

CANTO XIII.

ARGUMENT.

Thomas Aquinas resumes his speech. He solves the other of those doubts which he discerned in the mind of Dante, and warns him earnestly against assenting to any proposition without having duly examined it.

LET him,¹ who would conceive what now I saw,
Imagine (and retain the image firm
As mountain rock, the whilst he hears me speak),
Of stars, fifteen, from midst the ethereal host
Selected, that, with lively ray serene,
O'ercome the massiest air: thereto imagine
The wain, that, in the bosom of our sky,
Spins ever on its axle night and day,
With the bright summit of that horn, which swells
Due from the pole, round which the first wheel rolls,
To have ranged themselves in fashion of two signs
In heaven, such as Ariadne made,
When death's chill seized her; and that one of them
Did compass in the other's beam; and both
In such sort whirl around, that each should tend
With opposite motion: and conceiving thus,
Of that true constellation, and the dance
Twofold, that circled me, he shall attain
As 'twere the shadow; for things there as much
Surpass our usage, as the swiftest heaven
Is swifter than the Chiana.² There was sung
No Bacchus, and no Io Pæan, but

¹ *Let him.*—"Whoever would conceive the sight that now presented itself to me, must imagine to himself fifteen of the brightest stars in heaven, together with seven stars of Arcturus Major and two

of Arcturus Minor, ranged in two circles, one within the other, each resembling the crown of Ariadne, and moving round in opposite directions."

² *The Chiana.*—See "Hell," canto xxix. 45.



About us thus,
Of sempiternal roses, bending, wreathed
Those garlands twain; and to the innermost
E'en thus the external answer'd.

Canto XII. lines 16-19.

Three persons in the Godhead, and in one
Person that nature and the human join'd.

The song and round were measured: and to us
Those saintly lights attended, happier made
At each new ministering. Then silence brake
Amid the accordant sons of Deity,
That luminary,¹ in which the wondrous life
Of the meek man of God² was told to me;
And thus it spake: "One ear³ o' the harvest thresh'd
And its grain safely stored, sweet charity
Invites me with the other to like toil.

"Thou know'st that in the bosom,⁴ whence the rib
Was ta'en to fashion that fair cheek, whose taste
All the world pays for; and in that, which pierced
By the keen lance, both after and before
Such satisfaction offer'd as outweighs
Each evil in the scale; whate'er of light
To human nature is allow'd, must all
Have by his virtue been infused, who form'd
Both one and other: and thou thence admirest
In that I told thee, of beatitudes,
A second there is none to him enclosed
In the fifth radiance. Open now thine eyes
To what I answer thee; and thou shalt see
Thy deeming and my saying meet in truth,
As centre in the round. That⁵ which dies not,
And that which can die, are but each the beam
Of that idea, which our Sovereign Sire

¹That luminary.—Thomas Aquinas.

²The meek man of God.—St. Francis. See canto xi. 25.

³One ear.—"Having solved one of thy questions, I proceed to answer the other. Thou thinkest then that Adam and Christ were both endued with all the perfection of which the human nature is capable; and therefore wonderest at what has been said concerning Solomon."

⁴In the bosom.—"Thou knowest that in the breast of Adam, whence the rib was taken to make that

fair cheek of Eve, which, by tasting the apple, brought death into the world; and also in the breast of Christ, which, being pierced by the lance, made satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; as much wisdom resided as human nature was capable of: and thou dost therefore wonder that I should have spoken of Solomon as the wisest." See canto x. 105.

⁵That.—"Things corruptible and incorruptible are only emanations from the archetypal idea residing in the Divine Mind."