

The hands of holy promise, finds a throng
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony
Fattens with this his swine,¹ and others worse
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,
Paying with unstampt metal² for their fare.

"But (for we far have wander'd) let us seek
The forward path again; so as the way
Be shorten'd with the time. No mortal tongue,
Nor thought of man, hath ever reach'd so far,
That of these natures he might count the tribes.
What Daniel³ of their thousands hath reveal'd,
With finite number, infinite conceals.
The fountain, at whose source these drink their beams,
With light supplies them in as many modes,
As there are splendours that it shines on: each
According to the virtue it conceives,
Differing in love and sweet affection.
Look then how lofty and how huge in breadth
The eternal might, which, broken and dispersed
Over such countless mirrors, yet remains
Whole in itself and one, as at the first."

¹ *St. Anthony fattens with this his swine.*—On the sale of these blessings, the brothers of St. Anthony supported themselves and their paramours. From behind the swine of St. Anthony, our poet levels a blow at the object of his inveterate enmity, Boniface VIII., from whom, "in 1297, they obtained the dignity and privileges of an independent congregation." See Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," in

Dr. Maclaine's translation, v. ii., cent xi., p. ii., c. ii., § 28.

² *Paying with unstampt metal.*—With false indulgences.

³ *Daniel.*—"Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."—Dan. vii. 10.

CANTO XXX.

ARGUMENT.

Dante is taken up with Beatrice into the empyrean; and there having his sight strengthened by her aid, and by the virtue derived from looking on the river of light, he sees the triumph of the angels and of the souls of the blessed.

NOON'S fervid hour perchance six thousand miles¹
From hence is distant; and the shadowy cone
Almost to level on our earth declines;
When, from the midmost of this blue abyss,
By turns some star is to our vision lost.
And straightway as the handmaid of the sun
Puts forth her radiant brow, all, light by light,
Fade; and the spangled firmament shuts in,
E'en to the loveliest of the glittering throng.
Thus vanish'd gradually from my sight
The triumph, which plays ever round the point,
That overcame me, seeming (for it did)
Engirt² by that it girdeth. Wherefore love,
With loss of other object, forced me bend
Mine eyes on Beatrice once again.

If all, that hitherto is told of her,
Were in one praise concluded, 'twere too weak
To furnish out this turn.³ Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth,
Not merely to exceed our human; but,

¹ *Six thousand miles.*—He compares the vanishing of the vision to the fading away of the stars at dawn, when it is noon-day six thousand miles off, and the shadow formed by the earth over the part of it inhabited by the poet, is about to disappear.

² *Engirt.*—"Appearing to be encompassed by

these angelic bands, which are in reality encompassed by it."

³ *This turn.*—"Questa vice." Hence perhaps Milton, "Paradise Lost," b. viii. 491:

"This turn hath made amends."

That save its Maker, none can to the full
Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail;
Unequal to my theme; as never bard
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.
For as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
Hath dispossess my spirit of itself.
Not from that day, when on this earth I first
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
Have I with song applausive ever ceased
To follow; but now follow them no more;
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his skill.

She (such as I bequeath her to the bruit
Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,
Urging its arduous matter to the close)
Her words resumed, in gesture and in voice
Resembling one accusom'd to command:
"Forth' from the last corporeal are we come
Into the heaven, that is unbodied light;
Light intellectual, replete with love;
Love of true happiness, replete with joy;
Joy, that transcends all sweetness of delight.
Here shalt thou look on either mighty host³
Of Paradise; and one in that array,
Which in the final judgment thou shalt see."

As when the lightning, in a sudden spleen
Unfolded, dashes from the blinding eyes
The visive spirits, dazzled and bedimm'd;
So, round about me, fulminating streams
Of living radiance play'd, and left me swathed
And veil'd in dense impenetrable blaze.

¹ *Forth*.—From the ninth sphere to the empyrean,
which is mere light.

² *Either mighty host*.—Of angels that remained

faithful, and of beatified souls; the latter in that
form which they will have at the last day.

Such weal is in the love, that stills this heaven;
For its own flame¹ the torch thus fitting ever.

No sooner to my listening ear had come
The brief assurance, than I understood
New virtue into me infused, and sight
Kindled afresh, with vigour to sustain
Excess of light however pure. I look'd;
And, in the likeness of a river, saw
Light flowing,² from whose amber-seeming waves
Flash'd up effulgence, as they glided on
'Twixt banks, on either side, painted with spring,
Incredible how fair: and, from the tide,
There ever and anon, outstarting, flew
Sparkles instinct with life; and in the flowers
Did set them, like to rubies chased in gold:
Then, as if drunk with odours, plunged again
Into the wondrous flood; from which, as one
Re-enter'd, still another rose. "The thirst
Of knowledge high, whereby thou art inflamed,
To search the meaning of what here thou seest,
The more it warms thee, pleases me the more.
But first behoves thee of this water drink,
Or e'er that longing be allay'd." So spake
The day-star of mine eyes: then thus subjoin'd:
"This stream; and these, forth issuing from its gulf,
And diving back, a living topaz each;
With all this laughter on its bloomy shores;
Are but a preface, shadowy of the truth³
They emblem: not that, in themselves, the things

¹ *For its own flame*.—Thus disposing the spirits
to receive its own beatific light.

