

Whenas the car was o'er against me, straight  
 Was heard a thundering, at whose voice it seem'd  
 The chosen multitude were stay'd; for there,  
 With the first ensigns, made they solemn halt.

## CANTO XXX.

## ARGUMENT.

Beatrice descends from heaven, and rebukes the poet.

SOON as that polar light,<sup>1</sup> fair ornament  
 Of the first heaven, which hath never known  
 Setting nor rising, nor the shadowy veil  
 Of other cloud than sin, to duty there  
 Each one conveying, as that lower doth  
 The steersman to his port, stood firmly fixed;  
 Forthwith the saintly tribe, who in the van  
 Between the Gryphon and its radiance came,  
 Did turn them to the car, as to their rest:  
 And one, as if commission'd from above,  
 In holy chant thrice shouted forth aloud;  
 "Come, spouse! from Libanus:"<sup>2</sup> and all the rest  
 Took up the song.—At the last audit, so  
 The blest shall rise, from forth his cavern each  
 Uplifting lightly his new-vested flesh;  
 As, on the sacred litter, at the voice  
 Authoritative of that elder, sprang  
 A hundred ministers and messengers  
 Of life eternal. "Blessed<sup>3</sup> thou, who comest!"

<sup>1</sup> *That polar light.*—The seven candlesticks of gold, which he calls the polar light of heaven itself, because they perform the same office for Christians that the polar star does for mariners, in guiding them to their port.

<sup>2</sup> *Come, spouse! from Libanus.*—"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me, from Lebanon."  
—Song of Solomon iv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed.*—"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. xxi. 9.



And, "Oh!" they cried, "from full hands<sup>1</sup> scatter ye  
Unwithering lilies:" and, so saying, cast  
Flowers over head and round them on all sides.

I have beheld, ere now, at break of day,  
The eastern clime all roseate; and the sky  
Opposed, one deep and beautiful serene;  
And the sun's face so shaded, and with mists  
Attemper'd, at his rising, that the eye  
Long while endured the sight: thus, in a cloud  
Of flowers,<sup>2</sup> that from those hands angelic rose,  
And down within and outside of the car  
Fell showering, in white veil with olive wreathed,  
A virgin in my view appear'd, beneath  
Green mantle, robed in hue of living flame  
And<sup>3</sup> o'er my spirit, that so long a time  
Had from her presence felt no shuddering dread,  
Albeit mine eyes discern'd her not, there moved  
A hidden virtue from her, at whose touch  
The power of ancient love<sup>4</sup> was strong within me.  
No sooner on my vision streaming, smote  
The heavenly influence, which, years past, and e'en

<sup>1</sup> From full hands.—

"Manibus date lilia plenis."

Virgil, *Aeneid*, lib. vi. 884.

<sup>2</sup> In a cloud of flowers.—

"Dentro una nuvola di fiori.

\* \* \* Ninguntque rosarum.

Floribus, umbrantes matrem," &c.

Lucretius, lib. ii.

Thus Milton:

"Eye separate he spies,

Veil'd in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood."  
*Paradise Lost*, b. ix., v. 425.

And Thomson, in his Invocation to Spring:

"Veil'd in a shower

Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

<sup>3</sup> And.—In the first edition it stood thus:

"And o'er my spirit, that in former days  
Within her presence had abode so long,  
No shuddering terror crept. Mine eyes no more  
Had knowledge of her; yet there moved from her  
A hidden virtue, at whose touch awaked," &c.

And this was a translation of the common reading, which has "con la sua presenza," instead of "che alla sua presenza," and a full stop instead of a comma after "infranto." As I have little doubt but that the reading of the Nidobeatina edition and that of many MSS. is right in this instance, I have altered the version as it now stands in the text, which still perhaps needs some explanation. His spirit, which had been so long unawed by the presence of Beatrice (for she had been ten years dead), now felt, through a secret influence proceeding from her, its ancient love revived, though his sight had not yet distinguished her.

<sup>4</sup> The power of ancient love.—

"D'antico amor senti la gran potenza.

Io sento sì d'amor la gran possanza."

Dante, *Canzone* vi.

"Sveglia d'antico amor la gran possanza."

Mr. Mathias's *Ode to Mr. Nichols*, *Gray's Works*,  
4to, 1814, vol. i., p. 532.