

THE DIVINE COMEDY

THE VISION
of
HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

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HELL
OR THE INFERNO
CANTO I

In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
Gone from the path direct: and e'en to tell
It were no easy task, how savage wild

That forest, how robust and rough its growth,
Which to remember only, my dismay
Renews, in bitterness not far from death.
Yet to discourse of what there good befell,
All else will I relate discover'd there.
How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,
Such sleepy dullness in that instant weigh'd
My senses down, when the true path I left,
But when a mountain's foot I reach'd, where clos'd
The valley, that had pierc'd my heart with dread,
I look'd aloft, and saw his shoulders broad
Already vested with that planet's beam,
Who leads all wanderers safe through every way.

Then was a little respite to the fear,
That in my heart's recesses deep had lain,
All of that night, so pitifully pass'd:
And as a man, with difficult short breath,
Forespent with toiling, 'scap'd from sea to shore,
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands
At gaze; e'en so my spirit, that yet fail'd
Struggling with terror, turn'd to view the straits,
That none hath pass'd and liv'd. My weary frame
After short pause recomforted, again
I journey'd on over that lonely steep,

The hinder foot still firmer. Scarce the ascent
Began, when, lo! a panther, nimble, light,
And cover'd with a speckled skin, appear'd,
Nor, when it saw me, vanish'd, rather strove
To check my onward going; that oftentimes
With purpose to retrace my steps I turn'd.

The hour was morning's prime, and on his way
Aloft the sun ascended with those stars,
That with him rose, when Love divine first mov'd
Those its fair works: so that with joyous hope
All things conspir'd to fill me, the gay skin
Of that swift animal, the matin dawn
And the sweet season. Soon that joy was chas'd,
And by new dread succeeded, when in view
A lion came, 'gainst me, as it appear'd,

With his head held aloft and hunger-mad,
That e'en the air was fear-struck. A she-wolf
Was at his heels, who in her leanness seem'd
Full of all wants, and many a land hath made
Disconsolate ere now. She with such fear
O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd,
That of the height all hope I lost. As one,
Who with his gain elated, sees the time
When all unwares is gone, he inwardly
Mourns with heart-gripping anguish; such was I,
Haunted by that fell beast, never at peace,
Who coming o'er against me, by degrees

Impell'd me where the sun in silence rests.

While to the lower space with backward step
I fell, my ken discern'd the form one of one,
Whose voice seem'd faint through long disuse of speech.
When him in that great desert I espied,
"Have mercy on me!" cried I out aloud,
"Spirit! or living man! what e'er thou be!"

He answer'd: "Now not man, man once I was,
And born of Lombard parents, Mantuana both
By country, when the power of Julius yet
Was scarcely firm. At Rome my life was past
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time
Of fabled deities and false. A bard
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,
When the flames prey'd on Ilium's haughty towers.
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past
Return'st thou? wherefore not this pleasant mount
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight?"
"And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring,
From which such copious floods of eloquence
Have issued?" I with front abash'd replied.
"Glory and light of all the tuneful train!
May it avail me that I long with zeal
Have sought thy volume, and with love immense
Have conn'd it o'er. My master thou and guide!
Thou he from whom alone I have deriv'd
That style, which for its beauty into fame
Exalts me. See the beast, from whom I fled.
O save me from her, thou illustrious sage!"

“For every vein and pulse throughout my frame
She hath made tremble.” He, soon as he saw
That I was weeping, answer’d, “Thou must needs
Another way pursue, if thou wouldst ’scape
From out that savage wilderness. This beast,
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death:
So bad and so accursed in her kind,
That never sated is her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,

Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
 Her with sharp pain. He will not life support
 By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
 Wisdom, and virtue, and his land shall be
 The land 'twixt either Feltro. In his might
 Shall safety to Italia's plains arise,
 For whose fair realm, Camilla, virgin pure,
 Nisus, Euryalus, and Turnus fell.
 He with incessant chase through every town
 Shall worry, until he to hell at length
 Restore her, thence by envy first let loose.
 I for thy profit pond'ring now devise,
 That thou mayst follow me, and I thy guide
 Will lead thee hence through an eternal space,
 Where thou shalt hear despairing shrieks, and see
 Spirits of old tormented, who invoke
 A second death; and those next view, who dwell
 Content in fire, for that they hope to come,
 Whene'er the time may be, among the blest,
 Into whose regions if thou then desire
 T' ascend, a spirit worthier than I
 Must lead thee, in whose charge, when I depart,
 Thou shalt be left: for that Almighty King,
 Who reigns above, a rebel to his law,
 Adjudges me, and therefore hath decreed,
 That to his city none through me should come.
 He in all parts hath sway; there rules, there holds
 His citadel and throne. O happy those,
 Whom there he chooses!" I to him in few:
 "Bard! by that God, whom thou didst not adore,
 I do beseech thee (that this ill and worse
 I may escape) to lead me, where thou saidst,
 That I Saint Peter's gate may view, and those
 Who as thou tell'st, are in such dismal plight."

Onward he mov'd, I close his steps pursu'd.

CANTO II

Now was the day departing, and the air,
Imbrown'd with shadows, from their toils releas'd
All animals on earth; and I alone
Prepar'd myself the conflict to sustain,
Both of sad pity, and that perilous road,
Which my unerring memory shall retrace.

O Muses! O high genius! now vouchsafe
Your aid! O mind! that all I saw hast kept
Safe in a written record, here thy worth
And eminent endowments come to proof.

I thus began: "Bard! thou who art my guide,
 Consider well, if virtue be in me
 Sufficient, ere to this high enterprise
 Thou trust me. Thou hast told that Silvius' sire,
 Yet cloth'd in corruptible flesh, among
 Th' immortal tribes had entrance, and was there
 Sensible present. Yet if heaven's great Lord,
 Almighty foe to ill, such favour shew'd,
 In contemplation of the high effect,
 Both what and who from him should issue forth,
 It seems in reason's judgment well deserv'd:
 Sith he of Rome, and of Rome's empire wide,
 In heaven's empyreal height was chosen sire:
 Both which, if truth be spoken, were ordain'd
 And 'stablish'd for the holy place, where sits
 Who to great Peter's sacred chair succeeds.
 He from this journey, in thy song renown'd,
 Learn'd things, that to his victory gave rise
 And to the papal robe. In after-times
 The chosen vessel also travel'd there,
 To bring us back assurance in that faith,
 Which is the entrance to salvation's way.
 But I, why should I there presume? or who
 Permits it? not Aeneas I nor Paul.
 Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
 Will deem me. I, if on this voyage then
 I venture, fear it will in folly end.
 Thou, who art wise, better my meaning know'st,
 Than I can speak." As one, who unresolves
 What he hath late resolv'd, and with new thoughts
 Changes his purpose, from his first intent
 Remov'd; e'en such was I on that dun coast,
 Wasting in thought my enterprise, at first
 So eagerly embrac'd. "If right thy words
 I scan," replied that shade magnanimous,
 "Thy soul is by vile fear assail'd, which oft
 So overcasts a man, that he recoils
 From noblest resolution, like a beast
 At some false semblance in the twilight gloom.
 That from this terror thou mayst free thyself,
 I will instruct thee why I came, and what

