Dante's Divine Comedy

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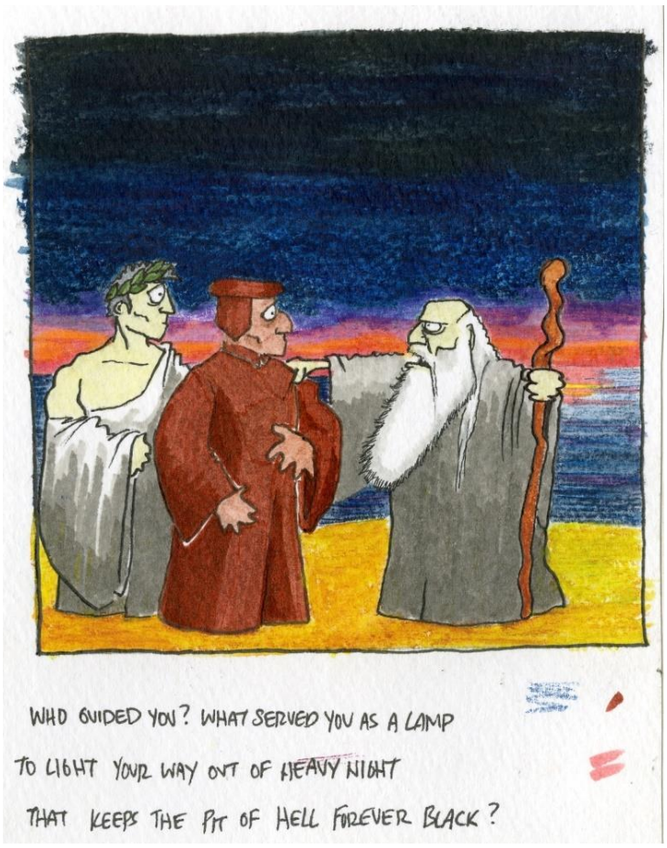
Illustrated by Stephen Lahey

Book Two

Purgatorio

1. Introduction to the Purgatorio
The Shore of the Island of Purgatory. Cato

To run o'er better water hoists her sails
the little vessel of my genius now,
which leaves behind her such a cruel sea;
and of that second Realm I 'll sing, wherein
the human spirit purifies itself,
and groweth worthy to ascend to Heaven.
But here let Poetry arise from death,
since, holy Muses, yours I am; and let
Calliopë, here somewhat higher soaring,
with those sweet tones accompany my song,
whose power the miserable Magpies felt
so keenly, that of pardon they despaired.
The oriental sapphire's tender hue,
now gathering in the sky's unclouded face,
as far as to the first of circles pure,
began again to give mine eyes delight,
when forth I issued from the deadly air,
which with its gloom had filled mine eyes and heart.
The beauteous planet which incites to love,
veiling with light the Fishes in her train,
was causing all the eastern sky to laugh.
Round to the right I turned, and set my mind
upon the other pole, and saw four stars,
never perceived, save by the first of men.
The sky appeared to enjoy their little flames.
region of the North, that widowed art,
because deprived of gazing thereupon!
When I had from the sight of them withdrawn,
turning a little toward the other pole,
whence now the Wain had wholly disappeared,
a lone Old Man beside me I perceived,
deserving of such reverence in his looks,
that no son owes his father any more.
Long was the beard he wore, and partly white,
as likewise was the hair upon his head,
two locks of which hung down upon his breast.
And so the rays of those four holy stars
adorned his face with splendor, that to me course
he looked as if the sun were facing him.
"Who, then, are ye, that 'gainst the blind stream's
have from the eternal Prison escaped?" he said,
moving the while those venerable locks.
"Who led you, or what served you as a lamp,
when forth ye issued from the night profound,
which makes the infernal Vale forever black?
Are broken thus the laws of Hell's abyss,
or through new counsel is there change in Heaven,
that ye, though damned, are come to these my cliffs?"
My Leader thereupon took hold of me,
and with his words and with his hands and signs
imposed respect upon my legs and brow.
He then replied: "I came not of myself;
from Heaven came down a Lady, at whose prayer
I helped this man with my companionship.
But since thy will it is that our true state
should be explained to thee more clearly, mine
it cannot be that this should be denied thee.

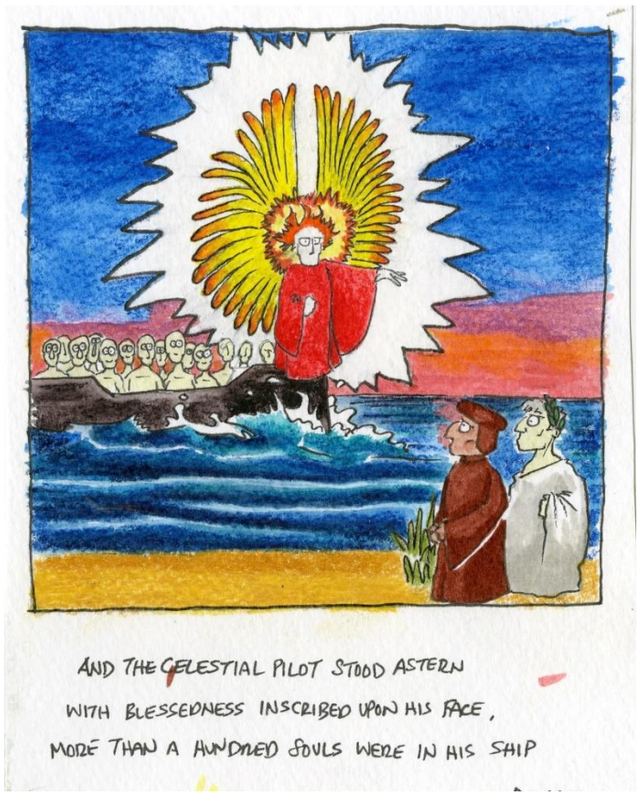


Not yet hath this man his last evening seen;
but through his folly was so near to it,
that he was left but very little time.
As I have told thee, I was sent to save
his life; nor was there any other way
than this, to which I have addressed myself.
I 've shown him all the people who are guilty;
and now I mean those spirits to reveal,
who 'neath thy jurisdiction cleanse themselves.
Long would it take to tell thee how I led him;
virtue descendeth from on high, which helps me
lead him to see thee and to hear thee speak.
His coming, therefore, please to welcome; Freedom
he seeks, which is so dear, as knoweth he
who gives up life therefor. This thou dost know,
since death for its sake was not bitter to thee
in Utica, where thou didst leave the robe,
which on the Great Day will so brightly shine.
The eternal edicts are not void through us;
for this man lives, and I 'm not bound by Minos;
but of that circle am, wherein the eyes
of thy chaste Marcia are, O holy breast,
whose looks implore thee still to hold her thine;
for love of her, then, yield thee unto us!
Permit us through thy seven domains to go.
My grateful praise of thee I 'll bear to her,
if to be mentioned there below thou deign."
"Marcia so pleased mine eyes," he then replied,
"that, while upon the other side I was,
I granted all the favors she desired.
Now that she dwells beyond the evil stream,
no longer can she move me, by the law
made at the moment when I issued thence.
But if a Lady of Heaven impel and guide thee,
as thou hast said, no need of flattering prayers;
suffice it thee that for her sake thou ask.
Go, then, and see that with a leafless rush

thou gird this man, and that thou wash his face,
so that therefrom all foulness thou remove;
for ’t were not fit he went, with eyes o’ercast
by any mist, before the first of those
who serve as Ministers of Paradise.
This little isle around its lowest base,
down yonder where the waves are beating it,
produces rushes on its yielding ooze.
No other plant, like one that brought forth leaves,
or hardened, can maintain its life down there,
because it yields not when receiving blows.
Thereafter be not hither your return;
the sun, which rises now, will show you how
to climb the Mountain by the easiest slope.”
Thereat he disappeared; and I arose
without a word, and to my Leader’s side
I closely drew, and toward him turned mine eyes.
And he began: “Son, follow thou my steps;
let us turn backward, for the shore slopes down
on this side toward its lowly boundaries.”
The dawn was vanquishing the morning breeze,
which fled before it, so that, from afar,
I recognized the shimmering of the sea.
We now were going o’er the lonely plain,
as one who to a road he lost returns,
and, till he find it, seems to go in vain.
When we were there, where with the sun the dew
still struggles on, through being in a place
where, for the breeze, it slowly melts away,
my Teacher, having spread out both his hands,
rested them gently on the tender grass;
whence I, who of his purpose was aware,
yielded to him the cheeks my tears had stained;
he then brought all that natural color back,
which Hell had on my countenance concealed.
We came thereafter to that lonely shore,
which never saw its waters sailed by one
who afterward experienced a return.
Here, as the other pleased, he girded me.
wondrous sight! For, like the humble plant
which he had chosen, another instantly
sprang forth again from where he tore the first.

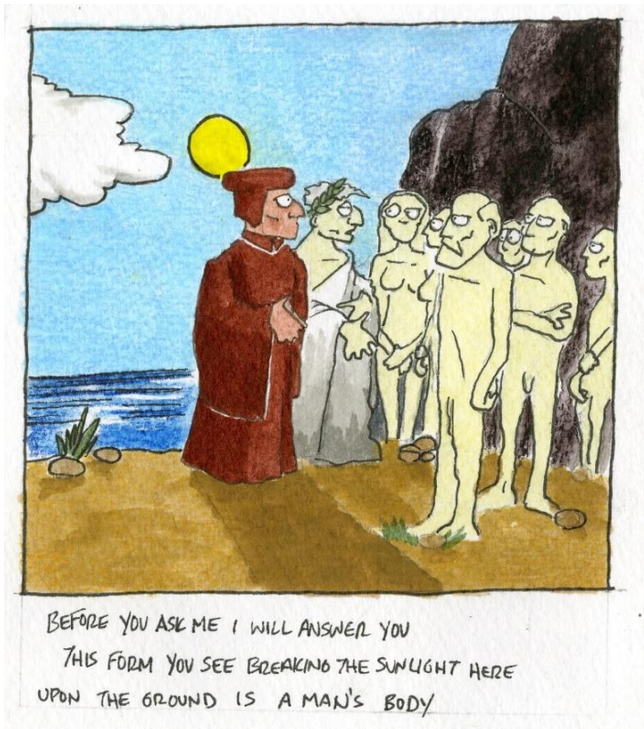
2. The Shore of the Island of Purgatory
The Angel Pilot and Arriving Souls

And now already had the sun arrived
at that horizon, whose meridian circle
rests with its zenith o’er Jerusalem;
and Night, which circles opposite thereto,
was issuing from the Ganges with the Scales,
which, when she gains, are falling from her hands;
so that the white and pure vermilion cheeks
of beautiful Aurora, where I was,
were turning orange through excessive age.
Along the seaside we were lingering still,
like folk who, taking thought about their road,
go on in heart, but with their body stay;
when lo, as, at the approach of morning, Mars,
because of heavy vapors, groweth red



down in the West above the ocean’s floor;
even so I saw — may I again behold it! —
a light which o’er the sea so swiftly moved,
that no flight is as rapid as its motion;
from which when I a moment had withdrawn
mine eyes, to ask a question of my Leader,
again I saw it grown more bright and large.
And on each side of it there then appeared
I knew not what white thing, and underneath
little by little came another forth.
Meanwhile my Teacher uttered not a word
until the first white objects looked like wings;
then, having recognized the Pilot well,
he cried: “See, see now that thou bend thy knees!
This is God’s Angel; fold thy hands! Henceforth
shalt thou behold such officers as this.
See how he so scorns human instruments,
as to wish neither oar, nor other sail
than his own wings, between such distant shores!
See how he holds them straight up toward the sky,
stroking the air with those eternal plumes,
which do not moult as mortal feathers do!”
And then, as more and more the Bird divine
drew near to us, the brighter he appeared;
therefore mine eyes endured him not near by,
but down I cast them; with a little boat
he came ashore, so agile and so light,
the water swallowed up no part of it.
Such on its stern the heavenly Pilot stood,
that he would bless one, were he but described;
more than a hundred spirits sat within.
“When Israel out of Egypt came,” they all
in unison were singing there together,
with what is written after in that psalm.
Then, having signed them with the holy Cross,
whereat all cast themselves upon the shore,
he went away as swiftly as he came.
The crowd which stayed seemed strangers to the place,
and gazed around them there, as doth a man,

who with unwonted things acquaints himself.
The sun, which from the middle of the sky
had hunted Capricorn with arrows bright,
was shooting forth the day on every side,
when those new people raised their brows toward us,
and said: “If ye know how, point out to us
the road that one should take to reach the Mount.”
And Virgil answered: “Ye, perchance, believe
that we have had experience of this place;
but we are pilgrim-strangers like yourselves.
We came just now, a little while before you,
but by another way, so rough and hard,
that going up will now seem play to us.”
The souls who, by my breathing, had become
aware that I was still a living being,
in their astonishment turned death-like pale;
and as around a messenger who bears
the olive, people surge to hear the news,
and, as to crowding, none of them seem shy;
so one and all those fortune-favored souls
fixed on my face their gaze, as if forgetting
to go and make their spirits beautiful.
Then one among them I beheld advance,
in such a loving manner, to embrace me,
that it persuaded me to do the like.
O, save in your appearance, empty shades!
Three times behind it did I clasp my hands,
and to my breast therewith as oft returned.
With wonder, I believe, I painted me;
smiling because of this, the shade drew back,
while, following after, I pressed further on.
With gentle words he told me to desist;
then who it was I knew, and begged of him
to stop a little while and speak with me.
“As thee I loved, when in my mortal body,”
he answered me, “even so, when freed, I love thee;
therefore I stop; but wherefore goest thou?”
“Casella mine,” said I, “I take this journey,
that where I am I may return again;
but why from thee hath so much time been taken?”
And he to me: “No outrage hath been done me,
if he, who takes both when and whom he likes,
hath more than once refused me passage here;
for to a Righteous Will is his conformed;
yet peacefully, these three months, hath he taken
whoever wished to enter into his boat.
Hence I, who now was toward the sea-shore bent,
where Tiber’s water mingles with the salt,
was with benignity received by him
at yonder river’s mouth, toward which his wings
ev’n now are turned; for those who go not down
toward Acheron, always assemble there.”
And I: “If some new law take not from thee
the memory or the practice of the song
of love, which used to quiet all my longings,
be pleased a little to console therewith
my spirit, which, because of coming here
when in its body, is so sore distressed!”
“The love that talketh with me in my mind,”
he thereupon began to sing so sweetly,
that still within me is its sweetness heard.
My Teacher, I, and those that with him were,
seemed as contented, as if none of us
had any other thing upon his mind.
Absorbed in listening to his notes, we all
were motionless; when lo, the grave Old Man,
who cried: “Ye laggard spirits, what is this?
What means this negligence and standing still?
Run to the Mount, and strip ye off the slough,
which lets not God be visible to you.”
Ev’n as, when picking grains of wheat or tares,
doves, met together at their feeding, calm,
and not displaying their accustomed pride,
if anything appear that frightens them,
all of a sudden leave their food alone,
because assailed by greater cause for care;
even so I saw that new-come family
give up the song, and toward the hillside move,
like one who goes, but whither knoweth not;
nor was in less haste our departure made.



3. Antepurgatory
The Repentant who died Excommunicated

Although their sudden flight had scattered them
over the plain, and turned them toward the Mount,
where Justice probes us with its penalties,
more closely to my faithful mate I drew.
And how without him had I run my race,
or who had drawn me up the Mountain’s side?
To me he seemed o’erwhelmed with self-reproach.
conscience, when both dignified and clear,
how sharp a bite a slight fault is to thee!
When once his feet had given up the haste,
which of their dignity deprives all acts,
my mind, to one thought limited at first,
enlarged its scope with eager interest now;
and toward that Mountain I addressed my gaze,
which skyward rises highest from the sea.
The sun, which back of us was flaming red,
in front of me was broken in the shape

wherein I lent its rays a resting place.
I turned, and at my side I looked, afraid
of having been abandoned, when I saw
the ground was dark in front of me alone.
When wholly turned, my Comforter began:
“Why still distrustful? Dost thou not believe
that I am with thee, and am guiding thee?
’T is evening now where buried lies the body,
wherein I cast a shadow; Naples now
possesses it; from Brindisi ’t was taken.
If, then, in front of me no shadow fall,
marvel no more than at the heavenly spheres
thou wouldst, which hinder not each other’s rays.
That Power enables bodies such as mine
to suffer torments, both of heat and cold,
which wills not that Its ways be shown to us.
Insane is he that hopes our human reason
will ever travel o’er the boundless path,
o’er which One Substance in three Persons moves.
Be satisfied, O human race, with facts;
for if ye could have seen the cause of all,
no need had been for Mary to bear child;
and ye ’ve seen, vainly longing, men so great,
that their desire would else have been appeased,
which giv’n them is for an eternal grief;
I speak of Aristotle and of Plato,
and many others.” Here he bowed his head,
and, saying nothing more, remained disturbed.
Meanwhile we had attained the Mountain’s foot;
and there we found the rocky cliff so steep,
that legs would there be nimble all in vain.
’Tween Lèrici and Turbìa the loneliest
and wildest path is, if compared with that,
a safely climbed and easy flight of stairs.
“Now who knows on which side the hill so slopes,”
then said my Teacher, as he stayed his steps,
“that he who wingless goes can make the ascent?”
Meanwhile, as he was questioning his mind
about the path, and held his face bowed down,
and I was gazing upward round the cliff,
upon my left a throng of souls appeared,
who toward us moved their feet, yet did not seem
to move, so slowly were they coming on.
“Teacher,” said I, “lift up thine eyes; behold
on this side people who will give us counsel,
if thou canst not obtain it from thyself.”
He then looked up, and with relief replied:
“Let us go toward them, for they slowly come,
and thou, sweet son, be steadfast in thy hope.”
Those people were as yet as far away,
after a thousand of our steps, I mean,
as a good thrower’s hand would reach, when all
pressed up against the lofty bank’s hard mass,
and stayed there, still, and huddled up together,
as, when in doubt, a walker stops to look.
Virgil began: “O ye whose end was good,
now elected spirits, by the peace
which I believe ye all look forward to,
say where the Mount so lies, that going up
be possible for us; for loss of time,
to him who knoweth most, is most displeasing.”
As from the fold young sheep are wont to come
by ones, and twos, and threes, while timidly
the others stay, with downcast eyes and muzzle;
and what the first one doth, so do the rest,
all huddling up to her, in case she stop,
simple and quiet, nor yet knowing why;
even so the leader of that favored flock
I saw start forward then, and toward us come,
modest in face and dignified in gait.
When those who were in front the light beheld
so broken on the ground upon my right,
that ’gainst the cliff a shadow fell from me,
they stopped, and backward drew a little way;
and all the others coming on behind,
not knowing why they did so, did the same.
“Without your asking I affirm to you
that this you see a human body is;
therefore the sun’s light on the ground is broken.
Be not surprised, then, but believe that not
without a power that cometh down from Heaven,
is he attempting to surmount this wall.”
My Teacher thus; those worthy people then,
as with the back part of their hands they waved,
said: “Turn, then, and ahead of us go in.”
And one of them began: “Whoe’er thou art,
as thus thou goest, turn thy face! Recall
if thou hast ever seen me in the world.”
Toward him I turned, and on him fixed my gaze.
Blond, handsome, and of noble mien he was,
although an eyebrow by a blow was cut.
When I had with due modesty disclaimed
having e’er seen him there, he said: “Now see!”
and showed me high upon his breast a wound.
Then with a smile he said: “Manfred am I,
the grandson of the Empress Constance; hence
I beg thee that, on thy return, thou go
to my fair daughter, mother of the honor
of Sicily and Aragon, and should
aught else be told her, tell her thou the truth.
After my body by two mortal stabs
had been pierced through, in tears I gave myself
to that One who forgiveth willingly.
My sins were horrible, indeed; and yet
the Goodness Infinite hath arms so wide,
that It receiveth all who turn to It.
And if Cosenza’s Pastor, who by Clement
was sent to hunt me down, had then perused
this page in God’s book, as he should have done,
my body’s bones would still be lying there,
hard by the bridge’s head near Benevento,
under the keeping of the heavy cairn.
Bathed by the rain, the wind now blows them round
outside the Kingdom, near the Verde’s banks,
whither he moved them with extinguished lights.
Not by their cursing is Eternal Love
so lost, that it can not return again,
as long as hope hath still a speck of green.
’T is true that he that dieth in contempt
of Holy Church, though at the very last

he may repent, outside this Mountain's bank
must stay, for all the time that he hath been
in his presumption, thirty times as long,
unless by good prayers shortened be this ban.
See now if thou canst make me glad, by telling
my good Costanza both where thou hast seen me
and of this interdict; for one is here
greatly advanced by those that are beyond."

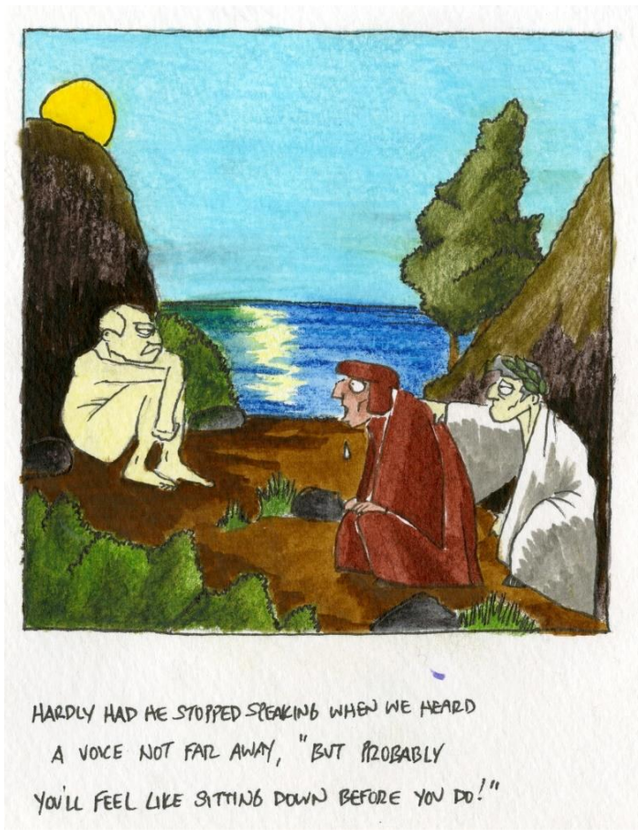
4. Antepurgatory. The First Ledge
Those who Neglected Repentance until Death

Whene'er, because of pleasure or of pain
received by any faculty of ours,
our soul is wholly centered thereupon,
it seems to heed no other faculty;
and this is 'gainst that wrong belief which holds
that one soul in us o'er another burns.
Therefore, when anything is heard or seen,
which toward it holds the soul intently turned,
time passes by, and one perceives it not;
since one thing is the faculty which harks,
and that which holdeth all the soul another;
this last is bound, as 't were, the former free.
Of this I real experience had, while hearing
and wondering at that spirit; for the sun
had climbed up fifty full degrees at least,
though I had not perceived it, when we came
to where those souls cried out to us together:
"The place which you were asking for is here."
Oft doth a farmer, when the grapes grow dark,
close up a wider opening in a hedge
with but a little forkful of his thorns,
than was the entrance there, through which my Leader,
and I behind him, mounted all alone,
when once the crowd had gone away from us.
One climbs Sanlèo, and descends to Noli;
one wins the summit of Bismàntova,
helped solely by one's feet; but one up here
would have to fly; with the swift wings, I mean,
and plumes of great desire, behind the Guide,
who gave me hope and furnished me with light.
As up within the cloven rock we climbed,
its walls on each side closely hemmed us in,
while under us the ground both feet and hands
required. When on the high cliff's upper edge
we were, and out upon the open slope,
"Which way, my Teacher, shall we go?" said I.
And he to me: "Take thou no backward step;
keep gaining ground behind me up the Mount,
until some guide who knows appear to us."
So high the summit was, that it surpassed
our sight, and steeper far the slope, than were
a line from center to mid-quadrant drawn.
Weary was I, when I began to speak:
"O gentle Father, turn around, and see
how I remain alone, unless thou stop!"
"Draw thyself up, my son, as far as there!"
he said, and somewhat higher pointed out
a ledge on that side circling all the hill.
His words so spurred me, that I forced myself
to crawl behind him on my hands and knees,
until the girding ledge was 'neath my feet.
There both of us sat down, and faced the East,
whence we had made the ascent; for looking back
upon a traversed course is wont to help.
First to the shores below I turned mine eyes;
then raised them to the sun, and was amazed
that we were smitten by it on our left.
The Poet well perceived that I was gazing
dumbfounded at the chariot of the light,
which now was rising 'tween the North and us.
"If Castor" said he then to me, "and Pollux
were in the company of yonder mirror,
which up and down in turn conducts its light,
thou wouldst the Zodiac's ruddy part behold
revolving still more closely to the Bears,
unless it issued from its ancient path.
If thou wouldst understand how this can be,
collect thy thoughts within thee, and imagine
both Zion and this Mount so placed on earth,
that both of them one sole horizon have,
and different hemispheres; and thou wilt see
how that the road which Phaëthon could not take,
alas for him, must pass this Mount on one,
while passing that one on the other side,
if thine intelligence but clearly heed."
"Surely, my Teacher, never have I seen"
said I, "as clearly as I now perceive,
where once my mind appeared to be at fault,
how the mid-circle of supernal motion,
which in a certain art is called Equator,
and ever 'tween the sun and winter stays,
lies toward the North, for reasons giv'n by thee,
as far on this side as the Hebrew people
ever beheld it toward the heated parts.
But, if it please thee, I would gladly know
how far we have to go; because the Mount
higher ascends than eyes of mine can rise."
"Such is this Mountain" said he then to me,
"that, always hard to climb at first below,
it pains one less, the higher one ascends.
Hence, when so pleasant to thee it shall seem,
that going up shall be to thee as easy
as floating with the current in a boat,
thou then shalt have attained this pathway's end.
Hope there to rest thee from thy breathless toil!
No more I answer; this I know for truth."
When he had ended what he had to say,
the voice of one near by cried out: "Perhaps,
ere that shall happen, thou wilt need to sit!"
On hearing this, we both of us turned round,
and saw a massive boulder on our left,
which neither I nor he had seen before.
Thither we drew; and there some persons were,
who lingered in the shade behind the rock,
as one is wont to do through indolence.
And one of them, who weary seemed to me,
was sitting with his arms around his knees,
and down between the latter held his face.
"O my sweet Lord," said I then, "turn thine eyes

on yonder man, who shows himself to be
more lazy than if sloth his sister were!”
Then turning round toward us, and giving heed,
he moved his face no more than o’er his thigh,
and said: “Go up now, thou that active art!”
I then knew who it was; nor did the strain,
which quickened still my breath a little, hinder
my going to him; yet, when at his side
I was, he barely raised his head, and said:
“Hast thou at last seen why it is the sun
driveth his car o’er thy left shoulder here?”
His lazy actions and his few short words
impelled my lips to smile a little; then,
“Belacqua,” I began, “I grieve for thee
no more; but tell me why thou sittest here?
Art waiting for a guide, or hast thou now
merely resumed thy customary mood?”
And he: “What, brother, is the use of climbing?
The Bird of God who at the Gate is seated,
would not allow me to approach the pangs.
The sky must first turn round me here outside,
as long as ever in my life it did,
since I delayed good sighs until the end,
unless before then I be helped by prayers
arising from a heart that lives in grace;
of what avail are those unheard in Heaven?”
But now the Poet, climbing on ahead,
was saying: “Come now on with me! Thou see’st
that our meridian by the sun is touched,
and that already from the Ganges’ banks
Night covers up Morocco with her feet.”

