

CANTO XXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

After a hymn sung, Beatrice leaves the tree, and takes with her the seven virgins, Matilda, Statius, and Dante. She then darkly predicts to our Poets some future events. Lastly, the whole band arrive at the fountain, from whence the two streams, Lethe and Eunoe, separating, flow different ways; and Matilda, at the desire of Beatrice, causes our Poet to drink of the latter stream.

"THE heathen,¹ Lord! are come:" responsive thus,

The trinal now, and now the virgin band
Quaternion, their sweet psalmody began,
Weeping; and Beatrice listen'd, sad
And sighing, to the song, in such a mood,
That Mary, as she stood beside the cross,
Was scarce more changed. But when they gave her place
To speak, then, risen upright on her feet,
She, with a colour glowing bright as fire,
Did answer: "Yet a little while,² and ye
Shall see me not; and, my beloved sisters!
Again a little while, and ye shall see me."

Before her then she marshal'd all the seven;
And, beckoning only, motion'd me, the dame,
And that remaining sage,³ to follow her.

So on she pass'd; and had not set, I ween,
Her tenth step to the ground, when, with mine eyes,
Her eyes encounter'd; and, with visage mild,
"So mend thy pace," she cried, "that if my words
Address thee, thou mayst still be aptly placed
To hear them." Soon as duly to her side

¹ *The heathen*.—"O God, the heathen are come
into thine inheritance."—Ps. lxxix. 1.

² *Yet a little while*.—"A little while, and ye shall

not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall
see me."—John xvi. 16.

³ *That remaining sage*.—Statius.

I now had hasten'd: "Brother!" she began,
 "Why makest thou no attempt at questioning,
 As thus we walk together?" Like to those
 Who, speaking with too reverent an awe
 Before their betters, draw not forth the voice
 Alive unto their lips, befell me then
 That I in sounds imperfect thus began:
 "Lady! what I have need of, that thou know'st;
 And what will suit my need." She answering thus:
 "Of fearfulness and shame, I will that thou
 Henceforth do rid thee; that thou speak no more,
 As one who dreams.¹ Thus far be taught of me:
 The vessel which thou saw'st the serpent break,
 Was, and is not:² let him, who hath the blame,
 Hope not to scare God's vengeance with a sop.³
 Without an heir for ever shall not be
 That eagle,⁴ he, who left the chariot plumed,
 Which monster made it first and next a prey.
 Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars
 E'en now approaching, whose conjunction, free
 From all impediment and bar, brings on
 A season, in the which, one sent from God
 (Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out),
 That foul one, and the accomplice of her guilt,
 The giant, both, shall slay. And if perchance

¹ *As one who dreams.*—Imitated by Petrarch, L. i., s. 41:

Se parole fai,
 Sono imperfette e quasi d'uom che sogna."

² *Was, and is not.*—"The beast that was and is not."—Rev. xvii. 11.

³ *Hope not to scare God's vengeance with a sop.*—"Let not him who hath occasioned the destruction of the church, that vessel which the serpent brake, hope to appease the anger of the Deity by any outward acts of religious, or rather superstitious ceremony; such as was that, in our poet's time, performed by a murderer at Florence, who imagined himself secure from vengeance, if he ate a sop of

bread in wine upon the grave of the person murdered, within the space of nine days."

⁴ *That eagle.*—He prognosticates that the Emperor of Germany will not always continue to submit to the usurpations of the Pope, and foretells the coming of Henry VII., Duke of Luxemburg, signified by the numerical figures DVX; or, as Lombardi supposes, of Can Grande della Scala, appointed the leader of the Ghibelline forces. It is unnecessary to point out the imitation of the Apocalypse in the manner of this prophecy. Troya assigns reasons for applying the prediction to Ugucione della Faggiola rather than to Henry or Can Grande. "Veltro Allegorico di Dante," ediz. 1826, p. 143. But see my note, "Hell," i. 102.

My saying, dark as Themis or as Sphinx,
 Fail to persuade thee (since like them it foils
 The intellect with blindness), yet ere long
 Events shall be the Naiads,¹ that will solve
 This knotty riddle; and no damage light²
 On flock or field. Take heed; and as these words
 By me are utter'd, teach them even so
 To those who live that life, which is a race
 To death: and when thou writest them, keep in mind
 Not to conceal how thou hast seen the plant,
 That twice³ hath now been spoil'd. This whoso robs,
 This whoso plucks, with blasphemy of deed
 Sins against God, who for his use alone
 Creating hallow'd it. For taste of this,
 In pain and in desire, five thousand years⁴
 And upward, the first soul did yearn for him
 Who punish'd in himself the fatal gust.

