

# 12 Masterpieces of the Renaissance

**Dante Alighieri**

**The Divine Comedy**

**PARADISE**

**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 below'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 findest 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  
Afflation 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  
Expatriates 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 liliated 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, scantily  
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 behooed  
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  
Princedom 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 wariier 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 depriv'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 stuff 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, whereth  
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 illumines 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 whereabouts, 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 Paeon, 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 Sovereign 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 faltering 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 fledg'd. 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 purfl'd 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 embolden'd (as the story holds)  
To first offence the doubting Guenever.

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

As embers, at the breathing of the wind,  
Their flame enliven, so that light I saw  
Shine at my blandishments; and, as it grew  
More fair to look on, so with voice more sweet,  
Yet not in this our modern phrase, forthwith  
It answer'd: “From the day, when it was said  
'Hail Virgin!' to the throes, by which my mother,  
Who now is sainted, lighten'd her of me  
Whom she was heavy with, this fire had come,  
Five hundred fifty times and thrice, its beams  
To reillumine underneath the foot  
Of its own lion. They, of whom I sprang,  
And I, had there our birth-place, where the last  
Partition of our city first is reach'd  
By him, that runs her annual game. Thus much

Suffice of my forefathers: who they were,  
And whence they hither came, more honourable  
It is to pass in silence than to tell.  
All those, who in that time were there from Mars  
Until the Baptist, fit to carry arms,  
Were but the fifth of them this day alive.  
But then the citizen's blood, that now is mix'd  
From Campi and Certaldo and Fighine,  
Ran purely through the last mechanic's veins.  
O how much better were it, that these people  
Were neighbours to you, and that at Galluzzo  
And at Trespiano, ye should have your bound'ry,  
Than to have them within, and bear the stench  
Of Aguglione's hind, and Signa's, him,  
That hath his eye already keen for bart'ring!  
Had not the people, which of all the world  
Degenerates most, been stepdame unto Caesar,  
But, as a mother, gracious to her son;  
Such one, as hath become a Florentine,  
And trades and traffics, had been turn'd adrift  
To Simifonte, where his grandsire ply'd  
The beggar's craft. The Conti were possess'd  
Of Montemurlo still: the Cerchi still  
Were in Acone's parish; nor had haply  
From 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 stretch'd for him

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

The brightness, where enclos'd the treasure  
smil'd,  
Which I had found there, first shone glisteningly,  
Like to a golden mirror in the sun;  
Next answer'd: “Conscience, dimm'd or by its  
own  
Or other's shame, will feel thy saying sharp.  
Thou, notwithstanding, all deceit remov'd,

See the whole vision be made manifest.  
And let them wince who have their withers  
wrung.  
What though, when tasted first, thy voice shall  
prove  
Unwelcome, on digestion it will turn  
To vital nourishment. The cry thou raisest,  
Shall, as the wind doth, smite the proudest  
summits;  
Which is of honour no light argument,  
For this there only have been shown to thee,  
Throughout these orbs, the mountain, and the  
deep,  
Spirits, whom fame hath note of. For the mind  
Of him, who hears, is loth to acquiesce  
And fix its faith, unless the instance brought  
Be palpable, and proof apparent urge.”

## CANTO XVIII

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 lili'd crowning, well content  
To over-canopy the M. mov'd forth,  
Following gently the impress of the bird.

Sweet star! what glorious and thick-studded gems  
Declar'd to me our justice on the earth  
To be the effluence of that heav'n, which thou,

Thyself a costly jewel, dost inlay!  
Therefore I pray the Sovran Mind, from whom  
Thy motion and thy virtue are begun,  
That he would look from whence the fog doth  
rise,  
To vitiate thy beam: so that once more  
He may put forth his hand 'gainst such, as drive  
Their traffic in that sanctuary, whose walls  
With miracles and martyrdoms were built.

