

Are the sole study. Pope and Cardinals,
Intent on these, ne'er journey but in thought
To Nazareth, where Gabriel oped his wings.
Yet it may chance, ere long, the Vatican,¹
And other most selected parts of Rome,
That were the grave of Peter's soldiery,
Shall be deliver'd from the adulterous bond."

versity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word."—Article xxxiv.

¹ *The Vatican*.—He alludes either to the death of Pope Boniface VIII., or, as Venturi supposes, to

the coming of the Emperor Henry VII. into Italy; or else, according to the yet more probable conjecture of Lombardi, to the transfer of the Holy See from Rome to Avignon, which took place in the pontificate of Clement V.

CANTO X.

ARGUMENT.

Their next ascent carries them into the sun, which is the fourth heaven. Here they are encompassed with a wreath of blessed spirits, twelve in number. Thomas Aquinas, who is one of these, declares the names and endowments of the rest.

LOOKING into his first-born with the love
Which breathes from both eternal, the first Might
Ineffable, wherever eye or mind
Can roam, hath in such order all disposed,
As none may see and fail to enjoy. Raise, then,
O reader! to the lofty wheels, with me,
Thy ken directed to the point,¹ whereat
One motion strikes on the other. There begin
Thy wonder of the mighty Architect,
Who loves his work so inwardly, his eye
Doth ever watch it. See, how thence oblique²
Brancheth the circle, where the planets roll
To pour their wished influence on the world;
Whose path not bending thus, in heaven above³
Much virtue would be lost, and here on earth
All power well nigh extinct; or, from direct
Were its departure distant more or less,

¹ *The point*.—"To that part of heaven," as Venturi explains it, "in which the equinoctial circle and the zodiac intersect each other, where the common motion of the heavens from east to west may be said to strike with greatest force against the motion proper to the planets; and this repercussion, as it were, is here the strongest, because the velocity of each is increased to the utmost by their respective distance from the poles. Such at least is the system of Dante."

² *Oblique*.—The zodiac.

³ *In heaven above*.—If the planets did not preserve that order in which they move, they would not receive nor transmit their due influences; and if the zodiac were not thus oblique—if towards the north it either passed or went short of the tropic of Cancer, or else towards the south it passed or went short of the tropic of Capricorn—it would not divide the seasons as it now does.

I' the universal order, great defect
Must, both in heaven and here beneath, ensue.

Now rest thee, reader! on thy bench, and muse
Anticipative of the feast to come;
So shall delight make thee not feel thy toil.
Lo! I have set before thee; for thyself
Feed now: the matter I indite, henceforth
Demands entire my thought. Join'd with the part,¹
Which late we told of, the great minister²
Of nature, that upon the world imprints
The virtue of the heaven, and doles out
Time for us with his beam, went circling on
Along the spires,³ where⁴ each hour sooner comes;
And I was with him, weetless of ascent,
But as a man,⁵ that weets him come, ere thinking.

For Beatrice, she who passeth on
So suddenly from good to better, time
Counts not the act, oh then how great must needs
Have been her brightness! What there was i' th' sun
(Where I had entered), not through change of hue,
But light transparent—did I summon up
Genius, art, practice—I might not so speak,
It should be e'er imagined: yet believed
It may be, and the sight be justly craved.
And if our fantasy fail of such height,
What marvel, since no eye above the sun
Hath ever travel'd? Such are they dwell here,
Fourth family of the Omnipotent Sire,⁶
Who of his spirit and of his offspring⁷ shows;

¹ *The part.*—The above-mentioned intersection of the equinoctial circle and the zodiac.

² *Minister.*—The sun.

³ *Along the spires.*—According to our poet's system, as the earth is motionless, the sun passes, by a spiral motion, from one tropic to the other.

⁴ *Where.*—In which the sun rises every day earlier after the vernal equinox.

⁵ *But as a man.*—That is, he was quite insensible of it.

⁶ *Such are they dwell here, fourth family of the Omnipotent Sire.*—The inhabitants of the sun, the fourth planet.

⁷ *Of his spirit and of his offspring.*—The procession of the third, and the generation of the second person in the Trinity.

And holds them still enraptured with the view.
And thus to me Beatrice: "Thank, oh thank
The Sun of angels, him, who by his grace
To this perceptible hath lifted thee."

Never was heart in such devotion bound,
And with complacency so absolute
Disposed to render up itself to God,
As mine was at those words: and so entire
The love for Him, that held me, it eclipsed
Beatrice in oblivion. Nought displeased
Was she, but smiled thereat so joyously,
That of her laughing eyes the radiance brake
And scattered my collected mind abroad.

Then saw I a bright band, in liveliness
Surpassing, who themselves did make the crown,
And us their centre: yet more sweet in voice,
Than, in their visage, beaming. Cinctured thus,
Sometime Latona's daughter we behold,
When the impregnate air retains the thread
That weaves her zone. In the celestial court,
Whence I return, are many jewels found,
So dear and beautiful, they cannot brook
Transporting from that realm: and of these lights
Such was the song.¹ Who doth not prune his wing
To soar up thither, let him² look from thence
For tidings from the dumb. When, singing thus,
Those burning suns had circled round us thrice,
As nearest stars around the fixed pole;
Then seem'd they like to ladies, from the dance
Not ceasing, but suspense, in silent pause,
Listening, till they have caught the strain anew:
Suspended so they stood: and, from within,

¹ *Such was the song.*—The song of these spirits was ineffable. It was like a jewel so highly prized, that the exportation of it to another country is prohibited by law.

² *Let him.*—Let him not expect any intelligence at all of that place, for it surpasses description.