

# **The Vision of Hell, Part 8, Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore      The Inferno**

Dante Alighieri

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THE VISION  
OF  
HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY  
DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY

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THE REV. H. F. CARY, M.A.

HELL

OR THE INFERNO

Part 8

Cantos 23 - 28

CANTO XXIII

IN silence and in solitude we went,  
One first, the other following his steps,  
As minor friars journeying on their road.

The present fray had turn'd my thoughts to muse  
Upon old Aesop's fable, where he told  
What fate unto the mouse and frog befell.  
For language hath not sounds more like in sense,  
Than are these chances, if the origin  
And end of each be heedfully compar'd.  
And as one thought bursts from another forth,  
So afterward from that another sprang,  
Which added doubly to my former fear.  
For thus I reason'd: "These through us have been  
So foil'd, with loss and mock'ry so complete,  
As needs must sting them sore. If anger then  
Be to their evil will conjoin'd, more fell  
They shall pursue us, than the savage hound  
Snatches the leveret, panting 'twixt his jaws."

Already I perceiv'd my hair stand all  
On end with terror, and look'd eager back.

"Teacher," I thus began, "if speedily  
Thyself and me thou hide not, much I dread  
Those evil talons. Even now behind  
They urge us: quick imagination works  
So forcibly, that I already feel them."

He answer'd: "Were I form'd of leaded glass,  
I should not sooner draw unto myself  
Thy outward image, than I now imprint  
That from within. This moment came thy thoughts  
Presented before mine, with similar act  
And count'nance similar, so that from both  
I one design have fram'd. If the right coast  
Incline so much, that we may thence descend  
Into the other chasm, we shall escape  
Secure from this imagined pursuit."

He had not spoke his purpose to the end,  
When I from far beheld them with spread wings  
Approach to take us. Suddenly my guide  
Caught me, ev'n as a mother that from sleep  
Is by the noise arous'd, and near her sees  
The climbing fires, who snatches up her babe  
And flies ne'er pausing, careful more of him  
Than of herself, that but a single vest  
Clings round her limbs. Down from the jutting beach  
Supine he cast him, to that pendent rock,  
Which closes on one part the other chasm.

Never ran water with such hurrying pace  
Adown the tube to turn a landmill's wheel,  
When nearest it approaches to the spokes,  
As then along that edge my master ran,  
Carrying me in his bosom, as a child,  
Not a companion. Scarcely had his feet  
Reach'd to the lowest of the bed beneath,

When over us the steep they reach'd; but fear  
In him was none; for that high Providence,  
Which plac'd them ministers of the fifth foss,  
Power of departing thence took from them all.

There in the depth we saw a painted tribe,  
Who pac'd with tardy steps around, and wept,  
Faint in appearance and o'ercome with toil.  
Caps had they on, with hoods, that fell low down  
Before their eyes, in fashion like to those  
Worn by the monks in Cologne. Their outside  
Was overlaid with gold, dazzling to view,  
But leaden all within, and of such weight,  
That Frederick's compar'd to these were straw.  
Oh, everlasting wearisome attire!

We yet once more with them together turn'd  
To leftward, on their dismal moan intent.  
But by the weight oppress'd, so slowly came  
The fainting people, that our company  
Was chang'd at every movement of the step.

Whence I my guide address'd: "See that thou find  
Some spirit, whose name may by his deeds be known,  
And to that end look round thee as thou go'st."

Then one, who understood the Tuscan voice,  
Cried after us aloud: "Hold in your feet,  
Ye who so swiftly speed through the dusk air.  
Perchance from me thou shalt obtain thy wish."

Whereat my leader, turning, me bespake:  
"Pause, and then onward at their pace proceed."

I staid, and saw two Spirits in whose look  
Impatient eagerness of mind was mark'd  
To overtake me; but the load they bare  
And narrow path retarded their approach.

Soon as arriv'd, they with an eye askance  
Perus'd me, but spake not: then turning each  
To other thus conferring said: "This one  
Seems, by the action of his throat, alive.  
And, be they dead, what privilege allows  
They walk unmantled by the cumbrous stole?"

Then thus to me: "Tuscan, who visitest  
The college of the mourning hypocrites,  
Disdain not to instruct us who thou art."

"By Arno's pleasant stream," I thus replied,  
"In the great city I was bred and grew,  
And wear the body I have ever worn.  
but who are ye, from whom such mighty grief,  
As now I witness, courseth down your cheeks?  
What torment breaks forth in this bitter woe?"  
"Our bonnets gleaming bright with orange hue,"  
One of them answer'd, "are so leaden gross,  
That with their weight they make the balances  
To crack beneath them. Joyous friars we were,  
Bologna's natives, Catalano I,  
He Loderingo nam'd, and by thy land  
Together taken, as men used to take  
A single and indifferent arbiter,  
To reconcile their strifes. How there we sped,  
Gardingo's vicinage can best declare."