I heard in that same instant, when for thee
Grief touch'd me first. I was among the tribe,
Who rest suspended, when a dame, so blest
And lovely, I besought her to command,
Call'd me; her eyes were brighter than the star
Of day; and she with gentle voice and soft
Angelically tun'd her speech address'd:
"O courteous shade of Mantua! thou whose fame
Yet lives, and shall live long as nature lasts!
A friend, not of my fortune but myself,
On the wide desert in his road has met
Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turn'd.
Now much I dread lest he past help have stray'd,
And I be ris'n too late for his relief,
From what in heaven of him I heard. Speed now,
And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,
And by all means for his deliverance meet,
Assist him. So to me will comfort spring.
I who now bid thee on this errand forth
Am Beatrice; from a place I come.

(Note: Beatrice. I use this word, as it is pronounced in the Italian, as consisting of four syllables, of which the third is a long one.) Revisited with joy. Love brought me thence, Who prompts my speech. When in my Master's sight I stand, thy praise to him I oft will tell."

She then was silent, and I thus began:
"O Lady! by whose influence alone,
Mankind excels whatever is contain'd
Within that heaven which hath the smallest orb,
So thy command delights me, that to obey,
If it were done already, would seem late.

No need hast thou farther to speak thy will;
Yet tell the reason, why thou art not loth
To leave that ample space, where to return
Thou burnest, for this centre here beneath.”

She then: “Since thou so deeply wouldst inquire,
I will instruct thee briefly, why no dread
Hinders my entrance here. Those things alone
Are to be fear’d, whence evil may proceed,
None else, for none are terrible beside.
I am so fram’d by God, thanks to his grace!
That any suff’rance of your misery
Touches me not, nor flame of that fierce fire
Assails me. In high heaven a blessed dame
Besides, who mourns with such effectual grief
That hindrance, which I send thee to remove,
That God’s stern judgment to her will inclines.”
To Lucia calling, her she thus bespake:
“Now doth thy faithful servant need thy aid
And I commend him to thee.” At her word
Sped Lucia, of all cruelty the foe,
And coming to the place, where I abode
Seated with Rachel, her of ancient days,
She thus address’d me: “Thou true praise of God!
Beatrice! why is not thy succour lent
To him, who so much lov’d thee, as to leave
For thy sake all the multitude admires?
Dost thou not hear how pitiful his wail,
Nor mark the death, which in the torrent flood,
Swoln mightier than a sea, him struggling holds?”
Ne’er among men did any with such speed
Haste to their profit, flee from their annoy,
As when these words were spoken, I came here,
Down from my blessed seat, trusting the force
Of thy pure eloquence, which thee, and all
Who well have mark’d it, into honour brings.”

“When she had ended, her bright beaming eyes
Tearful she turn’d aside; whereat I felt
Redoubled zeal to serve thee. As she will’d,
Thus am I come: I sav’d thee from the beast,

Who thy near way across the goodly mount
 Prevented. What is this comes o'er thee then?
 Why, why dost thou hang back? why in thy breast
 Harbour vile fear? why hast not courage there
 And noble daring? Since three maids so blest
 Thy safety plan, e'en in the court of heaven;
 And so much certain good my words forebode."

As florets, by the frosty air of night
 Bent down and clos'd, when day has blanch'd their leaves,
 Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems;
 So was my fainting vigour new restor'd,
 And to my heart such kindly courage ran,
 That I as one undaunted soon replied:
 "O full of pity she, who undertook
 My succour! and thou kind who didst perform
 So soon her true behest! With such desire
 Thou hast dispos'd me to renew my voyage,
 That my first purpose fully is resum'd.
 Lead on: one only will is in us both.
 Thou art my guide, my master thou, and lord."

So spake I; and when he had onward mov'd,
 I enter'd on the deep and woody way.

CANTO III

"Through me you pass into the city of woe:
 Through me you pass into eternal pain:
 Through me among the people lost for aye.
 Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd:
 To rear me was the task of power divine,
 Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
 Before me things create were none, save things
 Eternal, and eternal I endure.

“All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

Such characters in colour dim I mark'd
Over a portal's lofty arch inscrib'd:
Whereat I thus: “Master, these words import
Hard meaning.” He as one prepar'd replied:
“Here thou must all distrust behind thee leave;
Here be vile fear extinguish'd. We are come
Where I have told thee we shall see the souls
To misery doom'd, who intellectual good
Have lost.” And when his hand he had stretch'd forth
To mine, with pleasant looks, whence I was cheer'd,
Into that secret place he led me on.

Here sighs with lamentations and loud moans
Resounded through the air pierc'd by no star,
That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,

Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote that swell'd the sounds,
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with error yet encompass'd, cried:
"O master! What is this I hear? What race
Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?"

He thus to me: "This miserable fate
Suffer the wretched souls of those, who liv'd
Without or praise or blame, with that ill band
Of angels mix'd, who nor rebellious prov'd
Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves
Were only. From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,
Not to impair his lustre, nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest th' accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain."

I then: "Master! what doth aggrieve them thus,
That they lament so loud?" He straight replied:
"That will I tell thee briefly. These of death
No hope may entertain: and their blind life
So meanly passes, that all other lots
They envy. Fame of them the world hath none,
Nor suffers; mercy and justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by."

And I, who straightway look'd, beheld a flag,
Which whirling ran around so rapidly,
That it no pause obtain'd: and following came
Such a long train of spirits, I should ne'er
Have thought, that death so many had despoil'd.

When some of these I recogniz'd, I saw
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear
Yielding, abjur'd his high estate. Forthwith
I understood for certain this the tribe
Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing
And to his foes. These wretches, who ne'er lived,

Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung
By wasps and hornets, which bedew'd their cheeks
With blood, that mix'd with tears dropp'd to their feet,
And by disgusting worms was gather'd there.

Then looking farther onwards I beheld
A throng upon the shore of a great stream:
Whereat I thus: "Sir! grant me now to know
Whom here we view, and whence impell'd they seem
So eager to pass o'er, as I discern
Through the blear light?" He thus to me in few:
"This shalt thou know, soon as our steps arrive
Beside the woeful tide of Acheron."

