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Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Vol. 1 (Inferno)*  
(*English trans.*) [1321]

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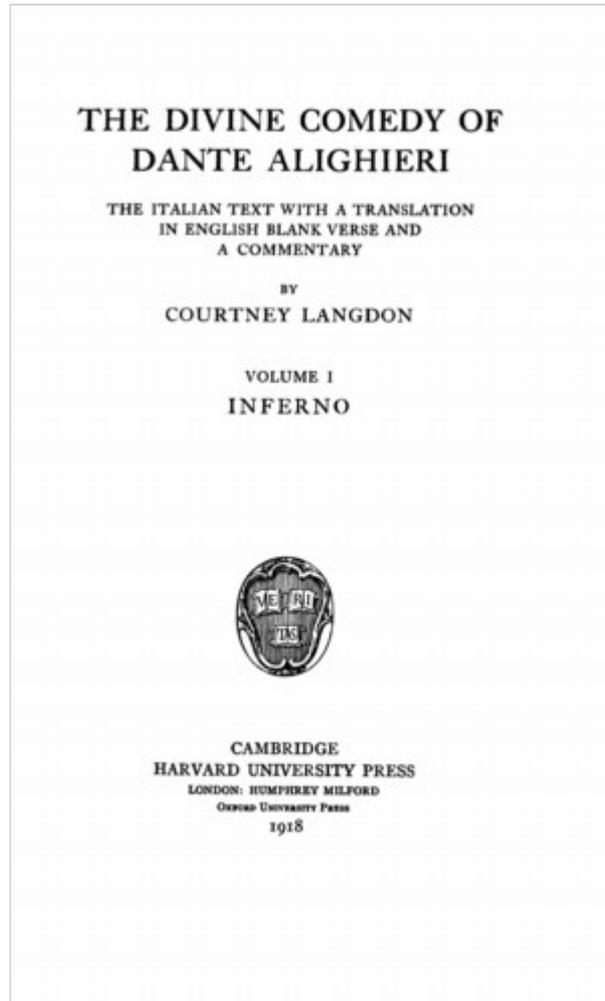
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## Edition Used:

*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. The Italian Text with a Translation in English Blank Verse and a Commentary by Courtney Langdon, vol. 1 (Inferno)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918). English version.

Author: [Dante Alighieri](#)

Translator: [Courtney Langdon](#)

## About This Title:

Dante's masterwork is a 3 volume work written in Italian rather than Latin. It embraces human individuality and happiness in a way which suggests the beginning of the Renaissance. This edition contains the English translation only. Vol. 1 (Inferno (Hell) describes what happens to the souls of the wicked who are condemned to suffer the torments of Hell.

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INFERNO I	
<i>Proemio della Divina Commedia</i>	
<i>La Selva e il Monte</i>	
Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, chè la diritta via era smarrita.	
Eh, quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte che nel pensier rinnova la paura!	4
Tanto è amara, che poco è più morte; ma per trattar del ben che vi trovai, dirò dell'altre cose ch'io v'ho scorte.	7
Io non so ben ridir com' io v' entrai, tanto era pien di sonno in su quel punto che la verace via abbandonai;	10
ma poi ch' io fui al piè d'un colle giunto, là dove terminava quella valle che m'avea di paura il cor compunto, guardai in alto, e vidi le sue spalle vestite già de' raggi del pianeta che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle.	13 16
Allor fu la paura un poco cheta, che nel lago del cor m'era durata la notte ch' io passai con tanta pièta.	19
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ALLA MIA

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## ***AVE DANTE***

*1321–1921*

*Above Man's war-wracked world a veteran throng  
Of singing spirits gather in the air,  
Called from the Poets' Heaven to take their share  
In Right's impending victory over Wrong.  
Far in their van the Eagle Eye of Song  
Looms o'er Ravenna, where he died, and where  
He saw God's Freedom in the dazzling glare  
Of visions, which to every race belong.  
Him his redeemed, united Italy —  
Her Alps new crowned with Monza's iron band,  
Her Hadria wedded with her Doge's ring —  
Hails as the Prophet-Bard of Liberty;  
And bids the free of every tongue and land  
Join in her Ave, and their tribute bring.*

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## PREFACE

EVERY new translation of the Divine Comedy, though in itself a fresh tribute, however humble, to the interlingual, as well as to the international claims of “the loftiest of poets,” calls for a word of justification. That justification involves the expression of some theory as to the translation of Dante’s world-poem, itself implying a criticism, whether expressed or not, of competitors already in the field.

The present translation, which is the result of over twenty years’ work with large classes in “Dante in English” at Brown University, was undertaken and continued with the object of meeting a need, which did not seem adequately met by the well known translations of Cary, Longfellow, Norton, or others more recent; it, therefore, frankly aimed at being in every possible way an improvement on its rivals old and new.

Since the advent of the feeling that minute loyalty to the actual words and thought of the original is a prerequisite to a translation of any poem of supreme human import, such a pioneer work as that of Cary, which so long held the field, came to be recognized as being, not only no longer abreast of the modern achievements of Dante scholars, but as inadequate in the above all-important respect.

Longfellow’s widely diffused version, which is an almost painfully accurate translation of the then accepted Italian text, at once attained great popularity not only in America but abroad, a popularity largely due to the poetical fame of its author, to its literal loyalty to every word of the original, for which it could so easily be made to serve as a ‘pony,’ and to the wealth and excellence of its accompanying notes. Longfellow, however, in his apparent eagerness to be true to every syllable of the Italian, was led to draw too much upon the tempting Latin element, which looks like Italian, and too little upon the stronger, homely Anglo-Saxon element, of his English medium, to bring due conviction to an English ear; he was also betrayed into infelicities of construction and rhythm peculiarly surprising in such a poet as the author of the incomparable Dante Sonnets, a betrayal which has found explanation in the state of his mind and heart during the prosecution of the work. This, consequently, remains as an instance of a great translation which, not intended to be prose, ought not to have been thought of as poetry. After using it for two or three years, I gave it up, in spite of its many happy lines, and valuable notes, because I found that I could not read it aloud with continuous pleasure either to myself or to my hearers.

Possibly as a reaction against these obvious defects, Charles Eliot Norton produced his well known and excellent prose version, against which the only thing that can be said is, that it is just what it purports to be, prose, a prose only slightly hampered by extreme verbal loyalty; and that it was composed under the strange conviction, expressed in his preface, that “to preserve in its integrity what” (of the thought and sentiment embodied in the verse) “may thus be transferred, prose is a better medium than verse.” Admitting, however, that for the harmonious blending of meaning and music in the original, a new harmony might, indeed, be substituted, Mr. Norton

unfortunately added: “but the difference is fatal,” and in giving up the creation of a new harmony himself, he lent the great authority of his name to the suggestion that any such attempt by others would prove futile.

As to such efforts as that of Dean Plumptre and others to translate Dante in English terza rima, it ought to be sufficient to urge, in the first place, that rhymes are practically an insurmountable obstacle for one who, as a translator, is already limited by the demands of loyalty to another’s articulated thought and feeling; and, secondly, that terza rima is not an indigenous, or even a fully acclimated, form of verse in English, and can not be made to sound natural to an English ear, or, at any rate, produce the effect it does in Italian, where it is to the manner born. I, therefore, feel that neither terza rima, nor, indeed, any rhymed translation in metrical forms still more alien in poetical tone to that in which the Divine Comedy was written, can prove to be at best other than unnatural and unsympathetic, though at times brilliant, *tours de force*. Their readers will too often be met by forced constructions, and forced or weak rhymes, while students familiar with the Italian original will too often be grieved by omissions, weakenings, or additions, to feel that they have been brought into due spiritual, or even intellectual, proximity to it; for even in such interesting translations as those of Parsons and Shadwell, their rhymes and meters would seem to have been indulged in at too great a cost to the poem’s thought, flow and tone.

In view, then, of the above and other similar frank criticisms of the work of my predecessors in the fascinating field of Dante translation, I have been guided by the following considerations, which are modestly offered in justification of the aims, if not of the results, of a slowly matured effort, which has enjoyed the rare help of being progressively tested by being read aloud in public during many years.

The transference of a poem from one tongue to another is capable of success in direct proportion to the degree in which the human and spiritual element in the original predominates over the artistry, however excellent, of the verse-form in which that element is embodied; the Divine Comedy, for example, differing vitally in this respect from such a poem as Poe’s Raven, which owes relatively too much to the charm of its meter and syllables to lend itself to a successful translation. It is, therefore, possible for the indwelling spirit of a supremely great poem to reclothe itself fittingly, and yet retain its essential identity, because in such a case the spirit, and not the clothing, is paramountly the thing; being that which originally made itself a body, it can make itself another, whatever the former’s perfection; but this is true only on condition that the new clothing fit it, and hold something like the same relation to it, as that sustained by the old clothing to the original. Now the evolution and acquired associations of poetical forms having, as I believe, given the qualities of blank verse the nearest possible position in English to those sustained by terza rima in Italian, notwithstanding the rhymes of the latter, blank verse would seem to be the translator’s natural choice. Being rhythmical and also metrical, it can supply the translator with the emotional and fusing element fatally lacking in prose; and being free from the artificial bondage of rhymes, or stanza schemes, which can only rarely prove happy under the restraints of dictated thought, it will release him from all temptation to disloyalty to the integrity of the original’s intellectual and spiritual message, or to any interruption of that formal continuity, which is a quality that blank verse and terza

rima possess in common, in spite of the latter's divisibility into *terzine*. For these reasons I cannot but feel that blank verse would be the medium that Dante himself would use, were he writing the same poem in English now, to say nothing of what he would do, were he translating it into that language.

This blank verse must, however, be loyal to itself and to its own laws, and must not take any such liberties with them as too many manufacturers of "vers libres," so-called, seem to think proof against the charge of license. In other words, a blank verse line cannot be made by applying scissors to indifferent prose. Again, in some such use of blank verse as that suggested, it will no longer be necessary to pad or truncate the words or thought of the original poem, since two lines and a fraction, or four lines, as the case may be, can be made to represent with due spiritual loyalty the poetical matter of the three lines of the Italian *terzina*.

Feeling, then, that blank verse is not merely the best, but the only organically satisfactory, medium afforded by the English language for a translation of the Divine Comedy, I have aimed, in using it, at being loyal, first to the spiritual tone and thought, next to the words, and last of all to the syllables and line dimensions of the Italian text, believing with the poet Spenser that the poem's soul, if caught to any extent, will somehow make itself a body out of whatever natural material it be afforded; but that, contrariwise, the most perfect imitation of a former body, such as has been achieved in a Dante translation by using feminine rhymes having the same vowel as in the original, will not reproduce the spirit. Aiming ever at keeping the reader's attention from being unnaturally diverted, I have tried to avoid the use of any word whose archaic nature would draw an attention to itself, not drawn to its Italian counterpart. I have furthermore striven to keep myself free from all organic omissions or additions, however sorely tempted by actual indolence, or fancied inspiration, in the hope that a faithful translation, expressed in the best English and in the best blank verse at my command, would ultimately enable me to render with some success the homely directness and familiarity, the strength and beauty, the satire, pathos, and even the sublimity, of the ever varying component parts of the Italian poem; and that the latter, if placed on guard, as it were, on the opposite page, as I am grateful for having it placed, would serve as an ever present criterion of its English portrait, and also prove a persuasive to the reader of the translation to render himself more and more familiar with the compelling harmonies of its model's soul and form. Accurate and sympathetic reproduction of its author's thoughts and moods, good English, and good verse have, therefore, been the triune aim of my long continued work on the poem's every line and poetic unit, with what result the reader and student must be the ultimate judge, no one realizing more than I how far any achievement is likely to be from its inspiring ideal.

The Italian text is that of the Vandelli edition of 1914, with such changes in individual words, spelling, and punctuation as, in my judgment, seemed warranted in themselves, and justified by having been adopted by one or more of such accredited Italian editors of the poem as Torraca, Casini, Passerini, or, in some instances, by our American Dantist, Dr. Grandgent. In very few cases only have I risked erring heretically on the side of radical boldness in adopting a rejected variant which seemed more Dante-like, or more consistent with its immediate or more remote context, than

that of the *textus receptus*. On the other hand, several temptations to make Dante say in my translation something in a given place that was truer, stronger, more beautiful, or more refined, than what was strictly warranted by the words he there used and by their context, have been sternly, though at times regretfully, resisted. On the English page the reader will see that in the vast majority of cases I have found it possible to have three lines of blank verse match the three lines of each opposite *terzina* without disloyalty to the interests of either. Where this seemed impossible or undesirable, simple typographical devices have been adopted, to keep up the useful parallelism to the eye, without detriment to the flow or metrical integrity of the English verse. Again, in the translation the subject matter has been helped, I trust, by being divided into paragraphs, with the object of making the dialogue clearer, as well as of isolating and framing independent gems of thought, feeling or description. A temperate use of capitals has been made in printing both texts with a similar aim. In dealing with the title *Maestro*, as applied to Virgil by Dante, I have replaced the usual translation, Master, by that of Teacher, which more correctly and unambiguously distinguishes his function as an instructor from that of lord, leader, or guide. In the translation of individual words — idiomatic phrases having been rendered as far as possible by idiomatic equivalents — while careful to reproduce Dante's quaint choices, when illuminating, I have not always thought it a part of loyalty to reproduce obscurities, when obviously due, in spite of his reported claim to the contrary, to the tyrannical exigencies of his rhymes; for though the latter may never have led him to say what he did not wish to say, they often forced him to say it less clearly. The grave accent has been used for all purposes in the Italian text, except that of marking a closed *o* or *e*, and in the English, to facilitate the pronunciation of proper nouns, or the rhythmic reading of the verse; while a free use has been made of the apostrophe, as one way of rendering the frequently colloquial style of the Italian, and in such embarrassing cases as that of *see 'st* when pronounced as one syllable. In the hope of publishing before long a fourth volume containing a running commentary on the poem, all notes have been omitted from the pages of the translation, what seemed indispensable being inserted in the Interpretative Analysis, which will explain itself.

Coming now to the question of indebtedness, apart from what I personally owe to the happy accident of my Italian birth and early familiarity with both Italian and English, and from what every Dante scholar consciously or unconsciously owes to the high lights, old and new, of the vast and rich body of Dante literature; as well as apart from that deeper spiritual indebtedness which could only find adequate expression in the simple Italian words of my dedication; I wish here to express my special gratitude to Dr. Harry L. Koopman, Librarian of Brown University, for the uncounted hours of his valuable time, the long continued and ever increasing sympathy, the convincing praise and persuasive disapproval, without which I might have had to advance too often not only "silent, alone, and unaccompanied," but unquickened and unchecked; as well as to one who was my pupil when I began this work, and has ever since been my friend, Mr. Henry D. Sharpe, of Providence, for the liberal generosity which enabled me to spend an unhampered year in Florence, in the atmosphere of Dante scholars, whose scientific zeal for the letter of Dante's text never blurs their Latin vision of the poem's spirit, or of its national and world significance. Among the latter, Dr. Guido Biagi of the Laurentian Library, and Count Giuseppe Lando Passerini, editor of the *Giornale*

Dantesco, are here most gratefully remembered for courtesies, encouragement, and help extended to me during my stay in Florence.

Finally, before closing a preface to what I hope will prove to have, under the present circumstances of the world, something more than merely a scholarly import, I cannot forego the opportunity of recording the intense joy with which, as an American who, born in Rome and brought up in Florence, lived to become a lover not only of Dante the Poet, but also of Dante the Patriot, I appreciate the full significance of its date. Nineteen hundred and seventeen will be remembered as the year in which, under the inspiring moral leadership of a Veltro-like, democratic King, Italy, robed in the symbolic colors of Beatrice, was about to attain that complete national unification and redemption of her people, of which Dante was, as he still is, the creative Poet-prophet, and one of whose results will be that, in Dante's oft quoted words, Quarnaro's gulf will again "bound Italia, and her border bathe;" and also as the year in which, in virtual alliance with America, she made her marvelous Latin contribution toward the universal attainment and preservation of that Liberty, personal, national and international, "for whose sake death did not prove bitter" to her sons on land or sea, or in the air, or even upon the snow clad sister summits of those Alps, "which o'er the Tyrol lock out Germany" from what has ever been the imperial garden of a World Culture, which, like its fairest single flower, Dante's *Commedia*, is not only scientific, but human and divine.

Courtney Langdon.

Providence, Rhode Island, October 28. 1917.

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## INFERNO I

### *Introduction to the Divine Comedy*

#### *The Wood and the Mountain*

When half way through the journey of our life  
I found that I was in a gloomy wood,  
because the path which led aright was lost.  
And ah, how hard it is to say just what  
this wild and rough and stubborn woodland was,  
the very thought of which renews my fear!  
So bitter 't is, that death is little worse;  
but of the good to treat which there I found,  
I 'll speak of what I else discovered there.  
I cannot well say how I entered it,  
so full of slumber was I at the moment  
when I forsook the pathway of the truth;  
but after I had reached a mountain's foot,  
where that vale ended which had pierced my heart  
with fear, I looked on high,  
and saw its shoulders  
mantled already with that planet's rays  
which leadeth one aright o'er every path.  
Then quieted a little was the fear,  
which in the lake-depths of my heart had lasted  
throughout the night I passed so piteously.  
And even as he who, from the deep emerged  
with sorely troubled breath upon the shore,  
turns round, and gazes at the dangerous water;  
even so my mind, which still was fleeing on,  
turned back to look again upon the pass  
which ne'er permitted any one to live.  
When I had somewhat eased my weary body,  
o'er the lone slope I so resumed my way,  
that e'er the lower was my steady foot.  
Then lo, not far from where the ascent began,  
a Leopard which, exceeding light and swift,  
was covered over with a spotted hide,  
and from my presence did not move away;  
nay, rather, she so hindered my advance,  
that more than once I turned me to go back.  
Some time had now from early morn elapsed,  
and with those very stars the sun was rising  
that in his escort were, when Love Divine  
in the beginning moved those beauteous things;

I therefore had as cause for hoping well  
of that wild beast with gaily mottled skin,  
the hour of daytime and the year's sweet season;  
but not so, that I should not fear the sight,  
which next appeared before me, of a Lion,  
— against me this one seemed to be advancing  
with head erect and with such raging hunger,  
that even the air seemed terrified thereby —  
and of a she-Wolf, which with every lust  
seemed in her leanness laden, and had caused  
many ere now to lead unhappy lives.  
The latter so oppressed me with the fear  
that issued from her aspect, that I lost  
the hope I had of winning to the top.  
And such as he is, who is glad to gain,  
and who, when times arrive that make him lose,  
weeps and is saddened in his every thought;  
such did that peaceless animal make me,  
which, 'gainst me coming, pushed me, step by step,  
back to the place where silent is the sun.  
While toward the lowland I was falling fast,  
the sight of one was offered to mine eyes,  
who seemed, through long continued silence, weak.  
When him in that vast wilderness I saw,  
“Have pity on me,” I cried out to him,  
“whate'er thou be, or shade, or very man!”  
“Not man,” he answered, “I was once a man;  
and both my parents were of Lombardy,  
and Mantuans with respect to fatherland.  
'Neath Julius was I born, though somewhat late,  
and under good Augustus' rule I lived  
in Rome, in days of false and lying gods.  
I was a poet, and of that just man,  
Anchises' son, I sang, who came from Troy  
after proud Ilion had been consumed.  
But thou, to such sore trouble why return?  
Why climbst thou not the Mountain of Delight,  
which is of every joy the source and cause?”  
“Art thou that Virgil, then, that fountain-head  
which poureth forth so broad a stream of speech?”  
I answered him with shame upon my brow.  
“O light and glory of the other poets,  
let the long study, and the ardent love  
which made me con thy book, avail me now.  
Thou art my teacher and authority;  
thou only art the one from whom I took  
the lovely manner which hath done me honor.  
Behold the beast on whose account I turned;

from her protect me, O thou famous Sage,  
for she makes both my veins and pulses tremble!”  
“A different course from this must thou pursue,”  
he answered, when he saw me shedding tears,  
“if from this wilderness thou wouldst escape;  
for this wild beast, on whose account thou criest,  
alloweth none to pass along her way,  
but hinders him so greatly, that she kills;  
and is by nature so malign and guilty,  
that never doth she sate her greedy lust,  
but after food is hungrier than before.  
Many are the animals with which she mates,  
and still more will there be, until the Hound  
shall come, and bring her to a painful death.  
He shall not feed on either land or wealth,  
but wisdom, love and power shall be his food,  
and ’tween two Feltros shall his birth take place.  
Of that low Italy he ’ll be the savior,  
for which the maid Camilla died of wounds,  
with Turnus, Nisus and Eurýalus.  
And he shall drive her out of every town,  
till he have put her back again in Hell,  
from which the earliest envy sent her forth.  
I therefore think and judge it best for thee  
to follow me; and I shall be thy guide,  
and lead thee hence through an eternal place,  
where thou shalt hear the shrieks of hopelessness  
of those tormented spirits of old times,  
each one of whom bewails the second death;  
then those shalt thou behold who, though in fire,  
contented are, because they hope to come,  
whene’er it be, unto the blessed folk;  
to whom, thereafter, if thou wouldst ascend,  
there ’ll be for that a worthier soul than I.  
With her at my departure I shall leave thee,  
because the Emperor who rules up there,  
since I was not obedient to His law,  
wills none shall come into His town through me.  
He rules as emperor everywhere, and there  
as king; there is His town and lofty throne.  
O happy he whom He thereto elects!”  
And I to him: “O Poet, I beseech thee,  
even by the God it was not thine to know,  
so may I from this ill and worse escape,  
conduct me thither where thou saidst just now,  
that I may see Saint Peter’s Gate, and those  
whom thou describest as so whelmed with woe.”  
He then moved on, and I behind him kept.

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## INFERNO II

### *Introduction to the Inferno*

#### *The Mission of Virgil*

Daylight was going, and the dusky air  
was now releasing from their weary toil  
all living things on earth; and I alone  
was making ready to sustain the war  
both of the road and of the sympathy,  
which my unerring memory will relate.  
O Muses, O high Genius, help me now!  
O Memory, that wrotest what I saw,  
herewith shall thy nobility appear!  
I then began: "Consider, Poet, thou  
that guidest me, if strong my virtue be,  
or e'er thou trust me to the arduous course.  
Thou sayest that the sire of Silvio entered,  
when still corruptible, the immortal world,  
and that while in his body he was there.  
Hence, that to him the Opponent of all ill  
was courteous, considering the great result  
that was to come from him, both who, and what,  
seems not unfitting to a thoughtful man;  
for he of fostering Rome and of her sway  
in the Empyrean Heaven was chosen as sire;  
and both of these, if one would tell the truth,  
were foreordained unto the holy place,  
where greatest Peter's follower hath his seat.  
While on this quest, for which thou giv'st him praise,  
he heard the things which of his victory  
the causes were, and of the Papal Robe.  
The Chosen Vessel went there afterward,  
to bring thence confirmation in the faith,  
through which one enters on salvation's path.  
But why should I go there, or who concedes it?  
I 'm not Aeneas, nor yet Paul am I;  
me worthy of this, nor I nor others deem.  
If, therefore, I consent to come, I fear  
lest foolish be my coming; thou art wise,  
and canst much better judge than I can talk."  
And such as he who unwillis what he willed,  
and changes so his purpose through new thoughts,  
that what he had begun he wholly leaves;  
such on that gloomy slope did I become;

for, as I thought it over, I gave up  
the enterprise so hastily commenced.  
“If I have rightly understood thy words,”  
replied the shade of that Great-hearted man,  
“thy soul is hurt by shameful cowardice,  
which many times so sorely hinders one,  
that from an honored enterprise it turns him,  
as seeing falsely doth a shying beast.  
In order that thou rid thee of this fear,  
I ’ll tell thee why I came, and what I heard  
the first time I was grieved on thy account.  
Among the intermediate souls I was,  
when me a Lady called, so beautiful  
and happy, that I begged her to command.  
Her eyes were shining brighter than a star,  
when sweetly and softly she began to say,  
as with an angel’s voice she spoke to me:  
‘O courteous Mantuan spirit, thou whose fame  
is still enduring in the world above,  
and will endure as long as lasts the world,  
a friend of mine, but not a friend of Fortune,  
is on his journey o’er the lonely slope  
obstructed so, that he hath turned through fear;  
and, from what I have heard of him in Heaven,  
I fear lest he may now have strayed so far,  
that I have risen too late to give him help.  
Bestir thee, then, and with thy finished speech,  
and with whatever his escape may need,  
assist him so that I may be consoled.  
I, who now have thee go, am Beatrice;  
thence come I, whither I would fain return;  
’t was love that moved me, love that makes me speak.  
When in the presence of my Lord again,  
often shall I commend thee unto Him.’  
Thereat she ceased to speak, and I began:  
‘O Lady of virtue, thou through whom alone  
the human race excels all things contained  
within the heaven that hath the smallest circles,  
thy bidding pleases me so much, that late  
I ’d be, hadst thou already been obeyed;  
thou needst but to disclose to me thy will.  
But tell me why thou dost not mind descending  
into this center from that ample place,  
whither thou art so eager to return.’  
‘Since thou wouldst know thereof so inwardly,  
I ’ll tell thee briefly,’ she replied to me,  
‘why I am not afraid to enter here.  
Of those things only should one be afraid,

that have the power of doing injury;  
not of the rest, for they should not be feared.  
I, of His mercy, am so made by God,  
that me your wretchedness doth not affect,  
nor any flame of yonder fire molest.  
There is a Gentle Lady up in Heaven,  
who grieves so at this check, whereto I send thee,  
that broken is stern judgment there above.  
She called Lucia in her prayer, and said:  
‘Now hath thy faithful servant need of thee,  
and I, too, recommend him to thy care.’  
Lucia, hostile to all cruelty,  
set forth thereat, and came unto the place,  
where I with ancient Rachel had my seat.  
‘Why, Beatrice,’ she said, ‘true Praise of God,  
dost thou not succour him who loved thee so,  
that for thy sake he left the common herd?  
Dost thou not hear the anguish of his cry?  
see’st not the death that fights him on the flood,  
o’er which the sea availeth not to boast?  
Ne’er were there any in the world so swift  
to seek their profit and avoid their loss,  
as I, after such words as these were uttered,  
descended hither from my blessèd seat,  
confiding in that noble speech of thine,  
which honors thee and whosoe’er has heard it.’  
Then, after she had spoken to me thus,  
weeping she turned her shining eyes away;  
which made me hasten all the more to come;  
and, even as she wished, I came to thee,  
and led thee from the presence of the beast,  
which robbed thee of the fair Mount’s short approach.  
What is it, then? Why, why dost thou hold back?  
Why dost thou lodge such baseness in thy heart,  
and wherefore free and daring art thou not,  
since three so blessèd Ladies care for thee  
within the court of Heaven, and my words, too,  
give thee the promise of so much that’s good?”  
As little flowers by the chill of night  
bowed down and closed, when brightened by the sun,  
stand all erect and open on their stems;  
so likewise with my wearied strength did I;  
and such good daring coursed into my heart,  
that I began as one who had been freed:  
“O piteous she who hastened to my help,  
and courteous thou, that didst at once obey  
the words of truth that she addressed to thee!  
Thou hast with such desire disposed my heart

toward going on, by reason of thy words,  
that to my first intention I 've returned.  
Go on now, since we two have but one will;  
thou Leader, and thou Lord, and Teacher thou!"  
I thus addressed him; then, when he had moved,  
I entered on the wild and arduous course.

