

The Divine Comedy

Volume 3 Paradise [*Paradiso*]

by

Dante Aligheri

Translated by Charles Eliot Norton

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PARADISE

CANTO I. *Proem.—Invocation.—Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Sphere of Fire.—Beatrice explains the cause of their ascent.*

THE GLORY OF HIM who moves everything penetrates through the universe, and shines in one part more and in another less. In the heaven that receives most of its light I have been, and have seen things which he who descends from thereabove neither knows how nor is able to recount; because, drawing near to its own desire,¹ our understanding enters so deep, that the memory cannot follow. Truly whatever of the Holy Realm I could treasure up in my mind shall now be the theme of my song.

O good Apollo, for this last labor make me such a vessel of thy power as thou demandest for the gift of the loved laurel.² Thus far one summit of Parnassus has been enough for

¹ The innate desire of the soul is to attain the vision of God.

² So inspire me in this labor that I may deserve the gift of the laurel.

me, but now with both³ I need to enter the remaining, arena. Enter into my breast, and breathe thou in such wise as when thou drewest Marsyas from out the sheath of his limbs. O divine Power, if thou lend thyself to me so that I may make manifest the image of the Blessed Realm imprinted within my head, thou shalt see me come to thy chosen tree, and crown myself then with those leaves of which the theme and thou will make me worthy. So rarely, Father, are they gathered for triumph or of Caesar or of poet (fault and shame of the human wills), that the Peneian leaf⁴ should bring forth joy unto the joyous Delphic deity, whenever it makes any one to long for it. Great flame follows a little spark: perhaps after me prayer shall be made with better voices, whereto Cyrrha⁵ may respond.

The lamp of the world rises to mortals through different passages, but from that which joins four circles with three

³ The Muses were fabled to dwell on one peak of Parnassus, Apollo on the other. At the opening of the preceding parts of his poem Dante has invoked the Muses only.

⁴ Daphne, who was changed to the laurel, was the daughter of Peneus.

⁵ Cyrrha, a city sacred to Apollo, not far from the foot of Parnassus, and here used for the name of the god himself.

crosses it issues with better course and conjoined with a better star, and it tempers and seals the mundane wax more after its own fashion⁶ Almost such a passage had made morning there and evening here;⁷ and there all that hemisphere was white, and the other part black, when I saw Beatrice turned upon the left side, and looking into the sun: never did eagle so fix himself upon it. And even as a second ray is wont to issue from the first, and mount upward again, like a pilgrim who wishes to return; thus of her action, infused through the eyes into my imagination, mine was made, and I fixed my eyes upon the sun beyond our use. Much is allowed there which here is not allowed to our faculties, thanks

⁶ In the spring the sun rises from a point on the horizon, where the four great circles, namely, the horizon, the zodiac, the equator, and the equinoctial colure, meet, and, cutting each other, form three crosses. The sun is in the sign of Aries, “a better star,” because the influence of this constellation was supposed to be benignant, and under it the earth reclothes itself. It was the season assigned to the Creation, and to the Annunciation.

⁷ There, in the Earthly Paradise; here, on earth. It is the morning of Thursday, April 123. The hours from the mid-day preceding to this dawn are undescribed.

to the place made for the human race as its proper, abode.⁸ Not long did I endure it, nor so little that I did not see it sparkling round about, like iron that issues boiling from the fire. And on a sudden,⁹ day seemed to be added to day, as if He who is able had adorned the heaven with another sun.

Beatrice was standing with her eyes wholly fixed on the eternal wheels, and on her I fixed my eyes from thereabove removed. Looking at her I inwardly became such as Glaucus¹⁰ became on tasting of the herb which made him consort in the sea of the other gods. Transhumanizing cannot be signified in words; therefore let the example¹¹ suffice for him to whom grace reserves experience. If I was only what of me thou didst the last create,¹² O Love that governest

⁸ The Earthly Paradise, made for man in his original excellence.

⁹ So rapid was his ascent to the sphere of fire, drawn upward by the eyes of Beatrice.

¹⁰ A fisherman changed to a sea-god. The story is in Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, xiii.).

¹¹ Just cited, of Glauens.

¹² In the twenty-fifth Canto of Purgatory, Dante has said that when the articulation of the brain is perfect God breathes into it a new spirit, the living soul; and he means here that, like St. Paul caught up into Paradise, he cannot tell “whether in the body or Out of the body.” (*2 Corinthians*, xii. 3).

the heavens, Thou knowest, who with Thy light didst lift me. When the revolution which Thou, being desired, makest eternal,¹³ made me attent unto itself with the harmony which Thou attunest and modulatest, so much of the heaven then seemed to me enkindled by the flame of the sun, that rain or river never made so broad a lake.

The novelty of the sound and the great light kindled in me a desire concerning their cause, never before felt with such acuteness. Whereupon she, who saw me as I see myself, to quiet my perturbed mind opened her mouth, ere I mine to ask, and began, “Thou thyself makest thyself dull with false imagining, so that thou seest not what thou wouldest see, if thou hadst shaken it off. Thou art not on earth, as thou believest; but lightning, flying from its proper site, never ran as thou who thereunto¹⁴ returnest.”

¹³ The desire to be united with God is the source of the eternal revolution of the heavens. “The Empyrean . . . is the cause of the most swift motion of the Primum Mobile, because of the most ardent desire of every part of the latter to be conjoined with every part of that most divine quiet heaven.”—Convito, 14.

¹⁴ To thine own proper site,—Heaven, the true home of the soul.

If I was divested of my first doubt by these brief little smiled-out words, within a new one was I the more enmeshed. And I said, “Already I rested content concerning a great wonder; but now I wonder how I can transcend these light bodies.” Whereupon she, after a pitying sigh, directed her eyes toward me, with that look which a mother turns on her delirious son, and she began, “All things whatsoever have order among themselves; and this is the form which makes the universe like to God. Here¹⁵ the high creatures¹⁶ see the imprint of the eternal Goodness, which is the end for which the aforesaid rule is made. In the order of which I speak, all natures are arranged, by diverse lots, more or less near to their source;¹⁷ wherefore they are moved to diverse ports through the great sea of being, and each one with an instinct given to it which may bear it on. This bears the fire upward toward the moon; this is the motive force in mortal hearts; this binds together and unites the earth. Nor does this bow shoot forth.¹⁸ Only the created things which are outside

¹⁵ In this order of the universe.

¹⁶ The created beings endowed with souls,—angels and men.

¹⁷ The source of their being, God.

¹⁸ This instinct directs to their proper end animate as well as inanimate things, as the bow shoots the arrow to its mark.

intelligence, but also those which have understanding and love. The Providence that adjusts all this, with its own light makes forever quiet the heaven¹⁹ within which that revolves which hath the greatest speed. And thither now, as to a site decreed, the virtue of that cord bears us on which directs to a joyful mark whatever it shoots. True is it, that as the form often accords not to the intention of the art, because the material is deaf to respond, so the creature sometimes deviates from this course; for it has power, though thus impelled, to incline in another direction (even as the fire of a cloud may be seen to fall²⁰), if the first impetus, bent aside by false pleasure, turn it earthwards. Thou shouldst not, if I deem aright, wonder more at thy ascent, than at a stream if from a high mountain it descends to the base. A marvel it would be in thee, if, deprived of hindrance, thou hadst sat below, even as quiet in living fire on earth would be.”

Thereon she turned again toward heaven her face.

¹⁹ The Empyrean, within which the Primum Mobile, the first moving heaven, revolves.

²⁰ Contrary to its true nature.

CANTO II. *Proem.—Ascent to the Moon.—The cause of Spots on the Moon.—Influence of the Heavens.*

O YE, WHO ARE IN A LITTLE BARK, desirous to listen, following behind my craft which singing passes on, turn to see again Your shores; put not out upon the deep; for haply losing me, ye would remain astray. The water that I sail was never crossed. Minerva inspires, and Apollo guides me, and nine Muses point out to me the Bears.

Ye other few, who have lifted tip your necks be. times to the bread of the Angels, oil which one here subsists, but never becomes sated of it, ye may well put forth your vessel over the salt deep, keeping my wake before you on the water which turns smooth again. Those glorious ones who passed over to Colchos wondered not as ye shall do, when they saw Jason become a ploughman.

The concreate and perpetual thirst for the deiform realm was bearing us on swift almost as ye see the heavens. Beatrice was looking upward, and I upon her, and perhaps in such time as a quarrel¹ rests, and flies, and from the notch is un-

¹ The bolt for a cross-bow.

locked,² I saw myself arrived where a wonderful thing drew my sight to itself; and therefore she, from whom the working of my mind could not be hid, turned toward me, glad as beautiful. “Uplift thy grateful mind to God,” she said to me, “who with the first star³ has conjoined us.”

It seemed to me that a cloud had covered us, lucid, dense, solid, and polished, like a diamond which the sun had struck. Within itself the eternal pearl had received us, even as water receives a ray of light, remaining unbroken. If I was body (and here⁴ it is not conceivable how one dimension brooked another, which needs must be if body enter body) the desire ought the more to kindle us to see that Essence, in which is seen how our nature and God were united. There will be seen that which we hold by faith, not demonstrated, but it will be known of itself like the first truth which man believes.⁵

I replied, “My Lady, devoutly to the utmost that I can, do

² The inverse order indicates the instantaneousness of the act.

³ The moon.

⁴ On earth, by mortal faculties.

⁵ Not demonstrated by argument, but known by direct cognition, like the intuitive perception of first principles, per se notu.

I thank him who from the mortal world has removed me.
But tell me what are the dusky marks of this body, which
there below on earth make people fable about Cain?”⁶

She smiled somewhat, and then she said, “If the opinion of mortals errs where the key of sense unlocks not, surely the shafts of wonder ought not now to pierce thee, since thou seest that the reason following the senses has short wings. But tell me what thou thyself thinkest of it.” And I, “That which here above appears to us diverse, I believe is caused by rare and dense bodies.” And she, “Surely enough thou shalt see that thy belief is submerged in error, if then listenest well to the argument that I shall make against it. The eighth sphere⁷ displays to you many lights, which may be noted of different aspects in quality and quantity. If rare and dense effected all this,⁸ one single virtue, more or less or equally distributed, would be in all. Different virtues must needs be fruits of for-

⁶ Fancying the dark spaces on the surface of the moon to represent Cain carrying a thorn-bush for the fire of his sacrifice.

⁷ The heaven of the fixed stars.

⁸ If all this difference were caused merely by difference in rarity and density.

mal principles;⁹ and by thy reckoning, these, all but one, would be destroyed. Further, if rarity were the cause of that darkness of which you ask, either this planet would be thus deficient of its matter through and through, or else as a body distributes the fat and the lean, so this would interchange the leaves in its volume. If the first were the case, it would be manifest in the eclipses of the sun, by the shining through of the light, as when it is poured out upon any other rare body. This is not so; therefore we must look at the other, and if it happen that I quash this other, thy opinion will be falsified. If it be that this rare passes not through,¹⁰ there needs must be a limit, beyond which its contrary allows it not to pass further; and thence the ray from another body is poured back, just as color returns through a glass which hides lead behind itself. Now thou wilt say that the ray shows itself dimmer there than in the other parts, by being there reflected from further back. From this objection experiment, which is wont to be the fountain to the streams of your arts, may deliver thee, if ever thou try it. Thou

⁹ The stars exert various influences; hence their differences, from which the variety of their influence proceeds, must be caused by different formal principles or intrinsic causes.

¹⁰ Extends not through the whole substance of the moon.

shalt take three mirrors, and set two of them at an equal distance from thee, and let the other, further removed, meet thine eyes between the first two. Turning toward them, cause a light to be placed behind thy back, which may illumine the three mirrors, and return to thee thrown back front all. Although the more distant image reach thee not so great in quantity, thou wilt then see how it cannot but be of equal brightness.

"Now, as beneath the blows of the warm rays that which lies under the snow remains bare both of the former color¹¹ and the cold, thee, thus remaining in thy intellect, will I inform with light so living that it shall tremble in its aspect to thee.¹²

"Within the heaven of the divine peace revolves a body, in whose virtue lies the being of all that it contains.¹³ The fol-

¹¹ The color of the snow.

¹² My argument has removed the error which covered thy mind, and now I will tell thee the true cause of the variety in the surface of the moon.

¹³ Within the motionless sphere of the Empyrean revolves that of the Primum Mobile, from whose virtue, communicated to it from the Empyrean, all the inferior spheres contained within it derive their special mode of being.

lowing heaven¹⁴ which has so many sights, distributes that being through divers essences¹⁵ from it distinct, and by it contained. The other spheres, by various differences, dispose the distinctions which they have within themselves unto their ends and their seeds.¹⁶ These organs of the world thus proceed, as thou now seest, from grade to grade; for they receive from above, and operate below. Observe me well, how I advance through this place to the truth which thou desirest, so that hereafter thou mayest know to keep the ford alone. The motion and the virtue of the holy spheres must needs be inspired by blessed motors, as the work of the hammer by the smith. And the heaven, which so many lights make beautiful, takes its image from the deep Mind which revolves it, and makes thereof a seal. And as the soul within your dust is diffused through different members, and conformed to divers potencies, so the Intelligence¹⁷ displays its own goodness

¹⁴ The heaven of the Fixed Stars.

¹⁵ Through the planets, called essences because each has a specific mode of being.

¹⁶ "The rays of the heavens are the way by which their virtue descends to the things below."—Convito, ii. 7.

¹⁷ Which moves the heavens.

multiplied through the stars, itself circling upon its own unity. Divers virtue makes divers alloy with the precious body that it quickens, in which, even as life in you, it is bound. Because of the glad nature whence, it flows, the virtue mingled through the body shines,¹⁸ as gladness through the living pupil. From this,¹⁹ comes whatso seems different between light and light, not from dense and rare; this is the formal principle which produces, conformed unto its goodness, the dark and the bright.”

CANTO III. *The Heaven of the Moon.—Spirits whose vows had been broken.—Piccarda Donati.—The Empress Constance.*

THAT SUN which first had heated my breast with love, proving and refuting, had uncovered to me the sweet aspect of fair truth; and I, in order to confess myself corrected and assured so far as was needful, raised my head more erect to speak. But a vision appeared which held me to itself so close in order to be seen, that of my confession I remembered not.

As through transparent and polished glasses, or through clear and tranquil waters, not so deep that their bed be lost, the lineaments of our faces return so feebly that a pearl on a white brow comes not less readily to our eyes, so I saw many faces eager to speak; wherefore I ran into the error contrary to that which kindled love between the man and the fountain.¹ Suddenly, even as I became aware of them, supposing them mirrored semblances, I turned my eyes to see of whom they were; and I saw nothing; and I turned them forward again, straight into the light of the sweet guide who, smiling, was glowing in her holy eyes. “Wonder not because I smile,” she said to me,

¹ Narcissus conceived the image to be a true face; Dante takes the real faces to be mirrored semblances.

¹⁸ The brightness of the stars comes from the joy which radiates through them.

¹⁹ From the divers virtue making divers alloy.

"at thy puerile thought, since thy foot trusts itself not yet upon the truth, but turns thee, as it is wont, to emptiness. True substances are these which thou seest, here relegated through failure in their vows. Therefore speak with them, and hear, and believe; for the veracious light which satisfies them allows them not to turn their feet from itself."

And I directed me to the shade that seemed most eager to speak, and I began, even like a man whom too strong wish confuses, "O well-created spirit, who in the rays of life eternal tastest the sweetness, which untasted never is understood, it will be gracious to me, if thou contentest me with thy name, and with your destiny." Whereon she promptly, and with smiling eyes, "Our charity locks not its door to a just wish, more than that which wills that all its court be like itself. I was in the world a virgin sister,² and if thy mind well regards, my being more beautiful will not conceal me from thee; but thou wilt recognize that I am Piccarda,³ who, placed here with these

² A nun, of the order of St. Clare.

³ The sister of Corso Donati and of Forese: see Purgatory, Canto XXIII. It may not be without intention that the first blessed spirit whom Dante sees in Paradise is a relative of his own wife, Gemma dei Donati.

other blessed Ones, am blessed in the slowest sphere. Our affections, which are inflamed only in the pleasure of the Holy Spirit, rejoice in being formed according to His order;⁴ and this allotment, which appears so low, is forsooth given to us, because our vows were neglected or void in some part." Whereon I to her, In your marvellous aspects there shines I know not what divine which transmutes you from our first conceptions; therefore I was not swift in remembering; but now that which you say to me assists me, so that refiguring is plainer to me. But tell me, ye who are happy here, do ye desire a highher place, in order to see more, or to make yourselves more friends?" With those other shades she first smiled a little; then answered me so glad, that she seemed to burn in the first fire of love, "Brother, virtue of charity⁵ quiets our will, and makes us wish only for that which we have, and for aught else makes us not thirsty. Should we desire to be higher up, our desires would be discordant with the will of Him who assigns us to this place, which thou wilt see is not possible in these

⁴ Rejoice in whatever grade of bliss is assigned to thern in that order of the universe which is the form that makes it like unto God.

⁵ Charity here means love, the love of God.

circles, if to be in charity is here necesse,⁶ and if its nature thou dost well consider. Nay, it is essential to this blessed existence to hold ourselves within the divine will, whereby our very wills are made one. So that as we are, from stage to stage throughout this realm, to all the realm is pleasing, as to the King who inwills us with His will. And His will is our peace; it is that sea whereunto is moving all that which It creates and which nature makes.”

Clear was it then to me, how everywhere in Heaven is Paradise, although the grace of the Supreme Good rains not there in one measure.

But even as it happen, if one food sates, and for another the appetite still remains, that this is asked for, and that declined with thanks; so did I, with gesture and with speech, to learn from her, what was the web whereof she did not draw the shuttle to the head.⁷ “Perfect life and high merit in-heaven a lady higher up,” she said to me, “according to

⁶ Of necessity; the Latin word being used for the rhyme's sake. “Mansionem Deus haber non potest ubi charitas non est” B. Alberti Magni, *De adhoerendo Deo*, c. xii.

⁷ To learn from her what was the vow which she did not fulfil.

whose rule, in your world below, there are who vest and veil themselves, so that till death they may wake and sleep with that Spouse who accepts every vow which love conforms unto His pleasure. A young girl, I fled from the world to follow her, and in her garb I shut myself, and pledged me to the pathway of her order. Afterward men, more used to ill than good, dragged me forth from the sweet cloister;⁸ and God knows what then my life became. And this other splendor, which shows itself to thee at my right side, and which glows with all the light of our sphere, that which I say of me understands of herself.⁹ A sister was she; and in like manner from her head the shadow of the sacred veils was taken. But after she too was returned unto the world against her liking and against good usage, from the veil of the heart she was never unbound.¹⁰ This is the light of the great Constance,¹¹

⁸ According to the old commentators, her brother Corso forced Piccarda by violence to leave the convent, in order to make a marriage which he desired for her.

⁹ Her experience was similar to that of Piccarda.

¹⁰ She remained a nun at heart.

¹¹ Constance, daughter of the king of Sicily, Roger 1.; married, in 1186, to the Emperor, Henry VI., the son of Frederick Barbarossa, and father of Frederick II., who died in 1250, the last Emperor of his line.

who from the second wind of Swabia produced the third and the last power."

Thus she spoke to me, and then began singing "Ave Maria," and Singing vanished, like a heavy thing through deep water. My sight, that followed her so far as was possible, after it lost her turned to the mark of greater desire, and wholly rendered itself to Beatrice; but she so flashed upon my gaze that at first the sight endured it not: and this made me more slow in questioning.

CANTO IV. *Doubts of Dante, respecting the justice of Heaven and the abode of the blessed, solved by Beatrice.—Question of Dante as to the possibility of reparation for broken vows.*

BETWEEN TWO VIANDS, distant and attractive in like measure, a free man would die of hunger, before he would bring one of them to his teeth. Thus a lamb would stand between two ravenous of fierce wolves, fearing equally; thus would stand a dog between two does. Hence if, urged by my doubts in like measure, I was silent, I blame not myself; nor, since it was necessary, do I commend.

I was silent, but my desire was depicted on my face, and the questioning with that far more fervent than by distinct speech. Beatrice did what Daniel did, delivering Nebuchadnezzar from anger, which had made him unjustly cruel, and said, "I see clearly how one and the other desire draws thee, so that thy care so binds itself that it breathes not forth. Thou reasonest, 'If the good will endure, by what reckoning doth the violence of others lessen for me the measure of desert?' Further, it gives thee occasion for doubt, that the souls appear to return to the stars, in accordance with

the opinion of Plato.¹ These are the questions that thrust equally upon thy wish; and therefore I will treat first of that which hath the most venom.²

“Of the Seraphim he who is most in God, Moses, Samuel, and whichever John thou wilt take, I say, and even Mary, have not their seats in another heaven than those spirits who just now appeared to thee, nor have they more or fewer years for their existence; but all make beautiful the first circle, and have sweet life in different measure, through feeling more or

¹ Plato, in his *Timaeus* (41, 42), says that the creator of the universe assigned each soul to a star, whence they were to be sown in the vessels of time. “ He who lived well during his appointed time was to return to the star which was his habitation, and there he would have a blessed and suitable existence.” Dante’s doubt has arisen from the words of Piccarda, which implied that her station was in the sphere of the Moon.

² The conception that the souls after death had their abode in the stars would be a definite heresy, and hence far more dangerous than a question concerning the justice of Heaven, for such a question might be consistent with entire faith in that justice.

less the eternal breath.³ They showed themselves here, not because this sphere is allotted to them, but to afford sign of the celestial condition which is least exalted. To speak thus is befitting to your mind, since only by objects of the sense doth it apprehend that which it then makes worthy of the understanding. For this reason the Scripture condescends to your capacity, and attributes feet and hands to God, while meaning otherwise; and Holy Church represents to you with human aspect Gabriel and Michael and the other who made Tobias whole again.⁴ That which Timaeus, reasons of the souls is not like this which is seen here, since it seems that he thinks as he says. He says that the soul returns to its own star, believing it to have been severed thence, when nature gave it as the form.⁵ And perchance his opinion is of other

³ The abode of all the blessed is the Empyrean,—the first circle, counting from above; but there are degrees in blessedness, each spirit enjoying according to its capacity; no one is conscious of any lack.

⁴ The archangel Raphael.

⁵ The intellectual soul is united with the body as its substantial form. That by means of which anything performs its functions (*operatur*) is its form. The soul is that by which the body lives, and hence is its form.—*Summa Theol.*, I. lxxvi. 1, 6, 7.

guise than his words sound, and may be of a meaning not to be derided. If he means that the honor of their influence and the blame returns to these wheels, perhaps his bow hits on some truth. This principle, ill understood, formerly turned awry almost the whole world, so that it ran astray in naming Jove, Mercury, and Mars.⁶

The other dubitation which disturbs thee has less venom, for its malice could not lead thee from me elsewhere. That our justice seems unjust in the eyes of mortals is argument of faith,⁷ and not of heretical iniquity. But in order that your perception may surely penetrate unto this truth, I will make thee content, as thou desirest. Though there be violence when he who suffers nowise consents to him who compels, these souls were not by reason of that excused; for will, unless it

⁶ The belief in the influence of the stars led men to assign to them divine powers, and to name their gods after them.

⁷ Mortals would not trouble themselves concerning the justice of God, unless they had faith in it. These perplexities are then arguments or proofs of faith; as St. Thomas Aquinas says, "The merit of faith consists in believing what one does not see." But in this case, as Beatrice goes on to show, mere human intelligence is sufficient to see that the injustice is only apparent.

wills, is not quenched,⁸ but does as nature does in fire, though violence a thousand times may wrest it. Wherefore if it bend much or little, it follows the force; and thus these did, having power to return to the holy place. If their will had been entire, such as held Lawrence on the gridiron, and made Mucius severe unto his hand, it would have urged them back, so soon as they were loosed, along the road on which they had been dragged; but will so firm is too rare. And by these words, if thou hast gathered them up as thou shouldst, is the argument quashed that would have given thee annoy yet many times.

"But now another path runs traverse before thine eyes, such that by thyself thou wouldest not issue forth therefrom ere thou wert weary. I have put it in thy mind for certain, that a soul in bliss cannot lie, since it is always near to the Primal Truth; and then thou hast heard from Piccarda that Constance retained affection for the veil; so that she seems in this to contradict me. Often ere now, brother, has it happened that, in order to escape peril, that which it was not meet to do has been done against one's liking; even as Alcmaeon (who thereto entreated

⁸ Violence has no power over the will; the original will may, however, by act of will, be changed.

by his father, slew his own mother), not to lose piety, pitiless became. On this point, I wish thee to think that the violence is mingled with the will, and they so act that the offences cannot be excused. Absolute will consents not to the wrong; but the will in so far consents thereto, as it fears, if it draw back, to fall into greater trouble. Therefore when Piccarda says that, she means it of the absolute will; and I of the other so that we both speak truth alike.”

Such was the current of the holy stream which issued from the fount whence every truth flows forth; and such it set at rest one and the other desire.

“O beloved of the First Lover, O divine one,” said I then, “whose speech inundates me, and warms me so that more and more it quickens me, my affection is not so profound that it can suffice to render to you grace for grace, but may He who sees and can, respond for this. I clearly see that our intellect is never satisfied unless the Truth illume it, outside of which no truth extends. In that it reposes, as a wild beast in his lair, soon as it has reached it: and it can reach it; otherwise every desire would be in vain. Because of this,⁹ the

⁹ Of this constant desire for truth.

doubt, in likeness of a shoot, springs up at the foot of the truth; and it is nature which urges us to the summit from height to height. This¹⁰ invites me, this gives me assurance, Lady, with reverence to ask you of another truth which is obscure to me. I wish to know if man can make satisfaction to you¹¹ for defective vows with other goods, so that in your scales they may not be light?” looked at we with such divine eyes, full of the sparks of love, that my power, vanquished, turned its back, and almost I lost myself with eyes cast down.

¹⁰ This natural impulse.

¹¹ To you, that is, to the court of Heaven.

CANTO V. *The sanctity of vows, and the seriousness with which they are to be made or changed.—Ascent to the Heaven of Mercury.—The shade of Justinian.*

“IF I FLAME UPON THEE in the heat of love, beyond the fashion that on earth is seen, go that I vanquish the valor of thine eyes, marvel not, for it proceeds from perfect vision,¹ which according as it apprehends, so moves its feet to the apprehended good. I see clearly how already shines in thy intellect the eternal light, which, being seen, alone ever enkindles love. And if any other thing seduce your love, it is naught but some vestige of that, illrecognized, which therein shines through. Thou wishest to know if for a defective vow so much can be rendered with other service as may secure the soul from suit.”

Thus Beatrice began this canto, and even as one who breaks not off his speech, she thus continued her holy discourse. “The greatest gift which God in His largess bestowed in creating, and the most conformed unto His goodness and that which He esteems the most, was the freedom of the will,

¹ From the brightness of my eyes illuminated by the divine light.

with which all the creatures of intelligence, and they alone, were and are endowed. Now will appear to thee, if from this thou reasonest, the high worth of the vow, if it be such that God consent when thou consentest;² for, in closing the compact between God and man, sacrifice is made of this treasure, which is such as I say, and it is made by its own act. What then can be rendered in compensation? If thou thinkest to make good use of that which thou hast offered, with illgotten gain thou wouldest do good work.³

“Thou art now assured of the greater point; but since Holy Church in this gives dispensation, which seems contrary to the truth which I have disclosed to thee, it behoves thee still to sit a little at table, because the tough food which thou hast taken requires still some aid for thy digestion. Open thy mind to that which I reveal to thee, and enclose it therewithin; for to have heard without retaining doth not make knowledge.

“Two things combine in the essence of this sacrifice; the one is that of which it consists, the other is the covenant. This last is never cancelled if it be not kept; and concerning

² If the vow be valid through its acceptance by God.

³ The intent to put what had been vowed to another (though good) use, affords no excuse for breaking a vow.

this has my preceding speech been so precise. On this account it was necessary for the Hebrews still to make offering, although some part of the offering might be changed, as thou shouldst know.⁴ The other, which as the matter⁵ is known to thee, may truly be such that one errs not if for some other matter it be changed. But let not any one shift the load upon his shoulder at his own will, without the turning both of the white and of the yellow key.⁶ And let him deem every permutation foolish, if the thing laid down be not included in the thing taken up, as four in six.⁷ Therefore whatever thing is, through its own worth, of such great weight that it can draw down every balance, cannot be made good with other spending.

“Let not mortals take a vow in jest; be faithful, and not squint-eyed in doing this, as Jephthah was in his first offer-

⁴ See Leviticus, xxvii., in respect to commutation allowed.

