

## CANTO XIV.

### ARGUMENT.

Solomon, who is one of the spirits in the inner circle, declares what the appearance of the blest will be after the resurrection of the body. Beatrice and Dante are translated into the fifth heaven, which is that of Mars, and here behold the souls of those who had died fighting for the true faith, ranged in the sign of a cross, athwart which the spirits move to the sound of a melodious hymn.

FROM centre to the circle, and so back  
 From circle to the centre, water moves  
 In the round chalice, even as the blow  
 Impels it, inwardly, or from without.  
 Such was the image<sup>1</sup> glanced into my mind,  
 As the great spirit of Aquinum ceased;  
 And Beatrice, after him, her words  
 Resumed alternate: "Need there is (though yet  
 He tells it to you not in words, nor e'en  
 In thought) that he should fathom to its depth  
 Another mystery. Tell him, if the light,  
 Wherewith your substance blooms, shall stay with you  
 Eternally, as now; and, if it doth,  
 How, when<sup>2</sup> ye shall regain your visible forms,  
 The sight may without harm endure the change,  
 That also tell." As those, who in a ring  
 Tread the light measure, in their fitful mirth  
 Raise loud the voice, and spring with gladder bound;  
 Thus, at the hearing of that pious suit,  
 The saintly circles, in their tourneying  
 And wondrous note, attested new delight.

<sup>1</sup> *Such was the image.*—The voice of Thomas Aquinas proceeding from the circle to the centre, and that of Beatrice from the centre to the circle.

<sup>2</sup> *When.*—When ye shall be again clothed with your bodies at the resurrection.

Whoso laments, that we must doff this garb  
 Of frail mortality, thenceforth to live  
 Immortally above; he hath not seen  
 The sweet refreshing of that heavenly shower.<sup>1</sup>

Him,<sup>2</sup> who lives ever, and for ever reigns  
 In mystic union of the Three in One,  
 Unbounded, bounding all, each spirit thrice  
 Sang, with such melody, as, but to hear,  
 For highest merit were an ample meed.  
 And from the lesser orb the goodliest light,<sup>3</sup>  
 With gentle voice and mild, such as perhaps  
 The angel's once to Mary, thus replied:  
 "Long as the joy of Paradise shall last,  
 Our love shall shine around that raiment, bright  
 As fervent; fervent as, in vision, blest;  
 And that as far, in blessedness, exceeding,  
 As it hath grace, beyond its virtue, great.  
 Our shape, regarmented with glorious weeds  
 Of saintly flesh, must, being thus entire,  
 Show yet more gracious. Therefore shall increase  
 Whate'er, of light, gratuitous imparts  
 The Supreme Good; light, ministering aid,  
 The better to disclose his glory: whence,  
 The vision needs increasing, must increase  
 The fervour which it kindles; and that too  
 The ray, that comes from it. But as the gleed  
 Which gives out flame, yet in its whiteness shines  
 More lively than that, and so preserves  
 Its proper semblance; thus this circling sphere  
 Of splendour shall to view less radiant seem,  
 Than shall our fleshly robe, which yonder earth

<sup>1</sup> *That heavenly shower.*—That effusion of beatific light.

<sup>2</sup> *Him.*—Literally translated by Chaucer, "Troilus and Cresseide," book v.:

"Thou one, two, and three eterne on live,  
 That rainnest aie in three, two, and one,  
 Uncircumscrip, and all maist circonscrive."  
<sup>3</sup> *The goodliest light.*—Solomon.



Now covers. Nor will such excess of light  
O'erpower us, in corporeal organs made  
Firm, and susceptible of all delight."

So ready and so cordial an "Amen"  
Follow'd from either choir, as plainly spoke  
Desire of their dead bodies; yet perchance  
Not for themselves, but for their kindred dear,  
Mothers and sires, and those whom best they loved,  
Ere they were made imperishable flame.

And lo! forthwith there rose up round about  
A lustre, over that already there;  
Of equal clearness, like the brightening up  
Of the horizon. As at evening hour  
Of twilight, new appearances through heaven  
Peer with faint glimmer, doubtfully desiered;  
So, there, new substances, methought, began  
To rise in view beyond the other twain,  
And wheeling, sweep their ampler circuit wide.

O genuine glitter of eternal Beam!  
With what a sudden whiteness did it flow,  
O'erpowering vision in me. But so fair,  
So passing lovely, Beatrice show'd,  
Mind cannot follow it; nor words express  
Her infinite sweetness. Thence mine eyes regain'd  
Power to look up; and I beheld myself,  
Sole with my lady, to more lofty bliss!  
Translated: for the star, with warmer smile  
Impurpled, well denoted our ascent.

With all the heart, and with that tongue which speaks  
The same in all, an holocaust I made  
To God, befitting the new grace vouchsafed.  
And from my bosom had not yet upsteam'd  
The fuming of that incense, when I knew  
The rite accepted. With such mighty sheen

<sup>1</sup> Sole with my lady, to more lofty bliss.—To the planet Mars.

