

P Q
44
.51
M5
1898
MAIN

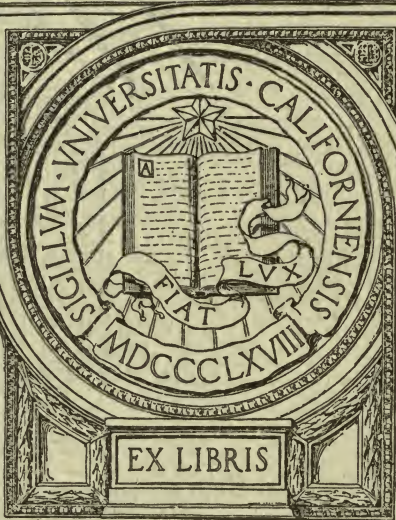
UC-NRLF



⌘B 256 662

YB 00946

GIFT OF
J. F. Hall.



EX LIBRIS

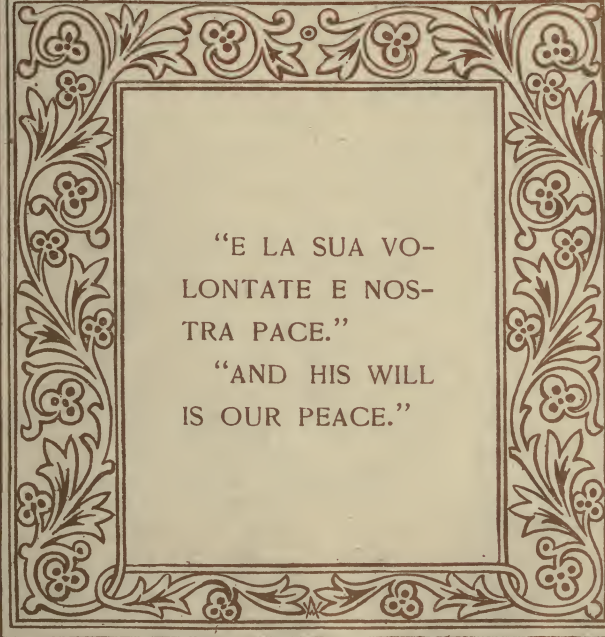
7852
M681

9187



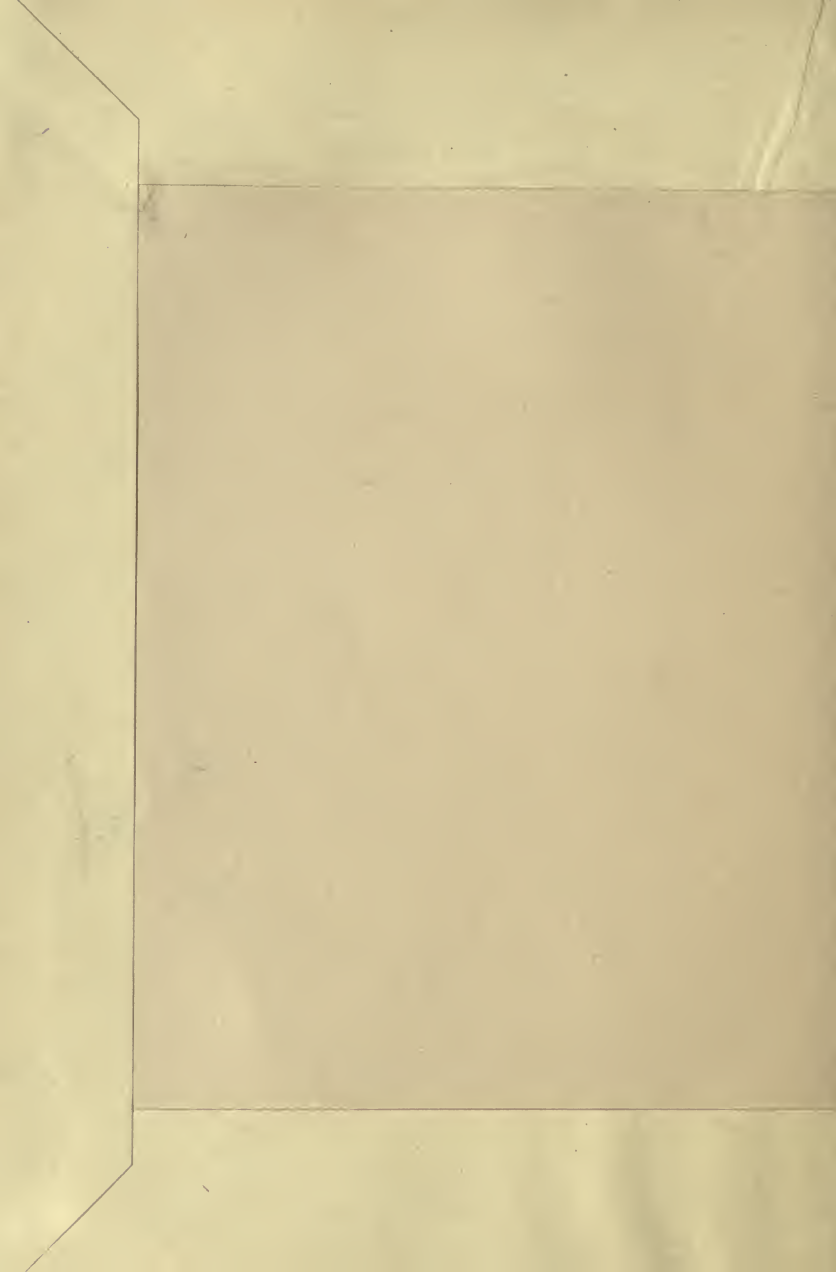
THE PARADISE
OF DANTE.

BY
ELLEN M. MITCHELL.



“E LA SUA VO-
LONTATE E NOS-
TRA PACE.”

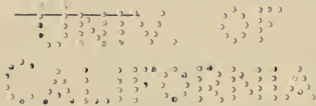
“AND HIS WILL
IS OUR PEACE.”



The Paradise of Dante.

BY
ELLEN M. MITCHELL.

COPYRIGHT 1898.



PRICE, 25 CENTS.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

PRESS OF HALL & M'CHESNEY,
SYRACUSE, N. Y.

*Gift
F. F. Hall*

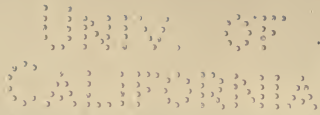
TO THE
LIBRARY OF

PQ44

.51

M.5

1898. MAIN



THE PARADISE OF DANTE.

HAMILTON MABIE says that "it is possible to spend years of study on what may be called the externals of the *Divina Commedia*, and remain unaffected in nature by this contact with one of the masterpieces of the spirit of man. It is also possible to so absorb Dante's thought and so saturate one's self with the life of the poem as to add to one's individual capital of thought and experience all that the poet discerned in that deep heart of his and wrought out of that intense and tragic experience."

"Still studying Dante?" was the question of a visitor of Lowell. "Yes, always studying Dante," was the reply of one of the greatest scholars America has produced.

Four chief subjects occupy the inner life of Dante, the circle of his thoughts and feelings; politics, philosophy, love, faith. All are found harmoniously united in his great poem. The world of ideas in which he lived, the contents of the real world which surrounded him, are poured

TO VIVU AUSONIAO

into one form and moulded into one thought, the *Divina Commedia*. The writer's own life is chronicled in it, the transient names and local factions and forgotten crimes of his own day, as well as the mysteries of time and eternity. Dante comes near to us as an erring human soul, tempted, purified, and at last triumphant. Under the figure of his own experience, the unity of the visible and the invisible is vividly shadowed forth. This is the subject of the *Divina Commedia*,—the harmony between the divine and the human, between faith and reason, between God and the world.

