

The Vision of Paradise, Part 3. Translated By The Rev. H. F. Cary, Illustrated by Gustave Dore

Dante Alighieri

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Author: 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 3

CANTO XXII

Astounded, to the guardian of my steps
I turn'd me, like the chill, who always runs
Thither for succour, where he trusteth most,
And she was like the mother, who her son
Beholding pale and breathless, with her voice
Soothes him, and he is cheer'd; for thus she spake,
Soothing me: "Know'st not thou, thou art in heav'n?
And know'st not thou, whatever is in heav'n,
Is holy, and that nothing there is done
But is done zealously and well? Deem now,
What change in thee the song, and what my smile
had wrought, since thus the shout had pow'r to move thee.
In which couldst thou have understood their prayers,
The vengeance were already known to thee,
Which thou must witness ere thy mortal hour,
The sword of heav'n is not in haste to smite,
Nor yet doth linger, save unto his seeming,
Who in desire or fear doth look for it.
But elsewhere now I bid thee turn thy view;
So shalt thou many a famous spirit behold."
Mine eyes directing, as she will'd, I saw
A hundred little spheres, that fairer grew
By interchange of splendour. I remain'd,
As one, who fearful of o'er-much presuming,
Abates in him the keenness of desire,
Nor dares to question, when amid those pearls,
One largest and most lustrous onward drew,
That it might yield contentment to my wish;
And from within it these the sounds I heard.

"If thou, like me, beheldst the charity
That burns amongst us, what thy mind conceives,
Were utter'd. But that, ere the lofty bound
Thou reach, expectance may not weary thee,
I will make answer even to the thought,
Which thou hast such respect of. In old days,
That mountain, at whose side Cassino rests,
Was on its height frequented by a race
Deceived and ill dispos'd: and I it was,
Who thither carried first the name of Him,
Who brought the soul-subliming truth to man.
And such a speeding grace shone over me,
That from their impious worship I reclaim'd
The dwellers round about, who with the world
Were in delusion lost. These other flames,
The spirits of men contemplative, were all
Enliven'd by that warmth, whose kindly force
Gives birth to flowers and fruits of holiness.
Here is Macarius; Romoaldo here:
And here my brethren, who their steps refrain'd
Within the cloisters, and held firm their heart."

I answ'ring, thus; "Thy gentle words and kind,
And this the cheerful semblance, I behold
Not unobservant, beaming in ye all,
Have rais'd assurance in me, wakening it
Full-blossom'd in my bosom, as a rose
Before the sun, when the consummate flower
Has spread to utmost amplitude. Of thee
Therefore entreat I, father! to declare
If I may gain such favour, as to gaze
Upon thine image, by no covering veil'd."

"Brother!" he thus rejoin'd, "in the last sphere
Expect completion of thy lofty aim,
For there on each desire completion waits,
And there on mine: where every aim is found
Perfect, entire, and for fulfillment ripe.
There all things are as they have ever been:
For space is none to bound, nor pole divides,
Our ladder reaches even to that clime,
And so at giddy distance mocks thy view.
Thither the Patriarch Jacob saw it stretch
Its topmost round, when it appear'd to him
With angels laden. But to mount it now
None lifts his foot from earth: and hence my rule
Is left a profitless stain upon the leaves;
The walls, for abbey rear'd, turned into dens,
The cowls to sacks choak'd up with musty meal.
Foul usury doth not more lift itself
Against God's pleasure, than that fruit which makes
The hearts of monks so wanton: for whate'er
Is in the church's keeping, all pertains.
To such, as sue for heav'n's sweet sake, and not
To those who in respect of kindred claim,
Or on more vile allowance. Mortal flesh
Is grown so dainty, good beginnings last not
From the oak's birth, unto the acorn's setting.
His convent Peter founded without gold
Or silver; I with pray'rs and fasting mine;
And Francis his in meek humility.
And if thou note the point, whence each proceeds,
Then look what it hath err'd to, thou shalt find
The white grown murky. Jordan was turn'd back;
And a less wonder, then the refluent sea,
May at God's pleasure work amendment here."

So saying, to his assembly back he drew:
And they together cluster'd into one,
Then all roll'd upward like an eddying wind.

The sweet dame beckon'd me to follow them:
And, by that influence only, so prevail'd
Over my nature, that no natural motion,
Ascending or descending here below,
Had, as I mounted, with my pennon vied.

So, reader, as my hope is to return
Unto the holy triumph, for the which
I oft-times wail my sins, and smite my breast,
Thou hadst been longer drawing out and thrusting

Thy finger in the fire, than I was, ere
The sign, that followeth Taurus, I beheld,
And enter'd its precinct. O glorious stars!
O light impregnate with exceeding virtue!
To whom whate'er of genius lifteth me
Above the vulgar, grateful I refer;
With ye the parent of all mortal life
Arose and set, when I did first inhale
The Tuscan air; and afterward, when grace
Vouchsaf'd me entrance to the lofty wheel
That in its orb impels ye, fate decreed
My passage at your clime. To you my soul
Devoutly sighs, for virtue even now
To meet the hard emprize that draws me on.

"Thou art so near the sum of blessedness,"
Said Beatrice, "that behooves thy ken
Be vigilant and clear. And, to this end,
Or even thou advance thee further, hence
Look downward, and contemplate, what a world
Already stretched under our feet there lies:
So as thy heart may, in its blithest mood,
Present itself to the triumphal throng,
Which through the' etherial concave comes rejoicing."

I straight obey'd; and with mine eye return'd
Through all the seven spheres, and saw this globe
So pitiful of semblance, that perforce
It moved my smiles: and him in truth I hold
For wisest, who esteems it least: whose thoughts
Elsewhere are fix'd, him worthiest call and best.
I saw the daughter of Latona shine
Without the shadow, whereof late I deem'd
That dense and rare were cause. Here I sustain'd
The visage, Hyperion! of thy sun;
And mark'd, how near him with their circle, round
Move Maia and Dione; here discern'd
Jove's tempering 'twixt his sire and son; and hence
Their changes and their various aspects
Distinctly scann'd. Nor might I not descry
Of all the seven, how bulky each, how swift;
Nor of their several distances not learn.
This petty area (o'er the which we stride
So fiercely), as along the eternal twins
I wound my way, appear'd before me all,
Forth from the havens stretch'd unto the hills.
Then to the beauteous eyes mine eyes return'd.

CANTO XXIII

E'en as the bird, who midst the leafy bower
Has, in her nest, sat darkling through the night,
With her sweet brood, impatient to descry
Their wished looks, and to bring home their food,
In the fond quest unconscious of her toil:
She, of the time prevenient, on the spray,

That overhangs their couch, with wakeful gaze
Expects the sun; nor ever, till the dawn,
Removeth from the east her eager ken;
So stood the dame erect, and bent her glance
Wistfully on that region, where the sun
Abateth most his speed; that, seeing her
Suspense and wand'ring, I became as one,
In whom desire is waken'd, and the hope
Of somewhat new to come fills with delight.

Short space ensued; I was not held, I say,
Long in expectance, when I saw the heav'n
Wax more and more resplendent; and, "Behold,"
Cried Beatrice, "the triumphal hosts
Of Christ, and all the harvest reap'd at length
Of thy ascending up these spheres." Meseem'd,
That, while she spake her image all did burn,
And in her eyes such fullness was of joy,
And I am fain to pass unconstrued by.

As in the calm full moon, when Trivia smiles,
In peerless beauty, 'mid th' eternal nymus,
That paint through all its gulfs the blue profound
In bright pre-eminence so saw I there,
O'er million lamps a sun, from whom all drew
Their radiance as from ours the starry train:
And through the living light so lustrous glow'd
The substance, that my ken endur'd it not.

O Beatrice! sweet and precious guide!
Who cheer'd me with her comfortable words!
"Against the virtue, that o'erpow'reth thee,
Avails not to resist. Here is the might,
And here the wisdom, which did open lay
The path, that had been yearned for so long,
Betwixt the heav'n and earth." Like to the fire,
That, in a cloud imprison'd doth break out
Expansive, so that from its womb enlarg'd,
It falleth against nature to the ground;
Thus in that heav'nly banqueting my soul
Outgrew herself; and, in the transport lost.
Holds now remembrance none of what she was.