5. Antepurgatory. The Second Ledge
The Negligent who died by Violence

Already had I parted from those shades,
and in my Leader’s steps was following on,
when one behind me, pointing with his finger,
cried out: “See how the light seems not to shine
upon the left side of that lower man,
who seems to act like one that’s still alive!”
Hearing this speech, I turned mine eyes, and saw
that with astonishment they gazed at me,
at me alone, and at the broken light.
“Why is thy mind so sore perplexed,” then said
my Teacher, “that thou slackenest thy pace?
What carest thou for what is whispered here?
Follow thou me, and let the people talk!
Firm as a tower remain, which never shakes
its top, however hard the winds may blow!
For from himself he ever turns his mark,
in whom one thought wells up behind another,
for each of them impairs the other’s strength.”
What could I say in answer, save “I come”?
And this I said, tinged slightly with the color
which sometimes makes one worthy of forgiveness.
Meanwhile a little way ahead of us
some people crosswise o’er the slope were coming,



singing the Miserere verse by verse.
When they became aware that through my body
I gave no passage to the rays of light,
they changed their chant into a long, hoarse “Oh!”
and two of them, acting as messengers,
ran out to meet us, and enquiring said:
“Cause us to know what kind of life is yours.”
My Teacher answered: “Ye may go your way,
and unto those that sent you out report
that real flesh this man’s body is. And if,
as I suppose, they stopped because they saw
his shadow, they ’ve been answered well enough;
if they respect him, it may profit them.”
I never saw ignited vapors cleave
at nightfall an unclouded sky, or break
so rapidly from August clouds at sunset,
that these returned not up in shorter time;
and, once there, with the rest they veered toward us,
as would a troop that ran without a curb.
“These people who are crowding us are many,”
the Poet said, “and come to beg of thee;
therefore go on, and listen on thy way.”
“O soul, that goest to be glad” they cried,
as on they came, “with those limbs which thou hadst
when thou wast born, a little stay thy steps!
Recall if thou hast e’er seen one of us,
that yonder thou mayst carry news of him!
Why, pray, dost thou go on? Ah, why not stop?
We all were slain of old by violence,
and sinners were until our latest hour;
then light from Heaven so caused us to beware,
that we, repentant and forgiving, issued
from life at peace with God, who in our hearts
stirs us with grievous longings to behold Him.”
And I: “Howe’er I gaze upon your faces,
none do I recognize; and yet, if aught
within my power can please you, well-born souls,

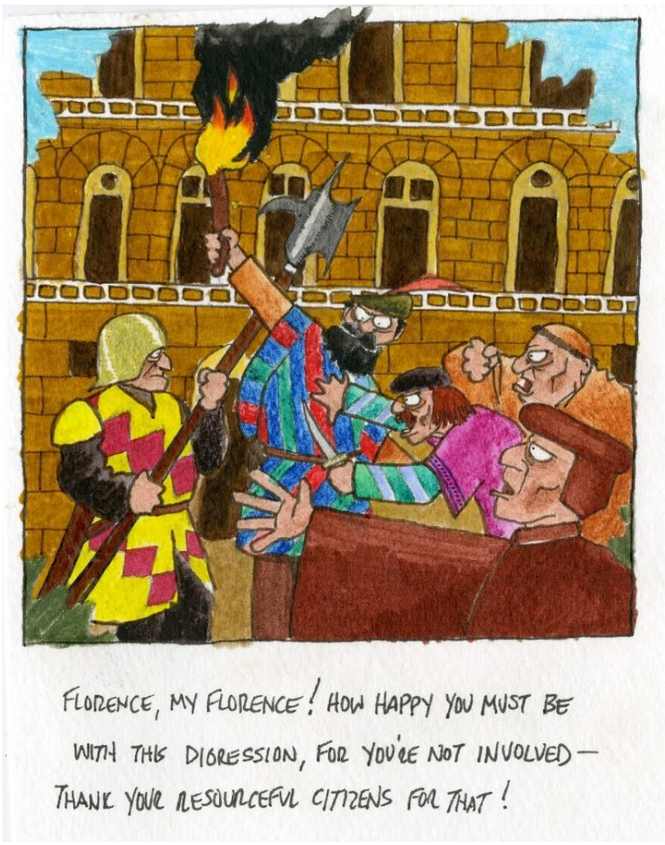
ask it, and I will do it, by the peace,
which, following the feet of such a Guide,
hath now become my quest from world to world."
And one began: "Each trusts in thy good help
without an oath, provided lack of power
cut not thy good will short. Hence I, who speak
alone before the others, beg of thee,
if e'er thou see the country which extends
between Romagna and the land of Charles,
be courteous to me with thy prayers in Fano,
that supplications due be made for me,
to help me purge away my grievous sins.
It was from there I came; but those deep wounds,
whence flowed the blood wherein my life resided,
were giv'n me in the Antenori's lap,
where I had trusted I should be most safe.
The lord of Esti, who was angry with me
beyond the bounds of justice, had it done.
Yet toward La Mira had I only fled,
when at Oriàgo I was overtaken,
still yonder would I be, where people breathe.
Toward the lagoon I ran, whose reeds and mire
so hampered me, I fell; and there a pool
formed from my veins I saw upon the ground."
Then said another: "So may that desire,
which draws thee to the lofty Mount be granted,
with kindly pity, prithee, help thou mine!
I Montefeltro was, I am Buonconte;
Giovanna cares not for me, nor do others;
hence among these I go with head bowed down.
And I to him: "What force was it, or chance,
caused thee to stray so far from Campaldino,
that never hath thy burial-place been known?"
"Oh!" he replied, "A river called Archiàno
flows crosswise at the Casentino's foot,
and takes its rise among the Apennines,
above the Hermitage. There, where its name
is lost, I came, a fugitive on foot,
pierced through the throat, and staining with my blood
the plain. And there it was I lost my sight,
and ended speech with Mary's name; and there
I fell, and all alone my flesh remained.
The truth I tell, tell thou among the living.
God's Angel took me, while the one from Hell
cried out: 'Why dost thou rob me, thou from Heaven?
Thou bearest hence this man's eternal part,
because of one small tear which takes him from me;
but I shall with the rest deal otherwise!'
Well knowst thou how damp vapors in the air,
as soon as they ascend to where the cold
affects them, into water change again.
He joined that wicked will, which asks for naught
but evil, with intelligence, and stirred
the mists and wind, by power his nature gave.
The valley thereupon, when day was spent,
he covered o'er with fog from Pratomagno
up to the mountain-chain, and made the sky
so lowering o'er it, that the pregnant air
to water turned; the rain poured down, and what
the soil absorbed not, reached the rivulets;

then, having joined the torrent-brooks, it rushed
so swiftly toward the royal stream, that naught
could hold it back. The swift Archiàno then
hard by its outlet found my frozen body;
and, as it swept it on into the Arno,
loosened the cross which with my arms I made
upon my breast, when sorrow's pain o'erwhelmed me;
along its banks and bed it rolled me on;
then covered me, and wrapped me with its spoils."
"Prithee, when to the world thou hast returned,
and when from thy long journey thou art rested,"
after the second spirit said the third,
"do thou remember me, who Pia am!
Sièna made me; Maremma me unmade;
he knoweth what this means, who previously
had, in betrothal, ringed me with his gem."

6. Antepurgatory. The Negligent who died by Violence
Address to Italy and Florence

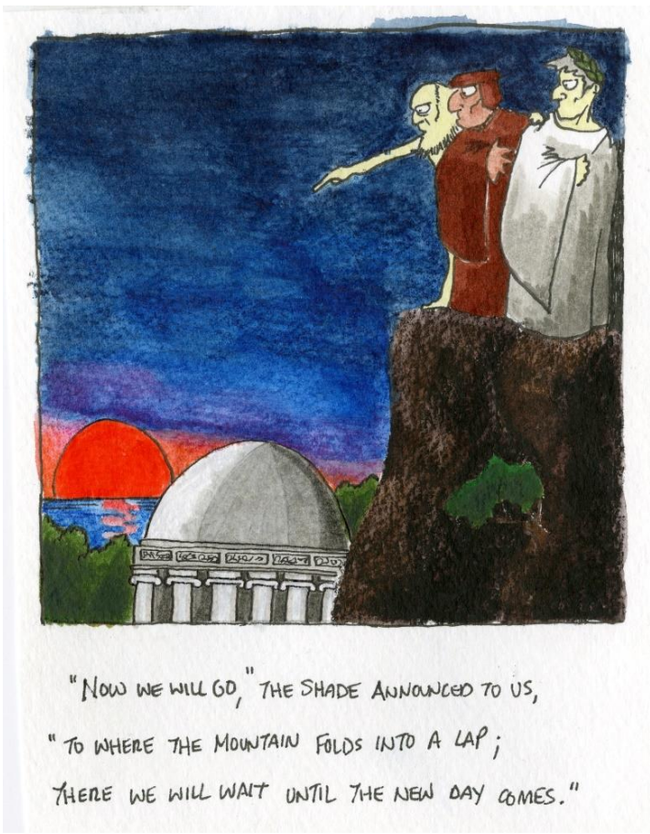
Whene'er a game of dice is broken up,
the one who loses sorrowing stays behind,
and learns, as sadly he repeats the throws;
while with the other all the people leave;
one goes before, one grasps him from behind,
and at his side one asks to be remembered.
And he stops not, but that one heeds and this;
the one whose hand he takes no longer crowds;
and from the throng he thus defends himself.
E'en such as he, was I in that dense crowd;
for as I this and that way turned my face,
and promised each, I freed myself therefrom.
Here was the Aretine who met his death
from Ghin di Tacco's cruel arms, and he,
who running madly in pursuit was drowned;
here Frederick Novello prayed with hands
outstretched, and he of Pisa, who induced
worthy Marzucco to reveal his strength.
Count Orso I beheld here, and the soul

through spite and envy from its body parted,
and not, so he maintained, through crime committed;
Pierre de la Brosse, I mean; and here, while still
on earth, let Brabant's Lady see to it,
that 'mong the worse flock she be not for this.
When I was free from each and all those shades,
who only prayed that others pray for them,
that their becoming holy might be sped,
"It seems that thou deniest," I began,
"O thou my Light, expressly in a text,
that prayer can cause a change in Heaven's decrees;
and yet these people only pray for this;
could it then be, that this their hope is vain,
or is thy saying not quite clear to me?"
And he to me: "That which I wrote is clear,
nor yet delusive is this people's hope,
if it be looked at with a healthy mind;
for Justice stoops not from her lofty height,
because Love's ardor all at once fulfils
what he who dwelleth here must satisfy;
and there where I decided on this point,
the fault was not made good again by praying,
because the prayer discordant was with God.
Yet in so deep a doubt decide thou not,
unless She bid thee do so, who a light
shall be between thine intellect and truth.
I know not if thou understand; I speak
of Beatrice; thou 'lt see her up above,
smiling and happy, on this Mountain's top."
And I: "Let 's go, then, Lord, with greater haste;
for now I grow not weary as before;
and see, the hillside casts its shadow now."
"We shall go forward with this day," he answered,
"as long as we are able; but the case
is otherwise than what thou deemest it.
Ere thou shalt be up there, thou him shalt see
return, who now so shields him with the hill,
that thou dost not compel his rays to break.
But yonder see a soul who all alone
is seated, and toward us is looking now;
he will point out to us the quickest way."
We came to him. O Lombard soul, how full
of self-respect and noble scorn thou wast,
and in the moving of thine eyes how slow
and dignified! Naught did he say to us;
but let us go our way, and only gazed
as would a couching lion in repose.
Virgil, meanwhile, drew near to him, and begged
that he would show to us the best ascent;
and he to his request made no reply,
but asked us of our country and condition;
and my kind Leader was with "Mantua . . ."
beginning, when the self-collected shade,
from where he was, sprang up to meet him, saying:
"O Mantuan, I 'm Sordello, of thy town!"
and each the other thereupon embraced.
Ah, Italy, thou slave, thou inn of woe,
ship without pilot in a mighty storm,
not queen of provinces, but house of shame!
So instant ready was that noble soul,



but at the sweet sound of his city's name,
to welcome here his fellow citizen;
and yet within thee now, thy living sons
are not exempt from war, and those one wall
and moat enclose upon each other prey!
All round thy coast-line search its shores, poor wretch,
and then within thy bosom look, and learn
if any part of thee be blest with peace.
What boots it that Justinian rearranged
thy bridle, if thy saddle vacant be?
Had it not been for that, thy shame were less.
And ye, ah, ye, that ought to be devout,
and so let Caesar in his saddle sit,
if well ye heeded God's advice to you,
behold how wild this animal has grown,
through being uncorrected by the spur,
since ye first set your hands upon her rein!
O German Albert, thou that dost forsake
this creature now become untamed and wild,
and oughtest to bestride her saddle-bows,
may some just judgment from the stars befall
thy blood, and may it so unheard of be,
and plain, that it may frighten thy successor!
For, held by greed of lands outside its bounds,
thou and thy father also have allowed
the Empire's Garden to become a waste.
Come see the Montagues and Capulets,
Monaldi and Filipeschi, careless man,
already troubled those, and these in dread!
Come, come, thou cruel man, and see the oppression
of thy nobility, and right their wrongs;
and thou shalt see how safe is Santafior!
Come see thy Rome, that, widowed and alone,
is shedding tears, and day and night is calling:
"Why dost thou not, my Caesar, stay with me?"
Come see the people, how they love each other!
And if for us no pity move thy soul,

come, then, and shame thee for thine own renown!
And, if I be allowed, O Jove Supreme,
Thou that for us wast crucified on earth,
are Thy just eyes, too, turned away elsewhere?
Or in Thy counsel's depths art Thou in this
a preparation making for some good,
from our perception utterly cut off?
For all Italia's towns are full of tyrants,
and a Marcellus every churl is deemed,
who comes to play a party henchman's rôle.
My Florence, well mayst thou be satisfied
with this digression, which concerns thee not,
thanks to thy people, who look out for that!
Many at heart are just, but slow to shoot,
lest to the bow uncounselled they should come;
but thy folk on their lips alone are just!
Many refuse to bear the common burden;
but thy folk eagerly respond, and cry,
although uncalled: "I 'll load myself therewith!"
Be joyful, then, since thou hast cause to be;
thou that art rich, that peaceful art, and wise!
Whether I speak the truth, results conceal not.
Athens and Lacedaemon, they that framed
the ancient laws, and were so civilized,
in living well made but a little mark
compared with thee, that dost so carefully
provide thee, that thy fine October spinning
as far as mid-November reaches not.
How many times, within thy memory,
hast thou changed laws and coinage, offices
and customs, and thy membership renewed!
And if thou well recall and face the light,
thou 'lt see thy likeness to a suffering woman,
who on a feather-bed can find no rest,
but seeks, by tossing, to relieve her pain.



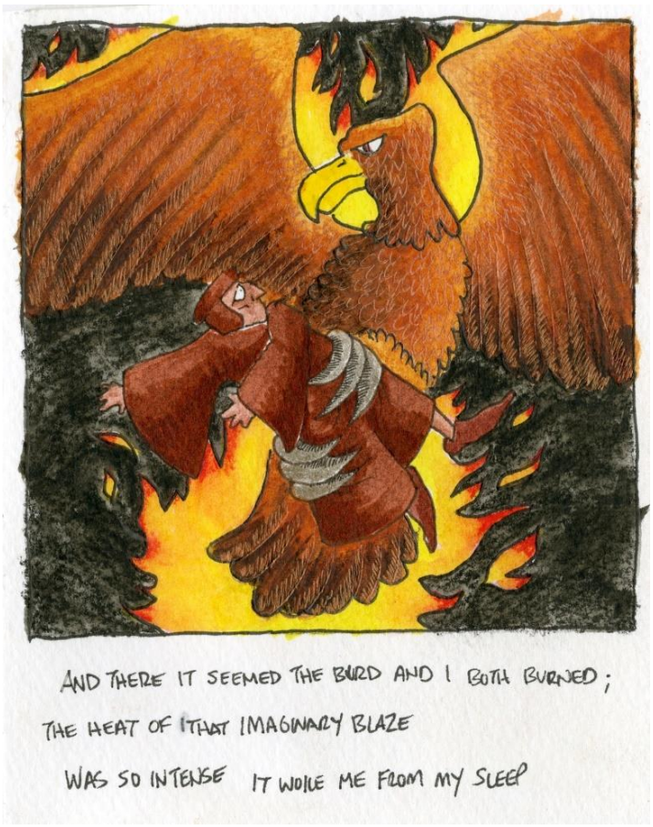
7. Antepurgatory. The Vale of Flowers
Princes intent on Earthly Glory
After their words of greeting, dignified
and glad, had three and four times been repeated,
Sordello, drawing back, said: "Who are ye?"
"Or ever yet the spirits, who deserved
to rise to God, were toward this Mount directed,
my bones were buried by Octavian's order.
Virgil am I; and through no other guilt
did I lose Heaven, than through not having faith."
'T was thus my Leader thereupon replied.
Like one who sudden sees before him aught
he wonders at, and, as he says: "It is . . ."
and "No, it 's not," believes and disbelieves;
such did the former seem; and then his head
he bowed, and, humbly turning back to him,
embraced him where inferior men take hold.
"O glory of the Latins," said he then,
"through whom our language showed what it could do,
eternal honor of my native town,
what merit, or what grace shows thee to me?
Tell me, if I deserve to hear thy words,
if thou from Hell art come, and from what cloister."
"Through all the circles of the woeful Realm"
he answered him, "have I come hither; virtue
from Heaven impelled me, and therewith I come.
'T was not for doing aught, but for not doing,
I lost the sight of that exalted Sun
thou longest for, and which was known by me
too late. There is a place below, not sad
because of pain, but only gloom, where moans
sound not as wailings, but are merely sighs.
There with those little innocents I dwell,
who, not delivered yet from human guilt,
were bitten by the teeth of death; and there
with those I dwell, who did not clothe themselves
with the three holy virtues, but who knew
the others without vice, and practiced all.
But give us, if thou know and can, some sign,
whereby the sooner we may reach the place,
where Purgatory hath its real beginning."
"No fixed place is assigned us;" he replied,
"I may go upward and around; I 'll join thee,
and be thy guide as far as I can go.
But see already how the day declines,
and one at night can not ascend; it, hence,
were well to think of some fair resting place.
Here to the right are souls that dwell apart;
if thou permit me, I will lead thee to them,
and not without delight will they be known."
"How, then, is this?" was answered, "Should one wish
to mount by night, would some one hinder him?
Or would one not ascend, through lack of power?
Then with his finger good Sordello marked
the ground, and: "See!" he said, "When once the sun
is gone, thou couldst not even cross this line;
though not because aught else than gloom of night
would hinder one from climbing; that it is
puzzles the will with impotence. One could,
however, downward go again therewith,

and walking o’er the hillside, wander round
while still the horizon kept the day confined.”
My Lord then said, as if in wonder lost:
“Do thou, then, lead us thither, where thou saidst
that one while waiting can enjoy himself.”
But little had we gone away from there,
when I perceived the hill was hollowed out,
as here on earth our hillside valleys are.
“Thither,” that shade said, “we ’ll betake ourselves
where of itself the hillside forms a lap;
and there will we await the coming day.”
A winding path there was, nor steep nor level,
which led us to a border of the dell,
where more than half away the hillside falls.
Gold and fine silver, scarlet and white lead,
indigo blue, wood’s clear and shining brown,
and green of emeralds when newly flaked,
would each in hue be vanquished by the grass
and flowers found growing in that bosomed dell,
as by the greater vanquished is the less.
Nature not only had been painting there;
but with the fragrance of a thousand scents
was making up a blend unknown on earth.
Here, seated on the grass among the flowers,
“Salve, Regina” singing, souls I saw,
who, for the dell, could not be seen outside.
“Before the waning sunlight nest itself,”
began the Mantuan who had guided us,
“desire me not to lead you among these.
Much better from this border shall ye learn
to know the acts and faces of them all,
than greeted ’mong them in the dale below.
The one that sitteth highest up, and seems
to have neglected what he should have done,
and with his mouth joins not the others’ songs,
was Emperor Rudolph, he who might have healed
the wounds that so have left Italia dead,
that by another she reviveth late.
He who appears to cheer him, ruled the land,
where rise the waters which the Moldau gives
the Elbe, and the Elbe gives the sea.
Named Ottocar, he was, in swaddling clothes,
far better than is Wenceslaus, his son,
on whom, a bearded man, feed lust and ease.
That small-nosed man, who close in counsel seems
with him that hath so kind a countenance,
died fleeing, and disflowering the Lily.
Look at him, yonder, how he smites his breast!
And see the other one, who for his cheek
hath, sighing, made a cushion of his hand.
Father and father-in-law of France’s bane,
they know the latter’s foul and vicious life;
hence comes the sorrow that so pierces them.
The one who so large-limbed appears, and joins
in song with him who hath the manly nose,
was girded with the cord of every worth;
and if the youth, who seated is behind him,
had, following after him, remained as king,
worth would, indeed, have gone from vase to vase;
which of the other heirs can not be said.
The kingdoms James and Frederick hold; but none
is owner of the better heritage.
Seldom doth human righteousness ascend
among the branches; this is willed by Him
who gives it, that of Him it may be asked.
My words concern the large-nosed man no less
than the other, Peter, who is singing with him,
whence both Apulia and Provence are grieved.
That plant is as inferior to its seed,
as of her husband Constance still vaunts more
than Beatrice and Margaret do of theirs.
Behold the king, known for his simple life,
Henry of England, seated there alone;
he in his branches better issue hath.
He that among them lower on the ground
is sitting, and looks up, is Marquis William,
for whom both Alexandria and her war
make Montferràt and Canavèsë weep.”

8. Antepurgatory. The Vale of Flowers
Princes intent on Earthly Glory. The Serpent

’T was now the hour, which homeward turns the longing,
and melts the heart of those that sail the sea,
the day they ’ve said goodbye to tender friends;
and thrills with love the pilgrim newly sped,
if from afar he hear a tolling bell,
that seems to mourn the slowly dying day;
when I began to render hearing vain,
and of those souls watch one who, risen up,
was asking for attention with his hand.
He joined his palms, and raising them on high,
turned toward the East his eyes with steadfast gaze,
as if to God he said: “I heed naught else.”
“Ere daylight fadeth” issued from his mouth
with such devoutness, and with notes so sweet,
that I was made unmindful of myself.
Thereat the others, sweetly and devoutly
followed that soul, and sang the whole hymn through,

fixing their gaze upon the spheres above.
Sharpen thine eyes here, Reader, for the truth;
for now its veil is certainly so thin,
that easy is the passage into it.
I saw that army of the gentle-born
gazing on high in silence after this,
as if in expectation, pale and meek;
and, issuing from above, and coming down,
two Angels with two fiery swords I saw,
which, broken off, were of their points deprived.
As green they were, as little new-born leaves,
and clothed with garments which, behind them trailed,
were stroked and fanned by verdant plumes. One came
and poised somewhat above us, while the other
alighted on the hillside opposite,
so that the people there remained between.
I well perceived that golden was their hair;
but on their faces vision went astray,
as would a power confounded by excess.
"From Mary's bosom both of them are come"
Sordello said, "to guard this sheltered vale
against the Serpent, which will soon arrive."
Hence I, who knew not by what path, turned round,
chilled through with fear, and to the trusted shoulders
drew closely back. Sordello thereupon
began: "And now among the mighty shades
let us descend, and we will speak with them;
greatly will they be pleased to see you here."
Only three steps, I think, did I go down,
and was below; then one I saw, who looked
at me alone, as if he wished to know me.
The air had for some time been growing dark
but not so much as, 'tween his eyes and mine,
not to reveal what it concealed before.
Toward me he came, and I toward him advanced.
Noble Judge Nino, when I saw that not
among the damned thou wast, how glad I was!
No greetings fair were left unsaid between us;
and then he asked: "How long ago didst thou
o'er the far waters reach the Mountain's foot?"
"Oh!" I exclaimed, "across the fields of woe
I came this morn, and in the first life am,
though by thus going, I'll the other win."
When once my answer had been heard, Sordello
and he drew back, like people suddenly
perplexed. The first to Virgil turned, the other,
to one who there was seated, crying out:
"Get up, Corrado! Come and see what God
hath as a favor willed." Then, turned toward me:
"By that rare gratitude thou owest Him,
who hides His primal Why in such a way,
that there 's no fording it; when thou art past
the wide waves, ask my Joan to pray for me
where to the innocent replies are given.
I think her mother loves me now no more,
for those white wimples hath she laid aside,
which she, poor soul, must needs want back again.
Through her one understands with greatest ease
how long the fire of love in woman lasts,
unless rekindled oft by sight and touch.



The Viper which conducts the Milanese
afield, will never make as beautiful
a tomb for her, as would Gallura's Cock."
These were the words he used, his countenance
marked with the impress of that righteous zeal,
which burneth in the heart with temperate flame.
My greedy eyes now sought the sky alone,
and only there, where slowest are the stars,
as, nearest to its axle, is a wheel.
My Leader then: "What art thou looking at
up there, my son?" And I: "At those three torches,
wherewith the pole on this side wholly burns."
Then he: "The four bright stars which thou this morn
didst see, are low down on the other side;
and these have risen there, where those were then."
While he was speaking thus, Sordello drew him
aside, and saying: "Yonder see our foe!"
lifted his finger up, to have him look.
On that side where the little hollowed vale
hath no defense, a Snake there was like that,
perhaps, which gave the bitter fruit to Eve.
On through the grass and flowers the wicked reptile
glided, and, turning back its head at times,
was licking like a beast that smoothes itself.
I did not see, and therefore cannot tell,
how the celestial Falcons 'gan to move,
but both I clearly saw, when once in motion.
When cleft by their green wings it heard the air,
the Serpent fled, and back the Angels turning,
regained their posts above with equal flight.
The shade who, when he called him, to the Judge
had closely drawn, throughout the whole assault
had not one moment loosed his gaze from me.
"So may the lantern leading thee above,
find in thy will the wax that is required
for one to reach the enamelled green on high;"
he thus began, "if thou of Valdimagra,
or of its neighboring land, dost know true news,

tell it to me, who once was mighty there.
Corrado Malaspina I was called;
I ’m not the elder, but from him descended;
I bore my race the love which here is cleansed.”
“Oh!” said I then to him, “I ’ve never been
in your domains, but where throughout all Europe
dwelleth a man who knows them not? The fame
which honoreth your house, proclaims its lords,
proclaims its district, so that even he
knows of them, who hath never been there yet.
I swear to you, so may I go on high,
that of the glorious use of purse and sword
your honored race doth not despoil itself.
Nature and use so favor it, that, howe’er
the guilty Head distort the world, alone
it goeth straight, and scorns the evil path.”
And he: “Now go, for lo, the sun shall not
seven times on that bed rest him, which the Ram
now covers, and with all four feet bestrides,
ere this thy courteously expressed opinion
shall in the middle of thy head be nailed
with greater nails than words of other men,
unless the course of doom decreed be stayed.”

