

And inasmuch as we must needs infer  
From such belief our reasoning, all respect  
To other view excluded; hence of proof  
The intention is derived." Forthwith I heard:  
"If thus, whate'er by learning men attain,  
Were understood; the sophist would want room  
To exercise his wit." So breathed the flame  
Of love; then added: "Current<sup>1</sup> is the coin  
Thou utter'st, both in weight and in alloy.  
But tell me, if thou hast it in thy purse."

"Even so glittering and so round," said I,  
"I not a whit misdoubt of its assay."

Next issued<sup>2</sup> from the deep-imbosom'd splendour:  
"Say, whence the costly jewel, on the which  
Is founded every virtue, came to thee."

"The flood," I answer'd, "from the Spirit of God  
Rain'd down upon the ancient bond and new,—<sup>3</sup>  
Here is the reasoning, that convinceth me  
So feelingly, each argument beside  
Seems blunt, and forceless, in comparison."  
Then heard I: "Wherefore holdest thou that each,

<sup>1</sup> *Current*.—"The answer thou hast made, is right; but let me know if thy inward persuasion be conformable to thy profession."

<sup>2</sup> *Next issued*.—"We find that the more men have been acquainted with the practice of Christianity, the greater evidence they have had of the truth of it. To such I grant there are such powerful evidences of the truth of the doctrine of Christ by the effectual workings of the Spirit of God upon their souls, that all other arguments, as to their own satisfaction, may fall short of these. As to which, those verses of the poet Dantes, rendered into Latin by F. S., are very pertinent and significant; for when he had introduced the Apostle Peter, asking him what it was which his faith was founded on, he answers,

Deinde exivit ex luce profunda  
Quæ illie splendebat pretiosa gemma.  
Super quam omnis virtus fundatur;

i.e., that God was so pleased, by immediate revelation of himself, to discover that divine truth to the world whereon our faith doth stand as on its sure foundation; but when the Apostle goes on to enquire how he knew this at first came from God, his answer to that is,

Larga pluvia  
Spiritus Sancti, quæ est diffusa  
Super veteres et super novas membranas  
Est syllogismus ille qui eam mihi conclusit  
Adeo acute, ut præ illa demonstratione  
Omnis demonstratio alia mihi videatur obtusa;

i.e., that the Spirit of God doth so fully discover itself both in the Old and New Testament, that all other arguments are but dull and heavy if compared with this.—*Stillington, Origines Sacrae*, b. ii., chap. ix., sect. xix., § 4. The reader will perceive that our learned divine has made an error in his quotation of this passage.

<sup>3</sup> *The ancient bond and new*.—The Old and New Testament.

The elder proposition and the new,  
Which so persuade thee, are the voice of heaven?"

"The works, that follow'd, evidence their truth,"  
I answer'd: "Nature did not make for these  
The iron hot, or on her anvil mold them."

"Who voucheth to thee of the works themselves,"  
Was the reply, "that they in very deed  
Are that they purport? None hath sworn so to thee."

"That all the world,"<sup>1</sup> said I, "should have been turn'd  
To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,  
Would in itself be such a miracle,  
The rest were not an hundredth part so great.  
E'en thou went'st forth in poverty and hunger  
To set the goodly plant, that, from the vine  
It once was, now is grown unsightly bramble."

That ended, through the high celestial court  
Resounded all the spheres, "Praise we one God!"  
In song of most unearthly melody.  
And when that Worthy<sup>2</sup> thus, from branch to branch,

<sup>1</sup> *That all the world*.—"We cannot conceive how the world should be at first induced to believe without manifest and uncontroverted miracles. For as Chrysostom speaks, *ei σημείων χωρὶς ἐπεισαν, πολλὰ μετ' αὐτῶν θαύματα φαίνεσθαι*. It was the greatest miracle of all, if the world should believe without miracles. Which the poet Dantes hath well expressed in the twenty-fourth canto of Paradise. For when the Apostle is there brought in, asking the poet upon what account he took the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, his answer is,

