

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 Polyhymnia¹ 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,
 How 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 'tis laid upon a mortal shoulder,
 May pardon, if it tremble with the burden.
 The track, our venturous 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,²
 Wherein the Word Divine was made incarnate;
 And here the lilies,³ by whose odour known
 The way of life was follow'd." Prompt I heard
 Her bidding, and encounter'd once again
 The strife of aching vision. As, erewhile,
 Through glance of sun-light, 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,⁴ to give room
 To my o'erlabour'd sight; when at the name
 Of that fair flower,⁵ whom duly I invoke
 Both morn and eve, my soul with all her might

¹ The Muse of sacred poetry.

² The Blessed Virgin Mary, *Rosa Mystica*.

³ The Apostles of Christ. Cf. Ecclesiasticus xxxix. 19.

⁴ A symbolical representation of the Ascension of Christ, after the work of Redemption had been accomplished.

⁵ Mary, on the feast of whose Assumption the Church sings:
 "And about her it was as the flower of roses in the spring of the
 year and as lilies of the valleys."

Collected, on the goodliest ardour fix'd.
 And, as the bright dimensions of the star
 In Heaven excelling, as once here on earth,
 Were, in my eye-balls livelily pourtray'd;
 Lo! from within the sky a cresset¹ fell,
 Circling in fashion of a diadem;
 And girt the star; and, hovering, 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;
 Compared unto the sounding of that lyre,
 Wherewith the goodliest sapphire, that inlays
 The floor of Heaven, was crown'd. "Angelic love
 I am, who thus with hovering flight enwheel
 The lofty rapture from that womb inspired,
 Where our desire did dwell: and round thee so,
 Lady of Heaven! 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,² that with its regal folds enwraps
 The world, and with the nearer breath of God
 Doth burn and quiver, held so far retired
 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,³
 That towering rose, and sought the seed it bore.
 And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
 For very eagerness toward the breast,
 After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd

¹ Gabriel the Archangel, who with ineffable music ("the sounding of that lyre") descends to crown Mary ("the goodliest sapphire").

² "The ninth Heaven, the *primum mobile*, that enfolds and moves the eight lower Heavens" (Cary).

³ The Blessed Virgin following her "seed," her Divine Son, in her Assumption. "This day the holy and animated Ark of the living God, which had held within it its own Maker, is borne to rest in that Temple of the Lord which is not made with hands. The stainless Virgin returned not to dust, but, being herself a living Heaven, took her place among the Heavenly Mansions" (John of Damascus).

Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
Through zealous love to Mary : then, in view,
There halted ; and " Regina Cœli " ¹ sang
So sweetly, the delight hath left me never.

Oh ! what o'erflowing plenty is up-piled
In those rich-laden coffers, ² 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 ³ won,
When gold had fail'd them. Here, in synod high
Of ancient council with the new convened,
Under the Son of Mary and of God,
Victorious he ⁴ his mighty triumph holds,
To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.

CANTO XXIV

ARGUMENT

Saint Peter examines Dante touching Faith, and is contented with his answers.

" O YE ! in chosen fellowship advanced
To the great supper of the blessed Lamb,
Whereon who feeds hath every wish fulfill'd ;
If to this man through God's grace be vouchsafed
Foretaste of that, which from your table falls,
Or ever death his fated term prescribe ;
Be ye not heedless of his urgent will :
But may some influence of your sacred dew
Sprinkle him. Of the fount ye always drink,
Whence flows what most he craves." Beatrice spake ;
And the rejoicing spirits, like to spheres
On firm-set poles revolving, trail'd a blaze
Of comet splendour : and as wheels, that wind
Their circles in the horologe so work
The stated rounds, that to the observant eye
The first seems still, and as it flew, the last ;
E'en thus their carols ⁵ weaving variously,

¹ *Regina Cœli lætare*, the Easter antiphon of the Blessed Virgin

² The Apostles and other Saints of God.

³ In their earthly pilgrimage.

⁴ St. Peter.

⁵ " *Carol*, in old English as in Italian, signifies a group of dancers " (Wicksteed).

They, by the measure paced, or swift, or slow,
Made me to rate the riches of their joy.

From that, which I did note in beauty most
Excelling, saw I issue forth a flame ¹
So bright, as none was left more goodly there.
Round Beatrice thrice it wheel'd about,
With so divine a song, that fancy's ear
Records it not; and the pen passeth on,
And leaves a blank: for that our mortal speech,
Nor e'en the inward shaping of the brain,
Hath colours fine enough to trace such folds.

"O saintly sister mine! thy prayer devout
Is with so vehement affection urged,
Thou dost unbind me from that beauteous sphere."

Such were the accents towards my lady breathed
From that blest ardour, soon as it was stay'd;
To whom she thus: "O everlasting light
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss
He bare below! tent ² this man as thou wilt,
With lighter probe or deep, touching the faith,
By the which thou didst on the billows walk.
If he in love, in hope, and in belief,
Be stedfast, ³ is not hid from thee: for thou
Hast there thy ken, where all things are beheld
In liveliest portraiture. But since true faith
Has peopled this fair realm with citizens;
Meet is, that to exalt its glory more,
Thou, in his audience, shouldst thereof discourse."

Like to the bachelor, who arms himself,
And speaks not, till the master have proposed
The question, to approve, and not to end it; ⁴
So I, in silence, arm'd me, while she spake,
Summoning up each argument to aid;

¹ From the most glorious group of Saints issues the flaming spirit of St. Peter.

² "Tenta. The word 'tent,' *try*, is used by our old writers" (Cary).

³ Cf. *Conv.* iii. 14. According to Aquinas, Faith, Hope, and Charity are the principles added by the gift of God to human nature, to lead man to supernatural happiness, and they correspond to the three essential constituents of that happiness: Vision, Comprehension, Fruition.

⁴ "Even as the Bachelor arms himself—and speaks not, until the Master has propounded the question—to argue it with proofs, not to decide it" (Vernon).

As was behoveful for such questioner,
 And such profession: "As good Christian ought,
 Declare thee, what is faith?" Whereat I raised
 My forehead to the light, whence this had breathed;
 Then turn'd to Beatrice; and in her looks
 Approval met, that from their inmost fount
 I should unlock the waters. "May the grace,
 That giveth me the captain of the Church
 For confessor," said I, "vouchsafe to me
 Apt utterance for my thoughts;" then added: "Sire!
 E'en as set down by the unerring style
 Of thy dear brother, who with thee conspired
 To bring Rome in unto the way of life,
 Faith of things hoped is substance, and the proof
 Of things not seen;¹ and herein doth consist
 Methinks its essence."—"Rightly hast thou deem'd,"
 Was answer'd; "if thou well discern, why first
 He hath defined it substance, and then proof."

"The deep things," I replied, "which here I scan
 Distinctly, are below from mortal eye
 So hidden, they have in belief alone
 Their being; on which credence, hope sublime
 Is built: and, therefore substance, it intends.
 And inasmuch as we must needs infer
 From such belief our reasoning, all respect
 To other view excluded; hence of proof
 The intention is derived." Forthwith I heard:
 "If thus, whate'er by learning men attain,
 Were understood; the sophist would want room
 To exercise his wit." So breathed the flame
 Of love; then added: "Current² is the coin
 Thou utter'st, both in weight and in alloy.
 But tell me, if thou hast it in thy purse."

"Even so glittering and so round," said I,
 "I not a whit misdoubt of its assay."
 Next issued from the deep-imbosom'd splendour:
 "Say, whence the costly jewel, on the which
 Is founded every virtue, came to thee."

"The flood," I answer'd, "from the Spirit of God

¹ The definition is taken from Hebrews xi. 1, which Dante accepts as written by St. Paul: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

² "The answer thou hast made, is right: but let me know if thy inward persuasion be conformable to thy profession" (Cary).

Rain'd down upon the ancient bond and new,¹—
 Here is the reasoning, that convinceth me
 So feelingly, each argument beside
 Seems blunt, and forceless, in comparison."

Then heard I: "Wherefore holdest thou that each,
 The elder proposition and the new,
 Which so persuade thee, are the voice of Heaven?"

"The works, that follow'd, evidence their truth,"
 I answer'd: "Nature did not make for these
 The iron hot, or on her anvil mold them."

"Who voucheth to thee of the works themselves,"
 Was the reply, "that they in very deed
 Are that they purport? None hath sworn so to thee."

"That all the world,"² said I, "should have been
 turn'd

To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,
 Would in itself be such a miracle,
 The rest were not an hundredth part so great.
 E'en thou went'st forth in poverty and hunger
 To set the goodly plant, that, from the vine
 It once was, now is grown unsightly bramble."

That ended, through the high celestial court
 Resounded all the spheres, "Praise we one God!"
 In song of most unearthly melody.

And when that Worthy³ thus, from branch to branch,
 Examining, had led me, that we now
 Approach'd the topmost bough; he straight resumed:
 "The grace, that holds sweet dalliance with thy soul,
 So far discreetly hath thy lips unclosed;
 That, whatsoe'er has past them, I commend.
 Behoves thee to express, what thou believest,
 The next; and, whereon, thy belief hath grown."

"O saintly sire and spirit!" I began,
 "Who seest that, which thou didst so believe,
 As to outstrip⁴ feet younger than thine own,

¹ The revelation of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.

² That the doctrines thus contained in the Scriptures were revealed by God is shown by the miracles that followed and confirmed them. As to the truth of these miracles, the Poet answers, with St. Augustine, that the conversion of the world to Christianity without miracles would have been a greater miracle than any of those recorded.

³ *Quel baron*: St. Peter.

⁴ *Cf.* John xx. 3-6. "John also says that he (Peter) went

Toward the sepulchre ; thy will is here,
That I the tenour of my creed unfold ;
And thou, the cause of it, hast likewise ask'd.
And I reply : I in one God believe ;
One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
All Heaven is moved, Himself unmoved the while.¹
Nor demonstration physical alone,
Or more intelligential and abstruse,
Persuades me to this faith : but from that truth
It cometh to me rather, which is shed
Through Moses ; the rapt Prophets ; and the Psalms ;
The Gospel ; and what ye yourselves did write,
When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost.
In three eternal Persons I believe ;
Essence threefold and one ; mysterious league
Of union absolute, which, many a time,
The word of gospel lore upon my mind
Imprints : and from this germ, this firstling spark
The lively flame dilates ; and, like Heaven's star,
Doth glitter in me." As the master hears,
Well pleased, and then enfoldeth in his arms
The servant, who hath joyful tidings brought,
And having told the errand keeps his peace ;
Thus benediction uttering with song,
Soon as my peace I held, compass'd me thrice
The apostolic radiance, whose behest
Had oped my lips : so well their answer pleased.

straight in when he came to the tomb, seeing the other disciple lingering at the entrance" (*Mon.* iii. 9).

¹ "I believe in one God, sole and eternal, who moveth all the Heaven with love and with desire, Himself unmoved." In a passage in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle shows that the Prime Mover, which causes motion without itself being moved, must be eternal, must be a substance (so in the Latin translation, which for Dante means "spirit"), and actuality ; it must be the prime object of desire and the prime object of intellectual apprehension. Upon this Aquinas bases his five philosophical proofs of the existence of God.

CANTO XXV

ARGUMENT

Saint James questions our Poet concerning Hope. Next Saint John appears; and, on perceiving that Dante looks intently on him, informs him that he, Saint John, had left his body resolved into earth, upon the earth; and that Christ and the Virgin alone had come with their bodies into Heaven.

IF e'er the sacred poem, that hath made
Both Heaven and earth copartners in its toil,
And with lean abstinence, through many a year,
Faded my brow, be destined to prevail
Over the cruelty, which bars me forth
Of the fair sheep-fold,¹ where, a sleeping lamb,
The wolves set on and fain had worried me;
With other voice, and fleece of other grain,
I shall forthwith return; and, standing up
At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath
Due to the poet's temples: ² for I there
First enter'd on the faith, which maketh souls
Acceptable to God: and, for its sake,
Peter had then circled my forehead thus.

Next from the squadron, whence had issued forth
The first fruit of Christ's vicars on the earth,
Toward us moved a light, at view whereof
My Lady, full of gladness, spake to me:

"Lo! lo! behold the peer of mickle might,
That makes Galicia throng'd with visitants."³

As when the ring-dove by his mate alights;
In circles, each about the other wheels,
And, murmuring, cooes his fondness: thus saw I
One, of the other great and glorious prince,⁴
With kindly greeting, hail'd; extolling, both,

¹ "The fair sheep-fold (Florence), where I slept, a lamb, foe to the wolves who are making war upon it." Cary has quaintly mistranslated these two lines.

² In 1318, Dante declined to take the laurel crown at Bologna, to which Giovanni del Virgilio had invited him: "Were it not better to crown my locks, and hide my grey hair, that once was golden, under the twined leaves, when, if it happen, I return to my native Arno?" (*Eclogue I.*)

³ St. James "the Greater," the son of Zebedee, whose shrine at Compostela in Galicia was (and still is) much frequented by pilgrims. Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 41.

⁴ St. Peter and St. James.

Their heavenly banqueting : but when an end
 Was to their gratulation, silent, each,
 Before me sat they down, so burning bright,
 I could not look upon them. Smiling then,
 Beatrice spake : " O life in glory shrined !
 Who didst the largess of our kingly court
 Set down with faithful pen,¹ let now thy voice,
 Of hope the praises, in this height resound.
 For well thou know'st, who figurest it as oft,
 As Jesus, to ye three, more brightly shone." ²

" Lift up thy head ; and be thou strong in trust :
 For that, which hither from the mortal world
 Arriveth, must be ripen'd in our beam."

Such cheering accents from the second flame
 Assured me ; and mine eyes I lifted up ³
 Unto the mountains, that had bow'd them late
 With over-heavy burden. " Sith our Liege
 Wills of His grace, that thou, or e'er thy death,
 In the most secret council with His lords
 Shouldst be confronted, so that having view'd
 The glories of our court, thou mayest therewith
 Thyself, and all who hear, invigorate
 With hope, that leads to blissful end ; declare,
 What is that hope ? how it doth flourish in thee ?
 And whence thou hadst it ?" Thus, proceeding still,
 The second light : and she, whose gentle love
 My soaring pennons in that lofty flight
 Escorted, thus preventing me, rejoin'd :
 " Among her sons, not one more full of hope,
 Hath the Church Militant : so 'tis of him
 Recorded in the Sun, whose liberal orb
 Enlightened all our tribe : and ere his term
 Of warfare, hence permitted he is come,
 From Egypt to Jerusalem,⁴ to see.
 The other points, both which thou hast inquired,

¹ Dante here attributes to this St. James the Epistle more usually ascribed to the other Apostle of that name, " James the brother of the Lord." The reference is to James i. 5, 12, 17.

² Peter and James and John were taken as signifying the three theological virtues, when Christ made to them the clearest manifestation of His divine nature in the Transfiguration and His human nature on the Mount of Olives.

³ Cf. Psalm cxxi. 1.

⁴ " From the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory " (*Epist.* x. 7).

Not for more knowledge, but that he may tell
How dear thou hold'st the virtue; these to him
Leave I: for he may answer thee with ease,
And without boasting, so God give him grace."

Like to the scholar, practised in his task,
Who, willing to give proof of diligence,
Seconds his teacher gladly; "Hope,"¹ said I,
"Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,
The effect of grace divine and merit preceding.
This light from many a star, visits my heart;
But flow'd to me, the first, from him who sang
The songs of the Supreme; himself supreme
Among his tuneful brethren. 'Let all hope
In thee,' so spake his anthem,² 'who have known
Thy name;' and, with my faith, who know not that?
From thee, the next, distilling from his spring,
In thine epistle,³ fell on me the drops
So plenteously, that I on others shower
The influence of their dew." Whileas I spake,
A lamping, as of quick and volley'd lightning,
Within the bosom of that mighty sheen⁴
Play'd tremulous; then forth these accents breathed:
"Love for the virtue, which attended me
E'en to the palm, and issuing from the field,
Glows vigorous yet within me; and inspires
To ask of thee, whom also it delights,
What promise thou from hope, in chief, dost win."

"Both scriptures, new and ancient," I replied,
"Propose the mark (which even now I view)
For souls beloved of God. Isaias saith,
'That, in their own land, each one must be clad
In two-fold vesture;' and their proper land
Is this delicious life. In terms more full,
And clearer far, thy brother hath set forth
This revelation to us, where he tells

¹ Dante gives the definition of Peter the Lombard: "Hope is the certain expectation of future beatitude, coming from the grace of God and from precedent merits;" that is, from the grace of God and man's correspondence with that grace by good works; "for to hope for anything without merits should not be called hope, but presumption."

² Psalm ix. 10: "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee."

³ James i. 12.

⁴ *Quello incendio*, St. James.

Of the white raiment destined to the saints."¹
 And, as the words were ending, from above,
 "They hope in Thee!" first heard we cried: whereto
 Answer'd the carols all. Amidst them next,
 A light of so clear amplitude emerged,
 That winter's month² were but a single day,
 Were such a crystal in the Cancer's sign.

