Now was the sun so station'd, as when first

His early radiance quivers on the heights,

Where stream'd his Maker's blood, while Libra hangs

Above Hesperian Ebro, and new fires

Meridian flash on Ganges' yellow tide.

So day was sinking, when the' angel of God
Appear'd before us. Joy was in his mien.
Forth of the flame he stood upon the brink,
And with a voice, whose lively clearness far
Surpass'd our human, "Blessed are the pure
In heart," he Sang: then near him as we came,
"Go ye not further, holy spirits!" he cried,
"Ere the fire pierce you: enter in; and list
Attentive to the song ye hear from thence."

I, when I heard his saying, was as one
Laid in the grave. My hands together clasp'd,
And upward stretching, on the fire I look'd,
And busy fancy conjur'd up the forms
Erewhile beheld alive consum'd in flames.

Th' escorting spirits turn'd with gentle looks

Toward me, and the Mantuan spake: "My son,

Here torment thou mayst feel, but canst not death.

Remember thee, remember thee, if I

Safe e'en on Geryon brought thee: now I come

More near to God, wilt thou not trust me now?

Of this be sure: though in its womb that flame

A thousand years contain'd thee, from thy head

No hair should perish. If thou doubt my truth,

Approach, and with thy hands thy vesture's hem

Stretch forth, and for thyself confirm belief.

Lay now all fear, O lay all fear aside.

Turn hither, and come onward undismay'd."

I still, though conscience urg'd' no step advanc'd.

When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,

Somewhat disturb'd he cried: "Mark now, my son,

From Beatrice thou art by this wall

Divided." As at Thisbe's name the eye

Of Pyramus was open'd (when life ebb'd

Fast from his veins), and took one parting glance,

While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turn'd

To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard

The name, that springs forever in my breast.

He shook his forehead; and, "How long," he said,
"Linger we now?" then smil'd, as one would smile
Upon a child, that eyes the fruit and yields.
Into the fire before me then he walk'd;
And Statius, who erewhile no little space
Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind.

I would have cast me into molten glass To cool me, when I enter'd; so intense Rag'd the conflagrant mass. The sire belov'd, To comfort me, as he proceeded, still Of Beatrice talk'd. "Her eyes," saith he, "E'en now I seem to view." From the other side A voice, that sang, did guide us, and the voice Following, with heedful ear, we issued forth, There where the path led upward. "Come," we heard, "Come, blessed of my Father." Such the sounds, That hail'd us from within a light, which shone So radiant, I could not endure the view. "The sun," it added, "hastes: and evening comes. Delay not: ere the western sky is hung With blackness, strive ye for the pass." Our way Upright within the rock arose, and fac'd Such part of heav'n, that from before my steps The beams were shrouded of the sinking sun.

Nor many stairs were overpass, when now
By fading of the shadow we perceiv'd
The sun behind us couch'd: and ere one face
Of darkness o'er its measureless expanse
Involv'd th' horizon, and the night her lot
Held individual, each of us had made
A stair his pallet: not that will, but power,
Had fail'd us, by the nature of that mount

Forbidden further travel. As the goats,

That late have skipp'd and wanton'd rapidly

Upon the craggy cliffs, ere they had ta'en

Their supper on the herb, now silent lie

And ruminate beneath the umbrage brown,

While noonday rages; and the goatherd leans

Upon his staff, and leaning watches them:

And as the swain, that lodges out all night

In quiet by his flock, lest beast of prey

Disperse them; even so all three abode,

I as a goat and as the shepherds they,

Close pent on either side by shelving rock.

A little glimpse of sky was seen above;
Yet by that little I beheld the stars
In magnitude and rustle shining forth
With more than wonted glory. As I lay,
Gazing on them, and in that fit of musing,
Sleep overcame me, sleep, that bringeth oft
Tidings of future hap. About the hour,
As I believe, when Venus from the east
First lighten'd on the mountain, she whose orb
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,
A lady young and beautiful, I dream'd,
Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
Methought I saw her ever and anon
Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:

"Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,
That I am Leah: for my brow to weave
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.
To please me at the crystal mirror, here
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
Before her glass abides the livelong day,
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm'd no less,
Than I with this delightful task. Her joy
In contemplation, as in labour mine."

And now as glimm'ring dawn appear'd, that breaks More welcome to the pilgrim still, as he Sojourns less distant on his homeward way, Darkness from all sides fled, and with it fled My slumber; whence I rose and saw my guide Already risen. "That delicious fruit, Which through so many a branch the zealous care Of mortals roams in quest of, shall this day Appease thy hunger." Such the words I heard From Virgil's lip; and never greeting heard So pleasant as the sounds. Within me straight Desire so grew upon desire to mount, Thenceforward at each step I felt the wings Increasing for my flight. When we had run O'er all the ladder to its topmost round, As there we stood, on me the Mantuan fix'd His eyes, and thus he spake: "Both fires, my son,

The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen, And art arriv'd, where of itself my ken No further reaches. I with skill and art Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way, O'ercome the straighter. Lo! the sun, that darts His beam upon thy forehead! lo! the herb, The arboreta and flowers, which of itself This land pours forth profuse! Till those bright eyes With gladness come, which, weeping, made me haste To succour thee, thou mayst or seat thee down, Or wander where thou wilt. Expect no more Sanction of warning voice or sign from me, Free of thy own arbitrement to choose, Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense Were henceforth error. I invest thee then

With crown and mitre, sovereign o'er thyself."