9. Antepurgatory. The Vale of Flowers
Dante’s First Dream. The Gate of Purgatory

Already was old Titan’s concubine
whitening upon the Orient’s balcony,
outside the arms of her sweet paramour;
already was her forehead shining bright
with gems, arranged according to the shape
of that cold beast, which smites one with its tail;
and Night had of the steps wherewith she climbs,
already taken two where we were then,
and now the third was lowering its wings;
when I, who had somewhat of Adam in me,
o’ercome with sleep, reclined upon the grass,
on which all five of us were sitting then.
Near morning, at the hour in which the swallow
begins to sing her melancholy lays,
perchance in memory of her earliest woes,
and when, much more a pilgrim from the flesh,
and less imprisoned by its thoughts, our mind
well nigh prophetic in its vision is;
an Eagle in a dream I seemed to see
suspended in the sky, with plumes of gold
and wings outspread, intent on swooping down;
and it appeared to me that I was where
his friends were left behind by Ganymede,
when to the highest council he was raised.
I thought within myself: “Perhaps this bird
is wont to strike but here, and from elsewhere,
perhaps, disdains to lift one with its claws.”
Then, having wheeled a while, it seemed to me
that terrible as lightning it came down,
and bore me up as far as to the fire.
There it and I both seemed to burn together;
and so intense was that imagined burning,
my sleep was broken of necessity.
Achilles roused himself no differently —
turning around him his awakened eyes,
nor knowing in what region he might be,
when, sleeping in her arms, his mother took him
away from Chiron to the isle of Scyros,
from which the Greeks removed him afterwards —
than I aroused myself, when from my face
sleep fled away; and death-like pale I turned,
like one who freezes when o’ercome by fright.
Only my Comforter was at my side,
and now the sun was higher than two hours,
and toward the open sea my face was turned.
“Be not afraid!” my Lord then said to me.
“Be reassured, for we are faring well;
restrain not, but expand thine every power!
At Purgatory art thou now arrived;
behold the cliff there, which encloses it;
behold the entrance where it broken seems.
Just now, when, in the dawn preceding day,
thy soul was sleeping in thee on the flowers,
wherewith the place down yonder is adorned,
a Lady came and said: ‘I am Lucìa;
allow me to take up this sleeping man;
I shall assist him thus upon his way.’
Sordello and the other noble forms
remained; she took thee, and when daylight dawned,
hither came up, and in her foot-prints I.
She laid thee here; and first her lovely eyes
revealed to me that opened entrance; then
both she and sleep together passed away.”
Like one who, when in doubt, is reassured,
and into comfort turns his fear, when once
the truth has been disclosed to him, I changed;
and when my Leader wholly freed from care
beheld me, upward o’er the cliff he moved,
and I behind him followed toward the height.
Reader, thou surely see’st how I exalt
my subject; therefore be thou not surprised
if I support it now with greater art.
Nearer we drew, and were in such a place,
that where at first there seemed to be a break,
just like a fissure that divides a wall,
I saw a Gate, and under, to approach it,
three steps of different color each, and then
a Keeper, who as yet said not a word.
And as I opened more and more mine eyes,
I saw him sitting on the upper step,
such in his face that I endured him not;
and in his hand he had a naked sword,
which so reflected upon us its rays,
that toward him oft I turned my eyes in vain.
“Say what it is you wish, from where you are,”
he then began, “and where your escort is.
Beware lest coming up should do you harm.”
“A heavenly Lady, of these things aware,”
my Teacher answered him, “said unto us
just now: ‘Go thither, yonder is the Gate.’”
“And unto good may she advance your steps!”
the courteous Keeper of the Gate resumed,
“Come forward, therefore, unto these our stairs.”

Made of white marble was the first great step
to which we came, so polished and so smooth,
I mirrored me therein as I appear.
The second step, darker than purple-black,
was of a rough and calcined kind of stone,
cracked lengthwise and across. The third, which rests
in massive shape above it, seemed to me
to be of porphyry as flaming red,
as blood appears when spurting from a vein.
Upon this last God's Angel held both feet,
sitting upon the threshold, which to me
appeared to be a rock of adamant.
Up over those three steps my Leader then
drew me along with my good will, and said:
"Humbly request him to undo the lock."
Devoutly at his holy feet I cast me;
I begged that of his mercy he would open,
but first I smote upon my breast three times.
Then with his sword's sharp point he traced seven P's
upon my brow, and told me: "See thou to it,
that, when inside, thou wash away these wounds!"
Ashes, or earth when excavated dry,
would with his garment of one color be;
and from beneath it he drew forth two Keys.
One was of gold, the other silver was;
first with the white, and after with the yellow,
he so did to the Gate that I was pleased.
"Whenever one of these Keys faileth so,
that in the lock it doth not rightly turn,"
said he to us, "this passage opens not.
More precious is the first; and yet the other,
ere it unlock, much skill and judgment needs,
for it is that one which unties the knot.
Peter, from whom I hold them, bade me err
rather in opening, than in keeping closed,
provided folk fell prostrate at my feet."
He pushed the holy Portal's door thereat,
and said to us: "Go in; but I inform you
that he who looks behind returns outside."
And when that sacred Gateway's folding doors,
which were of strong resounding metal made,
were on their iron hinges turned around,
Tarpeia roared not so, nor proved so shrill,
when good Metellus was removed from her,
because of which she afterwards kept lean.
I turned to heed its first resounding tones,
and "Thee we praise, O Lord" I seemed to hear
in voices mixed with those delightful sounds.
What I was hearing made upon me then
just the impression one is wont to get,
when people with an organ sing; for now
the words are heard, and now again are not.

10. Purgatory. The First Ring. Pride
Instances of Humility. The Expiation of Pride

When past the threshold of the Gate we were,
whose use the evil love of souls impairs,
because it makes the crooked path seem straight,
't was by its sound I knew that it had closed;
and, had I turned mine eyes in its direction,

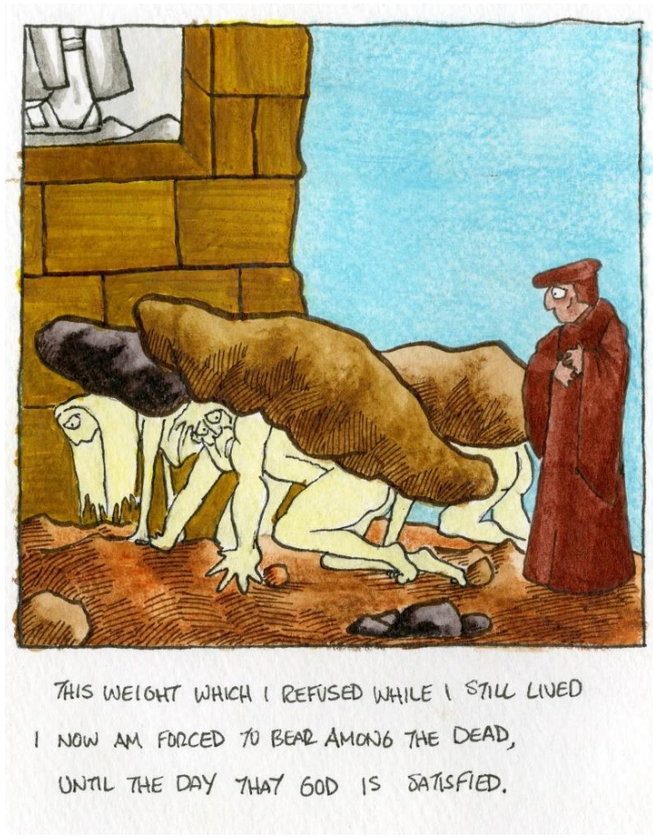
what would have fittingly excused my fault?
We mounted through a fissure in the rock,
which moved about to this side and to that,
as moves a wave that flees and draweth near.
"A little skill must here be used by us,"
my Leader then began, "in keeping close,
now here, now there, to the receding side."
This caused our steps to be so slow and short,
that to her bed the waning moon had gone
to rest herself again, ere we had issued
forth from that needle's eye; but when set free
we were, and in the open up above,
where back the Mountain's side recedes, I, weary,
and both of us uncertain of our way,
stopped short upon a level place up there,
more lonely than are roads through desert lands.
From where its margin borders on the void,
up to the foot of that high rising bank,
would measure thrice a human body's length;
and far as e'er mine eye could wing its flight,
now on the right, and now upon the left,
such did this girding ledge appear to me.
Our feet had not been moving on it yet,
when I perceived the bank surrounding it —
which, being perpendicular, could not
be climbed — white marble was, and so adorned
with carvings, that not only Polyclètus,
but Nature, too, would there be put to shame.
The Angel who to earth came with the word
of peace, which, wept-for during many years,
had after its long closure opened Heaven,
appeared before us there in gentle mien,
sculptured so truthfully, it did not seem
that he could be an image that is dumb.
One would have sworn that he was saying: "Hail!"
for She was there portrayed in effigy,
who turned the key that opened Love on high;
and in her mien and acts she had the words

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord” impressed
as clearly as a figure stamped in wax.
“Keep not thy mind on one place only fixed!”
my gentle Teacher said, who had me there
on that side of him, where one has his heart;
I therefore moved my eyes, and further on
than Mary, on the side where him I had,
who urged me to go on, I then beheld
another story graven in the rock;
passing by Virgil, therefore, I drew near
so that it might be set before mine eyes.
Cut in the marble there the cart and oxen
were drawing up the holy Ark, which made
men dread a charge not given them in trust.
People in front appeared; and all of them,
forming seven choirs, made one of my two senses
say “No,” and the other one say “Yes, they sing.”
So, too, by reason of the incense-smoke,
which there was pictured forth, my eyes and nose
became discordant as to Yes and No.
The humble Psalmist there, with loins girt up,
came dancing on, before the blessèd Vessel,
and, doing so, was more and less than king.
And Michal, opposite to this portrayed,
was from a palace window looking down,
as would an angry woman filled with scorn.
From where I was, I onward moved my feet,
that I might closely note another tale,
which after Michal gleamed upon me white.
The glorious action of that Roman prince
was storied here, whose worth moved Gregory
to win his mighty triumph; I refer
to Emperor Trajan; at his bridle stood
a widow who, in tears, showed signs of grief.
The space around him there seemed trampled down
and thronged with horsemen, while above his head
eagles, it seemed, upon a field of gold
were fluttering in the wind. Among all these
the sorrowing woman seemed to say: “My lord,
avenge me for the slaying of my son,
which breaks my heart.” And he to answer her:
“Wait now till I return.” And she, like one
whom sorrow makes impatient, said: “But what,
my lord, if thou shouldst not return?” And he:
“That one will do it, who shall hold my place.”
“How shall another’s goodness help thy case,”
she answered him, “if thou forget thine own?”
Then he: “Now be thou comforted; for needs
must I perform my duty ere I leave;
justice so wills, and pity keeps me here.”
He to whose vision naught was ever new,
created this seen language, new to us,
since not found here on earth. While with delight
I looked upon the pictures of such great
humilities, which for their Maker’s sake
are also dear to see, “On this side, lo,
much people come, but slow the steps they take;”
the Poet murmured, “toward the grades above
these souls will send us forward on our way.”
Mine eyes, intent on gazing, to behold
new things, for which with eagerness they long,
in turning toward him were not slow to move.
Yet I ’d not have thee, Reader, shrink dismayed
from thy good purposes, through hearing how
God wills that what is due be paid. Heed not
the nature of the torment! Think of what
comes after! Think that, at the very worst,
beyond the Judgment-day it cannot go.
Then I began: “That, Teacher, which toward us
I see advancing does not look like people,
nor know I what, my sight is so deceived.”
And he to me: “Their torment’s heavy nature
so bows them toward the ground, that my eyes, too,
struggled therewith at first. But steadily
gaze there, and disentangle with thine eyes
what underneath those stones is coming on;
thou now canst see how each one smites himself.”
O ye proud Christians, sad and weary creatures,
who, sick in mental vision, put your trust
in backward moving steps; perceive ye not
that worms we are, created but to form
the angelic butterfly, which flies unscreened
to judgment? Why, then, is it that your mind
soars up in pride, since ye are, as it were,
defective insects, even as is a worm,
in which formation is not yet complete?
As, to hold up a ceiling or a roof,
in lieu of corbel, one perceives at times
a human figure joining knees to breast,
which out of unreality gives birth
to real distress in him who sees it; such
seemed these to me, when I had given good heed.
They were, in truth, both more and less bowed down,
as each had more or less upon his back;
but he that in his acts most patient was,
seemed to say, weeping: “I can bear no more!”

11. Purgatory. The First Ring. Pride
The Lord’s Prayer. The Proud

“Our Father, Thou that in the Heavens dost dwell,
not circumscribed, but for the greater love
Thou hast for what Thou madest first on high;
let both Thy Name and Worth be given praise
by every creature, ev’n as it is meet
that to Thy loving Spirit thanks be given!
And may Thy Kingdom’s Peace come down to us,
since we can not attain it of ourselves,
for all our striving, save it also come!
As gladly of their wills Thine Angels make
a sacrifice to Thee, singing ‘All Hail!’,
so likewise gladly may men do with theirs!
Give us this day our daily spirit-food,
without which, through this bitter wilderness,
he backward goes, who onward toileth most!
And as we pardon every one the wrong
we ’ve suffered, of Thy Mercy do Thou us
forgive, regarding not what we deserve!
Our virtue which is easily o’ercome,
test Thou not through our ancient Enemy,

but set us free from him, who tempts it so!
This last request, dear Lord, is not, indeed,
made for ourselves, who need not make it here,
but is for their sake who behind us stayed."
Thus praying good speed for themselves and us,
those shades beneath a burden went their way,
not unlike that whereof one dreams at times,
unequally tormented, all of them,
and weary, o'er the first ring, round and round,
purging away the world's defiling mists.
If good things there be always said for us,
what can be said and done on their behalf
down here, by those whose will is rooted well?
Surely one ought to help them wash away
the stains they brought with them, that they may issue,
cleansed and unburdened, to the starry spheres.
"Pray, so may pity and Justice speedily
unburden you, that ye may move your wings,
and raise yourselves according to your wish,
show us on which hand lies the shortest way
to reach the stairs; and, be there more than one,
teach us the pass that hath the gentlest slope;
for, owing to the load of Adam's flesh,
which clothes his spirit, he who with me comes
is slow in climbing, though against his will."
As to the words, which in reply they said
to those which he, whom I was following, spoke,
it was not evident from whom they came;
but this was said: "Come with us on the right
along the bank, and ye shall find the pass,
which may be climbed by one that's still alive.
And were I not prevented by the stone,
which tames my haughty neck, and forces me
to keep my face bowed down, at this man here,
who liveth still and telleth not his name,
I 'd look, to see if he is one I know,
and stir his pity for this heavy load.
Latin I was, and born to a great Tuscan;
Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father;
I know not if you ever knew his name.
My forebears' ancient blood and noble deeds
caused me to be so arrogant, that I,
unmindful of our common mother, earth,
held every man in scorn to such extent,
I died for it, as well knows Siena's folk,
and every child in Campagnàtico.
I am Omberto; nor to me alone
doth this work ill, for pride hath with itself
drawn all my kin into calamity.
And here, for this, must I needs bear this load
among the dead, till God be satisfied,
since I among the living bore it not."
Listening, I bowed my face; and one of them,
not he who had been speaking, writhed around
under the burden which was hampering him;
and, having seen and recognized me, called,
and kept his eyes with effort fixed on me,
who, as I went along with them, was stooping.
Then "Oh!" said I, "Art thou not Oderisi,
the glory of Agobbio and the art,



which is in Paris called 'illuminating'?"
"Brother," said he, "more smiling are the parchments
which Franco Bolognese paints; the glory
is now all his and only partly mine.
Because of that great longing to excel,
whereon my heart was set, I certainly
would not have been so courteous while I lived.
Here is the forfeit paid for pride like this;
nor should I be here yet, had it not been
that, while I still could sin, I turned to God.
O empty glory of our human powers,
how short a time green lasts upon its top,
unless uncultured ages overtake it!
Once Cimabùe thought that he would hold
the field in painting, yet the cry is all
for Giotto now, hence that one's fame is dark.
Thus hath one Guido taken from the other
the glory of our tongue; and he is born,
perhaps, who from the nest will banish both.
Worldly repute is but a breath of wind,
which cometh now from here, and now from there,
and shifts its name, because its quarter shifts.
What greater fame shalt thou have — if when old
thou quit thy flesh, than hadst thou died ere 'pap'
and 'chink' were dropped, — a thousand years from
now?
For that, if to eternity compared,
is shorter than the twinkling of an eye
is to the sky's most slowly moving sphere.
All Tuscany proclaimed the fame of him,
who walks so slowly on the road before me;
yet hardly is a whisper of him left
in Siena now, whose governor he was,
what time the rage of Florence was destroyed,
which then as haughty was, as abject now.
Your worldly fame is like the hue of grass,
which comes and goes, and he discolors it,

through whom it springs up tender from the ground."
And I: "Thy true speech heart'ning me with good
humility, thou prickst my swollen pride;
but who is he of whom thou spok'st just now?
"That" he replied, "is Provenzàn Salvani;
and here he is, because presumptuously
he brought all Siena under his control.
Thus hath he gone, and without rest he goes,
e'er since he died; who yonder dares too much,
in satisfaction pays such coin as this."
And I then: "If the spirit who delays,
before repenting, till the verge of life,
abides below, and cometh not up here,
unless good prayers assist him, till as long
a time be passed as he had been alive,
wherefore hath this man's coming been vouchsafed?"
"When in his greatest glory," he replied,
"all shame removed, he freely took his stand
in Siena's Campo; and there, to free a friend
suffering in Charles' prison, he brought himself
to quake in every vein. I 'll say no more,
and know that what I say is darkly spoken;
but so, ere long, will thine own neighbors act,
that thou 'lt be able to interpret it.
This deed of his relieved him from those bounds."

12. Purgatory. The First Ring. Pride
Instances of Punished Pride. The Angel of Humility

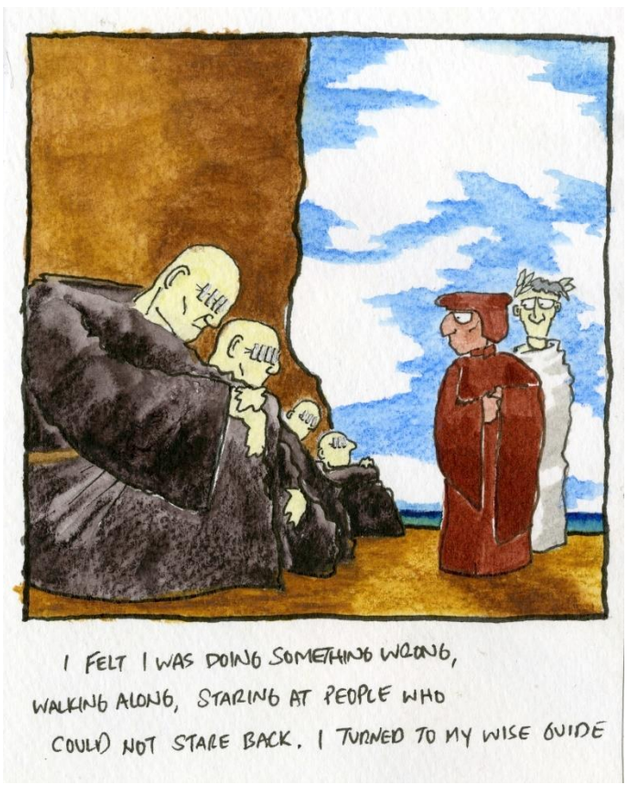
With equal steps, like oxen going yoked,
I went along beside that burdened soul,
as long as my dear Pedagogue allowed;
but when he said: "Leave him, and go thou on;
for here 't is well that each should urge his bark
with sail and oars, as much as e'er he can,"
I straightened me
as much as walking called for,
although my thoughts kept humble and depressed.
On had I moved, and in my Teacher's steps
was following willingly, and both of us
were showing now how light of step we were,
when "Downward turn thine eyes!" he said to me,
"Well will it be, to calm thee on thy way,
that thou shouldst see the bed thy soles are treading."
As over those that 'neath them buried lie
— that they may be recalled to people's minds —
tombs level with the ground the record bear
of what they were before; whence there they oft
are wept for, through the prick of memory,
which spurs to grief the pitiful alone;
ev'n so I saw engraved in sculpture here,
though finer in respect to workmanship,
as much as from the Mount juts out as path.
I saw, on one side, Him who once was made
nobler by far than any other creature,
fall like a flash of lightning down from Heaven.
I saw Briareus, on the other side,
pierced by an arrow from the sky, lie prone,
and heavy on the ground with mortal cold.
I saw Apollo, Mars I saw and Pallas,

as, still in armor, round their Sire they stood,
gazing upon the Giants' scattered limbs.
I saw great Nimrod 'neath his mighty work
dumb with confusion, as he watched the folk,
who once were proud with him on Shinar's plain.
O Niobe, with what sad eyes I thee
saw pictured forth in stone, between thy children,
the seven and seven thy dead, upon the road!
O Saul, how plainly there on thine own sword
didst thou seem dead upon Gilbòa's mount,
which felt thereafter neither rain nor dew!
O mad Arachne, thee I saw, as when,
already half a spider, thou wast sad
amid the tatters of thy fatal work.
O Rehoboam, not a threat seems now
thy face, but terror-stricken, as away
a chariot bears thee, lest thou be pursued.
It showed, moreover, that hard pavement did,
how costly once Alcmaeon caused his mother's
unlucky ornament to seem to her.
It showed how, in the temple's walls, his sons
cast themselves on Sennacherib, and how,
when he was dead, they there abandoned him.
It showed the slaughter and the cruel woe
wrought by Tomyris, when she said to Cyrus:
"With blood I fill thee, that didst thirst for blood!"
It showed, too, how the Assyrians took to flight,
routed, when Holophernes had been killed,
and also what was of that slaughter left.
I saw proud Troy in ashes and in caves.
O Ilion, how degraded and how vile
it showed thou wast, the image there perceived!
What master, or of brush or graving-tool,
could reproduce the shadows and the features,
which there would cause all cultured minds to wonder?
The dead seemed dead, the living seemed alive;
whoever saw the real, no better saw
than I then did what I was treading on,
as long as bowed I walked. Be ye, then, proud,

and go with haughty looks, ye sons of Eve,
nor bow your heads, to see your evil path!
More of the Mountain had we circled now,
and of the sun's course far more had we spent,
than my not disengaged mind had supposed;
when he who always walked attentively
ahead of me, began: "Lift up thy head!
The time for going thus absorbed is passed.
See there an Angel who is making ready
to come toward us; see how the sixth handmaiden
returns now from the service of the day.
With reverence adorn thine acts and face,
that he may now be pleased to send us up;
think that this day will never dawn again!"
So well accustomed was I to his warning,
that I should never let my time be lost,
that on this theme he could not darkly speak.
Toward us the lovely Creature was advancing,
arrayed in white, and in his countenance,
such as, when trembling, seems the morning star.
His arms he opened, then he oped his wings,
and said to us: "Come; near by are the steps,
and going up is easy after this."
Only a few to this announcement come.
O human race, why, born for upward flight,
fallest thou so before a little wind?
He led us on to where the rock was cut;
and there my forehead with his wings he stroked,
and promised that my passage would be safe.
As, on the right hand, to ascend the mount,
where seated is the church, which dominates
the well ruled town o'er Rubaconte's bridge,
the slope's bold flight is broken by the stairs
constructed in an age, when quire and stave
were safe; so, likewise, doth the bank relax,
which from the next ledge here quite steeply falls;
but closely on each side the high rock rubs.
While, turning thither, we were on our way,
"Blest are the poor in spirit!" voices sang
in such a way as words could not describe.
Alas! how different are the passes here
from those in Hell! For one up here goes in
with songs, but there below with frightful wails!
We now were climbing up the holy stairs,
and lighter far I felt than formerly
I seemed to be, when on the level ground;
I hence said: "Teacher, say, what heavy thing
has been removed from me, that, as I walk,
I almost feel no weariness at all?"
He answered: "When the P's, which still remain
almost extinct upon thy brow, are quite
erased, as one is now, thy feet will so
be conquered by good will, that they will feel
not only no fatigue, but it will be
a pleasure to them to be upward urged."
I then did as do those, who go about
with something on their head they know not of,
till others' gestures cause them to suspect;
whereat their hand assists in ascertaining,
searches, and finds, and so performs the work,
which cannot be accomplished by their sight;
and with my right hand's fingers spread I found
that only six the letters were, which he
who held the Keys, had o'er my temples cut;
on seeing which my Leader smiled with joy.