Then with eyes downward cast and fill'd with shame,
Fearing my words offensive to his ear,
Till we had reach'd the river, I from speech
Abstain'd. And lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man hoary white with eld,

Crying, "Woe to you wicked spirits! hope not
Ever to see the sky again. I come
To take you to the other shore across,
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell
In fierce heat and in ice. And thou, who there
Standest, live spirit! get thee hence, and leave
These who are dead." But soon as he beheld
I left them not, "By other way," said he,
"By other haven shalt thou come to shore,
Not by this passage; thee a nimbler boat
Must carry." Then to him thus spake my guide:
"Charon! thyself torment not: so 't is will'd,

Where will and power are one: ask thou no more.”

Straightway in silence fell the shaggy cheeks
Of him the boatman o'er the livid lake,
Around whose eyes glar'd wheeling flames. Meanwhile
Those spirits, faint and naked, color chang'd,
And gnash'd their teeth, soon as the cruel words
They heard. God and their parents they blasphem'd,
The human kind, the place, the time, and seed
That did engender them and give them birth.

Then all together sorely wailing drew
To the curs'd strand, that every man must pass
Who fears not God. Charon, demoniac form,
With eyes of burning coal, collects them all,
Beck'ning, and each, that lingers, with his oar
Strikes. As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
One still another following, till the bough
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath;

E'en in like manner Adam's evil brood
Cast themselves one by one down from the shore,
Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.

Thus go they over through the umber'd wave,
And ever they on the opposing bank
Be landed, on this side another throng
Still gathers. "Son," thus spake the courteous guide,
"Those, who die subject to the wrath of God,
All here together come from every clime,
And to o'erpass the river are not loth:
For so heaven's justice goads them on, that fear
Is turn'd into desire. Hence ne'er hath past
Good spirit. If of thee Charon complain,
Now mayst thou know the import of his words."

This said, the gloomy region trembling shook

So terribly, that yet with clammy dews
 Fear chills my brow. The sad earth gave a blast,
 That, lightning, shot forth a vermilion flame,
 Which all my senses conquer'd quite, and I
 Down dropp'd, as one with sudden slumber seiz'd.

CANTO IV

Broke the deep slumber in my brain a crash
 Of heavy thunder, that I shook myself,
 As one by main force rous'd. Risen upright,
 My rested eyes I mov'd around, and search'd
 With fixed ken to know what place it was,
 Wherein I stood. For certain on the brink
 I found me of the lamentable vale,
 The dread abyss, that joins a thund'rous sound
 Of plaints innumerable. Dark and deep,
 And thick with clouds o'erspread, mine eye in vain
 Explor'd its bottom, nor could aught discern.

“Now let us to the blind world there beneath
 Descend;” the bard began all pale of look:
 “I go the first, and thou shalt follow next.”

Then I his alter'd hue perceiving, thus:
 “How may I speed, if thou yieldest to dread,
 Who still art wont to comfort me in doubt?”

He then: “The anguish of that race below
 With pity stains my cheek, which thou for fear
 Mistakest. Let us on. Our length of way
 Urges to haste.” Onward, this said, he mov'd;
 And ent'ring led me with him on the bounds
 Of the first circle, that surrounds th' abyss.
 Here, as mine ear could note, no plaint was heard
 Except of sighs, that made th' eternal air
 Tremble, not caus'd by tortures, but from grief
 Felt by those multitudes, many and vast,
 Of men, women, and infants. Then to me
 The gentle guide: “Inquir'st thou not what spirits
 Are these, which thou beholdest? Ere thou pass

Farther, I would thou know, that these of sin
Were blameless; and if aught they merited,
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,
The portal to thy faith. If they before
The Gospel liv'd, they serv'd not God aright;
And among such am I. For these defects,
And for no other evil, we are lost;

“Only so far afflicted, that we live
Desiring without hope.” So grief assail'd
My heart at hearing this, for well I knew
Suspended in that Limbo many a soul
Of mighty worth. “O tell me, sire rever'd!
Tell me, my master!” I began through wish
Of full assurance in that holy faith,
Which vanquishes all error; “say, did e'er
Any, or through his own or other's merit,
Come forth from thence, whom afterward was blest?”

Piercing the secret purport of my speech,
 He answer'd: "I was new to that estate,
 When I beheld a puissant one arrive
 Amongst us, with victorious trophy crown'd.
 He forth the shade of our first parent drew,
 Abel his child, and Noah righteous man,
 Of Moses lawgiver for faith approv'd,
 Of patriarch Abraham, and David king,
 Israel with his sire and with his sons,
 Nor without Rachel whom so hard he won,
 And others many more, whom he to bliss
 Exalted. Before these, be thou assur'd,
 No spirit of human kind was ever sav'd."

We, while he spake, ceas'd not our onward road,
 Still passing through the wood; for so I name
 Those spirits thick beset. We were not far
 On this side from the summit, when I kenn'd
 A flame, that o'er the darken'd hemisphere
 Prevailing shin'd. Yet we a little space
 Were distant, not so far but I in part
 Discover'd, that a tribe in honour high
 That place possess'd. "O thou, who every art
 And science valu'st! who are these, that boast
 Such honour, separate from all the rest?"

He answer'd: "The renown of their great names
 That echoes through your world above, acquires
 Favour in heaven, which holds them thus advanc'd."
 Meantime a voice I heard: "Honour the bard
 Sublime! his shade returns that left us late!"
 No sooner ceas'd the sound, than I beheld
 Four mighty spirits toward us bend their steps,
 Of semblance neither sorrowful nor glad.

When thus my master kind began: "Mark him,
 Who in his right hand bears that falchion keen,
 The other three preceding, as their lord.
 This is that Homer, of all bards supreme:
 Flaccus the next in satire's vein excelling;

The third is Naso; Lucan is the last.
Because they all that appellation own,
With which the voice singly accosted me,
Honouring they greet me thus, and well they judge.”

So I beheld united the bright school
Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
That o’er the others like an eagle soars.
When they together short discourse had held,
They turn’d to me, with salutation kind
Beck’ning me; at the which my master smil’d:
Nor was this all; but greater honour still

They gave me, for they made me of their tribe;
And I was sixth amid so learn'd a band.

Far as the luminous beacon on we pass'd
Speaking of matters, then befitting well
To speak, now fitter left untold. At foot
Of a magnificent castle we arriv'd,
Seven times with lofty walls begirt, and round
Defended by a pleasant stream. O'er this
As o'er dry land we pass'd. Next through seven gates
I with those sages enter'd, and we came
Into a mead with lively verdure fresh.

There dwelt a race, who show their eyes around
Majestically mov'd, and in their port
Bore eminent authority; they spake
Seldom, but all their words were tuneful sweet.

We to one side retir'd, into a place
Open and bright and lofty, whence each one
Stood manifest to view. Incontinent
There on the green enamel of the plain
Were shown me the great spirits, by whose sight
I am exalted in my own esteem.

