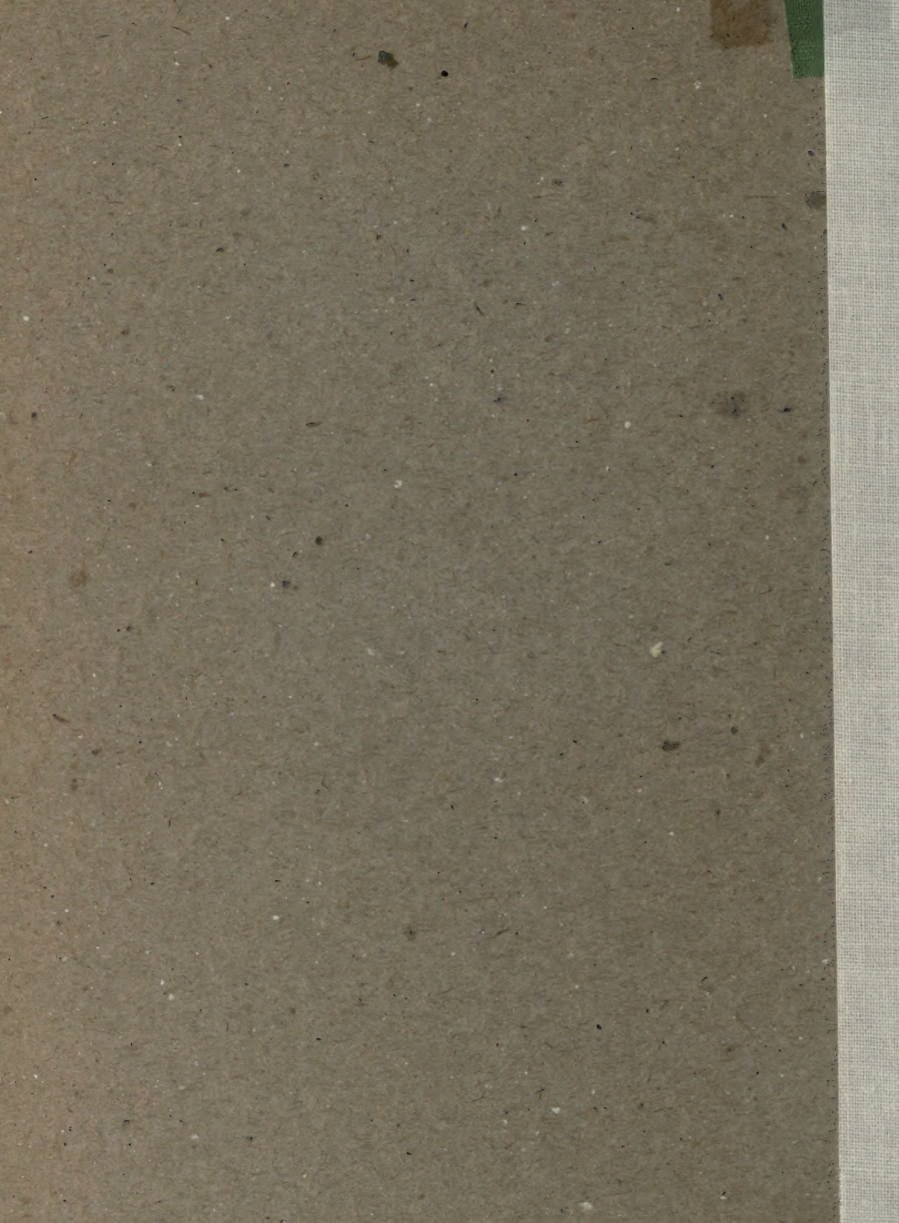


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· INSCRIPTIONS ·
FROM
DANTE'S
DIVINA COMMEDIA

IN THE
STREETS OF FLORENCE
EXPLAINED AND ILLUSTRATED
BY
IDA RIEDISSER



MCMXIII

ALFIERI & LACROIX
MILANO

SUCC. B. SEEBER
FIRENZE



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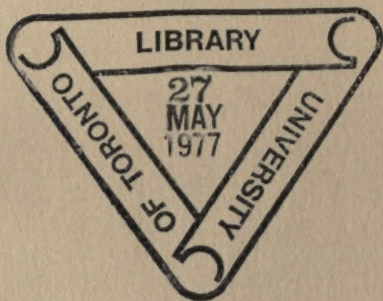
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PREFACE.

The "Commune" of Florence has put up inscriptions from Dante's *Commedia* to mark all the places mentioned in the great epic and all the sites, where stood the houses of the families alluded to.

Many of the verses convey but little or no meaning to one, who is not familiar with every line and every word of the famous poem.

I have therefore compiled this little guide-book to explain the "inscriptions from Dante in the streets of Florence" for those who have not the time to study them themselves. In doing so I have endeavoured to arrange the inscriptions — not in a topographical but rather in a chronological order, stringing them upon a historical thread, giving, as it were, a concise history of Florence up to the

time of Dante, and thus establishing between the inscriptions — which may seem chosen at random to one who notices them, as he passes by them in the streets — that connection, which shows their real purpose, namely: to indicate what remains of the city, as Dante knew it, and thus evoke in the Florence of to-day Dante's life there and that of his contemporaries.

Besides the arms put up by the Comune, I have given a few others; where the coat of arms is omitted, I did so, because in that case heraldry is uncertain.

Florence, October 1912.



FIORENZA

N. 1. - *Inscription put up in PALAZZO VECCHIO,
First Court:*

*Vid' io Fiorenza in sì fatto riposo,
Che non avea cagion onde piangesse;
Con queste genti vid' io glorioso
E giusto il popolo suo tanto, che il giglio
Non era ad asta mai posto a ritroso,
Nè per division fatto vermiglio. "*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 149-154.

Florence beheld I in so great repose,
That no occasion had she whence to weep;
With all these families beheld so just
And glorious her people, that the lily
Never upon the spear was placed reversed,
Nor by division was vermilion made. "

Longfellow's translation.