"Ope thou thine eyes, and mark me: thou hast seen
Things, that empower thee to sustain my smile."

I was as one, when a forgotten dream
Doth come across him, and he strives in vain
To shape it in his fantasy again,
Whenas that gracious boon was proffer'd me,
Which never may be cancel'd from the book,
Wherein the past is written. Now were all
Those tongues to sound, that have on sweetest milk
Of Polyhymnia and her sisters fed
And fatten'd, not with all their help to boot,
Unto the thousandth parcel of the truth,
My song might shadow forth that saintly smile,
flow merely in her saintly looks it wrought.
And with such figuring of Paradise

The sacred strain must leap, like one, that meets
A sudden interruption to his road.
But he, who thinks how ponderous the theme,
And that 't is lain upon a mortal shoulder,
May pardon, if it tremble with the burden.
The track, our ventrous keel must furrow, brooks
No unribb'd pinnacle, no self-sparing pilot.

"Why doth my face," said Beatrice, "thus
Enamour thee, as that thou dost not turn
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose,
Wherein the word divine was made incarnate;
And here the lilies, by whose odour known
The way of life was follow'd." Prompt I heard
Her bidding, and encounter once again
The strife of aching vision. As erewhile,
Through glance of sunlight, stream'd through broken cloud,
Mine eyes a flower-besprinkled mead have seen,
Though veil'd themselves in shade; so saw I there
Legions of splendours, on whom burning rays
Shed lightnings from above, yet saw I not
The fountain whence they flow'd. O gracious virtue!
Thou, whose broad stamp is on them, higher up
Thou didst exalt thy glory to give room
To my o'erlabour'd sight: when at the name
Of that fair flower, whom duly I invoke
Both morn and eve, my soul, with all her might
Collected, on the goodliest ardour fix'd.
And, as the bright dimensions of the star
In heav'n excelling, as once here on earth
Were, in my eyeballs lively portray'd,
Lo! from within the sky a cresset fell,
Circling in fashion of a diadem,
And girt the star, and hov'ring round it wheel'd.

Whatever melody sounds sweetest here,
And draws the spirit most unto itself,
Might seem a rent cloud when it grates the thunder,
Compar'd unto the sounding of that lyre,
Wherewith the goodliest sapphire, that inlays
The floor of heav'n, was crown'd. "Angelic Love
I am, who thus with hov'ring flight enwheel
The lofty rapture from that womb inspir'd,
Where our desire did dwell: and round thee so,
Lady of Heav'n! will hover; long as thou
Thy Son shalt follow, and diviner joy
Shall from thy presence gild the highest sphere."

Such close was to the circling melody:
And, as it ended, all the other lights
Took up the strain, and echoed Mary's name.

The robe, that with its regal folds enwraps
The world, and with the nearer breath of God
Doth burn and quiver, held so far retir'd
Its inner hem and skirting over us,
That yet no glimmer of its majesty
Had stream'd unto me: therefore were mine eyes

Unequal to pursue the crowned flame,
That rose and sought its natal seed of fire;
And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
For very eagerness towards the breast,
After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd
Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
Through zealous love to Mary: then in view
There halted, and "Regina Coeli" sang
So sweetly, the delight hath left me never.

O what o'erflowing plenty is up-pil'd
In those rich-laden coffers, which below
Sow'd the good seed, whose harvest now they keep.

Here are the treasures tasted, that with tears
Were in the Babylonian exile won,
When gold had fail'd them. Here in synod high
Of ancient council with the new conven'd,
Under the Son of Mary and of God,
Victorious he his mighty triumph holds,
To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.

CANTO XXIV

"O ye! in chosen fellowship advanc'd
To the great supper of the blessed Lamb,
Whereon who feeds hath every wish fulfill'd!
If to this man through God's grace be vouchsaf'd
Foretaste of that, which from your table falls,
Or ever death his fated term prescribe;
Be ye not heedless of his urgent will;
But may some influence of your sacred dews
Sprinkle him. Of the fount ye alway drink,
Whence flows what most he craves." Beatrice spake,
And the rejoicing spirits, like to spheres
On firm-set poles revolving, trail'd a blaze
Of comet splendour; and as wheels, that wind
Their circles in the horologe, so work
The stated rounds, that to th' observant eye
The first seems still, and, as it flew, the last;
E'en thus their carols weaving variously,
They by the measure pac'd, or swift, or slow,
Made me to rate the riches of their joy.

From that, which I did note in beauty most
Excelling, saw I issue forth a flame
So bright, as none was left more goodly there.
Round Beatrice thrice it wheel'd about,
With so divine a song, that fancy's ear
Records it not; and the pen passeth on
And leaves a blank: for that our mortal speech,
Nor e'en the inward shaping of the brain,
Hath colours fine enough to trace such folds.

"O saintly sister mine! thy prayer devout
Is with so vehement affection urg'd,

Thou dost unbind me from that beauteous sphere."

Such were the accents towards my lady breath'd
From that blest ardour, soon as it was stay'd:
To whom she thus: "O everlasting light
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss
He bare below! tent this man, as thou wilt,
With lighter probe or deep, touching the faith,
By the which thou didst on the billows walk.
If he in love, in hope, and in belief,
Be steadfast, is not hid from thee: for thou
Hast there thy ken, where all things are beheld
In liveliest portraiture. But since true faith
Has peopled this fair realm with citizens,
Meet is, that to exalt its glory more,
Thou in his audience shouldst thereof discourse."

Like to the bachelor, who arms himself,
And speaks not, till the master have propos'd
The question, to approve, and not to end it;
So I, in silence, arm'd me, while she spake,
Summoning up each argument to aid;
As was behooveful for such questioner,
And such profession: "As good Christian ought,
Declare thee, What is faith?" Whereat I rais'd
My forehead to the light, whence this had breath'd,
Then turn'd to Beatrice, and in her looks
Approval met, that from their inmost fount
I should unlock the waters. "May the grace,
That giveth me the captain of the church
For confessor," said I, "vouchsafe to me
Apt utterance for my thoughts!" then added: "Sire!
E'en as set down by the unerring style
Of thy dear brother, who with thee conspir'd
To bring Rome in unto the way of life,
Faith of things hop'd is substance, and the proof
Of things not seen; and herein doth consist
Methinks its essence,"--"Rightly hast thou deem'd,"
Was answer'd: "if thou well discern, why first
He hath defin'd it, substance, and then proof."

"The deep things," I replied, "which here I scan
Distinctly, are below from mortal eye
So hidden, they have in belief alone
Their being, on which credence hope sublime
Is built; and therefore substance it intends.
And inasmuch as we must needs infer
From such belief our reasoning, all respect
To other view excluded, hence of proof
Th' intention is deriv'd." Forthwith I heard:
"If thus, whate'er by learning men attain,
Were understood, the sophist would want room
To exercise his wit." So breath'd the flame
Of love: then added: "Current is the coin
Thou utter'st, both in weight and in alloy.
But tell me, if thou hast it in thy purse."

"Even so glittering and so round," said I,

"I not a whit misdoubt of its assay."

Next issued from the deep imbosom'd splendour:
"Say, whence the costly jewel, on the which
Is founded every virtue, came to thee."
"The flood," I answer'd, "from the Spirit of God
Rain'd down upon the ancient bond and new,--
Here is the reas'ning, that convinceth me
So feelingly, each argument beside
Seems blunt and forceless in comparison."
Then heard I: "Wherefore holdest thou that each,
The elder proposition and the new,
Which so persuade thee, are the voice of heav'n?"

"The works, that follow'd, evidence their truth;"
I answer'd: "Nature did not make for these
The iron hot, or on her anvil mould them."
"Who voucheth to thee of the works themselves,"
Was the reply, "that they in very deed
Are that they purport? None hath sworn so to thee."

"That all the world," said I, "should have been turn'd
To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,
Would in itself be such a miracle,
The rest were not an hundredth part so great.
E'en thou wentst forth in poverty and hunger
To set the goodly plant, that from the vine,
It once was, now is grown unsightly bramble."
That ended, through the high celestial court
Resounded all the spheres. "Praise we one God!"
In song of most unearthly melody.
And when that Worthy thus, from branch to branch,
Examining, had led me, that we now
Approach'd the topmost bough, he straight resum'd;
"The grace, that holds sweet dalliance with thy soul,
So far discreetly hath thy lips unclos'd
That, whatsoever has past them, I commend.
Behooves thee to express, what thou believ'st,
The next, and whereon thy belief hath grown."