"O friars!" I began, "your miseries--"  
But there brake off, for one had caught my eye,  
Fix'd to a cross with three stakes on the ground:  
He, when he saw me, writh'd himself, throughout  
Distorted, ruffling with deep sighs his beard.  
And Catalano, who thereof was 'ware,

Thus spake: "That pierced spirit, whom intent  
Thou view'st, was he who gave the Pharisees  
Counsel, that it were fitting for one man  
To suffer for the people. He doth lie  
Transverse; nor any passes, but him first  
Behoves make feeling trial how each weighs.  
In straits like this along the foss are plac'd  
The father of his consort, and the rest  
Partakers in that council, seed of ill  
And sorrow to the Jews." I noted then,  
How Virgil gaz'd with wonder upon him,  
Thus abjectly extended on the cross  
In banishment eternal. To the friar  
He next his words address'd: "We pray ye tell,  
If so be lawful, whether on our right  
Lies any opening in the rock, whereby  
We both may issue hence, without constraint  
On the dark angels, that compell'd they come  
To lead us from this depth." He thus replied:  
"Nearer than thou dost hope, there is a rock  
From the next circle moving, which o'ersteps  
Each vale of horror, save that here his cope  
Is shatter'd. By the ruin ye may mount:  
For on the side it slants, and most the height

Rises below." With head bent down awhile  
My leader stood, then spake: "He warn'd us ill,  
Who yonder hangs the sinners on his hook."

To whom the friar: At Bologna erst  
"I many vices of the devil heard,  
Among the rest was said, 'He is a liar,  
And the father of lies!'" When he had spoke,  
My leader with large strides proceeded on,  
Somewhat disturb'd with anger in his look.

I therefore left the spirits heavy laden,  
And following, his beloved footsteps mark'd.

#### CANTO XXIV

IN the year's early nonage, when the sun  
Tempers his tresses in Aquarius' urn,  
And now towards equal day the nights recede,  
When as the rime upon the earth puts on  
Her dazzling sister's image, but not long  
Her milder sway endures, then riseth up  
The village hind, whom fails his wintry store,  
And looking out beholds the plain around  
All whiten'd, whence impatiently he smites  
His thighs, and to his hut returning in,  
There paces to and fro, wailing his lot,  
As a discomfited and helpless man;  
Then comes he forth again, and feels new hope  
Spring in his bosom, finding e'en thus soon  
The world hath chang'd its count'nance, grasps his crook,  
And forth to pasture drives his little flock:  
So me my guide dishearten'd when I saw  
His troubled forehead, and so speedily  
That ill was cur'd; for at the fallen bridge  
Arriving, towards me with a look as sweet,  
He turn'd him back, as that I first beheld  
At the steep mountain's foot. Regarding well  
The ruin, and some counsel first maintain'd  
With his own thought, he open'd wide his arm  
And took me up. As one, who, while he works,  
Computes his labour's issue, that he seems  
Still to foresee the' effect, so lifting me  
Up to the summit of one peak, he fix'd  
His eye upon another. "Grapple that,"  
Said he, "but first make proof, if it be such  
As will sustain thee." For one capp'd with lead  
This were no journey. Scarcely he, though light,  
And I, though onward push'd from crag to crag,  
Could mount. And if the precinct of this coast  
Were not less ample than the last, for him  
I know not, but my strength had surely fail'd.  
But Malebolge all toward the mouth  
Inclining of the nethermost abyss,  
The site of every valley hence requires,  
That one side upward slope, the other fall.

At length the point of our descent we reach'd  
From the last flag: soon as to that arriv'd,  
So was the breath exhausted from my lungs,  
I could no further, but did seat me there.

"Now needs thy best of man;" so spake my guide:  
"For not on downy plumes, nor under shade  
Of canopy reposing, fame is won,  
Without which whosoe'er consumes his days  
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth,  
As smoke in air or foam upon the wave.  
Thou therefore rise: vanish thy weariness  
By the mind's effort, in each struggle form'd  
To vanquish, if she suffer not the weight  
Of her corporeal frame to crush her down.  
A longer ladder yet remains to scale.  
From these to have escap'd sufficeth not.  
If well thou note me, profit by my words."

