

CANTO IX.

ARGUMENT.

The next spirit who converses with our Poet in the planet Venus, is the amorous Cunizza. To her succeeds Folco, or Folques, the Provençal bard, who declares that the soul of Rahab the harlot is there also; and then, blaming the Pope for his neglect of the Holy Land, prognosticates some reverse to the Papal power.

AFTER solution of my doubt, thy Charles,
O fair Clemenza,¹ of the treachery² spake,
That must befall his seed: but, "Tell it not,"
Said he, "and let the destined years come round."
Nor may I tell thee more, save that the meed
Of sorrow well-deserved shall quit your wrongs.

And now the visage of that saintly light³
Was to the sun, that fills it, turn'd again,
As to the good, whose plentitude of bliss
Sufficeth all. O ye misguided souls!
Infatuate, who from such a good estrange
Your hearts, and bend your gaze on vanity,
Alas for you!—And lo! toward me, next
Another of those splendent forms approach'd,
That, by its outward brightening, testified
The will it had to pleasure me. The eyes
Of Beatrice, resting, as before,
Firmly upon me, manifested forth
Approval of my wish. "And O," I cried,
"Blest spirit! quickly be my will perform'd;
And prove thou to me,⁴ that my inmost thoughts

¹ *O fair Clemenza.*—Daughter of Charles Martel, and second wife of Louis X. of France.

² *The treachery.*—He alludes to the occupation of the kingdom of Sicily by Robert, in exclusion of his brother's son Carobert, or Charles Robert, the rightful heir. See G. Villani, lib. viii., c. cxii.

³ *That saintly light.*—Charles Martel.

⁴ *Prove thou to me.*—The thoughts of all created minds being seen by the Deity, and all that is in the Deity being the object of vision to beatified spirits, such spirits must consequently see the thoughts of all created minds. Dante therefore requests of the

I can reflect on thee." Thereat the light,
That yet was new to me, from the recess,
Where it before was singing, thus began,
As one who joys in kindness: "In that part¹
Of the depraved Italian land, which lies
Between Rialto and the fountain-springs
Of Brenta and of Piava, there doth rise,
But to no lofty eminence, a hill,
From whence erewhile a firebrand did descend,
That sorely shent the region. From one root
I and it sprang; my name on earth Cunizza:²
And here I glitter, for that by its light
This star o'ercame me. Yet I nought repine,³
Nor grudge myself the cause of this my lot:
Which haply vulgar hearts can scarce conceive.

"This⁴ jewel, that is next me in our heaven,
Lustrous and costly, great renown hath left,
And not to perish, ere these hundred years
Five times⁵ absolve their round. Consider thou,

spirit, who now approaches him, a proof of this truth with regard to his own thoughts. See v. 70.

¹ *In that part.*—Between Rialto in the Venetian territory, and the sources of the rivers Brenta and Piava, is situated a castle called Romano, the birth-place of the famous tyrant Ezzolino or Azzolino, the brother of Cunizza who is now speaking. The tyrant we have seen in "the river of blood," "Hell," canto xii., v. 110.

² *Cunizza.*—The adventures of Cunizza, overcome by the influence of her star, are related by the chronicler Rolandino of Padua, lib. i., c. 3, in Muratori, "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores," tom. viii., p. 173. She eloped from her first husband, Richard of St. Boniface, in the company of Sordello (see "Purgatory," canto vi. and vii.), with whom she is supposed to have cohabited before her marriage: then lived with a soldier of Trevigi, whose wife was living at the same time in the same city; and on his being murdered by her brother the tyrant, was by her brother married to a nobleman of Braganza: lastly, when he also had fallen by the same hand, she, after her brother's death, was again wedded in Verona.

³ *Yet I nought repine.*—"I am not dissatisfied that I am not allotted a higher place."

⁴ *This.*—Folco of Genoa, a celebrated Provençal poet, commonly termed Folques of Marseilles, of which place he was perhaps bishop. Many errors of Nostradamus concerning him, which have been followed by Crescimbeni, Quadrio, and Millot, are detected by the diligence of Tiraboschi, Mr. Matthias's edit., v. i., p. 18. All that appears certain is what we are told in this canto, that he was of Genoa; and by Petrarch, in the "Triumph of Love," c. iv., that he was better known by the appellation he derived from Marseilles, and at last assumed the religious habit. One of his verses is cited by Dante, "De Vulgari Eloquentia," lib. iii., c. 6.

⁵ *Ere these hundred years five times.*—The five hundred years are elapsed; and unless the Provençal MSS. should be brought to light, the poetical reputation of Folco must rest on the mention made of him by the more fortunate Italians. What I scarcely ventured to hope at the time this note was written, has been accomplished by the great learning and diligence of M. Raynouard. See his "Choix des Poésies des Troubadours" and "Lexique Roman," in which Folques and his Provençal brethren are awakened into the second life augured to them by our poet.