"O saintly sire and spirit!" I began,
"Who seest that, which thou didst so believe,
As to outstrip feet younger than thine own,
Toward the sepulchre? thy will is here,
That I the tenour of my creed unfold;
And thou the cause of it hast likewise ask'd.
And I reply: I in one God believe,
One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
All heav'n is mov'd, himself unmov'd the while.
Nor demonstration physical alone,
Or more intelligential and abstruse,
Persuades me to this faith; but from that truth
It cometh to me rather, which is shed
Through Moses, the rapt Prophets, and the Psalms.
The Gospel, and that ye yourselves did write,
When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost.
In three eternal Persons I believe,
Essence threefold and one, mysterious league
Of union absolute, which, many a time,

The word of gospel lore upon my mind
Imprints: and from this germ, this firstling spark,
The lively flame dilates, and like heav'n's star
Doth glitter in me." As the master hears,
Well pleas'd, and then enfoldeth in his arms
The servant, who hath joyful tidings brought,
And having told the errand keeps his peace;
Thus benediction uttering with song
Soon as my peace I held, compass'd me thrice
The apostolic radiance, whose behest
Had op'd lips; so well their answer pleas'd.

CANTO XXV

If e'er the sacred poem that hath made
Both heav'n and earth copartners in its toil,
And with lean abstinence, through many a year,
Faded my brow, be destin'd to prevail
Over the cruelty, which bars me forth
Of the fair sheep-fold, where a sleeping lamb
The wolves set on and fain had worried me,
With other voice and fleece of other grain
I shall forthwith return, and, standing up
At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath
Due to the poet's temples: for I there
First enter'd on the faith which maketh souls
Acceptable to God: and, for its sake,
Peter had then circled my forehead thus.

Next from the squadron, whence had issued forth
The first fruit of Christ's vicars on the earth,
Toward us mov'd a light, at view whereof
My Lady, full of gladness, spake to me:
"Lo! lo! behold the peer of mickle might,
That makes Falicia throng'd with visitants!"

As when the ring-dove by his mate alights,
In circles each about the other wheels,
And murmuring cooes his fondness; thus saw I
One, of the other great and glorious prince,
With kindly greeting hail'd, extolling both
Their heavenly banqueting; but when an end
Was to their gratulation, silent, each,
Before me sat they down, so burning bright,
I could not look upon them. Smiling then,
Beatrice spake: "O life in glory shrin'd!"
Who didst the largess of our kingly court
Set down with faithful pen! let now thy voice
Of hope the praises in this height resound.
For thou, who figur'st them in shapes, as clear,
As Jesus stood before thee, well can'st speak them."

"Lift up thy head, and be thou strong in trust:
For that, which hither from the mortal world
Arriveth, must be ripen'd in our beam."

Such cheering accents from the second flame
Assur'd me; and mine eyes I lifted up
Unto the mountains that had bow'd them late
With over-heavy burden. "Sith our Liege
Wills of his grace that thou, or ere thy death,
In the most secret council, with his lords
Shouldst be confronted, so that having view'd
The glories of our court, thou mayst therewith
Thyself, and all who hear, invigorate
With hope, that leads to blissful end; declare,
What is that hope, how it doth flourish in thee,
And whence thou hadst it?" Thus proceeding still,
The second light: and she, whose gentle love
My soaring pennons in that lofty flight
Escorted, thus preventing me, rejoin'd:
Among her sons, not one more full of hope,
Hath the church militant: so 't is of him
Recorded in the sun, whose liberal orb
Enlighteneth all our tribe: and ere his term
Of warfare, hence permitted he is come,
From Egypt to Jerusalem, to see.
The other points, both which thou hast inquir'd,
Not for more knowledge, but that he may tell
How dear thou holdst the virtue, these to him
Leave I; for he may answer thee with ease,
And without boasting, so God give him grace."
Like to the scholar, practis'd in his task,
Who, willing to give proof of diligence,
Seconds his teacher gladly, "Hope," said I,
"Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,
Th' effect of grace divine and merit preceding.
This light from many a star visits my heart,
But flow'd to me the first from him, who sang
The songs of the Supreme, himself supreme
Among his tuneful brethren. 'Let all hope
In thee,' so speak his anthem, 'who have known
Thy name;' and with my faith who know not that?
From thee, the next, distilling from his spring,
In thine epistle, fell on me the drops
So plenteously, that I on others shower
The influence of their dew." Whileas I spake,
A lamping, as of quick and vollied lightning,
Within the bosom of that mighty sheen,
Play'd tremulous; then forth these accents breath'd:
"Love for the virtue which attended me
E'en to the palm, and issuing from the field,
Glows vigorous yet within me, and inspires
To ask of thee, whom also it delights;
What promise thou from hope in chief dost win."

"Both scriptures, new and ancient," I reply'd;
"Propose the mark (which even now I view)
For souls belov'd of God. Isaias saith,
That, in their own land, each one must be clad
In twofold vesture; and their proper lands this delicious life.
In terms more full,
And clearer far, thy brother hath set forth
This revelation to us, where he tells
Of the white raiment destin'd to the saints."

And, as the words were ending, from above,
"They hope in thee," first heard we cried: whereto
Answer'd the carols all. Amidst them next,
A light of so clear amplitude emerg'd,
That winter's month were but a single day,
Were such a crystal in the Cancer's sign.

Like as a virgin riseth up, and goes,
And enters on the mazes of the dance,
Though gay, yet innocent of worse intent,
Than to do fitting honour to the bride;
So I beheld the new effulgence come
Unto the other two, who in a ring
Wheel'd, as became their rapture. In the dance
And in the song it mingled. And the dame
Held on them fix'd her looks: e'en as the spouse
Silent and moveless. "This is he, who lay
Upon the bosom of our pelican:
This he, into whose keeping from the cross
The mighty charge was given." Thus she spake,
Yet therefore naught the more remov'd her Sight
From marking them, or ere her words began,
Or when they clos'd. As he, who looks intent,
And strives with searching ken, how he may see
The sun in his eclipse, and, through desire
Of seeing, loseth power of sight: so I
Peer'd on that last splendence, while I heard:
"Why dazzlest thou thine eyes in seeking that,
Which here abides not? Earth my body is,
In earth: and shall be, with the rest, so long,
As till our number equal the decree
Of the Most High. The two that have ascended,
In this our blessed cloister, shine alone
With the two garments. So report below."

As when, for ease of labour, or to shun
Suspected peril at a whistle's breath,
The oars, erewhile dash'd frequent in the wave,
All rest; the flamy circle at that voice
So rested, and the mingling sound was still,
Which from the trinal band soft-breathing rose.
I turn'd, but ah! how trembled in my thought,
When, looking at my side again to see
Beatrice, I descried her not, although
Not distant, on the happy coast she stood.

CANTO XXVI

With dazzled eyes, whilst wond'ring I remain'd,
Forth of the beamy flame which dazzled me,
Issued a breath, that in attention mute
Detain'd me; and these words it spake: "'T were well,
That, long as till thy vision, on my form
O'erspent, regain its virtue, with discourse
Thou compensate the brief delay. Say then,
Beginning, to what point thy soul aspires:

"And meanwhile rest assur'd, that sight in thee
Is but o'erpowered a space, not wholly quench'd:
Since thy fair guide and lovely, in her look
Hath potency, the like to that which dwelt
In Ananias' hand." I answering thus:
"Be to mine eyes the remedy or late
Or early, at her pleasure; for they were
The gates, at which she enter'd, and did light
Her never dying fire. My wishes here
Are centered; in this palace is the weal,
That Alpha and Omega, is to all
The lessons love can read me." Yet again
The voice which had dispers'd my fear, when daz'd
With that excess, to converse urg'd, and spake:
"Behoooves thee sift more narrowly thy terms,
And say, who level'd at this scope thy bow."