⁵ That is, as the subject matter of the vow, the thing of which sacrifice is made.

⁶ Without the turning of the keys of St. Peter, that is, without clerical dispensation; the key of gold signifying authority, that of silver, knowledge. Cf. Purgatory, Canto IX.

⁷ The matter substituted must exceed in worth that of the original vow, but not necessarily in a definite proportion.

ing;⁸ to whom it better behoved to say, ‘I have done ill,’ than, by keeping his vow, to do worse. And thou mayest find the great leader of the Greeks in like manner foolish; wherefore Iphigenia wept for her fair face, and made weep for her both the simple and the wise, who heard speak of such like observance. Be, ye Christians, more grave in moving; be not like a feather on every wind, and think not that every water can wash you. Ye have the Old and the New Testament, and the Shepherd of the Church, who guides you; let this suffice you for your salvation. If evil covetousness cry aught else to you, be ye men, and not silly sheep, so that the Jew among you may not laugh at you. Act not like the lamb, that leaves the milk of his mother, and, simple and wanton, at its own pleasure combats with itself.”

Thus Beatrice to me, even as I write; then all desireful turned herself again to that region where the world is most alive.⁹ Her silence, and her transmuted countenance imposed silence on my eager mind, which already had new questions in advance. And even as an arrow, that hits the mark before

⁸ See Judges, xi.

⁹ Looking upward, toward the Empyrean.

the bowstring is quiet, so we ran into the second realm.¹⁰ Here I saw my lady so joyous as she entered into the light of that heaven, that thereby the planet became more lucent. And if the star war, changed and smiled, what did I become, who even by my nature am transmutable in every wise!

As in a fishpond, which is tranquil and pure, the fish draw to that which comes from without in such manner that they deem it their food, so indeed I saw more than a thousand splendors drawing toward us, and in each one was heard,— “Lo, one who shall increase our loves!”¹¹ And as each came to us, the shade was seen full of joy in the bright effulgence that issued from it.

Think, Reader, if that which is here begun should not proceed, how thou wouldest have distressful want of knowing more; and by thyself thou wilt see how desirous I was to hear from these of their conditions, as they became manifest to mine eyes. “O well-born,¹² to whom Grace concedes to see

¹⁰ The Heaven of Mercury, where blessed spirits who have been active in the pursuit of honor and fame show themselves.

¹¹ By giving us occasion to manifest our love.
¹² That is, born to good, to attain blessedness.

the thrones of the eternal triumph ere the warfare is abandoned,¹³ with the light which spreads through the whole heaven we are enkindled, and therefore if thou desirest to make thyself clear concerning us, at thine own pleasure sate thyself.” Thus was said to me by one of those pious spirits; and by Beatrice, “Speak, speak securely, and trust even as to gods.” “I see clearly, how thou dost nest thyself in thine ownlight, and that by thine eyes thou drawest it, because they sparkle when thou smilest; but I know not who thou art, nor why thou hast, O worthy soul, thy station in the sphere which is veiled to mortals by another’s rays.”¹⁴ This I said, addressed unto the light which first had spoken to me; whereon it became more lucent far than it had been. Even as the sun, which, when the heat has consumed the tempering of dense vapors, conceals itself by excess of light, so, through greater joy, the holy shape bid itself from me within its own radiance, and thus close enclosed, it answered me in the fashion that the following canto sings.

¹³ Ere thy life on earth, as a member of the Church Militant, is ended.

¹⁴ Mercury is veiled by the Sun.

CANTO VI. *Justinian tells of his own life.—The story of the Roman Eagle.—Spirits in the planet Mercury.—Romeo.*

AFTER CONSTANTINE turned the Eagle counter to the course of the heavens which it had followed behind the ancient who took to wife Lavinia,¹ a hundred and a hundred years and more² the bird of God held itself on the verge of Europe, near to the Mountains³ from which it first came forth, and there governed the world beneath the shadow of the sacred wings, from hand to hand, and thus changing, unto mine own arrived. Caesar I was,⁴ and am Justinian, who, through will of the primal Love which I feel, drew out from among the laws what was superfluous and vain.⁵ And before I was

1 Constantine, transferring the seat of Empire from Rome to Byzantium, carried the Eagle from West to East, counter to the course along which Aeneas had borne it when he went from Troy to found the Roman Empire.

2 From A. D. 324, when the transfer was begun, to 527, when Justinian became Emperor.

3 Of the Troad, opposite Byzantium.

4 On earth Emperor, but in Heaven earthly dignities exist no longer.

5 The allusion is to Justinian's codification of the Roman Law.

intent on this work, I believed one nature to be in Christ, not more,⁶ and with such faith was content. But the blessed Agapetus, who was the supreme pastor, directed me to the pure faith with his words. I believed him; and that which was in his faith I now see clearly, even as thou seest every contradiction to be both false and true.⁷ Soon as with the Church I moved my feet, it pleased God, through grace, to inspire me with the high labor, and I gave myself wholly to it. And I entrusted my armies to my Belisarius, to whom the right hand of Heaven was so joined that it was a sign that I should take repose.

“Now here to the first question my answer comes to the stop; but its nature constrains me to add a sequel to it, in order that thou mayst see with how much reason⁸ move against the ensign sacrosanct, both he who appropriates it to himself,⁹ and he who opposes himself to it.¹⁰ See how great

6 The divine nature only. Dante here follows Brunetto Latini (*Li Tresor*, I. ii. 87) in an historical error.

7 Of the two terms of a contradictory proposition one is true, the other false.

8 Ironical. The meaning is, “how wrongly.”

9 The Ghibelline.

10 The Guelph.

virtue has made it worthy of reverence,” and he began from the hour when Pallas¹¹ died to give it a kingdom. “Thou knowest it made in Alba its abode for three hundred years and move, till at the end the three fought with the three¹² for its sake still. And thou knowest what it did, from the wrong of the Sabine women clown to the sorrow of Lucretia, in seven kings, conquering the neighboring peoples round about. Thou knowest what it did when borne by the illustrious Romans against Brennus, against Pyrrhus, and against the other chiefs and allies; whereby Torquatus, and Quintius who was named from his neglected locks, the Decii and the Fabii acquired the fame which willingly I embalm. It struck to earth the pride of the Arabs, who, following Hannibal, passed the Alpine rocks from which thou, Po, glidest. Beneath it, in their youth, Scipio and Pompey triumphed, and to that hill beneath which thou wast born, it seemed bitter.¹³ Then, near the time when all Heaven willed to bring

¹¹ Son of Evander, King of Latium, sent by his father to aid Aeneas. His death in battle against Turnus led to that of Turnus himself, and to the possession of the Latian kingdom by Aeneas.

¹² The Horatii and Curiatii.

¹³ According to popular tradition Fiesole was destroyed by the Romans after the defeat of Catiline.

the world to its own serene mood, Caesar by the will of Rome took it: and what it did from the Var even to the Rhine, the Isere beheld, and the Saone, and the Seine beheld, and every valley whence the Rhone is filled. What afterward it did when it came forth from Ravenna, and leaped the Rubicon, was of such flight that neither tongue nor pen could follow it. Toward Spain it wheeled its troop; then toward Dyrrachium, and smote Pharsalia so that to the warm Nile the pain was felt. It saw again Antandros and Simois, whence it set forth, and there where Hector lies; and ill for Ptolemy then it shook itself. Thence it swooped flashing down on Juba; then wheeled again unto your west, where it heard the Pompeian trumpet. Of what it did with the next standard-bearer,¹⁴ Brutus and Cassius are barking in Hell; and it made Modena and Perugia woful. Still does the sad Cleopatra weep therefor, who, fleeing before it, took from the asp sudden and black death. With him it ran far as the Red Sea shore; with him it set the world in peace so great that on Janus his temple was locked up. But what the ensign which makes me speak had done before, and after was to do, through the mortal realm that is subject to it, becomes in appearance little and obscure, if in the hand of the third Caesar¹⁵ it be looked at with clear eye,

¹⁴ Augustus.

¹⁵ Tiberius.

and with pure affection. For the living Justice which inspires me granted to it, in the hand of him of whom I speak, the glory of doing vengeance for Its own ire¹⁶—now marvel here at that which I unfold to thee,—then with Titus it ran to do vengeance for the avenging of the ancient sin.¹⁷ And when the Lombard tooth bit the Holy Church, under its wings Charlemagne, conquering, succored her.

“Now canst thou judge of such as those whom I accused above, and of their crimes, which are the cause of all your ills. To the public ensign one opposes the yellow lilies,¹⁸ and the other appropriates it to a party, so that it is hard to see which is most at fault. Let the Ghibellines practice, let them practice their art under another ensign, for he ever follows it ill who parts justice and it. And let not this new Charles¹⁹ strike it down with his Guelphs, but let him fear its talons, which from a loftier lion have stripped the fell.

¹⁶ It was under the authority of Rome that Christ was crucified, whereby the sin of Adam. was avenged.

¹⁷ Vengeance was taken on the Jews, because although the death of Christ was divinely ordained, their crime in it was none the less.

¹⁸ The fleur-de-lys of France.

¹⁹ Charles II., King of Apulia, son of Charles of Anjou.

Often ere now the sons have wept for the sin of the father; and let him not believe that for his lilies Goa win change His arms.

“This little star is furnished with good spirits who have been active in order that honor and fame may follow them. And when the desires thus straying mount here, it must needs be that the rays of the true love mount upward less living.²⁰ But in the commeasuring of our wages with our desert is part of our joy, because we see them neither less nor greater. Hereby the living Justice so sweetens the affection in us, that it can never be bent aside to any wrong. Diverse voices make sweet notes; thus in our life diverse benches²¹ render sweet harmony among these wheels.

“And within the present pearl shines the light of Romeo, whose great and beautiful work was ill rewarded. But the Provencals who wrought against him are not smiling; and forsooth he goes an ill road who makes harm for himself of

²⁰ The desire for fame interferes with, though it may not wholly prevent, the true love of God.

²¹ The different grades of the blessed.

another's good deed.²² Four daughters, and each a queen, had Raymond Berenger, and Romeo, a humble person and a pilgrim, did this²³ for him. And then crooked words moved him to demand a reckoning of this just man, who rendered to him seven and five for ten. Then he departed, poor and old, and if the world but knew the heart he had, while begging his livelihood bit by bit, much as it lauds him it would laud him more."

¹ According to Giovanni Villani (vi. 90), one Romeo, a pilgrim, came to the court of Raymond Berenger IV., Count of Provence (who died, in 1245), and winning the count's favor, served him with such wisdom and fidelity that by his means his master's revenues were greatly increased, and his four daughters married to four kings,—Margaret, to Louis IX. of France, St. Louis; Eleanor, to Henry III. of England; Sanzia, to Richard, Earl of Cornwall (brother of Henry III.), elected King of the Romans; and Beatrice, to Charles of Anjou (brother of Louis IX.), King of Apulia and Sicily. The Provencal nobles, jealous of Romeo, procured his dismissal, and he departed, with his mule and his pilgrim's staff and scrip, and was never seen more.

² The making each a queen.

**CANTO VII. Discourse of Beatrice.—The Fall of Man.—
The scheme of his Redemption.**

“OSANNA SANCTUS DEUS SABAOTH, superillustrans claritate tua felices ignes horum malacoth!”¹—thus, turning to its own melody, this substance,² upon which a double light is twinned,³ was seen by me to sing. And it and the others moved with their dance, and like swiftest sparks veiled themselves to me with sudden distance. I was in doubt, and was saying to myself, “Tell her, tell her,” I was saying, “tell her, my Lady, who slakes my thirst with her sweet distillings;” but that reverence which lords it altogether over me, only by BE and by ICE,⁴ bowed me again like one who drowses. Little did Beatrice endure me thus, and she began, irradiat-

¹ “Hosanna! Holy God of Sabaoth, beaming with thy brightness upon the blessed fires of these realms.”

² Substance, as a scholastic term, signifies a being subsisting by itself with a quality of its own. “Substantiae nomen significat essentiam cui competit sic esse, id est per se esse; quod tamen esse non est ipsa ejus essentia.”—Summa Theol. I. iii. 5.

³ The double light of Emperor and compiler of the Laws.

⁴ Only by the sound of her name.

ing me with a smile such as would make a man in the fire happy, “According to my infallible advisement, how a just vengeance could be justly avenged has set thee thinking. But I will quickly loose thy mind: and do thou listen, for my words will make thee a present of a great doctrine.

“By not enduring for his own good a curb upon the power which wills, that man who was not born,—damning himself, damned all his offspring; wherefore the human race lay sick below for many centuries, in great error, till it pleased the Word of God to descend where He, by the sole act of His eternal love, united with Himself in person the nature which had removed itself from its Maker.

“Now direct thy sight to the discourse which follows. This nature, united with its Maker, became sincere and good, as it had been created; but by itself it had been banished from Paradise, because it turned aside from the way of truth and from its own life. The punishment therefore which the cross afforded, if it be measured by the nature assumed, none ever so justly stung; and, likewise, none was ever of such great wrong, regarding the Person who suffered, with whom this nature was united. Therefore from one act issued things di-

verse; for unto God and unto the Jews one death was pleasing: by it earth trembled and the heavens were opened. No more henceforth ought it to seem perplexing to thee, when it is said that a just vengeance was afterward avenged by a just court,

“But I see now thy mind tied up, from thought to thought, within a knot the loosing of which is awaited with great desire, Thou sayest, ‘I discern clearly that which I bear; but it is occult to we why God should will only this mode for our redemption.’ This decree, brother, stands buried to the eyes of every one whose wit is not full grown in the flame of love. Truly, inasmuch as on this mark there is much gazing, and little is discerned, I will tell why such mode was most worthy. The Divine Goodness, which from Itself spurns all rancor, burning in Itself so sparkles that It displays the eternal beauties. That which distils immediately⁵ from It, thereafter has no end, for when It seals, Its imprint is not removed. That which from It immediately rains down is wholly free, because it is not subject unto the power of the new things.⁶

⁵ Without the intervention of a second cause.

⁶ That is, of the heavens, new as compared with the First Cause.

It is the most conformed to It, and therefore pleases It the most; for the Holy Ardor which irradiates every thing is most living in what is most resemblance to Itself. With all these things⁷ the human creature is advantaged, and if one fail, he needs must fall from his nobility. Sin alone is that which disfranchises him, and makes him unlike the Supreme Good, so that by Its light he is little illumined. And to his dignity he never returns, unless, where sin makes void, he fill up for evil pleasures with just penalties. Your nature, when it sinned totally in its seed,⁸ was removed from these dignities, even as from Paradise; nor could they be recovered, if thou considerest full subtly, by any way, without passing by one of these fords:—either that God alone by His courtesy should forgive, or that man by himself should make satisfaction for his folly. Fix now thine eye within the abyss of the eternal counsel, fixed as closely on my speech as thou art able. Man within his own limits could never make satisfaction, through not being able to descend so far with humility in subsequent obedience, as disobeying he intended to ascend; and this is

⁷ That is, with immediate creation, with immortality, with free will, with likeness to God, and the love of God for it.

⁴ Adam.

the reason why man was excluded from power to make satisfaction by himself. Therefore it behoved God by His own paths⁹ to restore man to his entire life, I mean by one, or else by both. But because the work of the workman is so much the more pleasing, the more it represents of the goodness of the heart whence it issues, the Divine Goodness which imprints the world was content to proceed by all Its paths to lift you up again; nor between the last night and the first day has there been or will there be so lofty and so magnificent a procedure either by one or by the other; for God was more liberal in giving Himself to make man sufficient to lift himself up again, than if only of Himself He had pardoned him. And all the other modes were scanty in respect to justice, if the Son of God had not humbled himself to become incarnate.

“Now to fill completely every desire of thine, I return to a certain place to clear it up, in order that thou mayest see there even, as I do. Thou sayest, ‘I see the water, I see the fire, the air; and the earth, and all their mixtures come to corruption, and endure short while, and yet these things were

⁹ “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.”—Psalm xxv. 10. Truth may be here interpreted, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, as justice.

created;’ so that, if what I have said has been true, they ought to be secure against corruption. The Angels, brother, and the sincere¹⁰ country in which thou art, may be called created, even as they are, in their entire being; but the elements which thou hast named, and those things which are made of them, are informed by a created power.¹¹ The matter of which they consist was created; the informing power in these stars which go round about them was created. The ray and the motion of the holy lights draw out from its potential elements¹² the soul of every brute and of the plants; but the Supreme Benignity inspires your life without intermediary, and enamors it of Itself so that ever after it desires It. And hence¹³ thou canst argue further your resurrection, if thou

10 Sincere is here used in the sense of incorruptible, or perhaps unspoiled,—the quality of the Heavens as contrasted with the Earth.

11 The elements axe informed, that is, receive their specific being not immediately from Goa, but mediately through the informing Intelligences.

12 Literally, “from the potentiate mingling,” that is, from the matter endowed with the potentiality of becoming informed by the vegetative and the sensitive soul.

13 From the principle that what proceeds immediately from Goa is immortal.

refleetest bow the human flesh was made when the first parents were both made.”

CANTO VIII. *Ascent to the Heaven of Venus.—Spirits of Lovers, Source of the order and the varieties in mortal things.*

THE WORLD IN ITS PERIL ¹ was wont to believe that the beautiful Cypriote ² revolving in the third epicycle rayed out mad love; wherefore the ancient people in their ancient error not only unto her did honor with sacrifice and with votive cry, but they honored Dione ³ also and Cupid, the one as her mother, the other as her son, and they said that he had sat in Dido's lap ⁴ And from her, from whom I take my beginning, they took the name of the star which the sun wooes, now at her back now at her front. ⁵ I was not aware of the ascent to it; but of being in it, my Lady, whom I saw become more beautiful, gave me full assurance.

And even as in a flame a spark is seen, and as voice from voice is distinguished when one is steady and the other goes

¹ In heathen times.

² Venus, so called from her birth in Cyprus.

³ Dione, daughter of Oceanus and Thetis, mother of Venus.

⁴ Under the form of Ascanius, as Virgil tells in the first book of the Aeneid.

⁵ According as it is morning or evening star.

and returns, I saw in that light other lamps moving in a circle more and less rapidly, in the measure, I believe, of their inward vision. From a cold cloud winds never descended, or visible or not, go swift, that they would not seem impeded and slow to him who had seen these divine lights coming to us, leaving the circling begun first among the high Seraphim. And within those who appeared most in front was sounding HOSANNA, so that never since have I been without desire of hearing it again. Then one came nearer to us, and alone began, "We all are ready to thy pleasure, that thou mayest joy in us. With one circle, with one circling, and with one thirst, ⁷ we revolve with the celestial Princes, ⁸ to whom thou in the world once said: 'Ye who intelligent move the third heaven;' and we are so full of love that, to please thee, a little quiet will not be less sweet to us."

After my eyes had offered themselves reverently to my Lady, and she had of herself made them contented and assured, they turned again to the light which had promised so much;

⁷ One circle in space, one circling in eternity, one thirst for the vision of God.

⁸ The third in ascending order of the hierarchy of the Angels, corresponding with the heaven of Venus.

and, “Tell who ye are,” was my utterance, stamped with great affection. And how much greater alike in quantity and quality did I see it become, through the new gladness which was added to its gladnesses when I spoke! Become thus, it said to me,⁹ “The world had me below short while; and had it been longer much evil had not been which will be. My joy which rays around me, and hides me like a creature swathed in its own silk, holds me concealed from thee. Much didst thou love me, and thou hadst good reason; for had I stayed below I had showed thee of my love far more than the leaves. That left bank which is bathed by the Rhone, after it has mingled with the Sorgue, awaited me in due time for its lord;¹⁰ and that born of Ansonia¹¹ which is towned with Bari, with

⁹ It is Charles Martel, son of Charles II. of Naples, who speaks. He was born about 1270, and in 1294 he was at Florence for more than twenty days, and at this time may have become acquainted with Dante. Great honor was done him by the Florentines, and he showed great love to them, so that he won favor from everybody, says Villani. He died in 1295.

¹⁰ Charles of Anjou, grandfather of Charles Martel, had received this part of Provence as dowry of his wife Beatrice, the youngest daughter of Raymond Berenger.

¹¹ A name for Italy, used only by the poets.

Gaeta, and with Catona,¹² whence the Tronto and the Verde disgorge into the sea. Already was shining on my brow the crown of that land which the Danube waters after it abandons its German banks;¹³ and the fair Trinacria¹⁴ (which is darkened, not by Typhoeus but by nascent sulphur, on the gulf between Pachynus and Pelorus which receives greatest annoy from Eurus¹⁵) would be still awaiting its kings de-

¹² Bari on the Adriatic, Gaeta on the Mediterranean, and Catons at the toe of Italy, together with the two rivers named, give roughly the boundaries of the Kingdom of Naples.

¹³ The mother of Charles Martel was sister of Ladislaus IV., King of Hungary. He died without offspring, and Charles II. claimed the kingdom by right of his wife.

¹⁴ Sicily; the gulf darkened by sulphurous fumes is the Bay of Calabria, which lies exposed to Eurus, that is, to winds from the south-east.

¹⁵ The sea between Cape Pachynus, the extreme southeastern point of the island, and Cape Pelorus, the extreme northeastern, lies exposed to the violence of Eurus or the East wind. Clouds of smoke from Etna sometimes darken it. The eruptions of Etna were ascribed by Ovid (*Metam.* v., 346-353) to the struggles of Typhoeus, one of the rebellious Giants. Ovid's verses suggested this description.

scended through me from Charles and Rudolph,¹⁶ if evil rule, which always embitters the subject people, had not moved Palermo to shout, ‘Die! Die!’¹⁷ And if my brother had taken note of this,¹⁸ he would already put to flight the greedy poverty of Catalonia, in order that it might not do him harm: for truly there is need for him or for some other to look to it, so that on his laden bark more load be not put. His own nature, which descended niggardly from a liberal one, would have need of such a soldiery as should not care to put into a chest.”¹⁹

¹⁶ From his father, Charles H., or his grandfather, Charles of Anjou, and from the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg, who was the father of Clemence, Charles Martel’s wife.

¹⁷ By the insurrection which began at Palermo in 1282,—the famous Sicilian Vespers,—the French were driven from the island.

¹⁸ This brother was Robert, the third son of Charles II. He had been kept as a hostage in Catalonia from 1288 to 1295, and when he became King of Naples in 1309 he introduced into his service many Catalonian officials. The words of Charles Martel are prophetic of the evils wrought by their greed.

¹⁹ Officials who would not, by oppression of the subjects, seek their private gain.

“Because I believe that the deep joy which thy speech, my lord, infuses in me is seen by thee there where every good ends and begins²⁰ even as I see it in myself, it is the more grateful to me; and this also I hold dear, that thou discernest it, gazing upon God.²¹ Thou hast made me glad; and in like wise do thou make clear to me (since in speaking thou hast moved me to doubt) how bitter can issue from sweet seed.” This I to him; and he to me, “If I am able to show to thee a truth, thou wilt hold thy face to that which thou askest, as thou dost hold thy back. The Good which turns and contents all the realm which thou ascendest, makes its providence to be a power in these great bodies.²² And not the natures only are foreseen in the Mind which by itself is perfect, but they together with their salvation.²³ For whatsoever this bow shoots falls disposed to its foreseen end, even as a thing directed to its aim. Were this not so, the heavens

²⁰ Is seen in the mind of God.

²¹ My own joy is the dearer in that thou seest that it is more grateful to me because known by thee.

²² The providence of God is fulfilled through the influences of the Heavens acting upon the natures subject to them.

²³ That is, together with the good ends for which they are created and ordained.

through which thou journeyest would produce their effects in such wise that they would not be works of art but ruins; and that cannot be, if the Intelligences which move these stars are not defective, and defective also the prime Intelligence which has not made them perfect.²⁴ Dost thou wish that this truth be made still clearer to thee?" And I, "No, truly; because I see it to be impossible that Nature should weary in that which is needful."²⁵ Whereupon he again, "Now say, would it be worse for man on earth if he were not a citizen?"²⁶ "Yes," answered I, "and here I ask not the reason."²⁷ "And can he be so, unless he live there below in divers manner through divers offices?²⁸ No; if your master²⁹ writes well of this." So he went on deducing far as

²⁴ Defect in the subordinate Intelligences would imply defect in God, which is impossible.

²⁵ It is impossible that the order of nature should fail, that order being the design of God in creation.

²⁶ That is, united with other men in society.

²⁷ Because man is by nature a social animal, and cannot attain his true end except as a member of a community.

²⁸ Society cannot exist without diversity in the functions of its members.

²⁹ Aristotle, "the master of human reason, who treats of this in many places, for instance in his Ethics, i. 7, where he speaks of man as "by nature social," so that his end is accomplished only in society.

here; then he concluded, "Hence it behoves that the roots of your works must be diverse.³⁰ Wherefore one is born Solon, and another Xerxes, another Melchisedech, and another he who, flying through the air, lost his son. The revolving nature, which is the seal of the mortal wax, performs its art well, but does not distinguish one inn from another.³¹ Hence it happens that Esau differs in seed from Jacob, and Quirinus comes from so mean a father that he is ascribed to Mars. The generated nature would always make its path like its progenitors, if the divine foresight did not conquer. Now that which was behind thee is before thee, but that thou mayest know that I have joy in thee, I wish that thou cloak thee with a corollary.³² Nature, if she find fortune discordant with herself, like every other seed out of its region, always makes bad result. And if the world down there would fix

³⁰ Human dispositions, the roots of human works, must be diverse in order to produce diverse effects.

³¹ The spheres pour down their various influences without discrimination in the choice of the individual upon whom they fall. Hence sons may differ in their dispositions from their fathers.

³² This additional statement completes the instruction, as a cloak completes the clothing of a body.

attention on the foundation which nature lays, following that, it would have its people good. But ye wrest to religion one who shall be born to gird on the sword, and ye make a king of one who is for preaching; wherefore your track is out of the road."

CANTO IX. *The Heaven of Venus.—Conversation of Dante with Cunizza da Romano,—With Folco of Marseilles.—Rahab.—Avarice of the Papal Court.*

AFTER THY CHARLES, O beautiful Clemence,¹ had enlightened me, he told to me of the treasons which his seed must suffer. But he said, "Be silent, and let the years revolve:" so that I can tell nothing, save that just lament shall follow on your wrongs.²

And now the life of that holy light had turned again unto the Sun which fills it, as that Good which suffices for every thing. Ah, souls deceived, and creatures impious, who from such Good turn away your hearts, directing your foreheads unto vanity!

And lo! another of those splendors made towards me, and in brightening outwardly was signifying its will to please me. The eyes of Beatrice, which were fixed upon me, as before, made me assured of dear assent to my desire. "I pray thee give swift quittance to my wish, blessed spirit," I said, "and

¹ The widow of Charles Martel.

² Those who have done the wrong shall justly lament therefor.

afford me proof that what think I can reflect on thee.”³ Whereon the light which was still new⁴ to me, from out its depth, wherein erst it was singing, proceeded, as one whom doing good delights, “In that part⁵ of the wicked Italian land, which lies between Rialto and the founts of the Brenta and the Piave, rises a hill,⁶ and mounts not very high, whence a torch descended which made a great assault upon that district. From one root both I and it were born; Cunizza was I called; and I am resplendent here because the light of this star overcame me. But gladly do I pardon to myself the cause of my lot, and it gives me no annoy;⁷ which perhaps would

³ That thou, gazing on the mind of God, seest therein my thoughts.

⁴ Still unknown by name.

⁵ The March of Treviso, lying between Venice (Rialto) and the Alps.

⁶ The hill on which stood the little stronghold of Romano, the birthplace of the tyrant Azzolino, or Ezzolino, whom Dante had seen in Hell (Canto XII.) punished for his cruel misdeeds, in the river of boiling blood. Cunizza was his sister.

⁷ The sin which has limited the capacity of bliss, the sin which has determined the low grade in Paradise of Cunizza, is forgiven and forgotten, and she, like Piccarda, wishes only for that blessedness which she has.

seem difficult to your vulgar. Of this resplendent and dear jewel of our kingdom,⁸ who is nearest to me, great fame has remained, and ere it die away this hundredth year shall yet come round five times. See if man ought to make himself excellent, so that the first may leave another life! And this the present crowd, which the Tagliamento and the Adige shut in,⁹ considers not; nor yet by being scourged doth it repent. But it will soon come to pass that at the marsh Padua will discolor the water which bathes Vicenza, because her people are stubborn against duty.¹⁰ And where the Sile and the Cagnano unite, one lords it, and goes with his head high, for catching whom the web is already spun.¹¹ Feltro will yet weep the crime of its impious shepherd, which will be so

⁸ Folco, or Foulquet, of Marseilles, once a famous singer of songs of love, then a bishop. He died in 1213.