The above verses, as all those taken from the Paradise, Canto XVI, are words assigned by the Poet to *Cacciaguida*, his ancestor, whom he finds in the fifth Heaven, which is that of Mars, where are the souls of those "who died fighting for the true faith." *Cacciaguida* thus greets Dante: "I am thy root o leaf" and then describes Florence at the time of his birth and its extent when he lived there, passes in review the chief families of his day and speaks of the former simplicity of the Florentines, since then much corrupted. Their degeneracy and subsequent disgrace he attributes to the introduction of families from the neighbouring

country and their mixture with the primitive citizens. Thus — through the mouth of his grandsire the Poet lavishes praise or chastisement on his contemporaries and their ancestors according to their deserts and his personal views.

The name of *Fiorenza* was derived by the oldest chroniclers from Fiorino, the Praetor of Metellus, who during a long siege of Fiesole by the Romans commanded an entrenched camp between the River and the Rock and was here surprised and slain by the enemy. Others derive it from the flowers in which the meadows abounded, especially lilies, and the ancient ensign: a white lily on a red ground, as well as the name given to the Duomo, Santa Maria del Fiore tend to show that the name refers to the flowery mead rather than to the Roman Praetor. According to another version the city was originally called *Fluentia*, because situated between the Arno and the Mugnone, which name was afterwards changed into *Fiorentia* in allusion to the flourishing state of the colony.

"The lily" — meaning the emblem of Florence — had never "*hung reversed*" on the spear of her enemies in token of her defeat, nor been changed from argent to gules, as it was, when after the long struggle between the Ghibellines and the Guelphs, the latter gained the predominance. The ensign of Florence, having first been a white lily on a red field, was then changed to a red lily on a white field.



FIorenZA

N. 2. - *Inscription to commemorate the CERCHIA ANTICA, placed at the entrance of the Church of the Badia in Via Dante Alighieri:*

*Fiorenza dentro della Cerchia Antica,
Ond'ella toglie ancora e terza e nona,
Si stava in pace, sobria e pudica.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XV, 97-99.

Florence within her ancient limit-mark,
Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
Was chaste and sober and abode in peace.

H. F. Cary's translation.

The spirit of Cacciaguida speaks of ancient Florence, its peace and simplicity.

The *Cerchia Antica* was the first circle or wall of the new city, which arose from the ruins of the Roman town destroyed by Totila, King of the Goths, about the middle of the sixth century; it dates from the ninth century.

The centre of it was the Mercato Vecchio, where stood the forum (now Piazza Vittorio Emanuele). It ran from the Statue of Mars on Ponte Vecchio (see N. 14) through the Uffizi building, following Via Proconsolo, round Piazza del Duomo including the Baptistery, Via Cerretani, Via Rondinelli, Via Tornabuoni, Piazza Santa Trinità, Borgo SS. Apostoli, back to Ponte Vecchio.

The walls of Dante's time were begun 1284, but not finished until nine years after the Poet's death. They are in part still visible. The city then extended from Santa Croce to Santa Maria Novella.

"Terza" is the first division of the canonical day, from six to nine, "Nona" the third, from twelve to three in the afternoon. The bells of the Abbey within the old walls of Florence still rang these hours in Dante's time and measured the day for the Florentines. Villani says: "The Florentines lived soberly on simplest food at little expense; men and women were coarsely clad, many even wearing plain leather garments without fur or lining; the most distinguished women were content with a close gown of scarlet serge or camlet, confined by a leathern belt of ancient fashion, and a hooded cloak lined with miniver; and the lower classes wore a coarse green gown of the same form."



PERUZZI

N. 3. - *Inscription placed at the outlet of BORG
DEI GRECI near Piazza Signoria :*

*Nel picciol cerchio s'entrava per porta
Cbe si nomava da quei della Pera.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 125-126.

One entered the small circuit by a gate
Which from the Della Pera took its name.

Longfellow's translation.

Picciol Cerchio (= Antica Cerchia see N. 2).

The circuit of the city walls differed at various epochs. To belong to a family, whose houses were within the first or innermost and therefore smallest circle was a title of highest nobility, indicating descent from the original inhabitants of the city, whose blood was unmixed with that of new-comers from the neighbouring castles and villages. Cacciaguida says: "I tell a thing incredible but true: one entered the small circuit by a gate, which from the *Della Pera* took its name."

The thing incredible being, that there should have been so little jealousy among the citizens of Florence in those days, as to suffer one of the city-gates, *Porta Peruzza* to be named after one particular family.

The Peruzzi — probably descendents from the Della Pera — still show the pear in their arms, varying from one to six. It is to be supposed however, that at Dante's time, they showed but one pear, as indicated in the name: Della Pera.



GALIGAI

N. 4. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the family of the GALIGAI on the corner of the tower which forms a part of N. 9 Via dei Cerchi facing Via dei Tavolini. This was one of the*

towers of the Galigai who were proprietors of a whole square of houses, inside of which was also built the ancient Church of San Michele, now San Carlo in Via dei Calzaioli:

. ed avea Galigaio
Dorata in casa sua già l'elsa e il pome.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 101-102.

. and Galigaio showed
The golden hilt and pommel in his house.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Cacciaguida mentions the *Galigai* among the chief Florentine families of his time; the *golden hilt and pommel* were the symbols of Knighthood.



LAMBERTI

N. 5. - *Inscription and coat of arms commemorating the LAMBERTI Via Pellicceria N. 10 on the side front, facing VIA LAMBERTI. Here stood the houses that constituted the so called die of the Lamberti :*

. e le palle dell'oro
Fiorian Fiorenza in tutti i suoi gran fatti.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 110-111.

. the balls of gold
Florence overflowed in all their mighty deeds.

Longfellow's translation.

The *golden balls* were in the arms of the *Lamberti* and "the Poet mentions them by their emblem," writes the *Ottimo*, "meaning to say: as the ball is the symbol of the universe, and gold surpasses all other metals, so in goodness and valour these surpassed the other citizens and embellished the city with their great deeds. "The family are said to have come to Tuscany from Germany with the Emperor Otho the Great, about the middle of the tenth century. They were a powerful but turbulent family; one of them, Mosca dei Lamberti instigated the murder of Buondelmonte (see N. 12).



CONSORTERIA OF THE VISDOMINI

N. 6. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the VISDOMINI placed in the ancient tower in Via dell' Oche underneath the bridge-holes that still exist. The tower and adjoining palace (with access*

from *Via delle Scheletré N. 3*) belonged from times immemorial to the family of the *Visdomini*, the inner part facing the *Corte* and *PIAZZA DEI VISDOMINI*. The yard and houses were afterwards incorporated in the inclosure of the "*Canonica del Duomo*":

. *Così facean li padri di coloro
Che, sempre che la vostra chiesa vaca
Si fanno grassi stando a consistoro.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 112-114.