Like as a virgin riseth up, and goes,
 And enters on the mazes of the dance;
 Though gay, yet innocent of worse intent,
 Than to do fitting honour to the bride:
 So I beheld the new effulgence come
 Unto the other two, who in a ring
 Wheel'd, as became their rapture. In the dance,
 And in the song, it mingled. And the dame
 Held on them fix'd her looks; e'en as the spouse,
 Silent, and moveless. "This³ is he, who lay
 Upon the bosom of our Pelican:
 This he, into whose keeping, from the Cross,
 The mighty charge was given." Thus she spake:
 Yet therefore nought the more removed her sight
 From marking them: or e'er her words began,
 Or when they closed. As he, who looks intent,
 And strives with searching ken, how he may see
 The sun in his eclipse, and, through desire
 Of seeing, loseth power of sight; so I⁴
 Peer'd on that last resplendence, while I heard:
 "Why dazzlest thou thine eyes in seeking that,
 Which here abides not? Earth my body is,
 In earth; and shall be, with the rest, so long,
 As till our number equal the decree

¹ The object of Hope is eternal beatitude, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body to share in that immortality, as shown by Isaiah (lxi. 7, 10) and St. John (Rev. vii. 9).

² "If a luminary, like that which now appeared, were to shine throughout the month following the winter solstice, during which the constellation Cancer appears in the east at the setting of the sun, there would be no interruption to the light, but the whole month would be as a single day" (Cary).

³ St. John, who at the Last Supper "was leaning on Jesus' bosom" (John xiii. 23), and to whose charge Mary was committed from the Cross (John xix. 26, 27).

⁴ There was a legend, based upon John xxi. 22, 23, and frequently represented in Italian art, that the beloved disciple had not died as other men, but had been taken up into Heaven, body and soul. Dante wishes to see if this is true.

Of the Most High. The two¹ that have ascended,
 In this our blessed cloister, shine alone
 With the two garments. So report below."

As when, for ease of labour, or to shun
 Suspected peril, at a whistle's breath,
 The oars, erewhile dash'd frequent in the wave,
 All rest: the flamy circle at that voice
 So rested; and the mingling sound was still,
 Which from the trinal band, soft-breathing, rose.
 I turn'd, but ah! how trembled in my thought,
 When, looking at my side again to see
 Beatrice, I descried her not; although,
 Not distant, on the happy coast she stood.

CANTO XXVI

ARGUMENT

Saint John examines our Poet touching Charity. Afterwards Adam tells when he was created, and placed in the Terrestrial Paradise; how long he remained in that state; what was the occasion of his fall; when he was admitted into Heaven; and what language he spake.

WITH dazzled eyes, whilst wondering I remain'd;
 Forth of the beamy flame,² which dazzled me,
 Issued a breath, that in attention mute
 Detain'd me; and these words it spake: "'Twere well
 That, long as till thy vision, on my form
 O'erspent, regain its virtue, with discourse
 Thou compensate the brief delay. Say then,
 Beginning, to what point thy soul aspires:
 And meanwhile rest assured, that sight in thee
 Is but o'erpower'd a space, not wholly quench'd;
 Since thy fair guide and lovely, in her look
 Hath potency, the like to that, which dwelt
 In Ananias' hand."³ I answering thus:
 "Be to mine eyes the remedy, or late
 Or early, at her pleasure; for they were
 The gates, at which she enter'd, and did light
 Her never-dying fire. My wishes here

¹ Christ and Mary alone have body and soul already united in glory. He refers to the Ascension and Assumption, which Dante has seen mystically represented in Canto xxiii.

² St. John.

³ Cf. Acts ix. 17.

Are centred : in this palace is the weal,
That Alpha and Omega is, to all
The lessons love can read me." Yet again
The voice, which had dispersed my fear when dazed
With that excess, to converse urged, and spake :
" Behoves thee sift more narrowly thy terms ;
And say, who level'd at this scope thy bow."

" Philosophy," said I, " hath arguments,
And this place hath authority enough,
To imprint in me such love : for, of constraint,
Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,
Kindles our love ; and in degree the more,
As it comprises more of goodness in 't.¹
The Essence then, where such advantage is,
That each good, found without it, is nought else
But of His light the beam, must needs attract
The soul of each one, loving, who the truth
Discerns, on which this proof is built. Such truth
Learn I from him,² who shows me the first love
Of all intelligential substances

Eternal : from His voice I learn, whose word
Is truth ; that of Himself to Moses saith,
' I will make all My good before thee pass :'³
Lastly, from thee I learn, who chief proclaim'st,
E'en at the outset of thy heralding,
In mortal ears the mystery of Heaven."⁴

" Through human wisdom, and the authority
Therewith agreeing," heard I answer'd, " keep
The choicest of thy love for God. But say,
If thou yet other cords within thee feel'st,
That draw thee towards Him ; so that thou report
How many are the fangs, with which this love
Is grappled to thy soul." I did not miss,
To what intent the eagle of our Lord⁵

¹ Love is the natural tendency of the will to anything apprehended by the intellect as good ; and the greater the good apprehended, the stronger the tendency, the more ardent the love.

² Aristotle, the reference being to the passage in the *Metaphysics* where the Philosopher shows that the Prime Mover is " the primary object of love in which desire and reason fall into unity " (Wallace). Cf. notes on Canto xxiv.

³ Exodus xxxiii. 19.

⁴ Rev. i. 8 : " I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending."

⁵ The emblem of St. John in art is the Eagle.

Had pointed his demand; yea, noted well
 The avowal which he led to; and resumed:
 "All grappling bonds, that knit the heart to God,
 Confederate to make fast our charity.
 The being of the world; and mine own being;
 The death which He endured, that I should live;
 And that, which all the faithful hope, as I do;
 To the foremention'd lively knowledge join'd;
 Have from the sea of ill love saved my bark,
 And on the coast secured it of the right.
 As for the leaves,¹ that in the garden bloom,
 My love for them is great, as is the good
 Dealt by the eternal hand, that tends them all."

I ended: and therewith a song most sweet
 Rang through the spheres; and "Holy, holy, holy,"
 Accordant with the rest, my lady sang.
 And as a sleep is broken and dispersed
 Through sharp encounter of the nimble light,
 With the eye's spirit running forth to meet
 The ray, from membrane on to membrane urged;
 And the upstartled wight loathes that he sees;
 So, at his sudden waking, he misdeems
 Of all around him, till assurance waits
 On better judgment: thus the saintly dame
 Drove from before mine eyes the motes away,
 With the resplendence of her own, that cast
 Their brightness downward, thousand miles below.
 Whence I my vision, clearer than before,
 Recover'd; and well nigh astounded, ask'd
 Of a fourth light, that now with us I saw.

And Beatrice: "The first living soul,²
 That ever the first Virtue framed, admires
 Within these rays his Maker." Like the leaf,
 That bows its lithe top till the blast is blown;
 By its own virtue rear'd, then stands aloof:
 So I, the whilst she said, awe-stricken bow'd.
 Then eagerness to speak embolden'd me;
 And I began: "O fruit! that wast alone

¹ Creatures. This refers to what is called the order of Charity: "The love of charity tends to God, as to the principle of blessedness in the communication of which the friendship of charity is founded; it is therefore necessary that, in those things which are loved in charity, there should be some order kept in relation to the first principle of this love, which is God" (Aquinas).

² Adam.

Mature, when first engender'd; ancient father!
 That doubly seest in every wedded bride
 Thy daughter, by affinity and blood;
 Devoutly as I may, I pray thee hold
 Converse with me: my will thou seest: and I,
 More speedily to hear thee, tell it not."

It chanceth oft some animal bewrays,
 Through the sleek covering¹ of his furry coat,
 The fondness, that stirs in him, and conforms
 His outside seeming to the cheer within:
 And in like guise was Adam's spirit moved
 To joyous mood, that through the covering shone,
 Transparent, when to pleasure me it spake:
 "No need thy will be told, which I untold
 Better discern, than thou whatever thing
 Thou hold'st most certain: for that will I see
 In Him, who is truth's mirror; and Himself,
 Parhelion² unto all things, and nought else,
 To Him. This wouldst thou hear: how long since, God
 Placed me in that high garden, from whose bounds
 She³ led thee up this ladder, steep and long;
 What space endured my season of delight;
 Whence truly sprang the wrath that banish'd me;
 And what the language, which I spake and framed.
 Not that I tasted of the tree, my son,
 Was in itself the cause of that exile,
 But only my transgressing of the mark
 Assign'd me.⁴ There, whence at thy lady's hest
 The Mantuan moved him, still was I debarr'd
 This council, till the sun had made complete,
 Four thousand and three hundred rounds and twice,
 His annual journey; and, through every light
 In his broad pathway, saw I him return,

¹ *Tal volta un animal coperto broglia*; the image is more usually taken as that of an animal struggling under some covering.

² *Pareglio*. A much disputed passage. Mr. Wicksteed translates: "Because I see it in the veracious Mirror which doth make himself reflector of all other things, and nought doth make itself reflector unto him." He takes it as meaning: "Everything is perfectly reflected in God, and therefore he who looks on God sees everything perfectly. But no single thing and no single truth (nor even the sum of them all) is a complete and perfect reflection of God."

³ Beatrice.

⁴ Aquinas shows that Adam's sin was pride, in that he desired a certain spiritual good beyond his measure.

Thousand save seventy times, the whilst I dwelt
 Upon the earth.¹ The language I did use
 Was worn away, or ever Nimrod's race
 Their unaccomplishable work began.
 For nought, that man inclines to, e'er was lasting;
 Left by his reason free, and variable
 As is the sky that sways him.² That he speaks,
 Is nature's prompting: whether thus, or thus,
 She leaves to you, as ye do most affect it.
 Ere I descended into Hell's abyss,
 El was the name on earth of the Chief Good,
 Whose joy enfolds me: Eli then 'twas call'd.
 And so beseemeth:³ for, in mortals, use
 Is as the leaf upon the bough: that goes,
 And other comes instead. Upon the mount
 Most high above the waters, all my life,
 Both innocent and guilty, did but reach
 From the first hour, to that which cometh next
 (As the sun changes quarter) to the sixth."⁴

¹ Adam lived 930 years on the earth, and was then 4,302 years in Limbo, whence Virgil, at Beatrice's prayer, moved to succour Dante.

² Here Adam states that the language which he spoke was entirely extinct before the confusion of Babel; but, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 6), Dante says that the language of the first speaker was Hebrew, which remained with the sons of Heber in order that Christ might use the language, not of confusion, but of grace. For his view of the changes that man's speech undergoes, cf. *V. E.* i. 9.

³ The change in man's speech is illustrated by the name which he gives to God. Cf. *V. E.* i. 4. For *El* and *Eli*, we should read *J* and *El*.

⁴ "I remained in the Terrestrial Paradise only to the seventh hour." In the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor, it is said of our first parents: 'Quidam tradunt eos fuisse in Paradiso septem horas' (Cary).

CANTO XXVII

ARGUMENT

Saint Peter bitterly rebukes the covetousness of his successors in the apostolic see, while all the heavenly host sympathize in his indignation: they then vanish upwards. Beatrice bids Dante again cast his view below. Afterwards they are borne into the ninth Heaven, of which she shows him the nature and properties; blaming the perverseness of man, who places his will on low and perishable things.

THEN "Glory to the Father, to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit," rang aloud
Throughout all Paradise; that with the song
My spirit reel'd, so passing sweet the strain.
And what I saw was equal ecstasy:
One universal smile it seem'd of all things;
Joy past compare; gladness unutterable;
Imperishable life of peace and love;
Exhaustless riches, and unmeasured bliss.

Before mine eyes stood the four torches¹ lit:
And that, which first had come, began to wax
In brightness; and, in semblance, such became,
As Jove might be, if he and Mars were birds,
And interchanged their plumes.² Silence ensued,
Through the blest quire; by Him, who here appoints
Vicissitude of ministry, enjoin'd;
When thus I heard: "Wonder not, if my hue
Be changed; for, while I speak, these shalt thou see
All in like manner change with me. My place
He³ who usurps on earth, (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void,) the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood:
The more below his triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell."⁴ Such colour, as the sun,
At eve or morning, paints an adverse cloud,
Then saw I sprinkled over all the sky.

¹ The three Apostles and Adam.

² St. Peter, glowing with celestial anger, changes from silver white to sanguine red.

³ Pope Boniface VIII. Cf. Jeremiah vii. 4.

⁴ More literally: "has made my cemetery (Rome) a sewer for the blood and the filth whereby the Evil One (Satan), who fell from here above, is delighted there below."

And as the unblemish'd dame, who, in herself
 Secure of censure, yet at bare report
 Of other's failing, shrinks with maiden fear;
 So Beatrice, in her semblance, changed:
 And such eclipse in Heaven, methinks, was seen,
 When the Most Holy suffer'd. Then the words
 Proceeded, with voice, alter'd from itself
 So clean, the semblance did not alter more.
 "Not to this end was Christ's spouse with my blood,
 With that of Linus, and of Cletus, fed;
 That she might serve for purchase of base gold:
 But for the purchase of this happy life,
 Did Sextus, Pius, and Callixtus bleed,
 And Urban;¹ they, whose doom was not without
 Much weeping seal'd. No purpose was of ours,
 That on the right hand of our successors,
 Part of the Christian people should be set,
 And part upon their left;² nor that the keys,
 Which were vouchsafed me, should for ensign serve
 Unto the banners, that do levy war
 On the baptized; nor I, for sigil-mark,
 Set upon sold and lying privileges:
 Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.
 In shepherd's clothing, greedy wolves³ below
 Range wide o'er all the pastures. Arm of God!
 Why longer sleep'st thou? Cahorsines and Gascons⁴
 Prepare to quaff our blood. O good beginning!
 To what a vile conclusion must thou stoop.
 But the high Providence, which did defend,
 Through Scipio, the world's empery for Rome,
 Will not delay its succour: and thou, son,⁵
 Who through thy mortal weight shalt yet again
 Return below, open thy lips, nor hide

¹ Early Popes who, according to Roman tradition, died for the faith: St. Linus (66-76), St. Cletus (76-88), St. Sextus, or Sixtus I. (115-125), St. Pius I. (140-155), St. Callixtus I. (217-222), St. Urban I. (222-230).

² It was not St. Peter's intention that his successors should favour one Christian faction and persecute another, that the mystical keys should appear on a battle-standard, or that his figure should be stamped as a seal upon the corrupt transactions of the Papal Court.

³ Cf. Jeremiah xxiii. 1.

⁴ Clement V. (1305-1314), a Gascon, and John XXII. (1316-1334), a native of Cahors. Cf. *Inf.* xix., *Par.* xvii., xviii., and xxx.

⁵ Cf. Cacciaguada's injunction, *Par.* xvii. ad finem.

What is by me not hidden." As a flood
 Of frozen vapours streams adown the air,
 What time the she-goat with her skiey horn
 Touches the sun; ¹ so saw I there stream wide
 The vapours, who with us had linger'd late,
 And with glad triumph deck the ethereal cope.
 Onward my sight their semblances pursued;
 So far pursued, as till the space between
 From its reach sever'd them : whereat the guide
 Celestial, marking me no more intent
 On upward gazing, said, " Look down, and see
 What circuit thou hast compast." From the hour ²
 When I before had cast my view beneath,
 All the first region overpast I saw,
 Which from the midmost to the boundary winds;
 That onward, thence, from Gades, I beheld
 The unwise passage of Laertes' son; ³
 And hitherward the shore, ⁴ where thou, Europa,
 Madest thee a joyful burden; and yet more
 Of this dim spot had seen, but that the sun,
 A constellation off and more, had ta'en
 His progress in the zodiac underneath. ⁵

Then by the spirit, that doth never leave
 Its amorous dalliance with my lady's looks,
 Back with redoubled ardour were mine eyes
 Led unto her : and from her radiant smiles,
 Whenas I turn'd me, pleasure so divine
 Did lighten on me, that whatever bait
 Or art or nature in the human flesh,
 Or in its limn'd resemblance, can combine
 Through greedy eyes to take the soul withal,
 Were, to her beauty, nothing. Its boon influence
 From the fair nest of Leda ⁶ rapt me forth,

¹ The sun is in Capricorn in mid-winter.

² Since Dante last looked down (in Canto xxii.), he has " moved through all the arc which the first clima (latitudinal division) makes from the middle to the end." Mr. Wicksteed takes it as meaning : " I had revolved, with the first clima, through a whole quadrant."

³ Ulysses. Cf. *Inf.* xxvi.

⁴ " Phœnicia, where Europa, the daughter of Agenor, mounted on the back of Jupiter, in his shape of a bull " (Cary).

⁵ " Dante was in the constellation of Gemini, and the sun in Aries. There was, therefore, part of those two constellations, and the whole of Taurus, between them " (Cary).

⁶ The Gemini; Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Leda and Jupiter.

