

Consider how the human flesh was framed,
When both our parents at the first were made."

convincing, and of a higher kind, to assure us of the truth of our resurrection." It is, perhaps, here intended that the whole of God's dispensation should be taken into the account. The conclusion may be, that as before sin man was immortal, and even in flesh proceeded immediately from God, so being restored to the favour of heaven by the expiation made for sin, he necessarily recovers his claim to immortality even in the body. There is much in this poem to justify the encomium which the learned Salvini has passed on it, when, in an epistle to Redi, imitating what Horace had said of Homer, that the duties of life might be better learnt from the Gre-

cian bard than from the teachers of the porch or the academy, he says:

"And dost thou ask, what themes my mind engage?
The lonely hours I give to Dante's page;
And meet more sacred learning in his lines,
Than I had gain'd from all the school divines."

"Se volete saper la vita mia.
Studiando io sto lungi da tutti gli uomini;
Ed ho imparato più teologia
In questi giorni, che ho riletto Dante,
Che nelle scuole fatto io non avria."

CANTO VIII.

ARGUMENT.

The Poet ascends with Beatrice to the third heaven, which is the planet Venus; and here finds the soul of Charles Martel, King of Hungary, who had been Dante's friend on earth, and who now, after speaking of the realms to which he was heir, unfolds the cause why children differ in disposition from their parents.

THE world¹ 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,² shed on men
By stream of potent radiance: therefore they
Of elder time, in their old error blind,
Not her alone with sacrifice adored
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:³ and from her,
Whom I have sung preluding, borrow'd they
The appellation of that star, which views
Now obvious,⁴ and now averse, the sun.

¹ *The world*.—The poet, on his arrival at the third heaven, tells us that the world, in its days of heathen darkness, believed the influence of sensual love to proceed from the star to which, under the name of Venus, they paid divine honours; as they worshipped the supposed mother and son of Venus, under the names of Dione and Cupid.

² *Epicycle*.—

"The sphere
With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,
Cycle and epicycle."

Milton, Paradise Lost, b. viii. 84.

"In sul dosso di questo cerchio," &c.—*Convito di Dante*, p. 48. "Upon the back of this circle, in the heaven of Venus, whereof we are now treating, is a

little sphere, which has in that heaven a revolution of its own; whose circle the astronomers term epicycle."

³ *To sit in Dido's bosom*.—Virgil, "Æneid," lib. i. 718.

⁴ *Now obvious*.—Being at one part of the year a morning, and at another an evening star. So Frezzi:

"Il raggio della stella
Che 'l sol vagheggia or dritto or davanti."

Il Quadriregio, lib. i., c. i.

"Whose ray,
Being page and usher to the day,
Does mourn behind the sun, before him play."

John Hall.

I was not ware that I was wafted up
 Into its orb; but the new loveliness,
 That graced my lady, gave me ample proof
 That we had enter'd 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 coursed
 In circling motion, rapid more or less.
 As their¹ eternal vision each impels.

Never was blast from vapour charged with cold,
 Whether invisible to eye or no,²
 Descended with such speed, it had not seem'd
 To linger in dull tardiness, compared
 To those celestial lights, that towards 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 disposed
 To do thee gentle service. We are they
 To whom thou in the world erewhile didst sing;
 'O ye! whose intellectual ministry³
 Moves the third heaven:' and in one orb we roll,
 One motion, one impulse, with those who rule
 Princedoms in heaven;⁴ yet are of love so full,
 That to please thee 'twill be as sweet to rest."

¹ *As their.*—As each, according to their several deserts, partakes more or less of the beatific vision.

² *Whether invisible to eye or no.*—He calls the blast invisible, if unattended by gross vapour; otherwise, visible.

³ *O ye! whose intellectual ministry.*—
 "Voi ch' intendendo il terzo ciel movete."

The first line in our poet's first Canzone. See his "Convito," p. 40.

⁴ *Princedoms in heaven.*—See canto xxviii. 112, where the princedoms are, as here, made co-ordinate with this third sphere. In his "Convito," p. 54, he has ranked them differently, making the thrones the moving intelligences of Venus.