So likewise did the ancestors of those
Who evermore, when vacant is your church,
Fatten by staying in consistory.

Longfellow's translation.

These verses, following those of N. 5, refer to the *Visdomini* and others who, being sprung from the founders of the bishopric of Florence, were the curators of its revenues, which they did not spare, whenever it became vacant. When a bishop died, they took possession of the episcopal palace and, as custodians and defenders thereof, dwelt and feasted in it, till the successor was appointed. The memory of the *Visdomini* survives in the title of the little Church of *S. Michele dei Visdomini* at the corner of *Via Bufalini* and *Via dei Servi*. — The *Visdomini*, *Tosinghi*,

Cortigiani and others all belonged to one great parentage or "Consorteria" who backed each other in all their interests, quarrels and struggles for power and influence, bearing one common blazon, which showed the elements of the different emblems borne by the various families, that made up the "Consorteria." The coat of arms, as given by the Commune, lacks the pastorale, evidently a mistake according to the judgement of authorities on heraldry.



UGO DI TOSCANA

N. 7. - *Inscription to commemorate HUGO OF TUSCANY (UGO DI TOSCANA) put up at the entrance of the Badia in Via del Proconsolo:*

*Ciascun che della bella insegna porta
Del gran barone, il cui nome e il cui pregio
La festa di Tommaso riconforta,
Da esso ebbe milizia e privilegio.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 127-130.

Each one, who bears the sightly quarterings
Of the great Baron (he whose name and worth
The festival of Thomas still revives)
Through him knighthood and privilege retain'd.

H. F. Cary's translation.

"*The great Baron*," Marquis *Hugo of Brandenburg* had come from Germany with Otho III, and resided at Florence as Viceroy of the Emperor. He gave five of the chief families permission to bear his arms, and they had thereby titles and privileges of nobility. Those families were the Pulci, Nerli, Giandonati, Gangalandi and the Della Bella (see N. 19). *Hugo* founded seven abbeys, in one of which his memory was celebrated on *St. Thomas' day*. The reason why he founded those abbeys is this: *Hugo*, when hunting, once strayed away from his people, and wandering through the forest came to a smithy, where he saw black and deformed men tormenting others with fire and hammers; and asking the meaning of this, he was told, that they were condemned souls, who suffered this punishment, and that the soul

of the Marquis Hugo was doomed to suffer the same, if he did not repent. Struck with horror he sold all his possessions in Germany and founded seven Abbeys. He died on St. Thomas' day 1006.

N. 8. - *Inscription to commemorate the SESTO DI BORGO, the section of the Borgo, put up at the TOWER DEI BALDOVINETTI having its entrance from Borgo SS. Apostoli N. 2.*

*Già eran Gualterotti ed Importuni,
Ed ancor saria Borgo più quièto,
Se di nuovi vicin fosser digiuni.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 133-135.

In Borgo yet the Gualterotti dwelt
And Importuni; well for its repose,
Had it still lack'd of newer neighbourhood.

H. F. Cary's translation.

The *Gualterotti* and the *Importuni* lived in the district or *sesto* of the City called *Borgo*, meaning Village. New families coming to Florence from the surrounding country built their houses just outside the *cerchio* (city-wall), and when the town had thus grown larger and a new and wider *cerchio* or wall was built, it took in all those new houses — the division still retaining the name of *Borgo*. Thus also, when Fiesole was conquered by the Florentines and des-

troyed in 1010 and the Fiesolans were permitted to become Florentines, they erected their houses just outside the Antica Cerchia. Cacciaguida here deploras the introduction of new families, to whose mixture with the primitive stock he attributes their degeneracy and disgrace.

N. 9. - *Inscription which commemorates BELLINCION-BERTI visible on the palazzo Via del Proconsolo N. 9, side front, facing Via del Corso, precisely where the houses of the Berti Bellicioni formerly stood:*

*Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto
Di cuoio e d'osso, e venir dallo specchio
La donna sua senza il viso dipinto;*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XV, 106-108.

I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone;
And without artful colouring on her cheeks
His lady leave the glass.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Bellincion Berti in whom Caccioguida describes a type of the good citizen of Florence in the olden times, was still living in 1266. Villani calls him "the best and most honoured gentleman of Florence." He belonged to the noble family of the Ravnigani, a branch of the Adimari, and was the father of "the good Gualdrada" whose story is told by Boccaccio as follows: "When the Emperor Otho IV, happening

about 1208 to be in Florence, attended the festival of St. John to make it more gay with his presence, to the church, with the other city-dames, came the wife of Messer Berto and brought with her a daughter called Gualdrada, who was still unmarried. And as they sat there with the others, the maiden being beautiful in face and figure, nearly all present turned round to look at her, among the rest the Emperor. And having much commended her beauty and manners, he asked Messer Berto, who stood near him, who she was. To which Messer Berto smiling answered: "She is the daughter of one who, I dare say, would let you kiss her, if you wished." These words the young lady heard, being near the speaker, and somewhat troubled by the opinion her father seemed to have of her, that she would suffer to be kissed by any one in this free way, rising and blushing with shame she said: "father, do not make such courteous promises at the expense of my modesty, for certainly, unless by violence, no one shall ever kiss me except him, whom you shall give me as my husband." The Emperor, on hearing this, much commended the words of the young lady... and calling forward a noble youth named Guido Beisangue, afterwards called Guido the Elder, who as yet had no wife, insisted upon his marrying her, and gave him as her dowery a large territory in Casentino and made him Count thereof. It is uncertain what arms Bellincion Berti bore.



GIANFIGLIAZZI

N. 10. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the GIANFIGLIAZZI were placed upon the house next to the TORRIONE in Via Tornabuoni N. 1, being one of the oldest possessions of the Gianfigliuzzi:*

. . . . *Com'io riguardando tra lor vengo,
In una borsa gialla vidi azzurro,
Che di lione avea faccia e contegno.*

DANTE, *Inferno*, XVII, 58-60.

And when amongst them looking round I came,
A yellow purse I saw with azure wrought,
That wore a lion's countenance and port.

