

The Vision of Paradise, Part 2. Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore

Dante Alighieri

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THE VISION
OF
HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY
THE REV. H. F. CARY, M.A.

PARADISE

Part 2

CANTO XV

True love, that ever shows itself as clear
In kindness, as loose appetite in wrong,
Silenced that lyre harmonious, and still'd
The sacred chords, that are by heav'n's right hand
Unwound and tighten'd, flow to righteous prayers
Should they not hearken, who, to give me will
For praying, in accordance thus were mute?
He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,
Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,
Despoils himself forever of that love.

As oft along the still and pure serene,
At nightfall, glides a sudden trail of fire,
Attracting with involuntary heed
The eye to follow it, erewhile at rest,
And seems some star that shifted place in heav'n,
Only that, whence it kindles, none is lost,
And it is soon extinct; thus from the horn,
That on the dexter of the cross extends,
Down to its foot, one luminary ran
From mid the cluster shone there; yet no gem
Dropp'd from its foil; and through the beamy list
Like flame in alabaster, glow'd its course.

So forward stretch'd him (if of credence aught
Our greater muse may claim) the pious ghost
Of old Anchises, in the' Elysian bower,
When he perceiv'd his son. "O thou, my blood!
O most exceeding grace divine! to whom,
As now to thee, hath twice the heav'nly gate
Been e'er unclos'd?" so spake the light; whence I
Turn'd me toward him; then unto my dame
My sight directed, and on either side
Amazement waited me; for in her eyes
Was lighted such a smile, I thought that mine
Had div'd unto the bottom of my grace
And of my bliss in Paradise. Forthwith
To hearing and to sight grateful alike,
The spirit to his proem added things
I understood not, so profound he spake;
Yet not of choice but through necessity
Mysterious; for his high conception scar'd
Beyond the mark of mortals. When the flight
Of holy transport had so spent its rage,
That nearer to the level of our thought
The speech descended, the first sounds I heard
Were, "Best he thou, Triunal Deity!
That hast such favour in my seed vouchsaf'd!"
Then follow'd: "No unpleasant thirst, tho' long,
Which took me reading in the sacred book,
Whose leaves or white or dusky never change,
Thou hast allay'd, my son, within this light,

From whence my voice thou hear'st; more thanks to her.
Who for such lofty mounting has with plumes
Begirt thee. Thou dost deem thy thoughts to me
From him transmitted, who is first of all,
E'en as all numbers ray from unity;
And therefore dost not ask me who I am,
Or why to thee more joyous I appear,
Than any other in this gladsome throng.
The truth is as thou deem'st; for in this hue
Both less and greater in that mirror look,
In which thy thoughts, or ere thou think'st, are shown.
But, that the love, which keeps me wakeful ever,
Urging with sacred thirst of sweet desire,
May be contended fully, let thy voice,
Fearless, and frank and jocund, utter forth
Thy will distinctly, utter forth the wish,
Whereto my ready answer stands decreed."

I turn'd me to Beatrice; and she heard
Ere I had spoken, smiling, an assent,
That to my will gave wings; and I began
"To each among your tribe, what time ye kenn'd
The nature, in whom naught unequal dwells,
Wisdom and love were in one measure dealt;
For that they are so equal in the sun,
From whence ye drew your radiance and your heat,
As makes all likeness scant. But will and means,
In mortals, for the cause ye well discern,
With unlike wings are fledge. A mortal I
Experience inequality like this,
And therefore give no thanks, but in the heart,
For thy paternal greeting. This howe'er
I pray thee, living topaz! that ingemm'st
This precious jewel, let me hear thy name."

"I am thy root, O leaf! whom to expect
Even, hath pleas'd me:" thus the prompt reply
Prefacing, next it added; "he, of whom
Thy kindred appellation comes, and who,
These hundred years and more, on its first ledge
Hath circuited the mountain, was my son
And thy great grandsire. Well befits, his long
Endurance should be shorten'd by thy deeds.

"Florence, within her ancient limit-mark,
Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
Was chaste and sober, and abode in peace.
She had no armlets and no head-tires then,
No purpled dames, no zone, that caught the eye
More than the person did. Time was not yet,
When at his daughter's birth the sire grew pale.
For fear the age and dowry should exceed
On each side just proportion. House was none
Void of its family; nor yet had come
Hardanapalus, to exhibit feats
Of chamber prowess. Montemalo yet
O'er our suburban turret rose; as much
To be surpass in fall, as in its rising.
I saw Bellincione Berti walk abroad

In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone;
And, with no artful colouring on her cheeks,
His lady leave the glass. The sons I saw
Of Nerli and of Vecchio well content
With unrob'd jerkin; and their good dames handling
The spindle and the flax; O happy they!
Each sure of burial in her native land,
And none left desolate a-bed for France!
One wak'd to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lull'd the parent's infancy:
Another, with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectur'd them
Old tales of Troy and Fesole and Rome.
A Salterello and Cianghella we
Had held as strange a marvel, as ye would
A Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.