"Philosophy," said I, "hath arguments,
And this place hath authority enough
'T' imprint in me such love: for, of constraint,
Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,
Kindles our love, and in degree the more,
As it comprises more of goodness in 't.
The essence then, where such advantage is,
That each good, found without it, is naught else
But of his light the beam, must needs attract
The soul of each one, loving, who the truth
Discerns, on which this proof is built. Such truth
Learn I from him, who shows me the first love
Of all intelligential substances
Eternal: from his voice I learn, whose word
Is truth, that of himself to Moses saith,
'I will make all my good before thee pass.'
Lastly from thee I learn, who chief proclaim'st,
E'en at the outset of thy heralding,
In mortal ears the mystery of heav'n."

"Through human wisdom, and th' authority
Therewith agreeing," heard I answer'd, "keep
The choicest of thy love for God. But say,
If thou yet other cords within thee feel'st
That draw thee towards him; so that thou report
How many are the fangs, with which this love
Is grappled to thy soul." I did not miss,
To what intent the eagle of our Lord
Had pointed his demand; yea noted well
Th' avowal, which he led to; and resum'd:
"All grappling bonds, that knit the heart to God,
Confederate to make fast our clarity.
The being of the world, and mine own being,
The death which he endur'd that I should live,
And that, which all the faithful hope, as I do,
To the foremention'd lively knowledge join'd,
Have from the sea of ill love sav'd my bark,
And on the coast secur'd it of the right.
As for the leaves, that in the garden bloom,
My love for them is great, as is the good
Dealt by th' eternal hand, that tends them all."

I ended, and therewith a song most sweet
Rang through the spheres; and "Holy, holy, holy,"
Accordant with the rest my lady sang.
And as a sleep is broken and dispers'd
Through sharp encounter of the nimble light,
With the eye's spirit running forth to meet
The ray, from membrane on to the membrane urg'd;
And the upstartled wight loathes that he sees;
So, at his sudden waking, he misdeems
Of all around him, till assurance waits
On better judgment: thus the saintly came
Drove from before mine eyes the motes away,
With the resplendence of her own, that cast
Their brightness downward, thousand miles below.
Whence I my vision, clearer shall before,
Recover'd; and, well nigh astounded, ask'd
Of a fourth light, that now with us I saw.

And Beatrice: "The first diving soul,
That ever the first virtue fram'd, admires
Within these rays his Maker." Like the leaf,
That bows its lithe top till the blast is blown;
By its own virtue rear'd then stands aloof;
So I, the whilst she said, awe-stricken bow'd.
Then eagerness to speak embolden'd me;
And I began: "O fruit! that wast alone
Mature, when first engender'd! Ancient father!
That doubly seest in every wedded bride
Thy daughter by affinity and blood!
Devoutly as I may, I pray thee hold
Converse with me: my will thou seest; and I,
More speedily to hear thee, tell it not."

It chanceth oft some animal bewrays,
Through the sleek cov'ring of his furry coat.
The fondness, that stirs in him and conforms
His outside seeming to the cheer within:
And in like guise was Adam's spirit mov'd
To joyous mood, that through the covering shone,
Transparent, when to pleasure me it spake:
"No need thy will be told, which I untold
Better discern, than thou whatever thing
Thou holdst most certain: for that will I see
In Him, who is truth's mirror, and Himself
Parhelion unto all things, and naught else
To him. This wouldst thou hear; how long since God
Plac'd me high garden, from whose hounds
She led me up in this ladder, steep and long;
What space endur'd my season of delight;
Whence truly sprang the wrath that banish'd me;
And what the language, which I spake and fram'd
Not that I tasted of the tree, my son,
Was in itself the cause of that exile,
But only my transgressing of the mark
Assign'd me. There, whence at thy lady's hest
The Mantuan mov'd him, still was I debar'd
This council, till the sun had made complete,
Four thousand and three hundred rounds and twice,

His annual journey; and, through every light
In his broad pathway, saw I him return,
Thousand save sev'nty times, the whilst I dwelt
Upon the earth. The language I did use
Was worn away, or ever Nimrod's race
Their unaccomplishable work began.
For naught, that man inclines to, ere was lasting,
Left by his reason free, and variable,
As is the sky that sways him. That he speaks,
Is nature's prompting: whether thus or thus,
She leaves to you, as ye do most affect it.
Ere I descended into hell's abyss,
Ei was the name on earth of the Chief Good,
Whose joy enfolds me: Eli then 't was call'd
And so beseemeth: for, in mortals, use
Is as the leaf upon the bough; that goes,
And other comes instead. Upon the mount
Most high above the waters, all my life,
Both innocent and guilty, did but reach
From the first hour, to that which cometh next
(As the sun changes quarter), to the sixth."

CANTO XXVII

Then "Glory to the Father, to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit," rang aloud
Throughout all Paradise, that with the song
My spirit reel'd, so passing sweet the strain:
And what I saw was equal ecstasy;
One universal smile it seem'd of all things,
Joy past compare, gladness unutterable,
Imperishable life of peace and love,
Exhaustless riches and unmeasur'd bliss.

Before mine eyes stood the four torches lit;
And that, which first had come, began to wax
In brightness, and in semblance such became,
As Jove might be, if he and Mars were birds,
And interchang'd their plumes. Silence ensued,
Through the blest quire, by Him, who here appoints
Vicissitude of ministry, enjoin'd;
When thus I heard: "Wonder not, if my hue
Be chang'd; for, while I speak, these shalt thou see
All in like manner change with me. My place
He who usurps on earth (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void), the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood:
The more below his triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell." Such colour, as the sun,
At eve or morning, paints an adverse cloud,
Then saw I sprinkled over all the sky.
And as th' unblemish'd dame, who in herself
Secure of censure, yet at bare report
Of other's failing, shrinks with maiden fear;
So Beatrice in her semblance chang'd:

And such eclipse in heav'n methinks was seen,
When the Most Holy suffer'd. Then the words
Proceeded, with voice, alter'd from itself
So clean, the semblance did not alter more.
"Not to this end was Christ's spouse with my blood,
With that of Linus, and of Cletus fed:
That she might serve for purchase of base gold:
But for the purchase of this happy life
Did Sextus, Pius, and Callixtus bleed,
And Urban, they, whose doom was not without
Much weeping seal'd. No purpose was of our
That on the right hand of our successors
Part of the Christian people should be set,
And part upon their left; nor that the keys,
Which were vouchsaf'd me, should for ensign serve
Unto the banners, that do levy war
On the baptiz'd: nor I, for sigil-mark
Set upon sold and lying privileges;
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.
In shepherd's clothing greedy wolves below
Range wide o'er all the pastures. Arm of God!
Why longer sleepest thou? Caorsines and Gascona
Prepare to quaff our blood. O good beginning
To what a vile conclusion must thou stoop!
But the high providence, which did defend
Through Scipio the world's glory unto Rome,
Will not delay its succour: and thou, son,
Who through thy mortal weight shall yet again
Return below, open thy lips, nor hide
What is by me not hidden." As a Hood
Of frozen vapours streams adown the air,
What time the she-goat with her skiey horn
Touches the sun; so saw I there stream wide
The vapours, who with us had linger'd late
And with glad triumph deck th' ethereal cope.
Onward my sight their semblances pursued;
So far pursued, as till the space between
From its reach sever'd them: whereat the guide
Celestial, marking me no more intent
On upward gazing, said, "Look down and see
What circuit thou hast compass'd." From the hour
When I before had cast my view beneath,
All the first region overpast I saw,
Which from the midmost to the bound'ry winds;
That onward thence from Gades I beheld
The unwise passage of Laertes' son,
And hitherward the shore, where thou, Europa!
Mad'st thee a joyful burden: and yet more
Of this dim spot had seen, but that the sun,
A constellation off and more, had ta'en
His progress in the zodiac underneath.

Then by the spirit, that doth never leave
Its amorous dalliance with my lady's looks,
Back with redoubled ardour were mine eyes
Led unto her: and from her radiant smiles,
Whenas I turn'd me, pleasure so divine
Did lighten on me, that whatever bait
Or art or nature in the human flesh,

Or in its limn'd resemblance, can combine
Through greedy eyes to take the soul withal,
Were to her beauty nothing. Its boon influence
From the fair nest of Leda rapt me forth,
And wafted on into the swiftest heav'n.

