

All ye, who in small bark have following sail'd,
Eager to listen, on the advent'rous track
Of my proud keel, that singing cuts its way,
Backward return with speed, and your own shores
Revisit, nor put out to open sea,
Where losing me, perchance ye may remain
Bewilder'd in deep maze. The way I pass
Ne'er yet was run: Minerva breathes the gale,
Apollo guides me, and another Nine
To my rapt sight the arctic beams reveal.
Ye other few, who have outstretch'd the neck.
Timely for food of angels, on which here
They live, yet never know satiety,
Through the deep brine ye fearless may put out
Your vessel, marking, well the furrow broad
Before you in the wave, that on both sides
Equal returns. Those, glorious, who pass'd o'er
To Colchos, wonder'd not as ye will do,
When they saw Jason following the plough.

The increate perpetual thirst, that draws
Toward the realm of God's own form, bore us
Swift almost as the heaven ye behold.

Beatrice upward gaz'd, and I on her,
And in such space as on the notch a dart
Is plac'd, then loosen'd flies, I saw myself

Arriv'd, where wond'rous thing engag'd my sight.
Whence she, to whom no work of mine was hid,
Turning to me, with aspect glad as fair,
Bespake me: "Gratefully direct thy mind
To God, through whom to this first star we come."

Me seem'd as if a cloud had cover'd us,
Translucent, solid, firm, and polish'd bright,
Like adamant, which the sun's beam had smit
Within itself the ever-during pearl
Receiv'd us, as the wave a ray of light
Receives, and rests unbroken. If I then
Was of corporeal frame, and it transcend
Our weaker thought, how one dimension thus
Another could endure, which needs must be
If body enter body, how much more
Must the desire inflame us to behold
That essence, which discovers by what means
God and our nature join'd! There will be seen
That which we hold through faith, not shown by proof,
But in itself intelligibly plain,
E'en as the truth that man at first believes.

I answered: "Lady! I with thoughts devout,
Such as I best can frame, give thanks to Him,
Who hath remov'd me from the mortal world.
But tell, I pray thee, whence the gloomy spots

Upon this body, which below on earth
Give rise to talk of Cain in fabling quaint?"

She somewhat smil'd, then spake: "If mortals err
In their opinion, when the key of sense
Unlocks not, surely wonder's weapon keen
Ought not to pierce thee; since thou find'st, the wings
Of reason to pursue the senses' flight
Are short. But what thy own thought is, declare."

Then I: "What various here above appears,
Is caus'd, I deem, by bodies dense or rare."

She then resum'd: "Thou certainly wilt see
In falsehood thy belief o'erwhelm'd, if well
Thou listen to the arguments, which I
Shall bring to face it. The eighth sphere displays
Numberless lights, the which in kind and size
May be remark'd of different aspects;
If rare or dense of that were cause alone,
One single virtue then would be in all,
Alike distributed, or more, or less.
Different virtues needs must be the fruits
Of formal principles, and these, save one,
Will by thy reasoning be destroy'd. Beside,
If rarity were of that dusk the cause,
Which thou inquirest, either in some part

That planet must throughout be void, nor fed
With its own matter; or, as bodies share
Their fat and leanness, in like manner this
Must in its volume change the leaves. The first,
If it were true, had through the sun's eclipse
Been manifested, by transparency
Of light, as through aught rare beside effus'd.
But this is not. Therefore remains to see
The other cause: and if the other fall,
Erroneous so must prove what seem'd to thee.
If not from side to side this rarity
Pass through, there needs must be a limit, whence
Its contrary no further lets it pass.
And hence the beam, that from without proceeds,
Must be pour'd back, as colour comes, through glass
Reflected, which behind it lead conceals.
Now wilt thou say, that there of murkier hue
Than in the other part the ray is shown,
By being thence refracted farther back.
From this perplexity will free thee soon
Experience, if thereof thou trial make,
The fountain whence your arts derive their streame.
Three mirrors shalt thou take, and two remove
From thee alike, and more remote the third.
Betwixt the former pair, shall meet thine eyes;
Then turn'd toward them, cause behind thy back
A light to stand, that on the three shall shine,

And thus reflected come to thee from all.
Though that beheld most distant do not stretch
A space so ample, yet in brightness thou
Will own it equaling the rest. But now,
As under snow the ground, if the warm ray
Smites it, remains dismantled of the hue
And cold, that cover'd it before, so thee,
Dismantled in thy mind, I will inform
With light so lively, that the tremulous beam
Shall quiver where it falls. Within the heaven,
Where peace divine inhabits, circles round
A body, in whose virtue dies the being
Of all that it contains. The following heaven,
That hath so many lights, this being divides,
Through different essences, from it distinct,
And yet contain'd within it. The other orbs
Their separate distinctions variously
Dispose, for their own seed and produce apt.
Thus do these organs of the world proceed,
As thou beholdest now, from step to step,
Their influences from above deriving,
And thence transmitting downwards. Mark me well,
How through this passage to the truth I ford,
The truth thou lov'st, that thou henceforth alone,
May'st know to keep the shallows, safe, untold.

“The virtue and motion of the sacred orbs,

As mallet by the workman's hand, must needs
By blessed movers be inspir'd. This heaven,
Made beauteous by so many luminaries,
From the deep spirit, that moves its circling sphere,
Its image takes an impress as a seal:
And as the soul, that dwells within your dust,
Through members different, yet together form'd,
In different pow'rs resolves itself; e'en so
The intellectual efficacy unfolds
Its goodness multiplied throughout the stars;
On its own unity revolving still.
Different virtue compact different
Makes with the precious body it enlivens,
With which it knits, as life in you is knit.
From its original nature full of joy,
The virtue mingled through the body shines,
As joy through pupil of the living eye.
From hence proceeds, that which from light to light
Seems different, and not from dense or rare.
This is the formal cause, that generates
Proportion'd to its power, the dusk or clear."