Taken literally, Dante's poem is an account of his journey through Hell, Purgatory, Paradise; interpreted spiritually, it is a revelation of what man is and of what his life means. The soul that sins is in Hell, seeking to cut itself off from the divine organism of which it is a part. The result is impotence and misery.

Sin produces torment by creating a corresponding environment of hatred and antagonism. To sin is to suffer, because sin is contrary to the true nature of the soul. The guilty man creates his own penalty; penalty is born of freedom. Hell is free-will arrayed against the divine order, and

therefore cursed; Heaven is free-will working in harmony with the divine order, and therefore blessed. To make self the centre of the universe is Hell; to strive to subordinate self and do God's will through failure and repeated effort is Purgatory; to attain the end finally through divine help is Paradise. Freedom is grounded in our relation to God; it is to know and love and do His will.

The rushes on the shores of Purgatory that instantly spring up again when plucked symbolize the spiritual law; to give is to receive. They symbolize also that true humility which finds in pain a blessing so far as pain results from wrongdoing. Who ever recognized more clearly than Dante that it is something within us rather than something outside of us that causes our unrest and dissatisfaction? To forgive our own faults is as necessary to spiritual growth as to forgive the faults of others. It is false humility to despise and depreciate one's self over much. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." But the poor in spirit are exalted inasmuch as they recognize their divine birthright, the dignity and worth of the human soul.

Purgatory is the school of aspiration and spir-

itual growth; what we aspire to be we are in some measure. We create in part our own environment; opportunity and temptation have only the power given them by the heart's desire. The higher law of heredity masters the lower; we are worms, as Dante says, but worms destined to form angelic butterflies.

By symbolism and music and picture, by direct and indirect teaching, we are constantly shown by Dante how we ascend by one another, and are at our best only when we take God's gifts for the benefit of those who, needing them, stand beyond us. Pain and inconvenience are angels in disguise to help us toward the joy of unselfish service. When God has blessed some one else through us then is his blessing truly ours. Greatness in man is this quality of taking into one's self and diffusing to others some part of the goodness and beauty and truth at the heart of the universe.

Pride, envy, anger, *accidia* or lukewarmness, gluttony and intemperance, lust,—the fatal roots in character of fatal deeds,—can only be exterminated by long continued effort and pain, rebelled against if one is in Hell, patiently and hopefully borne if one is in Purgatory. Pride as

exclusiveness contradicts the very nature of spiritual good which cannot be monopolized by any soul. We grow by giving, not by keeping; to share is to increase our spiritual possessions.

Envy abuses the gift of spiritual sight and sees with grief the good of others. Men are envious because their desires are directed toward those things which exclude rather than include companionship. The few who possess material goods exclude from their possession the many; but the more there are who possess spiritual goods the more each one has and enjoys, "since good the more communicated the more abundant grows."

Anger obscures the duties we owe to others; lukewarmness makes us indifferent to evil; avarice and waste abuse our material means for helping men; gluttony and intemperance unfit us for human companionship; lust destroys the family, the element of social union. Sin is social as well as individual; its direct effect is to separate the sinner from the social whole in which he lives, and which by his deeds he would destroy. The true state of human beings is one of mutual love and service, giving and receiving the material products of the world, food, clothing, shelter; giving and receiving also feelings, thoughts, the experi-

ence of the race. Human life is vicarious, as Dr. William T. Harris has said, each one living through others and for others in a constant interchange of benefits. This is the truth seen by the regenerated self in Dante's Purgatory; this is the ideal realized in Dante's Paradise.