What place for entrance Beatrice chose,
I may not say, so uniform was all,
Liveliest and loftiest. She my secret wish
Divin'd; and with such gladness, that God's love
Seem'd from her visage shining, thus began:
"Here is the goal, whence motion on his race
Starts; motionless the centre, and the rest
All mov'd around. Except the soul divine,
Place in this heav'n is none, the soul divine,
Wherein the love, which ruleth o'er its orb,
Is kindled, and the virtue that it sheds;
One circle, light and love, enclasping it,
As this doth clasp the others; and to Him,
Who draws the bound, its limit only known.
Measur'd itself by none, it doth divide
Motion to all, counted unto them forth,
As by the fifth or half ye count forth ten.
The vase, wherein time's roots are plung'd, thou seest,
Look elsewhere for the leaves. O mortal lust!
That canst not lift thy head above the waves
Which whelm and sink thee down! The will in man
Bears goodly blossoms; but its ruddy promise
Is, by the dripping of perpetual rain,
Made mere abortion: faith and innocence
Are met with but in babes, each taking leave
Ere cheeks with down are sprinkled; he, that fasts,
While yet a stammerer, with his tongue let loose
Gluts every food alike in every moon.
One yet a babbler, loves and listens to
His mother; but no sooner hath free use
Of speech, than he doth wish her in her grave.
So suddenly doth the fair child of him,
Whose welcome is the morn and eve his parting,
To negro blackness change her virgin white.

"Thou, to abate thy wonder, note that none
Bears rule in earth, and its frail family
Are therefore wand'rers. Yet before the date,
When through the hundredth in his reck'ning drops
Pale January must be shor'd aside
From winter's calendar, these heav'nly spheres
Shall roar so loud, that fortune shall be fain
To turn the poop, where she hath now the prow;
So that the fleet run onward; and true fruit,
Expected long, shall crown at last the bloom!"

CANTO XXVII

So she who doth imparadise my soul,
Had drawn the veil from off our pleasant life,

And bar'd the truth of poor mortality;
When lo! as one who, in a mirror, spies
The shining of a flambeau at his back,
Lit sudden ore he deem of its approach,
And turneth to resolve him, if the glass
Have told him true, and sees the record faithful
As note is to its metre; even thus,
I well remember, did befall to me,
Looking upon the beauteous eyes, whence love
Had made the leash to take me. As I turn'd;
And that, which, in their circles, none who spies,
Can miss of, in itself apparent, struck
On mine; a point I saw, that darted light
So sharp, no lid, unclosing, may bear up
Against its keenness. The least star we view
From hence, had seem'd a moon, set by its side,
As star by side of star. And so far off,
Perchance, as is the halo from the light
Which paints it, when most dense the vapour spreads,
There wheel'd about the point a circle of fire,
More rapid than the motion, which first girds
The world. Then, circle after circle, round
Enring'd each other; till the seventh reach'd
Circumference so ample, that its bow,
Within the span of Juno's messenger,
lied scarce been held entire. Beyond the sev'nth,
Follow'd yet other two. And every one,
As more in number distant from the first,
Was tardier in motion; and that glow'd
With flame most pure, that to the sparkle' of truth
Was nearest, as partaking most, methinks,
Of its reality. The guide belov'd
Saw me in anxious thought suspense, and spake:
"Heav'n, and all nature, hangs upon that point.
The circle thereto most conjoin'd observe;
And know, that by intenser love its course
Is to this swiftness wing'd." To whom I thus:
"It were enough; nor should I further seek,
Had I but witness'd order, in the world
Appointed, such as in these wheels is seen.
But in the sensible world such diff'rence is,
That is each round shows more divinity,
As each is wider from the centre. Hence,
If in this wondrous and angelic temple,
That hath for confine only light and love,
My wish may have completion I must know,
Wherefore such disagreement is between
Th' exemplar and its copy: for myself,
Contemplating, I fail to pierce the cause."

"It is no marvel, if thy fingers foil'd
Do leave the knot untied: so hard 't is grown
For want of tenting." Thus she said: "But take,"
She added, "if thou wish thy cure, my words,
And entertain them subtly. Every orb
Corporeal, doth proportion its extent
Unto the virtue through its parts diffus'd.
The greater blessedness preserves the more.
The greater is the body (if all parts

Share equally) the more is to preserve.
Therefore the circle, whose swift course enwheels
The universal frame answers to that,
Which is supreme in knowledge and in love
Thus by the virtue, not the seeming, breadth
Of substance, measure, thou shalt see the heav'ns,
Each to the' intelligence that ruleth it,
Greater to more, and smaller unto less,
Suited in strict and wondrous harmony."

As when the sturdy north blows from his cheek
A blast, that scours the sky, forthwith our air,
Clear'd of the rack, that hung on it before,
Glitters; and, With his beauties all unveil'd,
The firmament looks forth serene, and smiles;
Such was my cheer, when Beatrice drove
With clear reply the shadows back, and truth
Was manifested, as a star in heaven.
And when the words were ended, not unlike
To iron in the furnace, every cirque
Ebullient shot forth scintillating fires:
And every sparkle shivering to new blaze,
In number did outmillion the account
Reduplicate upon the chequer'd board.
Then heard I echoing on from choir to choir,
"Hosanna," to the fixed point, that holds,
And shall for ever hold them to their place,
From everlasting, irremovable.

Musing awhile I stood: and she, who saw
by inward meditations, thus began:
"In the first circles, they, whom thou beheldst,
Are seraphim and cherubim. Thus swift
Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,
Near as they can, approaching; and they can
The more, the loftier their vision. Those,
That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,
Are thrones; in whom the first trine ends. And all
Are blessed, even as their sight descends
Deeper into the truth, wherein rest is
For every mind. Thus happiness hath root
In seeing, not in loving, which of sight
Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such
The meed, as unto each in due degree
Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd.
The other trine, that with still opening buds
In this eternal springtide blossom fair,
Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,
Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold
Hosannas blending ever, from the three
Transmitted. hierarchy of gods, for aye
Rejoicing, dominations first, next then
Virtues, and powers the third. The next to whom
Are principdoms and archangels, with glad round
To tread their festal ring; and last the band
Angelical, disporting in their sphere.
All, as they circle in their orders, look
Aloft, and downward with such sway prevail,
That all with mutual impulse tend to God.

These once a mortal view beheld. Desire
In Dionysius so intently wrought,
That he, as I have done rang'd them; and nam'd
Their orders, marshal'd in his thought. From him
Dissentient, one refus'd his sacred read.
But soon as in this heav'n his doubting eyes
Were open'd, Gregory at his error smil'd
Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth
Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt
Both this and much beside of these our orbs,
From an eye-witness to heav'n's mysteries."

CANTO XXIX

No longer than what time Latona's twins
Cover'd of Libra and the fleecy star,
Together both, girding the' horizon hang,
In even balance from the zenith pois'd,
Till from that verge, each, changing hemisphere,
Part the nice level; e'en so brief a space
Did Beatrice's silence hold. A smile
Bat painted on her cheek; and her fix'd gaze
Bent on the point, at which my vision fail'd:
When thus her words resuming she began:
"I speak, nor what thou wouldst inquire demand;
For I have mark'd it, where all time and place
Are present. Not for increase to himself
Of good, which may not be increas'd, but forth
To manifest his glory by its beams,
Inhabiting his own eternity,
Beyond time's limit or what bound soe'er
To circumscribe his being, as he will'd,
Into new natures, like unto himself,
Eternal Love unfolded. Nor before,
As if in dull inaction torpid lay.
For not in process of before or aft
Upon these waters mov'd the Spirit of God.
Simple and mix'd, both form and substance, forth
To perfect being started, like three darts
Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray
In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire,
E'en at the moment of its issuing; thus
Did, from th' eternal Sovran, beam entire
His threefold operation, at one act
Produc'd coeval. Yet in order each
Created his due station knew: those highest,
Who pure intelligence were made: mere power
The lowest: in the midst, bound with strict league,
Intelligence and power, unsever'd bond.
Long tract of ages by the angels past,
Ere the creating of another world,
Describ'd on Jerome's pages thou hast seen.
But that what I disclose to thee is true,
Those penmen, whom the Holy Spirit mov'd
In many a passage of their sacred book
Attest; as thou by diligent search shalt find

