

From rock to rock transpicuous, making known
The richness of his spring-head: and as sound
Of cittern, at the fret-board, or of pipe,
Is, at the wind-hole, modulate and tuned;
Thus up the neck, as it were hollow, rose
That murmuring of the eagle; and forthwith
Voice there assumed; and thence along the beak
Issued in form of words, such as my heart
Did look for, on whose tables I inscribed them.

"The part¹ in me, that sees and bears the sun
In mortal eagles," it began, "must now
Be noted steadfastly: for, of the fires,
That figure me, those, glittering in mine eye,
Are chief of all the greatest. This, that shines
Midmost for pupil, was the same who² sang
The Holy Spirit's song, and bare about
The ark from town to town: now doth he know
The merit of his soul-impassion'd strains
By their well-fitted guerdon. Of the five,
That make the circle of the vision, he,³
Who to the beak is nearest, comforted
The widow for her son: now doth he know,
How dear it costeth not to follow Christ;
Both from experience of this pleasant life,
And of its opposite. He next,⁴ who follows
In the circumference, for the overarch,
By true repenting slack'd the pace of death:
Now knoweth he, that the decrees of heaven
Alter not, when, through pious prayer below,
To-day is made to-morrow's destiny.

¹ *The part.*—Lombardi well observes, that the head of the eagle is seen in profile, so that one eye only appears.

² *Who.*—David.

³ *He.*—Trajan. See "Purgatory," canto x. 68.

⁴ *He next.*—Hezekiah.

⁵ *The decrees of heaven.*—The eternal counsels of God are indeed immutable, though they appear to us men to be altered by the prayers of the pious.

The other following,¹ with the laws and me,
To yield the shepherd room, pass'd o'er² to Greece;
From good intent, producing evil fruit:
Now knoweth he, how all the ill, derived
From his well doing, doth not harm him aught;
Though it have brought destruction on the world.
That, which thou seest in the under bow,
Was William,³ whom that land bewails, which weeps
For Charles and Frederick living: now he knows,
How well is loved in heaven the righteous king;
Which he betokens by his radiant seeming.
Who, in the erring world beneath, would deem
That Trojan Ripheus,⁴ in this round, was set,
Fifth of the saintly splendours? now he knows
Enough of that, which the world cannot see;
The grace divine: albeit e'en his sight
Reach not its utmost depth." Like to the lark,
That warbling in the air expatiates long,
Then, trilling out his last sweet melody,
Drops, satiate with the sweetness; such appear'd
That image, stamp'd by the everlasting pleasure,
Which fashions, as they are, all things that be.

I, though my doubting were as manifest,
As is through glass⁵ the hue that mantles it,

¹ *The other following.*—Constantine. There is no passage in which Dante's opinion of the evil that had arisen from the mixture of the civil with the ecclesiastical power is more unequivocally declared.

² *Pass'd o'er.*—"Left the Roman state to the Pope, and transferred the seat of the empire to Constantinople."

³ *William.*—William II., King of Sicily, at the latter part of the twelfth century. He was of the Norman line of sovereigns, and obtained the appellation of "the Good;" and, as the poet says, his loss was as much the subject of regret in his dominions, as the presence of Charles II. of Anjou and Frederick of Arragon was of sorrow and complaint.

⁴ *Trojan Ripheus.*—

"Ripheus justissimus unus
Qui fuit in Teucris, et servantissimus æqui."
Virgil, Æneid, lib. ii. 427.