After mine eyes had with meek reverence
 Sought the celestial guide, and were by her
 Assured, they turn'd again unto the light,
 Who had so largely promised; 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,¹
 Much evil, that will come, had never chanced.
 My gladness hides thee from me, which doth shine
 Around, and shroud me, as an animal
 In its own silk enswathed. Thou lovedst me well,²
 And hadst 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,³
 That Rhone, when he hath mix'd with Sorga, laves,
 In me its lord expected, and that horn
 Of fair Ausonia,⁴ with its boroughs old,
 Bari, and Croton, and Gaeta piled,
 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 sovereignty over the land⁵
 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,

¹ *Had the time been more.*—The spirit now speaking is Charles Martel, crowned King of Hungary, and son of Charles II., King of Naples and Sicily, to which dominions, dying in his father's lifetime, he did not succeed. The evil, that would have been prevented by the longer life of Charles Martel, was that resistance which his brother Robert, King of Sicily, who succeeded him, made to the Emperor Henry VII. See G. Villani, lib. ix., cap. xxxviii.

² *Thou lovedst me well.*—Charles Martel might have been known to our poet at Florence, whither he came to meet his father in 1295, the year of his death. The retinue and the habiliments of the

young monarch are minutely described by G. Villani, who adds, that "he remained more than twenty days in Florence, waiting for his father King Charles and his brothers; during which time great honour was done him by the Florentines, and he showed no less love towards them, and he was much in favour with all."—Lib. viii., cap. xiii. His brother Robert, King of Naples, was the friend of Petrarch.

³ *The left bank.*—Provence.

⁴ *That horn of fair Ausonia.*—The kingdom of Naples.

⁵ *The land.*—Hungary.

Betwixt Pelorus and Pachynian heights,
 The beautiful Trinacria¹ lies in gloom
 (Not through Typhæus,² but the vapoury cloud
 Bituminous upsteam'd), *that* too did look
 To have its sceptre wielded by a race
 Of monarchs, sprung through me from Charles and Rodolph;³
 Had not ill-lording,⁴ which doth desperate make⁵
 The people ever, in Palermo raised
 The shout of 'death,' re-echoed loud and long.
 Had but my brother's foresight⁶ kenn'd as much,
 He had been wavier, 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 fallen 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 look'st
 Into the source and limit of all good,

¹ *The beautiful Trinacria*.—Sicily; so called from its three promontories, of which Pachynus and Pelorus, here mentioned, are two.

² *Typhæus*.—The giant whom Jupiter is fabled to have overwhelmed under the mountain Ætna, from whence he vomited forth smoke and flame.

³ *Sprung through me from Charles and Rodolph*.—"Sicily would be still ruled by a race of monarchs, descended through me from Charles I. and Rodolph I., the former my grandfather, King of Naples and Sicily; the latter, Emperor of Germany, my father-in-law," both celebrated in the "Purgatory," canto vii.

⁴ *Had not ill-lording*.—"If the ill conduct of our governors in Sicily had not excited the resentment and hatred of the people, and stimulated them to that dreadful massacre at the Sicilian Vespers," in consequence of which the kingdom fell into the hands of Peter III. of Arragon, in 1282.

"Miracol parve ad ogni persona
 Che ad una voce tutta la Cicilia
 Si rubellò dall' una all' altra nona,
 Gridando, mora mora la famiglia
 Di Carlo, mora mora gli franceschi,
 E così ne tagliò ben otto miglia.
 O quanto i forestier che giugnon freschi
 Nell' altrui terre, denno esser cortesi,
 Fuggir lussuria e non esser maneschi."
Fazio degli Uberti, Dittamondo,
 lib. ii., cap. 39.

⁵ *Desperate make*.—"Accuora." Monti, in his "Proposta," construes this "afflicts." Vellutello's interpretation of it, which is "makes desperate," appears to be nearer the mark.

⁶ *My brother's foresight*.—He seems to tax his brother Robert with employing necessitous and greedy Catalonians to administer the affairs of his kingdom.

