was believed that when the universe was created, the heavenly bodies were placed in their vernal positions. The sun is in the sign of Aries from March 21 to April 20 inclusive.

The hour of time and the sweet season wrought  
 Thus on me; yet not so much, but when appeared  
 A Lion, terror to my heart he brought.  
 He seemed coming against me with head reared  
 Ravening with hunger, and so terrible  
 That the very air seemed of his breath afeared;  
 And a She-Wolf, that in her famished fell  
 Looked all infuriate craving (she hath meant [50]  
 To many ere now that they in misery dwell)  
 On me with grimness of her aspect sent  
 A burden that my spirit overpowered,  
 So that I lost the hope of the ascent.  
 As one that is with lust of gain devoured,  
 When comes the time that makes him lose, will rack  
 His thoughts, lamenting all his hope deflowered,  
 To such state brought me, in dread of his attack,  
 That restless beast, who by degrees perforce  
 To where the Sun is silent drove me back. [60]  
 While I was rushing on my downward course  
 Suddenly on my sight there seemed to start  
 One who appeared from a long silence hoarse.<sup>v</sup>  
 When I beheld him in that great desert  
 "Have pity on me!" I cried out to his face,  
 "Whatsoever—shade or very man—thou art."  
 He answered me: "Not man; man once I was.  
 My parents both were of the Lombard name,  
 Of Mantua by their country and by their race,  
 Sub Julio was I born, though late I came:<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 In Rome the good Augustus on me shone,  
 In the time of the false Gods of lying fame.<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>v</sup> 63. At this crisis Reason, personified in Virgil, comes, at divine bidding, to the sinner's rescue. The voice of Reason has not been heeded for so long that it comes faintly to the sinner's ear.

<sup>vi</sup> 70-71. "Sub Julio": at the time of Julius Caesar; but so late that he was identified with the reign of Augustus, and not that of Caesar. Virgil was barely twenty-six when Caesar perished.

<sup>vii</sup> 72. Repeatedly Virgil makes pathetic but always dignified and reticent allusion to his lack of Christianity and his consequent eternal exclusion from the presence of God.

Poet was I, and sang of that just son<sup>viii</sup>  
 Of old Anchises, who came out from Troy  
 After the burning of proud Ilion.  
 But thou, why turn'st thou back to such annoy?  
 Why climbest not the Mount Delectable  
 The cause and the beginning of all joy?"  
 "And art thou, then, that Virgil, and that well  
 Which pours abroad so ample a stream of song?" [80]  
 I answered him abashed, with front that fell.  
 "O glory and light of all the poets' throng!  
 May the ardent study and great love serve me now  
 Which made me to peruse thy book so long!<sup>ix</sup>  
 Thou art my Master and my Author thou.  
 Thou only art he from whom the noble style  
 I took, wherein my merit men avow.  
 Regard yon beast from which I made recoil!  
 Help me from her, renownèd sage, for she  
 Puts all my veins and pulses in turmoil." [90]  
 "Needs must thou find another way to flee,"  
 He answered, seeing my eyes with weeping fill,  
 "If thou from this wild place wouldst get thee free;  
 Because this beast, at which thou criest still,  
 Suffereth none to go upon her path,  
 But hindereth and entangleth till she kill,  
 And hath a nature so perverse in wrath,  
 Her craving maw never is satiated  
 But after food the fiercer hunger hath.  
 Many are the creatures with whom she hath wed, [100]  
 And shall be yet more, till appear the Hound<sup>x</sup>

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<sup>viii</sup> 73. "That just son": Aeneas.

<sup>ix</sup> 84. We learn from Inf. XX, 114 that Dante knew the Aeneid by heart.

<sup>x</sup> 101-105. This Hound is obviously a redeemer who shall set the world aright. If we compare this passage with another prophecy in Purg. XXX, 40-45, it is tolerably clear that he is to be a temporal rather than a spiritual saviour—a great Emperor, whose mission it shall be to establish the balance of power, restore justice, and guide erring humanity. Such an Emperor, destined to come at the end of the world, was not unknown to legend. As the prediction was still unfulfilled at the time of the writing, Dante naturally made it vague. We

By whom in pain she shall be stricken dead.  
 He will not batten on pelf or fruitful ground,  
 But wisdom, love, and virtue shall he crave.  
 'Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his folk abound.  
 He that abasèd Italy shall save,  
 For which Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus died,  
 For which her virgin blood Camilla gave.<sup>xi</sup>  
 And her through every city far and wide  
 Back into Hell's deep dungeon shall he chase, [110]  
 Whence envy first let loose her ravening stride.  
 Wherefore I judge this fittest for thy case  
 That I should lead thee, and thou follow in faith,  
 To journey hence through an eternal place,  
 Where thou shalt hear cries of despairing breath,  
 Shalt look on the ancient spirits in their pain,  
 Such that each calls out for a second death.  
 And thou shalt see those who in fire refrain<sup>xii</sup>  
 From sorrow, since their hope is in the end,  
 Whensoever it be, to the blessèd to attain. [120]  
 To whom if thou desirest to ascend  
 There shall be a spirit worthier than I,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 When I depart, who shall thy steps befriend.  
 For that Lord Emperor who reigns on high,  
 Because I was not to his law submiss,  
 Wills not that I to his city come too nigh.  
 In every part he ruleth, and all is his,  
 There is his city, there is his high seat:  
 O happy, whom he chooseth for that bliss!"  
 And I to him: "O Poet, I entreat [130]  
 In the name of that God whom thou didst not know,

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know that the poet entertained great hopes of the youthful leader, Can Grande della Scala, in Dante's last years the chief representative of the Imperial power in Italy. "Feltro and Feltro" may point to the towns of Feltre and Monte Feltro.

<sup>xi</sup> 108. Camilla, a warrior virgin who fought against the Trojans.

<sup>xii</sup> 118-119. The souls in Purgatory.

<sup>xiii</sup> 122. Beatrice.

So that I 'scape this ill and worse ill yet,  
Lead me where thou hast spoken of but now,  
So that my eyes St. Peter's gate may find<sup>xiv</sup>  
And those whom thou portrayest in such woe!"  
Then he moved onward: and I went behind.

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<sup>xiv</sup> 134. *The gate of Purgatory, opened only to the elect.*



# Canto II

*As the evening of the first day falls, Dante begins to doubt his courage for the journey. He recalls the visit to the underworld of Aeneas (told by Virgil in the Sixth Aeneid) and of St. Paul (the theme of a medieval legend) and declares himself unworthy to follow such as these. Virgil then discloses that Beatrice came from Heaven, prompted by Divine Grace, to ask him to rescue Dante from the dangers into which he has fallen. Dante's courage at once revives, and he accepts his mission.*

THE DAY was going, and the darkened air  
Was taking from its toil each animal  
That is on the earth; I only, alone there,  
Essayed to arm my spirit against all  
The terror of the journey and pity's plea,  
Which memory, that errs not, shall recall.  
O Muses, O high Genius, strengthen me!  
O Memory, that what I saw hast writ,  
Here shall be made known thine integrity.  
I began: "Poet, who guidest now my feet,  
Look if the virtue in me avail to endure  
The arduous pass, ere thou trust me to it.  
Thou sayest the father of Silvius went secure<sup>i</sup>  
In his corruptible body, and that world knew  
Which Death knows not, of all his senses sure.  
But if the Adversary of Sin that due  
Of favour gave him, weighing the high effect  
And who, and what, should be his great issue,  
This seems not unmeet to the intellect;  
For he was born to father and prepare  
Rome and her Empire, as high Heaven's elect;  
Both of which, the true history to declare,  
Were the foundations of that sainted spot

[10]

[20]

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<sup>i</sup> 13-21. This first visitor of the lower world is Father Aeneas, founder of Rome.

Which is the seat of greatest Peter's heir.  
 By this adventure, whence thy praise he got,  
 He learned things that for him were argument  
 Of victory, and the Papal Mantle wrought.  
 Afterwards too the Chosen Vessel went<sup>ii</sup>  
 The confirmation of that faith to bring  
 Which is for way of our salvation meant. [30]  
 But I, why go? By whose commissioning?  
 I am not Aeneas, no, nor Paul: too weak  
 I, and others also, deem me for this thing.  
 If I resign me, then, that world to seek,  
 I fear the quest for folly be aspersed.  
 Thou art wise and canst divine more than I speak."  
 And like one who unwills what he willed first  
 And new thoughts change the intention that he had,  
 So that his resolution is reversed,  
 So on that dim slope did my purpose fade [40]  
 For I with thinking had dulled down the zest  
 That at the outset sprang so prompt and glad.  
 "If rightly I read the trouble in thy breast,"  
 The shade of the Magnanimous replied,  
 "With cowardice thy spirit is oppressed,  
 Which oftentimes a man hath mortified,  
 So that it turns him back from noble deed,  
 As with false seeing a beast will start aside.  
 Now, that thy heart may from this fear be freed,  
 Hear why I came and what I heard, and where, [50]  
 When first I felt the pity of thy need.  
 I was with those who are in suspense: and there<sup>iii</sup>  
 A Lady of so great beauty and blessedness,<sup>iv</sup>  
 I craved for her command, called me to her.  
 Her eyes so shone, the Morning Star shines less.

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<sup>ii</sup> 28. "The Chosen Vessel" is St. Paul: Acts 9:15.

<sup>iii</sup> 52. "Who are in suspense": between Heaven and Hell, in Limbus.

<sup>iv</sup> 53. "A Lady": Beatrice.

And she began to speak, gentle and low,  
 In the angel voice that did her soul express:  
 'O courteous Mantuan spirit, whom men fame so<sup>v</sup>  
 That thy renown yet lasts, and till Time end  
 The motion of his hours, shall greater grow, [60]  
 He that is my friend, but not fortune's friend,  
 Halts on the lonely moor, by fear deterred,  
 So that the path he dareth not ascend.  
 Already I fear he may so sore have erred  
 That I have risen to succour him too late,  
 From what of him in Heaven I have heard.  
 Go now, and with thy poet's speech ornate  
 And what means else may rescue courage weak  
 Help him, and me deliver of this care's weight.  
 I am Beatrice who send thee, him to seek.<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 I come from that place for which now I sigh.  
 It was love moved me and made my lips to speak.  
 Often to thy praise will I testify  
 When I am come into my Lord's presence.'  
 She then was silent; and I made reply:  
 'O Lady, who art the only virtue whence  
 Mankind may overpass what is contained<sup>vii</sup>  
 Within the heaven of least circumference,  
 So welcome is the bidding thou hast deigned,  
 That were it now done, it were done too slow. [80]  
 It needs but that thy wish should be explained:  
 But tell me why into this core of woe  
 Thou shun'st not to descend, turning thy face  
 From the ample air, whither thou yearn'st to go?"  
 'Since thou,' she answered, 'so much of this case  
 Desirest knowledge, briefly shalt thou hear

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<sup>v</sup> 58. *Virgil was born near Mantua.*

<sup>vi</sup> 70. *Beatrice stands for Revelation, for which Dante's distorted mind must be prepared by Reason.*

<sup>vii</sup> 77. *Mankind surpasses everything contained within the sphere of the moon (everything perishable) only through divine revelation, embodied in Beatrice.*

Why I shrink not to come into this place.  
 Those things that have the power to wound and sear,  
 To them alone should due of dread be paid;  
 To the others not, they are not things to fear. [90]  
 I am by God so, in his mercy, made,  
 That misery of yours touches me not,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Nor in the scorch of this fire am I frayed.  
 A Lady in heaven is to such pity wrought<sup>ix</sup>  
 By the hard pass, whereto I bid thee haste,  
 That the strict law's remission she hath sought.  
 She called to her Lucy, and made request,<sup>x</sup>  
 Saying, Now thy faithful one hath need of thee:  
 I entrust him to thee; and do thou the rest.  
 Lucy, the enemy of all cruelty, [100]  
 Arose and came and stood within my gaze  
 There, where the ancient Rachel sat by me.<sup>xi</sup>  
 She spoke and said: Beatrice, God's true praise,  
 Why helpest thou not him, who loved thee so  
 That for thy sake he left the vile crowd's ways?  
 Hearest thou not the plaining of his woe?  
 Seest thou not what death would him undo  
 By that wild flood the sea may not o'ercrow?<sup>xii</sup>  
 None in the world was ever swift to ensue  
 His good, or fly his hurt, as these my feet [110]  
 At once, after those words were uttered few,  
 Hasted to come down from my blessèd seat,  
 Confiding in thy speech, so nobly graced,  
 It honours both thee and those hearing it'

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<sup>viii</sup> 92. *The happiness of the blest is not marred by compassion for the damned.*

<sup>ix</sup> 94. *"A Lady in heaven": the Virgin, who is not expressly named anywhere in the Inferno, Hell being a place where mercy does not enter.*

<sup>x</sup> 97. *Lucy has been regarded by almost all interpreters as the emblem of Grace—probably, as her name suggests, Illuminating Grace.*

<sup>xi</sup> 102. *Rachel symbolised the contemplative life.*

<sup>xii</sup> 108. *"The wild flood" is perhaps the Acheron, the river of death which flows beneath Dante's feet: and which does not empty into the sea, but runs down through Hell.*

Having said this, her footsteps she retraced,  
 Turning from me her eyes that wept and shone;  
 At sight of which she made me more to haste.  
 Thus I came to thee, as she desired, and won  
 Thee from that ravening beast which would withhold  
 The short way to the Beauteous Mount begun. [120]  
 What is it, then, keeps thee? Why, why haltest cold?  
 Why in thy heart nourishest fear so base?  
 Why art thou not delivered, eager, bold,  
 When three such blessed Ladies of their grace  
 Care in the court of Heaven for thy plight,  
 And my words promise thee such good to embrace?"  
 As little flowers, that by the chill of night  
 Are closed, prick up their stems drooping and bent,  
 And to the early ray re-open white,  
 So was it with my courage fallen and spent; [130]  
 And I began, as one from bondage freed,  
 So good a warmth about my body went:  
 "O most compassionate She, who helps my need!  
 O courteous thou, who to that uttered word  
 Didst listen, and to its truth so swift give heed!  
 Thou makest me so eager in accord  
 With what thou say'st, and quickenest so my heart,  
 That to my first resolve I am restored.  
 Now it is one will moves us both; thou art  
 Guide, master, lord!" These words to him I said, [140]  
 And then, perceiving that he made to start,  
 Began the desolate, arduous path to tread.

# Canto III

*The poets pass through the door of Hell. And first, in what is Hell's ante-room, they meet a confused lamenting rabble: these are those, displeasing alike to God and to his enemies, who pursued neither good nor evil. Among them Dante recognises him "who made the great refusal," generally identified with the Pope Celestine V, who, elected in 1294, resigned a few months later in favour of Boniface VIII, Dante's great enemy. Then they come to the shores of Acheron, the river which circles the rim of Hell before descending deeper; across it Charon ferries the lost souls, but demurs to taking Dante in his boat. A sudden earthquake throws Dante into a trance.*

THROUGH ME THE WAY IS TO THE CITY OF WOE:  
THROUGH ME THE WAY INTO THE ETERNAL PAIN;  
THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THE LOST BELOW.  
RIGHTEOUSNESS DID MY MAKER ON HIGH CONSTRAIN.  
ME DID DIVINE AUTHORITY UPREAR;<sup>i</sup>  
ME SUPREME WISDOM AND PRIMAL LOVE SUSTAIN.  
BEFORE I WAS, NO THINGS CREATED WERE<sup>ii</sup>  
SAVE THE ETERNAL, AND I ETERNAL ABIDE.  
RELINQUISH ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE.

These words, of a dim colour, I espied [10]  
Written above the lintel of a door.  
Whereat: "Master, the sense is hard," I cried.  
And he, as one experienced in that lore:  
"Here all misgiving must thy mind reject.  
Here cowardice must die and be no more.  
We are come to the place I told thee to expect,  
Where thou shouldst see the people whom pain stings

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<sup>i</sup> 5-6. Hell was made by the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or Power, Wisdom, and Love.

<sup>ii</sup> 7-8. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void" (Gen. 1:1-2). At this point, apparently, Hell was created for the rebellious angels, who sinned almost as soon as they were made. On the Judgment Day, when all the wicked shall have been consigned to Hell, it will be sealed up, and will remain unchanged forever.

And who have lost the good of the intellect."<sup>iii</sup>  
 His hand on mine, to uphold my falterings,  
 With looks of cheer that bade me comfort keep, [20]  
 He led me on into the secret things.  
 Here lamentation, groans, and wailings deep  
 Reverberated through the starless air,  
 So that it made me at the beginning weep.  
 Uncouth tongues, horrible chatterings of despair,  
 Shrill and faint cries, words of grief, tones of rage,  
 And, with it all, smiting of hands, were there,  
 Making a tumult, nothing could assuage,  
 To swirl in the air that knows not day or night,  
 Like sand within the whirlwind's eddying cage. [30]  
 And I, whose mind failed to discern aright,  
 Said: "Master, what is it that my ear affrays?  
 Who are these that seem so crushed beneath their plight?"  
 And he to me: "These miserable ways  
 The forlorn spirits endure of those who spent  
 Life without infamy and without praise.  
 They are mingled with that caitiff rabblement  
 Of the angels, who rebelled not, yet avowed  
 To God no loyalty, on themselves intent.  
 Heaven chased them forth, lest, being there, they cloud [40]  
 Its beauty, and the deep Hell refuses them,  
 For, beside these, the wicked might be proud."<sup>iv</sup>  
 And I: "Master, what is the grief extreme  
 Which makes them so their fortune execrate?"  
 He answered: "Brief words best their case beseem.  
 They have no hope of death: and their estate  
 Is so abased in the blind life they own  
 That they are envious of all others' fate.  
 Report of them the world permitteth none.  
 Mercy and Justice have them in disdain. [50]

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<sup>iii</sup> 18. "The good of the intellect" is the vision of God.

<sup>iv</sup> 42. The guilty might derive some satisfaction from comparing themselves with these.

Let us not talk of them. Look, and pass on."  
 I, who looked, beheld a banner all a-strain,  
 Which moved, and, as it moved, so quickly spun  
 That never a respite it appeared to deign.  
 And after it I saw so many run,  
 I had not believed, they seemed so numberless,  
 That Death so great a legion had undone.  
 When I had marked some few among the press,  
 I chanced the shade of him to recognise  
 Who made the great refusal, in cowardice.<sup>v</sup> [60]  
 Forthwith I was assured, and knew mine eyes  
 Looked of a truth on the abject crew that were  
 Odious to God and to his enemies.  
 These paltry, who never were alive, were bare  
 As to the body, and all about were stung  
 By stings of the wasps and hornets that were there.  
 Because of these, blood, from their faces sprung,  
 Was mingled with their tears and flowed to feast  
 The loathly worms about their feet that clung.  
 Then as my peering eyes made further quest, [70]  
 I saw folk on the shore of a great stream.  
 "Master," I said, "make to me manifest  
 Who these are and what law constraineth them  
 Willingly to pass over and be gone,  
 If rightly I can discern by the faint gleam."  
 And he to me: "The things shall all be known  
 To thy understanding when our steps are stayed  
 Upon the mournful shores of Acheron."  
 Casting abashed eyes downward, and afraid  
 Lest that my words should some offence have wrought, [80]  
 I ceased from speech until the stream we made.  
 And toward us lo! arriving in a boat

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<sup>v</sup> 60. Without much doubt this is Celestine V, a pious hermit, who, after a long vacancy of the papal office, was elected Pope in July, 1294, but abdicated five months later, feeling himself physically and mentally unfit. Through his renunciation Boniface VIII, Dante's chief enemy, became Pope.



An Ancient, white with hair upon him old,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Crying, "Woe to you, ye spirits misbegot!  
 Hope not that heaven ye ever shall behold.  
 I come to carry you to yon shore, and lead  
 Into the eternal darkness, heat and cold.  
 And thou who art there, a living spirit, with speed  
 Get hence, nor with these who are dead delay"—  
 But when he noted that I took no heed, [90]  
 He said: "By another ferry, another way  
 Of entrance must thou seek to pass, not here.  
 Needs must a lighter vessel thee convey."  
 My Guide to him: "Charon, thy frowns forbear.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Thus is this thing willed there, where what is willed  
 Can be accomplished. Further question spare."  
 Then were the shaggy cheeks from trouble stilled<sup>viii</sup>  
 Of that old steersman on the livid fen  
 Around whose eyes flames in a circle wheeled.  
 But those forlorn and naked spirits of men [100]  
 Changed colour, chattering with their teeth, all numb,  
 Soon as the harsh words sounded in their ken.  
 They blasphemed God, blasphemed their mother's womb,  
 The human kind, the place, the time, the seed  
 Of their engendering, and their birth and doom;  
 Then weeping all together in their sad need  
 Betook themselves to the accursed shore  
 Which awaits each who of God takes no heed.  
 Charon, the demon, beckoning before,  
 With eyes of glowing coal, assembles all: [110]  
 Whoever lags, he beats him with his oar.  
 And as the late leaves of November fall

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<sup>vi</sup> 83. The ancient boatman is Charon.

<sup>vii</sup> 94. Charon sees that Dante is destined to be carried, after death, to Purgatory in the angel's boat described in *Purg. II*, 40-52.

<sup>viii</sup> 97-99 Charon, like most of the classical guardians retained in Dante's Hell, becomes a demonic figure.

To earth, one after another, ever fewer,  
 Till the bough sees its spoil gone past recall,  
 So by that river Adam's seed impure  
 Cast themselves from the wharf, one after one,  
 At signals, as the bird goes to the lure.<sup>ix</sup>  
 Thus are they borne across the water dun;  
 And ere they disembark on the far strand  
 On this another gathering is begun. [120]  
 "Son," said the courteous Master, "understand  
 That all those who have died in the anger of God  
 Congregate hither out of every land.  
 And they are prompt to pass over the flood,  
 For Divine Justice pricketh in them so  
 That fear is changed to longing in their blood.<sup>x</sup>  
 By this way no good spirit is seen to go.  
 Therefore if Charon doth of thee complain,  
 What his words mean thou easily may'st know."  
 When he had ended, the whole shadowy plain [130]  
 Shuddered so strongly, that the terror past  
 Still at the memory bathes me in sweat again.  
 Out of the tear-drenched earth came forth a blast  
 That made a crimson flash before me leap  
 And numbness over all my senses cast.  
 And I fell, like to one seized with a sleep.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 117. "The lure": the call by which the hunter lures it.

<sup>x</sup> 126. Any reality seems to them less intolerable than the apprehension.

# Canto IV

*When the poet awakes he is on the farther side of Acheron and on the brink of the great Abyss. He descends with Virgil to the First Circle or Limbo, where are the souls of the unbaptised and of the virtuous heathen. Virgil describes the descent of Christ into Limbo. In a part which is more luminous they are greeted by Homer and other chief poets of antiquity; it is here that Virgil's own place is. Farther on is a noble castle, where are seen heroes and heroines of old, Aristotle, "the master of them that know," and the philosophers, and other famous spirits.*

RUMBLE OF THUNDER upon my brain deep-drowsed

So shook the sleep that at the heavy sound

I started, like a man by force aroused.

And my now rested eyes casting around

I rose upright, with peering gaze intent

To know the place wherein myself I found.

True it is, I stood on the edge of the descent

Where the hollow of the gulf out of despair

Amasses thunder of infinite lament.

Sombre, profound, and brimmed with vaporous air

[10]

It was, so that I, seeking to pierce through

To the very bottom, could see nothing there.

"Let us go down to the blind world below,"

Began the Poet, on a sudden pale.

"I shall be first, and thou behind me go."

And I, who had marked his colour so to quail,

Said: "How shall I come where thou lovest cheer

Who art wont over my falterings to prevail?"

And he to me: "The misery that is here,

Down among this folk, maketh my face wan

[20]

With pity, which thine eyes mistake for fear.

Descend we: the long way constrains us on."

So he entered, and he made me enter too,

On the first circle that the abyss doth zone.  
 Here was no sound that the ear could catch of rue,  
 Save only of sighs, that still as they complain  
 Make the eternal air tremble anew.  
 And this rose from the sorrow, unracked by pain,  
 That was in the great multitude below  
 Of children and of women and of mien. [30]  
 The good Master to me: "Wouldst thou not know  
 What spirits are these thou seest and hearest grieve?  
 Td have thee learn before thou farther go,  
 These sinned not: but the merit that they achieve<sup>i</sup>  
 Helps not, since baptism was not theirs, the gate  
 Of that faith, which was given thee to believe.  
 And if ere Christ they came, untimely in date,  
 They worshipped not with right experience;  
 And I myself am numbered in their state.  
 For such defect and for no other offence [40]  
 We are lost, and only in so far amerced  
 That without hope we languish in suspense."  
 I, when I heard this, to the heart was pierced,  
 Because I knew men to much virtue bred  
 Whose spirits in that Limbo were athirst.  
 "Tell me, my Master, tell me, Sir!" I said,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Seized with a longing wholly to be assured  
 Of that faith wherein error cannot tread,  
 "Did ever any of those herein immured  
 By his own or other's merit to bliss get free?" [50]  
 And he, aware what meant my covert word,  
 Answered: "I was yet new in this degree<sup>iii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> 34. "These sinned not": Virgil will not have Dante suppose for a moment that his companions in Limbus have been evildoers.

<sup>ii</sup> 46-48. As soon as Dante learns that Virgil's soul dwells in Limbus, he is eager to receive from this witness corroboration of the doctrine of the descent of Christ into Hell.

<sup>iii</sup> 52. "I was yet new . . .": Virgil died in the year 19 B.C.

When I saw one in power crowned appear<sup>iv</sup>  
 On whom the signs of victory were to see.  
 He took from us the shade of our first sire;<sup>v</sup>  
 Of his son Abel, and Noah of that same seed;  
 Moses, the obedient and the law-giver;  
 The patriarch, Abraham, and the King, David;  
 Israel with his father and with his sons;<sup>vi</sup>  
 Rachel also, to win whom so much he did;<sup>vii</sup> [60]  
 And many another; and made them blessed ones;  
 And I would have thee know that, before these,  
 There has been no human soul that he atones."<sup>viii</sup>  
 We ceased not to go on by slow degrees,  
 Though he spoke still, and past the wood had come,  
 The wood I mean of spirits thick like trees,  
 And, since my slumber, had not advanced therefrom  
 Far, when a radiant glow beyond us shone  
 Which overcame a hemisphere of gloom.  
 A little distance from us it lay on, [70]  
 Yet not so much but that I saw in part  
 What honourable folk that place had won.  
 "O thou that honourest Science and Art,  
 Who are these that have such honour and acclaim  
 That it removes them from the rest apart?"  
 And he to me: "The glory of the name<sup>ix</sup>  
 Which sounds of them above in the earthly sphere  
 Gains favour of Heaven which thus promoteth them."

---

<sup>iv</sup> 53. "I saw one . . . appear": Christ, who is never named in the *Inferno*. — "Crowned": doubtless a cruciform nimbus. After the crucifixion Christ went down into Hell, and took from Limbus the souls of the worthy people of the Old Testament.

<sup>v</sup> 55. "Our first sire" is Adam.

<sup>vi</sup> 59. "Israel": Jacob; "his father": Isaac; "his sons": his twelve children.

<sup>vii</sup> 60. To win Rachel, Jacob served Laban twice seven years: Gen. 29:18-28.

<sup>viii</sup> 63. Before the descent of Christ all human souls went, if bad, to Hell; if good, to Limbus. Since that time Christian souls penitent at the moment of death have gone to Purgatory.

<sup>ix</sup> 76-78. God allows the intelligence, by the good use of which they won such renown on earth, to remain with them in the other world.

Meanwhile a voice was sounding in my ear:<sup>x</sup>

“Honour ye all the great Poet: his shade  
That had departed, now again is here.”

[80]

After the voice had paused and silent stayed,

I saw four great shades come with one accord.

They had an aspect neither gay nor sad.

The good Master began to speak his word:

“On him who bears the sword thine eyes now cast,<sup>xi</sup>

Who comes before the others, as their lord.

He is Homer, who all poets hath surpassed.

The next who comes is Horace, satirist,

Ovid the third, and Lucan is the last.

[90]

Because each nature doth with mine consist

Through that name which the one voice glorifies

They do me honour, and themselves not least.”

Thus came that noble school before mine eyes

Assembling round the lord of loftiest style

Who over the others like an eagle flies.

After they had talked together a little while,

They turned to me and welcoming signs displayed:

At which salute I saw my Master smile.

And yet more honour unto me they paid,

[100]

For me into their band did they invite,

So that I a sixth amid such wisdom made.

Thus we went moving onwards toward the light

Speaking such things as here were better mute,

Though there to speak them was both meet and right.

Now came we to a Noble Castle’s foot,

With lofty walls seven times engirdled round,<sup>xii</sup>

And a fair rivulet moated it about.

---

<sup>x</sup> 79. *We are not told which of the spirits utters the greeting to Virgil.*

<sup>xi</sup> 86. *“On him who bears . . .”: Homer, who is depicted with a sword because he sang of arms.*

<sup>xii</sup> 107. *The “Noble Castle,” or the Palace of Wisdom, is surrounded by seven walls representing the four moral virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice) and the three intellectual virtues (understanding, knowledge, and wisdom).*

This we passed over as it had been dry ground.  
 Through seven gates entering with those sages, lo!<sup>xiii</sup> [110]  
 A meadow of fresh verdure there I found.  
 On it were people with grave eyes and slow,  
 And great authority was in their mien.  
 They spoke seldom, with mild voices and low.  
 Thus we retired on one side that demesne  
 Into an open, luminous, high place,  
 So that they stood where they could all be seen.  
 There on the green enamel, face to face,  
 Were shown me the great spirits, so that I  
 Exalt myself to have enjoyed such grace. [120]  
 I saw Electra in a great company<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Among whom Hector and Aeneas were,  
 'And armèd Caesar with the falcon eye.  
 I saw Camilla and Penthesilea there<sup>xv</sup>  
 Over against them, and the Latian King;  
 Lavinia his daughter sitting near;<sup>xvi</sup>  
 'That Brutus who drove out the proud Tarquin;  
 Lucrece, Cornelia, Julia, Marcia, four  
 Together, and by himself the Saladin.<sup>xvii</sup>  
 When I had raised my eyes a little more, [130]  
 I saw the Master of those who know: he sate  
 'Amid the sons Philosophy to him bore.  
 All do him honour, all eyes on him wait.  
 Here I beheld Plato and Socrates  
 Who of all are nearest to his high estate.  
 Democritus, whose world blind Chance decrees;

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 110. The gates probably symbolise the seven liberal arts of the trivium (grammar; logic, rhetoric) and the quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy), which afford access to knowledge.

<sup>xiv</sup> 121. Electra, daughter of Atlas, and mother of Dardanus who was the founder of Troy.

<sup>xv</sup> 124. Camilla: a warrior maiden (cf. *Inf.*, I, 108); Penthesilea: queen of the Amazons.

<sup>xvi</sup> 126-28. "Lavinia": wife of Aeneas; "Brutus": Lucius Junius Brutus, implacable foe of the Tarquins; "Lucrece": Lucretia, wife of Collatinus; "Julia": daughter of Caesar, wife of Pompey; "Marcia": wife of Cato of Utica; "Cornelia": mother of the Gracchi.

<sup>xvii</sup> 129. "Saladin," the model of chivalry, was sultan of Egypt and Syria in the twelfth century. He is different in race and religion from those mentioned hitherto.

Diogenes, Thales, Anaxagoras;<sup>xviii</sup>  
 Zeno, Heraclitus, and Empedocles:  
 Him who was skilled the virtue of plants to class,  
 Dioscorides, I saw and Orpheus' shade;<sup>xix</sup> [140]  
 Tully's and Linus'; moral Seneca's;<sup>xx</sup>  
 Euclid, and Ptolemy, who the stars surveyed;<sup>xxi</sup>  
 Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen,<sup>xxii</sup>  
 Averroes also, who the Comment made.<sup>xxiii</sup>  
 I may not portray all in the full scene,  
 Being hurried on so by the long theme's care,  
 That oft the word comes short of the thing seen.  
 The band of six to two hath dwindled, where<sup>xxiv</sup>  
 By another road the sage Escort inclines  
 Out of the quiet into the trembling air. [150]  
 I come to a place where there is naught that shines.

---

<sup>xviii</sup> 137. "Thales" was one of the seven wise men of Greece.

<sup>xix</sup> 140. Orpheus is considered as a philosopher.

<sup>xx</sup> 141. "Tully," or Cicero, was one of the first philosophers that Dante studied. "Linus": an imaginary Greek poet (other texts have "Livy," the Roman historian, who also wrote philosophical works). "Seneca" the moralist was thought to be a different person from the dramatist.

<sup>xxi</sup> 142. "Ptolemy," the great geographer and astronomer of Alexandria, who lived in the second century B.C.

<sup>xxii</sup> 143. "Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen": three famous physicians of Greece, Turkestan, and Mysia.

<sup>xxiii</sup> 144. "Averroes": a Spanish Moor of the twelfth century, was a celebrated scholar and philosopher. Having read the works of Aristotle in ancient Syriac translations, he composed three commentaries on them; one of these was followed by St. Thomas.

<sup>xxiv</sup> 148. The company of six dwindles to two—Virgil and Dante.



# Canto V

The descent to the Second Circle, with which Hell proper begins. Here are the souls of carnal sinners. Minos, who presides over the entrance of Hell as Judge and assigns their places to the damned as they come in, at first refuses admittance to Dante, but is overawed by Virgil. The carnal sinners are blown about forever on stormy winds, and among them Virgil points out famous lovers. Dante wishes to speak with one pair, who are Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta, brother of the husband to whom for state reasons Francesca had been married. Hearing Francesca's story Dante is so overcome with pity that he faints.

FROM THE FIRST circle I thus descended down  
    Into the second, which less space admits,  
    And so much more pain that it stings to groan.  
There Minos, hideously grinning, sits,  
    Inspects the offences at the entering in,  
    Judges and, as he girds himself, commits.  
I mean, that when the ill-born spirit comes in  
    Before his presence, it confesses all;  
    Thereon that scrutiniser of each sin  
Sees what place Hell holds for its fittest stall; [10]  
    Round him as many times his tail doth throw  
    As the degrees he wills that it should fall.  
Always before him stand they, row on row;  
    To sentence comes each of the wretched train:  
    They tell, and hear; and straight are whirled below.  
"O thou, who comest to the home of pain,"  
    Said Minos to me, when my face he spied,  
    Leaving his business of the great Arraign,  
"Beware in whom thou, entering, dost confide,  
    Let not the broad approach thy feet ensnare." [20]  
    "Why criest thou out?" answered to him my Guide:

"Hinder thou not his destined steps. Forbear!  
 Thus is the thing willed there, where what is willed  
 Can be accomplished. Further question spare."  
 Now begin notes of wailing never stilled  
 To pierce into my ear; now am I come  
 Where thronging lamentations hold me thrilled.  
 I came into a place of all light dumb  
 That bellows like a storm in the sea-deep  
 When the thwart winds that strike it roar and hum. [30]  
 The abysmal tempest that can never sleep  
 Snatches the spirits and headlong hurries them,  
 Beats and besets them with its whirling sweep.  
 When they arrive before the ruin, stream<sup>i</sup>  
 The cries up; there the wail is and the moan,  
 There the divine omnipotence they blaspheme.  
 I learnt that in such restless violence blown  
 This punishment the carnal sinners share  
 Whose reason by desire was overthrown.  
 And as their beating wings the starlings bear [40]  
 At the cold season, in broad flocking flight,  
 So those corrupted spirits were rapt in air  
 To and fro, down, up, driven in helpless plight,  
 Comforted by no hope ever to lie  
 At rest, nor even to bear a pain more light.  
 And as the cranes in long line streak the sky  
 And in procession chant their mournful call,  
 So I saw come with sound of wailing by  
 The shadows fluttering in the tempest's brawl.  
 Whereat, "O Master, who are these," I said, [50]  
 "On whom the black winds with their scourges fall?"  
 "The first of those concerning whom thou hast prayed<sup>ii</sup>"

---

<sup>i</sup> 34. "The ruin": as the pit narrows progressively toward the bottom, the terraces correspondingly decrease in circumference. At one point in the round of this shelf is a break, where the rock has fallen. In Canto XII, 31-45, we are told that when Christ descended into Hell, his coming was preceded by an earthquake, which shook down the walls of the abyss in three spots.

<sup>ii</sup> 52. "The first of those . . ." is Semiramis, queen of Assyria.

To know," he answered, "had dominion  
 Of many tongues, which she as empress swayed.  
 With vice of luxury was she so undone,  
 That she made lust a law by her decree,  
 To obliterate the shame that she had won.  
 This is Semiramis: we read that she  
 Came after Ninus, and had been his bride.  
 She ruled the land the Soldan holds in fee. [60]  
 That other is she who by her own hand died<sup>iii</sup>  
 For Love's sake, to Sichaeus' urn untrue;  
 Voluptuous Cleopatra comes beside.  
 See Helen, for whose sake the long years drew  
 Ill after ill; see great Achilles there,  
 Who fought with love in the end, and whom love slew.  
 See Paris, Tristram!" More than a thousand pair<sup>iv</sup>  
 He with his finger pointing at shades of fame  
 Showed me, whom love had power from life to tear.  
 After that I had heard my Teacher name [70]  
 Each lady of old, with her enamoured knight,  
 My thoughts were mazed, such pity upon me came.  
 I began: "Poet, I fain would, if I might,  
 Speak with those two that hand in hand appear  
 And, as they move, seem to the wind so light."  
 And he to me: "When they approach more near,  
 Thou shalt see. By the love which is their guide  
 Do thou entreat them then, and they will hear."  
 Soon as the wind's whirl made them nearer glide,  
 I raised my voice up: "O tired spirits, come [80]  
 And speak with us, if that be not denied."  
 Eagerly as a pair of pigeons, whom  
 Desire calls, and their will bears, as they fly  
 On wide unfaltering wings to their sweet home,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 61. "She who by her own hand died" is Dido. The story of her fatal love for Aeneas (and her infidelity to the memory of her dead husband Sichaeus) is told in Aeneid, IV.

<sup>iv</sup> 67. "Paris": son of Priam. "Tristram": the hero of the most famous medieval love romance.

So swerved those spirits from out the company  
 Where Dido is, flying toward us underneath  
 The fell mirk; such a power had my fond cry.  
 "O kind and gracious creature that hast breath  
 And comest journeying through the black air  
 To us who made the earth bloody with our death, [90]  
 Were but the world's King friend to us, a prayer  
 Should from us both implore Him for thy peace  
 Because thou hast taken pity on our despair.  
 Whether to speak or listen better please,  
 We will speak with you, and hear and understand,  
 Now while the lull'd wind spares a little ease.  
 The place where I was born sits on the strand<sup>v</sup>  
 Where Po descends to his peace, and with him takes  
 All the other streams that follow him down the land.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Love, that in gentle heart so quickly wakes, [100]  
 Took him with this fair body, which from me  
 Was torn: the way of it still hurts and aches.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Love, that to no loved one remits his fee,  
 Took me with joy of him, so deep in-wrought,  
 Even now it hath not left me, as thou dost see.  
 Love led us both to one death. He that sought  
 And spilt our life—Cain's hell awaits him now."<sup>viii</sup>  
 These words to us upon the wind were brought.  
 When I had heard those wounded spirits, my brow  
 Sank downward, and I held it where it was, [110]  
 Until the Poet spoke: "What musest thou?"  
 And when I answered, I began: "Alas!  
 How many sweet thoughts and what longings fain

---

<sup>v</sup> 97. "The place where I was born": Ravenna, then only one mile from the sea and connected with the Po river by canals.

<sup>vi</sup> 99. The tributaries are conceived as chasing the Po down to the sea.

<sup>vii</sup> 102. "The way . . . and aches": because, murdered as she was without a chance to repent, she incurred eternal punishment.

<sup>viii</sup> 107. "Cain's hell": the abode of traitors to kindred, at the bottom of Hell, which awaits Francesca's husband, Gian Ciotto.

Led them into the lamentable pass!"  
 I turned, and I began to speak again:  
 "Francesca, the tears come into mine eyes  
 For sorrow, and for pity of thy pain.  
 But tell me: in the time of the sweet sighs  
 How did Love vouchsafe proof of what he is,  
 And of the obscure yearnings make you wise?" [120]  
 And she to me: "No grief surpasses this  
 (And that thy Teacher understands full well)<sup>ix</sup> —  
 In the midst of misery to remember bliss.  
 But if thou so desire to know how fell  
 The seed whose first root in our bosoms fed,  
 I'll tell, as one who can but weep and tell.  
 One day together, for pastime, we read  
 Of Launcelot, and how Love held him in thrall.<sup>x</sup>  
 We were alone, and without any dread.  
 Sometimes our eyes, at the word's secret call, [130]  
 Met, and our cheeks a changing colour wore.  
 But it was one page only that did all.  
 When we read how that smile, so thirsted for,  
 Was kissed by such a lover, he that may  
 Never from me be separated more  
 All trembling kissed my mouth. The book I say  
 Was a Galahalt to us, and he beside<sup>xi</sup>  
 That wrote the book. We read no more that day."  
 While the one spirit spoke thus, the other cried  
 So lamentably, that the whole life fled [140]  
 For pity out of me, as if I died;  
 And I fell, like a body falling dead.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 122. "Thy Teacher": Virgil, who was happy and glorious on earth, and is now condemned to eternal exile.

<sup>x</sup> 128. "We read of Launcelot": the French prose romance of Launcelot of the Lake, which tells of the love of the hero for Guinevere, wife of King Arthur.

<sup>xi</sup> 137. "The book . . . was a Galahalt to us": Galahalt was the intermediary who brought Launcelot and Guinevere together; Paolo and Francesca had no such go-between—the book was their Galahalt, their guide to love.



# Canto VI

Dante awakes in the Third Circle, where an icy rain falls on souls of the gluttonous, watched over by Cerberus. A Florentine spirit named Ciacco accosts him and prophesies about Florence and the varying fortunes of the Black and White factions in it.

WHEN MY MIND came back, that had closed at sight  
Of those two kinsfolk in their misery bound,  
Pity of whom in sorrow had mazed me quite,  
New torments, new tormented ones around,  
Whatever step I take, wherever strain  
My eyes, I see, peopling the shadowy ground.

I am now in the Third Circle of the Rain,  
Eternal, cold, accurst, and charged with woe.  
Its law and quality ever the same remain.

Big hail, and clots of muddied water, and snow  
Pour downward through the darkness of the air:  
The ground they beat stinks with the overflow.

[10]

Cerberus, cruel and uncouth monster, there  
Stretches his three throats out and hound-like bays  
Over the people embogged about his lair.

His beard is slobbered black, his red eyes blaze,<sup>i</sup>  
His belly is big, his hands clawed; and with growl  
The spirits he clutches, rends piecemeal and flays.  
The rain provoketh them like dogs to howl.

They with one side the other strive to screen:  
Often they turn themselves, those sinners foul,  
When we by Cerberus, the great Worm, were seen,  
He showed the tusks within each grinning jaw:

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 16-19. Gluttony, the next of the sins of Incontinence, is essentially foul and selfish. It is a sin that robs men of their humanity, making them unrecognisable to their friends. Its perfect embodiment is Cerberus, the tormenting genius of the place.

He had no limb but quivered with his spleen.  
 My Guide spread out his palms, when this he saw,  
 And took up clods of earth, and with full fist  
 Crammed them into each madly ravening maw.  
 And like the craving dog whose barks persist  
 But whom the first full bites of food appease,  
 For all his fever is but to champ that grist, [30]  
 So was it with those squalid visages  
 Of demon Cerberus, who roars so loud  
 The spirits would fain that deafness gave them ease.  
 Now passed we on over the shadows bowed  
 Beneath the crushing rain, and our feet set  
 On seeming bodies, empty as a cloud.  
 They all lay grovelling prone amid the wet  
 Save one who sat up quickly and raised his head,  
 Seeing us pass before him, and our eyes met.  
 "O thou who through this drizzling hell art led," [40]  
 He cried out, "recognise me if thou may'st,  
 For thou wast made before I was unmade."  
 And I to him: "The anguish which thou hast  
 It may be so obscures thee to my mind  
 That 'tis as if for me thou never wast.  
 But tell me: who art thou in such place confined  
 And to such punishment condemned, that though  
 Worse may be, none is of so loathsome kind."  
 And he to me: "Thy city, which brims so<sup>ii</sup>  
 With envy that the sack is ripe to spill, [50]  
 Contained me in the sunny life ye know.  
 You citizens called me Ciacco: I did ill.<sup>iii</sup>  
 For the fell sin of gluttony I atone  
 Thou seest how in the rain I suffer still,  
 And I, unhappy spirit, am not alone.

---

<sup>ii</sup> 49. "Thy city": Florence.

<sup>iii</sup> 52. "Ciacco": a Florentine renowned both for his gluttony and for his cleverness, who figures also in one of Boccaccio's tales, Decameron, IX, 8.



For all of these are in like penal state  
 For the like trespass." More he would speak none.  
 TI answered him: "Ciacco, thy piteous fate  
 Weighs on me so, it moves me to lament.  
 But, if thou canst, tell me what things await [60]  
 The citizens of the city that strife has rent,  
 If any in it be just: and tell me why  
 Such discord doth within it so ferment."  
 And he to me: "They from contention high<sup>iv</sup>  
 Shall come to blood; the Party of the Woods  
 With contumely shall force the other to fly.  
 Eve the third sun his annual course concludes,<sup>v</sup>  
 This one must fall and the other prevail, upborne<sup>vi</sup>  
 By him who still tacks in alternate moods.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Long shall it hold high the proud front of scorn, [70]  
 Making the other with sore burdens bleed,  
 Though with the shame of bondage it be torn.  
 Two indeed are just: but none to them gives heed.<sup>viii</sup>  
 Pride, Envy, and Avarice are the triple spark  
 Which sows in all those bosoms fiery seed."  
 Here ended he his lamentation dark.  
 And I to him: "Continue, for I would  
 Hear yet more from thee and thine instruction mark.  
 Farinata and Tegghiaio, who worthiest stood,  
 Arrigo, Rusticucci, and Mosca, and those [80]  
 Others who fixed their will on doing good,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 64-66. After long strife between the adherents of the Donati, representing the old aristocracy, and the followers of the Cerchi, who had come to Florence from the country and enriched themselves by commerce, blood was shed in an encounter on May 1, 1300. In June, 1301, the leaders of the Black or Donati party conspired against their opponents, and in consequence were exiled.

<sup>v</sup> 67. "Third sun": the third solar year, beginning January 1; the Florentine year began on March 25.

<sup>vi</sup> 68. "The other prevail": the Blacks having gained the upper hand through the cunning of Boniface VIII and his pretended peacemaker, Charles of Valois, banished, between January 1 and October 1, 1302, some 600 Whites. Dante was sentenced on January 27 and again on March 10.

<sup>vii</sup> 69. "Upborne by him . . .": Boniface.

<sup>viii</sup> 73. "Two indeed are just": in Florence, there are only two just men; who these two are, we are not told.

Where are they? What place found they at the close?  
 For fain would I be certain, if I may,  
 Whether they taste Hell's poison or Heaven's repose."  
 And he: "Among the blackest spirits they.  
 Them may'st thou see, if thou so far descend,  
 Whom other sins down to the bottom weigh.  
 But when thou art come to the sweet world, befriend  
 My memory, and recall to men my fate.  
 No more I tell thee: here I make an end."  
 [90]  
 He twisted then his eyes asquint from straight,  
 Looked at me a little, and then bowed down his head  
 And mid his blind companions fell prostrate.  
 My Guide spoke to me: "No more from that bed  
 He wakes until the angel trumpet sounds<sup>ix</sup>  
 When the stern Power shall make his advent dread.  
 They shall revisit then their sad grave-mounds,  
 And each his flesh and his own shape resume,  
 And hear what through eternity resounds."  
 Thus passed we on through the commingled gloom  
 [100]  
 Of the shadows and the rain with paces slow,  
 Touching a little on the life to come.  
 Wherefore I said: "Master, these pangs of woe—  
 Shall they be increased after the great Assize  
 Or stay scorching as now, or lesser grow?"  
 And he: "Turn to thy science and be wise.<sup>x</sup>  
 The more a thing perfected is, the more  
 It feels bliss, and in pain the sharper sighs.  
 Although the state of these accurst at core  
 Never indeed in true perfection ends,  
 [110]

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<sup>ix</sup> 95. "Until the angel trumpet sounds": on the Day of Judgment, at the sound of the last trumpet, all souls in Heaven and Hell will return to earth, resume their bodies, gather in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and listen to their eternal sentence; after which they will go back to their respective places.

<sup>x</sup> 106-111. "Turn to thy science": i.e., to the philosophy of Aquinas. If the bodiless soul cannot attain the utmost happiness, we may infer that it cannot attain the utmost misery. It follows that the pains of Hell will be severer after the Judgment, because, although the word "perfection" cannot be fitly applied to "these accurst at core," they expect to be more complete after the Great Day than before it.

They look then to be nearer than before.”  
We made along that circle as round it bends,  
Speaking much more than I repeat, till we  
Attained the point whereat the road descends.  
Here found we Plutus, the Great Enemy.<sup>xi</sup>

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<sup>xi</sup> 115. “Plutus”: the god of wealth, who was not always distinguished, even by the ancients, from Pluto.

# Canto VII

*Plutus, the ancient God of Riches (who seems to be identified or confused by Dante with Pluto), presides over the Fourth Circle. Here are the Misers and the Spendthrifts, abusers of worldly goods in different ways. They roll dead weights in opposite directions and when they meet scold each other. Dante inquires of the function of Fortune, which Virgil explains. They arrive at the descent into the Fifth Circle, accompanying the fall of a stream which has worn a passage to form the marsh of Styx below. Here are the Wrathful, quarrelling in the mud, and the Sullen, sunk beneath it. The poets arrive at last at the foot of a tower.*

PAPE SATAN, aleppe, pape Satan!"<sup>i</sup>

That gentle sage who knew what all speech meant,  
When Plutus thus with clucking noise began,  
Said for my comfort: "Fear not, nor repent  
Thy journey; for our descending of this rock  
Whatever power he hath shall not prevent."

He turned him to that swollen visage and spoke;  
"Cease, thou accursed Wolf, thy rage to spit!  
Within thyself consume it till thou choke.

Not without cause our journey is to the pit. [10]

There is it willed on high, where Michaël  
For the rebel arrogance took vengeance fit."<sup>ii</sup>

As sails that sudden gusts of tempest swell,  
Fall when the mast breaks, tangled past amend,  
So to the ground that cruel goblin fell.

Thus down to the fourth hollow we descend,  
Taking the more in of that bank of woe  
Wherein all the evil of the world is penned.

Ah! Divine Justice! Who crowds throe on throe,  
Toil upon toil, such as mine eyes now met? [20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. The first line is evidently intended to produce the effect of an unintelligible jargon.

<sup>ii</sup> 12. "The rebel arrogance": the revolt of the angels.

And why doth guilt of ours consume us so?  
 Like to the wave above Charybdis' threat<sup>iii</sup>  
 That breaks against the wave it meeteth there,  
 So are the people here at counter set.  
 Here saw I troops more numerous than elsewhere  
 With yells prolonged on this side and that side  
 Rolling dead weights with full chest pushing square.  
 Smiting against each other in force they vied,  
 Then wheeled about just there and rolled them back.  
 "Why holdest thou?" "Why flingest away?" they cried. [30]  
 Thus they return along the dismal track  
 On either hand to the point opposite,  
 And their refrain of scolding never slack.  
 Then everyone when he had compassed it  
 Through his half-circle turned to the other mark,  
 And my heart felt as though itself were hit.  
 "Master mine," said I, "lighten my mind's dark.  
 Who are these? And all those that the tonsure wear,  
 Those on our left side, were they each a clerk?"<sup>iv</sup>  
 And he: "All these in mind so squint-eyed were [40]  
 In their first life, that they were quite without  
 All measure, whether to expend or spare.  
 Most clearly may'st thou tell this from their shout  
 When they the two points of the circle have won  
 Where contraries of guilt divide the rout.  
 Priests were they that no hairy cover have on  
 Their heads, and Popes, and Cardinals, in whom  
 Avarice hath its utmost mischief done."  
 And I: "Master, among this crew are some  
 Whose faces surely I should recognise, [50]  
 Who were polluted with this evil scum."  
 And he to me: "Confused is thy surmise.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 22. "Charybdis": in the Strait of Messina.

<sup>iv</sup> 39. "Were they each a clerk?" Clerics form a large part of the miserly host; Dante was by no means alone in regarding avarice as the besetting fault of the clergy.

The squalor that in life their senses shut  
 Now makes them too dim to be known of eyes.  
 For ever at one another must they butt.  
 These from the grave shall rise up with fists tight,  
 Those others with their very hair close-cut.  
 Ill-giving, ill-hoarding, lost for them the light  
 Of the bright world, and in this scuffling caught.  
 I beautify no words to tell their plight. [60]  
 Now, my son, see to what a mock are brought  
 The goods of Fortune's keeping, and how soon!  
 Though to possess them still is all man's thought.  
 For all the gold that is beneath the moon,  
 Or ever was, never could buy repose  
 For one of those souls, faint to have that boon."  
 "Master," said I, "tell me from what power rose  
 This Fortune upon whom thy word did glance.  
 What is she, whose grasp doth the world's good enclose?"  
 And he to me: "How heavy the ignorance, [70]  
 O foolish creatures, that on you is laid!  
 Hear now my judgment of her governance.  
 The wisdom that transcendeth all, and made  
 The heavens and gave them guides to rule them right,<sup>v</sup>  
 So that each splendour should the other aid  
 With equal distribution of the light,  
 In like sort also a general minister<sup>vi</sup>  
 Set over this world's glory and fond delight,  
 From time to time those vain goods to transfer  
 From people to people, and from class to class, [80]  
 Beyond cunning of mortals to deter.  
 Hence the empire from that race to this must pass,  
 In wax and wane obeying her decree

---

<sup>v</sup> 74. "And gave them guides": the angels, who govern the revolutions of the spheres.

<sup>vi</sup> 77. "A general minister": Fortune, a power similar to the celestial intelligences that move the heavens. It is her mission to shift prosperity to and fro, without apparent plan, seeing that it remain not too long with one person, family, or nation.

Which lurketh like a snake hid in the grass.  
 She is past your wit to understand; but she  
     Provideth, judgeth, governeth her own,  
     As the other Gods do theirs in their degree.  
 To her mutations is no respite known.  
     Necessity in her forbiddeth pause:  
     Thus comes he oft who is raised or overthrown. [90]  
 This is she who is cursed without a cause,  
     And even from those hath maledictions got,  
     Unjustly, of whom she should have won applause.  
 But she is in her bliss, and hears them not.  
     In chime with the other primal creatures glad,<sup>vii</sup>  
     She turns her sphere and tastes her blissful lot.<sup>viii</sup>  
 Descend we now to miseries more sad.  
     The stars that when I set forth climbed on high<sup>ix</sup>  
     Sink, and to stay too long my charge forbad."  
 To the other bank we crossed the circle, nigh [100]  
     Above a spring that boiled and overflowed  
     Down through the cleft it wore to issue by.  
 Darker than blackest purple the water showed.  
     We followed down the sombre stream's decline  
     And reached the floor below by a strange road.  
 These sullen waves into a fen combine  
     Called Styx, whenas the water's last descent<sup>x</sup>  
     Reaches the foot of that grey scarp malign.  
 And I who stood with fixed looks intent  
     Saw muddied people in that slough who stuck, [110]  
     All naked and with brows in anger bent.  
 Not with hands only each the other struck  
     But with the head and breast and heels that spurn:

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<sup>vii</sup> 95. "Primal creatures": the angels.

<sup>viii</sup> 96. "Her sphere": the wheel, the traditional symbolic attribute of Fortune.

<sup>ix</sup> 98. The stars which were rising in the east when they started have now crossed the meridian and begun to descend towards the west: it is past midnight. Virgil usually states the hour in astronomical terms.

<sup>x</sup> 107. The Styx was the most famous of the rivers of the classic lower world.

At one another with their teeth they pluck.  
 "Son," said the gracious Master, "here discern  
 The souls of those whom anger stupefied.  
 And I would have thee for a surety learn  
 That sobbing underneath the water abide  
 People who make the surface bubble and froth,  
 As the eye may tell, turned to whatever side. [120]  
 Fixed in slime, groan they: "We were sullen and wroth  
 In the sweet air made glad by the Sun's fire;  
 We fumed and smouldered inly, lapt in sloth,  
 And now we gloom and blacken in the mire.'  
 This sad refrain they gurgle in their throat  
 Because they cannot speak the words entire."  
 We 'twixt the dry bank and the putrid moat  
 Compassed a wide are of those waters sour,  
 And still those swallowers of the filth we note.  
 At last we reached the basis of a tower.<sup>xi</sup> [130]

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<sup>xi</sup> 130. Here, as frequently, Dante breaks his narrative at an interesting point, using suspense as a means of heightening effect.



# Canto VIII

*A signal flaming from the top of the tower is answered at a distance, and Phlegyas comes Fuerte in his boat to take the poets across the mars of Styx, supposing them to be damned souls. On the passage Filippo Argenti, a Florentine, tries to clutch the boat and is set on by his fellow-sinners, to Dante's great satisfaction. Soon appears the red city of Dis or Lucifer, wherein are punished the more heinous sins. Fallen angels refuse the poets admission, and even Virgil is discomfited.*

I SAY, continuing, that as on we went,  
Long ere the foot of that high tower we hit,  
Our eyes were drawn up to its battlement  
Because of two flames that we saw there lit,  
And yet another answering them discerned  
So far, the eye scarcely could distinguish it.  
To the Sea of all Intelligence I turned,  
And spoke: "What says this beacon, and what replies  
That other fire, and by whom are they burned?"  
And he to me: "Over the foul wave flies [10]  
What is awaited: save it be withheld  
By the marsh-mist, thou'lt see it with thine eyes."  
Never did arrow from the string propelled  
With such a vehemence the air divide  
As the small pinnacle that I now beheld  
Over the water toward us lightly glide;  
And at the helm a single steersman was.<sup>i</sup>  
"Art thou arrived, fell spirit?" aloud he cried.  
And my Lord answered, "Phlegyas, Phlegyas,"<sup>ii</sup>  
Thou criest this time in vain. Take us for freight, [20]

---

i

<sup>ii</sup> 19. The guardian of the Fifth Circle is the swift Phlegyas, who seems to impersonate both furor and rancor. On earth he was a king of the Lapithae, who, in a frenzy of rage against Apollo for the violation of his daughter, set fire to the temple at Delphi, and was slain by the god. In the *Commedia* he is a boatman on the Styx.

But for no more than ferry of the morass."  
 As one who hearkens to some great deceit  
     Done to him, and his spirit is inly frayed,  
     So Phlegyas swelled in anger at his defeat.  
 My Guide stept down into the boat, and made  
     Me to enter after him; nor till I trod  
     Within it, did that vessel seem down-weighed.  
 Soon as my Guide and I the thwart bestrode,  
     The ancient prow began to cleave anew  
     The water, deeper than with other load. [30]  
 As the dead channel we were running through,  
     Before me rose one full of mud, and cried,  
     "Who art thou, come before thy time is due?"  
 And I to him: "I come, but not abide.  
     But who art thou, so beastly that has grown?"  
     "I am one who weeps, thou seest," he replied.  
 And I to him: "With weeping and with moan  
     Stay on, accursed spirit! For though thou roll  
     In all thy filth, yet thou to me art known."  
 Then he stretched both hands out to clutch the thole. [40]  
     Whereat, watchful, the Master at him struck,  
     Saying, "Off! Away, with the other dogs to grow!"  
 And put his arms about my neck, and took  
     And kissed my face. "Indignant soul," he said,  
     "Blessed be she that bore thee and gave thee suck!  
 Arrogant in your world he held his head:  
     Now there is none to speak of him good things.  
     So is his shade here upon rages fed.  
 How many above there deem themselves great kings  
     Now, who shall lie wallowing in mire like swine, [50]  
     Leaving a name that with dishonour rings!"  
 And I, "Master, my wishes much incline  
     To see him plunged into this broth, before  
     We pass the ferry and this lagoon's confine."  
 And he to me: "Ere that thou see the shore

Thou shalt be satisfied. Fit it is, my son,<sup>iii</sup>  
 That thou enjoy this thing thou cravest for."  
 A little after I saw such mangling done  
 Upon him by the foul folk muddy-cheeked,  
 I still praise God that sight to have looked upon. [60]  
 "Have at Filippo Argenti!" they all shrieked.  
 The spirit of the infuriate Florentine  
 Turned biting and on himself his fury wreaked.  
 We left him. He gets no more word of mine.  
 But on mine ears now smote a sound of moan,  
 And I peered forth, its meaning to divine.  
 Said my good Master: "We begin, my son,  
 To approach the city that is named of Dis.<sup>iv</sup>  
 Sad people it holds, and a great garrison."  
 "Already," I said, "mine eye distinguishes [70]  
 Clearly its minarets within the vale,  
 All red, as if they had come from furnaces."  
 And he to me: "This their exterior shell  
 The eternal fire within them maketh red,  
 Even as thou seest, in this low hollow of Hell."  
 We now arrived at the deep fosses' bed  
 That moat about that place disconsolate:  
 Of iron seemed the walls above my head.  
 Not before making circuit long and late,  
 We came to a stop, and loud the boatman there [80]  
 Cried out to us: "Land now! Here is the gate."  
 Above I saw full thousand spirits in air  
 Rained down from heaven, who angry as if betrayed  
 Cried: "Who is this who without death can dare

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<sup>iii</sup> 56-57. "Fit it is . . . that thou enjoy this thing thou cravest for." St. Thomas, in his *Summa*, distinguishes from sinful rage the righteous indignation that is aroused by the sight of wickedness. This justifiable anger is illustrated here by the attitude of Dante toward one of the violently wrathful. The furious soul that so incenses Dante is Filippo Argenti of Florence.

<sup>iv</sup> 68. "The City of Dis," or Lower Hell, is the abiding-place of those whose sins were due not to Incontinence of desire or temper but to permanent evil disposition, Bestiality, and Malice. Their crimes are the fruit of envy and pride.

The kingdom of the dead folk to invade?"  
 And my sage Master, making sign to them  
 Of his desire, a secret parley essayed.  
 Their great scorn then did they a little stem,  
 And said: "Alone come! let that other plod  
 Back, who so bold into this kingdom came. [90]  
 Let him return the way his folly trod.  
 Try, if he can: for here shalt thou remain  
 Who hast brought him hither by so dark a road."  
 Think, Reader, if my heart misgave me then  
 To hear the accursed words, for from that shore  
 I thought not ever to return again.  
 "O my loved Guide, who seven times and more  
 Hast me from peril that stood before me freed,  
 And didst to sweet security restore,  
 Leave me not so undone in my hard need, [100]  
 And if we may no farther go, retrace  
 The path," I cried, "with all we can of speed."  
 And that Lord, who had led me to this place,  
 Said to me: "Fear not, for our passage none  
 Can take from us! 'twas given us by such Grace.  
 But thou, wait for me here. Thy spirit fordone  
 Feed upon good hope, and be comforted.  
 I will not leave thee in the low world alone."  
 Thus goes away and leaves me to my dread  
 The gentle Father, and I with doubting dwell, [110]  
 For Yes and No contend within my head.  
 What then he proffered them I could not tell;  
 But not long stood he among them in debate  
 When all rushed suddenly in again pell-mell.  
 So did our adversaries close the gate  
 Upon my Lord's breast, who, shut out in scorn  
 To me with slow steps turned back desolate.  
 His eyes upon the ground, and eyebrows shorn  
 Of all boldness, "Oh," he exclaimed with sighs,

“Who is it excludes me from the abodes forlorn?” [120]  
And then to me: “Although my anger rise,  
Be not dismayed, for I shall bring thee through,  
Whatever hindrance they within devise.  
This frowardness of theirs is nothing new.<sup>v</sup>  
They used it once at a less secret door  
Which standeth still without bars to undo.  
Thou sawest the dead writing that it bore.  
And now, this side of it, comes hitherward  
Without guide down the circles one before<sup>vi</sup>  
Whose might the place shall be to us unbarred.” [130]

---

<sup>v</sup> 124-126. “This frowardness of theirs is nothing new”: The demons are still possessed by the pride that caused their original fall. Their insolence was shown at the outer gate of Hell, when they tried to oppose the descent of Christ.

<sup>vi</sup> 129-130. The one who is descending from the gate to open the city is an angel. In the hour of need divine help is not lacking. A special grace descends upon the distracted spirit, and opens a way where all seemed hopeless.

# Canto IX

*Without some divine aid the poets are unable to enter the City. Above the walls suddenly appear the three Furies and threaten Dante with the Medusa head which turns those who see it to stone. At last appears with a sound of storm the Angel for whose aid Virgil has been waiting; he passes over the marsh, puts the demons to flight and opens the gate of the City. They pass within and find a plain covered with sepulchres, the lids of which are open and which are full of flames. These sepulchres contain the Heretics.*

THE COLOUR cowardice had painted pale  
    Upon my cheek, seeing my Guide turn back,  
    Made him more promptly his own hue countervail.  
He stopt, like one who some far sound would track,  
    List'ning: for but short distance could eye strive  
    Into the dim air filmed with vapour black.  
"Yet needs must that the victory we contrive,"  
    He began; "if not, . . . we were promised aid . . .  
    O how long seems it till that one arrive!"  
Well I perceived how his beginning stayed, [10]  
    And how with other words the first he sought  
    To cover, and with a difference overlaid.  
Nevertheless his language on me wrought;  
    For it may be the words he faltered on  
    I drew to a worse meaning than his thought.  
"To this bottom of the shell's drear cone  
    Comes ever any from the first degree,<sup>i</sup>  
    Whose only punishment is hope forgone?"  
So did I question; and he answered me:  
    "Rarely it chances that any of us essay [20]  
    This journey upon which I go with thee.  
True it is that once ere now I came this way,

---

<sup>i</sup> 17. "From the first degree": the Limbus.

By that Erichtho fearfully conjured<sup>ii</sup>  
 Who summoned back the shadows to their clay.  
 To the body's loss not long was I inured  
 When she made me to enter within that wall  
 To fetch a spirit in Judas' circle immured.  
 That is the lowest and most dark place of all,  
 Farthest from the Heaven that moveth all. I know<sup>iii</sup>  
 Full well the way: let naught then thee appal. [30]  
 This marsh, whose exhalation stinketh so,  
 Girdles the dolorous city of the dead,  
 Where without anger now we cannot go."  
 My memory hath not kept what more he said,  
 Because mine eyes drew me all up where I stood  
 To the high tower's top, palpitating red,  
 Where, all in a moment risen up, with blood  
 Spotted on them, three hellish Furies frowned.  
 Women they were in body and attitude,  
 And they were girt with bright green hydras round; [40]  
 For hair they had small snakes and horn'd vipers  
 About the ghastness of their temples wound.  
 He recognising well the ministers  
 Who serve the queen of wailing without cease,  
 Said to me: "Mark now the Erynnēs fierce!  
 The Fury upon the left Megaera is;  
 Alecto is she that clamours on the right;  
 'Twixt them Tisiphone." Then he held his peace  
 Each at her breast was clawing, and then would smite  
 Her body with the palms: so loud their moan, [50]  
 I pressed close to the poet in my affright.  
 "Let come Medusa, and change we him to stone!"  
 All with one voice, and eyes bent downward, said.

---

<sup>ii</sup> 23. "By that Erichtho fearfully conjured": The Thessalian sorceress Erichtho, Virgil declares, sent him, shortly after his death, to fetch a soul from the pit of treachery. That witches had such power over the departed, was firmly believed not merely by the ancients but in Christian times down almost to our day.

<sup>iii</sup> 29. "The Heaven that moveth all" is the *Primum Mobile*, the outermost of the revolving heavens.

"Ill made we Theseus his assault atone."<sup>iv</sup>  
 "Turn backwards. Keep thine eyes closed in thy head!  
 For if thou with the Gorgon should'st be faced,  
 There would be no return up from the dead."  
 Thus spoke the Master, and he himself made haste  
 To turn me, and would not in my hands confide  
 But his own also on my eyelids placed. [60]  
 O ye who have sane intellects for guide  
 Consider well the doctrines that for cloak  
 Beneath the strangeness of the verses hide!  
 And now upon the turbid waters broke  
 A crash, terrible with re-echoings  
 That into trembling either shore awoke.  
 It was a sound as of a wind that springs  
 Impetuous, meeting air that's hot and dry,  
 Which unrelaxing all the forest wrings,  
 Wrenches the boughs off, breaks and beats awry. [70]  
 Rolling the dust, imperiously it towers,  
 And makes the wild beasts and the shepherds fly.  
 Freeing my eyes, he said: "Sharpen thy powers  
 Of vision over the foam of the ancient lake,  
 Where most the smoke is and the swart air lours."  
 As frogs before their enemy the snake  
 Leap through the water, scattered at his threat,  
 Till each squats on the bottom, there to quake,  
 So saw I thousand ruined spirits set  
 In flight before one, who at easy pace [80]  
 Came and passed over Styx with soles unwet.  
 He waved the gross fumes from before his face,  
 Moving often his left hand as he went;  
 And only of that annoyance showed he trace.  
 Well did I know that he from Heaven was sent,  
 And tured to the Master; and he signed his will

---

<sup>iv</sup> 54. Theseus, who had attempted to rescue Persephone from the lower world, was himself rescued by Hercules.



That I should stand all quiet with head down-bent.  
 Ah, with what scorn his countenance seemed to fill!  
 He came to the gate, and with a wand he held  
 Set it wide open, unresisted still. [90]  
 "O race contemptible, from Heaven expelled!"  
 Began he then, on the malign threshold,  
 "Why is your contumacy yet unquelled?  
 Why at that Will still spurn ye, as of old,  
 Whose infinite fulfilment naught frustrates  
 And which hath oft increased your pains fourfold?  
 What profits it to butt against the Fates?  
 Your Cerberus rues his chin peeled and throat scored<sup>v</sup>  
 For this, if ye remember, at yon gates."  
 Then on the unclean journey, without word [100]  
 Spoken to us, returned he, and looked like one  
 By other business constrained and spurred  
 Than that of those before him; and thereon  
 We moved, and toward the city made our way,  
 Secure of what the sacred words had done.  
 We entered into it without any affray.  
 And I who had desire to scrutinise  
 What things, and how, within such fortress lay,  
 Soon as I was within, sent round my eyes  
 And saw a wilderness on either hand [110]  
 Full of evil torments and of miseries.  
 Like as at Arles, where Rhone stagnates in sand,  
 Like as at Pola, by Quarnaro Sound,  
 That barriers Italy and bathes her strand,  
 Sepulchres make uneven all the ground,<sup>vi</sup>  
 So here on every side were tombs arrayed,  
 Only that here was bitterer burial found;

---

<sup>v</sup> 98-99. *Cerberus, having tried to obstruct Hercules, was chained by him and dragged outside of Hell.*

<sup>vi</sup> 115. "*Sepulchres make uneven all the ground*": At Arles, near the delta of the Rhone, and at Pola, in the south of Istria, were ancient burying-grounds. The graves at Arles, of Roman origin, were thought to be filled with the bodies of Christian heroes who had fallen in battle with the Saracens. Just outside the city, on that side, the current of the Rhone turns to an eddy.

For scatterings of flame among them played  
Whereby they were so heated through and through  
That no craft needeth iron hotter made. [120]  
Their covers were all raised up in our view,  
And out of them such harsh lamenting rose  
As from a wretched and a wounded crew.  
And I spoke: "Tell me, Master, who are those  
Who, within these chests buried, so beseech  
With grievous sighs compassion on their throes?"  
And he: "The Arch-Heretics are here, with each  
His following of all sects: and heavier load  
These tombs have in them than thy thought can reach.  
Here like with like is buried in one abode, [130]  
And less or more hot are the monuments."  
Then to the right hand turning, our feet trod  
Between those pangs and the high battlements.

# Canto X

*Passing between the flaming sepulchres and the rampart circling the city, Dante is accosted from one of the tombs by Farinata, chief of the Ghibellines of Florence, who foretells to Dante the length of his exile and explains the nature of the foreknowledge possessed by the dead. He is interrupted by his companion in the tomb, the father of Guido Cavalcanti (Dante's greatest friend, poet and son-in-law of Farinata), who not seeing Guido with Dante is anxious to know if he is alive or dead: but Dante does not enlighten him. In reply to a question, Farinata says that Frederick II, the emperor, "stupor mundi," whose half-Oriental court in Sicily was so brilliant in the thirteenth century, and the Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, are among the heretics entombed.*

NOW JOURNEYING along a secret track

Between the ramparts and the sufferers

My Master goes, and I behind his back.

"O sovran Virtue, who down the circling tiers

Of the impious leadest me where thou dost bid,

Satisfy," I said, "the wish that in me stirs.

The people who in these sepulchres are hid,

May they be seen? None watches; none keeps guard.

And see! already raised is every lid."

And he to me: "All shall be fast and barred

When from Jehosophat they shall hither hie

Each with the body he left under the sword.

This is the quarter wherein buried lie

Epicurus and all those his doctrine swayed,

Who with the body make the soul to die.

Therefore unto the question thou hast made

Here within soon shalt thou an answer find

And also to the wish thou hast not betrayed."

And I: "I keep not from thee, Escort kind,

My thought, save that, as thou too didst require

[10]

[20]

Ere now, I speak but in few words my mind."<sup>i</sup>  
 "Tuscan, who goest through the city of fire  
 Alive, with comely speech upon thy tongue,  
 Halt here, if thou wilt tarry at my desire."<sup>ii</sup>  
 The speech thou usest manifests thee sprung  
 From that famed country which, it may be, I tried  
 And I perhaps with too much trouble wrung."  
 Suddenly in my ear this sound was cried  
 From out one of those coffers; and I drew,  
 In fear, a little closer to my Guide. [30]  
 And he to me spoke: "Turn! What dost thou do?  
 See Farinata, raising himself amain!<sup>iii</sup>  
 From the waist all of him shall rise in view."  
 My gaze from him I could not now have ta'en:  
 And he rose up to front me, face and breast,  
 As if of Hell he had a great disdain.  
 With prompt, inspiriting hands my Guide then prest  
 Me towards him, past the other sepulchres,  
 Counselling: "Use the words thou findest best."  
 When I was where his tomb its front uprears, [40]  
 He looked at me a little, and with a kind  
 Of scorn he questioned: "Who were thy forbears?"  
 I, who had it to obey him in my mind,  
 Concealed nothing from him, but told all out,  
 At which his brows upward a little inclined:

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<sup>i</sup> 21. On the day of Judgment all souls, having recovered their bodies, will gather in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, whence, after hearing their sentence, they will return to Heaven or Hell.

<sup>ii</sup> 24. Although all heresies are punished in this circle, the only one that concerns Dante is that called "Epicurean," a name bestowed, in his day, upon materialistic free-thinking which denied the immortality of the soul and regarded a comfortable life as the highest good. There is grim irony in the eternal burial of sinners who affirmed that the spirit perishes with the body. Epicurus himself, pagan though he was, is with them.

<sup>iii</sup> 32. This famous heretic is Manente degli Uberti, called Farinata, chief of the Florentine Ghibellines, a wise and valiant leader, who died in 1264, a year before Dante's birth. In 1260 he had taken part in the battle of Montaperti, where the Guelphs of Florence suffered a fearful defeat from the Sienese, the exiled Ghibellines, and King Manfred's Germans. After this rout the neighbouring towns and barons held a council at Empoli, and all but Farinata were in favour of destroying Florence; he, however, opposed the project so stoutly that it was abandoned. In 1283 the inquisitor, Salmone da Lucca, condemned him (nearly twenty years dead), his wife, his sons, and his grandsons, as heretics; his bones were cast out, his property confiscated and sold. His brave and haughty spirit is not quelled even by his fiery punishment: he appears with head and chest erect.

Then he said: "Fiercely did they use to flout  
 Me and my forefathers; and since they spurned  
 My party, twice I scattered them in rout."<sup>iv</sup>  
 "If they were chased, on all sides they returned,  
 Both times," I answered, "from adversities; [50]  
 But yours that art have not so rightly learned."  
 Beside him then a shadow by degrees<sup>v</sup>  
 Emerged, and was discovered to the chin:  
 I think he had raised himself upon his knees.  
 He looked around as if he had thought to win  
 Sight of some other who might be with me;  
 And when that hope was wholly quenched within,  
 Cried weeping: "If through this blind prison, free,  
 Thou goest by virtue of thy nature's height,  
 Where is my son? Why is he not here with thee?" [60]  
 And I to him: "Tis not by my own right"<sup>vi</sup>  
 I come; he that waits yonder leads me here,  
 Of whom perhaps thy Guido had despite."  
 His words, and manner of penance, made appear  
 His name, as if I had read it on his brow,  
 Therefore my answer had I made thus clear.  
 Suddenly erect, he cried: "What saidest thou?  
 He had? Lives he not, then, in the sweet air?  
 Does the sun's light not strike upon him now?"  
 When of a certain pause he was aware [70]  
 Ere I replied, where he had risen to stand  
 Down he fell backward, and so vanished there.  
 But, haughty of spirit, that other, at whose demand

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<sup>iv</sup> 48-51. *Farinata scattered the Guelfs in 1248 and 1260; but they returned to Florence in 1251, after the death of Frederick I, and in 1266, after the battle of Benevento; they then expelled the Ghibellines, who never "tightly learned" the art of returning.*

<sup>v</sup> 52. The "Shadow" is *Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti*, a noble and wealthy Florentine, the father of that Guido whom Dante calls his "first friend." This Guido Cavalcanti, a little older than Dante, was a famous poet and student, and an ardent partisan.

<sup>vi</sup> 61-63. Dante hastens to explain Guido's absence by the assurance that it is not his own wit, but Virgil's, which directs him, adding that Guido may not have duly esteemed the ancient sage.

I had halted, changed not aspect, nor his head  
 Moved, nor his side bent, no, nor stirred a hand.  
 "And if," continuing his own words, he said,  
 "To learn that art they have so little wit,  
 It tortureth me more than doth this bed.  
 But fifty times shall not afresh be lit<sup>vii</sup>  
 The countenance of the Lady who reigns here [80]  
 Ere thou shalt know the cost of learning it.  
 And, so thou would'st return back to the dear  
 Earth, tell me why in each of its decrees  
 That people against my people is so severe?"<sup>viii</sup>  
 Then I: "The havoc and the butcheries<sup>ix</sup>  
 That made the Arbia dyed all red to run  
 Hath filled our temple with such litanies."  
 He sighed, shaking his head; and then spoke on:  
 "In that I was not single; nor, I swear,  
 Would I in ill cause with the rest have gone. [90]  
 But single I was in that place yonder, where<sup>x</sup>  
 All on the ruin of Florence had agreed.  
 I only with open face defended her."  
 "Ah, so may peace come also to thy seed,  
 Resolve me," I prayed him, "this hard knot that ties  
 My judgment in it, and the riddle read.  
 It seemeth, if I hear aright, your eyes  
 Perceive beforehand what Time brings with him,  
 But with the present ye use otherwise."  
 "We see like those for whom the light is dim,"<sup>xi</sup> [100]

---

<sup>vii</sup> 79-81. "The Lady who reigns here" is Hecate, who in the sky appears as the moon. Before fifty months have passed, Dante is to learn how hard is the art of returning from exile.

<sup>viii</sup> 84. In 1280, when most of the Ghibellines were allowed to come back, several of the Uberti were expressly excluded.

<sup>ix</sup> 85-86. "The butcheries" refers to the battle of Montaperti, beside the Arbia river (cf. the note at line 32).

<sup>x</sup> 91. "In that place yonder": at the diet of Empoli; (cf. the note at line 32).

<sup>xi</sup> 100-108. The damned, while aware of the past and indistinctly cognisant of the future, have no knowledge of present events on earth. Just how much the "present" embraces we are 'not told. After the

He answered me, "the things that are remote;  
 So much still shines for us the Lord Supreme.  
 When they come near, or are, then avails not  
 Our understanding, and we know no more,  
 Save what is told us, of your human lot.  
 Easily may'st thou understand, therefore,  
 That all we have of knowledge shall be dead  
 From that time when the Future shuts its door."  
 Then pricked in conscience for my fault, I said,  
 "Will you not now acquaint that fallen one [110]  
 His child is not yet from the living fled?"  
 And if before to his answer I made none  
 Tell him it was my thought that was not free,  
 Being in that knot which now you have undone."  
 And now my Master was recalling me.  
 Therefore more earnestly the spirit I prest  
 To tell me who were those with him. And he:  
 "With more than a thousand I lie here opprest.  
 Yonder the Second Frederic is inurned,<sup>xii</sup>  
 The Cardinal also: I speak not of the rest."<sup>xiii</sup> [120]  
 With that he hid himself. My steps I turned  
 Back toward the ancient Poet, pondering  
 That saying wherein some menace I discerned.  
 He moved, and as we went: "What is this thing,"  
 He said to me, "which teases so thy mind?"  
 I satisfied him in his questioning.  
 "Keep in thy memory what thine ears divined  
 To be against thee," warned the Sage. "Attend  
 Now," and with finger lifted he enjoined:

---

*Judgment Day, when earthly life shall cease and the foresight of lost souls shall thus come to an end, their blindness will be unrelieved.*

<sup>xii</sup> 119. The great Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), who was long engaged in strife against the Papacy, was generally regarded as an Epicurean.

<sup>xiii</sup> 120. "The Cardinal" Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, apostolic legate in Lombardy and Romagna against Frederick, in the Kingdom of Naples against Manfred, was accused of unbelief and of sympathy with the Imperial cause. Several of the early commentators report him as saying: "If there is a soul, I have lost it for the Ghibellines."

“When thou before the radiance shalt bend  
Of that Lady, whose beauteous eyes see all,<sup>xiv</sup>  
Thou shalt learn thy life’s journey unto its end.”  
Then to the left he turned his steps; the wall  
We quitted, toward the middle advancing by  
A path that strikes into a valley’s fall,  
Wherefrom the fume rose noisome even thus high.

[130]

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<sup>xiv</sup> 131. “*Of that Lady*”: Beatrice.



# Canto XI

*The descent to the next, the Seventh Circle, is now before the poets; but the fetid stench arising from it repels them so that they take refuge behind a sepulchre. The opportunity is taken by Virgil to explain to Dante the conformation of the lower Hell, and the various kinds of guilt punished in the several circles: the system being based on Aristotle's classification, to whose Ethics Virgil refers, and on Cicero's. Three kinds of violence are punished in three separate rings of the Seventh Circle, which they are next to visit. The fraudulent are in the Eighth, those guilty of the special fraud of treachery in the Ninth and lowest circle. Dante will now have no need to ask for what crimes the sinners he is to meet are chastised: but he fails to understand at first why all the damned are not in the City of Dis. Virgil explains that the sins of incontinence, the punishment of which they have already witnessed before entering the city, are less offensive to God and so less grievously visited.*

ON THE EDGE of a circle of great broken stones  
Rimming a cliff, we came above the place  
Wherein are packed worse sins and deeper groans.  
And here, because of the horrible excess  
Of stench thrown upward from the unfathomed pit,  
We drew, for refuge from its noisesomeness,  
Behind a monument, whereon was writ:  
"Pope Anastasius is here immured;<sup>i</sup>  
Photinus lured him the true path to quit."  
"We must delay, till somewhat be inured  
Our sense to the vile reek, ere we descend:  
Then shall it be more easily endured."  
So spoke the Master. "That our time we spend  
Not vainly," I said, "some compensation find."  
And he: "Thou seest that I so intend."

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 8. This is Anastasius, who for many centuries was generally but unjustly thought to have been induced by Photinus, deacon of Thessalonica, to deny the divinity of Christ; it is likely that he had been confused with the Byzantine emperor, Anastasius I.

“Son,” he continued, “within these stones wind  
 Three circlets, going down in three degrees,  
 Even like those which thou hast left behind.  
 They are all filled with spirits accurst: of these  
 That sight hereafter alone suffice thee, know [20]  
 Wherefore and how the pangs upon them seize.  
 Of all malice that makes of Heaven a foe  
 The end is injury, and all such end won  
 By force or fraud worketh another’s woe.  
 But since fraud is a vice of man’s alone,  
 It more offends God: so are lowest set  
 The fraudulent, and the heavier is their groan.  
 All the first circle is for the violent; yet,  
 As violence in its object is threefold,  
 It is in three rings built, each separate. [30]  
 To God, oneself, one’s neighbour, it is told,  
 May violence be done, both to their things  
 And to themselves, as I shall clearly unfold.  
 Force on one’s neighbour death and torment brings,  
 And on his goods fire, ravage and reverse  
 Of fortune, and the hurt extortion wrings.  
 The first round, then, tortures all murderers,  
 And, each kind separate, those who with intent  
 Of malice strike; robbers and plunderers.  
 A man may to himself be violent [40]  
 And to his own; in the next round, therefore,  
 Must each inhabitant in vain repent  
 Who robs himself of your world, wastes his store  
 Of wealth, gambles and squanders till all’s gone  
 And, where he should rejoice, laments the more.  
 Violence against the Deity may be done  
 In the heart denying and blaspheming blind;  
 In Nature, too, spurning his benison.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> 46-48. “Violence . . . in nature”: the sodomites, or homosexuals, do violence to nature, the minister of God.

The smallest ring hath therefore sealed and signed  
 For its own both Sodom's and Cahors' offence,<sup>iii</sup> [50]  
 And all who speak with scorn of God in mind.  
 Fraud, which so gnaweth at all men's conscience,  
 A man may use on one who trusts him best  
 And on him also who risks no confidence.  
 This latter mode seems only to arrest  
 The love which Nature meaneth to endure;  
 Hence in the second circle huddled nest<sup>iv</sup>  
 Hypocrisy, flattery; they who would conjure  
 By spells; and simony; the thief, the cheat,  
 Pandars and barrators, and the like ordure. [60]  
 In the other mode mankind the love forget  
 Which Nature makes, and that love's after-dower  
 Which doth the special trust and faith beget.  
 Hence in the smallest circle, at the core<sup>v</sup>  
 Of the Universe, where Dis in darkness reigns,  
 Each traitor is consumed for evermore."  
 And I: "Most clearly thy discourse explains,  
 Master, distinguishing by class and class,  
 This pit and all the people it contains.  
 But tell me: those clogged in the slab morass,<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 Those whom the wind drives and the hard rain galls,  
 And they whom mutual cursing tongues harass,  
 Why are they not in the red city's walls<sup>vii</sup>  
 Chastised, if to God's anger they be prey?  
 And if not, why the woe that them befalls?"  
 And he to me: "Now wherefore goes astray

---

<sup>iii</sup> 50. *Cahors: a town in southern France, a notorious nest of usurers. Usurers—that is, moneylenders—do violence to human industry, the offspring of Nature.*

<sup>iv</sup> 57. "The second circle": the second of the "circlets" of line 17, is actually the eighth circle.

<sup>v</sup> 64. "The smallest circle": the ninth and last of the circles of Hell, at the centre of the whole material universe, where Dis, or Lucifer, is confined.

<sup>vi</sup> 70-72. The sinners mentioned here are: the wrathful (fifth circle), the lustful and the gluttonous (second and third circles), and the avaricious and the prodigal (fourth circle).

<sup>vii</sup> 73. "The red city" is the city of Dis, or Lower Hell.

Thy wit beyond its wont? or is thy thought  
 On other things and turned another way?  
 Recall the words thou surely hast not forgot  
 In which thy Ethics makes the matter plain<sup>viii</sup> [80]  
 Of the three dispositions Heaven wills not,  
 Incontinence, and malice, and insane  
 Bestiality; and how incontinence less  
 Displeaseth God and less blame doth obtain.  
 If rightly to regard this thou address  
 Thy mind, recalling who are they who smart  
 Above there, in that outer wilderness,  
 Thou wilt perceive why they are placed apart  
 From these fell spirits, and why with gentler blow  
 The Divine Justice hammereth their heart." [90]  
 "O Sun, who heal'st all troubled vision, and so  
 Contentest me where thou dost certify,  
 That to doubt pleaseth not less than to know,  
 Turn thee now yet a little back," said I,  
 "To where thou sayest that usury doth offend  
 The divine goodness, and the knot untie."  
 "Philosophy, to him who will attend,"<sup>ix</sup>  
 Said he, "in divers places hath discerned  
 How Nature her example and her end  
 From Divine Intellect and its art hath learned.<sup>x</sup> [100]  
 And to thy Physics if good heed thou pay,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Thou wilt find, after but few pages turned,  
 That your art follows her, far as it may,<sup>xii</sup>  
 As scholar his master, so that your art is  
 Of the Godhead the grandchild, so to say.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 80. "Thy Ethics": the Ethics of thy master, Aristotle, who enumerates three evils to be avoided: malice, incontinence, bestiality.

<sup>ix</sup> 97. "Philosophy": the works of Aristotle.

<sup>x</sup> 100. "Its art": the operation of the divine intelligence.

<sup>xi</sup> 101. "Thy Physics": Aristotle's treatise on Physics (II, ii).

<sup>xii</sup> 103-105. Human industry follows nature as far as it can, so that it is, so to speak, the grandchild of God.

By these two, if thy memory Genesis  
 Recalls, and its beginning, man hath need  
 To gain his bread and foster earthly bliss.  
 But the usurer, since he will not thus proceed  
 Flouts Nature's follower and herself also,  
 Setting his wealth another way to breed.<sup>xiii</sup>  
 But follow now, for I am willed to go.  
 The Fishes quiver on the horizon air,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 And over Caurus all the Wain lies low.  
 Far on it is where we descend the stair."

[110]

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<sup>xiii</sup> 111. The moneylender sets his hope on gain derived neither from nature nor from toil.

<sup>xiv</sup> 113. Virgil, as usual, indicates the hour (in Jerusalem) by a description of the sky, which, of course, is not visible from Hell. The time is three hours or more after midnight.

# Canto XII

*Down a steep slope of shattered rock (caused by the earthquake at the Crucifixion), guarded by the Minotaur, the poets clamber to the Seventh Circle and find at the bottom of the cliff a River of Blood (Phlegethon) which flows round the circle. Boiling in its stream are those who have been violent against others; this being the first ring of the circle. Centaurs trot about the bank and shoot those who emerge more than their punishment allows. Chiron, their chief, appoints Nessus to guide Dante across the shallowest part of the stream. On the way, Nessus points out certain conquerors, assassins and highwaymen; among them is Guy de Montfort, who avenged his father Simon's death by murdering Henry, son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, "on God's bosom," i.e. in a church, during Mass, at Viterbo. Henry's heart was said to have been kept in a casket on London Bridge.*

CRAGGY the place was where for our advance

We must descend, and by such presence marred,

That any eye would look on it askance.

Like to the desolation hitherward<sup>i</sup>

Of Trent, on Adige, which, by want of prop

Or earthquake, has the river's flank all scarred,

For down to the level from the mountain-top

The rock there is so ruined by its fall

That one above might scramble down the slope;

Such was the passage down that shattered wall;

[10]

And on the ragged coping of the pit

We found the infamy of Crete a-spraw<sup>ii</sup>

That was conceived in the cow's counterfeit;

Who, when he saw us, on himself, with look

Of one whom inward spleen convulses, bit.

Toward him my sage: "Thou think'st maybe the Duke<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 4-5. "The desolation . . . of Trent": our poet compares this vast slide with one in northeastern Italy.

<sup>ii</sup> 12. "The infamy of Crete" is the Minotaur; half man and half beast, he was the offspring of a bull and Pasiphaë, wife of King Minos of Crete, who satisfied her abnormal passion (inflicted by Venus as a curse) by enclosing herself in a wooden cow.

Of Athens comes to master thee anew  
 Who in the world above thy life-blood took.  
 Off, Monster! This one comes not with a clue  
 Provided by thy sister, on thy track, [20]  
 But passes on, your penances to view."  
 As a bull bursts his tether to attack  
 Just when he feels the stroke that makes an end  
 'And cannot charge but plunges forth and back,  
 So did the Minotaur his fury spend;  
 And watchful called my Guide: "To the passage! Haste!  
 The while he storms, 'tis best that thou descend."  
 Ties climbed we downward on that splintered waste  
 Of stones, that often slid beneath my tread  
 With the unfamiliar weight upon them placed. [30]  
 I went in thought: and "Peradventure," he said,  
 "Thou musest on this ruin, guarded by  
 The brute rage I but now discomfited.  
 I'd have thee know that the other time when I  
 Descended hither to the deeps of hell,  
 The rock was not yet tumbled from on high.  
 But short while certainly, if I gauge it well,  
 Ere He came, who the plunder made of Dis  
 From those who in the upmost circle dwell,  
 On every deep and foul abyss [40]  
 Trembled so, that the universe I deemed  
 Felt love, whereby, as some think oft it is,<sup>iv</sup>  
 The world has been to chaos cracked and seamed;  
 And in that moment, here and otherwhere,<sup>v</sup>  
 This ancient rock down into ruin streamed.  
 But turn thine eyes to the valley, for draws near  
 The river of blood, wherein are boiling they

---

<sup>iv</sup> 42-43. According to Empedocles, the four elements, mixed together, produced chaos; hate, separating the seeds, brought forth from chaos all the things of the universe; love, by drawing the seeds together, can restore chaos. Dante probably got his idea of Empedocles from Aristotle.

<sup>v</sup> 44. "Otherwhere": in the circle of the lustful (Inf. V, 34).

Who live by violence and on other's fear."  
 O blind greed and mad anger, all astray<sup>vi</sup>  
 That in the short life goad us onward so, [50]  
 And in the eternal with such plungings pay!  
 I saw a wide fosse bent into a bow  
 Embaying all the level ground in front,  
 Even as my Guide already had made me know.  
 Between it and the scarp's base were at hunt  
 Centaurs, who, armed with arrows, thronged the strand,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Running as in the world once they were wont.  
 Seeing us descending, each one came to a stand:  
 And from their company broke three, with bow  
 And javelin ready chosen in the hand. [60]  
 And one from far cried: "To what torment go  
 Ye that have come down by the headlong track?  
 Tell me from there; if not, I draw the bow."  
 My Master said: "Our answer will we make  
 To Chiron yonder. In thee, to thy rue,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Rashness did ever judgment overtake."  
 He touched me, and said: "This is that Nessus, who<sup>ix</sup>  
 Died for the fair Deianira, and took  
 Of himself vengeance by the shirt that slew.  
 He in the middle who on his breast doth look [70]  
 Is the great Chiron, who Achilles nursed;  
 The other Pholus, whom such rages shook.<sup>x</sup>  
 Round the fosse go their thousands; and soon pierced  
 With arrows is whatever spirit writhes out  
 From the blood higher than by his guilt immersed."

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<sup>vi</sup> 49. *The motives of violence to our fellow man are greed and wrath.*

<sup>vii</sup> 56. *Along the narrow bank run Centaurs, whose business it is to keep the other souls in their proper place. These half-human guardians are not depicted as hateful or repulsive, nor do they seem to be demons.*

<sup>viii</sup> 65. *Chiron, son of Saturn, skilled in surgery, was the preceptor of Achilles.*

<sup>ix</sup> 67. *Nessus, while trying to carry off Dejanira through the water, was struck by an arrow from Hercules, her husband. To avenge himself, he left his bloody shirt with Dejanira, which afterwards caused the death of Hercules.*

<sup>x</sup> 72. *Pholus figured in the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapithae.*



We drew near to these creatures fleet of foot;  
 And Chiron took an arrow, and with the notch  
 His beard upon his jaw-bones backward put.  
 When he had uncovered his great mouth thus much,  
 He said to his companions: "Note ye how [80]  
 The one behind moves that which he doth touch?  
 The feet of the dead are not wont so to do."  
 And my good Guide, now at the breast of him,  
 Where the two forms into one nature grew,  
 Said, "Ay, he lives, and through the valley dim  
 Solitary must I his steps escort.  
 Necessity brings him to it, and not whim.  
 From singing alleluias in Heaven's court  
 Came she who for this task commissioned me.<sup>xi</sup>  
 He is no thief, nor I of thievish sort. [90]  
 But by the Virtue on high, through whose decree  
 I am bound upon so wild a journey, spare  
 One of thy band, to bear us company,  
 That he may show the ford to us, and may bear  
 Him on his back over to the other side.  
 For he is no spirit, to walk upon the air."  
 Chiron upon his right breast turned and: "Guide  
 Be thou," said he to Nessus; "if waylaid  
 By another troop, compel it to avoid."  
 So with our guide we moved on unafraid [100]  
 By the red bubbles of the scalding ooze  
 Wherein the boiled their loud lamenting made.  
 I saw people in it up to the very brows.  
 And: "These are tyrants," said the great Centaur  
 "Who made of blood and plunder their carouse.  
 Here all their ruthless ravage they deplore—  
 Alexander, and Dionysius fierce of heart,<sup>xii</sup>

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<sup>xi</sup> 89. *Beatrice*.

<sup>xii</sup> 107. *It is not known whether Dante meant Alexander the Great or Alexander of Pherae, who was coupled with Dionysius as a typical tyrant by Cicero. Dionysius ruled Syracuse from 407 to 367 B.C.*

Who made for Sicily the years so sore.  
 That forehead with the hair on it so swart  
 Is Ezzelin; and the other, who is fair,<sup>xiii</sup> [110]  
 Opizzo of Este, who, the truth to impart,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Was quenched by his unnatural son, up there."<sup>xv</sup>  
 I turned to the poet, and he made reply:  
 "To him first now, not me, thou may'st refer."  
 A little on, the Centaur paused anigh  
 Another throng of sinners which appeared  
 To stand above the seething stream throat-high.  
 And there a spirit whom no other neared<sup>xvi</sup>  
 He showed us, saying: "He on God's bosom  
 Transfixt the heart still upon Thames revered." [120]  
 Then saw I from the river emerging some  
 Who could the head and even the chest uprear;  
 And many I knew by this doom overcome.  
 Thus more and more the blood grew shallower  
 Until it scorched only the feet below.  
 For us the passage of the fosse was here.  
 "As on this side thou seest the boiling flow  
 Its own continual diminution keep,  
 So," said the Centaur, "I would have thee know  
 That on the other it shelves from deep to deep [130]  
 Along the bottom, till it resumes its way  
 To where the tyrants are compelled to weep.  
 Here Divine Justice stings that Attila<sup>xvii</sup>  
 Who upon earth was the world's flail; and here

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<sup>xiii</sup> 110. "Ezzelin": Ezzelino da Romano, who held extensive dominions in northeastern Italy in the first half of the thirteenth century, a notoriously cruel tyrant; he was called a son of Satan.

<sup>xiv</sup> 111. "Opizzo of Este," Marquis of Ferrara in the second half of the thirteenth century, was a hard ruler.

<sup>xv</sup> 112. Virgil, to whom Dante turns in doubt, tells him that in this matter the Centaur is the best authority.

<sup>xvi</sup> 118. The "spirit whom no other neared" is Guy de Montfort (cf. the Argument of this canto).

<sup>xvii</sup> 133. Attila, King of the Huns, was called the "Scourge of God."

Pyrrhus and Sextus; and it milketh aye<sup>xviii</sup>  
Wea scald of pain the disimprisoned tear  
From Rinier of Corneto, who so warred,<sup>xix</sup>  
With Rinier Pazzo, on the traveller.”  
Then he turned backward, and repassed the ford.

---

<sup>xviii</sup> 135. Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, was a fearful enemy of the Romans. Sextus, son of Pompey, became a pirate.

<sup>xix</sup> 137-138. Rinieri da Corneto and Rinieri de' Pazzi were two highwaymen apparently famous in the thirteenth century.

# Canto XIII

*Crossing Phlegethon by the ford, the poets arrive in the Wood of the Suicides, who have become withered and poisonous trees among which the Harpies cry. Pier dalle Vigne, who rose to great power and to be Frederick II's most intimate adviser, then suddenly fell into disgrace and committed suicide, speaks from one of the trees and tells Dante his story. Their talk is interrupted by a rushing noise made by two spirits pursued by hounds. These are Giacomo da Sant' Andrea, and Lano, a Sienese, two notorious spendthrifts. Another spirit, unnamed and unknown, tells Dante that he is of Florence, the city which had Mars for its patron and by changing him for the Baptist was thought to have incurred that god's malignity.*

NESSUS had not regained the bank beyond  
When we betook us onward from the shore  
To a wood, wherein no path was to be found.  
No green leaves there, but all of dim colour:  
Smooth branches none, but wry with knot and gnarl;  
No apples, but gaunt twigs with poison sour.  
Not scrub or thicket rougher hides the snarl<sup>i</sup>  
"Twixt Cecina and Corneto of the beasts  
That roaming them abhor the well-tilled marl.  
Here have the savage Harpies made their nests<sup>ii</sup> [10]  
Who chased the Trojans from the Strophades  
With prophecy of baleful prophecy of coming pests.  
Wide wings, and human necks and visages,  
Clawed feet, and a gross belly plumed below,  
They make lament above on the strange trees.  
"Before thou further dost adventure, know

---

<sup>i</sup> 7-9. Cecina, a town near Volterra, and Corneto, a town close to Civitavecchia, denote the northern and southern limits of the woody, swampy district known as Maremma. In Dante's time it was covered with dense forest.

<sup>ii</sup> 10-12. The Harpies are voracious, filthy birds with maidens' faces. On the Strophades islands, off Messenia, where they dwelt, their foul presence repeatedly interrupted the Trojans' repast; and finally one of them uttered so threatening a prophecy that the warriors hastily departed.

That thou art in the second ring, from which,"  
 The gracious Master said, "thou canst not go  
 Until the terrible great sand thou reach.<sup>iii</sup>  
 Thou shalt see here—therefore look well around— [20]  
 Things which may take the credence from my speech."  
 Even then I heard on all sides wailing sound,  
 But of those making it saw no one nigh;  
 Wherefore I stood still, in amazement bound.  
 I think he thought that I thought that the cry  
 Of those so many voices came from folk  
 Who 'mid those trees hid, at our coming shy.  
 So now the Master said: "If thy hand broke  
 A shoot from any branch, the thoughts that went  
 With thy conjecture soon wouldst thou revoke." [30]  
 Then I stretched forth my hand a little, and bent  
 And plucked a puny branch from a great thorn.  
 And the trunk cried out: "Why hast thou me rent?"  
 And when it grew embrowned with blood, so torn,  
 It cried again: "Why hast thou wounded me?  
 Wast thou without one breath of pity born?  
 Men were we, and are now turned each to a tree.  
 If souls of serpents were within us penned,  
 Still should compassion have been found in thee."  
 As a green brand, that burneth at one end, [40]  
 At the other drips and hisses from the wood  
 Where the escaping wind and fire contend,  
 So from that broken splinter words and blood  
 Together came: whereat, like one afraid,  
 I let the tip fall and all silent stood.  
 "If he, O wounded spirit," my sage then said,  
 "Had but been able to believe before  
 What he has seen but in my verse portrayed,<sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>iii</sup> 19. "The terrible great sand": the third ring, consisting of a waste of sand, upon which falls a rain of fire.

<sup>iv</sup> 48. "But in my verse . . .": i.e., in the story of Polydorus in Aeneid III, 22-43.

He would not have stretched hand to hurt so sore;  
 But the incredible thing moved me to prove [50]  
 To him what now I do myself deplore.  
 But tell him who thou wast; so that thereof  
 To make amends, he may thy fame renew,  
 Where grace permits him to return, above."  
 Then the trunk: "Thy sweet words so melt me through,  
 My lips cannot keep silence; if to impart  
 My tale I linger, may it not burden you.  
 I am he who held both keys of Frederick's heart,<sup>v</sup>  
 And to their wards so softly did apply,  
 Locking and then unlocking with such art, [60]  
 That few had privacy of him as I.  
 So loyal was I to the proud office,  
 That sleep and pulses both were lost thereby.  
 The whore that at the house where Caesar is<sup>vi</sup>  
 Will ever her adulterous glances aim,  
 Man's common bane, of courts the special vice,  
 The minds of all against me did inflame,  
 And these, inflamed, inflamed my lord august  
 Till my glad honours withered to sad shame.  
 My soul into disdainful temper thrust, [70]  
 Thinking by death to escape the world's disdain,  
 Made me, the just, unto myself unjust.  
 But by the fresh roots that this tree sustain  
 I swear that never troth unto my lord,  
 So worthy of honour, did I vow in vain.  
 If either of you be to the world restored,  
 Comfort my memory which still lies so low

---

<sup>v</sup> 58. "I am he . . .": Pier delle Vigne, who entered the court of Frederick I as a notary, and so won the confidence and affection of the sovereign that for over twenty years he was entrusted with the most important affairs of the realm. In 1248, or 1249, he was accused and convicted of treason; his eyes were put out, and according to one account he was condemned by the Emperor to be led in derision, on an ass, from town to town. To escape dishonour, he killed himself by dashing his head against a wall. Piero, as Dante conceived him, is a magnanimous courtier, and most pathetic in his unshaken devotion to the master who wronged him.