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

## CANTO XIX

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

Thus is one heat from many embers felt,  
As in that image many were the loves,  
And one the voice, that issued from them all.  
Whence I address them: "O perennial flowers  
Of gladness everlasting! that exhale  
In single breath your odours manifold!  
Breathe now; and let the hunger be appeas'd,  
That with great craving long hath held my soul,

Finding no food on earth. This well I know,  
That if there be in heav'n a realm, that shows  
In faithful mirror the celestial Justice,  
Yours without veil reflects it. Ye discern  
The heed, wherewith I do prepare myself  
To hearken; ye the doubt that urges me  
With such inveterate craving." Straight I saw,  
Like to a falcon issuing from the hood,  
That rears his head, and claps him with his wings,  
His beauty and his eagerness bewraying.  
So saw I move that stately sign, with praise  
Of grace divine inwoven and high song  
Of inexpressive joy. "He," it began,  
"Who turn'd his compass on the world's extreme,  
And in that space so variously hath wrought,  
Both openly, and in secret, in such wise  
Could not through all the universe display  
Impression of his glory, that the Word  
Of his omniscience should not still remain  
In infinite excess. In proof whereof,  
He first through pride supplanted, who was sum  
Of each created being, waited not  
For light celestial, and abortive fell.  
Whence needs each lesser nature is but scant  
Receptacle unto that Good, which knows  
No limit, measur'd by itself alone.  
Therefore your sight, of th' omnipresent Mind  
A single beam, its origin must own

Surpassing far its utmost potency.  
The ken, your world is gifted with, descends  
In th' everlasting Justice as low down,  
As eye doth in the sea; which though it mark  
The bottom from the shore, in the wide main  
Discerns it not; and ne'ertheless it is,  
But hidden through its deepness. Light is none,  
Save that which cometh from the pure serene  
Of ne'er disturbed ether: for the rest,  
'Tis darkness all, or shadow of the flesh,  
Or else its poison. Here confess reveal'd  
That covert, which hath hidden from thy search  
The living justice, of the which thou mad'st  
Such frequent question; for thou saidst—'A man  
Is born on Indus' banks, and none is there  
Who speaks of Christ, nor who doth read nor  
write,  
And all his inclinations and his acts,  
As far as human reason sees, are good,  
And he offendeth not in word or deed.  
But unbaptiz'd he dies, and void of faith.  
Where is the justice that condemns him? where  
His blame, if he believeth not?'—What then,  
And who art thou, that on the stool wouldst sit  
To judge at distance of a thousand miles  
With the short-sighted vision of a span?  
To him, who subtilizes thus with me,  
There would assuredly be room for doubt

Even to wonder, did not the safe word  
Of scripture hold supreme authority.

“O animals of clay! O spirits gross I  
The primal will, that in itself is good,  
Hath from itself, the chief Good, ne'er been  
mov'd.

Justice consists in consonance with it,  
Derivable by no created good,  
Whose very cause depends upon its beam.”

As on her nest the stork, that turns about  
Unto her young, whom lately she hath fed,  
While they with upward eyes do look on her;  
So lifted I my gaze; and bending so  
The ever-blessed image wav'd its wings,  
Lab'ring with such deep counsel. Wheeling round  
It warbled, and did say: “As are my notes  
To thee, who understand'st them not, such is  
Th' eternal judgment unto mortal ken.”

Then still abiding in that ensign rang'd,  
Wherewith the Romans over-awed the world,  
Those burning splendours of the Holy Spirit  
Took up the strain; and thus it spake again:  
“None ever hath ascended to this realm,  
Who hath not a believer been in Christ,  
Either before or after the blest limbs

Were nail'd upon the wood. But lo! of those  
Who call 'Christ, Christ,' there shall be many  
found,  
In judgment, further off from him by far,  
Than such, to whom his name was never known.  
Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn:  
When that the two assemblages shall part;  
One rich eternally, the other poor.

“What may the Persians say unto your kings,  
When they shall see that volume, in the which  
All their dispraise is written, spread to view?  
There amidst Albert's works shall that be read,  
Which will give speedy motion to the pen,  
When Prague shall mourn her desolated realm.  
There shall be read the woe, that he doth work  
With his adulterate money on the Seine,  
Who by the tusk will perish: there be read  
The thirsting pride, that maketh fool alike  
The English and Scot, impatient of their bound.  
There shall be seen the Spaniard's luxury,  
The delicate living there of the Bohemian,  
Who still to worth has been a willing stranger.  
The halter of Jerusalem shall see  
A unit for his virtue, for his vices  
No less a mark than million. He, who guards  
The isle of fire by old Anchises honour'd  
Shall find his avarice there and cowardice;

And better to denote his littleness,  
The writing must be letters maim'd, that speak  
Much in a narrow space. All there shall know  
His uncle and his brother's filthy doings,  
Who so renown'd a nation and two crowns  
Have bastardized. And they, of Portugal  
And Norway, there shall be expos'd with him  
Of Ratza, who hath counterfeited ill  
The coin of Venice. O blest Hungary!  
If thou no longer patiently abid'st  
Thy ill-entreating! and, O blest Navarre!  
If with thy mountainous girdle thou wouldst arm  
thee  
In earnest of that day, e'en now are heard  
Wailings and groans in Famagosta's streets  
And Nicosia's, grudging at their beast,  
Who keepeth even footing with the rest.”