The gifts to men are various and by no means equal as regards material advantages and intellectual endowment. So, too, with environment; for one it is favorable to the growth of moral excellence, for another it is an atmosphere tending to vice and corruption. But whatever the gifts, whatever the environment, the human soul subsists apart as an independent being, not their creation but the creation of God, and therefore able to react upon limitations and convert them into freedom, transmuting evil into good. What we like is what we are; what we will is what we are struggling to become. To attain Paradise requires love as well as insight, fire as well as light. We may know and will rightly, but we must also feel rightly; we need an accession of the Christ-like spirit. Thirst for the divine has power to bear us upward; aspiration is the prophecy of attainment. What we crave and steadily seek will be ours, says Dante.

The *Paradiso* is the most difficult part of the *Divina Commedia*, but to one who comprehends its music, the music of spiritual life, the most inspiring. We are what we can see and realize. Dante, exiled, disappointed, embittered, sang those deathless songs of joy, so high and pure that the ear scarcely sustains their melody. He must have had in his heart the fountain of that joy, or he could not have interpreted so truly the fervor and love and high thought that are daily moving men and women to lead the spiritual life in obedience to Love Divine that rules hearts and sways the heavens in perpetual harmony.

“The glory of Him who moves all things penetrates through the universe, and shines in one part more and in another less,” are Dante’s opening words in the *Paradiso*. As the rays of the sun are received differently by different bodies, so with the goodness of God, which gives itself more and more as the capacity to receive it increases. The black clod absorbs and is warmed by the sunlight, but does not reflect and ray it forth on every side like the diamond. The gifts of God multiply by giving, and decrease by hoarding; he who gives most receives most. We are at our best only when we cheer and strengthen others

with the help that has come to us; again and again Dante reiterates this truth.

Dante gives the exact time when he ascended to Paradise, April 13, 1300. He also describes its location according to the astronomical notions of his day. Is Heaven then a place according to Dante? What does he say? "Light and love enclose it;" "these near nor far nor add nor take away;" "it has no other where than the Divine mind." We must always look through the symbolism to interpret the poem aright.

Dante's ascent to Paradise after climbing the terraces of Purgatory is like the descent of a stream from a high mountain to its base. Rivers flow to the sea, but the soul of man rises to the stars, overcoming the downward gravitation of earth by the upward gravitation of spiritual desire and aspiration, the divine power of love.

Dante looks at Beatrice, Beatrice at the Sun, and the two are borne upward to the heaven of the Moon. "Within itself the eternal pearl received us, even as water receives a ray of light, remaining unbroken." A lower law is again replaced by a higher, the law of exclusion by that of inclusion, as the downward gravitation of matter by the upward gravitation of spirit. There is

an exclusive sense in which I own houses and lands and material belongings, shutting out others from their possession; but knowledge and spiritual gifts increase as they are diffused and shared.

All the spirits in Dante's Paradise abide in the highest heaven, the Empyrean, but they show themselves to Dante in nine lower heavens that he may comprehend their different degrees of insight and beatitude. Gentle Piccarda Donati, in the heaven of the Moon, unfolds the secret of blessedness. It is not to desire a higher place, or to be thirsty for aught else than one has, since it is essential to heavenly existence to hold one's self within the divine will, "E la sua volontate è nostra pace." "And His will is our peace," says Piccarda, the finest single line in Dante's whole poem. Each soul has all the good it can hold and is unconscious of any lack; there is no jarring note in the heavenly harmony. Underlying diversity is perfect unity, the all-embracing bond of love, which moves each will in unison with the will of "Him who moves the Sun and the other stars."

On earth men are full of discontent because others excel them in material and intellectual

gifts, envying their possessions and their happiness, discordant rather than harmonious notes in that social brotherhood which, like the brotherhood of saints, should rest on love, each rejoicing and participating in the good of all. The ideal shines before men,—true humility and content with what we have and are,—but it is an ideal slowly realized.

Piccarda's words to Dante burn with Love's heart of fire; listening to them, it is clear how "everywhere in Heaven is Paradise." Tending to the sea of divine love, insight and blessedness increase with sympathy and fellowship.