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## INFERNO III

### *The Gate and Vestibule of Hell*

#### *Cowards and Neutrals. Acheron*

Through me one goes into the town of woe,  
through me one goes into eternal pain,  
through me among the people that are lost.  
Justice inspired my high exalted Maker;  
I was created by the Might divine,  
the highest Wisdom and the primal Love.  
Before me there was naught created, save  
eternal things, and I eternal last;  
all hope abandon, ye that enter here!  
These words of gloomy color I beheld  
inscribed upon the summit of a gate;  
whence I: "Their meaning, Teacher, troubles me."  
And he to me, like one aware, replied:  
"All fearfulness must here be left behind;  
all forms of cowardice must here be dead.  
We 've reached the place where, as I said to thee,  
thou 'lt see the sad folk who have lost the Good  
which is the object of the intellect."  
Then, after he had placed his hand in mine  
with cheerful face, whence I was comforted,  
he led me in among the hidden things.  
There sighs and wails and piercing cries of woe  
reverberated through the starless air;  
hence I, at first, shed tears of sympathy.  
Strange languages, and frightful forms of speech,  
words caused by pain, accents of anger, voices  
both loud and faint, and smiting hands withal,  
a mighty tumult made, which sweeps around  
forever in that timelessly dark air,  
as sand is wont, whene'er a whirlwind blows.  
And I, whose head was girt about with horror,  
said: "Teacher, what is this I hear? What folk  
is this, that seems so overwhelmed with woe?"  
And he to me: "This wretched kind of life  
the miserable spirits lead of those  
who lived with neither infamy nor praise.  
Commingled are they with that worthless choir  
of Angels who did not rebel, nor yet  
were true to God, but sided with themselves.  
The heavens, in order not to be less fair,

expelled them; nor doth nether Hell receive them,  
because the bad would get some glory thence.”  
And I: “What is it, Teacher, grieves them so,  
it causes them so loudly to lament?”  
“I ’ll tell thee very briefly,” he replied.  
“These have no hope of death, and so low down  
is this unseeing life of theirs, that envious  
they are of every other destiny.  
The world allows no fame of them to live;  
Mercy and Justice hold them in contempt.  
Let us not talk of them; but look, and pass!”  
And I, who gazed intently, saw a flag,  
which, whirling, moved so swiftly that to me  
contemptuous it appeared of all repose;  
and after it there came so long a line  
of people, that I never would have thought  
that death so great a number had undone.  
When some I ’d recognized, I saw and knew  
the shade of him who through his cowardice  
the great Refusal made. I understood  
immediately, and was assured that this  
the band of cowards was, who both to God  
displeasing are, and to His enemies.  
These wretched souls, who never were alive,  
were naked, and were sorely spurred to action  
by means of wasps and hornets that were there.  
The latter streaked their faces with their blood,  
which, after it had mingled with their tears,  
was at their feet sucked up by loathsome worms.  
When I had given myself to peering further,  
people I saw upon a great stream’s bank;  
I therefore said: “Now, Teacher, grant to me  
that I may know who these are, and what law  
makes them appear so eager to cross over,  
as in this dim light I perceive they are.”  
And he to me: “These things will be made clear  
to thee, as soon as on the dismal strand  
of Acheron we shall have stayed our steps.”  
Thereat, with shame-suffused and downcast eyes,  
and fearing lest my talking might annoy him,  
up to the river I abstained from speech.  
Behold then, coming toward us in a boat,  
an agèd man, all white with ancient hair,  
who shouted: “Woe to you, ye souls depraved!  
Give up all hope of ever seeing Heaven!  
I come to take you to the other shore,  
into eternal darkness, heat and cold.  
And thou that yonder art, a living soul,

withdraw thee from those fellows that are dead.”  
But when he saw that I did not withdraw,  
he said: “By other roads and other ferries  
shalt thou attain a shore to pass across,  
not here; a lighter boat must carry thee.”  
To him my Leader: “Charon, be not vexed;  
thus is it yonder willed, where there is power  
to do whate’er is willed; so ask no more!”  
Thereat were quieted the woolly cheeks  
of that old boatman of the murky swamp,  
who round about his eyes had wheels of flame.  
Those spirits, though, who nude and weary were,  
their color changed, and gnashed their teeth together,  
as soon as they had heard the cruel words.  
They kept blaspheming God, and their own parents,  
the human species, and the place, and time,  
and seed of their conception and their birth.  
Then each and all of them drew on together,  
weeping aloud, to that accursèd shore  
which waits for every man that fears not God.  
Charon, the demon, with his ember eyes  
makes beckoning signs to them, collects them all,  
and with his oar beats whoso takes his ease.  
Even as in autumn leaves detach themselves,  
now one and now another, till their branch  
sees all its stripped off clothing on the ground;  
so, one by one, the evil seed of Adam  
cast themselves down that river-bank at signals,  
as doth a bird to its recalling lure.  
Thus o’er the dusky waves they wend their way;  
and ere they land upon the other side,  
another crowd collects again on this.  
“My son,” the courteous Teacher said to me,  
“all those that perish in the wrath of God  
from every country come together here;  
and eager are to pass across the stream,  
because Justice Divine so spurs them on,  
that what was fear is turned into desire.  
A good soul never goes across from hence;  
if Charon, therefore, findeth fault with thee,  
well canst thou now know what his words imply.”  
The darkling plain, when this was ended, quaked  
so greatly, that the memory of my terror  
bathes me even now with sweat.  
The tear-stained ground  
gave forth a wind, whence flashed vermilion light  
which in me overcame all consciousness;  
and down I fell like one whom sleep o’ertakes.

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## INFERNO IV

*The First Circle. The Borderland*

*Unbaptized Worthies. Illustrious Pagans*

A heavy thunder-clap broke the deep sleep  
within my head, so that I roused myself,  
as would a person who is waked by force;  
and standing up erect, my rested eyes  
I moved around, and with a steady gaze  
I looked about to know where I might be.  
Truth is I found myself upon the verge  
of pain's abysmal valley, which collects  
the thunder-roll of everlasting woes.  
So dark it was, so deep and full of mist,  
that, howsoe'er I gazed into its depths,  
nothing at all did I discern therein.  
"Into this blind world let us now descend!"  
the Poet, who was death-like pale, began,  
"I will be first, and thou shalt second be."  
And I, who of his color was aware,  
said: "How am I to come, if thou take fright,  
who 'rt wont to be my comfort when afraid?"  
"The anguish of the people here below,"  
he said to me, "brings out upon my face  
the sympathy which thou dost take for fear.  
Since our long journey drives us, let us go!"  
Thus he set forth, and thus he had me enter  
the first of circles girding the abyss.  
Therein, as far as one could judge by list'ning,  
there was no lamentation, saving sighs  
which caused a trembling in the eternal air;  
and this came from the grief devoid of torture  
felt by the throngs, which many were and great,  
of infants and of women and of men.  
To me then my good Teacher: "Dost not ask  
what spirits these are whom thou seest here?  
Now I would have thee know, ere thou go further,  
that these sinned not; and though they merits have,  
't is not enough, for they did not have baptism,  
the gateway of the creed believed by thee;  
and if before Christianity they lived,  
they did not with due worship honor God;  
and one of such as these am I myself.  
For such defects, and for no other guilt,

we 're lost, and only hurt to this extent,  
that, in desire, we live deprived of hope.”  
Great sorrow filled my heart on hearing this,  
because I knew of people of great worth,  
who in that Borderland suspended were.  
“Tell me, my Teacher, tell me, thou my Lord,”  
I then began, through wishing to be sure  
about the faith which conquers every error;  
“came any ever, by his own deserts,  
or by another's, hence, who then was blest?”  
And he, who understood my covert speech,  
replied: “To this condition I was come  
but newly, when I saw a Mighty One  
come here, crowned with the sign of victory.  
From hence He drew the earliest parent's shade,  
and that of his son, Abel, that of Noah,  
and Moses the law-giver and obedient;  
Abram the patriarch, and David king,  
Israel, with both his father and his sons,  
and Rachel, too, for whom he did so much,  
and many others; and He made them blest;  
and I would have thee know that, earlier  
than these, there were no human spirits saved.”  
Because he talked we ceased not moving on,  
but all the while were passing through the wood,  
the wood, I mean, of thickly crowded shades.  
Nor far this side of where I fell asleep  
had we yet gone, when I beheld a fire,  
which overcame a hemisphere of gloom.  
Somewhat away from it we were as yet,  
but not so far, but I could dimly see  
that honorable people held that place.  
“O thou that honorest both art and science,  
who are these people that such honor have,  
that it divides them from the others' life?”  
And he to me: “The honorable fame,  
which speaks of them in thy live world above,  
in Heaven wins grace, which thus advances them.”  
And hereupon a voice was heard by me:  
“Do honor to the loftiest of poets!  
his shade, which had departed, now returns.”  
And when the voice had ceased and was at rest,  
four mighty shades I saw approaching us;  
their looks were neither sorrowful nor glad.  
My kindly Teacher then began to say:  
“Look at the one who comes with sword in hand  
before the three, as if their lord he were.  
Homer he is, the sov'reign poet; Horace,

the satirist, the one that cometh next;  
the third is Ovid, Lucan is the last.  
Since each of them in common shares with me  
the title which the voice of one proclaimed,  
they do me honor, and therein do well.”  
Thus gathered I beheld the fair assembly  
of those the masters of the loftiest song,  
which soareth like an eagle o’er the rest.  
Then, having talked among themselves awhile,  
they turned around to me with signs of greeting;  
and, when he noticed this, my Teacher smiled.  
And even greater honor still they did me,  
for one of their own company they made me,  
so that amid such wisdom I was sixth.  
Thus on we went as far as to the light,  
talking of things whereof is silence here  
becoming, even as speech was, where we spoke.  
We reached a noble Castle’s foot, seven times  
encircled by high walls, and all around  
defended by a lovely little stream.  
This last we crossed as if dry land it were;  
through seven gates with these sages I went in,  
and to a meadow of fresh grass we came.  
There people were with slow and serious eyes,  
and, in their looks, of great authority;  
they spoke but seldom and with gentle voice.  
We therefore to one side of it drew back  
into an open place so luminous  
and high, that each and all could be perceived.  
There on the green enamel opposite  
were shown to me the spirits of the great,  
for seeing whom I glory in myself.  
I saw Electra with companions many,  
of whom I knew both Hector and Aeneas,  
and Caesar armed, with shining falcon eyes.  
I saw Camilla with Penthesilea  
upon the other side, and King Latinus,  
who with Lavinia, his own daughter, sat.  
I saw that Brutus who drove Tarquin out,  
Lucretia, Julia, Martia and Cornelia,  
and, all alone, I saw the Saladin.  
Then, having raised my brows a little higher,  
the Teacher I beheld of those that know,  
seated amid a philosophic group.  
They all look up to him, all honor him;  
there Socrates and Plato I beheld,  
who nearer than the rest are at his side;  
Democritus, who thinks the world chance-born,

Diogenes, Anaxagoras and Thales,  
Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Zeno;  
of qualities I saw the good collector,  
Dioscorides I mean; Orpheus I saw,  
Tully and Livy, and moral Seneca;  
Euclid, the geometer, and Ptolemy,  
Hippocrates, Avicenna, Galen,  
Averrhoès, who made the famous comment.  
I cannot speak of all of them in full,  
because my long theme drives me on so fast,  
that oft my words fall short of what I did.  
The sixfold band now dwindles down to two;  
my wise Guide leads me by a different path  
out of the calm into the trembling air;  
and to a place I come, where naught gives light.

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## INFERNO V

*The Second Circle. Sexual Intemperance*

*The Lascivious and Adulterers*

Thus from the first of circles I went down  
into the second, which surrounds less space,  
and all the greater pain, which goads to wailing.  
There Minos stands in horrid guise, and snarls;  
inside the entrance he examines sins,  
judges, and, as he girds himself, commits.  
I mean that when an ill-born soul appears  
before him, it confesses itself wholly;  
and thereupon that Connoisseur of sins  
perceives what place in Hell belongs to it,  
and girds him with his tail as many times,  
as are the grades he wishes it sent down.  
Before him there are always many standing;  
they go to judgment, each one in his turn;  
they speak and hear, and then are downward hurled.  
“O thou that comest to the inn of woe,”  
said Minos, giving up, on seeing me,  
the execution of so great a charge,  
“see how thou enter, and in whom thou put  
thy trust; let not the gate-way’s width deceive thee!”  
To him my Leader: “Why dost thou, too, cry?  
Hinder thou not his fate-ordained advance;  
thus is it yonder willed, where there is power  
to do whate’er is willed; so ask no more!”  
And now the woeful sounds of actual pain  
begin to break upon mine ears; I now  
am come to where much wailing smiteth me.  
I reached a region silent of all light,  
which bellows as the sea doth in a storm,  
if lashed and beaten by opposing winds.  
The infernal hurricane, which never stops,  
carries the spirits onward with its sweep,  
and, as it whirls and smites them, gives them pain.  
Whene’er they come before the shattered rock,  
there lamentations, moans and shrieks are heard;  
there, cursing, they blaspheme the Power Divine.  
I understood that to this kind of pain  
are doomed those carnal sinners, who subject  
their reason to their sensual appetite.  
And as their wings bear starlings on their way,

when days are cold, in full and wide-spread flocks;  
so doth that blast the evil spirits bear;  
this way and that, and up and down it leads them;  
nor only doth no hope of rest, but none  
of lesser suffering, ever comfort them.  
And even as cranes move on and sing their lays,  
forming the while a long line in the air;  
thus saw I coming, uttering cries of pain,  
shades borne along upon the aforesaid storm;  
I therefore said: "Who, Teacher, are the people  
the gloomy air so cruelly chastises?"  
"The first of those of whom thou wouldst have news,"  
the latter thereupon said unto me,  
"was empress over lands of many tongues.  
To sexual vice so wholly was she given,  
that lust she rendered lawful in her laws,  
thus to remove the blame she had incurred.  
Semiramis she is, of whom one reads  
that she gave suck to Ninus, and became  
his wife; she held the land the Soldan rules.  
The next is she who killed herself through love,  
and to Sichaeus' ashes broke her faith;  
the lustful Cleopatra follows her.  
See Helen, for whose sake so long a time  
of guilt rolled by, and great Achilles see,  
who fought with love when at the end of life.  
Paris and Tristan see;" and then he showed me,  
and pointed out by name, a thousand shades  
and more, whom love had from our life cut off.  
When I had heard my Leader speak the names  
of ladies and their knights of olden times,  
pity o'ercame me, and I almost swooned.  
"Poet," I then began, "I 'd gladly talk  
with those two yonder who together go,  
and seem to be so light upon the wind."  
"Thou 'lt see thy chance when nearer us they are;"  
said he, "beseech them then by that same love  
which leadeth them along, and they will come."  
Soon as the wind toward us had bent their course.  
I cried: "O toil-worn souls, come speak with us,  
so be it that One Else forbid it not!"  
As doves, when called by their desire, come flying  
with raised and steady pinions through the air  
to their sweet nest, borne on by their own will;  
so from the band where Dido is they issued,  
advancing through the noisome air toward us,  
so strong with love the tone of my appeal.  
"O thou benign and gracious living creature,

that goest through the gloomy purple air  
to visit us, who stained the world blood-red;  
if friendly were the universal King,  
for thy peace would we pray to Him, since pity  
thou showest for this wretched woe of ours.  
Of whatsoever it may please you hear  
and speak, we will both hear and speak with you,  
while yet, as now it is, the wind is hushed.  
The town where I was born sits on the shore,  
whither the Po descends to be at peace  
together with the streams that follow him.  
Love, which soon seizes on a well-born heart,  
seized him for that fair body's sake, whereof  
I was deprived; and still the way offends me.  
Love, which absolves from loving none that 's loved,  
seized me so strongly for his love of me,  
that, as thou see'st, it doth not leave me yet.  
Love to a death in common led us on;  
Cain's ice awaiteth him who quenched our life."  
These words were wafted down to us from them.  
When I had heard those sorely troubled souls,  
I bowed my head, and long I held it low,  
until the Poet said: "What thinkest thou?"  
When I made answer I began: "Alas!  
how many tender thoughts and what desire  
induced these souls to take the woeful step!"  
I then turned back to them again and spoke,  
and I began: "Thine agonies, Francesca,  
cause me to weep with grief and sympathy.  
But tell me: at the time of tender sighs,  
whereby and how did Love concede to you  
that ye should know each other's veiled desires?"  
And she to me: "There is no greater pain  
than to remember happy days in days  
of misery; and this thy Leader knows.  
But if to know the first root of our love  
so yearning a desire possesses thee,  
I'll do as one who weepeth while he speaks.  
One day, for pastime merely, we were reading  
of Launcelot, and how love o'erpowered him;  
alone we were, and free from all misgiving.  
Oft did that reading cause our eyes to meet,  
and often take the color from our faces;  
and yet one passage only overcame us.  
When we had read of how the longed-for smile  
was kissed by such a lover, this one here,  
who nevermore shall be divided from me,  
trembling all over, kissed me on my mouth.

A Gallehault the book, and he who wrote it!  
No further in it did we read that day.”  
While one was saying this, the other spirit  
so sorely wept, that out of sympathy  
I swooned away as though about to die,  
and fell as falls a body that is dead.

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## INFERNO VI

*The Third Circle. Intemperance in Food*

*Gluttons*

On my return to consciousness, which closed  
before the kindred couple's piteous case,  
which utterly confounded me with grief,  
new torments all around me I behold,  
and new tormented ones, where'er I move,  
where'er I turn, and wheresoe'er I gaze.  
In the third circle am I, that of rain  
eternal, cursèd, cold and burdensome;  
its measure and quality are never new.  
Coarse hail, and snow, and dirty-colored water  
through the dark air are ever pouring down;  
and foully smells the ground receiving them.  
A wild beast, Cerberus, uncouth and cruel,  
is barking with three throats, as would a dog,  
over the people that are there submerged.  
Red eyes he hath, a dark and greasy beard,  
a belly big, and talons on his hands;  
he claws the spirits, flays and quarters them.  
The rainfall causes them to howl like dogs;  
with one side they make shelter for the other;  
oft do the poor profaners turn about.  
When Cerberus, the mighty worm, perceived us,  
his mouths he opened, showing us his fangs;  
nor had he any limb that he kept still.  
My Leader then stretched out his opened palms,  
and took some earth, and with his fists well filled,  
he threw it down into the greedy throats.  
And like a dog that, barking, yearns for food,  
and, when he comes to bite it, is appeased,  
since only to devour it doth he strain  
and fight; even such became those filthy faces  
of demon Cerberus, who, thundering, stuns  
the spirits so, that they would fain be deaf.  
Over the shades the heavy rain beats down  
we then were passing, as our feet we set  
upon their unreal bodies which seem real.  
They each and all were lying on the ground,  
excepting one, which rose and sat upright,  
when it perceived us pass in front of it.  
"O thou that through this Hell art being led,"

it said to me, "recall me, if thou canst;  
for thou, before I unmade was, wast made."  
And I to it: "The anguish thou art in  
perchance withdraws thee from my memory so,  
it doth not seem that thee I ever saw.  
But tell me who thou art, that in so painful  
a place art set, and to such punishment,  
that none, though greater, so repulsive is."  
And he to me: "Thy town, which is so full  
of envy that the bag o'erflows already,  
owned me when I was in the peaceful life.  
Ciaccio, you townsmen used to call me then;  
for my injurious fault of gluttony  
I 'm broken, as thou seest, by the rain;  
nor yet am I, sad soul, the only one,  
for all these here are subject, for like fault,  
unto like pain." Thereat he spoke no more.  
"Thy trouble, Ciaccio," I replied to him,  
"so burdens me that it invites my tears;  
but tell me, if thou canst, to what will come  
the citizens of our divided town;  
if any one therein is just; and tell me  
the reason why such discord hath assailed her."  
And he to me then: "After struggling long  
they 'll come to bloodshed, and the boorish party  
will drive the other out with much offence.  
Then, afterward, the latter needs must fall  
within three suns, and the other party rise,  
by help of one who now is 'on the fence.'  
A long time will it hold its forehead up,  
keeping the other under grievous weights,  
howe'er it weep therefor, and be ashamed.  
Two men are just, but are not heeded there;  
the three sparks that have set men's hearts on fire,  
are overweening pride, envy and greed."  
Herewith he closed his tear-inspiring speech.  
And I to him: "I 'd have thee teach me still,  
and grant the favor of some further talk.  
Farinata and Tegghiaio, who so worthy were,  
Jàcopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca,  
and the others who were set on doing good,  
tell me where these are, and let me know of them;  
for great desire constraineth me to learn  
if Heaven now sweeten, or Hell poison them."  
And he: "Among the blackest souls are these;  
a different fault weighs toward the bottom each;  
if thou descend so far, thou mayst behold them.  
But when in the sweet world thou art again,

recall me, prithee, unto others' minds;  
I tell no more, nor further answer thee."  
His fixed eyes thereupon he turned askance;  
a while he looked at me, then bowed his head,  
and fell therewith among the other blind.  
Then said my Leader: "He 'll not wake again  
on this side of the angel-trumpet's sound.  
What time the hostile Podestà shall come,  
each soul will find again its dismal tomb,  
each will take on again its flesh and shape,  
and hear what through eternity resounds."  
We thus passed through with slowly moving steps  
the filthy mixture of the shades and rain,  
talking a little of the future life;  
because of which I said: "These torments, Teacher,  
after the Final Sentence will they grow,  
or less become, or burn the same as now."  
And he to me: "Return thou to thy science,  
which holdeth that the more a thing is perfect,  
so much the more it feels of weal or woe.  
Although this cursèd folk shall nevermore  
arrive at true perfection, it expects  
to be more perfect after, than before."  
As in a circle, round that road we went,  
speaking at greater length than I repeat,  
and came unto a place where one descends;  
there found we Plutus, the great enemy.