<sup>vi</sup> 64. "The whore" is Envy, and the house of Caesar is the Imperial court.

From the stroke dealt to it by Envy's sword."  
 The poet waited; then: "Since he is slow,  
 Further to speak, and thou the hour hast got, [80]  
 Speak now and ask, if more thou wouldst know."  
 Then I to him: "Demand thou of him what  
 Thou think'st will most my mind's desire appease.  
 Such pity is in my heart, that I could not."  
 He resumed therefore: "So may this man ease,  
 By doing of what thou dost entreat, thy pain,  
 Now, O imprisoned spirit, may it please  
 To tell us how the soul becomes the grain  
 Of this gnarled wood; tell us too, if thou may'st,  
 Whether any from such limbs deliverance gain." [90]  
 Then the trunk sighed out strongly until the blast  
 Of breath became voice into language knit:  
 "My answer into brief words shall be cast.  
 When the fierce spirit doth the body quit  
 From which it hath with violence broken out,  
 Minos consigns it to the seventh pit.  
 It falls into the wood, and there, without  
 Place chosen for it but as fortune dole,  
 Like any grain of spelt it comes to sprout,  
 Shoots up to a sapling and a forest bole; [100]  
 Then the Harpies feeding on its leaves, their nest,  
 Make for it both pain and the pain's loop-hole<sup>vii</sup>  
 We shall go seek our spoils out, like the rest,  
 But not to be again in them arrayed;  
 He earns not that who himself hath dispossessed.  
 Either shall we drag them through the grievous glade  
 And on the boughs our bodies shall be strung,  
 Each on the thorn-tree of its guilty shade."  
 We still upon the voice attentive hung,  
 Supposing it desired to tell us more, [110]

---

<sup>vii</sup> 102. *By breaking the leaves, they provide an outlet.*

When suddenly we heard a noise upsprung,  
 Like one who hears the coming of the boar  
 And hunt behind it on his place intrude,  
 And hears the branches crash and beasts' uproar.  
 And on the left hand lo! two spirits pursued,  
 Naked and torn, who fled at speed so sick  
 That all the ground with broken boughs they strewed.  
 The foremost: "O come now, Death, O come quick!"  
 And the other, finding feet too slow to escape:  
 "Thy heels made no such answer to the prick, [120]  
 Lano, at Toppo jousts." And then, mayhap,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Because the breath was failing in him, he  
 Made of himself and of a bush one shape.  
 Behind, the wood was full, from tree to tree,  
 Of great black mastiffs, running with such gust  
 As greyhounds from their leashes slipping free.  
 Into him, as he crouched, their teeth they thrust  
 And tore him all asunder, shred by shred,  
 To carry his woeful limbs off as they lust.  
 My Guide now took me by the hand and led [130]  
 My steps up to the bush, that vainly sighed  
 Lamenting through its fractures as they bled.  
 "O Giacomo da Sant' Andrea," it cried,<sup>ix</sup>  
 "What blame have I of thy sins, or what good  
 Get'st thou by coming in my screen to hide?"  
 The Master spoke, when by it now he stood:  
 "Who wast thou who through all these wounds dost blow  
 Thy sorrowful speech forth, mingled with thy blood?"  
 And he to us: "Ye spirits that witness how  
 I have been with so great ignominy torn [140]  
 That these my leaves are severed from the bough,

---

<sup>viii</sup> 121. *The spendthrift Lano of Siena perished in the battle of Pieve del Toppo. The speaker is Giacomo da Sant' Andrea.*

<sup>ix</sup> 133. *The soul in the bush, whose identity is uncertain, addresses the second of the two runners, a mad prodigal.*



Gather them close about the bush forlorn!  
 My city is that which changed its first patron<sup>x</sup>  
 To choose the Baptist; for which act of scorn  
 He by his arts will ever make it groan;  
 And were it not that Arno doth retain  
 Upon her bridge some shadow of him in stone,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Those citizens who the city built again  
 On the ashes left by Attila's decree,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Would have expended all their toil in vain. [150]  
 I made my gibbet of my own roof-tree."<sup>xiii</sup>

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<sup>x</sup> 143. "My city": Florence, whose first patron, according to tradition, was Mars, The new patron was John the Baptist, whose image adorned the florin, The Florentines gave up martial valour for money making.

<sup>xi</sup> 147. "Some shadow of him . . .": an old stone statue, supposed to represent the God of War, stood at the head of the Ponte Vecchio.

<sup>xii</sup> 149. It was believed that Attila, King of the Huns, had destroyed Florence.

<sup>xiii</sup> 151. "Gibbet": place of execution. Two of the earliest commentators say that this sinner hanged himself with a girdle in his house.

# Canto XIV

*The third ring of the Seventh Circle is the ring of Burning Sand, which torments the violent against God, who lie supine; the violent against Nature and Art, who sit all huddled up; and the violent against Nature, who are forced to be continually moving: on all of them falls a fiery rain. Among the first group is Capaneus, one of the Seven Against Thebes, who retains his fierce rebellious spirit. Virgil guides Dante along the edge of the Wood of the Suicides, so as to avoid the burning sand which the wood encloses all round; and from the wood flows a red stream, apparently a branch of Phlegethon, which has petrified its banks, which are high, like dykes, and has the power of quenching the flames which fall on it. Virgil explains the origin and course of the rivers of Hell.*

THE DEARNESS of my native place perforce  
Constraining me, those scattered leaves I brought  
Back to him, who by now grew faint and hoarse.  
Then came we where is the division wrought  
Between the first ring and the second: here  
Heaven's justice hath conceived a fearful thought.  
To make the strangeness of the new things clear,  
I say we reached a waste, which from its bed  
Rejects all plants, and none permitteth near.  
By the drear wood it is engarlanded  
Round, as the wood is by the dismal fosse.  
Here, at the very edge, our steps we stayed.  
The ground was of a sand both dry and gross,  
Not different in its quality, I trow,  
From that the feet of Cato trod across.<sup>i</sup>  
O chastisement of God, how oughtest thou  
To be of each one feared who reads with awe  
What to my eyes was manifested now.  
Many herds there of naked souls I saw,

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 15. Cato led the remnants of Pompey's army across the Libyan desert in 47 B.C.

Who all bewept the misery on them come, [20]  
 And seemed to suffer under diverse law.  
 Supine lay some upon the ground; and some  
 Were sitting in a huddle all compressed:  
 Others were stirred continually to roam.  
 Those that moved much outnumbered all the rest,  
 Those lying in torment fewer, but wailed their woe  
 More loudly, seeing their pain was bitterest.  
 All over the wide sands descending slow  
 Were rained dilated flakes of dropping fire;  
 As without wind falls in the hills the snow. [30]  
 Like to the flames which in the regions dire<sup>ii</sup>  
 Of India's heat on Alexander smote  
 And on his host, falling to earth entire,  
 Whereat he made his men take careful thought  
 To trample down the soil beneath their feet  
 (Those single fires being readier to put out),  
 So was the falling of the eternal heat,  
 By which, like tinder under steel, the sands  
 Caught fire, and with a doubled torment beat.  
 Now here, now there, the miserable hands [40]  
 Were shaking off the scorchings without rest,  
 As they were still renewed, in helpless dance.  
 I began: "Master, thou who conquerest  
 All things, except only those demons hard  
 That at the gate our entry did contest,  
 Who is that great spirit who seems not to regard<sup>iii</sup>  
 The fire, and scowls disdainful on his bed,  
 So that the rain tames him not, though so charred?"  
 And he himself, alert to what I said,  
 And knowing that I asked of him, forthwith [50]

---

<sup>ii</sup> 31-36. Dante apparently got this story from Albertus Magnus.

<sup>iii</sup> 46. "That great spirit" is Capaneus, one of the seven kings who attacked Thebes; scaling the walls, whence his gigantic shadow frightened the city, he mocked at the gods and challenged Jupiter, who thereupon slew him with a thunderbolt.

Cried: "What I was alive, that am I dead.  
 Though Jupiter should weary out his smith<sup>iv</sup>  
 From whom, incensed, he took the bolt whereby  
 On my last day he blasted through my pith,  
 And though he weary out all the rest who ply  
 The black forge under Mongibello's vault,  
 One after one, and 'Help, good Vulcan,' cry,  
 As at the fight at Phlegra, when his bolt  
 At me with all his fury of hate he flung—  
 Yet in his vengeance shall he not exult!" [60]  
 Then my Guide spoke with such a force of tongue  
 As never had I heard him use before:  
 "O Capaneus, in that thou still hast clung  
 To thine unquenched pride, thou art punished more.  
 No torture but the thoughts that make thee rave  
 Would be a pain proportioned to thy score."  
 Then turned to me, a gentler look he gave,  
 Saying: "This spirit was one of those Seven Kings  
 Who besieged Thebes, and had, and seems to have, [70]  
 God in despite; and scorn upon Him flings.  
 But, as I have told him, his revilings black  
 For such a breast are fittest garnishings.  
 Now go behind me, and see that in my track  
 Thy feet not on the burning sand be set,  
 But by the wood's edge keep them always back."  
 Silent we came to where a rivulet  
 From the wood's shadow gushing outward shows,  
 Whereof the redness makes me shudder yet.  
 As from the Bulicame a streamlet goes<sup>v</sup>  
 Which 'mid themselves the sinful women share, [80]  
 So down across the sand this water flows.

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<sup>iv</sup> 52-60. Even though Jupiter should labour as he did in the battle against the giants, in the valley of Phlegra in Thessaly, he could not subdue the spirit of Capaneus. — "His smith": Vulcan. — "All the rest": the Cyclops, assistants of Vulcan. — "Mongibello": a Sicilian name for Aetna.

<sup>v</sup> 79. "Bulicame": a hot spring near Viterbo, frequented as a bath. The stream issuing from it was divided into separate baths for prostitutes, who were compelled to stay apart from the others.

The bottom, and the banks on each side, were,  
 With the edges raised above it, become stone:  
 Here then, I knew, should be our thoroughfare.  
 "Mid all the rest that I to thee have shown,  
 Since by the gate we entered into hell,  
 Of which the threshold is denied to none,  
 Thine eyes have seen nothing so notable  
 As is the present stream, which has the might  
 Within it all the flames above to quell." [90]  
 These words my Guide spoke; wondering at the sight,  
 I prayed him that he might vouchsafe me taste  
 Of that whereof he had vouchsafed appetite.  
 "In the mid sea a country lies, all waste,"  
 He therefore now continued, "Crete by name,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Under whose king the world of old was chaste.  
 There stands a mountain, Ida called, the same  
 Which once with green leaf and glad water shone,  
 Now desert, like a thing of mouldered fame.  
 This for the trusty cradle of her son<sup>vii</sup> [100]  
 Did Rhea choose of yore; and to protect  
 His infant cries, had clamour made thereon.  
 Within the mount a great old man erect<sup>viii</sup>  
 Looks out to Rome as if it were his glass;  
 His shoulders Damietta's coast reject.<sup>ix</sup>  
 A head shapen of perfect gold he has;  
 Of pure silver his arms are, and his breast:  
 But to the fork he is of molten brass.

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<sup>vi</sup> 95. *In the golden age, under Saturn.*

<sup>vii</sup> 100-102. *Rhea, wife of Saturn, to save the infant Jupiter from his father, who devoured his sons, entrusted him to the Curetes, or Corybantes, in Crete; and when he cried, she had them drown the sound with noise.*

<sup>viii</sup> 103. "A great old man": *in the island of Crete is the figure of an aged man—a statue evidently representing humanity at its successive ages. Ever since the Golden Age mankind has been imperfect; therefore all the statue except the head is split by a crack. From this fissure flow the tears of the sinful generations of men; descending into Hell, they make the infernal streams.*

<sup>ix</sup> 105. "Damietta," *an Egyptian city, represents the ancient, pagan world; "Rome" stands for the modern, Christian world.*

Thence down he is all of iron, proved the best,  
 Except that the right foot is baked of clay, [110]  
 And on this, more than the other, doth he rest.  
 All portions of him save the gold betray  
 Fissures that drop tears, oozing without end,  
 Which through the cave, collecting, force their w  
 Their streams cascading in this valley spend:  
 Acheron they make, and Styx and Phlegethon;  
 Then by this narrow conduit they descend  
 To where is no descending more; whereon  
 They form Cocytus; and what manner of pool<sup>x</sup>  
 It is, thou'lt see: words for it now I have none." [120]  
 And I to him: "If from our own world full  
 It flows thus down, why doth it only appear  
 To us upon this seluage visible?"  
 And he: "Thou knowest the place is circular;  
 And though, going ever leftward, so much space  
 Thou hast travelled, and hast now descended far,  
 Much of the circle thou hast still to trace:  
 Wherefore if sight of aught new we obtain,  
 This ought not to bring wonder to thy face."  
 "O Master, where are found," I asked again, [130]  
 "Phlegethon and Lethe? of one thou speakest naught,  
 And the other is formed, thou sayest, by this rain."<sup>xi</sup>  
 "In all thy questions thou dost please my thought,"  
 He answered; "but the red stream's boiling hiss<sup>xii</sup>  
 The answer of one might well to thee have taught.  
 Thou shalt see Lethe; but beyond the abyss,  
 There where the spirits go, themselves to cleanse,  
 When by their penitence guilt assoiled is."  
 Then he said: "It is time that we go hence,  
 And quit the wood. See that thou follow me: [140]

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<sup>x</sup> 119. *The frozen Cocytus forms the bottom of Dante's Hell.*

<sup>xi</sup> 132. *"This rain": the rain of tears that forms the stream.*

<sup>xii</sup> 134-135. *The heat of this stream proves that it is Phlegethon.*

The unscorched marge makes for our feet defence,  
And over it no fire hath power to be."

# Canto XV

*Dante follows Virgil along one of the petrified high banks of the stream which crosses the sand; and as they go, they meet a troop of those who indulged unnatural lust (the “violent against-nature”), and among them Dante recognises Brunetto Latini, famous in Florence as a philosopher and man of learning and author of the Treasure. They greet each other affectionately; Brunetto speaks warmly of Dante’s merits, and severely of the ingratitude of Florence; Dante acknowledges in tender words all he owes to Brunetto and his writings. Among Brunetto’s companions is a bishop transferred by Boniface VIII (servus servorum Dei was a style used by the Popes) from Florence to Vicenza: the first reference in the poem to the great pope whom Dante detested.*

NOW ONE of the hard banks our footing bears,  
And the stream’s smoke maketh a shadowy shield  
So that the fire both bank and water spares.  
As ‘twixt Wissant and Bruges the Flemings build,  
Dreading the tide that ever toward them pours,  
Their rampart that compels the waves to yield,  
And as the Paduans do by Brenta’s shores,<sup>i</sup>  
Their villages and castles to make fast,  
Ere Chiarentana feel the sun’s hot force,<sup>ii</sup>  
These dykes were fashioned of like mould and cast, [10]  
Albeit the master, whoever it was that wrought,  
Had made them not so lofty nor so massed.  
Already we were from the wood remote  
So far, that had my eyes turned back thereto  
They could not have had power the place to note,  
When up to us now a band of spirits drew,  
Coming beside the bank; and scrutiny  
Each made of us, as men are wont to do

---

<sup>i</sup> 7. The “Brenta” is a stream in northeastern Italy.

<sup>ii</sup> 9. “Chiarentana”: a mountainous region north of the Brenta. Its melting snows swell the river.



At dusk, when a new moon is in the sky;  
 And at us, puckering their brows, they pried [20]  
 Like an old tailor at his needle's eye.  
 As thus by all that company we were eyed,  
 One of them recognised me, and by the skirt  
 Caught hold of me, and "O what marvel!" cried.  
 Soon as he touched me, I could no more avert  
 Mine eyes, but on his visage scorched and sere  
 Fixt them, until beneath the mask of hurt  
 Did the remembered lineaments appear.  
 And to his face my hand inclining down,  
 I answered, "Ser Brunetto, are you here?" [30]  
 And he: "May it not displease thee, O my son,  
 If Brunetto Latini turn with thee  
 A little back, and let his troop go on."  
 I said: "That same thing most contenteth me.  
 And if that I sit with you, you prefer,  
 So will I do, if he I am with agree."  
 "O my son," said he, "of this herd, whoe'er  
 One instant stops, an hundred years must lie  
 Helpless against the fire a hand to stir;  
 Therefore go on, while at thy skirts go I [40]  
 And then rejoin my comrades in lament,  
 Who as they go, their loss eternal sigh."  
 I dared not from the road make the descent  
 To go level with him; but bowed my head  
 Like one who walketh inly reverent.  
 He began now: "What fate or fortune led  
 Thee down into this place, ere thy last day?  
 Who is it that thy steps hath piloted?"  
 "Above there in the clear world on my way,"  
 I answered him, "lost in a vale of gloom, [50]  
 Before my age was full, I went astray.  
 But yester morn I turned my back therefrom.

As I re-entered it, he came from far,<sup>iii</sup>  
 And by this same path he shall guide me home."  
 And he to me: "If thou follow thy star,  
 Thou'lt fail not glorious harbour at the end,  
 If in the beautiful life I did not err.  
 And had Fate chosen my own years to extend,  
 Seeing Heaven did on thee so benignly look,  
 I had been with thee to hearten and befriend. [60]  
 But that ungrateful, that malignant folk<sup>iv</sup>  
 Who came of old down from Fiesole,<sup>v</sup>  
 And still smack of the mountain and the rock,  
 Will for thy good deeds turn 'thine enemy.  
 And there is cause; among the acid sloes  
 Ill fits that sweet figs fruit upon the tree.  
 Old fame on earth proclaims them envious,  
 Arrogant, blind of eye and greedy of throat:  
 Wipe thyself clean of all such ways as those.  
 Thy fortune keeps thee for such honoured note [70]  
 That either side will hunger in pursuit  
 Of thee; but far shall grass be from the goat.  
 Let them their own selves tear in pieces, brute  
 Beasts of Fiesole, and not impede  
 If 'mid their rankness any scion shoot  
 In which reviveth still the sacred seed  
 Of those true Romans who incorrupt remained<sup>vi</sup>  
 When grew that nest of malice and of greed."  
 "Could all of my desire have been attained,"  
 I answered him, "not yet from the estate [80]  
 Of our humanity had you been banned.  
 Still in my heart stays, memory's dear inmate,

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<sup>iii</sup> 53. "He came . . .": Dante avoids mentioning Virgil by name in Hell.

<sup>iv</sup> 61. "That malignant folk": the Florentines.

<sup>v</sup> 62. "Fiesole" is at the top of a steep hill near Florence. Catiline, driven from Rome, took refuge there with his followers. When the place was finally taken, tradition has it that the surviving inhabitants, combining with a Roman colony, founded Florence.

<sup>vi</sup> 77-78. Dante believed that his own family belonged to the old Roman stock of Florence.

The fatherly kind image, paining now,  
 Of you, when in the world, early and late,  
 You taught me how man may eternal grow.  
 And whilst I breathe the air, it is most right  
 My grateful tongue declare all that I owe.  
 What of my course you tell, that do I write  
 And keep for a Lady with another text  
 For her wise comment, if I of her win sight. [90]  
 Of this much would I have you disperplext.  
 I am prepared, so conscience not upbraid,  
 For Fortune, whatsoe'er she purpose next.  
 Not new to these ears is such boding made.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Therefore let Fortune turn her wheel to accord  
 With her own pleasure, and the boor his spade."  
 Then over his right shoulder turned my Lord<sup>viii</sup>  
 Backward and looked at me, and spoke anon:  
 "He listens well who noteth well the word."  
 None the less I continue speaking on [100]  
 With Ser Brunetto, and I ask him who  
 Of his companions highest note have won.  
 And he to me: "Of some 'tis well to know:  
 But of the rest 'twere better naught be said;  
 So much talk, this short time, we must forgo.  
 Know then in brief, all these were scholars bred  
 And clerks, and upon earth great fame they knew,  
 And all by the same soilure forfeited.  
 Priscian goeth among that sorry crew,<sup>ix</sup>  
 And Francesco d'Accorso; and didst thou crave [110]  
 Such scurf, thou mightest have seen and spoken to  
 Him who from Arno to Bacchiglion's wave<sup>x</sup>

---

<sup>vii</sup> 94-95. *Let fate and men pursue their thoughtless course: this sounds like a proverbial phrase.*

<sup>viii</sup> 97. "My Lord": Virgil.

<sup>ix</sup> 109-110. "Priscian": the great Latin grammarian of the sixth century. "Francesco d'Accorso": a renowned jurist, lived in Bologna and in England, in the thirteenth century.

<sup>x</sup> 112. He "who from Arno" is, is Andrea di Mozzi, a bishop removed in 1295 by Boniface VIII (see the Argument).

By the servant of God's servants was transferred,  
 And there his sinfully spent nerves outgave.  
 I would say more, but must not be deferred  
 My going, and speech must end now; for I see  
 Smoke of new dust there from the sand upstirred.  
 People are coming with whom I may not be.  
 But let my Treasure (and I ask no more),<sup>xi</sup>  
 Wherein I live still, be commended thee." [120]  
 He turned, and seemed like, in the field before  
 Verona, one of those who run the race  
 For the green cloth; so seemed he running, nor<sup>xii</sup>  
 Seemed in the loser's but the winner's place.

---

<sup>xi</sup> 119. My "Treasure": Brunetto Latini's main work.

<sup>xii</sup> 123. In the annual games held in Verona in the thirteenth century the first prize in the foot-race was a green cloth.

# Canto XVI

*Three Florentines detach themselves from a troop of spirits and hail Dante as their countryman. Of the fate of two of them, Tegghiaio and Rusticucci, whom he admired for their political uprightness, he had already been told vaguely in Canto VI. They ask if Florence is really so degenerate as they have heard, and at Dante's answer depart sorrowfully. The poets have now arrived at the place where the stream falls roaring over into a great abyss: but how are they to descend? Virgil takes the cord which Dante wears as a girdle and throws it down into the pit; and to Dante's astonishment a strange monster floats up and poises itself on the brink of the precipice.*

ALREADY I had come to where the boom  
Of water falling into the other ring<sup>i</sup>  
Was heard resounding like a bee-hive's hum,  
When three shades parted, in their haste running  
Together, from a troop that passed beside  
Beneath the rain that scorched them with its sting.  
Toward us they ran and each with one voice cried:  
"Stop thou! Of our corrupted city's brood  
Thou seem'st, if by thy dress thou art not belied."  
Ah me, what scars I saw, both old and crude, [10]  
Upon their bodies burnt unto the bone!  
Even at the thought of it is my pain renewed.  
My Teacher lent a grave ear to their moan,  
Turned his face to me, and then said, "Now give heed  
For unto these should courtesy be shown.  
Were it not for the arrowy fire indeed  
This place engenders, I would say for thee  
Rather than them 'twere fitting to make speed."  
They, as we stood still, wailed their ancient dree  
Afresh, and when they had arrived quite close [20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 2. "The other ring" is the eighth circle, separated from the seventh by a mighty precipice.

Made of themselves a wheel there, all the three.  
 As champions do, when stript and oiled they choose<sup>ii</sup>  
 With the eye their hold and purchase, ere to get  
 At grips they come with thrusting and with blows,  
 So, as they wheeled, each one his visage set  
 Continually toward me, in such wise  
 That the neck travelled counter to the feet.  
 And "If this crumbling region's miseries,"  
 One began, "and our burnt and blackened fell  
 Cause thee not our petitions to despise, [30]  
 Let our renown incline thy heart to tell  
 What man thou art whose living feet tread so  
 Unterrified the thoroughfare of Hell.  
 He in whose steps thou seest me trample, although  
 All naked now he goes, and parched and peeled,  
 Was higher in degree than thou canst know.  
 Grandson of good Gualdrada, he upheld<sup>iii</sup>  
 The name of Guido Guerra, and in his days  
 Great service did with counsel and in the field.  
 The other who in the sand behind me stays [40]  
 Is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose fame  
 Should in the world above have earned him praise.<sup>iv</sup>  
 And I who with them to the torment came  
 Was Iacopo Rusticucci; and more than aught<sup>v</sup>  
 It is my fierce wife who hath brought me blame."  
 Could I a shelter from the fire have got  
 I would have flung me down among them there,  
 Nor had my Guide forbidden it, I thought;

---

<sup>ii</sup> 22. "Champions": the wrestlers and boxers of ancient times.

<sup>iii</sup> 37. "Gualdrada" was renowned for her beauty and modesty. Her grandson, Guido Guerra, was a distinguished Florentine Guelph.

<sup>iv</sup> 42. Tegghiaio, of the Adimari family, was an illustrious citizen of Florence in the middle part of the thirteenth century. If his counsel had been heeded, his countrymen would have escaped the defeat of Montaperti in 1260.

<sup>v</sup> 44. Of Jacopo Rusticucci, a contemporary of the other two, little is recorded. Nothing is known of his wife.

But since I should have burnt from heel to hair,  
 Terror prevailed that good will to constrain [50]  
 Which made me greedy their embrace to share.  
 Then I began: "Sorrow and not disdain  
 Of your condition did my heart imbrue  
 So deeply that not soon will fade the pain,  
 When this my lord spoke words wherefrom I drew  
 Such thought as expectation in me nursed  
 That there might be approaching such as you.  
 I am of your city; and always from the first  
 Your names with honour did my heart recall  
 And with affection heard your deeds rehearsed. [60]  
 For the sweet apples, leaving soon the gall,  
 I go, as promised me my trusted Guide,  
 But to the centre needs that first I fall."  
 "So may thy spirit long time," he replied,  
 "Sustain thy members and their motions fill,  
 And so thy fame bright after thee abide,  
 Tell us if courtesy and valour still  
 Dwell in our city, once their old resort,  
 Or have they quite abandoned her to ill?  
 Guglielmo Borsiere, who time but short<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 Has suffered with us, and is yonder gone  
 With the others, grieves us sore by his report."  
 "Because new men and sudden gains have sown  
 In thee the seeds of luxury and pride,  
 Florence, thou hast already cause to groan."  
 Thus, lifting up my countenance, I cried.  
 The three, who knew they had their answer got,  
 As men when truth is told, each other eyed.  
 "If other times thou canst so free of scot,"  
 They all replied, "make answer in like case, [80]  
 Thus as thou list, thou art lucky in thy lot.

---

<sup>vi</sup> 70. *The newly arrived Guglielmo Borsiere is known to us only through a story in Boccaccio's Decameron, I, 8.*

Therefore if thou escape this dismal pass  
 And win to see the beauteous stars again,  
 When it shall pleasure thee to say 'I was,'  
 See that thou speak of us to living men."  
 Then broke they up their wheel, and as they fled  
 Their nimble legs seemed wings upon the plain.  
 Truly an Amen could not have been said  
 So quickly as those spirits disappeared:  
 Wherefore it pleased my Master to be sped. [90]  
 I followed him and after a little neared  
 So close the falling water with its din  
 That, speaking, we had scarce each other heard.  
 As that stream, which its own path doth begin<sup>vii</sup>  
 From Monte Veso with an eastward aim  
 Upon the left slope of the Apennine  
 And, Acquaqueta called, is still the same  
 Till it descends into its nether bed  
 And at Forli is emptied of that name,  
 Resoundeth, falling in one full cascade<sup>viii</sup> [100]  
 Above St. Benedict of the Mountain, where  
 A thousand their safe refuge might have made,  
 So, thundering from a bank and plunging sheer,  
 That crimsoned water on our senses smote  
 So that ere long it would have stunned the ear.<sup>ix</sup>  
 had a cord that girdled me about,  
 'And one time had I thought within its noose  
 To catch the leopard with the spotted coat.  
 When from my loins I had made it wholly loose,  
 I gave it to my Guide, upcoiled and wound, [110]

---

<sup>vii</sup> 94-99. The roaring cataract in Hell is compared to the noisy falls of the Montone river. "Monte Veso" is Monviso. One of the three upper branches of the Montone is the "Acquaqueta" which, at Forli, gives up that name, and merges into the Montone.

<sup>viii</sup> 100-103. "St. Benedict" (San Benedetto dell' Alpi) is a little village. The river roars because it falls over a single ledge, when it ought to be caught by a thousand.

<sup>ix</sup> 106. The significance of the "cord" has been variously interpreted. It must stand for something upon which Dante at one time built false hopes, but now, at the command of Reason, discards.



Even as he commanded, for his use.  
 He bent him on the right side toward the ground,  
   'And some few paces from the precipice  
 He flung it forth into that pit profound.  
 "Surely it must be something strange shall rise,"  
   I inly said, "by this strange signal brought  
   Which thus my Master follows with his eyes."  
 Ah, well should men be circumspection taught  
   With those who see not only the deed done  
   But with their mind look through into the thought. [120]  
 He said to me: "There will come up anon  
   What I expect, and what thou seest in dream  
   Must soon be plain for sight to look upon."  
 Ever from truths which liker falsehood seem,  
   Far as man may, one should his lips refrain,  
   For, blameless, he yet hazards disesteem;  
 But speak I needs must here, and by the strain  
   Of this my Comedy, reader, I aver—  
   So may it some enduring favour gain—  
 That I saw through that gross and gloomy air [130]  
   Come swimming up a shape, miraculous  
   To any mind, unshaken howsoe'er;  
 Like one who reappears from where he goes<sup>x</sup>  
   To undo the anchor which, far down, grapnels  
   A rock or aught else hidden in the ooze;  
 Who stretches arms up, and draws in the heels.

---

<sup>x</sup> 133-136. *To the observer above, a diver, returning to the surface, is foreshortened and magnified by the intervening water.*

# Canto XVII

*The monster is Geryon, the emblem of Fraud, who guards the Eighth Circle; and to this the poets are now to descend on Geryon's back. But first Dante goes alone to see a group of the third class of the violent who are punished in the burning sand. These are the Usurers, who are violent against Nature and Art. Returning to Virgil he takes his place on Geryon, who floats down the circular abyss and brings them to the next circle.*

BEHOLD the fell beast with the sharp tail curled  
That mountains, walls and armour pierces through!  
Behold him who corrupteth the whole world!"  
Thus did my Master speak to me anew,  
And beckoned him that he should come ashore  
Where to the marbled causeway's end we drew.  
And that obscene image of Fraud then bore  
Onward, and landed with his head and chest,  
But drew not up his tail upon the scaur.  
His face was as a just man's, and expressed [10]  
The mildness that its outward aspect feigned;  
Like to a serpent's trunk was all the rest.  
He had two paws, up to the armpits maned  
With hair; the neck and breast and either flank  
Were freaked with knots and little whorls ingrained.  
Never did Turk or Tartar livelier prank  
With colour cloth, inlaid and overlaid;  
Such dyes Arachne's tissue never drank.<sup>i</sup>  
As sometimes on the shore a barge is stayed,  
That part in water lies and part on land; [20]  
And as, where guzzling Germans dwell, to aid

---

<sup>i</sup> 18. "Arachne": the famous weaver who challenged Minerva to contest, and was turned into a spider.

His fishery, the beaver takes his stand,<sup>ii</sup>  
 So that most evil of beasts leant on the stone  
 Which with its rim encloses the great sand.  
 Out in the void flickered his tail alone,  
 Twisting the venomed fork up in the air  
 Which armed the point, as in the scorpion.  
 My Guide said, "Now must we a little bear  
 Of from our path, far as that beast that, buoyed  
 Upon the bank, couches in evil there."[30]  
 Descending to the right hand we deployed,  
 And made ten paces toward the margin, so  
 That we might well the flame and sand avoid;  
 And soon as we came close upon him, lo!  
 A little farther upon the sandy waste  
 Were people sitting near the abyss a-row.<sup>iii</sup>  
 "Here," said to me my Master, "that thou may'st  
 Bear with thee full experience of this ring,  
 Go and observe the state of these; but haste!  
 Brief let thy talk be. I will with this thing[40]  
 Be parleying, till thou return again,  
 That to his strong back he may let us cling."  
 Thus on the extreme border of the plain  
 Of that seventh circle, all alone I went  
 To where that folk were seated in their pain.  
 Through the eyes their grief in torrents was unpent.  
 This side and that their hands twisted about,  
 Some shield from flame or hot soil to invent.  
 Not otherwise the dogs in summer drought,  
 When they are bitten by the fleas or flies,[50]  
 Defend themselves, either with paw or snout.  
 After I had scanned the faces with my eyes  
 Of many on whom the dread fire falling smote,

---

<sup>ii</sup> 22. *It was believed that the beaver caught fish with its tail, dangling it in the water. In the Middle Ages the beaver was associated with Germany.*

<sup>iii</sup> 36. *"Were people . . .": the usurers, who did violence to human industry.*

I found not one that I could recognise,  
 But saw on each a pouch, hung from the throat,  
 With a certain colour and device impressed,  
 And on it with their gaze they seemed to gloat.  
 As I came close to them, mine eyes at quest  
 Saw azure on a yellow purse display  
 A lion's face and figure for a crest.<sup>iv</sup> [60]  
 Then as my look continued on its way  
 Another, red as blood, I noted now  
 Whereon was stampt a goose more white than whey.  
 And one, whose argent wallet with a sow,  
 Azure and pregnant, was imprinted, cried:  
 "What in this ditch of misery doest thou?  
 Get thee away, and as thou hast not yet died,  
 Know, neighbour Vitaliano shall appear<sup>v</sup>  
 And come to seat himself at my left side.  
 Florentine these are, Paduan I, whose ear [70]  
 Their cries belabour often as with blows,  
 Shouting 'Let come the sovereign cavalier  
 Who brings the pouch with three goats where he goes.'<sup>vi</sup> "  
 Then with his mouth he writhed and sudden sent  
 His tongue out, like an ox that licks his nose.  
 And I, dreading my lord's admonishment,  
 Lest longer stay should his displeasure meet,  
 Turned and went back from those spirits spent.  
 I found my master, who had taken seat  
 Already on that dread creature's haunches bare: [80]  
 "Be bold," he said, "and think not of retreat.  
 This way must serve us for the downward stair.  
 Mount thou in front, I shall the middle take,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 60. The azure lion here, the goose on line 63, and the sow on line 64, are the arms of three well-known families of usurers.

<sup>v</sup> 68. Of "Vitaliano," the only one of the usurers mentioned by name, we have no certain information.

<sup>vi</sup> 73. "Three goats" were the arms of the Becchi family of Florence. It is thought that the "sovereign cavalier" of usurers is Gianni Buiamonte, the head of a money-lending company.

Lest the tail, swindging, hurt thee unaware."  
 Like one whom shiverings of the quartan shake  
 So that he has his nails already blue  
 And starts at the mere sight of shade to quake,  
 So, when these words came to me, did I grue;  
 But threat of shame, which makes a servant bold  
 Before his good lord, heartened me anew. [90]  
 On those great shoulders then I got me hold.  
 I wished to say, only the voice came not  
 As I had meant: "Thy arms about me fold."  
 But he who at other times my succour wrought  
 In other peril, clasped me by the waist,  
 Soon as I mounted, and my body caught.  
 Then he: "Move, Geryon, gently as thou may'st,  
 Wide be thy wheelings, thy descending slow.  
 Think on the unusual burden that thou hast."  
 As from shore glides the boat back, backward, so [100]  
 He launched himself from where he had come to lean;  
 And when he felt him wholly freed below,  
 His tail he turned there where his breast had been  
 And like an eel he moved it as to steer,  
 And with his paws gathered the air between.  
 Verily I think there was not greater fear  
 When Phaëthon his reins relaxing lost,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Whereby heaven scorched, as ev'n now doth appear  
 Or when faint Icarus felt his shoulders roast<sup>viii</sup>  
 Disfeathered, as the warm'd wax was unbound. [110]  
 And his sire cried to him, "An ill way thou go'st,  
 Than was my terror when myself I found  
 In the air all round about me and all alone,  
 And save that beast all else from sight was drowned.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 107-108. Phaeton, son of Phoebus, was carried away by the horses of the chariot of the sun, which he tried to drive. The sky, scorched by the runaway chariot, still shows traces of it in the Milky Way.

<sup>viii</sup> 109-111. Daedalus, to escape from Crete, fashioned wings for his son Icarus and himself and fastened them on with wax. In spite of his father's warning, the boy flew so high that the sun melted the wax, and, losing his wings, he fell into the sea.

Slow, slowly he continueth swimming on,  
Wheels and descends, but naught of this appeared.  
Save on my face a wind from under blown.  
Already upon the right the stream I heard  
Roar horribly beneath us; and I lowered  
My head, and forth with eyes bent down I peered. [120]  
Then feared I the dismounting that was toward  
Yet more, for fires I saw, and crying keen  
I heard, so that my limbs all trembling cowered.  
I saw, what heretofore I had not seen,  
The sinking and the wheeling, shown me by  
The nearing on all sides of bale and teen.  
As falcon, after flying long and high,  
That has no lure nor any bird in sight,  
And "Oh, thou stoopest" makes the falconer cry,  
Weary descends where swift he started flight, [130]  
Makes many a circle, and from his master far  
Goes sullen and disdainful to alight;  
So Geryon at the bottom of the scar  
Set us beside the rock's foot, ribbed and rough,  
And when he was disburdened of our care  
Like arrow from the string he bounded off.

# Canto XVIII

*The Eighth Circle is divided into ten concentric rings forming deep chasms called Malebolge or Evil Pockets; in each of them a separate kind of Fraud has its own punishment. From the circumference of the circle to the central pit (leading to the Ninth Circle) run "spokes" of rock which bridge the chasms. In the first, or outermost, chasm are two processions of sinners going opposite ways; the first are panders, the second seducers. By means of one of the bridges Dante passes to the cliff above the next chasm or bolgia where are flatterers immersed in filth. The description of the ten chasms of the Eighth Circle occupies this and the succeeding cantos as far as the end of Canto XXX.*

HELL hath a region, Malebolge called.

All stone and iron-coloured is the place,  
Like the round barrier wherewith it is walled.

Right in the middle of the baleful space

There yawns a well exceeding deep and wide,  
Whose structure hereinafter I shall trace.

The margin therefore that remains beside,

Between the well and the cliff's root, is round;  
And ten ravines the floor of it divide.

As is the form presented by the ground,

Where for defence of tower and bastion  
Moat after moat is round a castle wound,

Here a like image to the eye was shown;

And as the thresholds of the fortress send  
Their several bridges to the far bank thrown,

So from the bottom of the rock extend

Bridges, upon the dykes and fosses based,  
Down to the well that knits them at their end.

In this place, shaken off from Geryon's waist,

We found ourselves now, and the poet still  
Kept to the left and I behind him paced.

[10]

[20]

On the right hand I saw new sights of ill—  
 New torments, new tormentors multiplied—  
 Which, deep within it, the first pocket fill.  
 There were the naked sinners; on our side  
 Of the middle of it they came, so that we met;<sup>i</sup>  
 On the other, went with us, at larger stride.  
 The Romans thus, by the great throngs beset<sup>ii</sup>  
 In the year of Jubilee, found the people a mode  
 To pass the bridge unjostled without let, [30]  
 So that on one side they are all bestowed  
 Facing the Castle, and to St. Peter's fare;  
 On the other toward the Mount they keep the road  
 Along the dingy stone, now here, now there,  
 I saw horned demons each with a great whip  
 Who from behind smote on those sinners bare.  
 With what alacrity they made them skip  
 At the first strokes! Ah, truly there was none  
 Who waited for the third, nay second, stripe.  
 As I went on, my eyes encountered one; [40]  
 And "Before now" immediately I said  
 "This face I have not lacked to look upon."  
 To scrutinise him, in my steps I stayed.  
 And the most gentle Guide suffered me go  
 Backward a space, and with me himself delayed.  
 And that scourged spirit thought to have hidden, so low  
 He hung his head; but little did it avail.  
 For "Thou," said I, "who the eyes dost downward throw,  
 Unless thou wear false features for a veil,

---

<sup>i</sup> 26. On the nearer side of the bottom of the ditch, the sinners, in their circling course, were coming towards us; on the further side, they were going with us, but faster than we walked.

<sup>ii</sup> 28-34. In describing the double march of the lost souls, Dante recalls a scene witnessed by many thousands in Rome in the Jubilee year of 1299-1300. A barrier was erected lengthwise along the Bridge of Sant' Angelo, in order that the crowd going to and coming from St. Peter's might pass in opposite directions without interference. — "The castle": Castel Sant' Angelo. — "The Mount": Monte Giordano, a slight eminence on the left of the river.



Art Venedico Caccianemico, but<sup>iii</sup> [50]  
 What brings thee in the stinging brine to quail?"  
 And he to me: "My lips were liefer shut.  
 But these thy words that bring me back so true  
 The world that was, forbid me to be mute.  
 'Twas I who made Ghisolabella do<sup>iv</sup>  
 The Marquis' will, however it may please  
 Rumour the shameful story to construe.  
 Nor wail I here the only Bolognese.  
 Nay, with us is the place so full, that not  
 So many to say *sipa* (as our way is)<sup>v</sup> [60]  
 Twixt Savena and Reno now are taught.  
 If thou wouldst have confirming proof of it  
 Recall how greed of money on us hath wrought."  
 As he spoke thus, a demon at him beat  
 With lifted lash: "Pandar away," he cried,  
 "Here are no women thou canst use to cheat."  
 My Escort then I re-accompanied;  
 And after some few steps we came anon  
 To where a cliff projected from the side.  
 This without effort soon we climbed upon, [70]  
 And on the rough ridge, turning to the right,  
 From those eternal circles we passed on.  
 When we were at that place where for the flight  
 Of the scourged spirits it thereunder gapes,  
 "Now," said the Master, "wait and let the sight<sup>vi</sup>  
 Strike on thee of the misbegotten shapes  
 Whose faces heretofore have been withheld,  
 For they have gone with us and in our steps."

---

<sup>iii</sup> 50. "Venedico Caccianemico," was Podesta of Milan in 1275, Pistoia in 1283.

<sup>iv</sup> 55-56: "Ghisolabella" was Venedico's sister. "The Marquis": Obizzo da Este of Ferrara.

<sup>v</sup> 60-61. "*Sipa*" is an old Bolognese word for *sia*, often used for "yes." Bologna lies between the two rivers, Savena and Reno. The number of Bolognese panders in this ditch exceeds the number of all the living people who speak Bolognese.

<sup>vi</sup> 75-77. Dante is now to look down, at the right, on the seducers, whose faces he has not been able to see from the bank.

From the ancient bridge the train we then beheld  
 Of those who now facing to us-ward sped, [80]  
 Whom likewise the pursuing scourge compelled.  
 The kind Master, without my asking, said:  
 "Look on that great one who advances now  
 And seems in all his pain no tear to shed.  
 How regal still is the aspect of his brow!  
 He is Jason, who by courage and by guile<sup>vii</sup>  
 Bore off the Ram's fleece from the Colchian bough.  
 Upon that quest he passed by Lemnos isle,  
 After the women, pitilessly bold,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Had given the males all unto slaughter vile. [90]  
 There with fair pledges and with words of gold  
 Did he cajole the young Hypsipyle,  
 Who theretofore had all the rest cajoled.<sup>ix</sup>  
 Pregnant and lorn he left her by that sea.  
 Such guilt so heavy a punishment endures;  
 And also for Medea is paid the fee.<sup>x</sup>  
 With him go all who practise the like lures.  
 Be this sufficient for thee to have known  
 Of the first valley and all whom it devours."  
 We had come to where the pathway, narrower grown, [100]  
 Crosses the second ridge, whereof the rock  
 Is buttress to another arch of stone.  
 Here in the other chasm whining of folk  
 We heard, who with a gobbling muzzle growled,  
 While with their palms upon themselves they struck.  
 The banks were crusted over with a mould  
 Clotted upon them from the mounting fume  
 Which eyes and nose assaulted and befouled.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 86. "Jason" despoiled the Colchians of the golden fleece,

<sup>viii</sup> 89. The women of Lemnos, forsaken by their husbands on account of a curse put upon them by Venus, agreed to murder all the males on the island.

<sup>ix</sup> 93. "Hypsipyle" had saved her father, King Thoas, by pretending to have killed him.

<sup>x</sup> 96. "Medea" was beguiled by Jason.

The bottom was so deep that through the gloom  
 We saw nought, till by keeping on the road [110]  
 To the arch's summit we were on it come.  
 Thereon we stood, and in the hollow showed  
 Down there a people slopt in excrement  
 As if from human privies it had flowed.  
 And while I searched them with my eyes intent,  
 A head, if clerk's or layman's none could tell,  
 I saw, with ordure it was so besprent.  
 He cried to me: "Why does thy look so dwell  
 On me more than the others in this sty?"  
 And I: "Because, if I remember well, [120]  
 I have seen thee before now with thy hair dry.  
 Thou art Alessio Interminei<sup>xi</sup>  
 Of Lucca; of all, then, thee I keenest eye."  
 And he, beating his pumpkin-pate, said: "See!  
 Down to this dirt the flatteries without end,  
 Which my tongue revelled in, have sunken me!"  
 Thereon my Guide: "Stretch forth thy face and bend  
 A little forward, that thine eyes may meet  
 The form, and features fully comprehend,  
 Of that dishevelled harlot soiled with sweat [130]  
 Who with her filthy nails scratches her side,  
 Now crouching and now standing on her feet.  
 Thais is she, the whore who thus replied<sup>xii</sup>  
 To her lover when 'Dost thank me much?' he said:  
 "Ay, more than much, marvellously," she cried.  
 And herewith let our sight be surfeited."

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<sup>xi</sup> 122. "Alessio Interminei" belonged to a noble family of Lucca; we know nothing in particular about him.

<sup>xii</sup> 133. "Thais," the harlot, is a character in Terence's *Eunuchus*, to whom her lover Thraso has sent a present.

# Canto XIX

*The third chasm contains the Simonists, who are each fixed head downwards in holes in the rock. Dante speaks with Pope Nicholas III, who takes him at first to be the still living Boniface VIII (Pope from 1294 to 1303). Dante hated Boniface and has here contrived an opportunity—not the only one in the poem, see also Canto XXVII—for speaking his mind. Nicholas tells how he promoted the interests of his family, the Orsini (“I was a son of the She-Bear”), and prophesies the advent in Hell of a Pope “from the West,” i.e. France—Clement V, the Frenchman who transferred the Papal See to Avignon. Dante denounces Simonism to Nicholas in trenchant words. Virgil then carries him to the arch looking down on the next chasm.*

O SIMON MAGUS, O lost wretches, led  
By thee, who prostitute the things that need,  
Being things of God, with goodness to be wed;  
Who gape for gold and silver, mouths of greed!<sup>i</sup>  
For you now must the trumpet blow the doom,  
For in the third chasm is your place decreed.  
To the next hollow we had already come  
And, mounted on the bridge, were in that part  
Which hangs plumb over the middle of the tomb.  
Wisdom supreme! how dost thou show thine art [10]  
In heaven, in earth, and in the pit profound!  
How justly dost apportion sin's desert!  
The livid stone upon the bottom I found  
Was full of holes, and also on each side,<sup>ii</sup>  
All of one breadth, and each of them was round.  
They seemed to me not greater and not less wide  
Than those made in my beautiful St. John

---

<sup>i</sup> 4. The sin punished in the third chasm is simony, the use of ecclesiastical office for private gain. It derives its name from the Simon Magus of Acts 8:9-24.

<sup>ii</sup> 14. The burrows of the simonists are compared to the pits for baptisers in the Baptistery of Florence, which Dante lovingly calls “his beautiful St. John.” Dante takes this occasion to declare that he once broke down one of these receptacles to save someone drowning inside.

Wherein stand the baptisers to preside,  
 One of which I, not many years ago,  
 Broke, to save one who else had drowned therein. [20]  
 I stamp this true, to enlighten every one.  
 A sinner's feet from each mouth could be seen  
 Protruding up, and legs that rose in sight  
 Far as the calf: the rest remained within.  
 The soles of either foot were all alight,  
 Wherefore the joints were quivering in such throes  
 As had burst withy or grassy bonds outright.  
 As on things oiled the flame flickers and flows  
 Moving only along their outer face,  
 So was it there from the heels unto the toes. [30]  
 "Who is this, Master, who most in all this place  
 Writhes himself, quivering as he anguishes,  
 And whom the licking flames more redly chase?"  
 And he to me: "If down the bank it please  
 That I should bear thee, that which lies the lowest,  
 Thou'lt learn of him and of his trespasses."  
 And I: "It pleaseth me where'er thou goest.  
 Thou art my lord; thou knowest I will to do  
 Only thy will; and the unsaid words thou knowest."  
 On the fourth causeway then we came, and so [40]  
 Turned and descended down by the left bank  
 And reached the narrow, pitted floor below.  
 Nor did the master set me from his flank  
 Until he had brought me to the hollow crack  
 Where he was, who lamented with his shank.  
 "Whoe'er thou be who art planted like a stake  
 With the head downward, O thou spirit undone,"  
 I was now saying, "If thou art able, speak!"  
 I stood still like the friar confessing one  
 Fixt in the earth for treacherous homicide<sup>iii</sup> [50]

---

<sup>iii</sup> 50. "Fixt in the earth . . .": murderers were planted, head downwards, in a hole, and buried alive.

Who calls him back, his death so to postpone;  
 And "Dost thou stand already there," he cried,  
 "Boniface, dost thou stand already there?"<sup>iv</sup>  
 By several years the Writ to me hath lied.  
 Art thou so quickly gorged with all the gear  
 For which thou didst not shrink by guile to seize  
 The beauteous Lady and then to havock her?"<sup>v</sup>  
 I became like to those who, ill at ease,  
 Not comprehending the answer to them made,  
 Stand as if mocked, and words within them freeze. [60]  
 "Make haste and say to him," then Virgil said,  
 "I am not he thou thinkest, I am not he."  
 And I replied to him as my master bade.  
 Whereat in every fibre from the knee  
 The spirit shuddered, sighing in lament,  
 And spoke: "What is it, then, thou wouldst ask of me?  
 If to learn who I am thou art so intent  
 That for this cause thou hast crost the embankment, know  
 That I in the Great Mantle apparelled went,  
 And of the She-Bear was true son, and so<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 Persistent to advance the cubs, that I,  
 Who pouched above, myself am pouched below.  
 Beneath my head are those who in simony  
 Preceded me, thrust even deeper down  
 In the stone's crannies they are pinioned by.  
 Thither I also, when arrives that one<sup>vii</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> 53. The speaker, Nicholas III, thinks that his successor in simony, Boniface VIII, has arrived. But, as Boniface was not to die until 1303, the book of destiny seems to have lied.

<sup>v</sup> 57. "The beauteous Lady" is the Church, the Bride of Christ.

<sup>vi</sup> 70-71. Giovanni Gaetano Orsini, Pope Nicholas III from 1277 to 1280, was notorious for his nepotism. Because of the fact that the "She-Bear" was the cognisance in his family arms, Dante refers to his relatives as "the cubs."

<sup>vii</sup> 76-87. "That one" is Boniface. Nicholas has been there nearly twenty years; Boniface's feet will burn only about eleven years, from 1303 to 1314, when Clement V will die—Clement V, the "shepherd without law," was noted for his greed and licentiousness, and became the unscrupulous tool of Philip the Fair of France. In 1309 he transferred the Papal See to Avignon. Clement is compared to the Jason of 2 Macc., who bought the high priesthood of King Antiochus. As Antiochus favoured Jason, Philip will have Clement made Pope.

For whom I took thee when I was moved to make  
 But now the sudden question, shall be thrown.  
 But longer already is the time I bake  
 My soles and stay with legs above the chest [80]  
 Than, planted with red feet, he too shall quake.  
 For after him shall come out of the West  
 A shepherd without law, of uglier deed,  
 Above us both fit covering to be prest.  
 'Twill be another Jason, of whom we read  
 In Maccabees; and as to him of old  
 His king was soft, so France, by this one fee'd."  
 I know not if at this I was too bold,  
 For in this strain his discourse I repaid.  
 "Ah, tell me truth now, tell me how much gold [90]  
 Our Lord of Peter requisition made  
 Before he put the keys into his hand.  
 'Follow me!' Surely nought but this he bade.  
 Nor Peter, no, nor the others did demand  
 Gold from Mathias when he for that part<sup>viii</sup>  
 Was chosen, from which the guilty soul was banned.  
 Stay thou then here; justly chastised thou art,  
 And keep thou well the monies gotten ill  
 Which gave thee against Charles so bold a heart.<sup>ix</sup>  
 And were it not that reverence rules me still [100]  
 For the supreme keys which when life was glad  
 Thou heldest, and the office thou didst fill,  
 I'd have for thee words harder than I had;  
 Such woe your avarice for the world doth spell,  
 Trampling the good and raising up the bad.  
 Such pastors did the Evangelist foretell  
 When a-whoring with the kings before his sight

---

<sup>viii</sup> 95. "Mathias" was chosen apostle to fill the place of Judas.

<sup>ix</sup> 99. From the beginning of his papacy, Nicholas was hostile to Charles of Anjou.

She who sitteth upon the waters fell;<sup>x</sup>  
 She who was born with seven heads of might,  
 And ten horns for her sign of warrant bore, [110]  
 While still her spouse in virtue found delight.  
 A God of silver and gold ye have made to adore;  
 And how do ye differ from the idolater  
 Save that he worships one, and ye five-score?  
 Ah, Constantine, what evil fruit did bear<sup>xi</sup>  
 Not thy conversion, but that dowry broad  
 Thou on the first rich Father didst confer!"  
 And whether rage or conscience in him gnawed,  
 The while to him in such a strain I sung,  
 With both his feet fiercely he kicked abroad. [120]  
 Of a truth I think it pleased my Guide, he hung  
 Upon my lips with so content an eye,  
 Hearing the sound of truth upon my tongue.  
 Therefore he took me in both his arms to lie,  
 'And when he had drawn me all upon his breast  
 Mounted the path he had descended by.  
 Nor did he weary in holding me close-prest  
 Until, where the steep arch the chasm bestrode  
 From fourth to fifth ridge, he had climbed its crest.  
 Here softly he the burden of his load [130]  
 Soft on the rough and craggy cliff deposed  
 Where to goats even it were a painful road.  
 Therefrom another valley was disclosed.

---

<sup>x</sup> 108. "She who sitteth . . ." See Rev. 17: "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." Dante combines the woman with the beast, and makes her the symbol of the corrupt Church.

<sup>xi</sup> 115. The Emperor Constantine was thought to have donated the Western Empire to St. Sylvester, the first Pope to hold temporal possessions,



# Canto XX

*Dante looks down on the fourth chasm of Malebolge, where the Sorcerers and Diviners go with their faces twisted so as to look behind them: Among these are Amphiaraus of Argos, one of the Seven Against Thebes, Tiresias the Theban, Aruns the Etruscan, and Manto, daughter of Tiresias, who, according to the story now put in Virgil's mouth, founded his native city of Mantua. Virgil points out other diviners, among whom is Michael Scot, a prominent figure at the court of Frederick II in Sicily; then enjoins haste, as "Cain and his Thorns," ie. the "man in the moon," is setting beyond Seville (Spain being conceived as the Western boundary of the northern hemisphere, as India or "Ganges" the Eastern).*

VERSE for fresh penances must I compose

To fill the first book's twentieth canto and tell

Of the submerged spirits and their woes.

I was now stationed so that I could well

Look down into the new discovered deep

Bathed in the tears of anguish as they fell.

In the round valley I saw a people weep

As they came on, all silent, at the pace

Our Litanies in their processions keep.

When deeper down my eyes perused the place,

[10]

Each appeared strangely to be wrenched awry

Between the upper chest and lower face.

For toward the reins the chin was screwed, whereby

With gait reversed they were constrained to go,

For to look forth this posture would deny.

Perhaps by palsy's overmastering throe

Some may have been thus quite distorted, yet

I ne'er saw such, nor think it could be so.

Reader, so God vouchsafe thee fruit to get

Of what thou readest, think now in thy mind

[20]

If I could keep my cheeks from being wet

When this our image in such twisted kind  
     I saw, that tears out of their eyelids prest  
     Ran down their buttocks by the cleft behind.  
 Truly I wept, leant up against the breast  
     Of the hard granite, so that my Guide said:  
     “Art thou then still so foolish, like the rest?  
 Here pity lives when it is rightly dead.  
     What more impiety can he avow  
     Whose heart rebelleth at God’s judgment dread? [30]  
 Lift up thy head, lift up, and see him now  
     For whom in the eye of Thebes earth clove her floor:  
     Whereat they all cried: ‘Whither rushest thou,  
 Amphiaraus? Quittest thou the war?’<sup>i</sup>  
     And he stopt not upon his headlong track  
     To Minos down, who clutcheth evermore.  
 Mark how the shoulders now his bosom make.  
     Because he wished too far in front to see  
     He looks behind and ever goeth back.  
 Behold Tiresias, who so changed that he<sup>ii</sup> [40]  
     Lost his male semblance and became woman,  
     Causing the transformed members all to agree.  
 And afterwards he needs must over again  
     Strike with his rod the two convolvèd snakes  
     Ere he could reassume the plumes of man.  
 With back to his belly, next his footing takes  
     Aruns, who in hills of Luni, where his hoe<sup>iii</sup>  
     The Carrarese plies and his dwelling makes  
 ‘Mid the white marbles, had the cave below  
     For his abode, wherefrom the prospect wide [50]  
     Of stars and sea he had not to forgo.

---

<sup>i</sup> 34. *The story of Amphiaraus, the augur, one of the seven kings who besieged Thebes, is told by Statius in the Thebaid.*

<sup>ii</sup> 40. *“Tiresias,” a famous soothsayer of Thebes, having struck with his stick two snakes that were together, became a woman; seven years later, striking the same snakes again, he regained his male form.*

<sup>iii</sup> 47. *Aruns was an Etruscan soothsayer of Caesar’s time. The mountain cave seems to be an invention of Dante, who was in Lunigiana in 1306.*

And yonder she who both her breasts doth hide  
 With her dishevelled tresses from thy view,  
 And has all the hairy skin on the other side,  
 Was Manto, who searched many countries through.<sup>iv</sup>  
 Then settled there where I was born; wherefore<sup>v</sup>  
 Listen awhile, as I would have thee do.  
 After her father had passed out by death's door  
 And Bacchus' city in servitude was thrall'd,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Over the world she roamed a long time more. [60]  
 Above in beauteous Italy lieth, walled  
 By the Alps behind it, Germany's confine  
 Over Tiralli, a lake Benaco called.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Through a thousand springs is all between Pennine  
 And Garda and Val Camonica hesprent  
 The land by streams that in that luke resign.  
 Midmost a place is where the pastor of Trent<sup>viii</sup>  
 And he of Brescia and the Veronese  
 Might give their blessing if that road they went.  
 Peschiera, beautiful and strong fortress, [70]  
 Sits where the shore around is lowest seen  
 To front the Brescians and the Bergamese.  
 There down must slide what is not held within  
 The bosom of Benaco, and below  
 It swells to a river amid pastures green.  
 Soon as the water setteth head to flow,  
 No more Benaco, Mincio it is named  
 Far as Governol, where it meeteth Po.  
 Soon is his current on the level tamed

---

<sup>iv</sup> 55. Manto was the daughter of Tiresias of Thebes.

<sup>v</sup> 56. "Where I was born": the city of Mantua. Here Virgil launches into a lengthy account of the founding of his native place: the town was named after Manto, who ended her long wanderings on the spot where it was afterwards built.

<sup>vi</sup> 59. Bacchus was the son of the Thebean Semele. Thebes came under the rule of the tyrant Creon.

<sup>vii</sup> 63-65. "Benaco" is Lake Garda; Garda rises on the east of it, Val Camonica is a long valley some distance west of it.

<sup>viii</sup> 67. There is a point in or near the lake where the dioceses of Trent, Brescia, and Verona meet, so that any one of the three bishops might make the sign of the cross in that spot.

And widens into shallows smooth as glass, [80]  
 Sometimes in summer for miasma blamed.  
 By that way did the unmellowed virgin pass,  
 And saw land bare of any denizen  
 Or tillage, in the midst of the morass.  
 There, to shun all communion with men,  
 She stayed, her arts amid her thralls to ply;  
 There lived she and left her body in that fen.  
 Afterwards those who dwelt dispersed anigh  
 Drew to that spot which had for bastions  
 The swampy pools that it was compassed by. [90]  
 They reared the city over those dead bones,  
 Calling it, after her who chose it first,  
 Mantua, and sought no augury's response.  
 In it a denser populace was nursed  
 Ere Casalodi's mad pride, overawed<sup>ix</sup>  
 By Pinamonte's cunning was reversed.  
 Therefore I charge thee, if e'er thou hear abroad  
 Given to my city other origin,  
 Let false invention not the truth defraud."  
 And I: "Master, thy affirmations win [100]  
 Such certainty in me, that all else were  
 As a dead coal that once had kindled been.  
 But tell me of those that pass, if any appear  
 Of note, of whom thou knowest and canst speak;  
 For only of this my wish is bent to hear."  
 Then he answered: "He whose beard juts from his cheek  
 Over his dusky shoulders on each hand  
 Was, when in Greece the males were so to seek<sup>x</sup>  
 That hardly for the cradles they remained,  
 An Augur: he with Calchas timed the blow [110]

---

<sup>ix</sup> 95. *The Ghibelline Pinamonte Bonaccorsi treacherously advised the Guelf Count Alberto da Casalodi, lord of Mantua, to exile the nobles so as to win the favour of the people. Following this counsel and thus losing support, Casalodi was driven from the city, with much slaughter and banishment of the Guelfs.*

<sup>x</sup> 108. *All the men of Greece had gone to the Trojan war.*

Which was to sever the first cable's strand.  
 Eurypylus his name: and somewhere so<sup>xi</sup>  
 Doth my high Tragedy tell the tale of him:  
 Thou know'st it well who dost the whole well know.  
 The other, who looks about the flanks so slim,  
 Was Michael Scot; and verily he knew<sup>xii</sup>  
 The magic game and its false signs to limn.  
 See Guy Bonatti, see Asdente, who<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Would fain he had still attended to his cord  
 And leather, but too late the choice must rue. [120]  
 See the sad women, who the needle ignored,  
 The shuttle and spindle, and with effigy  
 And herb devised their sorceries abhorred.  
 But come, Cain and his thorns, reminding me,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Occupies of each hemisphere the bound  
 Already, and beyond Seville meets the sea.  
 Already yester-eve the moon was round:  
 Thou must remember, for she harmed thee not  
 That time when thou wast in the wood profound."  
 Thus as he spoke, we moved on from that spot. [130]

---

<sup>xi</sup> 112-13. Eurypylus assisted Calchas the soothsayer in determining "the right moment for cutting the first cable at Aulis," when the Greeks set sail from Troy. — "My high Tragedy": Virgil's Aeneid.

<sup>xii</sup> 116. Michael Scot, the Scotch scholar, who lived many years at the court of Frederick II, had great repute as a sorcerer.

<sup>xiii</sup> 118. Guido Bonatti of Forli was a famous astrologer. Asdente, a poor cobbler of Parma, was known far and wide as a prophet.

<sup>xiv</sup> 124. For "Cain and his thorns" see the Argument.

# Canto XXI

*The next chasm of Malebolge into which they look is that of the Barrators and Peculators who made a traffic of public offices. These are submerged in a river of boiling pitch and are kept under by a horde of demons armed with long hooks and called Malebranche or Evil-Talons. These demons threaten the poets, till Virgil appeases their chief, who gives them directions (afterwards proved false) and appoints ten of his band to escort them.*

FROM BRIDGE to bridge we came, with other talk  
Which to recite my Comedy hath no care,  
Keeping the summit of the stony baulk.  
Then stopt we, on Malebolge's following lair  
To look, and other vain lamenting moil;  
And marvellously dark I found it there.  
As the Venetians in their arsenal boil<sup>i</sup>  
The lumps of pitch in winter, stiff as glue,  
To caulk the ships whose timbers warp and spoil,  
Since sail they cannot then; whereof in lieu,  
Some of a vessel worn with voyage plug  
The ribs, and others build their craft anew;  
Some shape oars, others plait ropes, twist and tug,  
Some hammer at the poop, some at the prow,  
Or mend sails, one the jib and one the lug:  
So, not by fire, but divine art knows how,  
Thick pitch down there boiled, and on every side  
The bank was slimed with the overbrimming slough.  
The pitch I saw, but naught therein espied  
Except the bubbles which the boiling raised,  
And watched it all heave and compest subside.

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 7-15. The mention of the pitch leads to a lifelike description of the great arsenal, or shipyard, in Venice, famous during and after the Middle Ages, where the sailors utilise the enforced idleness of winter to repair their damaged craft.

While downward fixedly thereon I gazed,  
     My Guide, suddenly saying "Have a care!"  
     Drew me to him from where I stood amazed.  
 I turned like one who cannot choose but dare  
     Turn round to look on that which he must flee  
     And who is undermined with sudden scare,  
 So that he puts not off his flight to see;  
     And there I saw a black devil ascend  
     The crag behind us, running easily. [30]  
 Ah, what a grimness did his look portend!  
     How sorely did his cruel gesture daunt,  
     Light on his feet and with his wings opened!  
 His shoulder, that was sharp and arrogant,  
     For burden a sinner by the haunches bore  
     And by the ankle he gript the miscreant.  
 "Ye Evil-Claws," he cried down to the shore,  
     Beneath. "An elder of Santa Zita! Ho!"<sup>ii</sup>  
     Thrust him well under while I go for more  
 To the city I filled with them to overflow. [40]  
     Barrators all, except Bonturo, and lief  
     Would each for money make a Yes of No."<sup>iii</sup>  
 He flung him down, then wheeled along the cliff;  
     And never from his leash did mastiff bound  
     With more alacrity to chase a thief.  
 The sinner plunged, then rose and writhed him round.  
     But covered by the bridge the Demons cried:  
     "Here are no Holy Faces to be found;"<sup>iv</sup>  
 Here's other diving than on Serchio side.  
     Above the pitch then heave not up thy chin [50]  
     Unless thou care not from our hooks to hide."

---

<sup>ii</sup> 38. The chief magistrates of Lucca were called Elders. Santa Zita was the special patron saint of Lucca.

<sup>iii</sup> 42. "Except Bonturo" is ironical: Bonturo Dati, boss of Lucca, was the worst grafter of all.

<sup>iv</sup> 48-49. The hunched-up shape of their victim suggests to the humorous demons the attitude of prayer.  
 —The Serchio is a stream near Lucca.

With more than a hundred prongs for discipline  
 They nicked him, crying, "There, thou dancer, lurk!  
 There's privacy to try thy thieving in."  
 Just so the cooks bid underlings at work  
 About the cauldron that they overlean  
 Thrust down the flesh from floating with the fork.  
 The good Master: "That it may not be seen  
 That thou art here, crouch in yon broken bay,  
 So that the splinter serve thee for a screen. [60]  
 And whatsoever violence they essay,  
 Fear not; for I these matters well have conned,  
 Having ere now been once in like affray."  
 The head now of the bridge he passed beyond;  
 And when he set on the sixth bank his foot  
 A stedfast front he needed to have owned.  
 With such a fury and such tempestuous bruit  
 Wherewith the dogs rush out on the poor man  
 When, halting, he for alms makes hurried suit,  
 From underneath the bridge those demons ran, [70]  
 And turned on him with crooks raised up on high.  
 "Be none of you despiteful," he began;  
 "Before your grapnels upon me you try  
 Let one of you come forth to hear me. Wait  
 And then consider if those hooks you ply."  
 All cried: "Let Evil-Tail go!" And thereat  
 One moved, and the others stayed firm where they stood,  
 And came to him saying "What avails him that?"  
 "Thinkest thou, Evil-Tail, then, that I could,"  
 My Master said, "have come secure thus far [80]  
 Against all opposition of your brood  
 Without divine will and propitious star?  
 Let me pass on. 'Tis written in Heaven's book  
 That I for another this wild path unbar."  
 Then was his pride so fallen that his hook  
 He let drop at his feet and to the rest



Exclaimed, "No more now! let him not be struck!"  
 My Guide to me: "O thou who cowerest  
 Among the bridge's jags where thou hast crept  
 Cowering, return, return now undistrest."[90]  
 At which I moved and to him quickly stept.  
 Whereon the devils thronged us all about,  
 So that I feared the pact might not be kept.  
 Thus did I once the foot-men who marched out  
 Under safe-conduct from Caprona see,<sup>v</sup>  
 Ringed by so many foemen, fear and doubt.  
 And to my Master with my whole body  
 I drew close, turning not aside my head  
 From the look of them, which seemed not good to me.  
 Their irons they lowered and to each other said,[100]  
 "Now shall I touch him on the rump?" and "Yes,"  
 Others would answer, "notch it for him red."  
 But he whom my Guide held in talk of peace  
 Turned round immediately and looked askance,  
 And "Touzlemane," he shouted, "cease there, cease!"  
 Then to us: "Further by this cliff advance<sup>vi</sup>  
 Will not be possible, for the sixth arch there  
 Lies shattered over all the ground's expanse.  
 And if it please you forward still to fare,  
 Follow along this ridge; not far away[110]  
 Another cliff will give you passage clear.  
 Five hours later than this hour yesterday  
 A thousand ten score sixty and six years  
 Were ended, since the shattering of this way.  
 Thither, to watch if any take the airs  
 Out of the pitch, I send some of my men.  
 Follow them, nor have fear of any snares."

---

<sup>v</sup> 95. "Caprona," a town on the Amo, surrendered in 1289 to the "troops of Lucca and Florence. It is evident from these lines that Dante was serving with the Florentines.

<sup>vi</sup> 106-114. To entrap Dante and his too-confiding guide, the leader of the Evil-Claws informs them that though the nearest bridge over the following valley is broken, the next bridge will afford them a safe passage. This arch was shattered, he says, when Christ descended into Hell, 1266 years ago.

"Forth, Hellequin and Frostyharrow!" then  
 That fiend continued, "and Dogsnarler, thou!  
 And Beardabristle to command the ten. [120]  
 Furnacewind follow, and Dragonspittle too,  
 Fanged Swinewallow and Houndscratcher, and last  
 Farfarel and raging Scarletfury, you.  
 See that keen eyes upon the pitch ye cast.  
 Be these two safe, far as yon ridge of rock  
 That all unbroken spans the antres vast."  
 "O Master, what is this?" In fear I spoke,  
 "Alone, if thou the way know, let us start.  
 Such escort's aid I care not to invoke.  
 If thou beest wary, as wontedly thou wert, [130]  
 Dost thou not see them, how they grind their teeth  
 And with bent brows threaten us to our hurt?"  
 And he: "I'd have thee a brave spirit breathe.  
 Let them grind on, and threaten what they durst.  
 Tis all for those rogues in the tar that seethe."  
 By the left bank they turned to go; but first,  
 With tongue between his teeth protruded, each  
 Made signal to his chief; and from him burst  
 A sound that made a trumpet of his breach.

# Canto XXII

*The poets go along the stream with their escort, one of whom catches a sinner who has emerged from the pitch and holds him up by the hair. He is a Navarrese called Ciampolo (the name however is not given by Dante) and Virgil questions him. He offers to bring sinners of Italian birth to speak with them, and by a trick eludes the demons. Two of the Malebranche then quarrel among themselves and are left entangled in the pitch. This episode seems introduced by way of humorous relief.*

I HAVE SEEN horsemen moving camp to arm  
For the assault, and mustering band by band,  
And other whiles retiring at the alarm;  
I have seen prickers file across your land,  
O Aretines, and foray sweep pell-mell,<sup>i</sup>  
The clash of tourneys, and the tilt-yard manned,  
To trumpets now and now to beaten bell,  
To drums and turret-beacons from afar,  
Things native and outlandish things as well;  
But never, I vow, to such a monstrous blare [10]  
Did I see footmen march or horsemen ride,  
Or ship by landmark or by noted star.  
Now had we the ten demons by our side;  
Ah, grisly company! but in the church  
With saints, with rascals in the pot-house bide.  
But my whole gaze was on the pitch to search  
The valley and all its features, and those, black  
Within it, that the bubbles scald and smirch.  
As dolphins, when with arching of the back,<sup>ii</sup>  
Making to mariners a sign, they bid [20]  
Take thought to save the ship from coming wrack,

---

<sup>i</sup> 5. Dante was present at the battle of Campaldino, in 1289, when the forces of Arezzo (the "Aretines") were defeated by those of Florence and Lucca.

<sup>ii</sup> 19-21. The belief that dolphins warn sailors of an approaching storm was very common.

So, of the pain a moment to be rid,  
 At whiles some sinners peered above the pitch,  
 And, in less time than it lightens, hid;  
 And as, fringing the water of a ditch,  
 The frogs stand with their muzzles only out,  
 And all the rest of them is out of reach,  
 In such wise stood the sinners all about,  
 But soon as Beardabristle hastened near  
 Beneath the boiling slid in panic rout. [30]  
 I saw, and my heart shakes yet with its fear,  
 One linger, as 'twill chance that in his nook  
 One frog remains while the others disappear.  
 And Houndscratcher up-caught him with his hook,  
 Being nearest, by his hair that from the slough  
 Dript tarry, and made him like an otter look.  
 The name of every fiend I knew by now,  
 So well I marked them when they mustered first,  
 And when they called each other, listened how.  
 "O Scarletfury, let his back be pierced [40]  
 And opened by thy talons," all the band  
 Shouted together, of those fiends acurst.  
 And I: "O Master, if thou may'st, demand  
 Who is that lamentable wretch, whose hide  
 Is fallen into his adversary's hand."  
 Thereon my Guide drew closer to his side,  
 Asking him whence he came; he, so implored,  
 "I am of the Kingdom of Navarre," replied.<sup>iii</sup>  
 "My mother placed me as servant of a lord,  
 For she had borne me to a lewd wastrel [50]  
 Who self and substance into pleasure poured.  
 With good King Tybalt then I went to dwell.<sup>iv</sup>

---

<sup>iii</sup> 48. Some of the early commentators ascribe to this man from Navarre the name of Ciampolo; but we really know of him only what Dante tells us.

<sup>iv</sup> 52. "Tybalt," count of Champagne, son-in-law of Louis IX of France, was king of Navarre in the middle of the thirteenth century.

With jobbery there did I my purse equip,  
 For which I pay now in this heat of hell."  
 And Swinewallow, at each side of whose lip  
 Tusks like a hog's projected hideous,  
 Made him to feel how one of them could rip.  
 Among malignant cats was come the mouse.  
 But Beardabristle closed him in embrace  
 And said: "Stand off, while I enfork him thus." [60]  
 And to my Master as he turned his face  
 "Ask on," he said, "if more thou wouldest know,  
 Before another give him deadlier chase."  
 The Guide spoke then: "Now tell us, knowest thou  
 Any that is a Latin 'mid your throng  
 Beneath the pitch?" And he: "I left but now  
 One of those who to a neighbour isle belong.  
 Would he still covered me! then could I scorn  
 To tremble at the threat of claw and prong."  
 And Furnacewind cried: "Too much we have borne!" [70]  
 And with the grapnel seized upon his arm  
 So that a mangled sinew was off-torn.  
 Dragonspittle also to do his legs a harm  
 Had much a mind; but their decurion wheeled<sup>v</sup>  
 With evil looks and smote them with alarm.  
 When into quiet they were somewhat quelled,  
 My Guide to him who still was all at gaze  
 Upon his wound, without delay appealed.  
 "Who is it whom thou didst quit, as thy word says,  
 To come ashore by such a luckless road?" [80]  
 And he made answer: "Friar Gomita 'twas,<sup>vi</sup>  
 He of Gallura, vessel of every fraud,  
 Who held his master's enemies in fee

---

<sup>v</sup> 74. "Decurion": leader of ten.

<sup>vi</sup> 81-90. Of "Friar Gomita" we know only that he was hanged. The Pisans, who conquered Sardinia, divided it into four provinces, Gallura, Logudoro, Arborea, and Cagliari. Michel Zanche is said to have been vicar of King Enzo of Sardinia, son of Frederick II.

And did so to them that they all applaud.  
 Coin pouched he, and smoothly, he says, let them go free;  
 Moreover in his other offices  
 No jobber small, but prince of jobbers he.  
 Don Michel Zanche of Logodoro is  
 With him; their tireless tongues each other match  
 [in talking of Sardinia that was theirs.]<sup>vii</sup> [90]  
 O me! that other grins, look, on the watch.  
 I would say more, but fear he longs to wreak  
 His fury upon me, and my scurf to scratch."  
 And their great prefect turned him round to speak  
 To Farfarel, who rolled his eyes alight  
 With menace, saying: "Away, thou vulture-beak!"  
 "If you," resumed that sinner still in fright,  
 "With folk of Tuscan or of Lombard race  
 Would hold speech, I will bring them into sight;  
 But let the Evil Claws retire a space, [100]  
 That those who come may not their vengeance fear;  
 And I, still sitting in the self-same place,  
 One that I am, will gather seven here  
 By whistling, as, when one of us gets out,  
 Our wont is to make signal to appear."  
 Dogsнарler at that word raised up his snout  
 And shook his head, saying, "Hear that knave's device,  
 Who plots to cast him down, without a doubt."  
 Whereat he who was rich in artifice  
 Replied: "Too much a knave am I indeed [110]  
 When I my friends to greater pains entice."  
 Hellequin burst forth without any heed  
 Of the others: "If thou jump, however fleet,  
 Tl follow thee, not at a gallop's speed,  
 But close above the pitch my wings will beat.  
 Leave we the height: to the bank's screen resort

---

<sup>vii</sup> 90. This line was omitted in my source, so I have taken the liberty of my own insertion. MF

And see if one can all of us defeat."  
 O thou that readest, thou shalt hear new sport.  
 All turned their eyes now toward the further side,  
 He first who most had wished the scheme to thwart. [120]  
 The Navarrese his moment well espied,  
 Planted his soles upon the ground, and sprung  
 Free in an instant, and their chief defied.  
 Then each of them was with compunction stung.  
 He most through whom their pride had been abased,  
 Who leapt up with "I've got thee" on his tongue.  
 Little it availed him; wings were quite outpaced  
 By terror; and the other dived under;  
 And he still flying lifted clear his breast.  
 Not otherwise the duck, aware how near [130]  
 The falcon is upon her, diveth quick,  
 And he returns up angry and baulked of her.  
 But Frostyharrow, furious at the trick,  
 Kept winging after him, glad in his spite  
 To let the knave go, and a quarrel pick.  
 And when the barrator had slipt from sight,  
 He turned his talons on his fellow-fiend,  
 And gript they hung above the fosse in fight.  
 But a right sparrow-hawk, full grown, hot-spleened  
 To claw him well, was the other; and falling, wroth [140]  
 In the middle of the boiling they careened.  
 Immediately the heat unclutcht them both;  
 But to rise upward baffled all their wit,  
 So clogged their wings were with the gluey broth.  
 Beardabristle with the rest lamenting it  
 Made four fly over to the further shore  
 With all their hooks; and in a trice alit  
 This side and that, each at his post, the four.  
 They stretched their grapnels out to the limed pair  
 Whose crust was burnt already to the core. [150]  
 Thus busily embroiled we left them there.

# Canto XXIII

*Dante, following in Virgil's steps, begins to fear that they will be overtaken the revengeful demons. They are in fact pursued, and only escape by hurried flight, Virgil making a glissade, with Dante in his arms, down the slope of the next chasm. Here are the Hypocrites pacing in copes of lead, heavier than those devised by Frederick II for malefactors. Two Friars of Bologna speak with Dante; they were in 1266 installed in the office of Podesta at Florence. Suddenly Dante catches sight of Caiaphas crucified on the ground. One of the Friars tells of the punishment of him and Annas, and afterwards points out to the poets the right path for them to take.*

SILENT, lonely, and with no company,  
One before and one after, as on their way  
Journey the Minor Friars, journeyed we.<sup>i</sup>  
My thought, that lingered on the present fray,  
Was turned to Aesop and his fable, where  
The frog would the inveigled mouse betray.  
For Yes and Yea make not a better pair  
Than that with this case, if but with good heed  
End and beginning be accoupled fair.  
And, as one thought springs from another's seed,  
So out of that soon did another start  
Which made my first fear double terror breed.  
Through us it is, my thought was, that these smart  
And suffer such derision as is bound  
To mortify and sting them to the heart;  
And if with rage their enmity be crowned,  
They will come after us with more cruel tread  
Than, snapping at the leveret, comes the hound.  
Already I felt my hair all rise in dread

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 3. "Minor Friars": Franciscans. In Aesop's fable, a frog, having offered to tow a rat across a stream, ties itself to the animal, jumps in with it, and then treacherously tries to dive to the bottom, expecting to drown its companion. While the rat is struggling to keep afloat, a kite, seeing the disturbance, swoops down and carries off both creatures. The beginning and the end of the fable, Dante says, are exactly like the recent episode.



And stood with backward gaze and anxious brow, [20]  
 As "Master, if thou hide not quickly," I said,  
 "Thyself and me, I have terror, I avow,  
 Evil-Talons; they are close behind:  
 I so imagine them, I hear them now."  
 And he: "Were I of glass and leaden-lined,  
 Thine outward image were not in me shown  
 Sooner than now is the image of thy mind.  
 Already thy thoughts came among my own  
 With the like motion and the self-same face,  
 So that the two to one resolve have grown. [30]  
 If the right bank so shelves down to its base  
 That we may into the next pouch descend,  
 We shall escape from that foreboded chase."  
 Of these words hardly had he made an end  
 When them I saw, coming with outspread wing  
 Not far off, ardent us to apprehend.  
 My Guide suddenly seized me, hurrying  
 'As a mother whom the roar and cries awake,  
 Who sees the flames quite near her start and spring  
 Snatches her child and flieth, for his sake [40]  
 More than her own, and has no thought to stop  
 So long as even a shift on her to take;  
 And down the hard rock from the ridge's top  
 Supine resigned him to its sloping side  
 Which on one hand walls the next valley up.  
 Never so fast by sluice did water glide  
 To make revolve the wheel of a land-mill,  
 Close on the paddles gathering speed to slide,  
 As slid my Master down that slanting hill,  
 And me upon his bosom, as his son, [50]  
 Not now as his companion, carried still.  
 Scarce had his feet down to the level won  
 Of the deep hollow, when they were on the height  
 Above us; but all fear of them was gone;

For the high Providence that did commit  
     To them the warding of that fifth ravine  
     Takes from them all the power of leaving it.  
 There in the moat beneath was to be seen  
     A painted people who circled with slow tread  
     Weeping, with drooping and defeated mien. [60]  
 They wore cloaks with a deep hood on the head  
     Over their eyes, according to the mode  
     Wherein the monks of Cluny are habited.  
 Without, these were so gilded that they glowed  
     To the eye; within all lead, and so heavy  
     That Frederick's were of straw to such a load.<sup>ii</sup>  
 O weary mantle in that eternity!  
     We turned again to the left hand, and drew  
     Along with them, intent on their deep sigh.  
 But under the aching weight so slow that crew [70]  
     Came on, that at each movement of the thighs  
     The company abreast of us was new.  
 Wherefore I to my Guide: "Do thou devise  
     To find one who by deed or name is known,  
     And, as we go on, move around thine eyes."  
 And one, who recognised the Tuscan tone,  
     Cried after us: "O stay, relax your speed,  
     Ye who so run through this our dismal zone.  
 Perchance from me thou'lt have what thou dost need."  
     Whereat my Guide turned round on me and said, [80]  
     "Delay a little, and at his pace proceed."  
 I stood still, and saw two whose looks betrayed  
     Their mind's haste to be with me, but whom the throng  
     And the weight that they were burdened with delayed.  
 When they came up to us, they stood gazing long  
     Askance at me, but uttered not a word;  
     Then turned to each other and spoke themselves among:

---

<sup>ii</sup> 66. *The leaden cloaks which Frederick I put upon criminals were, in comparison with these, as light as straw.*

“By the working of his throat this one appeared  
 Alive; and if dead, why of the heavy shroud  
 Have they permission to go undeterred?” [90]  
 To me they spoke then: “Tuscan, to this crowd  
 That comest where the hypocrites go sad,  
 Be not, to tell us who thou art, too proud.”  
 And I to them: “By Arno’s water glad  
 Was I born; in that city did I grow,  
 And am with the body I have always had.  
 But ye, who are ye, from whom distils such woe  
 As I behold down-dropping either cheek?  
 What punishment upon you glitters so?”  
 And one of them replied: “Of lead so thick [100]  
 Our orange copes are that the balances  
 By the greatness of the weights are made to creak.  
 Jovial Friars were we, and Bolognese;<sup>iii</sup>  
 I Catalano, he Loderingo; and us,  
 Though to choose one alone the custom is,  
 Together both at once thy city chose  
 For maintenance of its peace; and how we bore  
 Ourselves in office the Gardingo shows.”  
 I began: “Friars, your misdeeds”—but more  
 Said not, for one came now before mine eyes [110]  
 Crucified with three stakes upon that floor.  
 He, when he saw me, into his beard with sighs  
 Blew, and contorted all his limbs as well;  
 And Friar Catalano, marking this,  
 Said: “He, impaled, on whom thy gaze doth dwell,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Counsell’d the Pharisees that it was meet

---

<sup>iii</sup> 103-108. The brethren of the lay order of Beata Maria were not required to lead an ascetic life, and were nicknamed “Jovial Friars.” Catalano de’ Malavolti and Loderingo degli Andalò were both men of great authority, and successful mayors of several cities. “Together both . . . thy city chose . . .”: it was customary in Florence, as in many other cities, to choose as mayor for a term some distinguished outsider. In 1266, however instead of “one alone,” two mayors, one from each party, were elected as a compromise. “Gardingo”: an old Longobard fortress in Florence. Near it were the houses of the Uberti, which were destroyed in 1266, when the Ghibellines left the city.

<sup>iv</sup> 115-16. The evil counselor is Caiaphas, who favoured the sacrifice of Christ.

That one should suffer for the whole people.  
 Naked and cross-wise on the road he is set  
 As thou beholdest, and must feel what load,  
 Ere they have passed, is in their passing feet. [120]  
 His father-in-law hath wretched like abode<sup>v</sup>  
 Within this fosse, with the others whose consent  
 For all the Jews a seed of evil sowed."  
 Then I saw Virgil marvelling as he bent  
 Over him outstretcht on the cross, in plight  
 So abject, in the eternal banishment.  
 The Friar in these words did he then invite:  
 "May it not displease you, if your law permit,  
 To tell us if a gap be on the right  
 By which we both may issue and hence be quit, [130]  
 Nor any of the Black Angels need compel  
 To come and to retrieve us from this pit."  
 He answered: "Nearer than thy hopes foretell  
 A rock that from the encircling wall doth go  
 Maketh a bridge across the valleys fell,  
 Save here where the arch is broken and roofless, so  
 That you may mount the ruin, which is spread  
 All down the slope, and heaps itself below."  
 The Guide stood still a little with bended head,  
 Then spoke: "Maliciously did he advise [140]  
 Who hooks the sinners in yon seething bed."  
 The Friar then: "Of the devil's iniquities  
 Once in Bologna I heard told, and heard  
 That he is a liar and the father of lies."  
 Then with long strides my Guide went onward, stirred  
 To trouble and with an angered look: whereat  
 With the laden spirits no more I conferred,  
 Following the prints of his beloved feet.

---

<sup>v</sup> 121. "His father-in-law": *Annas*.

# Canto XXIV

*They set out to climb the ruin of a bridge shattered by the earthquake which took place at Christ's death on the cross. The mountain-climb is vividly described. Dante reaches the top exhausted, and they move down into the seventh chasm, occupied by the Thieves, who are tormented by serpents. One of the thieves, Vanni Fucci, is seized by a serpent, and is instantly burnt to ashes, but at once the ashes resume the former shape. He tells of his crime, and makes a prophecy about the war of the Black and White factions and foretells an attack by Malaspina, captain of the Black Guelfs in Florence, on Pistoia.*

IN THAT PART of the young year when the Sun  
Beneath Aquarius warms his beaming locks<sup>i</sup>  
And toward the South the nights begin to run,  
And when upon the ground the hoar-frost mocks  
With likeness her white sister's effigy,<sup>ii</sup>  
But soon are blurred that limner's pencilled strokes,  
The peasant, who hath nothing now laid by,  
Rises and looks and sees the fields and lanes  
All whitened; and thereat he beats his thigh,  
Returns to his house and to and fro complains,  
Like a starved wretch who knows not what to do,  
Then again comes out and his hope regains,  
Seeing what the world has changed its face into  
So briefly, and takes his crook and out of door  
Goes driving forth his lambs to pastures new;  
Thus at my Guide's brow was mine clouded o'er  
When I beheld him in such anxious case;  
And ev'n so soon the salve came to the sore;  
For when the ruined bridge we came to face,

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 2-3. The sun is in Aquarius approximately from January 21 to February 21. From December 21 to June 21 the nights grow shorter in the northern hemisphere, longer in the southern.

<sup>ii</sup> 5. "Her white sister": the snow.

My Master turned upon me with the old [20]  
 Sweet look I had seen first at the mountain's base.  
 When with himself he had taken counsel bold,  
 Opening his arms, and fixing first his eyes  
 Upon the ruin, he of me took hold.  
 Like one at work, who measures all he tries,  
 And always seems his next step to foresee,  
 So, hoisting me over one boulder's rise,  
 He picked another rock out from the scree  
 With careful eye, "Now grip on that," he said,  
 "But prove first, if it well supporteth thee." [30]  
 No passage was it for one stoled in lead;  
 For hardly we, he light and I pushed on,  
 Could scale the crag from spur to spur ahead.  
 And were it not that in that close of stone  
 The ascent was shorter than on the other wall,  
 I, if not he, most surely had been fordone.  
 But because Malebolge slanteth all  
 Down toward the nethermost pit's opening, so  
 Conformed is every valley, it must befall  
 That the one side is high and the other low. [40]  
 We came in the end where at the ledge we hung  
 Whence the last stone was rent by the overthrow.  
 The breath was so milked out of my spent lung,  
 When I was up, I could no further heave  
 My body, and sat me down where I had clung.  
 "Now it behoveth lassitude to leave,"  
 The Master said, "for softly on down reclined  
 Or under coverlet, none can fame achieve,  
 Without which he who dallieth leaves behind  
 Such vestige of himself on earth imprest [50]  
 As foam in water or smoke upon the wind.  
 And therefore rise! Quell now thy panting breast  
 With the soul's strength that winneth every fight,  
 So it be not by the body's weight deprest.

We have yet to climb a stair of longer flight.  
     'Tis not enough to have escaped yon crew.  
     Seek thine own good, if thou hast read me right."  
 I rose, and feigned me better than was true  
     Furnished with breath, so that I spoke serene:  
     "Go on; I am bold and strong to bear it through." [60]  
 We climbed now on the bridge of the ravine,  
     Rugged and narrow and difficult to tread  
     And by far steeper than the last had been.  
 I talked, not to appear dispirited;  
     Whereat a voice, ill-fitted to define  
     Its words, came from the other fosse's bed.  
 I knew not what it said, though on the chine  
     Of the arch I was which crosses here the moat;  
     But he that spoke seemed our way to incline.  
 I had bent down, but my live eyes could not [70]  
     Pierce to the bottom through the air's dim pall.  
     Wherefore I: "Master, see that we be got  
 To the other circle and soon dismount this wall,  
     For hence I hear sounds of no meaning made  
     And see down but distinguish nought at all."  
 "No other answer I give to thee," he said,  
     "Save by deed only: for a just request  
     By silence, with performance, should be paid."  
 The bridge we now descended from its crest,  
     Where to the eighth embankment it is knit; [80]  
     And there the chasm to me was manifest.  
 A fearful throng I saw within that pit  
     Of serpents, and of breeds so strange beside,  
     That my blood thins yet at the thought of it.  
 Let Libya's sand no longer be her pride,<sup>iii</sup>  
     Though jacule and chelidre and cenchris there  
     With amphisbaena and pareia glide;

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<sup>iii</sup> 85. *The Libyan sands were familiar to Dante through Lucan and Ovid.*

So many and so fell plagues its regions bare  
 Could not, with all the land of the Ethiop  
 And all the Red Sea's desert border, rear. [90]  
 'Mid this most drear and cruel swarm, a group  
 Of shades were running naked and aghast,  
 Hopeless of hiding-place or heliotrope.<sup>iv</sup>  
 The snakes knotted their hands behind them fast,  
 And with the head and tail piercing them through  
 The loins, in front were clustered and enlaced.  
 And lo, to a sinner who near to our bank drew  
 Shot up a serpent, which transfixed him, just  
 Where from the shoulder-bones the neck out-grew  
 Never "O" nor "I" was written in such a gust [100]  
 Of speed as he took fire with, all allumed,  
 And then must needs drop into ash and dust.  
 When down to the very ground he was consumed,  
 Of its own motion re-combining there  
 The dust straightway its former shape resumed.  
 So the most famous sages do aver  
 The Phoenix dies and then is born again  
 When she approaches her five-hundredth year.  
 In her life eats she neither herb nor grain  
 But only amomum and incense-tears; and nard [110]  
 And myrrh for her last shrouding hath she ta'en.  
 And as one falls, but how he knows not, jarred<sup>v</sup>  
 And pulled to earth by a demon for his prize  
 Or fit, by which men's faculties are marred,  
 Who stares about him as he makes to rise,  
 All put to a deep amazement by the throes  
 Of anguish he hath borne, and gazing sighs,  
 Such aspect had the sinner when he rose.  
 O power of God, how striketh it to stun,

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<sup>iv</sup> 93. "Heliotrope": a precious stone that makes its bearer invisible.

<sup>v</sup> 112-114. "And as one falls. . .": an epileptic. Epileptics were thought to be possessed by devils. — "Obstruction" of the passages between heart and brain.



And for its vindication heaps such blows! [120]  
 The Guide then asked him who he was; whereon  
 "From Tuscany," he answered, "did I rain  
 Into this fell maw but a brief while gone.  
 Bestial life pleased me, not life of men,  
 Mule that I was: for Vanni Fucci I am,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Beast! and Pistoia was my fitting den."  
 And I to the Guide: "Bid him not shirk or sham,  
 And what offence drags him down hither, ask.  
 I have seen him when in blood and rage he swam."  
 The felon, who had heard me, assumed no mask, [130]  
 But turned intent on me his face and thought,  
 Sad, as if shame had taken his soul to task.  
 "Tt hurts me," he said then, "more that I am caught  
 In the miserable plight which thou dost see  
 Than when from life to this world I was brought.  
 Refuse I cannot what thou hast asked of me.  
 Lam thrust down so far because I stole  
 The fair adornments of the Sacristy.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Falsely the sin was laid on other's soul.  
 But that this sight may not rejoice thine eyes, [140]  
 If ever thou be enlarged from this hell-hole,  
 Open thine ears and hear my prophecies.  
 Pistoia first of all the Blacks is thinned.  
 Then Florence changes laws and families:  
 "Mars brings a mist from Valdimagra blind"<sup>viii</sup>  
 In murk of cloud and rolled in turbid rain,  
 And with tempestuous burst and fury of wind  
 There shall be battle on the Piceno's plain;<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> 125. "Mule that I was': Vanni Fucci was a bastard. He was a notorious ruffian, robber and a party leader.

<sup>vii</sup> 138-139. In 1293 some silver statues were stolen from the cathedral of Pistoia. The crime was attributed to a certain Ranucci, who came near being hanged for it.

<sup>viii</sup> 145. The "mist" that Mars draws forth is Moroello Malaspina, lord of Lunigiana in the valley of the Magra.

<sup>ix</sup> 148. The name "Piceno's plain" was applied to the territory of Pistoia.

Whence the fire suddenly the mist shall cleave  
So that no White shall not be stricken or slain. [150]  
Know this, that thou may'st have wherewith to grieve."

# Canto XXV

*Fucci cries out in blasphemous rage, and is set upon by the serpents. Cacus, a giant robber in the Aeneid, but here represented as a centaur, pursues him. Then three thieves appear; and on one of them, Agnello, a kind of dragon (really Cianfa who has been transformed into it) fastens itself so closely that they merge into one strange shape. Then a viper (into which Francesco de' Cavalcanti has been changed) bites Buoso degli Abati; and this time, serpent changes into man and man into serpent. Francesco had been killed at Gaville, near Florence.*

WHEN HE HAD made an end, the thief exclaimed,  
Raising his hands with both the figs on high:<sup>i</sup>  
"Take thou them, God; at thee, at thee they are aimed."  
Thenceforth the serpents were no enemy  
To me; for round his neck, as if it hissed  
Thou speak'st no more! one coiled and clung thereby.  
Another about his arms began to twist  
And tighten, prisoning him in front so fast,  
There was no wriggle in him that could resist.  
Pistoia, ah Pistoia! thou shouldst blast [10]  
Thyself to a cinder and toll thine own death-knell,  
For in evil thine old seed thou hast surpassed.<sup>ii</sup>  
Through all the sombre corridors of hell  
No spirit so insolent against God I found,  
Not him ev'n, who at Thebes from the wall fell.<sup>iii</sup>  
He fled, and uttered not another sound:  
And I beheld a Centaur full of storm  
Come crying: "Where, where goes he, the evil hound?"  
I think not that Maremma holds such swarm<sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 2. "The figs": a coarse, insulting gesture.

<sup>ii</sup> 12. "Thine old seed": Pistoia, according to tradition, was founded by the remnants of Catiline's army.

<sup>iii</sup> 15. *Capaneus*.

<sup>iv</sup> 19. "Maremma": a wild and swampy part of Tuscany.

Of snakes as clustered on his haunch and spread [20]  
 Even to where begins our human form.<sup>v</sup>  
 Over his shoulders and behind the head  
 Lay a dragon with extended wings aglow;  
 On all whom it encountered fire it shed.  
 "He is Cacus," said my Master, "who below<sup>vi</sup>  
 The rocks and caverns of Mount Aventine  
 Full often made a river of blood to flow.  
 He is trooped not with his brethren, by design,  
 Because by trickery he enticed to pen  
 The neighbouring great herd of stolen kine; [30]  
 Wherefore his crooked works were ended then  
 By the club of Hercules, who dealt him nigh  
 A hundred blows, and had to endure not ten."  
 While thus he spoke, the Centaur hasted by;  
 And under us on the path three spirits came near<sup>vii</sup>  
 Whom both I and my Guide failed to espy  
 Till they called: "Who are ye? What do ye here?"  
 Our discourse therefore halted short; and all  
 Intent, to them alone did we give ear.  
 I knew them not; but so it did befall, [40]  
 As often it befalleth by some hap,<sup>viii</sup>  
 That one had need the other's name to call,  
 Saying: "Where is Cianfa? What hath made him stop?"  
 Whereat I, that my Guide might give full heed,  
 From chin to nose my finger pointed up.  
 E thou art slow of faith, thou who dost read  
 What I shall tell, 'tis nothing for surprise,

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<sup>v</sup> 21. *The human part of the centaur.*

<sup>vi</sup> 25-30. *In a lair on Mt. Aventine dwelt the bloody monster Cacus, son of Vulcan. When Hercules returned from the west with Geryon's herd, Cacus stole a part of it. Warned by their bellowing, Hercules followed the cattle into Cacus' cave, and slew the thief with a club.*

<sup>vii</sup> 35. *Virgil and Dante are looking down from the bank, The three spirits turn out to be Agnolo Brunelleschi, Buoso degli Abati, and Puccio Sciancato. Two more come presently in the form of snakes.*

<sup>viii</sup> 41. *"Cianfa" Donati was a Florentine; we have no information concerning his thefts. He appears, in line 50, in the guise of a serpent.*

Since half I doubt, I who witnessed it indeed.  
 While with brows raised I held them in mine eyes,  
 Lo, a serpent with six feet one sinner faced [50]  
 And darting clamped its body entire on his.  
 With the middle feet his belly it embraced,  
 With the forefeet grips the arms and held them pent;  
 Then of both cheeks its fangs had the full taste.  
 With the hind feet stretcht along his thighs it leant,  
 And whipt its tail out in between the two  
 'And upwards on the loins behind him bent.  
 Ivy upon a tree never in-grew  
 Close as that hideous creature, all up-reared,  
 To the other's body did its body glue. [60]  
 Like heated wax the shapes of them were slurred  
 Together, and their mingling colours swam:  
 Nor this nor that was as it first appeared.  
 As runneth up before the burning flame  
 On paper, a brown colour, not yet black,  
 And the white dieth; such their hues became.  
 The other two gazed on him, and "Alack!"  
 Each cried, "O Agnel, how thou alterest!  
 Lo, neither two nor one shape dost thou make."  
 The two heads were by now to one comprest, [70]  
 When there before our eyes two forms begin  
 To mix in one where neither could be traced.  
 Two arms were made where the four bands had been;  
 The belly and chest and legs and thighs below  
 Became such members as were never seen.  
 Each former aspect was annulled, and lo,  
 The unnatural image seemed neither and both,  
 And such with languid step we watched him go.  
 As a lizard in the Dog-star's days of wrath  
 Shunning from hedge to hedge the scorching flame [80]  
 Flickers like lightning if it cross the path,  
 So swift on the other two, with angry aim

At the belly, a little viper all alight,  
 Livid, and black as a corn of pepper, came.  
 On one of them it pierced with sudden bite  
 That part in us whereby we first are fed,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Then, dropping down, lay stretched out opposite.  
 That pierced one stared on it but nothing said;  
 Nay, without motion of his feet he yawned  
 As if a sleep or fever on him weighed. [90]  
 He eyed the snake, the snake him: from his wound  
 The one smoked fiercely, the other from its mouth;  
 Their smoke commingled in the air beyond.  
 Let Lucan tell no more the fate uncouth  
 Of poor Sabellus and Nasidius,<sup>x</sup>  
 But stay to hear shot forth a stranger truth;  
 Nor Ovid boast Cadmus and Arethuse  
 More; if the one he fabled into a snake,  
 To a fountain the other, I grudge it not his Muse,  
 For never did he such transfusion make [100]  
 As that both persons, front to front, should find  
 That each to itself could the other's substance take.  
 They mutually responded in such kind  
 That the snake split its tail into a fork,  
 And close the wounded one his feet combined.  
 The legs, and thighs with them, adhered so stark  
 Of their own will, that soon the eye would fail  
 The least division in their joins to mark.  
 That figure was assumed by the cleft tail  
 Which opposite had melted, and its skin [110]  
 Grew soft, and the other hard with horny scale.  
 I saw the arms at the armpits enter in  
 And the two feet of the serpent, which were short,

---

<sup>ix</sup> 86. "That part in us. . .": the navel.

<sup>x</sup> 95. In Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Sabellus, as the result of being bitten by a little snake in the desert, melts away like snow. Nasidius, who had been poisoned by another serpent, swells into a shapeless globe and bursts his armour.

Lengthen as much as those had shortened been.  
 The two hind-feet together, as they contort,  
 Combine into the member man conceals:  
 From his the wretch grows two feet of like sort,  
 The while the smoke with altered colour steals  
 Both in its veil, and on one side bestows  
 The hair that from the other side it peels. [120]  
 The one fell prostrate and the other rose,  
 But not withdrew the lamps of wicked glow<sup>xi</sup>  
 'Neath which these muzzles were exchanged for those  
 The erect one drew his upward toward his brow,  
 And from the too much matter that it gained  
 Out of the flat cheeks ears started to grow.  
 The flesh that slipt not back but there remained  
 Of its excess made rise a nose, and swell  
 The lips till a right thickness they attained.  
 The prostrate one shot out his muzzle an ell [130]  
 And quite into his head drew back the ears,  
 As a snail draws its horns into its shell.  
 The tongue, before whole, fashioned to converse  
 In speech, divides; and in the other head  
 The fork unites; the smoke no longer stirs.  
 The soul that had become a reptile fled  
 With hissing noise along the valley side,  
 And the other sputtered at it as it sped.<sup>xii</sup>  
 Toward it he turned then his new back, and cried  
 Aloud to the other: "I'll have Buoso crawl [140]  
 Along the road where I was made to glide."  
 Thus I beheld the seventh pit's ballast all  
 Change and re-change; and here let the surprise  
 Excuse me, if ill my pen the thing recall.  
 And though bewilderment confused my eyes  
 And bruised my perfect understanding, flee

---

<sup>xi</sup> 122. "Lamps": *glaring eyes*.

<sup>xii</sup> 138. "The other sputtered . . .": *human saliva was thought to be poisonous to snakes*.

These did not, ere that I could recognise  
Puccio Sciancato; of all the three  
Companions who came first, he only had kept  
His form from those malign mutations free:  
The other was he for whom Gaville wept.<sup>xiii</sup>

[150]

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<sup>xiii</sup> 151. "The other," originally the second snake, was Francesco, nicknamed Guercio de' Cavalcanti, killed for his misdeeds by the people of Gaville, a village on the upper Arno. Gaville mourns because of the vengeance taken for his death.