And wafted on into the swiftest Heaven.¹

What place for entrance Beatrice chose,
I may not say; so uniform was all,
Liveliest and loftiest. She my secret wish
Divined; and, with such gladness, that God's love
Seem'd from her visage shining, thus began:
"Here is the goal, whence motion on his race
Starts: motionless the centre, and the rest
All moved around. Except the soul divine,
Place in this Heaven is none; the soul divine,
Wherein the love, which ruleth o'er its orb,
Is kindled, and the virtue, that it sheds:
One circle, light and love, enclasping it,
As this doth clasp the others; and to Him,
Who draws the bound, its limit only known.
Measured itself by none, it doth divide
Motion to all, counted unto them forth,
As by the fifth or half ye count forth ten.
The vase, wherein time's roots² are plunged, thou
seest:

Look elsewhere for the leaves. O mortal lust!³
That canst not lift thy head above the waves
Which whelm and sink thee down. The will in man
Bears goodly blossoms; but its ruddy promise
Is, by the dripping of perpetual rain,
Made mere abortion: faith and innocence
Are met with but in babes; each taking leave,
Ere cheeks with down are sprinkled: he, that fasts
While yet a stammerer, with his tongue let loose

¹ "By reason of the most fervent longing that each part of this ninth Heaven hath to be united with each part of the tenth most divine Heaven of quiet, it revolves within it with such great desire that its velocity is, as it were, incomprehensible" (*Conv.* ii. 4). Cf. *Par.* xxiii.

² Nature, the first principle of motion and of rest, which in the Ptolemaic system makes the earth motionless in the centre and the Heavens revolving round it, has its starting-point in this ninth sphere, the *Primum Mobile*, which itself is bounded only by the light and love of the Empyrean, where God directly rules. In the Divine Mind is enkindled the love (of the Seraphim) which turns it, and the virtue that it rains down upon the universe. All motion is caused and measured by its motion, and therefore in this sphere is the first measure of time. Time has its roots in the invisible motion of this Heaven, while its leaves are manifest in the lower spheres, whose motion is our visible measure of time.

³ *Cupidigia*, covetousness, or avarice.

Gluts every food alike in every moon :
 One, yet a babbler, loves and listens to
 His mother ; but no sooner hath free use
 Of speech, than he doth wish her in her grave.
 So suddenly doth the fair child of him,¹
 Whose welcome is the morn and eve his parting,
 To negro blackness change her virgin white.
 " Thou, to abate thy wonder, note, that none²
 Bears rule in earth ; and its frail family
 Are therefore wanderers. Yet before the date,³
 When, through the hundredth in his reckoning dropt,
 Pale January must be shoved aside
 From winter's calendar, these heavenly spheres
 Shall roar so loud, that fortune shall be fain⁴
 To turn the poop, where she hath now the prow ;
 So that the fleet run onward : and true fruit,
 Expected long, shall crown at last the bloom."

CANTO XXVIII

ARGUMENT

Still in the ninth Heaven, our Poet is permitted to behold the Divine Essence ; and then sees, in three hierarchies, the nine choirs of Angels. Beatrice clears some difficulties which occur to him on this occasion.

So she, who doth imparadise my soul,
 Had drawn the veil from off our present life,
 And bared the truth of poor mortality :
 When lo ! as one who, in a mirror, spies
 The shining of a flambeau at his back,

¹ The human race, which is the son of Heaven, for, according to the Philosopher, " man is begotten by man and the sun." Cf. *Mon.* i. 9, and *Par.* xxii., where the sun is " the parent of all mortal life."

² Cf. Marco Lombardo's discourse, in *Purg.* xvi.

³ " The Julian calendar (which we rectified in 1752) makes the year 11 m. 14 sec. (very roughly one-hundredth of a day) too long. In Dante's time, therefore, January began, by calendar, a little later in the real year every season ; and thus, in the course of ages, it would begin so late that winter would really be over before we came to New Year's Day by calendar. The substitution of an immense period for a short one is parallel to our ' not a thousand miles hence ' " (Wicksteed).

⁴ Cf. Jeremiah xxv. 30. Dante probably alludes once more to the coming of the *Veltro*.

Lit sudden ere he deem of its approach,
 And turneth to resolve him, if the glass
 Have told him true, and sees the record faithful
 As note is to its metre; even thus,
 I well remember, did befall to me,
 Looking upon the beauteous eyes, whence love
 Had made the leash to take me. As I turn'd :
 And that which none, who in that volume looks,
 Can miss of, in itself apparent, struck
 My view;¹ a point I saw, that darted light
 So sharp, no lid, unclosing, may bear up
 Against its keenness. The least star we ken
 From hence, had seem'd a moon; set by its side,
 As star by side of star. And so far off,
 Perchance, as is the halo from the light
 Which paints it, when most dense the vapour spreads;
 There wheel'd about the point a circle of fire,
 More rapid than the motion which surrounds,
 Speediest, the world. Another this enring'd;
 And that a third; the third a fourth, and that
 A fifth encompass'd; which a sixth next bound;
 And over this, a seventh, following, reach'd
 Circumference so ample, that its bow,
 Within the span of Juno's messenger,
 Had scarce been held entire. Beyond the seventh,
 Ensued yet other two. And every one,
 As more in number distant from the first,
 Was tardier in motion: and that glow'd
 With flame most pure, that to the sparkle of truth,
 Was nearest; as partaking most, methinks,
 Of its reality. The guide beloved
 Saw me in anxious thought suspense, and spake:
 "Heaven, and all nature, hangs upon that point.²
 The circle thereto most conjoin'd observe;
 And know, that by intenser love its course
 Is, to this swiftness, wing'd." To whom I thus:
 "It were enough; nor should I further seek,

¹ "When I turned, and my eyes were struck by what appears in that volume when one gazes rightly upon its circling." He who studies the Heavens rightly perceives that they "declare the glory of God" (Psalm xix. 1). So Mr. Wicksteed interprets the passage.

² Dante quotes the famous passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, xxx. (referred to in notes on Cantos xxiv. and xxvi.): "From that principle (the Prime Mover) depend Heaven and all Nature."

Had I but witness'd order, in the world
 Appointed, such as in these wheels is seen.
 But in the sensible world such difference is,
 That in each round shows more divinity,
 As each is wider from the centre.¹ Hence,
 If in this wondrous and angelic temple,
 That hath, for confine, only light and love,
 My wish may have completion, I must know
 Wherefore such disagreement is between
 The exemplar and its copy: for myself,
 Contemplating, I fail to pierce the cause."

"It is no marvel, if thy fingers foil'd
 Do leave the knot untied: so hard 'tis grown
 For want of tenting." Thus she said: "But take,"
 She added, "if thou wish thy cure, my words,
 And entertain them subtly. Every orb,
 Corporeal, doth proportion its extent
 Unto the virtue through its parts diffused.
 The greater blessedness preserves the more;
 The greater is the body (if all parts
 Share equally) the more is to preserve.
 Therefore the circle, whose swift course enwheels
 The universal frame, answers to that
 Which is supreme in knowledge and in love.
 Thus by the virtue, not the seeming breadth
 Of substance, measuring, thou shalt see the Heavens,
 Each to the intelligence that ruleth it,
 Greater to more, and smaller unto less,
 Suited in strict and wondrous harmony."

As when the north blows from his milder cheek
 A blast, that scours the sky, forthwith our air,

¹ "The material world and the intelligential (the copy and the pattern) appear to Dante to differ in this respect, that the orbits of the latter are more swift, the nearer they are to the centre, whereas the contrary is the case with the orbits of the former. The seeming contradiction is thus accounted for by Beatrice. In the material world, the more ample the body is, the greater is the good of which it is capable; supposing all the parts to be equally perfect. But in the intelligential world, the circles are more excellent and powerful, the more they approximate to the central point, which is God. Thus the first circle, that of the Seraphim, corresponds to the ninth sphere, or *primum mobile*; the second, that of the Cherubim, to the eighth sphere, or heaven of fixed stars; the third, or circle of Thrones, to the seventh sphere, or planet of Saturn; and in like manner throughout the two other trines of circles and spheres" (Cary).

Clear'd of the rack that hung on it before,
 Glitters; and, with his beauties all unveil'd,
 The firmament looks forth serene, and smiles:
 Such was my cheer, when Beatrice drove
 With clear reply the shadows back, and truth
 Was manifested, as a star in Heaven.
 And when the words were ended, not unlike
 To iron in the furnace, every cirque,
 Ebullient, shot forth scintillating fires:
 And every sparkle shivering to new blaze,
 In number ¹ did outmillion the account
 Reduplicate upon the chequer'd board.
 Then heard I echoing on, from choir to choir,
 "Hosanna," to the fixed point, that holds,
 And shall for ever hold them to their place,
 From everlasting, irremovable.

Musing awhile I stood: and she, who saw
 My inward meditations, thus began:
 "In the first circles, they, whom thou beheld'st,
 Are Seraphim and Cherubim. Thus swift
 Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,
 Near as they can, approaching; and they can
 The more, the loftier their vision.² Those
 That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,
 Are Thrones;³ in whom the first trine ends. And all
 Are blessed, even as their sight descends
 Deeper into the Truth, wherein rest is
 For every mind. Thus happiness hath root
 In seeing, not in loving, which of sight
 Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such
 The meed, as unto each, in due degree,
 Grace and good-will their measure have assign'd.
 The other trine, that with still opening buds
 In this eternal springtide blossom fair,
 Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,⁴

¹ "The sparkles exceeded the number which would be produced by the sixty-four squares of a chess-board, if for the first we reckoned one; for the next, two; for the third, four; and so went on doubling to the end of the account" (Cary).

² The division of the Angels into three Hierarchies, each composed of three orders, is based upon the diversity of their participation in the Divine Perfection. The Seraphim are named from excess of love, the Cherubim from plenitude of knowledge.

³ The Thrones are the mirrors of God's judgments, and represent especially His steadfastness.

⁴ "From the autumn equinox all through the winter till the

Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold
 Hosannas, blending ever; from the three,
 Transmitted, hierarchy of gods, for aye
 Rejoicing; Dominations first; next them,
 Virtues; and Powers the third;¹ the next to whom
 Are Princedoms and Archangels, with glad round
 To tread their festal ring; and last, the band
 Angelical, disporting in their sphere.²
 All, as they circle in their orders, look
 Aloft; and, downward, with such sway prevail,
 That all with mutual impulse tend to God.
 These once a mortal view beheld. Desire,
 In Dionysius, so intensely wrought,
 That he, as I have done, ranged them; and named
 Their orders, marshal'd in his thought. From him,
 Dissentient, one refused his sacred read;
 But soon as in this Heaven his doubting eyes
 Were open'd, Gregory at his error smiled.
 Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth
 Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt
 Both this and much beside of these our orbs,
 From an eye-witness to Heaven's mysteries." ³

spring equinox, the sign of Aries is visible in the sky at nightfall. The line, therefore, means 'where there is no autumn nor winter' (Wicksteed).

¹ The second Hierarchy is composed of Dominations, Virtues, and Powers, those orders whose names designate a certain common government or disposition. The Dominations are "an express image of the true and archetypal dominion in God;" the Virtues imitate the Divine strength and fortitude; the Powers represent the Divine power and majesty.

² The third Hierarchy includes Principalities or Princedoms, Archangels, and Angels, those orders which are more particularly concerned with the things of the world, contemplating the love of the Holy Spirit, and communicating the gifts of God to man. The last name is also applied to all these celestial intelligences; for Angels signify "messengers," and in this respect the higher Angels can execute the functions of the lower, while they have in addition the special qualities from which they derive their own names. Thus Christ Himself is called the Angel of the Great Counsel.

³ The mystical writings of the pseudo-Dionysius first appeared in the early part of the sixth century, and were ascribed to the Areopagite, St. Paul's convert on Mars' hill. One of them, the *Celestial Hierarchy*, became the great text-book for all that concerns "the angelic nature and its ministry" (cf. *Par.* x.); Dionysius being supposed to have learned these and other celestial mysteries from St. Paul himself, who had beheld them when rapt up to the third Heaven. St. Gregory the Great (590-604), in a

CANTO XXIX

ARGUMENT

Beatrice beholds, in the mirror of divine truth, some doubts which had entered the mind of Dante. These she resolves; and then digresses into a vehement reprehension of certain theologians and preachers in those days, whose ignorance or avarice induced them to substitute their own inventions for the pure word of the Gospel.

No longer, than what time Latona's twins
 Cover'd of Libra and the fleecy star,
 Together both, girding the horizon hang;
 In even balance, from the zenith poised;¹
 Till from that verge, each, changing hemisphere,
 Part the nice level; e'en so brief a space
 Did Beatrice's silence hold. A smile
 Sat painted on her cheek; and her fix'd gaze
 Bent on the point, at which my vision fail'd:
 When thus, her words resuming, she began:
 "I speak, nor what thou wouldst inquire, demand;
 For I have mark'd it, where all time and place
 Are present. Not for increase to Himself
 Of good, which may not be increased, but forth
 To manifest His glory by its beams;²
 Inhabiting His own eternity,
 Beyond time's limit or what bound soe'er
 To circumscribe His being; as He will'd,
 Into new natures, like unto Himself,
 Eternal Love unfolded. Nor before,
 As if in dull inaction, torpid, lay;

sermon on Luke xv. 1, adopted a slightly different arrangement from that of Dionysius, whose work he only knew by vague report. In the *Convivio* (ii. 6), Dante had followed a third classification, differing considerably from the Dionysian, which he here accepts—but one which was regarded in his day as hardly less orthodox.

¹ "As short a space as the sun and moon are in changing hemispheres, when they are opposite to one another, the one under the sign of Aries, and the other under that of Libra, and both hang, for a moment, poised as it were in the hand of the zenith" (Cary).

² *Ma perchè suo splendore potesse, risplendendo, dir: SUBSISTO;* "but that His splendour (His creatures who reflect His glory) might, by glowing, say: I exist;" may resemble Himself, that is, in the joy of conscious existence. God thus created for His infinite love alone.

For, not in process of before or aft,¹
 Upon these waters moved the Spirit of God.
 Simple and mix'd, both form and substance,² forth
 To perfect being started, like three darts
 Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray
 In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire,
 E'en at the moment of its issuing; thus
 Did, from the eternal Sovran, beam entire
 His threefold operation, at one act
 Produced coeval.³ Yet, in order, each
 Created his due station knew: those highest,
 Who pure intelligence were made; mere power,
 The lowest; in the midst, bound with strict league,
 Intelligence and power, unsever'd bond.
 Long tract of ages by the Angels past,
 Ere the creating of another world,
 Described on Jerome's pages, thou hast seen.
 But that what I disclose to thee is true,
 Those penmen, whom the Holy Spirit moved,
 In many a passage of their sacred book,
 Attest; ⁴ as thou by diligent search shalt find:
 And reason, in some sort, discerns the same,
 Who scarce would grant the heavenly ministers,
 Of their perfection void, so long a space.⁵
 Thus when and where these spirits of love were made,
 Thou know'st, and how: and, knowing, hast allay'd
 Thy thirst, which from the triple question ⁶ rose.
 Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon,
 Part of the Angels fell: and, in their fall,
 Confusion to your elements ensued.

¹ Time began when the Spirit of God moved over the waters, imprinting upon the formless primal matter the substantial forms, or Divine ideas, whereby created things are brought into being.

² For "substance" read "matter" (*materia*).

³ "Pure form or act (the Angels), pure matter or potentiality (the *materia prima*), and inseparably united act and potentiality (the material Heavens), issued into simultaneous being" (Wicksteed).

⁴ "St. Jerome had described the Angels as created long before the rest of the universe: an opinion which Thomas Aquinas controverted; and the latter, as Dante thinks, had Scripture on his side" (Cary). Cf. Gen. i. 1, and Ecclesiasticus xviii. 1.

⁵ Had they existed before the moving Heavens which it is their office to sway.

⁶ Where, when, and how the celestial intelligences had been created.

The others kept their station : and this task,
 Whereon thou look'st, began, with such delight,
 That they surcease not ever, day nor night,
 Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause
 Was the curst pride of him,¹ whom thou hast seen
 Pent with the world's incumbrance. Those, whom here
 Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves
 Of His free bounty, who had made them apt
 For ministries so high : therefore their views
 Were, by enlightening grace and their own merit,
 Exalted ; so that in their will confirm'd
 They stand, nor fear to fall. For do not doubt,
 But to receive the grace, which Heaven vouchsafes,
 Is meritorious, even as the soul
 With prompt affection welcometh the guest.
 Now, without further help, if with good heed
 My words thy mind have treasured, thou henceforth
 This consistory round about mayst scan,
 And gaze thy fill. But, since thou hast on earth
 Heard vain disputers, reasoners in the schools,
 Canvass the angelic nature, and dispute
 Its powers of apprehension, memory, choice ;
 Therefore, 'tis well thou take from me the truth,
 Pure and without disguise ; which they below,
 Equivocating, darken and perplex.