⁹ The people of the region where Cunizza lived.

¹⁰ The Paduan Guelphs, resisting the Emperor, to whom they owed duty, were defeated more than once, near Vicenza, by Can Grande, during the years in which Dante was writing his poem.

¹¹ The Sile and the Cagnano unite at Treviso, whose lord, Ricciardo da Camino, was assassinated in 1312.

shameful, that, for a like, none ever entered Malta.¹² Too large would be the vat which would hold the Ferrarese blood, and weary he who should weigh it, ounce by ounce, which this courteous priest will give to show himself a partisan;¹³ and such gifts will be conformed to the living of the country. Above are mirrors, ye call them Thrones,¹⁴ wherefrom God shines on us in his judgments, so that these words seem good to us.”¹⁵ Here she was silent, and had to me the semblance of being turned elsewhither by the wheel in which she set herself as she was before.¹⁶

The next joy, which was already known to me as an illus-

¹² An act of treachery on the part of the Bishop and Lord of Feltro, Alessandro Novello, in delivering up Ghibelline exiles from Ferrara, of whom thirty were beheaded; a treason so vile that in the tower called Malta, where ecclesiastics who committed capital crimes were imprisoned, no such crime as his was ever punished.

¹³ That is, of the Guelphs, by whom the designation of The Party was appropriated.

¹⁴ The Thrones were, according to St. Gregory, that order of Angels through whom God executes his judgments.

¹⁵ Because we see reflected from the Thrones the judgment of God above to fall on the guilty.

¹⁶ See Canto VIII., near the beginning.

trious thing,¹⁷ became to my sight like a fine ruby whereon the sun should strike. Through joy effulgence is gained there on high, even as a smile here; but below¹⁸ the shade darkens outwardly, as the mind is sad.

“God sees everything, and thy vision, blessed spirit, is in Him,” said I, “so that no wish can steal itself away from thee. Thy voice, then, that ever charms the heavens, with the song of those pious fires which make a cowl for themselves with their six wings,¹⁹ why does it not satisfy my desires? Surely I should not wait for thy request if I in-theed myself, as thou thyself in-meest.”²⁰ “The greatest deep in which the water spreads,”²¹ began then his words, “except of that sea which garlands the earth, between its discordant shores stretches so far counter to the sun, that it makes a meridian where first it

¹⁷ By the words of Cunizza.

¹⁸ In Hell.

¹⁹ The Seraphim, who with their wings cover their faces. See Isaiah, vi. 2.

²⁰ If I saw thee inwardly as thou seest me. Dante invents the words he uses here, and they are no less unfamiliar in Italian than in English.

²¹ The Mediterranean.

was wont to make the horizon.²² I was a dweller on the shore of that deep, between the Ebro and the Magra,²³ which, for a short way, divides the Genoese from the Tuscan. With almost the same sunset and the same sunrise sit Buggea and the city whence I was, which once made its harbor warm with its own blood.²⁴ That people to whom my name was known called me Folco, and this heaven is imprinted by me, as I was by it. For the daughter of Belus,²⁵ harmful alike to Sichaeus and Creusa, burned not more than I, so long as it befitted my hair;²⁶ nor she of Rhodopea who was deluded by Demophoon;²⁷ nor Alcides when he had enclosed Iole in his heart.²⁸ Yet one repents not here, but smiles, not for

²² According to the geography of the time the Mediterranean stretched from east to west ninety degrees of longitude.

²³ Between the Ebro in Spain and the Magra in Italy lies Marseilles, under almost the same meridian as Buggea (now Bougie) on the African coast.

²⁴ When the fleet of Caesar defeated that of Pompey with its contingent of vessels and soldiers of Marseilles, B. C. 49.

²⁵ Dido.

²⁶ Till my hair grew thin and gray.

²⁷ Phyllis, daughter of the king of Thrace, who hung herself when deserted by Demophoon, the son of Theseus.

²⁸ The excess of the love of Hercules for Iole led to his death.

the fault which returns not to the memory, but for the power which ordained and foresaw. Here one gazes upon the art which adorns so great a work, and the good is discerned whereby the world above turns that below.

“But in order that thou mayst bear away satisfied all thy wishes which have been born in this sphere, it behoves me to proceed still further. Thou wouldest know who is in this light, which beside me here so sparkles, as a sunbeam on clear water. Now know that therewithin Rahab²⁹ is at rest, and being joined with our order it is sealed by her in the supreme degree. By this heaven in which the shadow that your world makes comes to a point³⁰ she was taken up before any other soul at the triumph of Christ. It was well befitting to leave her in some heaven, as a palm of the high victory which was

²⁹ “By faith the harlot Rabab perished not with them that believed not.”—Hebrews, xi. 31. See Joshua, ii. 1-21; vi. 17; James, ii. 25.

³⁰ The conical shadow of the earth ended, according to Ptolemy, at the heaven of Venus. Philalethes suggests that there may be here an allegorical meaning, the shadow of the earth being shown in feebleness of will, worldly ambition, and inordinate love, which have allotted the souls who appear in these first heavens to the lowest grades in Paradise.

won with the two hands,³¹ because she aided the first glory of Joshua within the Holy Land, which little touches the memory of the Pope.

“Thy city, which is plant of him who first turned his back on his Maker, and whose envy³² has been so bewept, produces and scatters the accursed flower³³ which has led astray the sheep and the lambs, because it has made a wolf of the shepherd. For this the Gospel and the great Doctors are deserted, and there is study only of the Decretals,³⁴ as is apparent by their margins. On this the Pope and the Cardinals are intent; their thoughts go not to Nazareth, there where Gabriel spread his wings. But the Vatican, and the other elect parts of Rome, which have been the burial place for the soldiery that followed Peter, shall soon be free from this adultery.”³⁵

³¹ Nailed to the cross. The glory of Joshua was the winning of the Holy Land for the inheritance of the children of Israel.

³² “Through envy of the devil came death into the world.”—Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 24.

³³ The lily on its florin.

³⁴ The books of the Ecclesiastical Law.

³⁵ By the removal in 1305 of the Papal Court to Avignon.

CANTO X. *Ascent to the Sun.—Spirits of the wise, and the learned in theology.—St. Thomas Aquinas.—He names to Dante those who surround him.*

LOOKING UPON HIS SON with the Love which the one and the other eternally breathe forth, the Primal and Ineffable Power made everything which revolves through the mind or through space with such order that he who contemplates it cannot be without taste of Him.¹ Lift then thy sight, Reader, with me to the lofty wheels, straight to that region where the one motion strikes on the other;² and there begin to gaze with delight on the art of that Master who within Himself

¹ All things, as well the spiritual and invisible objects of the intelligence as the corporal and visible objects of sense, were made by God the Father, operating through the Son, with the love of the Holy Spirit, and made in such order that he who contemplates the creation beholds the partial image of the Creator.

² At the equinox, the season of Dante’s journey, the sun in Aries is at the intersection of the ecliptic and the equator of the celestial sphere, and his apparent motion in his annual revolution cuts the apparent diurnal motion of the fixed stars, which is performed in circles parallel to the equator.

so loves it that His eye never departs from it. See how from that point the oblique circle which bears the planets³ branches off, to satisfy the world which calls on them;⁴ and if their road had not been bent, much virtue in the heavens would be in vain, and well-nigh every potency dead here below.⁵ And if from the straight line its departure had been more or less distant, much of the order of the world, both below and above, would be defective. Now do thou remain, Reader, upon thy bench,⁶ following in thought that which is foretasted, if thou wouldest be glad far sooner than weary. I have set before thee; henceforth feed thee by thyself, for that theme whereof I have been made scribe wrests all my care unto itself.

The greatest minister of nature, which imprints the world with the power of the heavens, and with its light measures the time for us, in conjunction with that region called to mind above, was circling through the spirals in which from

³ The ecliptic.

⁴ Which invokes their influence.

⁵ Because on the obliquity of their path depends the variety of their influence.

⁶ As a scholar.

day to day he earlier presents himself.⁷ And I was with him; but of the ascent I was not aware, otherwise than as a man is aware, before his first thought, of its coming. Beatrice is she who thus conducts from good to better so swiftly that her act extends not through time.

How lucent of itself must that have been which, within the sun where I entered, was appareit not by color but by light! Though I should call on genius, art, and use, I could not tell it so that it could ever be imagined; but it may be believed, and sight of it longed for. And if our fancies are low for such loftiness, it is no marvel, for beyond the sun was never eye could go. Such⁸ was here the fourth family of the High Father, who always satisfies it, showing how He breathes forth, and how He begets.⁹ And Beatrice began, “Thank, thank thou the Sun of the Angels, who to this visible one has raised thee by His grace.” Heart of mortal was never so disposed to devotion, and so ready, with its own

⁷ In that spiral course in which, according to the Ptolemaic system, the sun passes from the equator to the tropic of Cancer, rising earlier every day.

⁸ So lucent, brighter than the sun.

⁹ Showing himself in the Holy Spirit and in the Son.

entire pleasure, to give itself to God, as I became at those words; and all my love was so set on Him that Beatrice was eclipsed in oblivion. It displeased her not; but she so smiled thereat that the splendor of her smiling eyes divided upon many things my singly intent mind.

I saw many living and surpassing effulgences make a centre of us, and make a crown of themselves, more sweet in voice than shining in aspect. Thus girt we sometimes see the daughter of Latona, when the air is pregnant so that it holds the thread which makes the girdle.¹⁰ In the court of Heaven, wherefrom I return, are found many jewels so precious and beautiful that they cannot be brought from the kingdom, and of these was the song of those lights. Who wings not himself so that he may fly up thither, let him await the tidings thence from the dumb.

After those burning suns, thus singing, had circled three times round about us, like stars near fixed poles, they seemed to me as ladies not loosed from a dance, but who stop silent, listening till they have caught the new notes. And within one I heard begin, "Since the ray of grace, whereby true love

¹⁰ When the air is so full of vapor that it forms a halo.

is kindled, and which thereafter grows multiplied in loving, so shines on thee that it conducts thee upward by that stair upon which, without reascending, no one descends, he who should deny to thee the wine of his flask for thy thirst, would not be more at liberty than water which descends not to the sea.¹¹ Thou wishest to know with what plants this garland is enflowered, which, round about her, gazes with delight upon the, beautiful Lady who strengthens thee for heaven. I was of the lambs of the holy flock¹² which Dominic leads along the way where one fattens well if he stray not.¹³ This one who is nearest to me on the right was my brother and master; and he was Albert of Cologne,¹⁴ and I Thomas of Aquino. If thus of all the rest thou wishest to be informed, come, following my speech, with thy sight circling around upon the blessed chaplet. That next flaming issues from the smile of Gratian, who so assisted one court and the other

¹¹ He would be restrained against his nature, as water prevented from flowing down to the sea.

¹² Of the Order of St. Dominic.

¹³ Where one acquires spiritual good, if he be not distracted by the allurement of worldly things.

¹⁴ The learned Doctor, Albertus Magnus.

that it pleases in Paradise.¹⁵ The next, who at his side adorns our choir, was that Peter who, like the poor woman, offered his treasure to Holy Church.¹⁶ The fifth light, which is most beautiful among us,¹⁷ breathes from such love, that all the world there below is greedy to know tidings of it.¹⁸ Within it is the lofty mind, wherein wisdom so profound was put, that, if the truth is true, to see so much no second has arisen.¹⁹ At his side thou seest the light of that candle, which,

¹⁵ Gratian was an Italian Benedictine monk, who lived in the 12th century, and compiled the famous work known as the *Decretum Gratiani*, composed of texts of Scripture, of the Canons of the Church, of Decretals of the Popes, and of extracts from the Fathers, designed to show the agreement of the civil and ecclesiastical law,—a work pleasing in Paradise because promoting concord between the two authorities.

¹⁶ Peter Lombard, a theologian of the 12th century, known as *Magister Sententiarum*, from his compilation of extracts relating to the doctrines of the Church, under the title of *Sententiarum Libri IV*. In the proem to his work he says that he desired, “like the poor widow, to cast something from his penury into the treasury of the Lord.”

¹⁷ Solomon.

¹⁸ It was matter of debate whether Solomon was among the blessed or the damned.

¹⁹ “Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.”—1 Kings, iii. 12.

below in the flesh, saw most inwardly the angelic nature, and its ministry.²⁰ In the next little light smiles that advocate of the Christian times, with whose discourse Augustine provided himself.²¹ Now if thou leadest the eye of the mind, following my praises, from light to light, thou remainest already thirsting for the eighth. Therewithin, through seeing every good, the holy soul rejoices which makes the deceit of the world manifest to whoso hears him well.²² The body whence it was hunted out lies below in Cieldauro,²³ and from martyrdom and from exile it came unto this peace. Beyond thou seest flaming the burning breath of Isidore, of

²⁰ Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul (*Acts*, xvii. 34), to whom was falsely ascribed a book of great repute, written in the fourth century, “On the Celestial Hierarchy.”

²¹ Paulus Orosius, who wrote his History against the Pagans, at the request of St. Augustine, to defend Christianity from the charge brought against it by the Gentiles of being the source of the calamities which had befallen the Roman world. His work might be regarded as a supplement to St. Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*.

²² Boethius, statesman and philosopher, whose work, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, was one of the books held in highest esteem by Dante.

²³ Boethius, who was put to death in Pavia, in 524, was buried in the church of S. Pietro in Ciel d’ Oro—St. Peter’s of the Golden Ceiling.

Bede, and of Richard who in contemplation was more than man.²⁴ The one from whom thy look returns to me is the light of a spirit to whom in grave thoughts death seemed to come slow. It is the eternal light of Sigier,²⁵ who reading in the Street of Straw syllogized truths which were hated."

Then, as a horologe which calls us at the hour when the Bride of God²⁶ rises to sing matins to her Bridegroom that he may love her, in which the one part draws and urges the other, sounding ting! ting! with such sweet note that the well-disposed spirit swells with love, so saw I the glorious wheel move, and render voice to voice in concord and in sweetness which cannot be known save there where joy becomes eternal.

²⁴ Isidore, bishop of Seville, died 636; the Venerable Bede, died 735; Richard, prior of the Monastery of St. Victor, at Paris, a mystic of the 12th century; all eminent theologians.

²⁵ Sigier of Brabant, who lectured, applying logic to questions in theology, at Paris, in the 13th century, in the Rue du Fouarre.

²⁶ The Church.

CANTO XI. *The Vanity of worldly desires,—St. Thomas Aquinas undertakes to solve two doubts perplexing Dante.—He narrates the life of St. Francis of Assisi.*

O INSENSATE CARE OF MORTALS, how defective are those syllogisms which make thee downward beat thy wings! One was going after the Laws, and one after the Aphorisms,¹ and one following the priesthood, and one to reign by force or by sophisms, and one to rob, and one to civic business; one, involved in pleasure of the flesh, was wearying himself, and one was giving himself to idleness, when I, loosed from all these things, with Beatrice, was thus gloriously received on high in Heaven.

When each² had returned unto that point of the circle at which it was at first, it stayed, as a candle in a candlestick. And within that light which first had spoken to me I heard, as smiling it began, making itself more clear, "Even as I am resplendent with its radiance, so, looking into the Eternal Light, I apprehend whence thou drawest the occasion of thy

¹ The Aphorisms of Hippocrates, meaning here, the study of medicine.

² Each of the lights which had encircled. Beatrice and Dante.

thoughts. Thou art perplexed, and hast the wish that my speech be bolted again in language so open and so plain that it may be level to thy sense, where just now I said, ‘where well one fattens,’ and there where I said, ‘the second has not been born;’ and here is need that one distinguish well.

“The Providence which governs the world with that counsel, in which every created vision is vanquished ere it reach the depth, in order that the bride³ of Him, who with loud cries espoused her with His blessed blood, might go toward her beloved, secure in herself and also more faithful to Him, ordained two princes in her favor, who on this side and that should be to her for guides. The one was all seraphic in ardor,⁴ the other, through wisdom, was a splendor of cherubic light⁵ on earth. Of the one I will speak, because both are spoken of in praising one, whichever be taken, for unto one end were their works.

“Between the Tupino and the water⁶ which descends from

³ The Church.

⁴ St. Francis of Assisi

⁵ St. Dominic.

⁶ The Chiassi, which flows from the hill chosen for his hermitage by St. Ubaldo.

the hill chosen by the blessed Ubaldo, hangs the fertile slope of a high mountain, wherefrom Perugia at Porta Sole⁷ feeleth cold and heat, while behind it Nocera and Gualdo weep because of their heavy yoke.⁸ On that slope, where it most breaks its steepness, rose a Sun upon the world, as this one sometimes does from the Ganges. Therefore let him who talks of that place not say Ascesi,⁹ for he would speak short, but Orient,¹⁰ if he would speak properly. He was not yet very far from his rising when he began to make the earth feel some comfort from his great virtue. For, still a youth, he ran to strife¹¹ with his father for a lady such as unto whom, even as unto death, no one unlocks the gate of pleasure; and

⁷ The gate of Perugia, which fronts Monte Subasio, on which Assisi lies, some fifteen miles to the south.

⁸ Towns, southeast of Assisi, oppressed by their rulers.

⁹ So the name Assisi was sometimes spelled, and here with a play on ascesi (I have risen).

¹⁰ As the sun at the vernal equinox, the sacred season of the Creation and the Resurrection, rises in the due east or orient, represented in the geographical system of the time by the Ganges, so the place where this new Sun of righteousness arose should be called Orient.

¹¹ Devoting himself to poverty against his father’s will.

before his spiritual court et coram patre¹² to her he had himself united; thereafter from day to day he loved her more ardently. She, deprived of her first husband,¹³ for one thousand and one hundred years and more, despised and obscure, had stood without wooing till he came;¹⁴ nor had it availed¹⁵ to hear, that he, who caused fear to all the world, found her at the sound of his voice secure with Amyclas;¹⁶ nor had it availed to have been constant and bold, so that where Mary remained below, she wept with Christ upon the cross. But that I may not proceed too obscurely, take henceforth in my diffuse speech Francis and Poverty for these lovers. Their concord and their glad semblances made love, and wonder, and sweet regard to be the cause of holy thoughts;¹⁷ so that the venerable Bernard first bared his feet,¹⁸ and ran

¹² Before the Bishop of Assisi, and “in presence of his father,” he renounced his worldly possessions.

¹³ Christ.

¹⁴ St. Francis was born in 1182.

¹⁵ To procure suitors for her,

¹⁶ When Caesar knocked at the door of Amyclas his voice caused no alarm, because Poverty made the fisherman secure.—Lucan, Pharsalia, V. 515 ff.

¹⁷ In the hearts of those who behold them.

¹⁸ The followers of Francis imitated him in going barefoot.

following such great peace, and, running, it seemed to him that he was slow. Oh unknown riches! oh fertile good! Egidius bares his feet and Sylvester bares his feet, following the bridegroom; so pleasing is the bride. Then that father and that master goes on his way with his lady, and with that family which the humble cord was now girding.¹⁹ Nor did baseness of heart weigh down his brow at being son of Pietro Bernardone,²⁰ nor at appearing marvellously despised; but royally he opened his bard intention to Innocent, and received from bim the first seal for his Order.²¹ After the poor people had increased behind him, whose marvellous life would be better sung in glory of the heavens, the holy purpose of this archimandrite²² was adorned with a second crown by the Eternal Spirit, through Honorius.²³ And when, through thirst for martyrdom, he had preached Christ and

¹⁹ The cord for their only girdle.

²⁰ Perhaps, because his father was neither noble nor famous.

²¹ In or about 1210 Pope Innocent III. approved the Rule of St. Francis.

²² “The head of the fold:” a term of the Greek Church, designating the head of one or more monasteries.

²³ In 1223, Honorius III. confirmed the sanction of the Order.

the rest who followed him in the proud presence of the Sultan,²⁴ and because he found the people too unripe for conversion, and in order not to stay in vain, had returned to the fruit of the Italian grass,²⁵ on the rude rock,²⁶ between the Tiber and the Arno, he took from Christ the last seal,²⁷ which his limbs bore for two years. When it pleased Him, who had allotted him to such great good, to draw him up to the reward which he had gained in making himself abject, he commended his most dear lady to his brethren as to rightful heirs, and commanded them to love her faithfully; and from her lap, his illustrious soul willed to depart, returning to its realm, and for his body he willed no other bier.²⁸

“Think now of what sort was he,²⁹ who was a worthy colleague to keep the bark of Peter on the deep sea to its right aim; and this was our Patriarch:³⁰ wherefore thou canst

²⁴ Probably the Sultan of Egypt, at the time of the Fifth Crusade, in 1219.

²⁵ To the harvest of good grain in Italy.

²⁶ Mount Alvernia.

²⁷ The Stigmata.

²⁸ St. Francis died in 1226.

²⁹ How holy he must have been.

³⁰ St. Dominic.

see that whoever follows him as he commands loads good merchandise. But his flock has become so greedy of strange food that it cannot but be scattered over diverse meadows; and as his sheep, remote and vagabond, go farther from him, the emptier of milk they return to the fold. Truly there are some of them who fear the harm, and keep close to the shepherd; but they are so few that little cloth suffices for their cowls. Now if my words are not obscure, if thy hearing has been attentive, if thou recallest to mind that which I have said, thy wish will be content in part, because thou wilt see the plant wherfrom they are hewn,³¹ and thou wilt see how the wearer of the thong reasons—’Where well one fattens if one does not stray.’

³¹ The plant of which the words are splinters or chips; in other terms, “thou wilt understand the whole ground of my assertion, and thou wilt see what a Dominican, wearer of the leather thong of the Order, means, when he says that the flock of Dominic fatten, if they stray not from the road on which he leads them.”

CANTO XII. *Second circle of the spirits of wise religious men, doctors of the Church and teachers.—St. Bonaventura narrates the life of St. Dominic, and tells the names of those who form the circle with him.*

SOON AS THE BLESSED FLAME uttered the last word of its speech the holy mill-stone¹ began to rotate, and had not wholly turned in its gyration before another enclosed it with a circle, and matched motion with motion, song with song; song which in those sweet pipes so surpasses our Muses, our Sirens, as a primal splendor that which it reflects.² As two bows parallel and of like colors are turned across a thin cloud when Juno gives the order to her handmaid³ (the outer one born of that within, after the manner of the speech of that wandering one⁴ whom love consumed, as the sun does vapors), and make the people here presageful, because of the covenant which God established with Noah concerning the world, that it is nevermore to be flooded; so the two gar-

¹ The garland of spirits encircling Beatrice and Dante.

² As an original ray is brighter than one reflected.

³ Iris.

⁴ Echo.

lands of those sempiternal roses turned around us, and so the outer responded to the inner. After the dance and the other great festivity, alike of the singing and of the flaming, light with light joyous and courteous, had become quiet together at an instant and with one will (just as the eyes which must needs together close and open to the pleasure that moves them), from the heart of one of the new lights a voice proceeded, which made me seem as the needle to the star in turning me to its place and it began,⁵ “The love which makes me beautiful draws me to speak of the other leader by whom⁶ so well has been spoken here of mine. It is fit that where one is the other be led in, so that as they served in war with one another, together likewise may their glory shine.

“The army of Christ, which it had cost so dear to arm afresh,⁷ was moving slow, mistrustful, and scattered, behind the standard,⁸ when the Emperor who forever reigns pro-

⁵ It is St. Bonaventura, the biographer of St. Francis, who speaks. He became General of the Order in 1256, and died in 1276.

⁶ By whom, through one of his brethren.

⁷ The elect, who had lost grace through Adam’s sin, were armed afresh by the costly sacrifice of the Son of God.

⁸ The Cross.

vided for the soldiery that was in peril, through grace alone, not because it was worthy, and, as has been said, succored his Bride with two champions, by whose deed, by whose word, the people gone astray were rallied.

“In that region where the sweet west wind rises to open the new leaves wherewith Europe is seen to reclothe herself, not very far from the beating of the waves behind which, over their long course, the sun sometimes bides himself to all men, sits the fortunate Callaroga, under the protection of the great shield on which the Lion is subject and subjugates.⁹ Therein was born the amorous lover of the Christian faith, the holy athlete, benignant to his own, and to his enemies harsh.¹⁰ And when it was created, his mind was so replete with living virtue, that in his mother it made her a prophetess.¹¹ After the espousals between him and the faith were

⁹ The shield of Castile, on which two lions and two castles are quartered, one lion below and one above.

¹⁰ St. Dominic, born in 1170.

¹¹ His mother dreamed that she gave birth to a dog, black and white in color, with a lighted torch in its mouth, which set the world on fire; symbols of the black and white robe of the Order, and of the flaming zeal of its brethren. Hence arose a play of words on their name, Domini cani, “the dogs of the Lord.”

completed at the sacred font, where they dowered each other with mutual safety, the lady who gave the assent for him saw in a dream the marvellous fruit which was to proceed from him and from his heirs;¹² and in order that he might be spoken of as he was,¹³ a spirit went forth from here¹⁴ to name him with the possessive of Him whose he wholly was. Dominic¹⁵ he was called; and I speak of him as of the husbandman whom Christ elected to his garden to assist him. Truly he seemed the messenger and familiar of Christ; for the first love that was manifest in him was for the first counsel that Christ gave.¹⁶ Oftentimes was he found by his nurse upon the ground silent and awake, as though he said, ‘I am come for this.’ O father of him truly Felix! Omother of him truly Joan, if this, being interpreted, means as is said!¹⁷

¹² The godmother of Dominic saw in dream a star on the forehead and another on the back of the head of the child, signifying the light that should stream from him over East and West.

¹³ That his name might express his nature.

¹⁴ From heaven.

¹⁵ Dominicus, the possessive of Dominus, “Belonging to the Lord.”

¹⁶ “Sell that thou hast and give to the poor.”—Matthew, xix. 21.

¹⁷ Felix, signifying “happy,” and Joanna, “full of grace.”

"Not for the world,¹⁸ for which men now toil, following him of Ostia and Thaddeus,¹⁹ but for the love of the true manna, he became in short time a great teacher, such that he set himself to go about the vineyard, which quickly fades if the vinedresser is bad; and of the Seat²⁰ which was formerly more benign unto the righteous poor (not through itself but through him who sits there and degenerates²¹), he asked not to dispense or two or three for six,²² not the fortune of the first vacancy, non decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei,²³ but leave to fight against the errant world for that seed²⁴ of

¹⁸ The goods of this world.

¹⁹ Henry of Susa, cardinal of Ostia, who wrote a much studied commentary on the Decretals, and Thaddeus of Bologna, who, says Giovanni Villani, "was the greatest physician in Christendom." The thought is the same as that at the beginning of Canto XI, where Dante speaks of "one following the Laws, and one the Aphorisms."

²⁰ The Papal chair.

²¹ The grammatical construction is imperfect; the meaning is that the change in the temper of the see of Rome is due not to the fault of the Church itself, but to that of the Pope.

²² Not for license to compound for unjust acquisitions by de-voting a part of them to pious uses.

²³ "Not the tithes which belong to God's poor."

²⁴ The true faith; "the seed is the word of God."—Luke, viii. 11.

which four and twenty plants are girding thee. Then with doctrine and with will, together with the apostolic office,²⁵ he went forth like a torrent which a lofty vein pours out, and on the heretical stocks his onset smote with most vigor there where the resistance was the greatest. From him proceeded thereafter divers streams wherewith the catholic garden is watered, so that its bushes stand more living.

If such was one wheel of the chariot on which the Holy Church defended itself and vanquished in the field its civil strife,²⁶ surely the excellence of the other should be very plain to thee, concerning which Thomas before my coming was so courteous. But the track which the highest part of its circumference made is derelict;²⁷ So that the mould is where the crust was.²⁸ His household, which set forth straight with their feet upon his footprints, are so turned round that they set the forward foot on that behind;²⁹ and soon the quality

²⁵ The authority conferred on him by Innocent III.

²⁶ The heresies within its own borders.

²⁷ The track made by St. Francis is deserted.

²⁸ The change of metaphor is sudden; good wine makes a crust, bad wine mould in the cask.

²⁹ They go in an opposite direction from that followed by the saint.

of the barvest of this bad culture shall be seen, when the tare will complain that the chest is taken from it.³⁰ Yet I say, he who should search our volume leaf by leaf might still find a page where he would read, ‘I am that which I am wont’; but it will not be from Casale nor from Acquasparta,³¹ whence such come unto the Written Rule that one flies from it, and the other contracts it.

