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THE VISION

OF

HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY

DANTE ALIGHIERI

ILLUSTRATED BY GUSTAVE DORE

TRANSLATED BY

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PURGATORY & PARADISE
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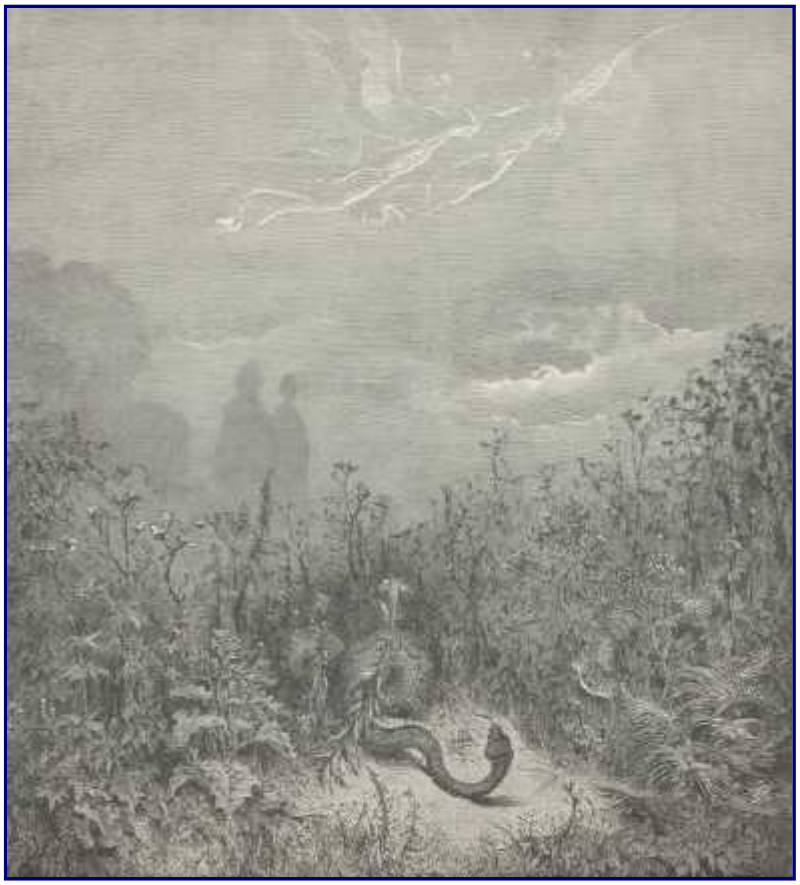

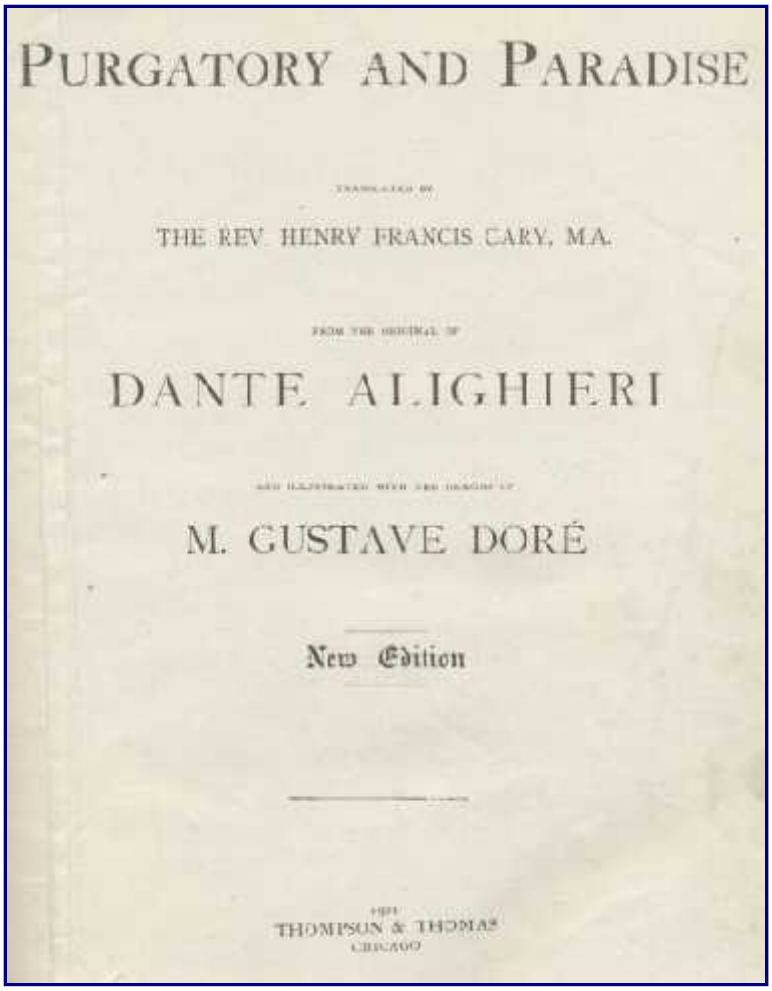
PURGATORY AND PARADISE

THE REV. HENRY FRANCIS CARY, M.A.

DANTE ALIGHIERI

M. GUSTAVE DORÉ

New Edition

THOMPSON & THOMAS
CHICAGO

PARADISE

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CANTO I

His glory, by whose might all things are mov'd,
Pierces the universe, and in one part
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere less. In heav'n,
That largeliest of his light partakes, was I,
Witness of things, which to relate again
Surpasseth power of him who comes from thence;
For that, so near approaching its desire
Our intellect is to such depth absorb'd,
That memory cannot follow. Nathless all,
That in my thoughts I of that sacred realm
Could store, shall now be matter of my song.

Benign Apollo! this last labour aid,
And make me such a vessel of thy worth,
As thy own laurel claims of me belov'd.
Thus far hath one of steep Parnassus' brows
Suffic'd me; henceforth there is need of both
For my remaining enterprise Do thou
Enter into my bosom, and there breathe
So, as when Marsyas by thy hand was dragg'd
Forth from his limbs unsheath'd. O power divine!
If thou to me of shine impart so much,
That of that happy realm the shadow'd form
Trac'd in my thoughts I may set forth to view,
Thou shalt behold me of thy favour'd tree
Come to the foot, and crown myself with leaves;
For to that honour thou, and my high theme
Will fit me. If but seldom, mighty Sire!
To grace his triumph gathers thence a wreath
Caesar or bard (more shame for human wills
Deprav'd) joy to the Delphic god must spring
From the Pierian foliage, when one breast
Is with such thirst inspir'd. From a small spark
Great flame hath risen: after me perchance

Others with better voice may pray, and gain
From the Cirrhaean city answer kind.

Through diver passages, the world's bright lamp
Rises to mortals, but through that which joins
Four circles with the threefold cross, in best
Course, and in happiest constellation set
He comes, and to the worldly wax best gives
Its temper and impression. Morning there,
Here eve was by almost such passage made;
And whiteness had o'erspread that hemisphere,
Blackness the other part; when to the left
I saw Beatrice turn'd, and on the sun
Gazing, as never eagle fix'd his ken.
As from the first a second beam is wont
To issue, and reflected upwards rise,
E'en as a pilgrim bent on his return,
So of her act, that through the eyesight pass'd
Into my fancy, mine was form'd; and straight,
Beyond our mortal wont, I fix'd mine eyes
Upon the sun. Much is allowed us there,
That here exceeds our pow'r; thanks to the place
Made for the dwelling of the human kind

I suffer'd it not long, and yet so long
That I beheld it bick'ring sparks around,
As iron that comes boiling from the fire.
And suddenly upon the day appear'd
A day new-ris'n, as he, who hath the power,
Had with another sun bedeck'd the sky.

Her eyes fast fix'd on the eternal wheels,
Beatrice stood unmov'd; and I with ken
Fix'd upon her, from upward gaze remov'd
At her aspect, such inwardly became
As Glaucus, when he tasted of the herb,
That made him peer among the ocean gods;
Words may not tell of that transhuman change:
And therefore let the example serve, though weak,
For those whom grace hath better proof in store

If I were only what thou didst create,
Then newly, Love! by whom the heav'n is rul'd,
Thou know'st, who by thy light didst bear me up.
Whenas the wheel which thou dost ever guide,
Desired Spirit! with its harmony
Temper'd of thee and measur'd, charm'd mine ear,
Then seem'd to me so much of heav'n to blaze
With the sun's flame, that rain or flood ne'er made
A lake so broad. The newness of the sound,
And that great light, inflam'd me with desire,
Keener than e'er was felt, to know their cause.

Whence she who saw me, clearly as myself,
To calm my troubled mind, before I ask'd,
Open'd her lips, and gracious thus began:
"With false imagination thou thyself
Mak'st dull, so that thou seest not the thing,
Which thou hadst seen, had that been shaken off.
Thou art not on the earth as thou believ'st;
For light'ning scap'd from its own proper place
Ne'er ran, as thou hast hither now return'd."

Although divested of my first-rais'd doubt,
By those brief words, accompanied with smiles,
Yet in new doubt was I entangled more,
And said: "Already satisfied, I rest
From admiration deep, but now admire
How I above those lighter bodies rise."

Whence, after utt'rance of a piteous sigh,
She tow'rds me bent her eyes, with such a look,
As on her frenzied child a mother casts;
Then thus began: "Among themselves all things
Have order; and from hence the form, which makes
The universe resemble God. In this
The higher creatures see the printed steps
Of that eternal worth, which is the end
Whither the line is drawn. All natures lean,
In this their order, diversely, some more,
Some less approaching to their primal source.
Thus they to different havens are mov'd on
Through the vast sea of being, and each one
With instinct giv'n, that bears it in its course;
This to the lunar sphere directs the fire,
This prompts the hearts of mortal animals,
This the brute earth together knits, and binds.
Nor only creatures, void of intellect,
Are aim'd at by this bow; but even those,
That have intelligence and love, are pierc'd.
That Providence, who so well orders all,
With her own light makes ever calm the heaven,
In which the substance, that hath greatest speed,
Is turn'd: and thither now, as to our seat
Predestin'd, we are carried by the force
Of that strong cord, that never looses dart,
But at fair aim and glad. Yet is it true,
That as ofttimes but ill accords the form
To the design of art, through sluggishness
Of unreplying matter, so this course
Is sometimes quitted by the creature, who
Hath power, directed thus, to bend elsewhere;
As from a cloud the fire is seen to fall,
From its original impulse warp'd, to earth,

By vicious fondness. Thou no more admire
Thy soaring, (if I rightly deem,) than lapse
Of torrent downwards from a mountain's height.
There would in thee for wonder be more cause,
If, free of hind'rance, thou hadst fix'd thyself
Below, like fire unmoving on the earth."

So said, she turn'd toward the heav'n her face.

CANTO II

All ye, who in small bark have following sail'd,
Eager to listen, on the advent'rous track
Of my proud keel, that singing cuts its way,
Backward return with speed, and your own shores
Revisit, nor put out to open sea,
Where losing me, perchance ye may remain
Bewilder'd in deep maze. The way I pass
Ne'er yet was run: Minerva breathes the gale,
Apollo guides me, and another Nine
To my rapt sight the arctic beams reveal.
Ye other few, who have outstretch'd the neck.
Timely for food of angels, on which here
They live, yet never know satiety,
Through the deep brine ye fearless may put out
Your vessel, marking, well the furrow broad
Before you in the wave, that on both sides
Equal returns. Those, glorious, who pass'd o'er
To Colchos, wonder'd not as ye will do,
When they saw Jason following the plough.