H. F. Cary's translation.

The lines describe the arms of the *Gianfigliuzzi* who descended from *Gian figlio di Azzo*. Dante finds one of the family as indicated among those who have done violence to Art, their love of gold still haunting them in the other world.



CAVICCIULI

N. 11. - *Inscription and coat of arms commemorating FILIPPO ARGENTI at the house N. 14 Corso. Up to the XIIth century this house belonged to the*

family of the CAVICCIULI, of whom the ARGENTI
were a branch:

*Tutti gridavano: "A Filippo Argenti!"
E'l fiorentino spirito bizarro
In se medes mo si volgea coi denti.*

DANTE, *Inferno*, VIII, 61-63.

"To Filippo Argenti!" cried they all:
And on himself the moody Florentine
Turned his avenging fangs.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Dante, when crossing the Stygian lake, wherein the gloomy and wrathful are tormented, finds *Filippo Argenti*, drenched in mire. Boccaccio tells us, *Filippo Argenti* was a man remarkable for the large proportions and extraordinary vigour of his bodily frame, and the extreme waywardness and irascibility of his temper. The coat of arms, which the commune has placed above this inscription, is that of the *Consorteria dei Cavicciuli* (see "Consorteria" N. 6 Visdomini).



BUONDELMONTI

N. 12. - *Inscription and coat of arms commemorating the BUONDELMONTI N. 5 Borgo SS. Apostoli, which was the principal palace of the family and on the façade of which is still to be seen the*

*emblem of the People of Florence, placed there,
when the family resigned their privilege of nobility :*

O Buondelmonte!
.

*Molti sarebber lieti che son tristi,
Se Dio t'avesse conceduto ad Ema
La prima volta che a città venisti.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 140-144.

O Buondelmonte!
.

Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
Had God to Ema given thee, the first time
That near our city camest.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Buondelmonte was betrothed to a lady of the Amidei, but broke his promise and united himself to one of the Donati. This was so much resented by the former that they and their kinsmen met together to consider the best means of revenging the insult. Mosca dei Lamberti persuaded them to resolve on the assassination of Buondelmonte, exclaiming to them, "cosa fatta testa ha" (the thing once done, there is an end), and so, young Buondelmonte, clad in a white mantle, coming on Easter morning from visiting beyond the Arno, riding a white horse, had just reached the



POPOLO DI FIRENZE

N. 12 a.

foot of Ponte Vecchio near the remains of that broken statue of Mars (see N. 14), when the whole party issued forth upon him and dragging him from his horse despatched him with a thousand wounds. Villani, says: This was the cause and beginning of the accursed Guelph and Ghibelline parties in Florence, the one siding with the Buondelmonti, who placed themselves at the head of the Guelphs or adherents of the papal power, the others embracing the cause of the Amidei, who sided with the Ghibellines or those who supported the authority of the Emperor.

This happened in 1215. And therefore Cacciaguida says: "O Buondelmonte! it had been well for the city, if thy ancestor had been drowned in the river Ema," when he crossed that stream to come to Florence from Montebuono, his castle in the rural district of Valdigueve (see N. 13, 14, 15).



AMIDEI

N. 13. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the AMIDEI on the right hand side of the ancient tower in Via Por S. Maria N. 1, which once belonged to the Amidei:*

*La casa, di che nacque il vostro fletto
Per lo giusto disdegno che v'ha morti
E posto fine al vostro viver lieto,
Era onorata essa e suoi consorti.*

DANTE *Paradiso*, XVI, 136-139.

The house from which is born your lamentation
Through just disdain that death among you brought
And put an end unto your joyous life,
Was honoured in itself and its companions.

Longfellow's translation.

Meaning the house of the *Amidei*, whose quarrel with the Buondelmonti was the origin of the Guelph and Ghibelline parties in Florence, and thus put an end to the joyous life of her citizens (see N. 12 Buondelmonte).

N. 14. - *Inscription on PONTE VECCHIO (in the middle):*

. *in sul passo d'Arno.*

DANTE, *Inferno*, XIII, 146.

. on the bridge of Arno.

"Florence" — says the suicide in *Inferno XIII* — "changed her first patron Mars for St. John the Baptist, for which reason the vengeance of the deity thus slighted will never be appeased: *and were it not that on the Bridge of Arno some glimpses of him are remaining still*, the city would already have been levelled to the ground, and thus the citizens, who raised her from the ashes to which Totila, King of the Goths had reduced her (550), would have laboured in vain."

However the relic of antiquity, to which the superstition of Florence attached so high an importance, was carried away by a flood, that destroyed the bridge on which it stood, in the year 1337, without the ill effects that were apprehended from the loss of the fancied Palladium (see N. 15, 12).

N. 15. - *Inscription on PONTE VECCHIO — north side, where once stood the maimed statue of Mars :*

*Conveniasi a quella pietra scema
Che guarda il ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
Vittima nella sua pace postrema.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 145-147.

But it behoved the mutilated stone
Which guards the bridge, that Florence should
[provide
A victim in her latest hour of peace.

Longfellow's translation.

Buondelmonte was slain near the remains of the statue of Mars, as if he and peace, which then departed from Florence, had been a sacrifice to the god (see N. 12 and 14).



UBERTI

N. 16. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the UBERTI in the first court of Palazzo Vecchio:*

*O quali vidi quei che son disfatti
Per lor superbia!*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 109-110.

How mighty then I saw whom since their pride
Hath undone!

H. F. Cary's translation.

The *Uberti* like the *Lamberti* are said to have come into Tuscany with Otho the Great about the middle of the tenth century; their houses occupied the ground which now forms the eastern part of the Piazza Signoria, north of Palazzo Vecchio.

They acquired riches and honours and became so powerful, that at length, their arrogance and lack of civic spirit increasing, they set the fatal example of intestine strife. In the quarrels between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines they joined the latter. When after 60 years' struggles the Guelphs remained masters of the city, the *Uberti* who had been exiled, were not allowed to return, and such was the hatred with which they inspired the people, that the new Palace of the Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio), decreed to be built in 1298, was not allowed to touch the ground upon which their houses had stood; hence the north front of Palazzo Vecchio bends inwards, instead of keeping a straight line. — In spite of this old feud the present generation granted to their memory a place of highest honour in that same Palazzo Vecchio.

N. 17. - *Inscription commemorating FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI Palazzo Vecchio — in the first court:*

. *fu' io sol colà, dove sofferto*
Fu per ciascun di torre via Fiorenza,
Colui che la difesi a viso aperto.