“I am the life of Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, who in great offices always set sinister³² care behind me. Illuminato and Augustin are here, who were among the first barefoot poor that in the cord made themselves friends to God. Hugh of St. Victor³³ is here with them, and Peter Mangiadore, and Peter of Spain,³⁴ who down below shines in twelve books;

³⁰ That it is taken from the chest in the granary to be burned.

³¹ Frate Ubertino of Casale, the leader of a party of zealots among the Franciscans, enforced the Rule of the Order with excessive strictness; Matteo, of Acquasparta, general of the Franciscans in 1257, relaxed it.

³² Sinister, that is, temporal.

³³ Hugh (1097-1141), a noted schoolman, of the famous monastery of St. Victor at Paris.

³⁴ Peter Mangiadore, or Comestor, “the Eater,” so called as being a devourer of books. He himself wrote books famous

Nathan the prophet, and the Metropolitan Chrysostom,³⁵ and Anselm,³⁶ and that Donatus³⁷ who deigned to set his hand to the first art; Raban³⁸ is here, and at my side shines the Calabrian abbot Joachim,³⁹ endowed with prophetic spirit.

in their time. He was chancellor of the University at Paris, and died in 1198. The Summae logicales of Peter of Spain, in twelve books, was long held in high repute. He was made Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum in 1273, and was elected Pope in 1276, taking the name of John XXI. He was killed in May, 1277, by the fall of the ceiling of the chamber in which he was sleeping in the Papal palace at Viterbo. He is the only Pope of recent times whom Dante meets in Paradise.

³⁵ The famous doctor of the Church, patriarch of

³⁶ Born about 1033 at Aosta in Piedmont, consecrated Arch. bishop of Canterbury in 1093, died 1109; magnus et subtilis doctor in theologia.” Constantinople.

³⁷ The compiler of the treatise on grammar (the first of the seven arts of the Trivium. and the Quadrivium), which was in use throughout the Middle Ages.

³⁸ Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz, in the ninth century; a great scholar and teacher, “cui similem suo tempore non habuit Ecelesia.”

³⁹ Joachim, Abbot of Flora, whose mystic prophecies had great vogue.

"The flaming courtesy of Brother Thomas, and his discreet discourse, moved me to celebrate⁴⁰ so great a paladin; and with me moved this company."

CANTO XIII. *St. Thomas Aquinas speaks again, and explains the relation of the wisdom of Solomon to that of Adam and of Christ, and declares the vanity of human judgment.*

LET HIM IMAGINE,¹ who desires to understand well that which I now saw (and let him retain the image like a firm rock, while I am speaking), fifteen stars which in different regions vivify the heaven with brightness so great that it overcomes all thickness of the air; let him imagine that Wain² for which the bosom of our heaven suffices both night and day, so that in the turning of its pole it disappears not; let him imagine the mouth of that horn³ which begins at the point of the axle on which the primal wheel goes round,—to have made

¹ To form an idea of the brightness of the two circles of spirits, let the reader imagine fifteen of the brightest separate stars, joined with the seven stars of the Great Bear, and with the two brightest of the Lesser Bear, to form two constellations like Ariadne's Crown, and to revolve one within the other, one following the movement of the other.

² Charles's Wain, the Great Bear, which never sets.

³ The Lesser Bear may be imagined as having the shape of a horn, of which the small end is near the pole of the heavens around which the Primum Mobile revolves.

⁴⁰ Literally, "to envy;" hence, perhaps, "to admire," "to praise," "to celebrate;" but the meaning is doubtful.

of themselves two signs in the heavens, like that which the daughter of Minos made, when she felt the frost of death,⁴ and one to have its rays within the other, and both to revolve in such manner that one should go first and the other after; and he will have as it were the shadow of the true constellation, and of the double dance, which was circling the point where I was; because it is as much beyond our wont as the motion of the heaven which outspeeds all the rest is swifter than the movement of the Chiana.⁵ There was sung riot Bacchus, not Paean, but three Persons in a divine nature, and it and the human in one Person. The singing and the revolving completed each its measure, and those holy lights gave attention to us, making themselves happy from care to care.⁶

Then the light in which the marvellous life of the poor man of God had been narrated to me broke the silence among those concordant deities, and said, “Since one straw is

⁴ When Ariadne died of grief because of her desertion by Theseus, her garland was changed into the constellation known as Ariadne's Crown.

⁵ The Chiana is one of the most sluggish of the streams of Tuscany.

⁶ Rejoicing in the change from dance and song to tranquility for the sake of giving satisfaction to Dante.

threshed, since its seed is now garnered, sweet love invites me to beat out the other. Thou believest that in the breast, wherefrom the rib was drawn to form the beautiful cheek whose taste costs dear to all the world, and in that which, pierced by the lance, both after and before made such satisfaction that it overcomes the balance of all sin, whatever of light it is allowed to human nature to have was all infused. by that Power which made one and the other; and therefore thou wonderest at that which I said above, when I told that the good which in the fifth light is inclosed had no second. Now open thine eyes to that which I answer to thee, and thou wilt see thy belief and my speech become in the truth as the centre in a circle.

“That which dies not and that which can die are naught but the splendor of that idea which in His love our Lord God brings to birth;⁷ for that living Light which so pro-

⁷ The creation of things eternal and things temporal alike is the splendid manifestation of the idea which the triune God, in His love, generated. The living light in the Son, emanating from its lucent source in the Father, in union with the love of the Holy Spirit, the three remaining always one, pours out its radiance through the nine orders of the Angelic Hierarchy, who distribute it by means of the Heavens of which they are the Intelligences.

ceeds from its Lucent Source that It is not disunited from It, nor from the Love which with them is intrined, through Its own bounty collects Its radiance, as it were mirrored, in nine subsistences, Itself eternally remaining one. Thence It descends to the ultimate potentialities, downward from act to act, becoming such that finally It makes naught save brief contingencies: and these contingencies I understand. to be the generated things which the heavens in their motion produce with seed and without.⁸ The wax of these, and that which moulds it, are not of one mode, and therefore under the ideal stamp it shines now more now less;⁹ whence it comes to pass that one same plant in respect to species bears better or worse fruit, and that ye are born with diverse dispositions. If the wax were exactly worked,¹⁰ and the heavens were supreme in their power, the whole light of the seal

⁸ Through the various movements and conjunctions of the Heavens, the creative light descends to the lowest elements, producing all the varieties of contingent things.

⁹ The material of contingent or temporal things, and the influences which shape them, are of various sort, so that the splendor of the Divine idea is visible in them in different degree.

¹⁰ If the material were always fit to receive the impression.

would be apparent. But nature always gives it defective,¹¹ working like the artist who has the practice of his art and a hand that trembles. Nevertheless if the fervent Love disposes and imprints the clear Light of the primal Power, complete perfection is acquired here.¹² Thus of old the earth was made worthy of the complete perfection of the living being;¹³ thus was the Virgin made impregnate;¹⁴ so that I commend thy opinion that human nature never was, nor will be, what it was in those two persons.

“Now, if I should not proceed further, ‘Then how was this man without peer?’ would thy words begin. But, in order that that which is not apparent may clearly appear, consider who he was, and the occasion which moved him to request, when it was said to him, ‘Ask.’ I have not so spoken that

¹¹ Nature, the second Cause, never transmits the whole of the Creative light.

¹² If, however, the first Cause acts directly,—the fervent Love imprinting the clear Light of the primal Power,—there can be no imperfection in the created thing; it answers to the Divine idea.

¹³ Thus, by the immediate operation of the Creator, the earth of which Adam was formed was made the perfect material for the formation of the creature with a living soul.

¹⁴ In like manner, by the direct act of the Creator.

thou canst not clearly see that he was a king, who asked for wisdom, in order that he might be a worthy king; not to know the number of the motors here on high, or if necesse with a contingent ever made necesse;¹⁵ non si est dare primum motum esse,¹⁶ or if in the semicircle a triangle can be made so that it should not have one right angle.¹⁷ Wherefore if thou notest this and what I said, a kingly prudence is that peerless seeing, on which the arrow of ray intention strikes.¹⁸ And if thou directest clear eyes to the ‘has arisen’ thou wilt see it has respect only to kings, who are many, and the good are few. With this distinction¹⁹ take thou my say-

¹⁵ If from two premises, one necessary and one contingent, a necessary conclusion is to be deduced.

¹⁶ “If a prime motion is to be assumed,” that is, a motion not the effect of another.

¹⁷ He did not ask through idle curiosity to know the number of the Angels; nor for the solution of a logical puzzle, nor for that of a question in metaphysics, or of a problem in geometry.

¹⁸ If thou understandest this comment on my former words, to see so much no second has arisen,” my meaning will be clear that his vision was unmatched in respect to the wisdom which it behoves a king to possess.

¹⁹ Thus distinguishing, it is apparent that Solomon is not brought into comparison, in respect to perfection of wisdom, with Adam or with Christ.

ing, and thus it can stand with that which thou believest of the first father, and of our Delight.²⁰ And let this be ever as lead to thy feet, to make thee move slow as a weary man, both to the YES and to the NO which thou seest not; for he is very low among the fools who affirms or denies without distinction, alike in the one and in the other case: because it happens, that oftentimes the current opinion bends in false direction, and then the inclination binds the understanding. Far more than vainly does he leave the bank, since he returns not such as be sets out, who fishes for the truth, and has not the art;²¹ and of this are manifest proofs to the world Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson,²² and many others who went on and knew not whither. So did Sabellius, and Arius,²³ and those fools who were as swords unto the Scriptures in making their straight faces crooked. Let not the people still

²⁰ Christ.

²¹ Because he returns not only empty-handed, but with his mind perverted.

²² Heathen philosophers who went astray in seeking for the truth.

²³ Sabellius denied the Trinity, Arius denied the Consubstantiality of the word.

be too secure in judgment, like him who reckons up the blades in the field ere they are ripe. For I have seen the briar first show itself stiff and wild all winter long, then bear the rose upon its top. And I have seen a bark ere now ran straight and swift across the sea through all its course, to perish at last at entrance of the harbor. Let not dame Bertha and master Martin, seeing one rob, and another make offering, believe to see them within the Divine counsel:²⁴ for the one may rise and the other may fall."

CANTO XIV. *At the prayer of Beatrice, Solomon tells of the glorified body of the blessed after the Last Judgment.—Ascent to the Heaven of Mars.—Souls of the Soldiery of Christ in the form of a Cross with the figure of Christ thereon.—Hymn of the Spirits.*

FROM THE CENTRE TO THE RIM, and so from the rim to the centre, the water in a round vessel moves, according as it is struck from without or within. This which I say fell suddenly into my mind when the glorious life of Thomas became silent, because of the similitude which was born of his speech and that of Beatrice, whom after him it pleased thus to begin,¹ "This man has need, and he tells it not to you, neither with his voice nor as yet in thought, of going to the root of another truth. Tell him if the light wherewith your substance blossoms will remain with you eternally even as it is now; and if it remain, tell how, after you shall be again made visible, it will be possible that it hurt not your sight."²

¹ St. Thomas had spoken from his place in the ring which formed a circle around Beatrice and Dante; Beatrice now was speaking from the centre where she stood.

² The souls of the blessed are hidden in the light which emanates from them; after the resurrection of the body they will become visible, but then how will the bodily eyes endure such brightness?

²⁴ To understand the mystery of predestination.

As, when urged and drawn by greater pleasure, those who are dancing in a ring with one accord lift their voice and gladden their motions, so, at that prompt and devout petition, the holy circles showed new joy in their turning and in their marvellous melody. Whoso laments because man dies here in order to live thereabove, has not seen here the refreshment of the eternal rain.

That One and Two and Three which ever lives, and ever reigns in Three and Two and One, uncircumscribed, and circumscribing everything, was thrice sung by each of those spirits with such a melody that for every merit it would be a just reward. And I heard in the divinest light of the small circle a modest voice,³ perhaps such as was that of the Angel to Mary, make answer, “As long as the festival of Paradise shall be, so long will our love radiate around us such a garment. Its brightness follows our ardor, the ardor our vision, and that is great in proportion as it receives of grace above its own worth. When the glorious and sanctified flesh shall be put on us again, our persons will be more pleasing through being all complete; wherefore whatever of gratuitous light

³ Probably that of Solomon, who in the tenth Canto is said to be “the light which is the most beautiful among us.”

the Supreme Good gives us will be increased,—light which enables us to see him; so that our vision needs must increase, our ardor increase which by that is kindled, our radiance increase which comes from this. But even as a coal which gives forth flame, and by a vivid glow surpasses it, so that it defends its own aspect,⁴ thus this effulgence, which already encircles us, will be vanquished in appearance by the flesh which all this while the earth covers. Nor will so great a light be able to fatigue us, for the organs of the body will be strong for everything which shall have power to delight us.” So sudden and ready both one and the other choir seemed to me in saying “Amen,” that truly they showed desire for their dead bodies, perhaps not only for themselves, but also for their mothers, for their fathers, and for the others who were dear before they became sempiternal flames.

And lo! round about, of a uniform brightness, arose a lustre, outside that which was there, like an horizon which is growing bright. And even as at rise of early evening new appearances begin in the heavens, so that the sight seems and seems not true, it seemed to me that there I began to see

⁴ The coal is seen glowing through the flame.

new subsistences, and a circle forming outside the other two circumferences. O true sparkling of the Holy Spirit, how sudden and glowing it became to mine eyes, which, vanquished, endured it not! But Beatrice showed herself to me so beautiful and smiling that she must be left among those sights which have not followed my memory.

Thence my eyes regained power to raise themselves again, and I saw myself alone with my Lady transferred to higher salvation.⁵

That I was more uplifted I perceived clearly by the fiery smile of the star, which seemed to me ruddier than its wont. With all my heart and with that speech which is one in all men,⁶ I made to God a holocaust such as was befitting to the new grace; and the ardor of the sacrifice was not yet exhausted in my breast when I knew that offering had been accepted and propitious; for with such great glow and such great ruddiness splendors appeared to me within two rays, that I said, “O Helios,⁷ who dost so array them!”

⁵ To a higher grade of blessedness, that of the Fifth Heaven.

⁶ The unuttered voice of the soul.

⁷ Whether Dante forms this word from the Hebrew Eli (my God), or adopts the Greek {Greek here} (sun), is uncertain.

Even as, marked out by less and greater lights, the Galaxy so whitens between the poles of the world that it indeed makes the wise to doubt,⁸ thus, constellated in the depth of Mars, those rays made the venerable sign which joinings of quadrants in a circle make. Here my memory overcomes my genius, for that Cross was flashing forth Christ, so that I know not to find worthy comparison. But he who takes his cross and follows Christ will yet excuse me for that which I omit, when in that brightness he beholds Christ gleaming.

From horn to horn⁹ and between the top and the base lights were moving, brightly scintillating as they met together and in their passing by. Thus here¹⁰ are seen, straight and athwart, swift and slow, changing appearance, the atoms of bodies, long and short, moving through the sunbeam, where-with sometimes the shade is striped which people contrive with skill and art for their protection. And as a viol or harp, strung in harmony of many strings, makes a sweet tinkling to one by whom the tune is not caught, thus from the lights

⁸ “Concerning the GaJaxy philosophers have held different opinions.”—Convito, 115.

⁹ From arm to arm of the cross.

¹⁰ On earth.

which there appeared to me a melody was gathered through the Cross, which rapt me without understanding of the hymn. Truly was I aware that it was of holy praise, because there came to me “Arise and conquer!” as unto one who understands not, and yet bears. I was so enamoured therewith that until then had not been anything which had fettered me with such sweet bonds. Perchance my word appears too daring, in setting lower the pleasure from the beautiful eyes, gazing into which my desire has repose. But he who considers that the living seals¹¹ of every beauty have more effect the higher they are, and that I there had not turned round to those eyes, can excuse me for that whereof I accuse myself in order to excuse myself, and see that I speak truth; for the holy pleasure is not here excluded, because it becomes the purer as it mounts.

¹¹ The Heavens, which are “the seal of mortal wax” (Canto VIII.), increase in power as they are respectively nearer the Empyrean, so that the joy in each, as it is higher up, is greater than in the heavens below. To this time Dante had felt no joy equal to that afforded him by this song. But a still greater joy awaited him in the eyes of Beatrice, to which, since he entered the Fifth Heaven, he had not turned, but which there, as elsewhere, were to afford the supreme delight.

CANTO XV. *Dante is welcomed by his ancestor, Cacciaguida.—Cacciaguida tells of his family, and of the simple life of Florence in the old days.*

A BENIGN WILL, wherein the love which righteously inspires always manifests itself, as cupidity does in the evil will, imposed silence on that sweet lyre, and quieted the holy strings which the right hand of heaven slackens and draws tight. How unto just petitions shall those substances be deaf, who, in order to give me wish to pray unto them, were concordant in silence? Well is it that be endlessly should grieve who, for the love of thing which endures not eternally, despoils him of that love.

As, through the tranquil and pure evening skies, a sudden fire shoots from time to time, moving the eyes which were at rest, and seems to be a star which changes place, except that from the region where it is kindled nothing is lost, and it lasts short while, so, from the arm which extends on the right, to the foot of that Cross, ran a star of the constellation which is resplendent there. Nor from its ribbon did the gem depart, but through the radial strip it ran along and seemed

like fire behind alabaster. Thus did the pious shade of Anchises advance (if our greatest Muse merits belief), when in Elysium he perceived his son.¹

“O sanguis meus! o superinfusa gratia Dei! sicut tibi, cui bis unquam coeli janua reclusa?”² Thus that light; whereat I gave heed to it; then I turned my sight to my Lady, and on this side and that I was wonderstruck; for within her eyes was glowing such a smile, that with my own I thought to touch the depth of my grace and of my Paradise.

Then, gladsome to hear and to see, the spirit joined to his beginning things which I understood not, he spoke so profoundly. Nor did he hide himself to me by choice, but by necessity, for his conception was set above the mark of mortals. And when the bow of his ardent affection was so relaxed that his speech descended towards the mark of our understanding, the first thing that was understood by me was,

¹ “And he (Anchises), when he saw Aeneas advancing to meet him over the grass, stretched forth both hands eagerly, and the tears poured down his cheeks, and he cried out, ‘Art thou come at length?’”—*Aeneid*, vi. 684-7.

² “O blood of mine! O grace of God poured from above! To whom, as to thee, was ever the gate of Heaven twice opened?”

“Blessed be Thou, Trinal, and One who in my offspring art so courteous.” And he went on, “Grateful and long hunger, derived from reading in the great vouime where white or dark is never changed,³ thou hast relieved, my son, within this light in which I speak to thee, thanks to Her who clothed thee with plumes for the lofty flight. Thou believest that thy thought flows to me from that which is first; even as from the unit, if that be known, ray out the five and six. And therefore who I am, and why I appear to thee more joyous than any other in this glad crowd, thou askest me not. Thou believest the truth; for the less and the great of this life gaze upon the mirror in which, before thou thinkest, thou dost display thy thought. But in order that the sacred Love, in which I watch with perpetual sight, and which makes me thirst with sweet desire, may be fulfilled the better, let thy voice, secure, bold, and glad, utter the wish, utter the desire, to which my answer is already decreed.”

I turned me to Beatrice, and she heard before I spoke, and smiled to me a sign which made the wings to my desire grow: and I began thus: “When the first Equality appeared to you,

³ In the mind of God, in which there is no change.

the affection and the intelligence became of one weight for each of you; because the Sun which illumined and warmed you is of such equality in its heat and in its light that all similitudes are defective. But will and discourse in mortals, for the reason which is manifest to you, are diversely feathered in their wings.⁴ Wherefore I, who am mortal, feel myself in this inequality,⁵ and therefore I give not thanks, save with my heart, for thy paternal welcome. Truly I beseech thee, living topaz that dost ingem this precious jewel, that thou make me content with thy name?" "O leaf of mine, in whom, while only awaiting, I took pleasure, I was thy root." Such a beginning he, answering, made to me. Then he said to me: "He from whom thy family is named,⁶ and who for a hundred years and more has circled the mountain on the first ledge, was my son and was thy great-grandsire. Truly it

⁴ But will and the discourse of reason, corresponding to affection and intelligence, are unequal in mortals, owing to their imperfection.

⁵ Which makes it impossible for me to give full expression to my gratitude and affection.

⁶ Alighiero, from whom, it would appear from his station in Purgatory, Dante inherited the sin of pride, as well as his name.

behooves that thou shorten for him his long fatigue with thy works. Florence, within the ancient circle wherefrom she still takes both tierce and nones,⁷ was abiding in sober and modest peace. She had not necklace nor coronal, nor dames with ornamented shoes, nor girdle which was more to be looked at than the person. Not yet did the daughter at her birth cause fear to the father, for the time and dowry did not evade measure on this side and that.⁸ She had not houses void of families;⁹ Sardanapalus had not yet arrived¹⁰ there to show what can be done in a chamber. Not yet by your Uccellatoio was Montemalo surpassed, which, as it has been surpassed

⁷ The bell of the church called the Badia, or Abbey, which stood within the old walls of Florence, rang daily the hours for worship, and measured the time for the Florentines. Tierce is the first division of the canonical hours of the day, from six to nine; nones, the third, from twelve to three.

⁸ They were not married so young as now, nor were such great dowries required for them.

⁹ Palaces too large for their occupants, built for ostentation.

¹⁰ The luxury and effeminacy of Sardanapalus were proverbial.

in its rise, shall be so in its fall.¹¹ I saw Bellincion Berti¹² go girt with leather and bone,¹³ and his dame come from her mirror without a painted face. And I saw them of the Nerli, and them of the Vecchio,¹⁴ contented with the uncovered skin,¹⁵ and their dames with the spindle and the distaff. O fortunate women! Every one was sure of her burial place;¹⁶ and as yet no one was deserted in her bed for France.¹⁷ One over the cradle kept her careful watch, and, comforting, she used the idiom which first amuses fathers and mothers. An-

¹¹ Not yet was the view from Montemalo, or Monte Mario, of Rome in its splendor surpassed by that of Florence from the height of Uccellatoio; and the fall of Florence shall be greater even than that of Rome.

¹² Bellincion Berti was “an honorable citizen of Florence,” says Giovanni Villani; “a noble soldier,” adds Benvenuto da Imola. He was father of the “good Gualdrada.” See Hell, XVI.

¹³ With a plain leathern belt fastened with a clasp of bone.

¹⁴ Two ancient and honored families.

¹⁵ Clothed in garments of plain dressed skin not covered with cloth.

¹⁶ Not fearing to die in exile.

¹⁷ Left by her husband seeking fortune in France, or other foreign lands.

other, drawing the tresses from her distaff, told tales to her household of the Trojans, and of Fiesole, and of Rome.¹⁸ A Cianghella,¹⁹ a Lapo Salterello would then have been held as great a marvel as Cincinnatus or Cornelia would be now.

“To such a tranquil, to such a beautiful life of citizens, to such a trusty citizenship, to such a sweet inn, Mary, called on with loud cries,²⁰ gave me; and in your ancient Baptistry I became at once a Christian and Cacciaguida. Moronto was my brother, and Eliseo; my dame came to me from the valley of the Po, and thence was thy surname. Afterward I followed the emperor Conrad.²¹ and he belted me of his soldiery,²² so much by good deeds did I come into his favor. Following him I went against the iniquity of that law²³ whose people usurp your right,²⁴ though fault of the shepherd.

¹⁸ These old tales may be read in the first book of Villani’s Chronicle.

¹⁹ “Mulier arrogantissima et intolerabilis . . . multum lubrice vixit,” says Benvenuto da Imola, who describes Lapo Salterello as temerarius et pravus civis, vir litigiosus et linguosus.”

²⁰ The Virgin, called on in the pains of childbirth.

²¹ Conrad III. of Suabia. In 1143 he joined in the second Crusade.

²² Made me a belted knight.

²³ The law of Mahomet.

²⁴ The Holy Land, by right belonging to the Christians.

There by that base folk was I released from the deceitful world, the love of which pollutes many souls, and I came from martyrdom to this peace.”

CANTO XVI. *The boast of blood.—Cacciaguida continues his discourse concerning the old and the new Florence.*

O THOU SMALL NOBLENESSE of our blood! If thou makest folk glory in thee down here, where our affection languishes, it will nevermore be a marvel to me; for there, where appetite is not perverted, I mean in Heaven, I myself gloried in thee. Truly art thou a cloak which quickly shortens, so that, if day by day it be not pieced, Time goeth round about it with his shears.

With the YOU,¹ which Rome first tolerated, in which her family least perseveres,² my words began again. Whereat Beatrice, who was a little withdrawn,³ smiling, seemed like her⁴ who coughed at the first fault that is written of Guenever.

¹ The plural pronoun, used as a mark of respect. This usage was introduced in the later Roman Empire.

² The Romans no longer show respect to those worthy of it.

³ Beatrice stands a little aside, theology having no part in this colloquy. She smiles, not reproachfully, at Dante's vainglory.

⁴ The Dame de Malehault, who coughed at seeing the first kiss given by Lancelot to Guenever. The incident is not told in any of the printed versions of the Romance of Lancelot, but it has been found by Mr. Paget Toynbee in several of the manuscripts.

I began, "You are my father, you give me all confidence to speak; you lift me so that I am more than I. Through so many streams is my mind filled with gladness that it makes of itself a joy, in that it can bear this and not burst.⁵ Tell me then, beloved first source of me, who were your ancestors, and what were the years that were numbered in your boyhood. Tell me of the sheepfold of St. John,⁶ how large it was then, and who were the people within it worthy of the highest seats."

As a coal quickens to flame at the blowing of the winds, so I saw that light become resplendent at my blandishments, and as it became more beautiful to my eyes, so with voice more dulcet and soft, but not with this modern speech, it said to me, "From that clay on which Ave was said, unto the birth in which my mother, who now is sainted, was lightened of me with whom she was burdened, this fire had come to its Lion⁷ five hundred, fifty, and thirty times to reinflame

⁵ Rejoices that it has capacity to endure such great joy.

⁶ Florence, whose patron saint was St. John the Baptist.

⁷—Mars

As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.—Maud, part III. The Lion is the sign Leo in the Zodiac, appropriate to Mars by supposed conformity of disposition.

itself beneath his paw.⁸ My ancestors and I were born in the place where the last ward is first found by him who runs in your annual game.⁹ Let it suffice to hear this of my elders. Who they were, and whence they came thither, it is more becoming to leave untold than to recount.

"All those able to bear arms who at that time were there, between Mars and the Baptist,¹⁰ were the fifth of them who are living. But the citizenship, which is now mixed with Campi and with Certaldo and with Figghine,¹¹ was to be seen pure in the lowest artisan. Oh, how much better it would be that those folk of whom I speak were neighbors, and to

⁸ Five hundred and eighty revolutions of Mars are accomplished in a little more than ten hundred and ninety years.

⁹ The place designated was the boundary of the division of the city called that of "the Gate of St. Peter," where the Corso passes by the Mercato Vecchio or Old Market. The races were run along the Corso on the 24th June, the festival of St. John the Baptist.

¹⁰ Between the Ponte Vecchio, at the head of which stood the statue of Mars, and the Baptistry,—two points marking the circuit of the ancient walls.

¹¹ Small towns not far from Florence, from which, as from many others, there had been emigration to the thriving city, to the harm of its own people.

have your confine at Galluzzo and at Trespiano,¹² than to have them within, and to endure the stench of the churl of Aguglione,¹³ and of him of Signa, who already has his eye sharp for barratry!

“If the people which most degenerates in the world¹⁴ had not been as a stepdame unto Caesar, but like a mother benignant to her son, there is one now a Florentine¹⁵ who changes money and traffics, who would have returned to Simifonti, there where his grandsire used to go begging. Montemurlo would still belong to its Counts, the Cerchi would be in the parish of Accone, and perhaps the Buondelmonti in

¹² It would have been better to keep these people at a distance, as neighbors, and to have narrow bounds for the territory of the city.

¹³ The churl of Aguglione was, according to Benvenuto da Imola, a lawyer named Baldo, “qui fuit magnus canis.” He became one of the priors of Florence in 1311. He of Signa is supposed to have been one Bonifazio, who, says Buti, “sold his favors and offices.”

¹⁴ If the clergy had not quarrelled with the Emperor, bringing about factions and disturbances in the world.

¹⁵ “I have not discovered who this is,” says Buti.