I straightway rose, and show'd myself less spent  
Than I in truth did feel me. "On," I cried,  
"For I am stout and fearless." Up the rock  
Our way we held, more rugged than before,  
Narrower and steeper far to climb. From talk  
I ceas'd not, as we journey'd, so to seem  
Least faint; whereat a voice from the other foss  
Did issue forth, for utt'rance suited ill.  
Though on the arch that crosses there I stood,  
What were the words I knew not, but who spake  
Seem'd mov'd in anger. Down I stoop'd to look,  
But my quick eye might reach not to the depth  
For shrouding darkness; wherefore thus I spake:  
"To the next circle, Teacher, bend thy steps,  
And from the wall dismount we; for as hence  
I hear and understand not, so I see  
Beneath, and naught discern."--"I answer not,"  
Said he, "but by the deed. To fair request  
Silent performance maketh best return."

We from the bridge's head descended, where  
To the eighth mound it joins, and then the chasm  
Opening to view, I saw a crowd within  
Of serpents terrible, so strange of shape  
And hideous, that remembrance in my veins  
Yet shrinks the vital current. Of her sands  
Let Lybia vaunt no more: if Jaculus,  
Pareas and Chelyder be her brood,  
Cenchrus and Amphisboena, plagues so dire  
Or in such numbers swarming ne'er she shew'd,  
Not with all Ethiopia, and whate'er  
Above the Erythraean sea is spawn'd.

Amid this dread exuberance of woe  
Ran naked spirits wing'd with horrid fear,  
Nor hope had they of crevice where to hide,  
Or heliotrope to charm them out of view.  
With serpents were their hands behind them bound,  
Which through their reins infix'd the tail and head

Twisted in folds before. And lo! on one  
Near to our side, darted an adder up,  
And, where the neck is on the shoulders tied,  
Transpierc'd him. Far more quickly than e'er pen  
Wrote O or I, he kindled, burn'd, and chang'd  
To ashes, all pour'd out upon the earth.  
When there dissolv'd he lay, the dust again  
Uproll'd spontaneous, and the self-same form  
Instant resumed. So mighty sages tell,  
The' Arabian Phoenix, when five hundred years  
Have well nigh circled, dies, and springs forthwith  
Renascent. Blade nor herb throughout his life  
He tastes, but tears of frankincense alone  
And odorous amomum: swaths of nard  
And myrrh his funeral shroud. As one that falls,  
He knows not how, by force demoniac dragg'd  
To earth, or through obstruction fettering up  
In chains invisible the powers of man,  
Who, risen from his trance, gazeth around,  
Bewilder'd with the monstrous agony  
He hath endur'd, and wildly staring sighs;  
So stood aghast the sinner when he rose.

Oh! how severe God's judgment, that deals out  
Such blows in stormy vengeance! Who he was  
My teacher next inquir'd, and thus in few  
He answer'd: "Vanni Fucci am I call'd,  
Not long since rained down from Tuscany  
To this dire gullet. Me the bestial life  
And not the human pleas'd, mule that I was,  
Who in Pistoia found my worthy den."

I then to Virgil: "Bid him stir not hence,  
And ask what crime did thrust him hither: once  
A man I knew him choleric and bloody."

The sinner heard and feign'd not, but towards me  
His mind directing and his face, wherein  
Was dismal shame depictur'd, thus he spake:  
"It grieves me more to have been caught by thee  
In this sad plight, which thou beholdest, than  
When I was taken from the other life.  
I have no power permitted to deny  
What thou inquirest. I am doom'd thus low  
To dwell, for that the sacristy by me  
Was rifled of its goodly ornaments,  
And with the guilt another falsely charged.  
But that thou mayst not joy to see me thus,  
So as thou e'er shalt 'scape this darksome realm  
Open thine ears and hear what I forebode.  
Reft of the Neri first Pistoia pines,  
Then Florence changeth citizens and laws.  
From Valdimagra, drawn by wrathful Mars,  
A vapour rises, wrapt in turbid mists,  
And sharp and eager driveth on the storm  
With arrowy hurtling o'er Piceno's field,  
Whence suddenly the cloud shall burst, and strike  
Each helpless Bianco prostrate to the ground.  
This have I told, that grief may rend thy heart."



## CANTO XXV

WHEN he had spoke, the sinner rais'd his hands  
Pointed in mockery, and cried: "Take them, God!  
I level them at thee!" From that day forth  
The serpents were my friends; for round his neck  
One of then rolling twisted, as it said,  
"Be silent, tongue!" Another to his arms  
Upgliding, tied them, riveting itself  
So close, it took from them the power to move.