"In such compos'd and seemly fellowship,
Such faithful and such fair equality,
In so sweet household, Mary at my birth
Bestow'd me, call'd on with loud cries; and there
In your old baptistery, I was made
Christian at once and Cacciaguida; as were
My brethren, Eliseo and Moronto.

"From Val dipado came to me my spouse,
And hence thy surname grew. I follow'd then
The Emperor Conrad; and his knighthood he
Did gird on me; in such good part he took
My valiant service. After him I went
To testify against that evil law,
Whose people, by the shepherd's fault, possess
Your right, usurping. There, by that foul crew
Was I releas'd from the deceitful world,
Whose base affection many a spirit soils,
And from the martyrdom came to this peace."

CANTO XVI

O slight respect of man's nobility!
I never shall account it marvelous,
That our infirm affection here below
Thou mov'st to boasting, when I could not choose,
E'en in that region of unwarp'd desire,
In heav'n itself, but make my vaunt in thee!
Yet cloak thou art soon shorten'd, for that time,
Unless thou be eked out from day to day,
Goes round thee with his shears. Resuming then
With greeting such, as Rome, was first to bear,
But since hath disaccustom'd I began;
And Beatrice, that a little space
Was sever'd, smil'd reminding me of her,
Whose cough embolden'd (as the story holds)
To first offence the doubting Guenever.

"You are my sire," said I, "you give me heart

Freely to speak my thought: above myself
You raise me. Through so many streams with joy
My soul is fill'd, that gladness wells from it;
So that it bears the mighty tide, and bursts not
Say then, my honour'd stem! what ancestors
Where those you sprang from, and what years were mark'd
In your first childhood? Tell me of the fold,
That hath Saint John for guardian, what was then
Its state, and who in it were highest seated?"

As embers, at the breathing of the wind,
Their flame enliven, so that light I saw
Shine at my blandishments; and, as it grew
More fair to look on, so with voice more sweet,
Yet not in this our modern phrase, forthwith
It answer'd: "From the day, when it was said
'Hail Virgin!' to the throes, by which my mother,
Who now is sainted, lighten'd her of me
Whom she was heavy with, this fire had come,
Five hundred fifty times and thrice, its beams
To reillumine underneath the foot
Of its own lion. They, of whom I sprang,
And I, had there our birth-place, where the last
Partition of our city first is reach'd
By him, that runs her annual game. Thus much
Suffice of my forefathers: who they were,
And whence they hither came, more honourable
It is to pass in silence than to tell.
All those, who in that time were there from Mars
Until the Baptist, fit to carry arms,
Were but the fifth of them this day alive.
But then the citizen's blood, that now is mix'd
From Campi and Certaldo and Fighine,
Ran purely through the last mechanic's veins.
O how much better were it, that these people
Were neighbours to you, and that at Galluzzo
And at Trespiano, ye should have your bound'ry,
Than to have them within, and bear the stench
Of Aguglione's hind, and Signa's, him,
That hath his eye already keen for bart'ring!
Had not the people, which of all the world
Degenerates most, been stepdame unto Caesar,
But, as a mother, gracious to her son;
Such one, as hath become a Florentine,
And trades and traffics, had been turn'd adrift
To Simifonte, where his grandsire ply'd
The beggar's craft. The Conti were possess'd
Of Montemurlo still: the Cerchi still
Were in Acone's parish; nor had haply
From Valdigrive past the Buondelmonte.
The city's malady hath ever source
In the confusion of its persons, as
The body's, in variety of food:
And the blind bull falls with a steeper plunge,
Than the blind lamb; and oftentimes one sword
Doth more and better execution,
Than five. Mark Luni, Urbisaglia mark,
How they are gone, and after them how go
Chiusi and Sinigaglia; and 't will seem

No longer new or strange to thee to hear,
That families fail, when cities have their end.
All things, that appertain t' ye, like yourselves,
Are mortal: but mortality in some
Ye mark not, they endure so long, and you
Pass by so suddenly. And as the moon
Doth, by the rolling of her heav'nly sphere,
Hide and reveal the strand unceasingly;
So fortune deals with Florence. Hence admire not
At what of them I tell thee, whose renown
Time covers, the first Florentines. I saw
The Ughi, Catilini and Filippi,
The Alberichi, Greci and Ormanni,
Now in their wane, illustrious citizens:
And great as ancient, of Sannella him,
With him of Arca saw, and Soldanieri
And Ardinghi, and Bostichi. At the poop,
That now is laden with new felony,
So cumb'rous it may speedily sink the bark,
The Ravignani sat, of whom is sprung
The County Guido, and whoso hath since
His title from the fam'd Bellincione ta'en.
Fair governance was yet an art well priz'd
By him of Pressa: Galigaio show'd
The gilded hilt and pommel, in his house.
The column, cloth'd with verrey, still was seen
Unshaken: the Sacchetti still were great,
Giouchi, Sifanti, Galli and Barucci,
With them who blush to hear the bushel nam'd.
Of the Calfucci still the branchy trunk
Was in its strength: and to the curule chairs
Sizii and Arigucci yet were drawn.
How mighty them I saw, whom since their pride
Hath undone! and in all her goodly deeds
Florence was by the bullets of bright gold
O'erflourish'd. Such the sires of those, who now,
As surely as your church is vacant, flock
Into her consistory, and at leisure
There stall them and grow fat. The o'erweening brood,
That plays the dragon after him that flees,
But unto such, as turn and show the tooth,
Ay or the purse, is gentle as a lamb,
Was on its rise, but yet so slight esteem'd,
That Ubertino of Donati grudg'd
His father-in-law should yoke him to its tribe.
Already Caponsacco had descended
Into the mart from Fesole: and Giuda
And Infangato were good citizens.
A thing incredible I tell, tho' true:
The gateway, named from those of Pera, led
Into the narrow circuit of your walls.
Each one, who bears the sightly quarterings
Of the great Baron (he whose name and worth
The festival of Thomas still revives)
His knighthood and his privilege retain'd;
Albeit one, who borders them With gold,
This day is mingled with the common herd.
In Borgo yet the Gualterotti dwelt,
And Importuni: well for its repose