The Moon was known to Dante to shine with reflected light and to be nearest the earth. It is therefore symbolic of the souls who through defective will were compelled to break their religious vows, unable to defy circumstances and triumph over fear. We are what we are through inward defect rather than through outward environment.

In Mercury, veiled by the rays of the Sun, Dante meets the souls who have done great deeds for the sake of honor and fame, their motives of action tinged by selfishness, its reflection in the minds of others rather than in their own.

Lacking complete moral independence and freedom they rejoice in the principle of justice. The application of justice is the work of the law, hence the typical spirit in Mercury is Justinian. "Diverse voices make sweet notes," he says; "thus different degrees of joy contribute to harmony in Heaven," a thought often repeated by Dante. Let the star be content to shine as a star rather than to imitate the Sun. Is our place in life secondary, subordinate? If we do our work faithfully it is as genuine a contribution to the universal good as the work of greater men and women. We all contribute in different ways to a perfected society on earth and in heaven.

The earth's shadow ends on the surface of Venus, according to Ptolemy, Dante's astronomical authority. The souls in the Moon, in Mercury, in Venus, are overshadowed by earthly influences, shown in want of courage, worldly ambition, unregulated love; they are therefore excluded from the higher degree of blessedness. Loving, one learns the nature of love; seeking the good of others, one enters into the divine activity. But love must be for all men; it must strive to lift up into insight and blessedness the lowest dregs of humanity.

In Dante's fourth heaven of the Sun, the souls of the blessed are wholly self-illuminated. They form two great concentric circles, or wheels, revolving with different yet concordant motion, symbolizing unselfish individuality developed into a harmonious social whole. They are the great theologians and doctors of the church, who sought to prove that the Christian religion is identical with the results of sound knowledge and right thinking. Love radiates the resplendence with which they are clothed. Love comes from the vision of God, the light increasing with the ardor, the ardor with the vision. The more clearly one sees the divine, the more ardent the love; the more ardent the love, the clearer the vision. "Therefore the vision must perforce increase, increase the ardor which from that is kindled, increase the radiance which from this proceeds." To know God is to love Him; to love God is to know Him more completely.

"O soaring soul ! faint not nor tire !

Each Heaven attained reveals a higher !"

In the fifth heaven of Mars, Dante sees the spirits, brightly scintillating, in the form of a cross, the supreme symbol of self-renunciation.

Up and down they move freely, but are never dissevered from the radiant fillet which binds them to the cross. As the spirits in the Sun show how knowledge increases love and love enkindles knowledge, the spirits in Mars renounce self utterly, their beneficent activity unobscured by love of fame, as in Mercury. Bound to the cross and shining with its indwelling light, they are one with the whole of humanity.

Mars is the heaven of martyrs who have dared to be true to themselves; it is the heaven where Dante meets his great ancestor, Cacciaguida. Banishment from Florence, dependence, loneliness,—all these are foretold to the poet.

Journeying with Dante we have learned to know his soul, his pride and anger and bitterness, his desire for worldly power and fame,—faults that he humbly acknowledged and humbly sought to expiate. The voice of his heroic ancestors in Mars bids him conquer the cowardice that would lead him to suppress unwelcome truth, bids him “manifest his vision utterly.” “Arise and conquer!” is the stirring cry from the spirits upgathered on the cross. Crucify selfish fear as well as pride and anger and ambition.

From the heaven of Mars, Dante and Beatrice

rise to the heaven of Jupiter, the planet of righteous rulers who, arranged in the form of an eagle, comprise in luminous words the sentence: "*Diligete justitiam qui judicatis terram,*" "Love justice, ye that be judges of the earth."

The eagle symbolizes the Holy Roman Empire—Dante's dream of a united nation based on justice and law. When the eagle speaks, it "utters with its beak both I and My, when in conception it is We and Our," the idea seeming to be that the realization of the highest self is found in total humanity. Man as an individual is protected, guided, strengthened, and helped by others in the family, the State, the Church. The least can share in the triumphs of the greatest. In the large way we prosper or suffer together. Mars is fiery red, Jupiter silvery white; the ardor of love concentrated in sacrifice is found in one, the radiance of love beneficently diffused in the other.