If to excel be worthy man's endeavour,
 When such life may attend the first.¹ Yet they
 Care not for this, the crowd² that now are girt
 By Adice and Tagliamento, still
 Impenitent, though scourged. The hour is near³
 When for their stubbornness, at Padua's marsh
 The water shall be changed, that laves Vicenza.
 And where Cagnano meets with Sile, one⁴
 Lords it, and bears his head aloft, for whom
 The web⁵ is now a-warping. Feltro⁶ too
 Shall sorrow for its godless shepherd's fault,
 Of so deep stain, that never, for the like,
 Was Malta's⁷ bar unclosed. Too large should be
 The skillet⁸ that would hold Ferrara's blood,
 And wearied he, who ounce by ounce would weigh it,
 The which this priest,⁹ in show of party-zeal,
 Courteous will give; nor will the gift ill suit
 The country's custom. We descry¹⁰ above
 Mirrors, ye call them thrones, from which to us
 Reflected shine the judgments of our God:
 Whence these our sayings we avouch for good."
 She ended; and appear'd on other thoughts

¹ *When such life may attend the first.*—When the mortal life of man may be attended by so lasting and glorious a memory, which is a kind of second life.

² *The crowd.*—The people who inhabited the tract of country bounded by the river Tagliamento to the east and Adice to the west.

³ *The hour is near.*—Cunizza foretels the defeat of Giacompo da Carrara and the Paduans, by Can Grande, at Vicenza, on the 18th September, 1314. See G. Villani, lib. ix., cap. lxii.

⁴ *One.*—She predicts also the fate of Riccardo da Camino, who is said to have been murdered at Trevigi (where the rivers Sile and Cagnano meet), while he was engaged in playing at chess.

⁵ *The Web.*—The net, or snare, into which he is destined to fall.

⁶ *Feltro.*—The Bishop of Feltro having received a number of fugitives from Ferrara, who were in opposition to the Pope, under a promise of protection, afterwards gave them up; so that they were re-con-

ducted to that city, and the greater part of them there put to death.

⁷ *Malta's.*—A tower, either in the citadel of Padua, which, under the tyranny of Ezzolino, had been "with many a foul and midnight murder fed," or (as some say) near a river of the same name, that falls into the lake of Bolsena, in which the Pope was accustomed to imprison such as had been guilty of an irremissible sin.

⁸ *The skillet.*—The blood shed could not be contained in such a vessel if it were of the usual size.

⁹ *This priest.*—The bishop who, to show himself a zealous partisan of the Pope, had committed the above-mentioned act of treachery. The commentators are not agreed as to the name of this faithless prelate. Troya calls him Alessandra Novello, and relates the circumstances at full. "Veltro Allegorico," p. 139.

¹⁰ *We descry.*—"We behold the things that we predict, in the mirrors of eternal truth."

Intent, re-entering on the wheel she late
 Had left. That other joyance¹ meanwhile wax'd
 A thing to marvel at,² in splendour glowing,
 Like choicest ruby³ stricken by the sun.
 For, in that upper clime, effulgence⁴ comes
 Of gladness, as here laughter: and below,
 As the mind saddens, murkier grows the shade.
 "God seeth all: and in him is thy sight,"
 Said I, "blest spirit! Therefore will of his
 Cannot to thee be dark. Why then delays
 Thy voice to satisfy my wish untold;
 That voice, which joins the inexpressive song,
 Pastime of heaven, the which those ardours sing,
 That cowl them with six shadowing wings⁵ outspread?
 I would not wait thy asking, wert thou known
 To me, as thoroughly I to thee am known."

He, forthwith answering, thus his words began:
 "The valley of waters,⁶ widest next to that⁷
 Which doth the earth engarland, shapes its course,
 Between discordant shores,⁸ against the sun
 Inward so far, it makes meridian⁹ there,
 Where was before the horizon. Of that vale
 Dwelt I upon the shore, 'twixt Ebro's stream

¹ *That other joyance.*—Folco.

² *A thing to marvel at.*—"Preclara cosa." A Latinism, according to Venturi; but the word "preclara" had been already naturalized by Guido Guinicelli:

"Oro ed argento e ricche gioje preclare."

See the sonnet, of which a version has been given in a note to "Purgatory," canto xi., v. 96.

³ *Choicest ruby.*—"Balascio."

"No saphire in Inde no rube rich of grace
 There lacked then, nor emeraude so green,
 Bales." *Chaucer, The Court of Love.*

Mr. Tyrwhitt—I should suppose erroneously, as to the sense at least intended by Chaucer—calls it "a sort of bastard ruby."

⁴ *Effulgence.*—As joy is expressed by laughter on earth, so is it by an increase of splendour in Para-

dise; and, on the contrary, grief is betokened in Hell by augmented darkness.

⁵ *Six shadowing wings.*—"Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings."—Isa. vi. 2. "Ante majestatis ejus gloriam cherubim senas habentes alas semper adstantes non cessant clamare, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus."—*Alberici Visio*, § 39.

"Six wings he wore to shade
 His lineaments divine."

Milton, Paradise Lost, b. v. 278.

⁶ *The valley of waters.*—The Mediterranean Sea.

⁷ *That.*—The great ocean.

⁸ *Discordant shores.*—Europe and Africa.

⁹ *Meridian.*—Extending to the east, the Mediterranean at last reaches the coast of Palestine, which is on its horizon when it enters the Straits of Gibraltar. "Wherever a man is," says Vellutello, "there he has, above his head, his own particular meridian circle."