Had it still lack'd of newer neighbourhood.
The house, from whence your tears have had their spring,
Through the just anger that hath murder'd ye
And put a period to your gladsome days,
Was honour'd, it, and those consorted with it.
O Buondelmonte! what ill counseling
Prevail'd on thee to break the plighted bond
Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
Had God to Ema giv'n thee, the first time
Thou near our city cam'st. But so was doom'd:
On that maim'd stone set up to guard the bridge,
At thy last peace, the victim, Florence! fell.
With these and others like to them, I saw
Florence in such assur'd tranquility,
She had no cause at which to grieve: with these
Saw her so glorious and so just, that ne'er
The lily from the lance had hung reverse,
Or through division been with vermeil dyed."

CANTO XVII

Such as the youth, who came to Clymene
To certify himself of that reproach,
Which had been fasten'd on him, (he whose end
Still makes the fathers chary to their sons),
E'en such was I; nor unobserv'd was such
Of Beatrice, and that saintly lamp,
Who had erewhile for me his station mov'd;
When thus by lady: "Give thy wish free vent,
That it may issue, bearing true report
Of the mind's impress; not that aught thy words
May to our knowledge add, but to the end,
That thou mayst use thyself to own thy thirst
And men may mingle for thee when they hear."

"O plant! from whence I spring! rever'd and lov'd!
Who soar'st so high a pitch, thou seest as clear,
As earthly thought determines two obtuse
In one triangle not contain'd, so clear
Dost see contingencies, ere in themselves
Existent, looking at the point whereto
All times are present, I, the whilst I scal'd
With Virgil the soul purifying mount,
And visited the nether world of woe,
Touching my future destiny have heard
Words grievous, though I feel me on all sides
Well squar'd to fortune's blows. Therefore my will
Were satisfied to know the lot awaits me,
The arrow, seen beforehand, slacks its flight."

So said I to the brightness, which erewhile
To me had spoken, and my will declar'd,
As Beatrice will'd, explicitly.
Nor with oracular response obscure,
Such, as or ere the Lamb of God was slain,
Beguil'd the credulous nations; but, in terms

Precise and unambiguous lore, replied
The spirit of paternal love, enshrin'd,
Yet in his smile apparent; and thus spake:
"Contingency, unfolded not to view
Upon the tablet of your mortal mold,
Is all depictur'd in the' eternal sight;
But hence deriveth not necessity,
More then the tall ship, hurried down the flood,
Doth from the vision, that reflects the scene.
From thence, as to the ear sweet harmony
From organ comes, so comes before mine eye
The time prepar'd for thee. Such as driv'n out
From Athens, by his cruel stepdame's wiles,
Hippolytus departed, such must thou
Depart from Florence. This they wish, and this
Contrive, and will ere long effectuate, there,
Where gainful merchandize is made of Christ,
Throughout the livelong day. The common cry,
Will, as 't is ever wont, affix the blame
Unto the party injur'd: but the truth
Shall, in the vengeance it dispenseth, find
A faithful witness. Thou shall leave each thing
Belov'd most dearly: this is the first shaft
Shot from the bow of exile. Thou shalt prove
How salt the savour is of other's bread,
How hard the passage to descend and climb
By other's stairs, But that shall gall thee most
Will be the worthless and vile company,
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.
For all ungrateful, impious all and mad,
Shall turn 'gainst thee: but in a little while
Theirs and not thine shall be the crimson'd brow
Their course shall so evince their brutishness
T' have ta'en thy stand apart shall well become thee.