DANTE, *Inferno*, X, 91-93.

But singly I stood, — when, by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been razed, —
The one who openly forbade the deed.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Farinata was the most celebrated of this race. Born at the beginning of the thirteenth century he became the head of the family in 1239, was chosen captain of the Ghibellines of Tuscany and obtained a signal victory over the Guelphs at Montaperto near the river Arbia. Dante reproaching him with this fact, he answers as above. The event referred to is this: Guido Novelli had assembled a council of the Ghibellines at Empoli, where all agreed that, in order to maintain the ascendancy of the Ghibelline party in Tuscany, it was necessary to destroy Florence, which

— the people of that city being Guelphs — could serve only to strengthen the party attached to the Church. This cruel sentence, passed upon so noble a city, met with no opposition from any of its banished citizens or friends, except Farinata degli Uberti, who openly and without reserve forbade the measure, affirming that he had endured so many hardships and encountered so many dangers in endeavouring to reconquer his own country with no other view than that of being able to pass his days in his native town, which he had never ceased to love, and in whose defence he would die a thousand deaths rather than permit her to be destroyed. Upon this he left the assembly. But he had made such a strong impression on the minds of his fellow partisans, that the cruel plan was abandoned.

As the stigma of free-thinking attached to Frederick II marks his followers also, Dante places the Ghibelline Farinata, who supported King Manfred, among the heretics in the *Inferno*, where he finds him among the followers of Epicurus "who with the body made the spirit die."



ABATI

N. 18. - *The inscription and coat of arms of the ABATI is placed in Via dei Tavolini N. 10 near the corner of Via Calzaioli, on the spot formerly covered by the houses of the ABATI, bordering on*

*the houses of the Della Bella and the grounds
of the Church of San Bartolomeo al Corso:*

*Piangendo mi sgridò: "Perchè mi pestò?
Se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
Di Mont'Aperto, perchè mi molestò?"*

*Quando un altro gridò: "Che hai tu, Bocca?
Non ti basta sonar con le mascelle,
Se tu non latrò? Qual diavol ti tocca?"*

DANTE, *Inferno*, XXXII, 79-81, 106-108.

"Wherefore dost bruise me?" weeping he exclaimed,
"Unless thy errand be some fresh revenge
For Mont'Aperto, wherefore troublest me?"

.....
..... when another cried,
"What ails thee, Bocca? Sound not loud enough
Thy chattering teeth, but thou must bark outright?
What devil wrings thee?"

H. F. Cary's translation.

Stepping through the frozen circle containing all sorts of traitors, Dante's foot strikes against the face of one, who *weeping exclaimed: "wherefore dost bruise me?"* etc. — The Poet seizing his hinder scalp says: "name thee or not a hair shall tarry here." — He still refuses to give his name — *when another*

cried: "*What ails thee Bocca*" etc. — It was *Bocca degli Abati* who had caused the defeat of the Guelphs at Montaperto by cutting off during the engagement the hand of Giacopo del Varca dei Pazzi, bearer of the Florentine standard. The event happened in 1260.



DELLA BELLA

N. 19. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate
GIANO DELLA BELLA in Piazza dei Tavolini:*

*Ciascun che della bella insegna porta
Del gran barone
Da esso ebbe milizia e privilegio;
Avvenga che col popol si rauni
Oggi colui che la fascia col fregio.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 127-132.

Each one, who bears the beautiful escutcheon
Of the great Baron
Knighthood and privilege from him received,
Though with the populace unites himself
To day the man who binds it with a border.

Longfellow's translation.

The Della Bella derived their name from the beautiful escutcheon "della bella insegna", being one of the families whom the Great Baron (see N. 7) Hugo of Brandenburg lieutenant of the Emperor Otho III had allowed to bear his arms. *Giano Della Bella* disguised the arms of Hugo with a fringe of gold and later on added the ensign of the People of Florence — the red cross on a white field. A nobleman by birth and education, he was by conviction a friend of the people, and espoused their cause against the nobles.

The aristocratic families had been so long at the head of the State, that they placed themselves above all law. *Giano* determined that their nobility itself

should be a title of exclusion from the "Signoria", that is from government, and when they troubled the public peace by their arrogance, their quarrels and frequent battles in the streets, they should be brought to order by summary justice, the execution of which he proposed to entrust to the Gonfaloniere, whom he caused to be elected. For this severity and the mighty influence he exercised, though all for the good of the community, he was hated by the nobles and envied by the wealthy and ambitious among the people, who were jealous of his power.

In 1294 he went into voluntary exile — as Machiavelli says "to deprive his enemies of all opportunity of injuring him, and his friends of all opportunity of injuring the country".

Villani writes: "Gian Della Bella was condemned and banished in contumacy... and all his possessions confiscated... whence great mischief accrued to our city, and chiefly to the people, for he was the most loyal and upright "popolano" and lover of the public good of any man in Florence".

When through his influence nobility had become a reason for exclusion from the Signoria, many nobles followed his example and made themselves "of the people", that is: gave up the prerogative of nobility. All those who did so added to their arms the sign of the People of Florence: a red cross on a white field (see N. 6 Visdomini and N. 12 Buondelmonti).



CERCHI

N. 20. - *The inscription placed at the corner of Via del Corso and Via del Proconsolo commemorates the PORTA SAN PIERO. Here stood up to the beginning of this century traces of the arch*

of the ancient *Porta San Piero*, built at the same time as the first circle of the walls of Florence:

. *la porta, che al presente è carca
Di nuova fellonia di tanto peso,
Che tosto fia iattura della barca.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 94-96.

. the gate that is at present laden
With new felony of so much weight,
That soon it shall be jetsam from the bark.

Longfellow's translation.

The Cerchi are hit with those verses. Having come to Florence from Val di Sieve, they had lately succeeded to the houses over the *gate of San Piero*, formerly inhabited by the Ravignani (see Bellincion Bertini N. 9). They were at the head of the Bianchi in the famous quarrels of the Bianchi and the Neri; the latter being led by the Donati (see N. 22 e 27). Giovanni Fiorentino, a writer of the fourteenth century tells of the origin of the two factions: "In the city of Pistoia, at the time of its greatest splendour there flourished the noble family of the Cancellieri. Messer Cancellieri was a rich merchant. He had numerous sons by two wives. This family increased so fast, that in a short time they were numbered by hundreds, all "cavalieri", valiant and worthy men.