"Thy reason slumbers, if it deem this height,
 And summit thus inverted,⁵ of the plant,
 Without due cause: and were not vainer thoughts,
 As Elsa's numbing waters,⁶ to thy soul,

¹ *The Naiads.*—Dante, it is observed, has been led into a mistake by a corruption in the text of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," l. vii. 757, where he found—

"Carmina Naiades non intellecta priorum
 Solvunt."

instead of—

"Carmina Laiades non intellecta priorum
 Solverat,"

as it has been since corrected by Heinsius. Lombardi, after Rosa Morando, questions the propriety of this emendation, and refers to Pausanias, where "the Nymphs" are spoken of as expounders of oracles, for a vindication of the poet's accuracy. Should the reader blame me for not departing from the error of the original (if error it be), he may substitute:

"Events shall be the Ædipus will solve," &c.

² *No damage light.*—

"Protinus Aoniis immissa est bellua Thebis,
 Cessit et exitio multis; pecorique sibi que
 Ruricolæ pavere feram."

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*.

³ *Twice.*—First by the eagle and next by the giant. See the last canto, v. 110 and v. 154.

⁴ *Five thousand years.*—That such was the opinion of the church, Lombardi shows by a reference to Baronius, "Martyr. Rom.," Dec. 25: "Anno a creatione mundi, quando a principio creavit Deus cœlum et terram, quinquies millesimo centesimo nonagesimo—Jesus Christus—conceptus."—Edit. Col. Agripp., 4to, 1610, p. 858.

⁵ *Inverted.*—The branches, unlike those of other trees, spreading more widely the higher they rose. See the last canto, v. 39.

⁶ *Elsa's numbing waters.*—The Elsa, a little stream which flows into the Arno about twenty miles below Florence, is said to possess a petrifying quality. Fazio degli Uberti, at the conclusion of cap. vii., l. 3, of the "Dittamondo," mentions a successful experiment he had himself made of the property here attributed to it.

And their fond pleasures had not dyed it dark
 As Pyramus the mulberry; thou hadst seen,¹
 In such momentous circumstance alone,
 God's equal justice morally implied
 In the forbidden tree. But since I mark thee,
 In understanding, harden'd into stone,
 And, to that hardness, spotted too and stain'd,
 So that thine eye is dazzled at my word;
 I will, that, if not written, yet at least
 Painted thou take it in thee, for the cause,
 That one brings home his staff inwreathed with palm."²

I thus: "As wax by seal, that changeth not
 Its impress, now is stamp'd my brain by thee.
 But wherefore soars thy wish'd-for speech so high
 Beyond my sight, that loses it the more,
 The more it strains to reach it?"—"To the end
 That thou mayst know," she answer'd straight, "the school,
 That thou hast follow'd; and how far behind,
 When following my discourse, its learning halts:
 And mayst behold your art,³ from the divine
 As distant, as the disagreement is
 'Twixt earth and heaven's most high and rapturous orb."

¹ *Thou hadst seen.*—This is obscure. But it would seem as if he meant to inculcate his favourite doctrine of the inviolability of the empire, and of the care taken by Providence to protect it.

² *That one brings home his staff inwreathed with palm.*—For the same cause that the *palmer*, returning from Palestine, brings home his staff, or *bourdon*, bound with palm, that is, to show where he has been.

"Che si reca 'l bordon di palma cinto."

"It is to be understood," says our poet in the "Vita Nuova," "that people who go on the service of the Most High, are probably named in three ways. They are named *palmer*s, inasmuch as they go beyond sea, from whence they often bring back the palm. Inasmuch as they go to the house of Galicia, they are called pilgrims; because the sepulchre of St. James was further from his country than that of any other Apostle. They are called *Romei*" (for which I know of no other word we have in English except *Roamers*),

"inasmuch as they go to Rome."—Page 275. "In regard to the word *bourdon*, why it has been applied to a pilgrim's staff it is not easy to guess. I believe, however, that this name has been given to such sort of staves, because pilgrims usually travel and perform their pilgrimages on foot, their staves serving them instead of horses or mules, then called *bourdons* and *burdonnes*, by writers in the middle ages."—*Mr. Johnes's Translation of Joinville's Memoirs*, Dissertation xv., by M. du Cange, p. 152, 4to, edit. The word is thrice used by Chaucer in the "Romaunt of the Rose."