Pistoia! Ah Pistoia! why dost doubt  
To turn thee into ashes, cumb'ring earth  
No longer, since in evil act so far  
Thou hast outdone thy seed? I did not mark,  
Through all the gloomy circles of the' abyss,  
Spirit, that swell'd so proudly 'gainst his God,  
Not him, who headlong fell from Thebes. He fled,  
Nor utter'd more; and after him there came  
A centaur full of fury, shouting, "Where  
Where is the caitiff?" On Maremma's marsh  
Swarm not the serpent tribe, as on his haunch  
They swarm'd, to where the human face begins.  
Behind his head upon the shoulders lay,  
With open wings, a dragon breathing fire  
On whomsoe'er he met. To me my guide:  
"Cacus is this, who underneath the rock  
Of Aventine spread oft a lake of blood.  
He, from his brethren parted, here must tread  
A different journey, for his fraudulent theft  
Of the great herd, that near him stall'd; whence found  
His felon deeds their end, beneath the mace  
Of stout Alcides, that perchance laid on  
A hundred blows, and not the tenth was felt."

While yet he spake, the centaur sped away:  
And under us three spirits came, of whom  
Nor I nor he was ware, till they exclaim'd;  
"Say who are ye?" We then brake off discourse,  
Intent on these alone. I knew them not;  
But, as it chanceth oft, befell, that one  
Had need to name another. "Where," said he,  
"Doth Cianfa lurk?" I, for a sign my guide  
Should stand attentive, plac'd against my lips  
The finger lifted. If, O reader! now  
Thou be not apt to credit what I tell,  
No marvel; for myself do scarce allow  
The witness of mine eyes. But as I looked  
Toward them, lo! a serpent with six feet  
Springs forth on one, and fastens full upon him:  
His midmost grasp'd the belly, a forefoot  
Seiz'd on each arm (while deep in either cheek  
He flesh'd his fangs); the hinder on the thighs  
Were spread, 'twixt which the tail inserted curl'd  
Upon the reins behind. Ivy ne'er clasp'd

A dodder'd oak, as round the other's limbs  
The hideous monster interwin'd his own.  
Then, as they both had been of burning wax,  
Each melted into other, mingling hues,  
That which was either now was seen no more.  
Thus up the shrinking paper, ere it burns,  
A brown tint glides, not turning yet to black,  
And the clean white expires. The other two  
Look'd on exclaiming: "Ah, how dost thou change,  
Agnello! See! Thou art nor double now,

"Nor only one." The two heads now became  
One, and two figures blended in one form  
Appear'd, where both were lost. Of the four lengths  
Two arms were made: the belly and the chest  
The thighs and legs into such members chang'd,  
As never eye hath seen. Of former shape  
All trace was vanish'd. Two yet neither seem'd  
That image miscreate, and so pass'd on  
With tardy steps. As underneath the scourge  
Of the fierce dog-star, that lays bare the fields,  
Shifting from brake to brake, the lizard seems  
A flash of lightning, if he thwart the road,  
So toward th' entrails of the other two  
Approaching seem'd, an adder all on fire,  
As the dark pepper-grain, livid and swart.  
In that part, whence our life is nourish'd first,  
One he transpierc'd; then down before him fell  
Stretch'd out. The pierced spirit look'd on him  
But spake not; yea stood motionless and yawn'd,  
As if by sleep or fev'rous fit assail'd.  
He ey'd the serpent, and the serpent him.  
One from the wound, the other from the mouth  
Breath'd a thick smoke, whose vap'ry columns join'd.

Lucan in mute attention now may hear,  
Nor thy disastrous fate, Sabellus! tell,  
Nor shine, Nasidius! Ovid now be mute.  
What if in warbling fiction he record  
Cadmus and Arethusa, to a snake  
Him chang'd, and her into a fountain clear,  
I envy not; for never face to face  
Two natures thus transmuted did he sing,  
Wherein both shapes were ready to assume  
The other's substance. They in mutual guise  
So answer'd, that the serpent split his train  
Divided to a fork, and the pierc'd spirit  
Drew close his steps together, legs and thighs  
Compacted, that no sign of juncture soon  
Was visible: the tail disparted took  
The figure which the spirit lost, its skin  
Soft'ning, his indurated to a rind.  
The shoulders next I mark'd, that ent'ring join'd  
The monster's arm-pits, whose two shorter feet  
So lengthen'd, as the other's dwindling shrunk.  
The feet behind then twisting up became  
That part that man conceals, which in the wretch  
Was cleft in twain. While both the shadowy smoke  
With a new colour veils, and generates

Th' excrescent pile on one, peeling it off  
From th' other body, lo! upon his feet  
One upright rose, and prone the other fell.  
Not yet their glaring and malignant lamps  
Were shifted, though each feature chang'd beneath.  
Of him who stood erect, the mounting face  
Retreated towards the temples, and what there  
Superfluous matter came, shot out in ears  
From the smooth cheeks, the rest, not backward dragg'd,  
Of its excess did shape the nose; and swell'd  
Into due size protuberant the lips.  
He, on the earth who lay, meanwhile extends  
His sharpen'd visage, and draws down the ears  
Into the head, as doth the slug his horns.  
His tongue continuous before and apt  
For utt'rance, severs; and the other's fork  
Closing unites. That done the smoke was laid.  
The soul, transform'd into the brute, glides off,  
Hissing along the vale, and after him  
The other talking sputters; but soon turn'd  
His new-grown shoulders on him, and in few  
Thus to another spake: "Along this path  
Crawling, as I have done, speed Buoso now!"

