

On Tabor's mount, admitted to behold
 The blossoming of that fair tree,¹ whose fruit
 Is coveted of angels, and doth make
 Perpetual feast in heaven; to themselves
 Returning, at the word whence deeper sleeps²
 Were broken, they their tribe diminish'd saw;
 Both Moses and Elias gone, and changed
 The stole their master wore; thus to myself
 Returning, over me beheld I stand
 The piteous one,³ who, cross the stream, had brought
 My steps. "And where," all doubting, I exclaim'd,
 "Is Beatrice?"—"See her," she replied,
 "Beneath the fresh leaf, seated on its root.
 Behold the associate choir, that circles her.
 The others, with a melody more sweet
 And more profound, journeying to higher realms,
 Upon the Gryphon tend." If there her words
 Were closed, I know not; but mine eyes had now
 Ta'en view of her, by whom all other thoughts
 Were barr'd admittance. On the very ground
 Alone she sat, as she had there been left
 A guard upon the wain, which I beheld
 Bound to the twyform beast. The seven nymphs
 Did make themselves a cloister round about her;
 And, in their hands, upheld those lights⁴ secure
 From blast septentrion and the gusty south.

"A little while thou shalt be forester here;
 And citizen shalt be, for ever with me,
 Of that true Rome,⁵ wherein Christ dwells a Roman.

¹ *Blossoming of that fair tree.*—Our Saviour's transfiguration. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons."—Solomon's Song ii. 3.

² *Whence deeper sleeps.*—The sleep of death, in the instance of the ruler of the Synagogue's daughter and of Lazarus.

³ *Returning, over me beheld I stand the piteous one.*—Matilda.

⁴ *And, in their hands, upheld those lights.*—The tapers of gold.

⁵ *And citizen shalt be, for ever with me, of that true Rome.*—Of heaven.

To profit the misguided world, keep now
 Thine eyes upon the car; and what thou seest,
 Take heed thou write, returning to that place."¹

Thus Beatrice: at whose feet inclined
 Devout, at her behest, my thought and eyes,
 I, as she bade, directed. Never fire,
 With so swift motion, forth a stormy cloud
 Leap'd downward from the welkin's furthest bound,
 As I beheld the bird of Jove² descend
 Down through the tree; and, as he rush'd, the rind
 Disparting crush beneath him; buds much more,
 And leaflets. On the car, with all his might
 He struck; whence, staggering, like a ship it reel'd,
 At random driven, to starboard now, o'ercome,
 And now to larboard, by the vaulting waves.

Next, springing up into the chariot's womb,
 A fox³ I saw, with hunger seeming pined
 Of all good food. But, for his ugly sins
 The saintly maid rebuking him, away
 Scampering he turn'd, fast as his hide-bound corpse
 Would bear him. Next, from whence before he came,
 I saw the eagle dart into the hull
 O' the car, and leave it with his feathers lined:⁴
 And then a voice, like that which issues forth
 From heart with sorrow rived, did issue forth
 From heaven, and, "O poor bark of mine!" it cried,
 "How badly art thou freighted." Then it seem'd
 That the earth open'd, between either wheel;
 And I beheld a dragon⁵ issue thence,
 That through the chariot fix'd his forked train;

¹ *To that place.*—To the earth.

² *The bird of Jove.*—This, which is imitated from Ezek. xvii. 3, 4, is typical of the persecutions which the church sustained from the Roman emperors.

³ *A fox.*—By the fox probably is represented the treachery of the heretics.

⁴ *With his feathers lined.*—In allusion to the donations made by Constantine to the church.

⁵ *A dragon.*—Probably Mahomet; for what Lombardi offers to the contrary is far from satisfactory.

And like a wasp, that draggeth back the sting,
 So drawing forth his baleful train, he dragg'd
 Part of the bottom forth; and went his way,
 Exulting. What remain'd, as lively turf
 With green herb, so did clothe itself with plumes,¹
 Which haply had, with purpose chaste and kind,
 Been offer'd; and therewith were clothed the wheels,
 Both one and other, and the beam, so quickly,
 A sigh were not breathed sooner. Thus transform'd,
 The holy structure, through its several parts,
 Did put forth heads;² three on the beam, and one
 On every side: the first like oxen horn'd;
 But with a single horn upon their front,
 The four. Like monster, sight hath never seen
 O'er it³ methought there sat, secure as rock
 On mountain's lofty top, a shameless whore,
 Whose ken roved loosely round her. At her side,
 As 'twere that none might bear her off, I saw
 A giant stand; and ever and anon
 They mingled kisses. But, her lustful eyes
 Chancing on me to wander, that fell minion
 Scourged her from head to foot all o'er; then full
 Of jealousy, and fierce with rage, unloosed
 The monster, and dragg'd on,⁴ so far across
 The forest, that from me its shades alone
 Shielded the harlot and the new-form'd brute.

¹ *With plumes.*—The increase of wealth and temporal dominion, which followed the supposed gift of Constantine.

² *Heads.*—By the seven heads, it is supposed with sufficient probability, are meant the seven capital sins: by the three with two horns, pride, anger, and avarice, injurious both to man himself and to his neighbour: by the four with one horn, gluttony, gloominess, concupiscence, and envy, hurtful, at least in their primary effects, chiefly to him who is

guilty of them. Vellutello refers to Rev. xvii. Landino, who is followed by Lombardi, understands the seven heads to signify the seven sacraments, and the ten horns the ten commandments. Compare "Hell," c. xix. 112.

³ *O'er it.*—The harlot is thought to represent the state of the church under Boniface VIII., and the giant to figure Philip IV. of France.

⁴ *Dragg'd on.*—The removal of the Pope's residence from Rome to Avignon is pointed at.



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 As 't were that none might bear her off, I saw
 A giant stand; and ever and anon
 They mingled kisses.