Valdigreve.¹⁶ The confusion of persons has always been the beginning of the harm of the city, as in the body the food which is added.¹⁷ And a blind bull falls more headlong than the blind lamb; and oftentimes one sword cuts more and better than five. If thou regardest Luni and Urbisaglia,¹⁸ how they have gone, and how Chiusi and Sinigaglia are going their way after them, to hear how families are undone will not appear to thee a strange thing or a bard, since cities have their term.¹⁹ Your things all have their death even as ye; but it is concealed in some that last long, while lives are short. And as the revolution of the heaven of the Moon covers and uncovers the shores without a pause, so fortune does with Florence. Wherefore what I shall tell of the

¹⁶ The Conti Guidi had been compelled to sell to the Florentines their stronghold of Montemurlo, because they could not defend it from the Pistoians. The Cerchi and the Buondelmonti had been forced by the Florentine Commune to give up their fortresses and to take up their abode in the city, where they became powerful, and where the bitterness of intestine discord and party strife had been greatly enhanced by their quarrels.

¹⁷ Food added to that already in process of digestion.

¹⁸ Cities once great, now fallen.

¹⁹ Cities longer-lived than families.

high Florentines, whose fame is hidden by time, should not appear to thee a marvellous thing. I saw the Ughi, and I saw the Catellini, Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, and Alberichi, even in their decline, illustrious citizens; and I saw, as great as they were old, with those of the Sannella, those of the Area, and Soldanieri, and Ardinghi, and Bostiebi.²⁰ Over the gate which at present is laden with new felony²¹ of such weight that soon there will be jettison from the bark,²² were the Ravignani, from whom the Count Guido is descended,²³ and whosoever since has taken the name of the high Bellincione. He of the Pressa knew already bow one needs to rule, and Galigaio already had in his house the gilded hilt and pummel.²⁴ Great were already the column of the

²⁰ All once great families, but now extinct, or fallen.

²¹ Above the gate of St. Peter rose the walls of the abode of the Cerchi, the head of the White faction.

²² The casting overboard was the driving out of the leaders of the Whites in 1302.

²³ The Count Guido married Gualdrada, the daughter of Bellincione Berti.

²⁴ Symbols of knighthood; the use of gold in their accoutrements being reserved for knights.

Vair,²⁵ the Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti, and Barucci, and Galli, and they who blush for the bushel.²⁶ The stock from which the Calfucci sprang was already great, and already the Sizii. and Arrigucci had been drawn to curule chairs.²⁷ Oh how great did I see those who have been undone by their pride!²⁸ and the balls of gold²⁹ made Florence flourish with all their great deeds. So did the fathers of those who always, when your church is vacant, become fat, staying in consistory.³⁰ The overweening race which is as a dragon behind him who flies, and to him who

²⁵ The family of the Pigli, whose scatcheon was, in heraldic terms, gules, a pale, vair; in other words, a red shield divided longitudinally by a stripe of the heraldic representation of the fur called vair.

²⁶ The Chiaramontesi, one of whom in the old days, being the officer in charge of the sale of salt for the Commune, had cheated both the Commune and the people by using a false measure. See Purgatory, Canto XII.

²⁷ To high civic office.

²⁸ The Uberti, the great family of which Farinata was the most renowned member.

²⁹ The Lamberti, who bore golden balls on their shields.

³⁰ The Visdomini, patrons of the Bishopric of Florence, who, after the death of a bishop, by deferring the appointment of his successor grew fat on the episcopal revenues.

shows tooth or purse is gentle as a lamb,³¹ already was coming up, but from small folk, so that it pleased not Ubertin Donato that his father-in-law should afterwards make him their relation.³² Already had Caponsacco descended into the market place down from Fiesole, and already was Giuda a good citizen, and Infangato.³³ I will tell a thing incredible and true: into the little circle one entered by a gate which was named for those of the Pear.³⁴ Every one who bears the beautiful ensign of the

³¹ The Adimari. Benvenuto da Imola reports that one Boccacino Adimari, after Dante's banishment, got possession of his property, and always afterward was his bitter enemy.

³² Ubertin Donato married a daughter of Bellincion Berti, and was displeased that her sister should afterwards be given to one of the Adimari.

³³ There seems to be a touch of humor in these three names of "Head in bag," "Judas," and "Bemired."

³⁴ The Peruzzi, who bore the pear as a charge upon their scutcheon. The incredible thing may have been that the people were so simple and free from jealousy as to allow a public gate to bear the name of a private family. The "little circle" was the circle of the old walls.

great baron³⁵ whose name and whose praise the feast of Thomas revives, from him had knighthood and privilege; although to-day he who binds it with a border unites himself with the populace.³⁶ Already there were Gualterotti and Importuni; and Borgo³⁷ would now be more quiet, if they had gone hung for new neighbors. The house of which was born your weeping,³⁸ through its just indignation which has slain you, and put an end to your glad living, was honored, both itself and its con-

³⁵ Hugh, imperial vicar of Tuscany in the time of Otho II. and Otho III. He died on St. Thomas's Day, December 21st, 1006, and was buried in the Badia, the foundation of which is ascribed to him; there his monument is still to be seen, and there of old, on the anniversary of his death, a discourse in his praise was delivered. Several families, whose heads were knighted by him, adopted his arms, with some distinctive addition. His scutcheon was paly of four, argent and gules.

³⁶ Giano della Bella, the great leader of the Florentine commonalty in the latter years of the 13th century. He bore the arms of Hugh with a border of gold.

³⁷ The Borgo Sant' Apostolo, the quarter of the city in which these families lived, would have been more tranquil if the Buondelmonti had not come to take up their abode in it.

³⁸ The Amidei, who were the source of much of the misery of Florence, through their long and bitter feud with the Buondelmonti, by which the whole city was divided.

sorts. O Buondelmonte, how ill didst thou flee its nuptials through the persuasions of another! ³⁹ Many would be glad who now are sorrowful, if God had conceded thee to the Ema⁴⁰ the first time that thou camest to the city. But it behoved that Florence in her last peace should offer a victim to that broken stone which guards the bridge.⁴¹

“With these families, and with others with them, I saw Florence in such repose that she had no occasion why she should weep. With these families I saw her people so glorious and so just, that the lily was never set reversed upon the staff, nor had it been made blood-red by division.”⁴²

³⁹ The quarrel between the Amidei and the Buondelmonti arose from the slighting by Buondelmonto dei Buondelmonti of a daughter of the former house, to whom he was betrothed, for a daughter of the Donati, induced thereto by her mother. This was in 1215.

⁴⁰ The Ema, a little stream that has to be crossed in coming from Montebuono, the home of the Buondelmonti, to Florence.

⁴¹ That victim was Buondelmonte himself, slain by the outraged Amidei, at the foot of the mutilated statue of Mars, which stood at the end of the Ponte Vecchio.

⁴² The banner of Florence had never fallen into the hands of her enemies, to be reversed by them in scoff. Of old it had

borne a white lily in a red field, but in 1250, when the Ghibellines were expelled, the Guelphs adopted a red lily in a white field, and this became the ensign of the Commune.

CANTO XVII. *Dante questions Cacciaguida as to his fortunes.—Cacciaguida replies, foretelling the exile of Dante, and the renown of his Poem.*

AS HE WHO STILL MAKES fathers chary toward their sons¹ came to Clymene, to ascertain concerning that which he had heard against himself; such was I, and such was I perceived to be both by Beatrice, and by the holy lamp which first for my sake had changed its station. Whereon my Lady said to me, “Send forth the flame of thy desire so that it may issue sealed well by the internal stamp; not in order that our knowledge may increase through thy speech, but that thou accustom thyself to tell thy thirst, so that one may give thee drink.”

“O dear plant of me, who so upliftest thyself that, even as earthly minds see that two obtuse angles are not contained in a triangle, so thou, gazing upon the point to which all times are present, seest contingent things, ere in themselves they are; while I was conjoined with Virgil up over the mountain which cures the souls, and while descending in the world

¹ Phaethon, son of Clymene by Apollo, having been told that Apollo was not his father, went to his mother to ascertain the truth.

of the dead, grave words were said to me of my future life; although I feel myself truly four-square against the blows of chance. Wherefore my wish would be content by hearing what sort of fortune is drawing near me; for arrow foreseen comes more slack.” Thus said I unto that same light which before had spoken to me, and as Beatrice willed was my wish confessed.

Not with ambiguous terms in which the foolish folk erst were entangled,² ere yet the Lamb of God which taketh away sins had been slain, but with clear words and with distinct speech that paternal love, hid and apparent by his own proper smile, made answer: “Contingency, which extends not outside the volume of your matter, is all depicted in the eternal aspect. Therefrom, however, it takes not necessity, more than from the eye in which it is mirrored does a ship which descends with the downward current. Thence, even as sweet harmony comes to the ear from an organ, comes to my sight the time that is preparing for thee. As Hippolytus departed from Athens, by reason of his pitiless and perfidious step-mother, so out from Florence thou must needs depart. This

² Not with riddles such as the oracles gave out before they fell silent at the coming of Christ.

is willed, this is already sought for, and soon it shall be brought to pass, by him I who designs it there where every day Christ is bought and sold. The blame will follow the injured party, in outcry, as it is wont; but the vengeance will be testimony to the truth which dispenses it. Thou shalt leave everything beloved most dearly; and this is the arrow which the bow of exile first shoots. Thou shalt prove how the bread of others savors of salt, and how the descending and the mounting of another's stairs is a hard path. And that which will heaviest weigh upon thy shoulders will be the evil and foolish company³ with which into this valley thou shalt fall; which all ungrateful, all senseless, and impious will turn against thee; but short while after, it, not thou, shall have the forehead red therefor. Of its bestiality, its own procedure will give the proof; so that it will be seemly for thee to have made thyself a party by thyself.⁴

"Thy first refuge and first inn shall be the courtesy of the great Lombard,⁵ who upon the ladder bears the holy bird,

³ Boniface VIII.

⁴ The other Florentine exiles of the party of the Whites.

⁵ Bartolommeo della Scala, lord of Verona, whose armorial bearings were the imperial eagle upon a ladder (scala).

who will turn such benign regard on thee that, in doing and in asking, between you two, that will be first, which between others is the slowest. With him shalt thou see one,⁶ who was so impressed, at his birth, by this strong star, that his deeds will be notable. Not yet are the people aware of him, because of his young age; for only nine years have these wheels revolved around him. But ere the Gascon cheat the lofty Henry⁷ some sparkles of his virtue shall appear, in caring not for silver nor for toils. His magnificences shall hereafter be so known, that his enemies shall not be able to keep their tongues mute about them. Await thou for him, and for his benefits; by him shall many people be transformed, rich and mendicant changing condition. And thou shalt bear hence written of him in thy mind, but thou shalt not tell it;" and he said things incredible to those who shall be present. Then he added, "Son, these are the glosses on what was said to

⁶ Can Grande della Scala, the youngest brother of Bartolommeo, and finally his successor as lord of Verona.

⁷ Before Pope Clement V., under whom the Papal seat was established at Avignon, shall deceive the Emperor, Henry VII, by professions of support, while secretly promoting opposition to his expedition to Italy in 1310.

thee; behold the ambushes which are bidden behind few revolutions. Yet would I not that thou bate thy neighbors, because thy life hath a future far beyond the punishment of their perfidies."

When by its silence that holy soul showed it had finished putting the woof into that web which I had given it warped, I began, as he who, in doubt, longs for counsel from a person who sees, and uprightly wills, and loves: "I see well, my Father, how the time spurs on toward me to give me such a blow as is heaviest to him who most deserts himself; wherefore it is good that I arm me with foresight, so that if the place most dear be taken from me, I should not lose the others by my songs. Down through the world of endless bitterness, and over the mountain from whose fair summit the eyes of my Lady have lifted me, and afterward through the heavens from light to light, I have learned that which, if I repeat it, shall be to many a savor keenly sour; and if I am a timid friend to the truth I fear to lose life among those who will call this time the olden." The light, in which my treasure which I had found there was smiling, first became flashing as a mirror of gold in the sunbeam; then it replied, "A

conscience dark, either with its own or with another's shame, will indeed feel thy speech as harsh; but nevertheless, all falsehood laid aside, make thy whole vision manifest, and let the scratching be even where the itch is; for if at the first taste thy voice shall be molestful, afterwards, when it shall be digested, it will leave vital nourishment. This cry of thine shall do as the wind, which heaviest strikes the loftiest summits; and that will be no little argument of honor. Therefore to thee have been shown within these wheels, upon the mountain, and in the woeful valley, only the souls which are known of fame. For the mind of him who bears rests not, nor confirms its faith, through an example which has its root unknown and hidden, nor by other argument which is not apparent."

CANTO XVIII. *The Spirits in the Cross of Mars.—Ascent to the Heaven of Jupiter.—Words shaped in light upon the planet by the Spirits.—Denunciation of the avarice of the Popes.*

NOW WAS THAT BLESSED MIRROR enjoying alone its own word,¹ and I was tasting mine, tempering the bitter with the sweet. and that Lady who to God was leading me said, “Change thy thought; think that I am near to Him who lifts the burden of every wrong.” I turned me round at the loving sound of my Comfort, and what love I then saw in the holy eyes, I here leave it; not only because I distrust my own speech, but because of the memory which cannot return so far above itself, unless another guide it. Thus much of that moment can I recount, that, again beholding her, my affection was free from every other desire.

While the eternal pleasure, which was raying directly upon Beatrice, from her fair face was contenting me with its second aspect,² vanquishing me with the light of a smile, she said to me, “Turn thee, and listen, for not only in my eyes is Paradise.”

¹ Its own thoughts in contemplation.

² Its aspect reflected from the eyes of Beatrice.

As sometimes here one sees the affection in the countenance, if it be so great that by it the whole soul is occupied, so in the flaming of the holy effulgence to which I turned me, I recognized the will in it still to speak somewhat with me. It began, “In this fifth threshold of the tree, which lives from its top, and always bears fruit, and never loses leaf, are blessed spirits, who below, before they came to heaven, were of great renown, so that every Muse would be rich with them. Therefore gaze upon the arms of the Cross; he, whom I shall name, will there do that which within a cloud its own swift fire does.” At the naming of Joshua, even as he did it, I saw a light drawn over the Cross; nor was the word noted by me before the act. And at the name of the lofty Maccabeus³ I saw another move revolving, and gladness was the whip of the top. Thus for Charlemagne and for Roland my attentive gaze followed two of them, as the eye follows its falcon as be flies. Afterward William, and Renouard,⁴ and the duke Godfrey,⁵ and Robert Guiscard⁶ drew my sight over that

³ Judas Maccabeus, who “was renowned to the utmost part of the earth.” See I Maccabees, ii-ix.

⁴ Two heroes of romance, paladins of Charlemagne.

⁵ Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of the first crusade.

⁶ The founder of the Norman kingdom of Naples.

Cross. Then, moving, and mingling among the other lights, the soul which had spoken with me showed me how great an artist it was among the singers of heaven.

I turned me round to my right side to see my duty signified in Beatrice either by speech or by act, and I saw her eyes so clear, so joyous, that her semblance surpassed her other and her latest wont. And even as, through feeling more delight in doing good, a man from day to day becomes aware that his virtue is advancing, so I became aware that my circling round together with the heaven had increased its are, seeing that miracle more adorned. And such as is the change, in brief passage of time, in a pale lady, when her countenance is unlading the load of bashfulness, such was there in my eyes, when I had turned, because of the whiteness of the temperate sixth star which had received, me within itself.⁷ I saw, within that torch of Jove, the sparkling of the love which was there shape out our speech to my eyes. And as birds, risen from the river-bank, as if rejoicing together over their food, make of themselves a troop now round, now of some

⁷ The change is from the red light of Mars to the white light of Jupiter, a planet called by astrologers the “temperate” star, as lying between the heat of Mars and the coldness of Saturn.

other shape, so within the lights⁸ holy creatures were singing as they flew, and made of themselves now D, now I, now L, in their proper shapes.⁹ First, singing, they moved to their melody, then becoming one of these characters, they stopped a little, and were silent.

O divine Pegasea,¹⁰ who makest the wits of men glorious, and renderest them long-lived, as they, through thee, the cities and the kingdoms, illume me with thyself that I may set in relief their shapes, as I have conceived them I let thy power appear in these brief verses!

They showed themselves then in five times seven vowels and consonants; and I noted the parts as they seemed spoken to me. Diligite justitiam were first verb and noun of all the picture; qui judicatis terram¹¹ were the last. Then in the M of the fifth word they remained arranged, so that Jove

⁸ The sparkles of the love which was there.

⁹ The first letters of Diligite, as shortly appears.

¹⁰ An appellation appropriate to any one of the Muses (whose fountain Hippocrene sprang at the stamp of Pegasus); here probably applied to Urania, already once invoked by the poet (*Purgatory, XXIX.*).

¹¹ “Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth.”—Wisdom of Solomon, i. 1.

seemed silver patterned there with gold. And I saw other lights descending where the top of the M was, and become quiet there, singing, I believe, the Good which moves them to itself. Then, as on the striking of burnt logs rise innumerable sparks, wherefrom the foolish are wont to draw auguries, there seemed to rise again thence more than a thousand lights, and mount, one much and one little, according as the Sun which kindles them allotted them; and, each having become quiet in its place, I saw the head and the neck of an eagle represented by that patterned fire. He who paints there, has none who may guide Him, but Himself guides, and by Him is inspired that virtue which is form for the nests.¹² The rest of the blessed spirits, which at first seemed content to be enlilied¹³ on the M, with a slight motion followed out the imprint.

O sweet star, how great gems and how many showed to

¹² The words are obscure; they may mean that a virtue, or instinct, similar to that which teaches the bird to build its nest, directed the shaping of these letters.

¹³ Ingigliare, a word invented by Dante, and used only by him. The meaning is that these spirits seemed first to form a lily on the M.

me that our justice is the effect of that heaven which thou ingemnest! Wherefore I pray the Mind, in which thy motion and thy virtue have their source, that It regard whence issues the smoke which spoils thy radiance, so that now a second time It may be wroth at the buying and selling within the temple which was walled with signs and martyrdoms. O soldiery of the Heaven on which I gaze, pray ye for those who are on earth all gone astray after the bad example! Of old it was the wont to make war with swords, but now it is made by taking, now here now there, the bread which the piteous Father locks up from none.

But thou that writest only in order to cancel,¹⁴ bethink thee that Peter and Paul, who died for the vineyard which thou art laying waste, are still alive. Thou mayest indeed say, "I have my desire set so on him who willed to live alone, and for a dance was dragged to martyrdom¹⁵ that I know not the Fisherman nor Paul."

¹⁴ The Pope, who writes censures, excommunications, and the like, only that he may be paid to cancel thorn.

¹⁵ The image of St. John Baptist was on the florin, which was the chief object of desire of the Pope.

CANTO XIX. *The voice of the Eagle.—It speaks of the mysteries of Divine justice; of the necessity of Faith for salvation; of the sins of certain kings.*

THE BEAUTIFUL IMAGE, which in its sweet fruition was making joyful the interwoven souls, appeared before me with outspread wings. Each soul appeared a little ruby on which a ray of the sun glowed so enkindled that it reflected him into My eyes. And that which it now behoves me to describe, no voice ever reported, nor ink wrote, nor was it ever conceived by the fancy; for I saw, and also heard the beak speaking, and uttering with the voice both I and MY, when in conception it was WE and OUR.¹

And it began, “Through being just and pious am I here exalted to that glory which lets not itself be conquered by desire; and on earth I left my memory such that the evil people there commend it, but continue not its story.” Thus a single heat makes itself felt from many embers, even as from many loves a single sound issued from that image. Wherefore I thereon, “O perpetual flowers of the eternal glad-

¹ An image of the concordant will of the Just, and of the unity of Justice under the Empire.

ness, which make all your odors seem to me as only one, deliver me, by your breath, from the great fast which has held me long in hunger, not finding for it any food on earth. Well I know that if the Divine Justice makes any realm in heaven its mirror, yours does not apprehend it through a veil.² Ye know how intently I address myself to listen; ye know what is that doubt³ which is so old a fast to me.”

As a falcon which, issuing from his hood, moves his head, and claps his wings, showing desire, and making himself fine; so I saw this ensign, which was woven of praise of the Divine Grace, become, with songs such as he knows who thereabove rejoices. Then it began, “He who turned the compasses at the verge of the world, and distributed within it so much occult and manifest, could not so imprint His Power on all the universe that His Word should not remain in infinite excess.⁴ And this makes certain that the first proud one, who was the top of every creature, through not awaiting light, fell

² Here, if anywhere, the Divine Justice is reflected.

³ Concerning the Divine justice.

⁴ The Word, that is, the thought or wisdom of God, infinitely exceeds the expression of it in the creation.

immature.⁵ And hence it appears, that every lesser nature is a scant receptacle for that Good which has no end and measures Itself by Itself. Wherefore our vision, which needs must be some ray of the Mind with which all things are full, cannot in its own nature be so potent that it may not discern its origin to be far beyond that which is apparent to it.⁶ Therefore the sight which your world receives⁷ penetrates into the eternal justice as the eye into the sea; which, though from the shore it can see the bottom, on the ocean sees it not, and nevertheless it is there, but the depth conceals it. There is no light but that which comes from the serene which is never clouded; nay, there is darkness, either shadow of the flesh, or its poison.⁸ The hiding place is now open enough to thee,

⁵ Lucifer fell through pride, fancying himself, though a created being, equal to his Creator. Had he awaited the full light of Divine grace, he would have recognized his own inferiority.

⁶ Our vision is not powerful enough to reach the source from which it proceeds.

⁷ It is the gift of God.

⁸ There is no light but that which proceeds from God, the light of Revelation. Lacking this, man is in the darkness of ignorance, which is in the shadow of the flesh, or of sin, which is its poison.

which concealed from thee the living Justice concerning which thou madest such frequent question;⁹ for thou saidest,—‘A man is born on the bank of the Indus, and no one is there who may speak of Christ, nor who may read, nor who may write; and all his wishes and acts are good so far as human reason sees, without sin in life or in speech. He dies unbaptized, and without faith: where is this Justice which condemns him? where is his sin if he does not believe?’ Now who art thou, that wouldest sit upon a bench to judge a thousand miles away with the short vision of a single span? Assuredly, for him who subtilizes with me,¹⁰ if the Scripture were not above you, there would be occasion for doubting to a marvel. Oh earthly animals! oh gross minds!¹¹

“The primal Will, which of Itself is good, never is moved from Itself, which is the Supreme Good. So much is just as is accordant to It; no created good draws It to itself, but It,

⁹ The hiding place is the depth of the Divine decrees, which man cannot penetrate, but the justice of which in his self-confidence he undertakes to question.

¹⁰ With me, the symbol of justice.

¹¹ The Scriptures teach you that “the judgments of God are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out;” why, foolish, do ye disregard them?

raying forth, is the cause of that good.”

As above her nest the stork circles, after she has fed her brood, and as he who has been fed looks up at her, such became (and I so raised my brows) the blessed image, which moved its wings urged by so many counsels. Wheeling it sang, and said, “As are my notes to thee who understandest them not, so is the eternal judgment to you mortals.”

After those shining flames of the Holy Spirit became quiet, still in the sign which made the Romans reverend to the world, it began again, “To this kingdom no one ever ascended, who had not believed in Christ either before or after he was nailed to the tree. But behold, many cry Christ, Christ, who, at the Judgment, shall be far less near to him, than such an one who knew not Christ; and the Ethiop will condemn such Christians when the two companies shall be divided, the one forever rich, and the other poor. What will the Persians be able to say to your kings, when they shall see that volume open in which are written all their praises? ¹² There among the deeds of Albert shall be seen that which will soon

¹² The Persians, who know not Christ, will rebuke the sins of kings professedly Christians, when the book of life shall be opened at the last Judgment.

set the pen in motion, by which the kingdom of Prague shall be made desert. ¹³ There shall be seen the woe which he who shall die by the blow of a wild boar is bringing upon the Seine by falsifying the coin. ¹⁴ There shall be seen the pride that quickens thirst, which makes the Scot and the Englishman mad, so that neither can keep within his own bounds. ¹⁵ The luxury shall be seen, and the effeminate living of him of Spain, and of him of Bohemia, who never knew valor, nor wished it. ¹⁶ The goodness of the Cripple of Jerusalem shall be seen marked with a I, while an M shall mark the con-

¹³ The devastation of Bohemia in 1303, by Albert of Austria (the “German Albert” of the sixth canto of Purgatory), will soon set in motion the pen of the recording angel.

¹⁴ After his terrible defeat at Courtray in 1302, Philip the Fair, to provide himself with means, debased the coin of the realm. He died in 1314 from the effects of a fall from his horse, over thrown by a wild boar in the forest of Fontainebleau.

¹⁵ The wars of Edward I. and Edward II. with the Scotch under Wallace and Bruce were carried on with little intermission during the first twenty years of the fourteenth century.

¹⁶ By “him of Spain,” Ferdinand IV. of Castile (1295-1312) seems to be intended; and by “him of Bohemia,” Wenceslaus IV., “whom luxury and idleness feed.” (Purgatory, Canto VII.).

trary.¹⁷ The avarice and the cowardice shall be seen of him¹⁸ who guards the island of the fire, where Anchises ended his long life; and, to give to understand how little worth he is, the writing for him shall be in contracted letters which shall note much in small space. And to every one shall be apparent the foul deeds of his uncle and of his brother¹⁹ who have dishonored so famous a nation and two crowns. And he of Portugal,²⁰ and he of Norway²¹ shall be known there; and he of Rascia,²² who, to his harm, has seen the coin of

¹⁷ The virtues of the lame Charles II. of Apulia, titular king of Jerusalem, shall be marked with one, but his vices with a thousand.

¹⁸ Frederick of Aragon, King of Sicily, too worthless to have his deeds written out in full. Dante's scorn of Frederick was enhanced by his desertion of the Ghibellines after the death of Henry VII.

¹⁹ James, King of Majorca and Minorca, and James, King of Aragon.

²⁰ Denis, King of Portugal, 1279-1325.

²¹ Perhaps Hakon Haleggr (Longlegs), 1299-1319.

²² Rascia, so called from a Slavonic tribe, which occupied a region south of the Danube, embracing a part of the modern Servia and Bosnia. The kingdom was established in 1170. One of its kings, Stephen Ouros, who died in 1307, imitated the coin of Venice with a debased coinage.

Venice. O happy Hungary, if she allow herself no longer to be maltreated! and happy Navarre, if she would arm herself with the mountains which bind her round!²³ And every one must believe that now, for earnest of this, Nicosia and Famagosta are lamenting and complaining because of their beast which departs not from the flank of the others.²⁴

²³ If she would make the Pyrenees her defence against France, into the hands of whose kings Navarre fell in 1304.

²⁴ The lot of these cities in Cyprus, which are now lamenting under the rule of Henry II. of the Lusignani, a beast who goes along with the rest, is a pledge in advance of what sort of fate falls to those who do not defend themselves.

CANTO XX. *The Song of the Just.—Princes who have loved righteousness, in the eye of the Eagle.—Spirits, once Pagans, in bliss.—Faith and Salvation.—Predestination.*

WHEN HE WHO ILLUMINES all the world, descends from our hemisphere so that the day on every side is spent, the heavens which erst by him alone are enkindled, suddenly become again conspicuous with many lights, on which one is shining.¹ And this act of the heavens came to my mind when the ensign of the world and of its leaders became silent in its blessed beak; because all those living lights, far more shining, began songs which lapse and fall from out my memory.

O sweet love, that cloakest thee with a smile, how ardent didst thou appear in those pipes² which had the breath alone of holy thoughts!

After the precious and lucent stones, wherewith I saw the sixth luminary ingemmed, imposed silence on their angelic bells, I seemed to hear the murmur of a stream which falls pellucid down from rock to rock, showing the abundance of

¹ One, that is, the sun, supposed to be the source of the light of the stars.

² That is, in those singers.

its mountain source. And as the sound takes its form at the citherm's neck, and in like manner at the vent of the bagpipe the air which enters it, thus, without pause of waiting, that murmur of the Eagle rose up through its neck, as if it were hollow. There it became voice, and thence it issued through its beak in form of words, such as the heart whereon I wrote them was awaiting.

“The part in me which in mortal eagles sees and endures the sun,” it began to me, “must now be fixedly looked upon, because of the fires whereof I make my shape, those wherein the eye in my head sparkles are the highest of all their grades. He who shineth in the middle, as the pupil, was the, singer of the Holy Spirit, who, bore about the ark from town to town.³ Now he knows the merit of his song, so far as it was the effect of his own counsel,⁴ by the recompense which is equal to it. Of the five which make a circle for the brow, be who is nearest to my beak consoled the poor widow for her son.⁵ Now he knows, by the experience of this sweet life and

³ David. See 2 Samuel, vi.