So saw I fluctuate in successive change  
Th' unsteady ballast of the seventh hold:  
And here if aught my tongue have swerv'd, events  
So strange may be its warrant. O'er mine eyes  
Confusion hung, and on my thoughts amaze.

Yet 'scap'd they not so covertly, but well  
I mark'd Sciancato: he alone it was  
Of the three first that came, who chang'd not: thou,  
The other's fate, Gaville, still dost rue.

## CANTO XXVI

FLORENCE exult! for thou so mightily  
Hast thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings  
Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell!  
Among the plund'ers such the three I found  
Thy citizens, whence shame to me thy son,  
And no proud honour to thyself redounds.

But if our minds, when dreaming near the dawn,  
Are of the truth presageful, thou ere long  
Shalt feel what Prato, (not to say the rest)  
Would fain might come upon thee; and that chance  
Were in good time, if it befell thee now.  
Would so it were, since it must needs befall!  
For as time wears me, I shall grieve the more.

We from the depth departed; and my guide  
Remounting scal'd the flinty steps, which late  
We downward trac'd, and drew me up the steep.  
Pursuing thus our solitary way

Among the crags and splinters of the rock,  
Sped not our feet without the help of hands.

Then sorrow seiz'd me, which e'en now revives,  
As my thought turns again to what I saw,  
And, more than I am wont, I rein and curb  
The powers of nature in me, lest they run  
Where Virtue guides not; that if aught of good  
My gentle star, or something better gave me,  
I envy not myself the precious boon.

As in that season, when the sun least veils  
His face that lightens all, what time the fly  
Gives way to the shrill gnat, the peasant then  
Upon some cliff reclin'd, beneath him sees  
Fire-flies innumerable spangling o'er the vale,  
Vineyard or tilth, where his day-labour lies:  
With flames so numberless throughout its space  
Shone the eighth chasm, apparent, when the depth  
Was to my view expos'd. As he, whose wrongs  
The bears aveng'd, at its departure saw  
Elijah's chariot, when the steeds erect  
Rais'd their steep flight for heav'n; his eyes meanwhile,  
Straining pursu'd them, till the flame alone  
Upsoaring like a misty speck he kenn'd;  
E'en thus along the gulf moves every flame,  
A sinner so enfolded close in each,  
That none exhibits token of the theft.

Upon the bridge I forward bent to look,  
And grasp'd a flinty mass, or else had fall'n,  
Though push'd not from the height. The guide, who mark'd  
How I did gaze attentive, thus began:

"Within these ardours are the spirits, each  
Swath'd in confining fire."--"Master, thy word,"  
I answer'd, "hath assur'd me; yet I deem'd  
Already of the truth, already wish'd  
To ask thee, who is in yon fire, that comes  
So parted at the summit, as it seem'd  
Ascending from that funeral pile, where lay  
The Theban brothers?" He replied: "Within  
Ulysses there and Diomedes endure  
Their penal tortures, thus to vengeance now  
Together hasting, as erewhile to wrath.  
These in the flame with ceaseless groans deplore  
The ambush of the horse, that open'd wide  
A portal for that goodly seed to pass,  
Which sow'd imperial Rome; nor less the guile  
Lament they, whence of her Achilles 'reft  
Deidamia yet in death complains.  
And there is rued the stratagem, that Troy  
Of her Palladium spoil'd."--"If they have power  
Of utterance from within these sparks," said I,  
"O master! think my prayer a thousand fold  
In repetition urg'd, that thou vouchsafe  
To pause, till here the horned flame arrive.  
See, how toward it with desire I bend."

He thus: "Thy prayer is worthy of much praise,  
And I accept it therefore: but do thou  
Thy tongue refrain: to question them be mine,  
For I divine thy wish: and they perchance,  
For they were Greeks, might shun discourse with thee."

When there the flame had come, where time and place  
Seem'd fitting to my guide, he thus began:  
"O ye, who dwell two spirits in one fire!  
If living I of you did merit aught,  
Whate'er the measure were of that desert,  
When in the world my lofty strain I pour'd,  
Move ye not on, till one of you unfold  
In what clime death o'ertook him self-destroy'd."