"First refuge thou must find, first place of rest,
In the great Lombard's courtesy, who bears
Upon the ladder perch'd the sacred bird.
He shall behold thee with such kind regard,
That 'twixt ye two, the contrary to that
Which falls 'twixt other men, the granting shall
Forerun the asking. With him shalt thou see
That mortal, who was at his birth impress
So strongly from this star, that of his deeds
The nations shall take note. His unripe age
Yet holds him from observance; for these wheels
Only nine years have compass him about.
But, ere the Gascon practice on great Harry,
Sparkles of virtue shall shoot forth in him,
In equal scorn of labours and of gold.
His bounty shall be spread abroad so widely,
As not to let the tongues e'en of his foes
Be idle in its praise. Look thou to him
And his beneficence: for he shall cause
Reversal of their lot to many people,
Rich men and beggars interchanging fortunes.
And thou shalt bear this written in thy soul
Of him, but tell it not;" and things he told
Incredible to those who witness them;

Then added: "So interpret thou, my son,
What hath been told thee.--Lo! the ambushment
That a few circling seasons hide for thee!
Yet envy not thy neighbours: time extends
Thy span beyond their treason's chastisement."

Soon, as the saintly spirit, by his silence,
Had shown the web, which I had stretch'd for him
Upon the warp, was woven, I began,
As one, who in perplexity desires
Counsel of other, wise, benign and friendly:
"My father! well I mark how time spurs on
Toward me, ready to inflict the blow,
Which falls most heavily on him, who most
Abandoned himself. Therefore 't is good
I should forecast, that driven from the place
Most dear to me, I may not lose myself
All others by my song. Down through the world
Of infinite mourning, and along the mount
From whose fair height my lady's eyes did lift me,
And after through this heav'n from light to light,
Have I learnt that, which if I tell again,
It may with many woefully disrelish;
And, if I am a timid friend to truth,
I fear my life may perish among those,
To whom these days shall be of ancient date."

The brightness, where enclos'd the treasure smil'd,
Which I had found there, first shone glisteningly,
Like to a golden mirror in the sun;
Next answer'd: "Conscience, dimm'd or by its own
Or other's shame, will feel thy saying sharp.
Thou, notwithstanding, all deceit remov'd,
See the whole vision be made manifest.
And let them wince who have their withers wrung.
What though, when tasted first, thy voice shall prove
Unwelcome, on digestion it will turn
To vital nourishment. The cry thou raisest,
Shall, as the wind doth, smite the proudest summits;
Which is of honour no light argument,
For this there only have been shown to thee,
Throughout these orbs, the mountain, and the deep,
Spirits, whom fame hath note of. For the mind
Of him, who hears, is loth to acquiesce
And fix its faith, unless the instance brought
Be palpable, and proof apparent urge."

CANTO XVIII

CANTO XVIII

Now in his word, sole, ruminating, joy'd
That blessed spirit; and I fed on mine,
Tempting the sweet with bitter: she meanwhile,
Who led me unto God, admonish'd: "Muse
On other thoughts: bethink thee, that near Him

I dwell, who recompenseth every wrong."

At the sweet sounds of comfort straight I turn'd;
And, in the saintly eyes what love was seen,
I leave in silence here: nor through distrust
Of my words only, but that to such bliss
The mind remounts not without aid. Thus much
Yet may I speak; that, as I gaz'd on her,
Affection found no room for other wish.
While the everlasting pleasure, that did full
On Beatrice shine, with second view
From her fair countenance my gladden'd soul
Contented; vanquishing me with a beam
Of her soft smile, she spake: "Turn thee, and list.
These eyes are not thy only Paradise."

As here we sometimes in the looks may see
Th' affection mark'd, when that its sway hath ta'en
The spirit wholly; thus the hallow'd light,
To whom I turn'd, flashing, bewray'd its will
To talk yet further with me, and began:
"On this fifth lodgment of the tree, whose life
Is from its top, whose fruit is ever fair
And leaf unwith'ring, blessed spirits abide,
That were below, ere they arriv'd in heav'n,
So mighty in renown, as every muse
Might grace her triumph with them. On the horns
Look therefore of the cross: he, whom I name,
Shall there enact, as doth in summer cloud
Its nimble fire." Along the cross I saw,
At the repeated name of Joshua,
A splendour gliding; nor, the word was said,
Ere it was done: then, at the naming saw
Of the great Maccabee, another move
With whirling speed; and gladness was the scourge
Unto that top. The next for Charlemagne
And for the peer Orlando, two my gaze
Pursued, intently, as the eye pursues
A falcon flying. Last, along the cross,
William, and Renard, and Duke Godfrey drew
My ken, and Robert Guiscard. And the soul,
Who spake with me among the other lights
Did move away, and mix; and with the choir
Of heav'nly songsters prov'd his tuneful skill.