But a division arose among them for the sake of rivalry in the affections of an enchanting girl.

Those who descended from the first wife took the title of *Cancellieri Bianchi*, and the offspring of the second marriage were called *Cancellieri Neri*. Having come to action, the Neri were defeated, and wishing to adjust the quarrel, they sent one young man of their party to entreat forgiveness of their opponents, the Bianchi. These however, heedless of the humble entreaties of the youth, cut off his right hand.

After this the feud was irreparable and the citizens of Pistoia, in order to reconcile the fighting parties applied to the Florentines, who took possession of the place and sent the adherents of both parties to the confines of Florence, whence they carried dissension into the city, the *White* taking refuge with and being seconded by the *Cerchi*, and the *Donati* espousing the interests of the *Neri*, thus multiplying the divisions of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, formerly brought into Florence by the murder of Buondelmonte. So rapidly did this pestiferous spirit gain ground in Florence, that from a peaceable and flourishing state it became a scene of rapine and devastationⁿ.

Which evil Dante, next to the Buondelmonti and the Amidei, with the above verses lays to the charge of the *Cerchi*.



ELISEI

N. 21. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the houses of the ELISEI N. 3 Via degli Speciali. This locality corresponds to the mouth of Vicolo della Coroncina, which was bounded on this side*

by the houses of the *Elisei*, that extended towards *Piazza del Mercato Vecchio* (*Piazza Vittorio Emanuele*):

*Gli antichi miei ed io nacqui nel loco,
Dove si trova l'ultimo sesto
Da quel che corre il vostro annual giuoco.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 40-42.

My ancestors and I our birthplace had
Where first is found the last ward of the city
By him who runneth in your annual game.

Longfellow's translation.

Cacciaguida's words. — The city, as before mentioned, was divided into *sesti* or sections.

The *Elisei* resided near the entrance of that, named after the *Porta San Piero*, which was the last reached by the competitors in the annual Florentine race. Those races took place on the 24th of June, the festival of St. John the Baptist.

"The prize was the *Palio*, or mantle of crimson silk velvet", says Villani, and the race was run from *San Pancrazio*, the western *sesto* of the city, through the *Mercato Vecchio*, to the eastern *sesto* of *San Piero*. These Florentine races, like those until the last century held in Rome, were horseraces, horses running without riders.

Cacciaguida is the first ancestor of the Elisei concerning whom anything certain is known. It is however doubtful if Cacciaguida's family-name was already *Elisei*, as family-names were not much used in those days. It is supposed that from Cacciaguida's brother *Eliseo* the *Elisei* took their name, as the *Alighieri* took theirs from Cacciaguida's son *Alighiero*, so named after his mother's family, the *Alighieri* of Ferrara. *Alighiero's* son was *Bellincion degl'Alighieri*, Dante's grandfather, whose son called *Alighiero* was Dante's father.

Cacciaguida tells of himself, that he was born 1090 (or 1106) and that he died fighting in the crusade under Emperor Conrad III 1147. Some historians have tried to follow the ancestors of Dante up to the days of Julius Ceasar. But the Poet himself — through the mouth of Cacciaguida — sums up his communications with the words:

*“Basti dei miei maggiori udirne questo;
Chi ei si furo, edonde venner quivi,
Piùètacer che ragionare onesto”*.

(Suffice it of my elders to hear this,
But who they were, and whence they hither came,
Silence is more considerate than speech).

As much as to say, that he himself had no further

knowledge of his ancestors and that he neither cared, nor found it necessary for his honour to prove his descent from a very ancient family.

N. 22. - *The inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the house of DANTE ALIGHIERI is not yet in its place, but will probably be placed in Via Dante Alighieri:*

. *io fui nato e cresciuto
Sovra il bel fiume d'Arno alla gran villa.*

DANTE, *Inferno*, XXIII, 94-95.

By Arno's pleasant stream
In the great city I was bred and grew.

H. F. Cary's translation.

Dante says this of himself. "Dante" is a name abbreviated, as was the custom in those days, from *Durante* or *Durando*. (*Alighieri* see N. 21 *Elisei*). He was born at Florence 1265. His mother's name was *Bella*, of what family is not known.

His father died in the Poet's childhood, but with the assistance of his preceptor *Bruno Latini* (see N. 23) "he studied literature and other liberal arts and omitted no pursuit necessary for the accomplishment of a manly character, and mixed in all honourable and noble exercises" says *Pelli*. When he was nine years old,

his passion for *Beatrice*, whom he immortalised in the *Commedia*, arose. They first met at a festival in the house of her father. — (See Portinari N. 24). — His first poetic work, the "*Vita Nuova*" has this love for its subject. He also took part in the battles of Campaldino and one year later in a battle between his countrymen and the citizens of Pisa. — "But neither war nor love prevented Dante from gratifying his desire for knowledge and mental improvement". He is said to have studied at the universities of Bologna and Padua, as well as in his native city, and there is reason to believe, that he also visited Paris and even Oxford. In 1300 he held the highest office in the Florentine state, being elected chief of the Priors (see Donati N. 26). He belonged by family-tradition to the Guelph party until after his banishment, when he became a fierce Ghibelline. While on a mission at Rome, his enemies prevailed against him and pronounced his banishment.

The occasion of his exile was this: The city had been disturbed by divisions between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, the former remaining in power after 60 years' fighting. The quarrel of the Bianchi and the Neri, having split the Guelph party into two factions again (see N. 20), the Neri determined to persuade the Pope Boniface VIII to send Charles of Valois to pacify and reform the city; — a measure opposed by the Bianchi. Both took up arms. Dante,

who then possessed the supreme authority of the state, called in the multitude to protect the Priors and then proceeded to banish the heads of the two factions: Corso Donati among the Neri; his friend, the poet Guido Cavalcanti, Balduccio Adimari and Torrigiani dei Cerchi among the Bianchi. Dante was accused of having treated the Neri with greater rigour — evidently without reason, though their resolve to call in Charles of Valois might have justified him in doing so. However this accusation afforded a pretext to Boniface VIII for sending Charles of Valois to Florence, by whose influence the Neri with Donati at their head were restored to their possessions, and the whole of the Bianchi party driven into exile. As this happened while Dante was not in Florence, having been sent to Rome as an ambassador to the Pope, offering voluntary return to peace and amity among the citizens, his enemies took advantage of his absence on this pacific mission to decree his banishment and confiscate his possessions. From that time Dante sided with the Ghibellines, the Guelphs having imperilled the independence of Florence by inviting Boniface VIII to interfere with their government. He died 1321 in banishment at Ravenna, where after long wanderings and hardships he enjoyed the hospitality of Guido Novello da Polenta, a protector of learning, himself a poet and a kinsman of that unfortunate Francesca da Rimini. It is uncertain what arms Dante bore.