## CANTO XX

When, disappearing, from our hemisphere,  
The world's enlightener vanishes, and day  
On all sides wasteth, suddenly the sky,  
Erewhile irradiate only with his beam,  
Is yet again unfolded, putting forth  
Innumerable lights wherein one shines.

Of such vicissitude in heaven I thought,  
As the great sign, that marshaleth the world  
And the world's leaders, in the blessed beak  
Was silent; for that all those living lights,  
Waxing in splendour, burst forth into songs,  
Such as from memory glide and fall away.

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

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

“The part in me, that sees, and bears the sun,  
In mortal eagles,” it began, “must now

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

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

I, though my doubting were as manifest,  
As is through glass the hue that mantles it,  
In silence waited not: for to my lips  
"What things are these?" involuntary rush'd,  
And forc'd a passage out: whereat I mark'd  
A sudden lightening and new revelry.  
The eye was kindled: and the blessed sign  
No more to keep me wond'ring and suspense,  
Replied: "I see that thou believ'st these things,  
Because I tell them, but discern'st not how;  
So that thy knowledge waits not on thy faith:  
As one who knows the name of thing by rote,  
But is a stranger to its properties,

Till other's tongue reveal them. Fervent love  
And lively hope with violence assail  
The kingdom of the heavens, and overcome  
The will of the Most high; not in such sort  
As man prevails o'er man; but conquers it,  
Because 't is willing to be conquer'd, still,  
Though conquer'd, by its mercy conquering.

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

Which from so deep a fountain doth distil,  
As never eye created saw its rising,  
Plac'd all his love below on just and right:  
Wherefore of grace God op'd in him the eye  
To the redemption of mankind to come;  
Wherein believing, he endur'd no more  
The filth of paganism, and for their ways  
Rebuk'd the stubborn nations. The three nymphs,  
Whom at the right wheel thou 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 emprise 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 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, 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,  
Glow's 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'ers. 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 below'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 beheldest,  
Are seraphim and cherubim. Thus swift  
Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,  
Near as they can, approaching; and they can  
The more, the loftier their vision. Those,  
That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,  
Are thrones; in whom the first trine ends. And all  
Are blessed, even as their sight descends  
Deeper into the truth, wherein rest is  
For every mind. Thus happiness hath root  
In seeing, not in loving, which of sight  
Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such  
The meed, as unto each in due degree  
Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd.  
The other trine, that with still opening buds  
In this eternal springtide blossom fair,

Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,  
Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold  
Hosannas blending ever, from the three  
Transmitted. hierarchy of gods, for aye  
Rejoicing, dominations first, next then  
Virtues, and powers the third. The next to whom  
Are principdoms and archangels, with glad round  
To tread their festal ring; and last the band  
Angelical, disporting in their sphere.  
All, as they circle in their orders, look  
Aloft, and downward with such sway prevail,  
That all with mutual impulse tend to God.  
These once a mortal view beheld. Desire  
In Dionysius so intently wrought,  
That he, as I have done rang'd them; and nam'd  
Their orders, marshal'd in his thought. From him  
Dissentient, one refus'd his sacred read.  
But soon as in this heav'n his doubting eyes  
Were open'd, Gregory at his error smil'd  
Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth  
Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt  
Both this and much beside of these our orbs,  
From an eye-witness to heav'n's mysteries.”