³ *Mayst behold your art.*—The second persons, singular and plural, are here used intentionally by our author, the one referring to himself alone, the second to mankind in general. Compare "Hell," xi. 107. But I will follow the example of Brunck, who in a note on the passage in the "Philoctetes" of Sophocles, v. 369, where a similar distinction requires to be made, says that it would be ridiculous to multiply instances in a matter so well known.

"I not remember," I replied, "that e'er
 I was estranged from thee; nor for such fault
 Doth conscience chide me." Smiling she return'd:
 "If thou canst not remember, call to mind
 How lately thou hast drunk of Lethe's wave;
 And, sure as smoke doth indicate a flame,
 In that forgetfulness itself conclude
 Blame from thy alienated will incur'd.
 From henceforth, verily, my words shall be
 As naked, as will suit them to appear
 In thy unpractised view." More sparkling now,
 And with retarded course, the sun possess'd
 The circle of mid-day, that varies still
 As the aspect varies of each several clime;
 When, as one, sent in vaward of a troop
 For escort, pauses, if perchance he spy
 Vestige of somewhat strange and rare; so paused¹
 The sevenfold band, arriving at the verge
 Of a dun umbrage hoar, such as is seen,
 Beneath green leaves and gloomy branches, oft
 To overbrow a bleak and alpine cliff.
 And, where they stood, before them, as it seem'd,
 I, Tigris and Euphrates² both, beheld
 Forth from one fountain issue; and, like friends,
 Linger at parting. "O enlightening beam!
 O glory of our kind! beseech thee say
 What water this, which, from one source derived,
 Itself removes to distance from itself?"

To such entreaty answer thus was made:
 "Entreat Matilda, that she teach thee this."

¹ *So paused.*—Lombardi imagines that the seven nymphs, who represent the four cardinal and the three evangelical virtues, are made to stop at the verge of the shade, because retirement is the friend of every virtuous quality and spiritual gift.

² *I, Tigris and Euphrates.*—

"Quaque caput rapido tollit cum Tigride magnus

Euphrates, quos non diversis fontibus edit Persis." *Lucan, Pharsalia*, lib. iii. 258.

"Tigris et Euphrates uno se fonte resolvunt."

Boetius, De Consol. Philosoph., lib. v., Metr. 1.

"Là oltre ond' esce

D'un medesimo fonte Eufrate e Tigre."

Petrarca, Son. Mie Venture, &c.

And here, as one who clears himself of blame
Imputed, the fair dame return'd: "Of me
He this and more hath learnt; and I am safe
That Lethe's water hath not hid it from him."

And Beatrice: "Some more pressing care,
That oft the memory 'reaves, perchance hath made
His mind's eye dark. But lo, where Eunoe flows!
Lead thither; and, as thou art wont, revive
His fainting virtue." As a courteous spirit,
That proffers no excuses, but as soon
As he hath token of another's will,
Makes it his own; when she had ta'en me, thus
The lovely maiden moved her on, and call'd
To Statius, with an air most lady-like:
"Come thou with him." Were further space allow'd,
Then, reader! might I sing, though but in part,
That beverage, with whose sweetness I had ne'er
Been sated. But, since all the leaves are full,
Appointed for this second strain, mine art
With warning bridle checks me. I return'd
From the most holy wave, regenerate,
E'en as new plants renew'd¹ with foliage new
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars.

¹ *Renew'd*.—

"Come piante novelle
Rinnovellate da novella fronda."

"So new this new-borne knight to battle new
did rise."

Spenser, Faery Queene, b. i., c. xi., st. 34.

"Rinnovellate" is another of those words which
Chaucer in vain endeavoured to introduce into our
language from the Italian, unless it be supposed that
he rather borrowed it from the French. "Certes
ones a yere at the lest way it is lawful to ben house-
led, for sothely ones a yere all things in the earth
renovelen."—*The Person's Tale*.



PARADISE.