N. 23. - *The inscription to commemorate BRUNETTO LATINI is placed outside the Chapel of the Carnesecchi in Santa Maria Maggiore, inside of which there is an inscription and part of an ancient tombstone of Brunetto Latini.*

. . . . *in la mente m'è fitta, ed or mi accora,
La cara e buona imagine paterna
Di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
M' insegnavate, come l'uom s'eterna.*

DANTE, *Inferno*, XV, 82-85.

. . . . *in my mind is fixed and touches now
My heart, the dear and good paternal image
Of you, when in the world from hour to hour
You taught me, how a man becomes eternal.*

Longfellow's translation.

Dante finds *Brunetto Latini* among those, who had sinned in the world by doing violence to Nature. Ser Brunetto, a Florentine, the secretary and chancellor of the city, was Dante's preceptor. Villani sums up his account of him by saying, that "he was himself

a wordly man, but he was the first to refine the Florentines from their grossness, and to instruct them in speaking properly and in conducting the affairs of the Republic on principles of policy".



PORTINARI

N. 24. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the PORTINARI in Via del Corso, Palazzo Cepparello :*

*Sovra candido vel, cinta d'oliva
Donna m'apparve sotto verde manto
Vestita del color di fiamma viva.*

‡DANTE, *Purgatorio*, XXX, 31-33.

In white veil with olive wreathed
A virgin in my view appeared, beneath
Green mantle robed in hue of living flame.

H. F. Cary's translation.

In these words Dante describes the appearance of *Beatrice*, come down from Paradise to become his guide in the place of Virgil, who then vanishes. Pelli observes, that Dante makes Beatrice appear clothed in the colours of the three theological virtues. The white veil being the symbol of Faith, the green mantle of Hope, the red tunic of Charity. This would justify the idea of those, who would see in Beatrice only a theological, poetical symbol. But a few verses further on we read, that at the sight of her he felt "the power sublime, that had already pierced me through, ere from my boyhood I had yet come forth". Meaning his love for *Beatrice Portinari*, the daughter of *Folco Portinari*, whom he first met and began to love at the end of his ninth and in the beginning of her ninth year, as he tells us in his "Vita Nuova", his first poetic work, which is dedicated to this love, and at the end of which he wrote the remarkable aspiration,

that God would take him to himself after he had written of Beatrice such things as were never yet written of woman. It was literally fulfilled, when the *Commedia* was finished, twenty-five years later. Beatrice had been dead ten years at the date of the poem. Her father, Folco di Ricovero Portinari, founded the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova and other charitable institutions in 1280 and died 1289.



CONSORTERIA OF THE CAVALCANTI

N. 25. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the CAVALCANTI. Via dei Calzaioli near the entrance from Porta Rossa :*

. "se per questo cieco
 Carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,
 Mio figlio ov'è, e perchè non è teco?"
 Ed io a lui: "Da me stesso non vegno:
 Colui che attende là per qui mi mena,
 Forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno".

DANTE, *Inferno*, X, 58-63.

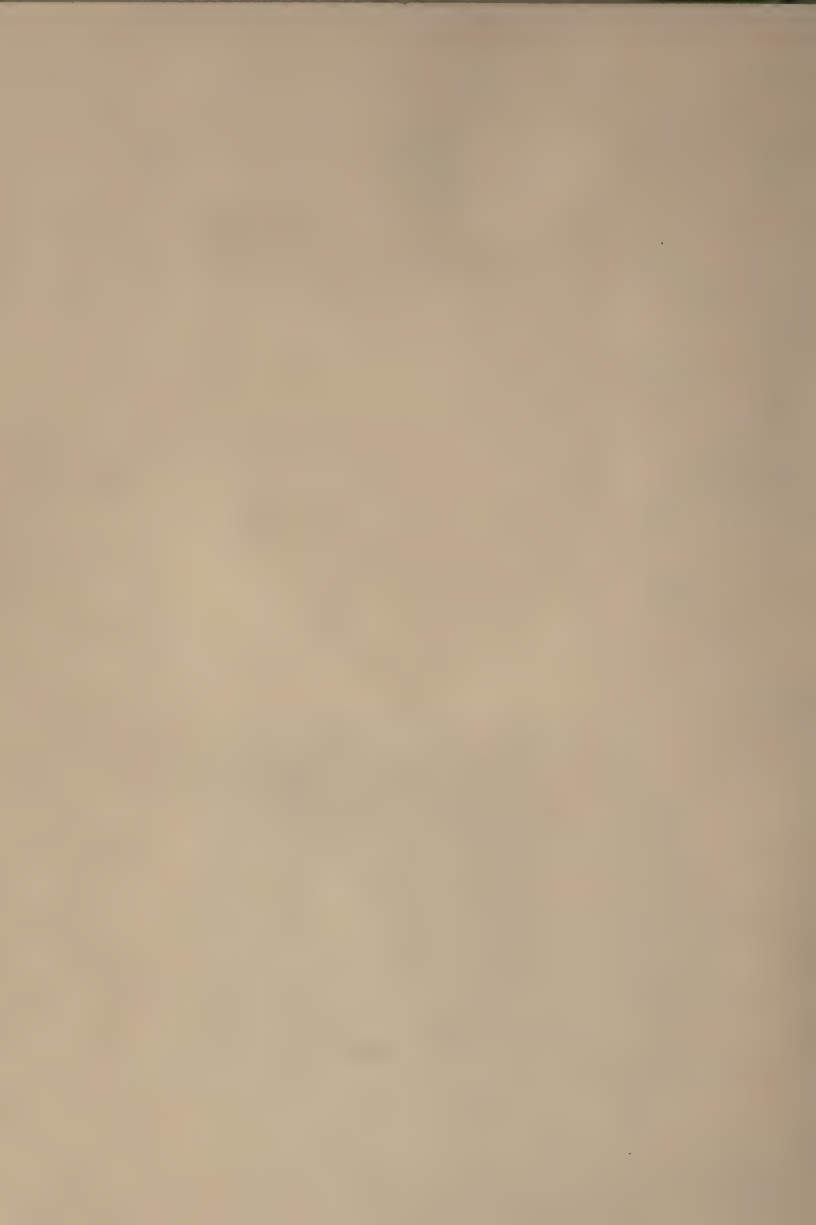
. "if through this blind
 Prison thou goest by loftiness of genius,
 Where is my son? and wherefore not with thee?"
 And I to him: "I come not of myself;
 He who is waiting yonder leads me here,
 Whom in disdain perhaps your Guido had."