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## INFERNO VII

*The Fourth Circle. Intemperance in Wealth*

*Misers and Prodigals. The Fifth Circle*

“*Papè Satàn, papè Satàn, alèppè!*”  
thus Plutus with his clucking voice began;  
that noble Sage, then, who knew everything,  
said, to encourage me: “Let not thy fear  
distress thee, for, whatever power he have,  
he ’ll not prevent our going down this rock.”  
Then to those swollen lips he turned around,  
and said: “Be silent, thou accursèd wolf;  
with thine own rage consume thyself within!  
Not causeless is our going to the bottom;  
there is it willed on high, where Michael wrought  
vengeance upon the arrogant rebellion.”  
As sails, when swollen by the wind, fall down  
entangled, when the mast breaks; even so,  
down to the ground the cruel monster fell.  
Into the fourth ditch we descended thus,  
advancing further o’er the woeful edge,  
which bags all evil in the universe.  
Justice of God, alas! who heapeth up  
the many unheard of toils and pains I saw,  
and wherefore doth our sin torment us so?  
As yonder o’er Charybdis doth the sea,  
which breaks against the one it runs to meet,  
so must the people dance a ring-dance here.  
I here saw folk, more numerous than elsewhere,  
on one side and the other, with great howls  
rolling big weights around by strength of chest;  
they struck against each other; then, right there  
each turned, and rolling back his weight, cried out:  
“Why keepest thou?” and “Wherefore throw away?”  
They circled thus around the gloomy ring  
on either hand unto the point opposed,  
still shouting each to each their vile refrain;  
then each turned back, when through his own half-ring  
he had attained the other butting place.  
And I, whose heart was well nigh broken, said:  
“Now, Teacher, show me who these people are,  
and tell me whether all these tonsured ones  
upon our left ecclesiastics were.”  
And he replied to me: “They each and all

were in their first life so squint-eyed in mind,  
that they with measure used no money there.  
Clearly enough their voices bark it forth,  
whene'er they reach the two points of the ring,  
where difference in fault unmateth them.  
These churchmen were, who have no hairy covering  
upon their heads, and Popes and Cardinals,  
among whom avarice works its mastery.”  
And I to him: “Among such men as these  
I surely, Teacher, ought to recognize  
a few, who by these sins polluted were.”  
And he to me: “Thou shapest a vain thought;  
the undiscerning life which made them foul,  
now to all recognition makes them dark.  
To these two shocks they 'll come eternally;  
these from the sepulchre will rise again  
close-fisted; these, shorn of their very hair.  
Ill-giving and ill-keeping took from them  
the lovely world, and set them at this fray;  
to qualify it I 'll not use fair words.  
Now canst thou, son, behold the short-lived cheat  
of riches that are put in Fortune's care,  
and for whose sake the human race contends;  
for, all the gold there is beneath the moon,  
and all that was there once, could not avail  
to make one of these weary spirits rest.”  
“Teacher,” said I to him, “now tell me further:  
what is this Fortune thou dost touch upon,  
which hath the world's good things thus in her claws?”  
“O foolish creatures,” said he then to me.  
“how great the ignorance which hurteth you!  
I 'd have thee swallow now my thought of her.  
The One whose knowledge everything transcends,  
so made the heavens, and so gave guides to them,  
that every part on every other shines,  
thus equally distributing the light;  
likewise for worldly splendours He ordained  
a general minister and guide, to change,  
from time to time, the vain goods of the world  
from race to race, from one blood to another,  
past all resistance by the minds of men;  
wherefore, one people governs, and the other  
declines in power, according to her judgment,  
which hidden is, as in the grass a snake.  
Your knowledge is not able to resist her;  
foreseeing, she decides, and carries on  
her government, as theirs the other gods.  
Her permutations have no truce at all;

necessity compels her to be swift;  
hence oft it happens that a change occurs.  
This is the one who is so often cursed  
even by those who ought to give her praise,  
yet give her blame amiss, and ill repute.  
But she is blest, and gives no heed to that;  
among the other primal creatures glad,  
she turns her sphere, and blest enjoys herself.  
But now to woe more piteous let 's descend;  
now falls each star that rose when I set out,  
and one is here forbidden too long a stay.”  
We crossed the circle to the other bank  
over a bubbling stream, that poureth down  
along a ditch which from it takes its shape.  
Than purple-black much darker was its water;  
and we, accompanying its dusky waves,  
went down and entered on an uncouth path.  
A swamp it forms which hath the name of Styx,  
this dismal little brook, when it hath reached  
the bottom of the grey, malignant slopes.  
And I, who was intensely gazing there,  
saw muddy people in that slimy marsh,  
all naked, and with anger in their looks.  
They struck each other, not with hands alone,  
but with their heads and chests, and with their feet,  
and rent each other piecemeal with their teeth.  
Said the good Teacher: “Son, thou seest now  
the souls of those whom anger overcame;  
nay, more, I 'd have thee certainly believe  
that 'neath the water there are folk who sigh,  
and make this water bubble at its surface,  
as, wheresoe'er it turn, thine eye reveals.  
Stuck in the slime, they say: “Sullen we were  
in the sweet air that 's gladdened by the sun,  
bearing within us fumes of surliness;  
we now are sullen in the swamp's black mire.”  
This hymn they gurgle down inside their throats,  
because they cannot utter it with perfect speech.  
And so we circled round the filthy fen  
a great arc 'tween the dry bank and the marsh,  
our eyes intent on those that swallow mud;  
and to a tower's foot we came at last.

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## INFERNO VIII

*The Fifth Circle. Intemperance in Indignation*

*The Wrathful and Sullen. Styx. The City of Dis*

I say, continuing, that long before  
we ever reached the lofty tower's foot,  
our eyes had upward toward its summit turned,  
because of two small flames we there saw placed,  
and of another answering from so far,  
that hardly could mine eyesight make it out.  
Then to all wisdom's Sea I turned around,  
and said: "What sayeth this? and what replies  
that other fire? and who are they that made it?"  
And he to me: "Upon the filthy waves  
thou canst already see what is expected,  
unless the marsh's fog conceal it from thee."  
Bowstring ne'er shot an arrow from itself,  
that sped away so swiftly through the air,  
as I beheld a slender little boat  
come toward us through the water thereupon,  
under the guidance of a single boatman,  
who shouted: "Thou art caught now, wicked soul!"  
"O Phlegyas, Phlegyas," said my Master then,  
"this time thou criest out in vain! No longer  
shalt thou have us, than while we cross the swamp."  
Like one who listens to a great deceit  
practiced upon him, and who then resents it,  
so Phlegyas in his stifled wrath became.  
My Leader then went down into the boat,  
and had me enter after him; and only  
when I was in it did it laden seem.  
Soon as my Leader and I were in the boat,  
the ancient prow goes on its way, and cuts  
more water than with others is its wont.  
While we were speeding through the stagnant trench,  
one stood before me filled with mud, and said:  
"Now who art thou, that comest ere thy time?"  
And I to him: "Even though I come, I stay not;  
but who art thou, that art become so foul?"  
He answered: "As thou see'st, I 'm one who weeps."  
Then I to him: "In sorrow and in grief  
mayst thou, accursèd spirit, here remain,  
for thee I know, all filthy though thou be!"  
Then toward the boat he stretched out both his hands;

my wary Teacher, therefore, thrust him off,  
saying: "Away there with the other dogs!"  
And with his arms he then embraced my neck,  
and kissed my face, and said: "Blessèd be she  
who pregnant was with thee, indignant soul!  
He was a haughty person in the world;  
nor is there any goodness which adorns  
his memory; hence his shade is furious here.  
How many now up yonder think themselves  
great kings, who here shall be like pigs in mire,  
leaving behind them horrible contempt!"  
And I said: "Teacher, I 'd be greatly pleased  
to see him get a ducking in this broth,  
before we issue from the marshy lake."  
And he to me: "Thou shalt be satisfied  
before the shore reveal itself to thee;  
't is meet that thou enjoy a wish like that."  
Soon after this I saw the muddy people  
making such havoc of him, that therefor  
I still give praise and render thanks to God.  
They all were shouting: "At Filippo Argenti!"  
the spirit of the wrathful Florentine  
turning, meanwhile, his teeth against himself.  
We left him there; of him I therefore tell  
no more; but on mine ears there smote a wail,  
hence I, intent ahead, unbar mine eyes.  
The kindly Teacher said: "Now, son, at last  
the town, whose name is Dis, is drawing near  
with all its host of burdened citizens."  
And I said: "Teacher, clearly I behold  
its mosques already in that valley there,  
vermilion, as if issuing out of fire."  
And he to me: "The eternal fire within  
which keeps them burning, maketh them look red,  
as thou perceivest in this nether Hell."  
Thereat we came inside the trenches deep,  
which fortify that region comfortless;  
to me its walls appeared to be of iron.  
Not without going first a long way round,  
we came to where the boatman cried aloud  
to us: "Get out, for here the entrance is!"  
More than a thousand o'er the gates I saw  
of those that from the heavens had rained, who, vexed,  
were saying: "Who is he, that, without death,  
is going through the kingdom of the dead?"  
And my wise Teacher thereupon made signs  
of wishing to have private talk with them.  
Their great disdain they somewhat checked, and said:

“Come thou alone, and let him go his way,  
who with such daring entered this domain.  
Let him retrace alone his foolish road,  
and try it, if he can; for thou shalt here  
remain, that him so dark a land didst show.”  
Think, Reader, whether I lost heart on hearing  
those cursèd words; for I did not believe  
that I should e’er return on earth again.  
“O my dear Leader, who hast made me safe  
more than seven times, and extricated me  
from serious dangers which I had to face,  
forsake me not,” said I, “when so undone!  
If further progress be denied to us,  
let us at once retrace our steps together.”  
That Lord then, who had brought me thither, said:  
“Be not afraid; for none can take from us  
our passage, since by such an One ’t is given!  
But thou, await me here, and with good hope  
nourish and comfort thou thy weary soul,  
for I ’ll not leave thee in the nether world.”  
Thus goes his way, and there abandons me,  
my tender Father, and I in doubt remain;  
for Yes and No contend within my head.  
I could not hear what he proposed to them;  
but with them there he did not long remain,  
for each in rivalry ran back within.  
They closed the gates, those enemies of ours,  
right in my Master’s face, who stayed outside,  
and walking with slow steps returned to me.  
His eyes were downcast, and his eyebrows shorn  
of all self-trust, and as he sighed he said:  
“Who has forbidden me the homes of pain?”  
“Though I get angry, be not thou dismayed,”  
he said to me, “for I shall win the fight,  
whate’er defensive stir be made within.  
This insolence of theirs is nothing new,  
for at a gateway less concealed than this  
they used it once, which still is lockless found.  
Death’s scroll thou sawest over it; and now  
this side of it One such descends the slope,  
crossing the rings unguided, that through him  
the city will be opened unto us.”

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## INFERNO IX

*The Gate of the City of Dis*

*The Sixth Circle. Heresy*

The color cowardice brought out on me,  
who saw my Leader coming back, the sooner  
repressed in him his unaccustomed hue.  
He stopped attentive like a man who listens;  
because his eyesight could not lead him far  
through the dark air, and through the heavy fog.  
“Yet we must win the battle,” he began,  
“unless . . . One such did offer us herself!  
Oh, how I long for some one to arrive!”  
I well perceived how, when he overlaid  
what he began to say by what came after,  
that these were words that differed from the first.  
But none the less his language gave me fear,  
because I lent to his unfinished phrase  
a meaning worse, perhaps, than he intended.  
“Into this bottom of the dismal shell  
doth any of that first grade e’er descend,  
whose only penalty is hope cut off?”  
I asked this question. He replied to me:  
“It seldom comes to pass that one of us  
performs the journey whereupon I go.  
’T is true that I was conjured once before  
down here by magic of that wild Erichtho,  
who used to call shades back into their bodies.  
My flesh had hardly been made bare of me,  
when me she forced to enter yonder wall,  
and thence withdraw a soul from Judas’ ring.  
That is the lowest and the darkest place,  
and from the heaven that turns all things most distant;  
well do I know the road; so be at rest!  
This marsh, from which the mighty stench exhales,  
girdles the woeful city round about,  
which without wrath we cannot enter now.”  
And more he said, but I recall it not,  
because mine eye had made me wholly heed  
the glowing summit of the lofty tower,  
where three infernal Furies stained with blood  
had suddenly uprisen all at once,  
having the members and the mien of women,  
and girt with water-snakes of brightest green;

for hair they had small serpents and horned snakes,  
wherewith their frightful temples were entwined.  
And he, who well the handmaids of the Queen  
of everlasting lamentation knew,  
said unto me: "Behold the fierce Erinyes!  
This is Megaera here upon the left;  
Alecto, she who weepeth on the right;  
Tisiphonë's between." Thereat he ceased.  
Each with her nails was tearing at her breast;  
they smote them with their hands, and cried so loud,  
that to the Poet I drew close in dread.  
"Now let Medusa come! We 'll turn him thus  
to stone!" they all cried out, as down they looked;  
"wrong were we not to punish Theseus' raid."  
"Turn back, and close thine eyes, for should the Gorgon  
reveal itself, and thou behold the face,  
there 'd be no more returning up above."  
The Teacher thus: and turning me himself,  
on my hands he did not so far rely,  
as not to close mine eyes with his as well.  
O ye in whom intelligence is sound,  
heed carefully the teaching which lies hidden  
beneath the veil of my mysterious lines!  
There now was coming o'er the turbid waves  
the uproar of a dread-inspiring sound,  
because of which both shores were all aquake,  
a noise like nothing other than a wind,  
impetuous through opposing heats, which smites  
a forest, and without the least restraint  
shatters, lays low, and carries off its boughs;  
dust-laden it goes proudly on its way,  
and makes wild animals and shepherds flee.  
He freed mine eyes, and said: "Direct thou now  
thy keenest vision o'er that ancient scum,  
to where that reeking smoke is most intense."  
As frogs before the hostile water-snake  
scatter in all directions through the water,  
till each is squatting huddled on the shore;  
more than a thousand ruined souls I saw,  
who thus from one were fleeing, who on foot,  
but with dry feet, was passing over Styx.  
That dense air he kept moving from his face  
by often passing his left hand before him,  
and only with that trouble weary seemed.  
I well perceived he was a Messenger  
from Heaven, and to my Teacher turned; with signs  
he warned me to keep still, and bow before him.  
Ah, how disdainful did he seem to me!

He reached the gate, and with a little wand  
he opened it, for hindrance had he none.  
“O people thrust from Heaven and held in scorn,”  
upon the horrid threshold he began,  
“whence dwells in you this overweening pride?  
Why is it that ye kick against the Will,  
from which its end can never be cut off,  
and which hath more than once increased your pain?  
Of what avail to butt against the Fates?  
Your Cerberus, if ye remember well,  
still sports for this a hairless chin and neck.”  
He then returned along the filthy road,  
nor did he say a word to us; but looked  
like one whom other cares constrain and gnaw,  
than that of him who in his presence is;  
then we with full assurance toward the town,  
after those holy words, addressed our steps.  
We entered it without the least contention;  
and I, who longed to look about and see  
the state of those whom such a fortress holds,  
when I was in it, cast mine eyes around,  
and see on every side an ample plain,  
with anguish and with awful torture filled.  
Even as at Arles, where marshy turns the Rhone,  
or as at Pola near Quarnaro’s gulf,  
which bounds Italia, and her border bathes,  
the sepulchres make all the ground uneven;  
so likewise did they here on every side,  
save that their nature was more bitter here;  
for flames were spread about within the tombs,  
whereby they glowed with such intensity,  
that no art needeth greater heat for iron.  
The lids of all of them were raised, and wails  
so woeful issued thence, that of a truth  
they seemed the wails of wretched, tortured men.  
“Teacher, what sort of people are those there,”  
said I, “who, buried in those arc-like tombs,  
make themselves heard by means of woeful sighs?”  
“Arch-heretics are with their followers here”  
said he, “of every sect, and far more laden  
than thou believest are the sepulchers.  
Here like with like is buried, and more hot  
and less so are the monuments.” Thereat,  
when he had turned him to the right, we passed  
between the woes and lofty bastioned walls.

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## INFERNO X

### *The Sixth Circle. Heresy*

#### *Heretics*

Now wends his way along a narrow path,  
between the torments and the city's wall,  
my Teacher and, behind his shoulders, I.  
"O lofty Virtue," I began, "that leadst me  
around the impious circles at thy pleasure,  
converse with me and satisfy my wishes.  
The people that are lying in the tombs,  
could they be seen? For all the lids are raised,  
it seems, and there is no one keeping guard."  
And he to me: "They all will be locked in,  
when from Jehoshaphat they here return  
together with the bodies they have left  
above. On this side have their burial-place  
with Epicurus all his followers,  
who claim that with the body dies the soul.  
To the request, however, which thou makest  
thou 'lt soon receive a due reply in here,  
as also to the wish thou keepest from me."  
And I: "Good Leader, I but keep my heart  
concealed from thee, in order to speak little;  
nor hast thou only now thereto disposed me."  
"O Tuscan, thou that through the town of fire  
dost go alive with such respectful speech,  
in this place be thou pleased to stay thy steps.  
Thy very language makes thee manifest  
a native of that noble fatherland,  
to which I was, perhaps, too great a bane."  
All of a sudden issued forth these words  
from one of those ark-tombs; hence I, in fear,  
a little closer to my Leader drew.  
And he said: "Turn around; what doest thou?  
See Farinata who has risen there;  
thou 'lt see him wholly from his girdle up."  
Already had I fixed mine eyes on his;  
and he was standing up with chest and head  
erect, as if he had great scorn for Hell.  
My Leader then with bold and ready hands  
pushed me between the sepulchers toward him,  
saying: "Now let thy words be frank and clear."  
When I was 'neath his tomb, he looked at me

awhile, and then, as though disdainfully,  
he asked of me: "Who were thine ancestors?"  
And I, who was desirous to obey,  
hid it not from him, but revealed it all;  
whereat he slightly raised his brows, and said:  
"So bitterly were they opposed to me,  
and to mine ancestors, and to my party,  
that I on two occasions scattered them."  
"If they were driven out," I answered him,  
"from all directions they returned both times;  
your people, though, have not well learned that art."  
A shade then at the tomb's uncovered mouth  
rose at his side as far up as his chin;  
I think that he had risen upon his knees.  
Round me he looked, as if he wished to see  
whether some other one were with me there;  
but when his doubt had wholly spent itself,  
weeping he said: "If thou through this blind prison  
dost go by reason of highmindedness,  
where is my son? and why is he not with thee?"  
And I to him: "I come not by myself;  
he who is waiting yonder leads me here,  
one whom, perhaps, your Guido held in scorn."  
The nature of his torment and his words  
had read this person's name to me already;  
on this account was my reply so full.  
Then of a sudden standing up, he cried:  
"What saidst thou? Held? Is he not still alive?  
Doth not the sweet light strike upon his eyes?"  
When he perceived the short delay I made  
before replying, down upon his back  
he fell, nor outside showed himself again.  
The other one, meanwhile, the great-souled man,  
at whose request I stopped, changed not his looks,  
nor did he move his neck or turn his side.  
And "If," continuing his previous words,  
he said: "if they have badly learned that art,  
far more doth that torment me than this bed.  
And yet that Lady's face who ruleth here  
shall not be lighted fifty times again,  
ere thou shalt know how heavy that art is.  
And so mayst thou return to the sweet world,  
pray tell me why so pitiless toward mine  
that people is in every law of theirs?"  
Whence I to him: "The havoc and great slaughter  
which caused the Arbia to be colored red,  
occasion such petitions in our church."  
When, sighing, he had tossed his head, he said:

“In this thing I was not alone, nor surely  
had I, without due cause, moved with the rest;  
but I was yonder, where assent was given  
by every one to do away with Florence,  
the only one to openly defend her.”  
“So may your seed eventually repose,”  
I begged of him, “untie for me, I pray,  
the knot which has perplexed my thinking here.  
It seems, if well I hear, that ye behold  
beforehand that which time brings with itself,  
while in the present ye do otherwise.”  
“We see,” he said, “like one whose sight is poor,  
things that are far from us; to that extent  
the Highest Leader shines upon us still.  
When they approach, or are, our intellect  
is wholly vain, and we, if others bring  
no news, know nothing of your human state.  
Hence thou canst understand that wholly dead  
will be our knowledge from that moment on,  
when closed shall be the gateway of the future.”  
Thereat, for I was grieved at my mistake,  
I said: “You ’ll therefore tell that fallen man  
his son is dwelling with the living still;  
and if in answering I was mute just now,  
cause him to know it was because my thoughts  
were struggling with the problem you have solved.”  
And now my Teacher was recalling me;  
with greater haste I therefore begged the spirit  
that he would tell me who was with him there.  
He said: “With o’er a thousand here I lie;  
the second Frederick and the Cardinal  
are here within; I speak not of the rest.”  
He thereupon concealed himself; and I,  
those words recalling which seemed hostile to me,  
back toward the ancient Poet turned my steps.  
The latter moved; and then, as on we went,  
he said to me: “Why art thou so perplexed?”  
And him in what he asked I satisfied.  
“Then let thy mind preserve,” that Sage enjoined,  
“what thou hast heard against thyself; pay now  
attention here!” His finger then he raised.  
“When in the sweet ray’s presence thou shalt be  
of Her whose lovely eyes see everything,  
from her thou ’lt know the journey of thy life.”  
Thereafter to the left he turned his feet;  
we left the wall, and toward the middle went  
along a path which to a valley leads,  
which even up there unpleasant made its stench.

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## INFERNO XI

*The Sixth Circle. Heresy*

*The Distribution of the Damned in the Inferno*

Upon the utmost verge of a high bank,  
formed in a circle by great broken rocks,  
we came upon a still more cruel pack;  
and there, by reason of the horrible  
excess of stench the deep abyss exhales,  
for shelter we withdrew behind the lid  
of a large tomb, whereon I saw a scroll  
which said: "Pope Anastasius I contain,  
whom out of the right way Photinus drew."  
"Our going down from here must be delayed,  
so that our sense may first get used a little  
to this foul blast; we shall not mind it then."  
The Teacher thus; and I: "Find thou therefor  
some compensation, lest our time be lost."  
And he to me: "See how I think of this."  
"My son, within these rocks," he then began,  
"are three small circles which, from grade to grade,  
are similar to those thou leavest now.  
Full of accursèd spirits are they all;  
but that hereafter sight alone suffice thee,  
hear how, and wherefore they are packed together.  
Of all wrong-doing which in Heaven wins hate  
injustice is the end, and each such end  
aggrieves by either violence or fraud.  
But whereas fraud is man's peculiar evil,  
God hates it most; therefore the fraudulent  
are down below, and greater pain assails them.  
All the first circle holds the violent;  
but since against three persons force is used,  
its shape divides it into three great rings.  
Both against God, one's neighbor, and one's self  
may force be used; against themselves, I mean,  
and what is theirs, as clearly shown thou'lt hear.  
By force both death and painful wounds are given  
one's neighbor, and thereby his property  
is ruined, burned, and by extortions robbed;  
the first ring, hence, torments in separate troops  
all homicides and those that smite with malice,  
spoilers of property and highway robbers.  
Upon oneself may one lay violent hands,

and on one 's goods; hence in the second ring  
must needs repentant be without avail  
whoever of your world deprives himself,  
gambles away and dissipates his means,  
and weepeth there where he should joyful be.  
'Gainst God may force be used, by wittingly  
denying that He is, by blasphemy,  
and by disprizing Nature and His Goodness;  
and therefore with its mark the lesser ring  
sealeth both Sodom and Cahors, and him  
who, speaking from his heart, despises God.  
And fraud, whereby all consciences are bitten,  
one may employ against a man who trusts him,  
and 'gainst a man who storeth up no trust.  
This latter kind of fraud would seem to kill  
only the bond of love which Nature makes;  
hence in the second circle make their nest  
hypocrisy, and flatteries, and workers  
of magic, coining, theft and simony,  
panders and grafters, and such filth as these.  
In the other way forgotten is the love  
which Nature makes, and that which afterward  
is joined thereto, whence special trust is born;  
hence in the smallest ring, where the universe  
its center hath, and on which Dis is seated,  
whoe'er betrays is spent eternally."  
"Teacher," said I, "thine argument proceeds  
most lucidly, and full well classifies  
this deep abyss and those that people it.  
But tell me now: those of the muddy marsh,  
those whom the wind drives, those the rain beats down,  
and those that with such keen tongues meet each other,  
why are n't they punished in the red-hot town,  
if God be angry with them? and, if not,  
why are they tortured in those several ways?"  
And he to me: "Why doth thine intellect  
wander so far from that which is its wont,  
or doth thy mind intently gaze elsewhere?  
Hast thou no recollection of the words  
with which thine Ethics treats extensively  
the dispositions three which Heaven rejects,  
Incontinence, and Malice, and insane  
Bestiality, and how Incontinence  
offends God least, and hence receives least blame?  
If thou consider this opinion well,  
and then remember who those are above,  
that outside undergo their punishment,  
well shalt thou see why from these wretches here

they 're set apart, and why less wrathfully  
Vengeance Divine is hammering on them there.”  
“O Sun that healest every troubled sight,  
thou so contentest me when answering questions,  
that doubt, no less than knowledge, pleases me.  
Return a little further back,” said I,  
“to where thou sayest usury offends  
Goodness Divine, and loose the tangled knot.”  
“Philosophy” said he to me, “points out  
to him that understandeth it, and not  
in one part only, that Nature takes her course  
from the Intellect Divine, and from its Art;  
and if thou note thy Physics carefully,  
after not many pages shalt thou find  
that your art follows that, as best it can,  
as the disciple him who teaches; hence,  
your art is grandchild, as it were, to God.  
From these two things, if thou recall to mind  
the first of Genesis, must people needs  
obtain their livelihood, and progress make.  
And as the usurer takes another course,  
Nature both in herself and in her follower  
he scorneth, since in something else he trusts.  
But follow me now, for I please to go;  
because the Fishes o'er the horizon quiver,  
and wholly over Caurus lies the Wain,  
and one descends the bank much further on.”