13. Purgatory. The Second Ring. Envy
Instances of Generosity. The Envious

We now were at the summit of the stairs,
where for the second time is cut away
the Mount, ascent of which frees one from sin;
and there a cornice, like the first one, girds
the hillside round about, save that its arc
more quickly curves. There is no shaded carving
apparent here, nor is there any mark;
the bank seems bare, as also seems the path,
with but the livid color of the rock.
"If we await folk here, of whom to ask
our way," the Poet argued, "I 'm afraid
our choice will be, perhaps, delayed too long."
Then on the sun he fixed his steadfast eyes,
made of his right the center for his motion,
and turned the left side of himself around.
"O thou sweet light, with confidence in whom
I enter this new path, conduct us thou,"
he said, "as one should be conducted here.
Thou warm'st the world, and on it thou dost shine;
if aught else urge not to the contrary,
thy rays at all times ought to be our guides."
Already had we gone as far up there,
as here on earth is reckoned for a mile,
in little time, because of ready will;
when, flying toward us, there were spirits heard,
who, though unseen, were to the board of love
uttering their courteous calls.
The voice which first
passed flying, said aloud: "They have no wine!"
and then behind us kept repeating it;

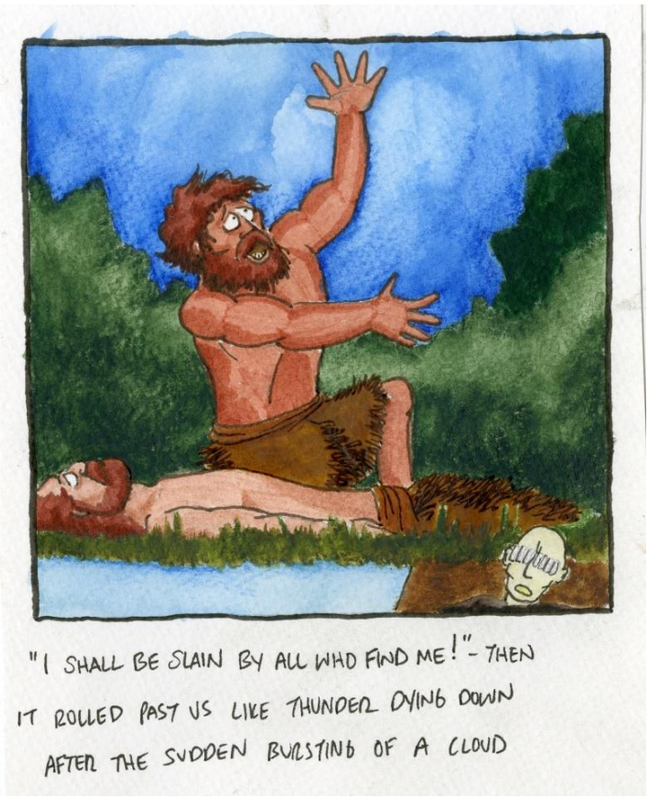


and ere, because of having moved away,
it could be heard no more, another, passing,
cried: “I ’m Orestes!” nor did that one linger.
“What are these voices, Father?” said I then;
and ev’n while I was asking, lo, a third,
which said: “Love those, from whom ye’ve ill received!”
The kindly Teacher then: “This circle whips
the fault of envy, hence the scourge’s cords
are drawn from love. The curb will probably
give forth a sound the contrary of this;
in my opinion, I believe thou ’lt hear it,
before the pass of pardon thou attain.
But keenly through the air address thy gaze,
and thou ’lt see people on ahead of us,
who seated are, and each against the cliff.”
Then wider than before I oped mine eyes;
I looked ahead, and shades I saw with cloaks
not differing from the color of the stone.
And when a little further on we were,
I heard one crying: “Mary, pray for us!”
and cries to Michael, Peter, and all the Saints.
Nor do I think there walks on earth to-day
a man so hard, that he would not be pierced
by sympathy for what I then perceived;
for, after I had drawn so near to them,
that what they did with clearness came to me,
tears from my eyes were drawn by bitter grief.
Covered they seemed to me with coarse hair-cloth,
and one sustained the other with his shoulder,
while all of them were by the bank sustained.
Ev’n thus the blind, in want of livelihood,
at Pardons stand to beg for what they need,
and one upon the other bows his head,
that pity may be speedily aroused,
not merely by the sound of what they say,
but by their aspect, which no less implores.
And as the sun availeth not the blind,
so to the shades, whereof I spoke just now,
the sky’s light willeth not to grant itself;
because an iron band runs through, and sews
the eyelids of them all, as with wild hawks
one does, since otherwise they ’d not keep still.
To me it seemed an outrage that, unseen,
I should see others, as I walked along;
I therefore turned to my wise Counselor.
He well knew what the dumb man wished to say;
and therefore waited not for me to ask,
but “Speak,” he said, “be brief and to the point.”
Virgil on that side of the cornice-ledge
was coming on with me, whence one can fall,
because it wreathes itself with no bank there.
On the other side I had those zealous shades,
who through the horrid seams were pressing so
their tears, that they were bathing both their cheeks.
Turning to them, I thus began: “O people,
who certain are of seeing that High Light,
which your desire hath for its only object;
so melt Grace soon the scum upon your conscience,
that memory’s stream may through it clearly flow,
tell me, for grateful will it be to me
and pleasing, if there is among you here
a soul that Latin is; it will be well
for him, perhaps, if I should come to know it.”
“O brother mine, we both are citizens
of one true City; but thou meanest one,
who, while a pilgrim, lived in Italy.”
It seemed to me that this I heard for answer
a little further on than where I was;
I therefore let myself be heard much further.
Among the rest I saw a shade which seemed
expectant in its looks; and, if one ask
“How so?” held up its chin as do the blind.
“Spirit,” said I, “that dost subdue thyself,
that thou mayst climb, if she that didst reply,
make thyself known to me by place or name.”
“Sienese I was;” she answered, “and with these
cleanse here my guilty life, and pray to Him
with tears, that He may lend Himself to us.
Though called Sapìa, sapient was I not,
for I was far more glad of others’ harm,
than I of my good fortune ever was.
And, that thou mayst not think that I deceive thee,
ev’n as I tell thee, hear how mad I was,
once my years’ arch was on its downward course.
When with their foes my fellow citizens
were joined in battle near the town of Colle,
I prayed to God for that which He had willed.
When, routed there, they took the bitter path
of flight, I felt, on seeing them pursued,
a joy unequalled by all other joys;
I therefore upward turned my daring face,
and cried to God: ‘I fear Thee now no more!’
as doth the blackbird at the least fair weather.
When I was at the end of life, I longed
for peace with God; but not yet would my debt
have been diminished by repentance here,
had it not been that Pietro Pettinagno,
who of his charity was grieved for me,
was mindful of me in his holy prayers.
But who art thou, that askest of our state
while going on, and hast thine eyes unclosed,
as I believe, and dost, while breathing, talk?”
“Mine eyes will yet be taken from me here,
but not for long;” said I, “for they have not
offended much by being turned by envy.
Far greater is the fear, wherewith my soul
is filled, of that tormenting pain below,
for even now the load there weighs upon me.”
And she: “Who, then, led thee to us up here,
if to return below thou think?” And I:
“He that is with me here, and speaketh not.
But I am living, therefore ask of me,
elected spirit, if thou’dst have me move
my mortal feet in thy behalf on earth.”
“Oh, this” she answered, “is so strange to hear,
that certainly it proves God’s love for thee;
therefore assist me with thy prayers at times!
I beg thee by what most thou longest for,
if e’er thou tread the soil of Tuscany,
that thou among my kin restore my fame.

Among that vain folk wilt thou see them there,
which hopes in Talamone, and will waste
more hope on it than on the Diàna quest;
but still more will the admirals invest."

14. Purgatory. The Second Ring. Envy. Valdarno and Romagna in 1300. Instances of punished Envy

"Who is this spirit, who around our Mount
is circling thus, ere death have giv'n him flight,
and at his will opens and veils his eyes?"
"I know not who he is, but know he 's not
alone; ask thou, that nearer art to him,
and greet him fairly, so that he may speak."
Two spirits, who were leaning on each other,
thus talked of me upon the right hand there;
then turned their faces up, to speak to me;
and one said: "Soul, that, still held in thy body,
toward Heaven art going, of thy charity
console us now, and tell us whence thou com'st,
and who thou art; for thou dost cause in us
such wonder at the grace accorded thee,
as that demands which never was before."
And I: "A small stream winds through Tuscany,
which up in Falterona hath its rise,
and is not sated by a hundred miles.
From somewhere on its banks I bring this body;
vain would it be to tell you who I am,
because my name makes no great sound as yet."
"If with my mind I rightly penetrate
thy meaning," that one then replied to me;
who spoke before, "thou talkest of the Arno."
Thereat the other spirit said to him:
"Why did this man conceal that river's name,
as people hide the name of dreadful things?"
The shade who had been questioned as to this,
discharged its duty thus: "I do not know;
but meet it is that this vale's name should die!
For from its source — where that wild mountain-chain,
whence severed is Pelorus, swells so greatly,
that in few places doth it pass that mark —
to there where it betakes it to restore
whatever from the sea the sky sucks up,
whence rivers get what goes along with them,
virtue is, snake-like, as a foe pursued
by all, or through the region's evil luck,
or through bad customs which incite men there;
hence those that in this wretched valley dwell,
have changed their nature so, that it would seem
that Circe had them in her pasturage.
Among foul hogs, of acorns worthier far
than of all other food that's fit for man
to use, it first directs its sorry path.
As down it comes, it afterward finds curs,
that snarl more fiercely than their strength comports,
and turns from these its snout aside in scorn.
It keeps on falling; and the more it swells,
the more that cursèd and unlucky ditch
finds that the dogs are turning into wolves.
Descending then through many a gloomy gorge,
foxes it finds, so full of fraud, that naught
have they to fear, lest cunning master them.
Nor shall I cease to speak, though overheard;
and for this man 't were well, if he recall
hereafter what a truthful spirit shows me.
Thy grandson I behold, who first becomes
a hunter of those wolves upon the banks
of that fierce stream, and terrifies them all.
He sells their flesh, while still alive; then kills them,
as an old beast he would; of life depriving
many, himself of honor he deprives.
He issues bloody from the dismal wood,
and leaves it such, that in a thousand years
't will not rewood itself as once it was."
As at the announcement of some painful loss,
the face of him who listens is disturbed,
from wheresoe'er the danger may assail him;
ev'n thus did I behold that other soul,



who turned to listen, grow distressed and sad,
as soon as he had gathered in that speech.
The words of one soul and the other's face
had caused me to desire to know their names;
therefore with prayers I mingled this request.
That spirit, therefore, who addressed me first,
began again: "Thou'dst have me condescend
to do for thee what thou for me wilt not.
But since God wills that so much of His Grace
should shine in thee, I 'll not be niggardly;
Guido del Duca know, then, that I am.
And so consumed by envy was my blood,
that, had I seen a man becoming happy,
livid with envy thou hadst seen me turn.
Of what I sowed I 'm reaping now the straw.
O human race, why set your heart on things,
wherein companionship must be forbidden?
This is Rinieri; this the honor is,
and glory of the house of Calboli,
whose worth, since him, none hath inherited.
Nor hath his blood alone despoiled itself,
'tween Po and mountains, Reno and the sea,
of those good things which truth and joy require;
for in those bounds the country is so full
of poisoned stocks, that only slowly now
would they be lessened, ev'n if it were tilled.
Where are good Lìzio, Arrigo Mainàrdi,
Pier Traversaro and Guido di Carpigna?
O Romagnoles, turned into bastards now!
When in Bologna will a Fabbro rise?
When, in Faenza, a Bernardin di Fosco,
the noble scion of a little plant?
Wonder not, Tuscan, if I weep now, when,
with Guido da Prata, I recall to mind
Ugolin d'Azzo, who among us dwelt,
Frederick Tignoso and his company,
the Traversara house, the Anastagi,
(and both these families are void of heirs),
the ladies and the knights, the toils and ease,
which love and courtesy once made us crave,
where hearts have grown so bad! O Brettinoro,
wherefore not vanish, since thy family,
and many people with them, have departed,
that guiltless they might be? Bàgnacavàl,
begetting sons no longer, doeth well;
but Castrocaro ill, and Conio worse,
which still takes trouble to beget such counts.
Well the Pagani, too, will fare, when once
their demon shall have gone, but not so well,
that an unspotted fame will e'er remain
to them. O Ugolin de' Fàntoli,
thy name is safe, since one can now no more
be looked for, who, as a degenerate,
can darken it! But go thy way now, Tuscan;
for weeping now affords me far more zest
than speech, our talk hath so distressed my mind!"
We knew that those dear spirits heard us leaving;
and therefore merely by their keeping still,
they made us trust the path which we were taking.
When we, advancing, found ourselves alone,
a voice, which seemed like lightning when it cleaves
the air, was heard, and, as it reached us there,
said: "Whosoever findeth me shall slay me!"
then vanished, as when thunder rolls away,
if suddenly a cloud be rent apart.
Soon as our hearing had a truce from this,
behold another with so great a crash,
it seemed to be its following thunder-clap:
"I am Aglauros, who was turned to stone!"
Then, to draw closer to the Poet's side,
I took a backward, not a forward, step.
The air was calm on all sides now, when he:
"That was the painful bit, which in his bounds
should hold a man. But ye take in the bait,
and so the ancient Adversary's hook
draweth you to him; hence of small avail
is either curb or lure.
Heaven calleth you,
and, showing to you its eternal beauties,
around you moves, and yet your eyes look down;
hence He, who seeth all things, scourges you."

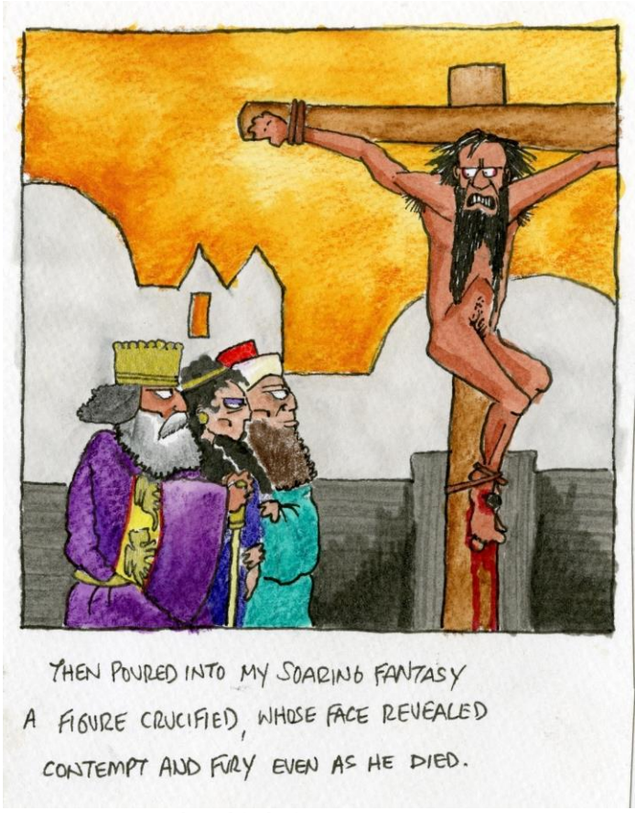
15. Purgatory. The Second Ring. Envy. The Angel of Generosity. The Third Ring. Anger. Instances of Gentleness

Between the third hour's close and day's beginning
as much as is apparent of the sphere,
which like a child is ever given to play,
so much now of its course toward evening seemed
remaining to the sun; 't was vespers there,
and midnight here; and fully on the face
its rays were striking us, because the Mount
had so been circled by us, that we now
were going on directly toward the West;
when, far more blindingly than e'er before,
I felt my forehead overcome by splendor,
and was bewildered by these unknown things;
over my eyebrows, hence, I raised my hands,

and made myself the screen which, filing off,
tempers excessive light in what is seen.
As when from water, or a looking-glass,
a ray leaps up in the opposite direction,
and in the same way mounts that down it came,
and from the falling of a stone departs
at equal distance to the same extent,
as both experiment and art reveal;
even so it seemed to me that I was smitten
as by a light, reflected there before me;
because of which my sight was swift to flee.
“Dear Father, what is that,” said I, “from which
I cannot screen my face sufficiently
to help me, and which toward us seems to come?”
“Wonder thou not” he answered me, “if still
Heaven’s family affect thy sight; an Angel
is this, who comes to ask us to ascend.
It soon will happen that to see such things
will be no burden, but as great a joy,
as Nature hath enabled thee to feel.”
As soon as we had reached the blessèd Angel,
with joyful voice he said: “Enter from hence
a stairway far less steep than were the rest!”
We were ascending, having thence departed,
when “Blessèd are the Merciful!” was sung
behind us, and “Rejoice, O thou that winnest!”
My Teacher then, and I, we two alone,
were going up; and, as we went, I thought
of how I might get profit from his words;
whereat I turned toward him, and asked: “What meant
that spirit from Romagna, when he mentioned
‘forbidden,’ and ‘companionship’ in things?”
Hence he: “Of his worst fault he knows the harm;
hence let it not surprise, if he therefor
rebuke men, that it be lamented less.
Because your wishes aim at that, wherein
each share is lessened through companionship,
envy fain moves the bellows for your sighs.
If love, though, for the highest sphere of all
were upward turning your desires, that fear
would not be in your breast; because the more
there are up yonder by whom ‘Ours’ is said,
so much more good doth each of them possess,
and so much more love in that cloister burns.”
“I fast much more from being satisfied,”
said I, “than had I silent been at first;
and more of doubt I gather in my mind.
How can it be, then, that a good that’s shared
should make more owners richer with itself,
than if by but a few it be possessed?”
And he to me: “Because thou fastenest
thy mind exclusively on earthly things,
thou drawest darkness out of very light.
That Good, Ineffable and Infinite,
which dwells up yonder, runs as fast to love,
as to bright bodies comes a ray of light.
So much It gives Itself, as is the warmth
It findeth; hence, as is the extent of love,
so much the Eternal Worth spreads over it.
The more there are up there that love each other,

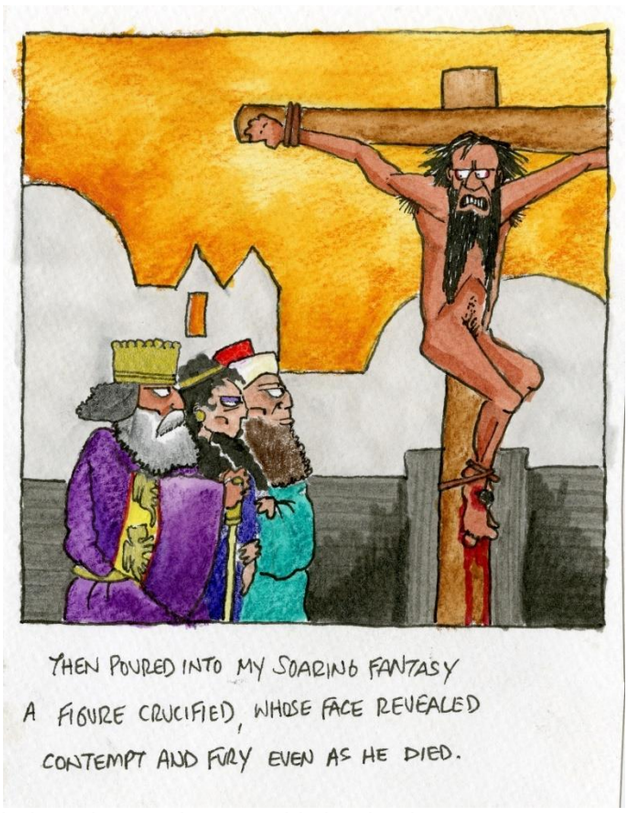
the more there are to love, and more the love,
and, mirror-like, the more of love each sheds
on each. And if my talk sate not thy hunger,
thou shalt see Beatrice, and she will fully
free thee from this and every other want.
Do thou, then, see to it that speedily
thou have removed, as two already are,
the five wounds which are closed by causing pain.”
Wishing to say: “Thou satisfiest me,”
I saw that I had reached the following ring;
my fond eyes, therefore, caused me to keep still.
There it appeared to me that I was wrapt
in an ecstatic vision all at once,
and that within a temple I perceived
much people; and a Lady at the door,
who with the sweet mien of a mother said:
“Wherefore, my Son, hast thou thus dealt with us?
Behold, thy father and I have sought for thee
in sorrow!” Here, when she had ceased to speak,
that disappeared which had before appeared.
Then there appeared another, o’er whose cheeks
those tears were streaming down, which grief distills,
when born of great resentment toward another,
saying: “If thou art master of the city,
about whose name there was among the gods
such strife, and whence all knowledge sparkles forth,
avenge thyself on those audacious arms,
Pisìstratus, which dared embrace our daughter!”
Kindly and gently then that lord appeared
to answer her with looks of self-control:
“What shall we do to him who hateth us,
if he who loves us is by us condemned?”
Then folk I saw inflamed by anger’s fire
who, bent on killing a young man with stones,
cried to each other naught but: “Kill him, kill!”
And him I saw, bowed to the ground in death
which now oppressed him; of his eyes he e’er
made gates of Heaven, and in that anguish prayed
the Lord on high with looks which unlock pity,

that He his persecutors would forgive.
When once my mind returned outside again
to those things which outside of it are true,
I recognized my not untruthful errors.
My Leader, who could see that I was acting
like one who frees himself from slumber, said:
“What aileth thee, that thou canst not stand up,
but hast been coming more than half a league,
veiling thine eyes, and reeling with thy legs,
like one o’ercome by either wine or sleep?”
“O my dear Father, if thou listen to me,
I ’ll tell thee what it was appeared to me,”
said I, “when I was thus deprived of legs.”
And he: “If on thy face a hundred masks
thou hadst, thy thoughts would not be hid from me,
however small they were. What thou hast seen
was lest thou free thyself from opening up
thy heart unto those waters of thy peace,
which from the Eternal Fountain are diffused.
I did not ask ‘What ails thee?’ as would one,
who looks but with the eye which seeth not,
when once the body lies inanimate;
but asked it to endow thy feet with strength;
so must the indolent be spurred, when slow
to use their waking time, when it returns.”
On through the vesper hours we went along,
forward intent, as far as e’er our eyes
could reach, against the late and shining rays;
when lo, a smoke in our direction came
little by little, and as dark as night;
nor was there any place of shelter from it;
this of pure air deprived us and of eyes.



16. Purgatory. The Third Ring. Anger
Free Will and the Corruption of the World

The gloom of Hell and of a night deprived
of every planet, ’neath a narrow sky,



darkened as much as possible by clouds,
ne’er made so thick a veil before my face,
nor to my feeling was so rough in tissue,
as was the smoke which covered us up there;
for that permitted not of opened eyes;
because of which my wise and trusty Escort
drew near to me, and offered me his shoulder.
Even as a blind man walks behind his guide,
in order not to go astray, and strike
aught that might hurt him, or might even kill;
so, going through that foul and bitter air,
I listened to my Leader, who said only:
“Take care that thou be not cut off from me!”
Voices I heard, and each appeared to pray
for peace and mercy to the Lamb of God,
who taketh sins away. Their only prelude
was “Lamb of God”; and all had but one word
and intonation, hence among them all
there seemed to be the fullest harmony.
“Are those, then, spirits, Teacher, whom I hear?”
said I; and he to me: “Thou judgest rightly;
as on they go, they loosen anger’s knot.”
“Now who art thou, that cleavest thus our smoke,
and yet dost speak of us, as if thou still
by monthly calends wert dividing time?”
These words were uttered by a single voice;
my Teacher therefore said to me: “Reply,
and ask him if on this side one goes up.”
And I: “O creature, that dost cleanse thyself,
that beautiful thou mayst return to Him
who made thee, thou’lt hear marvels, following me.”
“I ’ll follow thee as far as I ’m allowed,”
he answered, “and, if smoke permit not sight,
hearing, instead, will keep us linked together.”
I thereupon began: “I go on high
while in that swathing-band which death dissolves;
and through the infernal anguish came I here;
and whereas God hath wrapt me in His Grace
so much, that He would have me see His court

by means entirely out of modern use,
conceal not who thou wast before thy death,
but tell it me, and whether toward the pass
I rightly go; and be thy words our guides."
"Lombard I was, and Marco was I called;
familiar with the world, I loved the worth,
toward which all men have now unbent their bows.
For mounting upward thou art going rightly."
He thus replied, and added: "I beseech thee,
pray for me there, when thou shalt be above."
And I to him: "I pledge my faith to thee
that what thou askest of me I will do;
but with a doubt I 'll burst, unless therefrom
I free myself. Simple at first, it now
is doubled by thy speech, which makes me, here
and elsewhere, sure of that wherewith I link it.
The world is certainly as wholly void
of every virtue as thou tellest me,
and is with evil big and overspread;
but, pray, point out its cause, that I may see,
and show it unto other men; for one
puts it in heaven, another, here below."
At first he heaved a sigh profound, which grief
to "Ah me!" changed; then "Brother," he began,
"the world is blind, and thou, indeed, com'st hence.
Ye that are living still attribute upward
each cause to heaven alone, as though it moved
everything with it of necessity.
If this were so, Free Will would be destroyed
within you, and no justice would there be
in having joy for good, and grief for ill.
Heaven starts your inclinations, though I say
not all; but ev'n supposing that I did,
light has been giv'n to you for good and evil,
with Free Will, which, if it endure fatigue
in its first fights with heaven, will afterward,
if duly nourished, conquer everything.
Beneath a greater Power and better Nature
ye freely lie; and that creates within you
the mind, which heaven hath not in its control.
Hence, if the present world go wrong, the cause
is in yourselves, and should in you be sought;
of this I 'll now a true spy be for thee.
Forth from the hand of Him, who ere it lives
delights in it, ev'n like a little maid,
who weeps and laughs, and wantons like a child,
issues the simple soul, which knoweth nought,
save that, proceeding from a Joyous Maker,
it gladly turns to that which pleases it.
At first it tasteth things of little good;
deceived thereby, it runneth after them,
unless a guide or check divert its love.
Hence, as a bit, a law must needs be set;
a king must needs be had, who should at least
the tower of the truthful town discern.
The laws exist, but who sets hand to them?
No one; because the Shepherd who precedes
can chew the cud, but hath not cloven hoofs;
the people, hence, who see their guide strive solely
for those good things for which it longs itself,
feedeth thereon, and asks for nothing more.
Well canst thou see that evil leadership,
and not that Nature in you is corrupt,
is what has caused the world to be so wicked.
Rome, which once made it good, was wont to have
two Suns, which rendered visible both roads,
that of the world, and that of God. One now
hath quenched the other; to the bishop's staff
the sword is joined, and badly needs must one
fare with the other, since, together joined,
neither the other fears; recall to mind,
if thou believe me not, the ear of corn;
for every grass is by its own seed known.
Throughout the country watered by the Po
and Adige, one used to find both virtue
and courtesy, ere Frederick had his strife;
with safety it can nowadays be crossed
by any who, through shame, refrained from speech
with good men, or avoided intercourse.
There are, indeed, three old men still, in whom
the old age chides the modern, and who long
for God to give them back a better life:
Corrado da Palazzo, good Gherardo,
and Guido da Castello, better called,
the simple Lombard, as in France he is.
Say, therefore, that today the Church of Rome,
by joining in herself two kinds of rule,
falls in the mire, and fouls her self and load!"
"O Marco mine," said I, "thine arguments
are good; and now I see why Levi's sons
were from inheriting debarred. But which
Gherardo is the one, who, as thou sayst,
as sample of the people now extinct,
remaineth to reproach this savage age?"
"Thy speech deceives or tests me," he replied,
"for, thou, addressing me in Tuscan speech,
seemst not to know who good Gherardo was.
I know him not by other added name,
unless I took it from his daughter, Gaia.

God keep you, for with you I come no further!
Already whitening now, behold the light,
which rays out through the smoke, and I must go —
the Angel 's there — ere I be seen by him."
He thus turned back, nor would he hear me more.

