

I had been lost; but, so embolden'd, on  
I pass'd, as I remember, till my view  
Hover'd the brink of dread infinitude.

O grace, unenvying of thy boon! that gavest  
Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken  
On the everlasting splendour, that I look'd,  
While sight was unconsumed; and, in that depth,  
Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whate'er  
The universe unfolds; all properties<sup>1</sup>  
Of substance and of accident, beheld,  
Compounded, yet one individual light  
The whole. And of such bond methinks I saw  
The universal form; for that whene'er  
I do but speak of it, my soul dilates  
Beyond her proper self; and, till I speak,  
One moment<sup>2</sup> seems a longer lethargy,  
Than five-and-twenty ages had appear'd  
To that emprise, that first made Neptune wonder  
At Argo's shadow<sup>3</sup> darkening on his flood.

With fixed heed, suspense and motionless,  
Wondering I gazed; and admiration still  
Was kindled as I gazed. It may not be,  
That one, who looks upon that light, can turn  
To other object, willingly, his view.  
For all the good, that will may covet, there  
Is summ'd; and all elsewhere defective found,

<sup>1</sup> *All properties.*—Thus in the "Parmenides" of Plato, it is argued that all conceivable quantities and qualities, however contradictory, are necessarily inherent in our idea of a universe or unity.

<sup>2</sup> *One moment.*—"A moment seems to me more tedious than five-and-twenty ages would have appeared to the Argonauts, when they had resolved on their expedition." Lombardi proposes a new interpretation of this difficult passage, and would understand our author to say that "one moment elapsed after the vision, occasioned a greater forgetfulness of what he had seen, than the five-and-twenty centuries, which past between the Argonautic expedition and the time of his writing this poem,

had caused oblivion of the circumstances attendant on that event.

<sup>3</sup> *Argo's shadow.*—

"Quæ simul ac rostro ventosum proscidit æquor,  
Tortaque remigio spumis incanduit unda,  
Emersere feri candenti e gurgite vultus  
Æquoreæ monstrum Nereides admirantes."

*Catullus, De Nupt. Pel. et Thet., 15.*

"The wondred Argo, which in wondrous piece  
First through the Euxine seas bore all the flower  
of Greece."

*Spenser, Faery Queen, b. ii., c. 12, st. 44.*

Complete. My tongue shall utter now, no more  
E'en what remembrance keeps, than could the babe's  
That yet is moisten'd at his mother's breast.  
Not that the semblance of the living light  
Was changed (that ever as at first remain'd),  
But that my vision quickening, in that sole  
Appearance, still new miracles descried,  
And toil'd me with the change. In that abyss  
Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd, methought,  
Three orbs of triple hue, clipt in one bound:<sup>1</sup>  
And, from another, one reflected seem'd,  
As rainbow is from rainbow: and the third  
Seem'd fire, breathed equally from both. O speech!  
How feeble and how faint art thou, to give  
Conception birth. Yet this to what I saw  
Is less than little.<sup>2</sup> O eternal light!  
Sole in thyself that dwell'st; and of thyself  
Sole understood, past, present, or to come;  
Thou smiledst,<sup>3</sup> on that circling,<sup>4</sup> which in thee  
Seem'd as reflected splendour, while I mused;  
For I therein, methought, in its own hue  
Beheld our image painted: stedfastly  
I therefore pored upon the view. As one,  
Who versed in geometric lore, would fain  
Measure the circle; and, though pondering long  
And deeply, that beginning, which he needs,  
Finds not: e'en such was I, intent to scan  
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,

<sup>1</sup> *Three orbs of triple hue, clipt in one bound.*—The Trinity. This passage may be compared to what Plato, in his second Epistle, enigmatically says of a first, second, and third, and of the impossibility that the human soul should attain to what it desires to know of them, by means of any thing akin to itself.

<sup>2</sup> *Less than little.*—

"Che 'l pavon vi parrebbe men che poco."

*Fazio degli Uberti, Dittamondo, l. ii., cap. 5.*

<sup>3</sup> *Thou smiledst.*—Some MSS. and editions, instead of "intendente te a me arridi," have "intendente te ami ed arridi," "who, understanding thyself, lovest and enjoyest thyself;" which Lombardi thinks much preferable.

<sup>4</sup> *That circling.*—The second of the circles, "Light of Light," in which he dimly beheld the mystery of the incarnation.



How to the circle fitted, and therein  
How placed: but the flight was not for my wing;  
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,  
And, in the spleen, unfolded what it sought.

Here vigour fail'd the towering fantasy:  
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel  
In even motion, by the love impell'd,  
That moves the sun in heaven and all the stars.

THE END.