Electra there I saw accompanied
By many, among whom Hector I knew,
Anchises' pious son, and with hawk's eye
Caesar all arm'd, and by Camilla there
Penthesilea. On the other side
Old King Latinus, seated by his child
Lavinia, and that Brutus I beheld,
Who Tarquin chas'd, Lucretia, Cato's wife
Marcia, with Julia and Cornelia there;
And sole apart retir'd, the Soldan fierce.

Then when a little more I rais'd my brow,
I spied the master of the sapient throng,
Seated amid the philosophic train.
Him all admire, all pay him rev'rence due.
There Socrates and Plato both I mark'd,

Nearest to him in rank; Democritus,
 Who sets the world at chance, Diogenes,
 With Heraclitus, and Empedocles,
 And Anaxagoras, and Thales sage,
 Zeno, and Dioscorides well read
 In nature's secret lore. Orpheus I mark'd
 And Linus, Tully and moral Seneca,
 Euclid and Ptolemy, Hippocrates,
 Galenus, Avicen, and him who made
 That commentary vast, Averroes.

Of all to speak at full were vain attempt;
 For my wide theme so urges, that ofttimes
 My words fall short of what bechanc'd. In two
 The six associates part. Another way
 My sage guide leads me, from that air serene,
 Into a climate ever vex'd with storms:
 And to a part I come where no light shines.

CANTO V

From the first circle I descended thus
 Down to the second, which, a lesser space
 Embracing, so much more of grief contains
 Provoking bitter moans. There, Minos stands
 Grinning with ghastly feature: he, of all
 Who enter, strict examining the crimes,

Gives sentence, and dismisses them beneath,
According as he foldeth him around:
For when before him comes th' ill fated soul,
It all confesses; and that judge severe
Of sins, considering what place in hell
Suits the transgression, with his tail so oft
Himself encircles, as degrees beneath
He dooms it to descend. Before him stand
Always a num'rous throng; and in his turn
Each one to judgment passing, speaks, and hears
His fate, thence downward to his dwelling hurl'd.

“O thou! who to this residence of woe
Approachest?” when he saw me coming, cried
Minos, relinquishing his dread employ,
“Look how thou enter here; beware in whom
Thou place thy trust; let not the entrance broad
Deceive thee to thy harm.” To him my guide:

“Wherefore exclaimest? Hinder not his way
By destiny appointed; so ’tis will’d
Where will and power are one. Ask thou no more.”

Now ’gin the rueful wailings to be heard.
Now am I come where many a plaining voice
Smites on mine ear. Into a place I came
Where light was silent all. Bellowing there groan’d
A noise as of a sea in tempest torn
By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on
Whirl’d round and dash’d amain with sore annoy.

When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.

I understood that to this torment sad
The carnal sinners are condemn'd, in whom
Reason by lust is sway'd. As in large troops
And multitudinous, when winter reigns,
The starlings on their wings are borne abroad;
So bears the tyrannous gust those evil souls.
On this side and on that, above, below,
It drives them: hope of rest to solace them
Is none, nor e'en of milder pang. As cranes,
Chanting their dol'rous notes, traverse the sky,
Stretch'd out in long array: so I beheld
Spirits, who came loud wailing, hurried on
By their dire doom. Then I: "Instructor! who
Are these, by the black air so scourg'd?"—"The first
'Mong those, of whom thou question'st," he replied,
"O'er many tongues was empress. She in vice
Of luxury was so shameless, that she made
Liking be lawful by promulg'd decree,
To clear the blame she had herself incurr'd.
This is Semiramis, of whom 'tis writ,
That she succeeded Ninus her espous'd;
And held the land, which now the Soldan rules.
The next in amorous fury slew herself,
And to Sicheus' ashes broke her faith:
Then follows Cleopatra, lustful queen."

There mark'd I Helen, for whose sake so long
The time was fraught with evil; there the great
Achilles, who with love fought to the end.
Paris I saw, and Tristan; and beside
A thousand more he show'd me, and by name
Pointed them out, whom love bereav'd of life.

When I had heard my sage instructor name
Those dames and knights of antique days, o'erpower'd
By pity, well-nigh in amaze my mind
Was lost; and I began: "Bard! willingly

I would address those two together coming,
Which seem so light before the wind.” He thus:
“Note thou, when nearer they to us approach.

“Then by that love which carries them along,
Entreat; and they will come.” Soon as the wind
Sway’d them toward us, I thus fram’d my speech:
“O wearied spirits! come, and hold discourse
With us, if by none else restrain’d.” As doves
By fond desire invited, on wide wings
And firm, to their sweet nest returning home,
Cleave the air, wafted by their will along;

Thus issu'd from that troop, where Dido ranks,
They through the ill air speeding; with such force
My cry prevail'd by strong affection urg'd.

“O gracious creature and benign! who go'st
Visiting, through this element obscure,
Us, who the world with bloody stain imbru'd;
If for a friend the King of all we own'd,
Our pray'r to him should for thy peace arise,
Since thou hast pity on our evil plight.
Of whatsoe'er to hear or to discourse
It pleases thee, that will we hear, of that
Freely with thee discourse, while e'er the wind,
As now, is mute. The land, that gave me birth,
Is situate on the coast, where Po descends
To rest in ocean with his sequent streams.

“Love, that in gentle heart is quickly learnt,
Entangled him by that fair form, from me
Ta'en in such cruel sort, as grieves me still:
Love, that denial takes from none belov'd,
Caught me with pleasing him so passing well,
That, as thou see'st, he yet deserts me not.

“Love brought us to one death: Caina waits
The soul, who spilt our life.” Such were their words;
At hearing which downward I bent my looks,
And held them there so long, that the bard cried:
“What art thou pond’ring?” I in answer thus:
“Alas! by what sweet thoughts, what fond desire
Must they at length to that ill pass have reach’d!”

Then turning, I to them my speech address’d.
And thus began: “Francesca! your sad fate
Even to tears my grief and pity moves.
But tell me; in the time of your sweet sighs,
By what, and how love granted, that ye knew
Your yet uncertain wishes?” She replied:
“No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when mis’ry is at hand! That kens
Thy learn’d instructor. Yet so eagerly

If thou art bent to know the primal root,
From whence our love gat being, I will do,
As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day
For our delight we read of Lancelot,
How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
Suspicion near us. Ofttimes by that reading
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
The wished smile, rapturously kiss'd
By one so deep in love, then he, who ne'er
From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
We read no more." While thus one spirit spake,
The other wail'd so sorely, that heartstruck
I through compassion fainting, seem'd not far
From death, and like a corpse fell to the ground.

CANTO VI

My sense reviving, that erewhile had droop'd
With pity for the kindred shades, whence grief
O'ercame me wholly, straight around I see
New torments, new tormented souls, which way
Soe'er I move, or turn, or bend my sight.
In the third circle I arrive, of show'rs
Ceaseless, accursed, heavy, and cold, unchang'd
For ever, both in kind and in degree.
Large hail, discolour'd water, sleety flaw

Through the dun midnight air stream'd down amain:
Stank all the land whereon that tempest fell.