# Canto XXVI

*Dante addresses his native city in shame. He had recognised five Florentines of noble family among the Thieves. Virgil leads him up the rugged path to the next chasm, the eighth, where are the Evil Counsellors, whose theft is spiritual, each imprisoned in a burning flame. One of the flames has a double tip and conceals the spirits of Ulysses and Diomed. Virgil asks one of them to speak; and Ulysses tells of his last voyage into the unknown ocean below the Equator and shipwreck near the Mount of Purgatory. This story does not agree with the Odyssey and is thought to be Dante's invention. (It suggested Tennyson's poem.)*

FLORENCE, exult that thou hast grown so great  
That thy wings beat, the seas and lands around,  
And wide thy name is spread within Hell's gate!  
Among the Thieves five of such note I found  
Thy citizens, whence shame comes to my cheek,  
Nor to thine honour doth it much redound.  
But if the truth in dream of morning speak,<sup>i</sup>  
Thou shalt in short time feel what upon thee  
Prato, and others also, thirst to wreak.<sup>ii</sup>  
If it were now, not too soon would it be!  
Since come it must, I would that come it were,  
For, with each year, heavier it is for me.  
Thence we departed; and by that same stair  
Which served for our descent, of ledges frayed,  
My Guide climbed back, and me with him up-bare.  
And as our solitary way we made  
Among the juts and splinters of the scarp,  
The foot sped not without the hand to aid.  
Then did I grieve, and grief returneth sharp,

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 7. It was a popular belief that dreams occurring just before dawn would come true.

<sup>ii</sup> 9. "Prato" is a little town near Florence: thou shalt feel the grief which even thy nearest neighbours wish thee.

Seeing what I saw in memory, and I rein [20]  
 More than of wont my genius, lest it warp  
 And run where Virtue is not to constrain,  
 So that if good star or aught better still<sup>iii</sup>  
 Enrich me, I may not grudge myself the gain.  
 Like fire-flies that the peasant on the hill,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Reposing in that season, when he who shines  
 To light our world his face doth least conceal,  
 At that hour when the fly to gnat resigns,  
 Sees glimmering down along the valley broad,  
 There, where perhaps he ploughs or tends the vines,— [30]  
 So numerous the flames in the Eighth Chasm glowed  
 Down all its depth, laid open to mine eyes  
 Soon as I came to where the bottom showed.  
 As he who avenged him by the bears saw rise  
 The fiery chariot that Elijah bore  
 With horses mounting straight into the skies,  
 For follow it with his eyes he could not more  
 Than to behold only the flame serene  
 Like to a little cloud above him soar;  
 Thus moved along the throat of that ravine [40]  
 Each flame, for what it stole it doth not show,  
 And within each a sinner is, unseen.  
 I stood upon the bridge, rising tip-toe:  
 Had I not caught a rock and on it leant  
 I should have fallen, without thrust or blow.  
 The Guide, who saw me gazing thus attent,  
 Said: "Within these fires are the spirits confined,  
 Burned by the shroud within which they are pent."  
 "Master," I answered, "this had I divined  
 Myself already, which thou makest plain. [50]  
 And ev'n now was the question in my mind:

---

<sup>iii</sup> 23. "Aught better" is divine grace.

<sup>iv</sup> 25. In this pretty simile of the fireflies, the season which is indicated (lines 26-27) is the summer solstice, the hour (line 28) is dusk.

Who is in that fire which comes so torn in twain  
 As if it rose above the pyre that bare  
 Eteocles beside his brother slain?"<sup>v</sup>  
 He answered me: "Ulysses suffers there,"<sup>vi</sup>  
 And Diomed; as they braved Heaven's wrath before  
 Together, now its vengeance must they share.  
 Within their flame tormented, they deplore  
 The Horse and its deceiving ambushade  
 Which opened for Rome's gentle seed the door. [60]  
 And they lament the guile, whereby the shade  
 Of Deidamia for Achilles rues;<sup>vii</sup>  
 And for Palladium stolen are they paid."<sup>viii</sup>  
 "If they within those sparks a voice can use,  
 Master," I said, "I pray thee of thy grace—  
 A prayer that strongly as a thousand sues—  
 Forbid me not to tarry in this place  
 Until the hornèd flame blow hitherward:  
 See, toward it how the longing bends my face."  
 And he to me: "The thing thou hast implored [70]  
 Deserveth praise: and for that cause thy need  
 Is answered: yet refrain thy tongue from word.  
 Leave me to speak, for well thy wish I read.  
 But they, since they were Greeks, might turn aside,  
 It may be, and thy voice disdain to heed."  
 After the fire had come, where to my Guide  
 Time and the place seemed fit, I heard him frame  
 His speech upon this manner, as he cried:

---

<sup>v</sup> 54. Eteocles and Polynices, the rival sons of Oedipus, contending for the possession of Thebes, killed each other. When their bodies were burned on the same pyre, the flames divided into two peaks.

<sup>vi</sup> 55-60. Ulysses and Diomed, two of the leading heroes of the Trojan war, go together in their punishment, as they went together to expose themselves to divine wrath. — "Deplore the Horse . . .": the wooden horse full of Greek warriors, which the Trojans were persuaded to take into the city. By this means Troy was destroyed, and Aeneas and his followers, who afterwards founded the Roman stock, had to flee.

<sup>vii</sup> 62. Thetis, to save her son Achilles from the war, disguised him as a girl and entrusted him to King Lycomedes of Scyros; there won the love of the king's daughter Deidamia, and promised he would be true to her. Discovered by Ulysses and Diomed, he departed with them to the war, and forgot his promise.

<sup>viii</sup> 63. Ulysses and Diomed stole the Palladium, an image of Pallas, on which the fate of Troy depended.

"O ye who are two within a single flame,  
 If while I lived, merit of you I won,<sup>ix</sup> [80]  
 If merit, much or little, had my name,  
 When the great verse I made beneath the sun,  
 Move not, but let the one of you be heard  
 Tell where he went to perish, being undone."  
 The greater horn of the ancient flame was stirred  
 To shudder and make a murmur, like a fire  
 When in the wind it struggles and is blurred,  
 Then tossed upon a flickering crest yet higher,  
 As it had been a tongue that spoke, it cast  
 A voice forth from the strength of its desire, [90]  
 Saying: "When I from Circe broke at last,<sup>x</sup>  
 Who more than a year by Gaeta (before<sup>xi</sup>  
 Aeneas had so named it) held me fast,  
 Not sweet son, nor revered old father, nor  
 The long-due love which was to have made glad  
 Penelope for all the pain she bore,  
 Could conquer the inward hunger that I had  
 To master earth's experience, and to attain  
 Knowledge of man's mind, both the good and bad.  
 But I put out on the deep, open main [100]  
 With one ship only, and with that little band  
 Which chose not to desert me; far as Spain,  
 Far as Morocco, either shore I scanned.  
 Sardinia's isle I coasted, steering true,  
 And the isles of which that water bathes the strand.  
 I and my crew were old and stiff of thew  
 When, at the narrow strait, we could discern  
 The boundaries Hercules set far in view<sup>xii</sup>

---

<sup>ix</sup> 80. Virgil assumes that he has immortalised Ulysses and Diomed in his Aeneid.

<sup>x</sup> 91. Circe, daughter of the sun, was a sorceress who turned men into beasts. Ulysses visited her and compelled her to restore her victims to human form.

<sup>xi</sup> 92. Aeneas named the place in memory of his nurse Caieta, who had died there.

<sup>xii</sup> 108. "The boundaries": the pillars of Hercules, on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar.

That none should dare beyond, or further learn.  
 Already I had Sevilla on the right, [110]  
 And on the larboard Ceuta lay astern.  
 'Brothers,' I said, 'who manfully, despite  
 Ten thousand perils, have attained the West,  
 In the brief vigil that remains of light  
 To feel in, stoop not to renounce the quest  
 Of what may in the sun's path be essayed,  
 The world that never mankind hath possessed.  
 Think on the seed ye spring from! Ye were made  
 Not to live life of brute beasts of the field  
 But follow virtue and knowledge unafraid. [120]  
 With such few words their spirit so I steel'd,  
 That I thereafter scarce could have contained  
 My comrades from the voyage, had I willed.  
 And, our poop turned to where the Morning reigned,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 We made, for the mad flight, wings of our oars,  
 And on the left continually we gained.  
 By now the Night beheld within her course  
 All stars of the other pole, and ours so low,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 It was not lifted from the ocean-floors.  
 Five times the light had been re-kindled slow<sup>xv</sup> [130]  
 Beneath the moon and quenched as oft, since we  
 Broached the high venture we were plighted to,  
 When there arose a mountain in the sea,<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Dimm'd by the distance: loftier than aught  
 That ever I beheld, it seemed to be.  
 Then we rejoiced; but soon to grief were brought.  
 A storm came out of the strange land, and found

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 124. *They turn their stern to the morning and sail forth, constantly gaining on the left; that is, their course is not due west, but southwest.*

<sup>xiv</sup> 128. "Ours": our northern pole; when they pass the equator, the North Star sinks below the sea level.

<sup>xv</sup> 130. "Five times . . .": they have sailed five months.

<sup>xvi</sup> 133. *Doubtless the mountain of Purgatory, directly opposite Jerusalem, in the middle of the Hemisphere of Water.*

The ship, and violently the forepart caught.  
Three times it made her to spin round and round  
With all the waves; and, as Another chose, [140]  
The fourth time, heaved the poop up, the prow drowned,  
Till over us we heard the waters close."

# Canto XXVII

*Another flame appears, and a voice from it asks for news of Romagna, and Dante tells of its condition. The name of this spirit is not given, but he is Guido da Montefeltro, a distinguished Ghibelline. He tells how he was persuaded by Pope Boniface VIII to give fraudulent counsel. The poets then pass to the next chasm.*

QUIETED now, the flame rose all upright,  
Having no more to speak, and with the accord  
Of the sweet poet was moving from our sight  
When another, that came on behind it, toward  
Its summit caused us to direct our eyes  
Because of the wild sound that from it roared.  
As the Sicilian bull, that with the cries<sup>i</sup>  
Of him (and it was justice) bellowed first  
Who with his file had shaped it in that guise,  
Kept bellowing as the sufferer's voice outburst, [10]  
So that although it was of brass compact  
The metal seemed with agony transpierced;  
Thus from the fire at first, since a way lacked  
For issue, the despairing words up-cast  
Were changed into its language by the tract;  
But after they had found their road at last  
Up to the tip, imparting to the flame  
The trembling the tongue gave them as they passed,  
We heard it say: "O thou at whom I aim  
My voice, who used'st speech of Lombardy [20]  
Saying, 'Now go, no more of thee I claim,'  
Though over-tardy I have come, maybe,  
Speak with me, so it not irk thee and if thou wilt:

---

<sup>i</sup> 7. The brazen Sicilian bull, made for Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, was so constructed that the shrieks of victims burned within it sounded like the bellowing of a real beast. Phalaris tried it first on its maker, Perillus.

Thou seest, although I burn, it irks not me.  
 If into this blind world thou art but now spilt  
 From that sweet Latin country whence I bore  
 Hither the entire burden of my guilt,  
 Tell me if Romagna now have peace or war;<sup>ii</sup>  
 For I was of the mountains there, between  
 Urbino and where the springs of Tiber pour."<sup>iii</sup> [30]  
 Still all attentive downward did I lean,  
 When soft my Leader touched me on the side  
 Saying, "Speak thou; a Latin this has been."  
 To him without ado then I replied,  
 Having no need my answer to prepare:  
 "O spirit that there enshrouded dost abide,  
 Not now is thy Romagna, and was not e'er,  
 Without war in her tyrants' hearts; but blood  
 Of battle in open field I left not there.  
 Ravenna stands as long years it hath stood, [40]  
 Where covering Cervia with vans outspread<sup>iv</sup>  
 Polenta's Eagle over it doth brood.  
 The city that of the French made slaughter red<sup>v</sup>  
 And ere that proved its fortitude so long,  
 Under the Green Paws hides once more its head.  
 The old mastiff of Verrucchio and the young,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Who brought Montagna into such evil state,  
 After their wont still tear where they have clung.  
 Guideth Lamone's and Santerno's fate<sup>vii</sup>  
 The young Lion of the white lair, changing side [50]

---

<sup>ii</sup> 28. Romagna is the region lying between the Po, the Apennines, the Adriatic, and the Reno.

<sup>iii</sup> 30. The county of Montefeltro lies between Urbino and the Tuscan Apennines.

<sup>iv</sup> 41-42. Cervia, a town near Ravenna, was subject to the Polenta family, whose arms contained an eagle.

<sup>v</sup> 43. "The city": Forlì, whose inhabitants, in 1282, had defeated their French besiegers with great slaughter. In 1300 it was ruled by the Ordellaffi, who had in their arms a lion with green paws.

<sup>vi</sup> 46-47. The "old mastiff" is Malatesta da Verrucchio, lord of Rimini; the "young mastiff" is his son Malatestino. In 1296 they defeated the Ghibelline forces of Rimini, and murdered their leader Montagna.

<sup>vii</sup> 49. Faenza, on the Lamone, and Imola, near the Santerno, were ruled by Maghinardo da Susinana, whose banner bore a blue lion on a white field.



Winter and summer, with the seasons' date.  
 And that city the Savio flows beside,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Even as it lies between the hill and plain,  
 Tyranny and freedom do its life divide.  
 Now who thou art declare to us, nor refrain  
 In hardness more than others have been hard,  
 So may thy name on earth its front maintain."  
 When for awhile the flame had shrilled and roared  
 After its manner, the sharp tip it swayed  
 This way and that, and then this breath outpoured: [60]  
 "If I believed that my reply were made  
 To one who could revisit earth, this flame  
 Would be at rest, and its commotion laid.  
 But seeing that alive none ever came  
 Back from this pit, if it be truth I hear,  
 I answer without dread of injured fame.  
 I was a man of arms, then Cordelier,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Hoping, so girdled, in my ways to amend;  
 And certainly that hope had come entire  
 But for the Great Priest, whom may ill attend,<sup>x</sup> [70]  
 Who brought me back into my sins of old,  
 And how and why I'll have thee comprehend.  
 Whilst I was bones and pulp and in the mould  
 My mother made for me, my deeds were those  
 Of the sly fox, not of the lion bold.  
 All cunning stratagems and words that gloze  
 I knew, and mastered the uses of deceit  
 So that to earth's end rumour of it goes.  
 When at the age which counselled retreat  
 I saw me arrived, the which should all constrain [80]  
 To strike the sail and gather in the sheet,  
 That which before had pleased me now was pain,

---

<sup>viii</sup> 52. "That city" is Cesena.

<sup>ix</sup> 67. "Cordelier": a Franciscan friar.

<sup>x</sup> 70. "The Great Priest" is Pope Boniface VIII.

And from the world a penitent I withdrew.  
 Ah, miserable! it should have been my gain.  
 The prince of the new Pharisees, who knew<sup>xi</sup>  
 How to wage war beside the Lateran  
 And not with Saracen and not with Jew,  
 For each one of his foes was Christian,  
 And none to conquer Acre's fort had gone<sup>xii</sup>  
 Nor trafficked in the land of the Soldan, [90]  
 Regarding neither the office of his throne  
 Nor the Holy Orders, nor in me that cord  
 Which used to make lean those that girt it on,  
 As on Soracte Constantine implored<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Sylvester's art his leprosy to heal,  
 So for my mastery me this man conjured  
 To cure his prideful fever, and made appeal  
 To me for counsel: and I kept me mute,  
 For like a drunkard seemed his words to reel.  
 And then he spoke: 'Let not thy heart misdoubt; [100]  
 Here I absolve thee. Now instruct me how I  
 May Palestrina from the earth uproot.  
 Heaven, as thou knowest, I have authority  
 To unlock and lock: for double is the key,  
 Which he who came before me prized not high.'<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Then that strong argument enforcing me  
 To think silence the worst counsel of all,  
 I said, 'Since, Father, I am cleansed by thee  
 Of that guilt into which I now must fall,  
 Wouldst thou in the high seat hold triumphant head, [110]  
 Make large thy promise, its fulfilment small,'

---

<sup>xi</sup> 85. Boniface VIII was waging war at home, close to his Lateran palace, with the Colonna family, who had entrenched themselves in their stronghold of Palestrina. This city was surrendered to Boniface on false promises, and then demolished.

<sup>xii</sup> 89. No one of them had been a renegade to help the Saracens take Acre in 1291.

<sup>xiii</sup> 94. Pope Sylvester I, who had taken refuge on Mt. Soracte, near Rome, was sought out, according to the legend, to cure the Emperor Constantine of leprosy; this he did by baptism.

<sup>xiv</sup> 105. "He who came before me . . .": Celestine V, who renounced the papacy.

Francis came afterwards, when I was dead,<sup>xv</sup>  
 To take me; and one of the Black Cherubim  
 Denied him: 'Thou wilt do me wrong,' he said.  
 'Among my minions must I carry him  
 Because he gave the treacherous advice,  
 Since when by the hair I have held him, every limb.  
 For the unrepentant unabsolvèd dies,  
 Nor can a soul repent and will the sin  
 At once; in this a contradiction lies.' [120]  
 O wretched me! How startled was I then,  
 When seizing me he said: "Thou thoughtest not,  
 May be, that I had a logician been!"  
 To Minos then he bore me; he straightway got  
 His tail eight times around his horny side  
 And biting on it then with anger hot,  
 'To the thievish fire this sinner goes,' he cried.  
 Therefore I, where thou seest me, am borne  
 Lost in this swathing, and in grief abide."  
 When he had ended thus his words forlorn, [130]  
 The flame departed sorrowing, all frayed  
 With struggle and tossing upward its sharp horn.  
 I and my Guide with me passed on, and made  
 Along the cliff to the other arch up-built  
 Over the fosse in which their fee is paid  
 To those who, sowing discord, harvest guilt.

---

<sup>xv</sup> 112-120. *St. Francis of Assisi came to claim the departing spirit; but though absolved by a Pope, Guido had not genuinely repented of his last misdeed, and therefore the absolution was invalid.*

# Canto XXVIII

*The ninth chasm punishes the Schismatics with fearful mutilations, surpassing even the horrors of the wars which from early times devastated Southern Italy (Apulia). First appears Mahomet, regarded by Dante as a perverter of Christianity. He asks Dante to warn Fra Dolcino, an unorthodox fanatic, that he may be starved out (as he was) in his stronghold by the ecclesiastical authorities of Novara. Similarly, Pier da Medicina, who kept the houses of Polenta and Malatesta embroiled, asks Dante to warn two men of Fano that the younger Malatesta (half-brother of Francesca's husband) means to have them drowned on their way to a conference to which he will invite them. Next Dante is shown Curio, who, when Caesar was at Rimini, counselled him to persist in his march on Rome; Mosca, through whom arose the Guelf and Ghibelline factions at Florence; and Bertran de Born, the Troubadour, who sowed strife between Henry II of England and his eldest son Henry, called "the young king."*

WHO even in words untrammelled, though 'twere told

Over and over, could tell full the tale

Of blood and wounds before me now unrolled?

Truly there is no tongue that could avail,

Seeing that our speech and memory are small

And for so great a comprehension fail.

Nay, were it possible to assemble all

Who of old upon Apulia's fated soil

Wailed their spilt blood and friendless burial,

Wrought by the Trojans, or in that long moil<sup>i</sup>

[10]

Of war which heaped, as Livy writes nor errs,

Of Roman rings so marvellous a spoil,

---

<sup>i</sup> 10-18. "By the Trojans": the Romans, whose ancestors came from Troy; the allusion is to their conquest of the Samnites. — The "long moil of war" is the Second Punic War: after the battle of Cannae Hannibal's troops took from the dead Romans more than three thousand bushels of rings. — "Robert Guiscard": the Norman conqueror who overran southern Italy in the eleventh century. — "At Ceperano . . .": in the battle of Benevento, in 1266, where ManSed, son of Frederick I, was defeated by Charles of Anjou, and Eilled; he had been deserted by the Apulian troops. — At "Tagliacozzo," in 1268, the Imperial forces were again defeated by Charles of Anjou. The victory was due to the wit of a French general, Erard (or "Alard") de Valéry.

With those who, Robert Guiscard's serried spears  
 Defying, met great hurt and sore distress,  
 And those whose bones the plough still disinters  
 At Ceperano, where their faithlessness  
 The Apulians proved, and Tagliacozzo, where  
 The aged Erard conquered weaponless;  
 And one should make his riddled carcase bare  
 And another show his limbs cut off; yet shapes [20]  
 Of fouler fashion in the Ninth Chasm were.  
 A cask that has lost side- or mid-piece gapes  
 Less wide than one I saw, chopped from the chin<sup>ii</sup>  
 Down to that part wherefrom the wind escapes.  
 The bowels trailed, drooping his legs between;  
 The pluck appeared, the sorry pouch and vent  
 That turns to dung all it has swallowed in.  
 While gazing on him I stood all intent,  
 He eyed me, and with his hands opened his breast,  
 Saying: "Now see how I myself have rent. [30]  
 How is Mahomet maimed, thou canst attest.  
 Before me Ali, weeping tear on tear,<sup>iii</sup>  
 Goes with face cloven apart from chin to crest.  
 And all the others whom thou seest here  
 Were, alive, sowers of schism and of discord,  
 And therefore in this wise they are cloven sheer.  
 There is a devil behind us who hath scored  
 His mark on us, and brings each of this crew  
 Again to the edge of his most cruel sword  
 When the forlorn road we have circled through; [40]  
 For all our wounds are healed of blood and bruise  
 Ere any of us before him comes anew.  
 But who art thou who on the crag dost muse,  
 Haply to postpone thine apportioned pain,  
 Whatever confessed sins thy soul accuse?"

---

<sup>ii</sup> 23. "One I saw . . .": Mahomet.

<sup>iii</sup> 32. "Ali": the husband of Mahomet's favourite daughter, and one of his most zealous followers.

"Death comes not yet to him, nor guilty stain,"  
 Replied my Master, "chastisement to wreak;  
 But, that the full experience he obtain,  
 I, who am dead, am missioned through Hell's reek  
 From zone to zone to lead him undeterred; [50]  
 And this is true as that to thee I speak."  
 More than a hundred spirits, as him they heard,  
 Forgetting anguish in astonishment,  
 Halted amid the fosse and on me stared.  
 "Thou, then, who to the sun may'st win ascent  
 Erelong, bid Fra Dolcino his granaries<sup>iv</sup>  
 (Unless to hurry hither he be bent)  
 Replenish well, that to the Novarese  
 Victory come not through the blockading snow,  
 Which else it were no easy thing to seize." [60]  
 After he had lifted up one foot to go  
 Away, these words to me Mahomet said,  
 Then on the ground stretched it, departing slow.  
 Another, who had his throat pierced through, and bled  
 With nose cut off up to the eyebrows' hair,  
 And had but one sole ear upon his head,  
 Standing in wonder with the rest to stare,  
 Before the rest opened his weazand wide  
 Which outwardly was crimsoned everywhere,  
 Saying: "Thou who art damned not and who hast not died, [70]  
 And whom I have seen on Latin earth, I trow,  
 Unless in too great likeness I confide,  
 Remember Pier da Medicina; and oh,<sup>v</sup>  
 If ever thou revisit the sweet plain  
 That from Vercelli slopes to Marcabo,  
 Hie thee to Fano and to her worthiest twain,  
 To Guido and to Angiolello, and say  
 That if the foresight given us be not vain,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 56. "Fra Dolcino": see the Argument.

<sup>v</sup> 73-74. "Pier da Medicina": see the Argument. "The sweet plain" is the plain of the Po.

Out of their ship they shall be cast away  
 By a fell tyrant's cruelty and guile, [80]  
 Tied up in sacks nigh La Cattolica.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Never 'twixt Cyprus and Majorca's isle<sup>vii</sup>  
 Not even by pirates or by Grecian spawn  
 Saw Neptune such a crime his waves defile.<sup>viii</sup>  
 That traitor who with one eye sees alone  
 And holds the city, one who is with me here  
 Would wish his eyes had never looked upon,  
 Will summon them in parley to confer,  
 And then so act that they shall need no prayer<sup>ix</sup>  
 Or vow, Focara's stormy cape to clear." [90]  
 And I to him: "Show to me and declare,  
 If news of thee I carry up to the sun,  
 Who is he that had the bitter sight to bear?"  
 Then laid he his hand upon the jaw of one  
 Of his companions, and the mouth opened,  
 Saying: "This is he, and all his speech is done.  
 He it is who, banished, made in Caesar end<sup>x</sup>  
 The doubt, affirming that to men prepared  
 Delay is loss no patience can amend."  
 O how affrighted now to me appeared, [100]  
 With his tongue slit and in his gullet stopt,  
 Curio, who in speech so greatly dared.  
 And one who at the wrist had both hands lopt  
 Raising the stumps through the dim air on high  
 So that their blood befouled him as it dropt,  
 Said: "Thou'lt remember too the Mosca's cry  
 'A thing done makes an end.' Alas, how bad  
 Was the seed sown for Tuscan folk thereby!"

---

<sup>vi</sup> 81. "Cattolica": a place on the Adriatic.

<sup>vii</sup> 82. From one end of the Mediterranean to the other.

<sup>viii</sup> 84. "That traitor": the younger Malatesta, who had only one eye.

<sup>ix</sup> 89-90. They need have no fear of being shipwrecked, because they will be already drowned.

<sup>x</sup> 97. "He it is who . . .": Curio (see the Argument).

"And for thy kin death," thereto did I add:  
 So that, accumulating pain on pain, [110]  
 He went away like one with anguish mad.  
 But I remained to look on the sad train,  
 And saw a thing which without proof more sure  
 I should have fear even to tell again  
 Saving that conscience holdeth me secure,  
 That good companion which doth fortify  
 With a strong breastplate one who knows him pure.  
 Verily I saw and still have in mine eye  
 A headless trunk that followed in the tread  
 Of the others of that desolate company. [120]  
 And by the hair it held the severed head  
 That in its hand was like a lantern swayed,  
 And as it looked at us, "Oh me!" it said.  
 Thus of itself a lamp for itself it made;  
 And they were two in one and one in two;  
 How this can be, He knows who is there obeyed.  
 When it was just at the arch and close below,  
 It raised its arm high and with it the head  
 That it might bring its words the nearer so,  
 Which were: "Behold what I have merited! [130]  
 Thou who, still breathing, goest the dead to view  
 See if any suffer punishment as dread.  
 Know, that thou may'st bear tidings of me true,  
 Bertran de Born am I, and the Young King<sup>xi</sup>  
 My evil promptings to rebellion drew.  
 Father and son did I to quarrel bring.  
 Ahitophel wrought not more on Absalom  
 And David with the malice of his sting.  
 Such union since I made asunder come,  
 I carry alas! dissevered this my brain [140]  
 From the live marrow it fed its vigour from.

---

<sup>xi</sup> 134. "Bertran de Born": see the Argument.



Thus retribution's law do I maintain."

# Canto XXIX

*The poets, as they cross to the next chasm, talk of Geri del Bello, a kinsman of Dante. They now come to the tenth and last bolgia, containing the Falsifiers. Their penalty is to be afflicted with loathsome diseases, and they lie grovelling and helpless and inert. Dante speaks with one (Grifolino) who promised to teach Albero of Siena to fly, and was also an alchemist, like his companion Capocchio, who derides the Sienese in an ironic speech.*

THOSE THRONGS and their unheard-of wounds had made

Mine eyes so drunk, they were with longing faint

To tarry, and weep out what on them weighed.

But Virgil said: "Why gazest still intent?

Why on the maimed unhappy shades below

Still lingering is thy vision wholly bent?

Thou hast not at the other chasms done so.

Consider, if all the tale thou wouldst complete,

This circle two and twenty miles doth go;

The Moon already is underneath our feet;<sup>i</sup>

[10]

Near to its end the time permitted draws,

And more is yet to see than here we meet."

"Had'st thou," I then replied, "marked but the cause

Which made my eyes go questing with my mind,

Perhaps thou wouldst have suffered me to pause."

Meantime the Guide was going, and I behind

Moved in his steps, now making my reply

And adding: "There within the cavern blind

Whereon I kept so fixt a scrutiny

I think one of my own blood makes lament

[20]

For guilt which down there costs a price so high."

The Master then: "On him should not be spent

Thy thought; let him distract thee not at all.

---

<sup>i</sup> 10. The moon being under their feet, the sun must be over their heads: it is about noon in Jerusalem.

Turn to others, let him stay there, where he went;  
 For him I saw beneath the bridge's wall  
 With angry threats at thee his finger dart.  
 Geri del Bello's name I heard them call.<sup>ii</sup>  
 So all preoccupied with him thou wert  
 Who once held Hautefort, thou wouldst not thy head<sup>iii</sup>  
 Turn to the other; and so did he depart."[30]  
 "O my dear Guide, his violent death," I said,  
 "Which hath not yet found vengeance or redress  
 From any who share dishonour with the dead,  
 Made him indignant; therefore, as I guess,  
 He went with no word spoken from my sight;  
 And the more pity is in my heart's distress."  
 Thus talking, we won vantage of the height  
 Where first the ridge the other valley shows  
 Down to the bottom, were there but more light.  
 When we above the final cloister rose[40]  
 Of Malebolge's monastery, where  
 All its lay-brethren it could now disclose,  
 A volley of strange lamentings came to tear  
 My heart so barbed with pity's sudden prick  
 That with my hands I covered either ear.  
 Pain such as if from lazarets the sick<sup>iv</sup>  
 In feverish August from Chiana's fen,  
 And from Maremma and Sardinia, thick  
 Were heaped together in a single pen  
 With all their sores, was here: and all so stank[50]  
 As when they fester do the wounds of men.  
 Now we descended over the last bank  
 Of the long ridge, and still were moving toward

---

<sup>ii</sup> 27. "Geri del Bello": a first cousin of Dante's father, who was killed by one of the Sacchetti. In 1300 his death, to Dante's shame, was still unavenged.

<sup>iii</sup> 29. "Hautefort" was the castle of Bertran de Born.

<sup>iv</sup> 46. The swampy Valdichiana and Maremma (in Tuscany) and the fens of Sardinia were noted haunts of malaria.

The left; and now my vision deeper sank  
 Where Justice of the infallible award,  
 Ministress of the great Sire, punishes  
 The falsifiers whom her scrolls record.  
 I think no greater pang of grief was his  
 Who saw Aegina's people all infirm<sup>v</sup>  
 When the air was so charged with malign disease [60]  
 That the animals, down to the little worm,  
 Dropt dying, and afterwards the ancient folk,  
 As poets for a certainty affirm,  
 From seed of ants reanimated woke,  
 Than here to see along that valley black  
 The listless spirits huddled by the rock.  
 This on the belly and that upon the back  
 Of the other lay, and some were shifting round  
 At crawling pace along the dismal track.  
 Step by step went we without speech or sound [70]  
 Looking and listening to the sick, who drooped  
 Helpless to raise their bodies from the ground.  
 I saw two sit who one another propt,  
 As pan is propt on pan for the warmth's sake,  
 From head to foot bespotted and corrupt.  
 Ne'er saw I curry-comb more frenzy take  
 From hand of groom for whom his master waits  
 Or one who is kept unwillingly awake,  
 Than here did the anguished clawing upon pates  
 And bodies, as each plied the nail to appease [80]  
 The fury of the itch that nothing yet abates.  
 Those fevered nails the scabby leprosies  
 Scraped off, as the knife scrapes from bream the scales  
 Or what fish hath them larger yet than these.  
 "O thou whom fury of fingers so dis-mails,"  
 My Guide to one of them began, "and who

---

<sup>v</sup> 59-64. A pest sent by Juno carried off the inhabitants and even the animals that occupied the island of Aegina; afterwards, Jupiter restored the population by turning ants into men.

So often makest pincers of thy nails,  
 Tell us if any Latian be with you  
 Who are here within, so may thy nails be hard  
 Eternally to avail for what they do." [90]  
 "Latians are we whom here thou seest so marred,  
 Both of us," the one answered, making moan,  
 "But who art thou who hast of us regard?"  
 And the Guide: "I am one who, zone by zone,  
 Descend, and this man living with me take  
 Until all Hell be to his vision shown."  
 Then did the mutual prop suddenly break,  
 And each of them turned toward me, with the rest  
 Who chanced to have heard him; and it made them quake.  
 To me the Master all his gaze addressed, [100]  
 Saying: "Tell whatever thou art so inclined,"  
 And I began, obeying his behest,  
 "So may your memory out of human mind  
 There in the first world, not for ever fade  
 But under many suns a life yet find,  
 Tell me who ye are, and in what city bred,  
 Nor let your penance, loathly and foul howe'er  
 It be, of that disclosure make you afraid."  
 I was of Arezzo," the one answered clear,<sup>vi</sup>  
 "And Albergo of Siena had me burned; [110]  
 But what I died for hath not brought me here.  
 In jest, 'tis true, I said to him, 'I have learned  
 To lift myself in the air and earth to skim';  
 But he who craved much but small knowledge earned,  
 Willed I should show him the art, and for that whim,  
 Because I made him not a Daedalus,  
 He had me burned by one who had fathered him.  
 But for the alchemy I loved to use  
 On earth, to this last pocket of the ten

---

<sup>vi</sup> 109. "I was of Arezzo": Grifolino (see the Argument).

Minos, who may not err, condemns me thus." [120]  
 And I to the Poet: "Now did ever men  
 People as vain as the Sienese record?  
 Truly the French are not by far so vain."  
 Whereat the other leper, who caught my word,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Answered to me: "Except me Stricca, who I<sup>viii</sup>  
 Contrived to spend so modestly his hoard,  
 And Niccolé who made invention new  
 Of that so costly usage of the clove  
 Within the garden where such spices grew.  
 Except the Band of Prodigals where strove [130]  
 Caccia of Ascian to waste wood and vine,<sup>ix</sup>  
 And by his wit the Abbagliato throve.  
 But that thou may'st know whose vote seconds thine  
 Against the Sienese, sharpen thy sight  
 So that thou may'st retain this face of mine.  
 So shalt thou know Capocchio's shade, whose might  
 Of alchemy to metals gave false shape,  
 And thou'lt remember, if I scan thee right,  
 How I of Nature was so good an ape."

---

<sup>vii</sup> 124. "The other leper" is Capocchio.

<sup>viii</sup> 125-127. "Except me": evidently ironical. "Stricca": probably Giovanni Stricca, mayor of Bologna in 1286. His brother "Niccolé" was, apparently, the one who introduced into Siena the use of cloves as a spice.

<sup>ix</sup> 131-132. "Caccia of Ascian" is perhaps the poet known as Caccia dz Siena. "Abbagliato": a nickname of Bartolommeo Folcacchieri, z brother of the poet Folcacchiero.

# Canto XXX

*The poets are still in the tenth chasm and now meet the Counterfeiters. Among them is one Schicchi, who impersonated Buoso de' Donati in order to gain, with other things, a beautiful mare (the "lady of the herd," line 43); also Myrrha, the story of whose incest is told by Ovid. These, who are counterfeiters of persons, are afflicted with madness. Next are the coiners, counterfeiters of things, punished with dropsy. One of them, Adam of Brescia, tells his story to Dante, and points out Potiphar's wife, and Sinon, who betrayed Troy to the Greeks; they are perjurers, falsifiers in words, who are afflicted with fever. Adam and Sinon engage in a squabble, and Virgil reproves Dante for listening to them.*

WHAT TIME revengeful Juno was inflamed  
Through Semele against the Theban blood,<sup>i</sup>  
As otherwhiles like forfeit she had claimed,  
Athamas fell to so insane a mood,  
That seeing his wife go clasping in embrace<sup>ii</sup>  
Of either arm her two sons, "In the wood  
Spread we the nets," he cried, "that lioness  
And lion cubs may in the toils be found,"  
Then stretching out his talons merciless  
On the one who was named Learchus, whirled him round [10]  
In his strong grasp and on a boulder dashed;  
And she herself with the other burden drowned.  
Also when Fortune turning had abashed  
The Trojans' towering spirit and so brought low  
That king and kingdom down together crashed,  
Miserable Hecuba, captive to her foe,<sup>iii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> 2-3. Juno was enraged at Thebes on account of the love of Jupiter and Semele, daughter of the king of that city. "As otherwhiles . . .": the two instances are the destruction of Semele and the tragic incident that follows.

<sup>ii</sup> 5. "His wife": Ino, sister of Semele. Ino and Athamas had two children, Learchus and Melicerta.

<sup>iii</sup> 16. After the fall of Troy, Hecuba saw her daughter Polyxena slain as a victim on the tomb of Achilles, and her son Polydorus murdered and thrown into the sea.

After that she had seen her daughter die,  
 And on the sea-banks by the ebb and flow  
 Anguished beheld her Polydorus lie,  
 Howled as a dog howls, stricken in the brain, [20]  
 So much had sorrow wrenched her mind awry.  
 But never fury of Thebes or Troy had ta'en,  
 To goad wild beast, much less the heart of man,  
 A lodge in aught so cruel and insane  
 As two shades that I saw, naked and wan,  
 That like a famisht swine, after escape  
 Out of his sty, raging and biting ran.  
 The one seized on Capocchio by the nape,  
 Planting his tusks there, so that, dragging him,  
 It made the rugged ground his belly scrape. [30]  
 The Aretine who remained, with every limb  
 Trembling, said to me: "Gianni Schicchi it is.  
 Thus harrying others goes he, goblin grim."  
 "Oh," said I: "so may the other spare to seize  
 And tear thee, ere it dart out of our sight,  
 Tell us who it is, if telling not displease."  
 And he to me: "That is the ancient sprite  
 Of execrable Myrrha who to her sire  
 Bore love, but love which far exceeded right.  
 She came to sin with him in her desire, [40]  
 Borrowing an alien form to hide her shame  
 As the other, going away there, did conspire,<sup>iv</sup>  
 That he the lady of the herd might claim,  
 Buoso Donati's person to assume,  
 Making a will conforming to the name."  
 And when the raging two were past on whom  
 Mine eyes had been so fixt, they made pursuit  
 Of the other spirits born to evil doom.  
 And I beheld one shapen like a lute

---

<sup>iv</sup> 42. "The other": Gianni Schicchi (see the Argument). "Master Adam," a counterfeiter, was burned in 1281.



If he had only had his groin below [50]  
 Lopt from the rest, where man's fork hath its root.  
 The dropsy's weight which disproportions so  
 The limbs with humours ill-absorbed within  
 That with the paunch the visage doth not go,  
 Held his lips open in the parching skin  
 Even as 'tis with the hectic, who for thirst  
 Curls the one lip up and the other toward his chin.  
 "O ye who are not anywise amerced,  
 I know not why, in this world without hope,"  
 Said he to us, "that ye may hearken first [60]  
 To the misery of Master Adam, stop.  
 Alive I had all my wishes: now, alas!  
 I crave for water, for one little drop.  
 The mountain brooks that sparkle through the grass  
 Flowing down to Arno from the Casentin<sup>v</sup>  
 And freshening all the moist earth where they pass  
 For ever are in my sight; nor only seen;  
 For the image of them parcheth more than this  
 Disease that wastes the face where flesh hath been.  
 The unbending Justice which doth me chastise [70]  
 Finds in the place where into sin I strayed  
 Cause to make keener and more swift my sighs.  
 There is Romena, where the mint I made  
 Of the false coin, stamped with the Baptist bright,<sup>vi</sup>  
 For which the burning of my body paid.  
 But saw I here the wretched Guido's sprite<sup>vii</sup>  
 Or Alessandro's or their brother's, I'd  
 For Branda's fount not sacrifice the sight.  
 One is in already, if they have not lied

---

<sup>v</sup> 65. *The Casentino is a district in the mountains at the head of the Arno.*

<sup>vi</sup> 74. *This coin had on one side the image of John the Baptist who was the patron of Florence, on the other the lily-flower from which it derived its name.*

<sup>vii</sup> 76-78. *"Guido" and "Alessandro" are the counts of Romena, at whose instigation Master Adam committed the crime. Fonte Branda was a fountain near the walls of Romena.*

Who go around pricked by their frenzy's goad; [80]  
 But what avails it me whose limbs are tied?  
 Were I but now so nimble that this load  
 I could an inch in a hundred years drag out  
 I had set myself already upon the road  
 To seek for him through this misshapen rout,  
 Though half a mile and more it is across  
 And though eleven miles it winds about.  
 Through them I am of the household of this fosse;  
 By their persuasion I the florins struck  
 That had three carats' weight in them of dross." [90]  
 And I to him: "Who are the two sad folk  
 Who, at thy right and close on thy domain,  
 Like a hand plunged in icy water smoke?"  
 "Here were they when I dropt into this drain,"  
 He answered, "and since then they have not stirred,  
 And, I think, never may they stir again.  
 One is the false wife who chaste Joseph slurred;  
 Troy's false Greek, Sinon, is the other; and hot<sup>viii</sup>  
 In the foul fumes of fever are they blurred."  
 And one who of his speech took angry note, [100]  
 Perhaps because named with such evil scum,  
 Upon the rigid belly of him smote.  
 It sounded like the beat of a great drum.  
 And Master Adam smote him in the face,  
 With arm that seemed as hard and meitlesome,  
 Saying to him: "Though from this cursed place  
 My heaviness disableth me to go,  
 I have an arm still free for such a case."  
 Whereat the other: "When thou wast going to  
 The fire, thou hadst it not so ready there, [110]  
 But ready and more when coining was to do."  
 And he of the dropsy: "Truth of that affair

---

<sup>viii</sup> 98. "Sinon" persuaded the Trojans to take the wooden horse into city.

Thou hast; but when they questioned thee in Troy  
 Such witness of the truth thou didst not bear."  
 "If I spoke false, thou too didst falsify  
 The coins," said Sinon. "For one crime I am here,  
 But thou for more than all the devil's fry."  
 "Bethink thee of the horse, thou perjurer,"  
 Replied the swollen paunch, "and be thine aches  
 Sharper, that of it all the world's aware." [120]  
 "Sharper to thee be now the thirst that cracks  
 Thy tongue, and the foul rheum," the Greek replied,  
 "That of thy belly a blind bastion makes."  
 The coiner then: "As ever, thy jaw gapes wide  
 To speak ill; for if thirst is in my veins  
 And water stuffs me out from side to side,  
 Thou hast the burning and the head that pains;  
 And little prompting wouldst thou need to lap  
 The mirror of Narcissus to the drains."<sup>ix</sup>  
 All ear, I listened to their snarl and snap, [130]  
 When spoke the Master: "A little longer look,  
 And soon between us shall a quarrel hap."  
 And when I heard the wrath in his rebuke,  
 I turned, and such shame through my bosom shot  
 That even now it shakes me as then it shook.  
 As a man dreams of hurt that he has got  
 And dreaming wishes that it were a dream,  
 Yearning for that which is, as if 'twere not,  
 Such, with no power of utterance, did I seem,  
 Who wished to excuse myself and did excuse [140]  
 Even then, and that I had done it could not deem.  
 "Less shame the folly of greater fault undoes  
 Than thou hast now committed," said my Guide.  
 "Let thy heart therefore all its sorrow lose.  
 Remember I am always at thy side,

---

<sup>ix</sup> 129. "The mirror of Narcissus" is water.

Should fortune bring thee to some other place  
Where with like tongues men wrangle and deride.  
The wish to hear them is a wish that's base."

# Canto XXXI

*Dante has now visited the whole of the Eighth Circle, with its ten concentric chasms; and approaches the central well or pit which leads to the last and lowest circle. He seems to see a ring of towers round the well; but Virgil explains that these are Giants, who stand within it, and whose upper part appears over the bank surrounding the well. One of the Giants is Nimrod, who is by Dante supposed to have built the Tower of Babel, and pays for it by his unintelligible speech. After seeing him the poets go on round the rim of the well to Ephialtes, and then to Antaeus, who takes them up in his grasp and deposits them at the bottom of the pit, in the Ninth Circle. As he leans over he appears to Dante like the Garisenda, one of the leaning towers of Bologna.*

THE SELF-SAME TONGUE first dealt to me the wound

So that it coloured both my cheeks with red,

And then itself restoring medicine found.

Thus have I heard that by Achilles sped<sup>i</sup>

The spear, that was his father's, where it pierced

Brought hurt and then with healing comforted.

We turned our back upon the valley accurst

Up by the bank about its circle cast

And without any speech the ridge traversed.

To less than night and less than day we passed,

So that my sight not far before me went;

But now, on high, a horn sounded a blast

So loud, it would have made the thunder faint;

Which drew my eyes in reverse course to go

Whence the sound came, all upon one place bent.

When Charlemagne by dolorous overthrow

Had lost his army and sacred enterprise,

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 4. Virgil's tongue has the same power as the magic spear of Achilles and his father Peleus, which could both wound and cure.

No note so terrible did Roland blow.<sup>ii</sup>  
 Thitherward short while had I turned mine eyes,  
 When many lofty towers I seemed to see; [20]  
 Whereat I: "Master, say, what city is this?"  
 "Because thou travellest," said he to me,  
 "The murk at too great distance, thou dost err  
 And thy imagination cheateth thee.  
 If thou arrive there, thou shalt see full clear  
 How much remoteness can the sense confound.  
 Therefore thy steps I bid thee somewhat spur."  
 Thereon he clasped my hand with pressure fond  
 And said: "I'll tell thee, ere we further go, [30]  
 So that the truth of it may less astound,  
 These are not towers but Giants, and thou must know  
 That each and all, around the bank confined,  
 Down from the navel are in the well below."  
 As, when the mist disperses in the wind,  
 By little and little the eye discerns anew  
 Shapes of things dimly in the cloud divined,  
 So, as the gross, dark air I journeyed through  
 And toward the brink came near and nearer yet,  
 My error was dissolved, and my fear grew.  
 For as with towers on its round rampart set [40]  
 Montereccione crowns itself, so tall<sup>iii</sup>  
 Around the stony circle of the pit  
 With half their bodies turreted the wall  
 The horrible Giants whose rebellious pride  
 Jove's thunderings out of heaven still appal.  
 By now the face of one I well descried,  
 Shoulders and breast, and of the belly a part,  
 And arms that hung down by his either side.  
 Of a truth Nature, when she left the art

---

<sup>ii</sup> 18. *At the battle of Roncesvalles, when all was lost, Roland blew his horn so loud that it was heard thirty leagues away.*

<sup>iii</sup> 41. *"Montereccione," a strong castle built by the Sienese, was surmounted by twelve towers.*

Of making the like creatures, did not ill [50]  
 From Mars such monstrous agents to divert;  
 And if of elephants and whales she still<sup>iv</sup>  
 Repents not, he that subtly reads her right  
 Approves the prudent working of her will.  
 For if with the mind's instrument unite  
 Power and an evil purpose both at once,  
 Men have no means against such force to fight.  
 His face seemed large as the pine-cone of bronze<sup>v</sup>  
 That by St. Peter's has in Rome renown.  
 In like proportion were his other bones; [60]  
 So that the bank which from the middle down  
 Made him an apron, still so much displayed  
 Above, that to have reached up to his crown  
 Three Frieslanders in vain their boast had made.<sup>vi</sup>  
 For down from where a man buckles his coat  
 Thirty large spans of him mine eye surveyed.  
*Raphel may amech zabi almi*, throat<sup>vii</sup>  
 And brutish mouth incontinently cried;  
 And they were fitted for no sweeter note.  
 "Stupid soul!" towards him then began my Guide, [70]  
 "Keep to thy horn, and vent thee with its sound  
 When rage or other passion shakes thy hide.  
 Search on thy neck until the belt be found  
 That holds it fastened, O thou soul confused.  
 See where it girdles thy huge breast around."  
 Then to me speaking: "He hath himself accused.  
 This is that Nimrod, through whose ill design<sup>viii</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> 52-54. Nature continues to produce elephants and whales, but they have no intelligence and therefore are harmless. Her suppression of giants, then, shows fine discrimination.

<sup>v</sup> 58. A pine cone of gilt bronze, which is said to have been one of the adornments of the Mausoleum of Hadrian, stood in Dante's day in the fore-court of St. Peter's.

<sup>vi</sup> 64. "Three Frieslanders" (standing on one another's shoulders) would have boasted in vain that they could reach from the bank to the giant's hair. Frisians were noted for their tall stature.

<sup>vii</sup> 67. These words have no meaning.

<sup>viii</sup> 77. "Nimrod": see the Argument.

One language through the world is no more used.  
 Leave we him standing, nor waste words of thine;  
 For every tongue to him is as to all [80]  
 Others is his, which no one can divine."  
 Then made we a longer journey along the wall  
 Leftward, and at a cross-bow shot beyond  
 We found the next, even yet more fierce and tall.  
 What master it was who put him in such bond  
 I cannot tell, but his right arm behind  
 And the other in front of him were pinioned  
 With a great chain, that held him all entwined  
 From the neck down, and over what was bared  
 To view, far as the fifth turn seemed to wind. [90]  
 "This proud rebellious spirit his prowess dared  
 To match against the supreme might of Jove,"  
 Said my Guide; "wherefore he hath such reward.  
 Ephialtes he, who would the adventure prove  
 When that the Giants made the Gods afraid.  
 The arms he shook then, now he cannot move."  
 "If it were possible, I should wish," I said,  
 "That these mine eyes should have experience  
 Of Briareus' immeasurable shade."  
 Whereto he said: "Antaeus not far hence [100]  
 Thou'lt see, who speaks and is not chained; and he  
 Will lower us to the bottom of all offence.  
 Far beyond stands he whom thou cravest to see,  
 And shackled is, and like this one he shows,  
 Save that he seems of fiercer looks to be."  
 Never convulsion of an earthquake rose  
 To shake with so much violence a tower  
 As now shook Ephialtes in its throes.  
 Then more than ever I dreaded my death-hour,  
 And nought else needed for it but the dread, [110]  
 Had I not seen what bonds constrained his power.  
 We then continued on our way that led



Around the hollow, and to Antaeus came  
 Emerging full five ells, without the head.  
 "O thou who in the valley of happy fame,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Bequeathing Scipio glory on the day  
 When routed Hannibal was put to shame,  
 Didst take a thousand lions once for prey,  
 And through whom, hadst thou been amongst the host  
 Of thy high-warring brethren, some yet say [120]  
 The sons of the Earth had not the victory lost,  
 Set us down then, nor scorn thou to do thus,  
 Where lies Cocytus locked in the deep frost.  
 Make us not go to Typho or Tityus!<sup>x</sup>  
 This man can give what here is languished for.  
 Bend thee then down, nor curl thy lip at us.  
 He can thy fame yet upon earth restore:  
 He l'ives, and him long life doth yet abide  
 If to itself Grace call him not before."  
 Thus spake the Master, and quickly from his side [130]  
 He stretched the hands which Hercules assayed  
 Of old in mighty grapple, and took my Guide.  
 When Virgil felt their grasp upon him laid  
 He said, "Come hither, and let me take thee," and then  
 Of me and of himself one bundle made.  
 Such as the Garisenda seems to men<sup>xi</sup>  
 Beneath its leaning, when clouds pass on high,  
 And counter-wise it seemeth then to lean,  
 Such seemed Antaeus to me, who stood to eye  
 His bending; and it frightened so my mind [140]  
 That any other road I longed to try.  
 But gently on the floor which keeps confined<sup>xii</sup>

---

<sup>ix</sup> 115. *In the valley of Bagrada, near Zama, Scipio conquered Hannibal.*

<sup>x</sup> 124. "Typho" and "Tityus": two other giants.

<sup>xi</sup> 136-138. "Garisenda": one of the two famous leaning towers in Bologna. To an observer standing beneath the overhang, and looking upward, a cloud passing over the tower, in the direction opposite to its slope, makes the structure seem to be falling.

<sup>xii</sup> 142. "On the floor . . .": ninth circle.

Judas with Lucifer, he down at last  
Set us, nor lingered over us inclined,  
But raised himself, as in a ship the mast.

# Canto XXXII

*The Ninth Circle is formed by the frozen waters of Cocytus, into which all the rivers of Hell descend. It is divided into four concentric rings. The outermost is called Caina, from Cain who killed his brother, and contains those who have done violence to their own kin. The second is called Antenora, from Antenor the Trojan, and contains those who, like him, betrayed their country. The other two are called Ptolomea and Giudecca. In Caina Dante finds the two sons of Alberto degli Alberti frozen into the ice: they had killed each other. Dante learns who they are from Camicion de' Pazzi. Moving into Antenora—for there is no material division between the rings of this circle—he strikes his foot against the head of Bocca degli Abbati, the traitor on the Florentine side at the battle of Montaperti; Bocca refuses to tell his name, though Dante discovers it, but is eager to tell of other traitors. Passing on, Dante sees two sinners frozen in one hole, one of whom gnaws the head of the other.*

IF I HAD rhymes to rasp and words to grate  
Congenial with the grimness of the pit  
Whereon all the other scarps collect their weight,  
I should crush out the juice of my conceit  
More fully; but not having them, I fall  
Into fear, being constrained to tell of it.  
For to portray the bottom and core of all  
The world is no feat to essay in sport,  
No, nor for tongues that *Mamma, Pappa*, call.<sup>i</sup>  
But may those Ladies now my verse support<sup>ii</sup>  
Through whom Thebes rose up to Amphion's note  
So that my words may not the truth distort.  
O rabble above all others misbegot,  
Who are in the place to speak of which is hard,  
Better on earth ye were born sheep or goat!

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 9. Not fit for a childish tongue.

<sup>ii</sup> 10. "Ladies": the Muses, thanks to whom Amphion's lyre charmed the rocks to move and form the walls of Thebes.

When we were down within the well's dark ward  
 Under the Giant's feet, and yet more low,  
 And still on the high wall was my regard,  
 I heard a voice say: "Look how thou dost go!  
 Beware that thy feet spurn not as they pass [20]  
 The heads of thy sad brethren worn with woe."  
 Whereat I turned, and saw a great morass<sup>iii</sup>  
 Before me and beneath, whose icy flood  
 Had likeness not of water but of glass.  
 Never in Austria did Danube broad  
 Darken his wintry stream with veil so thick,  
 Nor Don afar beneath the freezing cloud,  
 As there was here: for even were Tambernic<sup>iv</sup>  
 Or Pietrapana down upon it shot, [30]  
 It would not, ev'n at the edge, have given a creak.  
 Like, when the peasant-woman dreams of what  
 She'll glean afield, the frogs that, every one  
 With muzzle out of water, croaking squat,  
 So livid, up to where men's shame is shown,  
 The desolate shades were in the ice confined,  
 Setting their teeth to the stork's chattering tune.  
 Each of them downward held his face inclined.  
 And by the mouth their bitter cold was seen  
 And by the eyes the torment of their mind.  
 When I had looked awhile upon that scene, [40]  
 I turned, and at my feet saw two close-prest  
 So that their hair commingled in between.  
 "Tell me, ye who are crushed so, breast to breast,"  
 Said I, "who are ye?" And back their necks they bent,  
 And when to me their gaze they had addressed,  
 Their eyes, before moist but with tears unspent,  
 Gushed down over the lips, and what forth-welled,  
 The frost bound fast, and stopt again their vent.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 22. The "sad brethren" who thus address Dante from the ice, are the counts of Mangona.

<sup>iv</sup> 28-29. "Tambernic" is an unidentified mountain. "Pietrapana" is a mountain in the Apennines.

Log to log clamping-iron never held  
 So firmly; wherefore with their heads they sparred, [50]  
 Butting like goats, such rage within them swelled.  
 And one who had both ears by cold quite marred,  
 With brow still bent, said: "Why with scrutiny  
 As in a glass look'st thou on us so hard?  
 If thou desire to learn who these two be,  
 The vale wherefrom Bisenzo's waters flow<sup>v</sup>  
 They and their father Albert held in fee.<sup>vi</sup>  
 They issued from one body: Caina through  
 Thou well may'st search and never find a shade  
 More worthy to be stuck in the icy glue; [60]  
 Not him whose breast and shadow by the blade<sup>vii</sup>  
 In Arthur's hand were cloven at one blow;  
 Not Focaccia; nor him who with his head<sup>viii</sup>  
 Soblocks my sight, it can no further go,  
 And Sassol Mascheroni had for name:<sup>ix</sup>  
 If thou be Tuscan, him wilt thou well know.  
 And lest thou tease me further speech to frame,  
 Know that Camicion de' Pazzi I was,<sup>x</sup>  
 And wait for Carlin to excuse my shame."  
 Then saw I countless visages, alas! [70]  
 Purpled with cold, that made me shudder, and still  
 The shudder comes when frozen pools I pass.  
 As we were going toward the middle still  
 Where the universe concentrates all its weight  
 And I was trembling in the eternal chill,  
 Whether it was by will or chance or fate

---

<sup>v</sup> 56. The "Bisenzo" is a little stream that runs near Prato.

<sup>vi</sup> 57. Alberto, count of Mangona. His sons quarrelled over their inheritance and killed each other.

<sup>vii</sup> 61. "Him whose breast . . .": Mordrec, the treacherous nephew of King Arthur, who was pierced by such a blow from him that, when the weapon was pulled out, a ray of sunlight traversed his body.

<sup>viii</sup> 63. "Focaccia" de' Cancellieri, of Pistoia, killed one of his relatives in a tailor's shop.

<sup>ix</sup> 65. "Sassol Mascheroni" murdered a nephew to secure his inheritance.

<sup>x</sup> 68-9. Of Camicion de' Pazzi nothing certain is known. He is said to have treacherously slain a kinsman named Ubertino. "Carlino" de' Pazzi is still alive; he was to commit his great crime in 1302, when he was bribed to surrender to the Florentine Blacks the castle of Pietravigne.

I know not, but as 'mid the heads I went  
 Hard against one my stumbling foot I set.  
 "Why dost thou trample me?" it made lament;  
 "If thou com'st not the vengeance to increase [80]  
 For Montaperti, why, then, me torment?"<sup>xi</sup>  
 And I: "Wait, Master, here, that he may ease  
 My mind of a certain doubt that I have had.  
 Then will I haste as much as thou dost please."  
 The Leader stood: then spoke I to that shade  
 Who still kept bitterly blaspheming there,  
 "What art thou, who dost others so upbraid?"  
 "Who art thou, who dost through Antenora dare  
 Come smiting others," said he, "on the cheek?  
 Wert thou alive, it were too much to bear." [90]  
 "Alive I am," replied I, "and if thou seek  
 Fame, it may profit that thy name be writ  
 Among the other names whereof I speak."  
 And he: "My craving is quite opposite.  
 Take thyself off; vex me no more; be sped.  
 To flatter on this slope thou hast small wit."  
 Then seizing him by the hair behind, I said:  
 "Needs must I have thy name from thine own lip  
 Or not a hair remains upon thy head."  
 Whence he to me: "Though all my scalp thou strip, [100]  
 Til tell not who I am; I will resist,  
 Though over me a thousand times thou trip."  
 Already I had his hair twined in my fist,  
 And more than one tuft had I plucked away,  
 The while he howled, nor would his face up-twist.  
 When another cried: "What ails thee, Bocca, say!  
 Is it not enough to chatter with thy jaws?  
 Must thou howl too? What fiend has thee for prey?"

---

<sup>xi</sup> 81. The mention of Montaperti arouses Dante's suspicions. This was the disastrous defeat of the Florentine Guelphs in 1260 by the Sienese Ghibellines. The rout was attributed to the traitor Bocca degli Abati (see line 106, and the Argument).

"Speak not now," said I, "there's no longer cause;  
 For to thy shame, accursed traitor thou! [110]  
 I'll tell the truth of what thy treachery was."  
 "Away!" he answered. "Blab, I care not how.  
 But if thou get hence, let the tale be told  
 Of him who had his tongue so prompt but now.  
 Here in his place he rues the Frenchman's gold.  
 Thou canst say: 'Him of Duera I espied,<sup>xii</sup>  
 There where the sinners ache amid the cold.'  
 Shouldst thou be questioned who was there beside,  
 Thou hast at hand the Beccheria here<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Who, with his gorget slit by Florence, died. [120]  
 Further on, I think, is Gianni de' Soldanier,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Ganelon, and Tebaldello, who made the trap,<sup>xv</sup>  
 Opening Faenza when all slept in her."  
 We had left him now behind, when in one gap  
 Frozen together two so close I saw  
 That the one head to the other was a cap.  
 And as upon a crust a famished jaw,  
 So the uppermost, there where the brain joins with  
 The nape, did eagerly the other gnaw.  
 Not otherwise did Tydeus' frenzied teeth<sup>xvi</sup> [130]  
 Upon the brows of Menalippus feed  
 Than he upon the skull and parts beneath.  
 "O thou who showest by such bestial deed  
 Thy hatred upon him thou dost devour,  
 Tell me why," said I; "but be this agreed,  
 That, if with reason thou complain so sore,

---

<sup>xii</sup> 116. Buoso da Duera of Cremona, being bribed by the French, allowed, in 1265, the army of Charles of Anjou, to pass by the Ghibelline forces.

<sup>xiii</sup> 119. Tesauo dei Beccheria of Pavia was beheaded by the Guelfs of Florence for conducting secret negotiations with the Ghibelline exiles.

<sup>xiv</sup> 121. "Gianni de' Soldanier," in 1266, headed a mob against his Ghibelline associates.

<sup>xv</sup> 122. "Ganelon" is the famous traitor to Charlemagne, at Roncesvalles. The Ghibelline Tebaldello surrendered to the Bolognese Guelfs his own city of Faenza.

<sup>xvi</sup> 130. Tydeus, one of the seven kings who attacked Thebes, was mortally wounded by Menalippus, whom he succeeded in killing. Before dying, he called for the head of his opponent, and gnawed it fiercely.

I, knowing who ye are and what his crime,  
May yet on earth above repay thy score,  
So my tongue be not withered ere the time."



# Canto XXXIII

*The two sinners are Count Ugolino and the Archbishop of Pisa, both traitors. Ugolino, having the chief power in Pisa, where he was head of the Guelfs, allied himself with the Archbishop, the leader of the Ghibellines, in order to get rid of his nephew; then the Archbishop turned against him and had him and his four sons imprisoned in a tower and starved to death, as Ugolino now describes to Dante. After an outburst of bitter indignation against Pisa, Dante passes on with Virgil to the third ring, the Ptolomea, so called from Ptolemy, whose treacherous act of murder is told in the Book of Maccabees. Here they find Friar Alberic, who invited his brother and nephew to a feast and then had them killed; the signal to the murderers being "Bring in the fruit." He explains the peculiar privilege of Ptolomea, that sometimes a man is brought there still alive, leaving a demon in his body on earth. This is the case with him and with Branca d'Oria, who had his father-in-law, Michel Zanche (already met with in Malebolge), murdered.*

THAT SINNER raised up from the brute repast  
His mouth, wiping it on the hairs left few  
About the head he had all behind made waste.  
Then he began: "Thou willest that I renew  
Desperate grief, that wrings my very heart  
Even at the thought, before I tell it you.  
But if my words prove seed for fruit to start  
Of infamy for the traitor I gnaw now  
Thou shalt hear words that with my weeping smart.  
Albeit I know not who thou art, nor how  
Thou hast descended hither, Florentine,  
Unless thy speech deceive me, seemest thou.  
Know then that I was the Count Ugolin,  
And this man Roger, the Archbishop: why  
I neighbour him so close, shall now be seen.  
That by the malice of his plotting I,  
Trusting in him, was seized by treachery,

[10]

Needs not to tell, nor that I came to die.  
 But what hath not yet been reported thee,  
 How cruel was that dying, hear, and then [20]  
 Judge with what injury he hath injured me.  
 The narrow slit within the prison-pen  
 That has from me the name of Famine's Tower  
 (And it must yet imprison other men)  
 Had shown me through its chink the beam of more  
 Than one moon, when the dream of evil taste<sup>i</sup>  
 For me the curtain of the future tore.  
 This man appeared as master and lord who chased<sup>ii</sup>  
 The wolf, and the wolf-cubs, over the mount  
 That lets not Pisan eyes on Lucca rest. [30]  
 Hounds, trained and lean and eager, led the hunt  
 Where with Gualandi and Sismondi went<sup>iii</sup>  
 Lanfranchi; these he had posted in the front.  
 Full soon it seemed both sire and sons were spent;  
 And in my vision the strained flanks grew red  
 Where by the tearing teeth the flesh was rent.  
 When I awoke before the dawn, in dread,  
 I heard my children crying in their sleep,  
 Them who were with me, and they cried for bread.  
 Cruel art thou if thou from tears canst keep [40]  
 To think of what my heart misgave in fear.  
 If thou weep not, at what then canst thou weep?  
 By now they were awake, and the hour drew near  
 When food should be set by us on the floor.  
 Still in the trouble of our dreams we were:  
 And down in the horrible tower I heard the door  
 Nailed up. Without a word I looked anew

---

<sup>i</sup> 26. *Just before dawn of the day when the door is to be nailed up, Ugolino has an allegorical dream; from lines 38-39 we learn that his companions have ominous dreams, but of a more literal character.*

<sup>ii</sup> 28. *"This man": Archbishop Ruggeri.*

<sup>iii</sup> 32-33. *Gualandi, Sismondi and Lanfranchi are the leaders of the Pisan Ghibellines; in the dream they figure as huntsmen.*

Into my sons' faces, all the four.  
 I wept not, so to stone within I grew.  
 They wept; and one, my little Anselm, cried: [50]  
 "You look so, Father, what has come on you?"  
 But I shed not a tear, neither replied  
 All that day nor the next night, until dawn  
 Of a new day over the world rose wide.  
 A little of light crept in upon the stone  
 Of that dungeon of woe; and I saw there  
 On those four faces the aspect of my own.  
 I bit upon both hands in my despair;  
 And they supposing it was in the access  
 Of hunger, rose up with a sudden prayer, [60]  
 And said: 'O Father, it will hurt much less  
 If you of us eat: take what once you gave  
 To clothe us, this flesh of our wretchedness.'  
 Then, not to make them sadder, I made me brave.  
 That day and the one after we were dumb.  
 Hard earth, couldst thou not open for our grave?  
 But when to the fourth morning we were come,  
 Gaddo at my feet stretched himself with a cry:  
 'Father, why won't you help me?' and lay numb  
 And there died. Ev'n as thou seest me, saw I, [70]  
 One after the other, the three fall: they drew,  
 Between the fifth and sixth day, their last sigh.  
 I, blind now, groping arms about them threw,  
 And still called on them that were two days gone.  
 Then fasting did what anguish could not do."<sup>iv</sup>  
 He ceased, and twisting round his eyes, thereon  
 Seized again on the lamentable skull  
 With teeth strong as a dog's upon the bone.  
 Ah, Pisa! thou offence to the whole people

---

<sup>iv</sup> 75. *Hunger did more than grief could do: it caused my death.*

Of the fair land where sound is heard of *Si*,<sup>v</sup> [80]  
 Since vengeance in thy neighbours' hands is dull,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Caprara and Gorgona shifted be<sup>vii</sup>  
 Into Arno's mouth, and Arno back be rolled,  
 That every living soul be drowned in theel  
 For if Count Ugolin by treachery sold<sup>viii</sup>  
 Thy forts, it was not cause thou shouldst torment  
 His little sons, whatever of him was told.  
 Their youth, O thou new Thebes, made innocent  
 Uguiccone and Brigata, and those<sup>ix</sup>  
 Two others named already in that lament.<sup>x</sup> [90]  
 We passed on, where the frost imprisons close  
 Another crew, stark in a rugged heap,  
 Not bent down, but reversed all where they froze.  
 The very weeping there forbids to weep;  
 And the grief, finding in the eyes a stop,  
 Turns inward, to make anguish bite more deep.  
 For their first tears collect in one great drop,  
 And like a vizor of crystal, in the space  
 Beneath the brows, fill all the hollow up.  
 And now although, as with a callous place [100]  
 Upon the skin, because the cold stung so,  
 All feeling had departed from my face,  
 It seemed as if I felt some wind to blow.  
 Wherefore I: "Master, who is it moves this air?  
 Is not all heat extinguished here below?"

---

<sup>v</sup> 80. The languages of Europe were classified according to the word for "yes," Italian being the language of *si*.

<sup>vi</sup> 81. "Thy neighbours": Lucca and Florence, which waged bitter war against Pisa.

<sup>vii</sup> 82. "Caprara and Gorgona": two small islands in the sea not far from the mouth of the Arno, beside which Pisa lies.

<sup>viii</sup> 85. The archbishop represented to the Pisans that Ugolino, in 1285, had betrayed them in the matter of five strongholds which he had allowed Lucca and Florence to occupy. In reality the cession of these castles was a necessary piece of diplomacy.

<sup>ix</sup> 89. Thebes being the wickedest city of the ancients, Dante calls Pisa the "new Thebes."

<sup>x</sup> 90. "Those two others": Anselmuccio and Gaddo. Gaddo and Uguccione were Ugolino's sons, Brigata and Anselmuccio his grandsons.

Whereto he answered: "Soon shalt thou be where,  
Seeing the cause which poureth down the gust,  
Thine eye to this the answer shall declare."

And one sad shadow amid the icy crust

Cried to us: "O ye souls, so cruel found,

[110]

That into the last dungeon ye are thrust,

Raise the stiff veils wherein my face is bound,

So that the grief which chokes my heart have vent

A little, ere the weeping harden round."

Wherefore I: "Tell me, if I to this consent,

Who thou art; if I do not succour thee,

May I to the bottom of the ice be sent."

"I am Friar Alberic," then he answered me;<sup>xi</sup>

"He of the fruits out of the bad garden,

Who, dates for figs, receive here my full fee."

[120]

"Oh," replied I to him, "thou art dead, then,

Already?" He answered, "I have no knowledge

How stands my body in the world of men.

This Ptolomea hath such privilege

That often a soul falls down into this place

Ere Atropos the fated thread abridge.<sup>xii</sup>

And that thou may'st more willingly the glaze

Of tears wipe from my cheek-bones' nakedness,

Know that, on the instant when the soul betrays,

As I did, comes a demon to possess

[130]

Its body, and thenceforth ruleth over it

Until the timed hour come for its decease.

The soul falls headlong to this cistern-pit:

The body of him who winters there behind

Perhaps among men still appears to sit.

Thou must, if newly come, call it to mind;

It is Ser Branca d' Oria. Years enough

---

<sup>xi</sup> 118-120. "Friar Alberic": see the Argument. "Dates for figs," that is: I am being repaid with interest, a date being worth more than a fig.

<sup>xii</sup> 126. "Atropos": the Fate who cuts the thread of life.

Have passed since he was to his prison assigned."  
 "I think," I said, "that thou dost lie; whereof  
 Proof is, that Branca d' Oria never died, [140]  
 And eats, drinks, sleeps, and puts clothes on and off."  
 "Up there with the Evil Talons," he replied,  
 "Where sticky pitch is boiling in its bed,  
 Not yet had Michel Zanche come to bide,  
 When this man left a devil in his stead<sup>xiii</sup>  
 In his own body, and in one of his house  
 Who with him played the traitor and did the deed.  
 But stretch thy hand out hither and uncloset  
 My eyes for me." And I unclosed them not;  
 And to be rude to him was courteous. [150]  
 Ah, Genoese, who have utterly forgot  
 All honesty, and in corruption abound,  
 Why from the earth will none your people blot?  
 For with Romagna's evillest spirit I found<sup>xiv</sup>  
 One of you, who, for deeds he did contrive<sup>xv</sup>  
 Even now in soul is in Cocytus drowned  
 And still in body appears on earth alive.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 145. Branca's soul, leaving a devil in its stead, reached this ninth circle as soon as the murdered man's soul (Michel Zanche) reached the eighth.

<sup>xiv</sup> 154. Alberigo de' Mantredi.

<sup>xv</sup> 155. Branca d'Oria.

# Canto XXXIV

*There remains the last ring of the circle, the Giudecca (so named from Judas Iscariot), where the sinners are wholly imprisoned in the ice. Here at the centre of the earth is the monstrous form of Lucifer, half above the ice and half below it. He has three heads; and in his teeth are mangled the spirits of Judas, of Brutus, and of Cassius. All has now been seen. Dante puts his arms round Virgil's neck; and Virgil, clinging by Lucifer's shaggy side, lets himself down to his waist; there he turns round (at the centre of gravity in the universe), so that his head is where his feet had been, and climbs in the opposite direction, ie. toward the antipodes, which, except for the Mount of Purgatory, is all water. By a long passage in the rock the poets climb up till through a round opening they see the stars, and emerge at last in the southern hemisphere on the shores of the Mount of Purgatory surrounded by the sea.*

THE BANNERS of the King of Hell proceed

Toward us," my Guide said. "If thine eyes avail  
To espy him, forward gaze and give good heed."

As when the thick autumnal mists exhale,

Or when night draws down on our hemisphere,  
A mill shows far away with turning sail,

Such structure to my eyes seemed now to appear;

And, for the wind that blew, I shrank behind  
My Master, because else no rock was near.

Now was I (verse for them I fear to find)

[10]

There where the frozen spirits as in glass  
Were covered wholly, and there like straw they shined.

Some prostrate lie, some standing in their place,

This on its head, that on its soles upright,  
Another like a bow bends feet to face.

When we had gone so far as appeared right

For the good Master's purpose to reveal  
To me the creature that was once so bright,

He turned about and stayed me upon my heel,

Saying: "Behold Dis, and the place behold [20]  
 Where thou thy soul with fortitude must steel."  
 How faint I then became, how frozen cold,  
 Ask me not, Reader; for I write it not,  
 Because all speech would fail, whate'er it told.  
 I died not, yet of life remained no jot.  
 Think thou then, if of wit thou hast any share,  
 What I became, deprived of either lot.  
 The Emperor of the kingdom of despair  
 From the mid-breast emerged out of the ice;  
 And I may with a giant more compare<sup>i</sup> [30]  
 Than giants with those monstrous arms of his:  
 Consider now how huge must be the whole  
 Proportioned to the part of such a size.  
 If he was once fair as he now is foul,<sup>ii</sup>  
 And 'gainst his Maker dared his brows to raise,  
 Fitly from him all streams of sorrow roll.  
 O what a marvel smote me with amaze  
 When I beheld three faces on his head!  
 The one in front showed crimson to my gaze;  
 Thereunto were the other faces wed [40]  
 Over the middle of either shoulder's height,  
 And where the crest would be, their union made.  
 The right was coloured between yellow and white,  
 The left was such to look upon as those  
 Who come from where Nile flows out of the night.  
 Two mighty wings from under each arose  
 Commensurable with so great a bird:  
 Never did sails at sea such form disclose.  
 Feathers they had not, but like bats appeared  
 The fashion of them, and with these he flapped [50]  
 So that three winds were from their motion stirred.

---

<sup>i</sup> 30-31. *A rough computation makes Dis more than a third of a mile in stature.*

<sup>ii</sup> 34-36. *If Lucifer's beauty, as God created him, was equal to his present ugliness, his revolt against his Creator was an act of such monstrous ingratitude as to be a fitting source of all subsequent sin and sorrow.*



Thence all Cocytus was in frost enwrap.  
 He wept with six eyes, and the tears beneath  
 Over three chins with bloody slaver dropt.  
 At each mouth he was tearing with his teeth  
 A sinner, as is flax by heckle frayed;<sup>iii</sup>  
 Each of the three of them so suffereth.  
 The one in front naught of the biting made  
 Beside the clawing, which at whiles so wrought  
 That on the back the skin remained all flayed. [60]  
 "That soul up there to the worst penance brought  
 Is Judas the Iscariot," spoke my Lord.  
 "His head within, he plies his legs without.  
 Of the other two, hanging with head downward,  
 Brutus it is whom the black mouth doth maul.  
 See how he writhes and utters not a word!  
 Cassius the other who seems so large to sprawl.  
 But night again is rising; time is now<sup>iv</sup>  
 That we depart from hence. We have seen all."  
 I clung about his neck, he showed me how, [70]  
 And choosing well the time and place to trust,  
 When the great wings were opened wide enow,  
 He clutched him to the shaggy-sided bust,  
 And climbed from tuft to tuft down, slipping by  
 Between the matted hair and icy crust.  
 When we were come to that part where the thigh  
 Turns on the thickness of the haunches' swell,  
 My Guide with effort and with difficulty  
 Turned his head where his feet had been; the fell  
 He grappled then as one who is mounting, so [80]  
 That I conceived turning back to Hell.  
 "Hold fast by me, for needs must that we go,"  
 Said my Guide, panting like a man quite spent,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 56. "Heckle": a hemp-brake.

<sup>iv</sup> 68. By the time of Jerusalem, it is the evening of Saturday, April 9, 1300. The poets have spent twenty-four hours in their downward journey.

“By such a ladder from the core of woe.”  
 And issuing through the rock where it was rent<sup>v</sup>  
 He made me sit upon the rock’s edge there;  
 Then toward me moved, eye upon step intent.  
 I lifted up my eyes, and Lucifer  
 Thought to have seen as I had left him last;  
 And saw him with legs uppermost appear. [90]  
 And if into perplexity I was cast  
 Let them be judge who are so gross of wit  
 They see not what the point is I had passed.  
 “Rise up now,” said the Master, “upon thy feet.  
 The way is long, and arduous the road.  
 The sun in mid-tierce now repairs his heat.”<sup>vi</sup>  
 No palace-chamber was it that now showed  
 Its flinty floor, but natural dungeon this,  
 Which but a starving of the light allowed.  
 “Master, before I pluck me from the abyss,” [100]  
 Said I, when I had risen erect, “speak on  
 A little, so my error to dismiss.  
 Where is the ice? And how is he, head prone,  
 Thus fixt? And how so soon is it possible  
 The sun from evening has to morning run?”<sup>vii</sup>  
 And he: “Thou dost imagine thyself still  
 On the other side of the centre, where I gript  
 The hair of the Worm that thrids the earth with ill.  
 There wast thou while with thee I downward slipt;  
 But when I turned round, from that point we fled [110]  
 Whereonto weight from every part is heaped.

---

<sup>v</sup> 85. *Through the chink between Satan’s thigh and the rocky bottom of the ice, they emerge into a cavern which is situated on the other side of the earth’s centre. Virgil puts Dante down on the brink of the crevice.*

<sup>vi</sup> 96. “Tierce” embracing the three hours following sunrise, “mid-tierce” is about half-past seven o’clock in the morning.

<sup>vii</sup> 105. *As Dante presently learns, the change from evening to morning is due, not to any unusual movement of the sun, but to the altered position of the observers, who have passed from one hemisphere to the other. The difference in time between them is 12 hours.*

Now thou art under the hemisphere's deep bed<sup>viii</sup>  
 Opposite that where spreads the continent  
 Of land, 'neath whose meridian perished  
 The Man who sinless came and sinless went.  
 Thou hast thy feet upon a little sphere,  
 Whose surface is Giudecca's complement;  
 When it is evening there, 'tis morning here.  
 And he whose hair for us a ladder made  
 Is still fixed as before and doth not stir.  
 He fell from Heaven on this side and there stayed.<sup>ix</sup>  
 And all the land which ere that stood forth dry,  
 Covered itself with sea, by him dismayed,  
 And came to our hemisphere; and, him to fly,  
 Perhaps, what on this side is seen around  
 Left its place here void and shot up on high."  
 There is a cave that stretches underground  
 Far from Beelzebub as his tomb extends,  
 Known not by sight, but only by the sound  
 Of a stream flowing, that therein descends  
 Along the hollow of rock that it has gnawed,  
 Nor falleth steeply down, but winds and bends.  
 The Guide and I, entering that secret road,  
 Toiled to return into the world of light,  
 Nor thought on any resting-place bestowed.  
 We climbed, he first, I following, till to sight  
 Appeared those things of beauty that heaven wears  
 Glimpsed through a rounded opening, faintly bright;

[120]

[130]

---

<sup>viii</sup> 112-117. "Hemisphere" means here hemisphere of the sky, not of the earth. It is the celestial hemisphere which covers the terrestrial Hemisphere of Water. Opposite to it is the celestial hemisphere "neath whose meridian" lies Jerusalem, where Jesus was slain. The "sphere" of line 116 is the circular block of ice and stone immediately surrounding Satan. On the Hell side it is ice, on the other side it is stone.

<sup>ix</sup> 121-126. At the time of their creation, sea and land were not separated. Then Satan fell, and all the land shrank away from the surface of the side where he descended, leaving a vast empty bed to be filled by the sea. The ground which he traversed "perhaps" fled away from him, and issued forth to form the Island of Purgatory, leaving a vacant cavern near the centre.

Thence issuing, we beheld again the stars.<sup>x</sup>

---

<sup>x</sup> 139. *The descent through Hell occupied Friday night and Saturday. Each of the three great divisions of the poem ends with the sweet and hopeful word "stars."*

**PURGATORIO**

# Canto I

*Having emerged from Hell, Virgil and Dante find themselves on the eastern shores of the island-mountain of Purgatory, which is at the antipodes of Jerusalem. It is the dawn of Easter Day, 1300. Four stars, symbols of the cardinal virtues (perhaps suggested by descriptions of the Southern Cross), blaze in the sky. Cato, the Guardian of Purgatory, appears to the poets and questions them. Being satisfied by Virgil, he tells them to wait for the daylight; but first Virgil is to wash Dante's face with dew and to gird him with a reed.*

NOW hoisteth sail the pinnacle of my wit  
For better waters, and more smoothly flies  
Since of a sea so cruel she is quit,  
And of that second realm, which purifies  
Man's spirit of its soilure, will I sing,  
Where it becometh worthy of Paradise.  
Here let dead Poesy from her grave up-spring,  
O sacred Muses, whom I serve and haunt,  
And sound, Calliope, a louder string<sup>i</sup>  
To accompany my song with that high chant [10]  
Which smote the Magpies' miserable choir  
That they despaired of pardon for their vaunt.  
Tender colour of orient sapphire  
Which on the air's translucent aspect grew,  
From mid heaven to horizon deeply clear,  
Made pleasure in mine eyes be born anew  
Soon as I issued forth from the dead air  
That had oppressed both eye and heart with rue.  
The planet that promoteth Love was there,  
Making all the East to laugh and be joyful, [20]  
And veiled the Fishes that escorted her.

---

<sup>i</sup> 9-11. The Magpies were the nine daughters of King Pieros; they challenged the Muses to a contest and, being worsted by one of them, Calliope, became so insolent that they were turned into birds.

I turned to the right and contemplated all<sup>ii</sup>  
 The other pole; and four stars o'er me came,<sup>iii</sup>  
 Never yet seen save by the first people.  
 All the heavens seemed exulting in their flame.  
 O widowed Northern clime, from which is ta'en  
 The happy fortune of beholding them!  
 When from my gaze I had severed them again,  
 Turned somewhat to the other pole, whose law  
 By now had sunken out of sight the Wain, [30]  
 Near me an old man solitary I saw,<sup>iv</sup>  
 In his aspect so much to be revered  
 That no son owes a father more of awe.  
 Long and with white hairs brindled was his beard,  
 Like to his locks, of which a double list  
 Down on his shoulders and his breast appeared.  
 The beams of the four sacred splendours kist  
 His countenance, and they glorified it so  
 That in its light the sun's light was not missed.  
 "Who are ye, that against the blind stream go," [40]  
 Shaking those venerable plumes, he said,  
 "And flee from the eternal walls of woe?  
 Who hath guided you? what lamp your footsteps led,  
 Issuing from that night without fathom  
 Which makes a blackness of the vale of dread?  
 Is the law of the abyss thus broken from?  
 Or is there some new change in Heaven's decrees,  
 That, being damned, unto my crags ye come?"  
 Then did my leader on my shoulder seize

---

<sup>ii</sup> 22. Venus was dimming, by her brighter light, the constellation of the Fishes; the time indicated is an hour or more before sunrise.

<sup>iii</sup> 23-24. Dante invents here a constellation of four bright lights, corresponding to the Great Bear of the north. These luminaries symbolise the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice. Adam and Eve before the fall ("the first people"), dwelling at the top of the mountain of Purgatory, beheld these stars.

<sup>iv</sup> 31. This custodian of Purgatory (an example of that free will which the souls in his domain are striving, by purification, to regain), is Cato the Younger, who on earth killed himself in Utica rather than submit to Caesar.

And with admonishing hand and word and sign [50]  
 Make reverent my forehead and my knees;  
 Then spoke: "I come not of my own design.  
 From Heaven came down a Lady, at whose prayer,  
 To help this man, I made his pathway mine.  
 But since it is thy will that we declare  
 More of our state, needs must that I obey  
 And tell thee all: deny thee I would not dare.  
 He hath never yet seen darken his last day,  
 Yet so near thereto through his folly went  
 That short time was there to re-shape his way. [60]  
 Even as I said, to his rescue I was sent,  
 Nor other way appeared that was not vain  
 But this on which our footsteps now are bent.  
 I have shown him all the sinners in their pain,  
 And now intend to show him those who dwell  
 Under thy charge and cleanse themselves of stain.  
 How I have brought him were too long to tell.  
 Our steps a Virtue, helping from on high,  
 That he might see thee and hear thee, did impel.  
 Now on his coming look with gracious eye. [70]  
 He seeketh freedom, that so precious thing,  
 How precious, he knows who for her will die.  
 Thou knowest: for her sake, death had no sting  
 In Utica, where thou didst leave what yet  
 The great day shall for thy bright raiment bring.  
 The eternal laws are still inviolate;  
 For he doth live, nor me doth Minos bind.<sup>v</sup>  
 But I am of the circle where the chaste eyes wait  
 Of Marcia, visibly praying that thy mind,  
 O sainted breast, still hold her for thine own. [80]  
 For love of her, then, be to us inclined.  
 Suffer that thy seven realms to us be shown;

---

<sup>v</sup> 77-79. Minos, the Judge of Hell, does not bind Virgil, who dwells in the Limbus. "Marcia" was Cato's wife.



And thanks of thee shall unto her be brought,  
 If there below thou deign still to be known."  
 "Marcia was so pleasing to my thought  
 Yonder," he answered, "and myself so fond,  
 Whate'er she willed, I could refuse her naught.  
 Now no more may she move me, since beyond<sup>vi</sup>  
 The evil stream she dwells, by the decree  
 Made when I was delivered from that bond. [90]  
 But if a heavenly lady hath missioned thee,  
 As thou hast said, of flattery is no need.  
 Enough, that in her name thou askest me.  
 Go then; first gird this man with a smooth reed,  
 And see thou bathe his features in such wise  
 That from all filthiness they may be freed.  
 It were not meet that mist clouded his eyes  
 To dim their vision, when he goes before  
 The first of those that serve in Paradise.  
 This little isle, there where for evermore [100]  
 The waters beat all round about its foot,  
 Bears rushes on the soft and oozy shore.  
 No other plant that would put forth a shoot  
 Or harden, but from life there is debarred,  
 Since to the surf it yields not from its root.  
 And then return not this way afterward.  
 The sun, at point to rise now, shall reveal  
 Where the mount yieldeth an ascent less hard."  
 So he vanished; and I rose up on my heel  
 Without word spoken, and all of me drew back [110]  
 Toward my guide, making with mine eyes appeal.  
 He began: "Son, follow thou in my track.  
 Turn we on our footsteps, for this way the lea  
 Slopes down, where the low banks its boundary make."  
 The dawn was moving the dark hours to flee

---

<sup>vi</sup> 88-90. When Cato was released from Limbus by Christ, he became subject to the law forbidding the blessed to be moved by the fate of the damned.

Before her, and far off amid their wane  
I could perceive the trembling of the sea.  
We paced along the solitary plain,  
Like one who seeks to his lost road a clue,  
And till he reach it deems he walks in vain. [120]  
When we had come there where the melting dew  
Contentends against the sun, being in a place  
Where the cool air but little of it updrew,  
My Lord laid both hands out on the lank grass  
Gently, amid the drops that it retained:  
Wherefore I, conscious what his purpose was,  
Lifted to him my cheeks that tears had stained;  
And at his touch the colour they had worn,  
Ere Hell had overcast it, they regained.  
Then came we down to the land's desert bourne, [130]  
Which never yet saw man that had essayed  
Voyage upon that water and knew return.  
There did he gird me as that other bade.  
O miracle! even as it was before,  
The little plant put forth a perfect blade  
On the instant in the place his fingers tore.

## Canto II

*The sun rises. A boat, steered by an angel, swiftly approaches the shore; it contains a company of spirits brought to Purgatory. These landed, the angel with the boat departs to collect other spirits at the mouth of the Tiber. Among the newcomers Dante recognises a friend; it is Casella the musician. Casella is persuaded to sing, and the spirits gather round to listen, when Cato appears and rebukes them for loitering, and they scatter up the slopes of the mountain.*

NOW the sun touched the horizon with his flame,<sup>i</sup>  
The circle of whose meridian, at the height  
It reaches most, covers Jerusalem;  
And opposite to him in her circling, Night  
Came up from Ganges, and the Scales with her  
That from her hand fall as she grows in might;  
So that the fair cheeks of Aurora, there<sup>ii</sup>  
Where I was, gave their red and white away,  
Sallowing, as if old age had turned them sere.  
We lingered yet by the ocean-marge, as they  
Who think upon the road that lies before  
And in their mind go, but in body stay;  
And lo! as at the approach of morning froze  
Mars through the mist glimmers a fiery red  
Down in the West over the ocean-floor,  
(May mine eyes yet upon that sight be fed!)<sup>iii</sup>  
Appeared, moving across the water, a light  
So swift, all earthly motion it outsped.

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-6. This is one of the astronomical riddles to which our poet was addicted. According to medieval cosmology, Jerusalem and Purgatory are on opposite sides of the earth, 180° from each other: when Jerusalem sees the sun rise, Purgatory sees it set. The river Ganges, which flowed on the eastern confines of the inhabited world, stands for the "east." What we are told, in a devious and ingenious way, is that for the spectators on the island of Purgatory the sun was rising.

<sup>ii</sup> 7-9. The poet transfers to the face of the goddess of dawn (Aurora) the changing colours of the morning sky.

<sup>iii</sup> 16. "May mine eyes . . .": after death, when my soul shall be wafted to Purgatory.

From which when for a space I had drawn my sight  
 Away, and of my Guide the meaning sought, [20]  
 I saw it now grown bigger and more bright.  
 On either side of it I knew not what  
 Of white appeared to gleam out; and below  
 Another whiteness by degrees it got.  
 My master spoke not yet a word, till lo!  
 When those first whitenesses as wings shone free  
 And his eyes now could well the Pilot know,  
 He exclaimed: "Bend, see that thou bend the knee.  
 Behold the Angel of God! Lay hand to hand!  
 Such ministers henceforth thou art to see. [30]  
 Look, how he scorneth aid that man hath planned,  
 And wills not oar nor other sail to ply,  
 But only his own wings from far land to land.  
 See how he has them stretcht up toward the sky,  
 Sweeping the air with that eternal plume  
 Which moulteth not as the hair of things that die."  
 Such an exceeding brightness did allume  
 The Bird of God, who near and nearer bore,  
 Mine eyes to endure him might not now presume,  
 But bent them down; and he came on to shore [40]  
 Upon a barque so swift and light and keen  
 As scarcely a ripple from the water tore.  
 On the heavenly Steersman at the stern was seen  
 Inscribed that blissfulness whereof he knew;  
 And more than a hundred spirits sat within.  
 Together all were singing *In exitu*  
*Israel de Egypto* as one host  
 With what of that psalm doth those words ensue.  
 With the holy sign their company he crossed;  
 Whereat themselves forth on the strand they threw: [50]  
 Swift as he came, he sped, and straight was lost.  
 They that remained seemed without any clue  
 To the strange place, casting a wondering eye

Round them, like one assaying hazards new.  
 On every side the arrowing sun shot high  
 Into the day, and with his bright arrows  
 Had hunted Capricorn from the mid sky,<sup>iv</sup>  
 When the new people lifted up their brows  
 Towards us, and spoke to us: "If ye know it, show  
 What path to us the mountain-side allows." [60]  
 And Virgil answered: "Peradventure you  
 Suppose we have experience of the way;  
 But we are pilgrims, even as ye are too.  
 We came but now, a little before you, nay,  
 By another road than yours, so steep and rude  
 That the climb now will seem to us but play."  
 The spirits, who by my breathing understood  
 That I was still among the living things,  
 Marvelling, became death-pale where they stood.  
 As round a messenger, who the olive brings,<sup>v</sup> [70]  
 Folk, to hear news, each on the other tread,  
 And none is backward with his elbowings,  
 So on my face their gaze intently fed  
 Those spirits, all so fortunate, and forgot  
 Almost to go up and be perfected.  
 One of them now advanced, as if he sought  
 To embrace me, with a love so fond and fain,  
 That upon me to do the like he wrought.  
 O Shades, in all but aspect, void and vain!<sup>vi</sup>  
 Behind it thrice my hands did I enlace, [80]  
 And thrice they came back to my breast again.  
 Wonder, I think, was painted on my face;  
 At which the spirit smiled and backward drew,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 57. At dawn the constellation of Capricorn was on the meridian; it is effaced by the rays of the rising sun.

<sup>v</sup> 70. Bearers of good tidings used to carry an olive branch.

<sup>vi</sup> 79-81. Throughout Hell the souls, though without weight, are not only visible but tangible. On the lower slopes of the mountain of Purgatory, however, Dante cannot touch a shade, although two spirits can still embrace.

And, following it, I sprang forward a pace.  
 Gently it bade me pause: and then I knew  
 Who it was, and prayed him pity on me to show  
 And talk with me as he was used to do.  
 "As in the mortal body I loved thee, so  
 In my release I love thee," he answered me.  
 "Therefore I stay: but thou, why dost thou go?"<sup>vii</sup> [90]  
 "Casella mine, that this place I may see  
 Hereafter," I said, "have I this journey made."<sup>viii</sup>  
 But how hath so much time been stolen from thee?"  
 And he to me: "None have I to upbraid  
 If he who takes when he chooses, and whom,<sup>ix</sup>  
 This passage many times to me forbade.  
 For in a just will hath his will its home.  
 Truly he has taken now these three months past  
 Whoso hath wished to enter, in all welcome.  
 So I, whose eyes on the sea-shore were cast [100]  
 Where Tiber's water by the salt is won,<sup>x</sup>  
 By him was gathered in benignly at last.  
 To that mouth now his wings he urgeth on  
 Because for ever assemble in that spot  
 They who are not to sink towards Acheron."  
 And I: "If a new law forbid thee not  
 Memory and usage of the enamoured song  
 Which used to soothe all wishes of my thought,  
 May it please thee awhile to solace with thy tongue  
 My spirit that, in its mortal mask confined, [110]  
 The journey hither bitterly hath wrung."  
 "Love that discourseth to me in my mind"

---

<sup>vii</sup> 91. Of Casella we know only that he was a musician of Florence and a close friend of the poet and, perhaps, that he set to music Dante's canzone, "Love that discourseth to me in my mind" (see line 112).

<sup>viii</sup> 92-93. Dante's present experience is intended to fit him to return to Purgatory after death. Casella evidently had died some time before, and Dante is astonished to see him just arrived in the other world.

<sup>ix</sup> 95-97. "He who takes . . .": the angelic boatman. "In a just will . . .": the will of God.

<sup>x</sup> 101. The "Tiber's water" signifies allegorically the Church of Rome. There congregate the souls of those who die in its bosom. The souls of the unrepentant descend to Acheron.

Began he then so sweetly, that the sound  
Still in my heart with sweetness is entwined.  
My Master and I, and all that people around  
Who were with him, had faces so content  
As if all else out of their thoughts were drowned.  
We to his notes, entranced, our senses lent:  
And lo! the old man whom all the rest revere  
Crying, "What is this, ye laggard spirits faint? [120]  
What truancy, what loitering is here?  
Haste to the Mount and from the slough be freed  
Which lets not God unto your eyes appear."  
As doves, when picking corn or darnel seed,  
All quiet and close-crowding to that fare,  
Their strut of pride forgotten in their greed,  
If anything appear their hearts to scare  
On the instant leave the food there, where it lies,  
Because they are assailed by greater care,  
So saw I that new company arise, [130]  
And leave the song, and the steep slope essay,  
Like one who goes, knowing not of where he hies:  
Nor with less haste went we upon our way.

# Canto III

*As the two poets proceed towards the mountain, Dante notes that he casts a shadow but that Virgil does not. Virgil calms Dante's perplexities. They arrive at the foot of the mountain and are baffled by the precipitous face of it, when a troop of spirits approaches and by these they are directed. One of their number is Manfred, son of the Emperor Frederick II and King of Sicily. He tells of his death at the battle of Benevento and the contumely done to his body by order of Pope Clement IV. Because he died excommunicate, though repenting at death, he is doomed to a long period of wandering in this Ante-Purgatory.*

ALTHOUGH in hurry so impetuous

They fled, and o'er the plain were scattered wide,

Turned toward the Mount where Justice probeth us,

I pressed me close unto my trusted Guide.

How without him could I have dared to start?

Who would have drawn me up the mountain-side?

Reproach of self seemed biting at his heart.

O honourable conscience, clear and chaste,

How small a fault stings thee to bitter smart!

Soon as his feet had cast aside the haste

[10]

Which in all action marreth dignity,

My mind, which heretofore was self-encased,

Enlarged its scope, to eager search set free,

And I addressed me to the mount, whose head

Loftiest rises heavenward from the sea.

The sun that was behind us flaming red

Was broken before me in the shape that I

Opposed obstruction to the beams he shed.

I turned me aside, put into fear thereby

Of being abandoned, when from me alone

[20]

I saw on the earth in front a shadow lie.

Already had my comforter begun,



Turning full round: "Why art thou still afeared?  
 Believ'st thou not I am with thee and guide thee on?  
 Now is it evening there, where is interred<sup>i</sup>  
 The body within which I shadow made.  
 Naples has it, from Brindisi transferred.  
 If, then, before me nothing lies in shade,  
 Marvel not more than at the heavens, wherein  
 The light of one doth the other not invade.<sup>ii</sup> [30]  
 That power disposes bodies like to mine  
 In torments both of heat and frost to weep  
 Which wills not that its workings we divine.  
 He is mad who hopes that reason in its sweep  
 The infinite way can traverse back and forth  
 Which the Three Persons in one substance keep.  
 With the *quia* stay content, children of earth!<sup>iii</sup>  
 For if the whole before your eyes had lain,  
 No need was there for Mary to give birth.  
 Ye have seen desiring without fruit, in vain, [40]  
 Men such that their desire had been at rest,  
 Which now is given them for eternal pain.  
 Of Aristotle's and of Plato's quest  
 I speak, and many more." His head he sank  
 Here, and no more said, and remained distrest.  
 Meanwhile we had come up to the mountain's flank.  
 There at its foot we found the rock so sheer,  
 Vainly would legs be limber on that bank.  
 'Twixt Lerice and Turbia the most bare,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Most broken landslide, for the going up, [50]  
 Compared to this an easy ladder were.  
 "Now who knows on which hand the scarp may slope

---

<sup>i</sup> 25-27. "Is it evening there . . .": in Italy. Virgil died in Brindisi, but was buried in Naples.

<sup>ii</sup> 30. The nine concentric heavens are transparent.

<sup>iii</sup> 37-42. "Quia": because. The meaning is: be satisfied with knowing the effects. If man had been all-knowing, there would have been no sin, and consequently no atonement; and, if human knowledge had sufficed, the vain longing of the ancient sages (which torments them through eternity) would have been satisfied.

<sup>iv</sup> 49. Between these places the mountains descend steeply to the sea.

So," said my Master, as his steps he stayed,  
 "That one without wings to ascend may hope?"  
 And while, his forehead holding low, he made  
 Scrutiny of the nature of the road,  
 And I the rock above all round surveyed,  
 On the left hand a company now showed  
 Of spirits who moved their feet toward where we were  
 And yet seemed not to move, so slow they trod. [60]  
 Said I to the Master: "Lift thine eyes, for there  
 Behold one who will give us counsel soon,  
 If of thyself thou hast none to declare."  
 He eyed them, and with gladness frankly shown  
 Replied: "Let us go thither, for full slow  
 They come, and thou, confirm thy hope, sweet son."  
 Still was that folk so far, I mean even now  
 When we had made a thousand paces, as  
 A good thrower with his hand would throw,  
 When they all pressed up to the stony mass [70]  
 Of the high cliff and stood, crowding and checked,  
 As he who goes in doubt halteth to gaze.  
 "O ye, well-ended, spirits already elect,"  
 Virgil began, "by that perpetual peace  
 Which, as I think, ye all look to expect,  
 Tell us where slopes the mountain by degrees  
 Such, that it may be possible to ascend;  
 For him who knows most lost hours most displease."  
 As sheep come from the fold where they were penned  
 By one, by two, by three; and, eye and nose [80]  
 Keeping to earth, timid the others stand;  
 And what the first one does the other does,  
 All simple and quiet in their ignorance,  
 And, if she stand still, huddle to her close;  
 So I beheld now moving to advance  
 Toward us, the leader of that happy flock,  
 With stately gait and modest countenance.

When those in front perceived how the light broke  
 Its beams upon the ground on my right flank  
 So that I cast a shadow upon the rock, [90]  
 They halted and a little backward shrank;  
 And those now coming after into view,  
 Not knowing why, with the others all kept rank.  
 "Without your question, I avow to you,  
 This is a man whose body ye perceive,  
 Whereby on the earth the light is cloven through.  
 "Marvel you not for this cause, but believe  
 That not without power which from Heaven he took  
 He seeks this wall's surmounting to achieve."  
 The Master thus; and that most worthy folk [100]  
 Said: "Turn then, and before us enter ye."  
 With the back of the hand they signed, as thus they spoke.  
 And one of them began: "Whoe'er thou be,  
 Turn thy face, as thou goest thus beyond:  
 Consider if ever on earth thou sawest me."  
 I turned and fixedly looked on him: blond  
 He was, and beautiful, of noble mien;  
 But one eye-brow was cleft by a great wound.  
 I disclaimed humbly ever to have seen  
 His person; then "Look on my breast," he said, [110]  
 And showed me, above, a scar upon the skin,  
 Smiling he spoke: "Manfred am I, Manfred,<sup>v</sup>  
 The grandson of Constantia, the Empress;<sup>vi</sup>  
 Wherefore I pray thee, when thou art homeward sped,  
 Seek my fair daughter, her who mother is  
 Of the glory of Sicily and of Aragon,

---

<sup>v</sup> 112. "Manfred am I . . .": see the Argument. Handsome, cultivated, winning, Manfred was the idolised chief of the Ghibellines, and the hated and excommunicated opponent of the Papacy. In 1266, on a plain near Benevento, he was defeated and slain by Charles of Anjou. His body was interred on the battlefield, but Pope Clement IV sent the Archbishop of Cosenza (see line 124) to cast out the corpse, and Manfred's remains were deposited on the bank of the Verde river (see line 131).

<sup>vi</sup> 113-116. "Constantia, the Empress" was the daughter of Roger II of Sicily, the last of the Norman kings. Manfred's "fair daughter" is Constance (see also line 143), the mother of Frederick and James, who became kings respectively of Sicily and Aragon.

And if she have heard aught different, tell her this.  
 After two mortal strokes had quite fordone  
 My broken frame, myself did I commit,  
 Weeping, to him whose mercy spurneth none. [120]  
 Horrible were my sins; but the infinite  
 Goodness hath arms so wide in their embrace  
 That it accepts that which turns back to it.  
 And if Cosenza's pastor, who in chase  
 Of me was sent by Clement, had but once  
 Read well in God the rubric of his grace,  
 Still at the bridge-head would my body's bones  
 Be found near Benevento, as at first,  
 Under the guard of the heaped, heavy stones.  
 Now by the rains they are washed, by winds dispersed [130]  
 Forth of the Kingdom, beside Verde tost,  
 Whither he had borne them with quenched lights, accurst.  
 Not through their malediction is one lost  
 So, that eternal love cannot relent  
 So long as hope has aught of green to boast.  
 True it is that whoso, though he at last repent,  
 In contumacy of Holy Church hath died,  
 Must stay without this bank, refused the ascent,  
 For thirty-fold the time that in the pride  
 Of his presumption he remained, unless [140]  
 In prayers to abridge that term he may confide.  
 See if thou canst not aid my happiness  
 One day, revealing to my good Constance  
 How thou hast seen me, and also this duress;<sup>vii</sup>  
 For here can those there much our weal advance."

---

<sup>vii</sup> 144. Manfred believes that his daughter will shorten by prayer his term of exclusion.