## CANTO XXIX

No longer than what time Latona's twins  
Cover'd of Libra and the fleecy star,  
Together both, girding the' horizon hang,  
In even balance from the zenith pois'd,  
Till from that verge, each, changing hemisphere,  
Part the nice level; e'en so brief a space  
Did Beatrice's silence hold. A smile  
Bat painted on her cheek; and her fix'd gaze  
Bent on the point, at which my vision fail'd:  
When thus her words resuming she began:  
"I speak, nor what thou wouldst inquire demand;  
For I have mark'd it, where all time and place  
Are present. Not for increase to himself  
Of good, which may not be increas'd, but forth  
To manifest his glory by its beams,  
Inhabiting his own eternity,  
Beyond time's limit or what bound soe'er  
To circumscribe his being, as he will'd,  
Into new natures, like unto himself,  
Eternal Love unfolded. Nor before,  
As if in dull inaction torpid lay.  
For not in process of before or aft  
Upon these waters mov'd the Spirit of God.  
Simple and mix'd, both form and substance, forth  
To perfect being started, like three darts

Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray  
In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire,  
E'en at the moment of its issuing; thus  
Did, from th' eternal Sovran, beam entire  
His threefold operation, at one act  
Produc'd coeval. Yet in order each  
Created his due station knew: those highest,  
Who pure intelligence were made: mere power  
The lowest: in the midst, bound with strict league,  
Intelligence and power, unsever'd bond.  
Long tract of ages by the angels past,  
Ere the creating of another world,  
Describ'd on Jerome's pages thou hast seen.  
But that what I disclose to thee is true,  
Those penmen, whom the Holy Spirit mov'd  
In many a passage of their sacred book  
Attest; as thou by diligent search shalt find  
And reason in some sort discerns the same,  
Who scarce would grant the heav'nly ministers  
Of their perfection void, so long a space.  
Thus when and where these spirits of love were  
made,  
Thou know'st, and how: and knowing hast allay'd  
Thy thirst, which from the triple question rose.  
Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon  
Part of the angels fell: and in their fall  
Confusion to your elements ensued.  
The others kept their station: and this task,

Whereon thou lookst, began with such delight,  
That they surcease not ever, day nor night,  
Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause  
Was the curst pride of him, whom thou hast seen  
Pent with the world's incumbrance. Those, whom  
here

Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves  
Of his free bounty, who had made them apt  
For ministries so high: therefore their views  
Were by enlight'ning grace and their own merit  
Exalted; so that in their will confirm'd  
They stand, nor feel to fall. For do not doubt,  
But to receive the grace, which heav'n  
vouchsafes,

Is meritorious, even as the soul  
With prompt affection welcometh the guest.  
Now, without further help, if with good heed  
My words thy mind have treasur'd, thou  
henceforth

This consistory round about mayst scan,  
And gaze thy fill. But since thou hast on earth  
Heard vain disputers, reasoners in the schools,  
Canvas the' angelic nature, and dispute  
Its powers of apprehension, memory, choice;  
Therefore, 't is well thou take from me the truth,  
Pure and without disguise, which they below,  
Equivocating, darken and perplex.

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

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

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

Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony  
Fattens with this his swine, and others worse  
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,  
Paying with unstamp'd metal for their fare.

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

## CANTO XXX

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

If all, that hitherto is told of her,  
Were in one praise concluded, 't were too weak  
To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look  
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth,  
Not merely to exceed our human, but,  
That save its Maker, none can to the full  
Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail,  
Unequal to my theme, as never bard  
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.

For, as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,  
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile  
Hath dispossess my spirit of itself.  
Not from that day, when on this earth I first  
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,  
Have I with song applausive ever ceas'd  
To follow, but not follow them no more;  
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,  
When it doth touch the limit of his skill.

She (such as I bequeath her to the bruit  
Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,  
Urging its arduous matter to the close),  
Her words resum'd, in gesture and in voice  
Resembling one 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 charmt them thus,  
Vouchsafe one glance to gild our storm below!

If the grim brood, from Arctic shores that roam'd,  
(Where helice, forever, as she wheels,  
Sparkles a mother's fondness on her son)

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

So rov'd my ken, and its general form  
All Paradise survey'd: when round I turn'd  
With purpose of my lady to inquire  
Once more of things, that held my thought  
suspense,  
But answer found from other than I ween'd;  
For, Beatrice, when I thought to see,  
I saw instead a senior, at my side,  
Rob'd, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign

Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffus'd,  
With gestures such as spake a father's love.  
And, "Whither is she vanish'd?" straight I ask'd.

"By Beatrice summon'd," he replied,  
"I come to aid thy wish. Looking aloft  
To the third circle from the highest, there  
Behold her on the throne, wherein her merit  
Hath plac'd her." Answering not, mine eyes I  
rais'd,  
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow  
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.

