

E'en as the bird, who midst the leafy bower
Has, in her nest, sat darkling through the night,
With her sweet brood, impatient to descry
Their wished looks, and to bring home their food,
In the fond quest unconscious of her toil:
She, of the time prevenient, on the spray,
That overhangs their couch, with wakeful gaze
Expects the sun; nor ever, till the dawn,
Removeth from the east her eager ken;
So stood the dame erect, and bent her glance
Wistfully on that region, where the sun
Abateth most his speed; that, seeing her
Suspense and wand'ring, I became as one,
In whom desire is waken'd, and the hope
Of somewhat new to come fills with delight.

Short space ensued; I was not held, I say,
Long in expectance, when I saw the heav'n
Wax more and more resplendent; and, "Behold,"
Cried Beatrice, "the triumphal hosts
Of Christ, and all the harvest reap'd at length
Of thy ascending up these spheres." Meseem'd,
That, while she spake her image all did burn,
And in her eyes such fullness was of joy,
And I am fain to pass unconstrued by.

As in the calm full moon, when Trivia smiles,

In peerless beauty, 'mid th' eternal nympus,
That paint through all its gulfs the blue profound
In bright pre-eminence so saw I there,
O'er million lamps a sun, from whom all drew
Their radiance as from ours the starry train:
And through the living light so lustrous glow'd
The substance, that my ken endur'd it not.

O Beatrice! sweet and precious guide!
Who cheer'd me with her comfortable words!
"Against the virtue, that o'erpow'reth thee,
Avails not to resist. Here is the might,
And here the wisdom, which did open lay
The path, that had been yearned for so long,
Betwixt the heav'n and earth." Like to the fire,
That, in a cloud imprison'd doth break out
Expansive, so that from its womb enlarg'd,
It falleth against nature to the ground;
Thus in that heav'nly banqueting my soul
Outgrew herself; and, in the transport lost.
Holds now remembrance none of what she was.

"Ope thou thine eyes, and mark me: thou hast seen
Things, that empower thee to sustain my smile."

I was as one, when a forgotten dream
Doth come across him, and he strives in vain

To shape it in his fantasy again,
Whenas that gracious boon was proffer'd me,
Which never may be cancel'd from the book,
Wherein the past is written. Now were all
Those tongues to sound, that have on sweetest milk
Of Polyhymnia and her sisters fed
And fatten'd, not with all their help to boot,
Unto the thousandth parcel of the truth,
My song might shadow forth that saintly smile,
flow merely in her saintly looks it wrought.
And with such figuring of Paradise
The sacred strain must leap, like one, that meets
A sudden interruption to his road.
But he, who thinks how ponderous the theme,
And that 't is lain upon a mortal shoulder,
May pardon, if it tremble with the burden.
The track, our ventrous keel must furrow, brooks
No unribb'd pinnacle, no self-sparing pilot.

"Why doth my face," said Beatrice, "thus
Enamour thee, as that thou dost not turn
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose,
Wherein the word divine was made incarnate;
And here the lilies, by whose odour known
The way of life was follow'd." Prompt I heard
Her bidding, and encounter once again

The strife of aching vision. As erewhile,
Through glance of sunlight, stream'd through broken cloud,
Mine eyes a flower-besprinkled mead have seen,
Though veil'd themselves in shade; so saw I there
Legions of splendours, on whom burning rays
Shed lightnings from above, yet saw I not
The fountain whence they flow'd. O gracious virtue!
Thou, whose broad stamp is on them, higher up
Thou didst exalt thy glory to give room
To my o'erlabour'd sight: when at the name
Of that fair flower, whom duly I invoke
Both morn and eve, my soul, with all her might
Collected, on the goodliest ardour fix'd.
And, as the bright dimensions of the star
In heav'n excelling, as once here on earth
Were, in my eyeballs lively portray'd,
Lo! from within the sky a cresset fell,
Circling in fashion of a diadem,
And girt the star, and hov'ring round it wheel'd.

Whatever melody sounds sweetest here,
And draws the spirit most unto itself,
Might seem a rent cloud when it grates the thunder,
Compar'd unto the sounding of that lyre,
Wherewith the goodliest sapphire, that inlays
The floor of heav'n, was crown'd. "Angelic Love,
I am, who thus with hov'ring flight enwheel

The lofty rapture from that womb inspir'd,
Where our desire did dwell: and round thee so,
Lady of Heav'n! will hover; long as thou
Thy Son shalt follow, and diviner joy
Shall from thy presence gild the highest sphere."

Such close was to the circling melody:
And, as it ended, all the other lights
Took up the strain, and echoed Mary's name.

The robe, that with its regal folds enwraps
The world, and with the nearer breath of God
Doth burn and quiver, held so far retir'd
Its inner hem and skirting over us,
That yet no glimmer of its majesty
Had stream'd unto me: therefore were mine eyes
Unequal to pursue the crowned flame,
That rose and sought its natal seed of fire;
And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
For very eagerness towards the breast,
After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd
Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
Through zealous love to Mary: then in view
There halted, and "Regina Coeli" sang
So sweetly, the delight hath left me never.

O what o'erflowing plenty is up-pil'd

In those rich-laden coffers, which below
Sow'd the good seed, whose harvest now they keep.

Here are the treasures tasted, that with tears
Were in the Babylonian exile won,
When gold had fail'd them. Here in synod high
Of ancient council with the new conven'd,
Under the Son of Mary and of God,
Victorious he his mighty triumph holds,
To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.