“ Know thou, that, from the first, these substances,
 Rejoicing in the countenance of God,
 Have held unceasingly their view, intent
 Upon the glorious vision, from the which
 Nought absent is nor hid : where then no change
 Of newness, with succession, interrupts,
 Remembrance, there, needs none to gather up
 Divided thought and images remote.²

“ So that men, thus at variance with the truth,
 Dream, though their eyes be open ; reckless some
 Of error ; others well aware they err,
 To whom more guilt and shame are justly due.
 Each the known track of sage philosophy
 Deserts, and has a bye-way of his own :

¹ Lucifer, whom Dante has seen embedded at the very bottom and centre of the universe. Cf. *Inf.* xxxiv.

² The Angels need no memory, for nothing has ever severed their gaze from that Divine Essence wherein all things are depicted.

So much the restless eagerness to shine,
And love of singularity, prevail.
Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes
Heaven's anger less, than when the book of God
Is forced to yield to man's authority,
Or from its straightness warp'd: no reckoning made
What blood the sowing of it in the world
Has cost; what favour for himself he wins,
Who meekly clings to it. The aim of all
Is how to shine: e'en they, whose office is
To preach the Gospel, let the Gospel sleep,
And pass their own inventions off instead.
One tells, how at Christ's suffering the wan moon
Bent back her steps, and shadow'd o'er the sun
With intervenient disk, as she withdrew:
Another, how the light shrouded itself
Within its tabernacle, and left dark
The Spaniard, and the Indian, with the Jew.
Such fables Florence in her pulpit hears,
Bandied about more frequent, than the names
Of Bindi and of Lapi¹ in her streets.
The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return
From pasture, fed with wind: and what avails
For their excuse, they do not see their harm?
Christ said not to His first conventicle,
'Go forth and preach impostures to the world,'
But gave them truth² to build on; and the sound
Was mighty on their lips: nor needed they,
Beside the Gospel, other spear or shield,
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.
The preacher now provides himself with store
Of jests and gibes; and, so there be no lack
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought.
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while
Of that dark bird³ which nestles in his hood,
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said,
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,
That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad
The hands of holy promise, finds a throng
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony

¹ The commonest Florentine names.

² Cf. Mark xvi. 15.

³ A waiting devil. Cf. *Inf.* xxvii. ad finem.

Fattens with this his swine, and others worse
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,
Paying with unstampt metal for their fare.¹

“ But (for we far have wander'd) let us seek
The forward path again; so as the way
Be shorten'd with the time. No mortal tongue,
Nor thought of man, hath ever reach'd so far,
That of these natures he might count the tribes.
What Daniel of their thousands hath reveal'd,
With finite number, infinite conceals.²
The fountain, at whose source these drink their beams,
With light supplies them in as many modes,
As there are splendours that it shines on: each
According to the virtue it conceives,
Differing in love and sweet affection.
Look then how lofty and how huge in breadth
The eternal Might, which, broken and dispersed
Over such countless mirrors, yet remains
Whole in itself and one, as at the first.”

CANTO XXX

ARGUMENT

Dante is taken up with Beatrice into the Empyrean; and there having his sight strengthened by her aid, and by the virtue derived from looking on the river of light, he sees the triumph of the Angels and of the souls of the blessed.

Noon's fervid hour perchance six thousand miles³
From hence is distant; and the shadowy cone
Almost to level on our earth declines;
When, from the midmost of this blue abyss,

¹ By selling these spurious and unauthorised indulgences, the monks of St. Anthony's congregation feed their pigs, and worse.

² Daniel vii. 10. The number of the Angels surpasses human computation, and each differs from the other in its reception of the Divine light, and in its consequent enkindling with the sweetness of Divine love. In things incorruptible, there is only one individual of each single species: "Each of these beings is an intellectual species, and their being is no other than the act of continuous understanding" (*Mon.* i. 3).

³ "He compares the vanishing of the vision to the fading away of the stars at dawn, when it is noonday six thousand miles off, and the shadow, formed by the earth over the part of it inhabited by the Poet, is about to disappear" (*Cary*).

By turns some star is to our vision lost.
 And straightway as the handmaid of the sun
 Puts forth her radiant brow, all, light by light,
 Fade; and the spangled firmament shuts in,
 E'en to the loveliest of the glittering throng.
 Thus vanish'd gradually from my sight
 The triumph, which plays ever round the point,
 That overcame me, seeming (for it did)
 Engirt¹ by that it girdeth. Wherefore love,
 With loss of other object, forced me bend
 Mine eyes on Beatrice once again.

If all, that hitherto is told of her,
 Were in one praise concluded, 'twere too weak
 To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look
 On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth,
 Not merely to exceed our human; but,
 That save its Maker, none can to the full
 Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail;
 Unequal to my theme; as never bard
 Of buskin or of sock² hath fail'd before.
 For as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
 E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
 Hath dispossess'd my spirit of itself.
 Not from that day, when on this earth I first
 Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
 Have I with song applausive ever ceased
 To follow; but now follow them no more;
 My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
 When it doth touch the limit of his skill.

She, (such as I bequeath her to the bruit
 Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,
 Urging its arduous matter to the close,)
 Her words resumed, in gesture and in voice
 Resembling one accusom'd to command:
 "Forth from the last corporeal are we come
 Into the Heaven, that is unbodied light;³
 Light intellectual, replete with love;
 Love of true happiness, replete with joy;

¹ "Appearing to be encompassed by these angelic bands, which are in reality encompassed by it" (Cary).

² Dante has simply *comico o tragedo*, "comic or tragic poet."

³ They have issued from the last material sphere, the last stage of intellectual preparation, into the true Paradise, the Empyrean of light, love, and joy.

Joy, that transcends all sweetness of delight.
 Here shalt thou look on either mighty host¹
 Of Paradise; and one in that array,
 Which in the final judgment thou shalt see."

As when the lightning, in a sudden spleen
 Unfolded, dashes from the blinding eyes
 The visive spirits, dazzled and bedimm'd;
 So, round about me, fulminating streams
 Of living radiance play'd, and left me swathed
 And veil'd in dense impenetrable blaze.
 Such weal is in the love, that stills this Heaven;
 For its own flame² the torch thus fitting ever.

No sooner to my listening ear had come
 The brief assurance, than I understood
 New virtue into me infused, and sight
 Kindled afresh, with vigour to sustain
 Excess of light however pure. I look'd;
 And, in the likeness of a river, saw
 Light flowing,³ from whose amber-seeming waves
 Flash'd up effulgence, as they glided on
 'Twixt banks, on either side, painted with spring,
 Incredible how fair: and, from the tide,
 There ever and anon, outstarting, flew
 Sparkles instinct with life; and in the flowers
 Did set them, like to rubies chased in gold:
 Then, as if drunk with odours, plunged again
 Into the wondrous flood; from which, as one
 Re-enter'd, still another rose. "The thirst
 Of knowledge high, whereby thou art inflamed,
 To search the meaning of what here thou seest,
 The more it warms thee, pleases me the more.
 But first behoves thee of this water drink,
 Or e'er that longing be allay'd." So spake
 The day-star of mine eyes: then thus subjoin'd:
 "This stream; and these, forth issuing from its gulf,
 And diving back, a living topaz each;

¹ The Angels and redeemed souls, the latter of whom he will see in their true forms, no longer concealed in dazzling light, but as they will appear at the last day, in glorified resemblances of what they were on earth.

² "Thus disposing the spirits to receive its own beatific light" (Cary).

³ The "river of water of life." Cf. Rev. xxii. 1; Psalm xlvi. 4. It symbolises the effusion of the Divine Grace upon all creatures, flowing down from the Source of Light.

With all this laughter on its bloomy shores ;
 Are but a preface, shadowy of the truth ¹
 They emblem : not that, in themselves, the things
 Are crude ; but on thy part is the defect,
 For that thy views not yet aspire so high."

Never did babe, that had outslept his wont,
 Rush, with such eager straining, to the milk,
 As I toward the water ; bending me,
 To make the better mirrors of mine eyes
 In the refining wave : and as the eaves
 Of mine eye-lids did drink of it, forthwith
 Seem'd it unto me turn'd from length to round.²
 Then as a troop of maskers, when they put
 Their vizors off, look other than before ;
 The counterfeited semblance thrown aside :
 So into greater jubilee were changed
 Those flowers and sparkles ; and distinct I saw,
 Before me, either court of Heaven display'd.³

O prime enlightener ! Thou who gavest me strength
 On the high triumph of Thy realm to gaze ;
 Grant virtue now to utter what I kenn'd.

There is in Heaven a light, whose goodly shine
 Makes the Creator visible to all
 Created,⁴ that in seeing Him alone
 Have peace ; and in a circle spreads so far,
 That the circumference were too loose a zone
 To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
 Reflected from the summit of the first
 That moves, which being hence and vigour takes.
 And as some cliff, that from the bottom eyes
 His image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
 As if to admire his brave appareling
 Of verdure and of flowers ; so, round about,
 Eying the light, on more than million thrones,
 Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
 Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves,

¹ It is still a mere foreshadowing preface to the truth, although a much nearer approximation to it than any of his former visions have been.

² Symbolising the passing of Time into Eternity.

³ The flowers and sparkles are revealed as the Saints and Angels, respectively.

⁴ The *lumen gloriae*, or light of glory, by which the rational creature is made like to God, and rendered capable of seeing Him in His essence.

Extended to their utmost, of this rose,
 Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
 Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
 Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
 Took in the full dimensions of that joy.
 Near or remote, what there avails, where God
 Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends
 Her sway?¹ Into the yellow of the rose
 Perennial, which, in bright expansiveness,
 Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent
 Of praises to the never-wintering sun,
 As one, who fain would speak yet holds his peace,
 Beatrice led me; and, "Behold," she said,
 "This fair assemblage; stoles of snowy white,
 How numberless. The city, where we dwell,
 Behold how vast; and these our seats so throng'd,
 Few now are wanting here. In that proud stall,
 On which, the crown, already o'er its state
 Suspended, holds thine eyes—or e'er thyself
 Mayst at the wedding sup,—shall rest the soul
 Of the great Harry,² he who, by the world
 Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,
 Before her day be ripe. But ye are sick,
 And in your tetchy wantonness as blind,
 As is the bantling, that of hunger dies,
 And drives away the nurse. Nor may it be,
 That he,³ who in the sacred forum sways,
 Openly or in secret, shall with him
 Accordant walk: whom God will not endure
 I' the holy office long; but thrust him down
 To Simon Magus, where Alagna's priest⁴
 Will sink beneath him: such will be his meed."

¹ "It had been maintained by Democritus, but was denied by Aristotle, that, were it not for the medium, even the smallest things could be seen at any distance whatsoever. This is one of the many instances in which Dante gives a spiritual turn to the physical speculations of the Greeks" (Wicksteed).

² Henry of Luxemburg, the Emperor Henry VII., died in 1313. Cf. Dante's Letters v., vi. and vii.

³ Pope Clement V., who died in 1314. Cf. *Inf.* xix., and *Par.* xvii.

⁴ Pope Boniface VIII. Cf. *Inf.* xix.

CANTO XXXI

ARGUMENT

The Poet expatiates further on the glorious vision described in the last Canto. On looking round for Beatrice, he finds that she has left him, and that an old man is at his side. This proves to be Saint Bernard, who shows him that Beatrice has returned to her throne, and then points out to him the blessedness of the Virgin Mother.

IN fashion, as a snow white rose, lay then
 Before my view the saintly multitude,¹
 Which in His own blood Christ espoused. Meanwhile,
 That other host, that soar aloft to gaze
 And celebrate His glory, whom they love,
 Hover'd around; ² and, like a troop of bees,
 Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,
 Now, clustering, where their fragrant labour glows,
 Flew downward to the mighty flower, or rose
 From the redundant petals, streaming back
 Unto the stedfast dwelling of their joy.
 Faces had they of flame, and wings of gold;
 The rest was whiter than the driven snow; ³
 And, as they flitted down into the flower,
 From range to range, fanning their plummy loins,
 Whisper'd the peace and ardour, which they won
 From that soft winnowing. Shadow none, the vast
 Interposition of such numerous flight
 Cast, from above, upon the flower, or view
 Obstructed aught. For, through the universe,
 Wherever merited, celestial light
 Glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.

All there, who reign in safety and in bliss,
 Ages long past or new, on one sole mark
 Their love and vision fix'd. O trinal beam
 Of individual star, that charm'st them thus!
 Vouchsafe one glance to gild our storm below.⁴

If the grim brood, from Arctic shores that roam'd,

¹ The souls of the Blessed redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

² The Angels, whom St. Anselm likens to busy bees in God's service, flying between the flowers of earth and the hives of Heaven.

³ The three colours symbolise Love, Knowledge, and Purity.

⁴ Dante has simply *guarda quaggiù alla nostra procella*, "look down upon our storm."

(Where Helice for ever, as she wheels,
 Sparkles a mother's fondness on her son,
 Stood in mute wonder 'mid the works of Rome,
 When to their view the Lateran arose
 In greatness more than earthly; ¹ I, who then
 From human to divine had past, from time
 Unto eternity, and out of Florence
 To justice and to truth, how might I chuse
 But marvel too? 'Twixt gladness and amaze,
 In sooth no will had I to utter aught,
 Or hear. And, as a pilgrim, when he rests
 Within the temple of his vow, looks round
 In breathless awe, and hopes some time to tell
 Of all its goodly state; e'en so mine eyes
 Coursed up and down along the living light,
 Now low, and now aloft, and now around,
 Visiting every step. Looks I beheld,
 Where charity in soft persuasion sat;
 Smiles from within, and radiance from above;
 And, in each gesture, grace and honour high.

So roved my ken, and in its general form
 All Paradise survey'd: when round I turn'd
 With purpose of my lady to inquire
 Once more of things, that held my thought suspense.
 But answer found from other than I ween'd;
 For, Beatrice when I thought to see,
 I saw instead a senior, at my side,
 Robed, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign
 Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffused,
 With gestures such as spake a father's love.
 And, "Whither is she vanish'd?" straight I ask'd.

"By Beatrice summon'd," he replied,
 "I come to aid thy wish. Looking aloft
 To the third circle from the highest, there
 Behold her on the throne, wherein her merit
 Hath placed her." Answering not, mine eyes I raised,
 And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
 A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.²

¹ Lateran here stands for Rome in general, at the splendour of which the barbarians from the north were amazed. Helice, or Callisto (cf. *Purg.* xxv.), was changed into the Great Bear, and her son Arcas into Boötes.

² Dante now beholds Beatrice no longer under her symbolical disguise, but in all the transfigured beauty of her human personality.

Not from the centre of the sea so far
 Unto the region of the highest thunder,
 As was my ken from hers; and yet the form
 Came through that medium down, unmix'd and pure.

“O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest;
 Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in Hell
 To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd;
 For all mine eyes have seen, I to thy power
 And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave
 Thou hast to freedom brought me: and no means,
 For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.
 Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep:
 That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole,
 Is loosen'd from this body, it may find
 Favour with thee.” So I my suit preferr'd:
 And she, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down,
 And smiled; then towards the eternal fountain turn'd.

And thus the senior, holy and revered:
 “That thou at length mayst happily conclude
 Thy voyage, (to which end I was dispatch'd,
 By supplication moved and holy love,)
 Let thy upsoaring vision range, at large,
 This garden through: for so, by ray divine
 Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount;
 And from Heaven's Queen, whom fervent I adore,
 All gracious aid befriend us; for that I
 Am her own faithful Bernard.”¹ Like a wight,
 Who haply from Croatia wends to see
 Our Veronica; and, the while 'tis shown,
 Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,
 And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith
 Unto himself in thought: “And didst Thou look
 E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?
 And was this semblance Thine?”² So gazed I then

¹ St. Bernard (1091-1153), the famous Abbot of Clairvaux and the greatest Churchman of the twelfth century. It was he who preached the disastrous second Crusade, for which his impassioned *apologia* may still be read in his *De Consideratione*—a work which profoundly influenced Dante (cf. *Epist.* x. 28). His intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds eloquent expression in his sermons, from which Dante has borrowed several passages in these cantos. He here represents the loving contemplation of God, in which the eternal life of the human soul consists.

² The *Veronica* is the representation of the countenance of Christ, still solemnly venerated in St. Peter's at Rome, said to

Adoring; for the charity of him,
 Who musing, in this world that peace enjoy'd,¹
 Stood livelily before me. "Child of grace!"
 Thus he began: "thou shalt not knowledge gain
 Of this glad being, if thine eyes are held
 Still in this depth below. But search around
 The circles, to the furthest, till thou spy
 Seated in state, the Queen,² that of this realm
 Is sovran." Straight mine eyes I raised; and bright,
 As, at the birth of morn, the eastern clime
 Above the horizon, where the sun declines;
 So to mine eyes, that upward, as from vale
 To mountain sped, at the extreme bound, a part
 Excell'd in lustre all the front opposed.
 And as the glow burns ruddiest o'er the wave,
 That waits the ascending team, which Phaëton
 Ill knew to guide, and on each part the light
 Diminish'd fades, intenses in the midst;
 So burn'd the peaceful oriflame,³ and slack'd
 On every side the living flame decay'd.
 And in that midst their sportive pennons waved
 Thousands of Angels; in resplendence each
 Distinct, and quaint adornment. At their glee
 And carol, smiled the Lovely One of Heaven,
 That joy was in the eyes of all the blest.

