

"Then saw I clearly how each spot in heaven Is Paradise, though with like gracious dew The supreme virtue shower not over all."

2. The second sphere, that of Mercury, contains the spirits of those who had done great deeds for the sake of fame. "More than thousand splendours" he saw and heard them rejoicing that another was added to their number, "to multiply our loves." The spirit of the Emperor Justinian appears, and denounces the opposition of the Guelfs and the selfishness of the Ghibellines. He also tells the pathetic story of Romeo, the ill-used minister of Raymond Berenger, Count of Provence.

3. They are now carried into the Planet Venus (viii-ix) where are the spirits of lovers. The spirits appear clothed in light. The first is Charles Martel, King of Hungary, whom Dante had met and learned to love. He tries to settle some doubts which had arisen in the poet's mind as to the difference of character between father and son. Among this class was Folco or Folque, the troubadour who had loved, and, after the death of the lady, had become a monk, and afterwards Archbishop of Toulouse. He explains how he had attained to paradise (ix., 99):

"And yet there bides
No sorrowful repentance here, but mirth,
Not for the fault (that doth not come to mind)
But for the virtue, whose o'erruling sway
And providence have wrought thus quaintly.
Here

The skill is looked into that fashioneth
With such effectual working, and the good
Discerned, accruing to the lower world
From this above."

4. The next ascent is to the Sun (x-xiv), probably brought in here, not because this sphere was thought inferior to those coming after, but because of the then supposed place of the sun among the planets. This is the sphere of the great theologians. Immediately a "bright band" appeared; "Yet more sweet in voice, than in their visage beaming." One was heard to speak. This was St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angel of the Schools. He points out the other great teachers who were with him, Albertus Magnus, Gratian, Peter Lombard and Solomon, whose wisdom was so vast that no one had ever equalled him.

Dante, surrounded by these glorified spirits, discerns as he never did before, the vanity of earthly things, and denounces (xi., 1) the "fond anxiety of mortal man."

A beautiful feature in the conversation of these luminaries was their readiness to prefer one another in honour. St. Thomas, a Dominican, lauds St. Francis; St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan, praises St. Dominic. St. Thomas narrates the events of the life of St. Francis, particularly mentioning his marriage with Poverty, which has been painted by Cimabue and Giotto. He laments the rivalry which had arisen between the two great orders. St. Bonaventure chants the praises of St. Dominic, saying:

"The dame, who was his surety, in her sleep Beheld the wondrous fruit, that was from him And from his heirs to issue. And that such He might be construed, as indeed he was, She was inspired to name him of his owner, Whose he was wholly; and so called him Dominic."

[Dominic means "He who is the Lord's."]

St. Thomas instructs Dante in the mystery of creation, and warns him not to adopt opinions without verifying them.

5. The next sphere is that of the Planet Mars, inhabited by crusaders, martyrs and

others who had contended for the faith (xiv-xviii). They appear as lights, grouped so as to make the form of the Crucified One—the cross extending over the surface of the planet over which they move. Dante describes in a passage of great beauty (xiv, 86) the mystical music which he heard sounding from the lights. He says:

"Me such ecstasy
O'ercame, that never, till that hour, was
thing
That held me in so sweet imprisonment."

While Dante was contemplating the glories of this vision, a voice came from one of the lights, saluting him as of his own blood. It was Cacciaguida, his ancestor the crusader, who was probably introduced by Dante in order to lament the degeneracy of Florence. Cacciaguida tells him that in her ancient days Florence

"Was chaste and sober and abode in peace," but that through the influx of strangers, who were wealthy without refinement, the city had been brought to degeneracy and disgrace. He then predicts to Dante his exile from Florence, but points out that it shall end in the disgrace of his enemies more than in his own. This incident has already been noted in the first paper, and it may be only further here remarked that the "stairs" which Dante found it so "hard" to climb, could not have been the first or the third of the brothers Delle Scale, both of whom are spoken of with respect and honour, although he might have had in his mind the second brother Alboino.