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## INFERNO XII

*The Seventh Circle. The First Ring. Violence against one's Fellow Man. Murderers and Spoilers. Phlegethon*

The place, where to descend the bank we came,  
was Alp-like, and, through what was also there,  
such that all eyes would be repelled by it.  
As is that downfall on the hither side  
of Trent, which sidewise smote the Àdige,  
through earthquake or through failure of support;  
since from the mountain's summit, whence it moved  
down to the plain, the rock is shattered so,  
that it would yield a path for one above;  
even such was the descent of that ravine;  
and on the border of the broken bank  
was stretched at length the Infamy of Crete,  
who in the seeming heifer was conceived;  
and when he saw us there he bit himself,  
like one whom inward anger overcomes.  
In his direction then my Sage cried out:  
"Dost thou, perhaps, think Athens' duke is here,  
who gave thee death when in the world above?  
Begone, thou beast! for this man cometh not  
taught by thy sister, but is going by,  
in order to behold your punishments."  
As doth a bull, who from his leash breaks free  
the moment he receives the mortal blow,  
and cannot walk, but plunges here and there;  
so doing I beheld the Minotaur;  
and he, aware, cried out: "Run to the pass!  
't is well that, while he rages, thou descend."  
Thereat we made our way adown that heap  
of fallen rocks, which often 'neath my feet  
were moved, because of their unwonted load.  
I went along in thought; and he: "Perchance  
thou thinkest of this landslide, which is guarded  
by that beast's anger which I quenched just now.  
Now I would have thee know that, when down here  
to nether Hell I came, that other time,  
this mass of rock had not yet fallen down.  
But certainly, if I remember well,  
not long ere He arrived, who carried off  
from Dis the highest circle's mighty prey,  
on every side the deep and foul abyss  
so trembled that I thought the universe

had felt the love, whereby, as some believe,  
the world to Chaos hath been oft reduced;  
and at that moment this old mass of rock  
was thus, both here and elsewhere, overthrown.  
But turn thine eyes down yonder now; for lo,  
the stream of blood is drawing near to us,  
wherein boils who by violence harms others.”  
O blind cupidity, O foolish wrath,  
that so dost in our short life goad us on,  
and after, in the eternal, steep us thus!  
I saw a wide moat curving in an arc,  
and such that it embraces all the plain,  
according as my Escort had informed me;  
and in a file, between it and the bank,  
Centaur's were running by, with arrows armed,  
as in the world it was their wont to hunt.  
On seeing us descend, they all stopped short,  
and three of them detached them from the troop,  
with bows and arrows they had chosen first.  
And one cried from afar: “Ye that descend  
the slope, to what pain are ye coming?  
Tell it from there, or else I draw my bow.”  
My Teacher said: “Our answer will we give  
to Chiron yonder, when we reach his side;  
thus ever to thy harm was thy will rash.”  
He touched me then, and said: “That one is Nessus,  
who died for lovely Dejanira's sake,  
and who himself wrought vengeance for himself;  
the middle one, who gazes at his breast,  
is that great Chiron who brought up Achilles;  
the other, Pholus, who so wrathful was.  
They go by thousands round about the moat,  
shooting each soul that from the blood emerges  
further than its own sin allotted it.”  
To those swift-footed beasts we then drew near;  
Chiron an arrow took, and with its notch  
backward upon his jaws he pushed his beard.  
When he had thus uncovered his great mouth,  
he said unto his mates: “Are ye aware  
that he who comes behind moves what he touches?  
Yet dead men's feet are not thus wont to do.”  
And my good Leader, who now reached his breast,  
where the two natures are together joined,  
replied: “He lives indeed, and thus alone  
must I needs show to him the dark abyss;  
necessity is leading him, not pleasure.  
One who withdrew from singing praise to God,  
gave me this new commission; he is not

a highwayman, nor I a robber's soul.  
But by the Power, through whom I move my steps  
along so wild a road, bestow on us  
one of thy troop, at whose side we may be,  
and who may show us where one fords, and carry  
this man upon his back, for he is not  
a spirit who can travel through the air.”  
Upon his right breast Chiron turned, and said  
to Nessus: “Turn around, and guide them thus,  
and if another troop should meet you, cause it  
to stand aside.” Then we with this safe escort  
skirted the edge of that red, boiling stream,  
wherein the boiled were crying out aloud.  
I saw some people in it to their brows.  
“These tyrants are,” the mighty Centaur said,  
“who took to bloodshed and to plundering.  
Here tears are shed because of heartless wrongs;  
here Alexander is, and who for years  
grieved Sicily, fierce Dionysius.  
The brow which hath so black a head of hair,  
is Azzolino; the other which is blond,  
Obizzo of Este, who in truth was quenched  
up in the world by his un-natural son.”  
I turned then toward the Poet, but he said:  
“Be he now first to thee, and second I.”  
A little further on the Centaur stopped  
over some people who, it seemed, emerged  
out of that boiling river from their necks.  
On one side there a lonely shade he showed us,  
and said: “He yonder in God's bosom pierced  
the heart, which still is honored on the Thames.”  
Then people I beheld who from the stream  
held out their heads, and even all their chest;  
and many did I recognize of these.  
Thus shallower and shallower became  
that blood, until it only cooked their feet;  
here was the place for us to ford the ditch.  
“Even as thou seest that the boiling stream  
grows shallow more and more on this side here,”  
the Centaur said, “I wish thee to believe  
that on this other side its bottom sinks  
increasingly, until it joins the place  
where it behooveth tyranny to groan.  
Justice Divine is over here tormenting  
that Attila who was a scourge on earth,  
Pyrrhus, and Sextus; and forever milks  
the tears, which with the boiling it unlocks,  
from Rinier da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo,

who on the highroads waged so great a war.”  
He then turned back, and crossed the ford again.

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## INFERNO XIII

*The Seventh Circle. The Second Ring. Violence against*

*Oneself. Suicides and Squanderers*

Not yet had Nessus reached the other side,  
when we had set our steps within a wood,  
which was not marked by any path whatever.  
No green leaves there, but leaves of gloomy hue;  
no smooth and straight, but gnarled and twisted, twigs;  
nor was there any fruit, but poison-thorns.  
No thickets rough and dense as these are owned  
by those wild beasts, that hate the tilled estates  
that lie between the Cécina and Corneto.  
Herein those ugly Harpies make their nest,  
who drove the Trojans from the Strophades,  
with gloomy prophecies of future loss.  
Wide wings they have, and human necks and faces;  
their feet are clawed, and feathered their great bellies;  
they utter wailings on the uncouth trees.  
My kindly Teacher then began to say:  
“Before thou enter any further, know  
that in the second ring thou art, and wilt be,  
until thou reach the horrid plain of sand;  
hence look around thee well, and things thou ’lt see,  
that from my words would take away belief.”  
Moans I heard uttered upon every side,  
but saw no person who might make them there;  
hence, utterly confused, I checked my steps.  
I think he thought I thought that all those voices  
were uttered from among those thorny trunks  
by people hiding there on our account.  
The Teacher therefore said: “If thou break off  
a little twig from any of these trees,  
the thoughts thou hast will all be proven false.”  
I then stretched out my hand a little way,  
and from a sturdy thorn-tree plucked a twig,  
whereat its trunk cried out: “Why dost thou rend me?”  
Then, after growing dark with blood, its cry  
began again: “Why dost thou break me off?  
Hast thou no spirit of compassion in thee?  
Men were we once, and now are stocks become;  
thy hand ought surely to have had more pity,  
even if the souls of serpents we had been.”  
As from a fresh, green log, that at one end

is being burned, and at the other drips  
and makes a hissing with the escaping air;  
so from the broken twig together issued  
both words and blood; I therefore dropped the end,  
and stood dumbfounded, like a man who fears.  
“Had he before been able to believe,  
O wounded soul,” replied my Sage to him,  
“what in my verses only he has seen,  
he had not set his hand on thee; whereas  
the thing’s incredibility has made me  
lead him to do what I myself regret.  
But tell him who thou wast, that he, by way  
of compensation, may refresh thy fame  
up in the world, where he can still return.”  
The trunk: “With sweet words thou dost so entice me,  
that I can not keep still; be not annoyed,  
if I am tempted to a little talk.  
I am the man who once held both the keys  
of Frederick’s heart, and he who turned them round  
so gently, locking and unlocking it,  
that most men from his secrets I withheld;  
so faithful was I to my glorious charge,  
that for its sake I lost both sleep and strength.  
The courtesan who never turned away  
her harlot eyes from Caesar’s dwelling-place,  
a common form of death and vice of courts,  
,gainst me inflamed the minds of every one;  
and those on fire inflamed Augustus so,  
that my glad honors turned to wretched grief.  
My mind, to vent its feelings of disdain,  
and thinking to avoid disdain by death,  
made me unjust against myself, the just.  
By this tree’s uncouth roots, I swear to you,  
I never broke the faith I owed my lord,  
who so deserving was of reverence!  
And to the world should one of you return,  
let him assist my memory, which still  
lies crushed beneath the blow which envy gave it!”  
A while he waited, then the Poet said:  
“Since he is still, lose not thy chance; but speak,  
and ask him other questions, if thou like.”  
Whence I to him: “Ask thou again whate’er  
thou thinkest satisfactory to me;  
for I could not, such pity stirs my heart!”  
Hence he began again: “So may this man  
do freely for thee what thy words request,  
imprisoned spirit, may it please thee still  
to tell us how within these knotted trunks

a soul is bound; and tell us, if thou canst,  
if any from such limbs is ever freed.”  
Thereat the trunk blew hard, and afterward  
that wind was changed into the following words:  
“Briefly shall a reply be made to you.  
Whenever a wild spirit leaves the body,  
from which itself hath torn itself away,  
Minos commits it to the seventh ravine.  
Into the wood it falls, nor is a place  
allotted to it; but where Fortune hurls it,  
there, like a grain of spelt, it germinates.  
It grows into a sapling and wild tree;  
the Harpies, feeding then upon its leaves,  
cause pain to it, and for the pain a vent.  
Like other spirits, for our spoils we ’ll come,  
though not that any be re clothed therewith;  
for ’t is not right to have what one casts off.  
We ’ll drag them with us here, and then our bodies  
will all around the dismal wood be hung,  
each on the thorn-tree of its hostile shade.”  
We still were giving heed unto the trunk,  
believing that it wished to tell us more,  
when we were startled by a sudden noise,  
as likewise he is, who perceives a boar  
and pack of hounds approach his hunting-post,  
and hears the crashing of the beasts and boughs.  
And lo, two on the left, who naked were  
and scratched, and fled away so rapidly,  
they shattered all the branches of the wood.  
The one ahead: “Now hurry, hurry, death!”  
and the other one, who thought himself too slow,  
cried: “Lano, not so knowing were thy legs,  
when running from Del Toppo’s battle-jousts!”  
And then, perhaps because of failing breath,  
he there made of himself and of a bush  
a group. The wood behind these two was full  
of swarthy bitches, ravenous and fleet  
as greyhounds are, when from their chains unleashed.  
Into the one who crouched they set their teeth,  
and tore him into pieces bit by bit;  
they then made off with those his suffering limbs.  
Thereat my Escort took me by the hand,  
and led me to the bush, which all in vain  
out of its bleeding rents was shedding tears.  
“O Giacomo” it said, “da Sant’ Andrea,  
what boots it thee to make a screen of me?  
and how am I to blame for thy bad life?”  
When over him my Teacher stopped, he said:

“Who then wast thou, that through so many gashes  
art blowing forth with blood such painful speech?”  
And he to us: “O spirits that have come  
in time to see the unbecoming havoc,  
which from me thus hath torn away my leaves,  
collect them at the foot of my sad bush!  
I to that town belonged, which for the Baptist  
changed its first patron; wherefore he, for this,  
will always make her mournful with his art;  
and were it not that on the Arno’s bridge  
there lingers still some little glimpse of him,  
those townsmen who rebuilt her afterward  
over the ashes left by Attila,  
had caused that work to be performed in vain.  
I made myself a gibbet of my house.”

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## INFERNO XIV

*The Seventh Circle. The Third Ring*

*Violence against God. Blasphemers*

Since love for my own native place constrained me,  
I gathered up the scattered twigs and leaves,  
and gave them back to him who now was weak.  
Thence to the bound we came, where from the third  
the second ring is severed, and wherein  
a frightful form of Justice may be seen.  
To manifest aright what here was new,  
I say that we had reached a barren plain,  
which from its bed removeth every plant.  
The woeful wood is as a garland round it,  
as round the former is the dismal moat;  
there on its very edge we stayed our steps.  
Its soil was of a dense and arid sand,  
whose nature differed in no way from that,  
which once was trodden by the feet of Cato.  
Vengeance of God, how much by every one  
thou oughtest to be feared, who readeth here  
what to these eyes of mine was manifest!  
Of naked souls I many flocks beheld,  
who all wept very sorely, while on each  
a different law appeared to be imposed.  
A few lay on the ground upon their backs;  
and some were seated cuddled up together,  
while others moved about continually.  
Most numerous were those that moved around,  
and least so those that under torment lay,  
but all the freer had their tongues to wail.  
Down on the whole great waste of sand there rained  
with gentle fall dilated flakes of fire,  
like flakes of snow that fall on windless Alps.  
As were the flames which Alexander saw  
in India's torrid regions, as they fell  
upon his hosts, unbroken to the ground;  
— and this he met, by ordering his troops  
to trample on the soil, because the flames,  
when single, were more easily put out —  
even such descended here the eternal heat,  
whereby the sand was set on fire, as tinder  
is kindled under steel, to double pain.  
And ever without resting was the dance

of wretched hands, that kept, now here, now there,  
slapping away each latest burning flake.  
“Thou, Teacher,” I began, “that conquerest all,  
except the stubborn devils who came out  
against us at the entrance of the gate,  
who is that great one who seems not to mind  
the fire, but lies there scornful and awry,  
so that the rain seems not to ripen him?”  
And that same one, who had observed that I  
concerning him was questioning my Leader,  
cried: “As I was alive, such am I dead!  
If Jove should tire that smith of his, from whom,  
in wrath, he took the pointed thunderbolt,  
wherewith I smitten was that final day;  
or should he tire the others, each in turn,  
in Mongibello’s smithy black with smoke,  
by calling out: ‘Help, help, good Vulcan, help!’  
even as he did on Phlegra’s battle-field;  
and should he shoot at me with all his might,  
no glad revenge would he obtain thereby!”  
Thereat my Leader spoke with so much force,  
that I had never heard him use the like:  
“In that thine arrogance, O Capaneus,  
is not extinguished, art thou all the more  
chastised; no torment, saving thine own rage,  
were for thy furious pride a fitting pain.”  
Then with a gentler mien he turned to me,  
and said: “One of the seven kings was he,  
who Thebes besieged; he held, and seems to hold  
God in disdain, and little seems to prize Him;  
but, as I told him, his own spitefulness  
is fit enough adornment for his breast.  
Now follow me, and see that thou meanwhile  
set not thy feet upon the burning sand,  
but to the thicket keep them ever close.”  
In silence we went on, and came to where,  
out of the wood a little stream spirts forth,  
whose ruddy color makes me shudder still.  
As from the Bulicàmë springs a brook,  
which afterward the sinful women share,  
even so went that one down across the sand.  
Its bottom and both sides had turned to stone,  
as also had the embankments on each side;  
I hence perceived the crossing-place was there.  
“Of all the other things which I have shown thee  
since first we entered through the outer gate,  
whose threshold unto no one is denied,  
nothing has ever by thine eyes been seen

as notable as is this present brook,  
which deadens o'er itself all little flames."  
These were my Leader's words; I therefore begged  
that he would freely grant to me the food,  
desire of which he had so freely given.  
"Amid the sea there lies a wasted land,"  
he told me thereupon, "whose name is Crete,  
under whose king the world of old was pure.  
There is a mountain there, which, happy once  
with waters and green leaves, was Ida called;  
't is now abandoned like a thing outworn.  
Whilom as trusty cradle for her son  
Rhea selected it, and when he wept,  
to hide him better, caused a shouting there.  
Within that mountain stands a great Old Man,  
who holds his shoulders toward Damiata turned,  
and who, as at his mirror, looks at Rome.  
His head is formed of finest gold, his arms  
and breast are of the purest silver, then,  
as far as to his loins, he 's made of brass;  
all chosen iron is he down from there,  
save that baked clay his right foot is, and straighter  
he stands on that, than on the other foot.  
Each of these parts, except the golden one,  
is broken by a cleft, whence trickle tears,  
which, when collected, perforate that cave.  
From rock to rock they course into this vale;  
then Acheron with Styx and Phlegethon  
they form, and through this narrow duct descend  
as far as where one goes no further down;  
they form Cocytus there; and what that pool  
is like, thou 'lt see; hence here it is not told.  
And I to him: "If thus this present stream  
hs from our world descended, why alone  
on this ring's edge hath it appeared to us?"  
And he: "Thou knowest that the place is round,  
and though a long way thou hast gone already,  
e'er to the left descending toward the bottom,  
through the whole circle thou hast not yet gone;  
wherefore, if aught that 's new appear to us,  
it should not bring amazement to thy face."  
And I again: "But where are Phlegethon  
and Lethe, Teacher? For, of this one silent,  
thou say'st the other of this rain is made."  
And he replied: "Thou certainly dost please me  
in all thy questions, but the red stream's boiling  
ought surely to have answered one of them.  
Lethe thou 'lt see, but there, outside this cave,

whither souls go to wash themselves, when once  
their sin, repented of, has been removed.”

And then he said: “It now is time for us  
to leave the wood; see that thou follow me;  
the banks, which are not burned, afford a path;  
and up above them every flame is quenched.”

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## INFERNO XV

*The Seventh Circle. The Third Ring*

*Violence against Nature. Sodomites*

One of the hard embankments bears us now,  
and overhead the brook's mist shades them so,  
that from the fire it saves the stream and banks.  
Such bulwarks as, to keep the sea away,  
the Flemings make between Witsand and Bruges,  
through fearing lest the high-tide break upon them;  
and as the Paduans make along the Brenta,  
their villages and strongholds to defend,  
ere Chiarentana feel the summer heat;  
in such a way were those embankments made,  
although the master did not make them there  
so high or thick, who'er he may have been.  
So far we were already from the wood,  
that I could not have seen just where it was,  
even had I turned around to look behind,  
when we a band of spirits met, who came  
along the bank, each one of whom looked hard  
at us, as in the evening one is wont  
to look at people, when the moon is new;  
and toward us they were knitting close their brows,  
as an old tailor at his needle's eye.  
When by that gathering I had thus been eyed,  
one of them, who had recognized me, seizing  
my garment's hem, exclaimed: "How wonderful!"  
And I, when toward me he had stretched his arm,  
fastened upon his roasted face mine eyes,  
so that, though blistered, it did not prevent  
mine intellect from recognizing him;  
and downward having bent my face toward his,  
I answered him: "Are you here, Ser Brunetto?"  
And that one: "O my son, be not displeased  
should Brunetto Latini a little way  
turn back with thee, and let the troop go on."  
"I beg you to with all my power;" said I,  
"and if you 'd have me sit with you, I will,  
if it please that one; for with him I go."  
"O son," he said, "whoever of this herd  
stands still at all, lies prone a hundred years,  
nor shields himself when smitten by the fire.  
Therefore go on; I 'll follow at thy skirts,

and then I 'll join again my company,  
which goes bewailing its eternal loss.”  
I dared not from the path descend, to go  
upon his level there; but held my head  
bowed down, like one who walks in reverence.  
And he began: “What fortune or what fate  
before thy last day leadeth thee down here,  
and who is he that showeth thee the way?”  
I answered him: “When in the life serene  
up yonder, in a vale I lost my way,  
before my age had rounded out its noon.  
Thereon I turned my back but yestermorn;  
this one, as I returned to it, appeared  
to me, and o'er this path now leads me home.”  
And he to me: “If thine own star thou follow,  
thou canst not fail to reach a glorious port,  
if in the lovely life I judged aright;  
and had I not so prematurely died,  
I, seeing Heaven so well disposed toward thee,  
had given thee comfort in thy work. But that  
ungrateful, wicked people, which of old  
came down from Fièsolè, and which e'en now  
smacks of the mountain and of hard grey stone,  
for thy well-doing shall become thy foe;  
and rightly, for among the acid sorbs  
it is not fitting that sweet figs bear fruit.  
An old fame in the world proclaims them blind,  
a greedy, envious, overweening folk;  
see to it that thou cleanse thee from their ways!  
Thy fortune hath in store for thee such honor,  
that either party shall be hungry for thee;  
but distant from the goat shall be the grass.  
Let, then, the beasts of Fièsolè make litter  
with their own selves, nor let them touch the plant,  
if on their dungheap any burgeon still,  
in which the sacred seed may live again  
of those old Romans who remained therein,  
when of such wickedness the nest was made!”  
“If perfectly fulfilled had been my prayer,”  
I then replied to him, “you had not yet  
been banished from the natural life of man;  
for in my mind is fixed, and stirs e'en now  
my heart, that dear and kind paternal face  
you showed, when in the world from time to time  
you taught me how man makes himself eternal;  
and how much gratitude I feel for this,  
must, while I live, be in my words perceived.  
What of my course you tell, I write, and keep,

with other texts, for a Lady to explain,  
who can, if ever I attain to her.  
I only wish that this be clear to you,  
that I, if but my conscience chide me not,  
am ready for whatever Fortune wills.  
Not new unto mine ears is such reward;  
hence, as she lists, let Fortune turn her wheel,  
and let the country clown his mattock ply!”  
Thereat my Teacher over his right cheek  
turned back, and looked at me; and then he said:  
“He listens well, who giveth heed to this.”  
Nor speaking less do I, on this account,  
go on with Ser Brunetto, asking who  
his fellows were, of greatest note and rank.  
And he to me: ’T is well to know of some;  
our silence on the rest will merit praise,  
for short the time were for so long a talk.  
Know then, in brief, that clerics were they all,  
and mighty men of letters of great fame,  
soiled by the self same sin when in the world.  
And with that sad crowd yonder Priscian goes,  
and Francis of Accorso, too; and him,  
if thou hadst had a longing for such scurf,  
thou couldst have seen there, whom the servants’ Servant  
changed from the Arno to the Bacchigliònë,  
where he behind him left his ill-strained nerves.  
I ’d speak of more; but I can come and talk  
no further, for a new dust-cloud I see  
rising o’er yonder from the sandy plain.  
People, with whom I must not be, are coming;  
let my *Tesoro*, in which I ’m still alive,  
be recommended thee; I ask no more.”  
Then round he turned, and seemed to be of those  
who at Verona run across the meadow  
to win the green cloth; and of these he seemed  
not he who loses, but the one who wins.

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## INFERNO XVI

*The Seventh Circle. The Third Ring*

*Violence against Nature. Sodomites*

I now was where the booming of the water,  
which fell into the following round, was heard  
like the dull, buzzing sound which bee-hives make;  
when three shades separated from a group,  
which 'neath the rain's tormenting punishment  
was passing by, and ran along together.  
Toward us they came, and each of them cried out:  
"Stop, thou, that by thy garb dost seem to us  
a citizen of our corrupted town!"  
Alas, what wounds I saw upon their limbs,  
both old and recent, by the flames burnt in!  
It pains me still but to remember them.  
My Leader, giving heed to these their cries,  
turned his face round toward me, and said: "Now wait!  
To those men yonder courtesy is due;  
and, were not for the fire, which, arrow-like,  
the nature of the place shoots forth, I 'd say  
that haste were more becoming thee than them."  
And they, when we had stopped, began again  
their old refrain; and after they had reached us,  
all three of them made of themselves a wheel.  
As champions oiled and nude are wont to do,  
when looking for an advantageous grip,  
before they come to giving blows and wounds;  
thus, as he wheeled, each turned his face toward me,  
so that his feet continuous journey made  
in opposite direction to his neck.  
And one began: "Even if the wretched nature  
of this soft place, and our burned, shrivelled faces  
bring us and our requests into contempt,  
still let our reputation bend thy mind  
to tell us who thou art, that dost so safely  
rub on the soil of Hell thy living feet.  
He, in whose footprints thou dost see me tread,  
was, though he go both nude and hairless now,  
of higher rank than thou believest him.  
He was the grandson of the good Gualdrada;  
his name was Guido Guerra, and when alive,  
his wisdom and his sword accomplished much.  
The other, who behind me treads the sand,

Tegghiaio Aldobrandi is, whose voice  
should have been welcomed in the world above.  
And I, who with them am tormented here,  
Iacopo Rusticucci was; and surely  
my shrewish wife than aught else hurts me more.”  
If I had been protected from the fire,  
I would have leapt into their midst below,  
and I believe my Leader had allowed it.  
But since I should have burned and baked myself,  
fear was victorious over my good will,  
which made me eager to embrace them there.  
I then began: “Your state impressed within me  
not scorn, but so much pain, that only late  
will all of it entirely disappear,  
as soon as this my Lord said words to me,  
because of which I thought within myself  
that there were people coming such as you.  
Of your own town am I, and evermore  
have I your doings and your honored names  
related, and heard mentioned, with regard.  
I leave the gall, and for the sweet fruit go,  
which my veracious Leader promised me;  
but to the center must I first descend.”  
“So may thy spirit lead thy members long,”  
the former thereupon replied to me,  
“and, after thou art gone, thy fame be bright,  
tell me if courtesy and worth abide  
within our town, as they were wont to do,  
or whether they have wholly gone from it;  
for Guglielmo Borsierè, who but newly  
has been in pain with us, and with our mates  
goes yonder, grieves us greatly with his words.”  
“The people newly come, and sudden gains,  
have bred in thee such pride and such excess,  
that, Florence, thou art even now in pain!”  
Thus with uplifted face I cried; whereat  
the three, who this as answer understood,  
looked at each other, as one looks at truth.  
“If satisfying others other times  
cost thee so little, happy thou, that thus  
at thy sweet will dost speak!” they all replied.  
“Hence, — so mayst thou, from these dark places saved,  
return to see the lovely stars again, —  
when saying ‘I was there’ shall do thee good,  
see that thou tell the people about us.”  
They then broke up their wheel, and in their flight  
it seemed as if their nimble legs were wings.  
*Amen* could not have been as quickly said,

as they then disappeared; my Teacher, therefore,  
thought it advisable for us to leave.  
I followed him, and not far had we gone,  
before the water's noise was so near by,  
that, had we spoken, we had not been heard.  
And as the stream, which is the first that eastward  
from Monte Veso takes a separate course  
upon the left slope of the Apennines,  
and which above is Acquacheta called,  
before it flows into its lowly bed,  
and at Forli is of that name deprived,  
booms loud, because of falling o'er a cliff  
above San Benedetto of the Alp,  
where for a thousand there should refuge be;  
even thus, as o'er a precipice it fell,  
we found that colored water roaring so,  
that very soon it would have hurt our ears.  
I had a cord around about me girt,  
wherewith I once had thought that I could capture  
the Leopard with the brightly colored hide.  
When from me I had wholly loosened it,  
even as my Leader had commanded me,  
I coiled it up and held it out to him.  
Thereat upon his right he turned around,  
and hurled it to some distance from the edge  
down into that profound and dark abyss.  
"Surely some strange new thing must needs reply"  
said I within myself, "to this strange signal,  
which with his eye my Teacher follows thus."  
Ah, with what caution men should deal with those,  
who see not only what is done by others,  
but with their wisdom see into their thoughts!  
He said to me: "What I am waiting for,  
and what thy thought now dreams, will soon come up;  
soon to thy vision will it be revealed."  
E'er to a truth that hath a falsehood's face  
ought one to close his lips as best he can,  
for, though one faultless be, it brings him shame;  
but I can not suppress it here; hence, Reader,  
even by the verses of this Comedy,  
so may they not be void of lasting favor,  
I swear to thee, that through that coarse, dark air  
I saw a shape, which would have chilled with wonder  
however brave a heart, come swimming up,  
as he returns, who, going down at times  
to clear an anchor clinging to a reef,  
or aught else lying hidden in the sea,  
above extends, and draweth in below.