Cerberus, cruel monster, fierce and strange,
Through his wide threefold throat barks as a dog
Over the multitude immers'd beneath.
His eyes glare crimson, black his unctuous beard,
His belly large, and claw'd the hands, with which
He tears the spirits, flays them, and their limbs
Piecemeal disparts. Howling there spread, as curs,
Under the rainy deluge, with one side
The other screening, oft they roll them round,
A wretched, godless crew. When that great worm
Descried us, savage Cerberus, he op'd
His jaws, and the fangs show'd us; not a limb
Of him but trembled. Then my guide, his palms
Expanding on the ground, thence filled with earth
Rais'd them, and cast it in his ravenous maw.

E'en as a dog, that yelling bays for food
His keeper, when the morsel comes, lets fall
His fury, bent alone with eager haste
To swallow it; so dropp'd the loathsome cheeks
Of demon Cerberus, who thund'ring stuns
The spirits, that they for deafness wish in vain.

We, o'er the shades thrown prostrate by the brunt
Of the heavy tempest passing, set our feet
Upon their emptiness, that substance seem'd.

They all along the earth extended lay
Save one, that sudden rais'd himself to sit,
Soon as that way he saw us pass. "O thou!"
He cried, "who through the infernal shades art led,
Own, if again thou know'st me. Thou wast fram'd
Or ere my frame was broken." I replied:
"The anguish thou endur'st perchance so takes
Thy form from my remembrance, that it seems
As if I saw thee never. But inform
Me who thou art, that in a place so sad
Art set, and in such torment, that although
Other be greater, more disgustful none
Can be imagin'd." He in answer thus:

“Thy city heap’d with envy to the brim,
Ay that the measure overflows its bounds,
Held me in brighter days. Ye citizens
Were wont to name me Ciacco. For the sin
Of glutt’ny, damned vice, beneath this rain,
E’en as thou see’st, I with fatigue am worn;
Nor I sole spirit in this woe: all these
Have by like crime incurr’d like punishment.”

No more he said, and I my speech resum’d:
“Ciacco! thy dire affliction grieves me much,
Even to tears. But tell me, if thou know’st,
What shall at length befall the citizens
Of the divided city; whether any just one
Inhabit there: and tell me of the cause,
Whence jarring discord hath assail’d it thus?”

He then: "After long striving they will come
 To blood; and the wild party from the woods
 Will chase the other with much injury forth.
 Then it behoves, that this must fall, within
 Three solar circles; and the other rise
 By borrow'd force of one, who under shore
 Now rests. It shall a long space hold aloof
 Its forehead, keeping under heavy weight
 The other oppress'd, indignant at the load,
 And grieving sore. The just are two in number,
 But they neglected. Av'rice, envy, pride,
 Three fatal sparks, have set the hearts of all
 On fire." Here ceas'd the lamentable sound;
 And I continu'd thus: "Still would I learn
 More from thee, farther parley still entreat.
 Of Farinata and Tegghiaio say,
 They who so well deserv'd, of Giacopo,
 Arrigo, Mosca, and the rest, who bent
 Their minds on working good. Oh! tell me where
 They bide, and to their knowledge let me come.
 For I am press'd with keen desire to hear,
 If heaven's sweet cup or poisonous drug of hell
 Be to their lip assign'd." He answer'd straight:
 "These are yet blacker spirits. Various crimes
 Have sunk them deeper in the dark abyss.
 If thou so far descendest, thou mayst see them.
 But to the pleasant world when thou return'st,
 Of me make mention, I entreat thee, there.
 No more I tell thee, answer thee no more."

This said, his fixed eyes he turn'd askance,
 A little ey'd me, then bent down his head,
 And 'midst his blind companions with it fell.

When thus my guide: "No more his bed he leaves,
 Ere the last angel-trumpet blow. The Power
 Adverse to these shall then in glory come,
 Each one forthwith to his sad tomb repair,
 Resume his fleshly vesture and his form,
 And hear the eternal doom re-echoing rend

The vault.” So pass’d we through that mixture foul
Of spirits and rain, with tardy steps; meanwhile
Touching, though slightly, on the life to come.
For thus I question’d: “Shall these tortures, Sir!
When the great sentence passes, be increas’d,
Or mitigated, or as now severe?”

He then: “Consult thy knowledge; that decides
That as each thing to more perfection grows,
It feels more sensibly both good and pain.
Though ne’er to true perfection may arrive
This race accurs’d, yet nearer then than now
They shall approach it.” Compassing that path
Circuitous we journeyed, and discourse
Much more than I relate between us pass’d:
Till at the point, where the steps led below,
Arriv’d, there Plutus, the great foe, we found.

CANTO VII

“Ah me! O Satan! Satan!” loud exclaim’d
Plutus, in accent hoarse of wild alarm:
And the kind sage, whom no event surpris’d,
To comfort me thus spake: “Let not thy fear
Harm thee, for power in him, be sure, is none
To hinder down this rock thy safe descent.”
Then to that sworn lip turning, “Peace!” he cried,

“Curs’d wolf! thy fury inward on thyself
Prey, and consume thee! Through the dark profound
Not without cause he passes. So ’t is will’d
On high, there where the great Archangel pour’d
Heav’n’s vengeance on the first adulterer proud.”

As sails full spread and bellying with the wind
Drop suddenly collaps’d, if the mast split;
So to the ground down dropp’d the cruel fiend.

Thus we, descending to the fourth steep ledge,
Gain’d on the dismal shore, that all the woe
Hems in of all the universe. Ah me!
Almighty Justice! in what store thou heap’st
New pains, new troubles, as I here beheld!
Wherefore doth fault of ours bring us to this?

E’en as a billow, on Charybdis rising,

Against encounter'd billow dashing breaks;
 Such is the dance this wretched race must lead,
 Whom more than elsewhere numerous here I found,
 From one side and the other, with loud voice,
 Both roll'd on weights by main forge of their breasts,
 Then smote together, and each one forthwith
 Roll'd them back voluble, turning again,
 Exclaiming these, "Why holdest thou so fast?"
 Those answering, "And why castest thou away?"
 So still repeating their despiteful song,
 They to the opposite point on either hand
 Travers'd the horrid circle: then arriv'd,
 Both turn'd them round, and through the middle space
 Conflicting met again. At sight whereof
 I, stung with grief, thus spake: "O say, my guide!
 What race is this? Were these, whose heads are shorn,
 On our left hand, all sep'rate to the church?"