To Beatrice on my right I bent,
Looking for intimation or by word
Or act, what next behoov'd; and did descry
Such mere effulgence in her eyes, such joy,
It past all former wont. And, as by sense
Of new delight, the man, who perseveres
In good deeds doth perceive from day to day
His virtue growing; I e'en thus perceiv'd
Of my ascent, together with the heav'n
The circuit widen'd, noting the increase
Of beauty in that wonder. Like the change
In a brief moment on some maiden's cheek,
Which from its fairness doth discharge the weight
Of pudency, that stain'd it; such in her,

And to mine eyes so sudden was the change,
Through silvery whiteness of that temperate star,
Whose sixth orb now enfolded us. I saw,
Within that Jovial cresset, the clear sparks
Of love, that reign'd there, fashion to my view
Our language. And as birds, from river banks
Arisen, now in round, now lengthen'd troop,
Array them in their flight, greeting, as seems,
Their new-found pastures; so, within the lights,
The saintly creatures flying, sang, and made
Now D. now I. now L. figur'd I' th' air.

First, singing, to their notes they mov'd, then one
Becoming of these signs, a little while
Did rest them, and were mute. O nymph divine
Of Pegasean race! whose souls, which thou
Inspir'st, mak'st glorious and long-liv'd, as they
Cities and realms by thee! thou with thyself
Inform me; that I may set forth the shapes,
As fancy doth present them. Be thy power
Display'd in this brief song. The characters,
Vocal and consonant, were five-fold seven.
In order each, as they appear'd, I mark'd.
Diligite Justitiam, the first,
Both verb and noun all blazon'd; and the extreme
Qui judicatis terram. In the M.
Of the fifth word they held their station,
Making the star seem silver streak'd with gold.
And on the summit of the M. I saw
Descending other lights, that rested there,
Singing, methinks, their bliss and primal good.
Then, as at shaking of a lighted brand,
Sparkles innumerable on all sides
Rise scatter'd, source of augury to th' unwise;
Thus more than thousand twinkling lustres hence
Seem'd reascending, and a higher pitch
Some mounting, and some less; e'en as the sun,
Which kindleth them, decreed. And when each one
Had settled in his place, the head and neck
Then saw I of an eagle, lively
Grav'd in that streaky fire. Who painteth there,
Hath none to guide him; of himself he guides;
And every line and texture of the nest
Doth own from him the virtue, fashions it.
The other bright beatitude, that seem'd
Erewhile, with liliated crowning, well content
To over-canopy the M. mov'd forth,
Following gently the impress of the bird.

Sweet star! what glorious and thick-studded gems
Declar'd to me our justice on the earth
To be the effluence of that heav'n, which thou,
Thyself a costly jewel, dost inlay!
Therefore I pray the Sovran Mind, from whom
Thy motion and thy virtue are begun,
That he would look from whence the fog doth rise,
To vitiate thy beam: so that once more
He may put forth his hand 'gainst such, as drive
Their traffic in that sanctuary, whose walls

With miracles and martyrdoms were built.

Ye host of heaven! whose glory I survey!
O beg ye grace for those, that are on earth
All after ill example gone astray.
War once had for its instrument the sword:
But now 't is made, taking the bread away
Which the good Father locks from none. --And thou,
That writes but to cancel, think, that they,
Who for the vineyard, which thou wastest, died,
Peter and Paul live yet, and mark thy doings.
Thou hast good cause to cry, "My heart so cleaves
To him, that liv'd in solitude remote,
And from the wilds was dragg'd to martyrdom,
I wist not of the fisherman nor Paul."

CANTO XIX

Before my sight appear'd, with open wings,
The beauteous image, in fruition sweet
Gladdening the thronged spirits. Each did seem
A little ruby, whereon so intense
The sun-beam glow'd that to mine eyes it came
In clear refraction. And that, which next
Befalls me to portray, voice hath not utter'd,
Nor hath ink written, nor in fantasy
Was e'er conceiv'd. For I beheld and heard
The beak discourse; and, what intention form'd
Of many, singly as of one express,
Beginning: "For that I was just and piteous,
I am exalted to this height of glory,
The which no wish exceeds: and there on earth
Have I my memory left, e'en by the bad
Commended, while they leave its course untrod."

Thus is one heat from many embers felt,
As in that image many were the loves,
And one the voice, that issued from them all.
Whence I address them: "O perennial flowers
Of gladness everlasting! that exhale
In single breath your odours manifold!
Breathe now; and let the hunger be appeas'd,
That with great craving long hath held my soul,
Finding no food on earth. This well I know,
That if there be in heav'n a realm, that shows
In faithful mirror the celestial Justice,
Yours without veil reflects it. Ye discern
The heed, wherewith I do prepare myself
To hearken; ye the doubt that urges me
With such inveterate craving." Straight I saw,
Like to a falcon issuing from the hood,
That rears his head, and claps him with his wings,
His beauty and his eagerness bewraying.
So saw I move that stately sign, with praise
Of grace divine inwoven and high song
Of inexpressive joy. "He," it began,