Had I a tongue in eloquence as rich,
 As is the colouring in fancy's loom,
 'Twere all too poor to utter the least part
 Of that enchantment. When he saw mine eyes
 Intent on her, that charm'd him; Bernard gazed
 With so exceeding fondness, as infused
 Ardour into my breast, unfelt before.

have been miraculously imprinted upon the handkerchief of a holy woman who wiped Christ's face on the way to Calvary. Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 41.

¹ Bernard, while still living, anticipated the peace of heavenly contemplation.

² The Blessed Virgin.

³ "The Oriflame (*aurea flamma*) was the standard given by the Angel Gabriel to the ancient kings of France, representing a flame on a golden ground. No one who fought under it could be conquered. The golden glow of Heaven is the invincible ensign not of war, but peace" (Wicksteed). Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 29.

CANTO XXXII

ARGUMENT

Saint Bernard shows him, on their several thrones, the other blessed souls, both of the old and new Testament; explains to him that their places are assigned them by grace, and not according to merit; and lastly, tells him that if he would obtain power to descry what remained of the heavenly vision, he must unite with him in supplication to Mary.

FREELY the sage, though wrapt in musings high,
 Assumed the teacher's part, and mild began:
 "The wound, that Mary closed, she¹ open'd first,
 Who sits so beautiful at Mary's feet.
 The third in order, underneath her, lo!
 Rachel with Beatrice: Sarah next;
 Judith; Rebecca; and the gleaner-maid,
 Meek ancestress² of him, who sang the songs
 Of sore repentance in his sorrowful mood.
 All, as I name them, down from leaf to leaf,
 Are, in gradation, throned on the rose.
 And from the seventh step, successively,
 Adown the breathing tresses of the flower,
 Still doth the file of Hebrew dames proceed;
 For these are a partition wall, whereby
 The sacred stairs are sever'd, as the faith
 In Christ divides them.³ On this part, where blooms
 Each leaf in full maturity, are set
 Such as in Christ, or e'er He came, believed.
 On the other, where an intersected space
 Yet shows the semicircle void, abide
 All they, who look'd to Christ already come.
 And as our Lady on her glorious stool,
 And they who on their stools beneath her sit,
 This way distinction make; e'en so on his,
 The mighty Baptist that way marks the line,
 (He who endured the desert, and the pains

¹ Eve.

² Ruth, the ancestress of David.

³ Two descending lines throughout the Rose divide the blessed of the Old Law from the blessed of the New: the one, passing down from Mary's throne, is composed of the Hebrew women, ancestresses of Christ and types of His Church; the other, passing down from the seat of St. John the Baptist, is similarly composed of men who continued the work of Christ's Precursor in preparing "a perfect people."

Of martyrdom, and, for two years,¹ of Hell,
 Yet still continued holy,) and beneath,
 Augustin; ² Francis; Benedict; and the rest,
 Thus far from round to round. So Heaven's decree
 Forecasts, this garden equally to fill,
 With faith in either view, past or to come.
 Learn too, that downward from the step, which cleaves,
 Midway, the twain compartments, none there are
 Who place obtain for merit of their own,
 But have through others' merit been advanced,
 On set conditions; spirits all released,
 Ere for themselves they had the power to chuse.
 And, if thou mark and listen to them well,
 Their childish looks and voice declare as much.

"Here, silent as thou art, I know thy doubt;
 And gladly will I loose the knot, wherein
 Thy subtil thoughts have bound thee. From this realm
 Excluded, chance no entrance here may find;
 No more than hunger, thirst, or sorrow can.
 A law immutable hath stablish'd all;
 Nor is there aught thou seest, that doth not fit,
 Exactly, as the finger to the ring.
 It is not, therefore, without cause, that these,
 O'erspeedy comers to immortal life,
 Are different in their shares of excellence.
 Our Sovran Lord, that settleth this estate
 In love and in delight so absolute,
 That wish can dare no further, every soul,
 Created in His joyous sight to dwell,
 With grace, at pleasure, variously endows;
 And for a proof the effect may well suffice.
 And 'tis moreover most expressly mark'd
 In holy Scripture, where the twins are said
 To have struggled in the womb.³ Therefore, as grace
 Inweaves the coronet, so every brow

¹ He was for two years in Limbo after his death, until the Crucifixion.

² Cary has altered the order, which in Dante is significant: Francis, Benedict, and Augustine. Francis comes first, as being Christ's most perfect imitator, in whose body the marks of the Passion were renewed; while Benedict, the great contemplative, is in the place opposite to Rachel, the type of Contemplation.

³ Cf. Gen. xxv. 22; Rom. ix. 10-14. "The children are ranked in accordance with the abysmal but just and orderly judgments of God in the assignment of primal endowment" (Wicksteed).

Weareth its proper hue of orient light.
 And merely in respect to his prime gift,
 Not in reward of meritorious deed,
 Hath each his several degree assign'd.
 In early times with their own innocence
 More was not wanting, than the parents' faith,
 To save them : those first ages past, behoved
 That circumcision in the males should imp
 The flight of innocent wings : but since the day
 Of grace hath come, without baptismal rites
 In Christ accomplish'd, innocence herself
 Must linger yet below. Now raise thy view
 Unto the visage most resembling Christ :
 For, in her splendour only, shalt thou win
 The power to look on Him." Forthwith I saw
 Such floods of gladness on her visage shower'd,
 From holy spirits, winging that profound ;
 That, whatsoever I had yet beheld,
 Had not so much suspended me with wonder,
 Or shown me such similitude of God.
 And he, who had to her descended, once,
 On earth, now hail'd in Heaven ; and on poised wing,
 " Ave, Maria, Gratia Plena," sang :
 To whose sweet anthem all the blissful court,
 From all parts answering, rang : that holier joy
 Brooded the deep serene. " Father revered !
 Who deign'st, for me, to quit the pleasant place
 Wherein thou sittest, by eternal lot ;
 Say, who that Angel is, that with such glee
 Beholds our Queen, and so enamour'd glows
 Of her high beauty, that all fire he seems."
 So I again resorted to the lore
 Of my wise teacher, he, whom Mary's charms
 Embellish'd, as the sun the morning star ;
 Who thus in answer spake : " In him are summ'd,
 Whate'er of buxomness and free delight¹
 May be in spirit, or in Angel, met :
 And so beseems : for that he bare the palm
 Down unto Mary, when the Son of God
 Vouchsafed to clothe Him in terrestrial weeds.
 Now let thine eyes wait heedful on my words ;
 And note thou of this just and pious realm

¹ *Baldezza e leggiadria*, " exultancy and celestial chivalry."

The chiefest nobles. Those, highest in bliss,
 The twain, on each hand next our Empress throned,
 Are as it were two roots unto this rose :
 He to the left, the parent, whose rash taste
 Proves bitter to his seed ; and, on the right,
 That ancient father of the holy Church,
 Into whose keeping Christ did give the keys
 Of this sweet flower ;¹ near whom behold the seer,
 That, ere he died, saw all the grievous times
 Of the fair bride, who with the lance and nails
 Was won.² And, near unto the other, rests
 The leader, under whom, on manna, fed
 The ungrateful nation, fickle and perverse.³
 On the other part, facing to Peter, lo !
 Where Anna sits, so well content to look
 On her loved daughter, that with moveless eye
 She chants the loud hosanna : while, opposed
 To the first father of your mortal kind,
 Is Lucia, at whose hest thy lady sped,
 When on the edge of ruin closed thine eye.⁴

“ But (for the vision hasteneth to an end)
 Here break we off, as the good workman doth,
 That shapes the cloak according to the cloth ;
 And to the Primal Love our ken shall rise ;
 That thou mayst penetrate the brightness, far
 As sight can bear thee. Yet, alas ! in sooth
 Beating thy pennons, thinking to advance,
 Thou backward fall'st. Grace then must first be gain'd ;
 Her grace, whose might can help thee. Thou in prayer
 Seek her : and, with affection, whilst I sue,
 Attend, and yield me all thy heart.” He said ;
 And thus the saintly orison began.

¹ Adam and St. Peter.

³ Moses.

² St. John the Evangelist.

⁴ Cf. *Inf.* ii. ; *Purg.* ix.

CANTO XXXIII

ARGUMENT

Saint Bernard supplicates the Virgin Mary that Dante may have grace given him to contemplate the brightness of the Divine Majesty, which is accordingly granted; and Dante then himself prays to God for ability to show forth some part of the celestial glory in his writings. Lastly, he is admitted to a glimpse of the great mystery; the Trinity, and the Union of Man with God.

“ O VIRGIN Mother,¹ daughter of thy Son !
 Created beings all in lowliness
 Surpassing, as in height above them all ;
 Term by the eternal counsel pre-ordain'd ;
 Ennobler of thy nature, so advanced
 In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn,
 To make Himself his own creation ;
 For in thy womb rekindling shone the love
 Reveal'd, whose genial influence makes now
 This flower to germin in eternal peace :
 Here thou to us, of charity and love,
 Art, as the noon-day torch ; and art, beneath,
 To mortal men, of hope a living spring.
 So mighty art thou, Lady, and so great,
 That he, who grace desireth, and comes not
 To thee for aidance, fain would have desire
 Fly without wings.² Not only him, who asks,
 Thy bounty succours ; but doth freely oft
 Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be
 Of excellence in creature, pity mild,
 Relenting mercy, large munificence,
 Are all combined in thee. Here kneeleth one,
 Who of all spirits hath review'd the state,
 From the world's lowest gap unto this height.
 Suppliant to thee he kneels, imploring grace
 For virtue yet more high, to lift his ken
 Toward the bliss supreme. And I, who ne'er
 Coveted sight, more fondly, for myself,
 Than now for him, my prayers to thee prefer,

¹ This prayer to the Blessed Virgin is translated by Chaucer as the *Prologue of the Seconde Nonnes Tale*.

² *Sua disianza vuol volar senz'ali*, “ his longing would fain fly without wings.”

(And pray they be not scant,) that thou wouldst drive
 Each cloud of his mortality away,
 Through thine own prayers, that on the sovran joy
 Unveil'd he gaze. This yet, I pray thee, Queen,
 Who canst do what thou wilt; that in him thou
 Wouldst, after all he hath beheld, preserve
 Affection sound, and human passions quell.¹
 Lo! where, with Beatrice, many a saint
 Stretch their clasp'd hands, in furtherance of my suit."

The eyes, that Heaven with love and awe regards,
 Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign
 She looks on pious prayers: then fasten'd they
 On the everlasting light, wherein no eye
 Of creature, as may well be thought, so far
 Can travel inward. I, meanwhile, who drew
 Near to the limit, where all wishes end,
 The ardour of my wish (for so behoved)
 Ended within me. Beckoning smiled the sage,
 That I should look aloft: but, ere he bade,
 Already of myself aloft I look'd;
 For visual strength, refining more and more,
 Bare me into the ray authentical
 Of sovran light. Thenceforward, what I saw,
 Was not for words to speak, nor memory's self
 To stand against such outrage on her skill.

As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight,
 All he hath seen forgets; yet still retains
 Impression of the feeling in his dream;
 E'en such am I: for all the vision dies,
 As 'twere, away; and yet the sense of sweet,
 That sprang from it, still trickles in my heart.
 Thus in the sun-thaw is the snow unseal'd;
 Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost
 The Sibyl's sentence.² O eternal beam!
 (Whose height what reach of mortal thought may soar?)
 Yield me again some little particle
 Of what Thou then appearedst; give my tongue
 Power, but to leave one sparkle of Thy glory,
 Unto the race to come, that shall not lose

¹ He prays that Mary may obtain for Dante the grace of final perseverance.

² The Cumæan Sibyl wrote her prophecies upon leaves, which she arranged in order and then suffered to be scattered by the wind. Virgil, *Æn.* iii. 441-452.

Thy triumph wholly, if Thou waken aught
Of memory in me, and endure to hear
The record sound in this unequal strain.

Such keenness from the living ray I met,
That, if mine eyes had turn'd away, methinks,
I had been lost; but, so embolden'd, on
I pass'd, as I remember, till my view
Hover'd the brink of dread infinitude.¹

O grace, unenvying of Thy boon! that gavest
Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken
On the everlasting splendour, that I look'd,
While sight was unconsumed,² and, in that depth,
Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whate'er
The universe unfolds; all properties
Of substance and of accident,³ beheld,
Compounded, yet one individual light
The whole. And of such bond methinks I saw
The universal form; for that when'er
I do but speak of it, my soul dilates
Beyond her proper self; and, till I speak,
One moment seems a longer lethargy,
Than five-and-twenty ages had appear'd
To that emprise, that first made Neptune wonder
At Argo's shadow darkening on his flood.⁴

With fixed heed, suspense and motionless,
Wondering I gazed; and admiration still
Was kindled as I gazed. It may not be,

¹ *Io giunsi l'aspetto mio col valor infinito*, "I united my gaze with the infinite Worth." According to Aquinas, in the Beatific Vision the Divine Essence itself becomes "the intelligible form" of the understanding.

² *Tanto che la veduta vi consunsi*, "so long that I consumed my sight therein," that is, actualised all possibilities of spiritual vision.

³ *Sustanzia ed accidenti e lor costume*, everything conceivable by thought as capable of existence in itself (substance), or only in something else as a mode of being (accidents), and all their relations (*costume*).

⁴ "When the vision broke, a single moment plunged the actual thing he saw into a deeper oblivion than five and twenty centuries had wrought over the voyage of the Argonauts. The memory of an intent gaze, of deepening vision, of absorbed volition, of a final flash of insight—the assured possession of a will and affections laid to rest by the sweetness of what came to him—the uncertain impression of the images and symbols amid which it came—all these remain; but the vision itself is utterly past recall" (Wicksteed).

That one, who looks upon that light, can turn
 To other object, willingly, his view.
 For all the good, that will may covet, there
 Is summ'd; and all, elsewhere defective found,
 Complete. My tongue shall utter now, no more
 E'en what remembrance keeps, than could the babe's,
 That yet is moisten'd at his mother's breast.
 Not that the semblance of the living light
 Was changed, (that ever as at first remain'd,)
 But that my vision quickening, in that sole
 Appearance, still new miracles descried,
 And toil'd me with the change.¹ In that abyss
 Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd, methought,
 Three orbs of triple hue, clipt in one bound :²
 And, from another, one reflected seem'd,
 As rainbow is from rainbow : and the third
 Seem'd fire, breathed equally from both. O speech !
 How feeble and how faint art thou, to give
 Conception birth. Yet this to what I saw
 Is less than little. O eternal Light !
 Sole in Thyself that dwell'st ; and of Thyself
 Sole understood, past, present, or to come ;
 Thou smiledst, on that circling, which in Thee
 Seem'd as reflected splendour, while I mused ;
 For I therein, methought, in its own hue
 Beheld our image painted :³ stedfastly
 I therefore pored upon the view. As one,
 Who versed in geometric lore, would fain
 Measure the circle ; and, though pondering long
 And deeply, that beginning, which he needs,

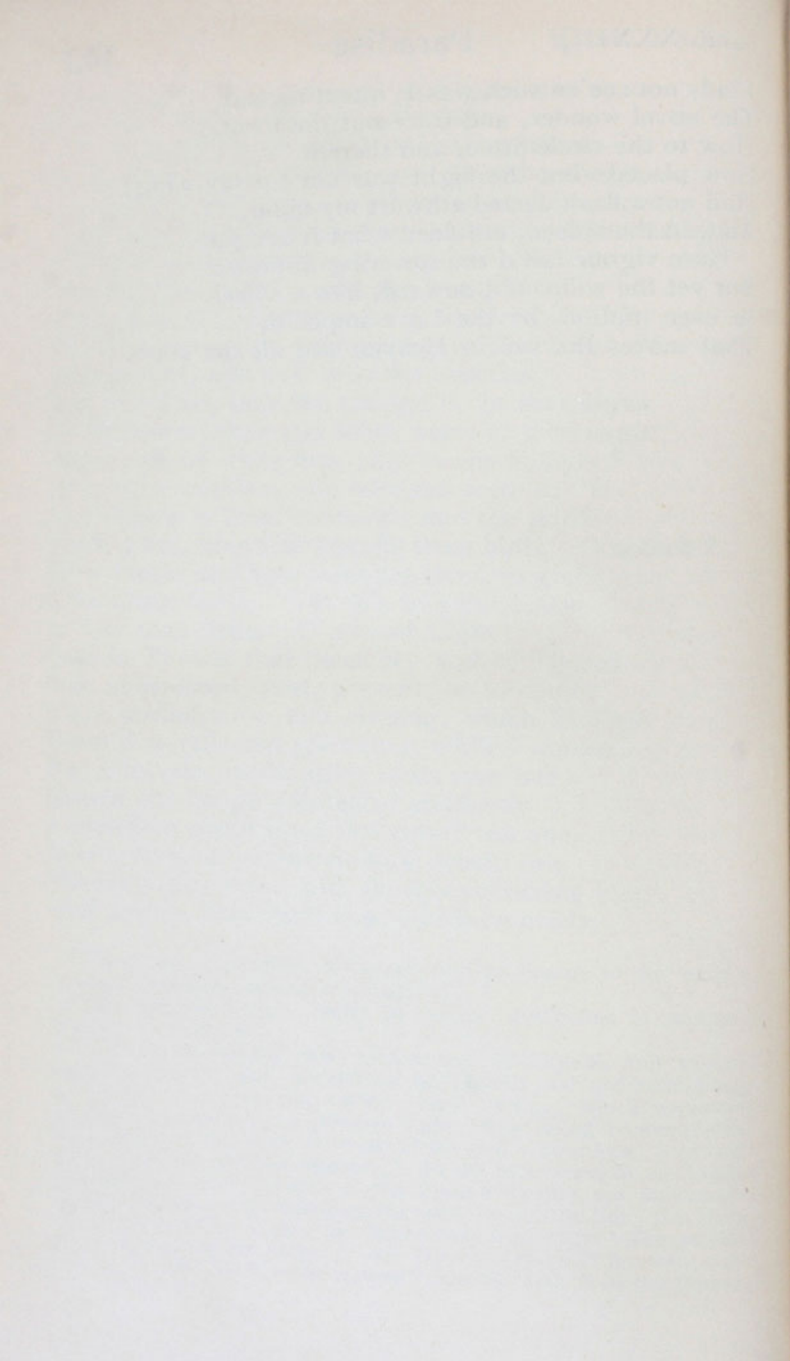
¹ Unchanging in itself, it seemed ever to change to me, as my spiritual intuition became more perfect.