The increate perpetual thirst, that draws
Toward the realm of God's own form, bore us
Swift almost as the heaven ye behold.

Beatrice upward gaz'd, and I on her,
And in such space as on the notch a dart
Is plac'd, then loosen'd flies, I saw myself
Arriv'd, where wond'rous thing engag'd my sight.
Whence she, to whom no work of mine was hid,
Turning to me, with aspect glad as fair,
Bespake me: "Gratefully direct thy mind
To God, through whom to this first star we come."

Me seem'd as if a cloud had cover'd us,
Translucent, solid, firm, and polish'd bright,
Like adamant, which the sun's beam had smit

Within itself the ever-during pearl
Receiv'd us, as the wave a ray of light
Receives, and rests unbroken. If I then
Was of corporeal frame, and it transcend
Our weaker thought, how one dimension thus
Another could endure, which needs must be
If body enter body, how much more
Must the desire inflame us to behold
That essence, which discovers by what means
God and our nature join'd! There will be seen
That which we hold through faith, not shown by proof,
But in itself intelligibly plain,
E'en as the truth that man at first believes.

I answered: "Lady! I with thoughts devout,
Such as I best can frame, give thanks to Him,
Who hath remov'd me from the mortal world.
But tell, I pray thee, whence the gloomy spots
Upon this body, which below on earth
Give rise to talk of Cain in fabling quaint?"

She somewhat smil'd, then spake: "If mortals err
In their opinion, when the key of sense
Unlocks not, surely wonder's weapon keen
Ought not to pierce thee; since thou find'st, the wings
Of reason to pursue the senses' flight
Are short. But what thy own thought is, declare."

Then I: "What various here above appears,
Is caus'd, I deem, by bodies dense or rare."

She then resum'd: "Thou certainly wilt see
In falsehood thy belief o'erwhelm'd, if well
Thou listen to the arguments, which I
Shall bring to face it. The eighth sphere displays
Numberless lights, the which in kind and size
May be remark'd of different aspects;
If rare or dense of that were cause alone,
One single virtue then would be in all,
Alike distributed, or more, or less.
Different virtues needs must be the fruits
Of formal principles, and these, save one,
Will by thy reasoning be destroy'd. Beside,
If rarity were of that dusk the cause,
Which thou inquirest, either in some part
That planet must throughout be void, nor fed
With its own matter; or, as bodies share
Their fat and leanness, in like manner this
Must in its volume change the leaves. The first,
If it were true, had through the sun's eclipse
Been manifested, by transparency
Of light, as through aught rare beside effus'd.

But this is not. Therefore remains to see
The other cause: and if the other fall,
Erroneous so must prove what seem'd to thee.
If not from side to side this rarity
Pass through, there needs must be a limit, whence
Its contrary no further lets it pass.
And hence the beam, that from without proceeds,
Must be pour'd back, as colour comes, through glass
Reflected, which behind it lead conceals.
Now wilt thou say, that there of murkier hue
Than in the other part the ray is shown,
By being thence refracted farther back.
From this perplexity will free thee soon
Experience, if thereof thou trial make,
The fountain whence your arts derive their streame.
Three mirrors shalt thou take, and two remove
From thee alike, and more remote the third.
Betwixt the former pair, shall meet thine eyes;
Then turn'd toward them, cause behind thy back
A light to stand, that on the three shall shine,
And thus reflected come to thee from all.
Though that beheld most distant do not stretch
A space so ample, yet in brightness thou
Will own it equaling the rest. But now,
As under snow the ground, if the warm ray
Smites it, remains dismantled of the hue
And cold, that cover'd it before, so thee,
Dismantled in thy mind, I will inform
With light so lively, that the tremulous beam
Shall quiver where it falls. Within the heaven,
Where peace divine inhabits, circles round
A body, in whose virtue dies the being
Of all that it contains. The following heaven,
That hath so many lights, this being divides,
Through different essences, from it distinct,
And yet contain'd within it. The other orbs
Their separate distinctions variously
Dispose, for their own seed and produce apt.
Thus do these organs of the world proceed,
As thou beholdest now, from step to step,
Their influences from above deriving,
And thence transmitting downwards. Mark me well,
How through this passage to the truth I ford,
The truth thou lov'st, that thou henceforth alone,
May'st know to keep the shallows, safe, untold.

"The virtue and motion of the sacred orbs,
As mallet by the workman's hand, must needs
By blessed movers be inspir'd. This heaven,
Made beauteous by so many luminaries,
From the deep spirit, that moves its circling sphere,
Its image takes an impress as a seal:

And as the soul, that dwells within your dust,
Through members different, yet together form'd,
In different pow'rs resolves itself; e'en so
The intellectual efficacy unfolds
Its goodness multiplied throughout the stars;
On its own unity revolving still.
Different virtue compact different
Makes with the precious body it enlivens,
With which it knits, as life in you is knit.
From its original nature full of joy,
The virtue mingled through the body shines,
As joy through pupil of the living eye.
From hence proceeds, that which from light to light
Seems different, and not from dense or rare.
This is the formal cause, that generates
Proportion'd to its power, the dusk or clear."

CANTO III

That sun, which erst with love my bosom warm'd
Had of fair truth unveil'd the sweet aspect,
By proof of right, and of the false reproof;
And I, to own myself convinc'd and free
Of doubt, as much as needed, rais'd my head
Erect for speech. But soon a sight appear'd,
Which, so intent to mark it, held me fix'd,
That of confession I no longer thought.

As through translucent and smooth glass, or wave
Clear and unmov'd, and flowing not so deep
As that its bed is dark, the shape returns
So faint of our impictur'd lineaments,
That on white forehead set a pearl as strong
Comes to the eye: such saw I many a face,
All stretch'd to speak, from whence I straight conceiv'd
Delusion opposite to that, which rais'd
Between the man and fountain, amorous flame.

Sudden, as I perceiv'd them, deeming these
Reflected semblances to see of whom
They were, I turn'd mine eyes, and nothing saw;
Then turn'd them back, directed on the light
Of my sweet guide, who smiling shot forth beams
From her celestial eyes. "Wonder not thou,"
She cry'd, "at this my smiling, when I see
Thy childish judgment; since not yet on truth
It rests the foot, but, as it still is wont,
Makes thee fall back in unsound vacancy.
True substances are these, which thou behold'st,

Hither through failure of their vow exil'd.
But speak thou with them; listen, and believe,
That the true light, which fills them with desire,
Permits not from its beams their feet to stray."

Straight to the shadow which for converse seem'd
Most earnest, I addressed me, and began,
As one by over-eagerness perplex'd:
"O spirit, born for joy! who in the rays
Of life eternal, of that sweetness know'st
The flavour, which, not tasted, passes far
All apprehension, me it well would please,
If thou wouldst tell me of thy name, and this
Your station here." Whence she, with kindness prompt,
And eyes glist'ning with smiles: "Our charity,
To any wish by justice introduc'd,
Bars not the door, no more than she above,
Who would have all her court be like herself.
I was a virgin sister in the earth;
And if thy mind observe me well, this form,
With such addition grac'd of loveliness,
Will not conceal me long, but thou wilt know
Piccarda, in the tardiest sphere thus plac'd,
Here 'mid these other blessed also blest.
Our hearts, whose high affections burn alone
With pleasure, from the Holy Spirit conceiv'd,
Admitted to his order dwell in joy.
And this condition, which appears so low,
Is for this cause assign'd us, that our vows
Were in some part neglected and made void."

Whence I to her replied: "Something divine
Beams in your countenance, wond'rous fair,
From former knowledge quite transmuting you.
Therefore to recollect was I so slow.
But what thou sayst hath to my memory
Given now such aid, that to retrace your forms
Is easier. Yet inform me, ye, who here
Are happy, long ye for a higher place
More to behold, and more in love to dwell?"

She with those other spirits gently smil'd,
Then answer'd with such gladness, that she seem'd
With love's first flame to glow: "Brother! our will
Is in composure settled by the power
Of charity, who makes us will alone
What we possess, and nought beyond desire;
If we should wish to be exalted more,
Then must our wishes jar with the high will
Of him, who sets us here, which in these orbs
Thou wilt confess not possible, if here
To be in charity must needs befall,

And if her nature well thou contemplate.
Rather it is inherent in this state
Of blessedness, to keep ourselves within
The divine will, by which our wills with his
Are one. So that as we from step to step
Are plac'd throughout this kingdom, pleases all,
E'en as our King, who in us plants his will;
And in his will is our tranquillity;
It is the mighty ocean, whither tends
Whatever it creates and nature makes."

Then saw I clearly how each spot in heav'n
Is Paradise, though with like gracious dew
The supreme virtue show'r not over all.

But as it chances, if one sort of food
Hath satiated, and of another still
The appetite remains, that this is ask'd,
And thanks for that return'd; e'en so did I
In word and motion, bent from her to learn
What web it was, through which she had not drawn
The shuttle to its point. She thus began:
"Exalted worth and perfectness of life
The Lady higher up enshrine in heaven,
By whose pure laws upon your nether earth
The robe and veil they wear, to that intent,
That e'en till death they may keep watch or sleep
With their great bridegroom, who accepts each vow,
Which to his gracious pleasure love conforms.
from the world, to follow her, when young
Escap'd; and, in her vesture mantling me,
Made promise of the way her sect enjoins.
Thereafter men, for ill than good more apt,
Forth snatch'd me from the pleasant cloister's pale.
God knows how after that my life was fram'd.
This other splendid shape, which thou beholdst
At my right side, burning with all the light
Of this our orb, what of myself I tell
May to herself apply. From her, like me
A sister, with like violence were torn
The saintly folds, that shaded her fair brows.
E'en when she to the world again was brought
In spite of her own will and better wont,
Yet not for that the bosom's inward veil
Did she renounce. This is the luminary
Of mighty Constance, who from that loud blast,
Which blew the second over Suabia's realm,
That power produc'd, which was the third and last."

She ceas'd from further talk, and then began
"Ave Maria" singing, and with that song
Vanish'd, as heavy substance through deep wave.

Mine eye, that far as it was capable,
Pursued her, when in dimness she was lost,
Turn'd to the mark where greater want impell'd,
And bent on Beatrice all its gaze.
But she as light'ning beam'd upon my looks:
So that the sight sustain'd it not at first.
Whence I to question her became less prompt.

CANTO IV

Between two kinds of food, both equally
Remote and tempting, first a man might die
Of hunger, ere he one could freely choose.
E'en so would stand a lamb between the maw
Of two fierce wolves, in dread of both alike:
E'en so between two deer a dog would stand,
Wherefore, if I was silent, fault nor praise
I to myself impute, by equal doubts
Held in suspense, since of necessity
It happen'd. Silent was I, yet desire
Was painted in my looks; and thus I spake
My wish more earnestly than language could.

As Daniel, when the haughty king he freed
From ire, that spurr'd him on to deeds unjust
And violent; so look'd Beatrice then.

"Well I discern," she thus her words address'd,
"How contrary desires each way constrain thee,
So that thy anxious thought is in itself
Bound up and stifled, nor breathes freely forth.
Thou arguest; if the good intent remain;
What reason that another's violence
Should stint the measure of my fair desert?