"Who turn'd his compass on the world's extreme,
And in that space so variously hath wrought,
Both openly, and in secret, in such wise
Could not through all the universe display
Impression of his glory, that the Word
Of his omniscience should not still remain
In infinite excess. In proof whereof,
He first through pride supplanted, who was sum
Of each created being, waited not
For light celestial, and abortive fell.
Whence needs each lesser nature is but scant
Receptacle unto that Good, which knows
No limit, measur'd by itself alone.
Therefore your sight, of th' omnipresent Mind
A single beam, its origin must own
Surpassing far its utmost potency.
The ken, your world is gifted with, descends
In th' everlasting Justice as low down,
As eye doth in the sea; which though it mark
The bottom from the shore, in the wide main
Discerns it not; and ne'ertheless it is,
But hidden through its deepness. Light is none,
Save that which cometh from the pure serene
Of ne'er disturbed ether: for the rest,
'Tis darkness all, or shadow of the flesh,
Or else its poison. Here confess reveal'd
That covert, which hath hidden from thy search
The living justice, of the which thou mad'st
Such frequent question; for thou saidst--'A man
Is born on Indus' banks, and none is there
Who speaks of Christ, nor who doth read nor write,
And all his inclinations and his acts,
As far as human reason sees, are good,
And he offendeth not in word or deed.
But unbaptiz'd he dies, and void of faith.
Where is the justice that condemns him? where
His blame, if he believeth not?'--What then,
And who art thou, that on the stool wouldst sit
To judge at distance of a thousand miles
With the short-sighted vision of a span?
To him, who subtilizes thus with me,
There would assuredly be room for doubt
Even to wonder, did not the safe word
Of scripture hold supreme authority.

"O animals of clay! O spirits gross I
The primal will, that in itself is good,
Hath from itself, the chief Good, ne'er been mov'd.
Justice consists in consonance with it,
Derivable by no created good,
Whose very cause depends upon its beam."

As on her nest the stork, that turns about
Unto her young, whom lately she hath fed,
While they with upward eyes do look on her;
So lifted I my gaze; and bending so
The ever-blessed image wav'd its wings,
Lab'ring with such deep counsel. Wheeling round
It warbled, and did say: "As are my notes

To thee, who understand'st them not, such is
Th' eternal judgment unto mortal ken."

Then still abiding in that ensign rang'd,
Wherewith the Romans over-awed the world,
Those burning splendours of the Holy Spirit
Took up the strain; and thus it spake again:
"None ever hath ascended to this realm,
Who hath not a believer been in Christ,
Either before or after the blest limbs
Were nail'd upon the wood. But lo! of those
Who call 'Christ, Christ,' there shall be many found,
In judgment, further off from him by far,
Than such, to whom his name was never known.
Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn:
When that the two assemblages shall part;
One rich eternally, the other poor.

"What may the Persians say unto your kings,
When they shall see that volume, in the which
All their dispraise is written, spread to view?
There amidst Albert's works shall that be read,
Which will give speedy motion to the pen,
When Prague shall mourn her desolated realm.
There shall be read the woe, that he doth work
With his adulterate money on the Seine,
Who by the tusk will perish: there be read
The thirsting pride, that maketh fool alike
The English and Scot, impatient of their bound.
There shall be seen the Spaniard's luxury,
The delicate living there of the Bohemian,
Who still to worth has been a willing stranger.
The halter of Jerusalem shall see
A unit for his virtue, for his vices
No less a mark than million. He, who guards
The isle of fire by old Anchises honour'd
Shall find his avarice there and cowardice;
And better to denote his littleness,
The writing must be letters maim'd, that speak
Much in a narrow space. All there shall know
His uncle and his brother's filthy doings,
Who so renown'd a nation and two crowns
Have bastardized. And they, of Portugal
And Norway, there shall be expos'd with him
Of Ratza, who hath counterfeited ill
The coin of Venice. O blest Hungary!
If thou no longer patiently abid'st
Thy ill-entreating! and, O blest Navarre!
If with thy mountainous girdle thou wouldst arm thee
In earnest of that day, e'en now are heard
Wailings and groans in Famagosta's streets
And Nicosia's, grudging at their beast,
Who keepeth even footing with the rest."

CANTO XX

When, disappearing, from our hemisphere,
The world's enlightener vanishes, and day
On all sides wasteth, suddenly the sky,
Erewhile irradiate only with his beam,
Is yet again unfolded, putting forth
Innumerable lights wherein one shines.
Of such vicissitude in heaven I thought,
As the great sign, that marshaleth the world
And the world's leaders, in the blessed beak
Was silent; for that all those living lights,
Waxing in splendour, burst forth into songs,
Such as from memory glide and fall away.

Sweet love! that dost apparel thee in smiles,
How lustrous was thy semblance in those sparkles,
Which merely are from holy thoughts inspir'd!

After the precious and bright beaming stones,
That did ingem the sixth light, ceas'd the chiming
Of their angelic bells; methought I heard
The murmuring of a river, that doth fall
From rock to rock transpicuous, making known
The richness of his spring-head: and as sound
Of cistern, at the fret-board, or of pipe,
Is, at the wind-hole, modulate and tun'd;
Thus up the neck, as it were hollow, rose
That murmuring of the eagle, and forthwith
Voice there assum'd, and thence along the beak
Issued in form of words, such as my heart
Did look for, on whose tables I inscrib'd them.