Cacciaguida bids Dante write the story of his progress through the abodes of the dead. Dante wishes to do so, but perceives the difficulties of the task. If he speaks the truth, he make enemies of his contemporaries. If he is timid he will be condemned by posterity. Cacciaguida consoles him by assuring him that even those who may least relish his utterances will, when they have digested them, find nourishment in them.

Cacciaguida then points out to him the spirits of Joshua, Judas Maccabaeus, Charlemagne, Godfrey de Bouillon and others who had fought for the faith.

6. They now ascend to the sphere of Jupiter, tenanted by righteous kings and rulers (xviii-xx). The blessed here appear in the form of an eagle, the symbol of the empire, as the martyrs had appeared in the form of a cross, the symbol of sacrifice. As Mars had been ruddy in color, so here we have silvery whiteness, on which the spirits shine like glowing sparks of fire. Dante speaks of the increasing ease and delight of his ascent, and of the heightening beauty of Beatrice.

As they rise into this sphere they hear the blessed spirits singing "Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram—Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth."

The eagle speaking for the whole company of righteous rulers of whom it was composed, told him that because he had been just and piteous he had been exalted to this height of glory. Dante submits to him some difficulties connected with the righteousness of God. The eagle replies that human judgments on divine mysteries are like opinions formed respecting objects a thousand miles away. After a passage of great beauty, (xx., init.) the eagle is heard speaking of the righteous rulers who made up its body, the chief of them constituting its eye. The pupil

"Was the same who sang
The Holy Spirit's song, and bare about
The Ark from town to town."—King David.

After him came Trajan, Hezekiah, Constantine and others. The mention of Constantine leads to comment on the evil done by his removing the seat of empire to Byzantium and so weakening imperial power and influence in Rome. This was a constant thought with Dante.

7. Saturn, the sphere of the contemplative, since in the reign of Saturn no evil had power to harm. In this sphere the redeemed are seen ascending and descending a ladder, the summit of which is beyond the poet's view; and here the music of the spheres is no longer heard. On the steps of this ladder the splendours were seen descending in such multitude that he thought that every light in heaven must be shed thence.

One of the spirits revealed himself as St. Peter Damian, who inveighs against the secularity and avarice of the clergy of those times, contrasted with the poverty of St. Peter and St. Paul (xxi., 135).

"Cephas came,
He came who was the Holy Spirit's vessel;
Barefoot and lean; eating their bread, as
clanced
At the first table. Modern shepherds need
Those who on either hand may prop or lead
them,
So burly are they grown; and from behind,
Others to hoist them. Down the palfrey's
sides
Spread their broad mantles, so as both the
beasts
Are covered with one skin."

Among the other spirits in this sphere appears St. Benedict, who tells the story of the founding on Monte Casino of the great order which bears his name, and points to other spirits by his side who had helped and carried on his work. But alas for the change which has taken place. Few now mount the ladder of contemplation, and many are carried away by the love of gold. Peter founded his convent without gold or silver; "I with prayer and fastings mine, and Francis his in meek humility," but now is "the white gown murky."

8. They now reach the eighth sphere; that of the fixed stars (xxii-xxvii) in which are celebrated the triumphs of Christ; a more brilliant light now appears.

"Then the triumphal hosts
Of Christ, and all the harvest gathered in,
Made ripe by these revolving spheres."

Then he saw a glorious manifestation of Christ as a sun brighter than a million lamps, so that he could not endure its splendour. But this was only preparatory for the supreme vision of Christ in the Empyrean, for which he must be prepared by the vision of the B. V. Mary.

Beatrice petitions that Dante be now admitted to the heavenly banquet; but he must first be examined by St. Peter, as to his faith; by St. James as to his hope, and by St. John as to his love. As he is preparing to enter, Adam appears and tells the story of the fall. After this they were about to pass on, when St. Peter broke out into a condemnation of Boniface VIII, who usurped his place on earth, so fierce that the very heavens were darkened.

9. The Primum Mobile (xxvii-xxix). "Here is the goal, whence motion on his race Starts; motionless the centre, and the rest all moved around."

As they rose, Dante had noted, as so often, the ever increasing beauty of Beatrice. She