² The Blessed Trinity : unity in essence, distinction in persons, equality in majesty.

³ " O Light Eternal, who abidest only in Thyself, only understandest Thyself, and, understood by Thyself and understanding, to Thyself dost love and smile ! That circling, which appeared in Thee conceived as a reflected light, after being contemplated for a while by my eyes, in itself, of its own very colour, appeared to me painted with our likeness." In the invocation to the Light Eternal, the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are indicated : the Father who, understanding Himself, begets the Son ; the Holy Spirit, the eternal Love, which proceeds from both. The second circling reveals the union of the Divine Nature (" its own very colour ") with the Human Nature (" our likeness ") in the Person of the Word.

Finds not : e'en such was I, intent to scan
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,
How to the circle fitted, and therein
How placed : but the flight was not for my wing ;
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,
And, in the spleen, unfolded what it sought.

Here vigour fail'd the towering fantasy :
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel
In even motion, by the Love impell'd,
That moves the sun in Heaven and all the stars.



INDEX OF PERSONS

INTRODUCED OR REFERRED TO IN THE *DIVINE COMEDY*

- ABATI**, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi;
 Bocca degli, *Inf.* xxxii; Buoso degli,
Inf. xxv
Abbagliato (Bartolommeo de' Folcac-
 chieri), *Inf.* xxix
Abel, *Inf.* iv
Abraham, *Inf.* iv
Absalom, *Inf.* xxviii
Accorso, Francesco di, *Inf.* xv
Achan, *Purg.* xx
Achilles, *Inf.* v, xii, xxvi, xxxi; *Purg.*
 ix, xxi
Acquasparta, Matteo da, *Par.* xii
Adam, *Inf.* iii, iv; *Purg.* ix, xi, xxix,
 xxxii, xxxiii; *Par.* vii, xiii, xxvi, xxxii
Adamo of Brescia, *Inf.* xxx
Adimari, the, *Par.* xvi
Adrian V, Pope (Ottobuono de' Fieschi),
Purg. xix
Æneas, *Inf.* ii, iv, xxvi; *Purg.* xviii,
 xxi; *Par.* vi, xv
Æsop, *Inf.* xxiii
Agamemnon, *Par.* v
Agapetus I, Pope, *Par.* vi
Agatho, *Purg.* xxii
Aghinolfo of Romena, *Inf.* xxx
Aglauros, *Purg.* xii
Agli (degli), Lotto, *Inf.* xvii (?)
Agostino, Friar, *Par.* xii
Aguglione, Baldo da, *Purg.* xii; *Par.*
 xvi
Ahasuerus, *Purg.* xvii
Ahitophel, *Inf.* xxviii
Alagia. See Malaspina
Alardo (Erard de Valéry), *Inf.* xxviii
Alberichi, the, *Par.* xvi
Alberigo, Friar. See Manfredi
Albero of Siena, *Inf.* xxix
Albert of Hapsburg, King of the
 Romans, *Purg.* vi; *Par.* xix
Alberti, degli, Alberto, *Inf.* xxxii;
 Alessandro, *Inf.* xxxii; Orso, *Purg.*
 vi; Napoleone, *Inf.* xxxii
Albertus Magnus, *Par.* x
Alcmæon, *Purg.* xii; *Par.* ix
Aldobrandesco, Guglielmo, *Purg.* xi;
 Umberto, *Purg.* xi
Aldobrandi, Tegghiaio, *Inf.* vi, xvi
Alessandro of Romena, *Inf.* xxx
Alexander the Great, *Inf.* xii (?), xiv
Alexander of Pheræ, *Inf.* xii (?)
Alfonso III, King of Aragon, *Purg.*
 vii
Ali, the Caliph, *Inf.* xxviii
Alichino, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
Alighieri, Alighiero, son of Cacciaguیدا,
Par. xv; Bella, mother of Dante,
Inf. viii
Amata, *Purg.* xvii
Amidei, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
Amphiarāus, *Inf.* xx; *Par.* iv
Amphion, *Inf.* xxxii
Amyclas, *Par.* xi
Anacreon (erroneous reading for Anti-
 phon), *Purg.* xxii
Ananias, husband of Sapphira, *Purg.*
 xx
Ananias of Damascus, *Par.* xxvi
Anastagi, Ghibelline family of Ravenna,
Purg. xiv
Anastasius, Pope, *Inf.* xi
Anaxagoras, *Inf.* iv
Anchises, *Inf.* i, iv, xxvi; *Par.* xv, xix
Andalo (degli), Loderingo, *Inf.* xxiii
Andrea, Giacomo da Sant', *Inf.* xiii
Andrew III, King of Hungary, *Par.* xix
Annas, *Inf.* xxiii
Anne, St., *Par.* xxxii
Anselm, St., *Par.* xii
Anselmo de la Gherardesca, *Inf.* xxxiii
Antæus, *Inf.* xxxi
Antenor, *Inf.* xxxii; *Purg.* v
Anthony, St., *Par.* xxix
Antigone, *Purg.* xxii
Antiochus, *Inf.* xix
Apollo (symbol of Christ), *Par.* i
Arachne, *Inf.* xvii, *Par.* xii
Arca (dell'), old Florentine family, *Par.*
 xvi
Ardinghi, old Florentine family, *Par.*
 xvi
Arethusa, *Inf.* xxv
Argenti, Filippo (Adimari), *Inf.* viii
Argogliosi (degli), Marchese, *Purg.*
 xxiv
Ariadne, *Par.* xiii
Aristotle, *Inf.* iv, xi; *Purg.* iii; *Par.*
 viii, xxvi
Arius, *Par.* xiii
Arnaut Daniel, *Purg.* xxvi
Arrigo (de' Fifanti ?), *Inf.* vi
Arrigucci, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
Arthur, King of Britain, *Inf.* xxxii
Aruns, *Inf.* xx
Asciano, Caccia de' Cacciaconti of, *Inf.*
 xxix
Asdente, *Inf.* xx
Athamas, *Inf.* xxx
Atropos, *Inf.* xxxiii
Attila, *Inf.* xii, xiii
Augustine, St., *Par.* x, xxxii
Augustus. See Cæsar
Averroës, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* xxv
Avicenna, *Inf.* iv
Azzo. See Este; Ubaldini
Azzolino. See Ezzelino

- BARBARICCIA, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Barbarossa. *See* Frederick I
 Barucci, old Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Battifolle. *See* Federigo
 Beatrice, daughter of Raymond Berenger and wife of Charles of Anjou, *Purg.* vii, xx; *Par.* vi
 Beatrice d'Este Visconti, *Purg.* viii
 Beatrice of Anjou, daughter of Charles II of Naples, *Purg.* xx
 Beatrice, type of Divine Philosophy, *Inf.* ii; *Purg.* vi, xv, xviii, xxiii, xxvii, xxx, xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii; *Par.* i-xxxiii
 Beccaria (Tesoro de' Beccheria), *Inf.* xxxii
 Bede, the Venerable, *Par.* x
 Belacqua, *Purg.* iv
 Belisarius, *Par.* vi
 Bella (della), Giano, *Par.* xvi (?)
 Bellincione Berti de' Ravignani, *Par.* xv, xvi
 Bello (del), Geri, *Inf.* xxix
 Benedict, St., *Par.* xxii, xxxii
 Benincasa of Arezzo, *Purg.* vi
 Berenger, Raymond, Count of Provence, *Par.* vi
 Bernard of Quintavalle, first follower of St. Francis, *Par.* xi
 Bernard, St., *Par.* xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii
 Bernardin di Fosco, *Purg.* xiv
 Bernardone, Pietro, father of St. Francis, *Par.* xi
 Bertrand de Born, *Inf.* xxviii
 Billi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Bocca. *See* Abati
 Boëthius, *Inf.* v; *Par.* x
 Bonatti, Guido, *Inf.* xx
 Bonaventura, St., *Par.* xii
 Boniface VIII, Pope, *Inf.* xix, xxvii; *Purg.* viii, xx; *Par.* ix, xii, xxii (?), xxvii, xxx
 Bonifazio (de' Fieschi), Archbishop of Ravenna, *Purg.* xxiv
 Bonturo. *See* Dati
 Borsiere, Guglielmo, *Inf.* xvi
 Bostichi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Botaio, Martino (?), *Inf.* xxi
 Brennus, *Par.* vi
 Briarius, *Inf.* xxxi; *Purg.* xii
 Brigata (Nino) della Gherardesca, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Brosse (de la), Pierre, *Purg.* vi
 Brunelleschi, Agnolo, *Inf.* xxv
 Brunetto. *See* Latini
 Brutus, Junius, the expeller of Tarquin, *Inf.* iv
 Brutus, Marcus, the slayer of Cæsar, *Inf.* xxxiv; *Par.* vi
 Bryso, *Par.* xiii
 Buimonte, Giovanni, *Inf.* xvii
 Buonaccorsi, Pinamonte, *Inf.* xx
 Buonagiunta Orbicciani, *Purg.* xxiv
 Buonconte. *See* Montefeltro
 Buondelmonti, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi; Buondelmonte de', *Inf.* xxviii; *Par.* xvi
 Buoso. *See* Donati
 CACCIAGUIDA, *Par.* xv, xvi, xvii
 Caccianimico, Venedico, *Inf.* xviii
 Cacus, *Inf.* xxv
 Cadmus, *Inf.* xxv
 Cæcilius, *Purg.* xxii
 Cæsar, Augustus, *Inf.* i; *Purg.* vii, xxix; *Par.* vi; Julius, *Inf.* i, iv; *Purg.* xviii, xxvi; *Par.* xi; Tiberius, *Par.* vi, vii
 Cagnano (da), Angelo, or Angiolello, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Cagnazzo, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Caiaphas, *Inf.* xxiii
 Cain, *Inf.* xx, xiv; *Par.* ii
 Calboli (da), Fulcieri, *Purg.* xiv; Rini-eri, *Purg.* xiv
 Calcabrina, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Calchas, *Inf.* xx
 Calfucci, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Calliope, *Purg.* i
 Callisto (or Helice), *Purg.* xxv; *Par.* xxx
 Callixtus I, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 Camiccione. *See* Pazzi
 Camilla, *Inf.* i, iv
 Camino (da), Gaia, *Purg.* xvi; Gherardo, *Purg.* xvi; Riccardo, *Par.* ix
 Cancellieri (de'), Focaccia, *Inf.* xxxii
 Capaneus, *Inf.* xiv
 Capet, Hugh, *Purg.* xx
 Capocchio, *Inf.* xxix, xxx
 Caponsacco, citizen of ancient Florence, *Par.* xvi
 Capulets, the Cappelletti of Verona (?), *Purg.* vi
 Carlino. *See* Pazzi
 Carpigna (da), Guido, *Purg.* xiv
 Casalodi (da), Alberto, *Inf.* xx
 Casella, *Purg.* ii
 Cassero (del), Guido, *Inf.* xxviii; Jacopo, *Purg.* v
 Cassius, *Inf.* xxxiv; *Par.* vi
 Castello (da), Guido, *Purg.* xvi
 Castrocara, Counts of, *Purg.* xiv
 Catalan (Catalani or Malavolti), *Inf.* xxxiii
 Catilini, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Cato of Utica, *Inf.* xiv; *Purg.* i, ii
 Cavalcanti (de'), Cavalcante, *Inf.* x; Francesco (Guercio), *Inf.* xxv; Guido, *Inf.* x; *Purg.* xi (?)
 Celestine V, St., Pope, *Inf.* iii, xxvii
 Centaurs, *Inf.* xii, xxv; *Purg.* xxiv
 Cerberus, *Inf.* vi, ix
 Cerchi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Charlemagne, Emperor, *Inf.* xxxi; *Par.* vi, xviii
 Charles of Lorraine, *Purg.* xx
 Charles I of Anjou, King of Naples, *Inf.* xix; *Purg.* vii, xi, xx; *Par.* viii
 Charles II, King of Naples, *Purg.* v, vii, xx; *Par.* vi, xix, xx
 Charles Martel, *Par.* viii, ix
 Charles of Valois, *Inf.* vi; *Purg.* xx
 Charles Robert (Carobert), *Par.* ix
 Charon, *Inf.* iii
 Chiararamontesi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi; Durante de', *Purg.* xii
 Chiron, *Inf.* xii; *Purg.* ix
 Christ, *passim*
 Chrysostom, St. John, *Par.* xii
 Ciaccio, *Inf.* vi

- Ciampolo, *Inf.* xxii
 Cianfa. *See* Donati
 Cianghella (della Tosa), *Par.* xv
 Cimabue, *Purg.* xi
 Cincinnatus, *Par.* vi
 Circe, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xiv
 Ciriatto, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Clare, St., *Par.* iii
 Clement IV, Pope, *Purg.* iii
 Clement V, Pope, *Inf.* xix; *Purg.* xxxii; *Par.* xvii, xxvii, xxx
 Clemenza, daughter of Charles Martel, *Par.* ix
 Cleopatra, *Inf.* v, *Par.* vi
 Cletus, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 Clio, *Purg.* xxii
 Clotho, *Purg.* xxi
 Clymene, *Par.* xvii
 Conio, Counts of, *Purg.* xiv
 Conrad. *See* Malaspina and Palazzo
 Conrad III, Emperor, *Par.* xv
 Conradin, *Purg.* xx
 Constance, Empress, *Purg.* iii; *Par.* iii, iv
 Constance (Costanza), Queen of Aragon, *Purg.* iii, vii
 Constantine the Great, *Inf.* xix, xxvii; *Purg.* xxxii; *Par.* v, xx
 Conti Guidi, the, *Inf.* xvi, xxx; *Purg.* vi; *Par.* xvi
 Cornelia, *Inf.* iv; *Par.* xv
 Corneto (da), Rinieri, *Inf.* xii
 Cortigiani, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Cosenza, Bishop of, *Purg.* iii
 Costanza. *See* Constance
 Crassus, *Purg.* xx
 Creusa, *Par.* ix
 Cunizza. *See* Romano
 Curiatii, *Par.* vi
 Curio, *Inf.* xxviii
 Cyrus, *Purg.* xii

 DÆDALUS, *Inf.* xvii, xxix; *Par.* viii
 Damian. *See* Peter
 Daniel, *Purg.* xxii; *Par.* iv, xix
 Dante, *Purg.* xxx
 Daphne, *Purg.* xxii
 Dati (de'), Bonturo, *Inf.* xxi
 David, *Inf.* iv, xxviii; *Purg.* x; *Par.* xx, xxv, xxxii
 Decii, the, *Par.* vi
 Deianira, *Inf.* xii
 Deidamia, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xxii
 Deiphile, *Purg.* xxii
 Democritus, *Inf.* iv
 Demophon, *Par.* ix
 Dido, *Inf.* v; *Par.* viii, ix
 Diogenes, *Inf.* iv
 Diomede, *Inf.* xxvi
 Dionysius, King of Portugal, *Par.* xix
 Dionysius the Areopagite, *Par.* x, xxviii
 Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, *Inf.* xii
 Dioscorides, *Inf.* iv
 Dis (Lucifer or Satan), *Inf.* viii, xi, xii, xxxiv
 Dolcino, Friar, *Inf.* xxviii
 Dominic, St., *Par.* x, xi, xii
 Domitian, *Purg.* xxii
 Donati, Buoso, *Inf.* xxx; Cianfa, *Inf.* xxv; Corso, *Purg.* xxiv; Forese, *Purg.* xxiii, xxiv; Piccarda, *Purg.* xxiv, *Par.* iii, iv; Ubertino, *Par.* xvi
 Donatus, Ælius, *Par.* xii
 Doria, Branca, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Draghignazzo, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Duca (d l), Guido, *Purg.* xiv
 Duera (da), Buoso, *Inf.* xxxii