17. Purgatory. The Third Ring. Anger
Instances of Punished Anger. The Angel of Peace. Love

Reader, remind thyself, if e'er a fog
o'ertook thee on a mountain, one through which
thou couldst not see in any other way
than moles do through the membrane o'er their eyes,
how, when the damp, thick mists begin to thin,
the sun's orb feebly pierces them; and quickly
will thine imagination come to see
how I first saw the sun again, which now
was at its setting. Thus, as I mine own
was matching with my Teacher's trusty steps,
from such a cloud I came into the beams,
already dead upon the shores below.
O thou Imagination, which at times
dost steal us so from outer things, that though
a thousand trumpets blow, one hears them not,
what moveth thee, if sense contribute naught?
A light which takes in Heaven its form impels thee,
freely, or by a Will which sends it down.
The vision of her cruelty, who changed
her form into the bird, which most delights
in song, appeared in my imagination;
and hereupon my mind was so shut up
within itself, that nothing that was then
received by it, came to it from without.
Then into my high fantasy there rained
one crucified, contemptuous and proud
in aspect, and as such he met his death.
Around him were the great Ahasuerus,
Esther his wife, and righteous Mordecai,
who so whole-hearted was in word and deed.
And as this picture of its own accord
broke up, as doth a bubble when it lacks
the water it was formed withal; a maid
rose in my vision next, who bitterly
was weeping, and was saying: "Why, O Queen,
didst thou through anger wish to be no more?"
Lavinia not to lose, thyself hast slain;
and now hast lost me! Mother, this is I,
who, ere I mourn another's loss, mourn thine."
As sleep is broken, when unwonted light
strikes closed eyes suddenly, and, being broken,
quivers before it wholly dies away;
ev'n so did my imagining break up,
as soon as on my face there smote a light
brighter by far than we are wont to see.
I turned around to notice where I was,
when lo, a voice which said: "The ascent is here,"
from every other interest turned my mind;
and made my will so eager to behold
the speaker, that, when such, it never rests
until it sees its object face to face.

But as before the sun, which whelms our eyes,
and veils its figure, through excess of light,
so likewise here my visual powers failed.
"A godlike spirit this, who, though unasked,
is pointing out to us our upward path,
and with his own light is himself concealing.
With us he deals as one would with himself;
for he that waits till asked, when seeing need,
inclines already meanly to refuse.
To such a bidding let us now accord
our feet, and try to climb ere darkness come;
for later one could not, till day returned."
Thus said my Leader then, and I with him
turned toward a flight of stairs our feet; and I,
when on its first step, near me felt, as 't were,
the motion of a wing, and on my face
a fanning, while a voice said: "Blessèd are
the Peaceful, who are free from evil wrath!"
So high above us now were those last beams
which by the night are followed, that the stars
were coming out on many sides. And "O
my strength, why dost thou fade away so fast?"
I to myself was saying, for a truce,
I felt, was set the powers of my legs.
We now were where the flight of stairs went up
no further, and as motionless we were,
as is a vessel when the shore is reached;
and for a while I waited to find out
if aught upon the new ring could be heard;
then, toward my Teacher turning round, I said:
"Say, my dear Father, what offense is purged
in this ring, here where now we are? Although
our feet keep still, let not thy talking cease."
And he to me: "The love of good, when scant
of what it should have been, is here atoned;
here beats again the ill-retarded oar.
But now, in order that thou understand
more clearly still, turn thou thy mind to me,

and some good fruit thou 'lt gather from our stay.
Neither Creator," he began, "nor creature
was e'er devoid of either innate love,
or that which conscious is; and this thou knowst.
The innate love is always free from error;
but the other kind can err through evil aim,
or through deficient, or excessive strength.
While well directed toward the primal goods,
and toward the secondary self-restrained,
it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure;
but when it turns toward evil things, or runs
to good, with more or less zeal than it ought,
the creature then against his Maker works.
From this, then, thou canst understand that love
must be the seed in you of every virtue,
and every deed that merits punishment.
And now, since love can never turn its face
from its own subject's welfare, from self-hate
all are secure; and since one cannot think
of any self as being from the First
divided, and existing of itself,
all hearts are thus debarred from hating Him.
It follows, that, if I in arguing
judge well, one's neighbor's is the harm one loves,
and this is born in three ways in your clay.
There 's he, who on the abasement of his neighbor
his hope of rising sets, and only longs
that from his greatness he may be brought low;
and he, who fears the loss of power, favor,
renown and honor, should another rise,
and grieves so, that he loves the contrary;
then he, who by injustice seems so shamed,
that greedy he becometh for revenge;
and such must needs prepare for others' harm.
This triform love is wept for here below;
but now I 'd have thee hear about the other,
which runs to love in a corrupted way.
All apprehend confusedly a good
wherein the mind can rest, and long for it;
and therefore every one attempts to reach it.
If slothful be the love impelling you
to see or win it, after just repentance,
this present cornice tortures you for that.
Another good there is, which never makes
man happy; it is not real happiness,
nor the Good Essence, fruit and root of all
that 's good. The love that yields too much to that,
is wept for in three rings above us here;
but why it 's reckoned threefold I say not,
that thou mayst seek the reason for thyself."

18. Purgatory. The Fourth Ring. Sloth
Love and Free Will. Instances of Punished Sloth

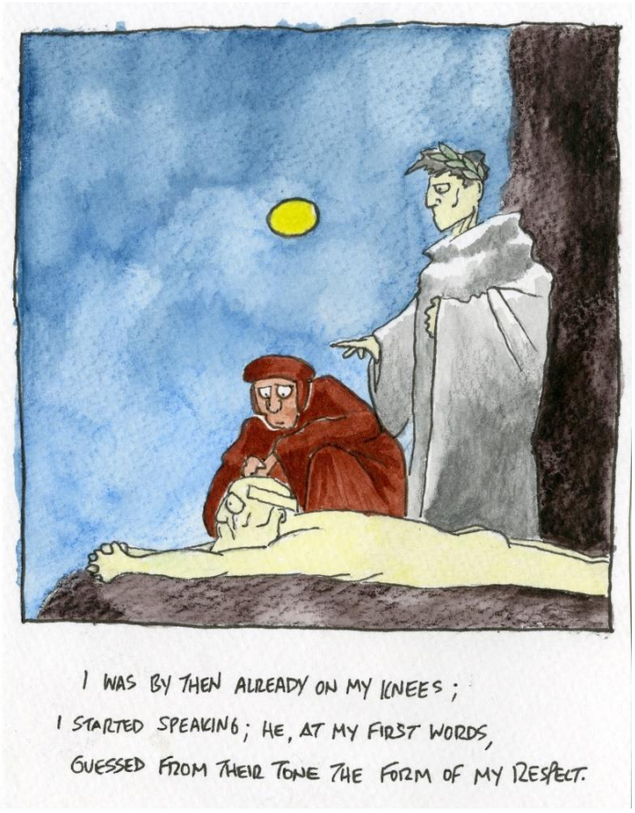
The lofty Doctor, having ended thus
his argument, was looking in my eyes,
eager to see if I seemed satisfied;
and I, who by new thirst was still spurred on,
was silent outwardly, and in me said:
"My many questions trouble him perhaps;"

but that true Father, who perceived the wish,
which, being shy, did not disclose itself,
by speaking first, emboldened me to speak.
Hence I: "My vision, Teacher, in thy light
becomes so keen, that clearly I discern
all that thy talk implieth or unfolds;
I therefore beg of thee, sweet Father dear,
explain to me why thou ascrib'st to love
every good action and its contrary."
"Direct thine understanding's sharpened eyes
toward me," he said, "and clear to thee will be
the error of the blind who pose as guides.
The mind, which is created prone to love,
inclines toward everything that pleases it,
when roused by pleasure to activity.
Your faculty of apprehending draws
an image from reality, and so
displays it in you, that your mind is caused
to turn to it; and if, thus turned, your mind
inclines thereto, that tendency is love,
is nature bound in you again by pleasure.
Then, just as fire, by reason of its form,
moves upward, being made for mounting thither,
where, in its element, it longer lasts;
ev'n so the captive mind begins to yearn,
(a motion of the soul) and never rests
until the thing it loveth gives it joy.
Apparent to thee now can be the extent
to which the truth is hid from those that claim
that each love in itself deserveth praise,
because, perhaps, its object in itself
seems always to be good; and yet not good
is every seal, though good may be its wax."
"Thy words, together with my heeding mind,"
I answered him, "have shown me what love is;
but this hath made me bigger with a doubt;
for, if love from without is born in us,
and if the soul can do naught else, her doing
or right or wrong, is no desert of hers."

And he: “What Reason sees here I can tell thee;
for aught beyond its ken, look thou alone
to Beatrice, for that ’s a work of Faith.
Every substantial form which is distinct
from matter, and is also joined with it,
hath in it a specific power collected,
which, save in operation, is not seen,
and only shows itself in its effects,
as life doth, by its green leaves, in a plant.
None knows, however, whence the understanding
of first cognitions comes, or whence the bent
toward those first appetites which are in you,
as zeal for making honey is in bees;
this first will, hence, deserves nor praise nor blame.
Now, that all others be conformed to this,
the power which counsels inborn is in you,
and ought to hold the threshold of assent.
This is the source, whence comes the ground
of merit in you, as it gathers in,
and winnows out, your good and guilty loves.
Those who in reasoning attained the bottom,
perceived this inborn liberty, and left
the world the teachings of morality.
Supposing, then, that every love that flames
within you, rises of necessity,
within you lies the power to master it.
This noble virtue is by Beatrice
called Freedom of the Will; hence see that thou
recall it, should she speak of it to thee.”
The moon, in rising, close to midnight late,
and looking like a bucket all on fire,
was causing now the stars to seem more rare;
as, counter to the heavens, it coursed the paths
the sun enflames, whene’er the Roman sees it
setting between the Sards and Corsicans;
and now that noble shade, whence Piètola
hath greater fame than any Mantuan village,
had put aside the load I laid on him;
hence I who, as an answer to my questions,
had reaped his clear and easy talk, remained
like one confused because of drowsiness.
But suddenly this sleepiness of mine
was taken from me by a crowd of people,
who, back of us, were circling toward us now.
And as Ismenus and Asopus once
along their banks saw maddened throngs at night,
whene’er the Thebans needed Bacchus; such
were those who, sweeping scythe-like round that ring,
were coming on, from what I saw of them,
by good will ridden and by righteous love.
And soon were they upon us, for the whole
of that great crowd was moving at a run;
and two ahead in tears were crying out:
“Mary proceeded to the hills in haste,” and “Caesar,
in order to subdue Ilerda, struck
Marseilles, then hurried on to Spain.”
“Quick, quick, lest time be lost through lack of love,”
cried those that came behind them, “so that zeal
in doing good may make Grace green again!”
“O folk, in whom keen fervor now redeems,
perhaps, the negligence and slowness shown
by your tepidity in doing good,
this man who lives, and truly I lie not,
desires, when sunlight once returns, to mount;
hence tell us where the nearest opening lies.”
These were my Leader’s words; and one of those
same spirits said: “Come on behind us, then,
and thou wilt find the hole. So keen we are
to keep on moving, that we cannot stop;
forgive us, then, if lack of courtesy
thou deem, what we consider righteousness.
I was San Zeno’s Abbot at Verona,
under the rule of worthy Barbarossa,
of whom Milàn in sorrow talketh still.
And he has one foot in the grave already,
who soon will for that monastery weep,
and grieve because he had it in his power;
for he his son, in body wholly sick,
worse still in mind, and also ill-begot,
has had installed in its true shepherd’s place.”
I know not if aught else he said, or ceased,
so far had he run past us now; but this
I heard, and I’ve enjoyed retaining it.
Then he who was my help in every need,
said: “Turn in this direction, and behold
two coming on, who give a bite to sloth.”
Moving behind them all, they said: “The folk,
for whom the sea was opened up, were dead,
before the Jordan had perceived their heirs;
and those who with the son of Anchises
could not endure to toil unto the end,
gave themselves up to lead inglorious lives.”
Then, when those shades were separated from us
so far, that they no longer could be seen,
a new thought made its way into my mind,
whence many other different thoughts were born;
and I between them so confused became,
that, wandering to and fro, I closed mine eyes,
and changed what I had thought into a dream.

19. Purgatory. The Fourth Ring. Sloth.
Dante’s Second Dream The Angel of Zeal.
The Fifth Ring. Avarice and Prodigality

Within the hour, when, vanquished by the earth,
or ev’n at times by Saturn, day-time’s heat
can warm the coldness of the moon no longer;
when geomancers see their Greater Fortune
rise in the East ere dawn, and on a path
which doth not long stay dark for it; a Female
approached me in a dream, with stammering tongue,
with eyes asquint, and crooked on her feet,
with hands lopped off, and pallor on her face.
I fixed my gaze on her; and as the sun
brings comfort to cold limbs which night-time chills,
ev’n so my looking at her freed her tongue,
and afterward, in but a little time,
completely straightened her, and gave that hue
to her discolored face which love desires.
As soon as she had thus unloosed her speech,



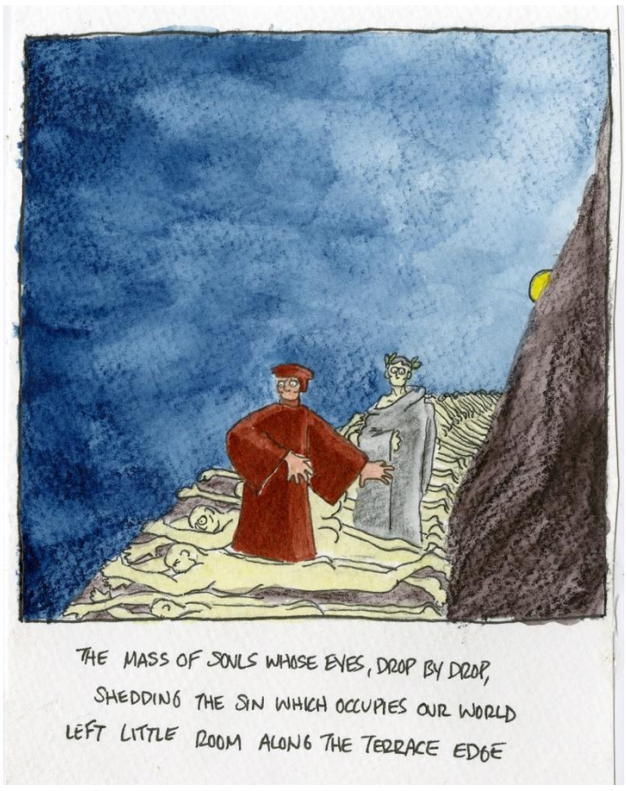
she then began to sing in such a way,
that from her I could hardly take my gaze.
“I am” she sang, “the lovely Siren, she
who in mid-ocean mariners bewitches;
so much I please whoever heareth me!
I turned Ulysses from his wandering course
to hear my song; and who gets used to me
seldom departs, so wholly I content him!”
Her mouth had not yet closed, when lo,
a holy Lady at my side appeared,
who ready was to put her to confusion.
“O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?” she cried
in scornful tones; whereat he then advanced
with eyes set only on the modest one.
She seized the other, opened her in front,
and rent her garments, showing me her belly;
this woke me with the stench that issued from it.
I turned my eyes, and my good Teacher said:
“I ’ve called thee thrice at least. Arise and come.
We’ ll find the gate through which thou mayst ascend.”
I rose, and all the holy Mountain’s rings
were with the high day’s light already filled,
as with the new sun back of us we moved.
While I was following him, I held my head
like one who, having it bowed down by thought,
makes of himself a half-arch of a bridge;
and then I heard: “Come on; the pass is here,”
uttered in such a gentle, kindly way,
as in this mortal land is never heard.
With outspread wings, which seemed the wings of swans,
he who thus spoke directed us on high
’tween the two side walls of the granite rock.
He moved his pinions then, and fanning us,
affirmed that “those who mourn” are happy, since
possessed of comfort shall their spirits be.
“What aileth thee, that only on the ground
thou gazest?” said my Guide, when past the Angel
both he and I had climbed a little way.

And I: “A recent dream, which to itself
inclines me, makes me with such doubt advance,
that I cannot refrain from thought of it.”
“Thou hast perceived” said he, “that ancient witch
who henceforth o’er us is alone lamented;
and seen how from her one is freed. Let that
suffice thee; strike thy heels upon the ground,
and turn thine eyes up toward the calling lure
the Eternal King whirls with the mighty wheels!”
As is the falcon, which at first looks down,
then turns around when called, and spreads his wings,
keen for the quarry which attracts him; such
was I; and thus, as long as e’er the rock
was cleft, to make a path for those that climb,
I went along to where the circling starts.
When out upon the fifth ring I had come,
people therein I saw who, shedding tears,
were lying wholly prone upon its bed.
“My soul hath cloven to the trodden ground!”
I heard them saying with such heavy sighs,
that what they said could hardly be made out.
“O ye elect of God, whose sufferings here
Justice and hope are making less intense,
direct us toward the steps that lead on high!”
“If ye are come exempt from lying down,
and wish to find the path with greatest speed,
let your right sides be always outward turned.”
Thus asked the Poet, and, not far ahead,
thus was the answer giv’n; hence, as he spoke,
I noticed where the other speaker hid,
and then I turned mine eyes unto my Lord;
whereat he granted with a cheerful nod
that which the looks of my desiring asked.
When I was free to act as I inclined,
I came and stood above the soul, whose words
had made me notice him at first, and said:
“Spirit, who by thy tears art ripening that,
without which one can not return to God,
for my sake stay a while thy greater care.

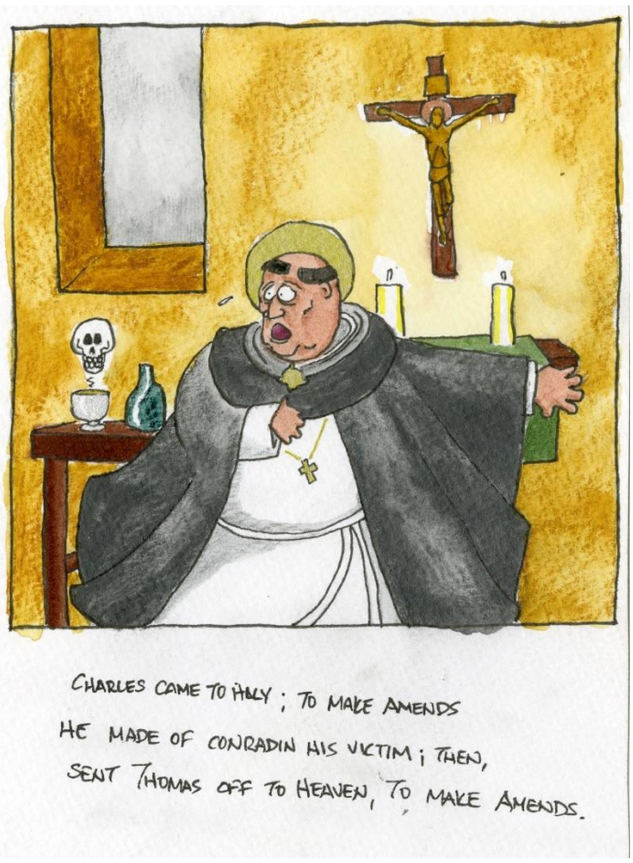
Say who thou wast, why ye hold up your backs,
and whether thou wouldst have me get thee aught
from there, whence I, a living man, set forth."
And he to me: "Why toward itself the sky
is turning here our backs, thou 'lt know; but, first,
know thou that I once sat in Peter's chair.
'Tween Sièstri and Chiaveri there descends
a lovely mountain stream, and from its name
my race's title takes its greatest boast.
For one month and a little more I felt
how much the mighty Mantle weights on him
who keeps it from the mire; for all loads else
seem feathers. My conversion was, alas!
delayed; but when Rome's Shepherd I was made,
I came to know how false the world's life was.
I saw that in it hearts can find no rest;
nor could one in it higher rise than I;
the love of this life, hence, was kindled in me.
Till that time I had been a wretched soul,
cut off from God, and wholly giv'n to greed;
now, as thou see'st, I'm punished for it here.
What avarice doth is here made manifest,
in this purgation of converted souls;
nor hath this Mount a penalty more bitter.
And as our eyes were never upward turned,
because intently fixed on earthly things,
so Justice here hath turned them to the ground.
As avarice quenched our love for all good things,
until well doing had completely ceased,
so here doth Justice hold us in restraint,
bound fast and fettered in our hands and feet;
and here we 'll stay, stretched out and motionless
as long as it shall please the Righteous Lord."
I had knelt down, and wished to speak; but just
as I began, and he was made aware,
by listening only, of my reverence,
"What cause" said he, "hath bent thee downward thus?"
And I to him: "Because of your high rank
my conscience troubled me for standing up."
"Straighten thy legs, my brother," he replied,
"and rise! Err not! With thee and with the rest
a fellow-servant of one Power am I.
If thou hast ever fully understood
those holy Gospel words: 'They neither marry,'
well canst thou see why I am speaking thus.
And now begone! I 'd have thee stay no more;
for, lingering here, thou hinderest the tears,
wherewith I ripen that which thou hast said.
A niece I have up yonder called Alàgia,
good in herself, so be it that our house
by its example do not make her bad;
and she is all that 's left to me up there"

**20. Purgatory. The Fifth Ring. Avarice and Prodigality
Instances of Liberality and of Greed. The Earthquake**

A will fights weakly 'gainst a stronger will;
hence I, myself displeasing, him to please,
out of the water drew my sponge unfilled.
I started; and along the space left clear



close to the rocky cliff my Leader moved,
as 'neath its battlements one hugs a wall;
for those who through their eyes pour drop by drop
the evil which pervadeth all the world,
approach too closely to the outer edge.
Be thou accurst, thou ancient Wolf, that prey
far greater hast than have all other beasts,
by reason of thy hunger's endless depth!
O Heaven, through whose revolving, some, it seems,
believe that here below conditions change,
when will he come, through whom this beast shall leave?
As on we went with slow and scanted steps,
and I was listening to the shades I heard
weeping and uttering piteous lamentations;
by chance I heard in front of us a voice
cry out 'Sweet Mary!' in the tearful tones
wherewith a woman cries in childbirth's pangs;
and this was followed by: "As poor thou wast,
as by the hostelry may be perceived,
where thou didst lay thy sacred burden down."
Next after this I heard: "O good Fabricius,
with virtue thou didst poverty prefer
to great possessions with iniquity."
So pleasing had these last words been to me,
that further on I moved, that I might know
the spirit from whose lips they seemed to come.
He now was speaking of the generous gift
bestowed by Nicholas upon the maids,
to guide their youth into an honored path.
"O soul, that speakest of such worthy deeds,
say who thou wast," said I, "and why alone
thou thus renewest this deservèd praise.
Thy words will not remain without reward,
if I return to end that life's short course,
which flieth onward toward its final term."
And he: "I 'll tell it thee, though not for help
that I may look for yonder, but because
Grace shines so brightly in thee, ere thy death.
I was the root of that malignant plant,



whose shadow darkens all the Christian land,
so that good fruit is seldom picked from it.
But if Douai, Lille, Ghent, and Bruges could,
vengeance would soon be wrought for this; and I
of Him request it, who is Judge of all.
Yonder my name was Hugh Capet; from me
have sprung the Philips and the Louises,
who have in recent ages governed France.
A Paris butcher's son I was; when all
the ancient kings had passed away, save one,
a gray-robed monk, tight in my hands I found
the bridle of the kingdom's government,
with so much power of recent gain, and such
a host of friends, that to the widowed crown
was raised the head of mine own son, with whom
the line of their anointed bones began.
As long as its great dowry of Provence
had not deprived my family of shame,
its worth was small, but still it did no harm.
With that began its thefts by force and fraud;
for afterward, to make amends, Ponthieu
it seized, with Normandy and Gascony.
Charles came to Italy; and there, to make
amends, a victim made of Conradin; and then,
to make amends, drove Thomas back to Heaven.
A time I see, not very long from now,
which out of France will bring another Charles,
to make both him and his the better known.
He issues thence alone and with no host,
but with the jousting lance of Judas; this
he thrusts so, that he bursts the paunch of Florence.
As a result not land, but sin and shame
he 'll win, of so much greater weight for him,
the lighter he accounts such loss. I see
the other Charles, once captured from his ship,
his daughter sell, and haggle for the price,
as corsairs do with slave-girls not their own.

What more, O Avarice, canst thou do with us,
since thou hast to thyself so drawn my race,
that ev'n for its own flesh it careth not?
That future ills and past ones may seem less,
I see Alagna by the Lily entered,
and, in his Vicar, Christ a prisoner made.
I see the latter mocked a second time;
I see the vinegar and gall renewed,
and Him I see 'mong living robbers killed.
And this new Pilate I behold so ruthless,
that, not content with this, he lawlessly
into the Temple bears his greedy sails.
Oh, when, my Lord, shall I rejoice to see
the vengeance, in Thy secret counsel hid,
which now avails to make Thine anger sweet?
What of the Holy Spirit's only Bride
I said just now, and thereby made thee turn
to me for explanation, serves as answer
to all our prayers, as long as daylight lasts;
but soon as night returns, instead of these,
we utter words which sound the opposite.
We thereupon rehearse Pygmalion's story,
and how of him his greedy lust for gold
a traitor made, a thief, and parricide;
and avaricious Midas' misery,
which followed from his covetous request,
and at which one will always have to laugh.
Next, foolish Achan every one recalls,
who stole the plunder, so that even here
the wrath of Joshua seems to bite him still.
We then accuse Sapphira with her husband;
we praise the kicks which Heliodorus got;
while Polymnestor circles all the Mount
in infamy, who Polydorus killed;
and finally, our cry is: 'Tell us, Crassus,
for thou dost know it, what 's the taste of gold?'
Aloud at times speaks one, another low,
as each one's feelings spur him on to speak,

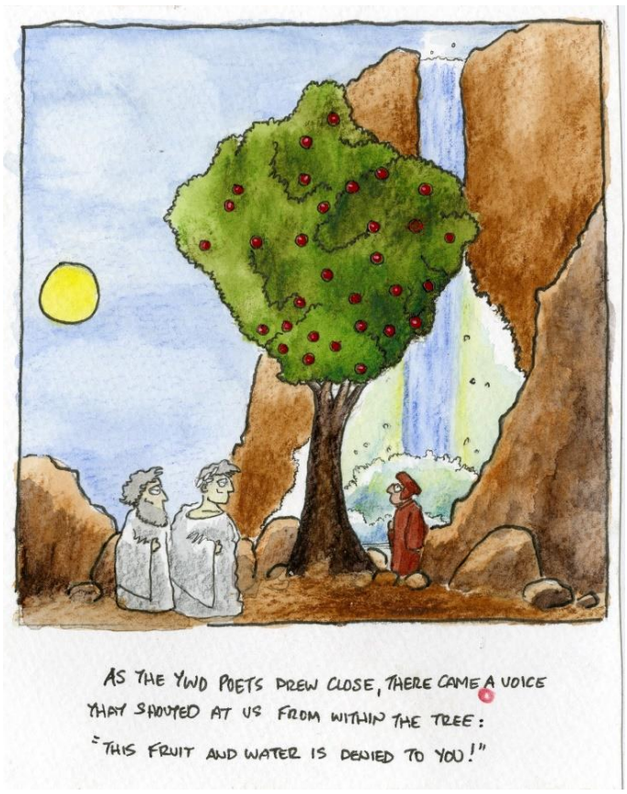
in stronger now, and now in weaker tones;
hence I, in speaking of the good, which here
is talked about by day, was not alone;
but near us here none other spoke aloud."
Already had we gone away from him,
striving to make our way along the path
as fast as was allowed our powers; when I,
like something falling, felt the Mountain quake;
then such a chill took hold of me, as he
is wont to have who goeth to his death.
Delos, indeed, shook not so terribly,
before Latona made therein her nest,
in order to give birth to heaven's two eyes.
Then such a cry arose on every side,
that close to me my Teacher drew, and said:
"Be not afraid, while I am guiding thee!"
"Glory to God" they all said, "in the highest,"
as far as I could understand from those near by,
where what was being shouted could be heard.
Both motionless and in suspense we stood,
as stood the shepherds who first heard that song,
till, when the trembling stopped, the shouting ceased.
Thereafter we resumed our holy journey,
watching the shades that lay upon the ground,
returned already to their wonted plaint.
No ignorance had ever with as great
anxiety made me desire to know,
unless in this my memory go astray,
as that which, as I thought, I seemed to have;
I neither dared to ask, because of haste,
nor could I see there anything myself;
so on I went, timid and lost in thought.

