S’Io avessi le rime aspre e chiocce, 
come si conferverrebbe al tristo buco 
sovra ‘l qual pontan tutte l’altr’ rocce, 
io premerei di mio concetto il suco 
più pienamente; ma perch’io non l’abbo, 
non sanza tema a dicer mi conduo; 
ché non è impresa da pigliare a gabbo 
discriver fondo a tutto l’universo, 
né da lingua che chiami mamma o babbo. 

Ma quelle donne aiutino il mio verso 
ch’aiutarò Anfione a chieder Tebe, 
si che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso. 

Oh sovra tutte mal creata plebe 
che stai nel loco donde parliare è duro, 
me foste state qui pereore o zebel 
Come noi fummo giù nel pozzo scuro 
sotto i piè del gigante assai più bassi, 
e io mirava ancora a l’alto muro, 
dicere udi’ mi: “Guarda come passi: 
va sì, che tu non calchi con le pianta 
le teste de’ fratei miseri lassi”. 

Per ch’io mi volsi, e vidimi davante 
e sotto i piedi un lago che per gelo 
avea di vetro e non d’acqua sembiante. 

Non fece al corso suo sì grosso velo 
di verno la Danoia in Osterlicchi, 
ché era quivi; che se Tambernicchi 
né Tanaï là sotto ’l freddo cielo 
Non fece al corso suo sì grosso velo 
And I still gazed up at the towering walls of Hell, 

E come a gradidar si sta la rana 
col muso fuor de’ l’acquis, quando sognà 
spigolar sovente la villana, 

I turned and saw, stretched out before my face 
And ‘neath my feet, a lake so bound with ice, 
it did not look like water but like glass. 

Danube in Austria never could disguise 
His wintry course beneath a shroud so thick 
As this, nor Tanaïs under frozen skies 

Afar; if Pietrapan or Tambernic 
Had crashed full weight on it, the very rim 
Would not have given so much as even a creak. 

And as with muzzles peeping from the stream 
The frogs sit croaking in the time of year 
When gleaning haunts the peasant-woman’s dream, 

Their heads were bowed toward the ice beneath, 
Their eyes attest their grief; their mouths proclaim 
The bitter airs that through that dungeon breathe. 

My gaze roamed round awhile, and, when it came 
Back to my feet, found two shades so close pressed, 
The hair was mingled on the heads of them. 

I said: “You two, thus cramponed breast to breast, 
Tell me who you are.” They heaved their necks a-strain 
To see me; and as they stood with faces raised, 

Their eyes, which were but inly wet till then. 
Gushed at the lids; at once the fierce frost blocked 
The tears between and sealed them shut again. 

Never was wood to wood so rigid locked 
By clamps of iron; like butting goats they jarred 
Their heads together, by helpless fury rocked. 

Then one who’d lost both ears from off his scarred 
Head with the cold, still keeping his face down, 
Cried out: “Why dost thou stare at us so hard? 

Fundament of the world is very far 
From being a task for idle wits at play, 
Or infant tongues that pipe mamma, papa. 

But may those heavenly ladies aid my lay 
That helped Amphion wall high Thebes with stone, 
Lest from the truth my wandering verses stray. 

O well for you, dregs of damnation, thrown 
In that last sink which words are weak to tell, 
Had you lived as sheep or goats in the world of the sun 

When we were down in the deep of the darkling well, 
Under the feet of the giant and yet more low, 
And I still gazed up at the towering walls of Hell, 

I heard it said: “Take heed how thou dost go. 
For fear thy feet should trample as they pass 
On the heads of the weary brotherhood of woe,” 

When I had turned round and saw the place 
And ‘neath my feet, a lake so bound with ice, 
it did not look like water but like glass. 

Danube in Austria never could disguise 
His wintry course beneath a shroud so thick 
As this, nor Tanaïs under frozen skies 

Had I but rhymes rugged and harsh and hoarse. 
Fit for the hideous hole on which the weight 
Of all those rocks grinds downward course by course, 

I might press out my matter’s juice complete; 
As ’tis, I tremble lest the telling mar 
The tale; for, truly, to describe the great 

Fundament of the world is very far 
From being a task for idle wits at play, 
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On the heads of the weary brotherhood of woe,” 


Se vuol saper chi son còsteli due, 
la valle onde Bisenzo si dichina 
del padre loro Alberto e di lor fue.

D'un corpo uscirìo; e tutta la Caina 
potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra 
degna più d'esser fitta in gelatinà:

non quelli a cui fu rotto il petto e l'ombra 
con esso un colpo per la man d'Artù; 
non Focaccia; non questi che m'ingombra 
col capo sì, ch'io non veggio oltre più, 
e fu nomato Sassol Mascheroni; 
se toscò se', ben sai omai chi fu.