"Cause too thou findst for doubt, in that it seems,
That spirits to the stars, as Plato deem'd,
Return. These are the questions which thy will
Urge equally; and therefore I the first
Of that will treat which hath the more of gall.
Of seraphim he who is most ensky'd,
Moses and Samuel, and either John,
Choose which thou wilt, nor even Mary's self,
Have not in any other heav'n their seats,
Than have those spirits which so late thou saw'st;
Nor more or fewer years exist; but all

Make the first circle beauteous, diversely
Partaking of sweet life, as more or less
Affation of eternal bliss pervades them.
Here were they shown thee, not that fate assigns
This for their sphere, but for a sign to thee
Of that celestial furthest from the height.
Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:
Since from things sensible alone ye learn
That, which digested rightly after turns
To intellectual. For no other cause
The scripture, condescending graciously
To your perception, hands and feet to God
Attributes, nor so means: and holy church
Doth represent with human countenance
Gabriel, and Michael, and him who made
Tobias whole. Unlike what here thou seest,
The judgment of Timaeus, who affirms
Each soul restor'd to its particular star,
Believing it to have been taken thence,
When nature gave it to inform her mold:
Since to appearance his intention is
E'en what his words declare: or else to shun
Derision, haply thus he hath disguis'd
His true opinion. If his meaning be,
That to the influencing of these orbs revert
The honour and the blame in human acts,
Perchance he doth not wholly miss the truth.
This principle, not understood aright,
Erewhile perverted well nigh all the world;
So that it fell to fabled names of Jove,
And Mercury, and Mars. That other doubt,
Which moves thee, is less harmful; for it brings
No peril of removing thee from me.

"That, to the eye of man, our justice seems
Unjust, is argument for faith, and not
For heretic declension. To the end
This truth may stand more clearly in your view,
I will content thee even to thy wish

"If violence be, when that which suffers, nought
Consents to that which forceth, not for this
These spirits stood exculpate. For the will,
That will not, still survives unquench'd, and doth
As nature doth in fire, tho' violence
Wrest it a thousand times; for, if it yield
Or more or less, so far it follows force.
And thus did these, whom they had power to seek
The hallow'd place again. In them, had will
Been perfect, such as once upon the bars
Held Laurence firm, or wrought in Scaevola
To his own hand remorseless, to the path,

Whence they were drawn, their steps had hasten'd back,
When liberty return'd: but in too few
Resolve so steadfast dwells. And by these words
If duly weigh'd, that argument is void,
Which oft might have perplex'd thee still. But now
Another question thwarts thee, which to solve
Might try thy patience without better aid.
I have, no doubt, instill'd into thy mind,
That blessed spirit may not lie; since near
The source of primal truth it dwells for aye:
And thou might'st after of Piccarda learn
That Constance held affection to the veil;
So that she seems to contradict me here.
Not seldom, brother, it hath chanc'd for men
To do what they had gladly left undone,
Yet to shun peril they have done amiss:
E'en as Alcmaeon, at his father's suit
Slew his own mother, so made pitiless
Not to lose pity. On this point bethink thee,
That force and will are blended in such wise
As not to make the' offence excusable.
Absolute will agrees not to the wrong,
That inasmuch as there is fear of woe
From non-compliance, it agrees. Of will
Thus absolute Piccarda spake, and I
Of th' other; so that both have truly said."

Such was the flow of that pure rill, that well'd
From forth the fountain of all truth; and such
The rest, that to my wond'ring thoughts I found.

"O thou of primal love the prime delight!
Goddess!" I straight reply'd, "whose lively words
Still shed new heat and vigour through my soul!
Affection fails me to requite thy grace
With equal sum of gratitude: be his
To recompense, who sees and can reward thee.
Well I discern, that by that truth alone
Enlighten'd, beyond which no truth may roam,
Our mind can satisfy her thirst to know:
Therein she resteth, e'en as in his lair
The wild beast, soon as she hath reach'd that bound,
And she hath power to reach it; else desire
Were given to no end. And thence doth doubt
Spring, like a shoot, around the stock of truth;
And it is nature which from height to height
On to the summit prompts us. This invites,
This doth assure me, lady, rev'rently
To ask thee of other truth, that yet
Is dark to me. I fain would know, if man
By other works well done may so supply
The failure of his vows, that in your scale

They lack not weight." I spake; and on me straight
Beatrice look'd with eyes that shot forth sparks
Of love celestial in such copious stream,
That, virtue sinking in me overpower'd,
I turn'd, and downward bent confus'd my sight.

CANTO V

"If beyond earthly wont, the flame of love
Illume me, so that I o'ercome thy power
Of vision, marvel not: but learn the cause
In that perfection of the sight, which soon
As apprehending, hasteneth on to reach
The good it apprehends. I well discern,
How in thine intellect already shines
The light eternal, which to view alone
Ne'er fails to kindle love; and if aught else
Your love seduces, 't is but that it shows
Some ill-mark'd vestige of that primal beam.

"This would'st thou know, if failure of the vow
By other service may be so supplied,
As from self-question to assure the soul."

Thus she her words, not heedless of my wish,
Began; and thus, as one who breaks not off
Discourse, continued in her saintly strain.
"Supreme of gifts, which God creating gave
Of his free bounty, sign most evident
Of goodness, and in his account most priz'd,
Was liberty of will, the boon wherewith
All intellectual creatures, and them sole
He hath endow'd. Hence now thou mayst infer
Of what high worth the vow, which so is fram'd
That when man offers, God well-pleas'd accepts;
For in the compact between God and him,
This treasure, such as I describe it to thee,
He makes the victim, and of his own act.
What compensation therefore may he find?
If that, whereof thou hast oblation made,
By using well thou think'st to consecrate,
Thou would'st of theft do charitable deed.
Thus I resolve thee of the greater point.

"But forasmuch as holy church, herein
Dispensing, seems to contradict the truth
I have discover'd to thee, yet behooves

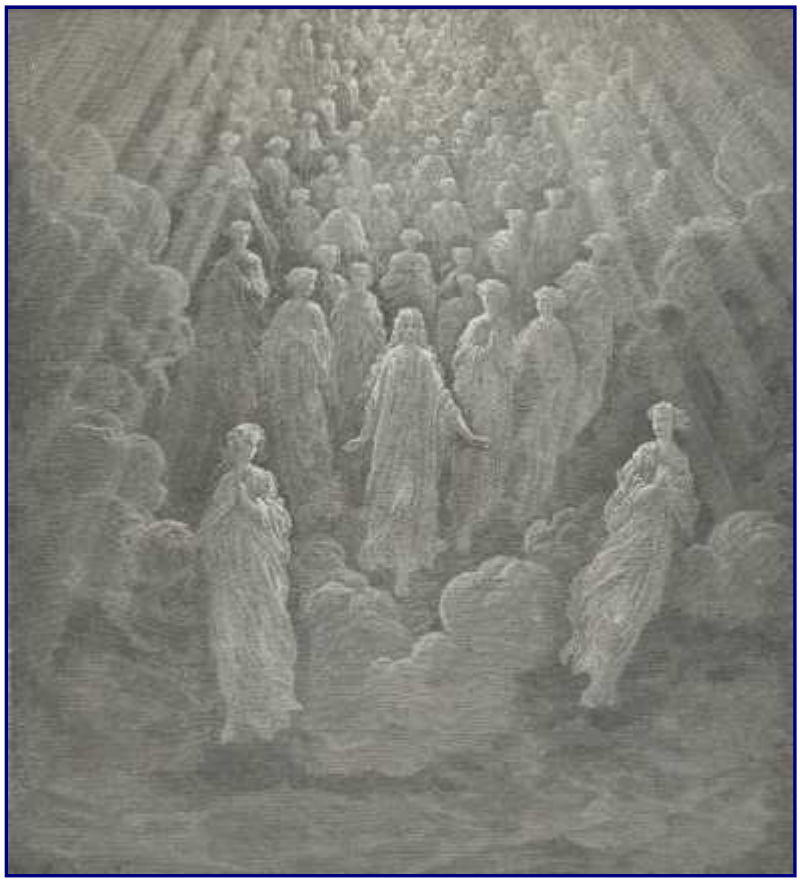
Thou rest a little longer at the board,
Ere the crude aliment, which thou hast taken,
Digested fitly to nutrition turn.
Open thy mind to what I now unfold,
And give it inward keeping. Knowledge comes
Of learning well retain'd, unfruitful else.

"This sacrifice in essence of two things
Consisteth; one is that, whereof 't is made,
The covenant the other. For the last,
It ne'er is cancell'd if not kept: and hence
I spake erewhile so strictly of its force.
For this it was enjoin'd the Israelites,
Though leave were giv'n them, as thou know'st, to change
The offering, still to offer. Th' other part,
The matter and the substance of the vow,
May well be such, to that without offence
It may for other substance be exchang'd.
But at his own discretion none may shift
The burden on his shoulders, unreleas'd
By either key, the yellow and the white.
Nor deem of any change, as less than vain,
If the last bond be not within the new
Included, as the quatre in the six.
No satisfaction therefore can be paid
For what so precious in the balance weighs,
That all in counterpoise must kick the beam.
Take then no vow at random: ta'en, with faith
Preserve it; yet not bent, as Jephthah once,
Blindly to execute a rash resolve,
Whom better it had suited to exclaim,
'I have done ill,' than to redeem his pledge
By doing worse or, not unlike to him
In folly, that great leader of the Greeks:
Whence, on the alter, Iphigenia mourn'd
Her virgin beauty, and hath since made mourn
Both wise and simple, even all, who hear
Of so fell sacrifice. Be ye more staid,
O Christians, not, like feather, by each wind
Removable: nor think to cleanse ourselves
In every water. Either testament,
The old and new, is yours: and for your guide
The shepherd of the church let this suffice
To save you. When by evil lust entic'd,
Remember ye be men, not senseless beasts;
Nor let the Jew, who dwelleth in your streets,
Hold you in mock'ry. Be not, as the lamb,
That, fickle wanton, leaves its mother's milk,
To dally with itself in idle play."

Such were the words that Beatrice spake:
These ended, to that region, where the world

Is liveliest, full of fond desire she turn'd.

Though mainly prompt new question to propose,
Her silence and chang'd look did keep me dumb.
And as the arrow, ere the cord is still,
Leapeth unto its mark; so on we sped
Into the second realm. There I beheld
The dame, so joyous enter, that the orb
Grew brighter at her smiles; and, if the star
Were mov'd to gladness, what then was my cheer,
Whom nature hath made apt for every change!



As in a quiet and clear lake the fish,
If aught approach them from without, do draw
Towards it, deeming it their food; so drew
Full more than thousand splendours towards us,
And in each one was heard: "Lo! one arriv'd
To multiply our loves!" and as each came

The shadow, streaming forth effulgence new,
Witness'd augmented joy. Here, reader! think,
If thou didst miss the sequel of my tale,
To know the rest how sorely thou wouldst crave;
And thou shalt see what vehement desire
Possess'd me, as soon as these had met my view,
To know their state. "O born in happy hour!
Thou to whom grace vouchsafes, or ere thy close
Of fleshly warfare, to behold the thrones
Of that eternal triumph, know to us
The light communicated, which through heaven
Expatiates without bound. Therefore, if aught
Thou of our beams wouldst borrow for thine aid,
Spare not; and of our radiance take thy fill."