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## INFERNO XVII

*The Seventh Circle. The Third Ring*

*Violence against Art. Usurers*

“Behold the wild beast with the pointed tail,  
which, crossing mountains, breaks through walls and armor;  
behold who sickens all the world with stench!”  
My Leader thus began to speak to me,  
and signalled to it to approach the edge,  
near where the marble we had traversed ended.  
And that foul image of deceit came on,  
and landed on the bank its head and chest;  
but o’er the edge it drew not up its tail.  
Its face was as the face of a just man,  
so pleasing outwardly was its complexion;  
the body of a serpent all the rest.  
Two paws it had, all hairy to the arm-pits;  
its back and breast, as well as both its sides,  
were painted o’er with snares and wheel-like shields.  
Ne’er with more colors in its woof and warp  
did Turks or Tartars manufacture cloth,  
nor by Arachne were such webs designed.  
As flat-boats sometimes lie upon the shore,  
in water partly, partly on the land;  
and as among the greedy Germans yonder,  
the beaver seats himself to wage his war;  
so lay that worst of beasts upon the edge  
which closes in the sandy plain with stone.  
All of its tail was quivering in the void,  
and twisting upward its envenomed fork,  
which like a scorpion’s weapon armed its tip.  
“Our path must turn aside a little now,”  
my Leader said to me, “until we reach  
that wicked beast reclining over there.”  
Around our right breast, therefore, we went down,  
and took ten paces on the very edge,  
thus surely to avoid both sand and fire;  
and after we had come to it, I saw,  
upon the sand a little further on,  
some people sitting near the precipice.  
My Teacher then: “That thou mayst take with thee  
a full experience of this ring, go on,  
and see the nature of the life they lead.  
There be thy conversation brief; meanwhile,

till thou return, I 'll talk with this wild beast,  
that its strong shoulders may be yielded us.”  
Thus further on, along the outer edge  
of that seventh circle, all alone I went,  
to where the melancholy people sat.  
Out of their eyes their woe was bursting forth;  
first here, then there, they helped them with their hands,  
now from the flames, now from the heated soil.  
Not otherwise do dogs in summer-time,  
now with their paws, and with their muzzles now,  
whene'er by flees, or flies, or gadflies bitten.  
When on the face of some I set mine eyes,  
on whom the woeful fire is falling there,  
I knew not one of them; but I perceived  
that from the neck of each there hung a pouch,  
which had a certain color and design,  
wherewith their eyes appeared to feed themselves.  
And as I, looking, came into their midst,  
azure upon a yellow pouch I saw,  
which had the form and semblance of a lion.  
Then, as my gaze continued on its course,  
another I beheld, as red as blood,  
exhibiting a goose more white than butter.  
And one of them, who had his small white pouch  
emblazoned with an azure pregnant sow,  
said to me: “What dost thou in this our ditch?  
Now go thy way; and since thou livest still,  
know that my fellow townsman, Vitaliano,  
will sit beside me here upon my left.  
I, with these Florentines, a Paduan am,  
and very frequently they stun my ears  
by shouting: “Let the sovereign knight arrive,  
who 'll bring with him the pocket with three beaks!””  
Herewith his mouth he twisted, sticking out  
his tongue, as doth an ox that licks its nose.  
And I, afraid lest any longer stay  
might anger him who warned me to be brief,  
turned from those weary spirits back again.  
I found my Leader, who had climbed already  
upon the back of that fierce animal,  
and said to me: “Now be thou strong and bold!  
By stairs like these shall we descend hereafter;  
climb thou in front, for midst I wish to be,  
so that the tail may do no injury.”  
Like one with quartan-fever's chill so near,  
that pale already are his finger nails,  
and that, but looking at the shade, he shudders;  
such at the words he uttered I became;

but that shame made its threats to me, which renders  
a servant strong when in a good lord's presence.  
As on those horrid shoulders I sat down,  
I wished to tell him: "See that thou embrace me!"  
my voice, however, came not as I thought.  
But he, who succoured me at other times  
and other straits, as soon as I was up,  
encircled and sustained me with his arms;  
and then he said: "Now, Geryon, move thou on!  
Wide be thy wheels, and gradual thy descent;  
bethink thee of the unwonted load thou hast."  
As from its mooring place a little boat  
backs slowly out, even so did he withdraw;  
and when he wholly felt himself in play,  
to where his breast had been, he turned his tail,  
and moved the latter, stretched out like an eel,  
while with his paws he gathered in the air.  
I do not think that there was greater fear  
when Phaëthon let go his horses' reins,  
whereby, as still appears, the sky was burned;  
nor yet when wretched Icarus perceived  
his back unfeathering through the melting wax,  
while, calling him, his father cried: "Thou hold'st  
an evil course!" than mine was, when I saw  
that I was in the air on every side,  
and gone the sight of all things save the beast.  
The latter, swimming, slowly wends his way,  
wheels and descends, but I perceive it not,  
save by the wind below and in my face.  
The waterfall I now heard on the right,  
making a horrid roar beneath us; hence,  
I outward thrust my head with eyes turned down.  
More fearful of the abyss I then became,  
for fires I now beheld, and wailings heard;  
hence, trembling, I clung closer with my thighs.  
And then, for I perceived it not before,  
by the great torments which on divers sides  
drew near, I saw our wheeling and descent.  
Even as a falcon long upon the wing,  
which, without seeing lure or game-bird, makes  
the falconer say: "Alas, thou comest down!"  
descendeth weary, through a hundred rings,  
whence he had swiftly started, and alights  
far from his lord in angry sullenness;  
so likewise Geryon set us down below,  
close to the bottom of the rough-hewn rock;  
and, of our persons rid, as fast as flies  
an arrow from a bowstring, sped away.

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## INFERNO XVIII

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud. The First Trench. Pandars and Seducers. The Second Trench. Flatterers and Prostitutes*

A place there is in Hell, called Malebolgë,  
wholly of stone, and of an iron hue,  
as is the round wall which encircles it.  
Right in the midst of its malicious field  
yawneth a well exceeding wide and deep,  
of whose construction, in its place, I 'll speak.  
Round, therefore, is the girdle which remains  
between the well and that hard, high wall's base,  
and ten great trenches subdivide its bed.  
As is the appearance which, where many moats  
encircle castles for the walls' protection,  
the section where they are presents;  
such was the one those trenches furnished here;  
and just as in such fortresses small bridges  
stretch from their thresholds to the outmost bank;  
so crags ran from the bottom of the cliff  
across the banks and trenches to the well,  
which, gathering them together, cuts them off.  
In this place, then, we found ourselves, when dropped  
from Geryon's back; the Poet thereupon  
held to the left, and I behind him moved.  
Upon the right side I beheld new cause  
for sympathy, new pains, and scourgers new,  
wherewith the first trench was completely filled.  
Down at its bottom naked were the sinners;  
this side the middle facing us they came,  
beyond it with us, but with quicker steps;  
means such as those which at the Jubilee  
the Romans took, because of its great throng,  
to have the people pass across the bridge,  
who toward the Castle all on one side face,  
and toward Saint Peter's go their way; while all  
move toward the mountain on the other edge.  
This side and that, upon the dark, stone floor,  
horned demons with great scourges I beheld,  
who from behind were fiercely whipping them.  
Ah, how they caused them to lift them up their heels,  
when by the first blows smitten! Certainly  
none waited for the second, or the third.  
While I was going on, mine eyes were met  
by one of them; and instantly I said:

“I fast not from a previous sight of him.”  
To make him out I therefore stayed my feet;  
and, having stopped with me, my gentle Leader  
assented to my going back a little.  
That scourged one thought that he could hide himself  
by looking down, but little it availed him;  
for “Thou, that castest down thine eyes,” said I,  
unless the features which thou hast are false,  
Venèdico Caccianimico art;  
but what brings thee into such pungent sauces?”  
And he to me: “Unwillingly I tell it;  
but forced I am by thy transparent speech,  
which makes me recollect the olden world.  
I was the one who led Ghisolabella  
to do according to the Marquis’ will,  
however the disgusting tale be told.  
Nor am I here the only Bolognese  
that weeps; nay, this place is so full of us,  
that not so many tongues are taught today  
between Savena and Reno to say *sipa*;  
and if thereof thou wouldst have pledge or proof,  
recall to mind our avaricious breasts.”  
As thus he spoke, a demon with his lash  
smote him, and said to him: “Pandar, begone!  
There are no women here to sell for coin.”  
I then rejoined my Escort; whereupon,  
when we had taken some few steps, we came  
to where a crag projected from the bank.  
This we ascended with the greatest ease,  
and turning to the right along its ridge,  
we left those everlasting circling walls.  
When we were where it hollows out below,  
to let the scourged pass through, my Leader said:  
“Now stay thy steps, and on thee let the sight  
of all these other ill-born spirits strike,  
whose faces thou hast not perceived as yet,  
because they ’ve gone with us in our direction.”  
As from the ancient bridge we watched the troop,  
which on the other side was toward us coming,  
and which the scourge was likewise driving on,  
without my asking, my good Teacher said:  
“Look at that great man there, who, as he comes,  
for all his pain, seems not to shed a tear.  
How royal an appearance he still keeps!  
Jason is he, who, by his doughtiness  
and wit, deprived the Colchians of their ram.  
He passed the isle of Lemmos on his way,  
after its pitiless and daring women

had given up to death their every male.  
With tokens of his love and flattering words  
he there deceived the maid, Hypsipylë,  
who previously had all the rest deceived.  
He left her there with child, and all alone;  
him to this punishment that fault condemns;  
and for Medea, too, is vengeance wrought.  
With him go those that in this way deceive;  
be this enough to know of this first ditch,  
and of those, too, that in its fangs it holds.”  
Already were we where the narrow path  
forms with the second bank a cross, and makes  
therewith abutments for another arch.  
We thence heard people in the following trench  
who whined and groaned, and with their muzzles puffed,  
while smiting their own bodies with their palms.  
The banks were crusted over with a mould  
by vapor from below, which, sticking there,  
offensive to both eyes and nose became.  
So deep the bottom, that there is no means  
of looking into it, unless one climb  
the arch’s summit, where the crag is highest.  
Thither we came, and from it in the ditch  
people I saw immersed in excrement,  
which seemed from human privies to have come.  
While peering with mine eyes down there, I saw  
a head so foul with filth, that whether clerk’s  
or layman’s head it were, was not apparent.  
Scolding, he said: “Why greedier art thou  
to look at me, than at the other foul ones?”  
And I: “Because, if I remember well,  
I’ve seen thee with dry hair ere now, for thou  
Alëssio Interminèi of Lucca art;  
that’s why I eye thee more than all the rest.”  
And he then, as he beat upon his pate:  
“Those flatteries immersed me here below,  
wherewith my tongue was never surfeited.”  
Then, after this, my Leader said to me:  
“See that thou urge thy glance a little further,  
that with thine eyes thou quite attain the face  
of that disgusting and dishevelled wench,  
who yonder claws herself with filthy nails,  
and crouches now, and now is on her feet.  
That Thaïs is, the prostitute, who answered  
her paramour, when he had said ‘Have I  
great thanks from thee?’: ‘Nay, marvelously great!’  
Herewith, then, let our sight be satisfied.”

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## INFERNO XIX

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Third Trench. Simoniacs*

O Simon Magus, O his wretched followers,  
since ye the things of God, which ought to be  
the brides of righteousness, rapaciously  
adulterate for silver and for gold;  
it now behooves the trumpet sound for you,  
for in the third great trench your station is!  
We now had climbed the next tomb-spanning bridge,  
and were on that part of the crag, which hangs  
directly o'er the middle of the trench.  
Wisdom Supreme, how great the art thou showest  
in Heaven, on earth, and in the evil world!  
How justly, too, thy virtue makes awards!  
I saw that on its sloping sides and bottom  
the livid-colored stone was full of holes,  
all of one width, while each of them was round.  
Nor less nor more wide did they seem to me,  
than those which in my beautiful Saint John's  
are made as places for baptizing priests;  
and one of which, not many years ago,  
I broke, to save one who was choking in it;  
be this a witness undeceiving all!  
Out of the mouth of each a sinner's feet  
protruded, and, as far as to the calf,  
his legs; the rest of him remained within.  
The soles of all were, both of them, on fire;  
because of which their joints so strongly twitched,  
they would have snapped green twigs and cords of grass.  
And as a flame on oily things is wont  
to move along the outer surface only;  
so likewise was it there from heels to toes.  
"Who, Teacher, is he yonder, who is tortured  
by twitching more than all the rest, his mates,"  
said I, "and whom a redder flame is sucking?"  
And he to me: "If thou wouldst have me bear thee  
down yonder bank which lowest lies, from him  
thou 't know both of himself and of his sins."  
And I: "What pleases thee I like; my lord  
thou art, and that I part not from thy will  
thou knowst, as also what is left unsaid."  
We then upon the fourth embankment came,

and, turning round, descended on our left  
into that narrow bottom pierced with holes;  
nor yet did my good Teacher set me down  
from off his back, but brought me to the hole  
of him who grieved so sorely with his shank.  
“Whoe’er thou art, sad soul, that holdest down  
thine upper portion, planted like a stake,”  
I then began, “say something, if thou canst.”  
I there was like a friar that confesses  
a base assassin, who, on being planted,  
calls him again, that death may be delayed.  
And he cried out: “Dost thou stand there already,  
dost thou stand there already, Boniface?  
By several years the writing lied to me.  
Art thou so quickly sated with the wealth,  
for which thou didst not fear to seize by fraud,  
and outrage next, the Lady beautiful?”  
Even such did I become, as those are, who,  
not understanding what is answered them,  
deem themselves mocked, and think of no reply.  
Then Virgil said: “Tell him immediately:  
‘I ’m not the one, I ’m not the one thou thinkest!’”  
And I replied to him as I was bidden.  
Whereat the spirit writhed with both his feet;  
then, sighing, and with weeping voice, he said:  
“What is it, then, that thou dost ask of me?  
If to know who I am concern thee so,  
that for it thou hast crossed the bank; know, then,  
that I was with the mighty Mantle clothed;  
and verily the she-Bear’s son was I,  
so eager to advance the cubs, that wealth  
I pocketed up there, and here myself.  
The others, who in working simony  
preceded me, are gathered ’neath my head,  
flattened between the fissures of the rock.  
I, in like manner, shall down yonder fall,  
when he arrives, whom I believed thou wast,  
when I of thee the sudden question asked.  
But now already longer is the time,  
that I, thus up-side down, have cooked my feet,  
than he will planted stay with ruddy soles;  
for after him shall come from westward lands  
a lawless shepherd of still uglier deed,  
and fit to cover him and me. Renewed  
shall Jason be, of whom in Maccabees  
one reads; and as to that one his king yielded,  
even so who governs France shall yield to this.”  
I know not whether I was here too bold,

in that I answered him in this strain only:  
“Now tell me, pray, how great the treasure was,  
our Lord demanded of Saint Peter first,  
before He placed the Keys in his control?  
Surely he asked for naught but ‘Follow me.’  
Nor yet did Peter or the rest take gold  
or silver from Matthias, when by lot  
he took the place the guilty soul had lost.  
Therefore keep still, for thou art rightly punished;  
and take good care of that ill-gotten wealth,  
which caused thee to be valiant against Charles.  
And were it not for this, that I am still  
forbidden by reverence for the Keys supreme  
thou hadst in keeping in the joyful life,  
words of still greater weight would I employ;  
because your greed, by trampling on the good  
and raising the depraved, afflicts the world.  
The Evangelist was thinking of your shepherds,  
when she, who on the waters hath her seat,  
was seen by him to fornicate with kings;  
the one who with the seven heads was born,  
and from the ten horns her support received,  
while virtue still was pleasing to her spouse.  
Ye’ ve made yourselves a god of gold and silver;  
and from idolaters how differ ye,  
save that they worship one, and ye a hundred?  
Ah, Constantine, of how much ill was mother,  
not thy conversion, but the dower-gift  
the earliest wealthy Father took from thee!”  
While I was singing him such notes as these,  
he, whether it were wrath or conscience bit him,  
was fiercely kicking out with both his feet.  
I verily believe it pleased my Leader,  
he heeded with so glad a look throughout  
the utterance of those true, clear words of mine.  
He therefore took me up with both his arms,  
and when he had me wholly on his breast,  
he climbed again the path down which he came;  
nor tired of holding me in his embrace,  
but bore me to the summit of the arch,  
which crosses from the fourth bank to the fifth.  
When there, he gently set his burden down,  
gently, because that crag was rough and steep,  
and would be difficult for goats to cross;  
from thence another trench was shown to me.

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## INFERNO XX

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Fourth Trench. Diviners and Soothsayers*

About strange punishments must I make verses,  
and furnish matter for the twentieth song  
of this first lay, which treats of those submerged.  
Already had I wholly given myself  
to looking down at its uncovered bottom,  
which with the tears of agony was bathed;  
when people in the great round trench I saw  
come weeping silently, and at the pace,  
at which in this world litanies advance.  
Then, as my sight fell on them lower down,  
wondrously twisted each of them appeared  
between the chin and where the chest begins;  
for toward his loins his face was turned around,  
and backward it behooved him to advance,  
because of foresight they had been deprived.  
By palsy some, perhaps, may thus have been  
entirely turned around, but I 've not seen it,  
nor do I think there ever was one such.  
So may God let thee, Reader, gather fruit  
from this thy reading, think now for thyself  
how I could ever keep my own face dry,  
when at close range I saw our human image  
so twisted, that the weeping of the eyes  
along the fissure bathed the back. Indeed,  
as on a rock of that hard crag I leaned,  
I wept so, that my Escort said to me:  
“Art thou still foolish as the others are?  
Here liveth piety when wholly dead  
is pity. Who, then, guiltier is than he  
who lets his feelings judge Divine Decrees?  
Lift, lift thy head, and see the man for whom,  
before the Trojans' eyes, the earth was opened!  
whence all cried: ‘Whither art thou rushing now,  
Amphiaræus? Why quittest thou the war?’  
and he ceased not from plunging headlong down  
to Minos, who lays hold on every one.  
See how he makes a bosom of his shoulders;  
because he wished to see too far ahead,  
he looks behind, and backward goes his way.  
Behold Tiresias there, who changed his looks,

when female he became, from being male,  
his members being each and all transformed;  
and afterward he needs must strike again  
the two entwining serpents with his rod,  
ere he the plumage of a male regained.  
He who to that one's belly turns his back,  
is Aruns, who in Luni's mountain quarries,  
where toils the Carrarese who dwells below,  
among white marbles had as dwelling-place  
a cave, from which his view was not cut off,  
when at the stars he gazed, or at the sea.  
And she who, yonder, with dishevelled locks  
covers the breasts which thou dost not behold,  
and has on that side all her hairy skin,  
was Manto, who first searched through many lands,  
then settled in the place where I was born;  
thereof I 'd have thee hear me speak a little.  
After her father had from life departed,  
and Bacchus' city had become enslaved,  
she wandered long about the world. Up there  
in lovely Italy, beneath the Alps  
which o'er the Tyrol lock out Germany,  
there lies a lake which is Benàco called.  
From o'er a thousand springs, I trow, 'tween Garda  
and Val Camònica, the Pennine Alp  
is bathed by waters which therein find rest.  
A midway place there is, where Trento's shepherd,  
and he of Brescia, and the Veronese,  
might each his blessing give, if there he went.  
Peschiera next, a fair and mighty fortress,  
and fit to face both Bergamasks and Brescians,  
sits where the shore lies lowest round about.  
There all that in Benàco's spacious lap  
cannot be held, flows out of it perforce,  
and down through verdant pastures forms a stream.  
When once its water gathers head to run,  
no more Benàco, Mincio is its name,  
till at Govèrnolo it joins the Po.  
Not long its course, before it finds low ground,  
o'er which it spreads, and, making it a marsh,  
is wont at times to be unsound in summer.  
Passing that way, the cruel virgin saw  
a region in the middle of the fen,  
untilled and naked of inhabitants.  
There, to escape all human fellowship,  
and work her arts, she settled with her slaves,  
and lived, and there she left her empty body.  
Thereafter men, who all around were scattered,

collected in that place, which was a strong one,  
because it had a fen on every side.  
O'er those dead bones of hers they built a town;  
then, after her, who first picked out the site,  
they called it Mantua, with no other lot.  
The people in it were more numerous once,  
before the foolishness of Casalodi  
had been deceived by Pinamonte's guile.  
I charge thee, then, if e'er thou hear it said  
my town had its beginning otherwise,  
permit no falsehood to defraud the truth."  
"Thy statements, Teacher, are so sure to me,"  
said I, "and take such hold upon my faith,  
that those of others would be burnt-out coals.  
But tell me if among these passing people  
thou seest any one deserving note;  
for my mind now is wholly bent on that."  
He told me then: "The one who from his cheeks  
extends his beard across his swarthy shoulders,  
an augur was, when Greece lacked males so much,  
that for her cradles only few were left;  
't was he who set, with Chalcas' aid, at Aulis  
the time to cut the fleet's first rope. His name  
Eurypylus, and in a certain place  
he thus is called by my high Tragedy;  
this thou know'st well, who knowest all of it.  
That other one, so thin about his flanks,  
was Michael Scot, who surely understood  
the artful game of magical deceits.  
Guido Bonatti see; and see Asdente,  
who wishes now that he had given heed  
to cord and leather, but too late repents.  
See the sad women who abandoned needles,  
spindles and shuttles, to become diviners;  
these wrought their spells with herbs and images.  
But now come on, for Cain is with his thorns  
holding the bounds of both the hemispheres,  
and plays upon the waves below Seville,  
and round already was the moon last night;  
thou surely must recall it, since at times,  
it harmed thee not, when in the dark wood's depths."  
Thus he to me, as, meanwhile, on we went.

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## INFERNO XXI

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Fifth Trench. Corrupt Politicians*

Speaking of other things my Comedy  
cares not to sing, we thus from bridge to bridge  
moved on, and, when upon the summit, stopped,  
in order to behold the next ravine  
of Malebòlgë, and the next vain cries;  
and I beheld it wonderfully dark.  
And just such sticky pitch as that which boils  
in the Venetians' Arsenal in winter,  
for calking up again the unsound ships,  
which cannot then be sailed; — instead of which,  
as one a new one builds, one plugs the ribs  
of that which many voyages has made;  
one hammers at the stern, and at the prow another;  
one fashions oars, another cordage twists,  
while still another mends a jib or mainsail; —  
such was the coarse, dense pitch, which, not by fire,  
but by an art divine, boiled there below,  
and limed the bank on every side. I saw  
the pitch, but nothing in it, save the bubbles  
the boiling raised, and that the whole of it  
kept swelling up, and settling back compressed.  
While I was gazing fixedly down yonder,  
my Leader cried to me: "Beware, beware!"  
and drew me to himself from where I was.  
I then turned round, as one who longs to see  
the thing which it behooves him to escape,  
and who, when by a sudden fear unmanned,  
although he sees, delays not his departure;  
and I perceived behind us a black devil  
come running up along the rocky crag.  
Ah, how ferocious in his looks he was,  
and in his actions how severe he seemed,  
with wings outspread, and light upon his feet!  
His shoulder, which was sharp and high, was loaded  
with both a sinner's haunches, whom he held  
clutched tightly by the sinews of his feet.  
"O Malebranche," from our bridge he cried,  
"here 's one of Santa Zita's Ancients! Put him  
beneath, for I 'm for more of them returning  
to that town which I have well stocked therewith;

there, save Bonturo, every one 's a grafter;  
a 'No' for money there becomes a 'Yes.'"  
He hurled him down, and o'er the rugged crag  
returned; and never was a mastif loosed  
with so much hurry to pursue a thief.  
The other sank, and then rose doubled up;  
those fiends, though, who were sheltered by the bridge,  
cried: "Here the Holy Face availeth not!  
One here swims otherwise than in the Serchio!  
If, therefore, thou dost not desire our hooks,  
protrude not from the surface of the pitch."  
They pricked him then with o'er a hundred prongs,  
and said: "Here under cover must thou dance,  
that, if thou canst, thou mayst thiefe secretly."  
Not otherwise do cooks have scullions plunge  
the meat with hooks into the cauldron's midst,  
to hinder it from floating on its surface.  
Thereat my kindly Teacher said to me:  
"That here thy presence be not known, crouch down  
behind a rock, which may avail to screen thee;  
and be not thou afraid, for any harm  
that may be done to me, who know these things,  
for I in frays like this have been before."  
He then passed on beyond the bridge's head,  
and when the sixth embankment had been reached,  
he had to show assurance in his face.  
With just the storm and fury wherewith dogs  
break out and rush upon a poor old man,  
who stops and begs at once from where he is;  
from 'neath the little bridge those devils issued,  
and turned against him all their grappling hooks;  
but he cried out: "Be none of you malicious!  
Before your grappling hooks take hold of me,  
let one of you advance, and hear me speak;  
then take ye counsel as to grappling me."  
Then all cried out: "Let Malacoda go!"  
Thereat one started, while the rest kept still,  
and, as he came, said: "What does this avail him?"  
"Dost thou think, Malacoda," said my Teacher,  
"that, as thou seest, I have hither come,  
safe until now from all your hindrances,  
unhelped by Will Divine and favoring fate?  
Let us go on, for it is willed in Heaven  
that I should show another this wild road."  
Thereat his pride received so great a fall,  
that at his feet he dropped his grappling hook,  
and to the rest said: "Let him not be wounded."  
My Leader thereupon cried out to me:

“Thou that among the bridge’s broken rocks  
art crouching, safely now regain my side.”  
I therefore moved, and quickly came to him;  
then all the fiends advanced so far, I feared  
they would not keep their word. Even thus I once  
saw infantry, who, under pledge of safety,  
were from Caprona coming forth, afraid,  
when ’mong so many foes they saw themselves.  
Then wholly to my Leader’s side I drew,  
nor from their faces, which did not look good,  
did I remove my eyes. For as their prongs  
they lowered, one fiend to another said:  
“Wouldst thou that I should touch him on his rump?”  
and they replied: “Yes, see thou nick it for him!”  
But that fiend, who was with my Leader talking,  
turned round at once, and said to him: “Keep still,  
keep still there, Scarmiglione!” Then to us:  
“Further advance along this present crag  
can not be made, because the sixth arch yonder  
lies wholly shattered on the ground below;  
but if it please you still to go ahead,  
go on along this ridge; there is near by  
another crag which furnishes a path.  
Than this hour five hours later yesterday,  
twelve hundred, six and sixty years had passed,  
since here the path was broken. I am sending  
some of my company in that direction,  
to see if any yonder air themselves;  
go on with them, for they will not be bad.”  
“Step forward, Alichino, and Calcabrina,”  
he then began to say, “thou, too, Cagnazzo;  
and let old Barbariccia guide the ten.  
Have Libicocco go, and Draghignazzo;  
tusked Ciriatto, too, and Graffiacane,  
with Farfarello and crazy Rubicante.  
Search round about the boiling birdlime pitch;  
let these be safe as far as that next crag,  
which all unbroken goes across the dens.”  
“Oh, Teacher, what is this I see?” said I.  
“If thou know how, pray let us go alone,  
for I request no escort for myself.  
If thou as wary art as thou art wont,  
dost thou not notice how they gnash their teeth,  
and with their eyebrows threaten us with woe?”  
And he to me: “I would not have thee frightened;  
let them grin on, then, as they like, for that  
they ’re doing at the wretches who are boiled.”  
They wheeled, and moved along the left bank then;

but not till each, as signal toward their leader,  
had first thrust out his tongue between his teeth,  
and he had of his rump a trumpet made.