"The part in me, that sees, and bears the sun,,
In mortal eagles," it began, "must now
Be noted steadfastly: for of the fires,
That figure me, those, glittering in mine eye,
Are chief of all the greatest. This, that shines
Midmost for pupil, was the same, who sang
The Holy Spirit's song, and bare about
The ark from town to town; now doth he know
The merit of his soul-impassion'd strains
By their well-fitted guerdon. Of the five,
That make the circle of the vision, he
Who to the beak is nearest, comforted
The widow for her son: now doth he know
How dear he costeth not to follow Christ,
Both from experience of this pleasant life,
And of its opposite. He next, who follows
In the circumference, for the over arch,
By true repenting slack'd the pace of death:
Now knoweth he, that the degrees of heav'n
Alter not, when through pious prayer below
Today's is made tomorrow's destiny.
The other following, with the laws and me,
To yield the shepherd room, pass'd o'er to Greece,
From good intent producing evil fruit:
Now knoweth he, how all the ill, deriv'd
From his well doing, doth not helm him aught,
Though it have brought destruction on the world.
That, which thou seest in the under bow,

Was William, whom that land bewails, which weeps
For Charles and Frederick living: now he knows
How well is lov'd in heav'n the righteous king,
Which he betokens by his radiant seeming.
Who in the erring world beneath would deem,
That Trojan Ripheus in this round was set
Fifth of the saintly splendours? now he knows
Enough of that, which the world cannot see,
The grace divine, albeit e'en his sight
Reach not its utmost depth." Like to the lark,
That warbling in the air expatiates long,
Then, trilling out his last sweet melody,
Drops satiate with the sweetness; such appear'd
That image stamp'd by the' everlasting pleasure,
Which fashions like itself all lovely things.

I, though my doubting were as manifest,
As is through glass the hue that mantles it,
In silence waited not: for to my lips
"What things are these?" involuntary rush'd,
And forc'd a passage out: whereat I mark'd
A sudden lightening and new revelry.
The eye was kindled: and the blessed sign
No more to keep me wond'ring and suspense,
Replied: "I see that thou believ'st these things,
Because I tell them, but discern'st not how;
So that thy knowledge waits not on thy faith:
As one who knows the name of thing by rote,
But is a stranger to its properties,
Till other's tongue reveal them. Fervent love
And lively hope with violence assail
The kingdom of the heavens, and overcome
The will of the Most high; not in such sort
As man prevails o'er man; but conquers it,
Because 't is willing to be conquer'd, still,
Though conquer'd, by its mercy conquering.

"Those, in the eye who live the first and fifth,
Cause thee to marvel, in that thou behold'st
The region of the angels deck'd with them.
They quitted not their bodies, as thou deem'st,
Gentiles but Christians, in firm rooted faith,
This of the feet in future to be pierc'd,
That of feet nail'd already to the cross.
One from the barrier of the dark abyss,
Where never any with good will returns,
Came back unto his bones. Of lively hope
Such was the meed; of lively hope, that wing'd
The prayers sent up to God for his release,
And put power into them to bend his will.
The glorious Spirit, of whom I speak to thee,
A little while returning to the flesh,
Believ'd in him, who had the means to help,
And, in believing, nourish'd such a flame
Of holy love, that at the second death
He was made sharer in our gamesome mirth.
The other, through the riches of that grace,
Which from so deep a fountain doth distil,
As never eye created saw its rising,

Plac'd all his love below on just and right:
Wherefore of grace God op'd in him the eye
To the redemption of mankind to come;
Wherein believing, he endur'd no more
The filth of paganism, and for their ways
Rebuk'd the stubborn nations. The three nymphs,
Whom at the right wheel thou beheldest advancing,
Were sponsors for him more than thousand years
Before baptizing. O how far remov'd,
Predestination! is thy root from such
As see not the First cause entire: and ye,
O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:
For we, who see our Maker, know not yet
The number of the chosen: and esteem
Such scantiness of knowledge our delight:
For all our good is in that primal good
Concentrate, and God's will and ours are one."

So, by that form divine, was giv'n to me
Sweet medicine to clear and strengthen sight,
And, as one handling skillfully the harp,
Attendant on some skilful songster's voice
Bids the chords vibrate, and therein the song
Acquires more pleasure; so, the whilst it spake,
It doth remember me, that I beheld
The pair of blessed luminaries move.
Like the accordant twinkling of two eyes,
Their beamy circlets, dancing to the sounds.

CANTO XXI

Again mine eyes were fix'd on Beatrice,
And with mine eyes my soul, that in her looks
Found all contentment. Yet no smile she wore
And, "Did I smile," quoth she, "thou wouldst be straight
Like Semele when into ashes turn'd:
For, mounting these eternal palace-stairs,
My beauty, which the loftier it climbs,
As thou hast noted, still doth kindle more,
So shines, that, were no temp'ring interpos'd,
Thy mortal puissance would from its rays
Shrink, as the leaf doth from the thunderbolt.
Into the seventh splendour are we wafted,
That underneath the burning lion's breast
Beams, in this hour, commingled with his might,
Thy mind be with thine eyes: and in them mirror'd
The shape, which in this mirror shall be shown."
Whoso can deem, how fondly I had fed
My sight upon her blissful countenance,
May know, when to new thoughts I chang'd, what joy
To do the bidding of my heav'nly guide:
In equal balance poising either weight.