⁴ So far as it proceeded from his own free will, open to the inspiration of grace.

⁵ Trajan. See Purgatory, Canto X.

of the opposite, how dear it costs not to follow Christ. And he who follows along the top of the are in the circumference of which I speak, by true penitence postponed death.⁶ Now he knows that the eternal judgment is not altered, when worthy prayer there below makes to-morrow's what is of to-day. The next who follows,⁷ under a good intention which bore bad fruit, by ceding to the Pastor⁸ made himself Greek, together with the laws and me. Now he knows how the ill derived from his good action is not hurtful to him, although thereby the world may be destroyed. And he whom thou seest in the down-bent are was William,⁹ whom that land deplores which weeps for Charles and Frederick living.¹⁰ Now he knows how heaven is enamoured of a just king, and

⁶ King Hezekiah. See 2 Kings, xx.

⁷ The Emperor Constantine.

⁸ By his so-called "Donation," Constantine was believed to have ceded Rome to the Pope, and by transferring the seat of empire to Constantinople, he made the laws and the eagle Greek.

⁹ William H., son of Robert Guiscard, King of Sicily and Apulia, called "the Good."

¹⁰ Charles H. of Apulia, and Frederick of Aragon, King of Sicily.

even by the aspect of his effulgence makes it seen. Who, down in the erring world, would believe that Rhipeus the Trojan¹¹ was the fifth in this circle of the holy lights? Now he knows much of what the world cannot see of the divine grace, although his sight cannot discern its depth."

Like as a little lark that in the air expatiates first singing, and then is silent, content with the last sweetness which satisfies her, such seemed to me the image of the imprint of the Eternal Plea, sure, according to whose desire everything becomes that which it is.¹² And though I was there, in respect to my doubt,¹³ like glass to the color which cloaks it; it¹⁴

¹¹—Rhipeus, iustissimus unus

Qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi.—*Aeneid*, ii, 426-7.

"Rhipeus, the one justest man, and heedfullest of right among the Trojans."

¹² So, seemed the image (that is, the eagle), satiated with its bliss, whether in the speech or the silence imposed upon it by the Eternal Pleasure, in accordance with which all things fulfil their ends.

¹³ How Trajan and Rhipeus could be in Paradise, since none but those who had believed in Christ were there.

¹⁴ My doubt.

endured not to await the time in silence, but with the force of its own weight urged from my mouth, “What things are these?” whereat I saw great festival of sparkling. Thereupon, with its eye more enkindled, the blessed ensign answered me , in order not to keep me in wondering suspense: “I see that thou believest these things because I say them, but thou seest not how; so that, although believed in, they are hidden. Thou dost as one who fully apprehends a thing by name, but cannot see its quiddity unless another explain it. Regnum coelorum¹⁵ suffers violence from fervent love, and from a living hope which vanquishes the divine will; not in such wise as man overcomes man, but vanquishes it, because it wills to be vanquished, and, vanquished, vanquishes with its own benignity. The first life of the eyebrow and the fifth make thee marvel, because thou seest the region of the Angels painted with them. From their bodies they did not issue Gentiles, as thou believest, but Christians, in firm faith, one in the Feet that were to suffer, one in the Feet that had suffered.¹⁶ For the one from Hell, where there is never return

¹⁵ The kingdom of Heaven.”—Matthew, xi. 12.

¹⁶ Rhipeus died before the coming of Christ; Trajan after.

to righteous will, came back to his bones; and that was the reward of living hope; of living hope, which put its power in prayers made to God to raise him up, so that it might be possible his will should be moved.¹⁷ The glorious soul, whereof I speak, returning to the flesh, in which it remained short while, believed in Him who was able to aid it; and in believing was kindled to such fire of true love, that at the second death it was worthy to come to this sport. The other, through grace which distils from a fount so deep that creature never pushed the eye far as its primal wave, there below set all his love on righteousness; wherefore from grace to grace God opened his eye to our future redemption, so that he believed in it, and thenceforth endured no more the stench of paganism, and reproved therefor the perverse folk. More than a thousand years before baptizing,¹⁸ those three ladies whom thou sawest at the right wheel¹⁹ were to him for bap-

¹⁷ According to the legend, St. Gregory the Great prayed that Trajan, because of his great worth, might be restored to life long enough for his will to return to righteousness, and for him to profess his faith in Christ.

¹⁸ Before the divine institution of the rite of baptism his faith, hope, and charity served him in lieu thereof.

¹⁹ Of the Chariot of the Church. See Purgatory, Canto XXIX.

tism. O predestination, how remote is thy root from the sight of those who see not the entire First Cause! And ye, mortals, keep yourselves restrained in judging; for we who see God know not yet all the elect. And unto us such want is sweet, for our good is perfected in this good, that what God wills we also will."

Thus, to make my short sight clear, sweet medicine was given to me by that divine image. And as a good lutanist makes the vibration of the string accompany a good singer, whereby the song acquires more pleasantness, so it comes back to my mind that, while it spake, I saw the two blessed lights moving their flamelets to the words, just as the winking of the eyes concords.

CANTO XXI. *Ascent to the Heaven of Saturn.—Spirits of those who had given themselves to devout contemplation.—The Golden Stairway.—St. Peter Damian.—Predestination.—The luxury of modern Prelates.*

NOW WERE MY EYES fixed again upon the countenance of my Lady, and my mind with them, and from every other intent it was withdrawn; and she was not smiling, but, "If I should smile," she began to me, "thou wouldst become such as Semele was when she became ashes; for my beauty, which along the stairs of the eternal palace is kindled the more, as thou hast seen, the higher it ascends, is so resplendent that, if it were not tempered, at its effulgence thy mortal power would be as a bough shattered by thunder. We are lifted to the seventh splendor which beneath the breast of the burning Lion now radiates downward mingled with his strength.¹ Fix thy mind behind thine eyes, and make of them mirrors for the shape which in this mirror shall be apparent to thee."

¹ The seventh splendor is Saturn, which was in the sign of the Lion, whence its rays fell to earth, mingled with the strong influences of the sign.

He who should know what was the pasture of my sight in her blessed aspect, when I transferred me to another care, would recognize, by counterposing one side with the other, how pleasing it was to me to obey my celestial escort.

Within the crystal which, circling round the world, bears the name of its shining leader, under whom all wickedness lay dead,² I saw, of the color of gold through which a sunbeam is shining,³ a stairway rising up so high that my eye followed it not. I saw, moreover, so many splendors descending, along the steps, that I thought every light which appears in heaven was there diffused.

And as, according to their natural custom, the rooks, at the beginning of the day, move about together, in order to warm their cold feathers; then some go away without return, others wheel round to whence they had set forth, and others, circling, make a stay; such fashion it seemed to me was here in that sparkling which came together, so soon as it struck on a certain step; and that which stopped nearest to us became so bright that I said in my thought, “I clearly see the love which thou signiest to me. But she, from whom I await the how

² Saturn, in the golden age.

³ As in a painted window.

and the when of speech and of silence, stays still; wherefore I, contrary to desire, do well that I ask not.” Whereupon she, who saw my silence, in the sight of Him who sees everything, said to me, “Let loose thy warm desire.”

And I began, “My own merit makes me not worthy of thy answer; but for her sake who concedes to me the asking, O blessed life, that keepest thyself hidden within thine own joy, make known to me the cause which has placed thee so near me; and tell why in this wheel the sweet symphony of Paradise is silent, which below through the others so devoutly sounds.” “Thou hast thy hearing mortal, as thy sight,” it replied to me; “therefore no song is here for the same reason that Beatrice has no smile. Down along the steps of the holy stairway I have thus far descended, only to give thee glad welcome with my speech and with the light that mantles me; nor has more love made me to be more ready, for as much and more love is burning here above, even as the flaming manifests to thee; but the high charity, which makes us ready servants to the counsel that governs the world, allots here,⁴ even as thou observest.” “I see well,” said I, “O sacred

⁴ Assigns its part to each spirit.

lamp, how the free will of love suffices in this Court for following the eternal Providence. But this is what seems to me hard to discern, why thou alone wert predestined to this office among thy consorts." I had not come to the last word before the light made a centre of its middle, whirling like a swift milestone. Then the love that was within it answered, "A divine light strikes upon me, penetrating through this wherein I embosom me: the virtue of which, conjoined with my vision, lifts me above myself so far that I see the Supreme Essence from which it emanates. Thence comes the joy where-with I flame, because to my vision, in proportion as it is clear, I match the clearness of my flame. But that soul in Heaven which is most enlightened,⁵ that Seraph who has his eye most fixed on God, could not satisfy thy demand; because that which thou askest lies so deep within the abyss of the eternal statute, that from every created sight it is cut off. And when thou retumest to the mortal world, carry this back, so that it may no more presume to move its feet toward such a goal. The mind which shines here, on earth is smoky; wherefore consider how there below it can do that

⁵ With the Divine light.

which it cannot do though Heaven assume it."

So did its words prescribe to me, that I left the question, and drew me back to ask it humbly who it was. "Between the two shores of Italy, and not very distant from thy native land, rise rocks so lofty that the thunders sound far lower down, and they make a height which is called Catria, beneath which a hermitage is consecrated which is wont to be devoted to worship only."⁶ Thus it began again to me with its third speech, and then, continuing, it said, "Here in the service of God I became so steadfast, that, with food of olive juice alone, lightly I used to pass the heats and frosts, content in contemplative thoughts. That cloister was wont to render in abundance to these heavens; and now it is become so empty as needs must soon be revealed. In that place I was Peter Damian,⁷ and Peter a sinner had I been in the house

⁶ Catria is a high offshoot to the east from the chain of the Apennines, between Urbino and Gubbio. Far up on its side lies the monastery of Santa Croce di Fouts Avellana, belonging to the order of the Camaldulensians.

⁷ A famous doctor of the Church in the eleventh century. He was for many years abbot of the Monastery of Fonte Avellana.

of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore.⁸ Little of mortal life was remaining for me, when I was sought for and dragged to that hat⁹ which ever is passed down from bad to worse. Cephas¹⁰ came, and the great vessel of the Holy Spirit¹¹ came, lean and barefoot, taking the food of whatsoever inn. Now the modern pastors require one to hold them up on this side and that, and one to lead them, so heavy are they, and one to support them behind. They cover their palfreys with their mantles, so that two beasts go under one skin. O Patience, that endurest so much!" At this voice I saw more flamelets from step to step descending and revolving, and each revolution made them more beautiful. Round about this one they came, and stopped, and uttered a cry of such deep sound that here could be none like it, nor did I understand it, the thunder so overcame me.

⁸ These last words are obscure, and have given occasion to much discussion, after which they remain no clearer than before. The house of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore is supposed to be the monastery of Santa Maria in Porto, near Ravenna.

⁹ He was made cardinal in 1058, and died in 1072.

¹⁰ St. Peter. See John, i. 42.

¹¹ St. Paul. "He is a chosen vessel unto me."—Acts, ix. 15.

CANTO XXII. Beatrice reassures Dante.—St. Benedict appears.—He tells of the founding of his Order, and of the falling away of its brethren. Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Starry Heaven.—The constellation of the Twins.—Sight of the Earth.

OPPRESSED WITH AMAZEMENT, I turned me to my Guide, like a little child who runs back always thither where he most confides. And she, like a mother who quickly succors her pale and breathless son with her voice, which is wont to reassure him, said to me, 11 Knowest thou not, that thou art in Heaven? and knowest thou not that Heaven is all holy, and whatever is done here comes from good zeal? How the song would have transformed thee, and I by smiling, thou canst now conceive, since the cry has moved thee so much; in which, if thou hadst understood its prayers, already would be known to thee the vengeance which thou shalt see before thou diest. The sword of here on high cuts not in haste, nor slow, save to the seeming of him who, desiring, or fearing, awaits it. But turn thee round now toward the others, for many illustrious spirits thou shalt see, if, as I say, thou dost lead back thy look."

As it pleased her I directed my eyes, and saw a hundred little spheres, which together were becoming more beautiful with mutual rays. I was standing as one who within himself represses the point of his desire, and attempts not to ask, he so fears the too-much. And the largest and the most luscious of those pearls came forward to make of its own accord my wish content. Then within it I heard, "If thou couldst see, as I do, the charity which burns among us, thy thoughts would be expressed. But that thou through waiting mayst not delay thy high end, I will make answer to thee, even to the thought concerning which thou art so regardful.

"That mountain¹ on whose slope Cassino is, was of old frequented on its summit by the deluded and illdisposed people, and I am he who first carried up thither the name of Him who brought to earth the truth which so high exalts us: and such grace shone upon me that I drew away the surrounding villages from the impious worship which seduced the world. These other fires were all contemplative men,

¹ Monte Cassino, in the Kingdom of Naples, on which a temple of Apollo had stood, was chosen by St. Benedict (480-543) as his abode, and became the site of the most famous monastery of his Order.

kindled by that heat which brings to birth holy flowers and fruits. Here is Macarius,² here is Romuald,³ here are my brothers, who within the cloisters fixed their feet, and held a steadfast heart." And I to him, "The affection which thou displayest in speaking with me, and the good semblance which I see and note in all your ardors, have so expanded my confidence as the sun does the rose, when she becomes open so much as she has power to be. Therefore I pray thee, and do thou, father, assure me if I have power to receive so much grace, that I may see thee with uncovered shape." Whereon he, "Brother, thy high desire shall be fulfilled in the last sphere, where are fulfilled all others and my own. There perfect, mature, and whole is every desire; in that alone is every part there where it always was: for it is not in space, and hath not poles; and our stairway reaches up to it, wherefore thus from thy sight it conceals itself. Far up as there the patriarch Jacob saw it stretch its topmost part when it appeared to him so laden with Angels. But now no one lifts his feet from earth to ascend it; and my Rule is remaining as waste of paper. The walls, which used to be an abbey, have become caves;

² The Egyptian anchorite of the fourth century.

³ The founder of the order of Camaldoli; he died in 1027.

and the cowls are sacks full of bad meal. But heavy usury is not gathered in so greatly against the pleasure of God, as that fruit which makes the heart of monks so foolish. For whatsoever the Church guards is all for the folk that ask it in God's name, not for one's kindred, or for another more vile. The flesh of mortals is so soft that a good beginning suffices not below from the springing of the oak to the forming of the acorn. Peter began without gold and without silver, and I with prayers and with fasting, and Francis in humility his convent; and if thou lookest at the source of each, and then lookest again whither it has run, thou wilt see dark made of the white. Truly, Jordan turned back, and the sea fleeing when God willed, were more marvellous to behold than succor here.”⁴

Thus he said to me, and then drew back to his company, and the company closed up; then like a whirlwind all gathered itself upward.

The sweet Lady urged me behind them, with only a sign, up over that stairway; so did her virtue overcome my nature.

⁴ Were God now to interpose to correct the evils of the Church, the marvel would be less than that of the miracles of old, and therefore his interposition may be hoped for.

But never here below, where one mounts and descends naturally, was there motion so rapid that it could be compared unto my wing. So may I return, Reader, to that devout triumph, for the sake of which I often bewail my sins and beat my breast, thou hadst not so quickly drawn out and put thy finger in the fire as I saw the sign which follows the Bull,⁵ and was within it.

O glorious stars, O light impregnate with great virtue, from which I acknowledge all my genius, whatever it may be; with you was born and with you was hiding himself he who is father of every mortal life, when I first felt the Tuscan air;⁶ and then, when the grace was bestowed on me of entrance within the lofty wheel which turns you, your region was allotted to me. To you my soul now devoutly sighs to acquire virtue for the difficult pass which draws her to itself.

“Thou art so near the ultimate salvation,” began Beatrice, “that thou oughtest to have thine eyes clear and sharp. And therefore ere thou further enterest it, look back downward,

⁵ The sign of the Gemini, or Twins, in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars.

⁶ At the time of Dante's birth the sun was in the sign of the Twins.

and see how great a world I have already set beneath thy feet, in order that thy heart, so far as it is able, may present itself joyous to the triumphant crowd which comes glad through this round aether." With my sight I returned through each and all the seven spheres, and saw this globe such that I smiled at its mean semblance; and that counsel I approve as best which holds it of least account; and he who thinks of other things may be called truly worthy. I saw the daughter of Latona enkindled without that shadow which had been the cause why I once believed her rare and dense. The aspect of thy son, Hyperion, here I endured, and I saw how Maia and Dione⁷ move around and near him. Then appeared to me the temperateness of Jove, between his father and his son,⁸ and then was clear to me the variation which they make in their places. And all the seven were displayed to me,[[how great they are and how swift they are, and how they are in distant houses. While I was revolving with the eternal Twins, the little threshing-floor⁹ which makes us so fierce all ap-

peared to me, from its hills to its harbors.

Then I turned back my eyes to the beautiful eyes.

⁷ The mothers of Venus and Mercury, by whose names these planets are designated.

⁸ Saturn and Mars.

⁹ The inhabited earth.

CANTO XXIII. *The Triumph of Christ.*

AS THE BIRD, among the beloved leaves, reposing on the nest of her sweet brood through the night which hides things from us, who, in order to see their longed-for looks and to find the food wherewith she may feed them, in which heavy toils are pleasing to her, anticipates the time upon the open twig, and with ardent affection awaits the sun, fixedly looking till the dawn may break; thus my Lady was standing erect and attentive, turned toward the region beneath which the sun shows least haste;¹ so that I, seeing her rapt and eager, became such as he who in desire should wish for something, and in hope is satisfied. But short while was there between one and the other WHEN: that of my awaiting, I mean, and of my seeing the heavens become brighter and brighter. And Beatrice said, “Behold the hosts of the triumph of Christ, and all the fruit harvested by the revolution of these spheres.”² It seemed to me her face was all aflame, and her eyes were so full of joy that I must needs pass it over without description.

¹ The meridian.

² By the beneficent influences of the planets.

As in the clear skies at the full moon Trivia³ smiles among the eternal nymphs who paint the heaven through all its depths, I saw, above myriads of lights, a Sun that was enkindling each and all of them, as ours kindles the supernal shows;⁴ and through its living light the lucent Substance⁵ shone so bright upon my face that I sustained it not.

O Beatrice, sweet guide and dear!

She said to me, “That which overcomes thee is a power from which naught defends itself. Here is the Wisdom and the Power that opened the roads between heaven and earth, for which there had already been such long desire.”

As fire from a cloud unlocks itself by dilating, so that it is not contained therein, and against its own nature falls down to earth, so my mind, becoming greater amid those feasts, issued from itself; and what it became cannot remember.

“Open thine eyes and look at what I am; thou hast seen things such that thou art become able to sustain my smile.” I

³ An appellation of Diana, and hence of the moon.

⁴ According to the belief, referred to at the opening of the twentieth Canto, that the sun was the source of the light of the stars.

⁵ Christ in his glorified body.

was as one who awakes from a forgotten dream and endeavors in vain to bring it back again to memory, when I heard this invitation, worthy of such gratitude that it is never effaced from the book which records the past. If now all those tongues which Polyhymnia and her sisters made most fat with their sweetest milk should sound to aid me, one would not come to a thousandth of the truth in singing the holy smile and how it made the holy face resplendent. And thus in depicting Paradise the consecrated poem needs must make a leap, even as one who finds his way cut off. But whoso should consider the ponderous theme and the mortal shoulder which therewith is laden would not blame it if under this it tremble. It is no coasting voyage for a little barque, this which the intrepid prow goes cleaving, nor for a pilot who would spare himself.

“Why doth my face so enamour thee that thou turnest not to the fair garden which beneath the rays of Christ is blossoming? Here is the rose,⁶ in which the Divine Word became flesh: here are the lilies⁷ by whose odor the good way

⁶ The Virgin.

⁷ The Apostles and Saints. The image is derived from St. Paul (2 Corinthians, ii. 14): “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” In the Vulgate the words are, “odorem notitiae suea manifestat per nos.”

was taken.” Thus Beatrice, and I, who to her counsel was wholly prompt, again betook me unto the battle of the feeble brows.

As my eyes, covered with a shadow, have ere now seen a meadow of flowers in a sunbeam which streamed bright through a rifted cloud, so saw I many throngs of splendors flashed-upon from above with burning rays, without seeing the source of the gleams. O benignant Power which so dost impress them, upwards didst thou exalt thyself to bestow space there for my eyes, which were powerless.⁸

The name of the fair flower which I ever invoke both morning and evening, wholly constrained my mind to gaze upon the greater fire.⁹ And when the form and the glory of the living star, which up there surpasses as here below it surpassed, were depicted in both my eyes, through the mid heavens a torch, formed in a circle in fashion of a crown, descended, and engirt it, and revolved around it. Whatever

⁸ The eyes of Dante, powerless to endure the sight of the glorified body of Christ, when that is withdrawn on high, are able to look upon those whom the light of Christ illuminates.

⁹ The Virgin,—Rosa mistica,—the brightest of all the host that remained.

melody sounds sweetest here below, and to itself most draws the soul, would seem a cloud which, rent apart, thunders, compared with the sound of that lyre wherewith was crowned the beauteous sapphire by which the brightest Heaven is ensapphired. “I am angelic Love, and I circle round the lofty joy which breathes from the bosom which was the hostelry of our desire; and I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, while thou shalt follow thy Son and make the supreme sphere more divine because thou enterest it.” Thus the circling melody sealed itself up, and all the other lights made resound the name of Mary.

The royal mantle¹⁰ of all the volumes¹¹ of the world, which is most fervid and most quickened in the breath of God and in His ways, had its inner shore so distant above us that sight of it, there where I was, did not yet appear to me. Therefore my eyes had not the power to follow the incoronate flame, which mounted upward following her own seed. And as a little child which, when it has taken the milk, stretches its arms toward its mother, through the spirit that flames up outwardly, each of these white splendors stretched upward

¹⁰ The Primum Mobile, the ninth Heaven, which revolves around all the others.

¹¹ The revolving spheres.

with its summit, so that the deep affection which they had for Mary was manifest to me. Then they remained there in ray sight, singing “Regina coeli” so sweetly that never has the delight departed from me. Oh how great is the plenty that is heaped up in those most rich chests which were good laborers in sowing here below! Here they live and enjoy the treasure that was acquired while weeping in the exile of Babylon, where the gold was left aside.¹² Here triumphs, under the high Son of God and of Mary, in his victory, both with the ancient and with the new council, he who holds the keys of such glory.¹³

¹² Despising the treasures of the world, in the Babylonish exile of this life, they laid up for themselves treasures in Heaven.

¹³ St. Peter.

CANTO XXIV. *St. Peter examines Dante concerning Faith, and approves his answer.*

“O COMPANY ELECT to the great supper of the blessed Lamb, who feeds you so that your desire is always full, since by grace of God this man foretastes of that which falls from your table, before death prescribes the time for him, give heed to his immense longing, and bedew him a little; ye drink ever of the fount whence comes that which he ponders.” Thus Beatrice; and those glad souls made themselves spheres upon fixed poles, flaming brightly in manner of comets. And as wheels within the fittings of clocks revolve, so that to him who gives heed the first seems quiet, and the last to fly, so these carols,¹ differently dancing, swift and slow, enabled me to estimate their riches.

From that which I noted of greatest beauty, I saw issue a fire so happy that it left there none of greater brightness; and three times it revolved round Beatrice with a song so divine that my fancy repeats it not to me; therefore the pen makes a leap, and

¹ A carol was a dance with song; here used for the souls who composed the carols, the difference in whose speed gave to Dante the gauge of their respective blessedness.

I write it not, for our imagination, much more our speech, is of too vivid color² for such folds. “O holy sister mine, who so devoutly prayest to us, by thy ardent affection thou unbindest me from that beautiful sphere:” after it had stopped, the blessed fire directed to my Lady its breath, which spoke thus as I have said. And she, “O light eternal of the great man to whom our Lord left the keys, which he bore below, of this marvellous joy, test this man on points light and grave, as pleases thee, concerning the Faith, through which thou didst walk upon the sea. If he loves rightly, and hopes rightly, and believes, it is hidden not from thee, for thou hast thy sight there where everything—is seen depicted. But since this realm has made citizens by the true faith, it is well that to glorify it speech of it should fall to him.”³

Even as, until the master propounds the question, the bach-

² The figure is a little obscure; pieghe, “folds,” is a rhyme-word; the meaning seems to be that as folds cannot be painted properly with bright hues, so our imagination and our speech are not delicate enough for conceiving and depicting such exquisite delights.

³ The meaning seems to be,—Thou knowest that he has true faith, but because by its means one becomes a citizen of this realm, it is well that he should celebrate it.

elor speaks not, and arms himself in order to adduce the proof, not to decide it, so, while she was speaking, I was arming me with every reason, in order to be ready for such a questioner, and for such a profession.

“Say thou, good Christian, declare thyself; Faith,—what is it?” Whereon I raised my brow to that light whence this was breathed out. Then I turned to Beatrice, and she made prompt signals to me that I should pour the water forth from my internal fount. “May the Grace,” began I, “which grants to me that I confess myself to the high captain, cause my conceptions to be expressed.”⁴ And I went on, “As the veracious pen, Father, of thy dear brother (who with thee set Rome on the good track) wrote of it, Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen:⁵ and this appears to me its essence.” Then I heard, “Rightly dost thou think, if thou understandest well why he placed it among the substances, and then among the evidences.” And I thereon: “The deep things which grant unto me here the sight of themselves, are so hidden to eyes below that there their existence is in belief alone, upon which the high hope

⁴ May it enable me to express clearly my conceptions.

⁵ Hebrews, xi, 1.

is founded, and therefore it takes the designation of substance; and from this belief we needs must syllogize, without having other sight, wherefore it receives the designation of evidence.”⁶ Then I heard, “If whatever is acquired below for doctrine, were so understood, the wit of sophist would have no place there.” Thus was breathed forth from that enkindled love; then it added, “Very well have the alloy and the weight of this coin been now run through, but tell me if thou hast it in thy purse?” And I, “Yes, I have it so shining and so round that in its stamp nothing is uncertain to me.” Then issued from the deep light which was shining there, “This precious jewel, whereon every virtue is founded, whence came it to thee?” And I, “The abundant rain of the Heavenly Spirit, which is diffused over the Old and over the New parchments,

⁶ The argument is as follows: The things of the spiritual world having no visible existence upon earth, the hope of blessedness rests only on belief unsupported by material proof; this belief is Faith, and since on it alone are the high hopes founded, it is properly called their substance, that is, their essential quality. And since all our reasoning concerning spiritual things must be drawn not from visible things, but from the convictions of Faith, our faith is also properly called evidence.

is a syllogism⁷ which has proved it to me so acutely that in comparison with it every demonstration seems to me obtuse." I heard then, "The Old and the New proposition⁸ which are so conclusive to thee,—why dost thou hold them for divine speech?" And I, "The proofs which disclose the truth to me are the works⁹ that followed, for which nature never heated iron, nor beat anvil." It was replied to me, "Say, what assures thee that these works were? The very thing itself which requires to be proved, naught else, affirms it to thee." "If the world were converted to Christianity," said I, "without miracles, this alone is such that the others are not the hundredth part; for thou didst enter poor and fasting into the field to sow the good plant, which once was a vine and now has become a thornbush."

This ended, the high holy Court resounded through the spheres a "We praise God," in the melody which thereabove is sung.

⁷ The evidence afforded by the Old and the New Testament that they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, makes their teachings in regard to matters of faith conclusive.

⁸ The two premises of the syllogism.

⁹ The miracles.

And that Baron who thus from branch to branch, examining, had now drawn me on, so that to the last leaves we were approaching, began again: "The Grace that dallies with thy mind has opened thy mouth up to this point as it should be opened, so that I approve that which has issued forth, but now there is need to express what thou believest, and whence it has been offered to thy belief." "O holy father, spirit who seest that which thou so believedst that thou, toward the sepulchre, didst outdo younger feet,"¹⁰ began I, "thou wishest that I should declare here the form of my ready belief, and also thou inquirest the cause of it. And I answer: I believe in one God, sole and eternal, who, unmoved, moves all the Heavens with love and with desire; and for such belief have I not only proofs physical and metaphysical, but that truth also gives it to me which hence rains down through Moses, through Prophets, and through Psalms, through the Gospel, and through you who wrote after the fiery Spirit made you holy. And I believe in three Eternal Persons, and these I believe one essence, so one and so threefold that it will admit to be conjoined with ARE and IS. Of the profound divine

¹⁰ "The other disciple did outrun Peter," but Peter first "went into the sepulchre." See John, xx. 4-6.

condition on which I touch, the evangelic doctrine ofttimes sets the seal upon my mind. This is the beginning; this is the spark which afterwards dilates to vivid flame, and like a star in heaven scintillates within me.”

