

Their flowery sprinkling; and mine eyes beheld
 (Yet unassured and wavering in their view)
 Beatrice; she, who towards the mystic shape,
 That joins two natures in one form, had turn'd:
 And, even under shadow of her veil,
 And parted by the verdant rill that flow'd
 Between, in loveliness she seem'd as much
 Her former self surpassing, as on earth
 All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads
 Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more
 Its love had late beguiled me, now the more
 Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote
 The bitter consciousness, that on the ground
 O'erpower'd I fell: and what my state was then,
 She knows, who was the cause. When now my strength
 Flow'd back, returning outward from the heart,
 The lady,¹ whom alone I first had seen,
 I found above me. "Loose me not," she cried:
 "Loose not thy hold:" and lo! had dragg'd me high
 As to my neck into the stream; while she,
 Still as she drew me after, swept along,
 Swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.

The blessed shore approaching, then was heard
 So sweetly, "Tu asperges me,"² that I
 Nay not remember, much less tell the sound.

The beauteous dame, her arms expanding, clasp'd
 My temples, and immersed me where 'twas fit
 The wave should drench me: and, thence raising up,
 Within the fourfold dance of lovely nymphs
 Presented me so laved; and with their arm
 They each did cover me. "Here are we nymphs,

derives it from the Nidobeatina edition. By the
 "primal creatures" are meant the angels, who were
 scattering the flowers on Beatrice.

¹ The lady.—Matilda.

² *Tu asperges me.*—"Purge me with hyssop, and
 I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter
 than snow."—Ps. li. 7. Sung by the choir, while
 the priest is sprinkling the people with holy water.



The beauteous dame, her arms expanding, clasp'd
 My temples, and immersed me where 'twas fit
 The waves should drench me.

And in the heaven are stars.¹ Or ever earth
 Was visited of Beatrice, we
 Appointed for her handmaids, tended on her.
 We to her eyes will lead thee: but the light
 Of gladness, that is in them, well to scan,
 Those yonder three,² of deeper ken than ours,
 Thy sight shall quicken." Thus began their song:
 And then they led me to the Gryphon's breast,
 Where, turn'd toward us, Beatrice stood.
 "Spare not thy vision. We have station'd thee
 Before the emeralds,³ whence love, erewhile,
 Hath drawn his weapons on thee." As they spake,
 A thousand fervent wishes riveted
 Mine eyes upon her beaming eyes, that stood,
 Still fix'd toward the Gryphon, motionless.
 As the sun strikes a mirror, even thus
 Within those orbs the twyfold being shone;
 For ever varying, in one figure now
 Reflected, now in other. Reader! muse
 How wondrous in my sight it seem'd, to mark
 A thing, albeit stedfast in itself,
 Yet in its imaged semblance mutable.
 Full of amaze, and joyous, while my soul
 Fed on the viand, whereof still desire
 Grows with satiety; the other three,
 With gesture that declared a loftier line,
 Advanced: to their own carol, on they came
 Dancing, in festive ring angelical.

¹ *Here are we nymphs, and in the heaven are stars.*
 —See canto i. 24.

² *Well to scan, those yonder three.*—Faith, Hope, and Charity.

³ *We have station'd thee before the emeralds.*—The eyes of Beatrice. The author of "Illustrations of Shakespeare," 8vo, 1807, vol. ii., p. 193, has referred to old writers, by whom the epithet green is given to eyes, as by the early French poets, and by Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet," act. iii., sc. 5:

"An eagle, madam,
 Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye."

Mr. Douce's conjecture, that eyes of this colour are much less common now than formerly, is not so probable as that writers, and especially poets, should at times be somewhat loose and general in applying terms expressive of colour, whereof an instance may be seen in some ingenious remarks by Mr. Blomfield on the word *κράνεις*—*Æschylæ Persæ*, edit. 1814, Glossar., p. 107.

"Turn, Beatrice!" was their song: "Oh! turn
 Thy saintly sight on this thy faithful one,
 Who, to behold thee, many a wearisome pace
 Hath measured. Gracious at our prayer, vouchsafe
 Unveil to him thy cheeks: that he may mark
 Thy second beauty, now conceal'd." O splendour!
 O sacred light eternal! who is he,
 So pale with musing in Pierian shades,
 Or with that fount so lavishly imbued,
 Whose spirit should not fail him in the essay
 To represent thee such as thou didst seem,
 When under cope of the still-chiming heaven
 Thou gavest to open air thy charms reveal'd?

CANTO XXXII.

ARGUMENT.

Dante is warned not to gaze too fixedly on Beatrice. The procession moves on, accompanied by Matilda, Statius, and Dante, till they reach an exceeding lofty tree, where divers strange chances befall.

MINE eyes with such an eager coveting
 Were bent to rid them of their ten years' thirst,¹
 No other sense was waking: and e'en they
 Were fenced on either side from heed of aught;
 So tangled, in its custom'd toils, that smile
 Of saintly brightness drew me to itself:
 When forcibly, toward the left, my sight
 The sacred virgins turn'd; for from their lips
 I heard the warning sounds: "Too fix'd a gaze!"²
 Awhile my vision labour'd; as when late
 Upon the o'erstrain'd eyes the sun hath smote:
 But soon,³ to lesser object, as the view
 Was now recover'd (lesser in respect
 To that excess of sensible, whence late
 I had perforce been sunder'd), on their right
 I mark'd that glorious army wheel, and turn,
 Against the sun and sevenfold lights, their front.
 As when, their bucklers for protection raised,
 A well-ranged troop, with portly banners curl'd,

¹ *Their ten years' thirst.*—Beatrice had been dead ten years.

² *Too fix'd a gaze.*—The allegorical interpretation of Vellutello, whether it be considered as justly inferable from the text or not, conveys so useful a lesson, that it deserves our notice. "The understanding is sometimes so intently engaged in contemplating the light of divine truth in the Scriptures, that

it becomes dazzled, and is made less capable of attaining such knowledge, than if it had sought after it with greater moderation."

³ *But soon.*—As soon as his sight was recovered, so as to bear the view of that glorious procession, which, splendid as it was, was yet less so than Beatrice, by whom his vision had been overpowered, &c.