

The ungrateful nation, fickle, and perverse.  
On the other part, facing to Peter, lo!  
Where Anna sits, so well content to look  
On her loved daughter, that with moveless eye  
She chants the loud hosanna: while, opposed  
To the first father of your mortal kind,  
Is Lucia,<sup>1</sup> at whose hest thy lady sped,  
When on the edge of ruin closed thine eye.

"But (for the vision hasteneth to an end)  
Here break we off, as the good workman doth,  
That shapes the cloak according to the cloth;  
And to the primal love our ken shall rise;  
That thou mayst penetrate the brightness, far  
As sight can bear thee. Yet, alas! in sooth  
Beating thy pennons, thinking to advance,  
Thou backward fall'st. Grace then must first be gain'd;  
Her grace, whose might can help thee. Thou in prayer  
Seek her: and, with affection, whilst I sue,  
Attend, and yield me all thy heart." He said;  
And thus the saintly orison began.

<sup>1</sup> Lucia.—See "Hell," canto ii. 97, and "Purgatory," ix. 50.

## CANTO XXXIII.

### ARGUMENT.

St. Bernard supplicates the Virgin Mary that Dante may have grace given him to contemplate the brightness of the divine Majesty, which is accordingly granted; and Dante then himself prays to God for ability to show forth some part of the celestial glory in his writings. Lastly, he is admitted to a glimpse of the great mystery; the Trinity, and the union of man with God.

"O VIRGIN mother,<sup>1</sup> daughter of thy Son!  
Created beings all in lowliness  
Surpassing, as in height above them all;  
Term by the eternal counsel pre-ordain'd;  
Ennobler of thy nature, so advanced  
In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn,  
To make himself his own creation;<sup>2</sup>  
For in thy womb rekindling shone the love  
Reveal'd, whose genial influence makes now  
This flower to germin in eternal peace:  
Here thou to us, of charity and love,

<sup>1</sup> O virgin mother.—

"Thou maide and mother daughter of thy son,  
Thou wel of mercy, sinful soules cure,  
In whom that God of bountee chees to won;  
Thou humble and high over every creature,  
Thou nobledest so far forth our nature,  
That no disdaine the maker had of kinde  
His son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde.

Within the cloistre blisful of thy sides  
Toke mannes shape the eternal love and pees,  
That of the trine compas Lord and guide is,  
Whom erthe, and sea, and heaven out of rellees  
Ay herien; and thou virgin wemmeles  
Bare of thy body (and dweltest maiden pure)  
The Creatour of every creature.

Assembled in thee magnificence  
With mercy, goodness, and with such pitee,  
That thou that art the sunne of excellence  
Not only helpst hem that praisen thee,  
But oftentime of thy benigntee

Ful freely, or that men thin helpe beseche,  
Thou goest beforne, and art hir lives leche."

Chaucer, *The Second Nonnes Tale*.

In the stanza preceding these, Chaucer alludes to St. Bernard's writings:

"And thou that art flour of virgins all,  
Of whom that Bernard list so well to write."

<sup>2</sup> To make himself his own creation.—

"Non si sdegnò di farsi sua fattura."

I had translated this line,

"Himself in his own work enclosed to dwell,"

and have corrected it at the suggestion of my friend, the Rev. William Digby, who points out a parallel passage in Bishop Hopkins, on the Lord's Prayer, ed. 1692, p. 190. "In Him omnipotence became weak; eternity, mortal; innocence itself, guilty; God, man; the Creator, a creature; the Maker of all, his own workmanship."



Art, as the noon-day torch; and art, beneath,  
 To mortal men, of hope a living spring.  
 So mighty art thou, lady, and so great,  
 That he, who grace desireth, and comes not  
 To thee for aidance, fain would have desire<sup>1</sup>  
 Fly without wings. Not only him, who asks,  
 Thy bounty succours; but doth freely oft  
 Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be  
 Of excellence in creature, pity mild,  
 Relenting mercy, large munificence,  
 Are all combined in thee. Here kneeleth one,  
 Who of all spirits hath review'd the state,  
 From the world's lowest gap unto this height.  
 Suppliant to thee he kneels, imploring grace  
 For virtue yet more high, to lift his ken  
 Toward the bliss supreme. And I, who ne'er  
 Coveted sight, more fondly, for myself,  
 Than now for him, my prayers to thee prefer  
 (And pray they be not scant), that thou wouldst drive  
 Each cloud of his mortality away,  
 Through thine own prayers,<sup>2</sup> that on the sovran joy  
 Unveil'd he gaze. This yet, I pray thee, Queen,  
 Who canst do what thou wilt; that in him thou  
 Wouldst, after all he hath beheld, preserve  
 Affection sound, and human passions quell.  
 Lo! where, with Beatrice, many a saint  
 Stretch their clasp'd hands, in furtherance of my suit."

The eyes, that heaven with love and awe regards,  
 Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign  
 She looks on pious prayers: then fasten'd they

<sup>1</sup> Desire.—

"Lo his desire woll fle withouten winges."

Chaucer, *Troilus and Cresseide*, lib. iii.

"Che l' desiderio sempre move l' ale  
 Dietro all' oggetto della mente appreso."

Frezzi, *Il Quadrivoglio*, lib. iii., cap. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Through thine own prayers.—Here again I am indebted to Mr. Digby for noticing the omission of "co' prieghi tuoi" in my former translation of the passage, which stood thus:

"That on the sovran pleasure he may gaze.  
 This also I entreat of thee, O queen."

On the everlasting light, wherein no eye  
 Of creature, as may well be thought, so far  
 Can travel inward. I, meanwhile, who drew  
 Near to the limit, where all wishes end,  
 The ardour of my wish (for so behoved)  
 Ended within me. Beckoning smiled the sage  
 That I should look aloft: but, ere he bade,  
 Already of myself aloft I look'd;  
 For visual strength, refining more and more,  
 Bare me into the ray authential  
 Of sovran light. Thenceforward, what I saw,  
 Was not for words to speak, nor memory's self  
 To stand against such outrage on her skill.

As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight,  
 All he hath seen forgets; yet still retains  
 Impression of the feeling in his dream;  
 E'en such am I: for all the vision dies,  
 As 'twere, away; and yet the sense of sweet,  
 That sprang from it, still trickles in my heart.  
 Thus in the sun-thaw is the snow unseal'd;  
 Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost  
 The Sibyl's sentence.<sup>1</sup> O eternal beam!  
 (Whose height what reach of mortal thought may soar?)  
 Yield me again some little particle  
 Of what thou then appearedst; give my tongue  
 Power, but to leave one sparkle of thy glory,  
 Unto the race to come, that shall not lose  
 Thy triumph wholly, if thou waken aught  
 Of memory in me, and endure to hear  
 The record sound in this unequal strain.

Such keenness<sup>2</sup> from the living ray I met,  
 That, if mine eyes had turn'd away, methinks,

<sup>1</sup> The Sibyl's sentence.—Virgil, "Æneid," iii. 445.

<sup>2</sup> Such keenness.—

"Th' air  
 No where so clear, sharpen'd his visual ray,  
 To objects distant far."  
 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, b. iii. 621.