Even as a lord who hears what pleases him, thereon, rejoicing in the news, embraces his servant, soon as he is silent, thus, blessing me as he sang, the apostolic light, at whose command I had spoken, thrice encircled me when I was silent; so had I pleased him in my speech.

CANTO XXV. *St. James examines Dante concerning Hope.—St. John appears, with a brightness so dazzling as to deprive Dante, for the time, of sight.*

IF IT EVER HAPPENS that the sacred poem to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, so that it has made me lean for many years, shbould overcome the cruelty which bars me out of the fair sheep-fold, where a lamb I slept, an enemy to the wolves that give it war, then with other voice, with other fleece, Poet will I return, and on the font of my baptism will I take the crown; because there I entered into the faith which makes the souls known to God, and afterward. Peter, for its sake, thus encircled my brow.

Then a light moved toward us from that sphere whence the first-fruit which Christ left of His vicars had issued. And my Lady, full of gladness, said to me, “Look, look! behold the Baron for whose sake Galicia is visited there below.”¹

Even as when the dove alights near his companion, and

¹ It was believed that St. James, the brother of St. John, was buried at Compostella, in the Spanish province of Galicia. His shrine was one of the chief objects of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.

one, turning and cooing, displays its affection to the other, so by the one great Prince glorious I saw the other greeted, praising the food which feasts them thereabove. But after their gratulation was completed, silent coram me,² each stopped, so ignited that it overcame my sight. Smiling, then Beatrice said, "Illustrious life, by whom the largess of our basilica has been written,³ do thou make Hope resound upon this height; thou knowest that thou dost represent it as many times as Jesus to the three displayed most brightness."⁴ "Lift up thy head and make thyself assured; for that which comes

² "Before me." Here, as sometimes elsewhere, it is not evident why Dante uses Latin words.

³ The reference is to the Epistle of James, which Dante, falling into a common error, attributes to St. James the Greater. The special words be had in mind may have been: "God, that giveth to all men liberally," i. 5; and "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," i. 17. By "basilica" is meant the court or church of heaven.

⁴ Peter, James, and John, were chosen by their Master to be present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and to witness his Transfiguration. Peter personifying Faith, John personifying Love, it was natural to take James as the personification of Hope.

up here from the mortal world needs must be ripened in our rays." This comfort from the second fire came to me; whereon I lifted up my eyes unto the mountains which bent them down before with too great weight.

"Since, through grace, our Emperor wills that thou, before thy death, come face to face with his Counts in the most secret hall, so that, having seen the truth of this Court, thou mayest therewith confirm in thyself and others the Hope which there below rightly enamours, say what it is, and how thy mind is flowering with it, and say whence it came to thee;" thus further did the second light proceed. And that compassionate one, who guided the feathers of my wings to such high flight, thus in the reply anticipated me.⁵ "The Church militant has not any son with more hope, as is written in the Sun which irradiates all our band; therefore it is conceded to him, that from Egypt be should come to Jerusalem to see, ere the warfare be at end for him. The other two points which are asked not for sake of knowing, but that he may report how greatly this virtue is pleasing to thee, to him I leave, for they will not be difficult to him, nor of vainglory,

⁵ Beatrice answers the question to which the reply, had it been left to Dante, might seem to involve self-praise.

and let him answer to this, and may the grace of God accord this to him.”

As a disciple who follows his teacher, prompt and willing, in that wherein he is expert, so that his worth may be disclosed: “Hope,” said I, “is a sure expectation of future glory, which divine grace produces, and preceding merit.⁶ From many stars this light comes to me, but be instilled it first into my heart who was the supreme singer⁷ of the supreme Leader. Sperent in te,⁸ ‘who know thy name,’ he says in his Theody,⁹ and who knows it not, if he has my faith? Thou afterwards didst instil it into me with his instillation in thy Epistle, so that I am full, and upon others shower down again your rain.”

While I was speaking, within the living bosom of that burning a flash was trembling, sudden and intense, in the manner of lightning. Then it breathed, “The love wherewith I still glow toward the virtue which followed me far as the palm, and to the issue of the field, wills that breathe anew to

⁶ These words are taken directly from Peter Lombard (*Liber Sententiarum*, iii. 26). Love is the merit which precedes Hope.

⁷ David.

⁸ “They will hope in thee.” See Psalm ix. 10.

⁹ Divine song.

thee, that thou delight in it; and it is my pleasure, that thou tell that which Hope promises to thee.” And I, “The new and the old Scriptures set up the sign, and it points this out to me. Of the souls whom God hath made his friends, Isaiah says that each shall be clothed in his own land with a double garment,¹⁰ and his own land is this sweet life. And thy brother, far more explicitly, there where he treats of the white robes, makes manifest to us this revelation.”¹¹

And first, close on the end of these words, “Sperent in te” was heard from above us, to which all the carols made answer. Then among them a light became so bright that, if the Crab had one such crystal, winter would have a month of one sole day.¹² And as a glad maiden rises and goes and enters in the dance, only to do honor to the new bride, and not for any fault,¹³ so saw I the brightened splendor come

¹⁰ “Therefore in their land they shall possess the double”—(Isaiah, 1xi. 7); the double vesture of the glorified natural body and of the spiritual body.

¹¹ Revelation, vii.

¹² If Cancer, which rises at sunset in early winter, had a star as bright as this, the night would be light as day.

¹³ Not for vanity, or love of, display.

to the two who were turning in a wheel, such as was befitting to their ardent love. It set itself there into the song and into the measure, and my Lady kept her gaze upon them, even as a bride, silent and motionless. "This is he who lay upon the breast of our Pelican,¹⁴ and from upon the cross this one was chosen to the great office."¹⁵ Thus my Lady, nor yet moved she her look from its fixed attention after than before these words of hers. As is he who gazes and endeavors to see the sun eclipsed a little, who through seeing becomes sightless, so did I become in respect to that last fire, till it was said, "Why dost thou dazzle thyself in order to see a thing which has no place here?¹⁶ On earth my body is

earth; and it will be there with the others until our number corresponds with the eternal purpose.¹⁷ With their two garments in the blessed cloister are those two lights alone which ascended:¹⁸ and this thou shalt carry back unto your world."

At this word the flaming gyre became quiet, together with the sweet mingling that was made of the sound of the trinal breath, even as, at ceasing of fatigue or danger, the oars, erst driven through the water, all stop at the sound of a whistle. Ah! how greatly was I disturbed in mind, when I turned to see Beatrice, at not being able to see her, although I was near her, and in the happy world.

¹⁴ A common type of Christ during the Middle Ages, because of the popular belief that the pelican killed its brood, and then revived them with its blood.

¹⁵ "Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!"—John, xix. 27.

¹⁶ Dante seeks to see whether St. John is present in body as well as soul; his curiosity having its source in the words of the Gospel: "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? . . . Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die."—John, xxi. 22, 23.

¹⁷ Till the predestined number of the elect is complete.

¹⁸ Jesus and Mary, who had been seen to ascend. See Canto XXIII.

CANTO XXVI. *St. John examines Dante concerning Love.—Dante's sight restored.—Adam appears, and answers questions put to him by Dante.*

WHILE I WAS APPREHENSIVE because of my quenched sight, a breath which made me attentive issued from the effulgent flame that quenched it, saying, “While thou art regaining the sense of sight which thou hast consumed on me, it is well that thou make up for it by discourse. Begin then, and tell whereto thy soul is aimed, and make thy reckoning that sight is in thee bewildered and not dead; because the Lady who conducts thee through this divine region has in her look the virtue which the band of Ananias had.”¹ I said, “According to her pleasure, or soon or late, let the cure come to the eyes which were gates when she entered with the fire where-with I ever burn! The Good which makes this court content is Alpha and Omega of whatsoever writing Love reads to me, either low or loud.” That same voice which had taken from me fear of the sudden dazzling, laid on me the charge to speak further, and said, “Surely with a finer sieve it behoves

¹ *Acts ix.*

thee to clarify; it behoves thee to tell who directed thy bow to such a target.” And I, “By philosophic arguments and by authority that hence descends, such love must needs be impressed on me; for the good, so far as it is good, in proportion as it is understood, kindles love; and so much the greater as the more of goodness it includes within itself. Therefore, to the Essence (wherein is such supremacy that every good which is found outside of It is naught else than a beam of Its own radiance), more than to any other, the mind of every one who discerns the truth on which this argument is founded must needs be moved in love.² Such truth to my intelligence he makes plain, who demonstrates to me the first love of all the sempiternal substances.³ The voice of the true Author makes it plain who, speaking of Himself, says to Moses, ‘I will make thee see all goodness.’⁴ Thou, too, makest it plain

² The argument is,—Whatever is good kindles love for itself; the greater the good the greater the love; God is the supreme good and therefore the chief object of love.

³ It is doubtful to whom Dante here refers. The first love of immortal creatures is for their own First Cause.

⁴ “I will make all my goodness pass before thee.”—Exodus, xxxiii, 19.

to me, beginning the lofty proclamation which there below, above all other trump, declares the secret of this place on high.⁵ And I heard, “By human understanding, and by authorities concordant with it, thy sovran love looks unto God; but say, further, if thou feelest other cords draw thee towards Him, so that thou mayest declare with how many teeth this love bites thee.”

The holy intention of the Eagle of Christ was not latent to me; nay, rather I perceived whither he wished to lead my profession; therefore, I began again: “All those bitings which can make the heart turn to God have been concurrent unto my charity;⁶ for the existence of the world, and my own existence, the death that He endured that I may live, and that which all the faithful hope even as I do, together with the aforesaid living knowledge, have drawn me from the sea of perverted love, and have set me on the shore of the right. The leaves, wherewith all the garden of the Eternal Gardener is enleaved, I love in proportion as good is borne unto them from Him.”

⁵ “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”—1 John, iv. 16.

⁶ Have concurred to inspire me with love of God.

Soon as I was silent a most sweet song resounded through the heavens, and my Lady said with the rest, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

And as at a keen light sleep is broken by the spirit of sight, which runs to the splendor that goes from coat to coat,⁷ and he who awakes shrinks from what he sees, so confused is his sudden wakening, until his judgment comes to his aid; thus Beatrice chased away every mote from my eyes with the radiance of her own, which were resplendent more than a thousand miles; so that I then saw better than before; and, as it were amazed, I asked about a fourth light which I saw with us. And my Lady, “Within those rays the first soul which the First Power ever created gazes with joy upon its creator.”

As the bough that bends its top at passing of the wind, and then lifts itself by its own virtue which raises it, so did I, in amazement, the while she was speaking; and then a desire to speak, wherewith I was burning, gave me again assurance, and I began, “O Apple, that alone wast produced mature, O ancient Father, to whom every bride is daughter and daughter-in-law, devoutly as I can, I supplicate thee that thou speak

⁷ The spirit of the sight runs to meet the light which flashes through the successive coats of the eye.

to me; thou seest my wish, and in order to hear thee quickly, I do not tell it.”

Sometimes an animal, which is covered up, so stirs, that his desire must needs become apparent through the corresponding movement which that which wraps him makes; and in like manner the first soul made evident to me, through its covering, how gladly it came to do me pleasure. Then it breathed, “Without its being uttered to me by thee, I better discern thy wish, than thou whatever thing is most certain to thee; because I see it in the truthful mirror which makes of Itself a likeness of other tbings, while nothing makes for It a likeness of Itself.⁸ Thou wouldest hear how long it is since God placed me in the lofty garden where this Lady disposed thee for so long a stairway; and how long it was a delight to my eyes; and the proper cause of the great wrath; and the idiom which I used and which I made. Now, my son, the

⁸ All things are seen in God as if reflected in a mirror; but nothing can reflect an image of God. “In the eternal Idea, as in a glass, the works of God are more perfectly seen than in themselves But it is impossible for a thing created to represent that which is increased.”—John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist*, 1554, p. 332.

tasting of the tree was not by itself the cause of so long an exile, but only the overpassing of the bound. There whence thy Lady moved Virgil, I longed for this assembly during four thousand three hundred and two revolutions of the sun; and while I was on earth I saw him return to all the lights of his path nine hundred and thirty times. The tongue which I spoke was all extinct long before the people of Nimrod attempted their unaccomplishable work; for never was any product of the reason (because of human liking, which alters, following the heavens) durable for ever.⁹ A natural action it is for man to speak; but, thus or thus, nature then leaves for you to do according as it pleases you. Before I descended to the infernal anguish, the Supreme Good, whence comes the gladness that swathes me, was on earth called I; EL it was called afterwards;¹⁰ and that must needs

⁹ Speech, a product of human reason, changes according to the pleasure of man, which alters from time to time under the influence of the heavens.

¹⁰ God was known in the primitive language by the sacred and mystical symbol I or J, the Hebrew letter Jod; afterwards by the term El: the first answering to Jehovah, the second to Elohim.

be,¹¹ for the custom of mortals is as a leaf on a branch, which goes away and another comes. On the mountain which rises highest from the wave I was, with pure life and sinful, from the first hour to that which, when the sun changes quadrant, follows the sixth hour.”¹²

CANTO XXVII. *Denunciation by St. Peter of his degenerate successors.—Dante gazes upon the Earth.—Ascent of Beatrice and Dante to the Crystalline Heaven.—Its nature.—Beatrice rebukes the covetousness of mortals.*

“TO THE FATHER, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit be glory,” all Paradise began, so that the sweet song was inebriating me. That which I was seeing seemed to me a smile of the Universe; for my inebriation was entering through the hearing and through the sight. O joy! O ineffable gladness! O life entire of love and of peace! O riches secure, without longing!¹

Before my eyes the four torches were standing enkindled, and that which had come first began to make itself more vivid, and in its semblance became such as Jove would become, if he and Mars were birds, and should interchange feathers.² The Providence which here apportions turn and office, had imposed silence on the blessed choir on every side, when I heard, “If I change color, marvel not; for, while I speak, thou shalt see all these change color. He who on earth usurps my place, my place, my place, which is vacant

¹ Which leave nothing for desire.

² The pure white light becoming red.

¹¹ Such change in the name was inevitable, because of the changing customs of thought and speech.

¹² Adam’s stay in the Earthly Paradise on the summit of the mount of Purgatory was thus a little more than six hours; the sun changes quadrant with every six hours.

in the presence of the Son of God, has made of my burial-place a sewer of blood and of stench, wherewith the Perverse One who fell from here above, below there is placated.”

With that color which, by reason of the opposite sun, paints the cloud at evening and at morning, I then saw the whole Heaven overspread. And like a modest lady who abides sure of herself, and at the fault of another, in bearing of it only, becomes timid, even thus did Beatrice change countenance; and such eclipse I believe there was in heaven when the Supreme Power suffered.

Then his words proceeded, in a voice so transmuted from itself that his countenance was not more changed; “The Bride of Christ was not nurtured on my blood, on that of Linus and of Cletus, to be employed for acquist of gold; but for acquist of this glad life Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban³ shed their blood after much weeping. It was not our intention that part of the Christian people should sit on the right hand of our successors, and part on the other; nor that the keys which were conceded to me should become a sign upon a banner which should fight against those who are bap-

³ Early Popes martyred for the faith.

tized;⁴ nor that I should be a figure on a seal to venal and mendacious privileges, whereat I often redden and flash. In garb of shepherd, rapacious wolves are seen from here-above over all the pastures: O defence of God, why dost thou yet lie still! To drink our blood Cahorsines and Gascons are making ready:⁵ O good beginning, to what vile end behoves it that thou fall! But the high Providence which with Scipio defended for Rome the glory of the world, will succor speedily, as I conceive. And thou, son, who because of thy mortal weight wilt again return below, open thy mouth, and conceal not that which I conceal not.”

Even as our air snows down flakes of frozen vapors, when the horn of the Goat of heaven touches the sun,⁶ so, upward, I saw the aether become adorned, and flaked with the triumphant vapors⁷ that had made sojourn there with us.

⁴ A reference to the war which Boniface VIII. waged against the Colonnae. See *Inferno*, Canto XXVII.

⁵ John XXII., who came to the Papacy in 1316, was a native of Cahors; his immediate predecessor, Clement V., 1305-1314, was a Gascon. The passage is one of those which shows that this portion of the poem was in hand during the last years of Dante’s life.

⁶ In midwinter, when the sun is in Capricorn.

⁷ The spirits.

My sight was following their semblances, and followed, till the intermediate space by its greatness pre-vented it from passing further onward. Whereon my Lady, who saw me disengaged from upward heeding, said to me, "Cast down thy sight, and look how thou hast revolved."

Since the hour when I had first looked, I saw that I had moved through the whole arc which the first climate makes from its middle to its end;⁸ so that I saw beyond Cadiz the mad track of Ulysses, and near on this side the shore⁹ on

⁸ From Dante's first look downward from the Heavens, at the end of Canto XXII, to the present moment, he had moved over the arc which the first climate describes from its middle to its end. The old geographers divided the earth into seven zones, called climates, by circles parallel to the equator. The first climate extended twenty degrees to the north of the equator. The sign of the Gemini, in which Dante was revolving in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars, is in the zone of the Heavens corresponding to the first climate. As each climate extended on the habitable hemisphere for one hundred and eighty degrees, the arc from its middle to its end would be of ninety degrees, comprised between Jerusalem and Cadiz, and the time required for passing through it would be six hours, one fourth of the diurnal revolution of the Heavens.

⁹ The shore of Phoenicia, whence Europa was carried off by Jupiter.

which Europa became a sweet burden. And more of the site of this little threshing-floor would have been discovered to me, but the sun was proceeding beneath my feet, a sign and more removed.¹⁰

My enamoured mind, that ever dallies with my Lady, was more than ever burning to bring back my eyes to her. And if nature has made bait in human flesh, or art in its paintings, to catch the eyes in order to possess the mind, all united would seem naught compared to the divine pleasure which shone upon me when I turned me to her smiling face. And the virtue with which the look indulged me, tore me from the fair nest of Leda,¹¹ and impelled me to the swiftest heaven.¹²

Its parts, most living and lofty, are so uniform that I cannot tell which of them Beatrice chose for a place for me. But

¹⁰ The Sun in Aries was separated by Taurus from Gemini; hence not all of the hemisphere of the earth seen from Gemini was illuminated by the sun, which was some three hours in advance.

¹¹ From Gemini, the constellation of Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Leda.

¹² The Primum Mobile, or Crystalline Heaven.

she, who saw my desire, began, smiling so glad that God seemed to rejoice in her countenance, “The nature of the world¹³ which quiets the centre, and moves all the rest around it, begins here as from its, starting-point. And this heaven has no other Where than the Divine Mind, in which the love that revolves it is kindled, and the virtue which it rains down. Light and love enclose it with one circle, even as this does the others, and of that cincture He who girds it is the sole Intelligence.¹⁴ The motion of this heaven is not marked out by another, but the others are measured by this, even as ten by a half and by a fifth.¹⁵ And how time can hold its roots in such a flower-pot, and in the others its leaves, may now be manifest to thee.

¹³ The world of the revolving Heavens.

¹⁴ The Angelic Intelligences move the lower Heavens, but of the Empyrean God himself is the immediate governor.

¹⁵ The reversal of magnitudes makes this image obscure. The motion of the Crystalline Heaven, the swiftest of all, determines the slower motions of the Heavens below it, and divides them; as five and two divide ten. The fixed unit of time is the day which is established by the revolution of the Primum Mobile.

“O covetousness,¹⁶ which whelms mortals beneath thee, so that no one has power to withdraw his eyes from out thy waves! Well. blossoms the will in men, but the continual rain converts the true plums into wildings. Faith and innocence are found only in children; then both fly away ere yet the cheeks are covered. One, so long as he stammers, fasts, who afterward, when his tongue is loosed, devours whatever food under whatever moon; and one, while stammering, loves his mother and listens to her, who, when speech is perfect, desires then to see her buried. So the skin of the fair daughter of him who brings morning and leaves evening, white in its first aspect, becomes black.¹⁷ Do thou, in order that thou make not marvel, reflect that on earth there is no one who governs; wherefore the human family is gone astray. But ere

¹⁶ The connection of the ideas presented in what precedes with this denunciation of covetousness, or selfishness, is not at first apparent. But the transition is not unnatural, from the consideration of the Heaven which pours down Divine influence, to the thought of the engrossment of men in the pursuit of their selfish and transitory ends, in which they are blinded to heavenly and eternal good.

¹⁷ Both the order of the words and the meaning of this sentence axe obscure.

January be all un-wintered by that hundredth part which is down there neglected,¹⁸ these supernal circles shall so roar that the storm which is so long awaited shall turn the sterns round to where the prows are, so that the fleet shall run straight, and true fruit shall come after the flower."

CANTO XXVIII. *The Heavenly Hierarchy.*

AFTER SHE WHO IMPARADISES my mind had disclosed the truth counter to the present life of wretched mortals, as he, who is lighted by a candle from behind, sees its flame in a mirror before he has it in sight or in thought, and turns round to see if the glass tell him the truth, and sees that it accords with it as the note with its measure;¹ I thus my memory recollects that I did, looking into the beautiful eyes, where-with Love made the cord to ensnare me.² And when I turned, and mine were touched by that which is apparent in that revolving sphere whenever one gazes fixedly on its gyration, I saw a Point which was raying out light so keen that the sight on which it blazes must needs close because of its intense keenness. And whatso star seems smallest here would seem a moon if placed beside it, as star with star is placed. Perhaps as near as a halo seems to girdle the light which paints it, when the vapor that bears it is most dense, at such distance round the Point a circle of fire was whirling so swiftly that it would have surpassed that motion which with most

¹ As the note of the song with the measure of the verse.

² The eyes of Beatrice reflected, as a mirror, the light which shone from God.

¹⁸ Before January falls in spring, owing to the lack of correctness in the calendar, by which the year is lengthened by about a day in each century. It is as if the poet said,—Before a thousand years shall pass; meaning,—Within short while.

speed girds the world; and this was by another circumcinct, and that by the third, and the third then by the fourth, by the fifth the fourth, and then by the sixth the fifth. Thereon the seventh followed, so spread now in compass that the messenger of Juno entire³ would be narrow to contain it. So the eighth and the ninth; and each was moving more slowly, according as it was in number more distant from the first.⁴ And that one had the clearest flame from which the Pure Spark was least distant; I believe because it partakes more of It. My Lady, who saw me deeply suspense in doubt, said, “On that Point Heaven and all nature are dependent. Gaze on that circle which is most conjoined to It, and know that its motion is so swift because of the burning love whereby it is spurred.” And I to her, “If the world were set in the order which I see in those wheels, that which is propounded to me would have satisfied me; but in the world of sense the revolutions may be seen so much the more divine as they are more remote from the centre.⁵ Wherefore if my desire is to

³ The full circle of Iris, or the rainbow.

⁴ These circles of fire are the nine orders of Angels.

⁵ The planetary spheres partake more of the divine nature, and move more swiftly, in proportion to their distance from the earth, their centre.

have end in this marvellous and angelic temple, which has for confine only love and light, I need yet to hear why the example and the exemplar go not in one fashion, because I by myself contemplate this in vain.” “If thy fingers are insufficient for such a knot, it is no wonder, so hard has it become through not being tried.” Thus my Lady; then she said, “Take that which I shall tell thee, if thou wouldest be satisfied, and make subtle thy wit about it. The corporeal circles⁶ are wide and narrow according to the more or less of virtue which is spread through all their parts. Greater goodness must make greater welfare; the greater body, if it has its parts equally complete, contains greater welfare. Hence this one,⁷ which sweeps along with itself all the rest of the universe, corresponds to the circle⁸ which loves most, and knows most. Therefore, if thou compassest thy measure round the virtue, not round the seeming of the substances which appear circular to thee, thou wilt see in each heaven a marvellous agreement with its Intelligence, of greater to more and of smaller to less.”⁹

⁶ The planetary spheres.

⁷ The ninth sphere.

⁸ Of the angelic hierarchy.

⁹ The greater heaven corresponds to the angelic circle of the Intelligences which love God most and know most of Him; the smaller to that of those which love and know least.

As the hemisphere of the air remains splendid and serene when Boreas blows from that cheek wherewith he is mildest,¹⁰ whereby the mist which first troubled it is cleared and dissolved, so that the heaven smiles to us with the beauties of all its flock, so I became after my Lady had provided me with her clear answer, and, like a star in heaven, the truth was seen.

And after her words had stopped, not otherwise does molten iron throw out sparks than the circles sparkled. Every scintillation followed its flame,¹¹ and they were so many that their number, was of more thousands than the doubling of the chess. I heard Hosaimah sung from choir to choir to the fixed Point that holds them, and will forever hold them, at the Ubi¹² in which they have ever been. And she, who

¹⁰ When Boreas blows the north wind more from the west than from the east.

¹¹ The innumerable sparks each moved in accord with the gyration of its flaming circle. The doubling of the chess alludes to the story that the inventor of the game asked, as his reward from the King of Persia, a grain of wheat for the first square of the board, two for the second, and so on to the last or sixty-fourth square. The number reached by this process of duplication extends to twenty figures.

¹² The WHERE, the appointed place.

saw the dubious thoughts within my mind, said, "The first circles have shown to thee the Seraphim and the Cherubim. Thus swiftly they follow their own bonds,¹³ in order to liken themselves to the Point so far as they can, and they can so far as they are exalted to see. Those other loves, which go round about them, are called Thrones of the divine aspect, because they terminated the first triad.¹⁴ And thou shouldst know that all have delight in proportion as their vision penetrates into the True in which every understanding is at rest. Hence may be seen how beatitude is founded on the act which sees, not on that which loves, which follows after. And merit, which grace and good will bring forth, is the measure of this seeing; thus is the progress from grade to grade.

"The next triad that thus buds in this semipiternal spring which the nightly Aries despoils not,¹⁵ perpetually sing their spring song of Hosannah with three melodies, which sound

¹³ The course of their respective circles to which they are bound.

¹⁴ "Throni elevantur ad hoc quod Deum familiariter in seipsis recipient."—Summa Theol., I, cviii. 6.

¹⁵ At the autumnal equinox, the time of frosts, Aries is the sign in which the night rises.

in the three orders of joy wherewith it is threefold. In this hierarchy are the three Divinities, first Dominations, and then the Virtues; the third order is of Powers. Then, in the two penultimate dances, the Principalities and Archangels circle; the last is wholly of Angelic sports. These orders are all upward gazing, and downward prevail, so that toward God they all are drawn, and they all draw. And Dionysius¹⁶ with such great desire set himself to contemplate these orders, that he named and divided them, as I. But Gregory¹⁷ afterward separated from him; wherefore, so soon as he opened his eyes in this Heaven, he smiled at himself. And if a mortal proffered on earth so much of secret truth, I would not have thee wonder, for he who saw it hereabove¹⁸ disclosed it to him, with much else of the truth of these circles.”

¹⁶ The Areopagite. See Canto X.

¹⁷ The Pope, St. Gregory, who differs slightly from Dionysius in his arrangement of the Heavenly host.

¹⁸ St. Paul, supposed to have communicated to his disciple the knowledge which he gained when caught up to Heaven. See 2 Cor., xii. 2.

CANTO XXIX. *Discourse of Beatrice concerning the creation and nature of the Angels.—She reproves the presumption and foolishness of preachers.*

WHEN BOTH THE CHILDREN of Latona, covered by the Ram and by the Scales, together make a zone of the horizon,¹ as long as from the moment the zenith holds them in balance, till one and the other, changing their hemisphere, are unbalanced from that girdle, soloing, with her countenance painted with a smile, was Beatrice silent, looking fixedly upon the Point which had overcome me. Then she began: “I speak, and I ask not what thou wishest to hear, for I have seen it where every WHERE and every WHEN are centred. Not for the gain of good unto Himself, which cannot be, but that His splendor might, in resplendence, say, Subsist; in His own eternity, outside of time, outside of every other limit, as pleased Him, the Eternal Love disclosed Himself in new

¹ When at the spring equinox, the sun being in the sign of Aries or the Ram, and the moon in that of Libra or the Scales, opposite to each other on the horizon, the one just rising and the other setting, they seem as if held for a moment in a balance which hangs from the zenith.

loves. Nor before, as if inert, did He lie; for the going forth of God upon these waters had proceeded neither before nor after.² Form and matter, conjoined and simple, came forth to existence which had no defect, as three arrows from a three-stringed bow; and as in glass, in amber, or in crystal a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coining and its complete existence, so the triform effect³ rayed forth from its Lord into its existence all at once, without discrimination of beginning. Order was concrete, and established for the substances, and those were top of the world in which pure act was produced.⁴ Pure potency held the lowest part;⁵ in the middle such a bond unites potency with act, that it is never unbound.⁶ Jerome has written to you of the Angels,

² In eternity there is no before or after; time had no existence till the creation, and has relevancy only to created things.

