

Checkers the shadow interposed by art
 Against the noontide heat. And as the chime
 Of minstrel music, dulcimer, and harp
 With many strings, a pleasant dinning makes
 To him, who heareth not the distinct note;
 So from the lights, which there appear'd to me,
 Gather'd along the cross a melody,
 That, indistinctly heard, with ravishment
 Possess'd me. Yet I mark'd it was a hymn
 Of lofty praises; for there came to me
 "Arise," and "Conquer," as to one who hears
 And comprehends not. Me such ecstasy
 O'ercame, that never, till that hour, was thing
 That held me in so sweet imprisonment.

Perhaps my saying overbold appears,
 Accounting less the pleasure of those eyes,
 Whereon to look fulfilleth all desire.
 But he,¹ who is aware those living seals
 Of every beauty work with quicker force,
 The higher they are risen; and that there
 I had not turn'd me to them; he may well
 Excuse me that, whereof in my excuse
 I do accuse me, and may own my truth;
 That holy pleasure here not yet reveal'd,²
 Which grows in transport as we mount aloof.

¹ *He*.—"He who considers that the eyes of Beatrice became more radiant the higher we ascended, must not wonder that I do not except even them, as I had not yet beheld them since our entrance into this planet." Lombardi understands by "living seals," "vivi suggelli," "the stars;" and this explanation derives some authority from the Latin notes on the Monte Casino MS., "id est cœli imprimentes ut sigilla."

² *Reveal'd*.—"Dischiuso." Lombardi explains this word "excluded," as indeed Vellutello had done before him; and as it is also used in the seventh canto. If this interpretation were adopted, the line should stand thus:

"That holy pleasure not excluded here."
 But the word is capable of either meaning; and it would not be easy to determine which is the right in this passage.

CANTO XV.

ARGUMENT.

The spirit of Cacciagnida, our Poet's ancestor, glides rapidly to the foot of the cross, tells who he is, and speaks of the simplicity of the Florentines in his days, since then much corrupted.

TRUE love, that ever shows itself as clear
 In kindness, as loose appetite in wrong,
 Silenced that lyre harmonious, and still'd
 The sacred chords, that are by heaven's right hand
 Unwound and tighten'd. How to righteous prayers
 Should they not hearken, who, to give me will
 For praying, in accordance thus were mute?
 He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,
 Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,
 Despoils himself forever of that love.

As oft along the still and pure serene,
 At nightfall, glides a sudden trail of fire,
 Attracting with involuntary heed
 The eye to follow it, erewhile at rest;
 And seems some star¹ that shifted place in heaven,
 Only that, whence it kindles, none is lost,
 And it is soon extinct: thus from the horn,
 That on the dexter of the cross extends,
 Down to its foot, one luminary ran
 From mid the cluster shone there; yet no gem
 Dropp'd from its foil: and through the beamy list,
 Like flame in alabaster, glow'd its course.

¹ *Some star*.—"Pare una stella che tramuti loco."

Frezzi, *Il Quadriregio*, lib. i., cap. 13.

"Sæpe etiam stellas, vento impendente, videbis,

Præcipites cœlo labi, noctisque per umbram
 Flammarum longos a tergo albescere tractus."
Virgil, Georgics, lib. i. 367.

Compare Arat., *Διοσημ.*, 194.

So forward stretch'd him (if of credence aught
Our greater muse¹ may claim) the pious ghost
Of old Anchises, in the Elysian bower,
When he perceived his son. "O thou, my blood!
O most exceeding grace divine! to whom,
As now to thee, hath twice the heavenly gate
Been e'er unclosed?" So spake the light: whence I
Turn'd me toward him; then unto my dame
My sight directed: and on either side
Amazement waited me; for in her eyes
Was lighted such a smile, I thought that mine
Had dived unto the bottom of my grace
And of my bliss in Paradise. Forthwith,
To hearing and to sight grateful alike,
The spirit to his poem added things
I understood not, so profound he spake:
Yet not of choice, but through necessity,
Mysterious; for his high conception soar'd
Beyond the mark of mortals. When the flight
Of holy transport had so spent its rage,
That nearer to the level of our thought
The speech descended; the first sounds I heard
Were, "Blest be thou, Triunal Deity!
That hast such favour in my seed vouchsafed."
Then follow'd: "No unpleasant thirst, though long,²
Which took me reading in the sacred book,
Whose leaves or white or dusky never change,
Thou hast allay'd, my son! within this light,
From whence my voice thou hear'st: more thanks to her
Who, for such lofty mounting, has with plumes

¹ *If of credence aught our greater muse.*—Virgil, *Æneid*, lib. vi. 684:
"Isque ubi tendentem adversum per gramina vidit
Ænean, alacris palmas utrasque tendendit.
Venisti tandem, tuasque spectata parenti
Vicit iter durum pietas?"

No unpleasant thirst, though long.—"Thou hast
satisfied the long yet pleasing desire which I have
felt to see thee, through my knowledge of thee, ob-
tained in the immutable decrees of the divine Provi-
dence.

Begirt thee. Thou dost deem thy thoughts to me
From Him transmitted, who is first of all,
E'en as all numbers ray from unity;¹
And therefore dost not ask me who I am.
Or why to thee more joyous I appear,
Than any other in this gladsome throng.
The truth is as thou deem'st; for in this life
Both less and greater in that mirror look,
In which thy thoughts, or e'er thou think'st, art shown.
But, that the love, which keeps me wakeful ever,
Urging with sacred thirst of sweet desire,
May be contented fully; let thy voice,
Fearless, and frank, and jocund, utter forth
Thy will distinctly, utter forth the wish,
Whereto my ready answer stands decreed."

I turn'd me to Beatrice; and she heard
Ere I had spoken, smiling an assent,
That to my will gave wings; and I began:
"To each among your tribe,² what time ye kenn'd
The nature, in whom nought unequal dwells,
Wisdom and love were in one measure dealt;
For that they are so equal in the sun,
From whence ye drew your radiance and your heat,
As makes all likeness scant. But will and means,
In mortals, for the cause ye well discern,
With unlike wings are fledged. A mortal, I
Experience inequality like this;
And therefore give no thanks, but in the heart,
For thy paternal greeting. This howe'er

¹ *Unity.*—Πάντων ἄρα τὸ ἐν πρῶτον γέγονε τῶν ἀριθμῶν
ἔχοντων.—Plato, "Parmenides," ed. Bip., vol. x., p.
130. Perhaps the mention of Parmenides in the last
canto but one, suggested this thought to Dante,
which he has expressed by specifying two particular
numbers intended to stand for all. There is some-
thing similar to it in his treatise "De Vulgari Elo-
quio," lib. i., c. xvi.: "Sicut in numero cuncta men-

surantur uno, et plura vel pauciora dicuntur, secun-
dum quod distant ab uno, vel ei propinquant."

² *To each among your tribe.*—"In you, glorified
spirits, love and knowledge are made equal, because
they are equal in God. But with us mortals it is
otherwise, for we have often the will without the
means of expressing our affections; and I can there-
fore thank thee only in my heart."