Not from the centre of the sea so far  
Unto the region of the highest thunder,  
As was my ken from hers; and yet the form  
Came through that medium down, unmix'd and  
pure,

"O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest!  
Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in hell  
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd!  
For all mine eyes have seen, I, to thy power  
And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave,  
Thou hast to freedom brought me; and no means,  
For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.  
Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep.  
That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole,

Is loosen'd from this body, it may find  
Favour with thee." So I my suit 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 authentic  
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 dwelst; 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.

## **PURGATORY**

### **CANTO I**

O'er better waves to speed her rapid course  
The light bark of my genius lifts the sail,  
Well pleas'd to leave so cruel sea behind;  
And of that second region will I sing,  
In which the human spirit from sinful blot  
Is purg'd, and for ascent to Heaven prepares.

Here, O ye hallow'd Nine! for in your train  
I follow, here the deadened strain revive;  
Nor let Calliope refuse to sound  
A somewhat higher song, of that loud tone,  
Which when the wretched birds of chattering note  
Had heard, they of forgiveness lost all hope.

Sweet hue of eastern sapphire, that was spread  
O'er the serene aspect of the pure air,  
High up as the first circle, to mine eyes  
Unwonted joy renew'd, soon as I 'scap'd  
Forth from the atmosphere of deadly gloom,  
That had mine eyes and bosom fill'd with grief.  
The radiant planet, that to love invites,  
Made all the orient laugh, and veil'd beneath  
The Pisces' light, that in his escort came.

To the right hand I turn'd, and fix'd my mind  
On the' other pole attentive, where I saw  
Four stars ne'er seen before save by the ken  
Of our first parents. Heaven of their rays  
Seem'd joyous. O thou northern site, bereft  
Indeed, and widow'd, since of these depriv'd!

As from this view I had desisted, straight  
Turning a little tow'rds the other pole,  
There from whence now the wain had

disappear'd,  
I saw an old man standing by my side  
Alone, so worthy of rev'ence in his look,  
That ne'er from son to father more was ow'd.  
Low down his beard and mix'd with hoary white  
Descended, like his locks, which parting fell  
Upon his breast in double fold. The beams  
Of those four luminaries on his face  
So brightly shone, and with such radiance clear  
Deck'd it, that I beheld him as the sun.

“Say who are ye, that stemming the blind stream,  
Forth from th' eternal prison-house have fled?”  
He spoke and moved those venerable plumes.  
“Who hath conducted, or with lantern sure  
Lights you emerging from the depth of night,  
That makes the infernal valley ever black?  
Are the firm statutes of the dread abyss  
Broken, or in high heaven new laws ordain'd,  
That thus, condemn'd, ye to my caves approach?”

My guide, then laying hold on me, by words  
And intimations given with hand and head,  
Made my bent knees and eye submissive pay  
Due reverence; then thus to him replied.

“Not of myself I come; a Dame from heaven  
Descending, had besought me in my charge

To bring. But since thy will implies, that more  
Our true condition I unfold at large,  
Mine is not to deny thee thy request.  
This mortal ne'er hath seen the farthest gloom.  
But erring by his folly had approach'd  
So near, that little space was left to turn.  
Then, as before I told, I was dispatch'd  
To work his rescue, and no way remain'd  
Save this which I have ta'en. I have display'd  
Before him all the regions of the bad;  
And purpose now those spirits to display,  
That under thy command are purg'd from sin.  
How I have brought him would be long to say.  
From high descends the virtue, by whose aid  
I to thy sight and hearing him have led.  
Now may our coming please thee. In the search  
Of liberty he journeys: that how dear  
They know, who for her sake have life refus'd.  
Thou knowest, to whom death for her was sweet  
In Utica, where thou didst leave those weeds,  
That in the last great day will shine so bright.  
For us the' eternal edicts are unmov'd:  
He breathes, and I am free of Minos' power,  
Abiding in that circle where the eyes  
Of thy chaste Marcia beam, who still in look  
Prays thee, O hallow'd spirit! to own her shine.  
Then by her love we' implore thee, let us pass  
Through thy sev'n regions; for which best thanks

I for thy favour will to her return,  
If mention there below thou not disdain.”

