

True love, that ever shows itself as clear
In kindness, as loose appetite in wrong,
Silenced that lyre harmonious, and still'd
The sacred chords, that are by heav'n's right hand
Unwound and tighten'd, flow to righteous prayers
Should they not hearken, who, to give me will
For praying, in accordance thus were mute?
He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,
Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,
Despoils himself forever of that love.

As oft along the still and pure serene,
At nightfall, glides a sudden trail of fire,
Attracting with involuntary heed
The eye to follow it, erewhile at rest,
And seems some star that shifted place in heav'n,
Only that, whence it kindles, none is lost,
And it is soon extinct; thus from the horn,
That on the dexter of the cross extends,
Down to its foot, one luminary ran
From mid the cluster shone there; yet no gem
Dropp'd from its foil; and through the beamy list
Like flame in alabaster, glow'd its course.

So forward stretch'd him (if of credence aught
Our greater muse may claim) the pious ghost
Of old Anchises, in the' Elysian bower,

When he perceiv'd his son. "O thou, my blood!
O most exceeding grace divine! to whom,
As now to thee, hath twice the heav'nly gate
Been e'er unclos'd?" so spake the light; whence I
Turn'd me toward him; then unto my dame
My sight directed, and on either side
Amazement waited me; for in her eyes
Was lighted such a smile, I thought that mine
Had div'd unto the bottom of my grace
And of my bliss in Paradise. Forthwith
To hearing and to sight grateful alike,
The spirit to his proem added things
I understood not, so profound he spake;
Yet not of choice but through necessity
Mysterious; for his high conception scar'd
Beyond the mark of mortals. When the flight
Of holy transport had so spent its rage,
That nearer to the level of our thought
The speech descended, the first sounds I heard
Were, "Best be thou, Triunal Deity!
That hast such favour in my seed vouchsaf'd!"
Then follow'd: "No unpleasant thirst, tho' long,
Which took me reading in the sacred book,
Whose leaves or white or dusky never change,
Thou hast allay'd, my son, within this light,
From whence my voice thou hear'st; more thanks to her.
Who for such lofty mounting has with plumes

Begirt thee. Thou dost deem thy thoughts to me
From him transmitted, who is first of all,
E'en as all numbers ray from unity;
And therefore dost not ask me who I am,
Or why to thee more joyous I appear,
Than any other in this gladsome throng.
The truth is as thou deem'st; for in this hue
Both less and greater in that mirror look,
In which thy thoughts, or ere thou think'st, are shown.
But, that the love, which keeps me wakeful ever,
Urging with sacred thirst of sweet desire,
May be contended fully, let thy voice,
Fearless, and frank and jocund, utter forth
Thy will distinctly, utter forth the wish,
Whereto my ready answer stands decreed."

I turn'd me to Beatrice; and she heard
Ere I had spoken, smiling, an assent,
That to my will gave wings; and I began
"To each among your tribe, what time ye kenn'd
The nature, in whom naught unequal dwells,
Wisdom and love were in one measure dealt;
For that they are so equal in the sun,
From whence ye drew your radiance and your heat,
As makes all likeness scant. But will and means,
In mortals, for the cause ye well discern,
With unlike wings are fledge. A mortal I

Experience inequality like this,
And therefore give no thanks, but in the heart,
For thy paternal greeting. This howe'er
I pray thee, living topaz! that ingemm'st
This precious jewel, let me hear thy name."

"I am thy root, O leaf! whom to expect
Even, hath pleas'd me:" thus the prompt reply
Prefacing, next it added: "he, of whom
Thy kindred appellation comes, and who,
These hundred years and more, on its first ledge
Hath circuited the mountain, was my son
And thy great grandsire. Well befits, his long
Endurance should be shorten'd by thy deeds.

"Florence, within her ancient limit-mark,
Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
Was chaste and sober, and abode in peace.
She had no armlets and no head-tires then,
No purfled dames, no zone, that caught the eye
More than the person did. Time was not yet,
When at his daughter's birth the sire grew pale.
For fear the age and dowry should exceed
On each side just proportion. House was none
Void of its family; nor yet had come
Hardanapalus, to exhibit feats
Of chamber prowess. Montemalo yet

O'er our suburban turret rose; as much
To be surpass in fall, as in its rising.
I saw Bellincione Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone;
And, with no artful colouring on her cheeks,
His lady leave the glass. The sons I saw
Of Nerli and of Vecchio well content
With unrob'd jerkin; and their good dames handling
The spindle and the flax; O happy they!
Each sure of burial in her native land,
And none left desolate a-bed for France!
One wak'd to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lull'd the parent's infancy:
Another, with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectur'd them
Old tales of Troy and Fesole and Rome.
A Salterello and Cianghella we
Had held as strange a marvel, as ye would
A Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.

"In such compos'd and seemly fellowship,
Such faithful and such fair equality,
In so sweet household, Mary at my birth
Bestow'd me, call'd on with loud cries; and there
In your old baptistery, I was made
Christian at once and Cacciaguida; as were
My brethren, Eliseo and Moronto.

“From Val dipado came to me my spouse,
And hence thy surname grew. I follow’d then
The Emperor Conrad; and his knighthood he
Did gird on me; in such good part he took
My valiant service. After him I went
To testify against that evil law,
Whose people, by the shepherd’s fault, possess
Your right, usurping. There, by that foul crew
Was I releas’d from the deceitful world,
Whose base affection many a spirit soils,
And from the martyrdom came to this peace.”