Of the old flame forthwith the greater horn  
Began to roll, murmuring, as a fire  
That labours with the wind, then to and fro  
Wagging the top, as a tongue uttering sounds,  
Threw out its voice, and spake: "When I escap'd  
From Circe, who beyond a circling year  
Had held me near Caieta, by her charms,  
Ere thus Aeneas yet had nam'd the shore,  
Nor fondness for my son, nor reverence  
Of my old father, nor return of love,  
That should have crown'd Penelope with joy,  
Could overcome in me the zeal I had  
T' explore the world, and search the ways of life,  
Man's evil and his virtue. Forth I sail'd  
Into the deep illimitable main,  
With but one bark, and the small faithful band  
That yet cleav'd to me. As Iberia far,  
Far as Morocco either shore I saw,  
And the Sardinian and each isle beside  
Which round that ocean bathes. Tardy with age  
Were I and my companions, when we came  
To the strait pass, where Hercules ordain'd  
The bound'ries not to be o'erstepp'd by man.  
The walls of Seville to my right I left,  
On the' other hand already Ceuta past.

"O brothers!" I began, "who to the west  
Through perils without number now have reach'd,  
To this the short remaining watch, that yet  
Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof  
Of the unpeopled world, following the track  
Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence we sprang:  
Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes  
But virtue to pursue and knowledge high.  
With these few words I sharpen'd for the voyage  
The mind of my associates, that I then  
Could scarcely have withheld them. To the dawn  
Our poop we turn'd, and for the witless flight  
Made our oars wings, still gaining on the left.  
Each star of the' other pole night now beheld,  
And ours so low, that from the ocean-floor  
It rose not. Five times re-illum'd, as oft  
Vanish'd the light from underneath the moon  
Since the deep way we enter'd, when from far

Appear'd a mountain dim, loftiest methought  
Of all I e'er beheld. Joy seiz'd us straight,  
But soon to mourning changed. From the new land  
A whirlwind sprung, and at her foremost side  
Did strike the vessel. Thrice it whirl'd her round  
With all the waves, the fourth time lifted up  
The poop, and sank the prow: so fate decreed:  
And over us the booming billow clos'd."

## CANTO XVII

NOW upward rose the flame, and still'd its light  
To speak no more, and now pass'd on with leave  
From the mild poet gain'd, when following came  
Another, from whose top a sound confus'd,  
Forth issuing, drew our eyes that way to look.

As the Sicilian bull, that rightfully  
His cries first echoed, who had shap'd its mould,  
Did so rebellow, with the voice of him  
Tormented, that the brazen monster seem'd  
Pierc'd through with pain; thus while no way they found  
Nor avenue immediate through the flame,  
Into its language turn'd the dismal words:  
But soon as they had won their passage forth,  
Up from the point, which vibrating obey'd  
Their motion at the tongue, these sounds we heard:  
"O thou! to whom I now direct my voice!  
That lately didst exclaim in Lombard phrase,

"Depart thou, I solicit thee no more,  
Though somewhat tardy I perchance arrive  
Let it not irk thee here to pause awhile,  
And with me parley: lo! it irks not me  
And yet I burn. If but e'en now thou fall  
into this blind world, from that pleasant land  
Of Latium, whence I draw my sum of guilt,  
Tell me if those, who in Romagna dwell,  
Have peace or war. For of the mountains there  
Was I, betwixt Urbino and the height,  
Whence Tyber first unlocks his mighty flood."

Leaning I listen'd yet with heedful ear,  
When, as he touch'd my side, the leader thus:  
"Speak thou: he is a Latian." My reply  
Was ready, and I spake without delay:

"O spirit! who art hidden here below!  
Never was thy Romagna without war  
In her proud tyrants' bosoms, nor is now:  
But open war there left I none. The state,  
Ravenna hath maintain'd this many a year,  
Is steadfast. There Polenta's eagle broods,  
And in his broad circumference of plume  
O'ershadows Cervia. The green talons grasp  
The land, that stood erewhile the proof so long,

And pil'd in bloody heap the host of France.

"The' old mastiff of Verruchio and the young,  
That tore Montagna in their wrath, still make,  
Where they are wont, an augre of their fangs.

"Lamone's city and Santerno's range  
Under the lion of the snowy lair.  
Inconstant partisan! that changeth sides,  
Or ever summer yields to winter's frost.  
And she, whose flank is wash'd of Savio's wave,  
As 'twixt the level and the steep she lies,  
Lives so 'twixt tyrant power and liberty.

"Now tell us, I entreat thee, who art thou?  
Be not more hard than others. In the world,  
So may thy name still rear its forehead high."

Then roar'd awhile the fire, its sharpen'd point  
On either side wav'd, and thus breath'd at last:  
"If I did think, my answer were to one,  
Who ever could return unto the world,  
This flame should rest unshaken. But since ne'er,  
If true be told me, any from this depth  
Has found his upward way, I answer thee,  
Nor fear lest infamy record the words.

