

So she who doth imparadise my soul,
Had drawn the veil from off our pleasant life,
And bar'd the truth of poor mortality;
When lo! as one who, in a mirror, spies
The shining of a flambeau at his back,
Lit sudden ore he deem of its approach,
And turneth to resolve him, if the glass
Have told him true, and sees the record faithful
As note is to its metre; even thus,
I well remember, did befall to me,
Looking upon the beauteous eyes, whence love
Had made the leash to take me. As I turn'd;
And that, which, in their circles, none who spies,
Can miss of, in itself apparent, struck
On mine; a point I saw, that darted light
So sharp, no lid, unclosing, may bear up
Against its keenness. The least star we view
From hence, had seem'd a moon, set by its side,
As star by side of star. And so far off,
Perchance, as is the halo from the light
Which paints it, when most dense the vapour spreads,
There wheel'd about the point a circle of fire,
More rapid than the motion, which first girds
The world. Then, circle after circle, round
Enring'd each other; till the seventh reach'd
Circumference so ample, that its bow,
Within the span of Juno's messenger,

lied scarce been held entire. Beyond the sev'nth,
Follow'd yet other two. And every one,
As more in number distant from the first,
Was tardier in motion; and that glow'd
With flame most pure, that to the sparkle' of truth
Was nearest, as partaking most, methinks,
Of its reality. The guide belov'd
Saw me in anxious thought suspense, and spake:
"Heav'n, and all nature, hangs upon that point.
The circle thereto most conjoin'd observe;
And know, that by intenser love its course
Is to this swiftness wing'd." To whom I thus:
"It were enough; nor should I further seek,
Had I but witness'd order, in the world
Appointed, such as in these wheels is seen.
But in the sensible world such diff'rence is,
That is each round shows more divinity,
As each is wider from the centre. Hence,
If in this wondrous and angelic temple,
That hath for confine only light and love,
My wish may have completion I must know,
Wherefore such disagreement is between
Th' exemplar and its copy: for myself,
Contemplating, I fail to pierce the cause."

"It is no marvel, if thy fingers foil'd
Do leave the knot untied: so hard 't is grown

For want of tenting." Thus she said: "But take,"
She added, "if thou wish thy cure, my words,
And entertain them subtly. Every orb
Corporeal, doth proportion its extent
Unto the virtue through its parts diffus'd.
The greater blessedness preserves the more.
The greater is the body (if all parts
Share equally) the more is to preserve.
Therefore the circle, whose swift course enwheels
The universal frame answers to that,
Which is supreme in knowledge and in love
Thus by the virtue, not the seeming, breadth
Of substance, measure, thou shalt see the heav'ns,
Each to the' intelligence that ruleth it,
Greater to more, and smaller unto less,
Suited in strict and wondrous harmony."

As when the sturdy north blows from his cheek
A blast, that scours the sky, forthwith our air,
Clear'd of the rack, that hung on it before,
Glitters; and, With his beauties all unveil'd,
The firmament looks forth serene, and smiles;
Such was my cheer, when Beatrice drove
With clear reply the shadows back, and truth
Was manifested, as a star in heaven.
And when the words were ended, not unlike
To iron in the furnace, every cirque

Ebullient shot forth scintillating fires:

And every sparkle shivering to new blaze,

In number did outmillion the account

Reduplicate upon the chequer'd board.

Then heard I echoing on from choir to choir,

"Hosanna," to the fixed point, that holds,

And shall for ever hold them to their place,

From everlasting, irremovable.

Musing awhile I stood: and she, who saw

by inward meditations, thus began:

"In the first circles, they, whom thou beheldst,

Are seraphim and cherubim. Thus swift

Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,

Near as they can, approaching; and they can

The more, the loftier their vision. Those,

That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,

Are thrones; in whom the first trine ends. And all

Are blessed, even as their sight descends

Deeper into the truth, wherein rest is

For every mind. Thus happiness hath root

In seeing, not in loving, which of sight

Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such

The meed, as unto each in due degree

Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd.

The other trine, that with still opening buds

In this eternal springtide blossom fair,

Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,
Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold
Hosannas blending ever, from the three
Transmitted. hierarchy of gods, for aye
Rejoicing, dominations first, next then
Virtues, and powers the third. The next to whom
Are pryncedoms and archangels, with glad round
To tread their festal ring; and last the band
Angelical, disporting in their sphere.
All, as they circle in their orders, look
Aloft, and downward with such sway prevail,
That all with mutual impulse tend to God.
These once a mortal view beheld. Desire
In Dionysius so intently wrought,
That he, as I have done rang'd them; and nam'd
Their orders, marshal'd in his thought. From him
Dissentient, one refus'd his sacred read.
But soon as in this heav'n his doubting eyes
Were open'd, Gregory at his error smil'd
Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth
Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt
Both this and much beside of these our orbs,
From an eye-witness to heav'n's mysteries."