21. Purgatory. The Fifth Ring. Avarice and Prodigality
Statius. The Cause of the Earthquake

The natural thirst, which never can be quenched,
save by the water asked for by the lowly
young woman of Samaria as a boon,
was troubling me, while hurry spurred me on
behind my Leader o'er the cumbered path,
and I was grieving for the just revenge.
Then lo, as Luke records for us that Christ,
when risen from the burial cave, appeared
before the two upon the road, a shade
appeared, and came behind us as we watched
the crowd, which lay around us at our feet;
but we perceived him not; hence he spoke first,
and said: "May God, my brethren, give you peace!"
We turned at once, and to this greeting Virgil
replied with that which corresponds to it.
Then he began: "Within the blest assembly
mayst thou be set at peace by that just court
which in eternal exile bindeth me."
"What!" he replied, as quickly on we went,
"If ye are shades whom God deigns not on high,
who guided you so far along His stairs?"
My Teacher then: "If thou regard the marks
which this one bears, and which the Angel draws,
thou 'lt see that with the good he needs must reign.

But whereas she, who spinneth night and day,
had not as yet drawn off for him the flax,
which Clotho lays and packs for every one,
his soul, which sister is to thee and me,
could not, in climbing here, come up alone,
because it seeth not as we. Hence I
out of the ample throat of Hell was drawn,
to show the way to him, and I shall show it,
as far as e'er my school can lead him on.
But tell us, if thou knowest, why the Mountain
shook so just now, and why all seemed to shout
with one accord down to its oozy base?"
Thus by his asking he had threaded so
the needle's eye of my desire, that, merely
with hope, my thirst had come to be less craving.
The former then began: "Nothing exists
which this Mount's sacred government can feel,
that void of order is, or 'gainst its wont.
From every change this place up here is free;
whate'er Heaven's self from its own self receives,
can be the cause of it, and nothing else;
for neither rain, nor hail, nor snow, nor dew,
nor frost falls any higher up than lies
the little stairway of the three short steps;
clouds neither dense or rarefied appear,
nor lightning flashes, nor yet Thaumas' daughter,
who often changes quarter in the world.
Dry vapor goes no higher than the top
of those three steps whereof I spoke to thee,
and on which Peter's vicar hath his feet.
Below, perhaps, it trembles more or less,
but never quakes up here because of wind
concealed, I know not how, inside the earth.
It trembles here whenever any soul
feels pure enough to rise, or starts to climb;
and such a cry as this endorses it.
Of purity the will alone gives proof,
which, seizing on the soul, now wholly free

to change its company, by willing helps it.
It wills this from the first; but that desire
which, ’gainst the will, God’s Justice turns toward pain,
as it was once toward sin, allows it not.
And I, who have five hundred years and more
lain in this woe, felt only now within me
a free volition for a better sphere.
That’s why thou didst the earthquake feel, and hear
the pious spirits on this Mountain praise
that Lord, who soon, I pray, will send them up.”
He thus addressed us; and, since one in drink
delights, according as his thirst is great,
I could not say how much he did me good.
And my wise Leader: “Now I see the net
which holds you here, and how it opens, why
it trembles here, and why ye all rejoice.
Now who thou wast be pleased to let me know,
and also let thy words include for me
why thou hast lain so many centuries here.”
“At that time when, helped by the Most High King,
good Titus took due vengeance for the wounds,
from which came forth the blood by Judas sold,
I was in great renown” that spirit said,
“up yonder with the name which longest lasts,
and honors most, but not as yet with faith.
So sweet my song, that, though a Toulousan,
Rome drew me to herself, where I deserved
to have my temples crowned with myrtle wreath.
Statius they call me still up there; of Thebes
I sang, of great Achilles next; but ’neath
this second load I sank upon the way.
The seeds of my enthusiasm were the sparks,
which warmed me, of that fire divine, wherewith
more than a thousand poets are enflamed;
I mean the Aeneid, which my mother was
and nurse in poetry; and, lacking which,
not by a drachm’s weight had I stirred the scales.
And to have lived on earth when Virgil lived,
to one sun’s period more would I consent
than what I owe, to issue from my ban.”
These words turned Virgil toward me with a look,
which, silently, “Be silent!” said; and yet
the power that wills can not do everything;
for tears and laughter follow so the passion,
from which they each take rise, that least of all
do they obey the will in those most truthful.
I only smiled, like one who winks; whereat
the shade kept still, and looked into my eyes,
wherein expression is most fixed, and said:
“So mayst thou bring unto a happy end
so great a toil, why was it that thy face
showed me just now the flashing of a smile?”
I now am caught on one side and the other;
one asks for silence, the other conjures me
to speak; I therefore sigh, and by my Teacher
am understood. “Be not afraid to talk,”
the latter said to me, “but speak, and tell him
what he so eagerly desires to know.”
I therefore said: “Perhaps thou marvellest,
O ancient spirit, at the smile I gave;



but I would have still greater wonder seize thee.
This spirit here, who upward leads mine eyes,
that Virgil is, from whom thou didst of old
derive the strength to sing of men and gods.
If thou hast given my smile some other cause,
leave it as not the true one, and believe
it was the words thyself didst say of him.”
Already was he stooping to embrace
my Teacher’s feet; but he said: “Brother, no;
for thou, a shade now, dost a shade behold.”
Rising, he said: “Thou now canst understand
the sum of love which warmeth me toward thee,
since I forget our disembodied state,
and act with shades as if they solid were.”

22. Purgatory. Statius. The Angel of Justice
The Sixth Ring. Gluttony. Instances of Temperance

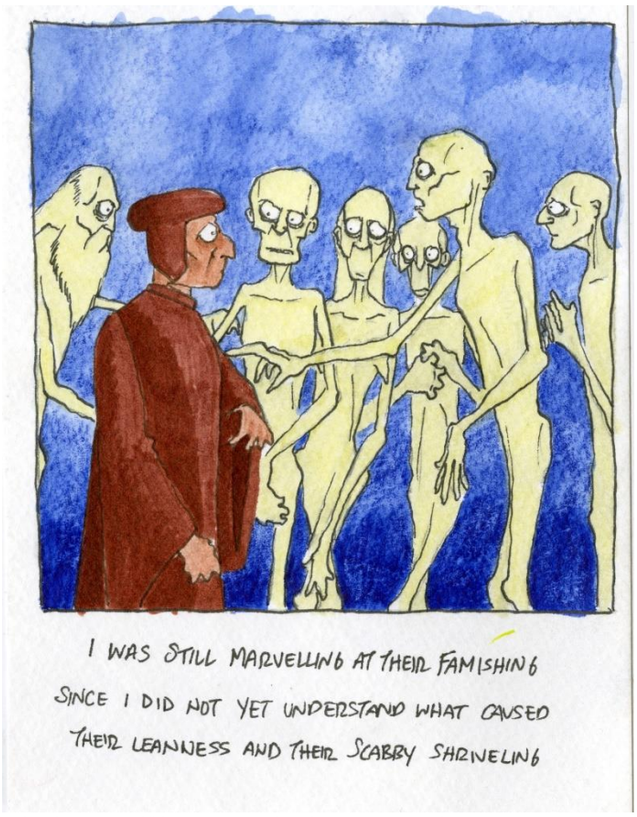
Already was the Angel left behind,
the Angel who had toward the sixth ring turned us,
after erasing from my face a wound;
and he had said to us that those are blest,
whose longing is for justice, and his words,
with nothing further, ended this with “thirst.”
Hence, lighter now than at the other passes,
I so advanced, that I, without fatigue,
was following up the spirits who were swift,
when Virgil thus began: “A love that flames,
by virtue kindled, always lights another,
if but its flame be outwardly revealed.
And therefore from the hour when Juvenal,
who let me know thy love for me, came down
among us in the Borderland of Hell,
my good will hath been such toward thee, that none
e’er bound me more to one I had not seen;
these stairs will, therefore, now seem short to me.
But tell me, and forgive me as a friend,
if too great confidence relax my rein,
and as a friend converse with me henceforth:

how was it avarice could find a place
within thy breast together with such wisdom,
as that wherewith thou by thy zeal wast filled?”
At first these words made Statius smile a little;
and then he answered: “Every word of thine
is of thy love for me a precious proof.
Things, of a truth, quite frequently appear,
which offer one false arguments for doubt,
because their real occasions are concealed.
Thy question makes me sure of thy belief,
due, maybe, to the ring where I was found,
that I was in the last life avaricious.
Know, then, that avarice was too far from me,
and that this lack of temperance on my part
thousands of courses of the moon have punished.
And were it not that I corrected me,
when I had understood thee in thy cry,
indignant, as it were, with human nature:
‘Why dost thou not, O virtuous love of gold,
govern the appetite of mortal men?’
I ’d now, by rolling, feel the wretched jousts.
I then perceived that hands could ope their wings
too much in spending, and repented me
of that, as well as of my other sins.
How many from the grave shall hairless rise
through ignorance which, in life and at the last,
deprives them of repentance for this fault!
Know, too, that any fault which of a sin
is just the opposite, together with it
drieth its green leaves here. If, therefore, I,
to purge myself, have been among the folk
who avarice bewail, to me it happened
because of what was contrary thereto.”
“When thou didst sing, then, of the cruel strife
between the two afflictions of Jocasta,”
said he who sang bucolic songs, “by that
which Clio singeth with thee there, the faith,
without which doing good is not enough,
had not, it seems, yet made thee a believer.
If this be so, what sun, or else what candles
lightened thy darkness so, that thou thereafter
didst set thy sails behind the Fisherman?”
“Thou first didst send me to Parnassus’ slopes
to drink,” he said to him, “and then the first
thou wast, who, next to God, illumined me.
Thou didst like him, who, when he walks by night,
a light behind him bears nor helps himself,
but maketh those that follow after see,
when thou didst say: ‘The age renews itself;
Justice returns, and man’s primeval times,
as down from Heaven a new-born race descends.’
Through thee a poet I became, through thee
a Christian! But, that thou mayst better see
my sketch, I ’ll set my hand to color it.
Pregnant already with the true belief,
sowed by the eternal Kingdom’s messengers,
was every portion of the whole wide world;
and now thy words, to which I ’ve just referred,
with these new preachers harmonized so well,
that I became accustomed to frequent them.
Thereat so holy did they come to seem,
that when Domitian persecuted them,
their lamentations did not lack my tears;
and while I still remained in yonder world,
I helped them; and their upright mode of life
caused me to treat with scorn all other sects.
And ere in poetry I led the Greeks
to see the streams of Thebes, baptized I was;
and yet, through fear, a secret Christian only,
I long pretended faith in paganism;
this lukewarmness around the fourth ring moved me
till far beyond the fourth centennial year.
Thou, therefore, that didst lift the covering veil
which hid from me the good whereof I speak,
tell me, while we have still a little more
to climb, where our old Terence is, and where
Cecilius, Plautus, Varro, if thou know;
tell me if they are damned, and in what ward.”
“Both they and Persius, I and many others”
my Leader answered him, “are with the Greek,
whom more than any else the Muses nursed,
in the first circle of the sightless Prison;
and frequently we talk about the mount,
which always hath our nurses on its slopes.
Euripides and Antiphon are there
with us, Simonides and Agathon,
and many other Greeks, who once adorned
their brows with laurel. There, of thine own folk,
Antigone is seen, Deìphile,
Argìa, and, as sad as once, Ismène.
There, too, may she be seen, who showed Langìa;
there is Tiresias’ daughter, Thetis also,
and with her sisters there, Deidamìa.”
And now the Poets, both of them, were silent,
intent again on looking round, since free
from climbing up and free from walls; and while
four handmaids of the day had dropped behind,
the fifth was at the sun-car’s pole, still upward
pointing its burning horn; whereat my Leader:
“I think that it behooves us now to turn
our right sides toward the outer edge, and circle
the Mountain as our wont it is to do.”
Thus was our custom our instructor there;
and with less doubt we started on again,
because of that deserving soul’s assent.
In front they went, and I behind, alone,
listening the while to what they had to say,
which gave me understanding for my verse.
But soon their pleasant talk a Tree broke off,
which in the middle of the road we found,
with fruit agreeable and sweet to smell;
and as a fir-tree tapers up from branch
to branch, so likewise this one tapered down,
in order, I believe, that none may climb it.
And on the side on which our path was closed,
down from the lofty cliff a limpid stream
was falling, and spraying upward o’er its leaves.
Then toward the Tree the two Bards turned their steps;
and from among its leaves a voice cried out:
“Of this food there will be for you a dearth!”

Then: “More did Mary think of honoring,
the marriage feast, and making it complete,
than of her mouth, which pleadeth now for you;
the ancient Roman women were content
with water for their only drink; and Daniel
thought little of his food, but wisdom gained.
The primal age was beautiful as gold;
with hunger it made acorns sweet to taste,
and nectar every little brook, with thirst.
Honey and flying locusts were the food
which fed the Baptist in the wilderness;
hence he is now as glorious and as great,
as by the Gospel is revealed to you.”

23. Purgatory. The Sixth Ring. Gluttony
The Punishment of Gluttons. Forese Donati

While I, as likewise he is wont to do,
who wastes his life in hunting little birds,
was piercing thus the green leaves with mine eyes,
my more than Father said to me: “My son,
come on now, for the time assigned to us
should be more usefully distributed.”
I turned my face, and, no less soon, my steps
behind the Sages, who so talked, that walking
they caused to be of no expense to me.
Then lo, in tearful and in singing tones
“My lips, O Lord” was heard in such a way,
that to delight and sorrow it gave birth.
“O gentle Father, what is that I hear?”
said I; and he then: “Shades who, moving on,
loosen, perhaps, the knot of what they owe.”
As pilgrim travellers do, who lost in thought,
on meeting unknown people on the road,
turn round to look at them, but do not stop;
ev’n so behind us, though more quickly moving,
there came a band of souls, who as they passed,
devout and silent, gazed at us in wonder.
Each was expressionless and hollow-eyed,
pale in his face, and lacking so in flesh,
that of his bones his skin assumed the shape.
I do not think that even Erysìchthon
became so withered into utter skin,
because of fasting, when he feared it most.
Thinking within myself, I said: “Behold
the people who once lost Jerusalem,
when Mary thrust her beak into her son!”
The sockets of their eyes seemed gemless rings;
and he that OMO reads in human faces,
would surely there have recognized the M.
Who would believe the perfume of a fruit
and odor of a water could so act,
and cause such craving, if he knew not how?
I still was wondering what so famished them,
because the reason of their being lean,
and of their wretched scurf was not yet clear;
when lo, a shade from deep within his head
turning his eyes toward me, looked hard, and then
cried out aloud: “What grace is this to me?”
I never should have known him by his face;
but that to me was in his voice revealed,



which in itself his aspect had suppressed.
That spark rekindled all that I had known
of that disfigured countenance, and thus
I recognized it as Forese’s face.
“Ah, prithee, heed thou not the dried up scab,”
he pleaded, “which discolors thus my skin,
nor any lack of flesh that I may have!
But tell the truth about thyself, and who
those two souls are, who bear thee company;
refrain no longer from addressing me.”
I answered him: “Thy face, which once as dead
I mourned for, gives me now no smaller cause
for weeping, that I see it so disfigured.
For God’s sake tell me, then, what strips you thus;
make me not talk and wonder, too; for ill
can he converse, who longs for something else.”
“A virtue from the Eternal Will” he said,
“comes down into the water and the Tree
we left behind, whereby I thus grow lean.
And all these people who in tears are singing,
because of following unchecked love of food,
are here resanctified in thirst and hunger.
The pleasant odor, issuing from the fruit,
and from the spray which o’er the verdure spreads,
kindles in us the wish to eat and drink.
And not once only is our pain renewed,
as on this floor we move around — our pain,
I say, though solace ought to be my word;
for to the Tree doth that same longing lead us,
which once led Christ in happiness to cry:
‘My God!’, when with His blood He set us free.”
And I to him: “Forese, from the day,
when thou didst for a better life change world,
five years have not yet rolled away till now.
If power of sinning further ended in thee
before the coming of that happy hour
of sorrow, which reweddeth us to God,
how is it thou art come up here? I thought

that I should find thee still below, down there,
where time restores itself by means of time."
Whence he to me: "My Nella, with the tears
which streamed from her, enabled me to drink
the pleasant wormwood of this pain so soon.
She, with her pious prayers and with her sighs,
hath drawn me from the hillside where one waits,
and freed me from the other lower rings.
So much the dearer a delight to God
is my poor widow whom I loved so much,
the more alone she is in doing right;
for far more modest in its women is
the wild Barbagia region of Sardinia,
than the Barbagia which I left her in.
O my dear brother, what wouldst have me say?
I have, e'en now, a future time in sight,
to which this hour will not be very old,
when from the pulpit shameless Florence women
will be prohibited to go abroad
showing their bosoms with the breasts exposed.
What Barbary women, or what Saracens
e'er needed spiritual or other laws,
to keep them covered up when going out?
But if the shameless ones were sure of what
a swiftly moving heaven prepares for them,
their mouths for howling would be open now;
for, if my foresight here deceive me not,
they 'll grieve, ere that one's cheek grows hair, who still
is hushed with lullabies. Now, brother, see,
I pray, that from me thou no longer hide!
Thou seèst that not only I, but all
these people gaze where thou dost veil the sun."
Hence I to him: "If thou recall to mind
what thou with me wast once, and with thee I,
still grievous will our present memory be.
Who goes before me turned me from that life
the other day, when that one's sister round
was seen by you;" (and at the sun I pointed).
"Through the deep night hath he conducted me,
and from among the truly dead, still clothed
in this real flesh, which follows in his steps.
Thence his encouragements have drawn me on,
as up I climbed, and circled round the Mount,
which straightens you whom crooked made the world.
He says that he will make me his companion,
till there I am, where Beatrice shall be;
up there without him must I needs remain.
Virgil is he, who tells me so," (at him
I pointed), "and this other one, the shade,
because of whom just now on every slope
your Realm, which from itself removes him, quaked."

24. Purgatory. The Sixth Ring. Gluttony
Instances of Gluttony. The Angel of Temperance

Speaking slowed not our gait, nor did our gait
our speaking; but, still talking, we went on
apace, as, by a fair wind driv'n, a ship.
The shades, meanwhile, who looked like things twice
dead,
drew wonder through their hollowed eyes at me,
when they perceived that I was still alive.
And I, continuing my talking, said:
"He, for another's sake, is going up
more slowly than, perhaps, he else would do.
But, if thou know, say where Piccarda is;
and whether I see any here worth noting
among these people who so gaze at me."
"My sister who, 'tween fair and good, was most
I know not which, on high Olympus triumphs,
happy already in the crown she wears."
This he said first, and then: "We 're not forbid
to name each here, since by our abstinence,
our aspects are so greatly milked away.
This Bonagiunta is," his finger showed him,
"the Lucca Bonagiunta; while the face
beyond him, more embroidered than the rest,
had in his arms the Holy Church; of Tours
he was, and now, by fasting, expiates
Bolsena's eels and rare vernaccia wine."
And many more he named me, one by one;
and all, when named, seemed satisfied, hence I,
because of this, saw not a gloomy act.
Using their teeth through hunger, though in vain,
I saw both Ubaldino della Pila,
and Boniface, who pastured with his crook
much folk. I Ser Marchese saw, who once
had time to drink less dryly at Forlì,
yet such he was, that he did not feel sated.
But, as one looks, and more of one man thinks

than of another, so did I at him
of Lucca, who, it seemed, most wished to know me.
He murmured, and I heard I know not what
about ‘Gentucca,’ uttered where he felt
the wound of Justice which consumes them so.
“O soul, that seemst so fain to speak to me,”
said I, “so do that I may understand,
and with thy words appease thyself and me.”
“There is a woman born,” he then began,
“nor weareth yet the veil, who, howsoe’er
it be reproached, shall cause my town to please thee.
With this prevision shalt thou now go on;
and if by what I murmured thou wast led
astray, events shall make it clear to thee.
But tell me whether him I here behold,
who those new rhymes produced, which thus begin:
‘Ye ladies, who well know what loving is.’”
And him I answered: “I am one, who heed
when Love within me breathes, and outwardly
express myself as in me Love dictates.”
“O brother, now I see” said he, “the bar,
which kept this side the sweet new style I hear,
the Notary, Guittone, and myself.
I clearly see that your pens closely follow
in the dictator’s wake, which certainly
was not the case with ours; and he who further
sets himself most to look, between these styles
perceives no other difference.” Whereupon,
as if content with this, he ceased to speak.
As birds that spend the winter ’long the Nile,
form in the air at times a flock, and then
with greater speed fly on, and in a line
advance; so likewise all the people there,
quickened their steps with faces turned around,
since through their leanness light, and through their will.
And as a man who weary is of running,
lets his companions go, and only walks,
until the panting of his chest has ceased;
ev’n so Forese let the holy flock
pass on, and saying: “When shall I again
behold thee?” came along behind with me.
“I know not,” I replied, “how long I ’ll live;
but I shall not so soon return, that sooner
I shall not with my will be on the shore;
because the place where I was set to live,
strips itself further day by day of goodness,
and now to dismal ruin seems ordained.”
“Now go,” said he, “for him I see, who most
hath blame for this, behind a beast’s tail dragged
down to the Vale, where none e’er frees himself
from fault. The beast with every step goes faster,
and ever faster, till it hurls him down,
and leaves his body in disgraceful plight.
Those spheres have not much further to revolve,”
(he raised his eyes toward heaven) “ere clear to thee
will that become, which my words can explain
no more. Stay now behind; for in this Realm
so precious is our time, that, coming thus
at even pace with thee, I lose too much.”
As at a gallop from a riding troop
a horseman issues forth at times, and goes
to win the honor of the first encounter;
so he with longer strides departed from us;
and on the road with those two I remained,
who of the world such mighty marshals were.
When he had gone so far ahead, that now
mine eyes became such followers of his form,
as of his words my mind, the heavy laden
and living branches of another Tree
appeared before me not so far away,
since toward it I had only then turned round.
Beneath it folk I saw with upraised hands,
who toward the foliage cried I know not what,
like eager children who in vain beseech,
while he, to whom they pray, replieth not,
but with a view to make their longing keen,
holds what they long for up, and hides it not.
They then departed, as if undeceived;
and thereupon to that great Tree we came,
which turns away so many prayers and tears.
“Pass on without approaching! Higher up
a Tree there is, which bitten was by Eve,
and this one is an offshoot sprung from that.”
Thus said I know not who among the branches;
hence Virgil, I, and Statius, close together,
advanced along the side which rises up.
“Recall” he said, “those cursèd cloud-born creatures,
who, gorged with food and drink, ’gainst Theseus strove
with double breasts; the Hebrews, too, recall,
who at their drinking showed that they were soft,
whence as his fellows Gideon had them not,
when he on Midian down the hills advanced.”
Thus, hugging close one margin of the ring,
we passed, and heard of gluttonies,
which once were followed by distressful gains.
Then, spreading out across the lonely path,
more than a thousand steps had borne us on,
in contemplation each without a word.
“What think ye three, as thus alone ye go?”
a voice cried suddenly; whereat I started,
as scared and sluggish beasts are wont to do.
I raised my head to see who this might be;
and ne’er were metals in a furnace seen,
or glass, as red and bright, as one I saw
who said: “If ye are pleased to mount above,
ye must in this direction turn aside;
this way goes he, who goes in quest of peace.”
His aspect had bereft me of my sight;
I therefore turned and stepped behind my Teachers
like one who guides his feet by what he hears.
And as, when heralding the light of dawn,
the breeze of May sheds fragrance as it stirs,
all redolent of grasses and of flowers;
so, ’gainst my brow I felt a zephyr’s stroke,
and well perceived the motion of the wing
which made me scent ambrosian odors there.
“Blessèd are they, whom so much Grace illumes,”
I heard one saying, “that the love of taste
stirs not too great a longing in their breast,
but always hunger only as is right!”