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## INFERNO XXII

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Fifth Trench. Corrupt Politicians*

Ere now have I seen cavalry break camp,  
start to attack, or be reviewed, and even,  
at times, retreat, in order to escape;  
scouts have I also seen upon your lands,  
O Aretines; raids, too, have I beheld,  
and tournaments and tilting-matches fought;  
with trumpets now, and now with bells, with drums  
and beacon-signals made from fortresses,  
with native and with foreign things; but never  
have I seen horse, or infantry, or ship,  
by sign of either land or sky, set out  
with instrument of wind as odd as that.  
With the ten demons we were going on;  
ah, the fierce company! But in a church  
with saints consort, with gluttons at an inn!  
Upon the pitch alone was I intent,  
that I might see all details of the trench  
and of the people who were burned therein.  
As dolphins do, when, arching up their backs,  
they give the warning which bids mariners  
take measures for the safety of their ship;  
even so at times, his suffering to relieve,  
one of the sinners there displayed his back,  
and hid it in less time than lightning takes.  
And as in ditches at the water's edge  
frogs stay with nothing but their muzzles out,  
and thus conceal their feet and all the rest;  
even so on all sides did those sinners stay;  
and now that Barbariccia was approaching,  
they likewise 'neath the boiling pitch withdrew.  
I saw, and still it stirs my heart with horror,  
one waiting thus, as oft, while one frog stays,  
it happens that another scurries off.  
And Graffiacane, who was nearest to him,  
hooking his pitch-smear'd tresses, pulled him up,  
so that an otter he appeared to me.  
I knew by now the names of each and all,  
I noted them so well when they were chosen,  
and, when they called each other, noticed how.  
"O Rubicante, see thou set thy claws

upon him so, that thou peel off his skin!”  
the accursèd all cried out together then.  
And I: “My Teacher, if thou canst, contrive  
to learn who that wretch is, who thus  
has fallen into his adversaries’ hands.”  
My Leader thereupon drew near to him,  
and asked him whence he was, and he replied:  
“Of Navarre’s kingdom I a native was.  
My mother placed me out to serve a lord,  
for she had borne me to a rascal knave,  
who both himself and what he owned destroyed.  
I next in good King Thibaut’s household served,  
and there I set myself to practice graft,  
for which I pay the reckoning in this heat.”  
Here Ciriatto, from whose mouth protruded,  
as from a boar’s, a tusk on either side,  
caused him to feel how one of them could rip.  
Among bad cats the mouse had fallen now;  
for Barbariccia clasped him in his arms,  
and said: “Stand off, while I am clutching him!”  
Then, toward my Teacher having turned his face,  
he said: “Ask him again, if more thou wish  
to know of him, before the others rend him.”  
My Leader then: “Now tell me: know’st thou any,  
among the other sinners ’neath the pitch,  
who Latin is?” And he: “Not long ago  
I left a man from that vicinity;  
would that like him I still were covered up,  
for I should then fear neither claw nor hook!”  
Here Libicocco said: “We ’ve borne too much!”  
and with his hook so seized him by the arm,  
and tore it, that he carried off a piece.  
And Draghignazzo also wished to clutch him  
down at his legs; but their decurion then  
turned right around at them with threatening looks.  
When they were somewhat pacified again,  
of him, who still was looking at his wound,  
my Leader asked without delay: “Who, then,  
was he, from whom thou tookst unlucky leave,  
as thou hast said, to land upon the shore?”  
And he made answer: “That was Fra Gomita,  
Gallura’s man, a vessel of all fraud,  
who, when he held in hand his master’s foes,  
so dealt with them that each is glad. Their money  
he took, and, as he puts it, let them all  
off easy, and even in other offices  
was not a petty, but a first rate grafter.  
With him Don Michel Zanche of Logodoro

associates; and never do their tongues  
feel tired out by talking of Sardinia.  
But oh! Look at the other grinning there!  
More would I say, but am afraid lest that one  
be making ready now to claw my skin.”  
Then the great provost turned toward Farfarello,  
who rolled his eyes as if he meant to strike,  
and said: “Off yonder, thou malicious bird!”  
“If you desire” thereat began again  
the terror-stricken man, “to see or hear  
Tuscans or Lombards, I will have some come.  
But let the Evil Claws here stand aside  
a little, that their vengeance be not feared,  
and I, while sitting in this very place,  
for one that I am, shall make seven come out,  
when I shall whistle, as our wont it is,  
when any one of us protrudes himself.”  
Cagnazzo at this speech his muzzle raised,  
and shook his head, and said: “Hear the sly trick  
devised by him to cast himself below!”  
Then he, who frauds in great abundance had,  
replied to him: “Tricky indeed am I,  
when for my mates a greater pain I win!”  
Here Alichin could not control himself,  
but said, in opposition to the rest:  
“I shall not gallop after thee, in case  
thou dive, but o’er the pitch shall beat my wings;  
the ridge abandoned, be the bank a screen,  
to see if thou alone art more than we!”  
Now, Reader, of a new sport shalt thou hear!  
Each turned his eyes the other way; and he  
the first, who had thereto been most opposed.  
The Navarrese chose well his time, stood firmly  
upon the ground, and, jumping suddenly,  
from what they purposed freed himself thereby.  
For this each felt himself to blame, but most  
the one who of the loss had been the cause;  
hence he moved first, and shouted: “Thou art caught!”  
But little did it profit him; for wings  
could not outmeasure fear; as one went under,  
the other, flying upward, raised his breast;  
nor different is the speed with which a duck  
dives under water, when a hawk draws near,  
who, vexed and baffled thus, flies up again.  
Then Calcabrina, angered by the flout,  
flew out behind him, glad that one escaped,  
because it let him scuffle with the other;  
and then, the grafter having disappeared,

he turned his claws upon his own companion,  
and grappled with him o'er the ditch; but he,  
being, indeed, a fighting sparrow-hawk  
fitted to claw him well, they both fell down  
into the middle of the boiling fen.  
A sudden separator was the heat;  
but rising thence was quite impossible,  
they had their wings so limed with sticky pitch.  
Then Barbariccia, vexed as were the rest,  
his mates, had four of them with all their hooks  
fly to the other bank; on both sides then  
they speedily descended to their posts,  
and stretched their hooks out toward the pitch-belimed,  
who now were cooked inside their crusted hides;  
and, thus embarrassed, we abandoned them.

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## INFERNO XXIII

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Sixth Trench. Hypocrites*

Silent, alone, and unaccompanied,  
we went along, one first and one behind,  
as Minor Friars go when on the road.  
My thoughts, by reason of the present brawl,  
were turned to Aesop's fable, that wherein  
he talks about the frog and mouse; for 'now'  
and 'at this moment' are no more alike,  
than one is like the other, if beginning  
and end be linked by an attentive mind.  
And ev'n as one thought from another springs,  
so, next, from that one was another born,  
which doubled my first fear. Hence thus I thought:  
"These devils have been scorned on our account,  
and with such injury and scoff, indeed,  
that I believe that they are greatly vexed.  
If anger to ill-will be joined, they 'll come  
more fiercely after us, than doth a dog  
the rabbit which he seizes with his teeth."  
Already was I feeling all my hair  
bristling with fear, when, gazing back intent,  
I said: "If, Teacher, thou hide not thyself  
and me with speed, I dread the Evilclaws;  
we have them now behind us, and I so  
imagine them, that I already feel them."  
And he: "If I were made of leaded glass,  
thine outward image I would not reflect  
more quickly than thine inward I receive.  
Even now thy thoughts were coming among mine  
with outlook and intent so similar,  
that I with both a single purpose formed.  
If it be true the right bank slopeth so,  
that to the following trench we can descend,  
we shall escape from this imagined chase."  
He had not finished telling me his plan,  
when not far off I saw them coming on  
with wings outspread, intent on seizing us.  
My Leader then took hold of me at once,  
even as a mother, by the noise aroused,  
and seeing close to her the burning flames,  
seizes her child and flees, and doth not stop,

since caring more for him than for herself,  
even long enough to clothe her with a shift;  
and downward from the ridge of that hard bank,  
his back he yielded to the hanging rock,  
which closes one side of the following trench.  
Water ne'er moved as swiftly through a sluice,  
to turn the overshot wheel of a mill,  
when closest to the paddles it approaches,  
as did my Teacher o'er that selvage-bank,  
bearing me down with him upon his back,  
as though his son I were, and not his mate.  
His feet had hardly reached the trench's bed  
below, when they were on the ridge above,  
just over us; but naught was now to fear;  
because the Providence on high, which willed  
to place them in the fifth trench as its servants,  
takes from them all the power of leaving it.  
A painted people found we there below,  
who, moving with exceedingly slow steps,  
shed tears, and in their looks appeared subdued  
and weary. Cloaks they had equipped with cowls  
lowered before their eyes, and cut like those  
which in Cologne are fashioned for her monks.  
So gilded outside are they that they dazzle;  
but inside all are lead, and of such weight,  
that those which Frederick clothed men with were straw.  
O cloak that wearies through eternity!  
We turned again, as ever, to the left,  
along with them, intent on their sad plaint;  
but, owing to the weight, that weary folk  
came on so slowly, that new company  
we had at every motion of our legs.  
Hence to my Leader I: "Contrive to find  
some one whom we may know by deed or name,  
and, while thus going, move thine eyes around."  
And one, who heard my Tuscan speech, cried out  
behind us: "Stay your feet, O ye that run  
so quickly through the gloomy air! From me,  
perhaps, shalt thou receive what thou dost ask."  
Thereat my Leader turned and said: "Now wait;  
and then proceed according to his pace."  
I stopped, and two I saw, whose faces showed  
great mental haste to be with me, and yet  
their burden and the narrow path delayed them.  
On coming up to us, they watched me long  
with eyes askance, and uttered not a word;  
then, toward each other turning, thus they spoke:  
"This one seems by the action of his throat

alive; but if they 're dead, by what right, then,  
go they uncovered by the heavy stole?"  
And then, addressing me, they said: "O Tuscan,  
who to the gathering of sad hypocrites  
art come, scorn not to tell us who thou art."  
And I to them: "On Arno's lovely stream,  
and in its famous town, both born and bred,  
I'm in the body I have always had.  
But who are ye, adown whose cheeks there drips,  
as I perceive, so great a woe, and what  
the penalty which sparkles on you thus?"  
"These orange cloaks," one answered, "are of lead,  
and of such thickness are they, that the weights  
thus cause the scales that balance them to creak.  
We Jovial Friars were, and Bolognese;  
I, Catalàn, and Loderingo he,  
by name, and chosen by thy town together,  
as one alone is usually called,  
to keep its peace; and such we were, as still  
in the Gardingo's neighborhood appears."  
"O friars," I began, "your evil deeds . . ."  
but said no more; because there struck mine eyes  
one crucified by three stakes on the ground.  
On seeing me, sighs through his beard he blew,  
and writhed all over; then Fra Catalàn,  
informed thereby of what had happened, said:  
"The pinioned man thou gazest at, advised  
the Pharisees that it expedient was  
to torture one man for the people's sake.  
Stretched crosswise, as thou seest, on the road,  
and naked, he is forced to be the first  
to feel how much whoever passes weighs.  
And in like fashion suffer in this ditch  
his father-in-law, and others of the council  
which proved a seed of evil for the Jews."  
I then saw Virgil marvelling at him,  
who in the figure of a cross was stretched  
so basely in eternal banishment.  
Then to the friar he addressed these words:  
"Be not displeased to tell us, an ye may,  
if on the right there lie a crossing-place,  
by means of which we two may issue hence,  
without black Angels being forced to come  
and extricate us from this trench's bed."  
"Nearer than thou dost hope" he then replied,  
"a crag there is, which at the great round wall  
begins, and all the cruel trenches spans,  
save that at this one it is broken down,

and spans it not; but ye can climb the ruins,  
which from its base lie piled along the slope.”  
My Leader kept his head bowed down awhile;  
then said: “Wrongly did he report the thing,  
who yonder grapples sinners with his hook!”  
The friar then: “Among the many vices given  
the Devil at Bologna, I once heard  
that he a liar is, and sire of lies.”  
Thereat my Leader with great strides departed,  
somewhat disturbed by anger in his looks;  
then I the burdened left, and followed on  
behind the footprints of beloved feet.

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## INFERNO XXIV

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Seventh Trench. Thieves*

When in the youthful season of the year  
the sun beneath Aquarius warms his locks,  
while southward now the nights pursue their way;  
and when the hoar-frost draws upon the ground  
the counterfeit of her white sister's face,  
though shortly lasts the temper of her pen;  
the peasant, lacking provender, gets up,  
looks out, and, seeing all the country white,  
slaps himself on the thigh, returns in doors,  
and walking to and fro, laments, poor wretch,  
not knowing what to do; then later on  
returning out again, recovers hope,  
on seeing that the world has shortly changed  
its face; and, taking down his shepherd-staff,  
out to their feeding drives his tender sheep.  
Even thus my Teacher filled me with dismay,  
when I beheld such trouble in his face;  
thus, too, the plaster quickly reached the wound;  
for when we had attained the ruined bridge,  
my Leader turned to me with that sweet look,  
which at the Mountain's foot I first perceived.  
First having well surveyed the ruined arch,  
after some counsel taken with himself,  
his arms he opened, and took hold of me.  
And like a man who ponders while he acts,  
and always seems to look ahead; ev'n so,  
while upward to the top of one great rock  
he pushed me, he sought out another crag,  
and said: "Take hold of that one next, but first  
see whether it be fit to bear thy weight."  
No path was this for one who wore a cloak,  
since scarcely could we two, though he was light,  
and I was pushed, ascend from rock to rock.  
And had the slope on that bank not been shorter,  
than on the other, I know not of him,  
but I would surely have been overcome;  
but since the whole of Malebolgë slopes  
down to the opening of the lowest well,  
such is the nature of each trench's banks,  
that one is high, and low the following one;

and yet we reached at length the ridge above,  
from which the crag's last rock projects.  
My breath was so exhausted from my lungs,  
when up at last, that I could go no further;  
nay, on arriving I sat down at once.  
"Thus, henceforth, must thou rid thyself of sloth,"  
my Teacher said; "for one attains not fame,  
sitting on cushions, or 'neath canopies;  
and he that lives without attaining it,  
leaveth on earth such traces of himself,  
as smoke doth in the air, or foam in water.  
Therefore get up! O'ercome thy troubled breath  
with that soul-energy, which wins all fights,  
unless it sink beneath its body's weight!  
A longer stairway must be climbed; 't is not  
enough that these stairs have been left; if, then,  
thou understand me, let it profit thee."  
I thereupon arose, and showed myself  
better equipped with breath than I had felt,  
and said: "Go on, for I am strong and bold!"  
We took the pathway up along the crag,  
which rocky was, narrow and hard to climb,  
and steeper far than was the one before.  
Not to seem weak, I talked as on I went;  
this from the next trench caused a voice to come,  
which was incapable of forming words.  
Though I was on the summit of the arch  
which crosses here, I know not what it said;  
but moved to anger seemed the one who spoke.  
Downward I looked, and yet my living eyes  
could not attain the bottom for the dark;  
hence, "Teacher, try to reach the following ridge,"  
said I, "and let us from the wall descend,  
for as I hear, but do not understand,  
so, looking down from hence, I make out nothing."  
"No other answer give I thee," he said,  
"save that of action; for a fair request  
ought to be met by deeds without a word."  
We climbed down from the bridge's further head,  
where to the eighth embankment it is joined,  
and then the trench was clearly shown to me;  
and in it I beheld a frightful throng  
of snakes, and of so weird a kind, that still  
the memory of them freezes up my blood.  
Let Libya and her sand no longer boast;  
for though she breed chelydri, jàculi,  
with cenchri, phàreae and àmphisbaenae,  
ne'er with all Ethiopia did she show,

nor e'en with what above the Red Sea lies,  
either so many or such evil plagues.  
Among this cruel and most dismal swarm  
people were running, nude and terrified,  
and with no hope of hole or heliotrope.  
Their hands were bound behind their back with snakes,  
whose tail and head were thrust between their loins,  
and tied together in a knot in front.  
Then lo, a serpent hurled himself at one,  
who near our bank was standing, and transfixed him  
there where the neck is to the shoulders joined.  
Never were *o* or *i* so quickly written,  
as he took fire, and, burning up, must needs  
turn wholly into ashes as he fell;  
whereat, though thus destroyed upon the ground,  
the dust, assembling of its own accord,  
turned instantly into the self-same man.  
So likewise, as great sages have declared,  
the Phoenix dies, and then is born again,  
as she approaches her five-hundredth year;  
she feeds through life on neither herbs or grain,  
but on amòmm only and incense-tears;  
her final swaddling bands are nard and myrrh.  
And as is he who falls, nor knoweth how,  
by demon force, which pulls him to the ground,  
or other inhibition binding man,  
and who, on getting up again, looks round  
wholly bewildered by the great distress  
which he has felt, and, as he looks, heaves sighs;  
such was that sinner, after he had risen.  
O Power of God, how truly just thou art,  
that in revenge dost deal such blows as these!  
Thereat my Leader asked him who he was,  
and he replied: "Into this wild ravine  
I rained from Tuscany not long ago.  
Mule that I was, a beast's life, not a man's,  
I liked; I 'm Vanni Fucci, called the Beast;  
for me Pistoia was a worthy den."  
Then "Tell him not to slip away," I said,  
"and ask what fault thrust him down here; for I  
once saw in him a man of blood and strife."  
The sinner then, who understood, feigned not,  
but turned toward me both mind and face, and said,  
as with a sudden shame he colored up:  
"That thou hast caught me in the misery  
in which thou see'st me, gives me greater pain  
than that which took me from the other life.  
I can't refuse what thou dost ask of me.

I 'm placed thus low, because 't was I who robbed  
the vestry known for its fair ornaments;  
a deed once falsely put upon another.  
But now, lest thou enjoy this sight of me,  
if thou art ever out of these dark lands,  
thine ears to my announcement ope, and hear:  
Pistoia first despoils herself of Neri;  
then Florence changes folk and government.  
From Val di Magra Mars draws forth a bolt  
by turbid clouds enveloped; next, with wild  
and cruel storm, a battle will be fought  
upon the Picene Plain; then suddenly  
the bolt will cleave the mist in such a way,  
that every Bianco will thereby be wounded.  
And this I 've said, that it may give thee pain!"

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## INFERNO XXV

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Seventh Trench. Thieves*

The thief, at the conclusion of his words,  
lifted his hands with both their figs, and cried:  
“Take that, O God, for ’t is to Thee I show them!”  
From that time onward snakes have been my friends,  
for thereupon one coiled around his neck,  
as if to say: “I ’d have thee speak no more;”  
another, coiling, tied his arms together,  
and clinched itself so well in front of him,  
that he could make no use of them at all.  
Pistoia, ah, Pistoia, why not will  
to burn to ashes, and no longer last,  
since in ill-doing thou excell’st thy seed?  
In all of Hell’s dark rings I ’ve seen no spirit  
so arrogant toward God; not even he,  
who fell down headlong from the walls at Thebes.  
Without another word he fled away;  
whereat I saw a Centaur full of rage  
come crying: “Where, where is the stubborn soul?”  
Not ev’n Maremma has so many snakes,  
I think, as on his crupper that one had,  
as far as where our human form begins.  
Upon his shoulders right behind his nape  
there crouched a dragon with wide opened wings;  
and he sets fire to whomsoe’er he meets.  
My Teacher said: “He, yonder, Cacus is,  
who ’neath the rocks that form Mount Aventine  
oft made a lake of blood. He travels not  
along the road o’er which his brethren go,  
because of having fraudulently robbed  
the famous herd which he as neighbor had;  
this ended his sly deeds beneath the club  
of Hercules, who may perhaps have dealt him  
a hundred blows, whereof he felt but ten.”  
While thus he spoke, that sinner, too, made off;  
whereat three spirits came and stood below us,  
whom neither I nor even my Leader noticed,  
until they all cried out: “Who then are ye?”  
because of which our conversation ceased,  
for afterward we heeded them alone.  
I knew them not; but so it happened then,

as it is wont to do in certain cases,  
that one perforce employed another's name,  
saying: "But where can Cianfa have remained?"  
Hence, that my Leader might give heed, I placed  
my finger in a line from chin to nose.  
If thou art slow now, Reader, to believe  
what I shall tell, no marvel will it be,  
for I, who saw it, hardly grant I did.  
As toward them I was holding up my brows,  
lo, a six-footed serpent hurls itself  
in front of one, and clings to him all over;  
with both its middle feet it clasped his paunch,  
and with its fore feet seized upon his arms;  
then with its teeth it wounded both his cheeks;  
it spread its hind feet out along his thighs,  
and thrusting next its tail between the two,  
it stretched it upward all along his back.  
Ivy was never rooted to a tree  
so fast, as round about the other's limbs  
that horrible wild creature twined its own.  
And thereupon, as if hot wax they were,  
they stuck together, and their colors mixed,  
till neither seemed to be what it had been;  
just as a browish hue precedes the flame  
on burning paper which is not yet black,  
while, equally, the white part dies away.  
The other two looked on, and each exclaimed:  
"O me, Agnello, what a change is thine!  
for see, thou now art neither two nor one."  
Already into one had both heads turned,  
when we two countenances still beheld  
mixed in a single face, where both were lost.  
From the four previous strips two arms were made;  
the thighs and legs, the belly and the chest  
became such members as were never seen.  
Cancelled therein was every former aspect;  
the transformed figure seemed both two and none;  
and thus appearing slowly moved away.  
As like a lightning-flash a lizard looks,  
if, changing hedges 'neath the dog-day's scourge,  
across a road it passes; even such  
a little fiery serpent seemed to me,  
as toward the bellies of the other two  
it came, livid and black as peppercorn.  
And in that part through which our nourishment  
is first received, it transfixing one of them,  
and then fell down, stretched out in front of him.  
The pierced man gazed at it, but nothing said;

nay, firmly on his feet he stood, and yawned,  
as if attacked by fever or by sleep.  
He at the serpent looked, and it at him;  
one through his wound, the other through its mouth  
smoked hard, and each smoke with the other mingled.  
Let Lucan, then, be silent, where he tells  
of poor Sabellus' and Nassidius' fate,  
and, giving heed, hear what is now proclaimed.  
Of Cadmus, and of Arethusa, too,  
let Ovid cease to speak; for though his verse  
turn him into a snake, and make of her  
a fount, I grudge him not; for face to face  
he ne'er so changed two natures, that the forms  
of each were ready to exchange their matter.  
They blended each with each in such a way  
that, while the serpent fork-wise clove its tail,  
the wounded man together drew his feet.  
The legs and with them ev'n the very thighs  
so stuck together, that in little time  
their juncture left no mark that could be seen.  
The cloven tail was taking on the shape  
which there was being lost; the skin of one,  
meanwhile, was growing soft, and hard the other's.  
I saw his arms withdraw into his armpits,  
and both the serpent's feet, which were not long,  
lengthen as much, as those were growing short.  
And then its hinder feet, together twisted,  
became the member which a man conceals,  
while from his own the wretch had two thrust forth.  
And while the smoke was veiling both of them  
with novel hues, and generated hair  
on one side, and deprived of it the other,  
the one stood up, and down the other fell,  
nor turned aside for that the impious eyes,  
beneath which each of them was changing face.  
The one who stood, drew his in toward his temples;  
and from the excessive matter coming there  
ears issued on his undeveloped cheeks;  
and that, which ran not back, but was retained,  
of this superfluous matter, gave the face  
a nose, and thickened suitably its lips.  
He who was lying down thrusts forth his muzzle,  
and backward through his head withdraws his ears,  
even as a snail doth with its horns; his tongue,  
which single used to be, and prompt to speech,  
divides itself, while in the other case,  
the split one closes, and the smoking stops.  
The soul which had become a savage beast

flees hissing through the trench; the other spits  
behind him as he talks. Then, having turned  
away from him his just created shoulders,  
he to the third said: "I 'd have Buoso run,  
as I have, on his belly o'er this path."  
I thus beheld the seventh balast change  
and interchange; here let its novelty  
excuse me, if it slightly blur my pen.  
And though somewhat bewildered were my eyes,  
and though confused my mind, those men could not  
escape so secretly, that I should fail  
Puccio Sciancato perfectly to see;  
and of the three companions who came first,  
he only was not changed; the other one  
was he, for whom, Gavillè, thou dost weep.