He straight replied: "In their first life these all
 In mind were so distorted, that they made,
 According to due measure, of their wealth,
 No use. This clearly from their words collect,
 Which they howl forth, at each extremity
 Arriving of the circle, where their crime
 Contrary in kind disparts them. To the church
 Were separate those, that with no hairy cowls
 Are crown'd, both Popes and Cardinals, o'er whom
 Av'rice dominion absolute maintains."

I then: "Mid such as these some needs must be,
 Whom I shall recognize, that with the blot
 Of these foul sins were stain'd." He answering thus:
 "Vain thought conceiv'st thou. That ignoble life,
 Which made them vile before, now makes them dark,
 And to all knowledge indiscernible.
 Forever they shall meet in this rude shock:
 These from the tomb with clenched grasp shall rise,
 Those with close-shaven locks. That ill they gave,
 And ill they kept, hath of the beauteous world
 Depriv'd, and set them at this strife, which needs
 No labour'd phrase of mine to set it off.

Now may'st thou see, my son! how brief, how vain,
The goods committed into fortune's hands,
For which the human race keep such a coil!
Not all the gold, that is beneath the moon,
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls
Might purchase rest for one." I thus rejoin'd:

"My guide! of thee this also would I learn;
This fortune, that thou speak'st of, what it is,
Whose talons grasp the blessings of the world?"

He thus: "O beings blind! what ignorance
Besets you? Now my judgment hear and mark.
He, whose transcendent wisdom passes all,
The heavens creating, gave them ruling powers
To guide them, so that each part shines to each,
Their light in equal distribution pour'd.

By similar appointment he ordain'd
 Over the world's bright images to rule
 Superintendence of a guiding hand
 And general minister, which at due time
 May change the empty vantages of life
 From race to race, from one to other's blood,
 Beyond prevention of man's wisest care:
 Wherefore one nation rises into sway,
 Another languishes, e'en as her will
 Decrees, from us conceal'd, as in the grass
 The serpent train. Against her nought avails
 Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,
 Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
 The other powers divine. Her changes know
 None intermission: by necessity
 She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
 Succession in her favours. This is she,
 So execrated e'en by those, whose debt
 To her is rather praise; they wrongfully
 With blame requite her, and with evil word;
 But she is blessed, and for that reck not:
 Amidst the other primal beings glad
 Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.
 Now on our way pass we, to heavier woe
 Descending: for each star is falling now,
 That mounted at our entrance, and forbids
 Too long our tarrying." We the circle cross'd
 To the next steep, arriving at a well,
 That boiling pours itself down to a foss
 Sluic'd from its source. Far murkier was the wave
 Than sablest grain: and we in company
 Of the inky waters, journeying by their side,
 Enter'd, though by a different track, beneath.
 Into a lake, the Stygian nam'd, expands
 The dismal stream, when it hath reach'd the foot
 Of the grey wither'd cliffs. Intent I stood
 To gaze, and in the marish sunk descried
 A miry tribe, all naked, and with looks
 Betok'ning rage. They with their hands alone
 Struck not, but with the head, the breast, the feet,
 Cutting each other piecemeal with their fangs.

The good instructor spake; "Now seest thou, son!
The souls of those, whom anger overcame.
This too for certain know, that underneath
The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turn.
Fix'd in the slime they say: 'Sad once were we
In the sweet air made glad some by the sun,
Carrying a foul and lazy mist within:
Now in these murky settlings are we sad.'
Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats.
But word distinct can utter none." Our route
Thus compass'd we, a segment widely stretch'd
Between the dry embankment, and the core
Of the loath'd pool, turning meanwhile our eyes
Downward on those who gulp'd its muddy lees;
Nor stopp'd, till to a tower's low base we came.

CANTO VIII

My theme pursuing, I relate that ere
We reach'd the lofty turret's base, our eyes
Its height ascended, where two cressets hung
We mark'd, and from afar another light
Return the signal, so remote, that scarce
The eye could catch its beam. I turning round
To the deep source of knowledge, thus inquir'd:
“Say what this means? and what that other light
In answer set? what agency doth this?”

“There on the filthy waters,” he replied,
“E'en now what next awaits us mayst thou see,
If the marsh-gender'd fog conceal it not.”

Never was arrow from the cord dismiss'd,
That ran its way so nimbly through the air,
As a small bark, that through the waves I spied
Toward us coming, under the sole sway
Of one that ferried it, who cried aloud:
“Art thou arriv'd, fell spirit?”—“Phlegyas, Phlegyas,
This time thou criest in vain,” my lord replied;
“No longer shalt thou have us, but while o'er
The slimy pool we pass.” As one who hears
Of some great wrong he hath sustain'd, whereat
Inly he pines; so Phlegyas inly pin'd
In his fierce ire. My guide descending stepp'd
Into the skiff, and bade me enter next
Close at his side; nor till my entrance seem'd
The vessel freighted. Soon as both embark'd,
Cutting the waves, goes on the ancient prow,
More deeply than with others it is wont.

While we our course o'er the dead channel held.
One drench'd in mire before me came, and said;
"Who art thou, that thou comest ere thine hour?"

I answer'd: "Though I come, I tarry not;
But who art thou, that art become so foul?"

"One, as thou seest, who mourn:" he straight replied.

To which I thus: "In mourning and in woe,
Curs'd spirit! tarry thou. I know thee well,
E'en thus in filth disguis'd." Then stretch'd he forth
Hands to the bark; whereof my teacher sage
Aware, thrusting him back: "Away! down there,

“To the other dogs!” then, with his arms my neck
Encircling, kiss’d my cheek, and spake: “O soul
Justly disdainful! blest was she in whom
Thou was conceiv’d! He in the world was one
For arrogance noted; to his memory
No virtue lends its lustre; even so
Here is his shadow furious. There above
How many now hold themselves mighty kings
Who here like swine shall wallow in the mire,
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise!”

I then: “Master! him fain would I behold

Whelm'd in these dregs, before we quit the lake.”

He thus: “Or ever to thy view the shore
Be offer'd, satisfied shall be that wish,
Which well deserves completion.” Scarce his words
Were ended, when I saw the miry tribes
Set on him with such violence, that yet
For that render I thanks to God and praise
“To Filippo Argenti:” cried they all:
And on himself the moody Florentine
Turn'd his avenging fangs. Him here we left,
Nor speak I of him more. But on mine ear
Sudden a sound of lamentation smote,
Whereat mine eye unbarr'd I sent abroad.

And thus the good instructor: “Now, my son!
Draws near the city, that of Dis is nam'd,
With its grave denizens, a mighty throng.”

I thus: “The minarets already, Sir!
There certes in the valley I descry,
Gleaming vermilion, as if they from fire
Had issu'd.” He replied: “Eternal fire,
That inward burns, shows them with ruddy flame
Illum'd; as in this nether hell thou seest.”