"Then Ripheus fell, the justest far of all
The sons of Troy."—*Pitt.*

⁵ *Through glass.*—This is the only allusion I have remarked in our author to the art of painting glass. Tiraboschi traces that invention in Italy as far back as to the end of the eighth century. "Storia della Lett. Ital.," tom. iii., lib. iii., cap. vi., § ii. This, however, if we may trust Mr. Warton's judgment, must have been a sort of mosaic in glass. For to express figures in glass, or what we now call the art of painting in glass, that writer observes, "was a very different work: and I believe I can show it was brought from Constantinople to Rome before the tenth century, with other ornamental arts."—*History of English Poetry*, vol. iii., p. xxii. In the following passage from the "Dittamondo" of Fazio degli Uberti, lib. v., cap. 3, the allusion is to mosaic in glass:

In silence waited not; for to my lips
 "What things are these?" involuntary rush'd,
 And forced a passage out: whereat I mark'd
 A sudden lightening and new revelry.
 The eye was kindled; and the blessed sign,
 No more to keep me wondering and suspense,
 Replied: "I see that thou believest these things,
 Because I tell them, but discern'st not how;
 So that thy knowledge waits not on thy faith:
 As one, who knows the name of thing by rote,
 But is a stranger to its properties,
 Till other's tongue reveal them. Fervent love,
 And lively hope, with violence assail
 The kingdom of the heavens, and overcome
 The will of the Most High; not in such sort
 As man prevails o'er man; but conquers it,
 Because 'tis willing to be conquer'd; still,
 Though conquer'd, by its mercy, conquering.

"Those, in the eye who live the first and fifth,
 Cause thee to marvel, in that thou behold'st
 The region of the angels deck'd with them.
 They quitted not their bodies, as thou deem'st,
 Gentiles, but Christians; in firm rooted faith,
 This,¹ of the feet in future to be pierced,
 That,² of feet nail'd already to the cross.
 One from the barrier of the dark abyss,
 Where never any with good will returns,
 Came back unto his bones. Of lively hope
 Such was the meed; of lively hope, that wing'd
 The prayers³ sent up to God for his release,

"E pensa s' ai veduto e posto cura,
 Quando il musaico con vetri dipinti
 Adorna e compon ben la sua pittura,
 E quei che son più riccamente tinti
 Nelle più nobil parti gli son sempre,
 Ed e converso nel men gli più stinti."

¹ *This*.—Ripheus.

² *That*.—Trajan.

³ *The prayers*.—The prayers of St. Gregory.

And put power into them to bend His will.
 The glorious Spirit, of whom I speak to thee,
 A little while returning to the flesh,
 Believed in him, who had the means to help;
 And, in believing, nourish'd such a flame
 Of holy love, that at the second death
 He was made sharer in our gamesome mirth.
 The other, through the riches of that grace,
 Which from so deep a fountain doth distil,
 As never eye created saw its rising,
 Placed all his love below on just and right:
 Wherefore, of grace, God oped in him the eye
 To the redemption of mankind to come;
 Within believing, he endured no more
 The filth of Paganism, and for their ways
 Rebuked the stubborn nations. The three nymphs,¹
 Whom at the right wheel thou beheld'st advancing,
 Were sponsors for him, more than thousand years
 Before baptizing. O how far removed,
 Predestination! is thy root from such
 As see not the First Cause entire: and ye,
 O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:
 For we, who see our Maker, know not yet
 The number of the chosen; and esteem
 Such scantiness of knowledge our delight:
 For all our good is, in that primal good,
 Concentrate; and God's will and ours are one."

So, by that form divine, was given to me
 Sweet medicine to clear and strengthen sight.
 And, as one handling skilfully the harp,
 Attendant on some skilful songster's voice
 Bids the chord vibrate; and therein the song
 Acquires more pleasure: so the whilst it spake,

¹ *The three nymphs, whom at the right wheel thou beheld'st advancing.*
 Faith, Hope, and Charity. "Purgatory," canto xxix. 116.

It doth remember me, that I beheld
The pair of blessed luminaries move,¹
Like the accordant twinkling of two eyes,
Their beamy circlets, dancing to the sounds.

¹ The pair of blessed luminaries move.—Ripheus and Trajan.



Again mine eyes were fix'd on Beatrice;
And, with mine eyes, my soul that in her looks
Found all contentment.

Canto XXI., lines 1-3.