# Canto IV

*The spirits point out a narrow passage in the rock by which the poets are to ascend, and then leave them. Climbing up with difficulty, Virgil and Dante arrive at a terrace which runs round the mountain. They rest awhile; and Dante is puzzled by the fact that, though he is facing east, the sun strikes him on the left; and Virgil explains that this is because they are now in the southern hemisphere. Behind a rock they find a group of spirits in listless attitudes. One of them, Belacqua, a friend of Dante's, tells how, because he delayed his repentance, he is delayed from entering into Purgatory.*

WHEN, through delight or it may be through pain<sup>i</sup>

Conceived by some one faculty of ours,

That faculty doth all the soul enchain,

It seems it gives heed to no other powers;

And this refutes that error which believes

That in us one soul over another flowers;

So when the soul by the ear or the eye receives

What grapples it and strongly clings it round,

Time goes, and naught of it the man perceives.

For 'tis one power that listens to the sound

[10]

And another that which keeps the soul entire:

This one is still at large, and that one bound.

Experience of this truth did I acquire,

Hearing that spirit and marvelling to hear;

For fifty full degrees had mounted higher

The sun, and I had been all unaware,

When we came where those spirits to us cried

With one accord: "What you desire is here."

The villager will in the hedgerow-side

With his fork-full of brambles often block,

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-13. When the soul is absorbed in the operation of one of the senses, no impressions can reach it from another sense. Those who maintain that man has several souls are wrong: if we had two souls, we could attend to two things at once.

What time the grape grows dark, a gap more wide  
 Than was the cleft by which we scaled the rock,  
 My leader, and I after him, alone,  
 As soon as we had parted from that flock.  
 One goes to San Leo up, to Noli down,<sup>ii</sup>  
 One climbs Bismantova to Cacuma's height  
 With only feet; but this must needs be flown,  
 I mean with the swift wings and feathered flight  
 Of great desire, following behind that lead  
 Which gave my heart hope and my feet a light. [30]  
 Up between broken rock did we proceed.  
 Its face on each hand grazed us, and below  
 The ground forced us both hands and feet to need.  
 When we had clambered to the upmost brow  
 Of the high bank, on the open mountain-side,  
 "Master mine," said I, "what course make we now?"  
 And he to me: "See that no footstep slide.  
 Only behind me gain thy ground aslant  
 Till some sage escort Heaven for us provide."  
 The lofty summit rose, our sight to daunt, [40]  
 And the bold slope of it more steeply ran  
 Than to the centre a line from mid-quadrant.  
 Weary was I, when: "Turn thee," I began,  
 "O sweet father, upon me: see'st thou not  
 How alone, if thou stay not, I remain?"  
 "Son," said he, "drag thee as far as yonder spot,"  
 Pointing me out a ledge a little beyond  
 Which on that side circles the mount about.  
 So did my courage to his spur respond  
 That I behind him forced myself to crawl [50]  
 Till the round ledge beneath my feet I found.  
 There we both sat us down by the cliff-wall,  
 Turned toward the East, the way that we had clomb,

---

<sup>ii</sup> 25-26. "San Leo," "Bismantova" and "Cacuma" are peaks in the Apennines.

For to look back is wont to solace all.  
 I bent my eyes to the low shores; therefrom  
 I raised them to the sun, and marvelled: lo,  
 On the left hand I found his beams to come.  
 The poet saw well why astounded so  
 Before the chariot of the light I stayed,  
 Now entering between us and Aquilo.<sup>iii</sup> [60]  
 Wherefore: "If Castor and Pollux," now he said<sup>iv</sup>  
 "That mirror did for its companions take,  
 Whose light both upward is and downward led,  
 Thou wouldst have seen the blazing Zodiac<sup>v</sup>  
 By the two Bears revolving closer yet,  
 Except it strayed forth from its ancient track.  
 How that is, if the power thy thought abet,  
 Fix well thy mind to imagine Zion's hill  
 On the earth's surface with this mountain set  
 So, that both have a single horizon still<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 And different hemispheres; wherefore the way  
 That Phaëthon to his own hurt drove so ill<sup>vii</sup>  
 Must on one side of this mount bring the day  
 When it is on the other side of that,  
 If thou perceivest what my words convey."  
 "Master mine, never did I contemplate"  
 Said I, "aught clearer than I see now, just  
 In that point, which it seems I stumbled at,  
 That of Heaven's moving circles the mid-most,  
 In a certain science called the Equator's girth,<sup>viii</sup> [80]  
 Ever abiding 'twixt the sun and frost

---

<sup>iii</sup> 60. "Aquila": the north wind.

<sup>iv</sup> 61. "Castor and Pollux" compose the sign of Gemini. The clause means: if it were June (instead of April).

<sup>v</sup> 64. The zodiac comprises the belt of constellations through which the sun passes in its annual course. "The blazing Zodiac" is, in other words, the sun itself.

<sup>vi</sup> 70. "Zion's hill," or Jerusalem, and the mountain of Purgatory are on opposite sides of the earth.

<sup>vii</sup> 72. "Phaëthon" tried to drive the chariot of the sun.

<sup>viii</sup> 80-81. "A certain science": astronomy. When it is winter in any place, the sun is on the other side of the equator from that place.

For the reason that thou tellest me toward the North  
 Departs hence far as the Hebrews in their turn  
 Would see it toward the hottest zone of earth.  
 But, if it please thee, gladly would I learn  
 How far we go still, since the mount rises  
 Higher than my eyes are able to discern."  
 And he: "This mountain hath such properties,  
 That the first steps below are toil extreme,  
 And the higher a man climbs the less it is. [90]  
 Thus when to thee it shall so pleasant seem  
 That the ascent doth smooth and easy grow,  
 As in a boat that glideth with the stream,  
 Then is the end; thou need'st no further go.  
 There of all weariness hope thou to be quit.  
 No more I answer, and this for truth I know."  
 This word he spoke, and when he had ended it,  
 A voice near sounded: "Ere that thou attain  
 So far, it may be thou wilt need to sit."  
 At the voice, each of us turned round again, [100]  
 And on the left saw a great bulk of stone  
 Which neither he nor I perceived till then.  
 Thither we approached, and there were persons strown  
 In postures at the rock's back in the shade  
 Listless as one who for his rest sinks down.  
 And one, whose looks the weariness betrayed,  
 With hands clasping his knees was sitting there,  
 And had his forehead low between them laid.  
 "O sweet my Lord," said I, "turn thine eyes here  
 Upon that one who more indifferent shows [110]  
 Himself than if Sloth were his own sister."  
 Then, seeming to give heed, he turned to us,  
 Moving his face only over his thigh,  
 And said: "Go up now, thou who art valorous!"  
 I knew who it was then; and that difficulty  
 Which still a little did my breath impede



Hindered me not from going to him: when I  
 Had got to him, he scarce lifted his head,  
 Saying: "Art satisfied then that the sun  
 Driveth his chariot on thy left indeed?" [120]  
 His indolent gestures and his curt speech won  
 My lips into a little smile to part  
 Ere I began: "Of grief, Belacqua, none  
 Have I for thee now; but say why thou art  
 Seated just here? Dost thou await escort,  
 Or hast thou but resumed thy wonted part?"  
 And he: "What boots it, brother, to resort  
 Up there? God's angel, sitting at the gate  
 My passage to the penances would thwart.  
 For me, shut out, first must the heavens rotate [130]  
 So long as in my life their circlings were,  
 Because my good sighs I delayed so late,  
 Unless, ere that, there succour me a prayer  
 Rising out of a heart that lives in grace.  
 What profits pleading that Heaven will not hear?"  
 The poet already had mounted from that place  
 Before me, saying: "Come, thou seest stand  
 The sun at the meridian, and the pace<sup>ix</sup>  
 Of Night by now touches Morocco's strand."

---

<sup>ix</sup> 138. *It is noon in Purgatory, midnight in Jerusalem.*

# Canto V

*The poets, continuing the ascent, meet a band of spirits who are astonished that Dante casts no shadow. These all died by violence and repented only at the last moment. Three of them speak to Dante in turn; Jacopo del Cassero; Buonconte da Montefeltro, who tells how his body was carried down a stream into the Arno, through the malignity of a devil who had in vain contended for his soul; and lastly Pia de' Tolomei, done to death in secret by her husband.*

FROM those shades now I had a little gone  
And was ascending where my Master led,  
When, pointing with his finger at me, one  
Behind me cried: "See, it seems no light is shed  
Upon the left of the lower of those two,  
And he behaves like one who is not dead."  
At that word's sound mine eyes turned back, and lo!  
They all were with amazement eyeing me,  
Me only, and where the light was broken through.  
"Why dost thou let thy mind entangled be," [10]  
My Lord said, "that thou falterest on the hill?  
If here they whisper, what is that to thee?  
Follow behind me and let them talk their fill:  
Stand like a tower whose summit never shakes  
For the wind's blowing, and stays immovable.  
For always he in whom thought overtakes  
The former thought, his goal less clearly sees,  
Because the one the other must relax."  
What could I answer save "I come"? and this  
I said, suffused with something of that hue [20]  
Which sometimes wins a man forgivenesses.  
Meanwhile across the mountain-side there drew  
A people chanting, a little above our course,  
The Miserere in alternation due.

When they perceived that I opposed perforce  
 My body to the passage of the ray,  
 They changed their chant to an "Oh" long and hoarse.  
 And two of them, as envoys, broke away,  
 Running to meet us, and began to plead:  
 "Make known to us your condition, we do pray."<sup>i</sup> [30]  
 My Master spoke then: "Backward ye may speed  
 To those who sent you, and carry this report,  
 That the body of this man is flesh indeed.  
 If because seeing his shadow they stopt short,  
 As I suppose, they have their answer given.  
 He is one whom it may profit them to court."<sup>i</sup>  
 Never saw I at nightfall the clear heaven  
 By kindled vapours cleft so swift in twain  
 Or, in the sunset, clouds of August riven,  
 But in less time they had sped up again, [40]  
 And, there arrived, wheeled toward us with the rest  
 Like a troop hurrying with loosened rein.  
 "Many is the folk that toward us cometh prest"  
 The poet said: "They come to implore thy grace:  
 But to go on, and going listen, is best."  
 "O soul that goest into blissfulness  
 With those members that thou wert born with," they  
 Came crying out "arrest awhile thy pace.  
 If ever any of us thou sawest, say,  
 So that of him news thou mayst yonder bear: [50]  
 Ah, why go on, ah, why wilt thou not stay?  
 We all were slain by violence, and were  
 Sinners to the last hour's extremity.  
 Then warning light from Heaven made us aware,  
 So that, repenting and forgiving, we  
 Came out of life atoned in peace with God  
 Who pierceth us with longing, him to see."

---

<sup>i</sup> 36. *They are in need of the prayers of the living, which Dante may procure for them.*

And I: "Though long I gaze on you, I could  
 Recognise none: but if to pleasure you  
 I can do aught, speak, spirits born for good. [60]  
 This for the sake of that peace will I do  
 Which following in the steps of such a guide  
 From world to world I am bounden to ensue."  
 One spoke then: "We do all of us confide  
 In thy good office, nor thine oath demand,  
 If to the will the power be not denied.  
 Wherefore I, who only speak before this band,  
 Pray thee, if e'er by thee be visited  
 The country 'twixt Romagna and Charles's land,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Me with thy favourable prayers bestead [70]  
 In Fano, that right pleading may o'ercome  
 The offences that were heavy upon my head.  
 There was I born: but the deep wounds, wherefrom  
 Issued the blood my life had for its seat  
 Were dealt me in the Antenori's home,  
 There where I thought me safest in retreat.  
 He of Este had it done, whose anger ran  
 Far beyond that which justice findeth meet.  
 But had I fled then toward La Mira, when  
 At Oriaco I was trapped and found [80]  
 I should be yonder still with breathing men.  
 I ran to the marsh, and reed and mud enwound  
 My feet, so that I fell, and there saw I  
 A pool grow from my veins upon the ground."  
 Another then: "So that desire on high  
 Be achieved which draws thee up the Mount, do thou  
 Pity, and help me mine to satisfy.  
 Buonconte I am, of Montefeltro, and now<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> 69-76. The country between "Romagna" and "Charles's land," i.e., the kingdom of Naples, which belonged to Charles II of Anjou, is the March of Ancona. The speaker is Jacopo del Cassero, a leading citizen of Fano. He fell out with Azzo of Este, and was murdered. — "The Antenori's home": Padua.

<sup>iii</sup> 88. Count Buonconte of Montefeltro, a Ghibelline leader, was captain of the Aretines in the disastrous battle of Campaldino in 1289. Joan was his wife.

Not Joan nor other of me has any thought.  
 Wherefore 'mid these I go with humbled brow." [90]  
 And I: "What chance or violence on thee wrought  
 To cause thee stray so far from Campaldin,  
 That no man of thy burial-place knew aught?"  
 "O," answered he, "below the Casentin<sup>iv</sup>  
 A stream named Archiano runs across  
 That over the Hermitage springs in Apennine.  
 There where its name is changed from what it was  
 Did I arrive, with the throat deeply cleft,  
 Fleeing on foot and bloodying the grass.  
 There lost I sight and there of speech was reft, [100]  
 Ending on Mary's name, and there did give  
 My ghost up, and my flesh alone was left.  
 I will tell truth; tell it thou where men live.  
 The angel of God took me; and he of Hell  
 Cried, 'Thou from Heaven, why dost thou me deprive?  
 The eternal part in this man thou dost steal,  
 Snatching him from me for one little tear.  
 But otherwise with the other part I'll deal.'  
 Thou knowest how the clammy mists prepare  
 And turn again to water where they find [110]  
 The cold condensing them in upper air.  
 The ill will, only on ill bent, he combined  
 With cunning, and by virtue of that power  
 His nature gave, he roused the mist and wind.  
 When day was spent, the valley he spread o'er  
 From Pratomagno to the mountain-chain  
 With cloud, and made the sky above to lour,  
 So that the charged air changed to water; rain  
 Came down and to the rivulets compelled  
 All of it that the earth could not contain. [120]  
 And as it merged and into torrents swelled

---

<sup>iv</sup> 94-96. "The Casentin" is a mountainous district in Tuscany; the "Hermitage" is the monastery of Camaldoli.

So swiftly to the royal stream it prest  
 That nothing its impetuous rush withheld.  
 My frozen body at its mouth the crest  
 Of foaming Archian found and bore me down  
 Into Arno, and loosed the cross upon my breast  
 I had made of me when the strong pangs came on.  
 It rolled me about its bed from side to side  
 Then wrapt me in all the plunder it had won."  
 "Ah, when, the long way ended, thou dost bide [130]  
 At peace, returned into the world again"<sup>v</sup>  
 The third after the second spirit sighed,  
 "Remember me, who am La Pia, then.  
 Siena made me and Maremma unmade:  
 He knows who had ringed me with his jewel, when  
 The vows of marriage we together said."

---

<sup>v</sup> 133. *Pia de' Tolomei of Siena was wedded to Nello della Pietra, who, wishing to marry another woman, murdered her in his castle in the Tuscan Maremma.*

# Canto VI

*Dante is beset by spirits, some of whom are named, desiring the intercession of their friends on earth, but gets free of them. Virgil observes a shade sitting alone and apart, and asks it to show them the quickest way of ascent. It is Sordello the thirteenth century poet, a Mantuan like Virgil. The two embrace when they learn that they are of the same city: and this provokes from Dante an impassioned outburst of indignation at the disunited and factious state of Italy, only to be remedied by the assertion of the Imperial authority; ending with a bitterly sarcastic description of Florence and the Florentines.*

WHEN dicers from the game of hazard rise,<sup>i</sup>  
The loser keeps disconsolately at play,  
Repeats the casts and sadly groweth wise:  
With the other all the people hurry away;  
One goes in front, one plucks him back, a third,  
Beside him, to be called to mind will pray.  
He stops not, giving this and that a word;  
Those he extends his hand to, cease to press;  
And so he wins him riddance from that herd.  
Such was I, turning here and there my face [10]  
Amid the thronging of that multitude,  
And got me quit of them by promises.  
There was the Aretine, who by the rude<sup>ii</sup>  
Sinews of Ghin di Tacco died, and there  
The other, who was drowned as he pursued.  
There Frederic Novello was in prayer<sup>iii</sup>  
With outstretcht hands, and he of Pisa, who made

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. "Hazard": a game played with three dice.

<sup>ii</sup> 13-15. "The Aretine" is Benincasa of Laterina, who was murdered by the famous robber, Ghino di Tacco, whose brother he had condemned to death. "The other" Aretine is said to be Guccio Tarlati, who was drowned in the Arno while pursuing the enemy.

<sup>iii</sup> 16-18. "Frederic Novello," the son of Count Guido Novello, was killed in war. "He of Pisa" is the son of "Marzucco," a Pisan, whose fortitude was shown by pardoning the murderer of his son.

The good Marzucco's fortitude appear.  
 I saw Count Orso, and that other shade,<sup>iv</sup>  
 By envy and hatred from its body torn, [20]  
 As it averred, and not for faith betrayed;  
 Pierre de la Brosse I mean; and may this warn<sup>v</sup>  
 The Lady of Brabant, ere her life cease,  
 Lest to worse company she be down-borne.  
 When I from all these spirits had gained release  
 Whose one prayer was that others pray for them  
 So that their way be hastened unto peace,  
 I thus began: "Thou, O my Light, dost seem  
 Ina certain place expressly to gainsay  
 That prayer may alter the decree supreme. [30]  
 And these people who only for this pray,  
 Is it idle hope, then, that they entertain,  
 Or may thy words some other sense convey?"  
 And he to me: "That which I wrote is plain,  
 And the hope these cherish fails not, if aright  
 Thou wilt consider it with judgment sane.  
 For justice is not brought down from its height,  
 Because in an instant burning love can here  
 Redeem the debt these souls have to requite.  
 And in that case where I the law made clear, [40]  
 Prayer to amend fault was of none effect  
 Because God was not present to the prayer.  
 Yet be not in so deep a question checked,  
 Unless she tell thee who shall be in this  
 A light between truth and the intellect.  
 Dost thou understand me? I speak of Beatrice.  
 When to this mountain's top thou winn'st at last  
 Thou shalt behold her smiling and in bliss."  
 And I: "My Lord, move we with greater haste,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 19. "Count Orso" of Mangona was murdered by his cousin Albert.

<sup>v</sup> 22. "Pierre de la Brosse" was chamberlain of Philip III of France; he was hanged through the wiles of Philip's second wife, Mary of Brabant.



For now I grow not weary as I did. [50]  
 And see, the hill doth now a shadow cast."  
 "We will go onward with this day," replied  
 The master, "far as we the path can track;  
 But the truth is not what thy hopes confide.  
 Ere thou be above, thou'lt see him shining back  
 Who now behind the mountain slope is gone  
 So that thou causest not his rays to break.  
 But see yon spirit that, stationed all alone,  
 All solitary, looketh toward us now:  
 It shall the speediest way to us make known." [60]  
 We came to it. O Lombard spirit, how<sup>vi</sup>  
 Disdainful and majestic thou wast!  
 In moving of thine eyes how stately and slow!  
 No word to us approaching it addrest,  
 But let us go on, watching only there  
 In likeness of a lion couched at rest.  
 Yet Virgil toward it moved and made his prayer  
 That it should point to us the best ascent;  
 And that shade for his question had no care,  
 But of our country and where our life was spent [70]  
 Inquired of us; and the sweet Guide began  
 "Mantua": and the shade, all self-intent,  
 Leapt toward him from its place, crying "Mantuan!  
 I am Sordello, of thine own city."  
 And each into the other's arms they ran.  
 Thou inn of sorrow, ah, trampled Italy!  
 No Lady of domains, but brothel of shamel  
 Ship without pilot on a stormy seal  
 That gentle spirit was thus quick to acclaim  
 His countryman and hail him there for friend [80]  
 Merely at the sweet sound of his city's name;  
 And now their days in thee the living spend

---

<sup>vi</sup> 61. "Lombard spirit": Sordello.

In quarrel, and each one doth the other wound  
 Of those whom one wall and one moat defend.  
 Search, miserable! all the shores around  
 Thy coasts, and then within thy bosom look,  
 If peace in any part of thee be found.  
 What does it profit, that Justinian took  
 Thy bridle in hand, if empty be the seat?  
 Were't not for this, thou hadst earned less rebuke. [90]  
 Ah, ye that should be all-devout, and let<sup>vii</sup>  
 Caesar sit in the saddle, if indeed  
 God's admonition ye do not forget,  
 See now this beast to what a vicious steed,  
 Lacking the spur's correction, she doth grow,  
 Since ye have grasped the bridle and strive to lead.<sup>viii</sup>  
 O German Albert, who neglectest so<sup>ix</sup>  
 Her who hath wild and mutinous become,  
 And oughtest to bestride her saddle-bow,  
 May a just judgment from the stars consume<sup>x</sup> [100]  
 Thy race, and be it strange and manifest,  
 That thy successor tremble at thy doom.  
 Thou and thy father, covetous in quest  
 Of lands beyond, have turned aside and choose  
 That the garden of the empire be laid waste.  
 Come, and see Capulets and Montagues,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Monaldi and Filippeschi, O heedless wight—  
 Those losing hope and these in dread to lose.  
 Come, cruel! come and see the woes that blight

---

<sup>vii</sup> 91. "Ye that . . .": the clergy.

<sup>viii</sup> 96. Ever since the clergy usurped temporal authority.

<sup>ix</sup> 97. Albert of Hapsburg was elected King of the Romans in 1298 but never went to Italy to be crowned.

<sup>x</sup> 100-103. In 1307 Albert's oldest son died after a short sickness; the next year Albert himself was murdered. — "Thy successor": Henry VII, who descended into Italy. — "Thy father": Rudolf, who was as remiss as his son.

<sup>xi</sup> 106-107. Dante cites a few of the great houses that were ravaged by strife: the Montecchi of Verona, Ghibellines; the Cappelletti of Cremona, of the Church party; the Monaldi and Filippeschi, rival families (Guelf and Ghibellines) of Perugia and Orvieto.

Thy nobles, and their heavy wrongs amend: [110]  
 Thou shalt see Santafor, how dark its plight.<sup>xii</sup>  
 Come, see thy Rome that, mourning without end,  
 Widowed and desolate, crieth night and day  
 “Why, Caesar mine, wilt thou not be my friend?”  
 Come, see how thy folk love each other: nay,  
 If our affliction no compassion move,  
 Come and be shamed for what men of thee say.  
 And be it permitted me, O highest Jove,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Who wast on earth crucified for our sake,  
 Dost thou thy just eyes elsewhere remove, [120]  
 Or is it preparation thou dost make  
 In thine unfathomed wisdom for some good  
 Wholly invisible to our sight opaque?  
 For not a city lacks its tyrant brood,  
 And every churl who would a party lead  
 Grows a Marcellus for the multitude.<sup>xiv</sup>  
 My Florence, thou may’st be content indeed  
 At this digression, which doth touch thee not,  
 So well thy folk provide against their need.  
 Many love justice, yet haste not to shoot [130]  
 The word, being well-advised, from the bow;  
 But on thy people’s lips it leapeth out.  
 Many to bear the common burden are slow;  
 But thy folk answer to the call unbid,  
 Crying “I gird me to the task and go.”  
 Rejoice now, thou hast reason, thou amid  
 Thy riches, thou at peace, thou wise of will!  
 That I speak truth, the event cannot keep hid.  
 Athens and Lacedaemon, famous still  
 For law-making and civil discipline, [140]

---

<sup>xii</sup> 111. *The Counts of Santafora, a great Ghibelline family, had lost a great part of their territory to Siena.*

<sup>xiii</sup> 118. *“Highest Jove”: Christ.*

<sup>xiv</sup> 126. *C. Claudius Marcellus was a partisan of Pompey.*

Showed but a small hint of the Commonweal  
Compared with thee, who dost so finely spin  
    That in October thou providest thread  
    Which mid-November cannot hope to win.  
How often thou rememberest to have shed  
    Laws, coinage, customs, offices, for new,  
    Cast out old members and new members bred!  
And if thou wilt examine and see true,  
    Thou'lt see thyself in that sick woman's shape  
    Who, laid on down, finds no rest, and can do  
Nothing but turn and turn, her pain to escape.

[150]

# Canto VII

*Sordello asks Virgil who he is, and on being told, pays homage to the great poet. Night is approaching, and Sordello explains that they can only mount by daylight; he therefore escorts them to a flowery dell, where are princes and rulers who had neglected their duties; among them he points out the emperor Rudolf; Philip III of France and Henry of Navarre; Peter III of Aragon; Charles I of Anjou; and Henry III of England.*

AFTER the welcomes grave and glad had now  
Thrice and four times been given and returned,  
Sordello, drawing back, said: "Who art thou?"  
"Before the time when toward this mountain yearned  
The spirits worthy to go up to God,  
My bones had by Octavian been inurned.  
I am Virgil; and to no guilt else I owed  
Loss of Heaven, save that faith I had not got."  
Answering thus, my Guide himself avowed.  
As one who hath a sudden sight of what  
Makes him to marvel, who believes, nor less  
Disbelieves, saying "It is; No, it is not";  
Such seemed he, and then downward bent his face,  
And in humility toward him once more came  
And clasped him where the inferior should embrace.<sup>i</sup>  
"Glory of the Latins," said he, "by whose fame  
Our tongue revealed what power was in it stored,  
Eternal praise of that place whence I am,  
What merit or grace hath thee to me declared?  
If I am worthy to hear thee, tell wherefrom  
Thou comest, and, if from Hell, out of what ward?"  
"Through all the circles of the sad kingdom,"  
He answered him, "I am come from that my state.

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 15. Either under the arms or at the feet.

Virtue from Heaven moved me; with it I come.  
 Not for things done but undone 'twas my fate  
     To lose the vision of the Sun on high,  
     By thee desired and known by me too late.  
 Down there a place is that no torments try  
     But only darkness grieves, where the lament  
     Hath not the sound of wail, but is a sigh. [30]  
 There dwell I with the babies innocent  
     Who bitten by the tooth of Death expired  
     Before they were from human guilt exempt.<sup>ii</sup>  
 There dwell I among those never attired  
     In the three holy virtues; without sin  
     All the others they both followed and desired.<sup>iii</sup>  
 But if thou know'st and canst, give us some sign  
     Whereby we may most speedily come to be  
     Where Purgatory rightly doth begin."  
 "No set post is prescribed us," answered he. [40]  
     "It is permitted to go up and round:  
     Far as I may, I will companion thee.  
 But see how day declines now to its bound,  
     And to ascend by night cannot be done;  
     Best then to seek a lodge on some good ground.  
 Here on the right are souls gathered alone.  
     If thou consent, I'll lead thee to their bower.  
     Not without joy will they to thee be known."  
 "How?" was the answer: "he who at night-hour  
     Would mount, will others stop him from his quest [50]  
     Or will he fail because he had not power?"  
 The good Sordello with his finger traced  
     The ground, saying "Look, this mere line by no skill  
     Wouldst thou cross over after day is past.  
 Not that aught else the going-up would foil,

---

<sup>ii</sup> 33. *Before baptism.*

<sup>iii</sup> 36. *The souls in Limbus were ignorant of the three theological virtues, but they knew the four cardinal virtues.*

Except alone the darkness of the night:  
 This, by disabling, trammelleth the will.  
 Downward by night return indeed one might,  
 Descending the steep slope with footsteps blind,  
 While the horizon holds day shut from sight." [60]  
 Then my lord spoke, as wondering in his mind,  
 "Lead us then where thou sayest we may be brought  
 To sojourn and therein a solace find."  
 Short way had we proceeded from that spot,  
 When I perceived the hill-side showed a scoop  
 Such as here too the valleys hollow out.  
 "There will we go," that shade said, "where the slope  
 Hath made out of itself a lap of grass,  
 And there await the new day's coming-up."  
 Twixt steep and level a winding path there was, [70]  
 That led us to the shelving of that pit  
 Where, more than half, the rim diminishes.  
 Gold and fine silver, crimson, pearly white,  
 Indigo, smooth wood lustrous in the grain,  
 Fresh flake of emerald but that moment split,  
 Could none of them in colour near attain  
 The flowers and the grass in that retreat,  
 As less with greater rivalleth in vain.  
 Not only had Nature painted all complete,  
 But of a thousand fragrances had made [80]  
 One new and indistinguishable sweet.  
 Singing *Salve Regina*, on that bed<sup>iv</sup>  
 Of grass and flowers there saw I souls at rest,  
 Sight of whom from without the ridge forbade.  
 "Before the little sun is home in nest"  
 Said he who thus aside had made us go,  
 "Desire not that I make you manifest.  
 From this ridge face and gesture will ye know

---

<sup>iv</sup> 82. *Salve Regina* is an antiphon recited after sunset.

Of each and all, better than if at once  
 Received among them in the nook below. [90]  
 He who sits highest and has an air which owns  
 Neglect of those things that he should have done,  
 Nor moves his mouth with the others' antiphons,  
 Was the emperor Rudolf, who might well have won<sup>v</sup>  
 To heal the wounds of murdered Italy.  
 Now for another saviour she hopes on.  
 The other, who seems to comfort him, is he  
 Who ruled the country where the water springs<sup>vi</sup>  
 Which Moldau bears to Elbe and Elbe to sea,  
 Ottocar named, and was in leading-strings [100]  
 Far better than full-bearded Wenceslas,  
 His son, who to his sloth and lechery clings.  
 And that snub-nose who seems conferring close<sup>vii</sup>  
 With him who looks so kindly, is he who fled,  
 Soiling the lily, and died inglorious.  
 Look how he beats his breast, uncomforted!  
 Behold the other, who with sighings vain  
 Has with his palm made for his cheek a bed.  
 Father and father-in-law of France's bane<sup>viii</sup>  
 Are they; they know his foulness and his sins; [110]  
 Hence comes the grief that stabs them with such pain.  
 He who appears so burly, and singing joins<sup>ix</sup>  
 Him of the manly nose in one accord,  
 Had all worth for a girdle around his loins.  
 And if the youth behind him on the sward<sup>x</sup>  
 Had after him remained king, then indeed

---

<sup>v</sup> 94. *Rudolf of Hapsburg.*

<sup>vi</sup> 98-100. "*The country . . .*": *Bohemia. Ottocar II was killed in 1278*

<sup>vii</sup> 103-4. "*That snub-nose*" is *Philip III, the Bold, of France. He is conferring with Henry the Fat of Navarre.*

<sup>viii</sup> 109. "*France's bane*": *Philip IV, the Fair.*

<sup>ix</sup> 112-113. *Peter III of Aragon, King of Sicily.* — He "*of the manly nose*" is *Charles of Anjou, conqueror of Naples and Sicily.*

<sup>x</sup> 115. "*The youth*": *Alphonse III, Peter's oldest son, who died young in 1291.*



From vessel to vessel had the worth been poured;  
 Which may not of the other heirs be said.  
 James and Frederick possess the realms, but to  
 The better heritage doth none succeed. [120]  
 Full seldom human virtue rises through  
 The branches; and the Giver wills it so,  
 That they to him for such a gift may sue.  
 Also to the high-nosed one do my words go  
 Even as to Peter, who with him lifts his chant,  
 Whence now Apulia's and Provence's woe.  
 So much less than its seed is the grown plant<sup>xi</sup>  
 As, more than Beatrice and than Margaret,  
 Constance still maketh of her husband vaunt.  
 The king of the simple life see yonder, set [130]  
 Aloof from the others, Harry of England; more  
 Hath he to boast in the issue he begat.  
 He on the ground amongst them sitting lower  
 Is William the Marquis, with eyes upward thrown,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Through whom Alessandria and her war  
 Make Monferrato and Canavese moan."

---

<sup>xi</sup> 127-32. Charles II is as much inferior to Charles I as Charles I is to Peter III. Beatrice and Margaret were the successive wives of Charles I; Constance was the wife of Peter. Henry III of England was reputed to have little wit; his son, Edward I, was highly esteemed.

<sup>xii</sup> 134. William VII, or "Longsword," who was Marquis of Montferrat and Canavese. In 1292 he was treacherously captured at Alessandria, in Piedmont.

# Canto VIII

*At sunset these souls join in the evening hymn; but they appear apprehensive, and two angels in green, with drawn swords, descend to take post on either side of the little valley and guard them from the visit of the serpent (of temptation). Sordello brings Dante and Virgil among the spirits, and Dante recognises Nino de' Visconti, and they talk together. Dante now notes that the four stars of the morning have disappeared and three stars (symbols of the Theological Virtues) are shining in their place. The snake appears, but is driven off by the angels who swoop down like hawks. Conrad Malaspina asks Dante for news of his country, the Val di Magra. Dante replies that he has never been in those lands, but praises the Malaspini for their uprightness. Conrad predicts that before long Dante will know of the hospitality of his house by experience and not only by report.*

NOW was the hour which longing backward bends  
In those that sail, and melts their heart in sighs,  
The day they have said farewell to their sweet friends,  
And pricks with love the outsetting pilgrim's eyes  
If the far bell he hears across the land  
Which seems to mourn over the day that dies,  
When I let hearing from my ears be banned,  
Absorbed in gaze on one of the souls there,  
Uprisen, who craved an audience with its hand.  
It joined and lifted both its palms in prayer,  
Fixing its eyes upon the East, as though  
'Twere saying-to God: "For naught else have I care."  
*Te lucis ante* I heard devoutly flow  
Out of its mouth and with a note so sweet  
It caused me quite out of myself to go.  
And the others then devoutly followed it,  
Sweetly, with eyes fixed on the spheres that spin  
On high, until the hymn was all complete.  
Sharpen thy sight well, reader; for so thin

[10]

Assuredly the veil of truth is now [20]  
 That 'tis an easy task to pass within.  
 I saw that noble army from below  
 Upward their silent gaze thereafter send  
 As if expectant, pale and humble of brow.  
 And I saw, issuing from on high, descend  
 Two angels, each with flaming sword in hand  
 Broken short off and blunted at the end.  
 Green as the just-born leaves ere they expand,  
 Their raiment was, which they behind them trailed,  
 By the green wings ever disturbed and fanned. [30]  
 One lighting a little above us I beheld,  
 And the other descended on the opposite bank,  
 So that the people all in the midst were held.  
 Clearly their blond heads I discerned, but blank  
 The eyes were in their faces, like a power  
 That, dazzled by excess of splendour, shrank.  
 "Both are from Mary's bosom come, this bower,"  
 Sordello said, "to have in ward, because  
 Of that snake which shall visit us at this hour."  
 Whereat I, knowing not by what way it was, [40]  
 Turned me around then and all frozen pale  
 Up to the trusted shoulders pressed me close.  
 Sordello again: "Now down into the dell  
 'Mid the great shades, to speak with them, go we:  
 To see you in their midst will please them well."  
 I think that I descended steps but three  
 And was below, when I saw one to stare,  
 As if for recognition, only at me.  
 'Twas now the time when dusk blackens the air,  
 Yet not so but that what before was lost [50]  
 By distance twixt his eyes and mine was clear.  
 Toward me he moved, and I to his accost.

Noble Judge Nino, how my heart had ease<sup>i</sup>  
 To see that not among the damned thou wast!  
 We left unsaid no greeting that could please.  
 Then he asked: "How long since didst thou attain  
 The foot of the mountain over the far seas?"  
 "O," said I, "from within the dens of pain  
 I came this morn: in my first life I am,  
 Though by this journey the other life I gain."  
 [60]  
 And when this answer of mine was heard by them,  
 Sordello and he backward recoiled a pace,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Like folk on whom a sudden amazement came.  
 The one turned round to Virgil, the other to face  
 One sitting there, crying: "Conrad, up now get!<sup>iii</sup>  
 Come, see what God hath purposed in His grace."  
 Then, turned to me: "By this especial debt  
 Thou owest to Him who so hides from our view  
 His first Wherefore, that none may fathom it,  
 When thou hast passed the wide waters anew,  
 [70]  
 Tell my Joan that she make for me a prayer<sup>iv</sup>  
 There where the innocent are hearkened to.  
 Her mother, I think, for me hath no more care  
 Since that day when she changed her wimples white,  
 Which she, poor soul, must long again to wear.  
 Through her, full easy it is to judge aright  
 How soon love's fire can in a woman fade  
 If eye and touch keep not the flame alight.  
 The viper by the Milanese displayed  
 [80]  
 Will for her tomb make not so fair a crest

---

<sup>i</sup> 53. "Nino" Visconti, a grandson of the Ugolino of Inf. XXXIII, was judge, or governor, of a Sardinian province.

<sup>ii</sup> 62. Sordello, up to this time, has not noticed that Dante is alive.

<sup>iii</sup> 65. Conrad Malaspina was the lord of Villafranca of the Magra. For a century his house had been famous for its liberality to troubadours.

<sup>iv</sup> 71-80. Joan was Nino's only child. Nino's wife, Beatrice d'Este, had married Galeazzo Visconti, who was driven from Milan. The arms of the Visconti (the viper) will not adorn her tomb so well as Nino's (the cock).

As would Gallura's blazoned cock have made."  
 Thus spoke he, in all his countenance imprest  
 With the clear stamp of that most righteous zeal  
 Which within due bound burneth in the breast.  
 My eyes went only upon the heavens to dwell,  
 There where the motion of the stars is slow  
 As the more near to the axle in the wheel.  
 My leader then: "Son, at what gazest thou  
 Aloft?" And I: "At those three torches there<sup>v</sup>  
 Which make the whole pole on this side to glow." [90]  
 And he to me: "The four stars beaming clear  
 Thou sawest this morning, now upon that side  
 Are sunk, and these are risen where they were."  
 Sordello, as he spoke, drew him aside  
 To himself, saying: "Our adversary, see!"  
 Pointing his finger, Virgil's eye to guide.  
 There, where the dell's foot is from barrier free,  
 Was a snake, such perhaps as in his guile  
 Gave unto Eve food from the bitter tree.  
 Through grass and flowers on came the fell reptile, [100]  
 And now and again its head to its back it drove,  
 As a beast sleeks itself, and licked the while.  
 I did not see, and cannot speak thereof,  
 How moved the heavenly hawks; but sure am I  
 That I beheld both one and the other move.  
 Hearing the green wings cleave the air to fly,  
 The serpent fled, and the angels wheeled about  
 Abreast up to their posts again on high.  
 The shade that to the judge when he called out  
 Had drawn close, all through that assault and swoop [110]  
 From me had not once loosed its gaze devout.  
 "So may that lantern which doth lead thee up  
 Find in thy will as much wax as needs yet

---

<sup>v</sup> 89-93. The "three torches," representing the three theological virtues, appear at night. The day is ushered in by the constellation of the four cardinal virtues.

To reach on high the enamelled mountain-top,"  
 It said, "if thou hast sure news to relate  
 Of Val di Magra's and its neighbours' lot,  
 Tell it to me, for once there I was great.  
 I was called Conrad Malaspina; not  
 The ancient one, but truly of his descent.<sup>vi</sup>  
 I loved my own, with love cleansed here from spot." [120]  
 "O," said I, "through your land I never went;  
 But where throughout all Europe do men dwell  
 That its renown is not among them sent?  
 The fame that honoureth your house so well  
 Crieth out the country, crieth out its lord,  
 So that who ne'er was there can of it tell.  
 I swear to you, so grace my steps reward,  
 Your honoured race hath ceased not forth to show  
 The glory of the purse and of the sword.  
 Custom and nature privilege it so [130]  
 That though the guilty head the world misguides,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Sole it goes straight, nor the evil way will know."  
 And he: "Depart now, for the sun abides<sup>viii</sup>  
 Not seven times in the bed the Ram with all  
 Four feet in season covers and bestrides  
 Before this courteous opinion shall  
 Right in the middle of thy head be nailed—  
 Nail stronger than report of men withal—  
 If that the course of judgment have prevailed."

---

<sup>vi</sup> 119. *The older and more famous Conrad Malaspina was the grandfather of the present speaker.*

<sup>vii</sup> 131. *"The guilty head": Rome.*

<sup>viii</sup> 133-135. *The sun will not return seven times to the sign of Aries, the Ram: seven years will not pass.*

# Canto IX

*Dante falls into a deep sleep and dreams that he is carried up by an eagle into the sphere of fire. Waking suddenly, he finds himself with Virgil at a spot higher up the mountain and just below the gate of Purgatory proper. Virgil tells him that, while he slept, Lucy carried him up from the valley below. The gate of Purgatory is guarded by an angel sitting on the topmost of three steps, each differently coloured. Dante goes up to the gate and humbly craves admission. The angel inscribes the letter P (symbol of the seven deadly sins, Peccata) seven times on his forehead; then opens the gate with a golden and a silver key.*

ANCIENT Tithonus' concubine by now<sup>i</sup>

At the eastern balcony was growing white  
Forth from the arms of her sweet bed-fellow.

With jewels was her forehead tiar'd bright  
Clustered in likeness of the cold creature  
That woundeth with his tail as with a bite.

And Night had made in that place where we were<sup>ii</sup>

Two of her climbing steps, and now the third  
Hovered upon its wings inclining near,

When I, in whom something of Adam stirred,

Sank down with body overcome by sleep,  
Where all we five were seated, on the sward.<sup>iii</sup>

At that time when the swallow wakes to cheep

Her sad notes close upon the morning hour,  
Perhaps the record of old plaints to keep,

And when our mind, being a truant more

From flesh, and with its thoughts less tangled up,  
In vision wins almost prophetic power,

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-6. "Ancient Tithonus' concubine" is the Lunar Aurora, ie. the moon's dawn. — The cold creature" is the constellation of Scorpio.

<sup>ii</sup> 7-9. Nearly three hours have passed 'since nightfall.

<sup>iii</sup> 12. Sordello, Virgil, Dante, Nino, Conrad.

I seemed in a dream to see above me stoop  
 An eagle of golden plumage in the sky [20]  
 With wings stretcht wide out and intent to swoop.  
 He seemed above the very place to fly  
 Where Ganymede was forced his mates to lose<sup>iv</sup>  
 When he was snatcht up to the assembly on high.  
 Within me I thought: Perhaps only because  
 Of habit he strikes here, and from elsewhere  
 Scorneth to carry up aught in his claws.  
 Then, having seemed to wheel a little, sheer  
 Down he came, terrible as the lightning's lash,  
 And snatcht me up far as the fiery sphere. [30]  
 Then he and I, it seemed, burnt in the flash,  
 And I so scorched at the imagined blaze  
 That needs must sleep be broken as with a crash.  
 Not otherwise Achilles in amaze,<sup>v</sup>  
 Not knowing whither he was come, did start  
 And all around him turn his wakened gaze  
 When Scyros-wards from Chiron, next her heart,  
 His mother bore him sleeping, to alight  
 There where the Greeks compelled him to depart,  
 Than I now started as sleep fled me quite [40]  
 And my face turned to death-pale suddenly,  
 Even as a man who freezes from affright.  
 Beside me was my Comfort, only he:  
 And lo, the sun was more than two hours high  
 Already, and mine eyes were turned to sea.  
 "Have no fear," said my Lord, "but fortify  
 Thyself; to a good point we have won through.  
 Hold thee not back, but all thy strength apply.  
 Thou art arrived at Purgatory now.  
 See there the rampart closing it around, [50]

---

<sup>iv</sup> 23. *Ganymede was caught up by an eagle, to be cup-bearer to the gods.*

<sup>v</sup> 34-39. *To prevent Achilles from going to the Trojan war, Thetis took him in his sleep from his teacher, the centaur Chiron, to the island of Scyros.*



See the entrance there where it seems cleft in two.  
 Ere this when in thee the soul slumbered sound  
     Amid the dawning that precedes the day,  
     Laid on the flowers that prank the lower ground,  
 A lady came, saying 'I am Lucy; I pray'<sup>vi</sup>  
     Let me lift up this sleeping man, to aid  
     And speed him the more surely upon his way,'  
 Sordello and the other noble natures stayed.  
     She took thee, and as the brightening day grew near  
     She mounted, and I followed in her tread.  
 Here did she set thee; her beautiful eyes made clear  
     First, where the entrance in yon opening lies;  
     Then she departed, and sleep went with her."  
 Like one who is delivered from surmise  
     And changes fear to comfort in his mind  
     When truth reveals itself before his eyes,  
 I changed me; and when from doubting disentwined  
     My leader saw me, up where the rampart rose  
     He moved on toward the height, and I behind.  
 Reader, thou see'st well how my matter grows  
     In loftiness, and therefore marvel not  
     That my art also more exalted shows.  
 We approached and were arriving at a spot  
     Whence, there where first to me a gap appeared  
     Like in a wall some crack that it hath got,  
 I saw a gate, and three steps mounting toward  
     The gate above, coloured of divers stain,  
     And a guardian who as yet spoke not a word.  
 And as my eyes were opened to see plain,  
     I saw him seated on the topmost tread  
     In countenance such as I could not sustain.  
 A naked sword within his hand he had  
     Which toward us turned the rays so from the steel

[60]

[70]

[80]

---

<sup>vi</sup> 55. *Lucy is the symbol of Illuminating Grace.*

That I to face it often in vain essayed.  
 "There where you stand, halt, and declare your will,"  
 He began saying; "who is it escorteth you?  
 Beware lest coming up be to your ill."  
 My master spoke and answered him: "But now  
 A lady of heaven who hath these things in care,  
 Said to us: 'There the gate is; thither go.'" [90]  
 "And may she for your steps all good prepare,"  
 Resumed the warden in his courtesy,  
 "Come ye then forward to ascend our stair."  
 There came we; and the first step of the three<sup>vii</sup>  
 Was white marble, and polished with such art  
 That just as I appear it mirrored me.  
 The second was black-purple or yet more swart,  
 Of rugged stone and burnt into the grain;  
 And it was cracked both lengthwise and athwart.  
 The third whose mass the other two sustain [100]  
 Seemed porphyry, from which a blazing broke  
 Bright as the blood that spurts out of a vein.  
 The angel of God rested upon this block  
 Both his feet, sitting on the threshold stone,  
 Which seemed to me of adamantine rock.  
 Up the three steps my Leader took me on  
 With my own right good will, saying: "Now entreat  
 In all humility that the bolt be drawn."  
 Devout I flung me at the sacred feet:  
 I prayed him to open to me of his grace; [110]  
 But first upon my bosom thrice I beat.  
 Seven P's upon my forehead did he trace  
 With his sword's point, and: "See that thou," he said,  
 "When that thou art within, these wounds efface."  
 Ashes or earth that comes dry on the spade  
 Would be one colour with his raiment's fold;

---

<sup>vii</sup> 94. Apparently these steps stand for the three stages of original innocence, sin, and atonement.

And from beneath it two keys he displayed.  
 One was of silver and the other of gold.<sup>viii</sup>  
 First with the white, then with the yellow he wrought  
 So to the gate that I was well consoled. [120]  
 "Whenever one of these fails in the slot  
 So that the lock it turneth not aright,"  
 Said he to us, "this passage opens not.  
 More precious the one is, but great art and wit  
 The other needs before the lock will stir,  
 Because by this one is the knot unknit.  
 From Peter I hold them, and he bade me err  
 Rather in opening than in keeping fast,  
 If but the people cast them prostrate here."  
 He pushed the sacred portal's door at last, [130]  
 Saying: "Enter, but be warned that he who is found  
 Looking behind him is again out-cast."<sup>ix</sup>  
 And when within their sockets turned full round  
 The pivots of the sacred portal-door,  
 Made of strong metal and clanging in their sound,  
 Tarpeia rasped not nor gave such a roar<sup>x</sup>  
 When good Metellus from its charge was rent,  
 Whereby it was to stay despoiled and poor.  
 I turned me aside, on that first thunder intent;  
 And *Te Deum laudamus* seemed I then [140]  
 To hear in voices with the sweet sound blent.  
 Just such an image did my senses gain  
 From what I heard, as from a choir is caught  
 When they to instruments accord their strain,  
 And now the words are clear and now are not.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 118. *The golden key of power and the silver key of discernment.*

<sup>ix</sup> 132. "Looking behind": upon his former life.

<sup>x</sup> 136-138. *When Caesar took possession of the Tarpeian rock from the tribune Metellus, the gates of the temple were opened and the rock resounded.*

# Canto X

*The poets, now admitted to Purgatory, mount by a zigzag passage through the rock, till they reach a terrace, which runs round the entire mountain. On the outer rim is the precipitous slope; on the inner side the cliff is adorned with reliefs in white marble, representing types of Humility and taken both from sacred and pagan history. Dante marvels at their life-likeness. There now approaches a crowd of spirits, hardly appearing human at first because bowed down in agonised postures by the huge rocks which they bear. These are the Proud, expiating their sin.*

WHEN we were past the threshold of the gate  
From which the spirits' perverse desires abstain  
Because they make the crooked path seem straight,  
By the loud sound I knew it shut again;  
And had mine eyes been toward it backward drawn  
What plea to excuse the fault could I maintain?  
We mounted through a cloven mass of stone  
Which shifted upon one and the other side  
Like a wave fleeing and then coming on.  
"Here must we use a little art," my Guide  
Began, "and take heed to continue close,  
This way or that, to the receding side."  
This caused us so much of our steps to lose  
That the diminished moon's disk had anew  
Attained its bed, to sink into repose,  
Ere from that needle's eye we had come through;<sup>i</sup>  
But when we now were free of the open air  
Above, where into itself the Mount withdrew,  
I weary, and both uncertain where we were,  
We stood at halt upon a level place  
Lonelier than roads crossing a desert bare.  
From its edge, bordering on the emptiness,

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 16. "That needle's eye": the narrow passage.

To the foot of the high bank which mounts upright  
 Three times a human body had spanned the space.  
 And so far as my eye could wing its flight  
 Now on the left, now on the right, I found  
 This terrace so appear unto my sight.  
 Our feet had not yet moved upon this ground  
 When I discerned that bank (which, rising straight,  
 Lacked means to ascend it as it circled round) [30]  
 To be of shining marble and all ornate  
 With chiselling, so that Polycletus, yea,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Nature herself would have been shamed thereat.  
 The Angel that came down with the decree<sup>iii</sup>  
 Of peace for ages prayed and wept for, whence  
 From so long interdict Heaven was made free,  
 Appeared before us with such live presence,  
 Graven there, gentle of gesture and of eye,  
 That it seemed not an image without sense.  
 One would swear he said Ave! for there-by [40]  
 Was she imagined and made manifest  
 Who turned the key to admit love from on high.  
 And in her gesture these words were expressed:  
*Ecce ancilla Dei*, clear as can<sup>iv</sup>  
 A figure be that is on wax impressed.  
 "Fix not thy mind on the one place," began  
 The gracious Poet, who had me, where he was,  
 On that side where the heart is in a man.  
 Wherefore I moved mine eyes, turning my face,  
 And saw, past Mary and beyond the head [50]  
 Of him who now bestirred me from my place,  
 Another story on the rock portrayed;<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>ii</sup> 32. "Polycletus": the Greek sculptor.

<sup>iii</sup> 34. "The Angel" is Gabriel. This example of humility represents the Virgin at the Annunciation.

<sup>iv</sup> 44. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," Mary's reply to Gabriel.

<sup>v</sup> 52-57. "Another story": King David dancing before the ark of the covenant. Uzzah, one of the drivers of the cart, seeing the ark shaken, "put forth his hand . . . and took hold of it"; whereupon "God smote him" for his "unchartered office": 2 Samuel 6:6.

Wherefore I crossed by Virgil and drew near  
 That I might have it to my eyes displayed.  
 There on the very marble graven were  
 The cart and the oxen drawing the holy Ark,  
 Whereby the unchartered office prompts to fear.  
 In front were people, all, as I could mark,  
 In seven choirs banded; of my senses two  
 Said, one "They are mute," and one "They are singing, hark!" [60]  
 In like manner the incense-smoke also  
 Which there appeared, by its imagining  
 Made eyes and nose at odds of Yes and No.  
 Before the blessed vessel went dancing  
 The humble Psalmist, with his dress up-girt;  
 In that hour was he more and less than King.  
 Opposite at a palace-window apart<sup>vi</sup>  
 Was the effigy of Michal looking on,  
 Like to a woman full of scorn and hurt.  
 I moved my feet from where I stood, to con [70]  
 Another story with a closer eye  
 Which beyond Michal white upon me shone.<sup>vii</sup>  
 There was enacted the nobility  
 Of the high prince whose worth made intervene  
 Gregory and win him his great victory;  
 Trajan the Roman emperor I mean:  
 And a poor widow to his bridle clung  
 Whose tears and grief were in her gesture seen.  
 Round him appeared a trampling and a throng  
 Of horsemen, and the eagles on gold brede [80]  
 Visibly in the wind above him swung.  
 'Mid them all that forlorn one seemed to plead:  
 "Avenge me for my son, I supplicate,

---

<sup>vi</sup> 67. *His wife, Michal, "looked through a window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart": 2 Samuel 6:16.*

<sup>vii</sup> 72-74. *The third example of humility is furnished by Trajan, who acknowledged the justice of a poor widow's claim; whereupon St. Gregory interceded with God for his salvation.*

Who is dead, and whose death makes my heart to bleed."  
 And he appeared to answer her: "Now, wait  
 Till I return." And she; "My Lord" (like one  
 In whom grief presses forth importunate)  
 "If thou return not?" He: "It shall be done  
 By one in my place." She: "And what to thee  
 Is another's goodness if thou lose thine own?" [90]  
 Wherefore he: "Comfort now, for needs must be  
 That I fulfil my duty, ere I stir.  
 Justice wills it, and pity holdeth me."  
 He, to whose sight no new thing can appear,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Fashioned this visible language, to us new,  
 Since such a thing never was fashioned here.  
 While I regarded, as I joyed to do,  
 Images of humility so rare  
 And for the Artist's sake precious to view,  
 The poet murmured, "Lo, much people there [100]  
 Approaching, but their steps are slow and spent.  
 These will direct us to the upper stair."  
 Mine eyes that in their gazing were content,  
 Seeing new things to their desire displayed,  
 Turned, and on him immediately were bent.  
 Reader, I would not that thou be dismayed<sup>ix</sup>  
 From good resolve, through being brought to know  
 How God designeth that the debt be paid.  
 Consider not the nature of the woe;  
 Think of the sequel, think that, at the extreme, [110]  
 Beyond the high sentence it cannot go.<sup>x</sup>  
 I began: "Master, what I see doth seem  
 Not persons, moving toward us with such gait,  
 But what I know not, so my sight doth swim."

---

<sup>viii</sup> 94. "He, to whose sight . . .": God.

<sup>ix</sup> 106. Dante fears that the horror of the penance may divert the reader from his "good resolution" to make amends.

<sup>x</sup> 111. The suffering will stop at the day of judgment.

And he to me: "Their miserable state  
 Of torment bows them to this crouching plight.  
 So that my eyes at first were in debate.  
 Look hard; then disentangle with thy sight  
 What comes beneath those stones: already thou  
 Mayest discern how each his breast doth smite."  
 [120]  
 O ye proud Christians, weary and sad of brow,  
 Who, tainted in the vision of the mind,  
 In backward steps your confidence avow,  
 Perceive ye not that we are worms, designed  
 To form the angelic butterfly, that goes<sup>xi</sup>  
 To judgment, leaving all defence behind?  
 Why doth your mind take such exalted pose,  
 Since ye, disabled, are as insects, mean  
 As worm which never transformation knows?  
 [130]  
 Just as a figure sometimes may be seen  
 For corbel, roof or ceiling to sustain,  
 Uniting knees to breast with nought between,  
 Which form unreal causeth real pain  
 In him who sees it, so beheld I these  
 When closely I regarded them again.  
 True it is they were contracted more or less  
 As more or less upon their backs they bore;  
 And he who seemed the most to acquiesce  
 Weeping appeared to say: "I can no more."

---

<sup>xi</sup> 125. Cf. Matt. 22:30: "For in the resurrection they . . . are as the angels of God in heaven."



# Canto XI

*The souls of the Proud repeat a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. Virgil asks of them the way to the nearest ascent; he is answered by Humbert Aldobrandesco. Dante then recognises Oderisi of Gubbio, an illuminator of manuscripts, who discourses on the transitoriness of human fame and tells the story of Provenzan Salvani of Siena.*

O OUR FATHER, who art in heaven above,<sup>i</sup>  
Not as being circumscribed, but because toward  
Thy first creation thou hast greater love,  
Hallowed thy name be and thy power adored  
By every creature, as is meet and right  
To give thanks for the sweetness from thee poured;  
May upon us thy kingdom's peace alight,  
For to it of ourselves we cannot rise,  
Unless it come itself, with all our wit.  
As of their will thine angels' companies [10]  
Make sacrifice, as they Hosanna sing,  
So may men make of their will sacrifice.  
To us this day our daily manna bring:<sup>ii</sup>  
Else through this desert harsh must he revert  
His steps, who most to advance is labouring.  
And as we pardon every one the hurt  
That we have suffered, do thou pardon too,  
Benignant, nor remember our desert.  
Try not our will, so easy to subdue,  
With the old adversary, and by thine aid [20]  
Save us from him who goads it, to our rue.  
This last prayer, dear Lord, is for us not made  
Any more, since remaineth now no need,

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-3. The Canto opens with an expanded paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. "Thy first creation": the angels and the heavens.

<sup>ii</sup> 13. The "daily manna" is spiritual food.

But 'tis for those who have behind us stayed."  
 Thus for themselves and us, praying God-Speed  
 Those shades were going beneath their burden bowed,  
 Like the oppression that a dream may breed.  
 Each in his proper pain, a weary crowd,  
 They circled the first terrace with their tread,  
 Purging away the murk of the world's cloud. [30]  
 And if of us good always there is said,  
 What can be said and done for them by men  
 Here, whose good-will is rooted and inbred?  
 Surely we ought to help them wash the stain  
 Which they have borne hence, so that cleansed and light  
 They may go forth the starry spheres to attain.  
 "Ah, so may pity and justice ease your plight  
 Soon, that disburdened ye be free to stretch  
 The wing that lifts you to your longing's height,  
 Show us on which hand we may quickest reach [40]  
 The stair; if there more be than the one road,  
 That which is least hard show us, we beseech.  
 For he who comes with me, having the load  
 Of Adam's flesh upon him yet to wear,  
 Mounts, though against his will, in halting mode."  
 From whom the words came, answering the prayer  
 Which to those shades he had addressed, whom still  
 I followed on the path, was not made clear;  
 But this was said: "To the right along the hill  
 Come with us now and there shall ye be shown [50]  
 The pass for a living person possible.  
 And if I were not hindered by the stone  
 Which lies upon me, my proud neck to tame,  
 Wherefore I needs must carry my face prone,  
 . Him who yet lives and hath not told his name  
 Would I behold, to see if 'tis a man  
 I know, and make him pity this my shame.

Latin was I; son of a great Tuscan.<sup>iii</sup>

William Aldobrandesco fathered me:  
I know not if his fame among you ran. [60]  
The ancient blood and feats of chivalry  
Of my forefathers puffed my pride up so  
That, careless of our common Mother's plea,  
Such extreme scorn of all men did I show,  
It killed me; how, the Sienese can tell  
And every child in Campagnatico.  
Tam Humbert; pride not only did compel  
Me to that fate; but all my kinsfolk too,  
Dragged down by it, into disaster fell.  
Here must I therefore bear this load of rue, [70]  
Till God be satisfied, among the dead,  
Since 'mid the living this I did not do."  
Listening I stooped my face down to his head.  
And one of them twisted himself about,  
(Not he who spoke) beneath what on him weighed  
And saw me and knew me and was calling out,  
Straining his neck to keep me in his eye  
Who, all bent down, went with them foot by foot.  
"Art thou not Oderisi," then said I,<sup>iv</sup>  
"Honour of Gubbio, honour of that art, [80]  
The illuminators famed in Paris ply?"  
"Brother, the pages smile more on the mart  
Which Franco of Bologna paints," said he:<sup>v</sup>  
"Now the honour is all his, mine only in part.  
Truly I had not used such courtesy  
In life, so great desire within me burned  
To excel the rest, which overmastered me.  
By such pride such a penalty is earned.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 58-66. Humbert, a member of the mighty Ghibelline family of the Aldobrandeschi, was killed by Sienese troops at his stronghold of Campagnatico, in 1259. — "Our common Mother" is the earth.

<sup>iv</sup> 79. Oderisi of Gubbio was a famous illuminator of manuscripts.

<sup>v</sup> 83. Of Franco of Bologna, an illuminator and a painter, little is known.

Nor were I here, save that, having the power  
 Of sinful doing, unto God I turned. [90]  
 O idle glory of all human dower!  
 How short a time, save a dull age succeed,  
 Its flourishing fresh greenness doth devour!  
 In painting Cimabue thought indeed<sup>vi</sup>  
 To hold the field; now Giotto has the cry,  
 So that the fame of the other few now heed.  
 So our tongue's glory from one Guido by  
 The other is taken; and from their nest of fame  
 Perchance is born one who shall make both fly.  
 Naught but a wind's breath is the world's acclaim, [100]  
 Which blows now hence, now thence, as it may hap,  
 And when it changes quarter changes name.  
 Wilt thou have more fame if old age unwrap  
 Thy bones from withered flesh than if thy race  
 Ended ere thou wert done with bib and pap  
 Before a thousand years pass,—shorter space  
 To eternity than is a blinked eye-lid  
 To the circle in heaven that moves at slowest pace?  
 With him, who moves so slow before me, did<sup>vii</sup>  
 All Tuscany once ring: and of him now [110]  
 Is scarcely a whisper in Siena hid,  
 Which he was lord of when was forced to bow  
 The fury of Florence, who at that time grew  
 In pride as high as now she is fallen low.  
 Your reputation is as grass in hue,  
 Which comes and goes, and through him is it brown  
 Who from the soil its springing freshness drew."  
 And I to him: "Thy true word softens down

---

<sup>vi</sup> 94-99. Giovanni Cimabue was regarded as the restorer of painting in Florence. Giotto, Cimabue's pupil, was the greatest painter of Dante's time. The poet Guido Cavalcanti surpassed Guido Guinicelli of Bologna. As to the general deduction of line 99, Dante must have known that the reader would immediately apply it to him.

<sup>vii</sup> 109. "With him . . .": Provenzano Salvani, a valiant Ghibelline chief, who was all-powerful in Siena in 1260 and nine years later was defeated and beheaded.

My swelling heart and healeth it of pride.  
 But of whom speak'st thou, and of whose renown?" [120]  
 Tis Provenzan Salvani," he replied;  
 "And he is here because so bold he had grown,  
 Presuming all Siena to bestride.  
 Thus goes he without rest as he has gone  
 Since death, and in such coin he needs must pay,  
 For over-daring upon earth to atone."  
 And I: "If such a spirit as makes delay  
 Of his repentance till life's utmost rim,  
 Remains beneath and mounts not up this way,  
 Save hallowed prayers assist him, till such time [130]  
 Be measured as his years of living were,  
 How was the coming hither vouchsafed him?"  
 "He of his own will in Siena square"<sup>viii</sup>  
 Said he, "when most he gloried among men,  
 Posted himself, all shame forsworn, and there  
 To liberate his friend out of the pain  
 That he endured in Charles's prison tower,  
 Constrained himself to tremble in every vein.  
 Darkly, I know, I speak, and say no more.  
 But soon thy neighbours' acts shall be for signs [140]  
 Whereby to read the riddle thou'lt have power.  
 This deed delivered him from those confines."<sup>ix</sup>

---

<sup>viii</sup> 133-138. To save the life of a friend held for ransom by Charles of Anjou, Provenzano meekly begged of the passers-by.

<sup>ix</sup> 142. "This deed" enabled him to enter Purgatory.

## Canto XII

*Virgil bids Dante leave Oderisi, with whom he has been stepping, bowed in sympathy. They go on their way, and Dante is now admonished by Virgil to examine the pavement they are treading. On this are chiselled reliefs, showing examples of pride laid low. After they have gone some distance, they meet the angel who guards this terrace and who with a stroke of his wing erases one of the P's from Dante's forehead. They ascend a stair, like the one made to ease the ascent from Florence to San Miniato, and Dante is surprised to find that he now mounts more easily than he went on the level. This is because the P (the sin of pride) has been obliterated.*

LIKE OXEN in the yoke, pace matching pace,  
That laden spirit I accompanied  
So long as the sweet Teacher gave me grace;  
But when he said: "Press on now and leave his side,  
For here 'tis well that each one urge with all  
His might his bark, and sail and oar be plied,"  
Upright, as walking maketh natural,  
I made again my body, although in thought  
Bowed down I still remained and shrunken small.  
I had moved me, and willingly my footsteps sought [10]  
My Master's, and we, stepping both as one,  
Already showed how light we were of foot,  
When he admonished me: "Turn thine eyes down.  
Good will it be, the way to soothe the more,  
To see the bed thy soles are treading on."  
As tombs over those buried in stone floor,  
That after may be memory of them, bear  
The portraiture of what they were before,  
Wherefore men often-times weep for them there,  
Because remembrance pricks them with the smart [20]  
That only the compassionate doth spur,  
So saw I, but more life-like, since the art

Did there of a diviner craftsman tell,  
 The road formed by the Mount's projecting part.  
 I saw on one side him, who to excel  
 All other creatures was created, flame  
 Down, like the lightning, as from heaven he fell.<sup>i</sup>  
 I saw Briareus, by celestial aim<sup>ii</sup>  
 On the other side transfixed upon the ground,  
 Lying with mortal frost upon his frame.  
 I saw Thrymbzus, Mars and Pallas round  
 Their father, still in arms and gazing o'er  
 The great limbs of the Giants strewn beyond.  
 I saw Nimrod under his mighty tower<sup>iii</sup>  
 As if bewildered and regarding those  
 Who in Shinar with him bragged of all their power.  
 O Niobe, into mine eyes arose<sup>iv</sup>  
 What grief, to see, carved on that floor, thy pain  
 Twixt seven and seven of children in death's throes!  
 O Saul, how there upon thine own sword slain  
 Didst thou appear, dead on Gilboa bare  
 That after felt not dew nor any rain.  
 O mad Arachne, so I saw thee stare,<sup>v</sup>  
 Half-spider already, mournful on the shred  
 Of what thou wovest to thine own despair.  
 O Rehoboam, here no threatening head<sup>vi</sup>  
 Thine image showeth; but a chariot now  
 Hurries thee away, ere chase come, full of dread.

[30]

[40]

---

<sup>i</sup> 27. Luke 10:18: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

<sup>ii</sup> 28-33. Briareus was one of the giants who fought against the gods. The carving represents the bodies of the defeated giants, upon which Apollo ("Thymbraeus"), Pallas, Mars, and Jove are gazing.

<sup>iii</sup> 34. "Nimrod": the builder of the tower of Babel in the land of Shinar.

<sup>iv</sup> 37. Niobe, proud of her seven sons and seven daughters, disparaged Latona, whose two children, Apollo and Diana, avenged her by shooting all of Niobe's offspring.

<sup>v</sup> 43. "Arachne," who had challenged Pallas to a trial of skill in weaving, was turned by her into a spider.

<sup>vi</sup> 46. "Rehoboam": see 1 Kings 12:18.

It showed further, the hard pavement, how<sup>vii</sup>  
 Dearly Alemaeon made his mother pay [50]  
 The unlucky necklace, to achieve his vow.  
 It showed how his sons rushed on him to slay<sup>viii</sup>  
 Sennacherib; and how, their father killed,  
 They left him in the temple where he lay.  
 It showed the rout and cruel carnage willed  
 By Queen Tomyris who to Cyrus cried:<sup>ix</sup>  
 "Blood thou didst crave, with blood shalt thou be filled."  
 It showed how after Holofernes died  
 The Assyrians all fled headlong and dismayed;  
 The relic of the slaying it showed beside. [60]  
 I saw Troy gaping and in ashes laid.  
 O Ilion, thee how vile and desecrate  
 The witness of the sculpture there betrayed!  
 What master of brush or point were he so great,  
 Who line and shade could have so justly wed  
 For every subtle mind to wonder at?  
 The live appeared living, and dead the dead.  
 Not better he who saw the actual deed  
 Saw than I, stooping, all beneath my tread.  
 Wax proud now and with haughty front proceed, [70]  
 Children of Eve, nor gaze upon the ground,  
 So that your evil courses ye may heed.  
 More of the Mount by us was compassed round  
 Already, and of the sun's path much more spent  
 Than the mind reckoned, being not yet unbound,  
 When he who, watchful without ceasing, went  
 In front of me, said: "Lift thy head upright!  
 'Tis no time now to walk so all-intent.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 49. *Amphiaraus, to avoid going to the Theban war, hid himself, but was betrayed by his wife Eriphyle, who had been bribed by a golden necklace. Her son Alcmaeon killed her in vengeance for the loss of his father.*

<sup>viii</sup> 52. *Sennacherib, the haughty king of the Assyrians, was killed by his sons "as he was worshipping."*

<sup>ix</sup> 56. *"Tomyris," queen of the Scythians, to avenge the defeat of her army, lured Cyrus and his men into an ambush and destroyed them.*



See, an angel cometh toward us into sight  
 There, and from service of the day withdrawn [80]  
 The sixth handmaiden homeward taketh flight.  
 Reverence over face and act put on,<sup>x</sup>  
 So that to send us upward may him please.  
 Think, that this day never again shall dawn!"  
 To his monitions, ever the hour to seize,  
 Was I full well used, so that to my ears  
 In that matter he spoke no mysteries.  
 Onward to us the beauteous creature nears,  
 Clad in white raiment and in countenance  
 Like as at morn a trembling star appears. [90]  
 His arms he opened, then his wings' expanse,  
 Saying: "Come; nigh to this spot is the stair,  
 And easy now will be the ascending hence.  
 To this inviting they who come are rare.  
 O human spirits, upward born to spring,  
 Why fall ye down at a brief blast of air?"  
 He led us where the rock was cleft; his wing  
 On me across the forehead did he beat,  
 Then pledged me a safe path for my journeying.  
 As, on the right, to climb the hill that, set [100]  
 O'er Rubaconte, by the church is topt<sup>xi</sup>  
 Which has the well-ruled city under it,  
 There is a breach amid the ascent abrupt,  
 Hewn into steps made in the former time  
 When stave and ledger were yet uncorrupt,  
 Even so the slope is made less hard to climb  
 Which falls from the other cornice with steep face,  
 But on both sides close presses the rock's rim.  
 While we were turning to the upward pass  
 Voices *Beati pauperes spiritu* [110]

---

<sup>x</sup> 82. *The sixth hour of daylight.*

<sup>xi</sup> 101-102. "The church": San Miniato. "Rubaconte": the old name of the bridge, now called Ponte alle Grazie. "Well-ruled" is ironical.

Sang, beyond speech to tell, so sweet it was.  
 Ah, different verily this avenue  
     From Hell's approaches; for through singing here  
     Is the entry, but down there fierce wails pursue.  
 Now mounting up the sacred steps we were,  
     And far more lightly it seemed that now I trod  
     Than earlier on the level did appear.  
 Wherefore I: "Master, say what is this load  
     Which has been taken from me, that scarce aught  
     Of toil seems now to oppress me upon the road?" [120]  
 He answered: "When the P's thy brow has got,  
     Nigh cancelled on thee yet remaining still,  
     Shall, like the one, be utterly razed out,  
 Thou shalt be so surrendered to good-will  
     That not only shall toil not tire thy feet  
     But to mount up shall be delectable."  
 Then did I like to those who walk the street  
     With something that they know not on their head  
     Save that they doubt the signs and stares they meet,  
 Wherefore, to make sure, the hand comes to aid [130]  
     And seeks and finds, that service to afford  
     For which the mere sight is not facultied;  
 And with the hand's spread fingers I explored  
     And found but six the letters he of the keys  
     Had over both the temples on me scored;  
 Perceiving which my Leader smiled at ease.

# Canto XIII

*The poets arrive at the second terrace, where the sin of Envy is punished. Voices are heard praising the virtues of generosity and charity. Then Dante perceives the envious sinners sitting huddled together along the side of the cliff, their eyelids stitched up with wire; and he speaks to them. Among the spirits is a woman, Sapia of Siena, who tells of her envious nature and how she rejoiced at the defeat of her countrymen, commanded by Provenzan Salvani (see Canto XI) at Colle in 1269. At the end of the canto she alludes to two abortive schemes of the Sienese; to discover the stream of Diana, underneath the city, and to buy the port of Talamone.*

NOW were we at the topmost of the steps  
Where for a second time is scarped all round  
The mount which, as 'tis climbed, of evil strips.  
About the hill there is a cornice wound  
After the fashion of the former one,  
Save that the curve of it is sooner found.  
Shades there are none to see there, nor sign shown,  
So naked looks the bank and paven way,  
All the one livid colour of the stone.  
"Tf here, for people to ask of, we should stay," [10]  
The poet was beginning, "I much doubt  
Our choice will may-be have too great delay."  
The sun then with a steady gaze he sought;  
Moving, on his right side he pivoted  
And the left part of him he turned about.  
"O sweet light, in whose confidence," he said,  
"I enter on the new way, do thou lead  
Our steps here as we would that they be led.  
Thou warm'st the world, thou shinest on its need.  
Save other reason prompt against it, still [20]  
Thy rays must be the guide that we should heed."  
Over such space as here counts for a mile,

So far there in but short time did we move,  
 Being quickened by our own consenting will.  
 And toward us flying now were heard above,  
 But not seen, spirits speaking, and they sent  
 Courteous welcome to the table of love.  
 The first voice flying *Vinum non habent*  
 Cried in its passage with a loud clear note,  
 Repeating it behind us as it went. [30]  
 And ere it had passed quite out of ear-shot  
 Through distance, passed another, without cease  
 Crying "I am Orestes," and it too stayed not.<sup>i</sup>  
 "O," said I, "Father, what voices are these?"  
 Even as I asked him, did the third begin  
 Saying, "Love those who have wrought you injuries."  
 And the good Master: "Envy is the sin  
 Which in this circle is scourged, and to that end  
 From love are drawn the cords of discipline.  
 Needs must the bit the contrary intend. [40]  
 I think that thou wilt hear it, as I guess,  
 Ere by the Pass of Pardon thou ascend.<sup>ii</sup>  
 - But fix thine eyes through the air in steadfastness,  
 And thou shalt see before us huddled folk  
 That sitting each against the cliff-side press."  
 Then wider than before my eyes awoke.  
 I looked in front and shades with cloaks espied  
 Not different from the colour of the rock.  
 And when we had come up nearer to their side  
 I heard cried "Mary, pray for us!" and "O [50]  
 Michael" and "Peter" and "O All Saints!" cried.  
 I think on earth to-day no man can go  
 So hard, he were not with compassion stung  
 At what mine eyes were then constrained to know.

---

<sup>i</sup> 33. When the tyrant Aegisthus had condemned Orestes, whom he did not know by sight, Orestes and his friend Pylades both claimed that name, each wishing to save the other.

<sup>ii</sup> 42. "The Pass of Pardon" is the beginning of the ascent to the next circle.

For when I had arrived so near that throng  
 That all their features came distinctly seen,  
 A heavy grief out of mine eyes was wrung.  
 With hair-cloth they seemed covered, coarse and mean,  
 And each upon the other's shoulder leant,  
 And all of them against the bank did lean. [60]  
 The blind, to whom is lacking nourishment,  
 Sit so at Pardons begging for their needs,  
 And each one's head is on his neighbour bent,  
 So that in others quick may spring the seeds  
 Of pity, not alone by sound of words  
 But by the sight, which not less sorely pleads.  
 And as to them the sun no boon affords,  
 So to the spirits, there where I have said,  
 Heavens light no bounty of itself accords.  
 For the eyelids of them all with iron thread [70]  
 Are stitched up, as is done to a wild hawk<sup>iii</sup>  
 Because its spirit stays not quieted.  
 I seemed to do those shades wrong, thus to walk,  
 Seeing others, and myself invisible:  
 Me therefore to my wisdom I betook.  
 What the mute craved to say, he knew full well:  
 And for that cause my question did forestall,  
 Saying: "Speak, but make brief what thou hast to tell."  
 Virgil came with me along the outer wall  
 Of the cornice, where, because no parapet [80]  
 Engirdles it, on that side one may fall.  
 And on the other side of me were set  
 The devout shades, who through the horrible seam  
 Pressed drops out, so that all their cheeks were wet.  
 "O people assured of seeing the light supreme,"  
 I, turning to them, spoke, "the only home  
 Ye crave, and your solicitude's one theme,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 71. Falcons that were tamed full-grown used to have their eyes closed in this cruel way.

So may grace quickly sift away the scum  
 Upon your conscience, so that through it clear  
 The stream of memory down-flowing may come, [90]  
 Tell me, for gracious will it be and dear  
 To me, if any among you a Latin be.  
 Perchance 'twill profit him, if such be here."  
 "O brother mine, each of a true city  
 Is citizen, but thou would'st rather say  
 That made his pilgrimage in Italy."  
 The answer I thus heard a voice convey  
 Seemed somewhat farther on from where I was;  
 Wherefore I made me heard yet more that way.  
 'Mid the others one sat with expectant face: [100]  
 And if one ask How so? it was the same  
 As if I saw one blind his chin upraise.  
 "Spirit," said I, "that dost thy nature tame  
 To mount up, if from thee came the reply,  
 Make thyself known to me by place or name."  
 "I was of Siena, and here with the others I,"  
 It answered, "wash away life's guilty blot,  
 Weeping to him that he to us draw nigh.  
 Though Sapia named, yet sapient I was not.<sup>iv</sup>  
 Of others' suffering was I much more glad [110]  
 Than of all good luck that befell my lot.  
 And lest thou think that now deceit I add,  
 Hear if, already when life downward wheeled,  
 I was not, even as I tell thee, mad.  
 My townsmen, hard by Colle, on the field  
 Were ranked in battle against their foes' attack;  
 And I prayed God for that which he had willed.  
 There were they routed and turned fleeing back  
 In defeat's bitter steps, and in that chase  
 A joy surpassing all else did I take; [120]

---

<sup>iv</sup> 109. "Sapia": see the Argument.

So much that, lifting my presumptuous face,  
     I cried to God 'I fear thee now no more,'  
     As did the merle for a brief sunshine's grace.  
 I craved for peace with God on the last shore  
     Of life, and not yet were the debt I owed  
     Abridged by my repentance in that hour,  
 Had Piers Pettinaio not bestowed<sup>v</sup>  
     On me remembrance, holy prayers to make,  
     And in his charity grieved for me to God.  
 But who art thou who passing by wouldst seek [130]  
     To learn our state, and hast thine eyes unwired,  
     As I believe, and usest breath to speak?"  
 "Sight," said I, "shall be yet from me required  
     Here, but for brief time, for the offence is small  
     Done by these eyes through being by envy fired.  
 Far greater is the dread in which my soul  
     Hangs of the torment lower down, the thought<sup>vi</sup>  
     Of which doth ev'n now with its weight appal."  
 And she: "Who then to us up hither brought  
     Thy steps, if here again thou think'st to be?" [140]  
     And I: "He who is with me and says naught.  
 And I am living, therefore ask of me,  
     Spirit elect, if thou would'st that down there  
     On earth my mortal feet I stir for thee."  
 "This is so new a thing," she said, "to hear,  
     That of God's love for thee 'tis a great sign:  
     Prosper me therefore sometimes with a prayer.  
 And I by what thou most desir'st to win  
     Entreat thee, if ever Tuscan earth thou tread  
     That thou restore my name among my kin. [150]  
 Thou'lt see them among that people in folly bred

---

<sup>v</sup> 127. *Only the intercession of one of her countrymen secured for her admission to Purgatory.*

<sup>vi</sup> 137. *"The torment lower down" is of the circle of pride.*

Who trust in Talamone and there will more<sup>vii</sup>  
Hope lose than seeking the Diana's bed.  
But most shall the Admirals lose upon that shore."

---

<sup>vii</sup> 152-154. "Talamone" and "Diana": see the Argument. "The Admirals": those who expect to be admirals.



# Canto XIV

*Overhearing Dante's talk, and learning that he is still alive, two spirits, Guy del Duca and Rinieri da Calboli, engage him in conversation. The former, discovering that Dante comes from the shores of the Arno, describes the course of that accursed river down a valley in which the inhabitants of each town it passes grow ever more brutish, till it reaches Pisa, the worst of all. He predicts what Florence is to suffer (in 1308) at the hands of Rinieri's grandson, and goes on to condemn the people of his own Romagna for its degeneracy. Virgil and Dante leave this rope of spirits, and as they go on hear voices in the air warning against envy.*

WHO is this that circles round about our hill  
Ere death have licensed him from earth to fly  
And shuts his eyes and opens them at will?"  
"I know not who he is: but this know I,  
He is not alone; ask thou who art nearer him,  
And sweetly accost him, so that he reply."  
Thus two shades closely huddled, limb to limb,  
There on the right of me were talking low,  
Then held upturned for speech their faces dim.  
And the one said: "O Soul, that on dost go<sup>i</sup>  
Toward Heaven, though still within the body set,  
For charity console us, and tell who  
Thou art and whence thou comest; for so great  
Astonishment is in us at thy grace  
As must be at a thing known never yet."  
And I: "Through Tuscan country spreads apace  
A stream from Falterona issuing<sup>ii</sup>  
And a hundred miles contenteth not its race.  
This body from the banks of it I bring.  
To tell you who I am, since yet hath been

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 10. "The one" is Guy del Duca.

<sup>ii</sup> 17. "Falterona": a mountain in the Apennines. "The other" is Rinieri da Calboli.

But little noised my name, were a vain thing."  
 "If my mind rightly pierce within that screen  
 To thy intention," then to me replied  
 He who spoke first, "'Tis Arno thou dost mean."  
 And the other said to him: "Why did he hide,  
 In speaking of that river, the name of it,  
 As one does, loathly matter to avoid?"  
 The shade thus questioned did him thus acquit:  
 "I know not, but indeed good cause he has.  
 That such a stream's name perish is most fit. [30]  
 For from its springing, where the mountain-mass,<sup>iii</sup>  
 Wherefrom is torn Pelorum, swells and soars  
 So that few points that measure overpass,  
 As far as where surrendered it restores  
 That which the sky hath sucked up from the sea,  
 Whence rivers have what flows between their shores,  
 Virtue is cast out for an enemy  
 By all, yea like a viper, either from  
 The curst place or ingrained malignancy.  
 And they who have the unhappy vale for home [40]  
 Have altered so their nature, one would swear  
 That into Circe's pastures they had come.  
 Among brute hogs, on acorns fit to fare  
 Rather than viand on which man subsists,  
 It first directs its current poor and spare.  
 Curs it encounters, coming downward, beasts  
 Whose force is feebler than their snarlings' threat,  
 And from them in contempt its muzzle twists.<sup>iv</sup>  
 It goes down, and the more it groweth great  
 The more it finds the dogs to wolves transformed, [50]  
 This ill-starred gutter of accursed fate.  
 Its way then through deep gorges having wormed,  
 Foxes it finds that trap nor cunning fear,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 31. "The mountain-mass": the Apennine chain, of which Pelorum is the continuation.

<sup>iv</sup> 48. Toward Arezzo the Arno suddenly turns off to the west.

So have their hearts with fraud's devices swarmed.  
 Nor will I cease, for all another hear:  
 And well for him if later he recall  
 What prophecy to me discloseth clear.  
 I see upon those wolves thy grandson fall,<sup>v</sup>  
 To hunt them by the savage river and drive  
 Along its banks and terrify them all. [60]  
 I see him sell their flesh while yet alive,  
 Then kill them like old cattle,—many a head  
 Of life, himself of honour to deprive.  
 Bloody he comes forth from the wood of dread.  
 He leaves it such that hence a thousand years  
 'Tis not to its first state re-forested."  
 As at the announcing of great ills appears  
 The face of him who listens sore disturbed,  
 Whence-so-ever comes the peril to his ears,  
 So saw I the other soul, who held him curbed [70]  
 To listen, become troubled and grow sad  
 When these words into itself it had absorbed.  
 The speech of the one, the look the other had  
 Filled me with longing that their names I knew,  
 And question of them, mixt with prayers, I made.  
 Wherefore the spirit that first spoke, now anew  
 Began to speak: "Thou wouldest that I agree  
 To indulge thee in what for me thou wilt not do.<sup>vi</sup>  
 But since God wills that his grace shine through thee  
 So greatly, I will not baulk thee, and therefore learn [80]  
 That Guy del Duca it is whom thou dost see.  
 My blood with envy did so hotly burn,  
 That did I see joy in a face upleap  
 Thou wouldst have seen my face all livid turn.  
 Of my own sowing such the straw I reap.  
 O human people, why the heart confide

---

<sup>v</sup> 58. "Thy grandson": the nephew of Rinieri, Fulcieri da Calboli, who had many citizens put to death.

<sup>vi</sup> 78. Dante has avoided giving his name.

There where fruition ousteth partnership?<sup>vii</sup>  
 This is Rinier, the glory and the pride  
 Of the house of Calboli, which house hath lacked  
 All sign of heir to his virtue since he died. [90]  
 Nor only is his blood beggared, in that tract  
 'Twixt Po and Reno and sea and mountain's foot<sup>viii</sup>  
 Of the good, truth and gentle ways exact,  
 For all within those borders the rank shoot  
 Of poison smothers, so that too late may  
 The tiller come, that canker to uproot.  
 Good Lizio, Hal Mainardi, where are they?<sup>ix</sup>  
 Guy di Carpigna and Traversaro, where?  
 O Romagnuols all bastardised today!  
 When in Bologna shall a Fabbro appear? [100]  
 In Faenza a Bernardin di Fosco arise  
 Again, fair scion for small plant to bear?  
 Marvel not, Tuscan, if tears fill mine eyes  
 When Guy of Prata I remember, and  
 Ugolin d'Azzo, and our friendship's ties,  
 Frederic Tignoso and his comrade band,  
 The Traversari and Anastagi, names  
 Extinguished, houses heirless and dismanned,  
 The ladies and the knights, the toils and games  
 Which love and courtesy made our delight [110]  
 There where our hearts now wickedness inflames.  
 Why, O Brettinoro, didst not vanish quite,<sup>x</sup>  
 Since out of thee thy family is gone  
 With much folk, to escape their guilt by flight?  
 Bagnacaval does well, to bear no son;<sup>xi</sup>

---

<sup>vii</sup> 87. *Upon earthly possessions.*

<sup>viii</sup> 92. *'Twixt Po and Reno . . .': Romagna.*

<sup>ix</sup> 97-107. *In these lines are enumerated sundry noble and famous citizens of Romagna in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.*

<sup>x</sup> 112. *"Brettinoro" was the birthplace of Guido [Guy] del Duca.*

<sup>xi</sup> 115-117. *"Bagnacavallo" is a little place near Ravenna. The counts of Castrocaro (near Forli) and Conio (near Imola) were numerous and ill-famed.*

But Castracaro ill, and Conio worse,  
 Since such Counts it hath troubled to breed on.  
 Well shall do the Pagani when their curse,<sup>xii</sup>  
 The Demon, quits them; not that clean of shame  
 May ever be their record that endures. [120]  
 O Ugolin de' Fantolin, thy name<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Is safe, expecting no inheritor  
 To blacken and by debasing it defame.  
 But go thy way now, Tuscan, for far more  
 To weep than speak comforteth now my heart,  
 So hath our converse wrung it to the core."  
 That those dear spirits heard our steps depart  
 We knew, and therefore by their silence they  
 Emboldened us, sure of the path, to start.  
 When we were left alone, bent on our way, [130]  
 Like lightning when it cuts the air in twain  
 We heard a voice that smote against us say:  
 "By whoever findeth me shall I be slain"<sup>xiv</sup>  
 And fled, like thunder in a dying peal,  
 If suddenly the cloud bursts with its rain.  
 And when our ears a truce from it could feel  
 The second lo! with such a crash and groan  
 Came, as the thunder upon thunder's heel:  
 "I am Aglauros who was turned to stone."<sup>xv</sup>  
 Then I, to press close to the Poet, slept [140]  
 With one foot backward and not forward thrown.  
 Now all around the air in quiet slept;  
 And he was saying: "That was the hard bit  
 By which within his bounds man should have kept.  
 But ye the bait seize, so that the hook in it

---

<sup>xii</sup> 118. "The Pagani," a noble family of Faenza, "shall do well" to get no more sons, "when their demon," Maghinardo, shall have died.

<sup>xiii</sup> 121. "Ugolino" was a worthy gentleman of Faenza.

<sup>xiv</sup> 133. The first of the examples of envy is that of Cain.

<sup>xv</sup> 139. Because she was envious of her sister Herse.

Of the old Enemy draws you to his side,  
And bridle or lure therefore avails no whit.  
The heavens call to you and around you glide  
In circle, and their eternal beauties show,  
And with earth only is your eye satisfied,  
Wherefore he who discerns all battereth you."

[150]

# Canto XV

*It is now afternoon, when the poets are dazzled by the brightness of an angel who points out to them the next ascent. As they climb upward, Dante reminds Virgil of something which had perplexed him in Guido del Duca's speech; and Virgil explains the difference between partnership in material goods and partnership in spiritual goods. They reach the third terrace, and Dante is caught up in an ecstatic vision and sees examples of gentleness (the Virgin Mary, Pisistratus, St. Stephen). He comes to himself, and the two continue their journey, till they encounter a dark smoke which surrounds them and robs them of light and air.*

AS MUCH AS, 'twixt the third hour and the day's<sup>i</sup>

Beginning, is apparent of the sphere

For ever moving as a child that plays,

So much of the sun's course did now appear,

Toward evening drawn, to be untravelled yet;

And it was vespers there and midnight here.

The middle of the nose the full beam met,

For we had made the mount's encirclement

So far that due West now our feet were set,

When heavy on my brows seemed to be bent

[10]

A brilliance such as ne'er before opprest;

And the untold things were an astonishment.

Wherefore I raised my hands up to the crest

Of the eyebrows, and so made the sun less great

Whereby was the light's overflow compest.

As when from mirror or from water, straight

The ray will in the opposed direction start,<sup>ii</sup>

Ascending by the self-same law as that

Which it descends by, and as far depart

From a stone's falling line in equal space,

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-6. *It was three hours before sunset, or mid-afternoon.*

<sup>ii</sup> 17. *A ray of light is reflected upward at the angle at which it descends.*

As proveth both experiment and art,  
 'Even so reflected light upon my face  
 Shining in front of me appeared to smite,  
 Wherefore my eyes were swift themselves to abase.  
 "Sweet Father, what is that from which my sight,"  
 I said, "I cannot serviceably fend,  
 And which seems toward us to be moving bright?"  
 "Needs not," he answered, "wonder to expend  
 That the heavenly retinue should dazzle still.  
 He is sent, who comes to invite us to ascend. [30]  
 Soon shall it be that when these things reveal  
 Themselves, not trouble but a joy 'twill stir  
 As great as nature fitteth thee to feel."  
 When we had reached the blessed Messenger,  
 With a glad voice he called us: "Hither come  
 To a stair far less steep than the others are."  
 Already, thence departed, up we clomb.  
*Beati Misericordes* was sung now<sup>iii</sup>  
 Behind, and "Joy thou, that hast overcome."  
 My Master and I together alone, we two, [40]  
 Were mounting, and I thought not to let slip  
 Profit his words might on the way bestow,  
 And turned to him with question on my lip:  
 "What meant the spirit of the Romagnuol  
 Speaking of 'ousting' and of 'partnership'?"<sup>iv</sup>  
 Then he to me: "He knows the hurt to his soul  
 Of his chief vice; let it not then surprise  
 If he reprove it, so to cause less dole.  
 For in as much as all your longing hies  
 Where partnership diminisheth the share, [50]  
 'Tis Envy moves the bellows for your sighs.  
 But did the soul's love of the highest sphere<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>iii</sup> 38. Matt. 5:7: "Blessed are the merciful."

<sup>iv</sup> 45. *The words of Guido del Duca in Canto XIV, 87*

<sup>v</sup> 52. "The highest sphere" is the Empyrean, the abode of God.



Wrench upward your desire, then would not ye  
 Within your bosom entertain that fear.  
 For by so many more saying 'Ours' there be,  
 So much the more of good doth each possess,  
 And more of love burns in that sanctuary."  
 "From being satisfied I fast not less  
 But more," said I, "than had I question spared,  
 And in my mind doubt doth the more increase. [60]  
 How can it be that out of a good shared  
 More numerous possessors more shall win  
 Of wealth than if a few had it in ward?"  
 And he to me: "Because thou still dost pin  
 Merely upon terrestrial things thy wit,  
 From very light thou drawest darkness in.  
 The Good ineffable and infinite  
 That is on high so runneth unto love  
 As a beam comes to a body that is bright.  
 So much it gives as warmth it findeth of,<sup>vi</sup> [70]  
 So that, how far so-ever love be poured,  
 The eternal goodness doth its best improve.  
 And the more people on high have that accord,  
 The more to love well are there, and more love is,  
 And mirror-like 'tis given and restored.  
 If my discourse thy hunger not appease,  
 Thou shalt see Beatrice; she thy craving thought  
 Shall free from this and all perplexities.  
 Strive only that the five wounds be razed out  
 Soon from thy forehead, like to the other twain, [80]  
 Which by our sorrowing are to healing brought."  
 I was nigh saying: "Thou content'st me," when  
 I saw me on the circle above to be,  
 So that my eyes' wish made me mute again.

---

<sup>vi</sup> 70-72. *The divine love runs to meet the aspiring human affection and, uniting with it, doubles its ardour and its joy.*

There seemed I in a vision of ecstasy<sup>vii</sup>  
 On a sudden to be caught up from my feet,  
 And in a temple many a one to see,  
 And at the entry a lady, with the sweet  
 Gesture of a mother, saying, "O my son!  
 Why, son, didst thou thy parents thus entreat? [90]  
 Behold, thy father and I about have gone  
 To seek thee sorrowing"; and as there she stopt,  
 That which appeared first, disappeared: whereon  
 Appeared to me another woman, who dropt<sup>viii</sup>  
 Those waters down her cheek which grief has stored  
 And which from indignation spring abrupt,  
 Saying: "If thou art of the city lord  
 For whose name did the gods such strife declare  
 And whence all knowledge sparkling is outpoured,  
 Avenge thee of those presumptuous arms that dare [100]  
 Embrace our daughter, O Pisistratus!"  
 And the lord seemed with a benignant air  
 To answer her, serene and courteous:  
 "What shall we do to him who works us ill  
 If he who loves us is condemned by us?"  
 Then saw I people inflamed by angry will  
 Slaying a youth with stones, and each one bade<sup>ix</sup>  
 The other on, crying aloud "Kill, Kill!"  
 And him I saw with body already weighed  
 Down unto earth by death, yet not the less [110]  
 Ever of his eyes gates unto heaven he made,  
 Praying the high Lord in such agonies  
 With that look which doth pity's door undo  
 That he forgive his persecutors this.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 85-88. The examples of gentleness appear as ecstatic visions. The first represents the infant Jesus, who is found in the temple disputing with the doctors.

<sup>viii</sup> 94. "Another woman": the wife of Pisistratus, ruler of Athens, enraged because a young man has dared to embrace their daughter.

<sup>ix</sup> 107. For the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, see Acts 7: 54-60.

When my soul came back to the outward view  
 Of what true things are outside of its thought,  
 I recognised my errors not untrue.  
 My leader, who could see my body all wrought  
 Like a man shaking sleep off from his limbs,  
 Said, "What doth ail, that thou art so distraught [120]  
 And more than half a league with eye that swims  
 And legs that stagger comest on thy way  
 Like him whom wine or heavy sleep bedims?"  
 "Sweet Father mine, listen, and if I may"  
 I said, "I'll tell thee what I saw appear  
 When from me thus my legs were taken away."  
 And he: "Had'st thou a hundred masks to wear  
 Over thy face, thou couldest not but choose  
 To show me thy hid thoughts, how small so'er.  
 What thou saw'st was that thou might'st not excuse [130]  
 Thy heart from letting in the water of peace  
 Which the eternal fount ever renews.  
 I asked 'What ails?' not with the thought that is  
 In him who asks and looks but with the eye,  
 Which, when the body is senseless, nothing sees.  
 I asked, that I thy feet might fortify.  
 So must be spurred the laggard, ever slow  
 The waking hour's return to profit by."  
 We through the evening journeying strove to throw  
 Our strained eyes as far forward as we could, [140]  
 Against the beams of evening shining low.  
 And lo, by little and little a smoky cloud  
 Rolled itself onward toward us, dark as night,  
 And every place of refuge overflowed:  
 This robbed us of the pure air and of sight.

# Canto XVI

*The poets are now on the terrace of the Wrathful, who move in a dark cloud of stinging smoke and are heard praying for peace and mercy. One of the spirits questions them, and Dante enters into talk with him: He is Mark Lombardo, and he mourns over the corruption of the times; which prompts Dante to ask if this is due to the stars or innate human depravity. Mark replies that the stars have their influence, but man has free will; and he attributes the degeneracy of the age to the usurpation by the Papacy of the temporal power.*

GLOOM of Hell, gloom of night uncomforted  
By any star beneath a niggard sky  
Darkened by cloud as far as cloud could spread,  
Made not so thick a curtain to the eye  
Nor to the feel such rasping frieze as made  
The smoke that there was all our canopy.  
For the eyelids to keep open in vain essayed;  
Wherefore my Escort, trusty and sage, drew close  
And offered me his shoulder for my aid.  
Just as behind his guide a blind man goes  
Lest he should stray or stumble against aught  
Whereby he might be hurt, or life ev'n lose,  
So through the bitter and foul air I fought,  
Listening to my leader, who still would say  
"See from my side that thou be parted not."  
I heard voices; and each one seemed to pray  
For peace and for compassion on their sin  
To the Lamb of God who taketh sins away.  
Still Agnus Dei did their prayers begin:  
One word was in them all, one tone rang clear,  
So that entire concord they seemed to win.  
"O Master, are those spirits that I hear?"  
Said I; and he: "Rightly dost thou conceive.

[10]

[20]

The knot of anger are they loosening here."  
 "Now who art thou who com'st our smoke to cleave  
 And speakest of us just as if still time  
 Thou didst divide and by the calend live?"<sup>i</sup>  
 This by a voice was spoken. "Answer him,"  
 My Master therefore said, "and ask if he  
 Will tell us if from this point we should climb." [30]  
 And I: "O creature that art cleansing thee  
 To return fair to him that made thee, thou  
 Shalt hear a marvel if thou follow me."  
 "As far I'll follow as our laws allow,"  
 It answered, "and if sight the smoke confounds,  
 Hearing in lieu of it unites us now."  
 Then began I: "With these same swathing bonds  
 Which death undoes, I journey up the mount  
 And did come hither through Hell's gasping wounds.  
 And if God hath so filled me from his fount [40]  
 Of grace, and wills that I behold his court  
 After a fashion beyond latter wont,  
 Hide not from me who before death thou wert,  
 But tell me, and tell me if for the pass I am  
 Set rightly; and let thy words our way escort."  
 "I was of Lombardy; Mark was my name;  
 I knew the world, and that worth did I love  
 At which now no one bendeth bow to aim.  
 For mounting up 'tis straight on thou must move."  
 Thus answered he, and added: "I pray thee [50]  
 That thou for me pray when thou art above."  
 And I: "By faith that binds my loyalty  
 To thee, that which thou askest I will do:  
 But a doubt bursts me unless I get me free.  
 'Twas simple at first, now twofold doth it grow"<sup>ii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> 27. "By the calend": after the mortal way. The calends was the first day of each month.

<sup>ii</sup> 55. When the doubt was first suggested to him by the words of Guido del Duca in Canto XIV, 37-41, it was "simple"; now it is "twofold."

By this thy judgment, certifying, both  
 Here and elsewhere, that which I couple it to.  
 The world is utterly despoiled, in truth,  
 Of all virtue, as thou too dost complain:  
 Big with iniquity under cloud it goeth. [60]  
 But make to me the cause, I pray thee, plain,  
 That I may see it and to others show;  
 For one sets it in Heaven, and one in man."<sup>iii</sup>  
 First a deep sigh that grief strained to one "Oh"  
 Broke from his breast; then he began: "Brother,  
 The world is blind, and of it truly art thou.  
 Ye, who are living, every cause refer  
 Up to the stars, as if with them they swept  
 All absolutely, and naught could fate deter.  
 Were it so, the free choice in you had slept [70]  
 Annulled, nor were it justice that ye still  
 For good have had joy and for evil wept.  
 The stars do prompt the motions ye fulfil;  
 I say not all, but even suppose it said,<sup>iv</sup>  
 A light is given you to know good and ill,  
 And Free will which, though oft discomfited  
 In its first battlings with the stars' decree,  
 Wins in the end all, be it but rightly bred.  
 To a mightier power, a nobler nature, ye  
 Being free are subject; which creates the mind [80]  
 In you that the stars hold not in their fee.  
 And therefore if the world now strayeth blind,  
 In you the cause is; track and seek it there,  
 And I shall be thy spy, this cause to find.  
 From the hands of him who wistly loves her, ere<sup>v</sup>  
 She is, forth comes, like a child frolicking  
 That now weeps and now laughs without a care,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 63. "Heaven" means the stars, i.e., planetary influence.

<sup>iv</sup> 74. The stars initiate only bodily impulses; they have no control over the will.

<sup>v</sup> 85-86. The subject of "forth comes" is "soul" in line 88. He "who wistly loves her" is God.

The little, the innocent soul that knows nothing  
 Saving that, sprung from a Creator's joy,  
 She goes to her own joy and there loves to cling. [90]  
 Ravished at first with good that's but a toy,  
 Still runs she back bewicht to the fond bower  
 If no guide turn her from delight's decoy.  
 Needs then that law bridle her wayward hour  
 And that she have a king who may far-off  
 Discern of the true city at least the tower.  
 The laws are: but what hand puts them to proof?<sup>vi</sup>  
 None; since the shepherd, going before, may chew  
 The cud, but hath not the divided hoof.  
 Wherefore the people, who see their guide pursue [100]  
 What only his greedy appetite hath craved,  
 Feed upon that nor seek for pastures new.  
 The evil guidance whereto 'tis enslaved  
 Thou seest is that which doth the world corrode,  
 Not nature, that in you may be depraved.  
 Rome, that the good world made for man's abode,  
 Was used to have two suns, by which were clear  
 Both roads, that of the world and that of God.  
 One hath put out the other; to crozier  
 Is joined the sword; and going in union [110]  
 Necessity compels that ill they fare,  
 Since, joined now, neither fears the other one.  
 Consider the ear of corn, if thou still doubt;  
 For every plant is by its fruiting known.  
 In the land where Adige and Po spread out<sup>vii</sup>  
 Their waters, before Frederick met with feud  
 Were worth and courtesy not vainly sought.  
 Now may pass there without solicitude

---

<sup>vi</sup> 97-108. *The laws still exist, but there is no one left to execute them, since the Papacy has usurped the imperial power and joined the sword of worldly supremacy to the crozier of ecclesiastical authority. It was not so in the old days, when Rome was the seat of two brother monarchs—the Pope and the Emperor.*

<sup>vii</sup> 115-116. *Lombardy. In 1300 Italy had known no Imperial guidance since the death of Frederick II, fifty years before.*

Whosoever hath desisted out of shame  
 To speak with good men or on them intrude. [120]  
 True, there are still three elders in whose name  
 The old age reproves the new, and time seems hard  
 Ere to a better life God carry them,  
 Conrad of Palazzo and the good Gerard  
 And Guy of Castel, who is better styled  
 "The guileless Lombard' in the Frenchmen's word.  
 Henceforward say that Rome's church, having willed  
 Confusion of two rules, falls in a slough,  
 And both she and her burden are defiled."  
 "O my Mark," answered I, "well reasonest thou;  
 And why the sons of Levi were removed<sup>viii</sup> [130]  
 From the inheritance I see well now.  
 But what Gerard is this thou hast so approved  
 For sample of the extinct race, by whose side  
 The barbarous generation goes reproved?"  
 "Either thy speech deceives me," he replied,  
 "Or thou dost tempt me, who in Tuscan tone  
 Knowledge of the good Gerard hast denied.  
 By other surname he's to me unknown,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Except his daughter Gaia give him it. [140]  
 Now God be with you, I come no further on.  
 See, raying through the smoke, now waxeth white  
 The gleaming of the sun; the angel is there:  
 Ere I be seen of him, I must be quit."  
 So he turned back, nor more from me would hear.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 131. The "sons of Levi," or Levites, are the priests.

<sup>ix</sup> 139. If any other epithet than "good" is needed to identify this Gerardo da Camino (who was captain general of Treviso), the only suitable one is suggested by the name of his daughter "Gaia," or "joyous."