“Marcia so pleasing in my sight was found,”  
He then to him rejoin'd, “while I was there,  
That all she ask'd me I was fain to grant.  
Now that beyond the' accursed stream she dwells,  
She may no longer move me, by that law,  
Which was ordain'd me, when I issued thence.  
Not so, if Dame from heaven, as thou sayst,  
Moves and directs thee; then no flattery needs.  
Enough for me that in her name thou ask.  
Go therefore now: and with a slender reed  
See that thou duly gird him, and his face  
Lave, till all sordid stain thou wipe from thence.  
For not with eye, by any cloud obscur'd,  
Would it be seemly before him to come,  
Who stands the foremost minister in heaven.  
This islet all around, there far beneath,  
Where the wave beats it, on the oozy bed  
Produces store of reeds. No other plant,  
Cover'd with leaves, or harden'd in its stalk,  
There lives, not bending to the water's sway.  
After, this way return not; but the sun  
Will show you, that now rises, where to take  
The mountain in its easiest ascent.”

He disappear'd; and I myself uprais'd

Speechless, and to my guide retiring close,  
Toward him turn'd mine eyes. He thus began;  
"My son! observant thou my steps pursue.  
We must retreat to rearward, for that way  
The champain to its low extreme declines."

The dawn had chas'd the matin hour of prime,  
Which deaf before it, so that from afar  
I spy'd the trembling of the ocean stream.

We travers'd the deserted plain, as one  
Who, wander'd from his track, thinks every step  
Trodden in vain till he regain the path.

When we had come, where yet the tender dew  
Strove with the sun, and in a place, where fresh  
The wind breath'd o'er it, while it slowly dried;  
Both hands extended on the watery grass  
My master plac'd, in graceful act and kind.  
Whence I of his intent before appriz'd,  
Stretch'd out to him my cheeks suffus'd with  
tears.

There to my visage he anew restor'd  
That hue, which the dun shades of hell conceal'd.

Then on the solitary shore arriv'd,  
That never sailing on its waters saw  
Man, that could after measure back his course,

He girt me in such manner as had pleas'd  
Him who instructed, and O, strange to tell!  
As he selected every humble plant,  
Wherever one was pluck'd, another there  
Resembling, straightway in its place arose.

## CANTO II

Now had the sun to that horizon reach'd,  
That covers, with the most exalted point  
Of its meridian circle, Salem's walls,  
And night, that opposite to him her orb  
Sounds, from the stream of Ganges issued forth,  
Holding the scales, that from her hands are  
dropp'd  
When she reigns highest: so that where I was,  
Aurora's white and vermeil-tinctur'd cheek  
To orange turn'd as she in age increas'd.

Meanwhile we linger'd by the water's brink,  
Like men, who, musing on their road, in thought  
Journey, while motionless the body rests.  
When lo! as near upon the hour of dawn,  
Through the thick vapours Mars with fiery beam  
Glares down in west, over the ocean floor;  
So seem'd, what once again I hope to view,

A light so swiftly coming through the sea,  
No winged course might equal its career.

From which when for a space I had withdrawn  
Thine eyes, to make inquiry of my guide,  
Again I look'd and saw it grown in size  
And brightness: thou on either side appear'd  
Something, but what I knew not of bright hue,  
And by degrees from underneath it came  
Another. My preceptor silent yet  
Stood, while the brightness, that we first  
discern'd,

Open'd the form of wings: then when he knew  
The pilot, cried aloud, "Down, down; bend low  
Thy knees; behold God's angel: fold thy hands:  
Now shalt thou see true Ministers indeed."

Lo how all human means he sets at naught!  
So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail  
Except his wings, between such distant shores.  
Lo how straight up to heaven he holds them  
rear'd,  
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,  
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change!"

As more and more toward us came, more bright  
Appear'd the bird of God, nor could the eye  
Endure his splendor near: I mine bent down.

He drove ashore in a small bark so swift  
And light, that in its course no wave it drank.  
The heav'nly steersman at the prow was seen,  
Visibly written blessed in his looks.

Within a hundred spirits and more there sat.  
“In Exitu Israel de Aegypto;”  
All with one voice together sang, with what  
In the remainder of that hymn is writ.  
Then soon as with the sign of holy cross  
He bless'd them, they at once leap'd out on land,  
The swiftly as he came return'd. The crew,  
There left, appear'd astounded with the place,  
Gazing around as one who sees new sights.

From every side the sun darted his beams,  
And with his arrowy radiance from mid heav'n  
Had chas'd the Capricorn, when that strange tribe  
Lifting their eyes towards us: “If ye know,  
Declare what path will Lead us to the mount.”