 EDWARD I, King of England, *Purg.* vii; *Par.* xix
 Egidius (Giles), Friar, *Par.* xi
 Eleanor, wife of Henry III of England, *Par.* vi
 Electra, *Inf.* iv
 Elijah, the Prophet, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xxxii
 Eliseo, brother of Cacciaguida, *Par.* xv
 Elisha, *Inf.* xxvi
 Empedocles, *Inf.* iv
 Ephialtes, *Inf.* xxxi
 Epicurus, *Inf.* x
 Erichtho, *Inf.* ix
 Erinyes, the Furies, *Inf.* vii
 Eriphyle, *Purg.* xii; *Par.* iv
 Erysichthon, *Purg.* xxiii
 Esau, *Par.* viii
 Este (da), Azzo, *Inf.* xii, *Purg.* v; Beatrice, *Purg.* viii; Obizzo, *Inf.* xii, xviii
 Esther, *Purg.* xvii
 Eteocles, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xxii
 Euclid, *Inf.* iv
 Euripides, *Purg.* xxv
 Euryalus, *Inf.* i
 Eurypilus, *Inf.* xx
 Eve, *Purg.* viii, xii, xxiv, xxix, xxx, xxxii; *Par.* xiii, xxxii
 Ezekiel, *Purg.* xxix

 FABII, the, *Par.* vi
 Fabricius, *Purg.* xx
 Fantolini (de'), Ugolino, *Purg.* xiv
 Farfarello, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Farinata. *See* Uberti
 Federigo Novello of Battifolle, *Purg.* vi
 Federigo Tignoso, *Purg.* xiv
 Felice Guzman, father of St. Dominic, *Par.* xii
 Feltre, Bishop of (Alessandro Novello), *Par.* ix
 Ferdinand IV, King of Castile, *Par.* xix
 Fieschi (de'). *See* Adrian V; Alagia; Bonifazio
 Fifanti, the, *Par.* xvi; Arrigo de' (?), *Inf.* vi
 Filippeschi, family of Orvieto, *Purg.* vi
 Filippi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Flaccus (Horace), *Inf.* iv
 Focaccia. *See* Cancellieri
 Folco, or Folquet, *Par.* ix
 Forese. *See* Donati
 Francesca da Rimini. *See* Malatesta
 Francis of Assisi, St., *Inf.* xxvii; *Par.* xi, xii, xiii, xxii, xxxii
 Franco of Bologna, *Purg.* xi
 Frederick I, Barbarossa, Emperor, *Purg.* xviii
 Frederick II, Emperor, *Inf.* x, xiii, xxiii; *Purg.* xvi; *Par.* iii

- Frederick II, King of Sicily, *Purg.* iii, vii; *Par.* xix, xx
 Fuoci, Vanni, *Inf.* xxiv
- GABRIEL, the Archangel, *Par.* iv, ix, xxiii, xxxii
 Gaddo della Gherardesca, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Gaia. *See* Camino
 Galen, *Inf.* iv
 Galigai (de'), Galigaio, *Par.* xv; Puccio (Sciaticato), *Inf.* xxv
 Galli, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Ganellon, *Inf.* xxxii
 Ganymede, *Purg.* ix
 Gentucca (Morla), *Purg.* xxiv
 Geryon, *Inf.* xvi, xvii, xviii; *Purg.* xxvii
 Gherardesca, Count Ugolino, *Inf.* xxxii, xxxiii
 Gherardo da Camino. *See* Camino
 Ghino di Tacco, *Purg.* vi
 Ghisola (da Fontana), *Inf.* xviii
 Gianfigliuzzi, Florentine family, *Inf.* xvii
 Gideon, *Purg.* xxiv
 Giotto, *Purg.* xi
 Giovanna, mother of St. Dominic, *Par.* xii
 Giovanna, wife of Buonconte da Montefeltro, *Purg.* v
 Giovanna Visconti da Camino, *Purg.* viii
 Giraut de Borneil, *Purg.* xxvi
 Giuda, citizen of old Florence, *Par.* xvi
 Giuochi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Glaucus, *Par.* i
 Godfrey of Bouillon, *Par.* xviii
 Gomita, Friar, *Inf.* xxii
 Graffiaccane, demon, *Inf.* xxi, xxii
 Gratianus, Franciscus, *Par.* x
 Greci, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Gregory the Great, St., Pope, *Purg.* x; *Par.* xx, xxviii
 Grifolino of Arezzo, *Inf.* xxix, xxx
 Gualandi, Ghibellines of Pisa, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Gualdrada de' Ravignani, *Inf.* xvi
 Gualterotti, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Guenever, *Inf.* v; *Par.* xvi
 Guido, Conte, *Par.* xvi
 Guido Guerra, *Inf.* xvi
 Guido of Romena, *Inf.* xxx
 Guinicelli, Guido, *Purg.* xi, xxvi
 Guiscard, Robert, *Inf.* xxviii; *Par.* xviii
 Guittone d'Arezzo, Fra, *Purg.* x (?), xxiv, xxvi
- HAMAN, *Purg.* xvii
 Hannibal, *Inf.* xxxi; *Par.* vi
 Hakon V, King of Norway, *Par.* xix
 Hector, *Inf.* iv; *Par.* vi
 Hecuba, *Inf.* xxx
 Helen of Troy, *Inf.* v
 Helice (or Callisto), *Purg.* xxv; *Par.* xxxi
 Heliodorus, *Purg.* xx
 Henry VI, Emperor, *Par.* iii
 Henry VII, Emperor, *Purg.* vi (?); *Par.* xvii, xxx
 Henry II, King of England, *Inf.* xxviii
 Henry III, King of England, *Purg.* vii
 Henry I, King of Navarre, *Purg.* vii
 Henry II of Lusignan, King of Cyprus, *Par.* xix
 Henry, "the Young King," *Inf.* xxviii
- Henry, son of Richard of Cornwall, *Inf.* xii
 Heraclitus, *Inf.* iv
 Hercules, *Inf.* ix, xii, xxv, xxvi; *Par.* ix
 Hezekiah, *Par.* xx
 Hippocrates, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* xxix
 Hippolytus, *Par.* xvii
 Holofernes, *Purg.* xii
 Homer, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* xxii
 Honorius III, Pope, *Par.* xi
 Horace (Flaccus), *Inf.* iv
 Horatii, the, *Par.* vi
 Hugh of St. Victor, *Par.* xii
 Hypsipyle, *Inf.* xviii; *Purg.* xxii
- ICARUS, *Inf.* xvii; *Par.* viii
 Illuminato. Friar, *Par.* xii
 Importuni, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Infangato, old Florentine, *Par.* xvi
 Innocent III Pope, *Par.* xi
 Ino, *Inf.* xxx
 Interminelli (degli), Alessio, *Inf.* xviii
 Iole, *Par.* ix
 Iphigenia, *Par.* v
 Isaiah, *Par.* xxv
 Isidore of Seville. St., *Par.* x
 Ismene, *Purg.* xxii
- JACOB, *Par.* viii, xxii
 James, St., *Par.* xxv
 James, King of the Balearic Islands, *Par.* xix
 James II, King of Aragon, *Purg.* iii, vii; *Par.* xix
 Jason, the Argonaut, *Inf.* xviii; *Par.* ii
 Jason, the high-priest, *Inf.* xix
 Jephthah, *Par.* v
 Jerome, St., *Par.* xxix
 Joachim of Flora, *Par.* xii
 Joanna, mother of St. Dominic, *Par.* xii
 John the Baptist, St., *Inf.* xiii, xxx; *Purg.* xxii; *Par.* iv, xvi, xviii, xxxii
 John the Evangelist, St., *Inf.* xix; *Purg.* xxix; *Par.* iv, xxiv, xxv, xxvi, xxxii
 John XXI, Pope (Peter of Spain), *Par.* xii
 John XXII, Pope, *Par.* xviii, xxvii
 John, King of England (erroneous reading for the "Young King"), *Inf.* xxviii
 Joseph, *Inf.* xxx
 Joshua, *Purg.* xx; *Par.* ix, xviii
 Juba, *Par.* vi
 Judas Iscariot, *Inf.* ix, xix, xxxi, xxxiv; *Purg.* xx, xxi
 Judith, *Par.* xxxii
 Julia, *Inf.* iv
 Justinian, Emperor and Lawgiver, *Purg.* vi; *Par.* vi
 Juvenal, *Purg.* xxix
- LACHESIS, *Purg.* xxi, xxv
 Lambertazzi (de'), Fabbro, *Purg.* xiv
 Lamberti, Florentine family, *Inf.* xxviii, *Par.* xvi; Mosca de', *Inf.* vi, xxviii
 Lancelot, *Inf.* v
 Laniranchi, Ghibellines of Pisa, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Lano. *See* Maconi
 Latini, Brunetto, *Inf.* xv
 Latinus, *Inf.* iv

- Laurence, St., *Par.* iv
 Lavinia, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* xvii; *Par.* vi
 Leah, *Purg.* xxvii
 Leander, *Purg.* xxviii
 Learchus, *Inf.* xxx
 Lentino (da), Jacopo, *Purg.* xxiv
 Linus, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 Linus, Poet, *Inf.* iv
 Livy, *Inf.* xxviii
 Lizio di Valbona, *Purg.* xiv
 Loderingo. *See* Andalò
 Lombardo, Marco, *Purg.* xvi
 Louis IX, St., King of France, *Purg.* vii (?)
 Lucan, *Inf.* iv, xxv
 Lucia, St. Lucy, *Inf.* ii; *Purg.* ix; *Par.* xxxii
 Lucifer (Dis), *Inf.* xxxi, xxxiv; *Purg.* xii; *Par.* ix, xix, xxvii, xxix
 Lucretia, *Inf.* iv; *Par.* iv
 Luke, St., *Purg.* xxi, xxix
 Lycurgus, *Purg.* xxvi

 MACARIUS, St., *Par.* xxii
 Maccabæus, Judas, *Par.* xviii
 Maconi, Lano, *Inf.* xiii
 Maghinardo. *See* Pagani
 Mahomet, *Inf.* xxviii; *Purg.* xxxii (?)
 Mainardi, Arrigo, *Purg.* xiv
 Malacoda, demon, *Inf.* xxi
 Malaspina, Alagia de' Fieschi, *Purg.* xix; Corrado, *Purg.* viii; Moroello, *Inf.* xxiv
 Malatesta, Francesca da Polenta, *Inf.* v; Gianciotto, *Inf.* v; Malatesta da Verucchio, *Inf.* xxvii; Malatestino, *Inf.* xxvii, xxviii; Paolo il Bello, *Inf.* v
 Malehaut, the Lady of, *Par.* xvi
 Manfred, King of Naples and Sicily, *Purg.* iii
 Manfredi (de'), Alberigo, Friar, *Inf.* xxxiii; Tebaldello, *Inf.* xxxii
 Mangiadore, Pietro, *Par.* xii
 Manto, *Inf.* xx; *Purg.* xxii
 Marcellus, *Purg.* vi
 Marcia, wife of Cato, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* i
 Marco. *See* Lombardo
 Margaret of Burgundy, second wife of Charles of Anjou, *Purg.* vii (?)
 Margaret of Provence, wife of St. Louis, *Purg.* vii (?); *Par.* vi
 Marsyas, *Par.* i
 Martin IV, Pope, *Purg.* xxiv
 Mary of Brabant, Queen of France, *Purg.* vi
 Mary of Jerusalem, *Purg.* xxiii
 Mary, the Blessed Virgin, *Inf.* ii; *Purg.* iii, v, viii, x, xv, xviii, xxii, xxix, xxxiii; *Par.* iv, xi, xiv, xv, xxiii, xxv, xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii
 Marzucco. *See* Scornigiani
 Mascheroni, Sassol, *Inf.* xxxii
 Matilda, *Purg.* xxviii, xxix, xxx, xxxii, xxxiii
 Matthias, St., *Inf.* xix
 Medea, *Inf.* xviii
 Medicina, Piero Biancucci da, *Inf.* xxviii
 Medusa, *Inf.* ix
 Melchisedec, *Par.* viii
 Meleager, *Purg.* xxv

 Melissus, *Par.* xiii
 Menalippus, *Inf.* xxxii
 Metellus, *Purg.* ix
 Michael, the Archangel, *Inf.* vii; *Purg.* xiii; *Par.* iv
 Michel. *See* Zanche
 Michol, *Purg.* x
 Midas, *Purg.* xx
 Minos, *Inf.* v, xiii, xx, xxvii, xxix; *Purg.* i
 Minotaur, the, *Inf.* xii
 Monaldi, family of Orvieto, *Purg.* vi
 Montagna. *See* Parcitati
 Montagues (Montecchi), family of Verona, *Purg.* vi
 Montefeltro (da), Buonconte, *Purg.* v; Guido, *Inf.* xxvii
 Montferrat, Marquis William of, *Purg.* vii
 Montfort (de), Guy, *Inf.* xii
 Mordecai, *Purg.* xvii
 Mordred, *Inf.* xxxii
 Moronto, brother of Cacciaguida, *Par.* xv
 Mosca. *See* Lamberti
 Moses, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* xxxii; *Par.* iv, xxiv, xxvi, xxxii
 Mozzi (de'), Andrea, *Inf.* xv; Rocco, *Inf.* xiii (?)
 Myrrha, *Inf.* xxx

 NARCISSUS, *Inf.* xxx; *Par.* iii
 Nasidius, *Inf.* xxv
 Naso (Ovid), *Inf.* iv, xxv
 Nathan, the Prophet, *Par.* xii
 Nebuchadnezzar, *Par.* iv
 Nella, wife of Forese Donati, *Purg.* xxiii
 Nerli, old Florentine family, *Par.* xv
 Nessus, *Inf.* xii
 Niccolò (Salimbeni or Buonsignori), *Inf.* xxix
 Nicholas, St., *Purg.* xx
 Nicholas III, Pope, *Inf.* xix
 Nimrod, *Inf.* xxxi; *Purg.* xii; *Par.* xxvi
 Nino. *See* Visconti
 Ninus, *Inf.* v
 Niobe, *Purg.* xii
 Nisus, *Inf.* i
 Noah, *Inf.* iv; *Par.* xii

 OBIZZO. *See* Este
 Oderigi of Gubbio, *Purg.* xi, xii
 Umberto. *See* Aldobrandesco
 Ordelaifi (degli), Sinibaldo, *Inf.* xxvii
 Orestes (and Pylades), *Purg.* xiii
 Orlando, *Inf.* xxxi; *Par.* xviii
 Ormanni, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Orosius, Paulus, *Par.* x
 Orpheus, *Inf.* iv
 Orsini, Roman family, *Inf.* xix
 Orso. *See* Alberti
 Ostiense, Henry of Susa, *Par.* xii
 Ottaviano. *See* Ubaldini
 Ottocar, King of Bohemia, *Purg.* vii
 Ovid. *See* Naso

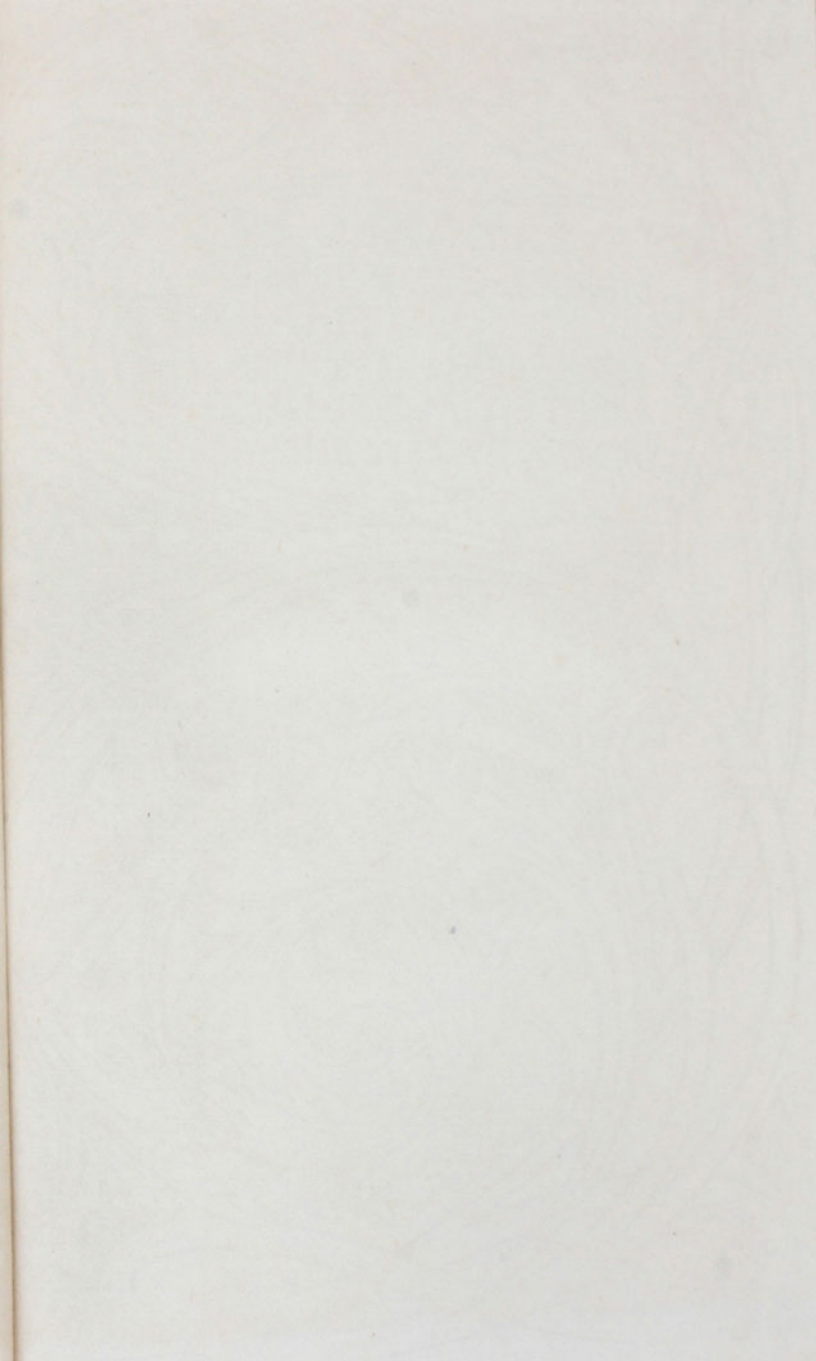
 PAGANI, Romagnole family, *Purg.* xiv; Maghinardo de', *Inf.* xxvii, *Purg.* xiv
 Palazzo (da), Corrado, *Purg.* xvi
 Pallas, son of Evander, *Par.* vi