E perché non mi metti in più sermoni, 
sappi ch'i' fu' il Camiscion de' Pazzi; 
e aspetto Carlin che mi scagioni".

Possa vid'm olio mille visi cagnazzi 
fatti per freddo; onde mi vien riprezzo, 
e verrà sempre, de' gelati guazzì.

E mentre ch'andavamo inver' lo mezz 
la quale ogne gravezza si rauna, 
e lo tremava ne l'eternò rezzo;

se voler fu o destì o fortuna, 
non so; ma, passeggìando tra le teste, 
forte percossì 'l piè nel viso ad una.

Piangendo mi sgridò: "Perché mi peste? 
se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta 
di Montaperì, perché mi molestè?"?

E lo: "Maestro mio, or qui m'aspetta 
ch'io esca d'un dubbio per costui; 
poi mi farà, quantunque vorrai, fretta.

La duca stette, e io dissi a colu 
andò i tuoi mali, e si dissi a colui 
che bestemmiava duramente ancora.

"Qual se' tu che cosi rampogni altrui?"

"Or tu ch'è che vai per l'Antenora, 
percorrendo", rispuose, "altrui le 
volleys di oaths; "Who art thou, cursing so

"Art come to make the vengeance I endure 
For Montaperi more vindictive still?"

"Master!" I cried, "wait for me! I adjure 
Thee, wait! Then hurry me on as thou shalt choose; 
But I think I know who it is, and I must make sure."

"Why trample me? What for?" it clamoured shrill; 
"Art come to make the vengeance I endure 
For Montaperi more vindictive still?"

"Living I am," said I; "do thou sing praises 
For that; if thou seek fame, I'll give thee it. 
Writing thy name with other notable cases."

"All I demand is just the opposite; 
Be off, and pester me no more," he said; 
"To try such wheedling here shows little wit." 
At that I grasped the scruff behind his head: 
"Thou'lt either tell thy name, or have thy hair 
Striped from thy scalp," I panted, "shred by shred."

"Pluck it all out," said he; "I'll not declare 
My name, nor show my face, though thou insist 
And break my head a thousand times, I swear."

"I'd got his hair twined tightly in my fist 
Already, and wrenched away a tuft or two. 
He yelping, head down, stubborn to resist, 
When another called: "Hey, Bocca, what's to do? 
Don't thy jaws make enough infernal clatter 
But, what the devil! must thou start barking too?"

"There, that's enough," I cried, "thou filthy traitor; 
Thou need'st not speak, but to thy shame I'll see 
Thee, within, and publish what thou wilt!"

"But prithee do not fail to advertise 
Awa, and publish what thou wilt!" said he; 
"But prithee do not fail to advertise 
That chatterbox there, if thou from hence go free.
El piange qui l'argento de' Franceschi: "Io vidi", potrai dir, "quel da Duer là dove i peccatori stanno freschi".

Se fossi domandato "Altri chi v'era?", tu hai dalati quel di Becceria di cui segù Florenza la goglieria.

Gianni de' Soldanier credo che sia più là con Ganellone e Tebaldello, ch'ap' Faenza quando si dormía.

Noi eravam partiti già da ello, chi' o vidi due ghiaiati in una buca, sì che l'un capo a l'altro era cappello;

e corno 'l pan per fame si manda, così 'l sovar li denti a l'altro pose à've 'l cervel s'aggiugne con la nuca:

non altrimenti Tidëo si rose le tempie a Menalippo per disdegno, che quei faceva il teschio e l'altre cose.

"O tu che mostri per sì bestial segno odio sovra colui che tu ti mangi, dimmi 'l perché", diss'io, "per tal convegno se tu a ragion di lui ti piangi, sappi che voi siete e la sua pecca, nel mondo suso ancora io te ne cangi, se quella con ch'io parlo non si secca".

He wails the Frenchmen's argent, treason's price;
'Him of Duera,' thou shalt say, 'right clear I saw, where sinners are preserved in ice.'

And if they should inquire who else was there, Close by thee's Beccaria, whose throat was cut By Florentines; Gianni de' Soldanier

Is somewhat further on, I fancy, put With Ganelon, and Tibbald, who undid Faenza's gates when sleeping eyes were shut."

And when we'd left him, in that icy bed, I saw two frozen together in one hole So that the one head capped the other head; And as starved men tear bread, this tore the poll Of the one beneath, chewing with ravenous jaw, Where brain meets marrow, just beneath the skull.

With no more furious zest did Tydeus gnaw The scalp of Menalippus, than he ate The brain-pan and the other tissues raw.

"O thou that in such bestial wise dost sate Thy rage on him thou munchest, tell me why; On this condition," I said, "that if thy hate seem justified, I undertake that I, Knowing who you are, and knowing all his crime, Will see thee righted in the world on high."

Unless my tongue wither before the time."