

Now had the sun to that horizon reach'd,
That covers, with the most exalted point
Of its meridian circle, Salem's walls,
And night, that opposite to him her orb
Sounds, from the stream of Ganges issued forth,
Holding the scales, that from her hands are dropp'd
When she reigns highest: so that where I was,
Aurora's white and vermeil-tinctur'd cheek
To orange turn'd as she in age increas'd.

Meanwhile we linger'd by the water's brink,
Like men, who, musing on their road, in thought
Journey, while motionless the body rests.
When lo! as near upon the hour of dawn,
Through the thick vapours Mars with fiery beam
Glares down in west, over the ocean floor;
So seem'd, what once again I hope to view,
A light so swiftly coming through the sea,
No winged course might equal its career.
From which when for a space I had withdrawn
Thine eyes, to make inquiry of my guide,
Again I look'd and saw it grown in size
And brightness: thou on either side appear'd
Something, but what I knew not of bright hue,
And by degrees from underneath it came
Another. My preceptor silent yet
Stood, while the brightness, that we first discern'd,

Open'd the form of wings: then when he knew
The pilot, cried aloud, "Down, down; bend low
Thy knees; behold God's angel: fold thy hands:
Now shalt thou see true Ministers indeed."

Lo how all human means he sets at naught!
So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail
Except his wings, between such distant shores.
Lo how straight up to heaven he holds them rear'd,
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change!"

As more and more toward us came, more bright
Appear'd the bird of God, nor could the eye
Endure his splendor near: I mine bent down.
He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
And light, that in its course no wave it drank.
The heav'nly steersman at the prow was seen,
Visibly written blessed in his looks.

Within a hundred spirits and more there sat.
"In Exitu Israel de Aegypto;"
All with one voice together sang, with what
In the remainder of that hymn is writ.
Then soon as with the sign of holy cross
He bless'd them, they at once leap'd out on land,
The swiftly as he came return'd. The crew,

There left, appear'd astounded with the place,
Gazing around as one who sees new sights.

From every side the sun darted his beams,
And with his arrowy radiance from mid heav'n
Had chas'd the Capricorn, when that strange tribe
Lifting their eyes towards us: "If ye know,
Declare what path will Lead us to the mount."

Them Virgil answer'd. "Ye suppose perchance
Us well acquainted with this place: but here,
We, as yourselves, are strangers. Not long erst
We came, before you but a little space,
By other road so rough and hard, that now
The' ascent will seem to us as play." The spirits,
Who from my breathing had perceiv'd I liv'd,
Grew pale with wonder. As the multitude
Flock round a herald, sent with olive branch,
To hear what news he brings, and in their haste
Tread one another down, e'en so at sight
Of me those happy spirits were fix'd, each one
Forgetful of its errand, to depart,
Where cleans'd from sin, it might be made all fair.

Then one I saw darting before the rest
With such fond ardour to embrace me, I
To do the like was mov'd. O shadows vain

Except in outward semblance! thrice my hands
I clasp'd behind it, they as oft return'd
Empty into my breast again. Surprise
I needs must think was painted in my looks,
For that the shadow smil'd and backward drew.
To follow it I hasten'd, but with voice
Of sweetness it enjoin'd me to desist.
Then who it was I knew, and pray'd of it,
To talk with me, it would a little pause.
It answered: "Thee as in my mortal frame
I lov'd, so loos'd forth it I love thee still,
And therefore pause; but why walkest thou here?"

"Not without purpose once more to return,
Thou find'st me, my Casella, where I am
Journeying this way;" I said, "but how of thee
Hath so much time been lost?" He answer'd straight:
"No outrage hath been done to me, if he
Who when and whom he chooses takes, me oft
This passage hath denied, since of just will
His will he makes. These three months past indeed,
He, whose chose to enter, with free leave
Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore
Where Tyber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind
Admittance, at that river's mouth, tow'rd which
His wings are pointed, for there always throng
All such as not to Archeron descend."

Then I: "If new laws have not quite destroy'd
Memory and use of that sweet song of love,
That while all my cares had power to 'swage;
Please thee with it a little to console
My spirit, that incumber'd with its frame,
Travelling so far, of pain is overcome."

"Love that discourses in my thoughts." He then
Began in such soft accents, that within
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide
And all who came with him, so well were pleas'd,
That seem'd naught else might in their thoughts have room.

Fast fix'd in mute attention to his notes
We stood, when lo! that old man venerable
Exclaiming, "How is this, ye tardy spirits?
What negligence detains you loit'ring here?
Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,
That from your eyes the sight of God conceal."

As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food
Collected, blade or tares, without their pride
Accustom'd, and in still and quiet sort,
If aught alarm them, suddenly desert
Their meal, assail'd by more important care;
So I that new-come troop beheld, the song

Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side,
As one who goes yet where he tends knows not.

Nor with less hurried step did we depart.