"A man of arms at first, I cloth'd me then  
In good Saint Francis' girdle, hoping so  
T' have made amends. And certainly my hope  
Had fail'd not, but that he, whom curses light on,  
The' high priest again seduc'd me into sin.  
And how and wherefore listen while I tell.  
Long as this spirit mov'd the bones and pulp  
My mother gave me, less my deeds bespake  
The nature of the lion than the fox.  
All ways of winding subtlety I knew,  
And with such art conducted, that the sound  
Reach'd the world's limit. Soon as to that part  
Of life I found me come, when each behoves  
To lower sails and gather in the lines;  
That which before had pleased me then I rued,  
And to repentance and confession turn'd;  
Wretch that I was! and well it had bested me!  
The chief of the new Pharisees meantime,  
Waging his warfare near the Lateran,  
Not with the Saracens or Jews (his foes  
All Christians were, nor against Acre one  
Had fought, nor traffic'd in the Soldan's land),  
He his great charge nor sacred ministry  
In himself, rev'renc'd, nor in me that cord,  
Which us'd to mark with leanness whom it girded.  
As in Socrate, Constantine besought  
To cure his leprosy Sylvester's aid,  
So me to cure the fever of his pride  
This man besought: my counsel to that end  
He ask'd: and I was silent: for his words  
Seem'd drunken: but forthwith he thus resum'd:  
'From thy heart banish fear: of all offence

I hitherto absolve thee. In return,  
Teach me my purpose so to execute,  
That Penestrino cumber earth no more.  
Heav'n, as thou knowest, I have power to shut  
And open: and the keys are therefore twain,  
The which my predecessor meanly priz'd."

Then, yielding to the forceful arguments,  
Of silence as more perilous I deem'd,  
And answer'd: "Father! since thou washest me  
Clear of that guilt wherein I now must fall,  
Large promise with performance scant, be sure,  
Shall make thee triumph in thy lofty seat."

"When I was number'd with the dead, then came  
Saint Francis for me; but a cherub dark  
He met, who cried: "Wrong me not; he is mine,  
And must below to join the wretched crew,  
For the deceitful counsel which he gave.  
E'er since I watch'd him, hov'ring at his hair,  
No power can the impenitent absolve;  
Nor to repent and will at once consist,  
By contradiction absolute forbid."  
Oh mis'ry! how I shook myself, when he  
Seiz'd me, and cried, "Thou haply thought'st me not  
A disputant in logic so exact."  
To Minos down he bore me, and the judge  
Twin'd eight times round his callous back the tail,  
Which biting with excess of rage, he spake:  
"This is a guilty soul, that in the fire  
Must vanish. Hence perdition-doom'd I rove  
A prey to rankling sorrow in this garb."

When he had thus fulfill'd his words, the flame  
In dolour parted, beating to and fro,  
And writhing its sharp horn. We onward went,  
I and my leader, up along the rock,  
Far as another arch, that overhangs  
The foss, wherein the penalty is paid  
Of those, who load them with committed sin.

## CANTO XXVIII

WHO, e'en in words unfetter'd, might at full  
Tell of the wounds and blood that now I saw,  
Though he repeated oft the tale? No tongue  
So vast a theme could equal, speech and thought  
Both impotent alike. If in one band  
Collected, stood the people all, who e'er  
Pour'd on Apulia's happy soil their blood,  
Slain by the Trojans, and in that long war  
When of the rings the measur'd booty made  
A pile so high, as Rome's historian writes  
Who errs not, with the multitude, that felt  
The grinding force of Guiscard's Norman steel,  
And those the rest, whose bones are gather'd yet



At Ceperano, there where treachery  
Branded th' Apulian name, or where beyond  
Thy walls, O Tagliacozzo, without arms  
The old Alardo conquer'd; and his limbs  
One were to show transpierc'd, another his  
Clean lopt away; a spectacle like this  
Were but a thing of nought, to the' hideous sight  
Of the ninth chasm. A rundlet, that hath lost  
Its middle or side stave, gapes not so wide,  
As one I mark'd, torn from the chin throughout  
Down to the hinder passage: 'twixt the legs  
Dangling his entrails hung, the midriff lay  
Open to view, and wretched ventricle,  
That turns th' englutted aliment to dross.

Whilst eagerly I fix on him my gaze,  
He ey'd me, with his hands laid his breast bare,  
And cried; "Now mark how I do rip me! lo!

