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DANTE ALIGHIERI

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INFERNO
PURGATORIO
PARADISO

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INFERNO

THE Second Circle, or proper commencement of Hell; and Minos, the Infernal Judge, at its entrance (1-24). It contains the souls of Carnal sinners; and their punishment consists in being driven about incessantly, in total darkness, by fierce winds (25-51). First amongst them comes Semiramis, the Babylonian queen. Dido, Cleopatra, Helena, Achilles, Paris, and a great multitude of others, pass

Cerchio II. Così discesi del cerchio primaio
 giù nel secondo, che men loco cinghia,
 e tanto più dolor, che pugne a guaio. 4
 Stavvi Minos orribilmente, e ringhia;
 esamina le colpe nell' entrata,
 giudica e manda, secondo che avvinghia. 7
 Dico, che quando l' anima mal nata
 li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa;
 e quel conoscitor delle peccata
 vede qual loco d' inferno è da essa; 10
 cignesi colla coda tante volte,
 quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa.
 Sempre dinanzi a lui ne stanno molte:
 vanno a vicenda ciascuna al giudizio;
 dicono e odone, e poi son giù volte. 13
 "O tu, che vieni al doloroso ospizio,"
 disse Minos a me, quando mi vide,
 lasciando l' atto di cotanto ufizio, 16
 "guarda com' entri, e di cui tu ti fide;
 non t' inganni l' ampiezza dell' entrare."
 E il duca mio a lui: "Perchè pur gride?" 19
 Non impedir lo suo fatale andare:
 vuolsi così colà, dove si puote
 ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare." 22
 48

CANTO V

in succession. Dante is overcome and bewildered with pity at the sight of them (52-72), when his attention is suddenly attracted to two Spirits that keep together, and seem strangely light upon the wind. He is unable to speak for some time, after finding that it is Francesca of Rimini, with her lover Paolo; and falls to the ground, as if dead, when he has heard their painful story (73-142).

Thus I descended from the first circle down into The Carnal Sinners
 the second, which encompasses less space, and
 so much greater pain, that it stings to wailing.

There Minos sits horrific, and grins: examines Minos
 the crimes upon the entrance; judges, and
 sends according as he girds himself.

I say, that when the ill-born spirit comes before
 him, it confesses all; and that sin-discerner
 sees what place in hell is for it, and with his
 tail makes as many circles round himself as
 the degrees he will have it to descend.

Always before him stands a crowd of them; they
 go each in its turn to judgment; they tell,
 and hear; and then are whirled down.

"O thou who comest to the abode of pain!"
 said Minos to me, when he saw me leaving the
 act of that great office;

"look how thou enterest, and in whom thou
 trustest; let not the wideness of the entrancy
 deceive thee." And my guide to him: "Why
 criest thou too?"

Hinder not his fated going; thus it is willed
 there where what is willed can be done: and
 ask no more."

Cerchio II. Ora incomincian le dolenti note
 a farmisi sentire; or son venuto 25
 là dove molto pianto mi percuote.
 Io venni in loco d' ogni luce muto, 28
 che mugghia, come fa mar per tempesta,
 se da contrari venti è combattuto.
 La bufera infernal, che mai non resta, 31
 mena gli spirti con la sua rapina;
 voltando e percotendo li molesta.
 Quando giungon davanti alla ruina, 34
 quivi le strida, il compianto e il lamento;
 bestemmian quivi la virtù divina.
 Intesi, che a così fatto tormento 37
 enno dannati i peccator carnali,
 che la ragion sommettono al talento.
 E come gli stornei ne portan l' ali, 40
 nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena:
 così quel fiato gli spirti mali;
 di qua, di là, di giù, di su gli mena. 43
 Nulla speranza gli conforta mai,
 non che di posa, ma di minor pena.
 E come i gru van cantando lor lai, 46
 facendo in aer di sè lunga riga;
 così vid' io venir, traendo guai,
 ombre portate dalla detta briga; 49
 per ch' io dissi: "Maestro, chi son quelle
 genti, che l' aura nera sì gastiga?"
 "La prima di color, di cui novelle 52
 tu vuoi saper," mi disse quegli allotta,
 "fu imperatrice di molte favelle.
 A vizio di lussuria fu sì rotta, 55
 che libito fe' licito in sua legge
 per torre il biasmo, in che era condotta.

Now begin the doleful notes to reach me; now The Carnal
 am I come where much lamenting strikes Sinners
 me.
 I came into a place void of all light, which
 bellows like the sea in tempest, when it is
 combated by warring winds.
 The hellish storm, which never rests, leads the Their
 spirits with its sweep; whirling, and smiting Punishment
 it vexes them.
 When they arrive before the ruin, there the
 shrieks, the moanings, and the lamentation;
 there they blaspheme the divine power.
 I learnt that to such torment are doomed
 the carnal sinners, who subject reason to
 lust.
 And as their wings bear along the starlings, at
 the cold season, in large and crowded troop:
 so that blast, the evil spirits;
 hither, thither, down, up, it leads them. No
 hope ever comforts them, not of rest but even
 of less pain.
 And as the cranes go chanting their lays, making
 a long streak of themselves in the air: so I
 saw the shadows come, uttering wails,
 borne by that strife of winds; whereat I said:
 "Master who are those people, whom the
 black air thus lashes?"
 "The first of these concerning whom thou Virgil
 seekest to know," he then replied, "was names the
 Empress of many tongues. spirits
 With the vice of luxury she was so broken, that
 she made lust and law alike in her decree, to
 take away the blame she had incurred.