Within the crystal, which records the name,
(As its remoter circle girds the world)
Of that lov'd monarch, in whose happy reign

No ill had power to harm, I saw rear'd up,
In colour like to sun-illumin'd gold.

A ladder, which my ken pursued in vain,
So lofty was the summit; down whose steps
I saw the splendours in such multitude
Descending, ev'ry light in heav'n, methought,
Was shed thence. As the rooks, at dawn of day
Bestirring them to dry their feathers chill,
Some speed their way a-field, and homeward some,
Returning, cross their flight, while some abide
And wheel around their airy lodge; so seem'd
That glitterance, wafted on alternate wing,
As upon certain stair it met, and clash'd
Its shining. And one ling'ring near us, wax'd
So bright, that in my thought: said: "The love,
Which this betokens me, admits no doubt."

Unwillingly from question I refrain,
To her, by whom my silence and my speech
Are order'd, looking for a sign: whence she,
Who in the sight of Him, that seeth all,
Saw wherefore I was silent, prompted me
T' indulge the fervent wish; and I began:
"I am not worthy, of my own desert,
That thou shouldst answer me; but for her sake,
Who hath vouchsaf'd my asking, spirit blest!
That in thy joy art shrouded! say the cause,
Which bringeth thee so near: and wherefore, say,
Doth the sweet symphony of Paradise
Keep silence here, pervading with such sounds
Of rapt devotion ev'ry lower sphere?"
"Mortal art thou in hearing as in sight;"
Was the reply: "and what forbade the smile
Of Beatrice interrupts our song.
Only to yield thee gladness of my voice,
And of the light that vests me, I thus far
Descend these hallow'd steps: not that more love
Invites me; for lo! there aloft, as much
Or more of love is witness'd in those flames:
But such my lot by charity assign'd,
That makes us ready servants, as thou seest,
To execute the counsel of the Highest."
"That in this court," said I, "O sacred lamp!
Love no compulsion needs, but follows free
Th' eternal Providence, I well discern:
This harder find to deem, why of thy peers
Thou only to this office wert foredoom'd."
I had not ended, when, like rapid mill,
Upon its centre whirl'd the light; and then
The love, that did inhabit there, replied:
"Splendour eternal, piercing through these folds,
Its virtue to my vision knits, and thus
Supported, lifts me so above myself,
That on the sov'ran essence, which it wells from,
I have the power to gaze: and hence the joy,
Wherewith I sparkle, equaling with my blaze
The keenness of my sight. But not the soul,
That is in heav'n most lustrous, nor the seraph

That hath his eyes most fix'd on God, shall solve
What thou hast ask'd: for in th' abyss it lies
Of th' everlasting statute sunk so low,
That no created ken may fathom it.
And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,
Be this reported; that none henceforth dare
Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.
The mind, that here is radiant, on the earth
Is wrapt in mist. Look then if she may do,
Below, what passeth her ability,
When she is ta'en to heav'n." By words like these
Admonish'd, I the question urg'd no more;
And of the spirit humbly sued alone
T' instruct me of its state. "'Twixt either shore
Of Italy, nor distant from thy land,
A stony ridge ariseth, in such sort,
The thunder doth not lift his voice so high,
They call it Catria: at whose foot a cell
Is sacred to the lonely Eremite,
For worship set apart and holy rites."
A third time thus it spake; then added: "There
So firmly to God's service I adher'd,
That with no costlier viands than the juice
Of olives, easily I pass'd the heats
Of summer and the winter frosts, content
In heav'n-ward musings. Rich were the returns
And fertile, which that cloister once was us'd
To render to these heavens: now 't is fall'n
Into a waste so empty, that ere long
Detection must lay bare its vanity
Pietro Damiano there was I yclept:
Pietro the sinner, when before I dwelt
Beside the Adriatic, in the house
Of our blest Lady. Near upon my close
Of mortal life, through much importuning
I was constrain'd to wear the hat that still
From bad to worse it shifted.--Cephas came;
He came, who was the Holy Spirit's vessel,
Barefoot and lean, eating their bread, as chanc'd,
At the first table. Modern Shepherd's need
Those who on either hand may prop and lead them,
So burly are they grown: and from behind
Others to hoist them. Down the palfrey's sides
Spread their broad mantles, so as both the beasts
Are cover'd with one skin. O patience! thou
That lookst on this and doth endure so long."
I at those accents saw the splendours down
From step to step alight, and wheel, and wax,
Each circuiting, more beautiful. Round this
They came, and stay'd them; uttered them a shout
So loud, it hath no likeness here: nor I
Wist what it spake, so deaf'ning was the thunder.

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