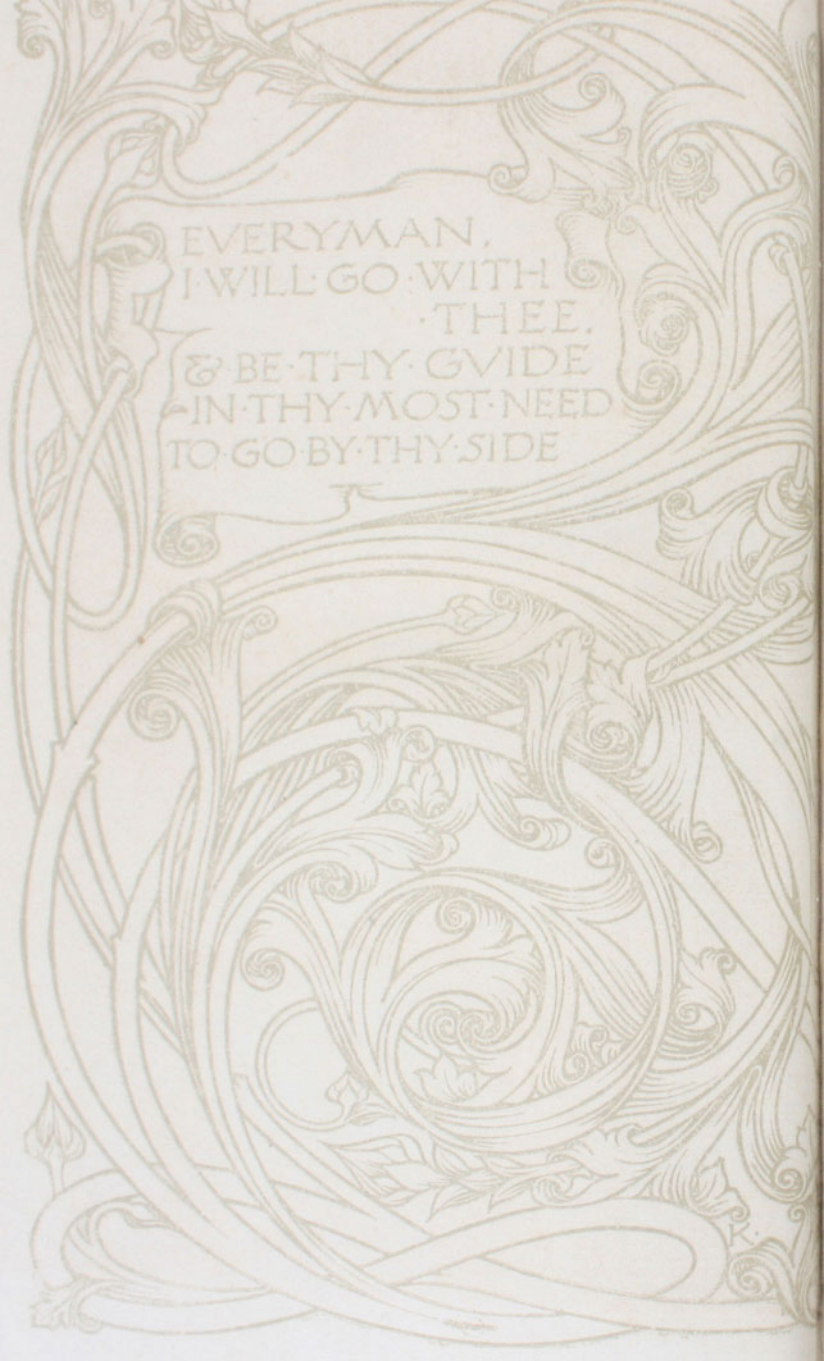
- Pannocchieschi (de'), Paganello, *Purg.*
 v (?)
 Parcitati (de'), Montagna, *Inf.* xxvii
 Paris, son of Priam, *Inf.* v
 Parmenides, *Par.* xiii
 Pasiphaë, *Inf.* xii; *Purg.* xxvi
 Paul, St., *Inf.* ii; *Purg.* xxix; *Par.*
 xviii, xxi, xxiv, xxviii
 Pazzi, Carlino and Camiccione, *Inf.* xxxii
 Pazzo, Rinieri, *Inf.* xii
 Penelope, *Inf.* xxvi
 Penthesilea, *Inf.* iv
 Pera (della), old Florentine family, *Par.*
 xvi
 Perillus, *Inf.* xxvii
 Persius, *Purg.* xxii
 Peter, St., the Apostle, *Inf.* i, ii, xviii,
 xix, xxxi; *Purg.* ix, xix, xxix; *Par.*
 ix, xi, xviii, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv, xxv,
 xxvii, xxxii
 Peter Damian, St., *Par.* xxi.
 Peter of Spain, Pope John XXI, *Par.*
 xii
 Peter the Lombard, *Par.* x.
 Peter III, King of Aragon, *Purg.* vii
 Pettignano, Piero, *Purg.* xiii
 Phædra, *Par.* xvii
 Phæton, *Inf.* xvii; *Purg.* iv; *Par.* xvii,
 xxxi
 Philip III, King of France, *Purg.* vii
 Philip IV, the Fair, king of France, *Inf.*
 xix; *Purg.* vi, xx, xxxi; *Par.* xix
 Phlegyas, *Inf.* viii
 Pholus, *Inf.* xii
 Photinus, *Inf.* xi
 Phyllis, *Par.* ix
 Pia (de' Tolomei?), *Purg.* v
 Piccarda. *See* Donati
 Pigli, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Pilate, *Purg.* xx
 Pinamonte. *See* Buonaccorsi
 Pisistratus, *Purg.* xv
 Pius I, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 Plato, *Inf.* iv; *Purg.* iii, iv; *Par.* iv
 Plautus, *Purg.* xxii
 Plutus, *Inf.* vi, vii
 Polenta (da), Francesca (Malatesta), *Inf.*
 v; Guido Vecchio, *Inf.* xxvii
 Polyclethus, *Purg.* x
 Polydorus, *Inf.* xiii, xxx; *Purg.* xx
 Polymestor, *Purg.* xx
 Polynices, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xxii
 Polyxena, *Inf.* xxx
 Pompeius, Cneius the Great, *Par.* vi;
 Sextus, *Inf.* xii
 Prata (da), Guido, *Purg.* xiv
 Prato, Cardinal Niccolò of, *Inf.* xxvi
 Pressa (della), old Florentine family,
Par. xvi
 Priam, *Inf.* xxx
 Priscian, *Inf.* xv
 Proserpine, *Purg.* xxviii
 Provenzano Salvani, *Purg.* xi
 Ptolemy, the astronomer, *Inf.* iv
 Ptolemy, King of Egypt, *Par.* vi
 Pygmalion, *Purg.* xx
 Pyramus, *Purg.* xxvii, xxxiii
 Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, *Inf.* xii (?);
Par. vi
 Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, *Inf.* xii (?)
- RABANUS Maurus, *Par.* xii
 Rachel (type of Contemplation), *Inf.* ii,
 iv; *Purg.* xxvii; *Par.* xxxii
 Rahab, *Par.* ix
 Raphael, the Archangel, *Par.* iv
 Ravignani, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi.
See Bellincion and Gualdrada
 Rebecca, *Par.* xxxii
 Rehoboam, *Purg.* xii
 Renard, or Renouard, *Par.* xviii
 Richard of St. Victor, *Par.* x
 Rimini. *See* Malatesta
 Rinieri. *See* Calboli, Corneto, Pazzo
 Ripheus, *Par.* xx
 Robert Guiscard, *Inf.* xxviii; *Par.* xviii
 Robert, Duke of Calabria, afterwards
 King of Naples, *Par.* xviii, ix
 Robert, King of France, *Purg.* xx
 Romano (da), Cunizza, *Par.* ix; *Ezze-*
lino, Inf. xii, *Par.* ix
 Romeo, *Par.* vi
 Romualdus, St., *Par.* xxii
 Romulus, or Quirinus, *Par.* viii
 Rudolf of Hapsburg, Emperor, *Purg.*
 vi, vii; *Par.* viii
 Ruggieri. *See* Ubaldini
 Rusticucci, Jacopo, *Inf.* vi, xvi
 Ruth, *Par.* xxxii
- SABELLIUS, *Par.* xiii
 Sabellus, *Inf.* xxv
 Sacchetti, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Saladin, *Inf.* iv
 Salterello, Lapo, *Par.* xv
 Salvani, Provenzano, *Purg.* xi
 Samuel, *Par.* iv
 Sancha, wife of Richard of Cornwall,
Par. vi
 Sannella (della), Florentine family, *Par.*
 xvi
 Sapia (de' Saracini), *Purg.* xiii
 Sapphira, *Purg.* xx
 Sarah, *Par.* xxxii
 Sardanapalus, *Par.* xv
 Saturn, *Inf.* xiv; *Purg.* xix; *Par.* xxi
 Saul, *Purg.* xii
 Scævola, Mucius, *Par.* iv
 Scala (della), Alberto, *Purg.* xviii; Bar-
 toloмео, *Par.* xvii; Can Grande,
Inf. i (?), *Purg.* xxxiii (?), *Par.* xvii;
 Giuseppe, *Purg.* xviii
 Scarmiglione, demon, *Inf.* xxi
 Schicchi, Gianni, *Inf.* xxx
 Sciancato, Puccio. *See* Galigai
 Scipio Africanus, *Inf.* xxxi; *Purg.* xxix;
Par. vi, xxvii
 Scornigiani (de'), Farinata, *Purg.* vi;
 Marzucco, *Purg.* vi
 Scot, Michael, *Inf.* xx
 Scrovigni, Rinaldo, *Inf.* xvii
 Semele, *Inf.* xxx; *Par.* xxi
 Semiramis, *Inf.* v
 Seneca, *Inf.* iv
 Sennacherib, *Purg.* xii
 Sextus I, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 Sibyl, the, *Par.* xxxiii
 Sigier of Brabant, *Par.* x
 Signa (da), Bonifazio, *Par.* xvi
 Simon Magus, *Inf.* xix; *Par.* xxx
 Simonides, *Purg.* xxii

- Sinon, *Inf.* xxx
 Sismondi, Ghibelline family of Pisa, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Sizi, ancient Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Socrates, *Inf.* iv
 Soldanieri, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi;
 Gianni de', *Inf.* xxxii
 Solomon, *Par.* x, xiii, xiv
 Solon, *Par.* xviii
 Sordello, *Purg.* vi, vii, viii, ix
 Statius,¹ *Purg.* xxi, xxii, xxv, xxvii, xxxii, xxxiii
 Stephen, St., *Purg.* xv
 Stephen Ouros II, King of Servia, *Par.* xix
 Stricca of Siena, *Inf.* xxix
 Sylvester, St., Pope, *Inf.* xxvii
 Sylvester (Silvestro), follower of St. Francis, *Par.* xi
 Syren, the, *Purg.* xix
 Syrinx, *Purg.* xxxii
 Sychæus, *Inf.* v; *Par.* ix
 TADDEO (Alderotti), *Par.* xii
 Tarlati (de'), Cino or Guccio, *Purg.* vi
 Tarquin, *Inf.* iv
 Tegghiaio. *See* Aldobrandi
 Terence, *Purg.* xxii
 Thais, *Inf.* xviii
 Thales, *Inf.* iv
 Themis, *Purg.* xxxiii
 Theseus, *Inf.* ix; *Purg.* xxiv
 Thetis, *Purg.* xxii
 Thibaut II, King of Navarre, *Inf.* xxii
 Thisbe, *Purg.* xxvii
 Thomas, St., the Apostle, *Par.* xvi
 Thomas Aquinas, St., *Purg.* xx; *Par.* x, xi, xii, xiii, xiv
 Tiberius. *See* Cæsar
 Tiresias, *Inf.* xx; *Purg.* xxii
 Tithonus, *Purg.* ix
 Titus, *Purg.* xxi; *Par.* vi
 Tityus, *Inf.* xxxi
 Tobias, *Par.* iv
 Tomyris, *Purg.* xii
 Torquatus, *Par.* vi
 Tosinghi (Della Tosa), Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Trajan, Emperor, *Purg.* x; *Par.* xx
 Traversari, family of Ravenna, *Purg.* xiv; Piero, *Purg.* xiv
 Tribaldello (Tebaldello). *See* Manfredi
 Tristram, *Inf.* v
 Tully (Cicero), *Inf.* iv
 Turnus, *Inf.* i
 Tydeus, *Inf.* xxxii
 Typhæus, or Typhon, *Inf.* xxxi; *Par.* viii
 UBALDINI (degli), Ottaviano, Cardinal, *Inf.* x; Ruggieri, Archbishop of Pisa, *Inf.* xxxiii; Ubaldino dalla Pila, *Purg.* xxiv; Ugolino d'Azco, *Purg.* xiv
 Ubaldo, St., *Purg.* xi
 Ubbriachi, Florentine family, *Inf.* xvii
 Uberti, leading Ghibelline family of Florence, *Par.* xvi; Farinata degli, *Inf.* vi, x
 Ubertino of Casale, *Par.* xii
 Ughi, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Ugo, Marquis of Tuscany, *Par.* xvi
 Ugolino. *See* Fantolini, Gherardesca, Ubaldini
 Ugucione della Gherardesca, *Inf.* xxxiii
 Ulysses, *Inf.* xxvi; *Purg.* xix; *Par.* xxvii
 Urban I, St., Pope, *Par.* xxvii
 VALBONA (di), Lizio, *Purg.* xiv
 Valéry. *See* Alardo
 Vanni. *See* Fucci
 Varro, *Purg.* xxxii
 Vecchietti, old Florentine family, *Par.* xv
 Venedico. *See* Caccianimico
 Verrucchio. *See* Malatesta
 Victor, St. *See* Hugh and Richard
 Vigne (delle), Piero, *Inf.* xiii
 Virgil, *Inf.* i—*Purg.* xxx; *Par.* xv, xvii, xxvi
 Visconti, Galeazzo, *Purg.* viii; Nino, *Inf.* xxii, *Purg.* viii
 Visdomini, Florentine family, *Par.* xvi
 Vitaliano (del Dente or di Jacopo Vitaliani), *Inf.* xvii
 WENCESLAUS, King of Bohemia, *Purg.* vii; *Par.* xix
 William of Orange, *Par.* xviii
 William II, King of Sicily, *Par.* xx
 William, Marquis of Montferrat, *Purg.* vii
 XERXES, *Purg.* xxviii; *Par.* viii
 ZANCHE, Michel, *Inf.* xxii, xxxiii
 Zeno, San, Abbot of, *Purg.* xviii
 Zita, Santa, *Inf.* xxi

¹ Publius Papinius Statius was born, not at Toulouse, but at Naples, where he died in A.D. 96 or thereabouts. Most of his life was passed at Rome, in the reign of Domitian, to whom he dedicated his *Thebaid*, an epic on the war of the Seven against Thebes. His *Achilleid*, dealing with the Trojan war (which Dante calls his "second burden"), was left unfinished. His shorter poems, the *Silvæ*, were unknown in Dante's age (Note on *Purg.* xxi, p. 237).

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I WILL GO WITH
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