One of the brightest lights in Jupiter is the Trojan Ripheus who, "through grace which distils from a fount so deep that creature never pushed the eye far as its primal wave, there below set all his love on righteousness, wherefore Faith, Hope and Charity were to him for baptism

more than a thousand years before baptizing." Salvation is by faith, but faith is purely spiritual. "*Regnum coelorum* (the kingdom of heaven) suffereth violence from fervent love, and from that living hope that overcometh the Divine volition, not in the guise that man o'ercometh man, but conquers it because it will be conquered, and conquered, conquers by benignity."

Ascending from Jupiter to Saturn, Dante beholds a golden stairway, uplifted beyond the power of mortal vision, symbol of the life of mystical contemplation. Spheres of light, "becoming more beautiful with mutual rays," the souls in Saturn, enriched by the total experience of humanity, expand to the measure of the divine fullness.

Dante almost anticipates the jubilant cry of Beatrice as, entering the heaven of the Fixed Stars, she bids him

"Behold the hosts of Christ's triumphal march, and all the fruit
Harvested by the rolling of the spheres."

"Above myriads of lights, a sun was enkindling each and all of them, and through its living splendor the lucent substance shone so bright that I sustained it not," says Dante.

We pass from vision to doctrine, from the symbol to its essential meaning. What is Faith? What is Hope? What is Charity? The three must be ours in order to triumph over the world in a Christ-like spirit. To bear witness to the truth, to seek and save the lost, to overcome evil with good, to deal gently with the erring and sternly with the false, to suffer wrong rather than do wrong, to draw toward ourselves all forms of blessing in order to enrich the lives of others,—this is the triumph of the Christ-like spirit in man.

Rapt in the beauty of Beatrice, Dante rises to the swiftest and first-moved heaven, the *Primum Mobile*, where time and space both end. The increasing radiance in the eyes of Beatrice is like a mirror in which Dante beholds the reflection of new glory. She “*imparadises*” his mind. The more man is deepened in the contemplation of divine things, the higher he rises on the ladder of contemplation to God.

Dante sees a point infinitely small and infinitely bright, the symbolic manifestation of the divine nature, and round it nine concentric circles of fire, the nine angelic orders of the hierarchy of heaven. They are all upward gazing, and down-

ward prevail, so that toward God they are all attracted and all attract,—a perfect symbol of the social ideal of Christ.

The ninth heaven is the heaven of influence, descending through Cherubim and Seraphim to the least and lowest who aspire toward a higher life. This is one of the deepest of Dante's lessons. We are to diffuse what we receive, to work forever to create the image of God in others as in ourselves. Love grows by giving; knowledge shared is knowledge deepened.

The primal light that irradiates all is received in as many modes; no two angels are precisely alike in their vision of God. "Wherefore since affection follows upon the act that conceives, the sweetness of love diversely glows and warms. Behold now the breadth and the height of the Eternal Goodness since it has made for itself so many mirrors on which it is broken, One in itself remaining as before."

In the ascent to the Empyrean Dante is overpowered by the greatness of his theme. He gives up the attempt to describe the beauty of Beatrice, "transcending measure." The Empyrean is the "Heaven which is pure light; light intellectual, full of love; love of true good, full

of joy; joy which transcends every sweetness." Dante's first sensation is that of a flash of lightning, swathing him in a veil of its own effulgence. This is the welcome that "fits the candle to the flame," giving Dante the strength required for new insight. Men must be bathed in God's illuminating grace before their thirst for truth can be satisfied.