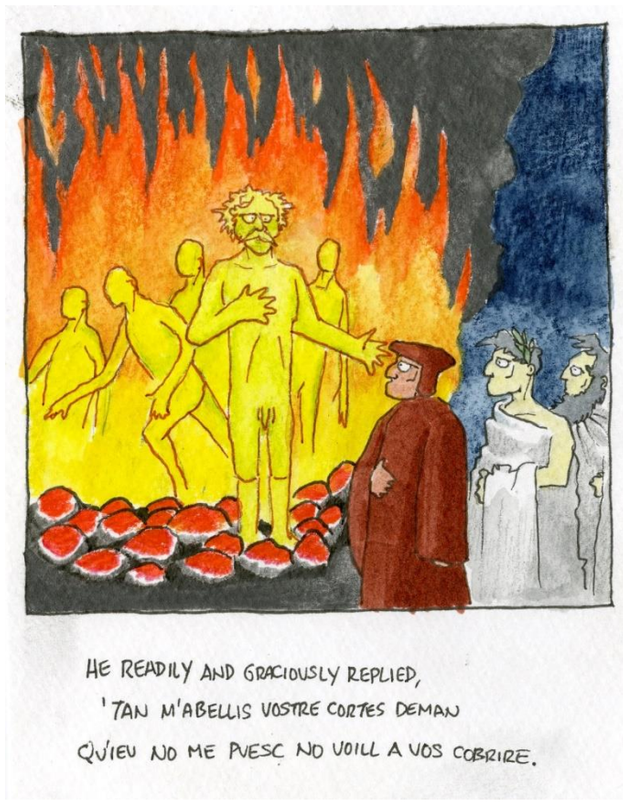
25. Purgatory. The Seventh Ring. Lust
Sensuality Punished. Instances of Chastity

The hour was when ascent brooked no delay,
because the sun had left the noon-time ring
to Taurus, as to Scorpio had the Night;
therefore, as doth a man who, whatsoe'er
appear to him, stops not, but goes his way,
if spurred by goading of necessity;
so, one before the other, through the gap
we entered in, and took the flight of stairs,
which by its narrowness parts those who climb.
And like the little stork, which lifts its wings,
because it longs to fly, but ventures not
to leave its nest, and lets them droop again;
even such was I, with kindled, and with quenched
desire to ask, when coming to the act
of one who starts to speak. Nor, though our pace
was fast, did my dear Father check himself,
but said to me: "Discharge the bow of speech,
which to the arrow-head thou now hast drawn."
With confidence I opened then my mouth,
and said: "How can one possibly grow lean,
where need of nourishment doth not obtain?"
"Shouldst thou recall" he said, "how, when the brand
was burning, Meleager was consumed,
this would not be so difficult for thee;
and shouldst thou think how, at your quivering,
your image quivers in the looking-glass,
that which seems hard to thee would easy seem.
But that thou ease thee to thy heart's content,
lo, here is Statius; him I call and beg
that he be now a healer of thy wounds."
"If I unfold for him the eternal view,
when in thy presence," Statius then replied,
"be my excuse that I cannot refuse thee."
He then began: "If, son, thy mind shall hear
and understand my words, they 'll prove a light
for thee unto the 'how' which thou dost ask.
The perfect blood, which by the thirsty veins
is never drunk, but stays as doth the food
which from the table thou dost take away,
gets in the heart a power informative
for all the human members, being that
which floweth through the veins to form the same.
When redigested, it flows down to parts,
whereof more seemly silence is than speech;
then on another's blood it trickles thence
into the natural vessel. There both meet,
passive the one, the other active, since
perfect the place from which it was distilled;
joining the former, it begins to work,
coagulating first, then quickening that,
which it had formed as matter for itself.
The active virtue, now become a soul, —
as of a plant, though so far differing from it,
that this is on its way, and that, arrived, —
so worketh next, that now it moves and feels,
like fungi of the sea; then undertakes
to organize the powers whose germ it is.
That virtue, son, now spreads, and now extends,
which from the generator's heart derives,
where Nature on all members is intent.
But how from animal it comes to be
a child, thou see'st not yet; a point so hard,
it led a wiser man than thou so far
astray, that, in his teaching, from the soul
he parted the potential intellect,
because he saw no organ it assumed.
Open thy mind unto the coming truth,
and know that, when the brain's organization
is in the foetus to perfection brought,
the Primal Mover, glad of such a work
of Nature, turns toward it, and breathes therein
a spirit new and full of powers, which draws
into its substance what it active finds
therein, and so becomes a single soul,
which lives and feels, and on itself reflects.
And that the less thou wonder at my words,
consider how to wine the sun's heat turns,
when joined to juices flowing from the vine!
When Lachesis hath no more thread, the soul
frees itself from the flesh, and bears away
potentially the human and divine;
mute one and all the other faculties,
with memory, intelligence, and will
far keener in their action than before.
Then, without stopping, of itself it falls
in wondrous way to one or other shore;
here first it learns its road. As soon as place
has circumscribed it there, the forming virtue
rays round it in the same degree and way,
as when the members were alive it did;
and as the air, when fully charged with rain,
is by another's rays, which it reflects
within itself, adorned with many hues;

so here the neighboring air takes on the shape
the soul, which settled there, impresses on it,
as would a seal, by its own forming power;
and afterward, as doth the little flame,
which follows fire where'er it changes place,
so the new shape accompanies its spirit;
which, since it hence takes visibility,
is called a shade; and therewith organizes
each of the senses, up to that of sight.
By means of this we speak, by means of this
we laugh, and by this means we make the tears
and sighs, thou mayst have heard upon the Mount.
As our desires and other passions move us,
our shade takes shape accordingly; and this
the reason is of what thou wonderest at."
We now had reached the final circling place,
and, to the right hand having turned our steps,
intent we were upon another care.
The bank here outwardly shoots forth a flame,
while upward from the ledge below a blast
is breathed, which drives it back, and keeps it off;
hence one by one along the open side
we had to walk; while I on one hand feared
the fire, and, on the other, falling down.
My Leader said to me: "Along this path
a tight rein must be kept upon one's eyes,
for one might very easily go wrong."
"O God of highest Clemency," I then
heard sung within the bosom of the fire,
whose glowing no less made me wish to turn;
and spirits moving through the flame I saw;
hence at their steps I looked, and at mine own,
lending my eyes to each from time to time.
After the lines with which that hymn concludes,
aloud they shouted: "I know not a man;"
then in low tones began the hymn again.
They cried again, this ended: "To the woods
Diana kept, and thence drove Hèlicë,
for having known the taste of Venus' poison."
Then they resumed the song; and then proclaimed
the names of wives and husbands who were chaste,
as virtue and the marriage state enjoin.
And this course, I believe, suffices them
for all the period, during which the fire
is burning them; and such the care and diet,
wherewith the wound is finally sewed up.

26. Purgatory. The Seventh Ring. Lust
Instances of Natural and of Unnatural Lust

While thus, one 'fore the other, 'long the edge
we went, and my good Teacher often said:
"Attention pay; and let my warning help thee!"
the sun, which with its rays was changing now
from azure all the western skies to white,
was on my right side striking me; and I
was with my shadow giving to the flame
a brighter red; I noticed many shades
give heed to this small sign, as on they moved.
This was what started them to speak of me;



and they began to say among themselves:
"That one seems not to have an unreal body."
Then some of them, as far as possible
drew near to me, though always with due care
not to come out where they would not be burned.
"O thou that goest on behind the rest,
though not from sloth, but from respect, perhaps
reply to me, who burn with thirst and fire!
Nor is by me alone thine answer needed;
for all these here have greater thirst therefor
than Indians or Ethiopians for cold water.
Inform us how it is that with thyself
thou makest thus a wall against the sun,
as if thou hadst not entered death's snare yet."
Thus one of them addressed me; and at once
had I declared myself, had I not heeded
another novelty which then appeared;
for through the middle of the flaming road
folk with their faces turned the other way
came on, and made me stop to gaze at them.
There all the shades on every side I see
make haste, and, without stopping, kiss each other,
with this short form of greeting satisfied.
Thus one ant from among its dark host touches
its muzzle to another's, to obtain,
perhaps, directions as to path or fortune.
As soon as they leave off their friendly greeting,
and ere the first step has been taken there,
each struggles to outcry the other shade;
the new-come band shouts: "Sodom and Gomorrah!"
the other: "In the cow Pasìphaë
reclines, that to her lust the bull may run."
Thereat, like cranes, — if some of them should fly
toward the Riphæan heights, and toward the sands
the rest, these shunning ice, and those the sun, —
one band departs, the other comes along;
and weeping to their previous song they turn,
and to the cry which best befitteth them.
Then those same shades who had entreated me,

drew near to me, as they had done before,
with eagerness to listen in their looks.
And I, who twice had seen what they desired,
began: “O souls, who now are sure of having,
whenever it may be, a state of peace,
my body’s members have not stayed beyond,
either unripe or ripe, but with their blood,
and with their joints are really with me here.
I hence go up, to be no longer blind.
On high a Lady wins us Grace, whereby
I carry through your world my mortal part.
But, so may your best wish be soon fulfilled,
in order that that heaven may shelter you,
which, full of love, is amplest in its spread,
tell me, that I may rule more paper for it,
both who ye are, and what is yonder crowd,
which onward goes its way behind your backs.”
A mountaineer becomes not otherwise
confused, nor, looking round, grows dumb,
when, rough and wild, he enters first a town,
than each shade did in its appearance there;
but, when set free from that astonishment,
which soon diminishes in high-born hearts,
the one who questioned me before resumed:
“Happy art thou, that shippest thus experience
of these our bounds, that better thou mayst live!
The people who come not along with us,
in that offended, for which Caesar once
when triumphing heard ‘Queen’ cried out against him;
from us they therefore separate with cries
of ‘Sodom,’ and by self-reproach assist,
as thou hast heard, the burning by their shame.
Our sin was intersexual; but, since we,
by following our appetites like beasts,
failed to conform ourselves to human law,
to our confusion, when we leave the others,
her name we cry, who bestialized herself
by lying in the beast-resembling frame.
Thou knowest now our deeds, and what our guilt;

if who we are thou ’dst know, perhaps, by name,
there is no time to tell, nor could I do it.
As to myself, I ’ll rid thee of thy wish;
I’m Guido Guinizelli, and purge me now,
because of grieving well before the end.”
As in Lycurgus’ anguish those two sons
became, when they again beheld their mother,
ev’n such did I, though I went not so far,
when him I heard self-named, who father was
to me and others, better men than I,
who e’er made sweet and graceful rhymes of love;
hence, lost in thought, nor hearing aught or speaking,
I moved, and long I gazed at him in wonder,
but, for the fire, no nearer drew to him.
When I with looking had been fully fed,
I put myself entirely at his service
with those assurances which win belief.
And he: “Thou leav’st in me a memory,
from what I hear, so great and plain, that Lethe
can neither wipe it out nor make it dim.
But, if thy words swore what was true just now,
tell me: why hast thou by thy speech and looks
revealed to me that thou dost hold me dear?”
And I to him: “’T was those sweet rhymes of yours
which, while the modern form of speech endures,
will e’er endear to me their very ink.”
“Brother,” he said, “he whom I indicate,”
(he pointed at a spirit on ahead)
was of his mother tongue a better smith.
In love-songs and in stories of romance
he vanquished all; hence let those fools talk on,
ho think the Limousin excelleth him.
To rumor, rather than to truth, they turn
their faces, forming their opinions thus,
were art or reason have by them been heeded.
Thus with Guittone many ancients did,
giving, from cry to cry, to him alone
the prize, until with most the truth prevailed.
If now so amply privileged thou art,
that lawful is thy going to the cloister,
where Christ is Abbot of the brotherhood,
a Pater-noster say to Him for me,
or all of it that we in this world need,
wherein no longer it is ours to sin.”
And then, perhaps to yield his place to one
near by him there, he vanished through the fire,
as to the bottom would a fish through water.
To ward him who had been pointed out I moved
a little way, and said that my desire
was for his name a gracious place preparing.
“Your courteous question” he, unurged, began,
“delighteth me so much, that I can not,
nor do I wish to, hide myself from you.
Arnaut am I, who, going, weep and sing;
with sorrow my past folly I behold,
and see with joy the hoped-for coming day.
Now by the Power which guides you to the top
of this short flight of stairs, I beg of you
be mindful in due time of this my pain!”
Then in the fire refining them he hid.

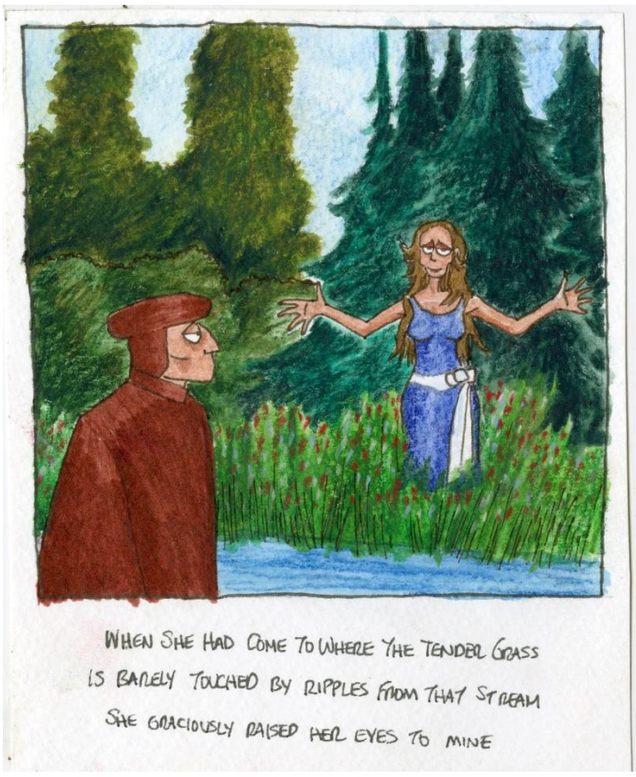
27. Purgatory. The Seventh Ring. Lust. The Angel of Purity Dante's Third Dream. Virgil's Last Words

As when he sends his earliest quivering beams
where his Creator shed his blood, while Ebro
'neath lofty Libra falls, and Ganges' waves
are being scalded by the heat of noon,
so stood the sun; daylight was, hence, departing,
when God's glad Messenger appeared to us.
Outside the flames upon the bank he stood,
and, in a voice far clearer than is ours
was singing: "Blessèd are the pure in heart!"
"No further may ye go, ye holy souls,
until the fire have burned you; enter it,
and be not deaf unto the song beyond!"
he told us next, when we were near to him;
hence I, on hearing him, became like one
who in the grave is laid. Clasping my hands
together, over them I bowed, and watched
the fire, while vivid images I formed
of human bodies I had once seen burned.
Toward me my kindly Escorts turned around;
and Virgil said to me: "There may, my son,
be pain here, but not death. Recall to mind,
recall to mind! . . . if even on Geryon's back
I safely led thee, what shall I do now,
that nearer God I am? Assuredly believe
that, if within the center of this flame
thou shouldst for ev'n a thousand years remain,
it could not make thee lose a single hair;
and if, perchance, thou think that I deceive thee,
draw near to it, and make thyself believe
with thine own hands upon thy garment's hem.
Lay now aside, lay now aside all fear!
Turn round toward me, and come ahead, assured!"
And yet, though 'gainst my conscience, I moved not.
On seeing me still motionless and firm,
somewhat disturbed, he said: "Now see, my son;
this wall remains 'tween Beatrice and thee."
As Pyramus, when dying, at the name
of Thisbe, oped his eyes, and looked at her,
what time the mulberry became vermilion;
ev'n so, my stubbornness becoming weak,
I turned to my wiser Leader, when I heard
the name that ever wells up in my heart.
Thereat he shook his head, and said: "What 's this?
Do we on this side wish to stay?" then smiled,
as one does at a child an apple wins.
Then, entering the fire in front of me,
Statius he begged to come behind, who erst
had over a long road divided us.
When once inside, I would have thrown myself,
that I might cool me, into boiling glass,
so without measure was the burning there.
My tender Father, to encourage me,
talked, as we moved, of Beatrice alone,
and said: "I seem to see her eyes already."
A voice that sang upon the further side,
was guiding us; and we, on it alone
intent, came forth to where the ascent began.
"Ye blessèd of my Father, come!" was said
within a light there, such that I thereby
was overcome, and could not look at it.
"The sun is setting, and the evening comes;"
it added, "tarry not, but hasten on,
while yet the western sky has not grown dark."
Straight upward went the pathway through the rock
in such direction, that in front of me
I cut the low sun's rays; not many stairs
had we yet tried, when I and my wise Leaders
were, by my shadow's vanishing, aware
that back of us the sun had gone to rest.
And ere in all of its unmeasured range
the horizon had assumed one single tone,
and night had everywhere diffused itself,
each of a step had made himself a bed;

because the nature of the Mount deprived us
rather of power to climb than of desire.
Like goats which, swift of foot and wanton once
when on the mountain heights, ere being fed,
grow tamely quiet when they ruminate,
all silent in the shade, while yet the sun
is hot, and guarded by a herd who leans when on the
mountain heights, ere being fed,
grow tamely quiet when they ruminate,
all silent in the shade, while yet the sun
is hot, and guarded by a herd who leans
upon his staff, and serves them as he leans;
and like the shepherd in the open living,
who calmly spends the night beside his flock,
and keepeth watch lest some wild animal
should scatter it; ev'n such all three of us
were then, I like a goat, and they like shepherds,
by the high rock hemmed in on either side.
But little of the outer world could there
be seen; but through that little I perceived
the stars more bright and larger than their wont.
While I was ruminating thus, and thus
was gazing at them, sleep o'ertook me; sleep,
which oft receiveth news of future things
before they are. At that same hour, methinks,
when Cytherèa, who, it seems, e'er burns
with fires of love, beamed first upon the Mount
from out the East, dreaming I seemed to see
a Lady, young and fair, who, gathering flowers,
was walking through a field, and as she sang,
said: "Know, who asks my name, that I am Leah,
and that I move my lovely hands about
to make myself a wreath. To please myself
when at my mirror, I adorn me here;
but never doth my sister Rachel leave
her looking-glass, but sits there all day long.
Her pleasure is to see her lovely eyes,
as mine is to adorn me with my hands;
seeing contenteth her, and doing, me."
And now, before the splendid beams of dawn,
which rise with greater thanks from travelers,
as, coming home, they lodge less far away,
the shades of night were fleeing everywhere,
and with them sleep; hence I arose and saw
that my great Teachers had already risen.
"That pleasant fruit, which on so many boughs
the care of men is ever looking for,
shall give thine every hunger peace today."
These were the very words which Virgil used,
when turned toward me; and never were there gifts,
which in their sweetness could have equaled these.
Such longing upon longing overcame me
to be above, that at each step thereafter,
I felt my pinions growing for the flight.
When all the stairway had beneath us passed,
and we were standing on its topmost step,
on me then Virgil fixed his eyes, and said:
"The temporal and the eternal fire, my son,
thou now hast seen, and to a place art come,
where I can, of myself, no further see.
I 've brought thee here by genius and by art;
henceforth as leader thine own pleasure take;
forth art thou from both steep and narrow paths.
Behold the sun there shining on thy brow;
behold the tender grass, the flowers and shrubs,
which here the soil yields of itself alone.
Until in happiness those lovely eyes
appear, which, weeping, made me come to thee,
thou mayst be seated, or among them walk.
From me expect no further word or sign.
Free, right and sound is thine own will, and wrong
were not to act according to its hest;
hence o'er thyself I crown and mitre thee."

28. Terrestrial Paradise. The Divine Forest Matelda. The River Lethe

Keen now to look within and round about
the wood divine, whose foliage dense and green
was tempering for mine eyes the new day's light,
waiting no longer there, I left the edge,
and entered very slowly on the plain,
across a soil which everywhere breathed fragrance.
A pleasant breeze, unvaried in itself,
smote me upon the forehead with a stroke
no greater than a gently blowing wind;
whereby the branches trembling readily
were all of them in that direction swaying,
where first the holy Mount its shadow casts;
yet ne'er deflecting from their upright state
so much, that on their tops the little birds
should give up practicing their every art;
but singing with full gladness, they received
the earliest breezes 'mong the leaves, which sang
in undertone a burden to their songs,
like that which gathers strength from bough to bough,
throughout the grove of pines on Chiassi's shore,
when Aeolus has set Scirocco free.



My slow steps now had carried me so far
inside the ancient wood, that I no longer
could see whence I had entered it; then, lo,
a stream deprived me of advancing further,
which with its little waves was toward the left
bending the grass which sprang upon its bank.
All waters which are purest here on earth
would seem to have within themselves some mixture,
if they should be compared to that one there,
which hideth naught, though very darkly flowing
'neath the perpetual shade, which ne'er allows
the rays of sun or moon to shine on it.
I checked my feet, and with mine eyes passed on
beyond the little stream, to gaze upon
the great variety of flowering trees;
and there, as when aught suddenly appears
that turns through wonder every thought aside,
a Lady all alone appeared to me,
who singing went her way, and picking flowers,
wherewith her path on every side was painted.
"Prithee, fair Lady, thou that in love's beams
art warming thee, if outward looks I trust,
which use to be a witness to the heart,
let it thy pleasure be" said I to her,
"to draw thee forward toward this stream so far,
that I may understand what thou art singing.
Thou makest me recall both where and what
Prosèrpina was at the time, when her
her mother lost, and she the flowers of spring."
As turns around a lady who, while dancing,
her feet together keeps and on the ground,
and hardly sets one foot before the other;
so on the little red and yellow flowers
turned she toward me, no otherwise than would
a virgin lowering her modest eyes;
and satisfied my prayers, for near to me
she drew in such a way, that her sweet tones
reached me with all of their significance.
As soon as she was where the grass is bathed
by that fair river's wavelets, she conferred
on me the gift of raising up her eyes.
Nor do I think so bright a light shone forth
from under Venus' eyelids, when transfixed,
wholly against his custom, by her son.
As smiling on the other bank she stood,
her hands kept picking other bright-hued flowers,
which without seed the highland there brings forth.
The river kept us still three steps apart;
but ev'n the Hellespont, where Xerxes crossed it,
a bridle still to every human pride,
endured no greater hatred from Leander,
because it surged 'tween Sestos and Abydos,
than this from me because it then oped not.
"New-comers are ye," she began, "and hence
because I smile in this place, which was chosen
for human nature as its nest, some doubt,
perhaps, still keeps you wondering here; and yet
the psalm called 'Delectasti' gives you light,
which from your minds can drive away your mist.
And thou that art in front and didst entreat me,
say whether thou wouldst hear aught else; for I
came ready for thine every question's need."
"The water and the music of the wood"
said I, "impugn in me a recent faith
in what I heard, which contradicted this."
Whence she: "I 'll tell thee how from its own cause
proceedeth that which makes thee wonder now,
and clear the mist obstructing thee. The Good
Supreme, which only by Itself is pleased,
made man both good and apt to good, and gave him
this place as earnest of eternal peace.
Through his own fault he but a little while
stayed here; through his own fault, for tears and toil
exchanged he honest laughter and sweet play.
In order that the trouble which, below,
the earth's and water's exhalations cause
by their own trend, which is to follow heat
as best they may, should wage no war on man,
this Mountain rose up toward the sky thus far;
and free from them it is from where it 's locked.
And now, since all the atmosphere revolves
and circles with the sphere of primal motion,
unless its whirling round be somewhere broken,
such motion strikes against this eminence,
which in the living air is wholly free,
and makes the forest, which is dense, resound;
and so much power hath the stricken plant,
that with its virtue it imbues the air,
which by revolving scatters it about;
the other land, as able of itself,
or through its climate, next conceives and bears
the divers qualities of divers trees.
If this were heard, it would not seem to be
a wonder yonder, when a plant takes root,
without there being evidence of seed.
And thou must know that all this holy plain
where thou art now, is full of every seed,
and fraught with fruit which yonder is not picked.
The water thou beholdest wells not up
from fountains fed by mists condensed by cold,

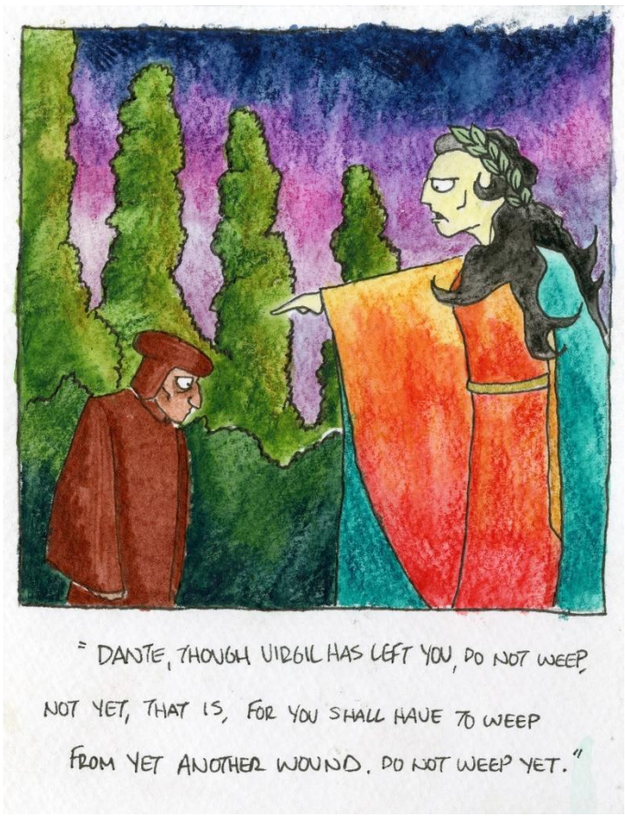
as doth a stream which gains and loses breath;
but issues from a sure and constant fount,
which by the will of God regains as much
as, open on both sides, it poureth forth.
On this side with a virtue it descends,
which takes from men all memory of sin;
on the other it restoreth that of all
good deeds. On this side it is Lethe called,
on the other Eunoë, and worketh not,
till tasted both on this side and on that.
This greater is than are all other savors;
and though thy thirst might be completely sated,
should I reveal no more to thee, I 'll give thee
a corollary as a further grace;
nor do I think my words will be less dear
to thee, should they extend beyond my promise.
Those who in ancient times sang of the Age
of Gold, and of its happy state, perchance
dreamed on Parnassus of this very place.
Here was the root of mankind innocent;
spring's flowers and every fruit are always here;
the nectar this, whereof all poets speak."
Thereat I turned around and, having faced
my Poets, I perceived that they had heard
this last interpretation with a smile;
then toward the Lady beautiful I turned my face.