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## INFERNO XXVI

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Eighth Trench. Fraudulent Counselors*

Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great,  
that thou dost beat thy wings o'er sea and land,  
while ev'n through Hell thy name is spread abroad!  
Among the thieves five such as these I found,  
thy citizens, whence shame accrues to me,  
nor to great honor risest thou thereby.  
But if the truth be dreamed at dawn's approach,  
thou 'lt feel a little while from now what Prato,  
of others not to speak, is craving for thee;  
and were it now, it would not be too soon;  
so were it, then, since thus it needs must be!  
for it will grieve me more, the more I age.  
We went away, and up the flight of stairs,  
the bournes had formed for our descent before,  
my Teacher climbed again, and drew me with him;  
and as we followed up the lonely path  
among the rocks and boulders of the crag,  
our feet proceeded not without our hands.  
I sorrowed then, and now again I sorrow,  
when I direct my mind to what I saw,  
and curb my genius more than I am wont,  
lest it should run when virtue guides it not;  
that, if a kindly star, or aught that's better,  
have blest me, I myself may not regret it.  
As many glow-worms as the countryman, —  
who on the hillside takes his rest, when he,  
who lights the world, least hides his face from us,  
while to the gnat the fly is giving way, —  
sees down along the valley where, perchance,  
he gathers in his grapes, or ploughs his field;  
with just as many flames the whole eighth trench  
was gleaming bright, as I perceived at once,  
when I was where its bottom came in view.  
As he who by the bears avenged himself,  
beheld Elijah's chariot when it left,  
and when to heaven its horses rose erect,  
since he could not so trace it with his eyes,  
as to see more than just the flame alone,  
when like a little cloud it rose on high;  
of such a nature were the flames that moved

along the gulley of the ditch, for none  
displays its theft, though each a sinner hides.  
Risen up to look, I so stood on the bridge,  
that without being pushed I would have fallen,  
had I not grasped a great projecting rock.  
My Leader, who perceived me thus intent,  
then said: "The spirits are within the fires,  
and each is swathed by that wherewith he burns."  
"My Teacher," I replied, "I 'm more assured  
through hearing thee, but deemed it so already,  
and wished to ask thee: 'Who is in the flame  
which comes along so cloven at the top,  
that from the pyre it seems to rise, whereon  
Etèocles was with his brother placed?'"  
He answered me: "Therein are both Ulysses  
and Diomed tormented, who in pain  
thus go together, as they did in wrath;  
and in that flame of theirs they now bewail  
the ambush of the horse, which made the gate,  
from which the Roman's noble seed went forth;  
there they lament the trick, because of which  
Deidamia, dead, still mourns Achilles;  
there the Palladium's penalty is paid."  
"If they can speak within those sparks," said I,  
"I pray thee, Teacher, much, and pray again  
that mine be worth to thee a thousand prayers,  
refuse not my request to linger here  
until the horned flame come this way; thou see'st  
that toward it I 'm inclined by great desire."  
And he replied to me: "Thy prayer deserves  
much praise and therefore I accede to it,  
but see thou that thy tongue restrain itself.  
Leave speech to me, who have a clear idea  
of what thou wouldst; for they, since Greeks they were,  
might be, perchance, disdainful of thy words."  
After the flame had come so near to us,  
that time and place seemed fitting to my Leader,  
't was in this fashion that I heard him speak:  
"O ye that in a single flame are two,  
if I deserved of you, when still alive,  
if I deserved of you or much or little,  
when in the world I wrote the lofty verses,  
depart not; but let one of you inform us  
whither, when lost, he went away to die."  
The greater horn then of the ancient flame  
began to quiver with a murmuring sound,  
as would a flame made weary by the wind;  
and then, while swaying here and there its tip,

as if the latter were the tongue that spoke,  
gave forth a voice, and said: "When I departed  
from Circe, who concealed me near Gaeta  
more than a year before Aeneas so  
had named the place, nor fondness for my son,  
nor pious reverence for my aged father,  
nor ev'n the bounden love which should have cheered  
Penelope, could overcome within me  
the eagerness I had to gain experience  
both of the world, and of the vice and worth  
of men; but forth I put upon the deep  
and open sea with but a single ship,  
and with that little company, by whom  
I had not been deserted. Both its shores  
I then beheld, as far away as Spain,  
Morocco and the island of the Sards,  
and all the rest that sea bathes round about.  
Both old and slow were I and my companions,  
when we attained that narrow passage-way,  
where Hercules set up those signs of his,  
which warned men not to sail beyond their bounds;  
Seville I left behind me on the right hand,  
Ceuta I'd left already on the other.  
And then I said: 'O brothers, ye who now  
have through a hundred thousand perils reached  
the West, to this so short a waking-time  
still left your senses, will not to refuse  
experience of that world behind the sun  
which knows not man! Bethink you of the seed  
whence ye have sprung; for ye were not created  
to lead the life of stupid animals,  
but manliness and knowledge to pursue.'  
So eager for the voyage did I make  
my fellows by this little speech of mine,  
that, after it, I hardly could have checked them.  
Hence, to the morning having turned our stern,  
we with our oars made wings for our mad flight,  
e'er veering toward the left as on we sped.  
Night was already seeing all the stars  
of the other pole, and our pole so low down,  
that from the ocean's floor it never rose.  
Five times rekindled, and as often quenched,  
had been the light beneath the moon, since first  
we entered on the passage of the deep,  
when lo, a mountain loomed before us, dim  
by reason of the distance, and so high  
it seemed to me, that I had seen none such.  
And we rejoiced; but soon our happiness

was turned to grief; for from the new-found land  
a whirlwind rose, and smote our vessel's prow;  
three times it made her whirl with all the waters;  
then at the fourth it made her stern go up,  
and prow go down, even as Another pleased,  
till over us the ocean's waves had closed."

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## INFERNO XXVII

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Eighth Trench. Fraudulent Counselors*

The flame, because of having ceased to speak,  
was quiet and erect, and now away from us  
was going with the gentle Poet's leave;  
when lo, another, which behind it came,  
caused us to turn our eyes up toward its tip,  
by reason of a vague sound issuing thence.  
As the Sicilian bull (which bellowed first  
with the lament of him, and that was right,  
who with his file had given form to it,  
was wont to bellow with the voice of him  
who suffered in it, so that, though of brass,  
it seemed the one who by the pain was pierced;  
even so, since from the body of the flame  
they had nor path nor mouth, the painful words  
were changed at first into the latter's tongue.  
But when these words had travelled to the tip,  
and given it that vibration which the tongue,  
when uttered, gave to them, we heard it say:  
"O thou, to whom I now address my voice,  
and who just now didst talk in Lombard, saying:  
'Now go thy way, for thee I urge no more;'  
though I, perhaps, have somewhat late arrived,  
be not displeased to stop and speak with me;  
thou see'st that I am not, although I burn!  
If into this blind world thou only now  
art fallen down from that sweet Latin land,  
whence all my guilt I bring, pray tell me whether  
the Romagnoles are having peace or war;  
for I came from the mountains 'tween Urbino  
and that high peak from which the Tiber springs."  
While downward I was leaning still intent,  
my Leader touched me on my side, and said:  
"Speak thou, for this one an Italian is."  
And I, who had my answer all prepared,  
began to speak without delay: "O soul,  
that art concealed down yonder, thy Romagna  
is not at present, and she never was,  
devoid of war within her tyrants' hearts;  
but I left none apparent there just now.  
Ravenna is, as she for many years

has been; Polenta's eagle so broods there,  
that Cervia it o'ercovers with its wings.  
The town which made the long resistance once,  
and of the French a sanguinary heap,  
beneath the green paws finds itself again.  
Verrucchio's former Mastif and the new,  
who foully with Montagna dealt, there make,  
where they are wont, a gimlet of their teeth.  
The cities of Lamone and Santerno  
the little lion of the white lair rules,  
who changes sides from summer-time to winter;  
and that whose flank is by the Savio bathed,  
lives, as it sits twixt plain and mount,  
a free state half, and half a tyranny.  
And now, I pray thee, tell me who thou art,  
nor harder be than others here have been,  
so may thy name maintain itself on earth.”  
After the flame had roared a little while,  
as is its fashion, to and fro it moved  
its pointed tip, and then gave forth this breath:  
“If I believed that my reply were made  
to one who to the world would e'er return,  
this flame would stay without another quiver;  
but inasmuch as, if I hear the truth,  
none e'er returned alive from this abyss,  
fearless of infamy I answer thee.  
A man of arms I was, then Cordelier,  
trusting, since girded thus, to make amends;  
and certainly my trust had been confirmed,  
were 't not for that High Priest, (whom ill befall!)  
who set me at my former sins again;  
both how and why I 'd have thee hear from me.  
While I was still the shape of bones and flesh  
my mother gave me, my performances  
were not a lion's, but a fox's deeds.  
All covert practices and hidden ways  
I knew; and I so carried on their arts,  
that to the ends of earth their fame was noised.  
When I perceived at last that I had reached  
that period of my life, when each should strike  
his sails and coil his ropes, what hitherto  
had given me pleasure I thereat disliked;  
I yielded then, repenting and confessing,  
and that, alas, poor me! would have availed.  
The Prince of modern Pharisees, who then  
hard by the Lateran had a war on hand,  
though not with either Saracens or Jews,  
for Christian were all enemies of his,

and none of them had gone to conquer Acre,  
or been a merchant in the Soldan's land;  
not heeding in himself his lofty office  
and holy orders, or in me the cord,  
which leaner used to make those girt therewith;  
but as upon Soracte Constantine  
once bade Sylvester heal his leprosy;  
so this one called on me, as master-leech,  
to cure him of the fever of his pride;  
he asked me for advice, but I kept still,  
because his words were like a drunkard's words.  
And then he said: 'Let not thy heart mistrust;  
I from now on absolve thee; teach me, then,  
how I can Palestrina overthrow.  
To lock and unlock Heaven is in my power,  
as thou dost know; two, therefore, are the Keys,  
my predecessor held in small esteem.'  
His weighty words then drove me to the point,  
at which the silent course appeared the worse;  
'Father,' I therefore said, 'since from the sin  
thou washest me, which I must now commit,  
a promise long drawn out but shortly kept  
will cause thy triumph on the lofty seat.'  
Then Francis came for me, when I was dead;  
but one of our black Cherubs said to him:  
'Remove him not, and do no wrong to me!  
Among my menials he must needs descend,  
because he gave the fraudulent advice,  
since which till now I've had him by the hair;  
for who repents not cannot be absolved,  
nor yet can one at once repent and will,  
the contradiction not permitting it!'  
O woeful me! O how I shook with fear,  
when, after laying hold on me, he said:  
'Perhaps thou didst not think me a logician!'  
He carried me to Minos, and the latter  
round his hard back eight times entwined his tail,  
and when in great rage he had bitten it,  
'A sinner of the thievish fire is this,'  
he said; hence, where thou see'st me, I am lost,  
and, thus robed, sorrowing go my way.'  
When he had thus completed his discourse,  
the flame departed from us with its grief,  
twisting and lashing its sharp-pointed horn.  
I and my Leader then passed further on  
up o'er the crag, as far as the next arch  
which spans the ditch, wherein their due is paid  
to those who burdens win by severing bonds.

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## INFERNO XXVIII

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Ninth Trench. Sowers of Discord*

Who ever could, ev'n with unfettered words,  
tell fully of the blood and of the wounds  
which now I saw, though oft he told the tale?  
All tongues would certainly fall short of it,  
by reason of our speech and of our mind,  
whose means are small for taking in so much.  
If all the people should again assemble,  
who on Apulia's fortune-ravaged soil  
suffered of old from all the loss of blood  
shed by the Trojans, and in that long war,  
which with its spoil of rings made such high heaps,  
as Livy writes, who maketh no mistakes;  
with those who felt the painful force of blows  
received in waging war with Robert Guiscard,  
and those whose bones are still heaped up together  
at Ceperano, where a faithless liar  
was each Apulian, and near Tagliacozzo,  
where old Alardo won, though all unarmed;  
and if, of these, one showed a limb pierced through,  
and one a limb lopped off, 't would all be nothing,  
compared with this ninth trench's foul display.  
No cask, indeed, by loss of middle-board  
or stave, is opened as was one I saw,  
split from the chin to where one breaketh wind;  
while down between his legs his entrails hung,  
his pluck appeared, and that disgusting sack,  
which maketh excrement of what is swallowed.  
While I on seeing him was all intent,  
he looked at me, and opening with his hands  
his breast, he said: "See now how I am cloven!  
Behold how torn apart Mahomet is!  
Ali in tears moves on ahead of me,  
cloven in his face from forelock down to chin;  
and all the others whom thou seest here  
disseminators were, when still alive,  
of strife and schism, and hence are cloven thus.  
There is a devil here behind, who thus  
fiercely adorns, and to the sword's edge puts  
each member of this company anew,  
when we have gone around the woeful road;

because, ere one return in front of him,  
the wounds thus made have all been closed again.  
But who art thou, that musest on the crag,  
perhaps to put off going to the torture  
adjudged thine accusation of thyself?"  
"Death hath not reached him yet," replied my Teacher,  
"nor to a torment is he led by guilt,  
but that complete experience may be giv'n him,  
I, who am dead, must needs conduct him here  
from circle unto circle down through Hell;  
and this is true, as that I speak to thee."  
On hearing him, more were there than a hundred  
who stopped there in the ditch to look at me,  
and who through their surprise forgot their pain.  
"To Fra Dolcino do thou therefore say,  
thou that, perhaps, wilt shortly see the sun,  
if soon he would not hither follow me,  
to arm him so with food, lest stress of snow  
should give the Novarese a victory,  
which else would not be easily obtained."  
When one foot he had raised to go away,  
Mahomet said these words to me; which done,  
upon the ground he stretched it to depart.  
Another then, who had his neck pierced through,  
his nose cut off as far as 'neath his brows,  
and who had one ear only, having stopped  
to gaze in wonder with the others there,  
opened, before the rest, his throat, whose neck  
vermilion was on every side, and said:  
"O thou that by thy guilt art not condemned,  
and whom up in the Latin land I 've seen,  
unless too great resemblance play me false,  
call Pier da Medicina to thy mind,  
if e'er thou see again the lovely plain,  
which from Vercelli slopes to Marcabò.  
And make it known to Fano's two best men,  
to Messer Guido and Angiolello, too,  
that they, unless foreseeing be in vain  
down here, will from their vessel be cast forth,  
and drowned in sacks near La Cattolica,  
through a disloyal tyrant's treachery.  
Between the isles Majolica and Cyprus  
Neptune ne'er saw so great a crime committed  
by pirates, nay, nor by the Argolic folk.  
That traitor who sees only with one eye,  
and holds the town, from seeing which, one now  
is with me here, who fain would fasting be,  
will to a conference have them come with him;

he 'll then so act, that 'gainst Focara's wind  
they 'll stand in need of neither vow nor prayer."  
And I to him: "Point out and show to me,  
if news of thee thou 'dst have me bear above,  
which is the one who had the bitter sight."  
Thereat he laid his hand upon the jaw  
of one of his companions, oped his mouth,  
and cried: "This is the one, for he speaks not;  
when exiled, he removed all doubt in Caesar,  
by saying that a man, when once prepared,  
ne'er brooked delay but to his detriment."  
Oh, how dismayed that Curio seemed to me,  
who from his throat now had his tongue cut out,  
yet once had been so daring in his speech!  
Then one, from whom both hands had been lopped off,  
raising his maimed arms through the gloomy air,  
so that his blood befouled his face, cried out:  
"Mosca will thou remember, too, who said,  
alas! 'What 's done is done!' a speech which proved  
the seed of evil for the Tuscan race."  
"And death" I thereto added, "to thy tribe!"  
Then he, as woe on woe he heaped, went off,  
as one would whom his grief had made insane.  
But I remained to look upon the throng,  
and such a thing I saw as I should be  
afraid to tell of without further proof;  
if it were not that conscience reassures me,  
the good companion which, beneath the breastplate  
of conscious purity, emboldens man.  
I really saw, and still I seem to see it,  
a trunk without a head, which moved along,  
as moved the others of the mournful herd;  
and by the hair it held the severed head,  
which, hanging like a lantern from its hand,  
was saying as it gazed at us: "O me!"  
With his own self he made himself a lamp,  
and two in one they were, and one in two;  
how this can be, He knows who so ordains.  
When at the bridge's very foot he was,  
he raised his arm above him, head and all,  
that he might thus bring near to us his words,  
which were: "Now see my baneful punishment,  
thou that, though breathing, go'st to see the dead!  
See whether any be as great as this!  
And that thou with thee mayst bear news of me,  
know that Bertran de Born I am, the man  
who gave the youthful king the ill support.  
Of sire and son I mutual rebels made;

Ahithophel by Absalom and David,  
with his malicious goadings, did no more.  
Because I severed those who thus were joined,  
I bear my brain around with me, alas!  
severed from its foundation in this trunk;  
retaliation thus is seen in me.”

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## INFERNO XXIX

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud*

*The Tenth Trench. Falsifiers of Metals*

The many people and unheard-of wounds  
had caused my eyes to be so drunk with tears,  
that fain they were to linger there and weep;  
but Virgil said: "At what art gazing still?  
Why is it that thine eyes still rest down there  
among the wretched mutilated shades?  
Thou didst not thus when in the other trenches;  
consider, then, if thou propose to count them,  
that this trench circles two-and-twenty miles,  
and that the moon is now beneath our feet;  
short is the time allowed us still, and more  
there is to see, than what thou seest here."  
"If thou hadst heeded" I thereat replied,  
"the reason for my gazing there, thou wouldst,  
perhaps, have granted me a longer stay."  
Meantime my Leader on his way was going,  
and I behind him moving, as I made  
my answer, adding: "In that hollow place,  
whereon I kept mine eyes so steadily,  
I think a spirit sprung from mine own blood  
bewails the fault so dearly paid for there."  
Thereat my Teacher said: "Let not thy thoughts  
hereafter break on him; heed other things,  
and there let him remain; for at the foot  
of that small bridge I saw him point thee out,  
and with his finger fiercely threaten thee;  
Geri del Bello I then heard him called.  
So wholly wast thou then intent on him  
who formerly possessed Hautefort, that thou,  
till he departed, didst not look beyond."  
"Leader," said I, "his death by violence,  
which is not yet avenged for him by any  
who shared the shame, made him indignant; that,  
as I believe, was why he went away  
without addressing me; he thus has caused me  
to pity him the more." We thus conversed  
till we had reached the first place on the crag,  
whence, had there been more light, the next ravine  
had to its very bottom been revealed.  
When we o'er Malebolgë's final cloister

were situated so, that its lay-brethren  
could be perceived by us, uncouth laments,  
which had their arrow-heads with pity barbed,  
so pierced me through and through, that with my hands  
I closed mine ears. Such pain as there would be,  
if from the hospitals of Val di Chiana,  
Maremma and Sardinia, from July  
until September, all diseases came  
together in one ditch; such was it here;  
and out of it there came a stench, like that  
which out of rotting limbs is wont to come.  
Adown the last bank of the lengthy crag  
we went, as ever to the left; and then  
much clearer was my vision toward the bottom,  
wherein the servant of the Most High Lord,  
Justice infallible, is punishing  
the falsifiers she recordeth here.  
I do not think it were a sadder sight  
to see the whole race in Aegina sick,  
when so suffused with poison was the air,  
that all the animals, down to the little worm,  
fell dead, and when the ancient race of people,  
according to what poets hold for truth,  
out of the seed of ants restored themselves;  
than now it was, to see the spirits languish  
down in that gloomy ditch in different heaps.  
One on his belly lay, and others leaned  
against each other's shoulders, while another  
crawled on all fours along the dismal path.  
Without conversing, step by step we moved,  
both looking at and listening to the sick,  
who could not raise their bodies. Two of these  
I then saw sitting and against each other  
leaning, just as a pan against a pan  
is leaned to warm, and spotted o'er with scabs  
from head to foot; and never have I seen  
a curry-comb plied by a boy, for whom  
his master waited, or by one who kept  
awake against his will, as each oft plied  
upon himself the edge of finger-nails  
for the great rage of itching, which hath else  
no help; their nails kept scraping down their scabs,  
as doth a knife the scales of bream, or fish  
of other kinds equipped with larger scales.  
"O thou that with thy fingers flay'st thyself,"  
to one of them my Leader then began,  
"and who at times dost pincers make of them,  
pray tell us whether Latin any be

of those in here, so may thy nails  
suffice thee for thy work eternally.”  
“We, both of us, whom thou beholdest here  
so spoiled, are Latin,” answered one who wept,  
“but who art thou that didst inquire of us?”  
My Leader thereupon said: “I am one  
who with this living man from ledge to ledge  
descend, and who propose to show him Hell.”  
Thereat the common back was broken up,  
and trembling each of them turned round toward me,  
with others who had heard him by rebound.  
Then my good Teacher drew close up to me,  
and said: “Say whatsoe’er thou wilt to them.”  
Hence, since he so had wished it, I began:  
“So may your memory never fly away  
from human minds in that first world of ours,  
but rather under many suns survive,  
pray tell me who ye are, and of what people;  
nor let your foul and loathsome punishment  
make you afraid to show yourselves to me.”  
“I of Arezzo was; and Albero  
da Siena had me burned;” one then replied,  
“but what I died for doth not bring me here.  
’T is true I said to him, although in jest,  
that I knew how to raise me in the air;  
and he, who, curious, had but little sense,  
wished me to show that art to him; and only  
because I did not make him Daedalus,  
he had me burned by one, who treated him  
as son. But to the last trench of the ten  
Minos, who may not make mistakes, condemned me  
for the alchemy I practised in the world.”  
Then to the Poet I: “Now was there ever  
a people as vainglorious as the men  
of Siena? Surely not the French by far!”  
Whereat the other leprous one, who heard me,  
replied to what I said: “Excepting Stricca,  
who moderation knew in what he spent;  
and Niccolò, who was the first to find  
the costly use of cloves in gardens where  
such seed takes root; excepting, too,  
the company, on whom Càccia d’ Ascian  
wasted his vineyard and great forest land,  
while d’ Abbagliato squandered all his sense.  
But so that thou mayst know who backs thee thus  
against the men of Siena, point thine eyes  
toward me, that well my face may answer thee;  
so shalt thou see that I ’m Capocchio’s shade,

who metals falsified by alchemy;  
and thou, if well I see thee, shouldst recall  
how good an ape of nature I was once.”

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## INFERNO XXX

*The Eighth Circle. Fraud. The Tenth Trench*

*Falsifiers of Persons, Money, and Words*

When Juno, on account of Semele,  
was angry with the royal blood of Thebes,  
as several times she showed herself to be,  
so fiercely mad did Athamas become,  
that, when he saw his wife approaching him,  
burdened by her two sons on either side,  
“Spread we the nets,” he cried, “that I may take,  
upon their passing, lioness and cubs!”  
and thereupon stretched out his cruel claws,  
and taking hold of one, Learchus named,  
whirled him around, and dashed him ’gainst a rock;  
his wife then with the other drowned herself.  
Again, when Fortune so low down had brought  
the Trojans’ arrogant, all-daring power,  
that with their kingdom shattered was their king;  
Hecuba, sad, forlorn, and captive now,  
when she had seen her dead Polyxena,  
and in her painful anguish had perceived  
her Polydorus lying on the beach,  
out of her senses, barked as would a dog;  
so greatly had her suffering turned her mind.  
But ne’er did furies or of Thebes or Troy  
reveal in any one such cruelty,  
in goading beasts or, much less, human limbs,  
as that which I beheld in two death-pale  
and naked shades, who ran around, and bit,  
as doth a boar, when from the sty let out.  
One reached Capocchio, and so thrust his tusks  
into his neck behind, that, dragging him,  
he made his belly scrape the solid ground.  
The Aretine, still trembling, said to me:  
“That imp is Gianni Schicchi who, enraged,  
goes all around ill-treating others thus.”  
Then “Oh,” said I to him, “so may the other  
not fix his teeth in thee, be not too tired  
to tell me who he is, before he ‘skips’!”  
And he to me: “That is the ancient soul  
of wicked Myrrha, who, outside the bounds  
of lawful love, became her father’s mistress.  
She came to sin with him by counterfeiting

another's person in herself, as dared  
the other one who yonder goes away, —  
that he might gain the lady of the stud, —  
to counterfeit Buoso Donati's self,  
and make his will and give it legal form.”  
When the two furious souls, on whom my eyes  
were fixed, had passed away, I turned them round  
to look upon the other evil born.  
And one I saw, who like a lute were shaped,  
if he had only had his groin cut off  
down in the region where a man is forked.  
The heavy dropsy which unmates the limbs  
in such a way with ill-digested humor,  
that face and paunch no longer correspond,  
was causing him to keep his lips apart,  
as doth the hectic, who, because of thirst,  
turns one lip chinward, and the other up.  
“O ye that are, and wherefore I know not,  
free from all torment in this world of woe,”  
said he to us, “behold, and pay attention  
to Master Adam's wretched misery!  
When living, I had all that I desired,  
and now, alas, I crave a drop of water.  
The little brooks which toward the Arno run  
down from the Casentino's green-clad hills,  
and render all their channels cool and fresh,  
are evermore before me, nor in vain;  
because their image makes me drier far  
than this disease, which strips my face of flesh.  
The rigid Justice, which is scourging me,  
takes from the very place in which I sinned  
the means to give my sighs a greater flight.  
There lies Romena, where I falsified  
the coin on which the Baptist's form is stamped;  
for that I left my body burned above.  
But could I see the woeful soul of Guido,  
or Alexander, or their brother, here,  
for Fonte Branda I'd not give the sight.  
One is in here already, if the shades,  
who go around here raging, tell the truth,  
but what is that to me whose limbs are bound?  
If only I were still so light of foot,  
that I could in a hundred years advance  
one inch, I'd be already on the road,  
in search of him among the loathsome people,  
although this trench goes round eleven miles,  
and is no less than half a mile across.  
Through them am I in such a family,

for they persuaded me to coin the florins,  
which had at least three carats of alloy.”  
Then I to him said: “Who are those two wretches  
who, smoking like wet hands in winter-time,  
are lying there beside thee on thy right?”  
“I found them here,” he answered, “when I rained  
into this ditch, since when they have not turned,  
nor will, I think, for all eternity.  
One is the woman who charged Joseph falsely;  
the other, Sinon, Troy’s deceitful Greek;  
their burning fever makes them reek like this.”  
And one of them, who felt aggrieved, perhaps,  
at being named so darkly, smote the speaker  
upon his hard stiff belly with his fist.  
It made a sound, as it had been a drum;  
then Master Adam smote him with his arm,  
which did not seem less hard, upon his face,  
and said: “Though I of motion be deprived,  
by reason of my limbs which heavy are,  
I have an arm that ’s loose for needs like this.”  
Then he replied: “When going to the fire  
thou hadst it not so ready; but just so,  
and more, thou hadst it, when thou madest coin.”  
He of the dropsy: “Here thou sayest true,  
but thou wast not so true a witness there,  
where thou wast questioned of the truth at Troy.”  
“If I spoke falsely, thou didst falsify  
the coin!” said Sinon, “I ’m for one sin here,  
and thou for more than any other demon!”  
“Remember, perjurer, the horse,” replied  
he of the swollen paunch, “and bitter be  
for thee, that known it is by all the world!”  
“Ill be for thee the thirst wherewith thy tongue  
is cracking,” said the Greek, “and that foul water,  
which ’fore thine eyes thus makes thy paunch a hedge!”  
Thereat the coiner said: “As is its wont,  
thy mouth in speaking evil gapeth wide;  
for though I ’m thirsty, and humor stuffs me out,  
thine is the fever and the aching head;  
and thou ’dst not stand in need of many words  
bidding thee lick the mirror of Narcissus.”  
On listening to them I was all intent,  
when “Now be careful there!” my Teacher said,  
“for I ’m not far from quarrelling with thee.”  
When I thus heard him speak to me in anger,  
such was the shame wherewith I turned to him,  
that through my memory it is circling still;  
and such as he who dreameth of his harm,

and, dreaming, wishes that he dreamt, and thus,  
as if it were not, longs for that which is;  
such I became, who, impotent to speak,  
would fain excuse myself, and all the while  
was doing so, but did not think I was.  
“Less shame would wash away a greater fault  
than thine hath been;” my Teacher said to me,  
“therefore unburden thee of all thy sadness,  
and count on me as ever at thy side,  
if it again should chance that Fortune find thee  
where folk in such a wrangle are engaged;  
for vulgar is the wish to hear such things.”