"How is Mohammed mangled! before me  
Walks Ali weeping, from the chin his face  
Cleft to the forelock; and the others all  
Whom here thou seest, while they liv'd, did sow  
Scandal and schism, and therefore thus are rent.  
A fiend is here behind, who with his sword  
Hacks us thus cruelly, slivering again  
Each of this ream, when we have compast round  
The dismal way, for first our gashes close  
Ere we repass before him. But say who  
Art thou, that standest musing on the rock,  
Haply so lingering to delay the pain  
Sentenc'd upon thy crimes?"--"Him death not yet,"  
My guide rejoin'd, "hath overta'en, nor sin  
Conducts to torment; but, that he may make  
Full trial of your state, I who am dead  
Must through the depths of hell, from orb to orb,  
Conduct him. Trust my words, for they are true."

More than a hundred spirits, when that they heard,  
Stood in the foss to mark me, through amazed,  
Forgetful of their pangs. "Thou, who perchance  
Shalt shortly view the sun, this warning thou  
Bear to Dolcino: bid him, if he wish not  
Here soon to follow me, that with good store  
Of food he arm him, lest impris'ning snows  
Yield him a victim to Novara's power,  
No easy conquest else." With foot uprais'd  
For stepping, spake Mohammed, on the ground  
Then fix'd it to depart. Another shade,  
Pierc'd in the throat, his nostrils mutilate  
E'en from beneath the eyebrows, and one ear  
Lopt off, who with the rest through wonder stood  
Gazing, before the rest advanc'd, and bar'd  
His wind-pipe, that without was all o'ersmear'd  
With crimson stain. "O thou!" said he, "whom sin  
Condemns not, and whom erst (unless too near  
Resemblance do deceive me) I aloft  
Have seen on Latian ground, call thou to mind  
Piero of Medicina, if again

Returning, thou behold'st the pleasant land  
That from Verucelli slopes to Mercabo;

"And there instruct the twain, whom Fano boasts  
Her worthiest sons, Guido and Angelo,  
That if 't is giv'n us here to scan aright  
The future, they out of life's tenement  
Shall be cast forth, and whelm'd under the waves  
Near to Cattolica, through perfidy  
Of a fell tyrant. 'Twixt the Cyprian isle  
And Balearic, ne'er hath Neptune seen  
An injury so foul, by pirates done  
Or Argive crew of old. That one-ey'd traitor  
(Whose realm there is a spirit here were fain  
His eye had still lack'd sight of) them shall bring  
To confrence with him, then so shape his end,  
That they shall need not 'gainst Focara's wind  
Offer up vow nor pray'r." I answering thus:

"Declare, as thou dost wish that I above  
May carry tidings of thee, who is he,  
In whom that sight doth wake such sad remembrance?"

Forthwith he laid his hand on the cheek-bone  
Of one, his fellow-spirit, and his jaws  
Expanding, cried: "Lo! this is he I wot of;  
He speaks not for himself: the outcast this  
Who overwhelm'd the doubt in Caesar's mind,  
Affirming that delay to men prepar'd  
Was ever harmful." Oh how terrified  
Methought was Curio, from whose throat was cut  
The tongue, which spake that hardy word. Then one  
Maim'd of each hand, uplifted in the gloom  
The bleeding stumps, that they with gory spots  
Sullied his face, and cried: "'Remember thee  
Of Mosca, too, I who, alas! exclaim'd,  
'The deed once done there is an end,' that prov'd  
A seed of sorrow to the Tuscan race."

I added: "Ay, and death to thine own tribe."

Whence heaping woe on woe he hurried off,  
As one grief stung to madness. But I there  
Still linger'd to behold the troop, and saw  
Things, such as I may fear without more proof  
To tell of, but that conscience makes me firm,  
The boon companion, who her strong breast-plate  
Buckles on him, that feels no guilt within  
And bids him on and fear not. Without doubt  
I saw, and yet it seems to pass before me,  
A headless trunk, that even as the rest  
Of the sad flock pac'd onward. By the hair  
It bore the sever'd member, lantern-wise  
Pendent in hand, which look'd at us and said,

"Woe's me!" The spirit lighted thus himself,  
And two there were in one, and one in two.  
How that may be he knows who ordereth so.

When at the bridge's foot direct he stood,  
His arm aloft he rear'd, thrusting the head  
Full in our view, that nearer we might hear  
The words, which thus it utter'd: "Now behold  
This grievous torment, thou, who breathing go'st  
To spy the dead; behold if any else  
Be terrible as this. And that on earth  
Thou mayst bear tidings of me, know that I  
Am Bertrand, he of Born, who gave King John  
The counsel mischievous. Father and son  
I set at mutual war. For Absalom  
And David more did not Ahitophel,  
Spurring them on maliciously to strife.  
For parting those so closely knit, my brain  
Parted, alas! I carry from its source,  
That in this trunk inhabits. Thus the law  
Of retribution fiercely works in me."

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