Thus of those piteous spirits one bespake me;
And Beatrice next: "Say on; and trust
As unto gods!"—"How in the light supreme
Thou harbour'st, and from thence the virtue bring'st,
That, sparkling in thine eyes, denotes thy joy,
I mark; but, who thou art, am still to seek;
Or wherefore, worthy spirit! for thy lot
This sphere assign'd, that oft from mortal ken
Is veil'd by others' beams." I said, and turn'd
Toward the lustre, that with greeting, kind
Erewhile had hail'd me. Forthwith brighter far
Than erst, it wax'd: and, as himself the sun
Hides through excess of light, when his warm gaze
Hath on the mantle of thick vapours prey'd;
Within its proper ray the saintly shape
Was, through increase of gladness, thus conceal'd;
And, shrouded so in splendour answer'd me,
E'en as the tenour of my song declares.

CANTO VI

"After that Constantine the eagle turn'd
Against the motions of the heav'n, that roll'd
Consenting with its course, when he of yore,
Lavinia's spouse, was leader of the flight,
A hundred years twice told and more, his seat
At Europe's extreme point, the bird of Jove
Held, near the mountains, whence he issued first.
There, under shadow of his sacred plumes
Swaying the world, till through successive hands
To mine he came devolv'd. Caesar I was,
And am Justinian; destin'd by the will

Of that prime love, whose influence I feel,
From vain excess to clear th' encumber'd laws.
Or ere that work engag'd me, I did hold
Christ's nature merely human, with such faith
Contented. But the blessed Agapete,
Who was chief shepherd, he with warning voice
To the true faith recall'd me. I believ'd
His words: and what he taught, now plainly see,
As thou in every contradiction seest
The true and false oppos'd. Soon as my feet
Were to the church reclaim'd, to my great task,
By inspiration of God's grace impell'd,
I gave me wholly, and consign'd mine arms
To Belisarius, with whom heaven's right hand
Was link'd in such conjointment, 't was a sign
That I should rest. To thy first question thus
I shape mine answer, which were ended here,
But that its tendency doth prompt perforce
To some addition; that thou well, mayst mark
What reason on each side they have to plead,
By whom that holiest banner is withstood,
Both who pretend its power and who oppose.
"Beginning from that hour, when Pallas died
To give it rule, behold the valorous deeds
Have made it worthy reverence. Not unknown
To thee, how for three hundred years and more
It dwelt in Alba, up to those fell lists
Where for its sake were met the rival three;
Nor aught unknown to thee, which it achiev'd
Down to the Sabines' wrong to Lucrece' woe,
With its sev'n kings conqu'ring the nation round;
Nor all it wrought, by Roman worthies home
'Gainst Brennus and th' Epirot prince, and hosts
Of single chiefs, or states in league combin'd
Of social warfare; hence Torquatus stern,
And Quintius nam'd of his neglected locks,
The Decii, and the Fabii hence acquir'd
Their fame, which I with duteous zeal embalm.
By it the pride of Arab hordes was quell'd,
When they led on by Hannibal o'erpass'd
The Alpine rocks, whence glide thy currents, Po!
Beneath its guidance, in their prime of days
Scipio and Pompey triumph'd; and that hill,
Under whose summit thou didst see the light,
Rued its stern bearing. After, near the hour,
When heav'n was minded that o'er all the world
His own deep calm should brood, to Caesar's hand
Did Rome consign it; and what then it wrought
From Var unto the Rhine, saw Isere's flood,
Saw Loire and Seine, and every vale, that fills
The torrent Rhone. What after that it wrought,
When from Ravenna it came forth, and leap'd

The Rubicon, was of so bold a flight,
That tongue nor pen may follow it. Tow'rds Spain
It wheel'd its bands, then tow'rd Dyrrachium smote,
And on Pharsalia with so fierce a plunge,
E'en the warm Nile was conscious to the pang;
Its native shores Antandros, and the streams
Of Simois revisited, and there
Where Hector lies; then ill for Ptolemy
His pennons shook again; lightning thence fell
On Juba; and the next upon your west,
At sound of the Pompeian trump, return'd.

"What following and in its next bearer's gripe
It wrought, is now by Cassius and Brutus
Bark'd off in hell, and by Perugia's sons
And Modena's was mourn'd. Hence weepeth still
Sad Cleopatra, who, pursued by it,
Took from the adder black and sudden death.
With him it ran e'en to the Red Sea coast;
With him compos'd the world to such a peace,
That of his temple Janus barr'd the door.

"But all the mighty standard yet had wrought,
And was appointed to perform thereafter,
Throughout the mortal kingdom which it sway'd,
Falls in appearance dwindled and obscur'd,
If one with steady eye and perfect thought
On the third Caesar look; for to his hands,
The living Justice, in whose breath I move,
Committed glory, e'en into his hands,
To execute the vengeance of its wrath.

"Hear now and wonder at what next I tell.
After with Titus it was sent to wreak
Vengeance for vengeance of the ancient sin,
And, when the Lombard tooth, with fangs impure,
Did gore the bosom of the holy church,
Under its wings victorious, Charlemagne
Sped to her rescue. Judge then for thyself
Of those, whom I erewhile accus'd to thee,
What they are, and how grievous their offending,
Who are the cause of all your ills. The one
Against the universal ensign rears
The yellow lilies, and with partial aim
That to himself the other arrogates:
So that 't is hard to see which more offends.
Be yours, ye Ghibellines, to veil your arts
Beneath another standard: ill is this
Follow'd of him, who severs it and justice:
And let not with his Guelphs the new-crown'd Charles
Assail it, but those talons hold in dread,
Which from a lion of more lofty port

Have rent the easing. Many a time ere now
The sons have for the sire's transgression wail'd;
Nor let him trust the fond belief, that heav'n
Will truck its armour for his lilied shield.

"This little star is furnish'd with good spirits,
Whose mortal lives were busied to that end,
That honour and renown might wait on them:
And, when desires thus err in their intention,
True love must needs ascend with slacker beam.
But it is part of our delight, to measure
Our wages with the merit; and admire
The close proportion. Hence doth heav'nly justice
Temper so evenly affection in us,
It ne'er can warp to any wrongfulness.
Of diverse voices is sweet music made:
So in our life the different degrees
Render sweet harmony among these wheels.

"Within the pearl, that now encloseth us,
Shines Romeo's light, whose goodly deed and fair
Met ill acceptance. But the Provencals,
That were his foes, have little cause for mirth.
Ill shapes that man his course, who makes his wrong
Of other's worth. Four daughters were there born
To Raymond Berenger, and every one
Became a queen; and this for him did Romeo,
Though of mean state and from a foreign land.
Yet envious tongues incited him to ask
A reckoning of that just one, who return'd
Twelve fold to him for ten. Aged and poor
He parted thence: and if the world did know
The heart he had, begging his life by morsels,
'T would deem the praise, it yields him, scantly dealt."

CANTO VII

"Hosanna Sanctus Deus Sabaoth
Superillustrans claritate tua
Felices ignes horum malahoth!"
Thus chanting saw I turn that substance bright
With fourfold lustre to its orb again,
Revolving; and the rest unto their dance
With it mov'd also; and like swiftest sparks,
In sudden distance from my sight were veil'd.

Me doubt possess'd, and "Speak," it whisper'd me,

"Speak, speak unto thy lady, that she quench
Thy thirst with drops of sweetness." Yet blank awe,
Which lords it o'er me, even at the sound
Of Beatrice's name, did bow me down
As one in slumber held. Not long that mood
Beatrice suffer'd: she, with such a smile,
As might have made one blest amid the flames,
Beaming upon me, thus her words began:
"Thou in thy thought art pond'ring (as I deem),
And what I deem is truth how just revenge
Could be with justice punish'd: from which doubt
I soon will free thee; so thou mark my words;
For they of weighty matter shall possess thee.

"That man, who was unborn, himself condemn'd,
And, in himself, all, who since him have liv'd,
His offspring: whence, below, the human kind
Lay sick in grievous error many an age;
Until it pleas'd the Word of God to come
Amongst them down, to his own person joining
The nature, from its Maker far estrang'd,
By the mere act of his eternal love.
Contemplate here the wonder I unfold.
The nature with its Maker thus conjoin'd,
Created first was blameless, pure and good;
But through itself alone was driven forth
From Paradise, because it had eschew'd
The way of truth and life, to evil turn'd.
Ne'er then was penalty so just as that
Inflicted by the cross, if thou regard
The nature in assumption doom'd: ne'er wrong
So great, in reference to him, who took
Such nature on him, and endur'd the doom.
God therefore and the Jews one sentence pleased:
So different effects flow'd from one act,
And heav'n was open'd, though the earth did quake.
Count it not hard henceforth, when thou dost hear
That a just vengeance was by righteous court
Justly reveng'd. But yet I see thy mind
By thought on thought arising sore perplex'd,
And with how vehement desire it asks
Solution of the maze. What I have heard,
Is plain, thou sayst: but wherefore God this way
For our redemption chose, eludes my search.

"Brother! no eye of man not perfected,
Nor fully ripen'd in the flame of love,
May fathom this decree. It is a mark,
In sooth, much aim'd at, and but little kenn'd:
And I will therefore show thee why such way
Was worthiest. The celestial love, that spume
All envying in its bounty, in itself

With such effulgence blazeth, as sends forth
All beauteous things eternal. What distils
Immediate thence, no end of being knows,
Bearing its seal immutably impress'd.
Whatever thence immediate falls, is free,
Free wholly, uncontrollable by power
Of each thing new: by such conformity
More grateful to its author, whose bright beams,
Though all partake their shining, yet in those
Are liveliest, which resemble him the most.
These tokens of pre-eminence on man
Largely bestow'd, if any of them fail,
He needs must forfeit his nobility,
No longer stainless. Sin alone is that,
Which doth disfranchise him, and make unlike
To the chief good; for that its light in him
Is darken'd. And to dignity thus lost
Is no return; unless, where guilt makes void,
He for ill pleasure pay with equal pain.
Your nature, which entirely in its seed
Trangress'd, from these distinctions fell, no less
Than from its state in Paradise; nor means
Found of recovery (search all methods out
As strickly as thou may) save one of these,
The only fords were left through which to wade,
Either that God had of his courtesy
Releas'd him merely, or else man himself
For his own folly by himself aton'd.

"Fix now thine eye, intently as thou canst,
On th' everlasting counsel, and explore,
Instructed by my words, the dread abyss.

"Man in himself had ever lack'd the means
Of satisfaction, for he could not stoop
Obeying, in humility so low,
As high he, disobeying, thought to soar:
And for this reason he had vainly tried
Out of his own sufficiency to pay
The rigid satisfaction. Then behooved
That God should by his own ways lead him back
Unto the life, from whence he fell, restor'd:
By both his ways, I mean, or one alone.
But since the deed is ever priz'd the more,
The more the doer's good intent appears,
Goodness celestial, whose broad signature
Is on the universe, of all its ways
To raise ye up, was fain to leave out none,
Nor aught so vast or so magnificent,
Either for him who gave or who receiv'd
Between the last night and the primal day,
Was or can be. For God more bounty show'd.

Giving himself to make man capable
Of his return to life, than had the terms
Been mere and unconditional release.
And for his justice, every method else
Were all too scant, had not the Son of God
Humbled himself to put on mortal flesh.

"Now, to fulfil each wish of thine, remains
I somewhat further to thy view unfold.
That thou mayst see as clearly as myself.