# Canto XVII

*Dante gets clear of the smoke, as the sun is setting. And again he falls into a trance, in which appear examples of wrath (Procne, Haman, Amata) and is waked by an angel who shows the way of ascent to the next terrace. The poets mount and reach the terrace, but cannot go farther, because it is night. Dante asks Virgil what sin is purged there. It is the sin of spiritual Sloth. Virgil takes the opportunity to expound the system of Purgatory. In the three circles through which they have passed are punished Pride, Envy, and Anger—all perversions of love or desire. Above, in three circles, are those whose desire for temporal goods was in excess and whose sins were Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust.*

READER, if in the mountains you have been  
Caught ever in a cloud, through which you saw  
Not otherwise than moles do through the skin,<sup>i</sup>  
Remember, when the vapours thick and raw  
Begin to thin themselves, how the sun's sphere  
Enters among them weakly as they withdraw,  
And easily will your fancy make appear  
How I was by the sun revisited  
That now unto his setting was full near.  
So, measuring with my master's faithful tread  
My steps, from such a cloud did I come out  
To rays on the low shore already dead.  
O Fantasy, that dost at times so rout  
Our senses that a man stays negligent  
Although a thousand trumpets sound about,  
Who moves thee, if senses naught to thee present?  
There moves thee a light which of itself is shaped  
In heaven, or by a will wherefrom 'tis sent.  
The sin of her who from her form escaped<sup>ii</sup>

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 3. According to Aristotle, the eye of the mole is covered by a membrane which prevents it from seeing.

<sup>ii</sup> 19. "The sin of her . . .": Progne, who became a nightingale.

Into the bird which most delights to sing, [20]  
 Printed its traces on my fancy rapt;  
 And here within its own imagining  
 So closeted my mind was, it could then  
 Receive the imprint of no outer thing.  
 Within my lofty fancy I next saw rain  
 One crucified, upon whose visage showed,<sup>iii</sup>  
 In the act of dying so, a fierce disdain.  
 Beside him great Ahasuerus stood,  
 Esther his wife, and Mordecai, he  
 Who in speech and act was incorruptly good. [30]  
 And as this image broke spontaneously,  
 Like to a bubble when it findeth fail  
 The water, under which it came to be,  
 Rose in my vision, making grievous wail,  
 A maiden, saying: "Queen, why didst thou choose<sup>iv</sup>  
 To become naught, letting thy wrath prevail?  
 Thou hast slain thyself, Lavinia not to lose;  
 Me now thou hast lost; I am she that sadly cries,  
 Mother, for no death but thy life's dark close."  
 As when strikes of a sudden on closed eyes [40]  
 The day's new light, and sleep breaks at a blow  
 And broken flutters ere it wholly dies,  
 Did my imagination even so  
 Collapse, soon as a light smote on my face  
 Greater by far than is our wont to know.  
 I turned me to discover where I was,  
 When a voice saying: "Here is the ascent"  
 Caused every other thought from me to pass.  
 And this made my desire so vehement  
 To see who it was that spoke, as longing is [50]  
 Which only face to face can be content.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 26. The "one crucified" is Haman, minister of King Ahasuerus.

<sup>iv</sup> 35. The "Queen" is Amata, wife of King Latinus, who hanged herself on hearing a premature report of the death of her daughter Lavinia's intended husband.

But as the sun which presses on our eyes  
 And by excess veileth his form, so here  
 All of their virtue failed my faculties.  
 "This is a heavenly spirit that, without prayer  
 On our part, up the path directeth us,  
 And in his own light hideth himself there.  
 He deals with us as with himself one does;  
 For he who awaits the prayer and sees the need  
 Already is with the unkind ones who refuse. [60]  
 Now let us match our feet to such God-speed  
 And hasten, ere the dark come, to ascend:  
 After, we could not, till day dawn, proceed."  
 Thus spoke my Leader, and we turned to bend  
 Our footsteps to the rising of a stair.  
 And soon as the first step I had attained  
 Near me I felt as 'twere a wing in the air  
 And my face fanned, and "*Beati*," I heard,<sup>v</sup>  
 "*Pacifici*, who evil wrath forswear."  
 Now far above us were the rays upreared, [70]  
 The last rays, whereupon the night ensues;  
 So that the stars on many sides appeared.  
 Why, O my virtue, dost thou me disuse?  
 I said within me, for I felt the power  
 Of my legs fail me, being put in truce.  
 We stood where the steps mounted up no more  
 And remained fixt, just as a ship embayed  
 And onward driven is stranded on the shore.  
 And listening for a little while I stayed,  
 If aught in the new circle I might hear; [80]  
 Then turned me to my Master round, and said:  
 "O sweet my Father, tell what trespass here  
 Within this present circle is purified?  
 If our feet halt, let thy speech persevere."

---

<sup>v</sup> 68-69. Matt. 5:9. "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*"

And he to me: "Love of the good, that did<sup>vi</sup>  
 The scantling of its duty, is here restored:  
 Here the ill-slackened oar again is plied.  
 But that unto thy reason all be bared,  
 Turn unto me thy mind, and thou shalt get  
 From our delay some good fruit for reward."<sup>[90]</sup>  
 "Nor creature nor creator ever yet,  
 My son, was without love," continued he,  
 "Natural; or of the mind: thou knowest it.  
 The natural always is from error free;  
 But the other may, through a bad object, err  
 By too much force or its deficiency.  
 While to the prime good 'tis resolved to steer,<sup>vii</sup>  
 And in the second keepeth measure due,  
 Of sinful joy it cannot be the spur.  
 But should it swerve to evil, or pursue<sup>[100]</sup>  
 The good with too strong or too feeble intent,  
 The creature to his Maker is untrue.  
 Hence may'st thou understand how love is meant  
 To be in you the seed of virtue pure  
 And of all works deserving chastisement.  
 Now, since love's gaze nothing can ever lure  
 From weal of that which is its nature's seat,  
 All things are from self-hatred made secure.  
 And since none can conceive that separate  
 From God, and self-subsisting, any stay,<sup>[110]</sup>  
 Him, its first cause, his creature cannot hate.  
 If rightly this division I assay,  
 Remains that the ill loved is other's woe;  
 And this love springs in three modes from your clay.<sup>viii</sup>  
 There is, who through his neighbour's overthrow  
 Hopes to excel, and only for that cause

---

<sup>vi</sup> 85-86. *The sin punished is sloth.*

<sup>vii</sup> 97-98. *"The prime good": heavenly blessings; "the second": worldly blessings.*

<sup>viii</sup> 114. *"In three modes": the vices of pride, of envy, and of anger.*

Longs that he may from greatness be brought low.  
 There is, who fears power, favour, fame to lose  
 Because another mounts; wherefore his lot  
 So irks, he loves the opposite to choose. [120]  
 And there is, who through injury grows so hot  
 From shame, with greed of vengeance he is burned,  
 And so must needs another's ill promote.  
 This three-formed love down under us is mourned.  
 Now would I have thee the other comprehend,  
 Which to the good speeds, but with order spurned.<sup>ix</sup>  
 Each one confusedly doth apprehend  
 A longed-for good, wherein the mind may rest;  
 And therefore each one strives to attain that end.  
 If laggard be the love that makes the quest [130]  
 For sight of it or winning it, this zone  
 Chastises you therefor, the sin confest.  
 Another good there is which blesses none.  
 'Tis not felicity, 'tis not the Good  
 Essence, of all good, fruit and root alone.  
 The love that this good hath too hotly wooed  
 Is mourned above us in three circles: how  
 'Tis reckoned as tripartite, since I would  
 Thou seek it out thyself, I tell not now."

---

<sup>ix</sup> 126. "With order spurned": too sluggishly toward heavenly good, too eagerly toward worldly good.

# Canto XVIII

*Dante, still not satisfied, asks Virgil to explain more fully the nature of love, to which his argument had reduced every good work and also its opposite. Virgil discourses on this theme, and solves Dante's further doubt as to what moral merit and demerit consist in, explaining the function of free will. It is now near midnight, and the moon has appeared from behind the mountain. Dante begins to drowse, when he is startled by a throng of spirits who overtake them, running at full speed. These are the Slothful, expiating their sins in the hurry of their zeal. Two of them run in front, proclaiming examples of zeal. A spirit who was Abbot of San Zeno in Verona tells the poets to follow and they will find the passage upward. He condemns Albert della Scala for appointing his depraved son to the abbacy; then rushes on. Last come two shades, proclaiming examples of sloth. Dante, again drowsy, falls asleep.*

THE PROFOUND Teacher of his argument  
Had made an end, and with an earnest look  
Searched in my face if I appeared content;  
And I, whom a new thirsting overtook,  
Kept silent outwardly but said within:  
"Perhaps with too much questioning I provoke."  
But that most truthful Father, who had seen  
The wish too timid to disclose its thought,  
By speaking heartened my speech to begin.  
Wherefore I: "Master, clearly do I note  
(So quickened is my vision in thy light)  
All that thy discourse hath described or taught.  
Therefore, sweet Father, make more explicit  
To me, I pray thee, what this love is, whence  
Thou draw'st each good deed and its opposite."  
"Direct the keen eyes of the intelligence  
Toward me," he said, "and the error thou wilt prove  
Of those, blind, who of leading make pretence.  
The mind which is created apt to love,

[10]

Soon as by pleasure it is stirred to act, [20]  
 To every pleasing thing is quick to move.  
 Your apprehension from a thing of fact  
 Draweth an image, shown to the inward view,  
 So that perforce it doth the mind attract.<sup>i</sup>  
 And if, being turned, it is inclined thereto,  
 The inclination is love: nature it is,  
 Which is through pleasure knit within ye anew.  
 Then, just as fire to the upper region flies  
 By reason of its form which, where it best  
 Endureth in its matter, is born to rise, [30]  
 Even so the mind is with desire possessed,  
 Which is a motion of spirit, and cannot be,  
 Till the thing loved rejoiceth it, at rest.  
 Now how the truth is hidden thou canst see  
 Plainly, from all those people who aver<sup>ii</sup>  
 That each love in itself is praiseworthy  
 Because perhaps its matter may appear  
 To be good always; but not every seal  
 Is good, however good the pressed wax were."  
 "Thy words and my wit following at their heel" [40]  
 I answered him, "do love to me disclose,  
 But the more big with doubt this makes me feel;  
 For if love from without is offered us,  
 And with no other foot the soul proceed,  
 No merit it is if straight or not she goes."  
 And he to me: "So far as reason plead  
 Can I instruct thee; beyond that point, wait  
 For Beatrice; for faith is here thy need.  
 Every substantial form which, separate<sup>iii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> 24-29. *The senses convey to the mind the impression of some attractive object in the material world; the understanding then develops this impression in such a way that it is brought to the notice of the will.*

<sup>ii</sup> 35. *"Those people . . .": the Epicureans, who overlook the fact that the object of desire may be evil.*

<sup>iii</sup> 49-62. *In scholastic language, a "substantial form" means the particular basic principle, which gives an object its separate existence; and the substantial form of mankind is the intellective soul, whose "faculty peculiar" is an instinct which comprises innate knowledge and the inborn disposition to love. Hence we are not*

From matter, is knitted up with it, doth own [50]  
 A faculty peculiar and innate,  
 Which only in its activity is known  
 Nor save by its effect manifested,  
 As a plant's life is by the green leaves shown.  
 Therefore man knows not either whence is bred  
 The understanding of first hints of thought  
 Nor the impulse to desire's first objects led,  
 Which are in you as the instinct that hath taught  
 Bees to make honey; and this original bent  
 Desert of praise or blame admitteth not. [60]  
 Now, that with this will all wills else consent,  
 The power that judges is inborn in you  
 And ought to guard the threshold of assent.  
 This is the principle that holds the clue  
 To merit in you, according as it can  
 Good loves and guilty garner and winnow true.  
 Those reasoners who sought the Founder's plan  
 Have recognized this inborn liberty,  
 And therefore Ethic have they left to man.  
 Wherefore suppose that from necessity [70]  
 Arises every love that in you stirs,  
 You have the power to curb it in your fee.  
 The noble virtue Beatrice avers  
 To be Free Will, and therefore look that thou  
 Have this in mind if she thereof converse."  
 The Moon, almost to midnight moving slow,  
 Made the stars seem to us more rare and wan,  
 Shaped like a bucket that were all aglow,  
 As 'gainst the heaven upon those paths she ran  
 Which the sun kindles when the man of Rome [80]  
 Sees him at set "twixt Sard and Corsican;  
 And since that noble shade, because of whom

---

*aware of the source of our natural inclination toward all that seems good. Judgment ("the power that judges") tells us which desires are tight and which are wrong.*



Pietola is more famed than Mantua town,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Had freed me of that which was so burdensome,  
 I now, who from the questions I had sown  
 Had reaped his candid and clear argument,  
 Stood like a man who wanders, drowsy grown.  
 But suddenly this drowsiness was rent  
 From off me by a throng of people, who  
 Behind our shoulders were to us-ward bent. [90]  
 As once Ismenus and Asopus knew<sup>v</sup>  
 By night a fury and trampling down their side,  
 If but the Thebans did to Bacchus sue,  
 Such forms, by what of them I now descried,  
 Were coming round that circle, forward bowed  
 With speed, whom good will and a just love ride.  
 Soon were they on us, because that great crowd  
 Moved at a run, as each the other chased;  
 And two in front with weeping cried aloud:  
 "Mary to the hill country ran in haste, [100]  
 And Caesar, that Ilerda be subdued,  
 To Spain, when he had stabbed Massilia, raced."  
 "On, on!" the others cried as they pursued.  
 "Through faint love O let not a moment lapse,  
 That grace by zeal for good may be renewed."  
 "O people, whose present ardour doth perhaps  
 Redress the loitering ways begotten by  
 Lukewarmness in you that well-doing saps,  
 This one who lives, and surely I do not lie,  
 Would mount, if but the sun's light be restored. [110]  
 Tell us then where the opening may be nigh."  
 These were the words addressed them by my Lord.  
 Then spoke one of those spirits: "Where we go,  
 Follow, and of the passage be assured.  
 We with desire to move are smitten so

---

<sup>iv</sup> 83. *Virgil was born at Pietola, near Mantua.*

<sup>v</sup> 91. *"Ismenus" and "Asopus" are rivers in Boeotia.*

That stay we cannot; therefore pardon us  
 If as discourtesy this our duty show.  
 Verona's Abbot of San Zeno I was  
 Under the rule of Barbarossa brave,  
 Of whom Milan still talks and says Alas!<sup>vi</sup> [120]  
 There's one with foot already in the grave  
 Who soon shall rue that monastery's case  
 And will lament that there to power he clave,  
 Because his son, in his whole body base,<sup>vii</sup>  
 And worse in mind, and his birth also bad,  
 He has set up there in the true shepherd's place."  
 I know not if more words or none he had,  
 So far already he had pressed beyond;  
 But this I heard and to retain was glad.  
 He who in all need was my succour fond [130]  
 Bade me to turn and "See, these two," he said.  
 "Come biting at the sin of sloth's despond."  
 In rear of all they cried: "The folk were dead"<sup>viii</sup>  
 For whom the sea divided and made way  
 Ere Jordan saw those who inherited.  
 And they who chose not to endure the day  
 To the last labours of Anchises' son  
 To life inglorious gave their souls away."  
 Then when those shades so far from us had run  
 That they could now be seen no more, arose [140]  
 A new thought in me and then another one,  
 And many and divers others sprang from those,  
 And I so wandered in and out of them  
 That all the wandering made mine eyes to close,  
 And thinking was transmuted into dream.

---

<sup>vi</sup> 120. *The Emperor Barbarossa destroyed Milan in 1162.*

<sup>vii</sup> 124. "His son": *Giuseppe, the son of Albert della Scala (see the Argument).*

<sup>viii</sup> 133-138. *All the Hebrews who had crossed the Red Sea perished, except Caleb and Joshua. Some of Aeneas's companions, weary of hardship, stayed behind in Sicily.*

# Canto XIX

*In a dream Dante has a vision of the Siren (symbolising worldly enticements). A lady from heaven appears in this dream; and Virgil, at her bidding, exposes the Siren's real foulness. Dante is roused by Virgil, the sun having now risen, and an angel speeds them up the passage to the fifth terrace, where are the souls of the avaricious and the prodigal, lying prone on the ground. Virgil asks the way, and is answered by one who proves to be Pope Adrian V. He tells them that he was possessed by Avarice till he reached the highest office, and then turned to God. Dante kneels, to show his reverence, but is told by the spirit to rise.*

IN THAT HOUR when the heat of day no more  
Can warm the Moon's cold influence, and it dies  
O'ercome by the earth or whiles by Saturn's power;  
When geomancers see in the East arise<sup>i</sup>  
Their Greater Fortune, ere the dawn be come,  
By a path which not long dark before it lies,  
In dream came to me a woman stuttering dumb,  
With squinting eyes and twisted on her feet,  
With deformed hands and cheeks of pallor numb.  
I gazed on her; and as the sun's good heat [10]  
Comforteth cold limbs weighed down by the night,  
So did my look make her tongue nimbly feat,  
And straightened her and set her all upright  
In short time, and her ruined countenance made  
Into the colour which is love's delight.  
Soon as her loosened tongue came to her aid,  
She began singing, so that for its sake  
From her voice hardly had my hearing strayed.  
"I am," she said, "the sweet Siren, who make  
Mariners helpless, charmed in the mid-sea; [20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 4: "Geomancers" foretold the future by means of figures constructed on points that were distributed by chance. One of their figures, called "Greater Fortune," resembled a constellation.

Such pleasure in my music do men take.  
 I turned Ulysses from his wandering, he  
 So loved my song; and who with me hath found  
 Home, seldom quits, so glad is he of me."  
 Her lips were not yet closed upon the sound  
 When came a lady in whom was holiness  
 Prompt to my side, that other to confound.  
 "O Virgil, Virgil, tell me who is this?"  
 Indignantly she said; and straight he went  
 With eyes fixt on that honest one, to seize [30]  
 The other, and when her garments he had rent,  
 He laid her open and showed her belly creased,  
 That waked me with the stench that forth it sent.  
 I turned my eyes, and Virgil said: "At least  
 Thrice have I called thee; up, let us begone!  
 Find we the opening where thou enterest."  
 I raised me up; high day now overshone  
 The holy mount and filled each winding ledge.  
 We went, and at our back was the new sun.  
 I followed him, like one who is the siege [40]  
 Of heavy thought that droops his forehead, when  
 He makes himself the half-arch of a bridge.  
 And I heard: "Come! Here is the pass"; spoken  
 With so much loving kindness in the tone  
 As is not heard in this our mortal pen.  
 With outspread wings that shone white as a swan  
 He who thus spoke guided our journeying  
 Upward between the two walls of hard stone.  
 Stirring his plumes, he fanned us with his wing  
 And named *qui lugent* blessed, for that they<sup>ii</sup> [50]  
 Shall dispense consolation, like a king.  
 We both had passed the angel a little way  
 When, "What now ails thee that thine eyes are so

---

<sup>ii</sup> 50. "*Qui lugent*": those who mourn.

Fixt on the ground?" my Guide began to say.  
 And I: "In such misgiving do I go  
     From a strange dream which doth my mind possess  
     So that the thought I cannot from me throw."  
 "Sawest thou," he said, "that ancient sorceress  
     For whom alone the mount above us wails?<sup>iii</sup>  
     Sawest thou how man obtains from her release? [60]  
 Let that suffice: beat the earth down with thy heels;  
     Turn thine eyes toward the lure which from his seat<sup>iv</sup>  
     The Eternal King spins round with the great wheels."  
 As a falcon, that first gazes at his feet,  
     Turns at the cry and stretches him beyond  
     Where desire draws him thither to his meat,  
 Such I became; and far as, for one bound  
     Upwards, a path is cloven through the stone,  
     Such went I up to where one must go round.  
 Soon as I was enlarged on the fifth zone<sup>v</sup> [70]  
     I saw on it a weeping multitude  
     With faces to the ground all lying prone.  
 My spirit clave unto the dust, I could  
     Hear them cry out, with sighings and laments  
     So that the words hardly were understood.  
 "O ye chosen of God, whose punishments  
     Both hope and justice make less hard to bear,  
     Direct our footsteps to the high ascents."  
 "If from the lying prone exempt ye are,  
     And wish the speediest way to be revealed, [80]  
     Keep your right hands to the outside as ye fare."  
 This answer to the poet, who thus appealed,  
     Was made a little in front of us; therefore  
     I noted, as each spoke, what was concealed,  
 My Lord then with my eyes I turned to implore,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 59. "Above us": in the three upper circles.

<sup>iv</sup> 62. "The lure . . .": the uplifting influence of the revolving heavens.

<sup>v</sup> 70. This is the circle of avarice and prodigality.

Whereat his glad sign of assent I caught  
 To what my eager look was craving for.  
 Then, free to do according to my thought,  
 I passed forward above that creature there  
 Whose words before had made me of him take note, [90]  
 Saying: "Spirit, in whom weeping ripens fair  
 That without which one cannot turn to God,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Suspend for me awhile thy greater care.  
 Who thou wast, tell me, and why to earth ye are bowed,  
 Face down, and if thou would'st that I should win  
 Aught for thee yonder, whence I tread this road."  
 And he: "Why turned to Heaven our backs have been  
 Thou shalt learn; but first *scias quod ego*<sup>vii</sup>  
*Fui* successor Petri. Down between  
 Sestri and Chiaveri waters flow [100]  
 Of a fair stream, wherefrom our old estate<sup>viii</sup>  
 Nameth the title it vaunts most to bestow.  
 One month, scarce more, taught me how weighs the great<sup>ix</sup>  
 Mantle on him who keeps it from the dirt,  
 So that all others seem a feather's weight.  
 Late came the day that could my soul convert,  
 But when the Roman Pastor I became,  
 Thus found I life to be with lies begirt.  
 I saw that there the heart no peace could claim,  
 Nor in that life could one mount higher: of this [110]  
 Therefore the love sprang in me to a flame.  
 Up-to that hour I, lost in avarice,  
 Was miserable, being a soul in want  
 Of God; thou seest here what my forfeit is.  
 Here of what avarice works is made the account,

---

<sup>vi</sup> 92. *The fruit of repentance.*

<sup>vii</sup> 98. "Know that I was a successor of Peter." *The speaker is Pope Adrian V.*

<sup>viii</sup> 101. "A fair stream": the Lavagna river. *Adrian belonged to the Fieschi family, who were counts of Lavagna.*

<sup>ix</sup> 103. "One month": *Adrian V held the papal office only for 38 days.*

In purge of souls converted ere the end;  
 And no more bitter penalty hath the mount.  
 Even as our eyes on high we would not send,  
 Which only upon earthly things were cast,  
 So here to earth Justice hath forced them bend. [120]  
 As avarice turned all our works to waste  
 Because it quenched our love of all goodness,  
 Even so Justice here doth hold us fast,  
 Both hands and feet, in seizure and duress;  
 And so long as the just Lord hath assigned,  
 So long we lie stretched-out and motionless."  
 I had knelt down; to speak was in my mind;  
 But he, by the mere hearing, in that pause  
 Being aware that I my back inclined,  
 Said, "Dost thou bow thy knees? and for what cause?" [130]  
 And I to him: "'Tis for your dignity:  
 My conscience pricked me, standing as I was."  
 "Make straight thy legs and rise up from thy knee,  
 Brother," he answered: "err not; of one Lord  
 I am fellow-servant with the rest and thee.  
 If thou hast understood that holy chord  
 The Gospel sounds which *Neque nubent* saith,<sup>x</sup>  
 Thou mayest perceive well why I spoke that word.  
 Go now, and no more tarry upon thy path,  
 For thou disturb'st the tears wherewith I crave [140]  
 To ripen what thyself didst say of faith.  
 A niece yonder, Alagia named, I have,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Good in herself, so only that our house  
 Her nature by example not deprave.  
 She only is there to assist me with her vows."

---

<sup>x</sup> 137. If thou hast interpreted *Neque nubent* ("They neither marry") in the broader sense, as meaning that earthly relations are not preserved in the spiritual world.

<sup>xi</sup> 142. "Alagia" de' Fieschi was the daughter of Adrian's brother Niccolò.

# Canto XX

*The souls of the avaricious are so many that Dante, to pass them, must keep close to the inner side of the cliff. And as he goes, he hears a spirit celebrating examples of poverty and generosity (The Virgin Mary, Fabricius, St. Nicholas). Questioning it, the spirit discloses that it is Hugh Capet, and denounces the greed of his descendants who sat on the throne of France. Among them were Charles I of Anjou, to whom Dante attributes the death of St. Thomas Aquinas (a now discredited tradition); Charles of Valois, who, like Charles I of Anjou, invaded Italy and brought about the triumph of the Blacks in Florence and the banishment of the Whites, including Dante: also Philip the Fair, who gave Pope Boniface VIII up to his enemies and who attacked the Order of the Templars. The spirit then tells how at night they proclaim warning examples of avarice. The poets depart, and suddenly the whole mountain quakes and a cry of "Glory to God on high" ascends on every side. Dante is awed and wonders what this may mean.*

ILL fights a will against a better will;  
Wherefore against my wish, his to content,  
The sponge dipt in the water I did not fill.  
Onward I moved me, and on my Leader went,  
Keeping the rock close, where a space was clear,  
As on a wall one hugs the battlement;  
For those who are distilling, tear by tear  
Through the eyes the evil of the world's disease  
On the other side approach the edge too near.  
She-wolf of old, a curse upon thee seize,  
That more than any other beast hast prey,  
For none thy hollow hunger can appease.  
O Heaven, whose revolutions, as men say,  
Change the condition of this world below,  
When comes he who shall drive her quite away?  
Now were we going with short steps and slow  
And I with the prone shades preoccupied,

[10]



Whom I heard piteously bewEEP their woe.  
 And so it chanced, I heard "Sweet Mary" sighed  
 In front of us with so profound a moan [20]  
 As if a woman in her travail cried;  
 Continuing: "So little didst thou own,  
 As one may well perceive by that poor inn  
 Where thou didst Jay thy sacred burden down."  
 "O good Fabricius," next I heard begin,<sup>i</sup>  
 "Virtue with poverty didst thou prefer  
 To the possession of much wealth with sin."  
 These words sounded so pleasant in my ear  
 That I drew further on, to be acquaint  
 With that spirit whose voice I seemed to hear. [30]  
 It spoke now of that bounty of the saint  
 And of the damsels Nicholas endowed<sup>ii</sup>  
 To save the honour of their youth from taint.  
 "O spirit that discoursest so much good,  
 Tell me who thou art, and why alone," said I,  
 "These worthy praises thou renew'st aloud.  
 Thy words shall lack not recompense on high  
 If I return the now short space to tread,  
 Of life which yonder to its end doth fly."  
 And he: "I'll tell thee, not for any aid [40]  
 That I expect from there, but I salute  
 Grace shining in thee so, ere thou art dead.  
 Of that malignant tree was I the root  
 Wherewith all Christian lands are shadowed o'er,  
 So that but rarely is plucked from it good fruit.  
 But if Douay, Lille, Ghent and Bruges had power,  
 Not long would vengeance for the treachery wait:<sup>iii</sup>  
 From him who judgeth all, this I implore.

---

<sup>i</sup> 25. "Fabricius": the Roman consul famous for his incorruptibility.

<sup>ii</sup> 32. St. Nicholas, on three successive nights, secretly threw into the window of his neighbor's house enough money to provide dowries for his three daughters.

<sup>iii</sup> 47. They would soon wreak vengeance on Philip the Fair, who had conquered Flanders.

Hugh Capet was I in my former state.<sup>iv</sup>

Of me the Philips and the Louises

[50]

Are born, by whom France has been ruled of late.

Son was I of a butcher of Paris:

When the ancient kings to an end had dwindled, all

Save one, who gave himself to the grey dress,<sup>v</sup>

I found firm in my hands the reins to pull

Of the realm's government, and such resource

From new possessions, and of friends so full,

That to the widowed crown in time's due course

The head of my son was promoted; whence

The anointed brows of those inheritors.

[60]

So long as the great dowry of Provence<sup>vi</sup>

Had not yet robbed of shame my dynasty,

Small power it had, but yet did no offence.

Its rapine from that day began to ply

Violence and fraud; and then seized for amends

Ponthieu and Normandy and Gascony.

Charles enters Italy; in his turn he sends

His victim Conradin to death; thereon<sup>vii</sup>

Thrusts Thomas back to heaven, for amends.

I see a day, soon after this is done,

[70]

That brings another Charles forth out of France<sup>viii</sup>

To make both him and his the better known.

Forth comes he, alone, without arms save the lance

That Judas jousted with; so true his aim,

The paunch of Florence bursts at its advance.

Thence shall he gain, not lands, but sin and shame,

Upon himself so much the heavier

As he the lighter reckoneth such blame.

---

<sup>iv</sup> 49. "Hugh Capet," king of France from 987 to 996, was the founder of the Capetian line.

<sup>v</sup> 54. The last of the Carolingians became a monk.

<sup>vi</sup> 61-66. "The great dowry of Provence": Charles of Anjou contrived to marry Beatrice, heiress of Provence. The history of his reign became a chronicle of crimes.

<sup>vii</sup> 68-69. Charles of Anjou put to death Conradin, a lad of sixteen, grandson of Frederick II.

<sup>viii</sup> 71. "Another Charles": Charles of Valois (see the Argument).

The other, who from his ship a prisoner<sup>ix</sup>  
 Came, I see sell his daughter, as pirates do [80]  
 With other girl-slaves, haggling over her.  
 O Avarice, what more have we to rue  
 From thee, since thou our race didst so persuade  
 That even to its own flesh it is untrue?  
 That future ill and past may seem outweighed,<sup>x</sup>  
 I see Alagna by the Lilies ta'en,  
 And in his Vicar Christ a captive made.  
 I see him scorned and mocked at once again;  
 I see the vinegar, the gall, renewed,  
 And him 'twixt living malefactors slain. [90]  
 I see the second Pilate's cruel mood  
 Grow so insatiate that without decree  
 His greedy sails upon the Temple intrude.  
 O my Lord, when shall I rejoice to see  
 The chastisement which, being hidden from us,  
 Makes sweet thine anger in thy secrecy?  
 What I was saying of that only spouse<sup>xi</sup>  
 Of the Holy Ghost, and which a question bred  
 In thee, and turned thee toward me for a gloss,  
 This as response to all our prayers is said [100]  
 As long as day lasts; but when night doth fall  
 An opposite strain we take up in its stead.  
 Pygmalion's story then do we recall,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Whom gluttonous of gold, his appetite  
 Made traitor and thief, and parricide withal,  
 And avaricious Midas' wretched plight,

---

<sup>ix</sup> 79. A third Charles — Charles II, king of Apulia — sold his young daughter Beatrice in marriage to the old Marquis of Ferrara.

<sup>x</sup> 85-93. The crowning infamy of the race shall be the seizure of Pope Boniface VIII at Anagni (Alagna) by two creatures of Philip the Fair. The fate of Christ was renewed in that of his Vicar. Then Philip, that "second Pilate," directed his "greedy sails" toward the Order of the Templars.

<sup>xi</sup> 97. Having replied to Dante's first question (line 35), Hugh proceeds to answer his second (line 36). Cf. Matt. 1:20: "that which is conceived in her [Mary] is of the Holy Ghost."

<sup>xii</sup> 103. Pygmalion, brother of Dido, killed her husband for the sake of his wealth.

Which came for answer to his greedy prayer;  
 At which we laugh forever, as 'tis right.  
 Fool Achan each remembers then, who bare<sup>xiii</sup>  
 The stolen spoils away, so that the pain [110]  
 Of Joshua's wrath seems still to bite him here.  
 Sapphira and her husband we arraign;<sup>xiv</sup>  
 We praise the hoof-kicks Heliodorus had:  
 And all the mount execrates in refrain  
 Polymnestor, who smote Polydorus dead.  
 Last of all cry we: 'Crassus, thou dost know;  
 Say, did the taste of gold make thy mouth glad?'<sup>xv</sup>  
 Sometimes we talk, one loud and the other low,  
 According as the impulse spurreth speech  
 At greater or at lesser pace to go. [120]  
 The good, then, that by day we tell of each  
 Not I alone rehearsed, but at that hour  
 None else near did his voice so loudly pitch."  
 From him we had already gone before,  
 And now were striving to surmount the path  
 So far as was permitted to our power,  
 When, like a thing that falling tottereth,  
 I felt the mountain tremble, and ice-cold fear  
 Seized on me, as on one going to his death.  
 Delos quaked not so violently, I swear,<sup>xvi</sup> [130]  
 In that time ere her nest Latona made  
 Therein, the two eyes of the heavens to bear.  
 Then from all parts a shout my ears dismayed  
 Such that the Master drew him to my side  
 Saying: "While I guide thee, be not thou afraid."  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo* they all cried,

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 109. Achan, having stolen some of the spoils of Jericho, was stoned to death at Joshua's command.

<sup>xiv</sup> 112-113. "Her husband": Ananias (see Acts 5:1-10). "Heliodorus": see Macc. 3:7, 25-27.

<sup>xv</sup> 117. Crassus, triumvir with Caesar and Pompey, was famous for his wealth and his greed.

<sup>xvi</sup> 130. Delos, before Latona took refuge there to bring forth Apollo and Diana (sun and moon, "the two eyes of heaven"), was a wandering island.

By what from those near by I understood,  
Whose words could through the shouting be descried.  
Motionless stood we in suspended mood,  
Like to the shepherds who first heard that chant, [140]  
Until the trembling ceased and naught ensued.  
Then took we again the pathway pure of taint,  
Eyeing the shades which on the terrace lay,  
Returned already to their wonted plaint.  
No ignorance ever fretted me to pray  
For knowledge with so troublesome a sting,  
If my remembrance go not here astray,  
As then I seemed to feel while pondering;  
And, for our haste, question I ventured not,  
Nor of myself could I see anything. [150]  
Thus I went on, fearful and full of thought.

# Canto XXI

*The poets, hastening along, are overtaken by a spirit, who greets and questions them. Virgil explains their errand, and asks the cause of the trembling of the mountain. The shade explains that this happens when a soul, feeling itself purged of its sin, is free to rise from Purgatory. This has just happened to himself. Virgil asks the shade who he is, and he tells them that he is Statius the poet, and speaks warmly of his debt to Virgil's poetry. Dante smiles, and on further question it is revealed that he is in Virgil's presence, and Statius does obeisance to the Master.*

THE NATURAL THIRST which is unquenchable

Save by the water the Samaritan<sup>i</sup>

Poor woman asked the boon of at the well

Wrought on me; and now, my Leader in the van,

Haste urged me up the encumbered path to press,

And grief for the just vengeance through me ran;

And lo! as Luke for our sake witnesses

How Christ appeared to those two on the way,

Already risen out of the tomb's recess,

To us, intent on those who prostrate lay,

[10]

Appeared a shade and close behind us drew;

Nor were we aware till first we heard it say

To us: "My brothers, God give peace to you!"

Immediately we turned; and Virgil gave

Back unto him the sign that fits thereto,

And then began: "Into the blest conclave

May the just court bring thee in peace up there

Which me into eternal exile drave."

Said the other, while we strode on, "If ye are

Shades not on high acceptable to God,

[20]

Who hath led you up so far along his stair?"

My Teacher then: "If the signs traced in blood

---

<sup>i</sup> 2. "The water": the water of truth. "The Samaritan": see Luke 24:23-15.

On this man by the angel thou hast read,  
 Thou'lt see 'tis fit that he reign with the good.  
 But since she, who spins night and day the thread,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Had not yet wholly drawn for him the skein  
 For each on Clotho's distaff firmly laid,  
 His spirit, which is thy sister as it is mine,  
 Because it sees not in our mode, could not  
 Alone ascend and up the mountain win. [30]  
 Wherefore was I fetched out of Hell's wide throat  
 To attend and guide him, and I guide him still  
 Beyond, as far as my lore serve his lot.  
 But tell us, if thou knowest, why the hill  
 Shuddered but now, and why all seemed to cry  
 Down to its oozy base as with one will."  
 Thus asking, did he thread the needle's eye  
 Of my desire, and merely with the hope  
 The fasting of my thirst became less dry.  
 That spirit began: "Naught on this sacred slope [40]  
 Can happen which its order overrides,  
 Nor is aught suffered outside custom's scope.  
 Free from all variation it abides.<sup>iii</sup>  
 What of itself to itself Heaven taketh here  
 May operate as cause, and naught besides,  
 Since neither rain nor hail falls anywhere  
 Nor snow nor any dew nor rime herein  
 Higher than the three steps of the short stair.  
 No cloud appeareth, whether dense or thin,  
 Nor lightning flash, nor Thaumas' daughter, she<sup>iv</sup> [50]  
 Who yonder oft is wont to change her scene.  
 Nor higher than the topmost of the three<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>ii</sup> 25. *Lachesis, the second of the three Fates, spins the thread of life, which Clotho prepares and Atropos cuts off.*

<sup>iii</sup> 43. *Purgatory is exempt from physical change, and only spiritual causes operate there.*

<sup>iv</sup> 50. *"Thaumas' daughter": Iris, the rainbow.*

<sup>v</sup> 52-54. *"Three steps": before the gate of Purgatory. "Peter's vicar": the angel at the gate.*

Steps that I spoke of, where are set the feet  
 Of Peter's vicar, can dry vapour be.  
 Down lower the quaking may be little or great  
 By reason of the winds in the earth that hide,  
 I know not how; here quaked it never yet.  
 It quakes here when some soul feels purified  
 So that it may stand up or upward move,  
 And by such cry is it accompanied. [60]  
 Its will alone gives of the cleansing proof,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Which, all free now to change its company,  
 Seizes the soul and makes it glad thereof.  
 It wills indeed before, but is not free  
 From that desire God's justice against will  
 Sets, as toward sin once, now to its penalty.  
 And I who have lain under these pains until  
 Five hundred years and more passed, have but known  
 Now, for the better threshold a free will.  
 Hence didst thou feel the earthquake, and thereon [70]  
 The pious spirits hear around us praise  
 The Lord, and may be speed them upward soon."  
 Thus to us spoke he; and since the draught repays  
 With more pleasure, the more the thirst was great,  
 I could not tell how much he helped my case.  
 And the sage Leader: "Now I see the net  
 That holds you here, and how 'tis broken, too;  
 Why it quakes here, and why ye all shout elate.  
 May it please thee now that I be acquainted who  
 Thou wast, and let thy words to me unfold [80]  
 Why here thou hast lain so many ages through."  
 "What time brave Titus, in the cause enrolled<sup>vii</sup>  
 Of the highest King, avenged the wounds whence came

---

<sup>vi</sup> 61-66. A soul in Purgatory is held there only by its own conditioned will. As soon as this conditioned will, or desire, coincides with the absolute will, i.e., the eternal inclination to seek blessedness, the penitent knows that his expiation is over.

<sup>vii</sup> 82-84. The capture of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus was regarded as a vengeance for the crucifixion of Christ.



Flowing the blood which was by Judas sold,  
 With the most lasting, most exalting name  
 Yonder I had," replied that other one,  
 "If not with faith yet, amplitude of fame.  
 So sweet a soul my song had, that anon  
 Rome drew me from my own Toulouse away;  
 And there the myrtle for my brows I won. [90]  
 Statius the folk there name me still today.<sup>viii</sup>  
 Of Thebes, then of Achilles' might, I sung,  
 But fell with the second burden on the way  
 Seed to my ardour were the sparks that sprung  
 To fire me from the flame divine that more  
 Than a thousand hath with inspiration stung.  
 Of the Aeneid I speak, mother which bore,  
 Nurse which in art trained me up; lacking it,  
 To balance a drachm's weight I had not power.  
 To have lived when Virgil lived, I would submit [100]  
 Willingly in this bondage still to be  
 A sun's course more than will my debt acquit."  
 These words turned Virgil with a look toward me,  
 A look that silently "Be silent" said:  
 But all is not done by the will's decree;  
 For on the passion wherefrom each is bred  
 Laughter and tears follow so close that least  
 In the most truthful is the will obeyed.  
 I barely smiled, like one whose lips attest;  
 Whereat the shade was mute and in the eyes [110]  
 Looked at me, where the mind is most exprest,  
 And: "So be accomplished thy great enterprise,"  
 Said he, "Why did thy face a moment gone  
 From me a gleam of laughter not disguise?"  
 Now am I caught on both sides; by the one  
 Made to be mute, by the other thus conjured

---

<sup>viii</sup> 91-93. Statius was a Latin poet of the first century of our era. Of his two great epics, the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*, the second is unfinished.

To speak: wherefore I sigh, and am all known  
Unto my master, and: "Be reassured,  
Fear not to speak," he said, "but speak and ease  
The great desire he hath to hear thy word." [120]  
Wherefore I: "May be that thy wonder is,  
O ancient spirit, at my smiling then.  
But thee I'll have a greater marvel seize.  
This one who guides mine eyes the heights to ken  
Is that same Virgil from whose fountain stream  
Thou drankest force to sing of gods and men.  
If for my smile thou suppose other theme,  
Leave it for untruth and thyself persuade,  
It was those words which thou didst speak of him."  
About my Teacher's feet he would have laid [130]  
His arms, and bent; but he said: "Do it not,  
Brother; thou art a shade, and see'st a shade."  
And he, uprising: "Now thou knowest what I  
Profound love toward thee warmeth my heart-strings  
When I our nothingness have so forgot,  
Handling the shadows as substantial things."

## Canto XXII

*Mounting the rocky stair, at which an angel has erased another P from Dante's forehead, the three reach the sixth terrace, where Gluttony is punished. Virgil asks Statius how it was he could be guilty of avarice; and Statius explains that his was the opposite sin of prodigality, for both are expiated in the same circle; and he further explains how he became a Christian. He then asks Virgil about the fate of the ancient poets, and Virgil tells him that they are in Limbo, and some of the people of Statius' Thebaid are with them. Their talk is interrupted at sight of a tree, full of fruit, on which a fountain sprays. A voice coming out of it recites examples of temperance.*

BY NOW we had left the angel in his place,  
Him who had turned us to the sixth circle,  
Having first razed a scar from off my face,  
And had proclaimed those spirits blessed who dwell  
In longing after righteousness (and this  
With *sitiunt* only his words effected well);<sup>i</sup>  
And lighter than through the other passages  
I found my body move, so that untired  
I followed the swift spirits up with ease,  
When Virgil: "Love, that is by virtue fired, [10]  
To fire another love did never fail,  
If but it have shown forth the flame desired;  
Wherefore from that first hour when Juvenal<sup>ii</sup>  
Who of thy affection brought to me report  
Came down into Hell's border among us all,  
My good will toward thee hath been of such sort  
As never yet to one unseen did bind,  
So that to me now these stairs will seem short.  
But tell me, and let me a friend's forgiveness find  
If my rein slacken in too great confidence, [20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 6. "Sitiunt": Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are they which . . . thirst after righteousness."

<sup>ii</sup> 13. The Latin poet Juvenal was a contemporary of Statius.

And talk with me henceforth in friendly kind,  
 How could thy breast find room for the offence  
 Of avarice, when so much wisdom throve  
 In thee by virtue of thy diligence?"  
 These words made Statius a little move  
 Toward laughter at the first; then he replied:  
 "Each word of thine is a dear token of love,  
 But often are things apparent that provide  
 For doubting false material, because  
 Of the true reasons that beneath them hide. [30]  
 Thy asking shows me that thou didst suppose  
 Me avaricious yonder; it may be  
 By reason of that circle where I was.  
 Know then that avarice was removed from me  
 Too far; and for a thousand moons the wage  
 Of this excess I have paid in penalty.  
 And had I not set straight my pilgrimage  
 When I had pondered what thou criest out,  
 As if at human nature thou didst rage,  
 'O hallowed hunger of gold, why dost thou not<sup>iii</sup>  
 The appetite of mortal men control?" [40]  
 To turn in the sad jousts had been my lot.  
 Then knew I how too far flights can cajole  
 The hands to squander, and I repented then  
 Of this and other evils in my soul.  
 How many with shorn hair will rise again<sup>iv</sup>  
 Through the ignorance forbidding them to win  
 Repentance in their life or life's last pain!  
 Know that the fault that meeteth any sin<sup>v</sup>  
 By direct opposition, is with it [50]  
 Condemned, and drieth here its fulsome green.  
 Wherefore if I among the folk was set

---

<sup>iii</sup> 40-41. Cf, Aeneid III, 56-57: "*Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, Auri sacra fames?*"

<sup>iv</sup> 46. "*With shorn hair*": a symbol of prodigality.

<sup>v</sup> 49. *Prodigality is a sin, as well as avarice.*

Who wail their avarice, so to cleanse my stain,  
 It hath befallen me for its opposite."  
 "Then too when thou didst sing the strife insane  
 Of the twin Sorrows that Jocasta bore,"<sup>vi</sup>  
 Spoke on the singer of the rustic strain,  
 "That chant of thine sustained by Clio's lore,"<sup>vii</sup>  
 Argues that faith, without which good works fail  
 Of their effect, had not yet taught thee more. [60]  
 If so, what sun, what candle did avail  
 To annul thy darkness, so that thou didst steer  
 Behind the Fisher afterwards thy sail?"<sup>viii</sup>  
 And he to him: "Thou first didst to the clear  
 Springs of Parnassus in its caves invite,"<sup>ix</sup>  
 Then thy light brought me to God's presence near.  
 Thou didst as he who travels in the night,  
 Who bears a lamp behind him, nor befriends  
 Himself, but those who follow leads aright,  
 When thou didst say, "The world itself amends;<sup>x</sup>  
 Justice returns and the first age of man,  
 And a new progeny from Heaven descends.'  
 Through thee became I poet and Christian:  
 But that my drawing may be better shown,  
 My hand shall colour what the sketch began. [70]  
 Already the whole world was ripe to own  
 The true belief, that fruit whereof the seed  
 By the heralds of the eternal realm was sown.  
 And thy words, that I touched on, so agreed  
 With the new preachers, that upon me grew [80]  
 The custom to frequent them at my need.  
 They then became so holy in my view

---

<sup>vi</sup> 56. By the "twin Sorrows" of Jocasta are meant her two sons, Eteocles and Polynices.

<sup>vii</sup> 58. "Clio": the Muse of history.

<sup>viii</sup> 63. The "Fisher" is St. Peter.

<sup>ix</sup> 65. Parnassus is the mountain sacred to the Muses.

<sup>x</sup> 70. "When thou didst say": in Virgil's *Bucolics*, IV, 4.

That when Domitian persecuted them  
 Their lamentation my tears also drew.  
 And while I trod on yonder earth, I came  
 Oft to their succour, and their upright way  
 Caused me all other doctrines to contemn.  
 And ere my poem had brought the Greeks to stay<sup>xi</sup>  
 Upon the rivers of Thebes, baptised I was,  
 But dared not to the world my faith betray, [90]  
 Long time professing paganism: because  
 Of this lukewarmness must I the fourth ring  
 Circle until four hundred years should pass.  
 Thou therefore, who didst lift the covering  
 Which hid such great good from me, (and time to spare  
 The ascent allows us for our communing,)  
 Tell me now where is our old Terence, where<sup>xii</sup>  
 Caecilius, Plautus, Varius, if thou know'st,  
 And if they are damned, tell me what ward they share."  
 "They, Persius, I and many another ghost," [100]  
 Answered my Guide, "are with the Greek, that one  
 Whom with their milk the Muses suckled most,  
 In the first circle of the blind dungeon.  
 Oft of the mount we talk, whose haunted ground  
 Our nursing mothers keep their vigil on.<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Euripides with Antiphon is found<sup>xiv</sup>  
 There, Agathon also, and Simonides  
 And other Greeks whose brows the laurel crowned.  
 There, of thy people, Antigone one sees,<sup>xv</sup>  
 Deiphile, and Argia, and the sad [110]  
 Ismene, living in past miseries.

---

<sup>xi</sup> 88. This episode marks the middle of the Thebaid.

<sup>xii</sup> 97-101. Various Latin dramatists. — "Persius": the Latin satirist. — "The Greek" is Homer.

<sup>xiii</sup> 105. "Our nursing mothers": the Muses.

<sup>xiv</sup> 106-107. The Greek lyric poet, Simonides, is mentioned with the Greek tragic poets, Euripides, Antiphon, and Agathon.

<sup>xv</sup> 109. By "thy people" Virgil means the characters in Statius' poems.

She is there who showed Langia where it sprayed;<sup>xvi</sup>  
 There is Tiresias' daughter, and there Thetis,  
 And with her sisters Deidamia's shade."  
 Now both the poets began to hold their peace  
 And round them eager looks afresh to turn,  
 Having from walls and climbing won release.  
 Already four handmaidens of the morn<sup>xvii</sup>  
 Were left behind, and the fifth upward still  
 Steered at the chariot-pole its blazing horn, [120]  
 When said my Leader: "I think to the outer sill  
 'Tis well that our right shoulders should be bent  
 And that we circle, as is our wont, the hill."  
 Thus habit was our guidance there; we went  
 Forward, the less to misgiving inclined  
 Because that worthy spirit gave assent.<sup>xviii</sup>  
 They journeyed on in front, and I behind  
 Alone, and to their discourse listened well,  
 Which gained me knowledge of poetic mind.  
 But soon the pleasant converse broken fell [130]  
 Before a tree, which in the mid-road now  
 We found, with bounteous fruit, sweet to the smell.  
 As a pine narrows up from bough to bough  
 So did this taper downward stage by stage;  
 As I suppose, that none may up it go.  
 Upon the side where there was no passage  
 A crystal liquor from the cliff sprang free  
 And sprinkled all the upper foliage.  
 As the two poets drew near to the tree  
 A voice within it from the green leaves there, [140]  
 Cried: "Of this food ye shall have scarcity."  
 Then: "Mary at the wedding had more care

---

<sup>xvi</sup> 112-113. *Hypsipyle who pointed out the fountain of Langia to Adrastus. "Tiresias' daughter" was Manto (Inf. XX, 55)*

<sup>xvii</sup> 118. *Four hours of daylight.*

<sup>xviii</sup> 126. *"That worthy spirit": Statius.*

That seemly and complete should be the feast<sup>xix</sup>  
Than of her own mouth, which now speaks your prayer.  
Rome's antique women were content with taste  
Of water for their drink; Daniel of old<sup>xx</sup>  
Despised food and in wisdom was increased.  
The first age was as beautiful as gold.  
It made acorns with hunger savour sweet  
And every brook with thirst a nectar hold. [150]  
Honey and locusts were the only meat  
That in the wilderness the Baptist knew,  
And therefore is he glorious, and so great  
As in the gospel is revealed to you."

---

<sup>xix</sup> 143. *The story of Mary at the wedding feast in Cana is an example of temperance.*

<sup>xx</sup> 146. Dan. 1:8-17.



# Canto XXIII

*The cry is heard of spirits who now overtake the pilgrims. Gluttons in life, they are now emaciated to an extreme degree, reminding Dante of Erysichthon, punished with hunger by Demeter, and of Mary, a Jewess, who devoured her own child during the siege of Jerusalem. So it is only by the voice that Dante recognises the friend of his youth, Forese Donati. Each is eager to learn about the other. Forese explains the nature of the punishment in this pots and tells how it is through the intercession of his widow Nella that he has been spared the long delay in Ante-Purgatory; and denounces the dissoluteness of the women of Florence, shameless as those of Barbagia, a wild district in Sardinia.*

WHILE I was thus fixing mine eyes at gaze  
Through the green foliage, even as is done  
By him who on the small birds wastes his days,  
My more than father said to me: "My son,  
Come now, the time allotted to our need  
Must to more profitable use be won."  
I turned my face, and foot with no less speed,  
Toward the two sages, who as they conferred  
Made me the cost of going not to heed.  
And lo, a weeping and a singing heard, [10]  
*Labia mea, Domine*, that filled my ear<sup>i</sup>  
In such mode that delight and grief it stirred.  
"O sweet father, what is it that I hear?"  
Said I; and he: "Shades loosening the knot  
Of their old debt perchance thus persevere."  
Even as pilgrims full of their own thought  
O'ertaking unknown people upon the road  
Turn themselves round to eye them, and tarry not,  
So behind us, moving more quickly, a crowd  
Of spirits coming up and passing by, [20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 11. Ps. 51:15: "O Lord, open Thou my lips."

Mute and devout, at us their wonder showed.  
 Each one was dark and hollow in the eye,  
 Pallid of face, and with the flesh so lost  
 As made the skin with the bones' form comply.  
 I think not Erysichthon at such cost<sup>ii</sup>  
 Was shrivelled to the outer rind by drouth  
 Of hunger, when he dreaded it the most.  
 I said within me, thinking in my ruth,  
 "Behold the folk that lost Jerusalem  
 When Mary upon her own child fleshed her tooth."<sup>iii</sup> [30]  
 Their eye-sockets seemed rings without a gem.  
 He who reads "omo" in the face of man<sup>iv</sup>  
 Would clearly there have recognized the "m."  
 Who would believe, did none to him explain,  
 That scent of fruit and of a liquid spring  
 By gendering desire could thus ordain?  
 I stood astonished at their famishing,  
 The cause not yet being manifest that made  
 Their leanness and their scabby shrivelling,  
 When lo! from the deep hollow of a head [40]  
 A shade turned on me eyes of fixèd quest.  
 Then, crying aloud, "What grace is this?" it said.  
 Him from his aspect had I never guessed,  
 But in his voice was given to me the clue  
 Of what was in his countenance suppressed.  
 This spark within me kindled all anew  
 Familiarity with lip and cheek  
 So altered; and Forese's face I knew.<sup>v</sup>  
 "Ah, stare not," pleading he began to speak,  
 "At the dry skin which the scab blotches so [50]

---

<sup>ii</sup> 25. "Erysichthon": see the Argument.

<sup>iii</sup> 30. "Mary": see the Argument.

<sup>iv</sup> 32-33. Capital M, resembled two O's side by side. Inasmuch as this figure is not unlike a nose between two eye-sockets, it was said that man ("omo") had his name written in his face.

<sup>v</sup> 48. "Forese" Donati: see the Argument.

Nor at the flesh that on me is so to seek.  
 Truth of thyself tell me, and who those two  
 Shades are, thou hast there for companions.  
 Speak with me, I entreat thee, and be not slow."  
 Then I: "Thy face which dead I wept for once  
 Grieves me not less, nay, tears it moves me to,  
 Seeing it now so drawn upon the bones.  
 Say then, in God's name, what so strippeth you.  
 Make me not talk while I am marvelling still.  
 Ill can he speak who other things would do." [60]  
 And he: "A virtue from the eternal will  
 Descends into the water and the tree  
 We have left behind, whereby I waste thus ill.  
 And those who, singing, weep, as thou dost see,  
 That appetite they followed with such heat,  
 Holy again through hunger and thirst shall be.  
 The scent that from the apple comes so sweet  
 And from the sprinkling of the leaves with spray  
 Fires us with craving both to drink and eat.  
 And not once only, while the appointed way [70]  
 We circle, is renewed for us the pain—  
 I say pain, but I ought 'solace' to say—  
 For that Will leads us to the tree again  
 Which led Christ to say 'Eli' and be glad,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Freeing us with the blood out of his vein."  
 And I: "Forese, from that day which made  
 Exchange of worlds for thee to a better mode  
 Of life, five years till now thou hast not had.  
 If power to sin more had its period  
 Ended in thee before the hour came on [80]  
 Of the good grief which re-weds us to God,  
 How art thou come so high, and how so soon?  
 I had thought to find thee on yonder terraces

---

<sup>vi</sup> 74. "Eli": Matt. 27:46: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Where time repairs itself by time alone.”  
 Wherefore he answered me: “My Nella ’tis<sup>vii</sup>  
 Brought me to drink thus, by her gushing tears,  
 Of the sweet wormwood of the penances.  
 With her devout prayers and those sighs of hers  
 She has drawn me from the shore where one must wait,  
 And from the other circles freed my fears. [90]  
 My widow, whom I loved with love so great,  
 Is to God dearer, and more his love doth win,  
 As in good works the lonelier is her state.  
 Barbagia in Sardinia ne’er hath been<sup>viii</sup>  
 Immodest in its women as today  
 Is the Barbagia that I left her in.  
 O sweet brother, what would’st thou have me say?  
 A time to come already I see indeed,  
 Wherefrom this hour shall not be far away,  
 In which from pulpit shall it be forbid [100]  
 To the unashamed women of Florence then  
 To go showing the breast with paps not hid.  
 What woman of, Barbary, what Saracen,  
 Did ever need, to make her go covered,  
 Spiritual or other regimen?  
 But if the unabashed ones were assured  
 Of what swift heaven prepares for them on high  
 Their mouths would open and their howls be heard  
 If my fore-sight deceives not, they shall cry  
 In sorrow, ere he clothes his cheek with down [110]  
 Who now is quieted with lullaby.  
 Ah, brother, hide thee not, let all be known!  
 Thou seest, not only I but this folk all  
 Are gazing where thou intercept’st the sun.”  
 Then I to him: “If thou to mind recall  
 What thou wast with me and I was with thee,<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> 85. “Nella”: see the *Argument*.

<sup>viii</sup> 94. “Barbagia”: a wild region in Sardinia.

Still heavy will the present memory fall.  
 From that life he who goes in front of me  
 Turned me the other day, when full and round  
 The sister of him there showed herself to be."<sup>x</sup> [120]  
 I pointed to the sun. "Through the profound  
 Night, from the real dead convoyed was I  
 In real flesh that still is upward bound.  
 Thence hath his aid supported me thus high,  
 Circle by circle, to ascend the Hill  
 Which straightens you whom the world bent awry.  
 So long he means to comrade me, until  
 I shall be there where shall be Beatrice:  
 Without him thence must I the rest fulfil.  
 Virgil is he who hath assured me this" [130]  
 I pointed to him; "and this other shade"<sup>xi</sup>  
 Is he for whom shook in each precipice  
 Your realm, from which his quittance now is paid."

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<sup>x</sup> 120. "The sister of him": the moon.

<sup>xi</sup> 131. "This other shade": Statius.

# Canto XXIV

*Dante asks about Forese's sister Piccarda and learns that she is in Paradise. Forese then points out to him certain shades of note. Among them is Buonagiunta, a poet of Lucca, who predicts that a lady, Gentucca, will make Lucca pleasing to Dante. He goes on to speak of the "sweet new style" of the Florentine school of poets to which Dante belonged, superior in naturalness and sincerity to the school of Jacopo of Lentini in Sicily (called The Notary), Guittone of Arezzo, and Buonagiunta himself. Dante speaks of the miseries of Florence, and Forese foretells the death of his brother Corso Donati, leader of the Blacks, and chief cause of those miseries. Dante next observes another tree, from which comes a voice reciting examples of gluttony; the Centaurs, and the Hebrews rejected by Gideon (Judges, 7). As the three poets go on silently, they hear a voice, and Dante is dazzled by the resplendent apparition of the Angel of Temperance.*

SPEECH made not going, nor going speech more slow,  
But in our talk we went with manful stride  
Like to a ship when winds behind it blow;  
And me through the eyes' pits in amazement eyed  
The thronging shades, who appeared things twice dead  
When they were of my living certified.  
And my discourse continuing, I said:  
"Perchance he mounts more slowly upon his way<sup>i</sup>  
Than he would else do, for another's aid.  
But, if thou know'st, where is Piccarda, say;<sup>ii</sup>  
And say if I see any whom I should  
Note well, of these whose eyes so on me stay."  
"My sister who was beautiful and good,  
I know not which most, triumphs now to' wear  
Her glad crown in Olympus' high abode."  
So said he: and then: "'Tis not forbidden here

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 8. Statius "mounts more slowly" in order to be longer with Virgil.

<sup>ii</sup> 10. "Piccarda": see the Argument.

To name each one, since so drained out and dim  
 Our likeness is, by reason of our fare.  
 This one is Buonagiunta" pointing at him,<sup>iii</sup>  
 "Buonagiunta of Lucca, and, next, the face [20]  
 That more than the others showeth scale and seam,  
 Had Holy Church within his arms' embrace:  
 He was of Tours, and purges off by fast  
 Bolsena's eels and the sweet wine's disgrace."  
 Many another he showed me, first and last,  
 And to be named thus all contented were,  
 It seemed, for none a dark look on us cast.  
 I saw, biting for hunger the empty air,  
 Ubaldin dalla Pila, and Boniface,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Who pastured with his staff folk near and far [30]  
 I saw Master Marchese, who once had space  
 To drink at Forli with less dry a throat,<sup>v</sup>  
 Nor, even so, could with his thirst keep pace.  
 As a man does who, looking, takes chief note  
 Of one, to him of Lucca did I do,  
 Who most, it seemed, for my acquaintance sought.  
 I thought I heard, as he was muttering low,  
 "Gentucca," there where he could feel the smart<sup>vi</sup>  
 Of the high justice which displumes them so.  
 "O soul," said I, "who something wouldst impart [40]  
 To me, do so, that I may understand,  
 And with thy speech content me and thine own heart."  
 "A woman, who wears not yet the wimple's band,  
 Is born," said he, "who shall my city endear  
 To thee, however by men's tongues arraigned.  
 This prophecy with thee thou art to bear.

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<sup>iii</sup> 19-20. "Buonagiunta": a poet of Lucca. "The face . . .": Pope Martin IV.

<sup>iv</sup> 29. "Ubaldin dalla Pila": a Ghibelline leader. "Boniface" de' Fieschi: an archbishop of Ravenna.

<sup>v</sup> 32. "Master Marchese": mayor of Faenza in 1296.

<sup>vi</sup> 38. "Gentucca": see the Argument (she is also the "woman" of line 43). "There where . . ." in the mouth.

If in my muttering thou wast doubtful of  
 The truth, the thing's self shall yet make it clear.  
 But tell me, I pray, if I see him who wove  
 Out of his heart the new rimes that begin [50]  
*Ladies that have intelligence of love.*<sup>vii</sup>  
 And I to him: "I am one who hearkens when  
 Love prompteth, and I put thought into word  
 After the mode which he dictates within."  
 "O brother," he said, "I see what knot deterred  
 The Notary and Guittone and me too,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Baulked of the new sweet style I have lately heard.  
 For now I see well how the pen with you  
 Follows him who dictateth close behind,  
 Which our pens truly were not wont to do; [60]  
 And he who seeks to look beyond can find  
 No difference else 'twixt one and the other style."  
 Thereat he held his peace, and seemed resigned.  
 Even as cranes that winter along the Nile  
 Now make themselves a squadron in the air,  
 Then fly at greater speed and go in file,  
 So all the people that had gathered there,  
 Turning away their faces, forward prest:  
 Fleet both through leanness and their wish they were.  
 And as the runner who becomes distress [70]  
 Lets his companions pass him and walks on  
 Till he have eased the panting of his chest,  
 Forese let the holy flock be gone,  
 And asking: "How long shall it be before  
 Again I see thee?" in step with me went on.  
 "I know not what of life I may have more"  
 Replied I, "but return not so soon but  
 My wish will waft me sooner to the shore,  
 Because the place where I to live was put

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<sup>vii</sup> 51. *The first canzone of the Vita Nuova.*

<sup>viii</sup> 56. "The Notary and Guittone": see the Argument.



Is, day by day, of all good more despoiled [80]  
 And seems ordained in misery to rot."  
 "Now go," said he, "for him who is most embroiled<sup>ix</sup>  
 I see dragged at the tail of a strong beast  
 Down towards the vale where sin is unassoiled.  
 The beast goes faster at every step, increased  
 In speed, until it breaks him on the ground  
 And leaves his body hideously defaced.  
 Yon wheels shall have not long to circle round"  
 He raised his eyes to heaven "ere that be clear  
 To thee, which my words may not more expound. [90]  
 Remain thou now behind, for time is dear  
 In this kingdom, so that too much I lose,  
 At equal pace with thee thus loitering here."  
 As sometimes at a gallop toward his foes  
 Forth from a troop a rider, bent to snatch  
 The honour of the first encounter goes,  
 So with great strides from us did he detach;  
 And I in the way remained with but the two,  
 Those marshals of the world that had no match.  
 When he was gone so far out of our view [100]  
 That my eyes after him pursuing yearned  
 Even as did my mind his words pursue,  
 Laden and living branches I discerned  
 Of another apple-tree, not far away,  
 Seeing that but then had I thither turned.  
 I saw folk under it raise their hands; and they  
 Were crying toward the leaves I know not what,  
 Like children that futile and eager pray,  
 And he who is prayed answers them not a jot,  
 But so to make their craving very keen [110]  
 Holds their desire on high and hides it not.  
 They, as if undeceived, departed then.

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<sup>ix</sup> 82-87. *Corso Donati, the great leader of the Blacks, who in 1308 was accused of treason and condemned. In Dante's version, Corso is kicked to death by the animal that is hauling him.*

And now we came to the great tree, which, dumb,  
 Rejects so many prayers and tears of men.  
 "Pass ye on, and no further this way come!  
 Higher up there is a tree whose taste was tried<sup>x</sup>  
 By Eve, and this same plant was raised therefrom."  
 Thus from among the branches some one cried.  
 Virgil and Statius and I, close-prest  
 Together, passed on the ascending side. [120]  
 "Remember," it said, "those monsters, all unblest,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Formed in the clouds, who when they had gorged their fill  
 Fought against Theseus with their double breast,  
 And the Hebrews, at the drinking weak of will,  
 Whom Gideon for his comrades would not choose<sup>xii</sup>  
 When he came down on Midian from the hill."  
 So, skirting one of the two edges close,  
 We passed, hearing what gluttons' faults once sowed  
 And after reaped a recompense of woes.  
 Once more at large upon the empty road [130]  
 Full thousand and more paces on, each one  
 Lost in his thoughts, without a word we strode.  
 "What ponder ye three, as ye go alone?"  
 Said a sudden voice; whereat I shook in dread  
 As a young beast does, into panic thrown.  
 To see who it was, I lifted up my head;  
 And never yet was seen in furnaces  
 Molten metal or glass to glow so red  
 As I saw one who was saying, "If ye please  
 To mount, here turn ye to ascend the height. [140]  
 This way they go who would go into peace."  
 His aspect had all taken away my sight.  
 Wherefore I turned, back to my teachers drawn,

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<sup>x</sup> 116. *The tree of knowledge.*

<sup>xi</sup> 121-123. *"Those monsters, . . . who. . . fought against Theseus" are the Centaurs.*

<sup>xii</sup> 125. *Of the Hebrews ready to fight against Midian, Gideon chose only those who drank without kneeling: Judg. 12:4-7.*

As one who by his ear is guided right.  
And as, annunciation of the dawn,  
The breeze of May awakeneth, sweet to smell,  
Impregnated from flower and grassy lawn,  
A wind full on the forehead did I feel  
Touching me, and distinct I heard the plumes<sup>xiii</sup>  
That made ambrosial fragrance on me steal.  
And I heard cry: "Blessed those, whom illumines  
So much of grace that never palate's lust  
Makes them exceed by kindling of its fumes,  
Hungering always so far as is just."

[150]

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<sup>xiii</sup> 149. "The plumes": of the Angel of Temperance.

# Canto XXV

*It is afternoon of the third day. One by one the poets mount the stair; and Dante, perplexed to know how it is that immaterial shades, not needing food, can suffer hunger and become emaciated, lays the problem before Virgil, who refers it to Statius. Statius then expounds a theory, derived from Aristotle and Aquinas, of the formation of the body, into which the rational soul is infused by the Creator, drawing into its substance the vital functions it finds already there (the vegetative and sensitive souls). At death the soul, freed from the flesh but retaining memory, intelligence and will and the other faculties in a dormant state, goes at once to its appointed place, whether Tiber-mouth or Acheron, and impresses its form upon the air; and this aerial body, the "shade," forms organs for every sense. The philosopher to whom Statius refers as erroneously supposing the intellectual faculty to be separate from the soul is Averroes. They have now arrived at the seventh and uppermost circle, that of the Lustful. Here they have to go warily because of a great fire burning on their path, into which spirits are passing, while voices from within the flames celebrate examples of chastity (the Virgin, Diana).*

AN HOUR 'twas that indulged no loitering,  
For now the sun had to the Bull resigned,  
Night to the Scorpion, the meridian ring;  
Wherefore as he does, who looks not behind  
But goes straight on, whatever his eye sees,  
If sharp necessity spur on his mind,  
So through the gap we entered by degrees,  
And one before the other took the stair  
That unlinks climbers by its narrowness.  
And as the young stork lifts its wing to dare  
The flight it wishes, and attempteth not  
To leave the nest, and drooping flutters there,  
Such was I, with desire to ask both hot  
And chilled; and last came to the gesture shown  
By him whose lips prepare to speak his thought.

[10]

My sweet Father, for all we hasted on,  
 Overlooked it not, but said: "Discharge the bow  
 Of speech which thou hast to the iron drawn."  
 Then, set at ease, I opened lips, and: "How,"  
 Began I, "can one famish and be pined [20]  
 There, where of food there is no need to know?"  
 "If thou hadst Meleager called to mind,<sup>i</sup>  
 Consumed with the consuming of a brand,  
 Thou would'st not here so much discordance find.  
 And if thou thinkest how your image, scanned  
 Within the mirror, stirs quick as you stir,  
 What seems hard would seem easy to understand.  
 But that thou may'st reach haven in thy desire,  
 Lo, Statius here; and him do I adduce  
 And pray him to thy wounds to minister." [30]  
 "If I unfold to him," answered Statius,  
 "Where thou art, the eternal sight, that I  
 Cannot deny thee shall be my excuse."  
 Then he said: "Son, if thou thy mind apply  
 And well absorb my words, they shall afford  
 Light to thee on the How thou art troubled by.  
 Blood perfected, which never is drunk or stored<sup>ii</sup>  
 By thirsting veins and is left over, as if  
 'Twere food which thou removest from the board,  
 Takes in the heart a virtue informative [40]  
 To all the human members, like that blood  
 Which courses through the veins to make those live.  
 Refined yet more, it flows down where 'tis good  
 Not to speak but be silent, and thence pours  
 Into another's blood in natural mode.  
 There the one is mingled with the other's course,  
 Ordained, one to be passive, the other to act

---

<sup>i</sup> 22. *The life of Meleager was made by the fates to depend on that of a firebrand.*

<sup>ii</sup> 37-51. *Man's blood contains potentially all the parts of his frame. Some of it remains intact and unsullied in the heart, retaining its complete formative power. This "perfected blood" becomes the parent seed.*

Because it comes from a so perfect source.  
 Thereto joined, it begins its part to enact,  
 Coagulating first, then quickening whole [50]  
 What for material it had made compact.  
 The active virtue growing into a soul<sup>iii</sup>  
 Like a plant's, only with the difference  
 That this is on the way, that at the goal,  
 So works that it has motion now and sense  
 Like a sea-fungus; then sets out to find  
 For the powers it is the seed of, instruments.  
 Now, son, the virtue expandeth unconfined  
 Which from the heart of the begetter flows  
 Where nature all man's members hath designed. [60]  
 But how from animal it human grows  
 Thou see'st not yet: and this point caused a wit  
 Wiser than thou art wrongly to suppose;  
 So that he falsely by his teaching split  
 The possible intellect from the soul, since no  
 Organ he found that was possessed by it.  
 Open thy breast to coming truth, and know  
 That when the articulation of the brain  
 Is consummated in the embryo,  
 The First Mover turns to it, glad and fain [70]  
 Over such art of nature, and, to abound  
 In virtue, inbreathes a spirit of new strain,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Which, drawing what it there has active found  
 Into its substance, makes one soul complete  
 That lives and feels and on itself turns round.  
 And that thou may'st less marvel at this, the heat  
 Of the sun consider, that becometh wine  
 When with it the vine's flowing juices meet.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 52-60. The embryo's life is at first merely that of a plant—the "vegetative soul." Then the senses are developed, and its life is that of the "sensitive soul." Both "souls" are perishable.

<sup>iv</sup> 72. The "spirit of new strain" is the "rational soul" (see the Argument).

When Lachesis hath no more thread to spin<sup>v</sup>  
 It sheds the flesh, and bears away therefrom [80]  
 Virtually both the human and divine:  
 The other faculties inert and dumb;  
 And will and memory and intelligence,  
 Which now in act far keener have become.  
 It stays not, but is borne in its suspense  
 To one or the other shore, in wondrous mode.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Here first it learns what path it must take thence.  
 Soon as 'tis circumscribed by its abode,  
 The formative virtue radiates without let  
 As much as in the living members showed. [90]  
 And as the air when it is charged with wet,  
 Through another's ray that it reflects, reveals  
 The divers colours in their glory set,  
 Thus here the neighbouring air itself anneals  
 Into that form which, by the virtue it owes,  
 The still surviving soul upon it seals.  
 And then like to the flame that, following close  
 The fire, wherever it shifteth, to it cleaves,  
 So the new form after the spirit goes.  
 Since visible aspect it therefrom receives, [100]  
 Well is it called a shade, and thence its own<sup>vii</sup>  
 Organ to each sense, even to sight, it gives,  
 We speak, we laugh, by this, and this alone;  
 By this we liberate the tears and sighs  
 Thou mayst have heard about the mount make moan.  
 The shade takes form as the desires devise  
 And the other stings of feeling that we share.  
 And this it was occasioned thy surprise."  
 And now we had come to the last twisting stair  
 And to the right hand had wheeled round our steps, [110]

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<sup>v</sup> 79. "Lachesis": the Fate.

<sup>vi</sup> 86. "To one or the other shore": to the bank of Acheron or of Tiber (see the Argument).

<sup>vii</sup> 101. "A shade": see the Argument.

And all our thoughts were turned to other care.  
 Here from the bank an arrowy fire outleaps<sup>viii</sup>  
 And from the ground beats up a blast whose brawl  
 Bends the flames backward and at distance keeps.  
 Thus on the free side must we needs go all,  
 One after the other; and the fire I feared  
 On this side, and on that side feared to fall.  
 My Leader said: "Along this place keep guard  
 With the curb tight over the eyes, for sore  
 Mishap might come, if one but a little erred."  
 [120]  
*Summae Deus clementiae* at the core  
 Of the great burning I heard chanted, so  
 That to turn thither it made me hunger more,  
 And through the flames I beheld spirits go.  
 Wherefore I eyed them and my steps, at feud  
 Each moment, as my glance went to and fro.  
 After the end which doth that hymn conclude  
 They *Virum non cognosco* cried aloud;<sup>ix</sup>  
 Then with soft voices all the hymn renewed.  
 That finished, they cried on: "To Dian vowed  
 [130]  
 The wood was, whence was Helice in shame<sup>x</sup>  
 Driven, who had Venus' poison in her blood."  
 Then, to their chanting turned, they cried the name  
 Of women and of husbands who were chaste,  
 As virtue and marriage do their fealty claim.  
 This ritual, I think, for them doth last  
 For all the time the fire upon them glows.  
 And with such cure and diet of such taste  
 Behoveth that the wound at last should close.

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<sup>viii</sup> 112. "An arrowy fire": the symbol of purification from lust.

<sup>ix</sup> 128. "I know not a man," is the reply of Mary to the angel at the Annunciation. After each singing of the hymn the souls call aloud an example of chastity.

<sup>x</sup> 131. The nymph Helice had been seduced by Jupiter.



# Canto XXVI

*Proceeding along the circle, the three poets go in single file, keeping to the outer edge, because of the fire. Dante's shadow makes the flames seem redder, which astonishes the spirits. One of them, who is Guido Guinicelli, questions Dante, whose attention is however distracted by a throng coming towards them who greet the others briefly; they are those who were guilty of unnatural lust, while the sin of the first group was "hermaphrodite," or bi-sexual, but infringed human law. This is explained by Guinicelli, who now makes himself known and is greeted with reverence by Dante as his "father" in poetry (as the sons of Hypsipyle recognized and embraced their mother in Statius' poem). But Guinicelli deprecates his praise and points to the shade of Arnaut Daniel, the Provençal poet, as a better craftsman in verse, surpassing his rival Giraut de Borneuil of Limoges. Guinicelli disappears into the flame, and Dante greets Arnaut, who replies in the Provençal tongue.*

WHILE THUS along the road's edge we progressed  
One after one, "By my instruction's light"  
Said the good Master, "see thou profitest."  
The sun smote on my shoulder from the right  
And with his beams by now was changing fast  
The whole face of the West from blue to white.  
And redder with the shadow that I cast  
The flames appeared; and this small sign alone  
Many, I saw, took heed of as they passed.  
This was the cue for them to speak upon:  
And of me, among themselves, they made comment:  
"No shadowy body this one seems to own."  
Far as they could, then, certain of them went  
Toward me, still watchful not to issue out  
There where the burning would no more torment.  
"O thou that goest behind the others, not  
From indolence but for reverence may-hap,  
Answer me, who have fire within my throat.

[10]

Not I alone will drink thine answer up,  
 For all these have a greater thirst for it [20]  
 Than for cold brooks Indian or Ethiop.  
 Say how it is that thou thyself dost set  
 As a wall against the sun, as if ensnared  
 Thou wert not in the meshes of Death's net."  
 Thus one spoke; and already I had declared  
 Myself, had not the intentness of my gaze  
 Been drawn to a new thing which then appeared.  
 For where the middle road was all ablaze  
 People were coming with face fronting these  
 Who made me stand and linger in my amaze. [30]  
 Each shade I see on either side to press,  
 And without staying, and content with scant  
 Greeting, I see them one another kiss.  
 Even so within their dusky troops an ant  
 Noses another, if haply it may spy  
 Their journey out or what their luck may grant.  
 Soon as they put the friendly greeting by,  
 Before the first step of the speeding foot  
 Each of them strives which shall the loudest cry.  
 "Sodom and Gomorrah" the new-comers shout. [40]  
 The rest, "Pasiphae entereth the cow"<sup>i</sup>  
 That the young bull may hasten to her rut."  
 Like cranes that, some to the Rhipean snow  
 Would fly, some to the sandy regions,—they  
 Shunning the frost, and those the hot sun's glow—  
 One part go on, the other come away,  
 And weeping to their first chants they recur  
 And to the words it fits them most to say.  
 And those same ones who did me first implore  
 With listening intentness in their mien [50]  
 Were drawing close up to me as before.

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<sup>i</sup> 41. "Pasiphae," cursed by Venus with a passion for a bull, satisfied her lust by concealing herself in a wooden cow.

I, who now twice their eagerness had seen,  
     Began: "O spirits that have security  
     Of reaching in the end the state serene,  
 My members, whether green or ripe they be,  
     Remain not yonder upon earth confined  
     But with their blood and joints are here with me.  
 Upward I go, to be no longer blind.  
     There is a lady above who hath won me grace;<sup>ii</sup>  
     Hence in your world my mortal self ye find. [60]  
 But so may your supreme wish come to pass  
     Sooner, so that the heaven may harbour you  
     Which brims with love and spreads in amplest space,  
 That yet my pen may write it, tell me who  
     Ye are, and what that multitude is there  
     Which goes behind your backs away from you?"  
 Not otherwise the embarrassed highlander  
     Grows dazed and round about him stareth dumb,  
     Wild and uncouth amid the city's stir,  
 Than each shade did now in his looks become. [70]  
     But when they were disburdened of that strain,  
     And lofty hearts are soon relieved therefrom,  
 "Blessed thou," that first shade began again,  
     "Who for a better death art taking in  
     Store of experience out of our domain.  
 The people who come not with us had that sin  
     For which Caesar of old as he passed by  
     Heard in his triumph called behind him 'Queen!'"<sup>iii</sup>  
 Therefore do they reproach themselves and cry  
     'Sodom,' as thou hast heard, at parting hence, [80]  
     And with their shame the burning magnify.  
 For us, hermaphrodite was our offence.  
     But since we observed not human law (our blood  
     Pursuing like a beast the lusts of sense)

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<sup>ii</sup> 59. "A lady": the Virgin Mary.

<sup>iii</sup> 78. A charge of sodomy.

We read, to our reproach and for our good,  
     Parting, the name of her who did imbrute  
     Herself in the imbruted frame of wood.  
 Thou knowest our guilty acts now and their fruit.  
     If chance thou would'st by name know who we are,  
     There is no time to tell, nor could I do it. [90]  
 Of me indeed I will content thy prayer.  
     I am Guido Guinicelli and purge me in flame<sup>iv</sup>  
     Because, ere the end, my sins repented were."  
 Then such as in Lycurgus' grief became<sup>v</sup>  
     Two sons, rejoiced their mother again to see  
     So became I (yet not so high I aim),  
 When I heard name himself the father of me  
     And of others, my betters, who have wrought  
     Ever of love sweet rhyme so graciously.  
 Without hearing or speech, in musing thought [100]  
     I went, a long time gazing on him still,  
     Yet, for the fire, no nearer to him sought.  
 When with beholding I had fed my fill,  
     I offered all his wishes to obey  
     With that oath which persuades another's will.  
 And he to me: "Such trace, by what men say,  
     Thou leavest printed in me, and one so clear,  
     That Lethe cannot drown or make it grey."<sup>vi</sup>  
 But if twas truth thy words just now did swear,  
     Tell me what is the cause why in thy speech; [110]  
     And look thou showest that thou hold'st me dear."  
 And I to him: "Your own sweet ditties, which,  
     So long as modern use is not let die,  
     The ink that they were written in shall enrich."  
 "O brother," said he, "He who is singled by<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> 92. "Guido Guinicelli": the most important Italian poet before Dante.

<sup>v</sup> 94. *Hypsipyle's two sons saved her from the rage of Lycurgus (see the Argument).*

<sup>vi</sup> 108. "Lethe": the river of oblivion.

<sup>vii</sup> 115. "He who . . .": Arnaut Daniel, a twelfth-century troubadour.

My finger (he pointed to a spirit in front)  
 Wrought better in the mother-tongue than I.  
 Whether in verses of love or prose romaunt  
 He surpassed all; and let the fools contend  
 Who make him of Limoges of more account.<sup>viii</sup> [120]  
 To rumour rather than to truth they bend  
 Their faces, fixt in their opinion's seat  
 Ere art or reason they can apprehend.  
 Thus many an elder did Guittone treat,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Shouting as one, their votes for him to pledge,  
 Till truth, with most, conquered the counterfeit.  
 Now if thou hast such ample privilege  
 That to the cloister it admitteth thee  
 Where Christ is Abbot of the blest college,  
 A Paternoster do thou say for me [130]  
 So far as need for us be of such aid  
 In this world, where to sin we are no more free."  
 Then, perhaps giving place to another shade  
 Close by him, through the flames he disappeared  
 Like fish that into the deep water fade.  
 Him who was pointed at I a little neared  
 And told him what desire upon my side  
 Held for his name a grateful place prepared.  
 And with a willing frankness he replied:  
 "Your courteous request pleases me so, [140]  
 I have no power nor will from you to hide.  
 I am Arnald, and I weep and singing go.  
 I think on my past folly and see the stain,  
 And view with joy the day I hope to know.  
 I pray you by that Goodness which doth deign  
 To guide you to the summit of this stair  
 Bethink you in due season of my pain."  
 Then he shrank back in the refining fire.

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<sup>viii</sup> 120. *Giraut de Borneuil of Limoges: a younger contemporary of Arnaut.*

<sup>ix</sup> 124. *Guittone d'Arezzo: a prolific imitator of the Provençal school.*

# Canto XXVII

*Night is coming on, when the Angel of Chastity appears and tells Dante that he cannot go further without passing through the fire. He is terrified, remembering deaths by burning that he had witnessed on earth; and even Virgil's encouragement cannot overcome his fears till he is reminded that Beatrice awaits him beyond. The three pass through the fire and emerge at the place of ascent. Another angel warns them to hasten, as the sun is setting. Each now makes a bed for himself on a step of the stair. Dante sleeps, and dreams of Leah and Rachel, types of the active and contemplative life; foreshadowing the meeting with Matilda and Beatrice which is to come. He wakes with morning, and at the summit Virgil tells him that his mission is ended and that Dante now needs no guide or instructor.*

AS WHEN his first beams tremble in the sky<sup>i</sup>  
There, where his own Creator shed his blood,  
While Ebro is beneath the Scales on high,  
And noon scorches the wave on Ganges' flood,  
Such was the sun's height; day was soon to pass;  
When the angel of God joyful before us stood.  
Outside the flames, above the bank, he was.  
*Beati mundo corde* we heard him sing<sup>ii</sup>  
In a voice more living far than comes from us.  
Then "None goes further, if first the fire not sting.  
O hallowed spirits, enter unafraid  
And to the chant beyond let your ears cling."  
When we were near him, this to us he said.  
Wherefore I, when I knew what his words meant,  
Became as one who in the grave is laid.  
Over my clasping hands forward I leant,  
Eyeing the fire, and vivid to my mind  
Men's bodies burning, once beheld, it sent.

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 1-5. *The time described is the approach of sunset.*

<sup>ii</sup> 8. Matt. 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart."

Then toward me turned them both my escorts kind;  
 And Virgil said to me: "O my son, here [20]  
 Torment, may-be, but death thou shalt not find.  
 Remember, O remember . . . and if thy fear  
 On Geryon into safety I recalled,  
 What shall I do now, being to God more near?  
 If thou within this womb of flames wert walled  
 Full thousand years, for certainty believe  
 That not of one hair could they make thee bald.  
 And if perchance thou think'st that I deceive,  
 Go forward into them, and thy faith prove,  
 With hands put in the edges of thy sleeve. [30]  
 Out of thy heart all fear remove, remove!  
 Turn hither and come confidently on!"  
 And I stood fixed and with my conscience strove.  
 When he beheld me still and hard as stone,  
 Troubled a little, he said: "Look now, this same  
 Wall is 'twixt Beatrice and thee, my son."  
 As Pyramus at the sound of Thisbe's name  
 Opened his dying eyes and gazed at her  
 Then, when the crimson on the mulberry came,<sup>iii</sup>  
 So did I turn unto my wise Leader, [40]  
 My hardness melted, hearing the name told  
 Which like a well-spring in my mind I bear.  
 Whereon he shook his head, saying: "Do we hold  
 Our wish to stay on this side?" He smiled then  
 As on a child by an apple's bribe cajoled.  
 Before me then the fire he entered in,  
 Praying Statius that he follow at his heel  
 Who for a long stretch now had walked between.  
 When I was in, I had been glad to reel  
 Therefrom to cool me, into boiling glass, [50]  
 Such burning beyond measure did I feel.

---

<sup>iii</sup> 39. The mulberry turned red on being spattered with the blood of Pyramus, who stabbed himself when he thought Thisbe slain by a lion (Ovid, *Met.*, IV, 55-166).

My sweet Father, to give me heart of grace,  
     Continued only on Beatrice to descant,  
     Saying: "Already I seem to see her face."  
 On the other side, to guide us, rose a chant,  
     And we, intent on that alone to dwell,  
     Came forth there, where the ascent began to slant.  
 And there we heard a voice *Venite* hail<sup>iv</sup>  
     *Benedicti patris mei* out of light  
     So strong, it mastered me and made me quail. [60]  
 "The sun departs," it added; "comes the night.  
     Tarry not; study at good pace to go  
     Before the west has darkened on your sight."  
 Straight rose the path within the rock, and so  
     Directed onward, that I robbed the ray  
     Before me from the sun, already low.  
 I and my sages few steps did assay  
     When by the extinguished shadow we perceived  
     That now behind us had sunk down the day.  
 And ere the horizon had one hue received [70]  
     In all the unmeasured regions of the air,  
     And night her whole expansion had achieved,  
 Each of us made his bed upon a stair,  
     Seeing that the nature of the mount o'ercame  
     Alike the power to ascend and the desire.  
 As goats, now ruminating, though the same  
     That, before feeding, brisk and wanton played  
     On the high places of the hills, grow tame,  
 Silent, while the sun scorches, in the shade,  
     Watched by the herd that props him hour by hour [80]  
     Upon his staff and, propt so, tends his trade;  
 And as the shepherd, lodging out-of-door,  
     Watches night-long in quiet by his flock,  
     Wary lest wild beast scatter it or devour;

---

<sup>iv</sup> 58-59. Matt. 25:34: "Come, ye blessed of my Father . . ."



Such were we then, all three, within that nook,  
     I as a goat, they as a shepherd, there,  
     On this and that side hemmed by the high rock.  
 Little could there of the outside things appear;  
     But through that little I saw the stars to glow  
     Bigger than ordinary and shine more clear. [90]  
 Ruminating and gazing on them so  
     Sleep took me; sleep which often will apprise  
     Of things to come, and ere the event foreknow.  
 In the hour, I think, when first from Eastern skies  
     Upon the mountain Cytherea beamed<sup>v</sup>  
     Whom fire of love forever glorifies,  
 A lady young and beautiful I seemed  
     To see move through a plain and flower on flower  
     To gather; singing, she was saying (I dreamed),  
 "Let them know, whoso of my name inquire,<sup>vi</sup> [100]  
     That I am Leah, and move my fingers fair  
     Around, to make me a garland for a tire.  
 To glad me at the glass I deck me here;  
     But never to her mirror is untrue  
     My sister Rachel, and sits all day there.  
 She is fain to hold her beauteous eyes in view  
     As me with these hands I am fain to adorn:  
     To see contenteth her, and me to do."  
 Already, through the splendour ere the morn,  
     Which to wayfarers the more grateful shows, [110]  
     Lodging less far from home, where they return,  
 The shadows on all sides were fleeing, and close  
     On them my sleep fled; wherefore, having seen  
     The great masters risen already, I rose.

---

<sup>v</sup> 95. "Cytherea" is *Venus*, whose star shines before sunrise.

<sup>vi</sup> 100. Dante is about to visit the Garden of Eden, the abode of innocence and harmless activity. Consequently the active and the contemplative life are revealed to him in the form of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel.

"That apple whose sweetness in their craving keen<sup>vii</sup>  
 Mortals go seeking on so many boughs  
 This day shall peace to all thy hungers mean."  
 Words such as these to me did Virgil use;  
 And no propitious gifts did man acquire  
 For pleasure matching these, to have or choose. [120]  
 So came on me desire upon desire  
 To be above, that now with every tread  
 I felt wings on me growing to waft me higher.  
 When under us the whole high stair was sped  
 And we unto the topmost step had won,  
 Virgil, fixing his eyes upon me, said:  
 "The temporal and the eternal fire, my son,  
 Thou hast beheld: thou art come now to a part  
 Where of myself I see no farther on.  
 I have brought thee hither both by wit and art. [130]  
 Take for thy guide thine own heart's pleasure now.  
 Forth from the narrows, from the steeps, thou art.  
 See there the sun that shines upon thy brow;  
 See the young grass, the flowers and coppices  
 Which this soil, of itself alone, makes grow.  
 While the fair eyes are coming, full of bliss,  
 Which weeping made me come to thee before,  
 Amongst them thou canst go or sit at ease.  
 Expect from me no word or signal more.  
 Thy will is upright, sound of tissue, free: [140]  
 To disobey it were a fault; wherefore  
 Over thyself I crown thee and mitre thee."<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> 115. "That apple . . .": earthly happiness.

<sup>viii</sup> 142. I make thee thine own Emperor and Pope.

# Canto XXVIII

*Dante sees before him the Earthly Paradise, which crowns the Mount, and sets out to explore "the divine forest." The grass is full of flowers, and birds sing on the boughs. He is stopped by the stream of Lethe, and on the farther side of it perceives a lady gathering flowers and singing. She is Matilda (as we learn from Canto XXXIII), a lady generally identified with a Countess of Tuscany (1046-1115), supporter of Pope Gregory VII, but here representing the active life and the guide of Dante towards Beatrice (the contemplative life). Dante asks her to explain how it is that wind blows and water runs at a height where, according to Statius, there is no disturbance and no rain. She satisfies his curiosity and tells him how the water is supernaturally constant and replenished, pouring from a fountain which on one side is called Lethe and has the property of obliterating memory of sin, and on the other Eunoë, which restores the memory of good deeds. Here, she adds, was the abode of man in his state of innocence.*

NOW eager to search out through all its maze  
The living green of the divine forest  
Which to my eyes tempered the new sun's rays,  
I left the mountain's rim, nor stayed to rest  
But took the plain by slow and slow degrees  
Where with sweet smells all the earth around is blest.  
Gentle air, having no inconstancies  
Within its motion, smote upon my brow  
With no more violence than a gracious breeze;  
And trembling to the touch of it, each bough [10]  
Was bending all its foliage toward that side  
Where the holy Mount casteth its first shadow;<sup>i</sup>  
Yet not so far from upright was blown wide  
But that the small birds on the topmost spray  
All their sweet art continually still plied,  
And from a full throat singing loud and gay  
Welcomed the first thrills in the leaves, that bore

---

<sup>i</sup> 12. The direction is the west.

A burden to the descant of their lay  
 Such as swells up along Chiassi's shore,<sup>ii</sup>  
 From branch to branch of the pine-forest blown, [20]  
 When Æolus has loosed Sirocco's roar.  
 Already my slow steps had borne me on  
 So far within that immemorial wood  
 That I could no more see whence I had gone;  
 And lo! a stream that stopped me where I stood;  
 And at the left the ripple in its train  
 Moved on the bank the grasses where it flowed.  
 All waters here that are most pure from stain  
 Would qualified with some immixture seem  
 Compared with this, which veils not the least grain, [30]  
 Altho' so dark, dark goes the gliding stream  
 Under the eternal shadow, that hides fast  
 Forever there the sun's and the moon's beam.  
 With my feet halting, with my eyes I passed  
 That brook, for the regaling of my sight  
 With the fresh blossoms in their full contrast.  
 And then appeared (as in a sudden light  
 Something appears which from astonishment  
 Puts suddenly all other thoughts to flight)  
 A lady who all alone and singing went,<sup>iii</sup> [40]  
 And as she sang plucked flowers that numberless  
 All round about her path their colours blent.  
 "I pray thee, O lovely Lady, if, as I guess,  
 Thou warm'st thee at the radiance of Love's fire,—  
 For looks are wont to be the heart's witness,—  
 I pray thee toward this water to draw near  
 So far," said I to her, "while thou dost sing,  
 That with my understanding I may hear.  
 Thou putt'st me in remembrance of what thing

---

<sup>ii</sup> 19-22. *The pine grove of "Chiassi": the old port of Ravenna; "Sirocco": the southeast wind; "Æolus": the king of the winds.*

<sup>iii</sup> 40. *"A lady": Matilda.*

Proserpine was, and where, when by mischance [50]  
 Her mother lost her, and she lost the spring.<sup>iv</sup>  
 Even as a lady turns round in the dance  
 With feet close to each other and to the ground  
 And hardly foot beyond foot doth advance,  
 Toward me with maiden mien she turned her round  
 Upon the floor of flowers yellow and red,  
 Holding the while her modest eyes earth-bound.  
 My supplication then she comforted,  
 So near approaching, that her song divine  
 Reached me with meaning to the music wed. [60]  
 Soon as she came to where the grasses line  
 The fair stream's bank and stand wet in its wave,  
 She accorded me to lift her eyes to mine.  
 I think not that the light such glory gave  
 Beneath the eye-lids of Venus, being hit  
 So strangely by the dart her own boy drave.<sup>v</sup>  
 Erect, she smiled from the bank opposite,  
 Disposing in her hands those colours fair  
 Which that land bears without seed sown in it.  
 Three paces the stream parted me from her; [70]  
 But Hellespont, where Xerxes bridged the strait<sup>vi</sup>  
 That still makes human vaunt a bridle wear,  
 Endured not from Leander keener hate,  
 'Twixt Sestos and Abydos full in foam,  
 Than this from me, because it closed the gate.  
 "It may be," she began, "since new ye come  
 And see me smiling in this place elect,  
 Made for mankind to be their nest and home,  
 That wonder and some misgiving hold you checkt;

---

<sup>iv</sup> 51. When Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, was suddenly carried off to the lower world by Pluto, she had been picking flowers.

<sup>v</sup> 66. "Her own boy": Cupid.

<sup>vi</sup> 71-74. Xerxes, king of Persia, crossed the Hellespont; this river swelled between Leander in Abydos and his beloved Hero in Sestos.

But the psalm Delectasti beams a ray<sup>vii</sup> [80]  
 Which haply shall discloud your intellect.  
 And thou who art first and didst beseech me, say  
 If there is aught that doth thy question rouse,  
 Behold! I am here thy mind's thirst to allay."  
 "The running water," I said, "and rustling boughs  
 Perplex me, appearing to serve other laws  
 Than what a new belief made me espouse."  
 Then she: "I'll tell thee how from its own cause  
 Cometh to pass what doth thy wonder tease,  
 And purge away the mist that gives thee pause. [90]  
 The Supreme Good, who himself alone doth please,  
 Made man good, and for goodness, and this clime  
 Gave him for pledge of the eternal peace.  
 By his default he sojourned here small time:  
 By his default, for tears, labour and sweat  
 He exchanged honest laughter and sweet pastime.  
 And lest the tumults that beneath it beat,  
 From water and earth by exhalation bred,  
 Which follow, far as they can rise, the heat,  
 Should vex the peace man here inherited, [100]  
 This mount thus far up toward the heavens rose,  
 And, barred secure from storm, lifts up its head.  
 Now since all the air in one smooth circuit flows,<sup>viii</sup>  
 And, save its circle is broken by some fret,  
 Revolving with the primal motion goes,  
 Such motion, striking here, where without let  
 In living air this peak upholds its height,  
 Makes the wood sound, since it is thickly set,  
 And all the plants, so smitten, contain such might  
 In them, that with their virtue the air they strew [110]

---

<sup>vii</sup> 80. The psalm proclaims the final triumph of the righteous.

<sup>viii</sup> 103-108. The two mobile elements—air and fire—are swept around the earth by the heavens in their "primal motion," or daily circuit. On the surface of the earth the air encounters many obstacles; but this mountain-top receives the atmospheric current unobstructed.

Which scatters it abroad in circling flight.  
 The rest of the earth, according to its due  
 Of soil and climate doth conceive and bear  
 Trees of each kind and each diverse virtue.  
 No marvel will it then on earth appear,  
 (This known,) when some plant without seed hath struck  
 Invisibly its root, to burgeon there.  
 Know that the blest plain whereon thou dost look  
 Is pregnant of all seed beneath the skies  
 And bears fruit in it no hand there doth pluck. [120]  
 The water which thou seest doth not rise  
 From veins, that mist, by cold condensed, restores,  
 Like rivers that now gain, now lose in size,  
 But issues from a spring's unfailing stores  
 Which God's will, plenishing it, still re-makes  
 So that on either side it freely pours.  
 On this side it streams virtue such as takes  
 Soilure of sin out of the memory;  
 On the other, memory of good deeds awakes.  
 On this side, Lethe, the other, Eunoë<sup>ix</sup> [130]  
 Its name is; nor comes healing from this well  
 Unless upon both sides it tasted be.  
 This savour doth all savours far excel.—  
 Now, though it may be all thy thirstiness  
 Is quenched, even were this all that I should tell  
 I give thee this corollary as a grace;  
 Nor do I think my words shall less be prized  
 By thee, that they exceed my promises.  
 They who in old time dreaming poetised  
 Of the felicity of the Age of Gold<sup>x</sup> [140]  
 On Helicon perchance this place agnised.  
 Innocent here was man's first root of old;

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<sup>ix</sup> 130. "Lethe" and "Eunoë": see the Argument.

<sup>x</sup> 140-142. The golden age was "poetised" by the ancient poets. When they sang of Parnassus ("Helicon"), they may have been dimly conscious of the real origin of man.

Here blooms perpetual Spring, all fruits abound:  
This is the nectar whereof each hath told.”  
Then full upon my poets I moved me round;  
And I perceived that they with smiles had learned  
The interpretation that her discourse crowned.  
To the fair lady then my face I turned.



# Canto XXIX

*Matilda is proceeding along the stream, while Dante keeps pace with her on the other side, when she calls his attention to a brilliant light and a music which are approaching. At first dazzlingly indistinct, the light resolves itself into a mystical procession, heralded by Seven Candlesticks, "the seven spirits of God," followed by four and twenty elders, symbolising the books of the Old Testament, and four Beasts, symbolising the Gospels. The last escort the triumphal car of the Church, drawn by a Gryphon (representing the twofold nature of Christ). By the wheels are dancing, on one side the three theological virtues and on the other the four active virtues. Then come elders, rose-crowned, who typify the remaining books of the New Testament; St. John closing the whole procession. When Dante is abreast of the car, the procession is stopped by a peal of thunder.*

SINGING, like to a lady in love's dream,  
She with the closing words continued on  
Blessed are they whose sins are pardoned them.  
Like nymphs that used to wander, each alone,  
Amid the shadowing green from tree to tree,  
One seeking, and one hiding from, the sun,  
Against the motion of the stream moved she  
Upon the bank; and I with her abreast  
Made little step with little step agree.

Not to a hundred had our steps increased  
When both the banks so curved as to compel  
My feet to turn aside unto the East.  
Thus went we, and were not far when it befell  
The Lady toward me turning full about  
Said: "Now, my brother, look and listen well!"  
And lo! a sudden splendour dazzled out  
From all sides of the forest through the trees,  
So that, if it were lightning, I made doubt.  
But since the lightning, as it comes, ceases,

[10]

And this, remaining, ever intenser grew, [20]  
 Within my thought I said: "What thing is this?"  
 And a sweet melody ran thrilling through  
 The luminous air; which in my righteous zeal  
 Made me the hardihood of Eve to rue,  
 Who, but a woman newly formed to feel,  
 Alone, where all earth and all heaven obeyed,  
 Presumed to abide not under any veil,<sup>i</sup>  
 Beneath which had she in devotion stayed,  
 I should of those ineffable delights  
 Supp'd sooner, and with me longer had they delayed. [30]  
 While thus I went mid the first sounds and sights  
 Of the eternal pleasance, hesitant  
 In joy that longed to reach yet heavenlier heights,  
 Before us, under the green boughs aslant,  
 The air glowed as a fire glows in a blast,  
 And the sweet sound was heard now as a chant.  
 O Virgins holy and high, if ever fast,<sup>ii</sup>  
 And cold, and vigil, I for you endured,  
 Now am I spurred to claim reward at last.  
 Helicon's founts for me be full out-poured, [40]  
 With all her choir Urania me uphold<sup>iii</sup>  
 To attempt in verse things scarce to thought assured.  
 A little farther on seven trees of gold  
 Feigned to be such by reason that the tract  
 Dividing us from them the sight cajoled.  
 But when a nearer vision had unpacked  
 The general image, which our fancies gloze,  
 So that of no particular it lacked,  
 The power that argument for reason shows  
 Perceived them candlesticks, even as they were, [50]  
 And clear the words into "Hosanna" rose.

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<sup>i</sup> 27. "Any veil": of ignorance.

<sup>ii</sup> 37. "O Virgins . . .": the Muses.

<sup>iii</sup> 41. "Urania": the Muse of astronomy.

In beauty on high the pomp was flaming there,  
 Brighter by far than is the moon's mild blaze  
 In her mid month through the clear midnight air.  
 I turned me backward filled full of amaze  
 To the good Virgil, and for answer read  
 No less a weight of wonder in his gaze.  
 Then to the things of glory again my head  
 I turned, and they came moving on so slow,  
 They had been passed by a bride newly wed.<sup>iv</sup> [60]  
 The Lady cried to me: "Why dost thou glow  
 To look but on the living lights in awe,  
 Nor seekest what comes after them to know?"  
 Then saw I people in white apparel draw  
 Nearer, as if one led them, rank by rank:  
 Such whiteness upon earth none ever saw.  
 The water glittered bright on my left flank,  
 And gave to me my left side, if my face  
 Looked into it, like a mirror, from the bank.  
 When on my shore I had found such vantage-place [70]  
 That only the stream's width kept me confined,  
 The better to behold, I stayed my pace.  
 I saw the flames come onward, and behind  
 Leave the air as if by painted colour sleeked  
 That a brush trails, to each its tint assigned,  
 So that the air remained in order streaked  
 With seven bands, the hues the Sun hath dyed  
 His bow, and Delia her girdle freaked.<sup>v</sup>  
 To rearward, farther than the eye descried,  
 These banners streamed; as I computed it, [80]  
 Ten paces might the outermost divide.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Under so fair a sky as I have writ,  
 Came four and twenty elders, two by two,

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<sup>iv</sup> 60. *They would have been outstripped by a wedding procession.*

<sup>v</sup> 78. *"Delia": Diana, the moon.*

<sup>vi</sup> 81. *"The outermost": the two outer ones, representing "wisdom" and "fear of the Lord."*

And they wore crowns of the white lilies knit.  
 "Among the daughters of Adam blessed thou,<sup>vii</sup>  
 And blessed," they continued in their song,  
 "Thy beauties, the eternal ages through."  
 Soon as the flowers and the fresh grass along  
 The other bank, opposite to my eye,  
 Were cleared of those elect ones and their throng, [90]  
 As star comes after star into the sky,  
 Four living creatures followed in their train,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Crowned with green leaves, slowly advancing nigh.  
 Each with six wings was plumed, the plummy grain  
 Filled full of eyes; and even such would gleam<sup>ix</sup>  
 The eyes of Argus, could they live again.  
 But further to define the forms of them,  
 I spare to spend rhymes, reader, nor can aim  
 At lavishness, constrained to other theme.  
 But read Ezekiel, who their form and frame<sup>x</sup> [100]  
 Paints as he saw them, from the region cold  
 Coming upon the wind in cloud and flame.  
 As thou upon his page dost find them scrolled,  
 So were they here; but for the wings they wore,  
 John is with me, and hath the difference told.<sup>xi</sup>  
 The midmost of the space between the four  
 Contained a car on two wheels, triumphing,  
 Which at his neck a Gryphon onward bore.<sup>xii</sup>  
 And he stretcht upward one and the other wing  
 'Twixt three and three and mid band, lest he might, [110]  
 By cleaving it, to any an injury bring.  
 They rose so high that they were lost to sight.