Raised to a higher power of vision, Dante sees "light in the form of a river, bright with effulgence, between two banks painted with a marvelous spring. Out of this stream were issuing living sparks, and on every side were setting themselves in the flowers, like rubies which gold encompasses. Then, as if inebriated by the odors, they plunged again into the wonderful flood, and as one was entering another was issuing forth." The river represents the grace and love of God; the ruby sparks are the angels; the flowers on the banks are the souls of the righteous; the movements represent the ministries of angels, ministries of joy and fellowship. All are images foreshadowing the truth.

As Dante bathes his eyes in the illuminating stream, its form changes, it flows in a circle consisting of a host of angelic beings, who form a

great white rose. The petals of the rose are ranks of glorified saints, tier above tier, mirrored in the crystal sea of light, as a flower-clad hill is mirrored in a lake. The angels pass in a continual stream of glory between God and the saints, a glory consisting of knowledge and love, deepening to all eternity.

The imagery may have been suggested by the rose windows of Gothic cathedrals, or it may have spontaneously sprung up before Dante's creative imagination. "My vision lost not itself in the breadth and in the height, but took in all the quantity and the quality of that joy. There near and far nor add nor take away; for where God immediately governs, the natural law is of no relevancy."

Turning to speak to Beatrice, Dante finds an old man with pious mien, such as befits a tender father. It is St. Bernard, to whom it was given to be master of the hearts of men as St. Thomas Aquinas was of their intellects. Beatrice has returned to her place as a petal of the White Rose of Paradise. Raising his eyes upward, Dante beholds her "as she makes for herself a crown, reflecting from herself the eternal rays." What a sublime image! The glory of God penetrates

the universe, blessing in proportion as it is accepted and reflected.

Beatrice, transcending all her words with the sweet splendor of her smile, is dear to us as the type of divine wisdom. She is dear to us also as the spirit of a love immortally famous, a love that once drew human breath like ours, and was pierced with the pain of sorrow and bereavement. Dante rises from circle to circle in the "*Paradiso*" by gazing on her loving eyes, always turned upward, drawing her lover from herself to God. The glance of Beatrice once fell on Dante's heart in Florence like a benediction. She died, and the poet's lady on earth became his lady in heaven. The love of his youth was to him a "New Life," "*Vita Nuova*," an ideal followed through failure and error until in repentant devotion he is at last saved "as by fire." For what is the ideal but a guide, like the love of Beatrice, leading us closer and closer to the real, the beatific vision of God?

Dante's sight enters more and more into the rays of the high light which in itself is true. Memory and speech alike fail to reproduce the vision. He remembers an ineffable intuition, an ineffable sweetness to bear witness to his experi-

ence. "O abundant Grace, whereby I presumed to fix my eyes through the Eternal Light so far that there I consumed my sight." "Bound with love in one volume," Dante sees the essential and the accidental, the universal and the particular, whatever on earth is manifold and separated existing in God as parts of an organic whole.