"I see, thou sayst, the air, the fire I see,
The earth and water, and all things of them
Compounded, to corruption turn, and soon
Dissolve. Yet these were also things create,
Because, if what were told me, had been true
They from corruption had been therefore free.

"The angels, O my brother! and this clime
Wherein thou art, impassible and pure,
I call created, as indeed they are
In their whole being. But the elements,
Which thou hast nam'd, and what of them is made,
Are by created virtue' inform'd: create
Their substance, and create the' informing virtue
In these bright stars, that round them circling move
The soul of every brute and of each plant,
The ray and motion of the sacred lights,
With complex potency attract and turn.
But this our life the' eternal good inspires
Immediate, and enamours of itself;
So that our wishes rest for ever here.

"And hence thou mayst by inference conclude
Our resurrection certain, if thy mind
Consider how the human flesh was fram'd,
When both our parents at the first were made."

CANTO VIII

The world was in its day of peril dark
Wont to believe the dotage of fond love
From the fair Cyprian deity, who rolls
In her third epicycle, shed on men
By stream of potent radiance: therefore they
Of elder time, in their old error blind,
Not her alone with sacrifice ador'd

And invocation, but like honours paid
To Cupid and Dione, deem'd of them
Her mother, and her son, him whom they feign'd
To sit in Dido's bosom: and from her,
Whom I have sung preluding, borrow'd they
The appellation of that star, which views,
Now obvious and now averse, the sun.

I was not ware that I was wafted up
Into its orb; but the new loveliness
That grac'd my lady, gave me ample proof
That we had entered there. And as in flame
A sparkle is distinct, or voice in voice
Discern'd, when one its even tenour keeps,
The other comes and goes; so in that light
I other luminaries saw, that cours'd
In circling motion rapid more or less,
As their eternal phases each impels.

Never was blast from vapour charged with cold,
Whether invisible to eye or no,
Descended with such speed, it had not seem'd
To linger in dull tardiness, compar'd
To those celestial lights, that tow'rds us came,
Leaving the circuit of their joyous ring,
Conducted by the lofty seraphim.
And after them, who in the van appear'd,
Such an hosanna sounded, as hath left
Desire, ne'er since extinct in me, to hear
Renew'd the strain. Then parting from the rest
One near us drew, and sole began: "We all
Are ready at thy pleasure, well dispos'd
To do thee gentle service. We are they,
To whom thou in the world erewhile didst Sing
'O ye! whose intellectual ministry
Moves the third heaven!' and in one orb we roll,
One motion, one impulse, with those who rule
Princedoms in heaven; yet are of love so full,
That to please thee 't will be as sweet to rest."

After mine eyes had with meek reverence
Sought the celestial guide, and were by her
Assur'd, they turn'd again unto the light
Who had so largely promis'd, and with voice
That bare the lively pressure of my zeal,
"Tell who ye are," I cried. Forthwith it grew
In size and splendour, through augmented joy;
And thus it answer'd: "A short date below
The world possess'd me. Had the time been more,
Much evil, that will come, had never chanc'd.
My gladness hides thee from me, which doth shine
Around, and shroud me, as an animal

In its own silk unswath'd. Thou lov'dst me well,
And had'st good cause; for had my sojourning
Been longer on the earth, the love I bare thee
Had put forth more than blossoms. The left bank,
That Rhone, when he hath mix'd with Sorga, laves."

"In me its lord expected, and that horn
Of fair Ausonia, with its boroughs old,
Bari, and Croton, and Gaeta pil'd,
From where the Trento disembogues his waves,
With Verde mingled, to the salt sea-flood.
Already on my temples beam'd the crown,
Which gave me sov'reignty over the land
By Danube wash'd, whenas he strays beyond
The limits of his German shores. The realm,
Where, on the gulf by stormy Eurus lash'd,
Betwixt Pelorus and Pachynian heights,
The beautiful Trinacria lies in gloom
(Not through Typhaeus, but the vap'ry cloud

Bituminous upsteam'd), THAT too did look
To have its scepter wielded by a race
Of monarchs, sprung through me from Charles and Rodolph;
had not ill lording which doth spirit up
The people ever, in Palermo rais'd
The shout of 'death,' re-echo'd loud and long.
Had but my brother's foresight kenn'd as much,
He had been warier that the greedy want
Of Catalonia might not work his bale.
And truly need there is, that he forecast,
Or other for him, lest more freight be laid
On his already over-laden bark.
Nature in him, from bounty fall'n to thrift,
Would ask the guard of braver arms, than such
As only care to have their coffers fill'd."

"My liege, it doth enhance the joy thy words
Infuse into me, mighty as it is,
To think my gladness manifest to thee,
As to myself, who own it, when thou lookst
Into the source and limit of all good,
There, where thou markest that which thou dost speak,
Thence priz'd of me the more. Glad thou hast made me.
Now make intelligent, clearing the doubt
Thy speech hath raised in me; for much I muse,
How bitter can spring up, when sweet is sown."

I thus inquiring; he forthwith replied:
"If I have power to show one truth, soon that
Shall face thee, which thy questioning declares
Behind thee now conceal'd. The Good, that guides
And blessed makes this realm, which thou dost mount,
Ordains its providence to be the virtue
In these great bodies: nor th' all perfect Mind
Upholds their nature merely, but in them
Their energy to save: for nought, that lies
Within the range of that unerring bow,
But is as level with the destin'd aim,
As ever mark to arrow's point oppos'd.
Were it not thus, these heavens, thou dost visit,
Would their effect so work, it would not be
Art, but destruction; and this may not chance,
If th' intellectual powers, that move these stars,
Fail not, or who, first faulty made them fail.
Wilt thou this truth more clearly evidenc'd?"

To whom I thus: "It is enough: no fear,
I see, lest nature in her part should tire."

He straight rejoin'd: "Say, were it worse for man,
If he liv'd not in fellowship on earth?"

"Yea," answer'd I; "nor here a reason needs."

"And may that be, if different estates
Grow not of different duties in your life?
Consult your teacher, and he tells you 'no."'

Thus did he come, deducing to this point,
And then concluded: "For this cause behooves,
The roots, from whence your operations come,
Must differ. Therefore one is Solon born;
Another, Xerxes; and Melchisidec
A third; and he a fourth, whose airy voyage
Cost him his son. In her circuitous course,
Nature, that is the seal to mortal wax,
Doth well her art, but no distinctions owns
'Twixt one or other household. Hence befalls
That Esau is so wide of Jacob: hence
Quirinus of so base a father springs,
He dates from Mars his lineage. Were it not
That providence celestial overrul'd,
Nature, in generation, must the path
Trac'd by the generator, still pursue
Unswervingly. Thus place I in thy sight
That, which was late behind thee. But, in sign
Of more affection for thee, 't is my will
Thou wear this corollary. Nature ever
Finding discordant fortune, like all seed
Out of its proper climate, thrives but ill.
And were the world below content to mark
And work on the foundation nature lays,
It would not lack supply of excellence.
But ye perversely to religion strain
Him, who was born to gird on him the sword,
And of the fluent phrasemen make your king;
Therefore your steps have wander'd from the paths."

CANTO IX

After solution of my doubt, thy Charles,
O fair Clemenza, of the treachery spake
That must befall his seed: but, "Tell it not,"
Said he, "and let the destin'd years come round."
Nor may I tell thee more, save that the meed
Of sorrow well-deserv'd shall quit your wrongs.

And now the visage of that saintly light
Was to the sun, that fills it, turn'd again,

As to the good, whose plenitude of bliss
Sufficeth all. O ye misguided souls!
Infatuate, who from such a good estrange
Your hearts, and bend your gaze on vanity,
Alas for you!—And lo! toward me, next,
Another of those splendent forms approach'd,
That, by its outward bright'ning, testified
The will it had to pleasure me. The eyes
Of Beatrice, resting, as before,
Firmly upon me, manifested forth
Approval of my wish. "And O," I cried,
"Blest spirit! quickly be my will perform'd;
And prove thou to me, that my inmost thoughts
I can reflect on thee." Thereat the light,
That yet was new to me, from the recess,
Where it before was singing, thus began,
As one who joys in kindness: "In that part
Of the deprav'd Italian land, which lies
Between Rialto, and the fountain-springs
Of Brenta and of Piava, there doth rise,
But to no lofty eminence, a hill,
From whence erewhile a firebrand did descend,
That sorely sheet the region. From one root
I and it sprang; my name on earth Cunizza:
And here I glitter, for that by its light
This star o'ercame me. Yet I naught repine,
Nor grudge myself the cause of this my lot,
Which haply vulgar hearts can scarce conceive.

"This jewel, that is next me in our heaven,
Lustrous and costly, great renown hath left,
And not to perish, ere these hundred years
Five times absolve their round. Consider thou,
If to excel be worthy man's endeavour,
When such life may attend the first. Yet they
Care not for this, the crowd that now are girt
By Adice and Tagliamento, still
Impenitent, tho' scourg'd. The hour is near,
When for their stubbornness at Padua's marsh
The water shall be chang'd, that laves Vicena
And where Cagnano meets with Sile, one
Lords it, and bears his head aloft, for whom
The web is now a-warping. Feltro too
Shall sorrow for its godless shepherd's fault,
Of so deep stain, that never, for the like,
Was Malta's bar unclos'd. Too large should be
The skillet, that would hold Ferrara's blood,
And wearied he, who ounce by ounce would weight it,
The which this priest, in show of party-zeal,
Courteous will give; nor will the gift ill suit
The country's custom. We descry above,
Mirrors, ye call them thrones, from which to us

Reflected shine the judgments of our God:
Whence these our sayings we avouch for good."

She ended, and appear'd on other thoughts
Intent, re-ent'ring on the wheel she late
Had left. That other joyance meanwhile wax'd
A thing to marvel at, in splendour glowing,
Like choicest ruby stricken by the sun,
For, in that upper clime, effulgence comes
Of gladness, as here laughter: and below,
As the mind saddens, murkier grows the shade.

"God seeth all: and in him is thy sight,"
Said I, "blest Spirit! Therefore will of his
Cannot to thee be dark. Why then delays
Thy voice to satisfy my wish untold,
That voice which joins the inexpressive song,
Pastime of heav'n, the which those ardours sing,
That cowl them with six shadowing wings outspread?
I would not wait thy asking, wert thou known
To me, as thoroughly I to thee am known."

