

To whom I thus: "Count of me but as one,
Who am the scribe of love; that, when he breathes,
Take up my pen, and, as he dictates, write."

"Brother!" said he, "the hindrance, which once held
The notary,¹ with Guittone² and myself,
Short of that new and sweeter style³ I hear,
Is now disclosed: I see how ye your plumes
Stretch, as the inditer guides them; which, no question,
Ours did not. He that seeks a grace beyond,

¹ *The notary.*—Jacopo da Lentino, called the Notary, a poet of these times. He was probably an Apulian: for Dante ("De Vulgari Eloquentia," lib. i., cap. 12), quoting a verse which belongs to a canzone of his, published by the Giunti, without mentioning the writer's name, terms him one of "the illustrious Apulians," *præfulgentes Apuli*. See Tiraboschi, Mr. Mathias's edit., vol. i., p. 137. Crescimbeni (lib. i. "Della Volgar. Poesia," p. 72, 4to ed., 1398) gives an extract from one of his poems, printed in Allacci's Collection, to show that the whimsical compositions called "Ariette," are not of modern invention. His poems have been collected among the "Poeti del primo secolo della Lingua Italiana," 2 vols. 8vo, Firenze, 1816. They extend from p. 249 to p. 319 of the first volume.

² *Guittone.*—Fra Guittone, of Arezzo, holds a distinguished place in Italian literature, as, besides his poems printed in the Collection of the Giunti, he has left a collection of letters, forty in number, which afford the earliest specimen of that kind of writing in the language. They were published at Rome in 1743, with learned illustrations by Giovanni Bottari. He was also the first who gave to the sonnet its regular and legitimate form, a species of composition in which not only his own countrymen, but many of the best poets in all the cultivated languages of modern Europe, have since so much delighted. Guittone, a native of Arezzo, was the son of Viva di Michele. He was of the order of the "Fratì Godenti," of which an account may be seen in the notes to "Hell," canto xxiii. In the year 1293 he founded a monastery of the order of Camaldoli, in Florence, and died in the following year. Tiraboschi, *ibid.*, p. 119. Dante, in the "Treatise de Vulgari Eloquentia," lib. i., cap. 13 (see note to v. 20 of this canto), and lib. ii., cap. 6, blames him for preferring the plebeian to the more courtly style: and Petrarch twice places him in the company of our poet, "Triumph of Love," cap. iv., and "Sonnets," part. sec., "Sennuccio mio." The eighth book in the col-

lection of the old poets published by the Giunti in 1527 consists of sonnets and canzoni by Guittone. They are marked by a peculiar solemnity of manner, of which the ensuing sonnet will afford a proof and an example.

"Gran piacer Signor mio, e gran desire
Harei d'essere avanti al divin trono,
Dove si prenderà pace e perdono
Di suo ben fatto e d'ogni suo fallire:
E gran piacer harei hor di sentire
Quella sonante tromba e quel gran suono,
E d'udir dire: hora venuti sono,
A chi dar pace, a chi crudel martire.
Questo tutto vorrei caro signore;
Perchè fia scritto a ciaschedun nel volto
Quel ch'è già tenne ascoso dentro al core:
Allhor vedrete a la mia fronte avvolto
Un brieve, che dirà: che 'l crudo amore
Per voi me prese, e mai non m' ha disciolto."

"Great joy it were to me to join the throng,
That thy celestial throne, O Lord, surround,
Where perfect peace and pardon shall be found,
Peace for good doings, pardon for the wrong:
Great joy to hear the vault of heaven prolong
That everlasting trumpet's mighty sound,
That shall to each award their final bound,
Wailing to these, to those the blissful song.
All this, dear Lord, were welcome to my soul.
For on his brow then every one shall bear
Inscribed, what late was hidden in the heart;
And round my forehead wreathed a letter'd scroll
Shall in this tenor my sad fate declare:
'Love's bondman I from him might never
part.'"

Bottari doubts whether some of the sonnets attributed to Guittone in the "Rime Antiche" are by that writer. See his notes to "Lettere di Fra Guittone," p. 135.

³ *That new and sweeter style.*—He means the style introduced in our poet's time.

Sees not the distance parts one style from other."
And, as contented, here he held his peace.

Like as the birds, that winter near the Nile,¹
In squared regiment direct their course,
Then stretch themselves in file for speedier flight;
Thus all the tribe of spirits, as they turn'd
Their visage, faster fled, nimble alike
Through leanness and desire. And as a man,
Tired with the motion of a trotting steed,²
Slacks pace, and stays behind his company,
Till his o'erbreathed lungs keep temperate time;
E'en so Forese let that holy crew
Proceed, behind them lingering at my side,
And saying: "When shall I again behold thee?"