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<sup>vii</sup> 85-87. *The books of the Old Testament anticipate the greeting to Mary uttered at the time of the Annunciation.*

<sup>viii</sup> 92. *The four animals represent the Gospels.*

<sup>ix</sup> 95. *The hundred-eyed Argus was the guardian of Io.*

<sup>x</sup> 100. *Ezekiel 1:4-6; 2:12.*

<sup>xi</sup> 105. *In the Revelation of St. John 4:6-8, the animals have six wings.*

<sup>xii</sup> 108. *"A Gryphon": see the Argument.*

As far as he was bird, his limbs were scaled  
 With gold, the rest was vermeil mixt with white.  
 With car so fair never was Rome regaled  
 By Africanus, nor Augustus, nay,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 The Sun's own car beside it would be paled,  
 The Sun's own car that perished, driven astray,  
 At Earth's devout prayer fallen in flames extinct,  
 When Jove let justice have her secret way. [120]  
 Beside the car's right wheel came dancing linked  
 Three ladies in a ring; so red was one,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 That scarce in fire her form had been distinct:  
 The next was like as if her flesh and bone  
 Were made all of an emerald; the third  
 Seemed snow on which the air had newly blown.  
 And now the red to lead the rest appeared,  
 And now the white; and from the chant which led  
 They took the time, as slow or quick they heard.  
 By the left wheel came four with festal tread,<sup>xv</sup> [130]  
 In purple, following in their order due  
 One of them, who had three eyes in her head.  
 After the passing of this retinue  
 I saw two aged men, unlike arrayed,  
 But like in mien, reverend and grave to view.  
 One showed him a familiar of that trade<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Ennobled by supreme Hippocrates  
 Whom Nature for her dearest creatures made.  
 Contrary care the other seemed to please:  
 He bore a sword so keen and bright, its glance [140]  
 Made, even across the stream, fear on me seize.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 116-120. "Africanus": Publius Cornelius Scipio. Phaëthon, the unsuccessful driver of the chariot of the sun, was stricken down by Jove.

<sup>xiv</sup> 122-125. Red is the colour of Charity. "The next" is Hope, the third is Faith.

<sup>xv</sup> 130. The four cardinal virtues: Prudence (who leads), Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude.

<sup>xvi</sup> 136-139. The "familiar" of Hippocrates, the Greek doctor, represents the book of the Acts of the Apostles. "The other" represents the Epistles of Paul.

Then saw I four, of aspect humble, advance;<sup>xvii</sup>  
And behind all was an old man alone  
Coming, with piercing visage, in a trance.  
And all these seven had a like raiment on  
With the first troop, but round about the head  
A garlanding of lilies had they none,  
Of roses rather, and other blossoms red.  
One from short distance viewing them would swear  
That over the eyes a fire upon them fed. [150]  
Now when the car came opposite me, the air  
Thundered; and this folk in their solemn lines,  
Seeming forbidden, did no farther dare,  
Halting in that place with the van's ensigns.<sup>xviii</sup>

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<sup>xvii</sup> 142-144. "Four": the minor Epistles. The "old man" stands for the Revelations of St. John.

<sup>xviii</sup> 154. "The van's ensigns": the candlesticks.

# Canto XXX

*Like the stars of Ursa Minor which guide sailors to port, the Seven Candlesticks, stars of the empyrean, control the movements of those in the procession; and the elders who preceded the car now turn toward it, and one (who represents the Song of Solomon) calls on Beatrice to appear. Angels are seen scattering flowers, and in the midst of them a veiled lady clad in the colours of Faith, Hope, and Charity. It is Beatrice; and Dante experiences the same agitation in her presence, though her face is not revealed, as when he first saw her. Overcome, he turns for comfort to Virgil; but Virgil has now disappeared; and Beatrice addresses Dante by name, severe in look and in speech. Frozen by her reproaches, he is melted by the compassion of the angels to whom Beatrice tells of Dante's life and disloyalty to her.*

NOW when those Seven of the First Heaven stood still<sup>i</sup>

Which rising and declension never knew

Nor veil of other mist than the evil will,

And which apprized each there what he should do,

Even as the starry Seven in lower air<sup>ii</sup>

Guide him to port who steereth by them true,

The people in whom truth doth itself declare,

Who first between it and the Gryphon came,

Turned to the car, as if their peace were there.

And one, as if Heaven prompted that acclaim,

*Veni, sponsa, de Libano* chanted thrice,<sup>iii</sup>

And after him all the others cried the same.

As at the last trump shall the saints arise,

Crying alleluias to be re-attired

In flesh, up from the cavern where each lies,

Upon the heavenly chariot so inspired

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 1-4. "The First Heaven": the Empyrean. — "The evil will": man's sinfulness. — "There": in the procession of the Church.

<sup>ii</sup> 5-6. As the Ursa Minor guides the helmsman.

<sup>iii</sup> 11. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse."

A hundred sprang *ad vocem tanti senis*,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Messengers of eternal life, who quired  
 Singing together *Benedictus qui venis*,<sup>v</sup>  
 While from their hands flowers up and down were thrown, [20]  
 And *Manibus O date lilia plenis*.<sup>vi</sup>  
 I have seen ere now at the beginning dawn  
 The region of the East all coloured rose,  
 (The pure sky else in beauty of peace withdrawn)  
 When shadowed the sun's face uprising shows,  
 So that the mists, attempering his powers,  
 Let the eye linger upon him in repose;  
 So now for me amid a cloud of flowers  
 That from the angels' hands up-floated light  
 And fell, withinside and without, in showers, [30]  
 A lady, olive-crowned o'er veil of white,  
 Clothed in the colour of a living flame,  
 Under a mantle green, stole on my sight.  
 My spirit that a time too long to name  
 Had passed, since, at her presence coming nigh,  
 A trembling thing and broken it became,  
 Now by no recognition of the eye  
 But virtue invisible that went out from her  
 Felt old love seize me in all its mastery.  
 When smote my sight the high virtue that, ere [40]  
 The years of boyhood were behind me laid,  
 Already had pierced me through, as with a spear,  
 With such trust as a child that is afraid  
 Or hurt, runs to his mother with his pains,  
 I turned me to the left, to seek me aid  
 And say to Virgil: "Scarce one drop remains  
 Of blood in me that trembles not: by this  
 I recognise the old flame within my veins."

---

<sup>iv</sup> 17. "At the voice of so great an elder."

<sup>v</sup> 19. "Blessed is he that cometh" (in the name of the Lord).

<sup>vi</sup> 21. "Oh, give lilies with full hands!"



But Virgil had from us his company's  
 Sweet solace taken, Virgil, father kind, [50]  
 Virgil, who for my soul's weal made me his.  
 Nor all that our first mother had resigned<sup>vii</sup>  
 Availed to keep my cheeks, washed with the dew,  
 From tears that once more stained them, welling blind.  
 "Dante, that Virgil leaves thee, and from thy view  
 Is vanished, O not yet weep; weep not yet,  
 For thou must weep, another stab to rue."  
 Like the admiral who on poop or prow is set,  
 To eye his men, in the other ships dispersed,  
 And comes, each heart to embolden and abet, [60]  
 So on the left side of the car, when first  
 I turned, hearing my own name in my ear  
 (Which of necessity is here rehearsed)  
 I found the gaze of her I had seen appear  
 Erewhile, veiled, in the angelic festival,  
 Toward me, this side the stream, directed clear;  
 Howbeit the veil she had from her head let fall,  
 With grey leaf of Minerva chapleted,  
 Disclosing her, did not disclose her all.  
 Still severe, standing in her queenlihead, [70]  
 She spoke on, as one speaks whose purpose is  
 To keep the hottest word awhile unsaid.  
 "Look on me well: I am, I am Beatrice.  
 How, then, didst thou deign to ascend the Mount?  
 Knewest thou not that, here, man is in bliss?"  
 I dropt mine eyes down to the lucent fount,  
 But seeing myself there, drew them back in haste  
 To the grass, heavy upon my shame's account.  
 As to a child a mother looks stern-faced,  
 So to me seemed she: pity austere in thought [80]  
 Hath in its savour a so bitter taste.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 52. *Not all Eden.*

She ceased then, and from every angel throat  
 Straightway *In te, Domine, speravi* rose<sup>viii</sup>  
 But beyond *pedes meos* they passed not.  
 As on the chine of Italy the snows<sup>ix</sup>  
 Lodged in the living rafters harden oft  
 To freezing, when the North-East on them blows,  
 Then, inly melted, trickle from aloft,  
 If from the shadeless countries a breath stirs,<sup>x</sup>  
 Like in the flame a candle melting soft, [90]  
 So was I, without sighs and without tears,  
 In presence of their singing who accord  
 Their notes to music of the eternal spheres;  
 But when I was aware of the sweet chord  
 Of their compassion, more than if they spoke  
 Saying, "Lady, why this shame upon him poured?"  
 The ice that round my heart had hardened woke  
 Warm into breath and water, and from my breast  
 In anguish, through mouth and through eyes, outbroke.  
 She, standing ever in her still'd arrest [100]  
 Upon the car's same side, to the array  
 Of those compassionate beings these words address:  
 "Ye so keep watch in the everlasting day  
 That neither night stealeth from you, nor sleep,  
 One step that the world takes upon its way;  
 Therefore my answer shall the more care keep  
 That he, there, understand me amid those tears,  
 So that transgression equal sorrow reap.  
 Not only by operation of great spheres<sup>xi</sup>  
 Which to some certain end each seed uptrain [110]  
 According as the starry voice it hears,,

---

<sup>viii</sup> 83-84. Ps. 31: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust." Verse 8 ends with: "Thou hast set my feet in a large room."

<sup>ix</sup> 85. "The chine of Italy" is the Apennine range.

<sup>x</sup> 89. "The shadeless countries": the African desert.

<sup>xi</sup> 109-112. The great spheres" are the revolving heavens, which determine the disposition of every human being. God also bestows upon every individual a special degree of grace.

But bounty of heavenly graces, which for rain  
 Have exhalations born in place so high  
 That our eyes may not near to them attain,  
 This man was such in natural potency,  
 In his new life, that all the ingrained good<sup>xii</sup>  
 Looked in him to have fruited wondrously.  
 But so much groweth the more rank and rude  
 The soil with bad seed and unhusbanded,  
 The more it hath from earth of hardihood. [120]  
 His spirit some time my countenance comforted  
 With look of my young eyes for its support,  
 Drawing him, the right path with me to tread.  
 Soon as the threshold I had passed, athwart  
 The second period, and life changed its home,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Me he forsook, with others to consort.  
 When from the flesh to spirit I had clomb  
 And beauty and virtue greater in me grew,  
 Less dear to him, more strange did I become;  
 And with perverted steps on ways untrue [130]  
 He sought false images of good, that ne'er  
 Perform entire the promise that was due.  
 Nor helped me the inspiration won by prayer  
 Whereby through dream or other hidden accost  
 I called him back; so little had he care.  
 So low he sank, all means must I exhaust,  
 Till naught for his salvation profited  
 Save to be shown the people that are lost.  
 For this I broached the gateway of the dead,  
 For this with tears was my entreaty brought [140]  
 To him, by whom his feet were hither led.  
 The ordinance of high God were set at naught  
 If Lethe were passed over into peace,  
 And such viand enjoyed, without some scot

---

<sup>xii</sup> 116. "New life": young life.

<sup>xiii</sup> 125. "The second period": begins at 25. Her "life changed" the temporal home for the eternal.

Of penitence that may the tears release.”

# Canto XXXI

*Dante, accused by Beatrice, confesses his sin and is filled with penitence. Overwhelmed by the severity of Beatrice's words, and by his own remorse, he falls senseless. When he recovers from his faint, he finds that Matilda is drawing him across Lethe stream, in which she immerses him. The four dancers (the four cardinal virtues) lead him up to the Gryphon, where Beatrice is standing; in her eyes the Gryphon is mirrored, now in one form now in the other. The other three (the Theological Virtues) then come forward, dancing, and implore Beatrice to smile upon her faithful servant.*

“O THOU who art yon-side the sacred stream,”  
Turning her speech to point at me the blade  
Which even the edge had made so sharp to seem,  
She spoke again, continuing undelayed.  
“Say, say if this be true; for, thus accused,  
Confession must thereto by thee be made”  
Whereat my faculties were so confused  
That the voice stirred and faltered and was dead  
Ere it came free of the organs that it used.  
Short time she endured; “What think’st thou?” then she said. [10]  
“Answer, for in thee the sad memories  
By the water are not yet discomfited.”<sup>i</sup>  
Fear and confusion’s mingled miseries  
Constrained out of my mouth a “Yes” so low  
That to understand it there was need of eyes.  
As the arbalast that snaps both string and bow,  
When to a too great tautness it is forced,  
And shooting hits the mark with feebler blow,  
So under this so heavy charge I burst,  
Out of me letting gush the sighs and tears; [20]  
And in its vent my voice failed as from thirst.

---

<sup>i</sup> 12. “The water’: of Lethe.

Wherefore she questioned: "Within those desires  
 I stirred in thee, to make thee love the Good  
 Beyond which nought is, whereto man aspires,  
 What moats or what strong chains athwart thy road  
 Didst thou encounter, that of hope to pass  
 Onward, thou needs must strip thee as of a load?  
 And what solace or profit in the face  
 Of the others was displayed unto thine eye  
 That thou before them up and down must pace?" [30]

After the drawing of a bitter sigh  
 Scarce had I voice an answer to essay,  
 And lips with difficulty shaped reply.  
 Weeping I said: "Things of the passing day,  
 Soon as your face no longer on me shone,  
 With their false pleasure turned my steps away."  
 And she: "If thou wert silent, nor didst own  
 What thou avowest, not less were record  
 Of thy fault made: by such a judge 'tis known.  
 But when the sinner's own mouth has outpoured [40]  
 The accusation, in our court the wheel<sup>ii</sup>  
 Against the edge is turned back on the sword.  
 Howbeit, that now the shame thou carry still  
 For thine error, and at the Siren's plea  
 Another time thou be of stronger will,  
 Lay aside the seed of weeping; hark to me.  
 Hear how my buried body should have spurred  
 And on the opposite path have furthered thee.  
 Nature or art never to thee assured  
 Such pleasure as the fair limbs that did house [50]  
 My spirit, and now are scattered and interred.  
 And if the highest pleasure failed thee thus  
 By my death, at such time what mortal thing  
 Ought to have drawn thee toward it amorous?

---

<sup>ii</sup> 41-42. *The sword of justice is blunted, i.e., tempered with mercy.*

Truly oughtest thou at the first arrow's sting  
 Of those lures, to rise after me on high,  
 Who was no more made in such fashioning.  
 Nay, nor should girl or other vanity<sup>iii</sup>  
 Of such brief usage have thy wings es sea  
 To wait for other coming shafts to fly. [60]  
 The young bird waiteth two or three indeed;  
 But in the eyes of the full-fledged in vain  
 The net is spread and the arrows vainly speed."  
 As boys that dumb with shamefastness remain,  
 Eyes to ground, listening to their faults rehearsed,  
 Knowing themselves in penitence and pain,  
 So stood I; and she said: "From what thou hear'st  
 If thou art grieving, lift thy beard and look,<sup>iv</sup>  
 And thou shalt by a greater grief be pierced."  
 With less resistance is a stubborn oak [70]  
 Torn up by wind (whether 'twas ours that blew  
 Or wind that from Iarbas' land awoke)<sup>v</sup>  
 Than at her bidding I my chin up-drew;  
 And when by "beard" she asked me for my face,  
 The venom in the meaning well I knew.<sup>vi</sup>  
 And when to expose my features I could brace  
 My spirit, I saw those primal Essences<sup>vii</sup>  
 Reposing from their strewings in their place.  
 And mine eyes, hardly as yet assured of these,  
 Were 'ware of Beatrice, turned toward that beast<sup>viii</sup> [80]  
 Which in two natures one sole person is.  
 Under her veil beyond the stream I wist  
 That she surpassed her ancient self yet more

---

<sup>iii</sup> 58. Is the "girl" to be taken literally, or does she symbolise some intellectual pursuit inconsistent with the spiritual ideal? The question remains open.

<sup>iv</sup> 68. "Beard": chin.

<sup>v</sup> 72. "Iarba" was king of Libya.

<sup>vi</sup> 75. The implication that the beard is inconsistent with Dante's youthful vagaries.

<sup>vii</sup> 77. "Primal Essences": the angels.

<sup>viii</sup> 80. "That beast": the Gryphon.

Than when amongst us she surpassed the rest.  
 The nettle of penitence pricked me now so sore  
 That, of all things, that which did most pervert  
 To love of it, I had most hatred for.  
 The recognition gnawed so at my heart  
 That I fell conquered, and what then of me  
 Became, she knows who had devised the smart. [90]  
 Then when my heart restored the faculty  
 Of sense, the lady I had found alone<sup>ix</sup>  
 I saw above me, and "Hold," she said, "hold me."  
 To the neck into the stream she had led me on  
 And, drawing me behind her, went as light  
 Over the water as a shuttle thrown.  
 When I was near the bank of blessed sight  
 Asperges me my ears so sweetly graced<sup>x</sup>  
 I cannot recollect it, far less write.  
 The fair lady opened her arms, embraced [100]  
 My head, and plunged me underneath the flow,  
 Where swallowing I must needs the water taste,  
 Then raised me and presented me, bathed so,  
 Within the dancing of the beauteous Four;<sup>xi</sup>  
 And each an arm about me came to throw.  
 "Here we are nymphs, in the sky stars: before  
 Beatrice descended to the world, we were  
 Ordained to be her handmaids evermore.  
 We'll lead thee to her eyes; but the Three there,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Whose gaze is deeper, in the blissful light [110]  
 That is within, shall make thine own more clear."  
 Thus singing they began, and me then right  
 Up to the Gryphon's breast with them they led  
 Where Beatrice was standing opposite.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 92. "The lady": Matilda.

<sup>x</sup> 98. "Purge me": Ps. 52:7.

<sup>xi</sup> 104. "The beauteous Four": the cardinal virtues.

<sup>xii</sup> 109. "The Three": the theological virtues.



"See that thou spare not of thy gaze," they said.  
 "We have set thee afore the emeralds to stand<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Wherefrom for thee Love once his armoury fed."  
 Thousand desires, hotter than flame, constrained  
 The gaze of mine eyes to the shining eyes  
 Which on the Gryphon only fixed remained. [120]  
 As in the glass the sun, not otherwise  
 The two-fold creature had its mirroring  
 Within them, now in one, now the other guise.<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Think, Reader, if I marvelled at this thing,  
 When I beheld it unchanged as at first  
 Itself, and in its image altering.  
 While in a deep astonishment immersed  
 My happy soul was tasting of that food  
 Which, itself sating, of itself makes thirst,  
 Showing themselves as if of loftiest blood [130]  
 In their demeanour, the other three came then  
 Dancing to the angelic air they trod.  
 "Turn, Beatrice, turn thy sainted eyes again,"  
 So were they singing, "to thy servant leal  
 Who to see thee so many steps hath ta'en.  
 Of thy grace do us this grace, to unveil  
 To him thy mouth, so that he may discern  
 The second beauty which thou dost conceal."<sup>xv</sup>  
 O splendour of the living light eterne,  
 Who is there that beneath Parnassus' shade [140]  
 Has grown pale or has drunk of that cistern  
 That would not seem to have his mind o'er-weighed  
 Striving to paint thee as thou appeared'st where  
 To figure thee, heaven's harmonies are made,  
 When thou didst unveil to the open air?

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 116. "The emeralds": the eyes of Beatrice.

<sup>xiv</sup> 123. Now with its human, now with its divine, bearing—the two component parts of the nature of Christ.

<sup>xv</sup> 138. "The second beauty" is the mouth, the first beauty being the eyes.



## Canto XXXII

*Dazzled to blindness for a while by the eyes of Beatrice, Dante becomes aware that the procession has wheeled round and is returning to face the sun. The Gryphon moves the car, and Dante follows it, with Matilda and Statius, through the wood. They come to a tree, despoiled of flowers and leaves; and the Gryphon fastens the car to the trunk of it; whereon it puts forth all its foliage again. Dante falls into a sleep and waking sees Beatrice guarding the car, the Gryphon have ascended to heaven, while the seven Virtues make a ring round her. An eagle swoops down on the tree, stripping it of its flowers and lies once more. Then a vixen leaps into the car, but is put to flight by Beatrice. The eagle descends again, enters the car and leaves it clothed with his plumage. Between the wheels the earth gapes and a dragon comes forth and wrenches off part of the car. The remnant of the car is again covered in an instant by the plumes; from it seven heads emerge; and seated on the car appear a harlot and a giant, by whom it is dragged away.*

*These actions and transformations typify crises and vicissitudes in the history of the Church. The harlot represents the Papacy under Boniface VIII and Clement V, the giant the French monarchy.*

SO FASTENED were mine eyes, and so intent  
The ten years' thirst of longing to abate,  
That the other senses were annulled and spent,  
And they on this side and on that side set  
Walls of unheeding (so to itself allured  
The holy smile, drawing the ancient net)—  
When needs must they be against my will conjured  
Unto my left hand by those Goddesses,<sup>i</sup>  
Because from them a "Too fixt!" I had heard;  
And the condition which impoverishes  
The eyes but lately smitten by the sun  
Caused for a space the sight of mine to cease.

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 8. "Those Goddesses": the three Christian Virtues.

But when to less things by comparison  
 My sight was re-established, less I mean  
 Than the great splendour I was forced to shun,  
 I saw the glorious army, that had been  
 Wheeled to the right, returning to confront  
 The seven flames in their place and the sun's sheen.  
 As, for retreat, with shields to bear the brunt,  
 A squadron wheels and turns with the ensign, ere' [20]  
 It can accomplish the full change of front,  
 That soldiery of the heavenly kingdom there,  
 Which made the van, all passed us by before  
 The turning of the pole had turned the car.  
 While to the wheels the ladies came once more  
 The Gryphon moved the blessed charge onward,  
 Yet not so that one feather shook therefor.  
 The fair lady who drew me to the ford,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Statius, and I, were following the wheel  
 That with a smaller arc its orbit scored.<sup>iii</sup> [30]  
 As thus we thrird the high wood, where none dwell  
 Through her who trusted to the snake's deceit,  
 Music of angels timed our paces well.  
 Perhaps in three flights takes a space as great  
 A shaft loosed from the string as we had gone,  
 When Beatrice alighted on her feet.  
 I heard all murmur "Adam"; and anon  
 They made a circle about a tree, made bare<sup>iv</sup>  
 Of flower and leaf on branches every one.  
 Its summit, which expands the more in air [40]  
 The loftier it grows, would for its height  
 Make the Indians in their woods admiring stare.  
 "Blest art thou, Gryphon, that with beak and bite<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>ii</sup> 28. "The fair lady": Matilda.

<sup>iii</sup> 30. The right wheel, inasmuch as the chariot is turning to the right.

<sup>iv</sup> 38. "A tree": the Tree of Law.

<sup>v</sup> 43-45. Christ himself is careful not to trespass on the field of temporal power.

Thou tearest naught from this sweet-tasting wood  
 Seeing how ill the belly griped from it."  
 Thus as about the stalwart tree they stood  
 Cried the others, and the twy-formed beast cried too;  
 "So is preserved the seed of all things good."  
 And turning round upon the pole he drew,  
 He halted it beneath the widowed stem, [50]  
 And that which came from it left bound thereto.  
 As plants on earth when downward falls on them<sup>vi</sup>  
 The great light, mingled with the radiance  
 Which comes behind the heavenly Carp to beam,  
 Swell inly, and each renews its own substance  
 And its own colour ere the Sun anew  
 His steeds beneath another star advance,  
 So the reviving tree into a hue  
 Less than of rose, more than of violet,  
 Through its so desolated branches grew. [60]  
 I understood it not, nor may repeat  
 The hymn, which then that people chanted, here,  
 Nor did my sense outlast the whole of it.  
 If I could picture how the eyes severe  
 Were lulled to sleep, hearing of Syrinx tell,<sup>vii</sup>  
 The eyes whose too long vigil cost so dear,  
 I would portray how into sleep I fell,  
 As one whose painting with his model vies:  
 But who paints drowsing let him paint it well.  
 Wherefore I pass to where I opened eyes. [70]  
 I say, a splendour rent sleep's veil away,  
 And summons of a voice: "What dost thou? Rise!"  
 As, to behold some flower of the apple-spray<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> 52. "When downward falls . . .": in the spring.

<sup>vii</sup> 65. The hundred eyes of Argus were put to sleep by Mercury's song of the nymph Syrinx.

<sup>viii</sup> 73-78. "Some flower of the apple-spray": a foretaste of Christ's glory. The scene has been transformed. A change as wonderful as when Peter, John, and James, who had witnessed the Transfiguration of Christ, recovered from their fright (Matt. 17:1-8).

Which makes the angels for its fruit athirst  
 And makes in heaven perpetual marriage-day,  
 Peter and John and James were led, and first  
 Quite overpowered, came to themselves again  
 At that word which a greater sleep dispersed,  
 And saw their company diminished then  
 By Moses and Elias also, and eyed [80]  
 Their master's raiment altered in its grain,  
 So came I to myself; and I espied  
 That pitying one bent o'er me, who my foot  
 Had led along the stream and been my guide.  
 And I said: "Where is Beatrice?" all in doubt.  
 Whereon she answered me: "Behold her there  
 Sitting under the new leaf on its root.  
 Behold the company encircling her!  
 The rest after the Gryphon mount on high  
 With a profounder song and sweeter air." [90]  
 And if her words were further poured forth, I  
 Know not, since she, who from all other sound  
 Had shut me out, was now before mine eye.  
 Alone she sat upon the very ground,  
 Left there, the chariot to watch and ward  
 Which by the twy-formed beast I had seen bound.  
 The seven nymphs round her made for her a guard  
 With those lights in their hands which, burning free,  
 Neither by North or South wind may be marred.  
 "Here for short time a forester, with me [100]  
 Shalt thou an everlasting citizen  
 Of that Rome, whereof Christ is Roman, be.<sup>ix</sup>  
 Upon the car keep thine eyes fastened then,  
 And what thou seest, when thou returnest, write  
 That it may profit the evil life of men."  
 Thus Beatrice: and I with my whole might

---

<sup>ix</sup> 102. "Of that Rome . . .": the city of God.

Whither she willed, devoted at the feet  
 Of her commands, gave both my mind and sight.  
 Never did fire from clouds that gathering meet,  
 When from the region that is most remote [110]  
 It rains, come down with suddenness as fleet  
 As I saw swoop the bird of Jove; he shot<sup>x</sup>  
 Down through the tree; the bark of it he rent,  
 And the flowers too and the fresh foliage smote.  
 And all his force upon the car he spent,  
 Which staggered like a ship by tempest chased  
 And now to starboard now to larboard sent.  
 Then I beheld into the hollow haste  
 Of the triumphal wain a vixen, lean<sup>xi</sup>  
 As if of no good food she knew the taste. [120]  
 But with upbraiding for her sins unclean  
 My lady turned her to such flight thereon  
 As bones may compass with no flesh between.  
 And then from there, whence down he first had flown,  
 The eagle I saw descend into that ark<sup>xii</sup>  
 And leave it plumed with feathers of his own.  
 And such as comes from a heart grieving dark  
 A voice issued from heaven, and thus it spoke:  
 "How ill thou art laden, O my little barque!"  
 Then it appeared to me that, as the earth broke [130]  
 'Twixt the two wheels, a dragon made his way<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Therefrom and through the car his tail up-stuck.  
 And like a wasp which draws the sting away,  
 Drawing to himself the venom'd tail, he drew  
 Part of the floor forth, and so trailed astray.  
 That which remained, like soil enlivened new

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<sup>x</sup> 112. "The bird of Jove": the eagle (the emblem of the Roman Empire), whose descent represents here the persecution of the Christians.

<sup>xi</sup> 119. The vixen stands for Heresy.

<sup>xii</sup> 125. The return of the eagle symbolises the donation of Constantine.

<sup>xiii</sup> 131-147. Here is recorded a great schism, either the secession of the Greek Church or the Mohammedan movement. The seven heads represent the seven capital vices.

With grass, the feathers (haply offered by  
 Benign intention) once more overgrew,  
 And all was clothed therewith before mine eye,  
 Both one and the other wheel and pole, so soon [140]  
 That the mouth opens longer for a sigh.  
 The holy shrine, this transformation done,  
 Put forth heads pushing through its parts; and o'er  
 The pole were three, and in each corner one.  
 The first had horns as of an ox, the four  
 A single horn that from the forehead rose:  
 Never was seen such prodigy before.  
 Secure as fortress on a mountain shows,  
 Upon it a loose harlot sat enthroned<sup>xiv</sup>  
 With quick glances around under her brows. [150]  
 As if that by none else should she be owned,  
 I saw a towering giant standing by:<sup>xv</sup>  
 Somewhile they kissed together and were fond.  
 But when she turned on me her wanton eye,  
 A scourge on her that savage paramour  
 From head to the foot-soles began to ply.  
 Then full of jealousy and in anger sore  
 He loosed the monster and dragged it through the wood  
 So far that the trees only from the whore  
 And the new beast a shield before me stood. [160]

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<sup>xiv</sup> 149. "A loose harlot": see the *Argument*.

<sup>xv</sup> 152. "A giant": see the *Argument*.



# Canto XXXIII

*The Seven Virtues lament the triumph of evil forces, but Beatrice tells them that though she departs, it is only for a time. Leaving the tree with the Seven, and followed by Dante, Statius, and Matilda, she speaks graciously to Dante and prophesies the future when one, represented by the Roman numerals DUX, shall rescue Italy from her present corruptions: this is conjectured to be the emperor Henry VII. But she sees that Dante does not understand her enigmatic discourse, since his mind has been dulled as if hardened by the petrifying waters of the Elsa. He asks why she speaks so darkly, and she replies that it was to show him how inadequate is the philosophy he has followed: henceforth she will speak more clearly. It is now noon. Beatrice bids Matilda lead Dante to the fountain from which both Lethe and Eunoë flow. He drinks of Eunoë and is forthwith ready to mount on his further journey to Paradise.*

*DEUS venerunt gentes; thus, now three,<sup>i</sup>  
Now four, with voice and weeping, alternate  
Began those ladies a sweet psalmody;  
And Beatrice, sighing and compassionate  
Listened with look so altered, at the cross  
Scarce was the change on Mary's face more great.  
But when those nymphs, for her to interpose,  
Yielded her place, up to her full height she,  
In colour like a flame, on her feet rose.*

*"Modicum, et non videbitis me"<sup>ii</sup>*

[10]

*Et iterum, dear sisters mine," she said,*

*"Modicum, et vos videbitis me."*

*Then all the seven before her she arrayed,  
And merely by her nod before her brought*

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. Ps. 79:1: "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance."

<sup>ii</sup> 10-12. John 16:16: "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me."

Me and the lady and the sage who stayed.<sup>iii</sup>  
 Thus she went on, and I believe that not  
 Ten steps upon the ground by her were paced  
 When with her eyes upon mine eyes she smote.  
 And with a tranquil countenance: "Make more haste"  
 She adjured me, "so that if I speak with thee [20]  
 Thou wilt for hearkening be the better placed."  
 Soon as I was, where duty bade me be,  
 With her, she said: "Brother, why ventureth  
 Thy tongue not, now thou art near, to question me?"  
 As with those who from reverence bate their breath  
 Before their betters, so that, being unstrung,  
 They bring not the voice living to the teeth,  
 So it happed to me; and with a halting tongue  
 I said to her: "My need, Madonna, you  
 Well know, and what things to its good belong." [30]  
 And she to me: "I would that thou eschew  
 Both fear and shame and rid thee of their cloak,  
 So that thou speak no more as dreamers do.  
 Know that the vessel which the serpent broke<sup>iv</sup>  
 Was and is not; but let the guilty weigh<sup>v</sup>  
 This well: God fears no sops to avert his stroke.  
 Not for all time without an heir shall stay  
 The eagle who left the plumage on the car,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Whence it became a monster, and then a prey.  
 For surely I see, what now I tell thee, a star [40]  
 That, safe from barrier and impediment,  
 Shall bring us times, already now not far,  
 When a Five Hundred Ten and Five forth sent<sup>vii</sup>  
 By God shall slay the thief and also him,

---

<sup>iii</sup> 15. "The lady": Matilda. "The sage": Statius.

<sup>iv</sup> 34. The "vessel" is the chariot.

<sup>v</sup> 35. "The guilty": Clement and Philip shall both be stricken down.

<sup>vi</sup> 38. "The eagle": the Empire; Dante considered Frederick I the last Roman Emperor.

<sup>vii</sup> 43. The number DXV gives DUX, the Latin word for "leader." An emperor, ordained by God, is soon to correct the Papacy and overthrow the power of France.

That giant, who with her in whoredom went.  
 Perhaps my prophecy, obscure in theme  
 As Sphinx or Themis, may persuade thee less  
 Since in like mode it maketh thy mind dim;  
 But soon the events shall be the Naiades<sup>viii</sup>  
 That, without ruin of the flocks or scaith [50]  
 To corn, shall solve this riddle's knottedness.  
 Note thou: as these words go forth on my breath,  
 Their purport do thou unto them declare  
 Who live that life which is a race to death.  
 And when thou writest these things, have a care  
 Not to conceal how thou hast seen the boughs  
 Which here have twice been ravaged and made bare.  
 Whoso despoils that tree or rends it, does  
 Offence to God, since he in act hath curst  
 What God created holy for His use. [60]  
 For biting of it did in pain and thirst  
 Five thousand years and more the first soul yearn<sup>ix</sup>  
 For Him who in himself the bite amerced.  
 Thy wit sleeps if it faileth to discern  
 That tree for a special cause to be so high  
 And at the top to growth inverted turn.  
 If the vain thoughts thy mind is crusted by  
 Had not been water of Elsa and not made<sup>x</sup>  
 Their pleasure a Pyramus to the mulberry,<sup>xi</sup>  
 By heed to so great circumstances paid [70]  
 Thou wouldst have found thy moral sense admit  
 God's justice in the tree that he forbade.  
 But since I see dulled into stone thy wit  
 And, stony, into stain of colour wrought

---

<sup>viii</sup> 49. Dante erroneously believed that the "Naiades," or water-nymphs, were the successful guessers of the Sphinx's riddle.

<sup>ix</sup> 62-63. "The first soul": Adam. "For Him": Christ.

<sup>x</sup> 68. "Water of Elsa": see the Argument.

<sup>xi</sup> 69. As the blood of Pyramus stained the mulberry.

Such that the light of my word dazzles it,  
 I also will that, if not written, thy thought  
 Bear it within thee, for the cause wherefore  
 The staff with palm encircled home is brought."<sup>xii</sup>  
 And I: "As wax is under the seal's power,  
 Keeping unchanged the figure it imprest, [80]  
 My brain is stamped by you for evermore.  
 But why doth your word, longed-for without rest,  
 Soar now so far beyond my vision's reach,  
 That the more keen, the vainer is its quest?"  
 "That thou may'st see," she said, "what the schools teach  
 Which thou hast followed, and may'st come to know  
 How vain its power to keep pace with my speech,  
 And see your way from the divine way so  
 Far separate as is that heaven remote  
 Which speeds the highest, from the earth below." [90]  
 Wherefore I answered: "I remember not  
 That I estranged myself ever from you,  
 Nor prick of conscience therefrom have I got."  
 "And if in this thy memory tells not true,"  
 Smiling she answered, "art thou not acquaint  
 How thou this day of Lethe hast drunken new?  
 And if for fire the smoke is argument,  
 Clearly doth this forgetfulness a flaw  
 Prove in thy will, on other things intent.  
 But naked verily shall be my saw [100]  
 Henceforth, so far as shall befit thy case,  
 Uncovering it unto thy vision raw."  
 Both more resplendent and with slower pace  
 The sun held the meridian circle above  
 Which varieth still with the observer's place,  
 When halted (as he halts and doth not move  
 Who goes with folk to escort them and defend,

---

<sup>xii</sup> 78. "The staff" which the pilgrims bring back from the Holy Land.

If he finds aught new or the trace thereof)  
 The seven ladies, at a shadow's end  
 Pale as beneath black branches and green growth [110]  
 The mountains over their cold brooks extend.  
 Before them Tigris and Euphrates both  
 I seemed to see from one spring welling twinned  
 And parting as friends part, lingering and loth.  
 "O light! O glory of all human kind,  
 What are these waters that from one source fleet  
 And self from self into the distance wind?"  
 At such a prayer was said to me: "Entreat  
 Matilda that she tell thee"; and here replied,  
 As one who doth himself from blame acquit, [120]  
 The fair lady: "This and things beside  
 Have been told him by me; and I can swear  
 That these from him no Lethe waters hide."  
 And Beatrice: "Perhaps a greater care  
 That often putteth memory to rout  
 Hath made his mind dim-eyed and unaware.  
 But behold Eunoë, which there floweth out:<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Lead him to it, and, as thou art wont to use,  
 Revive his virtue faint to death with doubt."  
 As noble soul that maketh no excuse [130]  
 But makes another's will her will, when she  
 The outward sign of it straightway construes,  
 So the fair lady, having taken me,  
 Set forth and spoke to Statius in his place:  
 "Come with him," gracious as a queen may be.  
 If, Reader, for the writing were more space,  
 That sweet fount, whence I ne'er could drink my fill,  
 Would I yet sing, though in imperfect praise.  
 But seeing that for this second canticle  
 The paper planned is full to the last page, [140]

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 127. *Dante's memory of the good must be revived by Eunoë.*

The bridle of art must needs constrain my will.  
Back from that wave's most holy privilege  
I turned me, re-made, as the plant repairs  
Itself, renewed with its new foliage,  
Pure and disposed to mount up to the stars.

**PARADISO**

# Canto I

*The poet invokes the aid of Apollo in attempting the hardest part of his theme, the description of Paradise.*

*On earth, in Italy, it is evening; but at the summit of the Mount of Purgatory it is near noon about the time of the vernal equinox; the sun being in Aries, a propitious conjunction. Dante and Beatrice are suddenly transported to the sphere of fire, between the earth and the moon. Dante is so "transhumanised" that he is now able to hear the music of the spheres; but at first he is bewildered, not understanding, till Beatrice explains that he has left the earth behind. He is still puzzled to know how it is that he has risen, more swiftly than air or fire, against the laws of gravitation. Beatrice tells him that the instinct implanted in the soul is to rise, as fire rises, towards heaven; this belongs to the order of the universe, in which each part has its own function. Dante has been liberated from the distractions which, through man's possession of free will, sometimes cause the soul to be diverted from its aim.*

THE GLORY of Him who moveth all that is  
Pervades the universe, and glows more bright  
In the one region, and in another less.  
In that heaven which partakes most of His light  
I have been, and have beheld such things as who  
Comes down thence has no wit nor power to write;  
Such depth our understanding deepens to  
When it draws near unto its longing's home  
That memory cannot backward with it go.  
Nevertheless what of the blest kingdom  
Could in my memory, for its treasure, stay  
Shall now the matter of my song become.  
For the last labour, good Apollo, I pray,  
Make me so apt a vessel of thy power  
As is required for gift of thy loved bay.<sup>i</sup>  
One of Parnassus' peaks hath heretofore

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 15. "Loved bay": Daphne, loved and pursued by Apollo, was changed to a laurel.



Sufficed me; both now shall I need forthwith  
 For entering on the last arena-floor.  
 Enter into my bosom, and in-breathe  
 Such force as filled thee to out-sing the strain [20]  
 Of Marsyas when thou didst his limbs unsheathe.<sup>ii</sup>  
 O divine power, if thou so far sustain,  
 That I may show the image visibly  
 Of the holy realm imprinted on my brain,  
 Thou'lt see me come to thy beloved tree<sup>iii</sup>  
 And there the leaves upon my temples fit  
 Which I shall earn both through the theme and thee.  
 So few times, Father, is there plucked of it  
 For Caesar or for poet triumphing  
 (Fault and reproach of human will and wit), [30]  
 That in the joyous Delphic god must spring<sup>iv</sup>  
 A joy new-born, when the Peneian frond  
 With longing for itself doth any sting.  
 A small spark kindles a great flame beyond:  
 Haply after me with better voice than mine  
 Such prayer shall plead, that Cirrha may respond.<sup>v</sup>  
 The world's lamp rises upon men to shine<sup>vi</sup>  
 By divers gates, but from that gate which makes  
 Four circles with three crosses to conjoin,  
 With happier star joined, happier course it takes, [40]  
 And more to its own example can persuade,  
 Moulding and stamping it, the mundane wax.  
 Almost this gate had morning yonder made  
 And evening here; and there that hemisphere<sup>vii</sup>  
 Was all white, and the other part in shade,

---

<sup>ii</sup> 21. "Marsyas": a satyr, who was defeated and then flayed by Apollo.

<sup>iii</sup> 25. "Thy beloved tree": the laurel.

<sup>iv</sup> 31-32. "The joyous Delphic god": Apollo. "The Peneian frond": the laurel.

<sup>v</sup> 36. "Cirrha" stands for Delphi, Apollo's abode.

<sup>vi</sup> 37-44. In these lines Dante describes the season. The sun, being almost in the sign of Aries, has the most benign influence on the earth.

<sup>vii</sup> 44-45. Here Dante tells the hour: it was noon in Eden, midnight in Jerusalem.

When, turned on her left side, I was aware  
 Of Beatrice, fixing on the sun her eyes:  
 Never on it so fixed was eagle's stare.  
 And as a second ray will always rise  
 Where the first struck, and backward seek ascent, [50]  
 Like pilgrim hastening when he homeward hies,  
 So into my imagination went  
 Through the eyes her gesture; and my own complied,  
 And on the sun, past wont, my eyes were bent.  
 Much is permitted there which is denied  
 Here to our faculties, thanks to the place<sup>viii</sup>  
 Made for mankind to own, and there abide.  
 Not long I endured him, yet not so brief space  
 But that I saw what sparkles round him shone  
 Like molten ore fresh from the fierce furnace; [60]  
 And, on a sudden, day seemed added on  
 To day, as if He, who such things can do,  
 Had glorified heaven with a second sun.  
 Beatrice was standing and held full in view  
 The eternal wheels, and I fixed on her keen<sup>ix</sup>  
 My eyes, that from above their gaze withdrew.  
 And at her aspect I became within  
 As Glaucus after the herb's tasting, whence<sup>x</sup>  
 To the other sea-gods he was made akin.  
 The passing beyond bounds of human sense [70]  
 Words cannot tell; let then the example sate  
 Him for whom grace reserves the experience.  
 If I was only what thou didst create<sup>xi</sup>  
 Last in me, O Love whose rule the heavens attest,  
 Thou know'st, who with thy light didst lift my state.  
 When that the wheel which thou eternisest

---

<sup>viii</sup> 56. "Thanks to the place": Eden.

<sup>ix</sup> 65. "The eternal wheels": the revolving heavens.

<sup>x</sup> 68. The fisherman Glaucus, tasting of a certain herb, became a sea-god.

<sup>xi</sup> 73. Dante is not sure whether he took his body with him to Heaven, or left it behind.

In longing, held me with the harmony<sup>xii</sup>  
 Which thou attunest and distinguishest,  
 So much of heaven was fired, it seemed to me,  
 With the sun's blaze that never river or rain [80]  
 Widened the waters to so great a sea.  
 The new sound and the great light made me fain  
 With craving keener than had ever been  
 Before in me, their cause to ascertain.  
 She then, who saw me as I myself within,  
 My mind's disturbance eager to remit,  
 Opened her lips before I could begin,  
 And spoke: "Thou makest thyself dense of wit  
 With false fancy, so that thou dost not see  
 What thou would'st see, wert thou but rid of it. [90]  
 Thou'rt not on earth, as thou supposest thee:  
 But lightning from its own place rushing out  
 Ne'er sped as thou, who to thy home dost flee."<sup>xiii</sup>  
 If I was stript of my first teasing doubt  
 By the brief smiling little words, yet freed  
 I was not, but enmeshed in a new thought.  
 And I replied: "I am released indeed  
 From much amazement; yet am still amazed  
 That those light bodies I transcend in speed."  
 She, sighing in pity, gave me as she gazed [100]  
 The look that by a mother is bestowed  
 Upon her child in its delirium crazed,  
 And said: "All things, whatever their abode,  
 Have order among themselves; this Form it is  
 That makes the universe like unto God.  
 Here the high beings see the imprint of His  
 Eternal power, which is the goal divine  
 Whereto the rule aforesaid testifies.

---

<sup>xii</sup> 77. *The swift motion of the Primum Mobile, the outermost sphere of the material universe, is due to the eagerness of every one of its parts to come into contact with every part of God's own Heaven, the Empyrean.*

<sup>xiii</sup> 93. *"Thy home": the Empyrean.*

In the order I speak of, all natures incline  
 Either more near or less near to their source<sup>xiv</sup> [110]  
 According as their diverse lots assign.  
 To diverse harbours thus they move perforce  
 O'er the great ocean of being, and each one  
 With instinct given it to maintain its course.  
 This bears the fiery element to the moon;  
 This makes the heart of mortal things to move;  
 This knits the earth together into one.  
 Not only creatures that are empty of  
 Intelligence this bow shoots towards the goal,  
 But those that have both intellect and love. [120]  
 The Providence, that rules this wondrous whole,  
 With its own light makes the heaven still to stay<sup>xv</sup>  
 Wherein whirls that which doth the swiftest roll.  
 And thither now upon the appointed way  
 We are borne on by virtue of that cord still  
 Which means a joyful mark, shoot what it may.  
 True it is that as the form oftentimes ill  
 Accordeth with the intention of the art,  
 The matter being slow to serve the will,  
 So aside sometimes may the creature start; [130]  
 For it has power, though on this course impelled,<sup>xvi</sup>  
 To swerve in purpose toward some other part  
 (And so the fire from cloud may be beheld  
 To fall), if the first impulse of its flight  
 To earth be wrested, by false pleasure held.  
 Thou should'st not marvel, if I esteem aright,  
 More at thy rising than at streams we see  
 Fall to the base down from a mountain's height;  
 Marvel it were if thou, from hindrance free,

---

<sup>xiv</sup> 110. "Their source": God.

<sup>xv</sup> 122-125. "The heaven": the Empyrean, within which the swift Primum Mobile revolves. "That cord": the bowstring of instinct.

<sup>xvi</sup> 131. "For it has power": the free will.

Had'st sat below, resolved there to remain, [140]  
As stillness in live flame on earth would be."  
Thereon toward heaven she turned her gaze again.

## Canto II

*From the sphere of fire Dante and Beatrice rise to the Heaven of the Moon with unimaginable speed, like the flight of a bolt from a crossbow. (The movements are described in inverted order to suggest its instantaneous swiftness.) They enter the pearl-like substance of the moon; and Dante wonders how, still in the body, he can penetrate into it—a mystery like the union of divine and human nature in Christ. He now asks Beatrice the cause of the spots in the moon, first giving the explanation he had hitherto maintained, that they are due to density and rarity. Beatrice refutes his error and then gives the true account. Each sphere is quickened and governed by the Intelligence presiding over it; and the Intelligence of the eighth heaven distributes its influence among the fixed stars. But this influence is modified by the character of the bodies it enters; hence the variation in degree of brilliance among the stars; hence also the brightness and dimness in the moon.*

*In refuting Dante's explanation Beatrice enforces theory by experiment, the modern method, here praised as the fountainhead of the arts. This is remarkable in a medieval poem.*

O YE, embarked in a small skiff, who long  
To listen, having followed on its way  
My boat, that goes continuing in song,  
Turn again home to sight of shore and bay!  
Trust not the deep; for peradventure there  
By losing me ye might be left astray.  
The sea I sail none yet did ever dare.  
Minerva wafts, Apollo leads me on,  
And the nine Muses show me either Bear.<sup>i</sup>  
Ye other few, who have raised your necks for boon [10]  
Of the angels' bread betimes, given to sustain<sup>ii</sup>  
The life lived here (and surfeit none hath known),  
Ye well may trust your bark to the salt main,

---

<sup>i</sup> 9. "Either Bear": the constellations of the Great and Little Bear, by which sailors are guided.

<sup>ii</sup> 11. "The angels' bread": sacred knowledge.

Keeping the furrow of my keel, before  
 The wake behind it is smoothed out again.  
 The glorious ones that fared to Colchis shore,<sup>iii</sup>  
 When they saw Jason ply the ploughman's trade,  
 Stood marvelling much; but ye shall marvel more.  
 The inborn thirst, which never is allayed,  
 For the God-moulded realm, bore us on high [20]  
 Swift almost as ye see heaven's motion made.  
 Beatrice was gazing up; on her gazed I.  
 Perhaps in such space as a bolt is spent  
 And flies and from the peg is loosed to fly,  
 I saw me arriving where a marvel bent  
 My sight all to itself: and she, because  
 Nothing from her was hidden of my intent,  
 Turned—and her joy like to her beauty was—  
 To me, and "Turn to God in thanks," she said,  
 "Who with the first star hath united us."<sup>iv</sup> [30]  
 It seemed a cloud all round about us spread,  
 Luminous, dense, compact, and burnished bright,  
 Like diamond with a sunbeam on it shed.  
 The everlasting pearl enclosed us quite  
 Within itself, as water of a well  
 Receives, remaining whole, a ray of light.  
 If I was body,—and on earth none could tell  
 How one substance another can admit,  
 Which must be, if body into body steal—  
 The more in us should longing's flame be lit [40]  
 To see that Essence wherein we perceive<sup>v</sup>  
 How our nature and God in one were knit.  
 There shall be seen that unto which we cleave  
 By faith, not proven in argument; self-shown

---

<sup>iii</sup> 16-18. *The Argonauts were amazed to see Jason compel two monstrous bulls to draw a plough.*

<sup>iv</sup> 30. *"The first star": the moon.*

<sup>v</sup> 41. *In the "Essence" of Christ the human and the divine nature are miraculously united (see the Argument).*

As is the simple truth that all believe.  
 "My Lady," I answered, "more devoutly none  
 Could thank Him, and I thank Him yet again,  
 Who hath removed me from yon mortal zone.  
 But tell me, what are those dark spots that stain  
 This body, which down there on the earth's floor [50]  
 Make folk to fable of the burden of Cain?"  
 She smiled a little, and then said: "If the lore  
 Of mortals err in its imagining,  
 Where sense hath no key to unlock the door,  
 Truly the barb of wonder should not sting  
 Thy mind henceforth, since, following after sense,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Reason, thou see'st, hath all too short a wing.  
 But tell me what thine own intelligence  
 Conceives." And "What appears diverse," said I,  
 "Is caused, I think, by bodies rare or dense." [60]  
 And she: "Indeed thou'lt see thy guess to lie  
 Submerged in error, if thou give good ear  
 To the argument I shall oppose it by.  
 Many are the lights displayed in the eighth sphere,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Which both in quality and in magnitude  
 May be observed a diverse look to wear.  
 If this from dense and rare alone ensued,  
 All with one virtue, equal less or more  
 In distribution, would be found imbued.  
 But needs must be that diverse virtues flower [70]  
 From formal principles; and these, save one,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Would on thy reasoning wholly lose their power.  
 Further, did rareness cause the spots alone  
 Of which thou askest, either in some part were  
 This planet starving of its matter shown,  
 Or, as in a body is disposed each layer

---

<sup>vi</sup> 56. "Following after sense": since even under the guidance of the senses.

<sup>vii</sup> 64. "The eighth sphere" is that of the fixed stars.

<sup>viii</sup> 71. "Formal principles": inherent characters.



Of fat and lean, so in its volume it  
 Would have leaves interchanging here and there.  
 Were the first true, it would be seen transmit<sup>ix</sup>  
 In his eclipse the light from the sun's face, [80]  
 As when his beams any rare body hit.  
 This is not so. Take then the other case;  
 And if it chance that I refute this too,  
 Thy supposition tumbles from its base.  
 If this rare quality extend not through,<sup>x</sup>  
 There must be a limit where its opposite  
 Forbiddeth it to pierce the residue;  
 And thence that other's ray pours back its light  
 Like colour from the glass returning, where  
 It keeps the lead behind it out of sight. [90]  
 Now thou wilt say that the ray showeth here  
 More dim than what from the other parts is sent  
 Because from further back reflected there.  
 From this objection may experiment  
 Deliver thee, if thou its virtue try,  
 (Source wherefrom stream the arts that you invent).  
 Take three mirrors; and set two equally  
 At distance from thyself; and let the last,  
 Further removed, between these front thine eye.  
 Turned towards them, have a light behind thee placed, [100]  
 Illumining the mirrors, all the three;  
 And back to the eye from each it will be cast.  
 Though the more distant image come to thee  
 Less great in magnitude, thou wilt behold  
 How of an equal brightness it must be.  
 Now, as the element that goes to mould  
 The snow, beneath warm beams is left in loss  
 Both of the former whiteness and the cold,

---

<sup>ix</sup> 79. "Were the first true . . .": if the layers did extend through the moon, we should see the sun shining through them at the time of a solar eclipse.

<sup>x</sup> 85. If the layers did not extend, the dense matter would reflect the light.

Thee in thine intellect left naked thus  
 I mean to inform with living light that glows [110]  
 Before thee sparkling as a bright star does.  
 Within the heaven of the divine repose  
 Circles a body, in whose virtue lies<sup>xi</sup>  
 The being of all that its confines enclose.  
 The following heaven, which has so many eyes,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Portions that being through divers essences  
 Distinct from it, though it must all comprise.  
 The other wheels by various differences  
 Dispose the inborn characters they show  
 Unto their ends and fruitful purposes. [120]  
 These organs of the universe, then, go  
 From grade to grade, as now thou see'st is done,  
 For from above they take, but work below.  
 Note well how through this passage I have gone  
 Advancing to the truth, thy heart's desire,  
 That thou may'st henceforth keep the ford alone.  
 Perforce the blessed Movers must inspire,  
 As do the craftsman's purposes his tool,  
 The virtue and motion of each holy gyre.  
 The heaven so many lights make beautiful [130]  
 Receives the image, and makes thereof its seal,  
 From the deep mind that is its motion's rule.  
 And as the soul which in your dust ye feel  
 Through members differing and conformed thereby  
 To divers powers, is thus diffused piecemeal,  
 So does the Intelligence display on high  
 Its goodness, multiplied through stars, while round  
 It rolls itself on its own unity.  
 And diverse virtue makes diverse compound  
 With the precious body into which it flows, [140]

---

<sup>xi</sup> 113. The "body" which revolves inside the Empyrean is the Primum Mobile, from which all the rest of the world derives its special mode of being.

<sup>xii</sup> 115. "The following heaven": the starry sphere.

Wherewith, as life in you, it is close-bound.  
Because of the glad nature whence it grows  
The mingled virtue through the body beams  
As gladness through the living pupil shows.  
From this comes, not from dense and rare, what seems  
The difference you see 'twixt light and light.  
This is the formal principle that schemes,  
Conformed to its own goodness, dim and bright."

# Canto III

*Dante becomes aware of faces appearing eager to speak to him. At first he supposes them to be reflections (unlike Narcissus, who supposed his reflection to be real). One of these spirits is Piccarda, about whom Dante had asked her brother Forese in Purgatory (Canto XXIV). She is with those placed in the sphere of the Moon because of vows Fakes or imperfectly performed. Dante asks if those who are in this lowest sphere ever crave for a more exalted place in Paradise. She tells him that this is impossible; it is of the essence of their bliss merely to fulfil the divine will: "In His will is our peace." And she goes on to tell how she took the veil in the Order of Saint Clare, but was forcibly taken from her convent (to be married to a noble). Among these spirits is the Empress Constance, who also was torn from her convent and married to Henry VI, the second of the three "whirlwinds" from Suabia (line 119); the first being Frederick Barbarossa, and the third Frederick II; all these emperors were men of tempestuous energy.*

THAT SUN which fired my bosom of old with love<sup>i</sup>  
Had thus bared for me in beauty the aspect sweet  
Of truth, expert to prove as to disprove;  
And I, to avow me of all error quit,  
Confident and assured, lifted my head  
More upright, in such measure as was fit.  
But now appeared a sight that riveted  
Me to itself with such compulsion keen  
That my confession from my memory fled.  
As from transparent glasses polished clean,  
Or water shining smooth up to its rim,  
Yet not so that the bottom is unseen,  
Our faces' lineaments return so dim  
That pearl upon white forehead not more slow  
Would on our pupils its pale image limn;  
So I beheld faces that seemed aglow

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. "That Sun": Beatrice.

To speak, and fell into the counter-snare  
 From what made love 'twixt man and pool to grow.<sup>ii</sup>  
 No sooner had I marked those faces there,  
 Than, thinking them reflections, with swift eyes [20]  
 I turned about to see of whom they were,  
 And saw nothing: again, in my surprise,  
 I turned straight to the light of my sweet Guide,  
 Who smiling, burned within her sainted eyes.  
 "Marvel not at my smiling," she replied,  
 "To contemplate thy childlike thought revealed  
 Which cannot yet its foot to truth confide,  
 But moves thee, as ever, on emptiness to build.  
 True substances are these thine eyes perceive,  
 Remitted here for vows not all fulfilled. [30]  
 Speak with them therefore, hearken and believe,  
 For the true light which is their happiness  
 Lets them not swerve, but to it they must cleave."  
 And I to the shade that seemed most near to press  
 For converse, turned me and began, as one  
 Who is overwrought through longing in excess:  
 "O spirit made for bliss, who from the sun  
 Of life eternal feelest the sweet ray  
 Which, save 'tis tasted, is conceived by none,  
 It will be gracious to me, if I may [40]  
 Be gladdened with thy name and all your fate."  
 And she, with laughing eyes and no delay:  
 "Our charity no more locks up the gate  
 Against a just wish than that Charity<sup>iii</sup>  
 Which would have all its court in like estate.  
 On earth I was a Virgin Sister: see  
 What memory yields thee, and my being now  
 More beautiful will hide me not from thee,  
 But that I am Piccarda thou wilt know,

---

<sup>ii</sup> 18. "Man": *Narcissus* (see the Argument).

<sup>iii</sup> 44. "That Charity": of God.

Who with these other blessed ones placed here [50]  
 Am blessed in the sphere that moves most slow;  
 For our desires, which kindle and flame clear  
 Only in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost,  
 To what he appointeth joyfully adhere;  
 And this which seems to thee so lowly a post  
 Is given to us because the vows we made  
 Were broken, or complete observance lost."  
 Then I to her: "Something divinely glad  
 Shines in your marvellous aspect, to replace  
 In you the old conceptions that I had; [60]  
 I was slow therefore to recall thy face:  
 But what thou tell'st me helpeth now to clear  
 My sight, and thee more easily to retrace.  
 But tell me: you that are made happy here,  
 Do ye to a more exalted place aspire,  
 To see more, or to make yourselves more dear?"  
 She smiled a little, and with her smiled that choir  
 Of spirits; then so joyous she replied  
 That she appeared to burn in love's first fire:  
 "Brother, the virtue of love hath pacified [70]  
 Our will; we long for what we have alone,  
 Nor any craving stirs in us beside.  
 If we desired to reach a loftier zone,  
 Our longings would be all out of accord  
 With His will who disposeth here His own.  
 For that, these circles, thou wilt see, afford  
 No room, if love be our whole being's root  
 And thou ponder the meaning of that word.  
 Nay, 'tis of the essence of our blessed lot  
 In the divine will to be cloistered still [80]  
 Through which our own wills into one are wrought,  
 As we from step to step our stations fill  
 Throughout this realm, to all the realm 'tis bliss  
 As to its King, who wills us into His will;

And in His will is perfected our peace.  
 It is the sea whereunto moveth all  
 That it creates and nature makes increase."  
 Then saw I how each heaven for every soul  
 Is paradise, though from the Supreme Good  
 The dews of grace not in one measure fall. [90]  
 But as may hap, when sated with one food  
 Still for another we have appetite,  
 We ask for this, and that with thanks elude,  
 Such words and gesture used I that I might  
 Learn from her what that web was where she plied  
 The shuttle and yet drew not the head outright.  
 "Perfect life and high merit have enskied  
 A Lady above," she said, "whose rule they take"<sup>iv</sup>  
 In your world who in robe and veil abide,  
 That they till death may, sleeping and awake, [100]  
 Be with that Spouse who giveth welcome free  
 To all vows love may for His pleasure make.  
 To follow her, a young girl, did I flee  
 The world and, closed within her habit, vowed  
 Myself to the pathway of her company.  
 Afterwards men, used to evil more than good,<sup>v</sup>  
 Tore me away, out of the sweet cloister;  
 And God knows then what way of life I trod.  
 This other splendour whom thou see'st appear  
 To thee on my right side, who, glowing pale, [110]  
 Kindles with all the radiance of our sphere,  
 Can of herself tell also the same tale.  
 She was a Sister; from her head they tore  
 Likewise the shadow of the sacred veil.  
 She was turned back into the world once more  
 Against her will, against good usage too;  
 Yet still upon her heart the veil she wore.

---

<sup>iv</sup> 98. "A Lady above": St. Clare, the friend of St. Francis; she founded the order that bears her name.

<sup>v</sup> 106. "Men": her brother Corso Donati and his followers.

This is the light of the great Constance, who<sup>vi</sup>  
From Suabia's second whirlwind was to bring  
To birth the third Power, and the last ye knew." [120]  
Thus spoke she to me, and then began to sing  
*Ave Maria*, and singing disappeared,  
As through deep water sinks a heavy thing.  
My sight, which followed far as it was powered,  
When it had lost her, turned and straightway shot  
To the other mark, more ardently desired,  
And Beatrice, only Beatrice, it sought.  
But she upon my look was flaming so  
That at the first my sight endured it. not;  
And this made me for questioning more slow. [130]

---

<sup>vi</sup> 118. "The great Constance": see the Argument.



# Canto IV

*Two questions perplex Dante's mind; but, equally desirous to learn the answer to each of them, he is paralysed into silence. Beatrice, reading his thoughts, gives them utterance. One of Dante's doubts refers to Plato's theory, in the Timaeus, that each soul returns after death to the star from which it came. This involves a poisonous heresy, since the orthodox view is that the blessed all have their home in the Empyrean, though they show themselves to Dante in the different spheres. The other question is prompted by the lower place assigned to those who were forced to break their vows; which seems inconsistent with divine justice. Beatrice explains the difference between the absolute and the relative will.*

*At the end of the canto Dante asks whether a person, by other good deeds, may compensate for broken vows.*

BETWEEN two foods, each near in like degree  
And tempting, would a man starve ere he chose  
To put one to his teeth, though choice were free.  
And so between two wolves, his ravening foes,  
In equal dread of both, would stand a lamb:  
So would a hound stand still between two does.  
Hence, if I held my peace, I take no blame  
Upon me, in like perplexity bemused,  
Since help was none, nor therefor merit claim.  
I held my peace; but my desire suffused  
My face, together with my question's need,  
Warmer than if articulate speech I used;  
And Beatrice did as Daniel, when he freed<sup>i</sup>  
Nebuchadnezzar from the wrath that made  
His heart unjustly will a cruel deed.  
"I see how one and the other desire," she said,  
"So draw thee that thy trouble is knotted fast

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 13. "Daniel" revealed the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar, saving the astrologers from the anger of the king.

Within itself, and thou art speechless stayed.  
 Thou arguest: 'If the good will in me last,  
 By what reason can violence from without [20]  
 Lessen for me the merit long amassed?"  
 Also it is perplexing to thy thought  
 That to the stars the souls seem to fly home,  
 According to the doctrine Plato taught.  
 These are the questions that thy will benumb  
 With equal burden; therefore first I treat  
 Of that which holds in it the worst venom.  
 Not Seraphs who in God most inly meet,  
 Not Moses, Samuel, nor whichever John<sup>ii</sup>  
 Thou choose, not Mary even, have a seat [30]  
 In other heaven than those the spirits have won  
 Who here but now made themselves visible;  
 Nor more or less years to their being run.  
 But all make beautiful the first circle  
 And have sweet life, albeit of divers taste,  
 Since more and less the eternal breath they feel.  
 They showed themselves here, not because they are placed  
 In this allotted sphere; rather to show  
 The heavenly sphere that is exalted least.  
 Speech to your wit must needs be tempered so, [40]  
 Since but from things of sense it apprehends  
 What it makes apt for the intellect to know.  
 Scripture to your capacity condescends  
 For this cause, and a foot and hand will feign  
 For God, yet something other it intends.  
 Thus Holy Church portrays to you as men  
 With human look Michael and Gabriel  
 And the other who made Tobit whole again.<sup>iii</sup>  
 What of the souls Timaeus has to tell  
 Is not like that which is apparent here; [50]

---

<sup>ii</sup> 29. "Whichever John . . .": the Baptist and the Evangelist.

<sup>iii</sup> 48. Raphael, who cured the blindness of Tobit.

For what he says it seems he thinks as well.<sup>iv</sup>  
 He says the soul returns to its own star,  
 Himself believing it was severed thence  
 When Nature made it form for flesh to wear.  
 Haply his opinion is of other sense  
 Than his words sound, and maybe has in it  
 Import of no derisory pretence.  
 If to these spheres he means the souls remit  
 The honour of their influence and the blame,  
 Perhaps his bow upon some truth may hit. [60]  
 Ill understood, this principle overcame  
 Nigh all the world; and on that erring plea  
 It gave to Jove, Mars, Mercury a name.  
 The other matter of thy perplexity  
 Hath the less poison, since from me to veer  
 Its mischief could not have perverted thee.  
 That heavenly justice should unjust appear  
 In the eyes of mortal beings is argument  
 Of faith; no heresy corrupteth here.  
 But seeing that your understanding, bent [70]  
 Upon this truth, can pierce to it unconfused,  
 Till make thee, according to thy wish, content.  
 If violence is, when he who is abused<sup>v</sup>  
 Nowise connives with what he is mastered by,  
 Then these souls were not on that count excused.  
 For the will cannot, if it wills not, die,  
 But does as in the fire's flame nature does  
 Though violence wrest it thousand times awry.  
 Should it, then, bend, little or much, it thus  
 Abets the violence; and so did these, [80]  
 Who still might have regained the holy house.  
 If their will had stayed perfect in duress,  
 Like that which upheld Laurence on the grid,<sup>vi</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> 51. Because Plato seems to understand it literally.

<sup>v</sup> 73. Beatrice begins by establishing a definition of violence.

Or Mucius, to his own hand pitiless,  
 It would have driven them, soon as they were freed,  
 Upon the road whence they were dragged before;  
 But so entire a will is rare indeed.  
 Now by these words, if thou hast reaped their lore  
 As thou should'st do, the argument falls down  
 Which would have teased thee many a time more; [90]  
 But now another pass is to be won,  
 Fronting thine eyes, such that thou would'st not, ere  
 Thou wert full weary, win through it alone.  
 I have set within thy mind this surety clear,  
 That souls in bliss never may lie, since they  
 Are to the primal truth forever near.<sup>vii</sup>  
 And then thou mightest hear Piccarda say  
 That Constance kept devotion to the veil,  
 So that in this she seems to say me nay.  
 Many times ere now, brother, it befell [100]  
 That to escape some danger a man was brought  
 To do against his wish things blameable,  
 Even as Alcmæon, on whom his father wrought<sup>viii</sup>  
 By his entreaties, his own mother slew:  
 Not to lose piety, he set pity at naught.  
 At this point I would have thee hold it true  
 That violence commingles with the will  
 And no excuse holds for the work these do.  
 Will absolute consents not to the ill,  
 But it consents so far as it's in dread, [110]  
 If it recoil, of a wrong greater still.  
 When, then, Piccarda utters on this head  
 Her thought, she means the absolute will, and I  
 The other, so that both the truth have said."<sup>ix</sup>  
 Such was the sacred stream that rippled by,

---

<sup>vii</sup> 96. "The primal truth": God.

<sup>viii</sup> 103. Alcmæon, to avenge his father, killed his mother.

<sup>ix</sup> 114. "The other": the relative will.

Issuing from the spring whence all truth flows,  
 Both one and the other desire to satisfy.  
 "O loved of the First Lover, O goddess, whose  
 Discourse," said I then, "floods me and bathes me round  
 And warms my spirit till more and more it glows, [120]  
 My love is not to such degree profound  
 As to suffice to render grace for grace:  
 May he who sees, and can, thereto respond!  
 Nothing can satiate, I now see, unless  
 The True illumine it, the mind of men:  
 Beyond that, no truth can enlarge its place.  
 Therein it rests like wild beast in his den,  
 Soon as it reaches it; and reach it may:  
 Else every human longing were in vain;  
 Hence the doubt groweth, like a sucker, say, [130]  
 At Truth's foot; it is nature's urging, which  
 Spurs us from height to height on the upward way.  
 This prompts me, this emboldens, to beseech  
 With reverence, Lady, that of one truth yet  
 That is obscure to me thou deign to teach.  
 I would fain know if one may pay the debt  
 For broken vows with other deeds upright  
 Which may not come short, in your balance set."  
 Beatrice looked on me with eyes of light  
 Filled so divinely with love's spark ablaze [140]  
 That, vanquished, all my powers were put to flight,  
 And I became as lost with downcast gaze.

# Canto V

*In answer to Dante's last question, Beatrice tells him that it is impossible to make sufficient compensation for broken vows, because the vow means the surrender of the most precious gift of all, that of free will. It is however allowed to substitute other meritorious service for the "matter" of the vow; that is the service undertaken in the vow's fulfilment; but only on condition that it is authorised by the Church (see Purgatorio, Canto IX, for the "white and yellow keys") and that what is commuted is in the proportion of six to four, compared with the service it is substituted for. Vows are not to be undertaken lightly; the tragic dilemma of Jephthah, and of Agamemnon when he sacrificed his daughter, is adduced in illustration.*

*Suddenly Beatrice and Dante are caught up into the Heaven of Mercury, where are the souls of the ambitious. One of these spirits, who is Justinian, addresses Dante.*

"IF I FLAME on thee in love's fervency  
Beyond all that is seen in earthly mood,  
So that I quell the courage of thine eye,  
Marvel not: this from perfect sight ensued,  
That, even as it apprehends, can win  
To set foot on the apprehended good.  
I see clear how already glows within  
Thine understanding the eternal light,  
Which only and always kindles love, once seen.  
And even if other lure your love invite  
'Tis nothing but some vestige left from that,  
Ill-recognised, which through it showeth bright.  
Thou would'st know if amends may be so great  
For broken vows, with other service paid,  
As to safeguard the soul from claim of debt."  
So Beatrice began this canto, and stayed  
No more than one who breaks not off his theme;  
And onward thus the sacred message led.  
"Of all the gifts God in His bounty extreme

[10]

Made when creating, most conformable [20]  
 To His own goodness, and in His esteem  
 Most precious, was the liberty of the will,  
 With which creatures that are intelligent  
 Were all endowed, they only, and are so still.  
 Now thou can'st see, following this argument,  
 The high worth of the vow, so it not lacked,  
 When thou consented'st to it, God's consent.  
 For when is sealed 'twixt God and man the pact,  
 This treasure, being such as I explain,  
 Is sacrificed, and that by its own act. [30]  
 How then can compensation here obtain?  
 If thou think'st to use well thine offering, thou  
 Would'st do a good work from ill-gotten gain.<sup>i</sup>  
 Of this chief point thou art certified; but now,  
 Since Holy Church hath dispensation made,  
 Which seems this truth I have told to disavow,  
 Still must thou be at table a while delayed,  
 Because what thou hast taken of tough food  
 Requires for thy digestion further aid.  
 Open thy mind to what I tell thee, and brood [40]  
 Thereon within; for knowledge none can vaunt  
 Who retains not, although he have understood.  
 Two things essential the conditions want;  
 The one is that whereof the sacrifice<sup>ii</sup>  
 Consists; the other is the covenant.  
 To cancel this last, nothing can suffice  
 Save keeping it; that this point thou may'st heed,  
 I made my words about it so precise.  
 Therefore the Jews could not escape the need  
 To sacrifice, though the thing offered might [50]  
 In part at least be exchanged, as thou canst read.  
 The other thing, which I as 'matter' cite,

---

<sup>i</sup> 33. *Thou art like a thief who is trying to do good deeds with ill-gotten gain.*

<sup>ii</sup> 44-45. *"The one . . .": the thing promised. The "other" element, in a vow, is the act of agreement.*

May well be such that no offence may be  
 If another matter be exchanged for it.  
 But let none shift the burden wilfully  
 From off his back, if at the turning sticks<sup>iii</sup>  
 Either the white key or the yellow key.  
 Let him hold all exchange as folly's tricks,  
 Unless the thing that's taken up include  
 The thing laid down, as four's contained in six. [60]  
 Whatever therefore by its own worth would<sup>iv</sup>  
 Weigh so that every counter-poise weighed short  
 By other spending cannot be made good.  
 Let mortals never take the vow in sport:  
 Keep faith, nor let your eyes, in doing this,  
 As Jephthah's with his first-vowed gift, distort;<sup>v</sup>  
 Who should have rather said: 'I did amiss'  
 Than, keeping faith, do worse. And thou canst trace  
 Such folly in the great chieftain of Greece,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Whence Iphigenia wept for her fair face [70]  
 And made simple and wise to weep her too,  
 Hearing of that vow kept in such a case.  
 Christians, walk more wary in what you do,  
 Not like a feather blown at the wind's bent,  
 Nor think that every water cleanses you.  
 Ye have the Old and the New Testament;  
 Ye have the Shepherd of the Church for guide;  
 With these for your salvation be content.  
 If evil greed aught else to you have cried,  
 Be men, not witless sheep, so that the Jews [80]  
 Among you may not mock you and deride.  
 Do not as the lamb does who will refuse

---

<sup>iii</sup> 56-57. The "turning" of the "white key" of discrimination and the "yellow key" of authority signifies ecclesiastical permission.

<sup>iv</sup> 61-63. If the obligation is the most precious of our possessions (our free will), nothing can be substituted for it.

<sup>v</sup> 66. "As Jephthah . . .": see Judg. 9:31.

<sup>vi</sup> 69. Agamemnon erred when he sacrificed his daughter to obtain from the Gods a favourable wind.



His mother's milk, and silly in wantonness,  
 Do battle with himself, himself to amuse."  
 Thus, as I write, to me spoke Beatrice;  
 Then turned in all her longing's radiance  
 To the region where the world most living is.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Her silence and transfigured countenance  
 Imposed a hush upon my craving wit  
 That had new questionings ready in advance: [90]  
 And sudden as an arrow that hath hit  
 The target ere the bowstring cease to thrill,  
 We flew, and on the second realm alit.<sup>viii</sup>  
 There I beheld such joy my lady fill,  
 When in this heaven she stept into its blaze,  
 It made the planet glow more lucent still.  
 And if the star laughed out with altered rays,  
 What then did I, whose mortal character  
 Was liable to mutation's every phase?  
 As in a fish-pond which is still and clear [100]  
 The fishes draw to what comes from outside  
 In such sort that they think their food is there,  
 So thousand splendours, ay, and more beside,  
 I saw drawn toward us; and from each was heard  
 "Lo one, by whom our loves are magnified."  
 And as each one of them to us-ward neared  
 The shade was seen with joy to overflow  
 By the effulgence that from it appeared.  
 Reader, if what I start to tell thee now  
 Were broken off, consider how intense [110]  
 A craving would torment thee more to know;  
 And thou canst ask of thine intelligence  
 How much I longed to hear from these their state,  
 Soon as they were discovered to my sense.  
 "O happy born, whom grace lets contemplate

---

<sup>vii</sup> 87. *The Empyrean*.

<sup>viii</sup> 93 "Second realm": the Heaven of Mercury.

The thrones of the eternal triumph, ere  
 For thee thy militancy reach its date,  
 The light pervading heaven through every sphere  
 Kindles us all; of us then, if it please  
 To be enlightened, take thy fill and hear."[120]  
 Such words were said to me by one of these  
 Devout souls; and by Beatrice; "Speak, speak!  
 Have no fear; trust as in divinities,"  
 "I see how in thine own light thou dost seek  
 To nest thee, and that it streameth through thine eye;  
 Such sparkles, as thou smilest, from it break:  
 But who thou art I know not, neither why,  
 Great soul, thou art stationed in this sphere veiled o'er  
 From mortals by another's rays on high."<sup>ix</sup>  
 This I said, turning to the first splendour[130]  
 That had addressed me; and its luminousness  
 Became thereat far livelier than before.  
 Like as the sun, which hides him in excess  
 Of light, when once the heat has nibbled thin  
 The dense, dull mists that overspread his face,  
 So did the sacred presence hide within  
 Its beams, by joy increased in radiance,  
 And, close enclosed thus, gave me answer in  
 The manner that the following canto chants.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 129. "By another's rays ": the Heaven of Mercury is veiled by the sun.

# Canto VI

*Justinian tells Dante who he is, and what he had done as a Law-giver. He then speaks of the achievements of Rome, symbolised by the Roman Eagle; and recounts her history, from the westward journey of the Trojans and their settlement in Italy to the time of the earlier Caesars, and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. This last is conceived of as punishment of the Jews for having put Christ to death; but the crucifixion was itself the punishment of mankind, in Christ's person, for "the ancient sin" of Adam and was inflicted by Pilate as representative of the Roman Empire, regarded by Dante as a divine institution. Justinian recounts this history in order to denounce the factions of Dante's day who would break up the unity of the Empire; the Guelfs, under their leader "the new Charles" (Charles II of Apulia) who would replace the "world's great ensign," the Eagle, by the lilies of France; and the Ghibellines, who want to appropriate it for their party. Justinian then explains that the spirits who are assigned to "this little planet," Mercury, are there because they were ambitious of fame and honour and not only aiming at the glory of God; hence placed in a lower sphere. He concludes with the story of Romeo, minister of Raymond Berenger of Provence, whose four daughters were, through his efforts, married to four kings; but being falsely accused, he was driven into exile. The last lines perhaps allude obliquely to Dante's own exile.*

WHEN CONSTANTINE had turned the Eagle's head<sup>i</sup>  
Against heaven's course which it of old pursued  
With him who took Lavinia to his bed,  
Twice a hundred years and longer posted stood  
The bird of God at Europe's last confine,  
Neighbouring the mountains whence it first issued,  
And under shadow of the wings divine  
Kept there from hand to hand continued reign,  
Till by succession's change it came to mine.

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-3. The Roman Eagle, having followed Aeneas from Troy to Italy, was carried by Constantine from Rome to Byzantium.

Caesar I was, and am Justinian,<sup>ii</sup> [10]  
 Who by the will of Primal Love possessed  
 Pruned from the laws the unneeded and the vain.  
 And, ere my mind was to the task addressed,  
 One nature only in Christ did I suppose,  
 Not more, and in such doctrine acquiesced.  
 But blessed Agapetus, he who was  
 Chief Pastor then, by his discourses drew<sup>iii</sup>  
 My mind, and taught me the pure faith to espouse.  
 Him I believed; and what by faith he knew  
 Is clear to me, as clear 'tis to your wit [20]  
 That contradictories are, one false, one true.  
 So soon as with the Church I moved my feet,  
 It pleased God of his grace to inspire me for  
 The high task, and I gave me whole to it.  
 Arms to my Belisarius I made o'er,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Who in Heaven's right hand such auxiliar had,  
 It was a sign I should not use them more.  
 To thy first question now is the answer made,  
 And here it stops; but that which from it flows  
 Constrains me something furthermore to add, [30]  
 That thou may'st see with how much reason goes  
 Against the ever-sacred standard he<sup>v</sup>  
 Who claims it his, or he whose schemes oppose.  
 See what great virtue hath won it fealty  
 Of reverence, beginning from the day  
 When Pallas died to give it sovereignty.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Thou knowest how in Alba it kept sway  
 Three hundred years and more, until was fought

---

<sup>ii</sup> 10. "Justinian": Emperor of the East in the sixth century under whose direction was achieved a great compilation of Roman law.

<sup>iii</sup> 17-18. "Chief Pastor": Pope. "The pure faith": the dual nature of Christ.

<sup>iv</sup> 25. "Belisarius": Justinian's great general.

<sup>v</sup> 32. "The ever-sacred standard": the Imperial Eagle.

<sup>vi</sup> 36. To avenge the death of his friend Pallas, Aeneas slew Turnus and gained possession of Latium.

Between the three and three the final fray.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Thou know'st what from the Sabine rape it wrought [40]  
 Through seven reigns, down to Lucretia's woe,  
 Conquering the neighbour peoples round about;  
 And what, borne by Rome's champions, it could do  
 Against Brennus and against Pyrrhus,<sup>viii</sup>  
 And the other princes, its confederate foe,  
 When, sur-named from his rough curls, Quinctius,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Torquatus, Decii and Fabii, vied  
 In fame that I embalm most gladly thus.  
 It smote to earth next the Arabians' pride,<sup>x</sup>  
 Who followed Hannibal across the torn [50]  
 Rocks of the Alps, wherefrom thou, Po, dost glide.  
 Youthful in triumph under it were borne  
 Scipio and Pompey; and bitter doom it meant  
 To that hill, underneath which thou wast born.<sup>xi</sup>  
 Then near the time when all heaven was intent  
 That in its own peace earth should also share,  
 Caesar seized hold of it by Rome's consent:  
 And what it did from Var to Rhine, Isère  
 Knows well the memory of, and Saône, and Seine,  
 And every valley feeding Rhône from far. [60]  
 What it did after it left Ravenna, when  
 It leapt the Rubicon, was flight so fast  
 That neither tongue could follow it, nor pen.  
 Toward Spain it swung the files of war, and passed  
 Next toward Durazzo, and Pharsalia struck,  
 So that hot Nile felt it, and was aghast.<sup>xii</sup>  
 Antandros, Simois, which it first forsook,

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<sup>vii</sup> 39. "Between the three and three. . .": the three Curiatii, who fought for Alba Longa against the three Horatii, the champions of Rome.

<sup>viii</sup> 44. "Brennus": leader of the Gauls. "Pyrrhus": king of Epirus.

<sup>ix</sup> 46. "Quinctius" was called Cincinnatus from his unkempt shock of hair.

<sup>x</sup> 49. "The Arabians": the Carthaginians.

<sup>xi</sup> 54 "To that hill": Fiesole.

<sup>xii</sup> 66. Caesar's victory at Pharsalia was felt in Egypt, where Pompey was murdered.

It saw again, where Hector's ashes lie,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Then, woe to Ptolemy! its plumes it shook,  
 On Juba pounced, like flame out of the sky,<sup>xiv</sup> [70]  
 Then toward your West wheeled and went storming on  
 Where sounded the Pompeian trumpet's cry.  
 For what, with its next bearer, it had done,<sup>xv</sup>  
 Brutus and Cassius howl in hell beneath:  
 Modena and Perugia it made groan.  
 Cleopatra for that cause still anguisheth,  
 Who, lost in fear of what she fled before,  
 Took from the asp's sudden and black death.  
 With him it sped on to the Red Sea shore,  
 With him stablished the world in peace so great [80]  
 That his own temple on Janus closed the door.<sup>xvi</sup>  
 But what the Eagle, whose prowess I relate,  
 Had done before, and what it yet should do  
 Through all the mortal realm of its estate,  
 Seems small and dim, if with profounder view  
 In the third Caesar's hand 'tis looked upon<sup>xvii</sup>  
 With undisturbed eye and intention true:  
 For Justice, whose live breath on me has blown,  
 Vouchsafed it, in the hand of him I mean,  
 The glory of vengeance, God's wrath to atone. [90]  
 What I repeat here may thy wonder win:  
 Thereafter under Titus it made speed  
 To avenge the vengeance on the ancient sin:  
 And when the biting Lombard fangs made bleed<sup>xviii</sup>  
 The Holy Church, under its wings in haste  
 Came Charlemagne victorious to her need.  
 Those, then, whom I arraigned erewhile, thou may'st

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<sup>xiii</sup> 68. "It [the Eagle] saw again": when Caesar was pursuing Pompey, he stopped to visit the Troad.

<sup>xiv</sup> 70. "Juba": king of the Numidians.

<sup>xv</sup> 73. The "next bearer" of the Eagle was Augustus.

<sup>xvi</sup> 81. The temple of Janus was closed only in time of peace.

<sup>xvii</sup> 86. "The third Caesar": Tiberius, under whom Christ was crucified

<sup>xviii</sup> 94. Charlemagne came to the aid of the Church against the Longobards.

Judge now, and their delinquencies assay,  
 Which are the cause of all the ills ye taste.  
 Against the world's great ensign these array [100]  
 The yellow lilies; those to a faction's force  
 Annex it; which is worse, were hard to say.  
 Under another standard plot your course,  
 Ghibellines! for he follows this one ill  
 Who between it and justice makes divorce.  
 And let not this new Charles set out to quell<sup>xix</sup>  
 The Eagle with his Guelfs, but those claws dread  
 That from a lordlier lion stript the fell.  
 Ofttimes ere now have sons inherited  
 Woe from their fathers' fault; nor let him dream [110]  
 God will his own arms for those lilies shed.  
 This little planet has for diadem<sup>xx</sup>  
 Good spirits who were active, to the end  
 That fame and honour should accrue to them.  
 When the desires, on these things nourished, bend  
 Aside so, needs must that the rays that soar  
 From the true love less ardently ascend.  
 But the commensuring of our wages' score  
 With our desert doth to our bliss belong,  
 Because we see them neither less nor more, [120]  
 Whereby the living justice is so strong  
 To sweeten our affection's pure intent  
 That it may not be warped to any wrong.  
 Divers voices on earth are sweetly blent;  
 So in our life the divers seats accord  
 To make among these wheels one sweet concent.  
 Within the pearl that thou art turned toward  
 Shineth the shining light of Romeo, whose<sup>xxi</sup>  
 So goodly achievement had such ill reward:

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<sup>xix</sup> 106. "This new Charles": see the Argument.

<sup>xx</sup> 112. "This little planet": Mercury.

<sup>xxi</sup> 128. "Romeo" of Villeneuve: see the Argument.

But the Provençals, his malicious foes, [130]  
Have not the laugh: and ill indeed they fare  
Who make of others' good deeds their own loss.  
Four daughters had Count Raymond Berenger,  
All queens; this Romeo won for him, a man  
Humble of station and a pilgrim there.  
By crooked words was he persuaded then  
To call to account this good servant and just  
Who paid him five and seven for every ten.  
Old and poor, thence, an outcast, was he thrust;  
And if the world knew what a heart he bore [140]  
Within him, begging life from crust to crust,  
Much as it praises, it would praise him more."



# Canto VII

*After Justinian and his companion spirits have resumed their place in the celestial dance, Beatrice dispels certain difficulties which had arisen in Dante's mind concerning the doctrine of Redemption. The first is the question: Why, if Christ was justly put to death, could it be just to punish those who did this? Beatrice explains that he was justly punished as regards his human nature, unjustly as being God. The next question is: Why did God choose this particular mode of redeeming mankind and not some other mode? The answer is that man could only recover what he lost by the Fall either through atoning himself for Adam's sin (and no offering of his was adequate) or through the divine mercy. But God combined "the two ways," both mercy and justice, for by Christ's incarnation and death man recovered the means of being pardoned, while at the same time justice was satisfied. Beatrice goes on to enlighten Dante on another point, and explains the difference between those created things which are corruptible and those which are incorruptible—the latter being acted upon immediately by the Divine Power, the former by the secondary influences of the stars.*

HOSANNA, Holy God of Hosts, to thee,  
Who from the loftiest heaven illuminest  
These kingdoms' flames in their felicity!"  
So, turning, by its own song re-possest,  
That spirit appeared to sound its chant of praise,  
On whom two splendours, twinned in lustre, rest.<sup>i</sup>  
And it and the others stepped into their maze,  
Dancing, like sparks, of speed ineffable;  
And sudden distance veiled them from my gaze.  
A doubt held me; and I said inly "Tell,  
O tell it to her! Tell my lady," I said,  
"Who slakes my thirst with sweet drops from her well."  
But the overmastering reverence in me bred,

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 6. "Two splendours": of natural intelligence and of illuminating grace.

Though but by Be and ice, again deprest,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Like to a drowsing man's, my drooping head.  
 Beatrice bore that I was thus distrest  
 A short time; such a smile then rayed from her  
 As would make one, in fire that burnt him, blest.  
 "According to my thought, which cannot err,  
 How vengeance that is just can justly be  
 Chastised, provoketh in thy mind demur. [20]  
 Soon from this doubt will I deliver thee.  
 Hearken thou to my words, for I have brought  
 A gift, to make thee of most high doctrine free.  
 Because that man who ne'er was born brooked not<sup>iii</sup>  
 To curb his will to his profit, he condemned  
 Himself; condemned, too, all his seed begot.  
 Wherefore mankind lay in great error penned  
 Down there for many an age and sick thereof,  
 Until it pleased the Word of God descend; [30]  
 And there that nature, which had dared remove  
 From its creator, he to himself annealed  
 By the sole act of his eternal love.  
 Now turn thy sight to what is now revealed.  
 This nature, with its maker joined, as first  
 Created, not a grain of ill concealed;  
 But by itself it had been banished erst  
 From Paradise, because it swerved aside  
 From truth, and its own way of life reversed.  
 And thus the penalty the Cross applied, [40]  
 If measured by the nature taken on,  
 Was never in its sting more justified.  
 In like manner was never such wrong done,  
 Having regard to Him who suffered there,  
 In whom this nature was condensed to one.  
 Thus from one act diverse effects appear:

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<sup>ii</sup> 14. "Be and ice": Beatrice.

<sup>iii</sup> 25. "That man": Adam.

At the one death God and the Jews were glad:  
 Therewith earth shook and the heavens were laid bare.  
 It should not then perplex thee, when 'tis said  
 At any time that vengeance justly wrought [50]  
 In a just court with vengeance was repaid.  
 But now I see thy mind from thought to thought  
 Ravelled within thee and in great desire  
 Waiting for the untying of the knot.  
 Thou sayest: 'I understand well what I hear;  
 But for what cause God willed this mode alone  
 For our redemption, is to me not clear.'  
 This decree, Brother, is not to be shown  
 To the eyes of him whose unperfected wit  
 Hath not in love's flame into ripeness grown.<sup>iv</sup> [60]  
 But since this target many engage to hit  
 But few clearly discern, I will expound  
 How such mode was the worthier and more fit.  
 The Divine Bounty, in which no shadow is found  
 Of envy, as it burns from inward, spills  
 Eternal beauties sparkling all around.<sup>v</sup>  
 That which immediately from it distils  
 Thereafter knows no end, since its imprint  
 Remaineth ever on whatso thing it seals.  
 That which immediate raineth without stint [70]  
 From it, is all free, since it is removed  
 From power of new things in the firmament.<sup>vi</sup>  
 Being more conformed to it, 'tis the more loved;  
 For the holy ardour that irradiates all  
 Lives most in what most like to itself is proved.  
 Vantaged with all these bounties is man's soul:  
 And should one thing fail that is requisite,  
 From its nobility it needs must fall.

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<sup>iv</sup> 60. *Only an infinitely loving mind can comprehend what impelled God to sacrifice himself for man.*

<sup>v</sup> 66: "Eternal beauties": men and angels.

<sup>vi</sup> 72. The "power of new things . . .": of the stars.

Sin only is that which disfranchises it,  
 And makes it unlike to the Sovereign Good, [80]  
 So that with that light 'tis but faintly lit  
 Nor can regain the station where it stood  
 Unless with suffering of just penalties  
 For ill joys it fill up what sin made void.  
 Your nature forfeited these dignities  
 When its first seed sinned wholly and was cast  
 From them, as it was cast from Paradise;  
 And they could be recovered (if thou hast  
 Subtly considered it) by no way save  
 One or the other of these fords be past: [90]  
 Either that God in graciousness forgave,  
 Or else that man by his own will and deed  
 For his own folly satisfaction gave.  
 Deep in the deep, eternal counsel feed  
 Thy fixt eyes now, and close as thy mind may  
 Let it to every word of mine give heed.  
 Man in his circumscription could not pay  
 The debt, since not so deep might he descend,  
 Were he, thereafter, humbly to obey,  
 As, disobeying, he aspired to ascend: [100]  
 For the which cause, from rendering the due  
 Atonement by his own act he was banned.  
 Needs then must God by His own ways renew<sup>vii</sup>  
 Man's life and its integrity restore;  
 I mean, by one way or by both the two.  
 But as the deed commends itself the more  
 The more it makes the goodness to appear  
 Of the heart, whence it issued, of the doer,  
 The Divine Goodness, whereof all things bear  
 The seal, designed then all its paths to assay [110]  
 That it might lift you up where once ye were;

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<sup>vii</sup> 103. "His own ways": Mercy and Justice.

Nor 'twixt the final night and the first day<sup>viii</sup>  
 Did aught of such a grandeur come to pass  
 Nor ever shall, on one or the other way.  
 God gave Himself with larger bounteousness  
 To enable man to lift himself again  
 Than if he had only pardoned of his grace;  
 And Justice must all other modes disdain  
 Except the Son of God humbled Him so  
 That He became incarnated in man. [120]

Now backward to a certain point I go  
 To enlighten thee and fill full thy desire,  
 So that thou mayest perceive this as I do.  
 Thou say'st: 'I see the water, I see the fire,  
 The air, and the earth, and their comminglings, come  
 All to corruption and short time endure;  
 And yet these were created things: wherefrom  
 Follows, if it be truth thou dost declare,  
 They should be safe from that corruption's doom.'  
 The angels, Brother, and this untainted star [130]  
 In which thou art, one may 'created' call  
 Even as entirely in their being they are;  
 But the elements which thou hast named, and all  
 The things that they have mingled to compound,—  
 Created virtue hath informed them all.<sup>ix</sup>  
 Created was the matter in them found,  
 Created was the informing power, whose worth  
 Is in the stars about them rolling round.  
 The life of every brute and plant on earth  
 Is by the quick beams of the sacred fires [140]  
 From its combining potencies drawn forth.  
 But the Supreme Benignity inspires  
 Directly your life, making it to love  
 Itself, and kindling it to fresh desires.

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<sup>viii</sup> 112. *Between Judgment and Creation.*

<sup>ix</sup> 135. *"Created virtue": the secondary power of the stars.*

For thee this argument may further prove  
Your resurrection, if the thought be weighed  
How human flesh was formed to breathe and move,  
When the first parents both of them were made.”

# Canto VIII

*Dante and Beatrice have now arrived in the third heaven, that of Venus. A band of spirits, abandoning their circling movement, come to meet them; and one spirit addresses Dante as one he had known on earth, quoting the first line of a canzone by the poet. This is Charles Martel (d. 1295), King of Hungary; he tells of the several kingdoms to which he was heir; of the "Sicilian Vespers," the massacre provoked by the misrule of his grandfather; and of the folly of his brother Robert in encouraging the rapacity of his Catalonian mercenaries. His allusion to the degeneracy of the avaricious Robert from his generous father leads Dante to ask about the cause of degeneracy in families. Charles explains that diversity is necessary for social life, variety of function requiring variety of character.*

THE WORLD was, to its peril, wont to hold  
That the fair Cyprian rayed love's fever round,<sup>i</sup>  
Where with her the third epicycle rolled;  
Wherefore not only were her rites renowned  
With sacrifice and votive ceremony  
By the ancient people in ancient error bound:  
Dione too was hymned, and Cupid; she  
As being her mother, he her son; and how  
He sat, they told, fondled on Dido's knee.  
And after her of whom I prelude now  
They chose to name the star which woos the sun  
Now with the nape turned toward him, now the brow.  
All unaware that we had thither flown  
I soon had proof that we were there, because  
A rarer beauty in my Lady shone.<sup>ii</sup>  
And as within a flame a sparkle shows,  
And in a voice is caught a voice's note,

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 2-3. "The fair Cyprian": Venus. — "Epicycle": the circuit of a revolving sphere carrying the planet.

<sup>ii</sup> 15. Beatrice, who symbolises Revelation, grows in loveliness as she and Dante rise from sphere to sphere.

If one holds on and the other comes and goes,  
 I saw in that light other torches float,  
 Circling (I deemed) more or less swiftly past, [20]  
 In measure as interior vision taught.  
 From freezing cloud never descended blast,  
 Visible or not, so swiftly, it would not seem  
 As loitering or obstructed in its haste  
 To whoso witnessed those divine lights gleam  
 Toward us, abandoning the circle stirred  
 To motion first in the high Seraphim.  
 And among those who most in front appeared  
 Sounded "Hosanna"; so that envious  
 I am still, to hear once more what then I heard. [30]  
 Then one brought himself nearer, and spoke thus<sup>iii</sup>  
 Alone: "All we are ready to fulfil  
 Thy pleasure, that thou may'st have joy of us.  
 We in one gyre with the Heavenly Princes wheel,  
 In the one circling, the one thirst of love,  
 To whom thou from the world didst make the appeal:  
 Ye who by intellect the third heaven move.  
 And our love brims so, that for thy content  
 A little of quiet no less sweet shall prove."  
 When my gaze had been offered reverent [40]  
 Up to my Lady, and she had reassured  
 And satisfied them with her own consent,  
 They turned back to that light which had outpoured  
 Itself so freely; and "Say, who are ye," impressed  
 With a profound affection, was my word.  
 How greatly in splendour and in size increased  
 I saw it at the new bliss which, when so  
 I spoke, was added to its blissful feast!  
 Transfigured thus, it spoke: "The world below  
 Held me not long; and much would not have happed, [50]

---

<sup>iii</sup> 31. "One": Charles Martel (see the Argument).



Had it been longer, that now comes in woe.  
 My bliss concealeth me from thee, enwrapt  
 Within its beams, that make for me a hood,  
 Like worm that in its swaddling silk is lapt.  
 Much didst thou love me, and for reason good;  
 For had I stayed below, I would have shown  
 More of my love to thee than leaf and bud.  
 Of that left bank, washed by the streaming Rhône<sup>iv</sup>  
 When Sorgue has joined it, I should have been lord  
 In the due time, and therewithal should own [60]  
 That horn too of Ausonia which is towered<sup>v</sup>  
 With Bari, Gaeta and Catona, down  
 From where to sea Tronto and Verde are poured.  
 Upon my brows already flamed the crown  
 Of all the land by Danube's water crost<sup>vi</sup>  
 After its German banks it has outgrown.  
 And beautiful Trinacria, whose coast<sup>vii</sup>  
 'Twixt Pachynus and Pelorus is o'erhung  
 (Beside the gulf that Eurus vexes most)  
 Not from Typhoeus' breath but fume up-flung<sup>viii</sup> [70]  
 Of sulphur, would still look to have its kings<sup>ix</sup>  
 Through me from seed of Charles and Rudolf sprung,  
 Had not ill rule, which chafes so the heart-strings  
 Of subject-peoples, moved Palermo in chime  
 To cry *Death! Death!* with eager clamourings.  
 And if my brother had foresight in time,<sup>x</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> 58. "Of that left bank . . .": Provence.

<sup>v</sup> 61. "That horn . . . of Ausonia": (Italy) is the Kingdom of Naples.

<sup>vi</sup> 65. "Of all the land . . .": Hungary.

<sup>vii</sup> 67-69. "Trinacria" is Sicily. — 'Pachynus and Pelorus': two capes. — "Eurus": the east wind.

<sup>viii</sup> 70. The darkness from Aetna is not due to the struggles of the giant Typhoeus, but to the effect of the sun's heat.

<sup>ix</sup> 71. Sicily would now be awaiting a line of kings descended from the grandfather and the father-in-law of Charles Martel, if the revolution of 1282, called the Sicilian Vespers, had not driven Charles's people from the island.

<sup>x</sup> 76. "My brother": Robert, who is represented as having adopted the traditional miserliness of Catalonia.

Ere now he had rebuffed the starveling greed  
 Of Catalonia, lest it injure him.  
 And verily should provision now be made  
 By him or another, lest upon his ship, [80]  
 Already o'erladen, heavier load be laid.  
 His nature, liberal stem's too niggard slip,  
 Has need of soldiery of such a brood  
 As lusteth not its coffers to equip."  
 "Since I believe that the beatitude  
 Which thy words flood me with, my liege, complete,  
 There where indeed begins and ends all good,  
 Is seen by thee as I see it, more sweet  
 It is to me; and this too I hold dear  
 That contemplating God thou seest it. [90]  
 Thou hast made me glad; make then this one thing clear,  
 For with thy speech a question is entwined,  
 How a sweet seed a bitter fruit may bear."  
 Thus I: and he to me: "If to thy mind  
 I show a truth, thou'lt have before thine eyes,  
 All manifest, what now thou hast behind.  
 The Good which moves and, moving, satisfies  
 The realm thou climbest, by its foresight still  
 On these vast bodies works in wondrous wise.<sup>xi</sup>  
 Nor for the natures only is there skill [100]  
 To make provision, but along with them  
 The all-perfect mind provideth too their weal.  
 Wherefore whatever this bow shoots, the same  
 Alights ordained to a provided end,  
 Even as a thing directed to its aim.  
 Were this not so, the heaven thou dost ascend  
 Would so produce its own effects, that these  
 Were ruins and not works that art has planned.  
 This cannot be, unless the Intelligences,

---

<sup>xi</sup> 99. *God has embodied his providence in the stars.*

That move these stars, from imperfection ail [110]  
 And ail, too, the first cause of their disease.<sup>xii</sup>  
 Would'st thou that I more of this truth unveil?"  
 And I: "Not so; it is impossible,  
 I see, that Nature, where the need is, fail."  
 Whence he again: "Would it be worse now, tell,  
 For man on earth were he no citizen?"  
 "Yes," I replied; "here in no doubt I dwell."  
 "And can that be, unless it be that men  
 Diversely live with diverse offices?  
 No, if aright your master guides his pen." [120]  
 Thus far he went deducing by degrees,  
 And then concluded: "Therefore must we own  
 Your effects rooted in diversities.  
 One is born Solon, and a Xerxes one,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Melchisedec another, or he who flew  
 Soaring into the sky, and lost his son.  
 The circling nature, which imprinteth true<sup>xiv</sup>  
 The mortal wax, plieth its art with heed,  
 But careth not what inn it cometh to:  
 Whence Esau is found separate in seed [130]  
 From Jacob, and Quirinus comes from so<sup>xv</sup>  
 Base father that from Mars is claimed his breed.  
 And the begotten nature would but go  
 The way of its begetter, if the power  
 Of providence o'erruled it not below.  
 Now that which was behind thee is before,  
 But that thou may'st know that thou pleasurest me,  
 With a corollary will I wrap thee o'er.  
 Nature, if she find fortune not agree

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<sup>xii</sup> 111. A defect in the work of the stars would imply a fault in their Maker.

<sup>xiii</sup> 124-126. One is born a legislator, another a general, another a priest, another a mechanic (Daedalus, who lost his son Icarus while they were flying through the air).

<sup>xiv</sup> 127. "The circling nature": the spheres.

<sup>xv</sup> 131. "Quirinus," or Romulus, was the son of such a poor father that a paternity was ascribed to the god Mars.

With her intents, like any other seed [140]  
Moved from its own soil, fails her destiny;  
And if the world beneath us took but heed  
And followed the foundation Nature lays,  
Its people would from misery be freed.  
But ye perversely in religion place  
Him born to gird the sword upon his side,  
And make him king who should a pulpit grace;  
Wherefore from the right road ye wander wide."