He forthwith answ'ring, thus his words began:
"The valley' of waters, widest next to that
Which doth the earth engarland, shapes its course,
Between discordant shores, against the sun
Inward so far, it makes meridian there,
Where was before th' horizon. Of that vale
Dwelt I upon the shore, 'twixt Ebro's stream
And Macra's, that divides with passage brief
Genoan bounds from Tuscan. East and west
Are nearly one to Begga and my land,
Whose haven erst was with its own blood warm.
Who knew my name were wont to call me Folco:
And I did bear impression of this heav'n,
That now bears mine: for not with fiercer flame
Glow'd Belus' daughter, injuring alike
Sichaeus and Creusa, than did I,
Long as it suited the unripen'd down
That fledg'd my cheek: nor she of Rhodope,
That was beguiled of Demophoon;
Nor Jove's son, when the charms of Iole
Were shrin'd within his heart. And yet there hides
No sorrowful repentance here, but mirth,
Not for the fault (that doth not come to mind),
But for the virtue, whose o'erruling sway
And providence have wrought thus quaintly. Here
The skill is look'd into, that fashioneth
With such effectual working, and the good
Discern'd, accruing to this upper world
From that below. But fully to content
Thy wishes, all that in this sphere have birth,

Demands my further parle. Inquire thou wouldst,
Who of this light is denizen, that here
Beside me sparkles, as the sun-beam doth
On the clear wave. Know then, the soul of Rahab
Is in that gladsome harbour, to our tribe
United, and the foremost rank assign'd.
He to that heav'n, at which the shadow ends
Of your sublunar world, was taken up,
First, in Christ's triumph, of all souls redeem'd:
For well behoov'd, that, in some part of heav'n,
She should remain a trophy, to declare
The mighty contest won with either palm;
For that she favour'd first the high exploit
Of Joshua on the holy land, whereof
The Pope recks little now. Thy city, plant
Of him, that on his Maker turn'd the back,
And of whose envying so much woe hath sprung,
Engenders and expands the cursed flower,
That hath made wander both the sheep and lambs,
Turning the shepherd to a wolf. For this,
The gospel and great teachers laid aside,
The decretals, as their stuft margins show,
Are the sole study. Pope and Cardinals,
Intent on these, ne'er journey but in thought
To Nazareth, where Gabriel op'd his wings.
Yet it may chance, erelong, the Vatican,
And other most selected parts of Rome,
That were the grave of Peter's soldiery,
Shall be deliver'd from the adult'rous bond."

CANTO X

Looking into his first-born with the love,
Which breathes from both eternal, the first Might
Ineffable, whence eye or mind
Can roam, hath in such order all dispos'd,
As none may see and fail to enjoy. Raise, then,
O reader! to the lofty wheels, with me,
Thy ken directed to the point, whereat
One motion strikes on th' other. There begin
Thy wonder of the mighty Architect,
Who loves his work so inwardly, his eye
Doth ever watch it. See, how thence oblique
Brancheth the circle, where the planets roll
To pour their wished influence on the world;
Whose path not bending thus, in heav'n above
Much virtue would be lost, and here on earth,

All power well nigh extinct: or, from direct
Were its departure distant more or less,
I' th' universal order, great defect
Must, both in heav'n and here beneath, ensue.

Now rest thee, reader! on thy bench, and muse
Anticipative of the feast to come;
So shall delight make thee not feel thy toil.
Lo! I have set before thee, for thyself
Feed now: the matter I indite, henceforth
Demands entire my thought. Join'd with the part,
Which late we told of, the great minister
Of nature, that upon the world imprints
The virtue of the heaven, and doles out
Time for us with his beam, went circling on
Along the spires, where each hour sooner comes;
And I was with him, weetless of ascent,
As one, who till arriv'd, weets not his coming.

For Beatrice, she who passeth on
So suddenly from good to better, time
Counts not the act, oh then how great must needs
Have been her brightness! What she was i' th' sun
(Where I had enter'd), not through change of hue,
But light transparent—did I summon up
Genius, art, practice—I might not so speak,
It should be e'er imagin'd: yet believ'd
It may be, and the sight be justly crav'd.
And if our fantasy fail of such height,
What marvel, since no eye above the sun
Hath ever travel'd? Such are they dwell here,
Fourth family of the Omnipotent Sire,
Who of his spirit and of his offspring shows;
And holds them still enraptur'd with the view.
And thus to me Beatrice: "Thank, oh thank,
The Sun of angels, him, who by his grace
To this perceptible hath lifted thee."

Never was heart in such devotion bound,
And with complacency so absolute
Dispos'd to render up itself to God,
As mine was at those words: and so entire
The love for Him, that held me, it eclips'd
Beatrice in oblivion. Naught displeas'd
Was she, but smil'd thereat so joyously,
That of her laughing eyes the radiance brake
And scatter'd my collected mind abroad.

Then saw I a bright band, in liveliness
Surpassing, who themselves did make the crown,
And us their centre: yet more sweet in voice,
Than in their visage beaming. Cinctur'd thus,

Sometime Latona's daughter we behold,
When the impregnate air retains the thread,
That weaves her zone. In the celestial court,
Whence I return, are many jewels found,
So dear and beautiful, they cannot brook
Transporting from that realm: and of these lights
Such was the song. Who doth not prune his wing
To soar up thither, let him look from thence
For tidings from the dumb. When, singing thus,
Those burning suns that circled round us thrice,
As nearest stars around the fixed pole,
Then seem'd they like to ladies, from the dance
Not ceasing, but suspense, in silent pause,
List'ning, till they have caught the strain anew:
Suspended so they stood: and, from within,
Thus heard I one, who spake: "Since with its beam
The grace, whence true love lighteth first his flame,
That after doth increase by loving, shines
So multiplied in thee, it leads thee up
Along this ladder, down whose hallow'd steps
None e'er descend, and mount them not again,
Who from his phial should refuse thee wine
To slake thy thirst, no less constrained were,
Than water flowing not unto the sea.
Thou fain wouldst hear, what plants are these, that bloom
In the bright garland, which, admiring, girds
This fair dame round, who strengthens thee for heav'n.
I then was of the lambs, that Dominic
Leads, for his saintly flock, along the way,
Where well they thrive, not sworn with vanity.
He, nearest on my right hand, brother was,
And master to me: Albert of Cologne
Is this: and of Aquinum, Thomas I.
If thou of all the rest wouldst be assur'd,
Let thine eye, waiting on the words I speak,
In circuit journey round the blessed wreath.
That next resplendence issues from the smile
Of Gratian, who to either forum lent
Such help, as favour wins in Paradise.
The other, nearest, who adorns our quire,
Was Peter, he that with the widow gave
To holy church his treasure. The fifth light,
Goodliest of all, is by such love inspired,
That all your world craves tidings of its doom:
Within, there is the lofty light, endow'd
With sapience so profound, if truth be truth,
That with a ken of such wide amplitude
No second hath arisen. Next behold
That taper's radiance, to whose view was shown,
Clearliest, the nature and the ministry
Angelical, while yet in flesh it dwelt.
In the other little light serenely smiles

That pleader for the Christian temples, he
Who did provide Augustin of his lore.
Now, if thy mind's eye pass from light to light,
Upon my praises following, of the eighth
Thy thirst is next. The saintly soul, that shows
The world's deceitfulness, to all who hear him,
Is, with the sight of all the good, that is,
Blest there. The limbs, whence it was driven, lie
Down in Cieldauro, and from martyrdom
And exile came it here. Lo! further on,
Where flames the arduous Spirit of Isidore,
Of Bede, and Richard, more than man, erewhile,
In deep discernment. Lastly this, from whom
Thy look on me reverteth, was the beam
Of one, whose spirit, on high musings bent,
Rebuk'd the ling'ring tardiness of death.
It is the eternal light of Sigebert,
Who 'scap'd not envy, when of truth he argued,
Reading in the straw-litter'd street." Forthwith,
As clock, that calleth up the spouse of God
To win her bridegroom's love at matin's hour,
Each part of other fitly drawn and urg'd,
Sends out a tinkling sound, of note so sweet,
Affection springs in well-disposed breast;
Thus saw I move the glorious wheel, thus heard
Voice answ'ring voice, so musical and soft,
It can be known but where day endless shines.

CANTO XI

O fond anxiety of mortal men!
How vain and inconclusive arguments
Are those, which make thee beat thy wings below
For statues one, and one for aphorisms
Was hunting; this the priesthood follow'd, that
By force or sophistry aspir'd to rule;
To rob another, and another sought
By civil business wealth; one moiling lay
Tangled in net of sensual delight,
And one to witless indolence resign'd;
What time from all these empty things escap'd,
With Beatrice, I thus gloriously
Was rais'd aloft, and made the guest of heav'n.

They of the circle to that point, each one.
Where erst it was, had turn'd; and steady glow'd,
As candle in his socket. Then within

The lustre, that erewhile bespake me, smiling
With merer gladness, heard I thus begin:

"E'en as his beam illumes me, so I look
Into the eternal light, and clearly mark
Thy thoughts, from whence they rise. Thou art in doubt,
And wouldst, that I should bolt my words afresh
In such plain open phrase, as may be smooth
To thy perception, where I told thee late
That 'well they thrive;' and that 'no second such
Hath risen,' which no small distinction needs.

"The providence, that governeth the world,
In depth of counsel by created ken
Unfathomable, to the end that she,
Who with loud cries was 'spous'd in precious blood,
Might keep her footing towards her well-belov'd,
Safe in herself and constant unto him,
Hath two ordain'd, who should on either hand
In chief escort her: one seraphic all
In fervency; for wisdom upon earth,
The other splendour of cherubic light.
I but of one will tell: he tells of both,
Who one commendeth which of them so'er
Be taken: for their deeds were to one end.

"Between Tupino, and the wave, that falls
From blest Ubaldo's chosen hill, there hangs
Rich slope of mountain high, whence heat and cold
Are wafted through Perugia's eastern gate:
And Norcera with Gualdo, in its rear
Mourn for their heavy yoke. Upon that side,
Where it doth break its steepness most, arose
A sun upon the world, as duly this
From Ganges doth: therefore let none, who speak
Of that place, say Ascesi; for its name
Were lamely so deliver'd; but the East,
To call things rightly, be it henceforth styl'd.
He was not yet much distant from his rising,
When his good influence 'gan to bless the earth.
A dame to whom none openeth pleasure's gate
More than to death, was, 'gainst his father's will,
His stripling choice: and he did make her his,
Before the Spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
And in his father's sight: from day to day,
Then lov'd her more devoutly. She, bereav'd
Of her first husband, slighted and obscure,
Thousand and hundred years and more, remain'd
Without a single suitor, till he came.
Nor aught avail'd, that, with Amyclas, she
Was found unmov'd at rumour of his voice,
Who shook the world: nor aught her constant boldness

Whereby with Christ she mounted on the cross,
When Mary stay'd beneath. But not to deal
Thus closely with thee longer, take at large
The rovers' titles—Poverty and Francis.
Their concord and glad looks, wonder and love,
And sweet regard gave birth to holy thoughts,
So much, that venerable Bernard first
Did bare his feet, and, in pursuit of peace
So heavenly, ran, yet deem'd his footing slow.
O hidden riches! O prolific good!
Egidius bares him next, and next Sylvester,
And follow both the bridegroom; so the bride
Can please them. Thenceforth goes he on his way,
The father and the master, with his spouse,
And with that family, whom now the cord
Girt humbly: nor did abjectness of heart
Weigh down his eyelids, for that he was son
Of Pietro Bernardone, and by men
In wond'rous sort despis'd. But royally
His hard intention he to Innocent
Set forth, and from him first receiv'd the seal
On his religion. Then, when numerous flock'd
The tribe of lowly ones, that trac'd HIS steps,
Whose marvellous life deservedly were sung
In heights empyreal, through Honorius' hand
A second crown, to deck their Guardian's virtues,
Was by the eternal Spirit inwreath'd: and when
He had, through thirst of martyrdom, stood up
In the proud Soldan's presence, and there preach'd
Christ and his followers; but found the race
Unripen'd for conversion: back once more
He hasted (not to intermit his toil),
And reap'd Ausonian lands. On the hard rock,
'Twixt Arno and the Tyber, he from Christ
Took the last Signet, which his limbs two years
Did carry. Then the season come, that he,
Who to such good had destin'd him, was pleas'd
T' advance him to the meed, which he had earn'd
By his self-humbling, to his brotherhood,
As their just heritage, he gave in charge
His dearest lady, and enjoin'd their love
And faith to her: and, from her bosom, will'd
His goodly spirit should move forth, returning
To its appointed kingdom, nor would have
His body laid upon another bier.