And reason in some sort discerns the same,
Who scarce would grant the heav'nly ministers
Of their perfection void, so long a space.
Thus when and where these spirits of love were made,
Thou know'st, and how: and knowing hast allay'd
Thy thirst, which from the triple question rose.
Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon
Part of the angels fell: and in their fall
Confusion to your elements ensued.
The others kept their station: and this task,
Whereon thou lookst, began with such delight,
That they surcease not ever, day nor night,
Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause
Was the curst pride of him, whom thou hast seen
Pent with the world's incumbrance. Those, whom here
Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves
Of his free bounty, who had made them apt
For ministries so high: therefore their views
Were by enlight'ning grace and their own merit
Exalted; so that in their will confirm'd
They stand, nor feel to fall. For do not doubt,
But to receive the grace, which heav'n vouchsafes,
Is meritorious, even as the soul
With prompt affection welcometh the guest.
Now, without further help, if with good heed
My words thy mind have treasur'd, thou henceforth
This consistory round about mayst scan,
And gaze thy fill. But since thou hast on earth
Heard vain disputers, reasoners in the schools,
Canvas the' angelic nature, and dispute
Its powers of apprehension, memory, choice;
Therefore, 't is well thou take from me the truth,
Pure and without disguise, which they below,
Equivocating, darken and perplex.

"Know thou, that, from the first, these substances,
Rejoicing in the countenance of God,
Have held unceasingly their view, intent
Upon the glorious vision, from the which
Naught absent is nor hid: where then no change
Of newness with succession interrupts,
Remembrance there needs none to gather up
Divided thought and images remote

"So that men, thus at variance with the truth
Dream, though their eyes be open; reckless some
Of error; others well aware they err,
To whom more guilt and shame are justly due.
Each the known track of sage philosophy
Deserts, and has a byway of his own:
So much the restless eagerness to shine
And love of singularity prevail.
Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes
Heav'n's anger less, than when the book of God
Is forc'd to yield to man's authority,
Or from its straightness warp'd: no reck'ning made
What blood the sowing of it in the world
Has cost; what favour for himself he wins,
Who meekly clings to it. The aim of all

Is how to shine: e'en they, whose office is
To preach the Gospel, let the gospel sleep,
And pass their own inventions off instead.
One tells, how at Christ's suffering the wan moon
Bent back her steps, and shadow'd o'er the sun
With intervenient disk, as she withdrew:
Another, how the light shrouded itself
Within its tabernacle, and left dark
The Spaniard and the Indian, with the Jew.
Such fables Florence in her pulpit hears,
Banded about more frequent, than the names
Of Bindi and of Lapi in her streets.
The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return
From pasture, fed with wind: and what avails
For their excuse, they do not see their harm?
Christ said not to his first conventicle,
'Go forth and preach impostures to the world,'
But gave them truth to build on; and the sound
Was mighty on their lips; nor needed they,
Beside the gospel, other spear or shield,
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.
The preacher now provides himself with store
Of jests and gibes; and, so there be no lack
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought:
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while
Of that dark bird which nestles in his hood,
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said.
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,
That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad
The hands of holy promise, finds a throng
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony
Fattens with this his swine, and others worse
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,
Paying with unstamp'd metal for their fare.

"But (for we far have wander'd) let us seek
The forward path again; so as the way
Be shorten'd with the time. No mortal tongue
Nor thought of man hath ever reach'd so far,
That of these natures he might count the tribes.
What Daniel of their thousands hath reveal'd
With finite number infinite conceals.
The fountain at whose source these drink their beams,
With light supplies them in as many modes,
As there are splendours, that it shines on: each
According to the virtue it conceives,
Differing in love and sweet affection.
Look then how lofty and how huge in breadth
The' eternal might, which, broken and dispers'd
Over such countless mirrors, yet remains
Whole in itself and one, as at the first."

CANTO XXX

Noon's fervid hour perchance six thousand miles

From hence is distant; and the shadowy cone
Almost to level on our earth declines;
When from the midmost of this blue abyss
By turns some star is to our vision lost.
And straightway as the handmaid of the sun
Puts forth her radiant brow, all, light by light,
Fade, and the spangled firmament shuts in,
E'en to the loveliest of the glittering throng.
Thus vanish'd gradually from my sight
The triumph, which plays ever round the point,
That overcame me, seeming (for it did)
Engirt by that it girdeth. Wherefore love,
With loss of other object, forc'd me bend
Mine eyes on Beatrice once again.

If all, that hitherto is told of her,
Were in one praise concluded, 't were too weak
To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth,
Not merely to exceed our human, but,
That save its Maker, none can to the full
Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail,
Unequal to my theme, as never bard
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.
For, as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
Hath dispossess my spirit of itself.
Not from that day, when on this earth I first
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
Have I with song applausive ever ceas'd
To follow, but not follow them no more;
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his skill.

She (such as I bequeath her to the bruit
Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,
Urging its arduous matter to the close),
Her words resum'd, in gesture and in voice
Resembling one accusom'd to command:
"Forth from the last corporeal are we come
Into the heav'n, that is unbodied light,
Light intellectual replete with love,
Love of true happiness replete with joy,
Joy, that transcends all sweetness of delight.
Here shalt thou look on either mighty host
Of Paradise; and one in that array,
Which in the final judgment thou shalt see."

As when the lightning, in a sudden spleen
Unfolded, dashes from the blinding eyes
The visive spirits dazzled and bedimm'd;
So, round about me, fulminating streams
Of living radiance play'd, and left me swath'd
And veil'd in dense impenetrable blaze.
Such weal is in the love, that stills this heav'n;
For its own flame the torch this fitting ever!

No sooner to my list'ning ear had come
The brief assurance, than I understood

New virtue into me infus'd, and sight
Kindled afresh, with vigour to sustain
Excess of light, however pure. I look'd;
And in the likeness of a river saw
Light flowing, from whose amber-seeming waves
Flash'd up effulgence, as they glided on
'Twixt banks, on either side, painted with spring,
Incredible how fair; and, from the tide,
There ever and anon, outstarting, flew
Sparkles instinct with life; and in the flow'rs
Did set them, like to rubies chas'd in gold;
Then, as if drunk with odors, plung'd again
Into the wondrous flood; from which, as one
Re'enter'd, still another rose. "The thirst
Of knowledge high, whereby thou art inflam'd,
To search the meaning of what here thou seest,
The more it warms thee, pleases me the more.
But first behooves thee of this water drink,
Or ere that longing be allay'd." So spake
The day-star of mine eyes; then thus subjoin'd:
"This stream, and these, forth issuing from its gulf,
And diving back, a living topaz each,
With all this laughter on its bloomy shores,
Are but a preface, shadowy of the truth
They emblem: not that, in themselves, the things
Are crude; but on thy part is the defect,
For that thy views not yet aspire so high."
Never did babe, that had outslept his wont,
Rush, with such eager straining, to the milk,
As I toward the water, bending me,
To make the better mirrors of mine eyes
In the refining wave; and, as the eaves
Of mine eyelids did drink of it, forthwith
Seem'd it unto me turn'd from length to round,
Then as a troop of maskers, when they put
Their vizors off, look other than before,
The counterfeited semblance thrown aside;
So into greater jubilee were chang'd
Those flowers and sparkles, and distinct I saw
Before me either court of heav'n displac'd.

O prime enlightener! thou who crav'st me strength
On the high triumph of thy realm to gaze!
Grant virtue now to utter what I kenn'd,
There is in heav'n a light, whose goodly shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace; and in a circle spreads so far,
That the circumference were too loose a zone
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
Reflected from the summit of the first,
That moves, which being hence and vigour takes,
And as some cliff, that from the bottom eyes
Its image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
As if 't admire its brave appareling
Of verdure and of flowers: so, round about,
Eyeing the light, on more than million thrones,
Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves

Extended to their utmost of this rose,
Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
Took in the full dimensions of that joy.
Near or remote, what there avails, where God
Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends
Her sway? Into the yellow of the rose
Perennial, which in bright expansiveness,
Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent
Of praises to the never-wint'ring sun,
As one, who fain would speak yet holds his peace,
Beatrice led me; and, "Behold," she said,
"This fair assemblage! stoles of snowy white
How numberless! The city, where we dwell,
Behold how vast! and these our seats so throng'd
Few now are wanting here! In that proud stall,
On which, the crown, already o'er its state
Suspended, holds thine eyes--or ere thyself
Mayst at the wedding sup,--shall rest the soul
Of the great Harry, he who, by the world
Augustas hail'd, to Italy must come,
Before her day be ripe. But ye are sick,
And in your tetchy wantonness as blind,
As is the bantling, that of hunger dies,
And drives away the nurse. Nor may it be,
That he, who in the sacred forum sways,
Openly or in secret, shall with him
Accordant walk: Whom God will not endure
I' th' holy office long; but thrust him down
To Simon Magus, where Magna's priest
Will sink beneath him: such will be his meed."