Them Virgil answer'd. “Ye suppose perchance  
Us well acquainted with this place: but here,  
We, as yourselves, are strangers. Not long erst  
We came, before you but a little space,  
By other road so rough and hard, that now  
The' ascent will seem to us as play.” The spirits,  
Who from my breathing had perceiv'd I liv'd,

Grew pale with wonder. As the multitude  
Flock round a herald, sent with olive branch,  
To hear what news he brings, and in their haste  
Tread one another down, e'en so at sight  
Of me those happy spirits were fix'd, each one  
Forgetful of its errand, to depart,  
Where cleans'd from sin, it might be made all  
fair.

Then one I saw darting before the rest  
With such fond ardour to embrace me, I  
To do the like was mov'd. O shadows vain  
Except in outward semblance! thrice my hands  
I clasp'd behind it, they as oft return'd  
Empty into my breast again. Surprise  
I needs must think was painted in my looks,  
For that the shadow smil'd and backward drew.  
To follow it I hasten'd, but with voice  
Of sweetness it enjoin'd me to desist.  
Then who it was I knew, and pray'd of it,  
To talk with me, it would a little pause.  
It answered: "Thee as in my mortal frame  
I lov'd, so loos'd forth it I love thee still,  
And therefore pause; but why walkest thou here?"

"Not without purpose once more to return,  
Thou find'st me, my Casella, where I am  
Journeying this way;" I said, "but how of thee

Hath so much time been lost?" He answer'd  
straight:

"No outrage hath been done to me, if he  
Who when and whom he chooses takes, me oft  
This passage hath denied, since of just will  
His will he makes. These three months past  
indeed,

He, whose chose to enter, with free leave  
Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore  
Where Tyber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd  
kind

Admittance, at that river's mouth, tow'rd which  
His wings are pointed, for there always throug  
All such as not to Archeron descend."

Then I: "If new laws have not quite destroy'd  
Memory and use of that sweet song of love,  
That while all my cares had power to 'swage;  
Please thee with it a little to console  
My spirit, that incumber'd with its frame,  
Travelling so far, of pain is overcome."

"Love that discourses in my thoughts." He then  
Began in such soft accents, that within  
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide  
And all who came with him, so well were pleas'd,  
That seem'd naught else might in their thoughts  
have room.

Fast fix'd in mute attention to his notes  
We stood, when lo! that old man venerable  
Exclaiming, "How is this, ye tardy spirits?  
What negligence detains you loit'ring here?  
Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,  
That from your eyes the sight of God conceal."

As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food  
Collected, blade or tares, without their pride  
Accustom'd, and in still and quiet sort,  
If aught alarm them, suddenly desert  
Their meal, assail'd by more important care;  
So I that new-come troop beheld, the song  
Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side,  
As one who goes yet where he tends knows not.

Nor with less hurried step did we depart.

### CANTO III

Them sudden flight had scatter'd over the plain,  
Turn'd tow'rds the mountain, whither reason's  
voice  
Drives us; I to my faithful company  
Adhering, left it not. For how of him  
Depriv'd, might I have sped, or who beside

Would o'er the mountainous tract have led my  
steps  
He with the bitter pang of self-remorse  
Seem'd smitten. O clear conscience and upright  
How doth a little fling wound thee sore!

Soon as his feet desisted (slack'ning pace),  
From haste, that mars all decency of act,  
My mind, that in itself before was wrapt,  
Its thoughts expanded, as with joy restor'd:  
And full against the steep ascent I set  
My face, where highest to heav'n its top  
o'erflows.

The sun, that flar'd behind, with ruddy beam  
Before my form was broken; for in me  
His rays resistance met. I turn'd aside  
With fear of being left, when I beheld  
Only before myself the ground obscur'd.  
When thus my solace, turning him around,  
Bespake me kindly: "Why distrustest thou?  
Believ'st not I am with thee, thy sure guide?  
It now is evening there, where buried lies  
The body, in which I cast a shade, remov'd  
To Naples from Brundusium's wall. Nor thou  
Marvel, if before me no shadow fall,  
More than that in the sky element  
One ray obstructs not other. To endure

Torments of heat and cold extreme, like frames  
That virtue hath dispos'd, which how it works  
Wills not to us should be reveal'd. Insane  
Who hopes, our reason may that space explore,  
Which holds three persons in one substance knit.  
Seek not the wherefore, race of human kind;  
Could ye have seen the whole, no need had been  
For Mary to bring forth. Moreover ye  
Have seen such men desiring fruitlessly;  
To whose desires repose would have been giv'n,  
That now but serve them for eternal grief.  
I speak of Plato, and the Stagyrite,  
And others many more." And then he bent  
Downwards his forehead, and in troubled mood  
Broke off his speech. Meanwhile we had arriv'd  
Far as the mountain's foot, and there the rock  
Found of so steep ascent, that nimblest steps  
To climb it had been vain. The most remote  
Most wild untrodden path, in all the tract  
'Twixt Lerice and Turbia were to this  
A ladder easy' and open of access.