"Think now of one, who were a fit colleague,
To keep the bark of Peter in deep sea
Helm'd to right point; and such our Patriarch was.
Therefore who follow him, as he enjoins,
Thou mayst be certain, take good lading in.
But hunger of new viands tempts his flock,

So that they needs into strange pastures wide
Must spread them: and the more remote from him
The stragglers wander, so much mole they come
Home to the sheep-fold, destitute of milk.
There are of them, in truth, who fear their harm,
And to the shepherd cleave; but these so few,
A little stuff may furnish out their cloaks.

"Now, if my words be clear, if thou have ta'en
Good heed, if that, which I have told, recall
To mind, thy wish may be in part fulfill'd:
For thou wilt see the point from whence they split,
Nor miss of the reproof, which that implies,
'That well they thrive not sworn with vanity."'

CANTO XII

Soon as its final word the blessed flame
Had rais'd for utterance, straight the holy mill
Began to wheel, nor yet had once revolv'd,
Or ere another, circling, compass'd it,
Motion to motion, song to song, conjoining,
Song, that as much our muses doth excel,
Our Sirens with their tuneful pipes, as ray
Of primal splendour doth its faint reflex.

As when, if Juno bid her handmaid forth,
Two arches parallel, and trick'd alike,
Span the thin cloud, the outer taking birth
From that within (in manner of that voice
Whom love did melt away, as sun the mist),
And they who gaze, presageful call to mind
The compact, made with Noah, of the world
No more to be o'erflow'd; about us thus
Of sempiternal roses, bending, wreath'd
Those garlands twain, and to the innermost
E'en thus th' external answered. When the footing,
And other great festivity, of song,
And radiance, light with light accordant, each
Jocund and blythe, had at their pleasure still'd
(E'en as the eyes by quick volition mov'd,
Are shut and rais'd together), from the heart
Of one amongst the new lights mov'd a voice,
That made me seem like needle to the star,
In turning to its whereabout, and thus
Began: "The love, that makes me beautiful,
Prompts me to tell of th' other guide, for whom

Such good of mine is spoken. Where one is,
The other worthily should also be;
That as their warfare was alike, alike
Should be their glory. Slow, and full of doubt,
And with thin ranks, after its banner mov'd
The army of Christ (which it so clearly cost
To reappoint), when its imperial Head,
Who reigneth ever, for the drooping host
Did make provision, thorough grace alone,
And not through its deserving. As thou heard'st,
Two champions to the succour of his spouse
He sent, who by their deeds and words might join
Again his scatter'd people. In that clime,
Where springs the pleasant west-wind to unfold
The fresh leaves, with which Europe sees herself
New-garmented; nor from those billows far,
Beyond whose chiding, after weary course,
The sun doth sometimes hide him, safe abides
The happy Callaroga, under guard
Of the great shield, wherein the lion lies
Subjected and supreme. And there was born
The loving million of the Christian faith,
The hollow'd wrestler, gentle to his own,
And to his enemies terrible. So replete
His soul with lively virtue, that when first
Created, even in the mother's womb,
It prophesied. When, at the sacred font,
The spousals were complete 'twixt faith and him,
Where pledge of mutual safety was exchang'd,
The dame, who was his surety, in her sleep
Beheld the wondrous fruit, that was from him
And from his heirs to issue. And that such
He might be construed, as indeed he was,
She was inspir'd to name him of his owner,
Whose he was wholly, and so call'd him Dominic.
And I speak of him, as the labourer,
Whom Christ in his own garden chose to be
His help-mate. Messenger he seem'd, and friend
Fast-knit to Christ; and the first love he show'd,
Was after the first counsel that Christ gave.
Many a time his nurse, at entering found
That he had ris'n in silence, and was prostrate,
As who should say, "My errand was for this."
O happy father! Felix rightly nam'd!
O favour'd mother! rightly nam'd Joanna!
If that do mean, as men interpret it.
Not for the world's sake, for which now they pore
Upon Ostiense and Taddeo's page,
But for the real manna, soon he grew
Mighty in learning, and did set himself
To go about the vineyard, that soon turns
To wan and wither'd, if not tended well:

And from the see (whose bounty to the just
And needy is gone by, not through its fault,
But his who fills it basely, he besought,
No dispensation for commuted wrong,
Nor the first vacant fortune, nor the tenth),
That to God's paupers rightly appertain,
But, 'gainst an erring and degenerate world,
Licence to fight, in favour of that seed,
From which the twice twelve cions gird thee round.
Then, with sage doctrine and good will to help,
Forth on his great apostleship he far'd,
Like torrent bursting from a lofty vein;
And, dashing 'gainst the stocks of heresy,
Smote fiercest, where resistance was most stout.
Thence many rivulets have since been turn'd,
Over the garden Catholic to lead
Their living waters, and have fed its plants.

"If such one wheel of that two-yoked car,
Wherein the holy church defended her,
And rode triumphant through the civil broil.
Thou canst not doubt its fellow's excellence,
Which Thomas, ere my coming, hath declar'd
So courteously unto thee. But the track,
Which its smooth fellies made, is now deserted:
That mouldy mother is where late were lees.
His family, that wont to trace his path,
Turn backward, and invert their steps; erelong
To rue the gathering in of their ill crop,
When the rejected tares in vain shall ask
Admittance to the barn. I question not
But he, who search'd our volume, leaf by leaf,
Might still find page with this inscription on't,
'I am as I was wont.' Yet such were not
From Acquasparta nor Casale, whence
Of those, who come to meddle with the text,
One stretches and another cramps its rule.
Bonaventura's life in me behold,
From Bagnororegio, one, who in discharge
Of my great offices still laid aside
All sinister aim. Illuminato here,
And Agostino join me: two they were,
Among the first of those barefooted meek ones,
Who sought God's friendship in the cord: with them
Hugues of Saint Victor, Pietro Mangiadore,
And he of Spain in his twelve volumes shining,
Nathan the prophet, Metropolitan
Chrysostom, and Anselmo, and, who deign'd
To put his hand to the first art, Donatus.
Raban is here: and at my side there shines
Calabria's abbot, Joachim, endow'd
With soul prophetic. The bright courtesy

Of friar Thomas, and his goodly lore,
Have mov'd me to the blazon of a peer
So worthy, and with me have mov'd this throng."

CANTO XIII

Let him, who would conceive what now I saw,
Imagine (and retain the image firm,
As mountain rock, the whilst he hears me speak),
Of stars fifteen, from midst the ethereal host
Selected, that, with lively ray serene,
O'ercome the massiest air: thereto imagine
The wain, that, in the bosom of our sky,
Spins ever on its axle night and day,
With the bright summit of that horn which swells
Due from the pole, round which the first wheel rolls,
T' have rang'd themselves in fashion of two signs
In heav'n, such as Ariadne made,
When death's chill seized her; and that one of them
Did compass in the other's beam; and both
In such sort whirl around, that each should tend
With opposite motion and, conceiving thus,
Of that true constellation, and the dance
Twofold, that circled me, he shall attain
As 't were the shadow; for things there as much
Surpass our usage, as the swiftest heav'n
Is swifter than the Chiana. There was sung
No Bacchus, and no Io Paean, but
Three Persons in the Godhead, and in one
Substance that nature and the human join'd.

The song fulfill'd its measure; and to us
Those saintly lights attended, happier made
At each new minist'ring. Then silence brake,
Amid th' accordant sons of Deity,
That luminary, in which the wondrous life
Of the meek man of God was told to me;
And thus it spake: "One ear o' th' harvest thresh'd,
And its grain safely stor'd, sweet charity
Invites me with the other to like toil.

"Thou know'st, that in the bosom, whence the rib
Was ta'en to fashion that fair cheek, whose taste
All the world pays for, and in that, which pierc'd
By the keen lance, both after and before
Such satisfaction offer'd, as outweighs
Each evil in the scale, whate'er of light

To human nature is allow'd, must all
Have by his virtue been infus'd, who form'd
Both one and other: and thou thence admir'st
In that I told thee, of beatitudes
A second, there is none, to his enclos'd
In the fifth radiance. Open now thine eyes
To what I answer thee; and thou shalt see
Thy deeming and my saying meet in truth,
As centre in the round. That which dies not,
And that which can die, are but each the beam
Of that idea, which our Soverign Sire
Engendereth loving; for that lively light,
Which passeth from his brightness; not disjoin'd
From him, nor from his love triune with them,
Doth, through his bounty, congregate itself,
Mirror'd, as 't were in new existences,
Itself unalterable and ever one.

"Descending hence unto the lowest powers,
Its energy so sinks, at last it makes
But brief contingencies: for so I name
Things generated, which the heav'nly orbs
Moving, with seed or without seed, produce.
Their wax, and that which molds it, differ much:
And thence with lustre, more or less, it shows
Th' ideal stamp impress: so that one tree
According to his kind, hath better fruit,
And worse: and, at your birth, ye, mortal men,
Are in your talents various. Were the wax
Molded with nice exactness, and the heav'n
In its disposing influence supreme,
The lustre of the seal should be complete:
But nature renders it imperfect ever,
Resembling thus the artist in her work,
Whose faultering hand is faithless to his skill.
Howe'er, if love itself dispose, and mark
The primal virtue, kindling with bright view,
There all perfection is vouchsafed; and such
The clay was made, accomplish'd with each gift,
That life can teem with; such the burden fill'd
The virgin's bosom: so that I commend
Thy judgment, that the human nature ne'er
Was or can be, such as in them it was.

"Did I advance no further than this point,
'How then had he no peer?' thou might'st reply.
But, that what now appears not, may appear
Right plainly, ponder, who he was, and what
(When he was bidden 'Ask'), the motive sway'd
To his requesting. I have spoken thus,
That thou mayst see, he was a king, who ask'd
For wisdom, to the end he might be king

Sufficient: not the number to search out
Of the celestial movers; or to know,
If necessary with contingent e'er
Have made necessity; or whether that
Be granted, that first motion is; or if
Of the mid circle can, by art, be made
Triangle with each corner, blunt or sharp.

"Whence, noting that, which I have said, and this,
Thou kingly prudence and that ken mayst learn,
At which the dart of my intention aims.
And, marking clearly, that I told thee, 'Risen,'
Thou shalt discern it only hath respect
To kings, of whom are many, and the good
Are rare. With this distinction take my words;
And they may well consist with that which thou
Of the first human father dost believe,
And of our well-beloved. And let this
Henceforth be led unto thy feet, to make
Thee slow in motion, as a weary man,
Both to the 'yea' and to the 'nay' thou seest not.
For he among the fools is down full low,
Whose affirmation, or denial, is
Without distinction, in each case alike
Since it befalls, that in most instances
Current opinion leads to false: and then
Affection bends the judgment to her ply.

"Much more than vainly doth he loose from shore,
Since he returns not such as he set forth,
Who fishes for the truth and wanteth skill.
And open proofs of this unto the world
Have been afforded in Parmenides,
Melissus, Bryso, and the crowd beside,
Who journey'd on, and knew not whither: so did
Sabellius, Arius, and the other fools,
Who, like to scymitars, reflected back
The scripture-image, by distortion marr'd.