We came within the fosses deep, that moat
This region comfortless. The walls appear'd
As they were fram'd of iron. We had made
Wide circuit, ere a place we reach'd, where loud
The mariner cried vehement: “Go forth!
The entrance is here!” Upon the gates I spied
More than a thousand, who of old from heaven
Were hurl'd. With ireful gestures, “Who is this,”
They cried, “that without death first felt, goes through
The regions of the dead?” My sapient guide
Made sign that he for secret parley wish'd;
Whereat their angry scorn abating, thus
They spake: “Come thou alone; and let him go
Who hath so hardily enter'd this realm.
Alone return he by his witless way;

If well he know it, let him prove. For thee,
Here shalt thou tarry, who through clime so dark
Hast been his escort.” Now bethink thee, reader!
What cheer was mine at sound of those curs’d words.
I did believe I never should return.

“O my lov’d guide! who more than seven times
Security hast render’d me, and drawn
From peril deep, whereto I stood expos’d,
Desert me not,” I cried, “in this extreme.
And if our onward going be denied,
Together trace we back our steps with speed.”

My liege, who thither had conducted me,
Replied: “Fear not: for of our passage none
Hath power to disappoint us, by such high
Authority permitted. But do thou
Expect me here; meanwhile thy wearied spirit
Comfort, and feed with kindly hope, assur’d
I will not leave thee in this lower world.”

This said, departs the sire benevolent,
And quits me. Hesitating I remain
At war ’twixt will and will not in my thoughts.

I could not hear what terms he offer'd them,
But they conferr'd not long, for all at once
To trial fled within. Clos'd were the gates
By those our adversaries on the breast
Of my liege lord: excluded he return'd
To me with tardy steps. Upon the ground
His eyes were bent, and from his brow eras'd
All confidence, while thus with sighs he spake:
"Who hath denied me these abodes of woe?"
Then thus to me: "That I am anger'd, think
No ground of terror: in this trial I
Shall vanquish, use what arts they may within
For hindrance. This their insolence, not new,
Erewhile at gate less secret they display'd,
Which still is without bolt; upon its arch
Thou saw'st the deadly scroll: and even now
On this side of its entrance, down the steep,

Passing the circles, unescorted, comes
One whose strong might can open us this land.”

CANTO IX

The hue, which coward dread on my pale cheeks
Imprinted, when I saw my guide turn back,
Chas'd that from his which newly they had worn,
And inwardly restrain'd it. He, as one
Who listens, stood attentive: for his eye
Not far could lead him through the sable air,
And the thick-gath'ring cloud. “It yet behooves
We win this fight”—thus he began—“if not—
Such aid to us is offer'd.—Oh, how long
Me seems it, ere the promis'd help arrive!”

I noted, how the sequel of his words
Clos'd their beginning; for the last he spake
Agreed not with the first. But not the less
My fear was at his saying; sith I drew
To import worse perchance, than that he held,
His mutilated speech. “Doth ever any
Into this rueful concave's extreme depth
Descend, out of the first degree, whose pain
Is deprivation merely of sweet hope?”

Thus I inquiring. “Rarely,” he replied,
“It chances, that among us any makes
This journey, which I wend. Erewhile 'tis true
Once came I here beneath, conjur'd by fell
Erictho, sorceress, who compell'd the shades
Back to their bodies. No long space my flesh
Was naked of me, when within these walls
She made me enter, to draw forth a spirit
From out of Judas' circle. Lowest place
Is that of all, obscurest, and remov'd
Farthest from heav'n's all-circling orb. The road
Full well I know: thou therefore rest secure.
That lake, the noisome stench exhaling, round
The city' of grief encompasses, which now
We may not enter without rage.” Yet more

He added: but I hold it not in mind,
For that mine eye toward the lofty tower
Had drawn me wholly, to its burning top.
Where in an instant I beheld uprisen
At once three hellish furies stain'd with blood:
In limb and motion feminine they seem'd;
Around them greenest hydras twisting roll'd
Their volumes; adders and cerastes crept
Instead of hair, and their fierce temples bound.

He knowing well the miserable hags
Who tend the queen of endless woe, thus spake:

"Mark thou each dire Erinny's. To the left
 This is Megaera; on the right hand she,
 Who wails, Alecto; and Tisiphone
 I' th' midst." This said, in silence he remain'd
 Their breast they each one clawing tore; themselves
 Smote with their palms, and such shrill clamour rais'd,
 That to the bard I clung, suspicion-bound.
 "Hasten Medusa: so to adamant
 Him shall we change;" all looking down exclaim'd.
 "E'en when by Theseus' might assail'd, we took
 No ill revenge." "Turn thyself round, and keep
 Thy count'nance hid; for if the Gorgon dire
 Be shown, and thou shouldst view it, thy return
 Upwards would be for ever lost." This said,
 Himself my gentle master turn'd me round,
 Nor trusted he my hands, but with his own
 He also hid me. Ye of intellect
 Sound and entire, mark well the lore conceal'd
 Under close texture of the mystic strain!

And now there came o'er the perturbed waves
 Loud-crashing, terrible, a sound that made
 Either shore tremble, as if of a wind
 Impetuous, from conflicting vapours sprung,
 That 'gainst some forest driving all its might,
 Plucks off the branches, beats them down and hurls
 Afar; then onward passing proudly sweeps
 Its whirlwind rage, while beasts and shepherds fly.

Mine eyes he loos'd, and spake: "And now direct
 Thy visual nerve along that ancient foam,
 There, thickest where the smoke ascends." As frogs
 Before their foe the serpent, through the wave
 Ply swiftly all, till at the ground each one
 Lies on a heap; more than a thousand spirits
 Destroy'd, so saw I fleeing before one
 Who pass'd with unwet feet the Stygian sound.
 He, from his face removing the gross air,
 Oft his left hand forth stretch'd, and seem'd alone
 By that annoyance wearied. I perceiv'd
 That he was sent from heav'n, and to my guide

Turn'd me, who signal made that I should stand
Quiet, and bend to him. Ah me! how full
Of noble anger seem'd he! To the gate
He came, and with his wand touch'd it, whereat
Open without impediment it flew.

“Outcasts of heav'n! O abject race and scorn'd!”
Began he on the horrid grunsel standing,
“Whence doth this wild excess of insolence
Lodge in you? wherefore kick you 'gainst that will
Ne'er frustrate of its end, and which so oft
Hath laid on you enforcement of your pangs?
What profits at the fays to but the horn?
Your Cerberus, if ye remember, hence
Bears still, peel'd of their hair, his throat and maw.”

This said, he turn'd back o'er the filthy way,

And syllable to us spake none, but wore
The semblance of a man by other care
Beset, and keenly press'd, than thought of him
Who in his presence stands. Then we our steps
Toward that territory mov'd, secure
After the hallow'd words. We unoppos'd
There enter'd; and my mind eager to learn
What state a fortress like to that might hold,
I soon as enter'd throw mine eye around,
And see on every part wide-stretching space
Replete with bitter pain and torment ill.