CANTO XXXI

In fashion, as a snow-white rose, lay then
Before my view the saintly multitude,
Which in his own blood Christ espous'd. Meanwhile
That other host, that soar aloft to gaze
And celebrate his glory, whom they love,
Hover'd around; and, like a troop of bees,
Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,
Now, clustering, where their fragrant labour glows,
Flew downward to the mighty flow'r, or rose
From the redundant petals, streaming back
Unto the steadfast dwelling of their joy.
Faces had they of flame, and wings of gold;
The rest was whiter than the driven snow.
And as they flitted down into the flower,
From range to range, fanning their plummy loins,
Whisper'd the peace and ardour, which they won
From that soft winnowing. Shadow none, the vast
Interposition of such numerous flight
Cast, from above, upon the flower, or view
Obstructed aught. For, through the universe,
Wherever merited, celestial light

Glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.

All there, who reign in safety and in bliss,
Ages long past or new, on one sole mark
Their love and vision fix'd. O trinal beam
Of individual star, that charmt them thus,
Vouchsafe one glance to gild our storm below!

If the grim brood, from Arctic shores that roam'd,
(Where helice, forever, as she wheels,
Sparkles a mother's fondness on her son)
Stood in mute wonder 'mid the works of Rome,
When to their view the Lateran arose
In greatness more than earthly; I, who then
From human to divine had past, from time
Unto eternity, and out of Florence
To justice and to truth, how might I choose
But marvel too? 'Twixt gladness and amaze,
In sooth no will had I to utter aught,
Or hear. And, as a pilgrim, when he rests
Within the temple of his vow, looks round
In breathless awe, and hopes some time to tell
Of all its goodly state: e'en so mine eyes
Cours'd up and down along the living light,
Now low, and now aloft, and now around,
Visiting every step. Looks I beheld,
Where charity in soft persuasion sat,
Smiles from within and radiance from above,
And in each gesture grace and honour high.

So rov'd my ken, and its general form
All Paradise survey'd: when round I turn'd
With purpose of my lady to inquire
Once more of things, that held my thought suspense,
But answer found from other than I ween'd;
For, Beatrice, when I thought to see,
I saw instead a senior, at my side,
Rob'd, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign
Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffus'd,
With gestures such as spake a father's love.
And, "Whither is she vanish'd?" straight I ask'd.

"By Beatrice summon'd," he replied,
"I come to aid thy wish. Looking aloft
To the third circle from the highest, there
Behold her on the throne, wherein her merit
Hath plac'd her." Answering not, mine eyes I rais'd,
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.
Not from the centre of the sea so far
Unto the region of the highest thunder,
As was my ken from hers; and yet the form
Came through that medium down, unmix'd and pure,

"O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest!
Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in hell
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd!
For all mine eyes have seen, I, to thy power
And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave,

Thou hast to freedom brought me; and no means,
For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.
Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep.
That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole,
Is loosen'd from this body, it may find
Favour with thee." So I my suit preferr'd:
And she, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down,
And smil'd; then tow'rds th' eternal fountain turn'd.

And thus the senior, holy and rever'd:
"That thou at length mayst happily conclude
Thy voyage (to which end I was dispatch'd,
By supplication mov'd and holy love)
Let thy upsoaring vision range, at large,
This garden through: for so, by ray divine
Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount;
And from heav'n's queen, whom fervent I adore,
All gracious aid befriend us; for that I
Am her own faithful Bernard." Like a wight,
Who haply from Croatia wends to see
Our Veronica, and the while 't is shown,
Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,
And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith
Unto himself in thought: "And didst thou look
E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?
And was this semblance thine?" So gaz'd I then
Adoring; for the charity of him,
Who musing, in the world that peace enjoy'd,
Stood lively before me. "Child of grace!"
Thus he began: "thou shalt not knowledge gain
Of this glad being, if thine eyes are held
Still in this depth below. But search around
The circles, to the furthest, till thou spy
Seated in state, the queen, that of this realm
Is sovran." Straight mine eyes I rais'd; and bright,
As, at the birth of morn, the eastern clime
Above th' horizon, where the sun declines;
To mine eyes, that upward, as from vale
To mountain sped, at th' extreme bound, a part
Excell'd in lustre all the front oppos'd.
And as the glow burns ruddiest o'er the wave,
That waits the sloping beam, which Phaeton
Ill knew to guide, and on each part the light
Diminish'd fades, intensest in the midst;
So burn'd the peaceful oriflame, and slack'd
On every side the living flame decay'd.
And in that midst their sportive pennons wav'd
Thousands of angels; in resplendence each
Distinct, and quaint adornment. At their glee
And carol, smil'd the Lovely One of heav'n,
That joy was in the eyes of all the blest.

Had I a tongue in eloquence as rich,
As is the colouring in fancy's loom,
'T were all too poor to utter the least part
Of that enchantment. When he saw mine eyes
Intent on her, that charm'd him, Bernard gaz'd
With so exceeding fondness, as infus'd
Ardour into my breast, unfelt before.

CANTO XXXII

Freely the sage, though wrapt in musings high,
Assum'd the teacher's part, and mild began:
"The wound, that Mary clos'd, she open'd first,
Who sits so beautiful at Mary's feet.
The third in order, underneath her, lo!
Rachel with Beatrice. Sarah next,
Judith, Rebecca, and the gleaner maid,
Meek ancestress of him, who sang the songs
Of sore repentance in his sorrowful mood.
All, as I name them, down from deaf to leaf,
Are in gradation throned on the rose.
And from the seventh step, successively,
Adown the breathing tresses of the flow'r
Still doth the file of Hebrew dames proceed.
For these are a partition wall, whereby
The sacred stairs are sever'd, as the faith
In Christ divides them. On this part, where blooms
Each leaf in full maturity, are set
Such as in Christ, or ere he came, believ'd.
On th' other, where an intersected space
Yet shows the semicircle void, abide
All they, who look'd to Christ already come.
And as our Lady on her glorious stool,
And they who on their stools beneath her sit,
This way distinction make: e'en so on his,
The mighty Baptist that way marks the line
(He who endur'd the desert and the pains
Of martyrdom, and for two years of hell,
Yet still continued holy), and beneath,
Augustin, Francis, Benedict, and the rest,
Thus far from round to round. So heav'n's decree
Forecasts, this garden equally to fill.
With faith in either view, past or to come,
Learn too, that downward from the step, which cleaves
Midway the twain compartments, none there are
Who place obtain for merit of their own,
But have through others' merit been advanc'd,
On set conditions: spirits all releas'd,
Ere for themselves they had the power to choose.
And, if thou mark and listen to them well,
Their childish looks and voice declare as much.

"Here, silent as thou art, I know thy doubt;
And gladly will I loose the knot, wherein
Thy subtle thoughts have bound thee. From this realm
Excluded, chalice no entrance here may find,
No more shall hunger, thirst, or sorrow can.
A law immutable hath establish'd all;
Nor is there aught thou seest, that doth not fit,
Exactly, as the finger to the ring.
It is not therefore without cause, that these,
O'erspeedy comers to immortal life,
Are different in their shares of excellence.