"Let not the people be too swift to judge,
As one who reckons on the blades in field,
Or ere the crop be ripe. For I have seen
The thorn frown rudely all the winter long
And after bear the rose upon its top;
And bark, that all the way across the sea
Ran straight and speedy, perish at the last,
E'en in the haven's mouth seeing one steal,
Another brine, his offering to the priest,
Let not Dame Birtha and Sir Martin thence
Into heav'n's counsels deem that they can pry:
For one of these may rise, the other fall."

CANTO XIV

From centre to the circle, and so back
From circle to the centre, water moves
In the round chalice, even as the blow
Impels it, inwardly, or from without.
Such was the image glanc'd into my mind,
As the great spirit of Aquinum ceas'd;
And Beatrice after him her words
Resum'd alternate: "Need there is (tho' yet
He tells it to you not in words, nor e'en
In thought) that he should fathom to its depth
Another mystery. Tell him, if the light,
Wherewith your substance blooms, shall stay with you
Eternally, as now: and, if it doth,
How, when ye shall regain your visible forms,
The sight may without harm endure the change,
That also tell." As those, who in a ring
Tread the light measure, in their fitful mirth
Raise loud the voice, and spring with gladder bound;
Thus, at the hearing of that pious suit,
The saintly circles in their tourneying
And wond'rous note attested new delight.

Whoso laments, that we must doff this garb
Of frail mortality, thenceforth to live
Immortally above, he hath not seen
The sweet refreshing, of that heav'nly shower.

Him, who lives ever, and for ever reigns
In mystic union of the Three in One,
Unbounded, bounding all, each spirit thrice
Sang, with such melody, as but to hear
For highest merit were an ample meed.
And from the lesser orb the goodliest light,
With gentle voice and mild, such as perhaps
The angel's once to Mary, thus replied:
"Long as the joy of Paradise shall last,
Our love shall shine around that raiment, bright,
As fervent; fervent, as in vision blest;
And that as far in blessedness exceeding,
As it hath grave beyond its virtue great.
Our shape, regarmented with glorious weeds
Of saintly flesh, must, being thus entire,
Show yet more gracious. Therefore shall increase,
Whate'er of light, gratuitous, imparts
The Supreme Good; light, ministering aid,

The better disclose his glory: whence
The vision needs increasing, much increase
The fervour, which it kindles; and that too
The ray, that comes from it. But as the greed
Which gives out flame, yet it its whiteness shines
More lively than that, and so preserves
Its proper semblance; thus this circling sphere
Of splendour, shall to view less radiant seem,
Than shall our fleshly robe, which yonder earth
Now covers. Nor will such excess of light
O'erpower us, in corporeal organs made
Firm, and susceptible of all delight."

So ready and so cordial an "Amen,"
Followed from either choir, as plainly spoke
Desire of their dead bodies; yet perchance
Not for themselves, but for their kindred dear,
Mothers and sires, and those whom best they lov'd,
Ere they were made imperishable flame.

And lo! forthwith there rose up round about
A lustre over that already there,
Of equal clearness, like the brightening up
Of the horizon. As at an evening hour
Of twilight, new appearances through heav'n
Peer with faint glimmer, doubtfully descried;
So there new substances, methought began
To rise in view; and round the other twain
Enwheeling, sweep their ampler circuit wide.

O gentle glitter of eternal beam!
With what a such whiteness did it flow,
O'erpowering vision in me! But so fair,
So passing lovely, Beatrice show'd,
Mind cannot follow it, nor words express
Her infinite sweetness. Thence mine eyes regain'd
Power to look up, and I beheld myself,
Sole with my lady, to more lofty bliss
Translated: for the star, with warmer smile
Impurpled, well denoted our ascent.

With all the heart, and with that tongue which speaks
The same in all, an holocaust I made
To God, befitting the new grace vouchsaf'd.
And from my bosom had not yet upsteam'd
The fuming of that incense, when I knew
The rite accepted. With such mighty sheen
And mantling crimson, in two listed rays
The splendours shot before me, that I cried,
"God of Sabaoth! that does prank them thus!"

As leads the galaxy from pole to pole,
Distinguish'd into greater lights and less,
Its pathway, which the wisest fail to spell;
So thickly studded, in the depth of Mars,
Those rays describ'd the venerable sign,
That quadrants in the round conjoining frame.
Here memory mocks the toil of genius. Christ
Beam'd on that cross; and pattern fails me now.
But whoso takes his cross, and follows Christ
Will pardon me for that I leave untold,
When in the flecker'd dawning he shall spy
The glitterance of Christ. From horn to horn,
And 'tween the summit and the base did move
Lights, scintillating, as they met and pass'd.
Thus oft are seen, with ever-changeful glance,
Straight or athwart, now rapid and now slow,
The atomies of bodies, long or short,
To move along the sunbeam, whose slant line
Checkers the shadow, interpos'd by art
Against the noontide heat. And as the chime
Of minstrel music, dulcimer, and help

With many strings, a pleasant dining makes
To him, who heareth not distinct the note;
So from the lights, which there appear'd to me,
Gather'd along the cross a melody,
That, indistinctly heard, with ravishment
Possess'd me. Yet I mark'd it was a hymn
Of lofty praises; for there came to me
"Arise and conquer," as to one who hears
And comprehends not. Me such ecstasy
O'ercame, that never till that hour was thing
That held me in so sweet imprisonment.

Perhaps my saying over bold appears,
Accounting less the pleasure of those eyes,
Whereon to look fulfilleth all desire.
But he, who is aware those living seals
Of every beauty work with quicker force,
The higher they are ris'n; and that there
I had not turn'd me to them; he may well
Excuse me that, whereof in my excuse
I do accuse me, and may own my truth;
That holy pleasure here not yet reveal'd,
Which grows in transport as we mount aloof.

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 purfled 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 Valdipado 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 emboldened (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 reilumine 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 Valdigrieve 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 streteh'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."

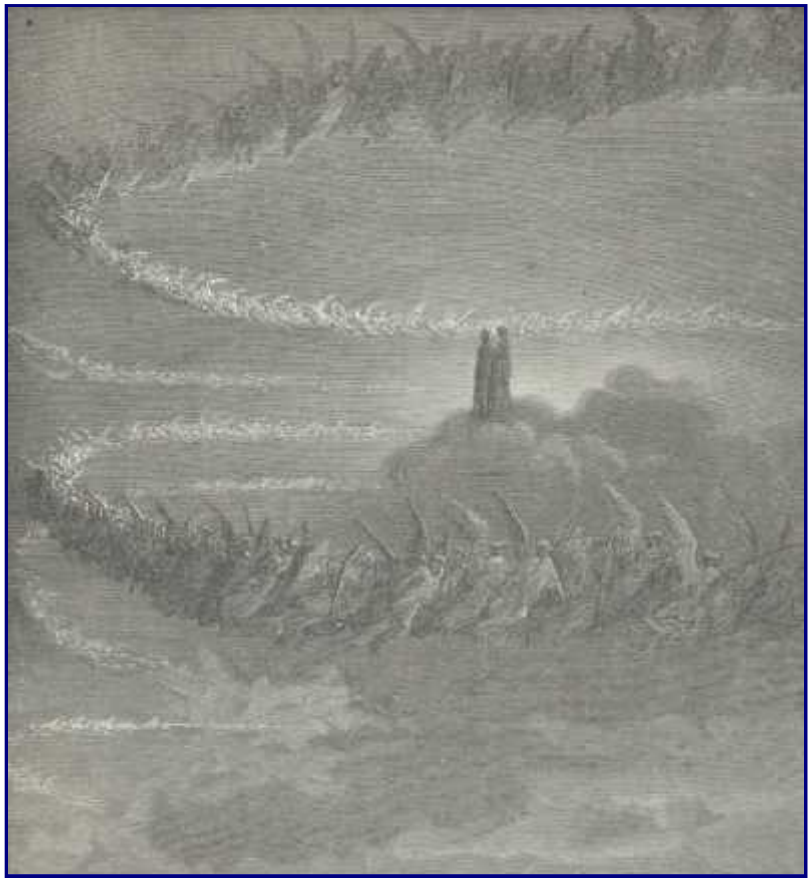
At the sweet sounds of comfort straight I turn'd;
And, in the saintly eyes what love was seen,
I leave in silence here: nor through distrust
Of my words only, but that to such bliss
The mind remounts not without aid. Thus much
Yet may I speak; that, as I gaz'd on her,
Affection found no room for other 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 lilied 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 I
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 stampt 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 beheldst 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."

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 ofttimes 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 nympus,
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 pinnace, 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, whatsoe'er 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.

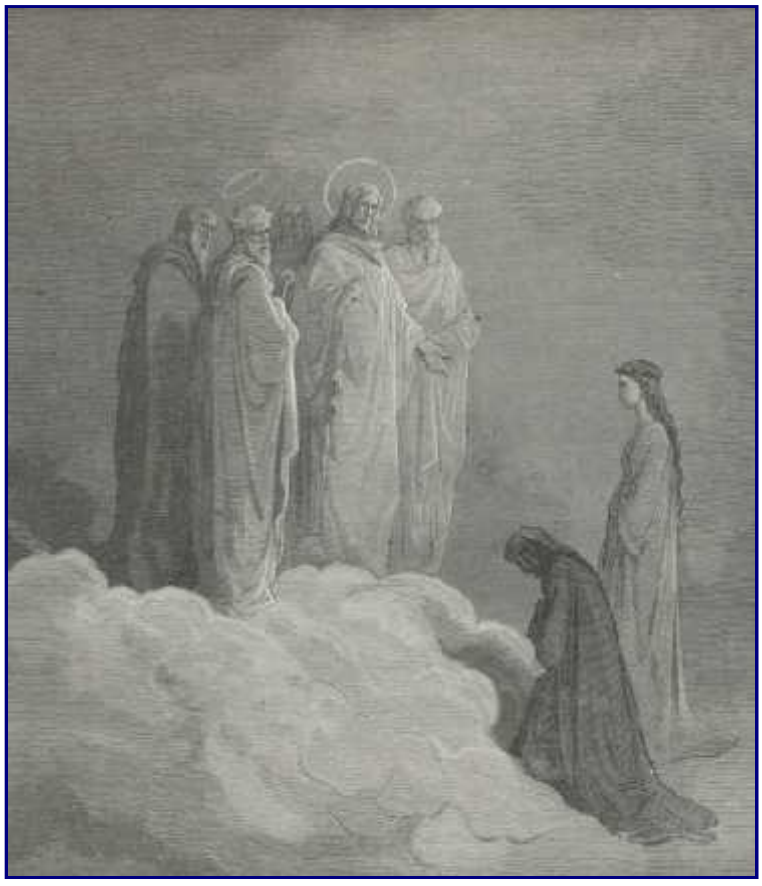
Like as a virgin riseth up, and goes,
And enters on the mazes of the dance,
Though gay, yet innocent of worse intent,
Than to do fitting honour to the bride;
So I beheld the new effulgence come
Unto the other two, who in a ring
Wheel'd, as became their rapture. In the dance
And in the song it mingled. 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 resplendence, 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:
"Behooves 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 debarr'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,
El 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 sleepst 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 XXVIII

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 princedoms 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,
Bandied 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 accustom'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 plumy 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 charmst 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 emprize, 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.