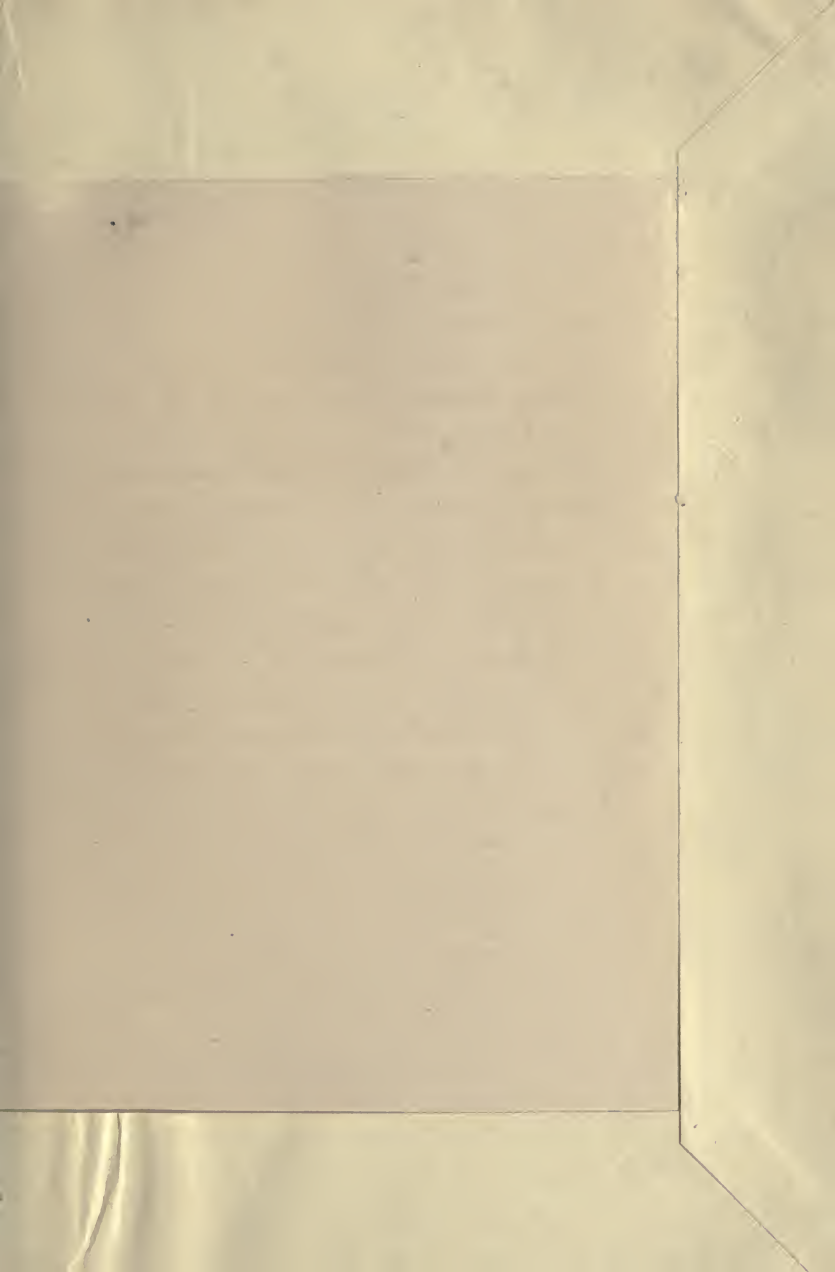
Wholly rapt, gazing fixed, motionless and intent, Dante grows more and more enkindled. Within the deep and luminous subsistence of the lofty light, three circles appear of threefold color and of one dimension, the first reflected by the second, and the third as fire which from the one and from the other is equally breathed forth. The second circle, regarded closer, depicts within itself the human effigy. First, the mystery of the Trinity is revealed, one nature and essence in three persons; then the mystery of the human incarnated in the divine. Dante sees a human form and features, "perfect God and perfect man," in the "Light of Light."

The end crowns the work. Dante wishes to see how the image accords with the circle, the human nature with the divine, but recognizes that the wings of his intellect are unequal to the task. Then, suddenly smitten by a flash of illuminat-

TO VINU
ABOVE US

ing grace, the truth is revealed. "To my high fantasy here power failed; but now my desire and my will, like a wheel which evenly is moved, the Love was turning which moves the Sun and the other stars."

Love, then, is Dante's solving word, love which shows us the way to the stars, the heights of Heaven. This is the end of man,—to climb through every phase of human experience to that region where the true, the good, and the beautiful blend in the white light of God. Beyond the horizon of speculation floats, in the passionless splendor of the Empyrean, a citadel of refuge for souls purified and transhumanized. "And it is called Empyrean, which is the same as a heaven blazing with fire or ardor, not because there is in it a natural fire burning, but a spiritual one, which is blessed love or charity."



THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

MAY 18 1939

MAY 19 1948

3 JUN 1948

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C046174788

YB 0094

295830

Mitchell

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