There, where thou markest that which thou dost speak,
 Thence prized 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,¹ 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,² that guides
 And blessed makes this realm which thou dost mount,
 Ordains its providence to be the virtue
 In these great bodies: nor the natures only
 The all-perfect mind provides for, but with them
That which preserves them too; for nought, that lies
 Within the range of that unerring bow,
 But is as level with the destined aim,
 As ever mark to arrow's point opposed.
 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 the intellectual powers, that move these stars,
 Fail not, and who, first faulty made them, fail.
 Wilt thou this truth more clearly evidenced?"

To whom I thus: "It is enough: no fear,
 I see, lest nature in her part should tire."

¹ *How bitter can spring up*.—"How a covetous son can spring from a liberal father." Yet that father has himself been accused of avarice in the "Purgatory," canto xx. 78; though his general character was that of a bounteous prince.

² *The Good*.—The Supreme Being uses these spheres as the intelligent instruments of his providence in the conduct of terrestrial natures; so that these natures cannot but be conducted aright, unless these heavenly bodies should themselves fail from not having been made perfect at first, or the Creator of them should fail. To this Dante replies, that nature, he is satisfied, thus directed must do

her part. Charles Martel then reminds him that he had learned from Aristotle, that human society requires a variety of conditions, and consequently a variety of qualifications in its members. Accordingly, men, he concludes, are born with different powers and capacities, caused by the influence of the heavenly bodies at the time of their nativity; on which influence, and not on their parents, those powers and capacities depend. Having thus resolved the question proposed, Charles Martel adds, by way of corollary, that the want of observing their natural bent in the destination of men to their several offices in life, is the occasion of much of the disorder that prevails in the world.

He straight rejoin'd: "Say, were it worse for man,
If he lived 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,¹ and he tells you 'no.'"

Thus did he come, deducing to this point,
And then concluded: "For this cause behoves,
The roots, from whence your operations come,
Must differ. Therefore one is Solon born;
Another, Xerxes; and Melchisedec
A third; and he a fourth, whose airy voyage
Cost him his son.² In her circuitous course,
Nature, that is the seal to mortal wax,
Doth well her art, but no distinction owns
'Twixt one or other household. Hence befalls
That Esau is so wide of Jacob:³ hence
Quirinus⁴ of so base a father springs,
He dates from Mars his lineage. Were it not
That Providence celestial overruled,
Nature, in generation, must the path
Traced by the generator still pursue
Unswervingly. Thus place I in thy sight
That, which was late behind thee. But, in sign

¹ Consult your teacher.—Aristotle, *ἐπεὶ ἐξ ἀνομοίων ἡ πόλις*, κ. τ. λ., "De Rep.," lib. iii., c. 4. "Since a state is made up of members differing from one another (for even as an animal, in the first instance, consists of soul and body; and the soul, of reason and desire; and a family, of man and woman; and property, of master and slave; in like manner a state consists both of all these, and besides these of other dissimilar kinds), it necessarily follows, that the excellence of all the members of the state cannot be one and the same."

² Whose airy voyage cost him his son.—Dædalus.

³ Esau is so wide of Jacob.—Gen. xxv. 22. Venturi blames our poet for selecting an instance, which, as that commentator says, proves the direct contrary of that which he intended, as they were born under

the same ascendant; and, therefore, if the stars had any influence, the two brothers should have been born with the same temperament and disposition. This objection is well answered by Lombardi, who quotes a passage from Roger Bacon, to show that the smallest diversity of place was held to make a diversity in the influence of the heavenly bodies, so as to occasion an entire discrepancy even between children in the same womb. It must be recollected, that whatever power may be attributed to the stars by our poet, he does not suppose it to put any constraint on the freedom of the human will; so that, chimerical as his opinion appears to us, it was, in a moral point of view at least, harmless.

⁴ Quirinus.—Romulus, born of so obscure a father, that his parentage was attributed to Mars,

Of more affection for thee, 'tis 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 phraseman make your king:
Therefore¹ your steps have wander'd from the path."

¹ Therefore.—"The wisdom of God hath divided the genius of men according to the different affairs of the world; and varied their inclinations according to the variety of actions to be performed therein. Which they who consider not, rudely rushing upon

professions and ways of life unequal to their natures, dishonour not only themselves and their functions, but pervert the harmony of the whole world."—*Brown, on Vulgar Errors*, b. i., ch. 5.