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## INFERNO XXXI

*The Edge of the Central Well*

*The Giants*

One and the selfsame tongue first wounded me,  
so that it colored both my cheeks, and then  
supplied me with the medicine required;  
Achilles' and his father's lance, I hear,  
was likewise wont to be the source of, first,  
a sad, and, after, of a grateful gift.  
We turned our backs upon the woeful vale  
over the bank which girds it round about,  
and passed across without a single word.  
Here less than night it was, and less than day,  
so that my sight advanced not far; but here  
I heard a horn give forth so loud a sound,  
that it had rendered any thunder faint;  
this led mine eyes, as counter to its path  
they followed, wholly to a single place.  
After the woeful rout, when Charlemagne  
the holy army of his knights had lost,  
Roland blew not so terrible a blast.  
I had not kept my head turned toward it long,  
when many lofty towers I seemed to see;  
I, therefore: "Teacher, say what town is this?"  
"Since through the darkness from too far away  
thou peerest," he replied, "it comes about  
that afterward thou errest in conceiving.  
If yonder thou attain, thou 'lt clearly see  
how from afar one's senses are deceived;  
hence onward urge thyself a little more."  
Thereat he took my hand with kindly care,  
and said to me: "Ere further on we go,  
so that the fact may seem less strange to thee,  
know, then, that towers they are not, but Giants;  
and all of them are standing in the well  
around the bank, each from his navel down."  
As, when a fog is thinning off, one's gaze  
little by little giveth shape to that,  
which, since it packs the air, the mist conceals;  
even so, as through the dense, dark air I pierced,  
and nearer drew and nearer to the brink,  
error in me took flight, and fear increased;  
for, as upon its round enclosing walls

Montereggione crowns itself with towers;  
thus o'er the margin which surrounds the well  
with one half of their bodies towered up  
those frightful Giants, whom, when from the sky  
he thunders, Jupiter is threatening still.  
Already now was I distinguishing  
the face of one, his shoulders and his breast,  
most of his paunch, and, down his sides, both arms.  
When Nature ceased from making animals  
like these, and took such executioners  
from Mars, she certainly did very well;  
and ev'n if she of elephants and whales  
repent her not, whoever subtly looks  
holds her therein the more discreet and just;  
for where the reasoning faculty is joined  
to evil will equipped with power to act,  
people can make against it no defence.  
His face appeared to me as long and big  
as is at Rome the pine-cone of Saint Peter's,  
and in proportion to it were his other bones;  
so that the bank, which from his middle down  
an apron was, showed quite so much of him  
above it, that of reaching to his hair  
three Frisians would have made a useless boast;  
for I full thirty spans of him perceived,  
down from the place at which one buckles cloaks.  
*"Rafel mai amech zabi et almi"*  
the frightful mouth, to which no sweeter psalms  
were fitting, thereupon began to cry.  
Then toward him cried my Leader: "Foolish soul,  
keep to thy horn, and vent thyself therewith,  
when wrath or other passion seizes thee!  
Search at thy neck, and thou wilt find the cord  
which holds it tied, O spirit of confusion,  
and see it lying on thy mighty breast."  
To me then: "Self-accused he stands, for this  
is Nimrod, to whose evil thought is due  
that more than one tongue in the world is spoken.  
Let us leave him alone, nor talk in vain;  
for such is every tongue to him, as his  
to others is, for that is known to none.  
Then, turning to the left, we travelled on  
much further; and within a crossbow's shot  
we found the next one far more large and fierce.  
What was the master's power who girded him,  
I cannot say; but this one had in front  
his left arm, and behind his back his right,  
tied by a chain, which downward from his neck

held him so bound, that on the uncovered part  
it wound around as far as the fifth coil.  
My Leader said to me: "Gainst Jove Most High  
this proud soul wished to test his strength, and hence  
hath this reward. Ephialtes is his name;  
his haughty undertaking he attempted  
what time the Giants caused the Gods to fear;  
the arms he plied he moveth now no more."  
And I to him: "If possible it be,  
I 'd gladly have these eyes of mine enjoy  
experience of the measureless Briareus."  
Then he replied: "Antaeus thou 'lt behold  
not far from here, who speaks, and, since unbound,  
can set us at the bottom of all sin.  
He is much further on, whom thou wouldst see,  
and bound he is, and shaped like this one, save  
that more ferocious in his looks he seems."  
There never was an earthquake strong enough  
to shake a tower with so much violence,  
as Ephialtes quickly shook at this.  
Then more than ever yet did I fear death,  
nor for it was there need of more than fear,  
had it not been that I perceived his bonds.  
We thereupon proceeded further still,  
and to Antaeus came, who full five ells,  
beside his head, protruded from the pit.  
"O thou that in the valley fortune-blest,  
which once caused Scipio to inherit glory  
when with his followers Hannibal took flight,  
once tookst a thousand lions as thy prey,  
and who, hadst thou been at thy brethren's war  
on high, it seems that it is still believed  
the Sons of Earth had been the victors there;  
pray set us down below, nor let disdain  
affect thee, where the cold locks up Cocytus.  
Make us not go to Tityus or to Tipheus;  
this man can give what most is longed for here;  
stoop, then, nor twist thy muzzle. He can still  
give fame to thee on earth, since he is living,  
and still looks forward to long life, if Grace  
recall him not untimely to itself."  
The Teacher thus; then he in haste stretched out  
the hands, whose mighty pressure Hercules  
once felt, and took my Leader. Virgil then,  
on feeling himself taken, said to me:  
"Come here, that I may take thee up;" and then  
so did, that he and I one bundle were.  
Such as the Carisenda seems, when viewed

beneath its leaning side, whene'er a cloud  
sails o'er it so, that opposite it hangs;  
such did Antaeus seem to me, who watched  
to see him stoop, and such a moment 't was,  
that I had gladly gone another road.  
But lightly at the bottom, which devours  
Judas and Lucifer, he set us down;  
nor, thus bent over, did he linger there,  
but raised himself, as on a ship a mast.

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## INFERNO XXXII

*The Ninth Circle. Treachery. Cocytus*

*Traitors to their Relatives, and to their Country*

If I had rhymes that were as harsh and hoarse  
as would be fitting for the dismal hole,  
on which lean all the other circling rocks,  
I 'd squeeze the juice of my conception out  
more fully; but because I have them not,  
not without fear do I resolve to speak;  
for to describe the bottom of the universe  
is not an enterprise wherewith to jest,  
nor for a tongue that says 'mamma' and 'dad';  
let, then, those Ladies give my verse their aid,  
who helped Amphion build the walls of Thebes,  
that from the facts the telling differ not.  
O rabble, that, ill-born beyond all people,  
are in a place, to speak of which is hard,  
far better had ye here been sheep or goats!  
When we were down within the gloomy well,  
beneath the Giant's feet, though lower far,  
and I still gazing at its lofty wall,  
I heard one say to me: "Look where thou walkest!  
and see that with thy feet thou trample not  
the heads of us two wretched, weary brothers!"  
Thereat I turned around, and saw before me,  
and 'neath my feet, a lake which, being frozen,  
seemed to be made of glass and not of water.  
The Danube up in Austria never made  
so thick a veil in winter for its course,  
nor yonder 'neath the cold sky did the Don,  
as what was here; for even if Tambernich  
had fallen on it, or had Pietrapana,  
it had not cracked even at its very edge.  
And as a frog remains, to do its croaking,  
with muzzle out of water, in the season  
when oft the peasant dreams that she is gleaning;  
even so, as far as where one's shame is shown,  
the woeful shades were livid in the ice,  
as to the notes of storks they set their teeth.  
Each kept his face turned downward; from his mouth,  
the cold, and from his eyes, his saddened heart  
provides itself a witness in their midst.  
When I had gazed around a while, I looked

down at my feet, and two I saw with heads  
so close together, that their hair was mixed.  
“Ye that are pressing thus your breasts together,  
say who ye are,” said I. They bent their necks,  
and when their faces had been raised toward me,  
their eyes, moist only inwardly before,  
gushed upward though the lids; whereat the cold,  
binding the tears between them, closed them up.  
A clamp ne’er bound so tightly board to board;  
whereat, so great the anger mastering them,  
like two he-goats, they butted one another.  
And one who had, by reason of the cold,  
lost both his ears, with face still lowered, said:  
“Why dost thou mirror thee so much on us?  
If thou wouldst know who those two near thee are,  
the valley from which thy Bisenzio flows  
belonged to their sire Albert and to them.  
They issued from one body; and thou canst search  
through all Caina, but thou ’lt never find  
a shade more worthy to be fixed in ice;  
not he, whose breast and shadow broken were  
by one same blow at Arthur’s hand; nor yet  
Focaccia; nor this fellow here, whose head  
so blocks me, that I cannot see beyond,  
and who was Sàssol Mascheroni called;  
who he was, thou, if Tuscan, now knowst well.  
And that thou put me to no further speech,  
know, then, that I was Camiciòn de’ Pazzi,  
and that, to excuse me, I await Carlin.”  
Thereafter I beheld a thousand faces  
made doglike by the cold; hence frozen ponds  
cause me to shudder now, and always will.  
And now, while toward that center we were moving,  
whereto all heavy objects gravitate,  
and I was trembling in the eternal cold;  
I know not whether it were will, or fate,  
or chance; but as I walked among the heads,  
hard in the face of one I struck my foot.  
Weeping he scolded: “Wherefore dost thou smite me?  
Unless thou comest to increase the vengeance  
for Mont’ Aperti, why dost thou molest me?”  
And I said: “Teacher, wait now for me here,  
that I through him may issue from a doubt;  
then at thy pleasure shalt thou hurry me.”  
My Leader stopped; and I to him, who still  
was savagely blaspheming, said: “What sort  
of man art thou, that scolest people so?”  
“Now who art thou, that goest” he replied,

“through Antenora, smiting cheeks so roughly,  
that it would be too much, wert thou alive?”  
“I am alive, and it may profit thee”  
was my reply, “for me to place thy name,  
if fame thou ask, among my other notes.”  
And he: “I crave the contrary; away  
with thee, and bother me no more; for ill  
dost thou know how to flatter in this bog!”  
Thereat I seized him by the nape, and said:  
“It needs must be that thou reveal thy name,  
or that no hair remain upon thee here!”  
Then he to me: “Though thou pull out my hair,  
I ’ll neither say, nor show thee, who I am,  
fall thou upon my head a thousand times.”  
I had his hair wrapped round my hand already,  
and more than one shock had I plucked from him,  
while he was barking, with his eyes turned down;  
when here another cried: “What ails thee, Bocca?  
Is making noise with jawbones not enough,  
unless thou bark? What devil touches thee?”  
“Henceforth” said I, “I would not have thee speak,  
perfidious traitor; for true news of thee  
I ’ll carry with me to thy lasting shame.”  
“Begone, and tell whate’er thou wilt;” he answered,  
but be not silent, if thou issue hence,  
of him who had just now his tongue so ready.  
He here bewails the money of the French;  
‘Him of Duera’ thou canst say, ‘I saw  
where cold the days are for the sinful folk.’  
And if thou shouldst be asked who else was there,  
thou hast beside thee him of Beccheria,  
who had his gorget cut in two by Florence.  
Gianni de’ Soldanier is further on,  
I think, with Ganellon, and Tebaldello,  
who, while its people slept, unlocked Faenza.”  
From him we had departed now, when two  
I saw, so frozen in a single hole,  
that one man’s head served as the other’s cap.  
And as because of hunger bread is eaten,  
even so the upper on the other set  
his teeth, where to the nape the brain is joined.  
Not otherwise did Tydeus gnaw the temples  
of Menalippus out of spite, than this one  
was gnawing at the skull and other parts.  
“O thou that showest by a sign so beastly  
hatred toward him thou eatest, tell me why,”  
said I to him, “on this express condition,  
that shouldst thou rightfully of him complain,

I, knowing who ye are, and that one's sin,  
may quit thee for it in the world above,  
if that, wherewith I speak, be not dried up."

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## INFERNO XXXIII

*The Ninth Circle. Treachery. Cocytus*

*Traitors to their Country, and to their Guests*

From his grim meal that sinner raised his mouth,  
and wiped it on the hair of that same head,  
which he had spoiled behind. He then began:  
“Thou wouldst that I renew a hopeless grief,  
the thought of which already breaks my heart,  
before I speak of it. But if my words  
are likely to be seeds, and bear the fruit  
of infamy upon the traitor whom I gnaw,  
speaking and weeping shalt thou see together.  
I know not who thou art, nor by what means  
thou ’rt come down here, but when I hear thee speak,  
thou truly seemst to me a Florentine.  
Know, then, that I Count Ugolino was,  
and this man here Ruggieri, the Archbishop;  
and now I ’ll tell thee why I ’m thus his neighbor.  
That, as the outcome of his evil thoughts,  
I, trusting him, was seized, and afterward  
was put to death, there is no need to say;  
but that which thou canst not have heard, that is,  
how cruel was my death, thou now shalt hear,  
and whether he have wronged me thou shalt know.  
A narrow slit within the moulting-tower,  
which bears, because of me, the name of Hunger,  
and in whose walls still others must be locked,  
had through its opening shown me many a moon  
already, when I had the evil dream,  
which rent apart the curtain of the future.  
This one therein a lord and huntsman seemed,  
chasing the wolf and wolfings toward the mount  
which hinders Pisans from beholding Lucca,  
with bitches lean and eager and well trained;  
for he had set before him in his van  
Gualandi with Sismondi and Lanfranchi.  
After a little run both father and sons  
seemed weary to me; then methought I saw  
their flanks torn open by sharp-pointed fangs.  
When, just before the morning, I awoke,  
I heard my children, who were with me there,  
sob in their sleep, and ask me for their bread.  
Cruel indeed thou art, if, thinking what

my heart forebode, thou grievest not already;  
and if thou weepest not, at what art wont  
to weep? Awake they were, and now the hour  
was drawing nigh when food was brought to us,  
hence each, by reason of his dream, was worried;  
and then I heard the dread tower's lower door  
nailed up; whereat, without a word, I looked  
my children in the face. I did not weep,  
so like a stone had I become within;  
they wept; and my poor little Anselm said:  
'Father, thou lookest so! What aileth thee?'  
But still I did not weep, nor did I answer  
through all that day, or through the following night,  
till on the world another sun had dawned.  
Then, when a little beam had made its way  
into our woeful prison, and I perceived  
by their four faces, how I looked myself,  
I bit in anguish both my hands. And they,  
thinking it done because I craved to eat,  
immediately stood up, and said to me:  
'Father, much less shall we be pained, if us  
thou eat; thou with this wretched flesh didst clothe us,  
do thou, then, strip it from us now.' Thereat,  
to sadden them no more, I calmed myself;  
through that day and the next we all kept mute.  
Ah, why, hard earth, didst thou not open up?  
Then Gaddo, when the fourth day we had reached,  
stretched himself out at length before my feet,  
and said: "My father, why dost thou not help me?"  
And there he died; and, ev'n as thou seest me,  
between the fifth day and the sixth I saw  
the three fall one by one; and, blind already,  
I gave myself to groping over each,  
and two days called them, after they were dead;  
then fasting proved more powerful than pain."  
When he had spoken thus, with eyes awry,  
he seized again the wretched skull with teeth,  
which for the bone were strong as are a dog's.  
Ah, Pisa, foul reproach of those that dwell  
in that fair country where the *si* is heard;  
since slow thy neighbors are to punish thee,  
then let Caprara and Gorgona move,  
and make a hedge across the Arno's mouth,  
that every person in thee may be drowned!  
for though Count Ugolino had the name  
of traitor to thee in thy castle-towns,  
thou shouldst not thus have crucified his sons.  
Their youthful age had made, thou modern Thebes,

Brigata and Ugucione innocent,  
and the other two my canto names above.  
Further along we went, to where the ice  
roughly enswathes another class of people,  
not downward turned, but wholly on their backs.  
Weeping itself allows not weeping there,  
and tears, which find a barrier in their eyes,  
turn back, to cause their suffering to increase;  
because the first ones form a solid block,  
and thus like crystal visors wholly fill  
the hollow cup beneath the brow. And though,  
as in a callous spot,  
because of cold  
all feeling had departed from my face,  
it seemed to me that now I felt some wind;  
whence I to him: "My Teacher, who moves this?  
Is not all moving air quenched here below?"  
And he: "Ere long shalt thou be where thine eyes,  
seeing the cause which raineth down the blast,  
will make an answer to thee as to this."  
One of the wretches of the icy crust  
called out to us thereat: "O souls, so cruel,  
that unto you the last place is assigned,  
remove for me the hard veils on my face,  
that I may somewhat vent the pain that fills  
my heart, before the tears freeze up again."  
Whence I to him: "If thou wouldst have me help thee,  
say who thou art; and should I not relieve thee,  
may I needs reach the bottom of the ice!"  
Then he: "I Frate Alberigo am,  
he of the evil garden's fruit, who here  
for every fig I gave get back a date."  
Then "Oh!" said I, "art thou already dead?"  
And he to me replied: "I have no knowledge  
how in the world above my body fares.  
Such is the privilege of this Ptolomèa,  
that frequently a soul falls into it,  
ere Atropos have caused it to move on.  
But that thou scrape more gladly from my face  
these glassy tears, know, then, that just as soon  
as any soul betrays, as I betrayed,  
its body is taken from it by a demon,  
who then takes charge of it, until its time  
be all revolved. Into a well like this  
it rushes headlong down; and so, perhaps,  
the body of the shade that winters here  
behind me, is still visible above.  
This thou shouldst know, if just come down, for he

Ser Branca d' Oria is, and many years  
have now gone by, since he was thus shut up.”  
“I think” said I, “that thou deceivest me,  
for Branca d' Oria is not dead as yet,  
but eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and dons his clothes.”  
“Above us, in the Malebranche's ditch,”  
he said, “there, where the sticky pitch is boiling,  
not yet had Michel Zanche's soul arrived,  
when in his stead this fellow left behind  
a devil in his body, as did also  
one of his kinsmen, who with him performed  
the treachery. But stretch thy hand here now,  
and ope mine eyes!” And yet I oped them not,  
for rudeness shown to him was courtesy.  
Ah, Genoese! ye men estranged from all  
morality, and full of every vice,  
why from the earth are ye not wholly driven?  
for with the meanest spirit of Romagna,  
I found one such of you, that, for his deeds,  
in soul he bathes already in Cocytus,  
and seems in body still alive above.

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## INFERNO XXXIV

*The Ninth Circle. Treachery. Cocytus*

*Traitors to their Benefactors. Lucifer*

“The banners of the King of Hell advance  
toward us; now, therefore, look ahead of thee,”  
my Teacher said, “and see if thou perceive him.”  
As, when a heavy fog is breathed abroad,  
or when at night our hemisphere grows dark,  
a windmill looks when seen from far away;  
even such a structure seemed I now to see;  
then, for the wind, I shrank behind my Leader,  
for other shelter was there none. I now —  
and ’t is with fear I put it into verse, —  
was where the shades were wholly covered up,  
and visible as is a straw in glass;  
some lying are; and some are standing up,  
one on his head, the other on his soles;  
one, like a bow, bends toward his feet his face.  
When we had gone so far ahead, that now  
it pleased my Teacher to reveal to me  
the Creature who once seemed so beautiful,  
he stepped from where he was in front of me,  
stopped me, and said: “Lo Dis, and lo the place,  
where thou must arm thyself with fortitude!”  
How frozen and how weak I then became,  
ask thou not, Reader, for I write it not,  
because all speech would be of small avail.  
I did not die, nor yet remained alive;  
think for thyself now, hast thou any wit,  
what I became, of both of these deprived.  
The Emperor of the Realm of Woe stood forth  
out of the ice from midway up his breast;  
and I compare more closely with a Giant,  
than merely with his arms the Giants do;  
consider now how great that whole must be,  
that with such parts as these may be compared.  
If, once as beautiful as ugly now,  
he still raised up his brows against his Maker,  
justly doth every woe proceed from him.  
Oh, what a marvel it appeared to me,  
when I beheld three faces to his head!  
One was in front of us, and that was red;  
the other two were to the latter joined

right o'er the middle of each shoulder-blade,  
and met each other where he had his crest;  
that on the right twixt white and yellow seemed;  
the left one such to look at, as are those  
who come from there, where valeward flows the Nile.  
Under each face two mighty wings stretched out,  
of size proportioned to so huge a bird;  
sails of the sea I never saw so large.  
They had no feathers, but were like a bat's  
in fashion; these he flapped in such a way,  
that three winds issued forth from him; thereby  
Cocytus was completely frozen up.  
With six eyes he was weeping, and his tears  
and bloody slaver trickled o'er three chins.  
In each mouth, as a heckle would have done,  
a sinner he was crushing with his teeth,  
and thus was causing pain to three of them.  
To him who was in front of us the biting  
was nothing to the clawing, for at times  
his back remained completely stripped of skin.  
"That soul up there which hath the greatest pain  
Judas Iscariot is," my Teacher said,  
"who hath his head within, and plies his legs  
without. Of the other two, whose heads are down,  
Brutus is he who from the black snout hangs;  
see how he writhes, and utters not a word!  
Cassius the other is, who so big-limbed  
appears. But night is coming up again,  
and now 't is time to leave, for we 've seen all."  
Then, as it pleased him, I embraced his neck,  
and he availed himself of time and place,  
and when the wings were opened wide enough,  
he firmly grasped the shaggy flanks, and then  
from tuft to tuft he afterward descended  
between the matted hair and frozen crusts.  
When we were come to where the thigh turns round,  
just at the thick part of the hips, my Leader  
with tiring effort and with stress of breath  
turned his head round to where his legs had been,  
and seized the hair as one would who ascends;  
hence I thought we were going back to Hell.  
"Hold fast to me, for by such stairs as these"  
panting like one worn out, my Teacher said,  
"must such great wickedness be left behind."  
Then, through an opening in the rock he issued,  
and, after seating me upon its edge,  
over toward me advanced his cautious step.  
Raising mine eyes, I thought that I should still

see Lucifer the same as when I left him;  
but I beheld him with his legs held up.  
And thereupon, if I became perplexed,  
let those dull people think, who do not see  
what kind of point that was which I had passed.  
“Stand up” my Teacher said, “upon thy feet!  
the way is long and difficult the road,  
and now to middle-tierce the sun returns.”  
It was no palace hallway where we were,  
but just a natural passage under ground,  
which had a wretched floor and lack of light.  
“Before I tear myself from this abyss,  
Teacher,” said I on rising, “talk to me  
a little, and correct my wrong ideas.  
Where is the ice? And how is this one fixed  
thus upside down? And in so short a time  
how hath the sun from evening crossed to morn?”  
Then he to me: “Thou thinkest thou art still  
beyond the center where I seized the hair  
of that bad Worm who perforates the world.  
While I was going down, thou wast beyond it;  
but when I turned, thou then didst pass the point  
to which all weights are drawn on every side;  
thou now art come beneath the hemisphere  
opposed to that the great dry land o’ercovers,  
and ’neath whose zenith was destroyed the Man,  
who without sinfulness was born and died;  
thy feet thou hast upon the little sphere,  
which forms the other surface of Judecca.  
'T is morning here, whenever evening there;  
and he who made our ladder with his hair,  
is still fixed fast, ev’n as he was before.  
He fell on this side out of Heaven; whereat,  
the land, which hitherto was spread out here,  
through fear of him made of the sea a veil,  
and came into our hemisphere; perhaps  
to flee from him, what is on this side seen  
left the place empty here, and upward rushed.”  
There is a place down there, as far removed  
from Beelzebub, as e’er his tomb extends,  
not known by sight, but by a brooklet’s sound,  
which flows down through a hole there in the rock,  
gnawed in it by the water’s spiral course,  
which slightly slopes. My Leader then, and I,  
in order to regain the world of light,  
entered upon that dark and hidden path;  
and, without caring for repose, went up,  
he going on ahead, and I behind,

till through a rounded opening I beheld  
some of the lovely things the sky contains;  
thence we came out, and saw again the stars.

PRINTED AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
U.S.A.