Cerchio II. Ell' è Semiramis, di cui si legge,
 che succedette a Nino, e fu sua sposa ;
 tenne la terra, che il Soldan corregge. 58
 L' altra è colei, che s' ancise amorosa,
 e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo ;
 poi è Cleopatras lussuriosa. 61
 Elena vedi, per cui tanto reo
 tempo si volse ; e vedi il grande Achille,
 che con amore al fine combatteo ; 64
 vedi Paris, Tristano " ; e più di mille
 ombre mostrommi, e nominommi a dito,
 ch' amor di nostra vita dipartille. 67
 Poscia ch' io ebbi il mio dottore udito
 nomar le donne antiche e i cavalieri,
 pietà mi giunse, e fui quasi smarrito. 70
 Io cominciai : " Poeta, volentieri
 parlerei a que' duo, che insieme vanno,
 e paion sì al vento esser leggieri." 73
 Ed egli a me : " Vedrai, quando saranno
 più presso a noi ; e tu allor li prega
 per quell' amor che i mena ; e quei verranno." 76
 Sì tosto come il vento a noi li piega,
 mossi la voce : " O anime affannate,
 venite a noi parlar, s' altri nol niega." 79
 Quali colombe, dal disio chiamate,
 con l' ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido
 vengon per l' aer dal voler portate : 82
 cotali uscir della schiera ov' è Dido,
 a noi venendo per l' aer maligno,
 sì forte fu l' affettuoso grido. 85
 " O animal grazioso e benigno,
 che visitando vai per l' aer perso
 noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno ; 88

She is Semiramis, of whom we read that she The Carnal
 succeeded Ninus, and was his spouse ; she Sinners
 held the land which the Soldan rules.
 That other is she who slew herself in love, and
 broke faith to the ashes of Sichæus ; next comes
 luxurious Cleopatra.
 Helena see, for whom so long a time of ill
 revolved ; and see the great Achilles, who
 fought at last with love ;
 see Paris, Tristan " ; and more than a thousand
 shades he shewed to me, and pointing with his
 finger, named to me those whom love had
 parted from our life.
 After I had heard my teacher name the olden
 dames and cavaliers, pity came over me, and
 I was as if bewildered.
 I began : " Poet, willingly would I speak with Paolo and
 those two that go together, and seem so light Francesca
 upon the wind."
 And he to me : " Thou shalt see when they are
 nearer to us ; and do thou then entreat them by
 that love, which leadsthem ; and they will come."
 Soon as the wind bends them to us, I raised
 my voice : " O wearied souls ! come to speak
 with us, if none denies it."
 As doves called by desire, with raised and
 steady wings come through the air to their
 loved nest, borne by their will :
 so those spirits issued from the band where Dido
 is, coming to us through the malignant air ;
 such was the force of my affectuous cry.
 " O living creature, gracious and benign ! that Francesca
 goest through the black air, visiting us who speaks
 stained the earth with blood :

Cerchio II. se fosse amico il re dell' universo, 92
 noi pregheremmo lui per la tua pace,
 poi che hai pietà del nostro mal perverso.
 Di quel che udire e che parlar ti piace 94
 noi udiremo e parleremo a vui,
 mentrechè il vento, come fa, ci tace.
 Siede la terra, dove nata fui, 97
 su la marina dove il Po discende
 per aver pace co' seguaci sui.
 Amor, che al cor gentil ratto s' apprende, 100
 prese costui della bella persona
 che mi fu tolta, e il modo ancor m' offende.
 Amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona, 103
 mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
 che, come vedi, ancor non m' abbandona.
 Amor condusse noi ad una morte ; 106
 Caina attende chi vita ci spense."
 Queste parole da lor ci fur porte.
 Da che io intesi quelle anime offense, 109
 chinai il viso, e tanto il tenni basso,
 finchè il poeta mi disse : " Che pense ? "
 Quando risposi, cominciai : " O lasso, 112
 quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio
 menò costoro al doloroso passo ! "
 Poi mi rivolsi a loro, e parlai io, 115
 e cominciai : " Francesca, i tuoi martiri
 a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.
 Ma dimmi : al tempo de' dolci sospiri, 118
 a che e come concedette amore,
 che conosceste i dubbiosi desiri ? "
 Ed ella a me : " Nessun maggior dolore, 121
 che ricordarsi del tempo felice
 nella miseria ; e ciò sa il tuo dottore.