29. Terrestrial Paradise. The River Lethe
The Mystic Pageant of the Church

Singing as an enamoured lady would,
when once her words were ended, she went on:
"Blessèd are they whose sins are covered up!"
And like the nymphs who used to go alone
through woodland shades, desiring, one to see,
the other to avoid, the sun; she then
moved counter to the stream's course, going up
along its bank, and I at even pace,
matching her little steps with steps as small.
Her paces were with mine not yet a hundred,

when both the margins equally were bent
in such a way, that toward the East I faced.
Nor had we yet as far again moved on,
when round toward me the Lady wholly turned,
and said: "My brother, look and listen now!"
And lo, so bright a luster suddenly
traversed the mighty wood in all directions,
that I of lightning was compelled to think;
but since this ceases as it comes, while that,
the longer it endured, the brighter grew,
within me I kept saying: "What is this?"
And through the illumined air was running now
a gentle melody; hence righteous zeal
made me reproach the hardihood of Eve,
who, while both earth and heaven obedient were,
the only woman, and but just created,
could not endure to stay beneath a veil;
'neath which if she had but devoutly kept,
I should have tasted those unspeakable
delights before, and for a longer time.
While I mid such first fruits of bliss eternal
was going all enrapt, and eager still
for further joys, in front of us the air
'neath the green boughs became a blazing fire,
and that sweet sound was now known as a song.
O Virgins sacrosanct, if I have ever
been hungry, cold or sleepless for your sake,
good reasons spur my claiming a reward.
For me now Helicon must pour her streams,
and with her choir Urania give me help
to set in verse things difficult to think.
A little further on, the lengthy space
still intervening 'tween ourselves and them,
showed falsely what appeared seven trees of gold;
but when I'd drawn so near to them, that now
the common object which deceiveth sense,
because of distance lost no attribute;
the virtue which prepares discourse for reason
perceived that they were candlesticks, and heard
'Hosanna!' in the voices of the song.
Above, the fair array flamed far more brightly
than in unclouded skies the midnight moon,
when at the middle of her monthly course.
Filled with astonishment, I turned around
to my good Virgil, and he answered me
with looks no less with wonder fraught. I then
gazed back again at those exalted things,
which toward us moved so slowly, that outrun
they would have been by newly wedded brides.
The Lady chided me: "Why dost thou gaze
so ardently at those bright lights alone,
and dost not look at that which follows them?
I then saw people who were coming on,
as if behind their leaders, clothed in white;
and never was such whiteness here on earth.
The water was resplendent on my left,
and, like a mirror, if I looked in it,
reflected back my body's left to me.
When I was on my bank so placed, that now
only the river kept me at a distance,

I checked my steps that I might better see,
and I beheld the little flames advance,
leaving the air behind them bright with color,
and look like strokes a painter's brush had drawn;
so that, above, the air remained marked out
by seven long bands, all in the hues wherewith
the sun his bow, and Delia makes her belt.
These standards further to the rear extended
than I could see; as far as I could judge,
the outermost ten paces were apart.
There now were coming 'neath as fair a sky
as I describe here, four and twenty Elders,
two at a time, and crowned with fleur-de-lys.
And all of them were saying: "Blest be thou
'mong Adam's daughters, aye, and blessèd be
throughout eternity thy beauty's charms!"
After the flowers and other tender blooms
in front of me upon the other bank,
had been set free from that elected folk,
as in the sky star follows after star,
so after these, four living Creatures came,
each with a wreath of verdant foliage crowned.
And each of them was feathered with six wings,
their feathers full of eyes; and these were such,
as, were they living, Argus' eyes would be.
I 'll waste no more rhymes, Reader, to describe
their forms; for other spending so constrains me,
that I in this one cannot be profuse.
But read thou in Ezechiel, who depicts them,
as from the sky's cold parts he saw them move,
accompanied by wind, and clouds and fire;
and such as in his pages thou wilt find them,
such were they here, except that, as to wings,
John is with me, and disagrees with him.
The space extending 'tween the four contained
a triumph-Chariot moving on two wheels,
which came along drawn by a Griffon's neck.
Both of His wings the latter stretched on high
'tween the mid banner and the three and three,
so that, by cleaving it, He injured none;
so high they rose that they were lost to sight.
His members were of gold as far as bird
He was, and white the others mixed with red.
Not only Rome ne'er with so fair a Car
made Africanus or Augustus glad,
but ev'n the Sun's were poor, compared with this —
the Sun's, which, when it lost its way, was burned
in answer to the suppliant Earth's request,
when Jupiter inscrutably was just.
At its right wheel three Ladies in a ring
came dancing on; the first so red, that hardly
would she be noticed, if in fire she were;
and such the second was, as if her flesh
and very bones were made of emerald;
the third one looked like newly fallen snow;
and now led by the white one they appeared,
now by the red; and from the latter's song
the others took their time, both slow and fast.
Upon the left hand four, in purple clothed,
were making glad, according to the gait



of one of them with three eyes in her head.
Behind the whole group I have here described,
two old men I beheld, unlike in clothes,
but like in mien, both dignified and grave;
one showed himself a pupil of that great
Hippocrates, whom for the animals
she loves most dearly, Nature made; the other
revealed the opposite intention with a sword
so glittering and sharp, that though I stood
on this side of the stream, it caused me fear.
Then four I saw who were of humble mien;
and, back of all, an agèd, keen-faced man
advancing by himself and lost in sleep.
These seven were robed in garments which resembled
those of the primal company, though on their heads
they wore not lily garlands, but were crowned
with roses and with other crimson flowers;
a distant sight of them had made one swear
that all on fire they were above their brows.
And when the Chariot was abreast of me,
thunder was heard; whereat those worthy people
appeared to have advance forbidden them,
and stopped there with the standards in their van.

30. Terrestrial Paradise. Lethe
Appearance of Beatrice. Disappearance of Virgil

When the Septentrion of the highest heaven, —
which never either setting knew, or rising,
or veil of other mist than that of guilt,
and which was causing every creature there
to know his duty, as the lower one
makes him who turns the helm to reach a port, —
stopped suddenly; the people of the truth,
who first had come between it and the Griffon,
turned around toward the Car, as toward their peace;
and one of them, as though from Heaven sent down,
sang thrice aloud: "Come thou from Lebanon,
my spouse!" and all the rest sang after him.

As at the last trump-call each of the blest
will quickly rise from out his tomb, and sing
the Halleluiah with a voice regained;
even so there rose upon the Car divine,
at such an elder's voice, a hundred servants
and message-bearers of eternal life.
They all were saying: "Blest be thou that comest!"
and, strewing flowers on high and all around,
"Oh, scatter forth your lilies with full hands!"
I 've seen ere now when day began to dawn,
the eastern skies all rosy, and the rest
adorned with beauty and serenity;
and then the sun rise with its face o'ershadowed
in such a way that, through the tempering
of mists, the human eye could long endure it;
so likewise standing in a cloud of flowers,
which rose from angel hands, and fell again
within and out the Car, a Lady, crowned
with a wreath of olives o'er a pure white veil,
appeared before me, 'neath a cloak of green,
clothed with the color of a living flame.
My spirit hereupon, which for so long
a time had not been trembling in her presence,
or felt itself all broken down with awe,
with no more knowledge of her by mine eyes,
but through a hidden virtue issuing from her,
felt the great power of the olden love.
As soon as that high virtue smote my sight,
which formerly had pierced me through and through,
ere I had passed beyond my boyhood's years,
round to the left I turned me with the trust
wherewith an infant to its mother runs,
whenever terrified or in distress,
to say to Virgil: "Less now than a drachm
of blood remains in me that is not trembling;
I feel the tokens of the olden flame."
But Virgil now had left us of himself
deprived, Virgil, my dearest father, Virgil,
to whom for my salvation I had giv'n me;
nor yet did all our ancient mother lost
avail to keep my cheeks, though cleansed with dew,
from turning dark again because of tears.
"Dante, though Virgil leave, weep thou not yet,
weep thou not yet; for thou wilt need to weep
by reason of another sword than this."
Even as an admiral, who, both on stern
and prow, comes to behold the men that serve
on the other ships, and urge them to do well;
so likewise on the left side of the Car,
when I had turned around me at the sound
of mine own name, which here must needs be
mentioned,
I saw the Lady who had first appeared
concealed beneath the Angels' festival,
direct her eyes toward me across the stream.
Although the veil, which from her head hung down,
encircled by Minerva's olive leaves,
did not allow her to appear distinctly;
she went on royally, still stern in mien,
as one doth who, when speaking, holdeth back
his warmest words: "Look at us well, for we,
indeed, are, we, indeed, are Beatrice!
How wast thou able to approach the Mountain?
Didst thou not know that man is happy here?"
My lowered eyes fell on the limpid stream;
but when I saw myself reflected there,
I drew them to the grass, so great the shame
that weighed my forehead down! As to her child
a mother seems severe, so she to me,
for bitter tastes the savor of harsh pity.
Silent she kept, then suddenly the Angels
chanted: "In Thee, Lord, have I set my trust,"
but further than "my feet" they did not go.
Even as the snow among the living beams
grown on the back of Italy is frozen,
when blown and hardened by Slavonian winds;
and then, when melting, trickles through itself,
if but the land that loses shadows breathe,
and thus seems like a fire that melts a candle;
ev'n so was I with neither tears nor sighs,
before the song of those who ever tune
their notes to music of eternal spheres.
But when I heard in their sweet harmonies
the sympathy they had for me, far more
than had they said: "Why, Lady, shame him so?"
the ice bound tightly round my heart was turned
to breath and water, and through mouth and eyes
issued with anguish from my inmost breast.
Then she, still standing motionless
upon the same side of the Car, addressed
those sympathetic creatures with these words:
"Ye keep your watches through the eternal day,
so that nor night nor slumber robs from you
one step the world may take upon its course;
my answer, hence, is made with greater care,
that he, who yonder weeps, may understand,
and guilt and sorrow of one measure be.
Not only through the work of those great spheres,
which to some end directly guide each seed,
according as the stars are its companions;
but through the bounty of the Grace divine,
which for its rain hath clouds so very high,
our eyes cannot approach them; this one here
was such potentially in early life,
that all right dispositions would have had
wondrous results in him. But all the more
malign and savage doth a soil become,
when sown with evil seed and left untilled,
the better and more vigorous it is.
I for a while sustained him with my face;
and showing him my youthful eyes, I led him
along with me turned in the right direction.
But when the threshold of my second age
I reached, and changed my life, he took himself
away from me, and gave him to another.
And when from flesh to spirit I had risen,
and beauty and virtue had increased in me,
less dear and pleasing was I then to him;
and o'er an untrue path he turned his steps,
following deceitful images of good,

which naught that they have promised pay in full.
Nor yet did it avail me to obtain
the inspirations, wherewith both in dreams
and otherwise I called him back; he cared
so little for them! So low down he fell,
that short were now all means for his salvation,
save showing him the people that are lost.
I visited the Gateway of the dead
for this, and unto him who guided him
up hither, fraught with tears, my prayers were borne.
God's high, fate-ordered Will would broken be,
if Lethe should be passed, and should such food
be tasted without paying first the scot
of penitence made manifest by tears."

31. Terrestrial Paradise. Dante's Confession
His Immersion in Lethe. Beatrice Unveiled

"O thou that art across the sacred stream,"
toward me directing with its point her speech,
which even edgewise had seemed sharp to me,
continuing, she began without delay:
"Say, say if this be true, to such a charge
must thy confession be united now."
My strength was so confounded, that my voice
began to move, and wholly died away,
ere by its organs it had been released.
A while she bore it; then: "What thinkest thou?"
she said, "Reply; for thy sad memories
are not extinguished by the water yet."
Perplexity and fear together mixed
extorted such a 'Yes' from out my mouth,
that eyes to hear its utterance were required.
Even as a crossbow breaks its cord and bow,
whenever with too great a tension shot,
and with less force the arrow strikes its mark;
so 'neath that heavy burden I broke down,
and as I poured forth gushing tears and sighs,
my voice more slowly through its passage came.
Then she: "Across the paths which I desired,
and which were leading thee to love the Good,
beyond which there is nothing one can wish,
what trenches didst thou find, or hindering chains,
for which thou thus must needs despoil thyself
of hope of further progress on thy way?
What luring charms or what advantages
displayed themselves upon the brows of others,
that thou shouldst pay thy passing court to them?"
Thereat, when I had heaved a bitter sigh,
I scarcely had the voice to make an answer,
and painfully my lips gave form to it.
Weeping, I said: "Things of the present turned
with their delusive joy my steps aside,
as soon as e'er your face was hid from me."
"Hadst thou been silent, or hadst thou denied"
said she, "what thou confessest, no less clear
would be thy guilt, since known by such a Judge.
But when self-accusation of one's sin
from one's own cheek breaks forth, in this our court
the wheel is turned to blunt the sharpened edge.
And yet, that for thy fault thou mayst be now
the more ashamed, and that, when thou again
shalt hear the sirens, thou mayst stronger be,
desist thou now from sowing tears, and hark;
so shalt thou hear o'er what a different path
my buried body should have moved thy feet.
Nature ne'er showed thee, nor did art, such beauty
as did the pleasing members which enclosed me,
and which are scattered now, dissolved in earth;
hence if the highest pleasure failed thee thus
by reason of my death, what mortal thing
should afterward have drawn thee to desire it?
At the first arrow of deceitful things
thou surely oughtest to have risen up
to follow me, who was no longer such.
Thy wings, at least, should not have been weighed down,
to wait for further blows from some young girl,
or other vain thing of as brief a use.
A young bird waits for two blows or for three;
but 'fore the eyes of fully feathered birds
a net is spread or arrow shot in vain."
As children who are silent when ashamed,
and with their eyes upon the ground, keep list'ning,
and conscience-stricken and repentant are;
so I remained; and she: "Since thou art grieved
because of hearing me, lift up thy beard,
and thou from seeing shalt receive more grief."
With less resistance is a sturdy oak
uprooted, either by our native wind,
or by the wind that blows from Jarba's land,
than I at her behest raised up my chin;
and when by 'beard' she asked to see my face,
I well perceived the venom in her words.
Thereafter when my face was raised again,
I saw that those first creatures were at rest
from strewing flowers; and thereupon mine eyes,
which were as yet but partially assured,
saw Beatrice turned toward the Animal

which in two natures one sole person is.
Though ’neath her veil and ’cross the stream, it seemed
to me that she surpassed her old-time self,
more than she did all others, when on earth.
So pricked me now the nettle of repentance,
that, of all other things, what turned me most
unto its love, became to me most hostile.
Whereat such great contrition gnawed my heart,
that, overcome, I fell; and what I then
became, she knows who gave me cause for it.
Then, when my heart restored my outward strength,
I saw the Lady I found alone, above me,
saying: “Hold on to me! Hold on to me!”
Into the stream she had already borne me
up to my neck, and, dragging me behind her,
light as a shuttle o’er its top was moving.
When I was near the blessèd shore, I heard:
‘Purge me with hyssop’ said in tones so sweet,
that far from writing, I can not recall it.
The lovely Lady, stretching out her arms,
embraced my head, and plunged me in the stream
so far, that I was forced to drink its water.
Drawing me thence, she set me when thus bathed
within the dance-ring of the lovely four;
and each of them embraced me with her arm.
“Nymphs are we here, and in the sky are stars;
ere Beatrice came down into the world
we were ordained to be her maids. We ’ll lead thee
to see her eyes; but, for the joyous light
therein, the three upon the other side,
who more profoundly gaze, will sharpen thine.”
Thus singing they began; and thereupon
they led me with them to the Griffon’s breast,
where, turning toward us, Beatrice remained.
And “See to it that thou spare not thine eyes;”
they said, “before the emeralds we have set thee,
whence Love of old against thee drew his shafts.”
A thousand wishes hotter far than flames
bound mine eyes fast to those resplendent eyes,
which on the Griffon set their steady gaze.
As in a glass the sun, not otherwise
the two-fold Animal was gleaming in them,
at first in one, then in another way.
Think, Reader, if I wondered, when I saw
that It was keeping quiet in Itself,
while in Its image It was changing form.
While, glad and with amazement filled, my soul
was tasting of the food, which, while it sates,
still causes thirst and hunger for itself;
proving themselves to be of higher rank
by reason of their deeds, the other three
came dancing to their angel roundelay.
“Turn thou,” their song was, “turn thou, Beatrice,
thy holy eyes upon thy faithful one,
who hath, to see thee, ta’en so many steps.
Kindly do us the favor to unveil
thy mouth to him, that he may thus perceive
the second loveliness which thou dost hide.”
O Splendor of eternal living Light,
who, ’neath Parnassus’ shades, e’er grew so pale,

or from its cistern e’er so deeply drank,
as not to feel bewildered in his mind,
should he attempt to paint what thou didst seem,
when, symbolized by Heaven’s own harmonies,
thou didst reveal thee in the open air?**32. Terrestrial Paradise. Vicissitudes and Transformation of the Car. The Harlot and the Giant**
So steadfast were mine eyes and so intent
on gratifying their decennial thirst,
that all my other senses were asleep;
and both on this side and on that a wall
of heedlessness they had, the holy smile
so strongly drew them with the olden net;
when forcibly my face was toward my left
turned by those Goddesses, for from their lips
I now was hearing a “Too steadfastly!”
Thereat the state of vision which exists
in eyes but newly smitten by the sun,
caused me to be awhile deprived of sight.
But when my eyes were to the small accustomed,
(I say ‘the small’ with reference to the great
resplendence, whence perforce I turned away,)
I saw that on the right the glorious host
had wheeled, and was returning with the sun
and with the sevenfold flame in front of it.
As, to protect itself, a troop revolves
beneath its shields, and wheeleth with its flag,
before the whole of it can change direction;
even so the heavenly Kingdom’s soldiery
who forward were, had wholly passed us by,
before its pole had made the Chariot turn.
Back to the wheel the Ladies then returned;
and so the Griffon drew His blessèd burden,
that, though He moved, no feather of him shook.
The Lady fair, who through the ford had drawn me,
Statius and I, were following the wheel
which made its orbit with the smaller arc.
As thus we crossed the lofty wood, unpeopled

because of her who trusted to the Serpent,
a song angelic kept our steps in time.
A liberated arrow in three flights,
perhaps, as great a distance would have gone,
as we had moved, when Beatrice alighted.
“Adam!” I then heard murmured by them all;
they circled then around a Tree, despoiled
of flowers and other leaves on every branch.
Its crowning boughs, spread out in greater width,
the higher up they are, would for their height
be wondered at by Indians in their woods.
“Thou, Griffon, happy art, since with Thy beak
Thou tearest not this pleasant tasting wood,
because one’s belly writhes in pain therewith.”
Thus round the sturdy Tree the others cried;
whereat the Double-natured Animal:
“Thus is the seed of all just deeds preserved.”
Then, turning toward the pole which He had drawn,
He dragged it forward to the widowed Tree,
and ’neath it left that part of it tied up.
As our plants swell, when falls the great light, mixed
with that which shines behind the heavenly Carp,
and as each thereupon renews itself
in its own color, ere the sun yokes up
his racing horses ’neath another star;
even so, a hue revealing, not as bright
as that which roses have, and more than that
of violets, that Tree renewed itself,
whose branches once had been so bare of leaves.
I understood not (’t is not sung on earth,)
the hymn which thereupon that people sang,
nor did I bear to hear the whole song through.
If I could picture how the unpitying eyes,
on hearing Syrinx’ story, sleepy grew,
the eyes to which much waking cost so dear;
as doth an artist who from models paints,
would I describe how I then fell asleep;
but let whoever will, feign sleeping well.
Hence to the point I pass, when I awoke;
and say a splendor rent my slumber’s veil,
and then a call: “Arise! What doest thou?”
As Peter, John and James were led to see
some of the early blossoms of the apple,
which makes the Angels eager for its fruit,
and causes endless marriage-feasts in Heaven;
and, overcome, recovered at the word
whereby far greater slumbers had been broken;
and even as they perceived their company
diminished both by Moses and Elias,
and all the raiment of their Master changed;
so I, recovering, near me standing saw
that pitying Lady who before had been
the leader of my steps along the stream.
“But where is Beatrice?” all lost in doubt
I said. Whence she: “Behold her sitting there,
beneath the Tree’s new leaves, upon its roots.
Behold the company surrounding her;
the rest on high behind the Griffon go,
with songs of sweeter sound and deeper theme.”
I know not if at greater length her words
were poured, because now in mine eyes was she,
who hindered my attending to aught else.
On the bare ground she sat, and all alone,
left there to be the guardian of the Car
I saw the Biformed Animal tie up.
Circling, the seven Nymphs with their persons formed
a hedge for her, those lights held in their hands,
which safe from Auster are and Aquilo.
“Here for a while shalt thou a woodman be;
then without end with me a citizen
of that Rome, whereof Christ a Roman is.
Hence, for the world’s sake, which lives badly, keep
thine eyes upon the Car, and what thou see’st
be sure to write, when once on earth again.”
Thus Beatrice; and I, who now was wholly
devoted at the feet of her commands,
whither she wished turned both my mind and eyes.
Fire ne’er descended with so swift a motion
out of dense clouds, when from the highest region
the rain is falling, as I now beheld
the bird of Jove swoop down upon the Tree,
and break not only its new budding leaves
and blossoms, but its bark; with all his might
he smote the Chariot next; whereat it reeled,
as in a storm a ship, when by the waves
to starboard now, and now to larboard driven.
And then a she-Fox which from all good food
seemed fasting, I perceived, hurling herself
against the bottom of the triumph-Car;
but, for her ugly sins upbraiding her,
my Lady put her to such speedy flight
as was permitted by her fleshless bones.
Thereafter, whence it first had come, I saw
the Eagle down into the Chariot’s ark
descend, and leave it feathered with his plumes;
and such a voice as from a suffering heart
comes forth, was that which came from Heaven, and
said:
“My little Ship, how badly thou art laden!”
Between both wheels the earth seemed opened then,
and forth from it I saw a Dragon come,
who upward through the Chariot thrust his tail;
and like a wasp which draweth back its sting,
withdrawing his bad tail, he drew away
part of its floor, and, keen for more, went off.
That which remained reclothed itself again,
as rich soil doth with grasses, with the plumes,
offered, perhaps, with wise and kind intent;
then one wheel and the other and the pole
were covered up so quickly, that a mouth
is open kept much longer by a sigh.
When thus the holy Structure was transformed,
it put forth heads upon its members, three
upon its pole, and at each corner one.
The first were horned like oxen, but the four
had on their foreheads but a single horn;
never had such a monster yet been seen.
Sitting thereon, as boldly as a fort
is seated on a lofty mountain-top,
a shameless Prostitute appeared before me,

with eyebrows that were quick to wander round;
and then, to see that none should take her from him,
I saw a Giant standing at her side;
at times they kissed each other there; but since
she turned her greedy, fickle eyes on me,
that cruel lover scourged her from her head
unto her soles. Then, filled with jealousy,
and cruel in his wrath, loosing the Monster,
he dragged it through the wood so far away,
that with this last alone he shielded me
against the Harlot and unnatural Beast.

33. Terrestrial Paradise. Beatrice's Prophecy
Dante's Final Purification in the River Eunoë

"O God, the heathen folk are come," now three,
now four, alternately, and shedding tears,
the Ladies a sweet psalmody began;
and Beatrice with sighs of sympathy
was listening to their words with such a look,
that Mary at the cross changed little more.
But when the other maids had given way
that she might speak, she rose upon her feet,
and, colored with the hue of fire, replied;
"A little while, and ye shall not behold me;
and then again, belovèd sisters mine,
a little while, and me ye shall behold."
All seven she thereupon before her placed,
and, merely by a nod, behind her moved
me and the Lady, and the Sage who stayed.
She thus was going on, nor do I think
her tenth step had been set upon the ground,
when with her eyes she forcibly met mine;
then with a tranquil face she said to me:
"More quickly come, that, if I speak to thee,
for listening to me thou mayst be well placed."
As soon as I was with her as I ought,
she said to me: "Why, brother, dost not venture
to question me, now that thou comest with me?"
As unto those who show excessive reverence,
when speaking in the presence of their elders,
and therefore draw no clear voice to their teeth,
to me it happed that with imperfect tones
"Madonna," I began, "my welfare's needs
you know, and that which may be good for it."
And she to me: "From fear and bashfulness
I wish thee now to extricate thyself,
that thou mayst speak no more like one who dreams.
Know that the Vessel which the Serpent broke,
was, and is not; but let whose fault it is,
believe God's vengeance fears not human sops.
Nor shall the Eagle heirless for all time
remain, who left his feathers on the Car,
whence monstrous it became, and then a prey;
for I see well, and therefore tell it, stars
now near, and from all checks and obstacles
secure, which for us shall a time obtain,
within which a Five Hundred Ten and Five,
sent forth by God, shall kill the female Thief,
and that great Giant who with her is guilty.
And my prediction, which is dark, perhaps,
as Themis and the Sphinx, persuades thee less,
because, as theirs did, it beclouds thy mind;
but facts will soon become the Naiades,
which shall this difficult enigma solve,
without the loss of either sheep or grain.
Give heed; and ev'n as uttered by myself,
see that thou teach these words of mine to those
that live the life which is a race toward death;
and bear in mind, when thou art writing them,
not to conceal in what state thou hast seen
the Tree, which twice now hath been here despoiled.
Whoever robs or teareth that apart,
with blasphemy of deed offendeth God,
who for His own use only made it holy.
For biting it, in pain and in desire
the first soul longed for Him five thousand years
and more, who punished in Himself the bite.
Thy mind is sleeping, if it deemeth not
that for a special cause it soars so high,
and at its summit so inverted is.
And if the vain thoughts which surround thy mind
had not been Elsa water, and their pleasure
as to the mulberry a Pyramus,
thou, by so many circumstances only,
wouldst in the interdict upon the Tree
see morally God's Justice. But, since made
of stone I see thee in thine understanding,
and, being petrified, so dark in mind
that thou art blinded by my speech's light,
I also, if not written, wish that painted,
at least, thou bear it in thee, for the reason
the pilgrim's staff is carried wreathed with palm."
And I: "As sealing-wax, which changes not
the shape imprinted on it by the seal,
so likewise is my brain now stamped by you.
But why so far above my mental sight
are your desired words now flying up,

it loses them the more, the more it strives?”
“That thou,” she said, “mayst thus appraise the school
which thou hast followed, and perceive how able
its teaching is to carry out my word;
and also see that your ways are removed
as far from the divine, as e’er the heaven
which speeds most high is distant from the earth.”
Whence her I answered: “I do not recall
that I have e’er estranged myself from you,
nor am I conscious of remorse therefor.”
“And if thou canst not call it to thy mind,”
she answered with a smile, “remember now
that this same day thou hast of Lethe drunk;
and if from smoke a fire may be inferred,
this thy forgetfulness but clearly proves
a fault in thy desire intent elsewhere.
Truly my words shall naked be henceforth,
as much at least as it shall needful seem
to make them clear to thine untutored sight.”
Both more refulgent and with slower steps
the sun was holding now the noonday circle,
which, with each point of view, moves here and there;
when, even as he, who as a leader goes
ahead of people, stops, if something new
he find upon his path, the Ladies seven
stopped at a death-pale shadow’s edge,
like that which ’neath green leaves and darkling boughs
the Alps cast o’er their icy mountain-streams.
In front of them I seemed to see Euphrates
and Tigris from one fountain issue forth,
and from each other slowly part as friends.
“O Light and Glory of the human race,
what stream is this which from one source unfolds,
and then from its own self itself withdraws?”
In answer to this question I was told:
“Pray that Matelda tell thee.” Whereupon,
like one who frees himself from blame, replied
the lovely Lady: “This, with other things,
hath he been told by me; and I am sure
that Lethe’s water hath not hid it from him.”
And Beatrice: “Perhaps a greater care
which oft deprives one’s memory of its power,
hath made the vision of his mind’s eye dark.
But Eunoë behold, which yonder now
is flowing forth; conduct him to its bank,
and, as thou ’rt wont, revive his lifeless power.”
Even as a noble soul makes no excuse,
but to another’s will its own conforms,
as soon as e’er by outward signs disclosed;
even so, when she had taken hold of me,
the lovely Lady moved, and then to Statius
said with a lady’s manner: “Come with him.”
If, Reader, I had now more space for writing,
I’d sing, at least in part, of that sweet drink,
which never would have satisfied my thirst;
but inasmuch as filled are all the pages
planned warp-like for this second Canticle,
no further doth art’s bridle let me go.
From that most holy water I returned
made young again, as new trees are in spring,
when with new foliage they renew themselves,
pure, and disposed to rise up to the stars.