

Doth burn and quiver, held so far retired
 Its inner hem and skirting over us,
 That yet no glimmer of its majesty
 Had stream'd unto me: therefore were mine eyes
 Unequal to pursue the crowned flame,¹
 That towering rose, and sought the seed² it bore.
 And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
 For very eagerness toward the breast,
 After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd
 Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
 Through zealous love to Mary: then, in view,
 There halted; and "Regina Cœli"³ sang
 So sweetly, the delight hath left me never.

Oh! what o'erflowing plenty is up-piled
 In those rich-laden coffers,⁴ which below
 Sow'd the good seed, whose harvest now they keep.
 Here are the treasures tasted, that with tears
 Were in the Babylonian exile⁵ won,
 When gold had fail'd them. Here, in synod high
 Of ancient council with the new convened.
 Under the Son of Mary and of God,
 Victorious he⁶ his mighty triumph holds,
 To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.

¹ *The crowned flame.*—The Virgin, with the angel hovering over her.

² *The seed.*—Our Saviour.

³ *Regina Cœli.*—"The beginning of an anthem, sung by the church at Easter, in honour of our Lady."—Volpi.

⁴ *What o'erflowing plenty is up-piled in those rich-*

laden coffers.—Those spirits, who, having sown the seed of good works on earth, now contain the fruit of their pious endeavours.

⁵ *In the Babylonian exile.*—During their abode in this world.

⁶ *He.*—St. Peter, with the other holy men of the Old and New Testament.

CANTO XXIV.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter examines Dante touching Faith, and is contented with his answers.

"O YE! in chosen fellowship advanced
 To the great supper of the blessed Lamb,
 Whereon who feeds hath every wish fulfill'd;
 If to this man through God's grace be vouchsafed
 Foretaste of that, which from your table falls,
 Or ever death his fated term prescribe;
 Be ye not heedless of his urgent will:
 But may some influence of your sacred dews
 Sprinkle him. Of the fount ye alway drink,
 Whence flows what most he craves." Beatrice spake;
 And the rejoicing spirits, like to spheres
 On firm-set poles revolving, trail'd a blaze
 Of comet splendour: and as wheels, that wind
 Their circles in the horologe, so work
 The stated rounds, that to the observant eye
 The first seems still, and as it flew, the last;
 E'en thus their carols¹ weaving variously,

¹ *Their carols.*—"Carole." The annotator on the Monte Casino MS. observes, "carolæ dicuntur tripudium quoddam quod fit saliendo, ut Napolitani faciunt et dicunt." The word had also that signification, which is now the only one that common use attaches to it. "Au tiers jour il s'en partit" (the King of Cyprus coming from Canterbury to Edward III.), "et chevaucha le chemin de Londres; et fit tant qu'il vint a Altem; ou le roi se tenoit, et grand foison de Seigneurs appareillés pour le recevoir. Ce fut un dimanche a heure de relevee qu'il vim là. Si eut entre celle heure et le souper grans danses et grans karolles. Là estoit le jeune Seigneur de Coucy

qui s'efforçoit de bien danser et de bien chanter quand son tour venoit," &c.—*Froissart*, vol. i., cap. 219, fol. edit., 1559.

"These folke, of which I tell you so,
 Upon a karole wenten tho:
 A ladie karoled hem, that hight
 Gladnesse, blissfull, and light,
 Well could she sing, and lustely."

Chaucer, Romaunt of the Rose, edit. 1602, fol. 112.

"I saw her daunce so comely,
 Carol and sing so sweetly."

Chaucer, The Dreame, or Booke of the Duchesse, fol. 231.

They, by the measure paced, or swift, or slow,
Made me to rate the riches¹ of their joy.

From that,² which I did note in beauty most
Excelling, saw I issue forth a flame
So bright, as none was left more goodly there.
Round Beatrice thrice it wheel'd about,
With so divine a song, that fancy's ear
Records it not; and the pen passeth on,
And leaves a blank: for that our mortal speech,
Nor e'en the inward shaping of the brain,
Hath colours fine enough to trace such folds.³

"O saintly sister mine! thy prayer devout
Is with so vehement affection urged,
Thou dost unbind me from thy beauteous sphere."

Such were the accents towards my lady breathed
From that blest ardour, soon as it was stay'd;
To whom she thus: "O everlasting light
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss
He bare below! tent⁴ this man as thou wilt,
With lighter probe or deep, touching the faith,
By the which thou didst on the billows walk.
If he in love, in hope, and in belief,
Be steadfast, is not hid from thee: for thou
Hast there thy ken, where all things are beheld
In liveliest portraiture. But since true faith
Has peopled this fair realm with citizens;

¹ *The riches*.—Lombardi here reads with the Nidobeatina edition, "dalla ricchezza," instead of "della ricchezza," and construes it of the *amplitude* of the circles, according to which the poet estimated their greater or less degree of velocity. I have followed the other commentators.

² *From that*.—St. Peter.

³ *Such folds*.—Pindar has the same bold image: ὕμνον πτυχῶν. Ode l. 170,

which both the Scholiast and Heyne, I think erroneously, understand of the return of the Strophes. Since this note was written, I have found the same

interpretation of Pindar's expression as that I had adopted, in the manuscript notes on that poet collected by Mr. St. Amand, and preserved in the Bodleian Library, No. 42: "Notandum: maximum decus vestimenti antiquitus *sinus* existimabantur, ita ut vix unquam a poetis tam Græcis quam Latinis vestis pulchra describatur sine hoc adjuncto."

⁴ *Tent*.—Tenta. The word "tent," *try*, is used by our old writers, who, I think, usually spell it "taint;" as Massinger, "Parliament of Love," act iv., sc. 3: "Do not fear, I have a staff to taint, and bravely."

Meet is, that to exalt its glory more,
Thou, in his audience, shouldst thereof discourse."

Like to the bachelor, who arms himself,
And speaks not, till the master have proposed
The question, to approve,¹ and not to end it;
So I, in silence, arm'd me, while she spake,
Summoning up each argument to aid;
As was behoveful for such questioner,
And such profession: "As good Christian ought,
Declare thee, what is faith?" Whereat I raised
My forehead to the light, whence this had breathed;
Then turn'd to Beatrice; and in her looks
Approval met, that from their inmost fount
I should unlock the waters. "May the grace
That giveth me the captain of the church
For confessor," said I, "vouchsafe to me
Apt utterance for my thoughts;" then added: "Sire!
E'en as set down by the unerring style
Of thy dear brother, who with thee conspired
To bring Rome in unto the way of life,
Faith² of things hoped is substance, and the proof
Of things not seen; and herein doth consist
Methinks its essence."—"Rightly hast thou deem'd,"
Was answer'd; "if thou well discern, why first
He hath defined it substance, and then proof."

"The deep things," I replied, which here I scan
Distinctly, are below from mortal eye
So hidden, they have in belief alone
Their being; on which credence, hope sublime
Is built: and, therefore substance, it intends.

¹ *To approve*.—"Per approbarla." Landino has "aiutarla." "The bachelor, or disputant in the school, arms or prepares himself to discuss the question proposed by the master, whose business it is to terminate it." Such is Vellutello's interpretation; and it has the merit of being, at least, more intelligible than Lombardi's, who, without reason, accuses

the other commentators, except Venturi (whose explanation he rejects), of passing over the difficulty.

² *Faith*.—Heb. xi. 1. So Marino, in one of his sonnets, which he calls "Divozioni:"

"Fede è sustanza di sperate cose,
E delle non visibili argomento."