# Canto IX

*Dante apostrophises Clemence, Charles's daughter, still living and Queen of France, assuring her of retribution to be exacted for the wrongs suffered by Charles's family.*

*Another spirit now makes itself known: Cunizza da Romano, sister of the notorious tyrant, "the fiery brand," Ezzelin. She tells of the crimes of the people of her country, especially of the bishop of Feltro who gave up to execution a number of Ferrarese who had taken refuge with him. (Malta, line 54, was the name of several prisons; here perhaps one at Bolsena.) Fulk is the name of the next spirit to appear. He was born at Marseilles, but without naming the place lets it be inferred from elaborate geographical indications. First a troubadour, then a monk, Fulk ended as a bishop. Like Cunizza, he feels no remorse for the amours of his youth. He points out the spirit of Rahab the harlot, and denounces the corruption of the Papacy and priesthood. (The "accursed flower," line 180, is the lily stamped on the golden florin.)*

AFTER thy Charles, beautiful Clemence, thus  
Had solved my doubt, he spoke of treachery soon  
To afflict his seed and bring them cruel loss.  
But "Hold thy peace," he said; "let time roll on."  
So I can tell naught, save that, to requite  
Your wrongs, shall chastisement be duly done.  
Already the spirit of that sacred light  
Had turned unto the Sun which thrills it through,  
As to that Good whence all things drink delight.  
Ah, souls deceived and impious creatures! You  
Whose hearts from so great good pervert your aim  
And twist your foreheads unto things untrue!  
And lo, another of those splendours came  
Toward me, and signified its good intent  
To please me, by its brighter outward flame:  
The eyes of Beatrice, which were wholly bent  
Upon me, as before, made me assured

[10]

That my desire should have her dear assent.  
 "Ah, swiftly," said I, "proof to me accord<sup>i</sup>  
 That I can on thy mind reflect my mind, [20]  
 Blest spirit! and give my longing its reward."  
 Whereon the light, by me still undivined,  
 Out of its depths, whence rose its singing first,  
 Went on, as one whose joy is to be kind:  
 "In that part of the Italian land, immersed<sup>ii</sup>  
 In sin, that is between Rialto set  
 And Piave and Brenta, where their springs outburst  
 Rises a hill, and soars to no great height;  
 Whence once a fiery brand rushed down, to war<sup>iii</sup>  
 Upon that region and to ravage it. [30]  
 Out of one root with it was I born there.  
 Cunizza was I called; and here I glow,  
 Since I was conquered by this burning star.  
 But for the cause of this my lot I owe<sup>iv</sup>  
 No grief, but shrive myself in happiness:  
 Hard saying, maybe, to your crowd below.  
 Of this dear jewel, luminous in bliss,<sup>v</sup>  
 Which in our heaven neighboureth me most near,  
 Great fame remains; and ere it perishes  
 Five times shall come again the hundredth year.<sup>vi</sup> [40]  
 Think, should a man not make himself excel  
 So that the first life may a second rear?  
 Not such high aim the present rabble who dwell<sup>vii</sup>  
 'Twixt Adige and Tagliamento choose,  
 Nor yet repent beneath the tyrant's flail.

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<sup>i</sup> 19-21. *Answer me without waiting to be questioned.*

<sup>ii</sup> 25. *"In that part . . .": the March of Treviso, in the northeast corner of Italy.*

<sup>iii</sup> 29. *"A fiery brand": Ezzelin (see the Argument).*

<sup>iv</sup> 34. *"The cause": the influence of Venus.*

<sup>v</sup> 37. *"This dear jewel": Fulk of Marseilles, who reappears in line 67.*

<sup>vi</sup> 40. *Five centuries shall pass. Dante probably thought the world would come to an end at about that time.*

<sup>vii</sup> 43. *"The . . . rabble who dwell . . .": the citizens of Treviso.*

But soon shall Padua by the reedy ooze<sup>viii</sup>  
     Stain the stream watering Vicenza red,  
     Since duty still the froward folk refuse;  
 And where Cagnano and Sile join their bed<sup>ix</sup>  
     One lordeth it and goes with head held high,<sup>x</sup> [50]  
     To catch whom even now the net is spread.  
 Feltro shall wail its pastor's perfidy—<sup>xi</sup>  
     A crime so foul, that Malta's deep dungeons  
     Held never a doer of like infamy.  
 Exceeding wide and big would be the tuns  
     Sufficient to contain Ferrara's blood,  
     And weary who should weigh it, ounce by ounce,  
 Which that suave priest shall lavish in a flood  
     To prove his party zeal; and such expense  
     Shall be congenial to that country's brood. [60]  
 Above are Mirrors—Thrones ye call them—whence<sup>xii</sup>  
     God in his judgments shineth on us here,  
     So that these words commend them to our sense."  
 She ceased then; and like one whose thoughts appear  
     Gone elsewhither, she turned, as the wheel turned  
     And in its circle again included her.  
 The other Joy, of whom I had newly learned<sup>xiii</sup>  
     As something precious, made my eyes as glad  
     As a fine ruby on which a sunbeam burned.  
 Joy doth in heaven splendour to shining add, [70]  
     As smiles on earth; but down below the shade<sup>xiv</sup>  
     Outwardly darkens as the mind is sad.  
 "God sees all; and thy sight, blest spirit," I said,  
     "Is deep in Him, so that no harbourings

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<sup>viii</sup> 46-47. *In 1314 the Paduans attacking Vicenza were defeated by Can onus of Verona.*

<sup>ix</sup> 49. *"And where . . .": at Treviso.*

<sup>x</sup> 50. *"One lordeth . . .": Rizzardo, a powerful lord, who was to be murdered by an assassin.*

<sup>xi</sup> 52. *"Its pastor": the bishop of Feltro (see the Argument).*

<sup>xii</sup> 61. *The "Thrones" are the angels that direct the Heaven of Saturn.*

<sup>xiii</sup> 67. *"The other Joy": Fulk (see line 37).*

<sup>xiv</sup> 71. *"Down below": in Hell.*

Of secret wish thy vision may evade:  
 Why doth thy voice then, which forever sings  
 To charm Heaven, with those Flames' devout concert<sup>xv</sup>  
 Which make themselves a cowl of the six wings,  
 Not satisfy the longing of my heart?  
 I would not now be waiting thy request [80]  
 Were I so in thee as in me thou art."  
 Then he began to speak: "That mightiest<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Of valleys that the expanding water brims  
 Out of the ocean wreathed about Earth's breast  
 So far between its shores' estrangement streams  
 Against the sun, it is meridian there  
 Which at its starting-point horizon seems.  
 Of that valley was I a coast-dweller  
 'Twixt Ebro and Magra, which, with course soon done,<sup>xvii</sup>  
 Parts Genoese from Tuscan villager. [90]  
 Almost alike for rise and set of sun  
 Lies Bugia and the place from which I came,<sup>xviii</sup>  
 That once with warm blood made its harbour run.  
 Fulk was I called by those that knew my name;  
 And this heaven taketh my imprint to wear  
 As I from its imprinting do the same.  
 For Belus' daughter burned not fierier,<sup>xix</sup>  
 Wronging Sichaeus and Creusa both,  
 Than I, so long as curled my youthful hair,  
 Nor Rhodopeian maid, ensnared by the oath [100]  
 Demophoön swore, nor Hercules when he  
 Held Iole enclosed in his heart's troth.  
 Yet here is no repentance, only glee;  
 Not for the sin, washed from our memories,

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<sup>xv</sup> 77. "Those Flames": the six-winged Seraphim.

<sup>xvi</sup> 82-83. "That mightiest of valleys": the Mediterranean.

<sup>xvii</sup> 89. Between the Spanish river Ebro and the Italian Magra.

<sup>xviii</sup> 92. "Bugia": a town on the north coast of Africa. "The place": Marseilles.

<sup>xix</sup> 97-102. "Belus's daughter": Dido. All the following are examples of passionate love.



But for the Power which planned and could foresee.  
 We contemplate the art which beautifies  
 Result so great, and we discern the Good  
 Which turns the world below back toward the skies.  
 But that thou may'st reap all the plenitude  
 Of thy desires, engendered in this sphere, [110]  
 Behoves yet more to say, ere I conclude.  
 Thou long'st to know who lives in that light here  
 Which near to me so sparkles in its bliss  
 As the sun's ray glitters on water clear.  
 Know that within there Rahab is at peace;<sup>xx</sup>  
 And having joined our order she bestows  
 Her seal upon it in the loftiest place.  
 To this heaven, where the shadow your earth throws  
 Comes to a point, first soul to be retrieved  
 Of any, she with Christ triumphant rose; [120]  
 And meet it was that she should be received  
 In some heaven, palm of victory supreme  
 That was with those two nailèd palms achieved,<sup>xxi</sup>  
 Because in Joshua's war she prospered him  
 Toward his first glory in the Holy Land,  
 Which to the papal memory is grown dim.  
 Thy city, which was planted by his hand<sup>xxii</sup>  
 Who first presumed his maker to abhor,  
 And from whose envy woe and wail expand,  
 Puts forth and propagates the accursed flower<sup>xxiii</sup> [130]  
 Which leads both sheep and lambs astray; and 'tis  
 Not the wolves now, but shepherds, that devour.  
 The Gospel and great Doctors are for this  
 Forsaken, and only the Decretals read<sup>xxiv</sup>

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<sup>xx</sup> 115. *The story of Rahab, a harlot who hid Joshua's spies, is related in Josh. 2.*

<sup>xxi</sup> 123. *By lifting up both hands.*

<sup>xxii</sup> 127. *"Thy city": Florence, a plant of the devil.*

<sup>xxiii</sup> 130. *"The accursed flower": see the Argument.*

<sup>xxiv</sup> 134. *"The Decretals" (Canon Law) are studied for financial profit.*

With zeal, as many a margin testifies.  
To this the Pope and Cardinals are wed:  
They in their thoughts never to Nazareth come,  
There, whither Gabriel his wings outspread.  
But Vatican and the other parts of Rome  
That are its holy places, where lie hid  
Soldiers of Peter, each beneath his tomb,  
Shall of this whoredom speedily be rid.”<sup>xxv</sup>

[140]

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<sup>xxv</sup> 142. “Whoredom”: the unholy union of a corrupt Papacy and the Church.

# Canto X

*Dante and Beatrice are borne aloft to the fourth heaven, that of the sun. Here are the theologians. The Canto begins with an exhortation to the reader to admire the beauty and precision of the order of the universe; the first lines referring to the three Persons of the Trinity. A band of twelve spirits make themselves into a circle or garland round Dante and Beatrice in the centre. One of these, Thomas Aquinas, names the others, one by one. They are Albertus Magnus of Cologne, Gratian, Peter Lombard, Solomon, Dionysius the Areopagite, Orosius, Boethius, Isidore of Seville, the Venerable Bede, Richard of St. Victor, and Sigier of Brabant.*

ON HIS SON gazing, with the Love that still  
From one and from the other's breath proceeds,  
The Power primordial and ineffable  
Made with such order all that circling speeds  
Through mind or space, that he who looks on it  
Cannot but taste Him, as thereon he feeds.  
With me, then, Reader, lift thou up thy sight  
To the high spheres, directed to that part  
Where the two motions on each other smite.<sup>i</sup>  
Rejoice there to adore that Master's art  
Who inly holds it in so dear esteem  
That never will his eye from it depart.  
See how diverges there, as branch from stem,<sup>ii</sup>  
The oblique circle which the planets tread  
To minister to the world invoking them.  
And were their path not bent, the heaven would shed  
Much of its influence idly, and well-nigh  
Would every potency on earth be dead.<sup>iii</sup>  
If from the straight farther or less awry

[10]

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<sup>i</sup> 9. "The two motions": the diurnal and the annual revolutions of the sun.

<sup>ii</sup> 13. "Diverges": at Aries the ecliptic slants across the equator.

<sup>iii</sup> 18. There would be no seasons, and hence no generation.

Were the diverging, many a flaw would strain [20]  
 The world's whole order, down here and on high.  
 Now on thy bench, Reader, do thou remain,  
 Thinking on what thou hast foretasted there  
 If thou would'st banquet ere thou tire thy brain.  
 I have set before thee: feed now on this fare;  
 For that matter to which my pen I vow  
 Now wresteth to itself all of my care.  
 The greatest minister of Nature, who<sup>iv</sup>  
 Imprinteth on the world the heavens' power  
 And whose light measures time for us below. [30]  
 Conjoined with that sign spoken of before,<sup>v</sup>  
 Was circling through the spirals whereupon  
 He, day by day, shows at an earlier hour.<sup>vi</sup>  
 I was with him; yet had awareness none  
 Of the ascent more than a man is made  
 Aware of his first thought ere 'tis begun.  
 'Tis Beatrice by whom I thus am sped  
 From good to better, in such instant flight  
 That over time her action is not spread.<sup>vii</sup>  
 How must those spirits be in their nature bright, [40]  
 Which in the sun, where I had entered thus,  
 Were visible not by colour but by light!  
 Vainly invoked were art, lore, genius,  
 Things unimaginable here to show:  
 But faith believes, and longing kindles us.  
 And if imagination be too low  
 For such heights, 'tis no wonder: never yet  
 Did eye conceive what could the sun out-glow.  
 So lucent the Fourth Household there was set<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> 28. "The greatest minister": The sun.

<sup>v</sup> 31. "That sign": Aries.

<sup>vi</sup> 33. "Shows at an earlier hour": in the spring.

<sup>vii</sup> 39. Revelation (Beatrice) enlightens us instantaneously.

<sup>viii</sup> 49. "The Fourth Household": is the fourth order of the blest, the theologians.

Where their High Father feasts them all their days, [50]  
 Showing how he breathes and how he doth beget.  
 And Beatrice began: "Give thanks, give praise  
 To the angels' Sun, who to this sun of sense  
 Hath by His favour deigned thy feet to raise."  
 Never was heart of mortal so propense  
 To all devotion and to render glad  
 Itself to God with impulse so intense  
 As at those words the heart of me was made;  
 And so entire was my love given Him, that  
 Beatrice, eclipsed, passed to oblivion's shade. [60]  
 Her it displeased not; but she smiled thereat,  
 So that the splendour of her smiling eyes  
 Split my absorbed mind on things separate.  
 Then saw I living, dazzling flames devise  
 In us a centre and in themselves a crown,  
 Sweeter in voice than radiant in their guise.  
 So girdled is Latona's daughter shown<sup>ix</sup>  
 Sometimes, when vapour has so charged the air  
 That it retains the thread that makes her zone.  
 Many a jewel beautiful and rare [70]  
 Is in the court of Heaven from which I come,  
 Such that they may not be transferred elsewhere.  
 Such was the song those lights sang in their home.  
 Who is not fledged that he may fly at last  
 Up thither, may expect news from the dumb.  
 When, singing so, three times those suns had passed  
 In circle around us, burning as before,  
 Like stars next to the poles that stay steadfast,  
 They seemed like ladies whom the dancing-floor  
 Still detains, silent, listening in the pause [80]  
 Until they catch the sound of strings once more.  
 And within one I heard a voice: "Because

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<sup>ix</sup> 67. "Latona's daughter" is Diana, the moon.

The ray of grace, whereby true love in men  
 Is kindled and thereon with loving grows,  
 Multiplied in thee shineth out so plain  
 That it conducts thee up the stair divine  
 Which none goes down save to mount up again,  
 Whoso refused thee of his vial's wine  
 For quenching of thy thirst were no more free  
 Than water that descends not to the brine. [90]  
 Thou would'st learn what flowers on this garland be<sup>x</sup>  
 The blossom, ringing with enraptured gaze  
 The lady who for Heaven emboldens thee.  
 A lamb once of the sacred flock I was,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Which Dominic leadeth on the path whereby  
 He thriveth well who from the path not strays.  
 See on the right the one to me most nigh,  
 My brother and master; Albert of Cologne  
 Was he, and Thomas of Aquino I.<sup>xii</sup>  
 If thou would'st have the rest likewise be known, [100]  
 Do thou behind my words come with thine eyes  
 Circling around the blessed garland's zone.  
 The next flame issues smiling from the wise  
 Gratian, who so aided with his lore<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Both courts, that it well pleases Paradise.  
 The other who at his side adorns our choir  
 Was that Peter, who with the poor widow<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Offered his mite for Holy Church to store.  
 The fifth light which in beauty excelleth so<sup>xv</sup>  
 Breathes from such love, that all on earth beseech, [110]

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<sup>x</sup> 91. "This garland": the ring of shining spirits.

<sup>xi</sup> 94. The speaker, St. Thomas Aquinas, belonged to the Dominican order.

<sup>xii</sup> 99. Albert Magnus of Cologne was the greatest scholar of the Middle Ages.

<sup>xiii</sup> 104. Gratian, in the first half of the twelfth century, did much to establish an agreement between religious and civil law.

<sup>xiv</sup> 107. "Peter" Lombard, who wrote famous doctrinal excerpts, compared his work to the widow's mite.

<sup>xv</sup> 109. "The fifth light": of Solomon.

With hungry longing, news of it to know.  
 Within there is the lofty mind to which  
     Was given such wisdom that, if truth be true,  
     A second never could that vision reach.  
 Next shines the candle coming into view<sup>xvi</sup>  
     Which in the body saw most deep within  
     The angels' nature and the work they do.  
 In the next little radiance smiles serene  
     That pleader for the Christian times, from whose<sup>xvii</sup>  
     Fine-wrought discourse Augustine chose to glean. [120]  
 Now if from light to light thy mind's eye goes,  
     Attending on the praises I record,  
     Already for the eighth thy thirsting grows.  
 There in the vision of all good outpoured  
     The sainted soul rejoices, that strips bare<sup>xviii</sup>  
     The world's deceit to whoso hears his word.  
 The body it was hunted from down there  
     Lies in Cieldauro, and, released, it came<sup>xix</sup>  
     From torture and exile to this peace by prayer.  
 Further thou canst behold the breathing flame [130]  
     Of Isidore, of Bede, of Richard burn,<sup>xx</sup>  
     Who in contemplation more than man became.  
 The one from whom thine eyes to me return  
     Is the illumined spirit in whose grave thought  
     Slow seemed to come the death he hoped to earn.  
 'Tis Sigier's eternal light, who taught<sup>xxi</sup>  
     In the Straw Street, and there for all to hear  
     Syllogised truths that hatred on him brought."  
 Then as a clock, which calleth to us clear

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<sup>xvi</sup> 115. "The candle" is Dionysius the Areopagite, the great authority on the orders of the angels.

<sup>xvii</sup> 119. "That pleader": Paulus Orosius, whose work supplements St. Augustine's *City of God*.

<sup>xviii</sup> 125. "The sainted soul" is Boethius.

<sup>xix</sup> 128. St. Peter in "Cieldauro": a church in Pavia.

<sup>xx</sup> 131. St. Isidore wrote a very useful encyclopaedia. The Venerable Bede was the author of an important historical work. Richard of St. Victor composed a treatise *On Contemplation*.

<sup>xxi</sup> 136. "Sigier" of Brabant, a daring philosopher of the thirteenth century, was condemned for heresy.

At the hour when God's bride, having risen to tell<sup>xxii</sup> [140]  
Her love, sings matins in her bridegroom's ear,  
Where one part pulls the other and strikes the bell,  
Sounding its *ding-ding* in so sweet a tone  
As makes love in the attuned spirit swell,  
So did I see the glorious wheel roll on<sup>xxiii</sup>  
And render voice to voice, in harmony  
And in a sweetness never to be known  
Save where joy tastes its own eternity.

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<sup>xxii</sup> 140. "God's bride": the Church.

<sup>xxiii</sup> 145. "The glorious wheel": of twelve counseling prophets.



# Canto XI

*While on earth men pursue their petty ambitions in law, medicine (the "Aphorisms" of Hippocrates), the priesthood, etc., Dante felicitates himself on being with Beatrice in Heaven. St. Thomas Aquinas now recounts to him the story of the life of St. Francis of Assisi; of his devotion to Lady Poverty; his foundation of the Franciscan Order, his ministry and death. St. Thomas then speaks of the other great Captain of the Church, St. Dominic, and of the corruption which has spread among his followers.*

DISTRACTED mortals! of what paltry worth  
Are the arguments whereby ye are so prone  
Senselessly to beat down your wings to earth!  
One wooed the Law, one the Aphorisms, one  
Coveted the priesthood, and another pressed  
Through force or fraud to acquire dominion;  
One plunder, and one business, quite possessed;  
One in the pleasures of the carnal sty  
Grew weary; another his own ease caressed;  
The while, from all these things delivered, I [10]  
In heaven with Beatrice in this manner met  
Was entertained in glory upon high.  
Each spirit, when he had made the ring complete,  
Coming again where he before had been,  
Stopt, like a candle in the socket set.  
And straightway, from within that blessed sheen  
Which first had spoken to me, smiling there  
And glowing more intense, I heard begin:  
"Even as in me its lustre shineth clear,  
So gazing into the eternal light [20]  
I see thy thoughts and what their promptings are,  
Thou questionest: and, that thou construe right  
My words, would'st have me more at large re-tell

In sifted phrase, clearer to earthly sight,  
 What I but now was saying, "He thriveth well,"  
 And where I said: 'No second ever rose.'  
 And here on some distinctions must we dwell.  
 The providence, which doth the world dispose  
 By counsel, wherein mortal scrutiny  
 Is baffled ere it can the depths uncloze, [30]  
 So that the spouse of him, who with loud cry<sup>i</sup>  
 And with the blessed blood made her his bride,  
 Might go toward her Belov'd unfalteringly,  
 Sure in herself and closer to his side,  
 Appointed in her favour captains two  
 Who each on either hand should be for guide.  
 The one was all seraphic heart a-glow,<sup>ii</sup>  
 The other, by the wisdom he attained,  
 A splendour of cherubic light below.  
 Of the one I tell, because they who commend [40]  
 Either, praise both, choose which-so'er they will,  
 For all their works were to a single end.  
 Between Tupino and the dropping rill,<sup>iii</sup>  
 Blessed Ubaldo's chosen mountain-nook,  
 A fertile slope hangs from a lofty hill,  
 Whence cold and heat come to Perugia's folk  
 Through Porta Sole, and behind it weep  
 Nocera and Gualdo for the oppressor's yoke.<sup>iv</sup>  
 From this slope, where it breaketh most the steep,  
 A sun was born into the world, as this<sup>v</sup> [50]  
 Is seen somewhiles from Ganges to upleap;  
 Wherefore, who speaks of that place speaks amiss<sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 31. "The spouse": the Church, which Christ wedded on the Cross.

<sup>ii</sup> 37-38. "The one": St. Francis of Assisi. "The other": St. Dominic.

<sup>iii</sup> 43. Assisi is situated between the river Tupino and the Chiascio; St. Ubaldo had his hermitage near by.

<sup>iv</sup> 48. The little towns of "Nocera and Gualdo" "weep . . . for the . . . yoke" of the Apennines.

<sup>v</sup> 50. This real "sun," where Dante now is.

<sup>vi</sup> 52-54. The Tuscan form for Assisi, "Ascesi" (which also means "I have risen"), is less fit a word than "Orient," or Dayspring.

Saying *Ascesi*—a falling short that were—  
 But *Orient* would name truly what it is.  
 Not yet from his uprising was he far  
 When he began to make earth feel a breath  
 Of comfort stirring from his virtue rare.  
 For, young, he ran to face his father's wrath  
 For a certain lady's sake, to whom no hand<sup>vii</sup>  
 Unlocketh pleasure's gate, more than to death, [60]  
 And in his spiritual court to stand<sup>viii</sup>  
 Where *coram patre* faith to her he swore;  
 And love from day to day his ardour fanned.  
 A thousand and a hundred years and more  
 She, robbed of her first husband, unrenowned,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Unwooed, till he came, scorn of all men bore.  
 And nought availed to hear that she was found<sup>x</sup>  
 Calm with Amyclas, though by that voice hailed  
 Which made the whole world tremble at its sound;  
 Nor constancy nor fearlessness availed [70]  
 So daring that, where Mary stayed below,  
 She wept, high on the cross where Christ was nailed.  
 Lest too obscurely I continue, know  
 Francis and Poverty for these lovers true;  
 In my explicit speech accept them so.  
 Their concord and the joy their faces knew  
 Made love and wonder and gentle, sweet regard  
 To sacred thoughts the inviting avenue:  
 So first the venerable Bernard bared<sup>xi</sup>  
 His feet, and to such great peace swiftly hied, [80]  
 And thought he went slow, though he ran so hard.  
 O fecund good! O riches undescried!

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<sup>vii</sup> 59. *He espoused Lady Poverty.*

<sup>viii</sup> 61-62. *Summoned before the episcopal court of Assisi, St. Francis stripped off his clothes. — 'Coram patre': before his father.*

<sup>ix</sup> 65. *"She": Poverty. — "Her first husband": Christ.*

<sup>x</sup> 67-69. *"Amyclas," a poor fisherman, was not afraid when Caesar knocked at his door.*

<sup>xi</sup> 79. *"Bernard": the first disciple of St. Francis.*

Barefoot goes Giles, barefoot Sylvester, toward<sup>xii</sup>  
 The bridegroom, following him: so charms the bride.  
 Thence took his way this father and this lord,  
 He and his lady and all now of his house  
 Already girded with the humble cord.  
 No abjectness of heart abashed his brows  
 That he was Peter Bernardone's son,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Nor that he seemed such wondrous scorn to arouse; [90]  
 But like a king his staunch resolve anon  
 He told to Innocent, and from him the impress<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Of the first signet on his Order won.  
 When the humble folk began so to increase,  
 Following him, whose marvellous life and death  
 Were better sung in glory of Heaven's high peace,  
 Then by Honorius with a second wreath<sup>xv</sup>  
 Was this chief shepherd's holy purpose deckt  
 At prompting of the Eternal Spirit's breath.  
 When he, in thirst of martyrdom, erect<sup>xvi</sup> [100]  
 Stood in the presence of the proud Soldan  
 And preached Christ and the band of his elect,  
 Seeing the people were too crude a clan  
 To be converted, he, not tarrying more,  
 Returned to garner ripe Italian grain.  
 On the rough rock 'twixt Tiber and Arno shore  
 He took that final imprint of the rood  
 From Christ, which for two years his body bore.<sup>xvii</sup>  
 When it pleased Him who chose him for such good  
 To draw him up to his reward above, [110]  
 Earned when he took on him that lowlihood,

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<sup>xii</sup> 83. "Giles" and "Sylvester": two early disciples.

<sup>xiii</sup> 89. "Peter B.," St. Francis's father, was a rich tradesman.

<sup>xiv</sup> 92. "Innocent" III: the Pope who reluctantly sanctioned St. Francis's Rule.

<sup>xv</sup> 97. Pope "Honorius" III. "A second wreath": the final sanction.

<sup>xvi</sup> 100-102. In 1219 St. Francis accompanied the crusaders to Egypt, where he preached before the Sultan.

<sup>xvii</sup> 107. "That final imprint": the Stigmata, or marks of Christ's five wounds.

To his brethren, as to rightful heirs thereof,  
 His most dear lady he trusted, and to her  
 Bade them to cleave with ever-faithful love;  
 And from her bosom the high soul and clear,  
 To its own realm returning willed to flit,  
 And for its body wished no other bier.  
 Consider now who he was, who was fit<sup>xviii</sup>  
 Colleague to captain on deep seas the bark  
 Of Peter, steering to the goal aright. [120]  
 Such and no other was our Patriarch;  
 Wherefore who follow him as he commands  
 Taketh aboard good wares, as all can mark.  
 But greedy has grown his flock for new viands,<sup>xix</sup>  
 So that it cannot but go uncontrolled  
 And become scattered on high pasture-lands;  
 And the more wide astray over the wold  
 The sheep, departing from him, go to feed,  
 The emptier of milk they come to fold.  
 Some are there, dreading harm, who do indeed [130]  
 Cleave to the shepherd; but so few they are,  
 That for their cowls but little cloth they need.  
 Now if my voice have not seemed faint and far,  
 If all thy mind on what I said is bent,  
 If thou hast listened with attentive ear,  
 In part thy wish must surely be content;  
 For thou shalt see the plant they chip away,  
 And see too the correction that was meant  
 In 'where he thriveth, if his feet not stray.'"

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<sup>xviii</sup> 118. "Who he was": St. Dominic.

<sup>xix</sup> 124. "His flock": the Dominicans.

## Canto XII

*A second band of spirits appear, and form a circle outside the first. One of these is St. Bonaventura. He, a Franciscan, sings the praises of St. Dominic, just as Aquinas, a Dominican, had celebrated St. Francis. After telling of Dominic's birth in Spain, his unworldliness and his fervent preaching against the Albigenses, he goes on to condemn the degeneracy of his own, the Franciscan, order. He then names those famous theologians who are with him.*

SOON as the blessed flame had with the last  
Word spoken stayed the utterance of its tongue,  
The sacred mill began to circle past;<sup>i</sup>  
Nor one full revolution had it swung  
Before another enclosed it in a ring,  
And motion chimed with motion, song with song;  
Song that surpasseth all our Muses sing,  
Our Sirens, in those dulcet pipes sustained,  
As the sun's beams the beams they backward fling.  
Even as the frail film of the cloud is spanned [10]  
By two bows parallel and like in hue,  
When Juno to her handmaid gives command,<sup>ii</sup>  
Outer from inner being born anew,  
Like that lost nymph repeating sound for sound<sup>iii</sup>  
Whom love consumed, as sun consumes the dew;  
And presage then is with assurance crowned  
By the pact God with Noah certified  
That the world never shall again be drowned;  
So did these ever-living roses glide  
In circle, a double garland, joy-possessed; [20]  
So the outermost to the innermost replied.

---

<sup>i</sup> 3. "The sacred mill": the ring of spirits.

<sup>ii</sup> 12. "Her handmaid": Iris, the rainbow.

<sup>iii</sup> 14. "That lost nymph": Echo, who wasted away to a voice.

Soon as the dance and heavenly revel ceased  
 Both of the singing and the flaming, loopt  
 About us,—light caressing and caressed,—  
 All by one impulse at one moment stopt,  
 Like the eyelids that must needs in unison,  
 As pleasure prompts, be lifted or be dropt,  
 A voice that came out of the heart of one  
 Of the new lights turned me, as tractable  
 As needle to the star, to where it shone,<sup>iv</sup> [30]  
 And spoke: “The love I glow with bids me tell  
 Of the other Leader on account of whom  
 That voice hath celebrated mine so well.<sup>v</sup>  
 ‘Tis fit that, where the one is, the other come,  
 That, as together to the uttermost  
 They strove, together may their glory bloom.  
 The army of Christ, which at so dear a cost<sup>vi</sup>  
 Was armed afresh, behind the standard strayed,  
 A lagging, scattered, and mistrustful host,  
 When the Emperor who reigns forever made [40]  
 Provision for His soldiers in their hour  
 (By grace alone, not that ‘twas merited);  
 And, as hath been said, came to His bride’s succour  
 With two champions, by whose deed, whose word,  
 The folk regained the path and footing sure.  
 In that land where the sweet west wind is stirred<sup>vii</sup>  
 To open the fresh foliage to the light,  
 And therewith Europe shows her re-attired,  
 Not far from where the waves of ocean smite  
 Behind which, when his weary course he quits, [50]  
 The sun at times hideth from all men’s sight,

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<sup>iv</sup> 30. “Needle”: of a compass.

<sup>v</sup> 33. *St. Thomas, for love of his own leader, St. Dominic, has been praising St. Francis.* 33. *St. Thomas, for love of his own leader, St. Dominic, has been praising St. Francis.*

<sup>vi</sup> 37. “At so dear a cost”: by Christ’s atonement.

<sup>vii</sup> 46. “In that land . . .”: Spain.

The fortune-favoured Calaroga sits<sup>viii</sup>  
 With the great shield protecting her repose  
 Whereon the lion, who subdues, submits.  
 Therein was born the enthusiast amorous  
 Of Christian faith, the saintly wrestler, kind  
 Unto his own, severe unto his foes.  
 So charged, soon as created, was his mind  
 With quickening power, that in the womb it led  
 His mother a prophetic tongue to find.<sup>ix</sup> [60]  
 When at the sacred font were perfected  
 The espousals pledged between the faith and him,  
 Where, dowried each with mutual weal, they wed,  
 The lady assenting for him, in her dream  
 Beheld the marvel of the fruit's reward  
 Wherewith he and his heirs should come to teem;  
 And, that his name should with himself accord,  
 They called him, prompted by a spirit from here,  
 By the possessive of his only Lord.<sup>x</sup>  
 Dominic was he named; and I aver [70]  
 He was a husbandman chosen by Christ  
 To tend His garden and be His helper there.  
 Messenger and familiar of Christ  
 He showed him; for his love's first loyalties  
 Clung to the first great counsel given by Christ.<sup>xi</sup>  
 Often, awake and silent on his knees, ~  
 His nurse would find him on the floor, as who  
 Should there be saying: 'I am come for this,'  
 O father of him called truly Felix! O  
 Mother of him called also truly Joan<sup>xii</sup> [80]  
 (If the word rightly they interpret so)!

---

<sup>viii</sup> 52-54. "Calaroga": a town in Old Castile, whose shield has two lions.

<sup>ix</sup> 60-66. Before his birth, his mother had prophetic dreams; so had his godmother at his baptism which is conceived here as a wedding.

<sup>x</sup> 69. Dominicus means "of the Lord."

<sup>xi</sup> 75. The "counsels" of Christ are poverty, continence, and obedience.

<sup>xii</sup> 80. Joan signifies in Hebrew "the grace of Lord."



Not for the world for which men now toil on  
     After him of Ostia and Thaddeus; nay,<sup>xiii</sup>  
     But for the love of the true bread alone,  
 A mighty teacher soon, he went his way  
     About the vineyard to restore the vine  
     Which, tended ill, fast withers and goes grey.  
 And from the Seat which once was more benign<sup>xiv</sup>  
     To the honest poor (not that itself forswore,  
     But through him who degenerate sits therein); [90]  
 Not to dispense, for seven, three or four;<sup>xv</sup>  
     Not for the gift of the first vacancy;  
     Not for the tithes belonging to God's poor  
 He asked, but licence and authority  
     Against error to combat for what nursed  
     Those twice twelve flowers that here engarland thee.  
 With doctrine and with will then, both endorsed  
     With the apostolic office, forth he went  
     Swift as a torrent from some high vein forced.  
 On stocks and stumps of heresy he spent [100]  
     His vehemence, most impetuously where  
     Most stubborn was the opposed impediment.  
 Springing from him then divers runnels fair  
     Water the Catholic orchard near and far,  
     So that its saplings breathe more living air.  
 If such as this was one wheel of the car  
     In which the Holy Church made her defence  
     And won on the open field her civil war,  
 Plain enough must appear the excellence  
     Of the other one about whom Thomas told, [110]  
     Before my coming, in so courteous sense.  
 But, where the topmost of the wheel once rolled,<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>xiii</sup> 83. "Him of Ostia" (Enrico da Susa) and "Thaddeus": two famous professors.

<sup>xiv</sup> 88. "The Seat": the Papal chair.

<sup>xv</sup> 91. To dole out in charity only part of the money on hand. gs. "What nursed . . .": the Faith.

<sup>xvi</sup> 112. "The wheel" is St. Francis. His track is deserted by the Franciscans.

The track deserted shows now not a hint;  
 So that, where once was crust, is now but mould.  
 His household, who marched on, treading the print  
 His feet made, has so turned itself about  
 That the toe strikes on the heel's former dint;  
 And soon shall it appear what crop is got  
 From careless tillage, when the tares begin  
 Their plaint that from the barn they are shut out. [120]  
 I well know that who searches close and keen  
 Our volume, might yet find a page to cull  
 Where he might read 'I am as I have been';  
 But not Casál's or Acquasparta's school<sup>xvii</sup>  
 Breeds such, for these our scripture's meaning turn;  
 So that one shirks, and the other cramps, its rule.  
 I am the spirit of Bonaventura, born  
 In Bagnoregio; in great offices  
 The temporal care ever I had in scorn.  
 Illuminato, Austin, look! are these,<sup>xviii</sup> [130]  
 Of the first brethren vowed barefoot to go,  
 Friended with God and with the cord made His.  
 Hugh of St. Victor is here with them also,<sup>xix</sup>  
 And Peter Mangiadore and Peter of Spain,  
 Who in his twelve books spreadeth light below;  
 Nathan the prophet; the metropolitan<sup>xx</sup>  
 Chrysostom; Anselm; Donat, who was guide  
 To the first art, nor held it in disdain.  
 Rabano is here; and, shining at my side,  
 Joachim the Calabrian abbot, great [140]

---

<sup>xvii</sup> 124-125. "Casale" and "Acquasparta": the homes of the leaders of two Franciscan factions. "Scripture": the Rule of St. Francis.

<sup>xviii</sup> 130. Two early followers of St. Francis.

<sup>xix</sup> 133-134. "Hugh of St. Victor": a famous theologian. — "Peter Mangiadore": the author of a commentary on the Bible. — "Peter of Spain," a great logician, became Pope John XXI.

<sup>xx</sup> 136-140. St. John "Chrysostom" was Metropolitan of Constantinople. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, was a keen theologian. — "Donat" was a grammarian. — "Rabano": a Biblical commentator. — "Joachim," Abbot of Flora in Calabria, founded a new branch of the Cistercians.

In gift, through whom the spirit prophesied.  
So mighty a Paladin I celebrate,  
Moved by the ardour and the courtesy  
Of brother Thomas and his speech discreet;  
And moved is all this company with me.”

# Canto XIII

*In two concentric circles the twenty-four theologians dance, singing, round Dante and Beatrice. When their chant and movement are completed, the spirit of St. Thomas again addresses Dante. He has solved one of Dante's difficulties and now undertakes to solve the other, which arose from his having said that Solomon had no peer in wisdom. He is aware of Dante's objection that Adam and Christ in His human nature were supreme in wisdom, being directly created by God; but he explains that the wisdom Solomon asked for and obtained was not the speculative wisdom of a philosopher but the practical wisdom necessary to the office of a king. He closes with a warning against hasty judgments and rashly adopted opinions.*

LET him imagine, who desires to grasp  
What now I saw (and let him, while I speak,  
Hold the image like a rock firm in his clasp),  
Fifteen stars, which in divers regions prick  
The dark with lustre of such vividness  
That it wins through the air, however thick;  
Imagine, too, that Wain, for which the embrace<sup>i</sup>  
Of our heaven so sufficeth, night and morn,  
That, turning on its pole, it shows not less;  
Imagine, too, the mouth of that bright horn<sup>ii</sup>  
Which starteth from the central axle-spike  
Round which the prime revolving wheel is borne,  
To have made themselves two constellations, like  
What Minos' daughter hung in heaven to blaze<sup>iii</sup>  
When she felt death's cold frost upon her strike;  
And one within the other to have its rays,  
And both in such a manner to spin past  
That they should circle upon opposing ways;

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 7. "That Wain": the Great Bear or Dipper.

<sup>ii</sup> 10. "That bright horn": the Little Bear.

<sup>iii</sup> 14. "Minos' daughter": Ariadne, whose crown was turned into a constellation.

And he will have as in a shadow traced  
 The real constellations, the two rings, [20]  
 Dancing around the point where I was placed,  
 Since it as much transcends our happenings  
 As the most swift of all the heavens whirled round<sup>iv</sup>  
 Is swifter than Chiana's oozy springs.  
 Bacchus nor Paeon did their chanting sound,<sup>v</sup>  
 But three persons in the divine nature  
 And it and the human in one person found.  
 Circling and song by now completed were;  
 And the hallowed flames their heed on us bestowed,  
 Rejoicing to alternate care with care. [30]  
 Broke then the hush of divine spirits who glowed  
 In concert, that flame which had told about<sup>vi</sup>  
 The wondrous life of the poor man of God.  
 It said: "Now that the one sheaf of thy doubt  
 Is threshed and garnered up, sweet love anew  
 Inviteth me to beat the other out.  
 Thou hold'st that in the breast wherefrom God drew<sup>vii</sup>  
 The rib to mould that lovely cheek and chin  
 Whose palate cost the world unending rue,  
 And in that breast which, when the spear drove in,<sup>viii</sup> [40]  
 Made satisfaction, after and before,  
 Such as to dip the scale against all sin,  
 Such light as human nature skills to store  
 Was by that Virtue all infused, which made  
 One and the other human by its power.  
 Therefore thou wonderest at the thing I said  
 When I declared the wisdom which hath seat<sup>ix</sup>  
 In the fifth light no second to have had.

---

<sup>iv</sup> 23-24. "The most swift . . .": the Primum Mobile. The "Chiana" is a sluggish stream in Tuscany.

<sup>v</sup> 25. "Paeon": Apollo.

<sup>vi</sup> 32-33. "That flame": St. Thomas. "The poor man": St. Francis.

<sup>vii</sup> 37-38. "The breast" of Adam, whence was taken the "rib" to form Eve.

<sup>viii</sup> 40. "That breast": of Christ.

<sup>ix</sup> 47. "The wisdom": of Solomon.

Open thine eyes to the answer I now complete.  
 Thou shalt see thy belief and my reply [50]  
 In truth, as in the circle's centre, meet.  
 That which not dieth and that which can die  
 Reflect but that idea in their gleam<sup>x</sup>  
 Which in His love our Sire begets on high.  
 That living radiance which so sends its beam  
 From its bright source, that it parts not from it  
 Nor from the Love that is en-threed with them,  
 Doth of its bounty its own rays unite,  
 As though in a mirror, in nine subsistences,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Itself remaining one eternal light. [60]  
 Thence it descends to the least potencies<sup>xii</sup>  
 Downward from act to act, becoming soon  
 Such as makes only brief contingencies.  
 And these contingencies may well be shown  
 To be the things engendered by the stress  
 Of moving heaven, from seed or else unsown.<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Their wax and that which doth the wax impress  
 Vary; beneath the ideal stamp we find,  
 Therefore, a brilliance now more and now less;  
 Whence comes it that, though of the self-same kind, [70]  
 Trees in their fruiting better are or worse;  
 And ye are born with diverse gifts of mind.  
 Were the heavens operant in propitious course,  
 And perfect and precise the moulded wax,  
 The seals full brilliance would shine out perforce;  
 But Nature's rendering ever something lacks,  
 Working as the artist who hath skill by dint  
 Of his art's practice but a hand that shakes.  
 Yet if the fervent Love dispose and print

---

<sup>x</sup> 53. "That idea": "In the beginning was the Word."

<sup>xi</sup> 59. The "nine subsistences" are the nine orders of angels.

<sup>xii</sup> 61-63. "To the least potencies": to the elements. "Brief contingencies": perishable things.

<sup>xiii</sup> 66. "Moving heaven": Nature. Animals and vegetables "from seed," minerals without seed.

The lucent vision of the primal Power, [80]  
 There is perfection without flaw or stint.  
 So the dust of the earth was made worthy of yore<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Of all perfection breathing flesh can win;  
 And thus the Virgin's womb its burden bore.  
 Thy opinion therefore I commend; I mean,  
 That the human nature never was nor can  
 Be such as was in those two persons seen.  
 Now here if my discourse no further ran,  
 'How comes it then, that this one had no peer?'  
 Would be the words with which thy speech began, [90]  
 But, that what still is not clear may be clear,  
 Think who he was and what cause moved him (when  
 He was commanded Ask!) to make his prayer.  
 I have not argued so that 'tis not plain  
 He was a king, who therefore wisdom chose,<sup>xv</sup>  
 That equal to his office he might reign.  
 Twas not to know what numbers may compose  
 Heaven's movers here; nor if *necesse* could<sup>xvi</sup>  
 With a contingent in *necesse* close;  
 Nor whether a *primus motus* be allowed;<sup>xvii</sup> [100]  
 Nor if in a half-circle could be made  
 A triangle that no right angle showed.  
 Hence, if thou note all that I say and said,  
 Royal prudence is that vision without peer  
 To which the arrow of my intention sped.  
 And if on 'rose' thy gaze be fastened clear,<sup>xviii</sup>  
 Thou'lt see that it hath solely in regard  
 Kings, which are many and the good kings rare.  
 With this distinction then, accept my word,

---

<sup>xiv</sup> 82-84. This happened when God formed Adam, and when Christ was conceived.

<sup>xv</sup> 95. The gift which Solomon obtained was not general intelligence but kingly prudence.

<sup>xvi</sup> 98. "Nor if *necesse* . . .": a scholastic problem in logic.

<sup>xvii</sup> 100. "A *primus motus*": a motion independent of any cause.

<sup>xviii</sup> 106. "On 'rose'": "A second never could that vision reach" (Par. X, line 114).

Which thus consists with what faith bids thee say [110]  
 Of the first father and our Delight adored.  
 Ever let this, like lead, thy feet down-weigh  
 To make thee, where thou see'st not clear, move slow,  
 Like one who is weary, both to Yea and Nay.  
 For he among the foolish stands right low  
 Who affirms without distinction or denies,  
 With whichsoever case he has to do;  
 Since often it haps that rashness of surmise  
 Leadeth the judgment on false roads to start;  
 Then fond desire the understanding ties. [120]  
 On voyage worse than vain doth he depart  
 (Since he returns not such as he sets out),  
 Who fishes for the truth and lacks the art.  
 Of this are proofs the world hath not forgot,  
 Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson—great<sup>xix</sup>  
 Multitudes going, who where they went knew not.  
 Such was Sabellius' and such Arius' fate,<sup>xx</sup>  
 And fools who were to Scripture as a sword  
 Reflecting crooked, faces that are straight.  
 Let not the people be too self-assured [130]  
 In judging early, as who should count the rows  
 Of green blades in the field ere they matured.  
 For I have seen how first the wild-brier shows  
 Her sprays, all winter through, thorny and stark,  
 And then upon the topmost bears the rose;  
 And I have seen ere now a speeding barque  
 Run all her sea-course with unswerving stem  
 And close on harbour go down to the dark.  
 Let no Dame Bertha or Sir Martin deem,<sup>xxi</sup>  
 Because they see one steal and one give all, [140]  
 They see as divine forethought seeth them;

---

<sup>xix</sup> 125. *Greek philosophers criticised by Aristotle.*

<sup>xx</sup> 127. *"Sabellius" and "Arius" are heretical theologians.*

<sup>xxi</sup> 139. *"Dame Bertha or Sir Martin": "Tom, Dick, and Harry."*



For the one yet may rise and the other fall.”

# Canto XIV

*Beatrice begins to speak to Dante; and since she speaks from the centre of the circle of spirits and St. Thomas from the circle, the image is suggested to Dante of the movement of water in a bowl, moving outward or inward according as the bowl is struck from outside or inside. What is in Dante's thought is apparent to Beatrice before he has formulated it: he wants to know if the glorified body, after the resurrection, will retain its lustre eternally; and, if it does, will the eyes endure to look on its brilliance. She asks the spirits to satisfy him on these points; and Solomon answers both questions in the affirmative. Other spirits now appear, at first faintly descried like stars at evening, and they form themselves into a third circle round the other two.*

*Dante and Beatrice now mount to the fifth heaven. It is the heaven of Mars; and here the spirits of warriors and martyrs appear in the form of a dazzling cross.*

FROM CENTRE up to rim, and so from rim  
To centre, water moves within a bowl  
As struck from outside or inside the brim.  
Into my mind what thus I speak of stole  
Upon a sudden, as to an end was brought  
The speech of Thomas's illustrious soul,  
Because of the similitude I caught  
From his discourse and that of Beatrice,  
Whom it pleased, after him, to speak her thought:  
"This man needs (though to tell what need is his [10]  
Neither with voice, nor in thought yet, hath power)  
To pierce to another truth's deep mysteries.  
Tell him, then, if the light, whence comes to flower  
Your being, is destined to remain with you  
Eternally, as in the present hour;  
And if it still remaineth, tell him how  
When you in body are visible again  
It may no injury to your vision do."

As, all at once, the dancers in a chain,  
 By a gust of gladness urged and drawn along, [20]  
 More blithely step and lift a louder strain,  
 So at entreaty so devout and strong  
 The sacred circles yet more joyous grew  
 In their revolving and their wondrous song.  
 Whoso laments that, to live there anew,  
 We here must die, has known not what regale  
 Is in the freshness of the eternal dew.  
 That One and Two and Three who ever shall<sup>i</sup>  
 Live and reign ever as Three and Two and One,  
 Not circumscribed but circumscribing all, [30]  
 Thrice by those spirits, by each and every one,  
 Was hymned with such melodious acclaim,  
 'Twere full reward for all good ever done.  
 And I heard breathe from the divinest flame<sup>ii</sup>  
 Of the inmost, smaller circle a voice, modest  
 As haply on Mary from the angel came,<sup>iii</sup>  
 Answering thus: "As long as lasts the feast  
 Of Paradise, so long, by our love lit,  
 Shall we in such a radiancy be drest.  
 Its brightness answereth our ardour's heat,<sup>iv</sup> [40]  
 Ardour the vision; and that shall be as great  
 As, beyond worth, it has grace given to it.  
 When flesh in glorified and sainted state  
 Shall be re-clothed, our persons in esteem  
 Shall be more pleasing, being then complete;  
 Whence shall increase whate'er the Good Supreme  
 On us of undeserved light shall bestow,  
 Light which conditions us to look on Him.  
 The vision then must needs intenser grow,

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<sup>i</sup> 28-30. *The mystery of the Trinity.*

<sup>ii</sup> 34. "From the . . . flame": of Solomon.

<sup>iii</sup> 36. "The angel": Gabriel.

<sup>iv</sup> 40-43. "Answereth": is proportionate. "The vision": of God. "When . . .": on the Judgment Day.

Intenser the ardour which from vision came, [50]  
 And thence the light's intenser overflow.  
 But like the coal that giveth out the flame<sup>v</sup>  
 Which by its living glow is overcome,  
 So that it keeps its aspect still the same,  
 So this effulgence wherein now we bloom  
 Shall by outshining flesh be conquered quite,  
 Which all this while lies in an earthly tomb.  
 Nor shall such light have power to daze our sight;  
 For the organs of the body shall acquire  
 Strength to support all that may most delight." [60]  
 So quick and eager seemed then either choir  
 To cry Amen, that thus they seemed to announce  
 Plainly for their dead bodies their desire;  
 Not only for their own sake, but perchance  
 For mother and father and others who were dear  
 Ere they became flames in the eternal dance.  
 And lo! around, surpassing what was there,  
 A lustre, all of equal brilliance, grew  
 Like brightness on the horizon growing clear.  
 As in the sky, when evening still is new, [70]  
 Comes the apparition of faint-shining things<sup>vi</sup>  
 So that the sight seems and yet not seems true,  
 Methought that I perceived there new beings  
 Making themselves a circle like a wreath  
 Outside the other two resplendent rings.  
 O very sparkle of the Holy Breath!  
 How swiftly furnace-bright it grew to be,  
 Such as my daunted eyelids fell beneath!  
 But Beatrice disclosed herself to me  
 Smiling in beauty such that I leave this [80]  
 Among those sights barred to my memory.  
 Therefrom mine eyes regained their faculties;

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<sup>v</sup> 52. *The coal glows through the fame that envelops it.*

<sup>vi</sup> 71. *"Things": stars, faint in the twilight.*

And, raising them, I saw me now transferred  
 Sole with my lady to a loftier bliss.  
 That I was lifted higher was averred  
 By the star's fiery smile, whose kindled face  
 Redder to me than is his wont appeared.  
 With my whole heart and that unvoiced address  
 Which all men own, burnt sacrifice I made  
 To God, such as befitted this new grace. [90]  
 Nor did the sacrificial ardour fade  
 Out of my bosom, ere I knew my vows  
 Accepted, and my offering perfected;  
 For with such redness, and so luminous,  
 Splendour appeared within two beams; whereat  
 I cried: "O Sun that dost adorn them thus!"  
 As "twixt the poles, with lesser lights and great  
 Patterned, the Galaxy so whitely glows<sup>vii</sup>  
 That thereof sages question and debate,  
 So in the depth of Mars were clustered those [100]  
 Full beams to make the venerated sign<sup>viii</sup>  
 Which quadrants, joined within a round, compose.  
 Here memory overcomes all wit of mine;  
 For that cross in such glory beacons Christ  
 That I must all comparison resign:  
 But whoso takes his cross and follows Christ  
 Shall one day pardon this my helpless case  
 When he shall see that flashing forth of Christ.  
 From horn to horn, and between top and base,  
 Moved lights that sparkled in a livelier sort [110]  
 When each the other came to meet and pass.  
 So here on earth we see, level and thwart,  
 Rapid and slow, with varying aspect freaked,  
 The particles of bodies long and short<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> 98. "The Galaxy": the Milky Way.

<sup>viii</sup> 101-102. "The . . . sign': the Cross. "Quadrants": two diameters of a circle.

<sup>ix</sup> 114. "The particles": the bits of dust dancing in a ray of sunshine in a dark room.

Dance through the ray wherewith is often streaked  
 The shadow, which against the glare of noon  
 Men's art contrives, their comfort to protect.  
 As viol and harp in harmony commune  
 With many strings that chime sweet on the ear  
 Of one who apprehendeth not the tune,  
 So from the lights I there beheld appear [120]  
 Was harmonised a music on the Rood  
 That ravished me, though the import was not clear.  
 I knew the hymn to be of lofty mood  
 For 'Rise' and 'Conquer' came into my ken  
 As to whoso hears but hath not understood.  
 There was I so enamoured, that till then  
 I had not been by anything possessed  
 That with such sweetness did my soul enchain.  
 It may be I seem too boldly to protest, [130]  
 Slighting those eyes of beauty and delight<sup>x</sup>  
 Gazing on which my longing is at rest;  
 But he who minds him that the more the height  
 The more power the quick seals of beauty use,  
 And that I had not turned yet to their light,  
 May excuse that which for my own excuse  
 I accuse me of, and know I tell truth here;  
 For naught I say the holy joy eschews,  
 Since, as it mounteth, so it glows more clear.

---

<sup>x</sup> 131-134. "Those eyes" and "the quick seals of beauty" are Beatrice's eyes, which become more potent from sphere to sphere.

# Canto XV

*A star detaches itself from the right arm of the cross and descends to the foot of it. It is the soul of Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida. After he has welcomed Dante with affection, Dante excuses himself from thanking Cacciaguida in words, because, unlike the spirits in Paradise, he is conscious of a disparity between his feeling and the power to express it. His ancestor then describes the Florence of his own time, its simple manners and familiar life, and contrasts with it the extravagance and dissipation of the present.*

A GRACIOUS will whereinto is distilled  
Forever love that righteous thoughts inspire,  
As base greed in the bad will is fulfilled,  
Imposed a silence upon that sweet lyre,<sup>i</sup>  
And made the sound of sacred strings to cease  
Whereof Heaven's right hand pulls and slacks the wire.  
How shall those beings honest prayers dismiss  
Who, to encourage me to make my prayer  
To them, of one accord now held their peace?  
'Tis well that he without end should despair [10]  
Who for the love of what cannot endure  
Eternally, of this love strips him bare.  
As through the evening sky, serene and pure,  
Will trail from time to time a sudden blaze<sup>ii</sup>  
And the idle eyes from their repose allure,  
Seeming a star that from its region strays,  
Save that from that place, where it seemed to ignite,  
No star is lost, and it but short time stays,  
So from the arm that stretches on the right  
Down that cross to its foot a star began [20]  
To glide from the full cluster, blazing bright,

---

<sup>i</sup> 4. "Lyre": the spirits of the Cross.

<sup>ii</sup> 14. "A sudden blaze": a meteor.

Nor swerved the jewel from its ribbon's span,<sup>iii</sup>  
 But shooting down the radiant strip it shone  
 Like fire behind an alabaster pane.  
 So fondly, if trust our greatest Muse hath won,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Anchises' shade proffered his arms' embrace,  
 When in Elysium he perceived his son.  
 "O my own blood! O brimming with God's grace!  
 To whom was ever twice, as unto thee,  
 The gate thrown open of Heaven's holy place?" [30]  
 So that light spoke: I hearkened heedfully:  
 Then to my lady turned again mine eyes;  
 And on both sides amazement mastered me.  
 For such a smile was glowing in her eyes,  
 Methought with mine the deepest depth to sound  
 Both of my grace and of my paradise:  
 Then, joy to hear and see, the spirit crowned  
 His proem with things added, which my mind  
 Understood not, his speech was so profound.  
 Neither was this obscurity designed, [40]  
 But of necessity; for his thought I know  
 Ranged high above the mark of mortal kind.  
 And when the bow of ardent love was so  
 Unbent, that his discourse descended toward  
 The target of our intellect below,  
 What first I comprehended was this word:  
 "Blessed be thou, O Three and One, that hast  
 Such courtesy upon my seed outpoured!"  
 Then followed: "A dear hunger from long past  
 Drawn from the great Book's reading, wherein white<sup>v</sup> [50]  
 Nor black is ever changed from first to last,  
 Thou hast assuaged, my son, within this light

---

<sup>iii</sup> 22. *The bright spirit did not go outside the Cross.*

<sup>iv</sup> 25-27. "Our greatest Muse": *Virgil, who, in the Aeneid, describes the meeting of Aeneas and the shade of his father, Anchises.*

<sup>v</sup> 50. "The great Book": *of Fate.*



Wherein I speak to thee: thanks be to her  
 Who with wings plumed thee for the lofty flight.  
 Thou deem'st that thy thought passeth to me clear  
 From him who is First, as five and six expand  
 From one, provided this is known for sure.  
 Who I am, therefore, thou dost not demand,  
 Nor why I seem more full of happiness  
 Than any other in this rejoicing band: [60]  
 Rightly thou thinkest; for both great and less  
 In this life on the mirror gaze, wherein,  
 Before thou think'st, thou dost thy thought express.  
 But that the sacred love I watch within  
 With constant gaze, and which doth in me breed  
 Sweet longing, may the more fruition win,  
 Let thy voice firm, joyous and bold proceed;  
 Utter the will, utter the wish whereto  
 My answer hath already been decreed."  
 I turned me round to Beatrice; and she knew [70]  
 Before I spoke, and smiled me a signal, whence  
 The wings of my desire more urgent grew.  
 I began: "Feeling and Intelligence,  
 When the Prime Equality was to you made known,  
 For you were poised, equal in influence,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Because the sun that warmed you and on you shone  
 With heat and light hath such an equal might  
 That it makes beggary of comparison.  
 But reason and feeling in our mortal plight  
 (And well ye know the impediments that thwart) [80]  
 Unequally are feathered for their flight.  
 Hence I, who am mortal, feel that I have part  
 In this disparity, and must thank thee for  
 Thy fatherly welcome only in my heart.  
 Yet, living topaz, thee I may implore,

---

<sup>vi</sup> 75. *The blest have no wish which they have not intelligence to fulfill.*

Who dost this jewel beyond price begem,  
 That with thy name thou gladden me yet more."  
 "O leaf of mine!" thus he commenced his theme,  
 "In whose arrival happiness I knew,  
 Merely awaiting thee, I was thy stem." [90]  
 Continuing: "He from whom thy kindred drew  
 Their name, and who hath passed the hundredth year<sup>vii</sup>  
 Circling the Mount's first cornice for his rue,  
 Was my son, father to thy grandfather;  
 And fit it is that thy good works abate  
 The weariness that he hath yet to bear.  
 Florence within the ancient cincture sate<sup>viii</sup>  
 Wherefrom she still hears daily tierce and nones,  
 Dwelling in peace, modest and temperate.  
 She wore no chain or crownset with stones, [100]  
 No gaudy skirt nor brodered belt, to gather  
 All eyes with more charm than the wearer owns.  
 Nor yet did daughter's birth dismay the father;  
 For dowry and nuptial-age did not exceed  
 The measure, upon one side or the other.  
 There was no house too vast for household need;  
 Sardanapalus was not come to show<sup>ix</sup>  
 What wanton feats could in the chamber speed.  
 Nor yet could over Montemalo crow<sup>x</sup>  
 Your Uccellatoio, which, as it hath been [110]  
 Passed in its rise, shall in its fall be so.  
 Bellincion Berti girdled have I seen<sup>xi</sup>  
 With leather and bone: and from her looking-glass  
 His lady come with cheeks of raddle clean.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 92-93. "He from whom . . .": Alighiero, son of Cacciaguida. "The Mount's first cornice": the circle of *Pride*, in *Purgatory*.

<sup>viii</sup> 97-98. "The ancient cincture": the old city walls, beside which stood the ancient Abbey, whose bell marked the hours ("tierce and nones") for the Florentines.

<sup>ix</sup> 107. "Sardanapalus," king of Assyria, was notorious for his luxury.

<sup>x</sup> 109-111. Rome was not yet surpassed in splendour by Florence.

<sup>xi</sup> 112. "Berti": a worthy citizen.

I have seen a Nerli and a Vecchio pass  
     In jerkin of bare hide, and hour by hour  
     Their wives the flax upon the spindle mass.  
 O fortunate! for each one was secure  
     Of her own burial-place; none in her bed  
     Deserted yet because of France's lure. [120]  
 One would keep watch over the cradle's head,  
     And, soothing, babble in that fond idiom  
     Which maketh each new father and mother glad.  
 One, as the tresses off the distaff come,  
     Would tell the story in her children's ear  
     Of Trojans, of Fiesole, and Rome.  
 Cianghella or Lapo Salterello there<sup>xii</sup>  
     As singular a portent would have been  
     As now Cornelia, Cincinnatus, were.  
 To so comely a life and so serene [130]  
     Of citizens that to their city's claim  
     Replied with loyalty, a so pleasant inn,  
 Mary, invoked with cryings on her name,  
     Gave me; and in your ancient Baptistery  
     Christian and Cacciaguida I became.  
 Moronto and Eliseo brothered me;  
     My wife came to me from the vale of Po:  
     It was from her thy surname was to be.  
 Then in the train of Conrad did I go,<sup>xiii</sup>  
     The emperor, who belted me his knight; [140]  
     Such honour my good service raised me to.  
 With him I went, the iniquity to fight  
     Of those usurping infidels who rule  
     (Fault of the Pastors) what is yours by right.  
 There was I stript free by that people foul  
     Of the world's swathing of deceitfulness,  
     The love of which corrupteth many a soul,

---

<sup>xii</sup> 127. "Cianghella" and "Lapo" were notorious for their immodesty.

<sup>xiii</sup> 139. "Conrad" III, of Swabia, leader of the crusade of 1147.

And came from martyrdom into this peace.”

# Canto XVI

*Cacciaguida informs Dante, in response to his question, of the date at which he lived, and tells him about the population of Florence, then so much smaller than in Dante's time; the city being contained in the space between the battered statue of Mars on the Ponte Vecchio and the church of St. John the Baptist. Cacciaguida goes on to enumerate the great Florentine families of his day and to tell of their decline, attributed by him to admixture of blood from outside the city.*

*The "great baron" (line 128), who made so many knights, is Ugo il Grande, Marquis of Tuscany. Buondelmonte was killed at the instance of Mosca (see *Inferno*, Canto XXVIII) at the foot of the statue of Mars. The arms of Florence, originally white lilies on a red field, were changed by the Guelfs to red lilies on white.*

O THOU small dignity of noble blood!  
If thou make men to glory in thee below  
Here, where we faint, pursuing the true good,  
Never will I account it wonder now;  
For where desire warps not, being immune  
(I mean in Heaven), that pride did I avow.  
Truly thou art a garment shrinking soon;  
So that, if naught daily to thee accrue,  
Time goes about thee with the shears that prune.  
With that which Rome permitted first, the *You*<sup>i</sup> [10]  
(In which her citizens least persevere),  
I now began to address that soul anew;  
Whence Beatrice, withdrawn a pace less near,  
Smiled, and seemed like to her who, standing by,  
Coughed at the first fault told of Guinevere.<sup>ii</sup>  
"You are my father," I said, "you fortify  
My heart to speak out boldly all I will;

---

<sup>i</sup> 10. "The *You*": the respectful "voi" instead of the familiar "tu."

<sup>ii</sup> 15. In the Old French romance of *Launcelot du Lac*, the Dame de Malehaut coughed on hearing the impassioned speech of Guinevere.

You lift me, so that I am more than I.  
 My mind with gladness from so many a rill  
 Brims, it exults that, being so full-stored, [20]  
 It can contain all, nor be burst and spill.  
 O tell me then, firstling of mine adored!  
 What ancestry was yours, and what the date  
 Whereof your years of boyhood could record.  
 Tell me of the sheepfold of St. John, how great<sup>iii</sup>  
 It was then, and who in it were the folk  
 Accounted the most worthy of highest seat."  
 As a coal quickens, at the wind's soft stroke  
 Breathed into flame, so now began to glow  
 That light at the caressing words I spoke. [30]  
 And as to the eye its beauty appeared to grow  
 So with a voice more sweet and gentle made  
 But using not the modern mode we know,  
 He spoke: "From that day when was Ave said<sup>iv</sup>  
 To the birth in which my sainted mother earned  
 Deliverance, and the burden of me shed,  
 Five hundred fifty and thirty times returned  
 This star to its own Lion, and with its face  
 Of fire beneath his paws rekindling burned.  
 My ancestor and I had for birth-place [40]  
 That last ward, first upon his onward way<sup>v</sup>  
 Reached by the runner in your annual race.  
 Of my forbears let this be enough to say:  
 Of who they were, and whence, 'twere seemlier  
 To hold one's peace, rather than make display.  
 'Twixt Mars and Baptist all who at that time were<sup>vi</sup>  
 Capable of arms would in their number sum

---

<sup>iii</sup> 25. "St. John" the Baptist: the patron saint of Florence.

<sup>iv</sup> 34. "From that day . . .": from the Annunciation to the birth of Cacciaguida (in 1091), Mars returned 580 times to the constellation of Leo.

<sup>v</sup> 41. "That last ward": the Mercato Vecchio.

<sup>vi</sup> 46. "Twixt Mars and Baptist": see the Argument.

But a fifth part of those now living there.  
 But the citizens, mixt now from Campi and from<sup>vii</sup>  
 Certaldo and Filigne, had their blood [50]  
 Then, to the least of craftsmen, pure of scum.  
 How much better it were to have that brood  
 For neighbours rather, and that your boundary  
 At Trespiano and Galluzzo stood,  
 Than, having them inside, the stench to aby  
 Of Aguglion's churl and him of Signa, one  
 Who for a jobbery sharpens still his eye!  
 Had but that clergy, most degenerate known,  
 Not been to Caesar as a stepmother  
 But tender as a mother to her son, [60]  
 One, Florentine now, buyer and barterer,  
 To Simifonte had been made to pack,<sup>viii</sup>  
 Where his grandfather plied for a mean hire;  
 The Conti in Montemurlo would be back,  
 The Cerchi in Acone parish still,  
 Nor Valdigueve a Buondelmonte lack.  
 Confusion of persons ever was and will  
 Be that from which the city's woes derive,  
 As from superfluous food the body's ill;  
 And a blind bull falls with more headlong dive [70]  
 Than a blind lamb, and often a single sword  
 Cuts sharper and with a wider sweep than five.  
 If Luni and Urbisaglia thou regard,<sup>ix</sup>  
 How they are fallen, and how Chiusi too,  
 And with them Sinigaglia, not so hard  
 A thing will it appear, nor strange and new  
 (Since cities have a term to which they tend)  
 To hear how families themselves undo.  
 All your affairs, like you, on death depend,

---

<sup>vii</sup> 49-50. "Campi . . . , Certaldo and Filigne": towns belonging to Florence.

<sup>viii</sup> 62. "Simifonte": a stronghold in Val d'Elsa, annexed by Florence in 1202.

<sup>ix</sup> 73-75. "Luni and Urbisaglia" were fallen cities; "Chiusi" and "Sinigaglia" were in decay.

Though this some long-enduring things conceal; [80]  
 And briefly come your own lives to their end.  
 And as the moon's heaven rolling in its wheel  
 Covereth and uncovereth without cease  
 The shores, so Fortune does with Florence deal.  
 Therefore no marvel shall appear in this  
 Which I shall tell of each high Florentine  
 Whose fame is hidden among Time's secrecies.  
 I have seen Ughi and Catellini shine,<sup>x</sup>  
 Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, and by their side  
 The Alberichi, all noble in their decline; [90]  
 Seen Soldanieri's and the Arca's pride  
 And the Sannella; houses old as great;  
 Ardinghi and Bostichi with them vied.  
 Over the gate, now burdened with the weight<sup>xi</sup>  
 Of a new felony, so fraught with shame,  
 That soon the ship will jettison its freight,  
 The Ravignani dwelt, from whom there came  
 Count Guy, and whosoever since hath ta'en  
 On him the lofty Bellincione's name.  
 He of La Pressa knew how to rule men; [100]  
 And in the house of Galigaio were  
 The gilded hilt and pommel, even then.  
 High stood Sacchetti, Giuochi, pillared Vair,  
 Fifanti and Barucci and Galli, and those  
 Who of the cheating bushel blushed to hear.<sup>xii</sup>  
 Still great the stock was whence Calfucci rose;  
 And to the curule office still were drawn  
 Sizii and men of Arrigucci's house.  
 O how great have I seen these, now undone

---

<sup>x</sup> 88-93. *Old families that have declined or disappeared.*

<sup>xi</sup> 94. "Over the gate . . .": in 1280 the Cerchi, leaders in party strife, bought the palace of the Counts Guidi.

<sup>xii</sup> 105. "Who of the cheating bushel . . .": the Chiaramontesi, who disgraced themselves as salt commissioners.



By pride! and, with the balls of gold made fair,<sup>xiii</sup> [110]  
 Flowered Florence in the triumphs they had won.  
 Such were the sires of them who now, whene'er  
 Your church's bishopric is vacant, keep  
 Prolonged consistory, and fatten there.  
 The insolent tribe that like a dragon leap  
 On him who flies them, but to him whose mien  
 Shows tooth or purse are milder than a sheep,  
 Was rising, though from small folk; Ubertain  
 Donato was but little pleased to know  
 His father-in-law had made him of their kin. [120]  
 Already to the market-place below  
 Had Caponsacco come down from the hill:  
 Giuda, Infangato, yet had worth enow.  
 I'll tell a thing true, though incredible:  
 One entered the small circuit by a gate<sup>xiv</sup>  
 That took its name from the Pear's blazon still.  
 Each one who shares the fair arms of the great<sup>xv</sup>  
 Baron, whose virtue and whose renown, revived,  
 The feast-days of St. Thomas celebrate,  
 Knighthood and privilege from him derived, [130]  
 Though that one now joins with the populace<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Who for the escutcheon a gold fringe contrived.  
 Gualterotti and Importuni thrive apace;<sup>xvii</sup>  
 And, had they still abstained from neighbours new,  
 The Borgo now were a more peaceful place.  
 The house from which arose your weeping, through<sup>xviii</sup>  
 The just wrath that hath murdered you and set

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 110. "The balls of gold": on the shield of the Lamberti family.

<sup>xiv</sup> 125-126. "The small circuit": the old city walls. "A gate": The Porta Peruzza.

<sup>xv</sup> 127-128. "The great Baron" is Hugh the Great (see the Argument), who died in 1001, on St. Thomas's day.

<sup>xvi</sup> 131. The knight who "now joins with the populace" is Giano della Bella

<sup>xvii</sup> 133. These families also fell from their high estate.

<sup>xviii</sup> 136-141. "The house": the Amidei. The bloody feud between the Amidei and the Buondelmonti divided all Florence for a long time. One Buondelmonte had forsakeh his betrothed, one of the Amidei. The "Ema" is a little stream.

A term to all the joyous life ye knew,  
 Was honoured, and the houses with it knit.  
 O Buondelmonte, ill didst thou to flee [140]  
 Those nuptials, when another prompted it!  
 Glad had been many, who now must mournful be,  
 If God thy body had into Ema thrown  
 The first time that the city welcomed thee.  
 Yet fit it was that to that battered stone,<sup>xix</sup>  
 Which guards the bridge, our Florence should present  
 A victim in the last peace she hath known.  
 With these folk and with those who with them went  
 I beheld Florence in such peace immersed  
 That she knew no occasion to lament. [150]  
 With these I saw her people in justice nursed  
 And glory, so that never was espied  
 The lily upon a victor's lance reversed,<sup>xx</sup>  
 No, nor by feud and faction crimson-dyed."

---

<sup>xix</sup> 145. "That battered stone": the statue of Mars at the foot of which Buondelmonte was killed.

<sup>xx</sup> 153. "The lily": see the Argument.

# Canto XVII

*Dante now tells of the warnings he had received (from Farinata and Brunetto Latini in Hell, and from other souls in Purgatory), about his future; and he now asks his ancestor to tell him plainly what are the calamities he is to undergo. He thus learns of his banishment from Florence; of his refuge with the Della Scala family at Verona, where Can Grande della Scala (here warmly eulogised) was to be his chief patron and protector; and of the annoyance to be caused him by his fellow-exiles. Cacciaguida encourages the poet to complete his poem and publish it, in spite of the offence it will give to many persons opprobriously named in it and branded with Dante's scorn.*

AS CAME to Clymene, intent upon<sup>i</sup>  
The truth of what against him had been said,  
Who still makes father chary toward his son,  
Such was my need, and so my thought was read  
By Beatrice and by the sacred lamp  
Which for my sake had from its station sped.  
Wherefore my Lady: "Let no scruple damp  
Thy desire's flame, but let it issue free,  
Bearing clear impress of the inward stamp;  
Not that our knowledge by thy words may be  
Increased, but that thy tongue inure to tell  
Thy thirst, that we may mix the cup for thee."  
"Dear root of mine, who art lifted up to dwell  
So high, that, as to earthly mind 'tis clear  
Two obtuse fit not in one triangle,  
So dost thou see contingent things, or e'er<sup>ii</sup>  
Themselves are, gazing on the point beyond  
To which all times are present, now and here.

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-3. Phaëthon, having been told that Apollo was not really his father, went to his mother Clymene to find out the truth. Apollo's indulgence had tragic results, when he allowed Phaëthon to drive the chariot of the sun.

<sup>ii</sup> 16. "Contingent": casual things, whether they be past, present, or future.

While I by Virgil was companioned  
 Over the mountain where the souls are healed, [20]  
 And journeyed down the dead world underground,  
 Words, grave in import, of what lies concealed  
 In time to come were said to me, although  
 Four-square I feel me against all hazard steeled.  
 My wish, then, were content if thou would'st show  
 What fortune nears me and makes of me its quest:  
 Foreseen, the arrow strikes a duller blow."  
 To that same light by which I had been addressed  
 I spoke thus; and in promptness to obey  
 The will of Beatrice was my will confessed. [30]  
 By no such oracle, saying Yea and Nay,<sup>iii</sup>  
 As the fond folk were limed with, ere was slain  
 The Lamb of God who taketh sins away,  
 But in transparent speech, precise and plain,  
 Answered me that paternal love, in light  
 Hidden, and revealed by its own smile again.  
 "Contingency, concerned only to write<sup>iv</sup>  
 In the volume of your matter, and nothing higher,  
 Is all portrayed in the eternal sight,  
 Yet cannot thence Necessity acquire [40]  
 More than the eye that is reflecting her  
 Can the ship's motion down the tide inspire.  
 From thence into my sight, as into the ear  
 Harmonies of an organ softly start,  
 Comes what for thee the approaching times prepare.  
 As by his stepmother's perfidious art<sup>v</sup>  
 Cruelly was Hippolytus driven out  
 From Athens, so must thou from Florence part.  
 This they have willed; this they already plot;

---

<sup>iii</sup> 31. *In no ambiguous terms, such as heathen prophets used.*

<sup>iv</sup> 37. *"Contingency": the whole sequence of casual events.*

<sup>v</sup> 46. *"His stepmother": Phaedra.*

And soon shall it be done by him who brews<sup>vi</sup> [50]  
 That plot, where daily Christ is sold and bought.  
 The common cry shall, after its wont, accuse  
 The wronged party; but justice shall be near  
 To testify how Truth exacts her dues.  
 Thou shalt leave all that thou hast loved most dear;  
 This is the arrow, shooting from the bow  
 Of banishment, which thou hast first to fear.  
 How bitter another's bread is, thou shalt know  
 By tasting it; and how hard to the feet  
 Another's stairs are, up and down to go. [60]  
 And what shall on thy shoulders heaviest sit  
 Shall be the crew, stupid and venomous,<sup>vii</sup>  
 With whom thou shalt have fallen into that pit;  
 For, ingrates all, frenzied and impious,  
 They'll turn against thee; but thereafter soon  
 They and not thou shall have blood-reddened brows.  
 Their brutishness shall by their works be known,  
 So that thou shalt be honoured and preferred  
 To have made a party of thyself alone.  
 Thy first hostel and refuge from that herd [70]  
 In the great Lombard's favour shalt thou find<sup>viii</sup>  
 Who on the Ladder bears the sacred Bird.  
 For he shall hold thee in regard so kind,  
 That of the giving and asking 'twixt you two,  
 That shall come first which oftenest lags behind.  
 And one there is thou shalt see with him, who<sup>ix</sup>  
 Was at his birth so stamped with this strong star<sup>x</sup>  
 That he is destined deeds of note to do.  
 Hardly of him yet is the world aware

---

<sup>vi</sup> 50. "By him who . . .": Pope Boniface VIII.

<sup>vii</sup> 62. "The crew": the Whites, Dante's fellow exiles.

<sup>viii</sup> 71. "The great Lombard": Bartolommeo della Scala, whose shield bore a ladder and an eagle.

<sup>ix</sup> 76. "One there is": Can Grande (see the Argument).

<sup>x</sup> 77. "This strong star": Mars.

Because of his young age, for years have rolled [80]  
 But nine around him in their course; but ere  
 The Gascon's guile great Harry have cajoled,<sup>xi</sup>  
 Some sparkles of his virtue shall be shown  
 In grudging not laborious days nor gold  
 Later, shall his magnificence be known,  
 So that his enemies will not repress  
 Their tongues from telling what things he hath done.  
 Look to him; wait his gracious offices!  
 Through him shall many taste an altered lot,  
 The beggar and the rich exchanging place. [90]  
 And of him thou shalt bear, but tell it not,  
 A record in thy mind." And he told things  
 Which those who see with their own eyes shall doubt.  
 Then he added: "Son, these are the commentings  
 On what thou hast been told; the snares now see  
 Ambushed behind few years' revolving rings.  
 But I would have thee of envy of neighbours free,  
 Since thy life shall be futured to outrun  
 By far, the avenging of their perfidy!"  
 When, by his saying no more, that sainted one [100]  
 Showed he had finished setting of the woof  
 Across the warp I proffered, I began,  
 Like one who, in uncertainty of proof,  
 Longs with great longing for a counsellor  
 Who sees, and wills uprightly, and who has love.  
 "I see, my father, Time against me spur  
 To deal me a blow, such as falls heaviest  
 On him who goes unwary and self-secure.  
 Twas well with foresight, then, to arm me, lest,  
 If the most dear place I am forced to lose,<sup>xii</sup> [110]  
 I may not, through my song, lose all the rest.  
 Down in the world of never-ending throes

---

<sup>xi</sup> 82. "The Gascon": Pope Clement V. "Harry": the Emperor Henry VII.

<sup>xii</sup> 110. "The most dear place": Florence.

And up the mountain from whose radiant height,  
 My Lady's eyes uplifting me, I rose,  
 And, after, through the heaven from light to light,  
 I have learnt that, which, if it all be penned,  
 In many will a bitter taste excite;  
 And if to truth I am a flinching friend,  
 I fear to lose life among those to whom  
 This world will be an old world, come to its end." [120]

The enclosing radiance it was smiling from—  
 My treasure I had there discovered—flashed  
 Like beams that from a golden mirror come,  
 Then answered me: "Conscience, that is abashed  
 By shame, its own or others', will in each,  
 'Tis true, who reads thee, feel some frailty lashed;  
 Yet none the less, cast falsehood from thy speech  
 Quite out; make thy whole vision manifest;  
 And let them scratch wherever is the itch.  
 For if thy voice be pungent at first taste [130]  
 Yet shall it leave a vital sustenance  
 After the mind has leisure to digest.  
 Thy cry shall come with the wind's vehemence  
 That strikes full on the loftiest peaks alone;  
 Honour not small shall be thy recompense.  
 Therefore to thee have on these spheres been shown,  
 And on the Mount, and in the Vale of Dread,  
 Only such souls as have acquired renown,  
 Since the hearer's spirit is not comforted  
 Nor knits its faith by an example mean [140]  
 Which hath its roots obscure and darkly hid,  
 Nor by what proof else is not plainly seen."

# Canto XVIII

*Cacciaguida points out to Dante a number of illustrious souls, who appear as stars on the cross, and move as they are named. Dante and Beatrice now ascend from the heaven of Mars to the "temperate star" of Jupiter, the sixth heaven, where are spirits conspicuous for justice. The lights in which the spirits are hidden form themselves into the pattern of an eagle.*

*At the end of the Canto Pope John XXII is denounced for his love of money. The Florentine florin was stamped with the image of St. John the Baptist; and in the concluding lines the Pope is ironically represented as being so devoted to this coin. that he has forgotten Peter and Paul.*

THAT BLESSÈD mirror was now lost in joy  
Of its own thought; and savouring mine, I stood  
Tempering the bitter with the sweet alloy;  
And she whom I was following unto God  
Said: "Change thy thought! Remember I am near  
To Him who of all wrong lifts off the load!"  
I turned me to the sound, loving and dear,  
Of my own Comfort; and what love then shone  
In the holy eyes I leave unwritten here,  
Not because I mistrust my speech alone [10]  
But memory, which returns not to excel  
Itself so far, save it be guided on.  
Only this of that moment I can tell,  
That my affection, as she filled my gaze,  
Was freed from all else only on her to dwell,  
While the eternal joy which beamed its rays  
Immediate on the beauty of Beatrice  
Rapt me with its reflection on her face.  
And vanquishing me with a smile of bliss  
She spoke to me: "Turn now and listen anew! [20]  
Not only in my eyes is Paradise."



As sometimes in the very features' hue  
 Appears the affection, if it be so strong  
 As to possess the whole soul through and through,  
 So in the glow the sacred flame outflung<sup>i</sup>  
 To which I turned, a craving I could see  
 In it, a little our converse to prolong.  
 He began: "In this fifth tier of the tree<sup>ii</sup>  
 Which from its top lives, and can never lose  
 One leaf, and puts forth fruit continually, [30]  
 Are blessed spirits whose names were glorious  
 On earth, before into this heaven they came,  
 Such as would richly furnish every Muse.  
 Gaze therefore on the cross: he whom I name  
 Shall on its arms that suddenness enact  
 Which happeneth when the cloud lets forth the flame."<sup>iii</sup>  
 Gliding along the cross, a light I tracked  
 At Joshua's naming; spoken, it was done;  
 Nor did I learn the word before the act.  
 At mighty Maccabeus' name there shone<sup>iv</sup> [40]  
 Another, whirling bright before my eyes;  
 And gladness whipt the top, as round it spun.  
 For Charlemagne and Roland in like wise  
 Two more were followed by my earnest look,  
 As the eye follows a falcon as it flies.  
 Next William, Rainouart, and then the Duke<sup>v</sup>  
 Godfrey, and Robert Guiscard, did their part,  
 When swift along the cross my sight they took.  
 The soul I had spoken with I now saw dart  
 Among the other lights, with whom it vied, [50]

---

<sup>i</sup> 25. "The sacred flame": Cacciaguida.

<sup>ii</sup> 28. The fifth "tier" of the tree of the heavens is Mars.

<sup>iii</sup> 36. As lightning flashes across a cloud.

<sup>iv</sup> 40. Judas "Maccabaeus" delivered his people from the tyranny of the Syrians.

<sup>v</sup> 46-47. "William," Count of Orange, is the hero of a group of Old French epics. "Rainouart": a knight of Saracen birth, but baptised. "Godfrey" of Bouillon: the leader of the first crusade. "Robert Guiscard": a Norman conqueror.

Showing how great in Heaven's choir was its art.  
 I turned me thereupon to my right side  
 To see in Beatrice what I was to do,  
 Whether by speech or gesture signified.  
 And I beheld her eyes so clear and true,  
 So joyous, that the semblance which she wore  
 Surpassed all former wont, and the last too.  
 And as a man, by feeling hour by hour  
 In the doing of good works increased delight,  
 Perceives his virtue growing more and more, [60]  
 So I perceived that this my circling flight<sup>vi</sup>  
 With the heaven had widened its circumference,  
 Seeing this wonder yet more wondrous-bright.  
 Such a change as pale cheeks experience  
 When a lady, suddenly from shame relieved,  
 Sheddeth the brief blush from her countenance  
 Was in my eyes, when turning I perceived  
 The whiteness round me of the temperate star,<sup>vii</sup>  
 The sixth, whereinto I had been received. [70]  
 And in that torch of Jove, I was aware  
 Of sparkles from the love within it warm,  
 Spelling our speech to me in letters there.  
 As birds that risen above a stream in swarm,  
 As though rejoicing to have fed them well,  
 Take now a round and now a different form,  
 Those holy beings the lights made visible  
 Sang flying, and in the shaping of their throng  
 Became now *D*, and now *I*, and now *L*.  
 They moved first to the notes of their own song;  
 Then, as each letter, one by one, was made [80]  
 Complete, they paused and held awhile their tongue.

---

<sup>vi</sup> 61-63. Thus from an increase of Beatrice's loveliness I inferred that I had risen to a greater and swifter sphere.

<sup>vii</sup> 68. The change is from the red light of Mars to the whiteness of Jupiter.

O Goddess Pegasea who hast arrayed<sup>viii</sup>  
 Genius in glory, and given it long renown,  
 As it for city and realm does with thine aid,  
 Lend me thy light, that so I may set down  
 In right relief their shapes as limned in Heaven:  
 Through these few verses let thy power be known!  
 Then they disposed themselves in five times seven  
 Vowels and consonants; and my mind held fast  
 Each member as in the alphabet 'twas given. [90]  
*DILIGITE JUSTICIAM* was traced<sup>ix</sup>  
 The first of all, in verb and noun displayed;  
*QUI JUDICATIS TERRAM* was the last.  
 Then in the *M* of the fifth word arrayed  
 They halted, so that Jove was made to seem  
 Silver with patterning of gold inlaid.  
 And I saw other lights descending gleam  
 On the *M*'s top and come there to a stand,  
 Hymning, I think, the Good that draweth them.  
 As at the beating of a smouldering brand [100]  
 Innumerable sparks rise, from whose flight  
 Fools in their folly an augury demand,  
 Seemed thence to rise a thousand sparks of light  
 And mount, some much, some little, according as  
 The Sun which kindled them ordained their height.  
 And when each quieted in its place, my gaze  
 Beheld that figured fire present the crest,  
 And neck beneath it that an eagle has.<sup>x</sup>  
 He who paints there hath none to guide the wrist<sup>xi</sup>  
 But guides himself; from him, we call to mind, [110]  
 The instinct is informed that builds the nest.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 82. "O Goddess Pegasea": O Muse.

<sup>ix</sup> 91-94. They spell the first verse of the Book of Wisdom: Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth. The "*M*" is the symbol of Monarchy.

<sup>x</sup> 108. "An eagle": the Imperial Eagle.

<sup>xi</sup> 109. "He who paints there" is God.

The other blessed, seeming first designed  
 To shape a lily in flower upon the M,  
 Moved slightly and with the pattern were combined.  
 O sweet star, with how many and rare a gem  
 Didst thou prove that the justice we obey  
 Proceedeth from the heaven thou dost begem!  
 Therefore the Mind that set thee upon thy way,  
 And prompts thy power, I pray to watch wherefrom  
 Issues the smoke that tarnishes thy ray, [120]  
 That once again the enkindled wrath may come  
 On the hucksters in the temple that was reared  
 And walled with miracle and martyrdom.  
 O hosts of Heaven I contemplate, be heard  
 Your prayers to aid all those on earth, led on  
 By bad example, who have strayed and erred!  
 Once war was made with swords; now it is done  
 By the withholding in this place and that<sup>xii</sup>  
 Of bread the all-pitying Father bars from none.  
 Thou who recordest but to obliterate,<sup>xiii</sup> [130]  
 Consider that Peter and Paul, who died to save  
 The vineyard thou hast spoiled, are living yet.  
 Thou canst well say: "So ardently I crave  
 For him who willed to live apart from all<sup>xiv</sup>  
 And whom a dance brought to a martyr's grave,  
 That I know not the Fisherman, nor Paul."

---

<sup>xii</sup> 128. "By the withholding . . .": of the sacraments, by means of excommunications.

<sup>xiii</sup> 130. "Thou who . . .": Pope John XXII, who issued and revoked many excommunications.

<sup>xiv</sup> 134. "For him . . .": St. John the Baptist (see the Argument).

# Canto XIX

*The symbolic Eagle speaks with one voice, though representing the many spirits composing it. It addresses Dante, and explains that no mind of mortal is capable of understanding the Divine Justice, and what on earth may seem justice is not so in Heaven. Only true believers in Christ can attain to Paradise; but many who profess Christ are less near to him than some who never heard his name. Follows a denunciation of certain unjust rulers.*

BEFORE ME in beauty appeared with wings displayed

The image which those souls, all woven in one,  
Exulting in their sweet fruition, made.

Each one was as a little ruby stone

Whose core by the sun's brilliance should be lit  
So that reflected in my eyes it shone.

And that which now I must to speech commit

No voice ever communicated, nor  
Ink wrote, nor fancy comprehended it.

For I beheld and heard the beak outpour

[10]

Words, and his voice was uttering "I" and "My"  
When in conception it was "We" and "Our."

And it began: "Justice and piety

Have raised me into the glory of that state  
Which no ambition dareth to outvie.

On earth I have left my memory so great

That 'mid the evil people it is renowned,  
Though the example none perpetuate!"

As one may feel in many coals abound

One heat, so from those many loves there went  
Out of that image only a single sound.

[20]

Then I: "O ye perpetual flowers content

In the eternal gladness! ye who make  
Your odours all seem to me one sweet scent,

Breathe on me and break the fast wherewith I ache  
And which hath kept me long in hunger lean  
Because on earth it found no food to take.

I know that if, as in a mirror seen,

In other realm the divine justice glow,<sup>i</sup>

Yours apprehends it with no veil between.

[30]

How eager I am to hearken, ye well know,

And what the doubt is and solicitude

Which caused this fast of mine from long ago.”

Like falcon that emerges from the hood

To turn his head, and clap his wings, and preen

His plumes, and show the mettle in his blood,

So looked to me that Emblem which had been

Woven of the praises of divine grace, filled

With songs that Heaven knows and rejoices in.

Then it began: “He who the compass wheeled<sup>ii</sup>

[40]

Round the world’s edges, and within that space

Mapped out so much, both hidden and revealed,

Could not so deeply His potency impress

On the whole universe, but that His word

Must still remain in infinite excess.

Which proveth that the first proud being erred,<sup>iii</sup>

In that, creation’s highest, he would not bend

To await the light, and so fell unmatured.<sup>iv</sup>

Each lesser nature, then, if thou perpend,

Is a too scant receptacle for that Good

[50]

Which is its own measure, and hath no end.

Wherefore our vision, which can be the abode

Of but one ray proceeding from the Mind

With which all things are filled as with a flood,

Cannot have such power in its natural kind

---

<sup>i</sup> 29. “In other realm”: the angelic order of the Thrones, in the sphere of Saturn.

<sup>ii</sup> 40. “He who . . .”: God.

<sup>iii</sup> 46. “The first proud being”: Lucifer.

<sup>iv</sup> 48. “The light”: of grace.

But that it knows its origin to lie<sup>v</sup>  
 Far beyond what appears to it defined.  
 Wherefore the sight that your world liveth by  
 Penetrates not the eternal justice more  
 Than into the ocean penetrates the eye; [60]  
 For though it sees the bottom from the shore,  
 On the open sea it cannot: none the less  
 It is there; but the depth conceals the floor.  
 There is no light save from that perfect peace  
 Which never is clouded: it is else darkness,  
 Shadow of the flesh, or poison of its disease.  
 This glimpse sufficeth of the secret place  
 Which hath from thee the living Justice hid  
 Whereof thy questioning ceased not to harass;  
 For thou didst say: 'On Indus bank is bred [70]  
 A man, and there is no one there to tell  
 Of Christ; no one to write, no one to read:  
 Good purposes his every act impel,  
 So far as human faculty perceives,  
 Without sin in his life, and words as well.  
 Without faith, unbaptised, the world he leaves.  
 Where is this justice that condemns the man?  
 Where is his trespass, if he not believes?"  
 Now who art thou with a judge's eyes to scan,  
 On thy bench sitting a thousand miles away, [80]  
 This case with the short sight of a mere span?  
 For him who would engage me in subtle play,  
 Were not the Scripture beyond all appeal,<sup>vi</sup>  
 This were fine cause for doubt to say its say.  
 O minds gross as of brutes! The Primal Will,  
 In itself good, to its own self, which is  
 The Sovereign Good, forever cleaveth still,  
 All then is just which is attuned to this;

---

<sup>v</sup> 56. "Its origin': the divine Mind.

<sup>vi</sup> 83. If you mortals had not the Bible to guide you, there would be no end to your sophistries.

To no created good does it adhere,  
 But from its radiance is that good's increase." [90]  
 As just above her nest circles in air  
 The stork, after her youngling brood is fed,  
 And as the one she has fed looks up to her,  
 So did (while I too lifted up my head)  
 The blessed image move its wings amain,  
 Urged by so many wills together wed.  
 Wheeling, it sang, and said: "Like this my strain  
 To thee who understandest not a word,  
 The eternal judgment is to mortal men."  
 When those bright fires of the Holy Spirit stirred [100]  
 No more, that ensign of the empery  
 Which made the Romans by the world revered  
 Spoke once again: "None ever rose to see  
 This realm who had not the belief in Christ  
 After or before the nailing on the tree.  
 But look! how many are crying: 'Christ! Christ!'  
 Who at the day of judgment shall be far  
 Less near to him than such as knew not Christ.  
 The Ethiop such Christians will not spare  
 When the assembled companies divide, [110]  
 The one forever rich, the one stript bare.  
 How shall the Persians challenge your kings' pride  
 When they shall see that volume, wherein stand  
 Recorded their dispraises, opened wide!  
 There shall be seen 'mid the acts of Albert's hand<sup>vii</sup>  
 That one which soon shall move the accusing pen,  
 Whereby Prague's kingdom shall be desert land.  
 There shall be seen the woe which he on Seine,<sup>viii</sup>  
 By making the false coinage, is to bring,

---

<sup>vii</sup> 115-116. "Albert": of Austria. "That one": the devastation of Bohemia in 1304. "The accusing pen": of the recording angel.

<sup>viii</sup> 118-120. Philip the Fair, who had debased the coinage of the realm, died from a fall occasioned by a wild boar.



Who by the tusk of wild boar shall be slain. [120]  
 There shall be seen the ambition maddening  
 With thirst so quenchless Englishman and Scot,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Whose frontiers content not either king;  
 Seen too the soft lascivious lives that rot  
 Both him of Spain and of Bohemia him<sup>x</sup>  
 Who never has known virtue and wills it not;  
 Seen too the cripple of Jerusalem,<sup>xi</sup>  
 His goodness noted with a One, whereas  
 The adverse page is noted with an M;  
 Seen too the avarice and the craven ways [130]  
 Of him who rules the Isle of Fire, the isle<sup>xii</sup>  
 Whereon the old Anchises closed his days;  
 And to underscore how paltry he is and vile,  
 His record in contracted letters writ  
 Shall on a small space all the matter pile.  
 And all shall know what foul deeds they commit,  
 His uncle and brother, such deeds as deflower<sup>xiii</sup>  
 A race so famous and two crowns with it.  
 And he of Portugal, he of Norway's power<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Shall be known there, and he of Rascia, who [140]  
 Saw coin of Venice in an evil hour.  
 O happy Hungary, if her strength but grew  
 Her maimers to defy! Happy Navarre,  
 If round her she her mountain rampart drew!<sup>xv</sup>  
 And none should doubt what presages prepare  
 For Nicosia and Famagusta woes,<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>ix</sup> 122. *The wars of Edward I and Edward II against the Scots.*

<sup>x</sup> 125. *Ferdinand IV of Castile and Wenceslaus IV.*

<sup>xi</sup> 127-129. *Charles I of Naples, titular king of Jerusalem. "With an M": one thousand.*

<sup>xii</sup> 131. *Frederick of Aragon, king of Sicily.*

<sup>xiii</sup> 137. *James, king of Majorca and Minorca, and James II of Aragon.*

<sup>xiv</sup> 139-140. *Dionysius of Portugal and Haakon of Norway. The king of "Rascia"—a state made up of parts of Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia—was a certain Stephen Ouros, who counterfeited the Venetian ducat.*

<sup>xv</sup> 144. *If she could make the Pyrenees a bulwark against France.*

<sup>xvi</sup> 146. *"Nicosia and Famagusta": two towns in Cyprus, which are already bewailing their dissolute king, Henry II of Lusignan.*

Who groan even now at him they have to bear,  
This beast, who step by step with the others goes.”

# Canto XX

*The Eagle names six spirits pre-eminent for their justice. They form the Eagle's eye and eyebrow. David is in the pupil of the eye, and in the eyebrow are Trajan, Hezekiah, Constantine, William II of Sicily, and Ripheus the Trojan. Dante is puzzled, because Trajan and Ripheus whom he conceived of as pagans, are found in Paradise: and the Eagle explains to him how it is that they are there; ending with an admonition against hasty judgment.*

WHEN HE who illumines all the world descends<sup>i</sup>  
So far, departing from our hemisphere,  
That day on all sides vanishes and ends,  
The heaven, which he alone before lit clear,  
With myriad lights all kindled at one flame  
Immediately begins to reappear.  
Into my mind this act of heaven came  
When the Ensign that the world's great chiefs obeyed<sup>ii</sup>  
Silent within the blessed beak became;  
Because from all those living lights, arrayed  
In growing brilliance, songs began to float  
Which from my memory lapse and falling fade.  
O Love, whose sweet smile hath thy raiment wrought,  
How ardent wast thou in those fluted tones  
Breathed only by the breath of holy thought!  
Soon as the precious and resplendent stones  
Which I beheld the sixth lamp to begem  
Had hushed the angelic chiming antiphons,  
I seemed to hear the murmur of a stream  
When clear from ledge to ledge the waters drop  
Showing how its springs within the mountain teem.  
And as from sound the music taketh shape

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. "He who . . .": the sun.

<sup>ii</sup> 8. "The Ensign": the Eagle.

At the lute's neck, or in the pipes the air  
 That, penetrating, enters at the stop,  
 So with no pause to baulk the waiting ear  
 Rose the Eagle's murmur with resounding tone  
 Up through its neck, as if it hollow were.  
 There it became voice as a way it won  
 Out from the beak in words articulate  
 Such as the heart craved that I wrote them on. [30]  
 "That part in me which looks unflinching at  
 The sun in mortal eagles," thus it spoke:  
 "This must thou now fixedly contemplate.  
 For of the fires from which my form I make  
 Those wherewith the eye sparkles in my head  
 In all their ranks the loftiest station take.  
 He from whose light the pupil's fire is fed  
 Was the singer of the Holy Spirit, who bare<sup>iii</sup>  
 The Ark, from city unto city led.<sup>iv</sup>  
 He knoweth now his song's desert, so far [40]  
 As in his own conception 'twas begun,  
 By its being matched with recompense so rare..  
 Of five, who make the eyebrow's arch, the one  
 Who of all closest to the beak is set<sup>v</sup>  
 Brought comfort to the widow for her son.  
 He knoweth now how dearly costeth it  
 Not to be Christ's liege, by experience  
 Of this sweet life and of its opposite.  
 He who comes next in the circumference<sup>vi</sup>  
 Of which I speak, on the ascending curve, [50]  
 Postponed death by his earnest penitence.  
 He knoweth now that nothing maketh swerve

---

<sup>iii</sup> 38. "The singer": David.

<sup>iv</sup> 39. "The Ark": of the Covenant.

<sup>v</sup> 44-48. Trajan (see Purg. X, 56) was allowed to resume his body long enough to embrace the true faith.

<sup>vi</sup> 49-51. The effect of a petition in one's own behalf is illustrated by a Biblical character, King Hezekiah.

The eternal judgment when a prayer's just plea  
 Below, makes for to-day to-morrow serve.  
 The next became Greek, with the laws and me,<sup>vii</sup>  
 In good intention which had evil fruit,  
 Ceding the Pastor such a realm in fee.  
 He knoweth now that Heaven doth not impute  
 To him what ills from his good deeds derive,  
 Even though the world be stricken to the root. [60]  
 On the arc's down-slope, that one of the five  
 Thou seest was William, whom that land bewails<sup>viii</sup>  
 Which weeps that Charles and Frederick are alive.  
 He knoweth now with what love Heaven hails  
 The just king, and in measure as he glows  
 Still proveth how that love on him prevails.  
 Down in the erring world who would suppose  
 Ripheus the Trojan should the fifth be found<sup>ix</sup>  
 Within the orb the sacred lights compose?  
 He knoweth now enough, and far beyond [70]  
 What the world sees, of the divine grace there,  
 Although its depth his vision cannot sound."  
 Like the small lark who wantons free in air,  
 First singing and then silent, as possessed  
 By the last sweetness that contenteth her,  
 So seemed to me the image, deep-impressed  
 With the Eternal Pleasure, by whose will  
 Each thing in its own nature is expressed.  
 Though the doubt in me was discernible,  
 As coloured things through glass are, yet its thirst [80]  
 Endured not to wait silent and be still,  
 But from my mouth "What things are these?" it forced  
 By the mere pressure of its vehemence:

---

<sup>vii</sup> 55-57. Constantine, ceding Rome to the Pope and transferring the capital to Byzantium, made himself, the Eagle, and the laws Greek.

<sup>viii</sup> 62-63. William II of Sicily, Charles II of Naples and Frederick of Aragon (see Purg. XIX, 127-131).

<sup>ix</sup> 68. "Ripheus": an inconspicuous character in the Aeneid.

A festive sparkling then I saw outburst.  
 And with its eye yet more enkindled thence  
 The blessed Ensign answered without pause  
 Lest he might keep me wondering in suspense:  
 "I see that thou believ'st these things because  
 I tell them; but the 'how' thou seest not,  
 And, though believed, they keep their secret close. [90]  
 Thou art as he who apprehends by rote  
 The thing he names, but cannot thereby come  
 To the essence, save another solve the knot.  
*Regnum coelorum* suffereth violence from<sup>x</sup>  
 Warm love and hope, living in stedfastness,  
 Which even the divine will overcome,  
 Not in the way that man doth man oppress,  
 But conquers it because it wills that same,  
 And, conquered, conquers with its own kindness.  
 On the eyebrow's arch the first and the fifth flame<sup>xi</sup> [100]  
 Cause thee to marvel, seeing above thy head  
 The region of the angels bright with them.  
 Not Gentiles, as thou thinkest, did they shed  
 The flesh, but Christians, having faith for prop  
 In feet which were to bleed or which had bled.<sup>xii</sup>  
 For the one from Hell, whence none returneth up<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Ever to right will, back to his bones repaired;  
 And this was the reward of living hope;  
 Of living hope, whose potency inspired  
 Prayers made to God to raise him from the dead,<sup>xiv</sup> [110]  
 That his will thus might waken and be stirred.  
 The glorious soul I speak of, having stayed  
 Once more a brief while in the body on earth,

---

<sup>x</sup> 94. "*Regnum coelorum*": the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>xi</sup> 100. "*The first and the fifth*": Trajan and Ripheus.

<sup>xii</sup> 105. *They had faith in the feet of Christ, one before and one after the crucifixion.*

<sup>xiii</sup> 106. "*The one from Hell*": the soul of Trajan.

<sup>xiv</sup> 110. "*Prayers made to God*": by St. Gregory.

Believed in Him who had the power to aid,  
 And, in believing, such a flame sent forth  
 Of very love, that at death's second sting  
 It became worthy to enter into this mirth.  
 The other, by the grace which, issuing  
 From so profound wells that no creature yet  
 Pierced with his eye down to the primal spring, [120]  
 On righteousness below his whole heart set,  
 So that God's grace, unveiling more and more,  
 Showed him the sure redemption of man's debt.  
 Believing in it, he no longer bore  
 The pagan superstition's filthy blight  
 And chided the corrupted folk therefore.  
 And those three ladies, who rejoiced thy sight<sup>xv</sup>  
 At the right wheel, made baptism for him  
 A thousand years ere the baptismal rite.  
 Predestination! how remote and dim [130]  
 Thy root lies hidden from the intellect  
 Which only glimpses the First Cause Supreme!  
 And you, ye mortals, keep your judgment checked,  
 Since we, who see God, have not therefore skill  
 To know yet all the number of the elect.  
 To us such wanting is delectable  
 Because our good in this good is refined,  
 That, what God willeth, that we also will."  
 With such sweet medicine was I medicined  
 By the celestial image, to make clear [140]  
 The short sight of my unillumined mind.  
 As the strings touched by the good lute-player  
 Attend upon the singer's voice, whereby  
 The song with added pleasure takes the ear,  
 So, while it spoke, comes back to memory  
 That the two blessed spirits to the words

---

<sup>xv</sup> 127. "Those three ladies": the three Christian Virtues.

Made their flames tremble in one harmony  
Even as the winking of the eyes concords.