As where Rhone stagnates on the plains of Arles,
Or as at Pola, near Quarnaro's gulf,
That closes Italy and laves her bounds,
The place is all thick spread with sepulchres;
So was it here, save what in horror here
Excell'd: for 'midst the graves were scattered flames,
Wherewith intensely all throughout they burn'd,
That iron for no craft there hotter needs.

Their lids all hung suspended, and beneath
From them forth issu'd lamentable moans,
Such as the sad and tortur'd well might raise.

I thus: "Master! say who are these, interr'd
Within these vaults, of whom distinct we hear
The dolorous sighs?" He answer thus return'd:

“The arch-heretics are here, accompanied
By every sect their followers; and much more,
Than thou believest, tombs are freighted: like
With like is buried; and the monuments
Are different in degrees of heat.” This said,
He to the right hand turning, on we pass’d
Betwixt the afflicted and the ramparts high.

CANTO X

Now by a secret pathway we proceed,
 Between the walls, that hem the region round,
 And the tormented souls: my master first,
 I close behind his steps. "Virtue supreme!"
 I thus began; "who through these ample orbs
 In circuit lead'st me, even as thou will'st,
 Speak thou, and satisfy my wish. May those,
 Who lie within these sepulchres, be seen?
 Already all the lids are rais'd, and none
 O'er them keeps watch." He thus in answer spake
 "They shall be closed all, what-time they here
 From Josaphat return'd shall come, and bring
 Their bodies, which above they now have left.
 The cemetery on this part obtain
 With Epicurus all his followers,
 Who with the body make the spirit die.
 Here therefore satisfaction shall be soon
 Both to the question ask'd, and to the wish,
 Which thou conceal'st in silence." I replied:
 "I keep not, guide belov'd! from thee my heart
 Secreted, but to shun vain length of words,
 A lesson erewhile taught me by thyself."

"O Tuscan! thou who through the city of fire
 Alive art passing, so discreet of speech!
 Here please thee stay awhile. Thy utterance
 Declares the place of thy nativity
 To be that noble land, with which perchance
 I too severely dealt." Sudden that sound
 Forth issu'd from a vault, whereat in fear
 I somewhat closer to my leader's side
 Approaching, he thus spake: "What dost thou? Turn.
 Lo, Farinata, there! who hath himself
 Uplifted: from his girdle upwards all
 Expos'd behold him." On his face was mine
 Already fix'd; his breast and forehead there
 Erecting, seem'd as in high scorn he held
 E'en hell. Between the sepulchres to him
 My guide thrust me with fearless hands and prompt,
 This warning added: "See thy words be clear!"

He, soon as there I stood at the tomb's foot,
Ey'd me a space, then in disdainful mood
Address'd me: "Say, what ancestors were thine?"

I, willing to obey him, straight reveal'd
The whole, nor kept back aught: whence he, his brow
Somewhat uplifting, cried: "Fiercely were they
Adverse to me, my party, and the blood
From whence I sprang: twice therefore I abroad
Scatter'd them." "Though driv'n out, yet they each time
From all parts," answer'd I, "return'd; an art
Which yours have shown, they are not skill'd to learn."

Then, peering forth from the unclosed jaw,
Rose from his side a shade, high as the chin,
Leaning, methought, upon its knees uprais'd.
It look'd around, as eager to explore
If there were other with me; but perceiving
That fond imagination quench'd, with tears
Thus spake: "If thou through this blind prison go'st.
Led by thy lofty genius and profound,
Where is my son? and wherefore not with thee?"

I straight replied: "Not of myself I come,
By him, who there expects me, through this clime
Conducted, whom perchance Guido thy son
Had in contempt." Already had his words
And mode of punishment read me his name,
Whence I so fully answer'd. He at once
Exclaim'd, up starting, "How! said'st thou he HAD?
No longer lives he? Strikes not on his eye
The blessed daylight?" Then of some delay
I made ere my reply aware, down fell
Supine, not after forth appear'd he more.

Meanwhile the other, great of soul, near whom
I yet was station'd, chang'd not count'nance stern,
Nor mov'd the neck, nor bent his ribbed side.
"And if," continuing the first discourse,
"They in this art," he cried, "small skill have shown,
That doth torment me more e'en than this bed.
But not yet fifty times shall be relum'd
Her aspect, who reigns here Queen of this realm,
Ere thou shalt know the full weight of that art.
So to the pleasant world mayst thou return,
As thou shalt tell me, why in all their laws,
Against my kin this people is so fell?"

"The slaughter and great havoc," I replied,
"That colour'd Arbia's flood with crimson stain—
To these impute, that in our hallow'd dome
Such orisons ascend." Sighing he shook
The head, then thus resum'd: "In that affray

I stood not singly, nor without just cause
Assuredly should with the rest have stirr'd;
But singly there I stood, when by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been raz'd,
The one who openly forbad the deed."

"So may thy lineage find at last repose,"
I thus adjur'd him, "as thou solve this knot,
Which now involves my mind. If right I hear,
Ye seem to view beforehand, that which time
Leads with him, of the present uninform'd."

"We view, as one who hath an evil sight,"
He answer'd, "plainly, objects far remote:
So much of his large splendour yet imparts
The Almighty Ruler; but when they approach
Or actually exist, our intellect
Then wholly fails, nor of your human state
Except what others bring us know we aught.
Hence therefore mayst thou understand, that all
Our knowledge in that instant shall expire,
When on futurity the portals close."

Then conscious of my fault, and by remorse
Smitten, I added thus: "Now shalt thou say
To him there fallen, that his offspring still
Is to the living join'd; and bid him know,
That if from answer silent I abstain'd,
'Twas that my thought was occupied intent
Upon that error, which thy help hath solv'd."

But now my master summoning me back
I heard, and with more eager haste besought
The spirit to inform me, who with him
Partook his lot. He answer thus return'd:

"More than a thousand with me here are laid
Within is Frederick, second of that name,
And the Lord Cardinal, and of the rest
I speak not." He, this said, from sight withdrew.
But I my steps towards the ancient bard

Reverting, ruminated on the words
Betokening me such ill. Onward he mov'd,
And thus in going question'd: "Whence the amaze
That holds thy senses wrapt?" I satisfied
The inquiry, and the sage enjoin'd me straight:
"Let thy safe memory store what thou hast heard
To thee importing harm; and note thou this,"
With his rais'd finger bidding me take heed,

"When thou shalt stand before her gracious beam,
Whose bright eye all surveys, she of thy life
The future tenour will to thee unfold."

Forthwith he to the left hand turn'd his feet:
We left the wall, and tow'rds the middle space
Went by a path, that to a valley strikes;
Which e'en thus high exhal'd its noisome steam.