Probatio quæ verum hoc mihi recludit,  
Sunt opera, quæ secuta sunt, ad quæ Natura  
Non candefecit ferrum unquam aut percussit  
incudem;

i.e., the evidence of that is the divine power of miracles which was in those who deliver'd those things to the world. And when the Apostle catechiseth him further, how he knew those miracles were such as they pretended to be, viz., that they were true and divine, his answer is,

Si orbis terræ sæpe convertit ad Christianismum  
Inquirebam ego, sine miraculis; hoc unum  
Est tale, ut reliqua non sint ejus centesima pars;

i.e., if the world should be converted to the Christian

faith without miracles, this would be so great a miracle, that others were not to be compared with it. I conclude this, then, with that known saying of St. Austin, 'Quisquis adhuc prodigia, ut credat, inquiret, magnum est ipse prodigium qui mundo credente non credit.' 'He that seeks for miracles still to induce him to faith, when the world is converted to the Christian faith, he needs not seek for prodigies abroad; he wants only a looking-glass to discover one.' For, as he goes on, 'Unde temporibus eruditus, et omne quod fieri non potest respicientibus, sine ullis miraculis nimium mirabiliter incredibilia credidit mundus?' 'Whence came it to pass that in so learned and wary an age as that was which the Apostles preach'd in, the world without miracles should be brought to believe things, so strangely incredible as those were which Christ and his Apostles preach'd?'—*Stillington, Origines Sacrae*, b. ii., chap. x., sect. v., § 1. Donne, in his Sermons (vol. ii., p. 215, fol. edit.), quotes a similar passage from Augustine, and applies it to the demand for miracles made by Roman Catholics on Protestants.

<sup>2</sup> *And when that Worthy*.—"Quel Baron." In the next canto, St. James is called "Barone." So in Boccaccio, *Giorn.*, vi., Nov. 10, we find "Baron Messer Santo Antonio."



Examining, had led me, that we now  
 Approach'd the topmost bough; he straight resumed:  
 "The grace, that holds sweet dalliance with thy soul,  
 So far discreetly hath thy lips unclosed;  
 That, whatsoe'er has past them, I commend.  
 Behoves thee to express, what thou believest,  
 The next; and, whereon, thy belief hath grown."

"O saintly sire and spirit!" I began,  
 "Who seest that, which thou didst so believe,  
 As to outstrip<sup>1</sup> feet younger than thine own,  
 Toward the sepulchre; thy will is here,  
 That I the tenour of my creed unfold;  
 And thou, the cause of it, hast likewise ask'd.  
 And I reply: I in one God believe;  
 One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love  
 All heaven is moved, himself unmoved the while.  
 Nor demonstration physical alone,  
 Or more intelligential and abstruse,  
 Persuades me to this faith: but from that truth  
 It cometh to me rather, which is shed  
 Through Moses; the rapt Prophets; and the Psalms;  
 The Gospel; and what ye yourselves did write,  
 When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost.  
 In three eternal Persons I believe;  
 Essence threefold and one; mysterious league  
 Of union absolute, which, many a time,  
 The word of gospel lore upon my mind  
 Imprints: and from this germ, this firstling spark  
 The lively flame dilates; and, like heaven's star,  
 Doth glitter in me." As the master hears,  
 Well pleased, and then enfoldeth in his arms

<sup>1</sup> *As to outstrip.*—Venturi insists that the poet has here "made a slip;" for that John came first to the sepulchre, though Peter was the first to enter it. But let Dante have leave to explain his own meaning, in a passage from his third book "De Monar-

chia." "Dicit etiam Johannes ipsum (scilicet Petrum) introiisse subito, cum venit in monumentum, videns alium discipulum cunctantem ad ostium."—Page 146.

The servant, who hath joyful tidings brought,  
 And having told the errand keeps his peace;  
 Thus benediction uttering with song,  
 Soon as my peace I held, compass'd me thrice  
 The apostolic radiance, whose behest  
 Had oped my lips: so well their answer pleased.