# Canto XXI

*Dante and Beatrice ascend into the seventh heaven. This is the heaven of Saturn, where are those who passed their lives in holy contemplation. Dante discerns a ladder, the top of which is out of sight, on which are spirits descending and ascending. One of these is the soul of Peter Damian, who tells Dante about his life of retirement and austerity before, in his last years, against his wish, he was made a Cardinal. He contrasts the luxurious habits of the clergy with the simple lives of the Apostles.*

MY LADY's face once more had occupied  
My eyes, and with them all my mind was turned  
Rapt from the thought of anything beside.  
She did not smile. "Were I to smile," she warned,  
"Thou would'st be as Semele, when her eyes' desire<sup>i</sup>  
She had, and straightway was to ashes burned;  
Because my beauty, which from stair to stair  
Of the eternal palace flames afresh,  
As thou hast seen, the more it mounteth higher,  
Were it not tempered, would upon thee flash  
So that thy mortal senses in that light  
Would be as boughs beneath the thunder's crash.  
We have risen to the seventh splendour's height  
Which underneath the burning Lion's breast<sup>ii</sup>  
Rays its beams downward, mingled with his might.  
Behind thine eyes let thy mind also rest,  
And make them to be mirrors of the thing  
Which in this mirror thou encounterest."<sup>iii</sup>  
He who should know what was the pasturing

[10]

---

<sup>i</sup> 5-6. "Semele," having insisted on beholding her lover, Jupiter, in all his heavenly majesty, was burned to ashes by his splendor.

<sup>ii</sup> 14. "The burning Lion": the constellation of Leo.

<sup>iii</sup> 18. "This mirror": Saturn.

My sight had in her look beatified, [20]  
 When I turned now to a new soliciting,  
 Would, weighing one against the other side,  
 Recognise what delight twas to adhere  
 To the command of my celestial Guide.  
 Within the crystal's ever-circling sphere—  
 Named after its bright regent, him whose reign<sup>iv</sup>  
 Made wickedness to die and disappear,—  
 Coloured like gold which flashes back again  
 The sun, I saw a ladder stand, that seemed  
 So high that the eye followed it in vain. [30]  
 Moreover on the rungs descending gleamed  
 So many splendours that each several star  
 From heaven, methought, collected thither, streamed.  
 As rooks, after their natural habit, fare  
 Forth all together at beginning day  
 To warm their feathers chilled by the night air;  
 Then some, without returning, wing away,  
 Some to the boughs they have their nests among  
 Return, and others circling make a stay;  
 Such a behaviour had that sparkling throng, [40]  
 It seemed to me, coming in bands abreast,  
 Soon as they lighted on a certain rung.  
 And that one which most near to us came to rest  
 Became so bright that I said in my thought:  
 "I see the love to me thou signallest;  
 But she who 'how' and 'when' to me hath taught  
 For speaking and for silence, stayeth still;  
 Therefore, though fain, I do well to ask naught."  
 Then she, my silence being visible  
 To her, through sight of Him who seeth all, [50]  
 Said to me: "Now thy warm desire fulfil."  
 And I began: "My merit is too small

---

<sup>iv</sup> 26. "Its bright regent" is Saturn, who ruled in the Golden Age.

To be accounted worthy of thy reply;  
 But for her sake who suffereth this, O soul,  
 O blessed life, who hidden in thy joy  
 Abidest, make thou known to me the cause  
 That brings thee to a place to me so nigh;  
 And say why in this circling wheel is pause  
 From the sweet symphony of Paradise<sup>v</sup>  
 Which through the others so devoutly rose." [60]  
 "Thou hast," he answered, "mortal ears and eyes.  
 For the same reason no voice singeth here  
 That thou hast seen no smile in Beatrice.  
 Down the rungs thus far of the sacred stair  
 I have descended but to make thee glad  
 With speech and with the glowing light I wear.  
 Nor did more love a greater fervour add;  
 For equal love, or greater, burns above,  
 As in these flaming lustres is displayed;  
 But the high charity which prompts our love [70]  
 To serve the sovereign purpose, doth assign  
 To each its office, as thine eyes can prove."  
 "O sacred lamp," I said, "I well divine  
 How in this court free love sufficeth you  
 For following Heaven's fore-ordained design.  
 But this is where I cannot find the clue;  
 Why to this office the eternal power  
 Predestined thee of all this retinue."  
 I had not come to the last word before  
 The light made of its centre an axle-tree [80]  
 And whirled like a swift mill-stone round that core.  
 The love which was within it answered: "See,  
 A divine light with pressure like a sting  
 Penetrates through this which embowels me,  
 The virtue of which, my vision strengthening,

---

<sup>v</sup> 59. "Symphony": the hymns sung in the preceding spheres.

Lifts me above myself to contemplate  
 The Supreme Essence, its far source and spring.  
 Thence comes the rapture that I radiate;  
 For to my vision, in measure as 'tis clear,  
 The clearness of my flame I match and mate. [90]  
 But that soul which is most illumined here  
 In heaven, that seraph of most fixed regard  
 On God, could not content thee in thy desire,  
 Since what thou askest lies so deep in ward  
 Of the eternal ordinance's abyss  
 That from created vision it is barred.  
 When thou returnest to the world, take this  
 Monition, that it never more presume  
 To set foot to invade such mysteries:  
 The mind, which here shines, there is thick with fume; [100]  
 Consider therefore how below it could  
 What it could not, though Heaven should it illumine."  
 The stricture of his words had so subdued  
 My questioning, that from all else I refrained  
 Save the asking who he was, in humble mood.  
 "Between the two shores of Italian land  
 Rise crags, not far from thy birth-place, so high<sup>vi</sup>  
 That far above the thunder's noise they stand,  
 Shaped to a hump called Catria; and thereby  
 Is found a hallowed hermitage below [110]  
 Where there was worship only of Deity."  
 His third discourse to me he opened so,  
 And then, continuing: "Here, on God intent,  
 So stedfast in his service did I grow  
 That with but the olive's juice for nutriment  
 I passed serene through heat and frost, being filled  
 With contemplative thought, therein content.  
 That cloister used abundantly to yield

---

<sup>vi</sup> 107-109. "Crags": the northern part of the Apennines. "Catria": a spur between Urbino and Gubbio.

Souls to these heavens: now 'tis so bare and mean,  
 That soon its emptiness must be revealed. [120]  
 In that place was I Peter Damian,  
 And in Our Lady's house on the Adrian shores<sup>vii</sup>  
 Peter the Sinner had I also been.  
 Little was left me of my mortal course  
 When I was called and dragged unto the hat<sup>viii</sup>  
 Which ever is passed down from. bad to worse.  
 Barefoot and lean came Cephas, came the great<sup>ix</sup>  
 Vessel of the Holy Spirit, glad to sup  
 At whatsoever inn they halted at.  
 Pastors to-day need one to hold them up [130]  
 On this side and on that, and one to lead  
 (So heavy are they), and one behind to prop.  
 They have their palfreys with long mantles hid,  
 So that two beasts go under the one hide:  
 O Patience, what endurance dost thou need!"  
 As he was speaking, more flames I espied  
 From rung to rung, each whirling round, descend,  
 Their beauty in their revolving magnified.  
 About this one they came, and made an end  
 Of motion, uttering a cry profound [140]  
 Like nothing here; nor could I comprehend,  
 Since all my sense was in the thunder drowned.

---

<sup>vii</sup> 122. *The monastery of Santa Maria, near Ravenna.*

<sup>viii</sup> 125. *"The hat": the cardinal's hat.*

<sup>ix</sup> 127-128. *"Cephas": St. Peter. "The great Vessel": St. Paul.*

# Canto XXII

*The thunderous cry which had so dismayed the poet is, Beatrice tells him, the expression of Heaven's wrath at the corruption just described, and a prayer for its punishment.*

*Dante is addressed by St. Benedict, who tells of his founding of the monastery on Monte Cassino, after he had driven out the pagan worship; and then bewails and condemns the corruption of the monks of the Order he had founded. When the Saint has disappeared among his companions, the poet and his conductress are snatched up into the eighth heaven, that of the Fixed Stars: thence Dante, at Beatrice's command, looks back over all the way he had come from the earth, and the system of the seven spheres. He smiles to see how insignificant appears the earth from such a height.*

I TURNED, numbed with amazement, to my Guide

For comfort, as a little child who runs,

As always, there where it can most confide;

And as a mother succoureth her son's

Pale cheeks and panting breath and forehead hot

With her own voice, that reassures at once,

She said: "Thou art in Heaven, know'st thou it not?

And know'st thou not, Heaven is all holiness,

And what is done here from good zeal is wrought?

How the song would have changed thee, thou canst guess, [10]

And (had I not refrained) by smiling I,

Seeing that this shout puts thee in such distress.

If thou had'st caught the prayers within the cry,

Already would the chastisement appear

Disclosed, which thou shalt witness ere thou die.

The sword cuts not in haste which smites from here

On high, nor tarrieth, save as those conceive

Who wait for it in longing or in fear.

But turn to the others; now may'st thou perceive

Many illustrious spirits, if thou raise [20]

Thine eyes and lead them where I give thee leave."  
 As was her pleasure, I lifted up my gaze,  
 And saw a hundred little spheres collect  
 And grow more beautiful with mutual rays.  
 I stood as one who in himself hath checked  
 The pricking of desire, nor makes him bold  
 To speak, from fearing too much to expect,  
 And the most large and luminous to behold  
 Of all those pearls advanced to solace me  
 With what I craved might of itself be told. [30]  
 I heard then from within it: "Didst thou see,  
 As I, what loving-kindness burns in us,  
 Thy thoughts had been expressed in utterance free.  
 But lest by waiting thou a moment lose  
 On the high journey, my word but replies  
 To the thought that found thy tongue so scrupulous.  
 That mountain on whose slope Cassino lies<sup>i</sup>  
 Was once frequented on its top by folk  
 Obdurate in their dark idolatries.  
 And I am he who first bore up that rock [40]  
 The name of Him who brought down among men  
 The truth which lifteth us, on high to look.  
 Grace so abundant overshone me then  
 That I reclaimed the villages about  
 From the impious worship's world-seducing reign.  
 These others, all contemplatives at root,  
 Were quickened by that warm enkindling fire  
 Which giveth birth to holy flower and fruit.  
 Here is Macarius, here Romualdus, here<sup>ii</sup>  
 My brothers, who refrained their feet and stayed [50]  
 Within the cloister and kept their hearts entire."  
 And I: "The affection which thou hast displayed,  
 Speaking with me, and the benign intent

---

<sup>i</sup> 37-39. *St. Benedict in 528 erected two chapels in a temple of Apollo, and converted the heathen.*

<sup>ii</sup> 49. *St. Macarius of Alexandria and St. Romualdus of Ravenna.*

Which by your glowing you have each conveyed  
 Dilate me and make me newly confident  
 As when the sun the rose encourages  
 To open to the utmost of its bent.  
 Wherefore I pray thee, Father, assure me this,  
 That of thy grace I may be favoured so  
 That thou unveil thy likeness as it is." [60]  
 Then he: "Brother, thy high desire to know  
 Shall in the last sphere its fulfilment win  
 Where the others are fulfilled, and mine also.  
 There perfected and ripe and whole within  
 Is each desire; and there, and there alone,  
 Is every part as it hath ever been.  
 For it is not in space; poles it hath none;  
 And mounting to it reaches up our stair;  
 For this cause is it from thy sight withdrawn.  
 Jacob the patriarch far up even to there [70]  
 Was given to see its upper part extend,  
 And in his vision troops of angels bear;  
 But on it none now lifteth foot to ascend  
 From low earth: and on earth remaineth still  
 My Rule, a waste of parchments without end.  
 Walls that were once an abbey now conceal  
 A den of thieves, and every monkish hood  
 Is a sack, full to bursting with bad meal.  
 But taking of hard usury is at feud  
 Less with God's pleasure than what maketh fall [80]  
 Into such greed the monks' demented brood;  
 For whatsoever the Church holds is all  
 For the poor people who God's name invoke,  
 Nor for one's kin, nor some yet viler soul.  
 So frail the flesh is among mortal folk  
 That good beginning lasts not on to mould  
 The acorn from the seedling of the oak.  
 Peter began with neither silver nor gold,



And I with prayer and fast gathered my band,  
 And Francis his with humbleness enrolled. [90]  
 And if in its beginning each be scanned,  
 And if thou scrutinise what things deprave,  
 Thou wilt behold black where the white was planned.  
 Yet Jordan turned-back and the fleeing wave  
 God willed, were marvel of a mightier kind  
 Than here were the recovery that should save."  
 So saying, into his company behind  
 He merged; the company close round him came;  
 Then all were swept up like a whirl of wind.  
 And the sweet Lady urged me after them, [100]  
 With a sign only, up that stair to spring;  
 Her power my earthiness so overcame.  
 Now here, where up and down our motioning  
 Is nature's work, was ever motion guessed  
 To match the sudden swiftness of my wing.  
 So may I, Reader, to that triumph blest  
 Return, for sake of which my weight of sin  
 I wail, and often beat upon my breast,  
 Thou had'st not quicker plucked out and thrust in  
 The fire thy finger, than I saw the sign<sup>iii</sup> [110]  
 Which follows next the Bull, and stood therein.  
 O glorious stars! Light pregnant with divine  
 Virtue, which I in recognition thank<sup>iv</sup>  
 For whatsoever genius is mine,  
 With you he mounted and with you he sank,<sup>v</sup>  
 The father to whom mortal life is owed,  
 When first the air of Tuscany I drank.  
 And then, when favour was on me bestowed  
 To enter the great wheel which turns your skies,  
 Your region was appointed my abode. [120]

---

<sup>iii</sup> 110-111. "The sign": Gemini (the Twins). Dante has risen to the heaven of the fixed stars.

<sup>iv</sup> 113. "Which I in recognition thank": Gemini, the house of Mercury, bestows a taste for learning.

<sup>v</sup> 115. The sun was rising with Gemini when Dante was born.

To you devoutly now my spirit sighs<sup>vi</sup>  
 To acquire virtue for the trial hard  
 Which draws me on to essay that enterprise.  
 "Thou draw'st so near to the ultimate reward,"  
 Said Beatrice, "that nothing should remit  
 Thine eyes' intense and undisturbed regard;  
 And therefore, ere thou further enter it,  
 Look down and see how great the world's extent  
 Which I already have set beneath thy feet,  
 So that thy heart may all it can present [130]  
 Of joy unto the joyous throng that nears  
 In triumph through the rounded firmament."  
 My sight through each and all of the seven spheres  
 Turned back; and seeing this globe there manifest,  
 I smiled to see how sorry it appears;  
 And I approve that judgment as the best  
 Which least accounts it, and that man esteem  
 Most worthy, who elsewhere brings his thoughts to rest.  
 I saw the daughter of Latona gleam<sup>vii</sup>  
 Without that shade which I had pondered on [140]  
 And which had made her rare and dense to seem.  
 The strong love of thy son, Hyperion,<sup>viii</sup>  
 I there sustained, and saw how in a ring  
 Maia and Dione close beside him shone.  
 Next there appeared to me Jove's tempering  
 Between his father and son; and I could note  
 Their places and their station's varying.  
 And all the seven were shown me, and I thought:  
 How swift they are in moving and how great,  
 And each one from the other how remote! [150]

---

<sup>vi</sup> 121. Dante invokes the aid of his native constellation.

<sup>vii</sup> 139. Diana, the moon.

<sup>viii</sup> 142-146. "Hyperion" is often called the father of the sun. — "Maia": the mother of Mercury. — "Dione": the mother of Venus. — "His father and son": Saturn and Mars.

The small round floor which makes us passionate<sup>ix</sup>  
I, carried with the eternal Twins, discerned,  
From hill to harbour, plain to contemplate:  
Then to the beauteous eyes my eyes returned.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 151. *"The small round floor": the inhabited part of the earth.*

# Canto XXIII

*The Triumph of Christ is made visible. Christ ascends out of sight, followed by the Virgin, round whom circles the archangel Gabriel.*

STILL as the bird, 'mid the belovèd leaves,  
Reposing on the nest of her sweet brood  
Through night, which all things from our vision thieves,  
Who, to have longed-for sight of them renewed  
And once again to find them, where she may  
(Hard toil she taketh pleasure in), their food,  
Fore-runs the time, high on the open spray,  
And warm with love awaits the earliest light,  
Only intent that dawn may bring the day;  
So was my Lady, standing all upright [10]  
And stretched in yearning toward the region where  
The sun shows least of hasting in his flight.  
And eyeing the suspense in her rapt air,  
I was like one who wants, and who is fain  
Of what he has not, and with hope must bear.  
But short the space was between when and then,  
I mean between the expectancy I had  
And seeing in heaven splendour on splendour gain.  
"Behold the assembled hosts," Beatrice said;  
"Behold Christ triumphing, and all the fruit [20]  
These spheres have in their circling harvested."  
Joy in her aspect was so absolute,  
And such a flame shone in her countenance,  
That words are idle, and I must needs be mute.  
As in a full moon's tranquil brilliance  
Trivia smiles among the nymphs who paint<sup>i</sup>  
Eternally Heaven's uttermost expanse,

---

<sup>i</sup> 26. "Trivia" is one of the names of Diana: the moon.

Over a myriad lamps preëminent  
 I saw one Sun which kindled each and all,<sup>ii</sup>  
 As light from our sun to the stars is lent; [30]  
 And through the living light shone forth the whole  
 Irradiated Substance, so intense<sup>iii</sup>  
 Upon my eyes, I needs must let them fall.  
 O Beatrice, dear Guide! sweet Influence!  
 She said to me: "What masters now thy sight  
 Is power against which nothing hath defence.  
 Within there is the wisdom and the might  
 Which between earth and heaven the pathways found  
 Longed-for of old with longing infinite."  
 As fire is from the fettering cloud unbound, [40]  
 Expanding till it needs must overflow,  
 And, against nature, rushes to the ground,  
 So did my mind amid these feasts outgrow  
 Itself, and was dilated, and became  
 What recollection hath no skill to show.  
 "Open thine eyes and look on what I am!  
 Thou hast seen things which of thy weakness make  
 Strength to sustain my smile, nor fear the flame."  
 I was like one who comes to himself awake  
 From a forgotten vision, and is stirred [50]  
 Vainly to bring it to his memory back,  
 When—worthy of such great thanksgiving—I heard  
 This proffered boon, which nothing can erase  
 From that book where the past is registered.  
 Were all those tongues now sounding in her praise  
 Which Polyhymnia and her sisters made<sup>iv</sup>  
 Rich with the sweetest milk that ever was,  
 Not by a thousandth of the truth their aid  
 Could hymn the holy smiling of the eyes

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<sup>ii</sup> 29. "One Sun": Christ.

<sup>iii</sup> 32. "Substance": the humanity of Christ.

<sup>iv</sup> 56. "Polyhymnia and her sisters": the Muses.

And what pure light from the holy face it rayed; [60]  
 Therefore in picturing forth Paradise  
 Needs must the sacred poem take a leap,  
 As when some barrier on the pathway lies.  
 But he who thinks how heavy a theme to grip  
 Is here for mortal, shouldering such a weight,  
 Will think no blame if sometimes the foot slip.  
 No passage for a little barque is that  
 Which my adventurous keel is set to plough,  
 Nor for a pilot losing heart thereat.  
 "Why does my face enamour so, that thou [70]  
 On the fair garden hast no glance bestowed  
 Which flowers beneath Christ's rays? Behold it now!  
 Here is the Rose, wherein the Word of God<sup>v</sup>  
 Made itself flesh; and there the lilies are  
 Whose fragrance lured to follow the good road."  
 So Beatrice; and I, all prompt to hear  
 Her counsels and obey them, once again  
 Betook me to the fluttering eyelids' war.  
 As, with my eyes in shadow, I have seen  
 A meadow of flowers flashed over by the sun, [80]  
 When cloud breaks and a pure ray glides between,  
 Many a clustered splendour, blazed upon  
 By ardent beams, was to my eyes revealed,  
 Although I saw not whence the blazing shone.  
 O benign Power, who hast these spirits sealed,  
 Thou didst withdraw thee on high, that to my sight,  
 So feebly empowered, this room thou mightest yield.  
 The name of the fair flower, which day and night<sup>vi</sup>  
 My lips continually invoke, compelled  
 My mind to gaze upon the greatest light; [90]  
 And when distinct in both mine eyes were held  
 The glory and grandeur of the living star

---

<sup>v</sup> 73-74. "The Rose": Mary. "The lilies": the Apostles.

<sup>vi</sup> 88. "The name": the mention of Mary.

Which excels there as down here it excelled,  
 A fire descended out of heaven from far<sup>vii</sup>  
 Shaped in a circle like a coronal,  
 Which turned and turned as it engirdled her.  
 Whatever music sounds most sweet of all  
 On earth, and draws the soul most in desire,  
 Would seem cloud crackling in the thunder's brawl  
 Compared with the resounding of that lyre [100]  
 Whereby the beautiful Sapphire was crowned<sup>viii</sup>  
 Which makes the clearest heaven all one sapphire.  
 "I am angelic love and circle round  
 The sublime joy, which breathes out from the womb  
 Wherein the world's desire its hostel found.  
 And I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, till home  
 Thou thy son follow into the sphere supreme  
 And make it more divine since thou art come."  
 Thus the encircling melody of flame  
 Sealed itself up, and the other lights in praise [110]  
 Made all the air re-echo Mary's name.  
 The royal mantle of all the wheeling maze<sup>ix</sup>  
 Of the universe, whose ardour burns most hot,  
 Most quickened in God's breath and in His ways,  
 Had the inner border of it so far remote  
 Above, that in my vision's narrower scope,  
 Where I was stationed, I discerned it not.  
 Therefore my eyes' endeavour might not hope  
 To accompany the crownèd flame beyond,  
 As after her own seed she mounted up.<sup>x</sup> [120]  
 And as the child who toward his mother fond  
 Stretches his arms when he has milked her breast—  
 The spirit flaming outward to respond—

---

<sup>vii</sup> 94. The "fire" is perhaps the Archangel Gabriel.

<sup>viii</sup> 101. "The Sapphire" is Mary.

<sup>ix</sup> 112. "The royal mantle": the Empyrean.

<sup>x</sup> 120. "Her own seed": Christ.

Each of those white fires strained into a crest  
 Its flame, so that the affection infinite  
 They had for Mary was made manifest.  
 There for a while they lingered in my sight  
 Singing *Regina Coeli*, in tone so steeped<sup>xi</sup>  
 In sweetness, I still taste of the delight.  
 O how immense is the abundance heaped  
 Into those bursting coffers, which on earth  
 Were sowers of the good grain to be reaped!  
 Here joy they in their treasure, earned in dearth  
 Of exile, when they wept in Babylon,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Where gold was left aside as nothing worth.  
 Here triumphs, under the exalted Son  
 Of God and Mary, in his victory,  
 With the ancient council and the later one,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 He who of so great glory holds the key.

[130]

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<sup>xi</sup> 128. "Regina Coeli": "Queen of Heaven," an antiphon.

<sup>xii</sup> 134. The "exile" of "Babylon" is the earthly life.

<sup>xiii</sup> 138-139. With the souls of the Old and the New Covenant, the Prophets and the Apostles. "He who . . .": St. Peter.



# Canto XXIV

*Among the innumerable company of the Blessed (who sing and dance in circles and are here called "Carols") one spirit detaches itself: it is St. Peter; and at the request of Beatrice he examines Dante on the subject of Faith. Peter is well content with the poet's answers.*

O CHOSEN band, to the great supper called  
Of the blessed Lamb who giveth you to feast  
So that desire in you is still forestalled,  
If by the grace of God this man foretaste  
Of that which falleth from your table, ere  
The days appointed him of life have ceased,  
Think on his boundless longing, and then spare  
Some drops for his bedewing from those pools<sup>i</sup>  
Ye drink of, whence comes that which is his care."  
Thus Beatrice: forthwith those blissful souls, [10]  
Flaming like to a comet in the sky,  
Shaped themselves into spheres upon fixt poles;  
And as within a clock's machinery  
The wheels so turn that to the observer's sense  
The first seems to be still, the last to fly,  
Those Carols, dancing in the difference  
Of their revolving motion, swift or slow,  
Told me the measure of their affluence.<sup>ii</sup>  
And from the one which seemed the most to grow  
In beauty I saw so happy a fire shine out, [20]  
It left not one there of more dazzling glow.  
Three times round Beatrice it twined about,  
Accompanied with singing so divine  
That fantasy to me re-tells it not.

---

<sup>i</sup> 8-9. Give him a few drops from the fount of Truth, upon which his thought is bent.

<sup>ii</sup> 18. "Affluence": gladness.

Therefore my pen must skip, and I resign:  
 Imagination, and our speech much more,  
 Is of too vivid hue for shades so fine.  
 "O sister mine, who dost this boon implore,  
 Thou hast unbound me from this beauteous sphere  
 By thy devotion and love's ardent power."  
 [30]  
 Soon as the blessed flame stayed itself near,  
 Directed toward my Lady, its breath began  
 Discoursing, even as I repeat it here.  
 And she: "Eternal light of that great man  
 To whom our Lord the keys at parting gave,  
 Which He brought down, of joy's supreme domain,  
 Test thou this man on points both light and grave,  
 As pleases thee, how he the Faith conceives,  
 By which thou once didst walk upon the wave."<sup>iii</sup>  
 [40]  
 If rightly he loves, hopes rightly, and believes,  
 This is not hidden from thee, since thine eye,  
 Where thou art, each thing true-portrayed perceives;  
 But since this realm reckons its lieges by  
 The true faith, now to speak of it he ought,  
 This chance being given its truth to glorify."  
 Just as the bachelor arms him in his thought,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Mute, till the master shall the question pose,  
 To adduce the proof, but to determine not,  
 I, while she spoke, armed me with reasonings close  
 To be prepared for such a questioner  
 [50]  
 And such profession as I now disclose.  
 "Speak, O good Christian, and thyself declare!  
 Faith, what is it?" Whereat my brows inclined  
 Up to the light which breathed thus on the air.  
 I turned to Beatrice, and she promptly signed  
 To me that nothing should I now repress

---

<sup>iii</sup> 39. *Through faith Peter "walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matt. 14:46).*

<sup>iv</sup> 46. *"The bachelor": the candidate for a degree of doctor in theology.*

But pour forth all the fountain in my mind.  
 "Now may the Grace that grants me to confess,"  
 I began, "to the Church's high captain,  
 Enable me my thoughts well to express." [60]  
 And I continued: "As the truthful pen  
 Of thy dear brother wrote for our behoof,<sup>v</sup>  
 Who, with thee, led Rome the good path to gain,  
 Faith is the substance of things hoped, and proof  
 Of things invisible to mortal sight;  
 This seems to me the essential truth thereof."  
 Then I heard: "Thou conceiv'st of it aright,  
 If thou grasp why among the substances<sup>vi</sup>  
 And then among the proofs he counted it."  
 And I thereon: "The profound mysteries,<sup>vii</sup> [70]  
 Which here to me are by their bounty shown,  
 Are upon earth so hidden from our eyes  
 That there their being is in belief alone,  
 On which is founded the high hope we share;  
 Therefore as substance is it named and known.  
 And needs from this belief must we infer,  
 Deducing without further vision's aid;  
 Therefore of proof it has the character."  
 Then I heard: "If whatever is purveyed  
 By teaching were so understood below, [80]  
 There were no room left for the sophist's trade."  
 This was breathed forth from that love-kindled glow,  
 Which added: "Needs no further to traverse  
 This coin's alloy and weight, examined now;  
 But tell me if thou hast it in thy purse."  
 Then I: "Yes, truly; so bright and so round,  
 No hint of doubt is in the stamp it bears."

---

<sup>v</sup> 62. St. Peter's "dear brother" is St. Paul.

<sup>vi</sup> 68-69. Why did St. Paul call Faith first a "substance" and then a "proof"?

<sup>vii</sup> 70-78. Faith, from the human point of view, is a belief; and, in theological questions, takes the place of evidence in worldly syllogisms.

Thereupon issued from the light profound  
 That beamed on me: "This gem of heavenly hue,  
 On which all virtue is builded and enthroned, [90]  
 Whence came it to thee?" And I: "The abundant dew<sup>viii</sup>  
 Of the Holy Spirit which is so outpoured  
 Upon the ancient parchments and the new  
 Is argument compelling my accord  
 With such precise proof that, compared with it,  
 All demonstration else appeareth blurred."  
 Then heard I: "The ancient and the newer Writ,  
 Whose testaments have such conviction brought,  
 Why dost thou them as word of God admit?"  
 And I: "The proofs that truth to me have taught [100]  
 Are the works following, for which Nature ne'er<sup>ix</sup>  
 Heated the iron nor on anvil smote."  
 The answer came: "Say who, that these works were,  
 Assureth thee? The same things, and naught else,  
 That need proof do the proof to thee declare."  
 "If the world," said I, "without miracles  
 Turned Christian, then a miracle is born  
 That all the rest a hundred times excels;  
 For thou didst enter hungry, poor, forlorn,  
 Into the field, to sow there the good plant [110]  
 Which, once a vine, is now a bush of thorn."  
 This ended, rose through all the spheres the chant  
 Of the high holy Court: "Praised, God, be thou!"  
 In music making there its own descant.  
 And that great Baron, who had drawn me now,<sup>x</sup>  
 Examining, from branch to branch, till we  
 Were coming to the last leaves on the bough,  
 Resumed: "The Grace which in love's courtesy  
 Wooeth thy mind, hath loosed indeed thy tongue

---

<sup>viii</sup> 91-93. "The abundant dew": inspiration. "Parchments": Testaments.

<sup>ix</sup> 101. "The works following": the miracles.

<sup>x</sup> 115. "That great Baron": St. Peter.

To expound thy thought as it behoveth thee; [120]  
 Nor find I fault those arguments among  
 Thus far; but now thou needs must persevere  
 To tell what thou believ'st and whence 'tis sprung."  
 "O holy father, spirit who seest here  
 What thou didst so believe as to outrun<sup>xi</sup>  
 More youthful feet, seeking the Sepulchre,"  
 I began, "thou would'st have me to make known  
 The essence of my faith, alert and whole,  
 And askest also what 'tis built upon.  
 I answer: I believe in one God, sole, [130]  
 Eternal, that, unmoved, all heaven doth move  
 With love and with desire to the one goal.  
 For such belief I hold physical proof  
 And metaphysical; 'tis given me too  
 By verity which raineth from above  
 Through Moses, through the Psalms and Prophets, through  
 The Gospel, and through you who wrote, I wis,<sup>xii</sup>  
 When the ardent Spirit fondly adopted you.  
 In three eternal persons, and in these  
 One essence, I believe; so one, so trine, [140]  
 That with it may be joined both *are* and *is*.  
 With the unfathomable state divine  
 I speak of, often has stamped on me its mark  
 The evangelic doctrine's great design.  
 And this is the beginning; this, the spark  
 Which, after, into livelier fame shall swell  
 To shine in me as stars shine in the dark."  
 Then as a lord, at news which pleases well,  
 Taketh his servant to his bosom prest  
 Rejoicing, soon as he has told his tale, [150]  
 So blessing me, and singing as it blest,  
 Thrice circled round me, soon as I had ceased,

---

<sup>xi</sup> 125. *Faith impelled St. Peter to enter the Sepulchre before John.*

<sup>xii</sup> 137. *"You": the Apostles.*

The apostolic light at whose behest  
I had spoken; so my words its joy increased.

# Canto XXV

*St. James examines Dante on the subject of Hope. Beatrice answers for him, to spare his modesty, and says he has this virtue in full measure and on that account been privileged to behold Paradise. As to the nature of Hope, Dante himself answers. This examination ended, Beatrice points out to Dante the spirit of St. John, which dazzles him so that for the moment he is as one blind.*

IF EVER it happen that the sacred song<sup>i</sup>  
Where to both heaven and earth have set a hand,  
Whereby I am lean, these many years and long,  
Overcome the cruelty which keeps me banned  
From the fair sheepfold where I slept, a lamb,<sup>ii</sup>  
Foe to the wolves that raven through the land,  
With different voice now, nor with fleece the same,  
Shall I return, poet, and at the fount<sup>iii</sup>  
Of my baptising shall the chaplet claim,  
Because into the faith that makes the account [10]  
Of souls to God I won then; for which worth  
Peter wreathed such a light about my front.  
Thereafter toward us moved a splendour forth<sup>iv</sup>  
Out of that sphere whence we had seen issue  
The first fruits of Christ's vicars left on earth.  
Whereon my Lady, full of gladness new,  
Said to me: "Look; look! see the Baron move  
For whose sake is Galicia journeyed to."<sup>v</sup>  
As when by its companion comes a dove  
To settle close, and each one to its mate, [20]  
Turning and cooing, poureth forth its love,

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. "The sacred song": the Divine Comedy.

<sup>ii</sup> 5. "The fair sheepfold": Florence.

<sup>iii</sup> 8-9. "The fount": the Church of San Giovanni, in Florence. "The chaplet": the laurel crown.

<sup>iv</sup> 13-15. "A splendour": St. James. "The first fruits": St. Peter.

<sup>v</sup> 18. The grave of St. James at Compostella in Galicia was a favourite place of pilgrimage.

So the one prince, so glorious and great,  
     I saw received by the other, while that food  
     They lauded, spread above, their souls to sate.  
 But when the welcome was complete, they stood  
     Each of them silent *coram me*, so bright<sup>vi</sup>  
     And burning that my sight was all subdued.  
 Smiling then, Beatrice spoke: "Illustrious light,  
     To whom 'twas given the bounteous largess  
     Of our celestial palace once to write,<sup>vii</sup> [30]  
 Do thou make Hope to sound in this high place:  
     Thou knowest that thou as often hast pictured it  
     As Jesus showed the three that special grace."<sup>viii</sup>  
 "Lift up thy head, and confidently quit  
     Thyself! For whatso mortal dares to soar  
     Hither, our rays must ripen and complete."  
 The second flame this comfort breathed: wherefore<sup>ix</sup>  
     I lifted up mine eyes unto the hills  
     Which beat them down by too much weight before.  
 "Since, ere death, of His grace our Emperor wills [40]  
     That face to face thou should'st His Nobles see  
     In the most secret hall His presence fills,  
 That having seen this Court in verity  
     Thou in thyself and others mayest breed  
     Stronger the hope on earth enamouring thee,  
 Say what this is, and how therewith the seed<sup>x</sup>  
     Flowers in thy mind; and say whence comes this thing."  
     Thus further did the second light proceed;  
 And that compassionate one who set my wing,  
     Guiding its feathers, on a flight so vast, [50]  
     Fore-ran my answer, herself thus answering:

---

<sup>vi</sup> 26. "Coram me": *before me*.

<sup>vii</sup> 30. "To write": in the Epistle of James there are some references to divine liberality.

<sup>viii</sup> 33. "The three": Peter, James and John.

<sup>ix</sup> 37-38. "The second flame": St. James. "The hills": the two Apostles.

<sup>x</sup> 46. "Say what this is": Hope.



"Church Militant hath not a child to boast  
 Of greater hope; 'tis writ in the Sun's beam  
 Which radiateth over all our host.  
 Therefore from Egypt to Jerusalem<sup>xi</sup>  
 'Twas granted him to come, to look on her,  
 Before his soldier's service end for him.  
 The other two points asked by thee, which were  
 Not for the sake of knowing, but to record  
 How much this virtue to thy heart is dear, [60]  
 I leave to him; for they will not be hard,  
 Nor theme for vain-glory: let him reply  
 Therefore, and God this grace to him accord."  
 Like pupil answering teacher eagerly,  
 Prompt in those points wherein he is most expert,  
 To give proof of his quality, "Hope," said I,  
 "Is certain expectation that the heart  
 Has of the future glory; the effect  
 Of divine grace and precedent desert.  
 Me did the light from many stars direct; [70]  
 He first distilled it into me with his breath,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Singer supreme of the supreme Prefect.  
 For 'let them put their trust in thee' he saith  
 In his psalm, 'all who know thy name'; and who  
 Knoweth it not, if he possess my faith?  
 Then didst thou into me instil his dew<sup>xiii</sup>  
 In thine epistle, so that I overflow  
 And upon others spill your rain anew."  
 While I was speaking, a quick-throbbing glow  
 In that fire's living bosom was revealed, [80]  
 Like lightning in its sudden come-and-go.  
 Then spoke its breath: "The warm love still not quelled  
 For that dear virtue, which companioned me

---

<sup>xi</sup> 55. By "Egypt" is meant life on earth.

<sup>xii</sup> 71. "He": David.

<sup>xiii</sup> 76. "Thou": St. James.

Even to the palm and the issue of the field,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Bids me breathe to thee, who find'st felicity  
 In her; and me it pleases that thou tell  
 What thing it is that Hope has promised thee."  
 And I: "The old Scripture and the new as well  
 Set up the goal, pointing to Hope at hand,  
 Of all the souls God wills with Him to dwell. [90]  
 Isaiah says that each in his own land  
 Shall in a double garment be arrayed;<sup>xv</sup>  
 And this delectable life is his own land.  
 Also in far distincter mode conveyed  
 (Where of the white apparelling he wrote),  
 Thy brother hath this revelation made."<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Just on the close of these words, I heard float  
 A singing from above *Sperent in te*,<sup>xvii</sup>  
 Whereunto answered every Carol's note.  
 Then 'mid them brightened so intense a ray<sup>xviii</sup> [100]  
 That, if the Crab such crystal could enclose,  
 Winter would have a month of one sole day.  
 Blithe as a maiden rises up and goes  
 To join the dance, not flaunting, but to do  
 That honour to the new bride which she owes,  
 So did that brightened splendour join the two,  
 Who dancing wheeled in measure, at such pace<sup>xix</sup>  
 As to the ardour of their love was due.  
 It sang and danced itself into its place:  
 My Lady held them in her gaze confined [110]  
 As a bride stays, silent and motionless.  
 "This is he, this, who on the breast reclined

---

<sup>xiv</sup> 84. "The palm": of martyrdom. "The field": the battlefield of life.

<sup>xv</sup> 92. "In a double garment": the effulgence of the soul and the clarified body.

<sup>xvi</sup> 96. "Thy brother": St. John, in Rev. 3:5 and 7:9-17.

<sup>xvii</sup> 98. "Will put their trust in Thee."

<sup>xviii</sup> 100. "A ray": the light of St. John. If the constellation of Cancer (the Crab) contained a star as bright as this, night would be as light as day.

<sup>xix</sup> 107. The three representatives of the Christian virtues dance before Beatrice.

Even of our Pelican; 'tis he who bore<sup>xx</sup>  
 The great charge from the cross to him consigned."<sup>xxi</sup>  
 My Lady thus; but moved her eyes no more,  
 Intent in contemplation and delight,  
 After her words than she had done before.  
 As he who, gazing, strives with all his might  
 To see the sun eclipsed for a brief while,  
 And who by seeing is bereft of sight, [120]  
 So did I strive with the last flame, until  
 I heard a voice: "Why dazzlest thou thine eyes  
 To see that, which hath no place here to fill?<sup>xxii</sup>  
 Earth in earth is my body, and there lies  
 With the others, till our number shall comport  
 With what the eternal purposes devise.  
 With both robes in the blessed cloister's court  
 Are the two lights which alone rose from ground;<sup>xxiii</sup>  
 And this I bid thee to your world report."  
 Hearing this voice, the circle flaming round [130]  
 Was stilled, and with it that sweet mingling-up  
 Of threefold breath in one harmonious sound,<sup>xxiv</sup>  
 As, to forestall fatigue or some ill hap,  
 The oars, that till then smote the water sheer,  
 All at the one blast of a whistle stop.  
 Ah, how my mind was shaken and in fear  
 When now I turned to look on Beatrice!  
 For now I could not see her, though so near  
 I was to her, and in the world of bliss.

---

<sup>xx</sup> 113. The "Pelican" was a symbol of Christ.

<sup>xxi</sup> 114. John was entrusted with the care of Mary.

<sup>xxii</sup> 123. Dante believes, mistakenly, that John was taken up to Heaven in the flesh.

<sup>xxiii</sup> 128. "The two lights": Christ and Mary. Theirs are the only human bodies now in Heaven.

<sup>xxiv</sup> 132. "Threefold breath": of Peter, James, and John.

# Canto XXVI

*Dante is examined by St. John on the subject of Love. When he has given his answers, there is a sound of sweet singing; and Dante's sight is restored to him. A fourth spirit has now appeared and joined the three Apostles. Beatrice tells Dante that this is the spirit of Adam. Though Dante has not expressed his desire for enlightenment, Adam perceives it and answers his unspoken questions. He tells how long it is since he was placed in the Garden of Eden, how long he remained there, what was the true cause of the Fall, and what language he spoke.*

WHILE my extinguished sight perplexed me yet,  
A breath came forth that held me, hearkening tense,  
Out of the effulgence that extinguished it,  
Saying: "Until thou hast again the sense  
Of sight which on me was discomfited,  
'Tis well that converse be thy recompense.  
Begin then; say whereto thy soul is wed.  
Consider, and be assured that sight suppressed  
In thee is but confounded and not dead;  
Because the lady, who through this region blest  
Leads thee, hath in her look compassionate  
The virtue Ananias' hand possessed."<sup>i</sup>  
I said: "At her good pleasure, soon or late,  
Let cure come to the eyes which, when she brought  
The fire I burn with always, were the gate.  
The Good which utterly contents this Court  
Is Alpha and Omega of all lessons Love<sup>ii</sup>  
Reads me, of lighter or more deep import."  
And that same voice which I had felt remove  
Fear at the dazzling I was daunted by  
Put me in mind further to speak thereof,

[10]

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 12. Ananias cured St. Paul of his blindness.

<sup>ii</sup> 17. Rev. 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord."

And said: "A finer sieve thou needs must try  
 To explain this matter; thou must say who bent  
 Thy bow, aimed at a target set so high!"  
 And I "By philosophic argument  
 And with authority from thence imbrued<sup>iii</sup>  
 Such love must needs stamp on me its imprint;  
 For the good, soon as 'tis perceived as good,  
 Enkindles love and makes it more to live,  
 The more of good it can itself include. [30]  
 Therefore to the Essence, whose prerogative<sup>iv</sup>  
 Is, that what good outside of it is known  
 Is naught else but a light its own beams give,  
 More than elsewhere must in love be drawn  
 The mind of him whose vision can attain  
 The verity the proof is founded on.  
 This verity to my intellect is made plain  
 By Him who to that prime love testifies<sup>v</sup>  
 Which all the eternal substances maintain.  
 Made plain it is by word of the Author wise, [40]  
 Who, speaking of Himself, to Moses said:  
 'I will make all good pass before thine eyes';  
 Made plain by thee too, when thy prelude led<sup>vi</sup>  
 All other voices like a herald's cry,  
 And over earth Heaven's secret trumpeted."  
 I heard: "Through human intellect and by  
 Authorities in sure accord with it  
 Thy sovereign love of loves seeks God on high.  
 But tell me further if other cords have knit  
 Thee unto Him, so that thou may'st declare [50]  
 With what close teeth this love on you has bit."

---

<sup>iii</sup> 26. *By revealed Truth.*

<sup>iv</sup> 31. *Since love is attracted by goodness, and all goodness is in God, he must be the primal object of love.*

<sup>v</sup> 38-40. *"Him who . . .": Aristotle. "The Author": God.*

<sup>vi</sup> 43. *"Thy prelude": probably the Gospel of John.*

Not hidden was the sacred purpose here  
 Of the Eagle of Christ; nay, well could I divine<sup>vii</sup>  
 Whither he intended me to persevere.  
 Hence I resumed: "Those bitings, that incline  
 The heart to God by the power that they bring,  
 All with the yearning of my love, combine.  
 For the being of the world, and my being,  
 The death which He, that I might live, endured,  
 And hope, whereto the faithful, as I, cling, [60]  
 Joined with that living knowledge, have secured  
 That from the sea of the erring love retrieved  
 On the shore of the right love I stand assured.  
 I love the leaves wherewith is all enleaved  
 The Eternal Gardener's garden, great and least,  
 In the measure of the good from Him received."  
 A marvellous sweet singing, when I ceased,  
 Through heaven resounded; and my Lady too  
 Cried "Holy, Holy, Holy," with the rest;  
 And as a sharp light breaketh sleep in two, [70]  
 The 'visual spirit running forth to meet  
 Splendour that thrills the membranes through and through,  
 And he who has been awaked recoils from it,  
 Dazed by that suddenness, which makes him quail  
 Till reasoning come to succour his defeat,  
 So from mine eyes did Beatrice every scale  
 Remove with her own ray, so luminous  
 That over a thousand miles it might prevail;  
 Whence clearer than before my vision was;  
 And now I asked, like one well-nigh dismayed, [80]  
 Concerning a fourth light I saw with us.  
 My Lady then: "In those bright beams arrayed  
 Gazes on his creator, rapt in joy,  
 The first soul that the prime power ever made."<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> 53. "The Eagle of Christ" is John.

<sup>viii</sup> 84. "The first soul": Adam.

And as the bough, when the wind rushes by,  
     Bendeth its topmost leaves and then is raised  
     By its own virtue, and once more springeth high,  
 So all the while that she was speaking, mazed  
     I was, and then again was fortified  
     By wish to speak, which burned me as I gazed. [90]  
 Forthwith: "O fruit alone born ripe," I cried,  
     "O thou who hast, our far progenitor,  
     Both daughter and daughter-in-law in every bride,  
 Devoutly as I may, do I implore  
     That thou speak to me; my desire thou see'st;  
     And, to hear thee the sooner, I say no more."  
 Sometimes an animal, covered up at rest,  
     Quivers till, through whatever wraps him, all  
     The motions of his impulse are exprest;  
 And in like manner that first human soul [100]  
     Disclosed to me through its own covering  
     How for my pleasure it gladdened at my call;  
 And from it breathed: "Without thy uttering  
     I can discern thy wish better than thou  
     See'st what to thee is the most certain thing,  
 Because I see it in the mirror true<sup>ix</sup>  
     Which can the likeness of all things present  
     Though none of these its likeness ever drew.  
 Thou would'st be told how long a time was spent  
     Since in the garden high I was enclosed [110]  
     Where she there led thee to the long ascent;<sup>x</sup>  
 And how long on its joys my eyes reposed;  
     And why by the great wrath I was out-cast;  
     And what language I used and had composed.  
 Know now, my son, that not the tree's mere taste  
     Was in itself cause of so hard exile,  
     But only the ordered limit overpast.<sup>xi</sup>

---

<sup>ix</sup> 106. "In the mirror true": in God.

<sup>x</sup> 111. "She there . . .": Beatrice.

From that place whence thy lady impelled Virgil,  
 While for this choir I pined, four thousand, three  
 Hundred and two gyres did the sun fulfil. [120]  
 Nine hundred times and thirty, wheeling, he<sup>xii</sup>  
 Through all the lights in turn his pathway took  
 While upon earth it was my lot to be.  
 Wholly extinguished was the tongue I spoke  
 Long ere the unachievable monument<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Was looked to be achieved by Nimrod's folk.  
 For never a thing that reason can invent  
 Forever endures, because man's will is weak  
 And, following the heaven, on change is bent.  
 It is a natural act that man should speak; [130]  
 But this or that way Nature leaves to you,  
 As pleases most, whatever end you seek.  
 Ere I descended to the eternal rue  
 YAH was the name on earth of Him Supreme  
 Wherefrom the gladness clothing me I drew.  
 EL was He named thereafter, as doth beseem;<sup>xiv</sup>  
 For mortal use is as the leaves upon  
 The bough, which drop, and others follow them.  
 On the highest mount that the wave beateth on<sup>xv</sup>  
 Was I, with life first pure and then impure, [140]  
 From the first hour to that which, when the sun  
 Changes his quadrant, follows the sixth hour."

---

<sup>xii</sup> 121-122. "He": the sun. "The lights": the signs of the Zodiac.

<sup>xiii</sup> 125. "The unachievable monument": the Tower of Babel.

<sup>xiv</sup> 136. "EL" is the Hebrew name.

<sup>xv</sup> 139-142. Adam lived in the Garden of Eden only about six hours.



# Canto XXVII

*The lustre clothing the spirit of St. Peter begins to dilate and to redden. This is from indignation at the avarice, ambition, and venality of modern Popes. ("Cahorsins and Gascons," line 58, refers to Clement V, a Gascon, and John XXII, of Cahors.) The host of spirits vanishes; and Beatrice bids Dante look down for a moment to see how far they had come on their upward journey. Both are then wafted into the ninth heaven, that of the Primum Mobile: Beatrice explains the nature of this sphere, and laments the perversity of mankind, with their desires set upon ignoble things, not from depravity of nature but for lack of right government.*

TO THE FATHER and to the Son and Holy Ghost

Glory!" burst forth from all the heavenly spheres.

So sweet, my spirit in ecstasy was lost.

What I saw seemed a smile of the universe;

So that the intoxicating ecstasy

Entered me both by the eyes and by the ears.

O joy! unutterable felicity!

O life entire in love and peace! and O

Riches assured, from every craving free!

Before mine eyes the four torches a-glow<sup>i</sup>

[10]

Stood; and the one which first to me came near

Began more vivid and intense to grow,

And made itself in aspect to appear

As Jupiter would seem if he and Mars<sup>ii</sup>

Were birds and could exchange the plumes they wear.

The Providence, which here for each prepares

The time and the office, had imposed a hush

On every side through all the quiring stars,

When this I heard: "If that I change and flush

Marvel thou not; for thou shalt soon divine

[20]

---

<sup>i</sup> 10-11. *The lights of Peter, James, John, and Adam.* — "The one which . . .": the flame of St. Peter.

<sup>ii</sup> 14-15. *If Jupiter would turn red and Mars white.*

On all these, as I speak, as deep a blush.  
 He who the place usurpeth that was mine<sup>iii</sup>  
 On earth, mine, mine, now vacant in the sight  
 Of the Son of God, has made my grave decline  
 Into a sewer, well-nigh choked outright  
 With blood and filth; wherein the Arch-Renegade,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Who fell from here, down there taketh delight."  
 With such a colour as on a cloud is laid  
 At morning or at evening, opposite  
 The sun, I saw the whole heaven overspread. [30]  
 And as a virtuous lady, herself quit  
 Of self-reproach, at other's fault will seem  
 Abashed, though merely at report of it,  
 So Beatrice changed her countenance; I deem  
 Such an eclipse it was that darkened o'er  
 Heaven, when on earth suffered the Power Supreme.  
 Then he proceeded; not now as before,  
 But with a voice so altered in its mood  
 That even his aspect was not altered more.  
 "The spouse of Christ was not upon my blood<sup>v</sup> [40]  
 And that of Linus and of Cletus fed,  
 That for the gain of gold she might be wooed;  
 But Sixtus, Pius, Calixtus, Urban bled  
 After much weeping 'mid the faithful band,  
 That they might gain this blissful life instead.  
 It was not our will that on the right hand  
 Of our successors one part of Christ's flock<sup>vi</sup>  
 Should be, and one part on the other stand;  
 Nor that the keys which in my charge I took  
 Should on a standard be the ensign fown [50]

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<sup>iii</sup> 22. "He who . . .": Pope Boniface VIII.

<sup>iv</sup> 26-27. "The Arch-Renegade": Satan. — "Down there": in Hell.

<sup>v</sup> 40-46. "The spouse of Christ": the Church. — Linus and Cletus were Bishops of Rome. — Sixtus and the others were also martyrs.

<sup>vi</sup> 47. The two parts "of Christ's flock" are the Guelfs and the Ghibel lines.

In battle urged against baptised folk;  
 Nor that my image should for seal be shown  
 On lying privileges, bought and sold:  
 I flash and redden, seeing these things done.  
 From here above preying on every fold  
 In shepherds' clothing wolves are seen to slink:  
 O succour of God, thy hand why dost thou hold?  
 Cahorsins and Gascons make ready to drink<sup>vii</sup>  
 Our blood: O in beginning once so bright,  
 To what ignoble ending dost thou sink! [60]  
 But the high Providence, which with Scipio's might<sup>viii</sup>  
 Rescued the glory of the world for Rome,  
 Soon will bring help, if I conceive aright.  
 Open thy mouth, my son, when, overcome  
 By mortal weight, thou shalt return below,  
 And what I hide not, do not thou shrink from."  
 As in our air the vapours downward snow,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Frozen in flakes, at that time when the horn  
 Of the heavenly Goat is touched by the sun's glow,  
 So, jewelling the ether, upward borne [70]  
 In flakes of fire, those vapours triumphing  
 Shone, which had come to make with us sojourn.  
 Their semblances my sight was following,  
 And followed till the space between increased  
 So vast, it failed on further flight to wing,  
 Whereat the Lady, who saw me now released  
 From gazing up, said to me: "Downward send  
 Thy sight, and see how far thou hast been displaced."  
 From the hour at which I had first looked down, I kenned  
 That I had moved by now through the whole are [80]

---

<sup>vii</sup> 58. *See the Argument.*

<sup>viii</sup> 61. *Scipio the younger, who conquered Hannibal.*

<sup>ix</sup> 67-72. *These lines present the strange picture of an inverted snowstorm. — "The heavenly Goat" is Capricorn.*

Which the first climate makes from middle to end;<sup>x</sup>  
 Ulysses' mad adventure I could mark  
 Past Cadiz, and this side almost, the shore  
 Europa left, her sweet load to embark;  
 And more I had seen of this small threshing-floor,  
 But now the sun beneath me in his career  
 Was parted from me by one sign or more.  
 The enamoured mind, fain ever to confer  
 With my loved Lady, more than ever sure  
 Of its want, burned to gaze once more on her. [90]  
 And all that art or nature makes to allure  
 The eyes and, feasting them, the mind entrance,  
 In human lineaments or portraiture,  
 Combined would seem but insignificance  
 Beside the divine pleasure I beheld  
 When I turned toward her smiling countenance.  
 And power, that in that look abounding welled,  
 From the fair nest of Leda shot me far<sup>xi</sup>  
 And into the most swift of heavens propelled.  
 Its parts, the nearest and remotest, are [100]  
 So uniform, I have no skill to tell  
 Which of them Beatrice chose for my place there;  
 But she to whom my wish was visible,  
 Began, smiling in such a happiness  
 That God's own joy seemed on her lips to dwell:  
 "The nature of the world which, motionless  
 At core, the wheeling of the rest maintains,<sup>xii</sup>  
 Starteth from here the running of the race;  
 Else this heaven no locality contains  
 Save the divine mind, whence enkindled glows [110]

---

<sup>x</sup> 81-84. *The earth was divided into seven strips, or "climates."* — "Ulysses' mad adventure": cf. Inf. XXVI, 90-142. — "This side" is the Phoenician shore, where Europa mounted on the back of Jupiter.

<sup>xi</sup> 98-99. "The fair nest": the constellation of Gemini. — "The most swift of heavens": the ninth, or Primum Mobile.

<sup>xii</sup> 107. "At core": on the earth.

The love that turns it and the power it rains.  
 Light and love clasp it in one circle close,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 As it the other spheres; and this circuit  
 He only who girds it understands and knows.  
 None other its speed determines; but by it  
 Are measured all the others, just as ten  
 Is measured, when to half and fifth part split.  
 And how Time in such vessel can contain  
 Its roots, while in the rest its leaves emerge,  
 May now to thine intelligence be plain. [120]  
 O Covetousness, so hasty to submerge  
 Mortals, that each and all are powerless  
 To draw their eyes forth from thy blinding surge!  
 The will indeed in men still flourishes;  
 But drenchings of continual rain convert  
 Sound plums into a wrinklèd rottenness.  
 For faith and innocence are in the heart  
 Of children only; both aside are cast  
 Before a beard upon the cheeks may start,  
 Many a stammering child observeth fast [130]  
 Who, after, when his tongue is freed, will chew  
 Any food, any month, in glutton haste.  
 And many a stammerer loves and hearkens to  
 His mother, who, when full speech in him flows  
 Longeth to see her buried out of view.  
 So, soon as it is seen, the white skin grows  
 Black on the beauteous daughter of him whose sway<sup>xiv</sup>  
 With morning comes and with the evening goes.  
 Then, lest thou make a marvel of such decay,  
 Think that on earth is now no governance; [140]  
 Wherefore the human family runs astray.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> 112-114. *The ninth heaven is surrounded only by the Empyrean, which is the Mind of God.*

<sup>xiv</sup> 137. *"Of him . . .": the sun, whose "beauteous daughter" is the human race.*

But ere from winter January advance<sup>xv</sup>  
To spring, through the hundredth part which ye neglect,  
From these high spheres so great a light shall lance  
That destiny, which we so long expect,<sup>xvi</sup>  
Shall turn the poops to where the prows have stood;  
And then the fleet shall steer a course direct,  
And a sound fruit shall follow upon the bud."

---

<sup>xv</sup> 142. If an error in the Julian calendar had not been corrected in 1582, the month of January, in the course of less than 90 centuries, would have been pushed into the spring.

<sup>xvi</sup> 145. Once more we have a vague prophecy of violent reformation.

# Canto XXVIII

*Dante is privileged to see the Divine Essence, revealed as a single point of intensely shining light. In this ninth heaven, moving round that Point are nine orders of angels, in nine concentric circles of light. These orders are the Intelligences, who are the Movers of the various spheres: they are divided into three hierarchies: Seraphs, Cherubs, Thrones; Dominations, Virtues, Powers; Principalities, Archangels, and Angels; as set forth by St. Dionysius. The swiftness and brightness of the circles are the measure of their excellence; and the joy of the angels is proportioned to their sight. The doubling of the chess-board squares (line 98) alludes to the inventor of chess, who asked from a king as a reward a grain of wheat doubled as many times as there were squares on the board. The king was amazed at the millions to which the numbers added up.*

WHEN SHE who hath imparadised my mind  
Had stript the truth bare, and its contraries  
In the present life of wretched mortal-kind,  
As one who, looking in the mirror, sees  
A torch's flame that is behind him lit  
Ere in his sight, or in his thought, it is,  
And turns to see if the glass opposite  
Have told him truth, and findeth it agree  
Therewith, as truly as note and measure fit;  
So is recorded in my memory  
That I turned, looking on those eyes of light  
Whence Love had made the noose to capture me.  
And when I turned, and when there smote my sight  
What is revealed within that sphere supreme  
If the eye upon its circling fix aright,  
I saw a Point, of so intense a beam  
That needs must every eye it blazes on  
Be closed before its poignancy extreme.  
Whatever star to the eye is smallest known

[10]

Would seem a moon, were it beside this placed [20]  
 As star beside star, in comparison.  
 Close, perhaps, as the halo seems to invest  
 The lustre with whose tinge it is impearled  
 Where the surrounding air is mistiest,  
 At such a distance round the Point there whirled  
 A ring of fire so swift, it had surpassed  
 The motion which most swiftly girds the world.<sup>i</sup>  
 And round this was a second circle traced;  
 Round that a third, and then a fourth began;  
 A fifth the fourth, a sixth the fifth enlaced. [30]  
 Followed the seventh, of so ample a span  
 That Juno's messenger, completely shown,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Had been too narrow its compass to contain:  
 So the eighth and ninth; and each revolving zone  
 Moved the more slowly according as it was,  
 In numbering, at more distance from the one;  
 And that ring glowed most lively and luminous  
 Which from the pure spark was removed the least,  
 Being most within its truth, as I suppose.  
 My Lady, who saw perplexity persist [40]  
 In my suspense, said: "From that point of light  
 Dependeth Heaven, and all things that exist.  
 Look on that circle most conjoined with it;  
 And know, its motion is so swift by aid  
 Of love, whose kindling spurs its onward flight."  
 And I to her: "Were the universe arrayed<sup>iii</sup>  
 In the order that I see these rings denote,  
 This proffered food had my desire allayed;  
 But in the world of sense we have learned to note  
 That the encircling spheres are more divine [50]

---

<sup>i</sup> 27. "The motion": of the Primum Mobile itself.

<sup>ii</sup> 32. "Juno's messenger" is Iris, the rainbow.

<sup>iii</sup> 46-51. The light and speed of the girdles are proportionate to their proximity to the Point, whereas in the material universe the nearest sphere is the slowest.



As from the centre they are more remote.  
 If my desire, then, in this wondrous shrine  
 Of beings angelic must be quieted,  
 Which hath but love and light for its confine,  
 Needs must I hear still why the example bred<sup>iv</sup>  
 By the exemplar differeth therefrom  
 For, by myself, I gaze on it unfed."  
 "If thy weak fingers find it troublesome  
 To untie this knot, 'tis nothing to surprise;  
 So hard, from being untried, it has become." [60]  
 My Lady thus; then: "Take and recognise  
 The truth I tell thee, if thou would'st be content,  
 And subtle wit about it exercise.  
 The corporal circles vary in their extent  
 According to the virtue, more or less,  
 Whence all these parts receive their nourishment.  
 The greater goodness will more greatly bless;  
 The greater body greater blessing steeps,  
 If like perfection all its parts possess.  
 Therefore this one which onward with it sweeps<sup>v</sup> [70]  
 The rest of the universe, must answer to  
 The circle that most love and knowledge keeps.  
 If thou thy measure round the virtue drew,  
 Not round the seeming substance that thy sense  
 Doth as a circle to thy mind construe,  
 Thou would'st perceive a marvellous congruence  
 Of great with more, and small with less, appear<sup>vi</sup>  
 In each heaven, with its own Intelligence."  
 As, purifying the hemisphere of air,  
 A brilliancy remains when Boreas blows<sup>vii</sup> [80]  
 From his more lenient cheek, and washes fair

---

<sup>iv</sup> 55. *The angelic circles are the pattern of the material spheres.*

<sup>v</sup> 70. *"This one": the Primum Mobile.*

<sup>vi</sup> 77. *"Of great [size] with more [intelligence]."*

<sup>vii</sup> 80. *The northeast wind, the clearest of Boreas' threefold blast.*

The tarnish of the dull mist, to disclose  
 Heaven laughing out, triumphant and serene,  
 And each horizon all its beauty shows,  
 So was it with me, when so clear had been  
 Vouchsafed me answer by my Lady's grace;  
 And like a star in heaven the truth was seen.  
 And now, when she fell silent for a space,  
 Thick as the sparks from molten iron sped  
 So did the sparks about the circles chase.<sup>viii</sup> [90]  
 Their fiery course each spark accompanied,  
 'So many in number that the doubling told<sup>ix</sup>  
 Of chess-board squares had been out-myriaded.  
 From choir to choir I heard Hosanna rolled  
 To that fixt Point which holds them in their home,  
 Hath held them ever, and shall forever hold.  
 Seeing into my mind a question come,  
 She said: "The circles of the first degree  
 The Seraphim and Cherubim illumine:  
 So swift they follow their own bonds, to be<sup>x</sup> [100]  
 Like to the Point as most they can; and can  
 The more, the higher they have risen to see.  
 Those other loves, which move around their span,  
 Are named Thrones of the godhead they attest,  
 Completing the first triad with their train.  
 And thou should'st be assured that these are blest  
 In measure as their sight plumbs the abyss  
 Of truth, where the intellect is stayed at rest.  
 Hence may be seen how the celestial bliss<sup>xi</sup>  
 Is founded on the act that seeth God, [110]  
 Not that which loves, which cometh after this.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 90. "The sparks': the individual angels.

<sup>ix</sup> 92. "The doubling": see the Argument.

<sup>x</sup> 100. "Their own bonds": the respective rings.

<sup>xi</sup> 109-114. Grace begets good will, together they constitute merit, merit determines the degree of sight, and sight is the source of love.

Of this sight merit is the measuring-rod,  
     Which grace begetteth, married to good will;  
     So, rank on rank, each fills its own abode.  
 The second triad, blossoming in soil  
     Of that eternal spring, which no unkind<sup>xii</sup>  
     Night-frost of Aries cometh to despoil,  
 Warbles Hosanna without end, combined  
     In triple melody, that sounds on three  
     Orders of bliss whereof it is entwined. [120]  
 Three godheads are within that hierarchy;  
     First Dominations; Virtues next to them,  
     And Powers, the third of the orders fronting thee.  
 In the two last-but-one that dance and flame  
     Are Principalities and Archangels:  
     The last is all Angelic feast and game.  
 Upward these orders gaze; and so prevails  
     Downward their power, that up toward God on high  
     All are impelled, and each in turn impels.  
 Dionysius set himself so ardently<sup>xiii</sup> [130]  
     To fix upon these orders his regard,  
     He named them and distinguished them as I.  
 But Gregory parted from him afterward,  
     Though at himself he smiled when all things were  
     In heaven to his enlightened eyes unbarred,  
 And if on earth a mortal could declare  
     A truth so secret, be not stupefied;  
     For he imparted it who saw it here  
 With much of truth about these gyres beside."

---

<sup>xii</sup> 116-117. "No . . . night-frost of Aries": no autumn.

<sup>xiii</sup> 130-138. "Dionysius" the Areopagite, the great authority for the orders of the angels, was thought to have derived his information from St. Paul (cf. line 138). St. Gregory (line 133) arranged the angelic orders differently.

# Canto XXIX

*Beatrice enlightens Dante on various points that troubled him. He learns from her that the creation was not a temporal process: God revealed Himself in eternity. Pure “act” (the angels), pure potentiality (matter), and the two united in the material heavens, all came into being simultaneously. Jerome erred in supposing that the angels were created long before the rest of the universe. In contrast with the pure vision of the angels, preachers on earth cloud the minds of their hearers with pedantic questions and trivial inventions.*

WHEN BOTH Latona’s children, covered by<sup>i</sup>  
The Ram and by the Scales, together make  
One complete girdle of the horizon sky,  
Not longer than the one and the other take,  
Poised from the zenith, ere they disunite  
That girdle, and both their hemisphere forsake,  
Beatrice held her peace with smile alight  
Upon her features and eyes fixèd clear  
Upon the Point which had o’erwhelmed my sight.  
Then she: “I ask not what thou long’st to hear, [10]  
But tell thee; I can all thy longing name  
Here, where is centred every *when* and *where*.<sup>ii</sup>  
Not increase of His own good to proclaim  
(Which is not possible) but that His own  
Splendour might in resplendence say *I Am*;  
In His eternity, where time is none,  
Nor aught of limitation else, He chose  
That in new loves the eternal Love be shown.<sup>iii</sup>  
Nor, ere that, lay He dulled as in repose;

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-6. At the vernal equinox, at dawn and at sunset. the sun and the moon (“Latona’s children”) are exactly balanced for an instant on opposite sides of the horizon.

<sup>ii</sup> 12. God is the centre of all our conceptions of space and time.

<sup>iii</sup> 18. “In new loves”: in the creation of the angels.

For not before nor after, thou must know, [20]  
 Did God move on the waters as they rose.  
 Into existence, which no flaw could show,  
 Form and its matter, simple or mixt withal,<sup>iv</sup>  
 Sprang, as three arrows from a three-stringed bow.  
 And as in glass, in amber, or crystal,  
 A ray of light will instantly pervade  
 The whole without one moment's interval,  
 So its Sire's threefold operation rayed  
 Into its being, entire, immediate,  
 With no distinction of beginning made. [30]  
 And with the substances was concreate  
 Order, and welded with them; and these crowned<sup>v</sup>  
 The world in which pure act was animate.  
 In the lowest place mere potency was found;  
 Between them, potency was twined with act  
 In withies that may never be unwound.  
 From Jerome you have heard of a long tract<sup>vi</sup>  
 Of time, wherein the angels' ranks appeared,  
 While all else of the universe yet lacked;  
 But what I tell hath many a page averred [40]  
 (Keep watch, and thou thyself the truth shall feel)  
 Of those whose pens the Holy Spirit stirred.  
 Reason also may perceive it in some deal,  
 Which would not grant that for so long an age  
 The Movers should of their completion fail.<sup>vii</sup>  
 Now, where these Loves were chosen, at what stage,  
 And how, thou know'st; so that a triple flame  
 Of thy desire already I assuage.  
 Nor could one count till he to twenty came<sup>viii</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> 23. *The angels, the earth, and the heavens (see the Argument).*

<sup>v</sup> 32-34. "And these crowned . . .": at the top were the angels, which are pure intelligence. "Mere potency" is characteristic of brute matter.

<sup>vi</sup> 37. "From Jerome . . .": see the Argument.

<sup>vii</sup> 45. "The Movers": the angels.

<sup>viii</sup> 49. *The rebellious angels fell before one could count to twenty; the others accepted grace.*

So soon as of the angels did one part [50]  
 Disturb your matter's elemental frame.  
 The rest remained; and then began this art  
 Which thou perceivest, in such joy immerst  
 That never from their circlings they dispart.  
 The Fall had its beginning in the accurst  
 Arrogance of him whom thou didst see compressed.<sup>ix</sup>  
 With all the world's weights down upon him forced.  
 Those thou see'st here were humble, and thus confessed  
 The Goodness that empowered them to aspire  
 To be with so great understanding blest; [60]  
 Therefore their vision was exalted higher  
 With grace illumining and their own desert,  
 So that they have their will firm and entire.  
 Nor must thou doubt what I for sure assert  
 That to receive grace is desert indeed  
 In measure as 'tis taken to the heart.  
 On this consistory now thy thought may feed  
 In contemplation, if my science fills  
 Thy garner full, without ulterior aid.  
 But since the fashion of your schools instils [70]  
 The doctrine that the angelic nature's kind  
 Is such as understands, remembers, wills,  
 I will speak on, that pure into thy mind  
 The truth may come, which there below hath been  
 Dimmed, and with ambiguities entwined.  
 These beings, since they first had joy therein,  
 On God's face have their constant vision kept,  
 Wherefrom nothing is hidden or unseen.  
 Hence no new object comes to intercept<sup>x</sup>  
 Their sight; nor need they single memories, [80]  
 Dividing thought, ever to recollect;  
 So that-on earth men dream with open eyes,

---

<sup>ix</sup> 56. *"Of him": Satan.*

<sup>x</sup> 79-81. *Nothing ever intervenes between their minds and the image of all things in God.*

Some in good faith, some unbelieving; and they  
 Are those on whom reproach the heavier lies.  
 Your speculation keeps not the one way  
 Down there; so far desire for prominence  
 Transports you and the craving for display.  
 Yet even this to Heaven is less offence  
 And more endurable than when Holy Writ  
 Is cast aside or wrested from its sense. [90]  
 They think not how much blood the sowing of it  
 In the world cost, nor what blessed reward  
 Is theirs, who humbly to its rule submit.  
 Each vies with the other to bring out a hoard  
 Of fond inventions, which the preachers take  
 And furbish: of the Gospel not a word.  
 One says the moon returned upon her track<sup>xi</sup>  
 At the passion of Christ, and hid from view  
 The sun, whose light was thus from earth held back;  
 And lieth, for the light itself withdrew, [100]  
 So that the darkness of eclipse made fear  
 Spaniard and Indian even as the Jew.  
 Lapo and Bindo are names not commoner  
 In Florence than the fables preached in turn  
 From pulpit after pulpit, year by year,  
 So that the sheep, who know nothing, return  
 From pasture fed with wind; yet are not they  
 Excused because their loss they never learn.  
 Christ to His first assembly did not say:  
 'To proclaim trifles go ye forth a-field, [110]  
 But gave them truth to build on, day by day.  
 That and that only filled their mouths, and pealed  
 To battle for the faith, their glorious work,  
 In which the Gospel was both spear and shield.  
 Now they go forth to preach with quip and quirk,

---

<sup>xi</sup> 97-102. To explain the darkness at the Crucifixion, some say that the moon left its course to make an eclipse; the truth is that the sun hid its own rays.

And if a good laugh they contrive to win,  
 The puffed hood covers a contented smirk.  
 But the cowl hideth such a bird within<sup>xii</sup>  
 That, if the crowd could see it as it is,  
 They'd see what pardon they confided in; [120]  
 Through which this folly on earth hath such increase  
 That without warrant of authority  
 They rush to catch at any promises.  
 Therewith grows fat the pig of Antony,<sup>xiii</sup>  
 And others too of yet more swinish kind,  
 Paying with money unstampt by the die.  
 Enough of this digression! Turn thy mind  
 Back to the main path, that the way we go  
 Be shortened with the time to us assigned.  
 The angelic nature mounts in number so [130]  
 Past measure, that no speech was ever skilled,  
 Nor mortal thought, to cast so far a throw;  
 And if thou note what Daniel has revealed,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Thou wilt perceive that the determinate  
 Number is in his myriads concealed.  
 The primal light whose beams irradiate  
 This nature, is absorbed through avenues<sup>xv</sup>  
 Many as the splendours whereto it is mate;  
 And since on the mind's vision love ensues,  
 That sweetness glows within them fiery-bright [140]  
 Or warm, according to the mode they use.  
 See now the Eternal Virtue's breadth and height,  
 Since it hath made itself so vast a store  
 Of mirrors upon which to break its light,  
 Remaining in itself one, as before."

---

<sup>xii</sup> 118. "Such a bird": the devil, waiting for the preacher's soul.

<sup>xiii</sup> 124. "The pig of Antony": the degenerate monks of the order of St. Antony, who is generally represented with a hog under his feet.

<sup>xiv</sup> 133. Dan. 7:10: "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."

<sup>xv</sup> 137. Every angel constituting a species by itself, no two perceive God alike.



# Canto XXX

*At daybreak Dante and Beatrice find themselves taken up from “the greatest body” (the Primum Mobile) into the Empyrean, beyond the spheres. This heaven is revealed symbolically as a river of light, streaming between banks of flowers. Dante’s eyes are strengthened by “drinking” of this light; whereupon the image is transformed, and appears as a round sea of light, above which Paradise is discovered as a vast white rose, within which are assembled the “two courts” of Heaven, the Angels and the Redeemed. Beatrice points out to Dante the seat awaiting Henry VII of Luxembourg, who was to become Emperor in 1308 and to die in 1318. The Canto ends with a reference to Pope Clement’s deceitful conduct towards Henry, already mentioned in Canto XVII (line 82).*

PERHAPS six thousand miles away is spread<sup>i</sup>  
The blaze of noon, and this world more and more  
Inclines its shadow almost to a level bed,  
When over us the heavens’ unfathomed core  
Begins to alter, so that one by one  
Stars lose their faint path down to this low floor,  
And as the brightest handmaid of the Sun  
Comes onward, so the closing heavens efface  
Light after light, till the most fair is gone;  
Even so the Triumph that forever plays [10]  
About the Point which overwhelmed me quite,  
Seeming embraced by what it doth embrace,  
By little and little stole out of my sight;  
So that, by vacancy of vision led,  
And love, I turned to Beatrice for light.  
If all of her that heretofore is said  
Could in a single perfect praise be quit,  
‘Twere still too narrow to suffice my need,

---

<sup>i</sup> 1-7. Dante is about to describe the aspect of the sky, with the stars gradually fading, a little before dawn. “This low floor”: the earth’s surface. “Handmaid”: Aurora, the dawn.

The beauty I saw not only exceeds our wit  
 To measure, past all reach, but I aver [20]  
 He only who made it fully enjoyeth it.  
 And I avow me more defeated here  
 Than by his theme's height and the exacted cost  
 Comic or tragic poet ever were.  
 As the sun doth to the eyes that tremble most,  
 So doth to me the thought of the sweet smile,  
 Whereby, shorn of itself, my mind is lost.  
 From the first day when I beheld her, while  
 She was in this life, till this vision blest,  
 Never from her did aught my song beguile; [30]  
 Yet needs must be relinquished further quest  
 To follow in verse her beauty; it now forgoes,  
 As must each artist to his last power prest.  
 For mightier notes than this my trumpet blows  
 So lofty I leave her, to assay the height  
 Of the arduous theme, which draws now toward its close.  
 With the gesture of a guide, whose goal's in sight,  
 She spoke: "We from the greatest body move,<sup>ii</sup>  
 Emerging in the heaven that is pure light;  
 Light of the understanding, full of love, [40]  
 Love of the true good, full of joy within,  
 Joy that transcends all the heart conceiveth of.  
 Thou shalt see either soldiery therein<sup>iii</sup>  
 Of Paradise; the one in the aspect they  
 Shall at the Judgment by thine eyes be seen."  
 As sudden lightning throws in disarray  
 The visual spirits, so that the eye is reft  
 Of power to grasp even things that strongest stay,  
 The living light in such a radiant weft  
 Enwound me and with such glory overcame, [50]

---

<sup>ii</sup> 38. "The greatest body": the Primum Mobile.

<sup>iii</sup> 43. "Either soldiery": the army of the souls that resisted temptation and the host of good angels that triumphed over the bad.

That in it all was burnt and nothing left.  
 "Ever doth the Love which stills this heaven acclaim  
     Its own with salutation like to this,  
     Preparing so the candle for its flame."  
 No sooner did these brief words on me seize,  
     Than I became aware that I had aid  
     To overpass my proper faculties.  
 And such new vision of the sense it made  
     That there is no intensity, my sight  
     Could not have borne to endure it unafraid. [60]  
 And I beheld, shaped like a river, light  
     Streaming a splendour between banks whereon  
     The miracle of the spring was pictured bright.<sup>iv</sup>  
 Out of this river living sparkles thrown  
     Shot everywhere a fire amid the bloom  
     And there like rubies gold-encrusted shone;  
 Then as if dizzy with the spiced perfume  
     They plunged into the enchanted eddy again:  
     As one sank, rose another fiery plume.  
 "The high desire that burns thee now to attain [70]  
     To the true knowledge of the things thou see'st  
     Pleaseth me more, the stronger it doth strain.  
 But thou must needs even of this water taste  
     Ere thou the parch of so great thirst appease."  
     So spoke mine eyes' Sun to me, and scarce had ceased  
 When she added: "The river and the topazes  
     That enter and issue, and the smiling flowers,  
     Are of their truth foreshadowing prefaces.  
 Not that in these things are unripened powers,  
     But in thyself is that which doth impede, [80]  
     Since not yet to such height thy vision towers."  
 No child is there that flings him at such speed  
     With face turned to the milk, if he awake

---

<sup>iv</sup> 63-64. The spring flowers are the souls of the just. The "living sparkles" are the angels.

Far later than his wont, as at my need  
 I did, more perfect mirrors still to make  
 Of mine eyes, bending to the wave profound  
 That floweth for our full salvation's sake.  
 Soon as mine eyes within the eyelids' bound  
 Had drunk of it, immediately shone  
 The length of it translated into round. [90]  
 And then, as maskers in their masks are shown  
 Different of feature, if they cast aside  
 The assumed appearance that was not their own,  
 So into festal aspect glorified  
 Sparkles and flowers changed: both Heaven's courts I saw  
 Revealed before me opening far and wide.  
 O Splendour of God, by whose largess I saw  
 With these mine eyes truth realmed in triumph, fill  
 My lips with power to re-tell how I saw.  
 There is light yonder which makes visible [100]  
 Creator to creation, that alone  
 In seeing Him can in its own peace dwell.  
 In the figure of a circle it stretcheth on  
 And out, so far that its circumference  
 Would be too wide a girdle for the sun.  
 All of it is one radiant effluence,  
 Reflected downward from the First Moved Sphere,  
 Whose virtue and energy proceedeth thence;  
 And as a hill looks down upon a mere  
 As if its own adornments to enjoy, [110]  
 When grass and flowers are richest, mirrored there,  
 So over the light and round and round did I  
 See mirrored on a thousand tiers all those  
 Of us permitted to return on high.  
 And if the least degree so greatly glows,  
 What measure shall suffice for the amplitude

Of the extremest petals of this Rose?<sup>v</sup>  
 The breadth, the height, my vision could include  
 Undazzled, and that joy which blooms for aye,  
 Its quality and its sum, I understood. [120]  
 Near and far adds not there nor takes away,  
 For where God governeth immediate  
 The natural law runs not, and hath no sway.  
 To the yellow of the Rose whose leaves dilate,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Tier over tier, perfumed with praises quired  
 To the Sun that doth eternal spring create,  
 Me, like to one made mute, who yet desired  
 To speak, Beatrice onward drew and cried:  
 "Look on the assemblage of the white-attired!  
 Behold our City, and how it circleth wide! [130]  
 Behold our seats, so filled full that but few,  
 Yet to be numbered there, their place abide.  
 On that great seat thine eyes are drawn unto  
 By the crown hung already over it  
 Ere at this wedding-feast thyself art due,  
 The soul, on earth imperial, shall sit  
 Of the high Henry, coming to enforce<sup>vii</sup>  
 Right ways on Italy, though she is yet unfit.  
 A blind greed hath bewitched you with its curse  
 And made you like the child who perishes [140]  
 Of hunger, and peevish drives away his nurse.  
 The prefect of the court of Heaven's decrees<sup>viii</sup>  
 Shall then be one who in open and secret ways  
 Shall not be such as with his course agrees;  
 But in the holy office but short space

---

<sup>v</sup> 117. *The vast, cuplike theater is called a "Rose," and its sections "petals."*

<sup>vi</sup> 124. *The sea of light that forms the bottom of the arena.*

<sup>vii</sup> 137. *Henry VII attempted to restore the balance of power and the Imperial authority in Italy (see the Argument).*

<sup>viii</sup> 142-144. *"The prefect": Pope Clement V (see the Argument). — "His": Henry's.*

Shall God endure him: soon shall he be thrown<sup>ix</sup>  
Where Simon Magus hath his own just place,  
And thrust him of Anagna deeper down."

---

<sup>ix</sup> 146-148. *Clement V shall fall into the eighth circle of Hell, where simonists are punished. — He "of Anagna" is Boniface VIII.*

# Canto XXXI

*Further description of the Rose of Paradise, into and out of which the angels flit like bees about a flower. Dante, having taken in its general form, turns to Beatrice to inquire more particularly about it. But Beatrice has disappeared, and in her place is an old man, who proves to be St. Bernard, and who points out Beatrice, now in her appointed seat above. Next, he bids Dante contemplate the beauty of the Virgin.*

IN FORM, then, of a radiant white rose  
That sacred soldiery before mine eyes<sup>i</sup>  
Appeared, which in His blood Christ made His spouse.  
But the other host which seeth and, as it flies,  
Singeth His glory who enamours it  
And the goodness which its greatness magnifies,  
Like bees, which deep into the flowers retreat  
One while, and at another winging come  
Back thither where their toil is turned to sweet,  
Descended into the great flower, a-bloom [10]  
With petal on petal, and re-ascended thence  
To where its love forever hath its home.  
Their faces all were as a flame intense,  
Their wings of gold, the rest so pure a white  
That never snow could dazzle so the sense.  
Into the flower descending from the height  
Through rank on rank they breathed the peace, the glow,  
They gathered as they fanned their sides in flight.  
And, spite of the interposing to and fro  
Of such a throng 'twixt high heaven and the flower, [20]  
Vision and splendour none had to forgo;  
For the divine light pierceth with such power  
The world, in measure of its complement  
Of worth, that naught against it may endure.

---

<sup>i</sup> 2-4. "That sacred soldiery": the Redeemed. — "The other host": the angels.

This realm of unimperilled ravishment  
 With spirits thronged from near times and from far  
 Had look and love all on the one mark bent.  
 O triple Light, which in a single star  
 Shining on them their joy can so expand,  
 Look down upon this storm wherein we are! [30]  
 If the barbarian, coming from such land<sup>ii</sup>  
 As every day by wheeling Helice  
 And her belovèd son with her, is spanned,  
 Seeing Rome and her stupendous works,—if he  
 Was dazed, in that age when the Lateran<sup>iii</sup>  
 Rose, builded to outsoar mortality,  
 I, who was come to the divine from man,  
 To the eternal out of time, and from  
 Florence unto a people just and sane,  
 How dazed past measure must I needs become! [40]  
 Between this and my joy I found it good,  
 Truly, to hear naught and myself be dumb.  
 And as the pilgrim quickens in his blood  
 Within the temple of his vow at gaze,  
 Already in hope to re-tell how it stood,  
 So traversing the light of living rays  
 My eyes along the ranks, now up I led,  
 Now down, and now wandered in circling ways.  
 I saw faces, such as to love persuade,  
 Adorned by their own smile and Other's light [50]  
 And gestures that all dignity displayed.  
 The general form of Paradise my sight  
 Had apprehended in its ambience,  
 But upon no part had it rested quite;  
 I turned then with a wish re-kindled thence  
 To ask my Lady and to be satisfied  
 Concerning things which held me in suspense.

---

<sup>ii</sup> 31-33. "Such land": the North. "Helice" and "her . . . son" Arcas are the Great and the Little Bear.

<sup>iii</sup> 35. "The Lateran": the old Papal palace in Rome.



One thing I thought, another one replied:  
 I thought to have seen Beatrice, and behold!  
 An elder, robed like to those glorified.<sup>iv</sup> [60]  
 His eyes and cheeks of benign gladness told,  
 And in his bearing was a kindliness  
 Such as befits a father tender-souled:  
 "Where is she?" I cried on a sudden in my distress.  
 "To end thy longing, Beatrice was stirred,"  
 He answered then, "to bring me from my place.  
 Her shalt thou see, if to the circle third<sup>v</sup>  
 From the highest rank thine eyes thou wilt up-raise,  
 There on the throne whereto she hath been preferred."  
 Without reply I lifted up my gaze [70]  
 And saw her making for herself a crown  
 Of the reflection from the eternal rays.  
 From the highest sky which rolls the thunder down  
 No mortal eye is stationed so remote,  
 Though in the deepest of the seas it drown,  
 As then from Beatrice was my sight; but naught  
 It was to me; for without any veil  
 Her image down to me undimmed was brought.  
 "O Lady, in whom my hopes all prosper well,  
 And who for my salvation didst endure [80]  
 To leave the printing of thy feet in Hell,  
 Of all that I have seen, now and before,  
 By virtue of what thy might and goodness gave,  
 I recognise the grace and sovereign power.  
 Thou hast drawn me up to freedom from a slave  
 By all those paths, all those ways known to thee  
 Through which thou had'st such potency to save.  
 Continue thy magnificence in me,

---

<sup>iv</sup> 60. "An elder": St. Bernard, a great mystic of the twelfth century, famous for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

<sup>v</sup> 67. The first circle is that of Mary, the second that of Eve, the third that of Rachel, beside whom Beatrice sits.

So that my soul, which thou hast healed of scar,  
 May please thy sight when from the body free." [90]  
 So did I pray; and she, removed so far  
 As she appeared, looked on me smiling-faced;  
 Then to the eternal fountain turned her there.  
 Whereon the holy Elder: "That thou may'st  
 Consummate this thy journey, whereunto  
 Prayer and a holy love made me to haste,<sup>vi</sup>  
 Fly with thine eyes this heavenly garden through!  
 Gazing on it shall better qualify  
 Thy vision, the light upward to pursue.  
 The Queen of Heaven, for whom continually [100]  
 I burn with love, will grant us every grace  
 Since Bernard, her own faithful one, am I."  
 Like one, some Croat perhaps, who comes to gaze  
 On our Veronica with eyes devout,<sup>vii</sup>  
 Nor sates the inveterate hunger that he has,  
 So long as it is shown, but says in thought,  
 "My Lord Christ Jesus, very God, is this  
 Indeed Thy likeness in such fashion wrought?"  
 Such was I, gazing on the impassioned bliss  
 Of love in him who even in this world's woe [110]  
 By contemplation tasted of that peace.<sup>viii</sup>  
 "Child of Grace," he began, "thou wilt not know  
 This joyous being in its felicity  
 If thine eyes rest but on the base below.  
 Look on the farthest circles thou canst see,  
 Till thou perceive enthroned the Queen, to whom  
 This realm devoteth its whole fealty."  
 I raised my eyes; and as in morning bloom  
 The horizon's eastern part becometh bright

---

<sup>vi</sup> 96. The "prayer and a holy love" are Beatrice's.

<sup>vii</sup> 104. The "Veronica" is the true image of the Saviour, left on a kerchief. It was shown at St. Peter's in Rome.

<sup>viii</sup> 111. St. Bernard in his meditations had a foretaste of the peace of Heaven.

And that where the sun sinks is overcome, [120]  
 So with my eyes climbing a mountain's height,  
 As from a valley, I saw on the utmost verge  
 What outshone all else fronting me in light.  
 As that point where the car is to emerge,<sup>ix</sup>  
 Which Phaëthon drove ill, glows fieriest  
 And softens down its flame on either marge,  
 So did that oriflamme of peace attest<sup>x</sup>  
 The midmost glory, and on either side  
 In equal measure did its rays arrest.  
 And at that mid-point, with wings opened wide, [130]  
 A myriad angels moved in festive play,  
 In brilliance and in art diversified.  
 There, smiling upon dance and roundelay,  
 I saw a Beauty, that was happiness  
 In the eyes of all the other saints' array.  
 And if in speaking I had wealth not less  
 Than in imagining, I would not dare  
 To attempt the least part of her loveliness,  
 When of my fixt look Bernard was aware,  
 So fastened on his own devotion's flame, [140]  
 He turned his eyes with so much love to her<sup>xi</sup>  
 That mine more ardent and absorbed became.

---

<sup>ix</sup> 124. "The car": of the sun.

<sup>x</sup> 127. "That oriflamme," i.e., golden pennant, is the streak of light on Mary's side.

<sup>xi</sup> 141. "To her": on Mary.

# Canto XXXII

*Bernard explains the conformation of the Celestial Rose. It is divided down the middle, and across; on one side are male, on the other female, saints. Below the horizontal division are the souls of beatified children. That Dante may be vouchsafed a vision of Deity itself, Bernard makes supplication to the Virgin, and bids Dante accompany him in his prayer.*

RAPT in love's bliss, that contemplative saint  
Nevertheless took up the instructor's part,  
Uttering these sacred words with no constraint:  
"The wound that Mary closed, and soothed its smart,<sup>i</sup>  
She, who so beautiful sits at her feet,  
Opened, and yet more deeply pressed the dart.  
In the order making the third rank complete  
Rachel thou canst distinguish next below  
With Beatrice in her appointed seat.  
Sara, Rebecca, Judith, and her too, [10]  
Ancestress of the singer, whose cry rose<sup>ii</sup>  
Miserere mei for his fault and rue,—<sup>iii</sup>  
These thou beholdest tier by tier disclose,  
Descending, as I name them each by name,  
From petal after petal down the Rose.  
And from the seventh grade downward, following them,  
Even as above them, Hebrew women bide,  
Parting the tresses on the Rose's stem;  
Because, according as faith made confide<sup>iv</sup>  
In Christ, these serve as for a party-wall [20]  
At which the stairs of sanctity divide.

---

<sup>i</sup> 4-5. "The wound": of original sin. "She": Eve.

<sup>ii</sup> 11. "Ancestress": Ruth; "the singer": David.

<sup>iii</sup> 12. "Miserere mei": "Have mercy upon me."

<sup>iv</sup> 19. On one side of the partition are the Hebrews (line 24), on the other the Christians (line 27).

On this side, where the flower is filled in all  
     Its numbered petals, sit in order they  
     Who waiting on Christ Coming heard His call;  
 On the other side, where certain gaps betray  
     Seats empty, in semicircle, thou look'st on  
     Such as in Christ Come had their only stay.  
 And as on the one side the glorious throne  
     Of the Lady of Heaven and the other thrones as well  
     Below it make partition, so great John [30]  
 Sits over against her, ever there to dwell,  
     Who, ever holy, endured the desert's fare,  
     And martyrdom, and then two years in Hell.<sup>v</sup>  
 Beneath him, chosen to mark the boundary there  
     Francis and Benedict and Augustine shine  
     And others, round by round, down even to here.  
 Now marvel at the deep foresight divine!  
     For the faith's either aspect, equal made,<sup>vi</sup>  
     Shall consummate this garden's full design.  
 And know that downward from the midmost grade [40]  
     Which runneth the two companies betwixt  
     They sit there by no merit that they had  
 But by another's, on conditions fixt;<sup>vii</sup>  
     For these are spirits that were all released  
     Ere they had made a true choice, unperplexed.  
 And by their faces this is manifest  
     And also by their voices' childish note,  
     If looking heedfully thou listenest.  
 Now thou art doubting, and doubt makes thee mute;<sup>viii</sup>  
     But for thy sake will I the coil undo [50]  
     Wherein thou art bound by subtlety of thought.

---

<sup>v</sup> 33. "In Hell': the Limbus.

<sup>vi</sup> 38. "Either aspect": the Old Church and the New.

<sup>vii</sup> 43-45. "But by another's": one's parents. "Released": from the flesh. These are the spirits of children who died before the age of moral responsibility.

<sup>viii</sup> 49. Dante is wondering why some have higher seats than others. He learns that the degree of beatitude is determined by predestination.

Within this kingdom's compass thou must know  
 Chance hath no single point's determining,  
 No more than thirst, or hunger, or sorrow,  
 Because eternal law, in everything  
 Thou see'st, it stablisht with such close consent  
 As close upon the finger fits the ring;  
 Wherefore these children, hastened as they went  
 Into the true life, are not without cause  
 Within themselves more and less excellent. [60]  
 The King, through whom this realm hath its repose  
 In so great love and such felicities,  
 That no rash will on further venture goes,  
 Creating all minds in His own eyes' bliss,  
 At His own pleasure dowers them with grace  
 Diversely; on this point let the fact suffice.  
 This is made known to you, clear and express,  
 In Holy Writ, by those twins who, ere birth,<sup>ix</sup>  
 In the womb wrestled in their wrathfulness.  
 According to the colour figuring forth<sup>x</sup> [70]  
 In the hair such grace, the sublime Light must needs  
 Chaplet their heads according to their worth.  
 Wherefore without reward for any deeds  
 Their places are to different ranks assigned,  
 Differing only in what from gift proceeds.  
 In the early ages parents' faith, combined  
 With innocence, sufficed and nothing more  
 To wing them upward and salvation find.  
 The first age being completed, other power  
 Was needed for the innocent males to attain [80]  
 By virtue of circumcision, Heaven's door.  
 But when the time of grace began its reign,  
 Having not perfect baptism of Christ,  
 Such innocence below there must remain.<sup>xi</sup>

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<sup>ix</sup> 68. "Those twins": Jacob and Esau.

<sup>x</sup> 70-72. Our halo in Heaven is proportionate to the grace bestowed on us at birth.

Look now upon the face most like to Christ!  
 For only its radiance can so fortify  
 Thy gaze as fitteth for beholding Christ."  
 I saw rain over her such ecstasy  
 Brought in the sacred minds that with it glowed—<sup>xii</sup>  
 Created through the heavenly height to fly— [90]  
 That all I had seen on all the way I had trod  
 Held me not in such breathless marvelling  
 Nor so great likeness vouched to me of God.  
 And that Love which at its first down-coming<sup>xiii</sup>  
 Sang to her: "Hail, O Mary, full of grace!"  
 Now over her extended either wing.  
 The divine song echoed through all the space,  
 Answered from all sides of the Blessed Court  
 So that serener joy filled every face.  
 "O holy father, who for my comfort [100]  
 Hast deigned thy sweet allotted place to quit,  
 With me in this low station to consort,  
 What is that angel who with such delight  
 Looketh our Queen in the eyes, lost in love there  
 So that he seems one flame of living light?"  
 To his instruction thus did I repair  
 Once more, who drew from Mary increasingly  
 Beauty, as from the sun the morning star.  
 "Blitheness and buoyant confidence," said he,  
 "As much as angel or a soul may own, [110]  
 Are all in him; so would we have it be.  
 For he it is who brought the palm-leaf down  
 To Mary, when the burden of our woe  
 In flesh was undertaken by God's Son.  
 Now with thine eyes come with me, as I go  
 Discoursing, and the great patricians note  
 Of the empire that the just and pious know.

---

<sup>xii</sup> 89. "The sacred minds": the angels.

<sup>xiii</sup> 94. "That Love which . . .": the angel Gabriel.

Those two above, most blessed in their lot  
 By being nearest to the august Empress,<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Are of our rose as 'twere the double root. [120]  
 He on the left who has the nearest place  
 Is that father, through whose presumptuous taste<sup>xv</sup>  
 The human tribe tasteth such bitterness.  
 That ancient Father of Holy Church thou may'st  
 See on the right, to whom Christ gave in trust  
 The keys of this, of all flowers loveliest.  
 And he who, ere he died, saw all the host<sup>xvi</sup>  
 Of grievous days prepared for that fair spouse  
 Won by the nails and by the lance's thrust,  
 Sits by him; by the other, see repose<sup>xvii</sup> [130]  
 That leader under whom was fed by manna  
 The ungrateful people, fickle and mutinous.  
 And, sitting over against Peter, Anna<sup>xviii</sup>  
 Looks on her daughter, so content of soul,  
 She moveth not her eyes, singing Hosanna;  
 And opposite the greatest father of all  
 Sits Lucy, who stirred the lady of thy troth,<sup>xix</sup>  
 When, eyes down, thou wert running to thy fall.  
 But stop we here as the good tailor doth  
 (Since of thy sleeping vision the time flies), [140]  
 Cutting the gown according to the cloth;  
 And turn we to the Primal Love our eyes,  
 So that, still gazing toward Him, thou may'st pierce  
 Into His splendour, far as in thee lies.  
 Yet, lest it happen that thou should'st reverse,  
 Thinking to advance, the motion of thy wing,

---

<sup>xiv</sup> 119. "Empress": Mary.

<sup>xv</sup> 122-124. "That father": Adam. "That ancient Father": St. Peter.

<sup>xvi</sup> 127-129. St. John, the author of the Apocalypse. "Spouse": the Church. "The nails and . . . the lance": of Christ's Passion.

<sup>xvii</sup> 130-131. "By him": Peter. "By the other": Adam. "That leader": Moses.

<sup>xviii</sup> 133. "Anna": St. Anna, mother of Mary.

<sup>xix</sup> 137. "The lady of thy troth": Beatrice.



A prayer for grace needs must we now rehearse,  
Grace from her bounty who can the succour bring.<sup>xx</sup>

And do thou with thy feeling follow on

My words, that close to them thy heart may cling.”

[150]

And he began this holy orison.

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<sup>xx</sup> 148. “From her bounty”: the Blessed Virgin’s.

# Canto XXXIII

*The prayer of St. Bernard to the Virgin Mary. The prayer is granted; and then Dante prays to God that some trace of the dazzling glimpse of the divine mystery of Trinity in Unity may be communicated to men through his verse.*

"MAIDEN and Mother, daughter of thine own Son,<sup>i</sup>

Beyond all creatures lowly and lifted high,

Of the Eternal Design the corner-stone!

Thou art she who did man's substance glorify

So that its own Maker did not eschew

Even to be made of its mortality.

Within thy womb the Love was kindled new

By generation of whose warmth supreme

This flower to bloom in peace eternal grew.<sup>ii</sup>

Here thou to us art the full noonday beam

[10]

Of love revealed: below, to mortal sight,

Hope, that forever springs in living stream.

Lady, thou art so great and hast such might

That whoso crave grace, nor to thee repair,

Their longing even without wing seeketh flight.

Thy charity doth not only him up-bear

Who prays, but in thy bounty's large excess

Thou oftentimes dost even forerun the prayer.

In thee is pity, in thee is tenderness,

In thee magnificence, in thee the sum

[20]

Of all that in creation most can bless.

Now he that from the deepest pit hath come<sup>iii</sup>

Of the universe, and seen, each after each,

---

<sup>i</sup> 1. A great part of this beautiful prayer was copied by Chaucer in the Second Nun's Tale, 29-84.

<sup>ii</sup> 9. "This flower"; the Rose of the Blessed.

<sup>iii</sup> 22. "He that . . .": Dante.

The spirits as they live and have their home,  
 He of thy grace so much power doth beseech  
 That he be enabled to uplift even higher  
 His eyes, and to the Final Goodness reach.  
 And I who never burned with more desire  
 For my own vision than for his, persist  
 In prayer to thee—my prayers go forth in choir, [30]  
 May they not fail!—that thou disperse all mist  
 Of his mortality with prayers of thine,  
 Till joy be his of that supreme acquist.  
 Also I implore thee, Queen who canst incline  
 All to thy will, let his affections stand  
 Whole and pure after vision so divine.  
 The throbbings of the heart do thou command!  
 See, Beatrice with how many of the blest,  
 To second this my prayer, lays hand to hand.”  
 Those eyes, of God loved and revered, confest, [40]  
 Still fixt upon him speaking, the delight  
 She hath in prayer from a devoted breast.  
 Then were they lifted to the eternal light,  
 Whereinto it may not be believed that eye  
 So clear in any creature sendeth sight.  
 And I, who to the goal was drawing nigh  
 Of all my longings, now, as it behoved,  
 Felt the ardour of them in contentment die.  
 Bernard signed, smiling, as a hand he moved,  
 That I should lift my gaze up; but I knew [50]  
 Myself already such as he approved,  
 Because my sight, becoming purged anew,  
 Deeper and deeper entered through the beam  
 Of sublime light, which in itself is true.  
 Thenceforth my vision was too great for theme  
 Of our speech, that such glory overbears,  
 And memory faints at such assault extreme.  
 As he who dreams sees, and when disappears

The dream, the passion of its print remains,  
 And naught else to the memory adheres, [60]  
 Even such am I; for almost wholly wanes  
 My vision now, yet still the drops I feel  
 Of sweetness it distilled into my veins.  
 Even so the sunbeam doth the snow unseal;  
 So was the Sibyl's saying lost inert<sup>iv</sup>  
 Upon the thin leaves for the wind to steal.  
 O supreme Light, who dost thy glory assert  
 High over our imagining, lend again  
 Memory a little of what to me thou wert.  
 Vouchsafe unto my tongue such power to attain [70]  
 That but one sparkle it may leave behind  
 Of thy magnificence to future men.  
 For by returning somewhat to my mind  
 And by a little sounding in this verse  
 More of thy triumph shall be thence divined.  
 So keenly did the living radiance pierce  
 Into me, that I think I had been undone  
 Had mine eyes faltered, from the light averse.  
 And I recall that with the more passion  
 I clove to it, till my gaze, thereat illumed, [80]  
 With the Infinite Good tasted communion.  
 O Grace abounding, whereby I presumed  
 To fix upon the eternal light my gaze  
 So deep, that in it I my sight consumed!<sup>v</sup>  
 I beheld leaves within the unfathomed blaze  
 Into one volume bound by love, the same<sup>vi</sup>  
 That the universe holds scattered through its maze.  
 Substance and accidents, and their modes, became  
 As if together fused, all in such wise<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> 65. The Cumaean "Sibyl" was accustomed to write her prophecies on loose tree-leaves.

<sup>v</sup> 84. I became blind to all else.

<sup>vi</sup> 86. God is the Book of the Universe.

<sup>vii</sup> 89. God, containing all things, is a perfect unit.

That what I speak of is one simple flame. [90]  
 Verily I think I saw with mine own eyes  
 The form that knits the whole world, since I taste,  
 In telling of it, more abounding bliss.  
 One moment more oblivion has amassed<sup>viii</sup>  
 Than five-and-twenty centuries have wrought  
 Since Argo's shadow o'er wondering Neptune passed.  
 Thus did my mind in the suspense of thought  
 Gaze fixedly, all immovable and intent,  
 And ever fresh fire from its gazing caught.  
 Man at that light becometh so content [100]  
 That to choose other sight and this reject,  
 It is impossible that he consent,  
 Because the good which is the will's object  
 Dwells wholly in it, and that within its pale  
 Is perfect, which, without, hath some defect.  
 Even for my remembrance now must fail  
 My words, and less than could an infant's store  
 Of speech, who at the pap yet sucks, avail;  
 Not that within the living light was more  
 Than one sole aspect of divine essence, [110]  
 Being still forever as it was before,  
 But the one semblance, seen with more intense  
 A faculty, even as over me there stole  
 Change, was itself transfigured to my sense.  
 Within the clear profound Light's aureole<sup>ix</sup>  
 Three circles from its substance now appeared,  
 Of three colours, and each an equal whole.  
 One its reflection on the next conferred  
 As rainbow upon rainbow, and the two

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<sup>viii</sup> 94-96. *In the first moment after my awakening I forgot more of my vision than mankind has forgotten, in 2500 years, of the story of the Argonauts.*

<sup>ix</sup> 115. *The threefold oneness is disclosed by the symbol of three mysterious rings occupying exactly the same place.*

Breathed equally the fire that was the third.<sup>x</sup> [120]  
 To my conception O how frail and few  
 My words! and that, to what I looked upon,  
 Is such that "little" is more than is its due.  
 O Light Eternal, who in thyself alone  
 Dwell'st and thyself know'st, and self-understood,  
 Self-understanding, smilest on thine own!  
 That circle which, as I conceived it, glowed  
 Within thee like reflection of a flame,  
 Being by mine eyes a little longer wooed,  
 Deep in itself, with colour still the same, [130]  
 Seemed with our human effigy to fill,  
 Wherefore absorbed in it my sight became.  
 As the geometer who bends all his will  
 To measure the circle, and howsoe'er he try<sup>xi</sup>  
 Fails, for the principle escapes him still,  
 Such at this mystery new-disclosed was I,  
 Fain to understand how the image doth alight  
 Upon the circle, and with its form comply.  
 But these my wings were fledged not for that flight,  
 Save that my mind a sudden glory assailed [140]  
 And its wish came revealed to it in that light.  
 To the high imagination force now failed;  
 But like to a wheel whose circling nothing jars<sup>xii</sup>  
 Already on my desire and will prevailed  
 The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

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<sup>x</sup> 120. "The third": the Holy Ghost, who emanates equally from Father and Son.

<sup>xi</sup> 134. The problem is the squaring of the circle.

<sup>xii</sup> 143-145. Circular motion symbolises faultless activity. Dante's individual will is merged in the World-Will of the Creator.