if the King of the Universe were our friend, we The Carnal Sinners
 would pray him for thy peace ; seeing that
 thou hast pity of our perverse misfortune.
 Of that which it pleases thee to hear and to speak,
 we will hear and speak with you, whilst the
 wind, as now, is silent for us.
 The town, where I was born, sits on the shore,
 where Po descends to rest with his attendant
 streams.
 Love, which is quickly caught in gentle heart,
 took him with the fair body of which I was
 bereft ; and the manner still afflicts me.
 Love, which to no loved one permits excuse for
 loving, took me so strongly with delight in him,
 that, as thou seest, even now it leaves me not.
 Love led us to one death ; Caina waits for him
 who quenched our life." These words from
 them were offered to us.
 After I had heard those wounded souls, I bowed
 my face, and held it low until the Poet said to
 me : " What art thou thinking of ? "
 When I answered, I began : " Ah me ! what
 sweet thoughts, what longing led them to the
 woful pass ! "
 Then I turned again to them ; and I spoke, and Dante questions Francesca
 began : " Francesca, thy torments make me
 weep with grief and pity.
 But tell me : in the time of the sweet sighs, by
 what and how love granted you to know the
 dubious desires ? "
 And she to me : " There is no greater pain than Her reply
 to recall a happy time in wretchedness ; and
 this thy teacher knows.

Cerchio II. Ma se a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
farò come colui che piange e dice. 124

Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancillotto, come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto. 127

Per più fiate gli occhi ci sospinse
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse. 130

Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso, 133

la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante:
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse;
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante." 136

Mentre che l' uno spirto questo disse,
l' altro piangeva sì, che di pietade
io venni men così com' io morisse;
e caddi, come corpo morto cade. 142

52-60. According to Orosius, Semiramis succeeded her husband Ninus as ruler of Assyria. She was known for her licentious character. Dante appears to have confused the ancient kingdom of Assyria or Babylonia in Asia with the Babylon in Egypt, for only the latter was ruled by the Sultan. Or perhaps he followed a tradition according to which Ninus conquered Egypt. The mention of the *molte favelle* in verse 54 is probably due to the fact that Babylon and Babel were commonly held to be identical.

61, 62. Dido, Queen of Carthage, fell in love with Æneas, after the death of her husband Sichæus, to whose memory she had sworn eternal fidelity. When Æneas left her to go to Italy, she slew herself on a funeral pyre (*Æn.* iv.).

63. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, the mistress of Cæsar and Antony.

But if thou hast such desire to learn the first
root of our love, I will do like one who weeps
and tells. The Carnal
Sinners

One day, for pastime, we read of Lancelot, how
love constrained him; we were alone, and
without all suspicion.

Several times that reading urged our eyes to
meet, and changed the colour of our faces;
but one moment alone it was that overcame us.

When we read how the fond smile was kissed
by such a lover, he, who shall never be
divided from me,

kissed my mouth all trembling: the book, and
he who wrote it, was a Galeotto; that day
we read in it no farther."

Whilst the one spirit thus spake, the other wept
so, that I fainted with pity, as if I had been
dying; and fell, as a dead body falls.

64, 65 and 67. Helen, the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, was carried off by Paris of Troy, and was thus the cause of the Trojan war.

65, 66. According to medieval legend, Achilles was slain by Paris in a Trojan temple, whither he had gone with the intention of marrying Paris' sister Polyxena, who had been promised him as a reward if he would join the Trojans.

67. Tristan of Lyonesse, one of King Arthur's knights, who loved Yseult, the wife of his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall, and was killed by the outraged husband.

73-142. Francesca, daughter of Guido Vecchio da Polenta (and aunt of the Guido Novello at whose court in Ravenna Dante found his last refuge), was, for political reasons, married to Gianciotto, the deformed son of Malatesta da Verrucchio, Lord of Rimini (ca. 1275). About ten years later Gianciotto, having

surprised his wife with his younger brother Paolo, stabbed the guilty pair. These are the bald historical facts, to which legend early began to add romantic details, tampering not only with the dates of the events and the ages of the persons concerned, but with the actual facts. Thus, it is quite possible that Paolo took part in the preliminary negotiations connected with his brother's marriage; but this circumstance was utilised in such a way as to make it appear as though Francesca actually went through the ceremony of marriage with the handsome Paolo, and did not discover the trick till it was too late. Dante followed this tradition, as is proved by verse 102.

97-99. Ravenna, situated close by the shore of the Adriatic Sea, at the mouth of the Po.

107. The region of Hell reserved for those who had slain a relative (see below, Canto xxxii.).

121-123. Although these words are translated liter-

ally from Boethius, and although we know that Dante had made a special study of Boethius, yet we cannot well identify the *dottore* with this philosopher: for how can we be expected to assume that Francesca was acquainted with these two facts? The reference is probably to Virgil, and to his position in Limbo.

127-137. The passage in the Old French version of the Lancelot Romance which alone contains all the details given by Dante, here and in *Par.* xv. 13-15, is now known, thanks to Mr Paget Toynbee. That Dante was acquainted with the Old French poems dealing with the *matière de Bretagne* is proved by *De Vulg. El.* i. 10: 12-20.

137. *Galeotto* synonymous with "pandar": for, in the Old French poem, Gallehault renders Lancelot and Guinivere the same service that Pandarus rendered Troilus and Cressida, according to the Trojan legend.