"Who knows on which hand now the steep  
declines?"

My master said and paus'd, "so that he may  
Ascend, who journeys without aid of wine?"  
And while with looks directed to the ground  
The meaning of the pathway he explor'd,

And I gaz'd upward round the stony height,  
Of spirits, that toward us mov'd their steps,  
Yet moving seem'd not, they so slow approach'd.

I thus my guide address'd: “Upraise thine eyes,  
Lo that way some, of whom thou may'st obtain  
Counsel, if of thyself thou find'st it not!”

Straightway he look'd, and with free speech  
replied:

“Let us tend thither: they but softly come.  
And thou be firm in hope, my son belov'd.”

Now was that people distant far in space  
A thousand paces behind ours, as much  
As at a throw the nervous arm could fling,  
When all drew backward on the messy crags  
Of the steep bank, and firmly stood unmov'd  
As one who walks in doubt might stand to look.

“O spirits perfect! O already chosen!”  
Virgil to them began, “by that blest peace,  
Which, as I deem, is for you all prepar'd,  
Instruct us where the mountain low declines,  
So that attempt to mount it be not vain.  
For who knows most, him loss of time most  
grieves.”

As sheep, that step from forth their fold, by one,  
Or pairs, or three at once; meanwhile the rest  
Stand fearfully, bending the eye and nose  
To ground, and what the foremost does, that do  
The others, gath'ring round her, if she stops,  
Simple and quiet, nor the cause discern;  
So saw I moving to advance the first,  
Who of that fortunate crew were at the head,  
Of modest mien and graceful in their gait.  
When they before me had beheld the light  
From my right side fall broken on the ground,  
So that the shadow reach'd the cave, they stopp'd  
And somewhat back retir'd: the same did all,  
Who follow'd, though unweeting of the cause.

“Unask'd of you, yet freely I confess,  
This is a human body which ye see.  
That the sun's light is broken on the ground,  
Marvel not: but believe, that not without  
Virtue deriv'd from Heaven, we to climb  
Over this wall aspire.” So them bespake  
My master; and that virtuous tribe rejoin'd;  
“Turn, and before you there the entrance lies,”  
Making a signal to us with bent hands.

Then of them one began. “Whoe'er thou art,  
Who journey'st thus this way, thy visage turn,  
Think if me elsewhere thou hast ever seen.”

I tow'rds him turn'd, and with fix'd eye beheld.  
Comely, and fair, and gentle of aspect,  
He seem'd, but on one brow a gash was mark'd.

When humbly I disclaim'd to have beheld  
Him ever: "Now behold!" he said, and show'd  
High on his breast a wound: then smiling spake.

"I am Manfredi, grandson to the Queen  
Costanza: whence I pray thee, when return'd,  
To my fair daughter go, the parent glad  
Of Aragonia and Sicilia's pride;  
And of the truth inform her, if of me  
Aught else be told. When by two mortal blows  
My frame was shatter'd, I betook myself  
Weeping to him, who of free will forgives.  
My sins were horrible; but so wide arms  
Hath goodness infinite, that it receives  
All who turn to it. Had this text divine  
Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,  
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,  
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,  
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole  
Protected; but the rain now drenches them,  
And the wind drives, out of the kingdom's  
bounds,  
Far as the stream of Verde, where, with lights

Extinguish'd, he remov'd them from their bed.  
Yet by their curse we are not so destroy'd,  
But that the eternal love may turn, while hope  
Retains her verdant blossoms. True it is,  
That such one as in contumacy dies  
Against the holy church, though he repent,  
Must wander thirty-fold for all the time  
In his presumption past; if such decree  
Be not by prayers of good men shorter made  
Look therefore if thou canst advance my bliss;  
Revealing to my good Costanza, how  
Thou hast beheld me, and beside the terms  
Laid on me of that interdict; for here  
By means of those below much profit comes.”