³ Pure form, pure matter, and form conjoined with matter.

⁴ The substances created purely active, to exercise action upon others, were the angels.

⁵ The substances purely passive, capable potentially only of submitting to the action of others, are the material things without intelligence.

⁶ The substances in which potency and act are united are the creatures endowed with bodies and souls.

created a long tract of centuries before the rest of the world was made. But this truth⁷ is written on many pages by the writers of the that Holy Spirit: and thou wilt thyself discover it, if thou watchest well for it; and even the reason sees it somewhat, for it would not admit that the motors could be so long without their perfection.⁸ Now thou knowest where and when these loves were elected, and how; so that three flames of thy desire are already quenched.

One would not reach to twenty, in counting, so quickly as a part of the Angels disturbed the subject of your elements.⁹ The rest remained and began this art which thou beboldest, with such great delight that they never cease from circling. The origin of the fall was the accursed pride of him whom thou hast seen opprest by all the weights of the world. Those whom thou seest here were modest in grateful recognition of the goodness which had made them ready for intelligence so great; wherefore

⁷ The truth here set forth (contrary to Jerome's assertion), the creation of the Angels was contemporaneous with that of the creation of the rest of the Universe of which they were the Intelligences.

⁸ Without scope for their action as movers of the spheres.

⁹ The earth.

their vision was exalted with illuminant grace and with their merit, so that they have full and steadfast will. And I wish that thou doubt not, but be certain, that to receive grace is meritorious in proportion as the affection is open to it.

“Henceforth, if my words have been harvested, thou canst contemplate sufficiently round about this consistory without other assistance. But because on earth it is taught in your schools that the angelic nature is such that it understands, and remembers, and wills, I will speak further, in order that thou mayest see the truth pure, which there below is mixed, through the equivocation in such like teaching. These substances, from the time that they were glad in the face of God, have not turned their sight from it, from which nothing is concealed. Therefore they have not their vision interrupted by a new object, and therefore do not need because of divided thought to recollect.¹⁰ So that there below men dream when not asleep, believing and not believing to speak truth; but in the one is more fault and more shame.¹¹ Ye below go

¹⁰ The angels, looking always upon God, to whom all things are present, have no need of memory.

¹¹ Many of the doctrines of men on earth axe like dreams, because they have no foundation in truth; and while some honestly believe in them, there are others, who, though not believing, still teach these doctrines as truth.

not along one path in philosophizing; so much do the love of appearance¹² and the thought of it transport you; and yet this is endured hereabove with less indignation than when the divine Scripture is set aside, or when it is perverted. Men think not there how much blood it costs to sow it in the world, and how much he pleases who humbly keeps close to its side. Every one strives for appearance, and makes his own inventions, and those are discoursed of by the preachers, and the Gospel is silent. One says that the moon turned back at the passion of Christ and interposed herself, so that the light of the sun reached not down; and others that the light hid itself of its own accord, so that this eclipse answered for the Spaniards and for the Indians as well as for the Jews. Florence hath not so many Lapi and Bind¹³ as there are fables such as these shouted the year long from the pulpits, on every side; so that the poor flocks, who have no knowledge, return from the pasture fed with wind; and not seeing the harm does not excuse them. Christ did not say to his first company, ‘Go, and preach idle stories to the world,’ but he

¹² Of making a good show.

¹³ Common nicknames in Florence; Lapo is from Jacopo, Bindo from Ildebrando.

gave to them the true foundation; and that alone sounded in their cheeks, so that in the battle for kindling of the faith they made shield and lance of the Gospel. Now men go forth to preach with jests and with buffooneries, and provided only there is a good laugh the cowl puffs up, and nothing more is required. But such a bird is nesting in the tail of the hood, that if the crowd should see it, they would see the pardon in which they confide; through which such great folly has grown on earth, that, without proof of any testimony, men would flock to every indulgence. On this the pig of St. Antony fattens, and others also, who are far more pigs, paying with money that has no stamp of coinage.

“But because we have digressed enough, turn back thine eyes now toward the straight path, so that the way be shortened with the time. This nature¹⁴ so extends in number, that never was there speech or mortal concept that could go so far. And if thou considerest that which is revealed by Daniel thou wilt see that in his thousands¹⁵ a determinate number is concealed. The primal light that irradiates it all is received

¹⁴ The Angels.

¹⁵ “Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”—Daniel, vii. 10.

in it by as many modes as are the splendors with which the light pairs itself.¹⁶ Wherefore, since the affection follows upon the act¹⁷ that conceives, in this nature the sweetness of love diversely glows and warms. Behold now the height and the breadth of the Eternal Goodness, since it has made for itself so many mirrors on which it is broken, One in itself remaining as before.”

¹⁶ No two angels are precisely alike in their vision of God.
¹⁷ Since love follows on knowledge through vision.

CANTO XXX. *Ascent to the Empyrean.—The River of Light.—The celestial Rose.—The seat of Henry VII.—The last words of Beatrice.*

THE SIXTH HOUR is glowing perhaps six thousand miles distant from us, and this world now inclines its shadow almost to a level bed, when the mid heaven, deep above us, begins to become such that some one star loses its show so far as to this depth;¹ and as the brightest handmaid of the sun comes farther on, so the heaven is closed from light to light, even to the most beautiful. Not otherwise the Triumph, that plays forever round the Point which vanquished me, seeming enclosed by that which it encloses, little by little to my sight was extinguished;² wherefore my seeing nothing, and my love constrained me to turn with my eyes to Beatrice. If what has been said of her so far as here were all included in a single praise, it would be little to furnish out this turn. The

¹ When it is noon,—the sixth hour,—six thousand miles away from us to the east, it is about daybreak where we are; the shadow of the earth lies in the plane of vision, and with the growing light the stars one after another become invisible at this depth, that is, to one on earth.

² Losing itself in the light which streams from the Divine point.

beauty which I saw transcends measure not only by us, but truly I believe that its Maker alone can enjoy it all.

By this pass I concede myself vanquished more than ever comic or tragic poet was overcome by crisis of his theme. For as the sun does to the sight which trembles most, even so remembrance of the sweet smile deprives my mind of its very self. From the first day that I saw her face in this life, even to this look, the following with my song has not been interrupted for me, but now needs must my pursuit desist from further following her beauty in my verse, as at his utmost every artist.

Such, as I leave her to a greater heralding than that of my trumpet, which is bringing its arduous theme to a close, with act and voice of a trusty leader she began again. “We have issued forth from the greatest body³ to the Heaven⁴ which is pure light: light intellectual full of love, love of true good, full of joy; joy which transcends every sweetness. Here thou shalt see one and the other host of Paradise;⁵ and the one in

³ The Primum Mobile, the greatest of the material spheres of the universe.

⁴ The Empyrean.

⁵ The spirits of the redeemed who fought against the temptations of the world, and the good angels who fought against the rebellious; and here the souls in bliss will be seen in their bodily shapes.

those aspects which thou shalt see at the Last Judgment."

As a sudden flash which scatters the spirits of the sight so that it deprives the eye of the action of the strongest objects,⁶ thus a vivid light shone round about me, and left me swathed with such a veil of its own effulgence that nothing was visible to me.

"The Love which quieteth this Heaven always welcomes to itself with such a salutation, in order to make the candle ready for its flame." No sooner had these brief words come within me than I comprehended that I was surmounting above my own power; and I rekindled me with a new vision, such that no light is so pure that my eyes had not sustained it. And I saw light in form of a river, bright with effulgence, between two banks painted with a marvellous spring. Out of this stream were issuing living sparks, and on every side were setting themselves in the flowers, like rubies which gold encompasses. Then, as if inebriated by the odors, they plunged again into the wonderful flood, and as one was entering another was issuing forth.

"The high desire which now inflames and urges thee to

⁶ So that the clearest objects produce no effect upon the eye.

have knowledge concerning that which thou seest, Pleases me the more the more it swells, but thou must needs drink of this water before so great a thirst, in thee be slaked." Thus the Sun of my eyes said to me; thereon she added, "The stream, and the topazes which enter and issue, and the smiling of the herbage, are foreshadowing prefaces of their truth;⁷ not that these things are in themselves immature,⁸ but there is defect on thy part who hast not yet vision so lofty."

There is no babe who so hastily springs with face toward the milk, if he awake much later than his wont, as I did, to make better mirrors yet of my eyes, stooping to the wave which flows in order that one may be bettered in it. And even as the eaves of my eyelids drank of it, so it seemed to me from its length to become round. Then as folk who have been under masks, who seem other than before, if they divest themselves of the semblance not their own in which they disappeared, thus for me the flowers and the sparks were

⁷ The stream, the sparks, the flowers are not such in reality as they seem to be; they are but images foreshadowing the truth.

⁸ The things show themselves as they are, but the eyes cannot yet see them correctly.

changed into greater festival, so that I saw both the Courts of Heaven manifest.

O splendor of God, by means of which I saw the high triumph of the true kingdom, give me power to tell how I saw it!

Light is thereabove which makes the Creator visible to that creature which has its peace only in seeing Him; and it is extended in a circular figure so far that its circumference would be too wide a girdle for the sun. Its whole appearance is made of a ray reflected from the summit of the First Moving Heaven,⁹ which therefrom takes its life and potency. And as a hill mirrors itself in water at its base, as if to see itself adorned, rich as it is with verdure and with flowers, so ranged above the light, round and round about, on more than a thousand seats, I saw mirrored all who of us have returned on high. And if the lowest row gather within itself so great a light, how vast is the spread of this rose in its outermost leaves! My sight lost not itself in the breadth and in the height, but took in all the quantity and the quality of that joy. There near and far nor add nor take away; for where God immedi-

⁹ The Primum Mobile.

ately governs the natural law is of no relevancy.

Into the yellow of the semipernal rose, which spreads wide, rises in steps, and is redolent with odor of praise unto the Sun that makes perpetual spring, Beatrice, like one who is silent and wishes to speak, drew me, and said, “Behold, how vast is the convent of the white stoles!¹⁰ See our city, how wide its circuit! See our benches so full that few people are now awaited here. On that great seat, on which thou holdest thine eye because of the crown which already is set above it, ere thou suspest at this wedding feast will sit the soul (which below will be imperial) of the high Henry who, to set Italy straight, will come ere she is ready.¹¹ The blind cupidity which bewitches you has made you like the little child who dies of hunger, and drives away his nurse. And such a one will then be prefect in the divine forum that openly or covertly he will not go with him along one road;¹² but short

¹⁰ “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.”—Revelation, iii. 5.

¹¹ Henry VII., Emperor 1308, crowned at Milan 1311, died 1313.

¹² The Pope Clement V. ostensibly supported the Emperor Henry VII. in his Italian expedition, but secretly manoeuvred

while thereafter shall he be endured by God in the holy office; for he shall be thrust down for his deserts, there where Simon Magus is, and shall make him of Anagna go lower."

against him. He died in 1314, eight months after the death of Henry. Beatrice here condemns him to the third bolgia of the eighth circle of Hell, whither he was to follow Boniface VIII.,—him of Anagna,—and push him deeper in the hole where the simoniacal Popes were punished, Cf. Hell, XIX.

CANTO XXXI. *The Rose of Paradise.—St. Bernard.—Prayer to Beatrice.—The glory of the Blessed Virgin.*

IN FORM then of a pure white rose the holy host was shown to me, which, in His own blood, Christ made His bride. But the other,¹ which, flying, sees and sings the glory of Him who enamours it, and the goodness which made it so great, like a swarm of bees which one while are among the flowers and anon return to the place where their work gets its savor, were descending into the great flower which is adorned with so many leaves, and thence rising up again to where their love always abides. Their faces all were of living flame, and their wings of gold, and the rest so white that no snow reaches that extreme. When they descended into the flower, from bench to bench, they imparted somewhat of the peace and of the ardor which they acquired as they fanned their sides. Nor did the interposing of such a flying plenitude between what was above and the flower impede the sight and the splendor; for the divine light penetrates through the universe, according as it is worthy, so that naught can be an

¹ The angelic host.

obstacle to it. This secure and joyous realm, thronged with ancient and with modern folk, had all its look and love upon one mark.

O Trinal Light, which in a single star, scintillating on their sight, so satisfies them, look down here upon our tempest!

If the Barbarians, coming from a region such that every day it is covered by Helice,² revolving with her son of whom she is fond, when they beheld Rome and her arduous work, were wonderstruck, what time Lateran rose above mortal things,³ I, who to the divine from the human, to the eternal from the temporal, had come, and from Florence to a people just and sane, with what amazement must I have been full! Surely what with it and the joy I was well pleased not to hear, and to stand mute. And as a pilgrim who is refreshed in the temple of his vow in looking round, and hopes now to

² The nymph Callisto or Helice bore to Zeus a son, Arcas; she was metamorphosed by Hera into a bear, and then transferred to Heaven by Jupiter as the constellation of the Great Bear, while her son was changed into the constellation of Aretophylax or Bootes. In the far north these constellations remain always above the horizon.

³ When Rome was mistress of the world, and the Lateran the seat of imperial or papal power.

report how it was, so, journeying through the living light, I carried my eyes over the ranks, now up, now down, and now circling about. I saw faces persuasive to love, beautified by the light of Another and by their own smile, and actions ornate with every dignity.

My look had now comprehended the general form of Paradise as a whole, and on no part yet my sight was fixed; and I turned me with re-ekindled wish to ask my Lady about things concerning which my mind was in suspense. One thing I was meaning, and another answered me; I was thinking to see Beatrice, and I saw an old man, robed like the people in glory. His eyes and his cheeks were overspread with benignant joy, in pious mien such as befits a tender father. And, “Where is she?” on a sudden said I. Whereon he, “To terminate thy desire, Beatrice urged me from my place, and if thou lookest up to the third circle from the highest step, thou wilt again see her upon the throne which her merits have allotted to her.” Without answering I lifted up my eyes, and saw her as she made for herself a crown, reflecting from herself the eternal rays. From that region which thunders highest up no mortal eye is so far distant, in whatsoever sea

it loses itself the lowest,⁴ as there from Beatrice was my sight. But this was naught to me, for her image did not descend to me blurred by aught between.

“O Lady, in whom my hope is strong, and who, for my salvation, didst endure to leave thy footprints in Hell, of all those things which I have seen, I recognize by thy power and by thy goodness the grace and the virtue. Thou hast drawn me from servitude to liberty by all those ways, by all the modes whereby thou hadst the power to do this. Guard thou in me thine own magnificence so that my soul, which thou hast made whole, may, pleasing to thee, be unloosed from the body.” Thus I prayed; and she, so distant, smiled, as it seemed, and looked at me; then turned to the eternal fountain.

And the holy old man, “In order that thou mayest complete perfectly,” he said, “thy journey, whereto prayer and holy love sent me, fly with thy eyes through this garden; for seeing it will prepare thy look to mount further through the divine radiance. And the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn wholly with love, will grant us every grace, because I am her

⁴ From the highest region of the air to the lowest depth of the sea.

faithful Bernard.”⁵

As is he who comes perchance from Croatia to see our Veronica,⁶ who is not satisfied by its ancient fame, but says in thought, while it is shown, “My Lord Jesus Christ, true God, now was your semblance like to this?” such was I, gazing on the living charity of him who, in this world, in contemplation, tasted of that peace.

“Son of Grace, this glad existence,” began he, “will not be known to thee holding thine eyes only below here at the bottom, but look on the circles even to the most remote, until thou seest upon her seat the Queen to whom this realm is subject and devoted.” I lifted up my eyes; and as at morning the eastern parts of the horizon surpass that where the sun declines, thus, as if going with my eyes from valley to mountain, I saw a part on the extreme verge vanquishing in

⁵ St. Bernard, to whom, because of his fervent devotion to her, the Blessed Virgin had deigned to show herself during his life.

⁶ The likeness of the Saviour miraculously impressed upon the kerchief presented to him by a holy woman, on his way to Calvary, wherewith to wipe the sweat and dust from his face, and now religiously preserved at Rome, and shown at St. Peter’s, on certain holydays.

light all the other front. And even as there where the pole which Phaeton guided ill is awaited,⁷ the flame is brighter, and on this side and that the light grows less, so that pacific oriflamme was vivid at the middle, and on each side in equal measure the flame slackened. And at that mid part I saw more than a thousand jubilant Angels with wings outspread, each distinct both in brightness and in act. I saw there, smiling at their sports and at their songs, a Beauty⁸ which was joy in the eyes of all the other saints. And if I had such wealth in speech as in imagining, I should not dare to attempt the least of its delightfulness. Bernard, when he saw my eyes fixed and intent upon its warm glow, turned his own with such affection to it, that he made mine more ardent to gaze anew.

CANTO XXXII. *St. Bernard describes the order of the Rose, and points out many of the Saints.—The children in Paradise.—The angelic festival.—The patricians of the Court of Heaven.*

FIXED IN AFFECTION upon his Delight, that contemplator freely assumed the office of a teacher, and began these holy words: “The wound which Mary closed up and anointed, she who is so beautiful at her feet is she who opened it and who pierced it. Beneath her, in the order which the third seats make, sits Rachel with Beatrice, as thou seest. Sara, Rebecca, Judith, and she¹ who was great-grandmother of the singer who, through sorrow for his sin, said Miserere mei,² thou mayest see thus from step to step in gradation downward, as with the name of each I go downward through the rose from leaf to leaf. And from the seventh row downwards, even as down to it, Hebrew women follow in succession, dividing all the tresses of the flower; because these are the wall by which the sacred stairways are separated according to the look which faith turned on Christ. On this side, where the flower is mature with all its leaves, are seated those who believed in

¹ Ruth.

² “Have mercy upon me.”—Psalm li. 1.

⁷ Where the chariot of the sun is about to rise.

⁸ The Virgin.

Christ about to come. On the other side, where the semi-circles are broken by empty spaces, are those who turned their faces on Christ already come.³ And as on this side the glorious seat of the Lady of Heaven, and the other seats below it, make so great a division, thus, opposite, does that of the great John, who, ever holy, endured the desert and martyrdom, and then Hell for two years;⁴ and beneath him Francis and Benedict and Augustine and others are allotted thfis to divide, far down as here from circle to circle. Now

³ The circle of the Rose is divided in two equal parts. In the one half, the saints of the Old Dispensation, who believed in Christ about to come, are seated. The benches of this half are full. In the other half, the benches of which are not yet quite full, sit the redeemed of the New Dispensation who have believed on Christ already come. On one side the line of division between the semicircles is made by the Hebrew women from the Virgin Mary downwards; on the opposite side the line is made by St. John Baptist and other saints who had rendered special service to Christ and his Church. The lower tiers of seats all round are occupied by children elect to bliss.

⁴ The two years from the death of John to the death of Christ and his descent to Hell, to draw from the limbus patrum the souls predestined to salvation.

behold the high divine foresight; for one and the other aspect of the faith will fill this garden equally. And know that downwards from the row which midway cleaves⁵ the two divisions, they are seated for no merit of their own, but for that of others, under certain conditions; for all these are spirits absolved ere they had true election. Well canst thou perceive it by their looks, and also by their childish voices, if thou lookest well upon them and if thou listenest to them. Now thou art perplexed, and in perplexity art silent; but I will loose for thee the strong bond in which thy subtile thoughts fetter thee.⁶ Within the amplitude of this realm a casual point can have no place,⁷ any more than sadness, or thirst, or hunger; for whatever thou seest is established by eternal law, so that here the ring answers exactly to the finger. And therefore this folk,⁸ hastened to true life, is not sine causa more and less excellent here among itself. The King through whom

⁵ Horizontally.

⁶ The perplexity was, How can there be difference of merit in the innocent, assigning them to different seats in Paradise?

⁷ No least thing can here be matter of chance.

⁸ This childish folk.

this realm reposes in such great love and in such great delight that no will is venturesome for more, creating all the minds in His own glad aspect, diversely endows with grace according to His own pleasure; and here let the fact suffice.⁹ And this is expressly and clearly noted for you in the Holy Scripture in those twins who, while within their mother, had their anger roused.¹⁰ Therefore, according to the color of the hair of such grace,¹¹ it behoves the highest light befittingly to crown them. Without, then, merit from their modes of Efe, they are placed in different grades, differing only in their primary keenness of vision.¹² Thus in the fresh centuries the faith of parents alone sufficed, together with innocence, to secure salvation. After the first ages were, complete, it was needful for males with their innocent plumage to acquire virtue through circumcision. But after the time of grace

⁹ Without attempt to account for it, to seek the wherefore of the will of God.

¹⁰ Jacob and Esau. See Genesis, xxv. 22.

¹¹ The crown of light and the station in Paradise axe allotted according to the diversity in the endowment of grace, which is like the diversity in the color of the hair of men.

¹² In capacity to see God.

had come, without perfect baptism in Christ, such minotence was kept there below.

“Look now upon the face which most resembles Christ, for only its brightness can prepare thee to see Christ.”

I saw raining upon her such great joy borne in the holy minds created to fly across through that height, that whatsoever I had seen before had not rapt me with such great admiration, nor shown to me such likeness to God. And that love which had first descended there, in front of her spread wide his wings, singing “Ave, Maria, gratia plena.” The blessed Court responded to the divine song from all parts, so that every countenance became thereby serener.

“O holy Father, who for me submittest to be below here, leaving the sweet place in which thou sittest through eternal allotment, who is that Angel who with such jubilee looks into the eyes of our Queen, so enamoured that he seems of fire?” Thus I again had recourse to the teaching of him who was made beautiful by Mary, as the morning star by the sun. And he to me, “Confidence and grace as much as there can be in Angel and in soul, axe all in him, and so we would have it be, for he it is who bore the palm down to Mary, when the

Son of God willed to load Himself with our burden.

“But come now with thine eyes, as I shall go on speaking, and note the great patricians of this most just and pious empire. Those two who sit there above, most happy through being nearest to the Empress, are, as it were, the two roots of this rose. He who on the left is close to her is the Father through whose rash taste the human race tastes so much bitterness. On the right thou seest that ancient Father of Holy Church, to whom Christ entrusted the keys of this lovely flower. And he who saw before his death all the heavy times of the beautiful bride, who was won with the lance and with the nails, sits at his side; and alongside the other rests that leader, under whom the ingrate, fickle and stubborn people lived on manna. Opposite Peter thou seest Anna sitting, so content to gaze upon her daughter, that she moves not her eyes while singing Hosannah; and opposite the eldest father of a family sits Lucia, who moved thy Lady, when thou didst bend thy brow to rush downward.

“But because the time flies which holds thee slumbering,¹³ here will we make a stop, like a good tailor who makes the

¹³ This is the single passage in which Dante implies that his vision is of the nature of a dream.

gown according as he has cloth, and we will direct our eyes to the First Love, so that, looking towards Him, thou mayst penetrate so far as is possible through His effulgence. Truly, lest perchance, moving thy wings, thou go backward, believing to advance, it is needful that grace be obtained by prayer; grace from her who has the power to aid thee; and do thou follow me with thy affection so that thy heart depart not from my speech.”

And he began this holy supplication.

CANTO XXXIII. *Prayer to the Virgin.—The Beatific Vision.—The Ultimate Salvation.*

“VIRGIN MOTHER, daughter of thine own Son, humble and exalted more than any creature, fixed term of the eternal counsel, thou art she who didst so ennable human nature that its own Maker disdained not to become His own making. Within thy womb was rekindled the Love through whose warmth this flower has thus blossomed in the eternal peace. Here thou art to us the noonday torch of charity, and below, among mortals, thou art the living fount of hope. Lady, thou art so great, and so availest, that whoso wishes grace, and has not recourse to thee, wishes his desire to fly without wings. Thy benignity not only succors him who asks, but oftentimes freely foreruns the asking. In thee mercy, in thee pity, in thee magnificence, in thee whatever of goodness is in any creature, are united. Now doth this man, who, from the lowest abyss of the universe, far even as here, has seen one by one the lives of spirits, supplicate thee, through grace, for virtue such that he may be able with his eyes to uplift himself higher toward the Ultimate Salvation. And I, who never for my

own vision burned more than I do for his, proffer to thee all my prayers, and pray that they be not scant, that with thy prayers thou wouldest dissipate for him every cloud of his mortality, so that the Supreme Pleasure may be displayed to him. Further I pray thee, Queen, who canst whatso thou wilt, that, after so great a vision, thou wouldest preserve his affections sound. May thy guardianship vanquish human impulses. Behold Beatrice with all the Blessed for my prayers clasp their hands to thee.”¹

The eyes beloved and revered by God, fixed on the speaker, showed to us how pleasing unto her are devout prayers. Then to the Eternal Light were they directed, on which it is not to be believed that eye so clear is turned by any creature.

And I, who to the end of all desires was approaching, even as I ought, ended within myself the ardor of my longing.² Bernard was beckoning to me, and was smiling, that I should look upward; but I was already, of my own accord, such as he wished; for my sight, becoming pure, was entering more

¹ In the Second Nun’s Tale Chaucer has rendered, with great beauty, the larger part of this prayer.

² The ardor of longing ceased, as was natural, in the consummation and enjoyment of desire.

and more through the radiance of the lofty Light which of itself is true.

Thenceforward my vision was greater than our speech, which yields to such a sight, and the memory yields to such excess.³

As is he who dreaming sees, and after the dream the passion remains imprinted, and the rest returns not to the mind, such am I; for my vision almost wholly fails, while the sweetness that was born of it yet distils within my heart. Thus the snow is by the sun unsealed; thus on the wind, in the light leaves, was lost the saying of the Sibyl.

O Supreme Light, that so high upliftest Thyself from mortal conceptions, re-lend a little to my mind of what Thou didst appear, and make my tongue so powerful that it may be able to leave one single spark of Thy glory for the future people; for, by returning somewhat to my memory and by sounding a little in these verses, more of Thy victory shall be conceived.

³ Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became."

—*In Memoriam*, XCV.

I think that by the keenness of the living ray which I endured, I should have been bewildered if my eyes had been averted from it. And it comes to my mind that for this reason I was the more hardy to sustain so much, that I joined my look unto the Infinite Goodness.

O abundant Grace, whereby I presumed to fix my eyes through the Eternal Light so far that there I consumed my sight!

In its depth I saw that whatsoever is dispersed through the universe is there included, bound with love in one volume; substance and accidents and their modes, fused together, as it were, in such wise, that that of which I speak is one simple Light. The universal form of this knot⁴ I believe that I saw, because in saying this I feel that I more at large rejoice. One instant only is greater oblivion for me than five and twenty centuries to the emprise which made Neptune wonder at the shadow of Argo.⁵

Thus my mind, wholly rapt, was gazing fixed, motionless,

⁴ This union of substance and accident and their modes; the unity of creation in the Creator.

⁵ The mysteries of God vanish in an instant from memory, but the larger joy felt in recording them is proof that they were seen.

and intent, and ever with gazing grew enkindled. In that Light one becomes such that it is impossible he should ever consent to turn himself from it for other sight; because the Good which is the object of the will is all collected in it, and outside of it that is defective which is perfect there.

Now will my speech be shorter, even in respect to that which I remember, than an infant's who still bathes his tongue at the breast. Not because more than one simple semblance was in the Living Light wherein I was gazing, which is always such as it was before; but through my sight, which was growing strong in me as I looked, one sole appearance, as I myself changed, was altering itself to me.

Within the profound and clear subsistence of the lofty Light appeared to me three circles of three colors and of one dimension; and one appeared reflected by the other, as Iris by Iris,⁶ and the third appeared fire which from the one and from the other is equally breathed forth.

O how short is the telling, and how feeble toward my conception! and this toward what I saw is such that it suffices not to call it little.

⁶ As one arch of the rainbow by the other.

O Light Eternal, that sole dwellest in Thyself, sole understandest Thyself, and, by Thyself understood and understanding, lovest and smilest on Thyself! That circle, which, thus conceived, appeared in Thee as a reflected light, being somewhat regarded by my eyes, seemed to me depicted within itself, of its own very color, by our effigy, wherefore my sight was wholly set upon it. As is the geometer who wholly applies himself to measure the circle, and finds not by thinking that principle of which he is in need, such was I at that new sight. I wished to see how the image accorded with the circle, and how it has its place therein; but my own wings were not for this, had it not been that my mind was smitten by a flash in which its wish came.

To my high fantasy here power failed; but now my desire and my will, like a wheel which evenly is moved, the Lovee was turning which moves the Sun and the other stars.

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