Our Sovran Lord--that settleth this estate
In love and in delight so absolute,
That wish can dare no further--every soul,
Created in his joyous sight to dwell,
With grace at pleasure variously endows.
And for a proof th' effect may well suffice.
And 't is moreover most expressly mark'd
In holy scripture, where the twins are said
To, have struggled in the womb. Therefore, as grace
Inweaves the coronet, so every brow
Weareth its proper hue of orient light.
And merely in respect to his prime gift,
Not in reward of meritorious deed,
Hath each his several degree assign'd.
In early times with their own innocence
More was not wanting, than the parents' faith,
To save them: those first ages past, behoov'd
That circumcision in the males should imp
The flight of innocent wings: but since the day
Of grace hath come, without baptismal rites
In Christ accomplish'd, innocence herself
Must linger yet below. Now raise thy view
Unto the visage most resembling Christ:
For, in her splendour only, shalt thou win
The pow'r to look on him." Forthwith I saw
Such floods of gladness on her visage shower'd,
From holy spirits, winging that profound;
That, whatsoever I had yet beheld,
Had not so much suspended me with wonder,
Or shown me such similitude of God.
And he, who had to her descended, once,
On earth, now hail'd in heav'n; and on pois'd wing.
"Ave, Maria, Gratia Plena," sang:
To whose sweet anthem all the blissful court,
From all parts answ'ring, rang: that holier joy
Brooded the deep serene. "Father rever'd:
Who deign'st, for me, to quit the pleasant place,
Wherein thou sittest, by eternal lot!
Say, who that angel is, that with such glee
Beholds our queen, and so enamour'd glows
Of her high beauty, that all fire he seems."
So I again resorted to the lore
Of my wise teacher, he, whom Mary's charms
Embellish'd, as the sun the morning star;
Who thus in answer spake: "In him are summ'd,
Whatever of buxomness and free delight
May be in Spirit, or in angel, met:
And so beseems: for that he bare the palm
Down unto Mary, when the Son of God
Vouchsaf'd to clothe him in terrestrial weeds.
Now let thine eyes wait heedful on my words,
And note thou of this just and pious realm
The chiefest nobles. Those, highest in bliss,
The twain, on each hand next our empress thron'd,
Are as it were two roots unto this rose.
He to the left, the parent, whose rash taste
Proves bitter to his seed; and, on the right,
That ancient father of the holy church,
Into whose keeping Christ did give the keys

Of this sweet flow'r: near whom behold the seer,
That, ere he died, saw all the grievous times
Of the fair bride, who with the lance and nails
Was won. And, near unto the other, rests
The leader, under whom on manna fed
Th' ungrateful nation, fickle and perverse.
On th' other part, facing to Peter, lo!
Where Anna sits, so well content to look
On her lov'd daughter, that with moveless eye
She chants the loud hosanna: while, oppos'd
To the first father of your mortal kind,
Is Lucia, at whose hest thy lady sped,
When on the edge of ruin clos'd thine eye.

"But (for the vision hasteneth so an end)
Here break we off, as the good workman doth,
That shapes the cloak according to the cloth:
And to the primal love our ken shall rise;
That thou mayst penetrate the brightness, far
As sight can bear thee. Yet, alas! in sooth
Beating thy pennons, thinking to advance,
Thou backward fall'st. Grace then must first be gain'd;
Her grace, whose might can help thee. Thou in prayer
Seek her: and, with affection, whilst I sue,
Attend, and yield me all thy heart." He said,
And thus the saintly orison began.

CANTO XXXIII

"O virgin mother, daughter of thy Son,
Created beings all in lowliness
Surpassing, as in height, above them all,
Term by th' eternal counsel pre-ordain'd,
Ennobler of thy nature, so advanc'd
In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn,
Himself, in his own work enclos'd to dwell!
For in thy womb rekindling shone the love
Reveal'd, whose genial influence makes now
This flower to germin in eternal peace!
Here thou to us, of charity and love,
Art, as the noon-day torch: and art, beneath,
To mortal men, of hope a living spring.
So mighty art thou, lady! and so great,
That he who grace desireth, and comes not
To thee for aidance, fain would have desire
Fly without wings. Nor only him who asks,
Thy bounty succours, but doth freely oft
Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be
Of excellence in creature, pity mild,
Relenting mercy, large munificence,
Are all combin'd in thee. Here kneeleth one,
Who of all spirits hath review'd the state,
From the world's lowest gap unto this height.
Suppliant to thee he kneels, imploring grace
For virtue, yet more high to lift his ken
Toward the bliss supreme. And I, who ne'er

Coveted sight, more fondly, for myself,
Than now for him, my prayers to thee prefer,
(And pray they be not scant) that thou wouldst drive
Each cloud of his mortality away;
That on the sovran pleasure he may gaze.
This also I entreat of thee, O queen!
Who canst do what thou wilt! that in him thou
Wouldst after all he hath beheld, preserve
Affection sound, and human passions quell.
Lo! Where, with Beatrice, many a saint
Stretch their clasp'd hands, in furtherance of my suit!"

The eyes, that heav'n with love and awe regards,
Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign
She looks on pious pray'rs: then fasten'd they
On th' everlasting light, wherein no eye
Of creature, as may well be thought, so far
Can travel inward. I, meanwhile, who drew
Near to the limit, where all wishes end,
The ardour of my wish (for so behooved),
Ended within me. Beck'ning smil'd the sage,
That I should look aloft: but, ere he bade,
Already of myself aloft I look'd;
For visual strength, refining more and more,
Bare me into the ray authentical
Of sovran light. Thenceforward, what I saw,
Was not for words to speak, nor memory's self
To stand against such outrage on her skill.
As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight,
All he hath seen forgets; yet still retains
Impression of the feeling in his dream;
E'en such am I: for all the vision dies,
As 't were, away; and yet the sense of sweet,
That sprang from it, still trickles in my heart.
Thus in the sun-thaw is the snow unseal'd;
Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost
The Sybil's sentence. O eternal beam!
(Whose height what reach of mortal thought may soar?)
Yield me again some little particle
Of what thou then appearedst, give my tongue
Power, but to leave one sparkle of thy glory,
Unto the race to come, that shall not lose
Thy triumph wholly, if thou waken aught
Of memory in me, and endure to hear
The record sound in this unequal strain.

Such keenness from the living ray I met,
That, if mine eyes had turn'd away, methinks,
I had been lost; but, so embolden'd, on
I pass'd, as I remember, till my view
Hover'd the brink of dread infinitude.

O grace! unenvying of thy boon! that gav'st
Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken
On th' everlasting splendour, that I look'd,
While sight was unconsum'd, and, in that depth,
Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whatever
The universe unfolds; all properties
Of substance and of accident, beheld,

Compounded, yet one individual light
The whole. And of such bond methinks I saw
The universal form: for that whenever
I do but speak of it, my soul dilates
Beyond her proper self; and, till I speak,
One moment seems a longer lethargy,
Than five-and-twenty ages had appear'd
To that emprise, that first made Neptune wonder
At Argo's shadow darkening on his flood.

With fixed heed, suspense and motionless,
Wond'ring I gaz'd; and admiration still
Was kindled, as I gaz'd. It may not be,
That one, who looks upon that light, can turn
To other object, willingly, his view.
For all the good, that will may covet, there
Is summ'd; and all, elsewhere defective found,
Complete. My tongue shall utter now, no more
E'en what remembrance keeps, than could the babe's
That yet is moisten'd at his mother's breast.
Not that the semblance of the living light
Was chang'd (that ever as at first remain'd)
But that my vision quickening, in that sole
Appearance, still new miracles descry'd,
And toil'd me with the change. In that abyss
Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd methought,
Three orbs of triple hue clipt in one bound:
And, from another, one reflected seem'd,
As rainbow is from rainbow: and the third
Seem'd fire, breath'd equally from both. Oh speech
How feeble and how faint art thou, to give
Conception birth! Yet this to what I saw
Is less than little. Oh eternal light!
Sole in thyself that dwellst; and of thyself
Sole understood, past, present, or to come!
Thou smiledst; on that circling, which in thee
Seem'd as reflected splendour, while I mus'd;
For I therein, methought, in its own hue
Beheld our image painted: steadfastly
I therefore por'd upon the view. As one
Who vers'd in geometric lore, would fain
Measure the circle; and, though pondering long
And deeply, that beginning, which he needs,
Finds not; e'en such was I, intent to scan
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,
How to the circle fitted, and therein
How plac'd: but the flight was not for my wing;
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,
And in the spleen unfolded what it sought.

Here vigour fail'd the tow'ring fantasy:
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel
In even motion, by the Love impell'd,
That moves the sun in heav'n and all the stars.

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