

Soon as its final word the blessed flame
Had rais'd for utterance, straight the holy mill
Began to wheel, nor yet had once revolv'd,
Or ere another, circling, compass'd it,
Motion to motion, song to song, conjoining,
Song, that as much our muses doth excel,
Our Sirens with their tuneful pipes, as ray
Of primal splendour doth its faint reflex.

As when, if Juno bid her handmaid forth,
Two arches parallel, and trick'd alike,
Span the thin cloud, the outer taking birth
From that within (in manner of that voice
Whom love did melt away, as sun the mist),
And they who gaze, presageful call to mind
The compact, made with Noah, of the world
No more to be o'erflow'd; about us thus
Of sempiternal roses, bending, wreath'd
Those garlands twain, and to the innermost
E'en thus th' external answered. When the footing,
And other great festivity, of song,
And radiance, light with light accordant, each
Jocund and blythe, had at their pleasure still'd
(E'en as the eyes by quick volition mov'd,
Are shut and rais'd together), from the heart
Of one amongst the new lights mov'd a voice,
That made me seem like needle to the star,

In turning to its whereabouts, and thus
Began: "The love, that makes me beautiful,
Prompts me to tell of th' other guide, for whom
Such good of mine is spoken. Where one is,
The other worthily should also be;
That as their warfare was alike, alike
Should be their glory. Slow, and full of doubt,
And with thin ranks, after its banner mov'd
The army of Christ (which it so clearly cost
To reappoint), when its imperial Head,
Who reigneth ever, for the drooping host
Did make provision, thorough grace alone,
And not through its deserving. As thou heard'st,
Two champions to the succour of his spouse
He sent, who by their deeds and words might join
Again his scatter'd people. In that clime,
Where springs the pleasant west-wind to unfold
The fresh leaves, with which Europe sees herself
New-garmented; nor from those billows far,
Beyond whose chiding, after weary course,
The sun doth sometimes hide him, safe abides
The happy Callaroga, under guard
Of the great shield, wherein the lion lies
Subjected and supreme. And there was born
The loving million of the Christian faith,
The hollow'd wrestler, gentle to his own,
And to his enemies terrible. So replete

His soul with lively virtue, that when first
Created, even in the mother's womb,
It prophesied. When, at the sacred font,
The spousals were complete 'twixt faith and him,
Where pledge of mutual safety was exchang'd,
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 inspir'd to name him of his owner,
Whose he was wholly, and so call'd him Dominic.
And I speak of him, as the labourer,
Whom Christ in his own garden chose to be
His help-mate. Messenger he seem'd, and friend
Fast-knit to Christ; and the first love he show'd,
Was after the first counsel that Christ gave.
Many a time his nurse, at entering found
That he had ris'n in silence, and was prostrate,
As who should say, "My errand was for this."
O happy father! Felix rightly nam'd!
O favour'd mother! rightly nam'd Joanna!
If that do mean, as men interpret it.
Not for the world's sake, for which now they pore
Upon Ostiense and Taddeo's page,
But for the real manna, soon he grew
Mighty in learning, and did set himself
To go about the vineyard, that soon turns

To wan and wither'd, if not tended well:
And from the see (whose bounty to the just
And needy is gone by, not through its fault,
But his who fills it basely, he besought,
No dispensation for commuted wrong,
Nor the first vacant fortune, nor the tenth),
That to God's paupers rightly appertain,
But, 'gainst an erring and degenerate world,
Licence to fight, in favour of that seed,
From which the twice twelve cions gird thee round.
Then, with sage doctrine and good will to help,
Forth on his great apostleship he far'd,
Like torrent bursting from a lofty vein;
And, dashing 'gainst the stocks of heresy,
Smote fiercest, where resistance was most stout.
Thence many rivulets have since been turn'd,
Over the garden Catholic to lead
Their living waters, and have fed its plants.

"If such one wheel of that two-yoked car,
Wherein the holy church defended her,
And rode triumphant through the civil broil.
Thou canst not doubt its fellow's excellence,
Which Thomas, ere my coming, hath declar'd
So courteously unto thee. But the track,
Which its smooth fellies made, is now deserted:
That mouldy mother is where late were lees.

His family, that wont to trace his path,
Turn backward, and invert their steps; erelong
To rue the gathering in of their ill crop,
When the rejected tares in vain shall ask
Admittance to the barn. I question not
But he, who search'd our volume, leaf by leaf,
Might still find page with this inscription on't,
'I am as I was wont.' Yet such were not
From Acquasparta nor Casale, whence
Of those, who come to meddle with the text,
One stretches and another cramps its rule.
Bonaventura's life in me behold,
From Bagnororegio, one, who in discharge
Of my great offices still laid aside
All sinister aim. Illuminato here,
And Agostino join me: two they were,
Among the first of those barefooted meek ones,
Who sought God's friendship in the cord: with them
Hugues of Saint Victor, Pietro Mangiadore,
And he of Spain in his twelve volumes shining,
Nathan the prophet, Metropolitan
Chrysostom, and Anselmo, and, who deign'd
To put his hand to the first art, Donatus.
Raban is here: and at my side there shines
Calabria's abbot, Joachim, endow'd
With soul prophetic. The bright courtesy
Of friar Thomas, and his goodly lore,

Have mov'd me to the blazon of a peer

So worthy, and with me have mov'd this throng."