² *Light flowing*.—"And he shewed me a pure
river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out
of the throne of God and of the Lamb."—Rev.
xxii. 1.

"Underneath a bright sea flow'd
Of jasper or of liquid pearl."

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, b. iii. 518.

³ *Shadowy of the truth*.—

"Son di lor vero ombriferi prefazii."
So Mr. Coleridge, in his "Religious Musings," v. 406:
"Life is a vision shadowy of truth."

Are crude; but on thy part is the defect,
For that thy views not yet aspire so high."

Never did babe that had outslept his wont,
Rush, with such eager straining, to the milk,
As I toward the water; bending me,
To make the better mirrors of mine eyes
In the refining wave: and as the eaves
Of mine eyelids¹ did drink of it, forthwith
Seem'd it unto me turned from length to round.
Then as a troop of maskers, when they put
Their vizors off, look other than before;
The counterfeited semblance thrown aside;
So into greater jubilee were changed
Those flowers and sparkles; and distinct I saw,
Before me, either court² of heaven display'd.

O prime enlightener! thou who gavest me strength
On the high triumph of thy realm to gaze
Grant virtue now to utter what I kenn'd.

There is in heaven a light, whose goodly shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace; and in a circle spreads so far,
That the circumference were too loose a zone
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
Reflected from the summit of the first,
That moves, which being hence and vigour takes.
And as some cliff,³ that from the bottom eyes
His image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
As if to admire his brave apparelling
Of verdure and of flowers; so, round about,
Eying the light, on more than million thrones,

¹ As the eaves of mine eyelids.—Thus Shakespeare calls the eyelids "penthouse lids."—*Macbeth*, act i., sc. 3.

² Either court.—See note to v. 44.

³ As some cliff.—

"A lake,
That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd
Her crystal mirror holds."

Milton, Paradise Lost, b. iv. 263.

Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves,
Extended to their utmost, of this rose,
Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
Took in the full dimensions of that joy.
Near or remote, what there avails, where God
Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends
Her sway? Into the yellow of the rose
Perennial, which, in bright expansiveness,
Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent
Of praises to the never-wintering sun,
As one, who fain would speak yet holds his peace,
Beatrice led me; and, "Behold," she said,
"This fair assemblage; stoles of snowy white,
How numberless. The city, where we dwell,
Behold how vast; and these our seats so throng'd,
Few now are wanting here. In that proud stall,²
On which, the crown, already o'er its state
Suspended, holds thine eyes—or e'er thyself
Mayst at the wedding sup,—shall rest the soul
Of the great Harry,³ he who, by the world
Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,
Before her day be ripe. But ye are sick,
And in your tetchy wantonness as blind,
As is the bantling, that of hunger dies,

¹ My view with ease.—

"Far and wide his eye commands;
For sight no obstacle found here, nor shade,
But all sun-shine."

Milton, Paradise Lost, b. iii. 616.

² In that proud stall.—"Ostenditque mihi circa
Paradisum lectum claris et splendidissimis operi-
mentis adornatum—in quo lecto quendam jacere
conspexi ejus nomen ab Apostolo audivi, sed pro-
hibuit ne cui illud dicerem."—*Alberici Visio*, § 31.

³ Of the great Harry.—The Emperor Henry VII.,
who died in 1313. "Henry, Count of Luxemburgh,

held the imperial power three years, seven months,
and eighteen days, from his first coronation to his
death. He was a man wise, and just, and gracious;
brave and intrepid in arms; a man of honour and a
good Catholic; and although by his lineage he was
of no great condition, yet he was of a magnanimous
heart, much feared and held in awe; and if he had
lived longer, would have done the greatest things."
—*G. Villani*, lib. ix., cap. i. Compare *Dino Com-
pagni*, Muratori, "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores,"
tom. ix., lib. iii., p. 524; and *Fazio degli Uberti*,
"Dittamondo," l. ii., cap. 80.

And drives away the nurse. Nor may it be,
That he,' who in the sacred forum sways,
Openly or in secret, shall with him
Accordant walk: whom God will not endure
I' the holy office long; but thrust him down
To Simon Magus, where Alagna's priest²
Will sink beneath him: such will be his meed."

¹ *Nor may it be, that he.*—Pope Clement V.
See canto xxvii. 53.

² *Alagna's priest.*—Pope Boniface VIII. "Hell,"
canto xix. 79.



Answering not, mine eyes I raised,
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.

Canto XXXI., lines 64-66.