

When, disappearing, from our hemisphere,
The world's enlightener vanishes, and day
On all sides wasteth, suddenly the sky,
Erewhile irradiate only with his beam,
Is yet again unfolded, putting forth
Innumerable lights wherein one shines.
Of such vicissitude in heaven I thought,
As the great sign, that marshaleth the world
And the world's leaders, in the blessed beak
Was silent; for that all those living lights,
Waxing in splendour, burst forth into songs,
Such as from memory glide and fall away.

Sweet love! that dost apparel thee in smiles,
How lustrous was thy semblance in those sparkles,
Which merely are from holy thoughts inspir'd!

After the precious and bright beaming stones,
That did ingem the sixth light, ceas'd the chiming
Of their angelic bells; methought I heard
The murmuring of a river, that doth fall
From rock to rock transpicious, making known
The richness of his spring-head: and as sound
Of cistern, at the fret-board, or of pipe,
Is, at the wind-hole, modulate and tun'd;
Thus up the neck, as it were hollow, rose
That murmuring of the eagle, and forthwith

Voice there assum'd, and thence along the beak
Issued in form of words, such as my heart
Did look for, on whose tables I inscrib'd them.

“The part in me, that sees, and bears the sun,,
In mortal eagles,” it began, “must now
Be noted steadfastly: for of the fires,
That figure me, those, glittering in mine eye,
Are chief of all the greatest. This, that shines
Midmost for pupil, was the same, who sang
The Holy Spirit’s song, and bare about
The ark from town to town; now doth he know
The merit of his soul-impassion’d strains
By their well-fitted guerdon. Of the five,
That make the circle of the vision, he
Who to the beak is nearest, comforted
The widow for her son: now doth he know
How dear he costeth not to follow Christ,
Both from experience of this pleasant life,
And of its opposite. He next, who follows
In the circumference, for the over arch,
By true repenting slack’d the pace of death:
Now knoweth he, that the degrees of heav’n
Alter not, when through pious prayer below
Today’s is made tomorrow’s destiny.
The other following, with the laws and me,
To yield the shepherd room, pass’d o’er to Greece,

From good intent producing evil fruit:
Now knoweth he, how all the ill, deriv'd
From his well doing, doth not helm him aught,
Though it have brought destruction on the world.
That, which thou seest in the under bow,
Was William, whom that land bewails, which weeps
For Charles and Frederick living: now he knows
How well is lov'd in heav'n the righteous king,
Which he betokens by his radiant seeming.
Who in the erring world beneath would deem,
That Trojan Ripheus in this round was set
Fifth of the saintly splendours? now he knows
Enough of that, which the world cannot see,
The grace divine, albeit e'en his sight
Reach not its utmost depth." Like to the lark,
That warbling in the air expatiates long,
Then, trilling out his last sweet melody,
Drops satiate with the sweetness; such appear'd
That image stamp'd by the' everlasting pleasure,
Which fashions like itself all lovely things.

I, though my doubting were as manifest,
As is through glass the hue that mantles it,
In silence waited not: for to my lips
"What things are these?" involuntary rush'd,
And forc'd a passage out: whereat I mark'd
A sudden lightening and new revelry.

The eye was kindled: and the blessed sign
No more to keep me wond'ring and suspense,
Replied: "I see that thou believ'st these things,
Because I tell them, but discern'st not how;
So that thy knowledge waits not on thy faith:
As one who knows the name of thing by rote,
But is a stranger to its properties,
Till other's tongue reveal them. Fervent love
And lively hope with violence assail
The kingdom of the heavens, and overcome
The will of the Most high; not in such sort
As man prevails o'er man; but conquers it,
Because 't is willing to be conquer'd, still,
Though conquer'd, by its mercy conquering.

"Those, in the eye who live the first and fifth,
Cause thee to marvel, in that thou behold'st
The region of the angels deck'd with them.
They quitted not their bodies, as thou deem'st,
Gentiles but Christians, in firm rooted faith,
This of the feet in future to be pierc'd,
That of feet nail'd already to the cross.
One from the barrier of the dark abyss,
Where never any with good will returns,
Came back unto his bones. Of lively hope
Such was the meed; of lively hope, that wing'd
The prayers sent up to God for his release,

And put power into them to bend his will.
The glorious Spirit, of whom I speak to thee,
A little while returning to the flesh,
Believ'd in him, who had the means to help,
And, in believing, nourish'd such a flame
Of holy love, that at the second death
He was made sharer in our gamesome mirth.
The other, through the riches of that grace,
Which from so deep a fountain doth distil,
As never eye created saw its rising,
Plac'd all his love below on just and right:
Wherefore of grace God op'd in him the eye
To the redemption of mankind to come;
Wherein believing, he endur'd no more
The filth of paganism, and for their ways
Rebuk'd the stubborn nations. The three nymphs,
Whom at the right wheel thou beheldst advancing,
Were sponsors for him more than thousand years
Before baptizing. O how far remov'd,
Predestination! is thy root from such
As see not the First cause entire: and ye,
O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:
For we, who see our Maker, know not yet
The number of the chosen: and esteem
Such scantiness of knowledge our delight:
For all our good is in that primal good
Concentrate, and God's will and ours are one."

So, by that form divine, was giv'n to me
Sweet medicine to clear and strengthen sight,
And, as one handling skillfully the harp,
Attendant on some skilful songster's voice
Bids the chords vibrate, and therein the song
Acquires more pleasure; so, the whilst it spake,
It doth remember me, that I beheld
The pair of blessed luminaries move.
Like the accordant twinkling of two eyes,
Their beamy circlets, dancing to the sounds.