

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

Dante Alighieri

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THE VISION

OF

HELL, PURGATORY, AND PARADISE

BY DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY

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

PARADISE

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Part 3

CANTO XXII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thou art so near the sum of blessedness,"  
Said Beatrice, "that behooves thy ken  
Be vigilant and clear. And, to this end,  
Or even thou advance thee further, hence  
Look downward, and contemplate, what a world  
Already stretched under our feet there lies:  
So as thy heart may, in its blithest mood,  
Present itself to the triumphal throng,  
Which through the' ethereal 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 mov'd my smiles: and him in truth I hold  
For wisest, who esteems it least: whose thoughts  
Elsewhere are fix'd, him worthiest call and best.  
I saw the daughter of Latona shine  
Without the shadow, whereof late I deem'd  
That dense and rare were cause. Here I sustain'd  
The visage, Hyperion! of thy sun;  
And mark'd, how near him with their circle, round  
Move Maia and Dione; here discern'd  
Jove's tempering 'twixt his sire and son; and hence  
Their changes and their various aspects  
Distinctly scann'd. Nor might I not descry  
Of all the seven, how bulky each, how swift;  
Nor of their several distances not learn.  
This petty area (o'er the which we stride  
So fiercely), as along the eternal twins  
I wound my way, appear'd before me all,  
Forth from the havens stretch'd unto the hills.  
Then to the beauteous eyes mine eyes return'd.

### CANTO XXIII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### CANTO XXIV

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

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

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



Thou dost unbind me from that beauteous sphere."

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

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

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

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

"I not a whit misdoubt of its assay."

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

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

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

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

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

## CANTO XXV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like as a virgin riseth up, and goes,  
And enters on the mazes of the dance,  
Though gay, yet innocent of worse intent,  
Than to do fitting honour to the bride;  
So I beheld the new effulgence come  
Unto the other two, who in a ring  
Wheel'd, as became their rapture. In the dance  
And in the song it mingled. And the dame  
Held on them fix'd her looks: e'en as the spouse  
Silent and moveless. "This is he, who lay  
Upon the bosom of our pelican:  
This he, into whose keeping from the cross  
The mighty charge was given." Thus she spake,  
Yet therefore naught the more remov'd her Sight  
From marking them, or ere her words began,  
Or when they clos'd. As he, who looks intent,  
And strives with searching ken, how he may see  
The sun in his eclipse, and, through desire  
Of seeing, loseth power of sight: so I  
Peer'd on that last 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 debar'd  
This council, till the sun had made complete,  
Four thousand and three hundred rounds and twice,

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

#### CANTO XXVII

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## CANTO XXVII

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

And bar'd the truth of poor mortality;  
When lo! as one who, in a mirror, spies  
The shining of a flambeau at his back,  
Lit sudden ore he deem of its approach,  
And turneth to resolve him, if the glass  
Have told him true, and sees the record faithful  
As note is to its metre; even thus,  
I well remember, did befall to me,  
Looking upon the beauteous eyes, whence love  
Had made the leash to take me. As I turn'd;  
And that, which, in their circles, none who spies,  
Can miss of, in itself apparent, struck  
On mine; a point I saw, that darted light  
So sharp, no lid, unclosing, may bear up  
Against its keenness. The least star we view  
From hence, had seem'd a moon, set by its side,  
As star by side of star. And so far off,  
Perchance, as is the halo from the light  
Which paints it, when most dense the vapour spreads,  
There wheel'd about the point a circle of fire,  
More rapid than the motion, which first girds  
The world. Then, circle after circle, round  
Enring'd each other; till the seventh reach'd  
Circumference so ample, that its bow,  
Within the span of Juno's messenger,  
lied scarce been held entire. Beyond the sev'nth,  
Follow'd yet other two. And every one,  
As more in number distant from the first,  
Was tardier in motion; and that glow'd  
With flame most pure, that to the sparkle' of truth  
Was nearest, as partaking most, methinks,  
Of its reality. The guide belov'd  
Saw me in anxious thought suspense, and spake:  
"Heav'n, and all nature, hangs upon that point.  
The circle thereto most conjoin'd observe;  
And know, that by intenser love its course  
Is to this swiftness wing'd." To whom I thus:  
"It were enough; nor should I further seek,  
Had I but witness'd order, in the world  
Appointed, such as in these wheels is seen.  
But in the sensible world such difference 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,  
Banded about more frequent, than the names  
Of Bindi and of Lapi in her streets.  
The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return  
From pasture, fed with wind: and what avails  
For their excuse, they do not see their harm?  
Christ said not to his first conventicle,  
'Go forth and preach impostures to the world,'  
But gave them truth to build on; and the sound  
Was mighty on their lips; nor needed they,  
Beside the gospel, other spear or shield,  
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.  
The preacher now provides himself with store  
Of jests and gibes; and, so there be no lack  
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl  
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought:  
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while  
Of that dark bird which nestles in his hood,  
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said.  
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,  
That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad  
The hands of holy promise, finds a throng  
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony  
Fattens with this his swine, and others worse  
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,  
Paying with unstamp'd metal for their fare.

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

## CANTO XXX

Noon's fervid hour perchance six thousand miles

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

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

She (such as I bequeath her to the bruit  
Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,  
Urging its arduous matter to the close),  
Her words resum'd, in gesture and in voice  
Resembling one 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 plummy loins,  
 Whisper'd the peace and ardour, which they won  
 From that soft winnowing. Shadow none, the vast  
 Interposition of such numerous flight  
 Cast, from above, upon the flower, or view  
 Obstructed aught. For, through the universe,  
 Wherever merited, celestial light

Glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.

All there, who reign in safety and in bliss,  
Ages long past or new, on one sole mark  
Their love and vision fix'd. O trinal beam  
Of individual star, that 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 prefer'd:  
And she, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down,  
And smil'd; then tow'rds th' eternal fountain turn'd.

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

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

## CANTO XXXII

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

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

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

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

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

### CANTO XXXIII

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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