"How long my life may last," said I, "I know not:
This know, how soon soever I return,
My wishes will before me have arrived:
Sithence the place,³ where I am set to live,
Is, day by day, more scoop'd of all its good;
And dismal ruin seems to threaten it."

"Go now," he cried: "lo! he,⁴ whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes, that leaveth him

¹ *Like as the birds, that winter near the Nile.*—"Hell," canto v. 46. Euripides, "Helena," 1495, and Statius, "Thebais," lib. v. 12.

² *Tired with the motion of a trotting steed.*—I have followed Venturi's explanation of this passage. Others understand

"Di trottare è lasso"

of the fatigue produced by running.

³ *The place.*—Florence.

⁴ *He.*—Corso Donati was suspected of aiming at the sovereignty of Florence. To escape the fury of his fellow citizens, he fled away on horseback, but falling, was overtaken and slain, A.D. 1308. The contemporary annalist, after relating at length the

circumstances of his fate, adds, "that he was one of the wisest and most valorous knights, the best speaker, the most expert statesman, the most renowned and enterprising man of his age in Italy, a comely knight and of graceful carriage, but very worldly, and in his time had formed many conspiracies in Florence, and entered into many scandalous practices for the sake of attaining state and lordship."—*G. Villani*, lib. viii., cap. xvi. The character of Corso is forcibly drawn by another of his contemporaries, Dino Compagni, lib. iii. Muratori, "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores," tom. ix., p. 523. Guittone d'Arezzo's seventh letter is addressed to him. It is in verse.

A corse most vilely shatter'd. No long space
Those wheels have yet to roll" (therewith his eyes
Look'd up to heaven), "ere thou shalt plainly see
That which my words may not more plainly tell.
I quit thee: time is precious here: I lose
Too much, thus measuring my pace with thine."

As from a troop of well rank'd chivalry,
One knight, more enterprising than the rest,
Pricks forth at gallop, eager to display
His prowess in the first encounter proved;
So parted he from us, with lengthen'd strides;
And left me on the way with those twain spirits,
Who were such mighty marshals of the world.

When he beyond us had so fled, mine eyes
No nearer reach'd him, than my thought his words;
The branches of another fruit, thick hung,
And blooming fresh, appear'd. E'en as our steps
Turn'd thither: not far off, it rose to view.
Beneath it were a multitude, that raised
Their hands, and shouted forth I know not what
Unto the boughs; like greedy and fond brats,
That beg, and answer none obtain from him,
Of whom they beg; but more to draw them on,
He, at arm's length, the object of their wish
Above them holds aloft, and hides it not.

At length, as undeceived, they went their way:
And we approach the tree, whom vows and tears
Sue to in vain; the mighty tree. "Pass on,
And come not near. Stands higher up the wood,
Whereof Eve tasted: and from it was ta'en
This plant." Such sounds from midst the thickets came.
Whence I, with either bard, close to the side
That rose, pass'd forth beyond. "Remember," next
We heard, "those unblest creatures of the clouds,"¹

¹ *Creatures of the clouds.*—The Centaurs. Ovid, "Metamorphoses," lib. xii., fab. 4.

How they their twyfold bosoms, overgorged,
Opposed in fight to Theseus: call to mind
The Hebrews, how, effeminate, they stoop'd¹
To ease their thirst; whence Gideon's ranks were thinn'd,
As he to Madian² march'd adown the hills."

Thus near one border coasting, still we heard
The sins of gluttony, with woe erewhile
Reguerdon'd. Then along the lonely path,
Once more at large, full thousand paces on
We travel'd, each contemplative and mute

"Why pensive journey so ye three alone?"
Thus suddenly a voice exclaim'd: whereat
I shook, as doth a scared and paltry beast;
Then raised my head, to look from whence it came.

Was ne'er, in furnace, glass, or metal, seen
So bright and glowing red, as was the shape
I now beheld. "If ye desire to mount,"
He cried; "here must ye turn. This way he goes
Who goes in quest of peace." His countenance
Had dazzled me; and to my guides I faced
Backward, like one who walks as sound directs.

As when, to harbinger the dawn, springs up
On freshen'd wing the air of May, and breathes
Of fragrance, all impregn'd with herb and flowers;
E'en such a wind I felt upon my front
Blow gently, and the moving of a wing
Perceived, that, moving, shed ambrosial smell;
And then a voice: "Blessed are they, whom grace
Doth so illume, that appetite in them
Exhaleth no inordinate desire,
Still hungering as the rule of temperance wills."

¹ Call to mind the Hebrews, how, effeminate, they
stoop'd.—Judges vii.

² To Madian.—

"The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish't kings."
Milton, Samson Agonistes.



At length, as undeceived, they went their way:
And we approach the tree, whom vows and tears
Sue to in vain; the mighty tree.

Canto XXIV., lines 112-114.