Longfellow's translation.

The spirit of *Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti* rises up at the sight of the Poet to look around, as eager to explore, if there were any other person with Dante, expecting to see his son, *Guido Cavalcanti*, whom Dante calls "the first of his friends" in his *Vita Nuova*, where the commencement of their friendship is related. It began when Dante was eighteen years of age and terminated only with the death of Guido. He was a poet of mark, but being more given to philosophy than to poetry, Guido was perhaps no great admirer of Virgil, Dante's guide through Hell and

Purgatory, whom Dante designates with the words:
"He who is waiting yonder leads me here".

The Cavalcanti also were a powerful family (see N. 22) and at the head of a "Consorteria" (see Consorteria N. 6).





DONATI

N. 26. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the DONATI at the left side of the tower on the Corso N. 2 (with entrance from Piazza Donati). The building is a remnant of one of the*

Donati towers, which rose by the side of the entrance to their Piazza and Corte:

. *il luogo, u'fui a viver posto,
Di giorno in giorno più di ben si spolpa,
Ed a triste ruina par disposto".*
. *"quei che più n'ha colpa
Vegg'io a coda d'una bestia tratto
In ver la valle, ove mai non si scolpa."*

DANTE, *Purgatorio*, XXIV, 79-84.

. the place where I was set to live
From day to day of good is more depleted,
And unto dismal ruin seems ordained".
. "him most guilty of it
At a beast's tail behold I dragged along
Towards the valley where is no repentance."

Longfellow's translation.

The first three lines are Dante's answer to *Forese*, a Tuscan poet, who had been Dante's friend on Earth, and whom he finds purifying himself of the vice of gluttony. *Forese's* question being: "When shall I again behold thee?" Dante answers: "How soon soever I return — My wishes will before me have arrived, — *because the place where I am set to live etc.* This in reference to the political state of Florence. In the latter three lines *Forese foretells* (the fictitious

date of the Poem being about 1300) the death of *Corso Donati*, Dante's political enemy and the head of the Neri (see N. 20 and 22) who was the cause of Charles of Valois' being sent to Florence by Boniface VIII and was suspected and finally formally accused of himself aiming at the sovereignty. — To escape the fury of his fellow-citizens he fled away on horseback, but falling, was overtaken and slain A. D. 1308, which fact Forese's prophecy alludes to. A contemporary annalist, after relating the circumstances of his fate, adds that "he was one of the wisest and most valorous knights, the best speaker, the most expert statesman, the most renowned and enterprising man of his age in Italy, a comely man of graceful carriage, but very worldly and had formed many scandalous practices for the sake of attaining state and lordship".

Dante's wife Gemma was the sister of Corso Donati; notwithstanding this he was greatly instrumental in obtaining the decree of exile against the Poet.

N. 27. - *Inscription at the ZECCA VECCHIA which faces the Arno.*

*Per mezzo Toscana si spazia
Un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona,
E cento miglia di corso nol sazia.*

DANTE, *Purgatorio*, XIV, 16-18.

Through midst of Tuscany there wanders
A streamlet, that is born at Falterona,
And not a hundred miles of course suffice it.

Longfellow's translation.

The above is part of Dante's answer to Guido del Duca di Brettinaro's question, whence he cometh. He means by the *streamlet* the Arno — (a name so hateful to him, that he avoids pronouncing it) — that rises at Falterona, a mountain in the Appennine, its course being a hundred and twenty miles, and adds: "from its banks bring I this frame".

From the summit of the Falterona all the valley of the Arno can be traced. Dante follows in that Canto the course of the river, and as he advances brands every place he comes to with fierce impre-

cation — the farther he goes, the more his bitterness increases. Which is easily understood when we remember, that during his exile he wandered up and down the valley and those mountain-paths seeking refuge from his enemies.



CONSORTERIA OF THE ADIMARI

N. 28. - *Inscription and coat of arms to commemorate the ADIMARI placed near the arcade of N. 17 in Via dell'Oche. On this spot was the famous Loggia called la Neghittosa, belonging to the CON-*

SORTERIA of the ADIMARI, which rose among the towers, palaces and houses belonging to those families:

*L'oltracotata schiatta, che s'indraca
Dietro a chi fugge, ed a chi mostra il dente
O ver la borsa, com'agnel si placa.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XVI, 115-117.

The insolent race, that like a dragon follows
Whoever flees, and unto him, that shows
His teeth or purse is gentle as a lamb.

Longfellow's translation.

The *Adimari* are one of those families of Florence to whose introduction Cacciaguida attributes its degeneracy. They were at the head of a numerous and powerful "Consorteria" and therefore obnoxious to the people, and though rich and mighty so little esteemed, that Ubertino dei Donati who had married a daughter of Bellincion Berti was offended with his father-in-law for giving another of his daughters in marriage to one of the *Adimari*. It was a member of this family, *Boccaccio Adimari* who got possession of Dante's property in Florence, when he was banished, and always bitterly opposed his return, which may have sharpened the Poet's angry judgement against them. The Consorteria of the *Adimari* was composed of ten distinct families, all varying in armorial bearings and patronymics.

N. 29. - *Inscription outside Porta San Miniato placed at the foot of the stairway that leads to the MONTE ALLE CROCE:*

. *per salire al monte,*
Dove siede la Chiesa che soggioga
La ben guidata sopra Rubicone,
Si rompe del montar l'ardita foga
Per le scalee che si fero ad etade
Ch'era sicuro il quaderno e la doga;

DANTE, *Purgatorio*, XII, 100-105.

. *to ascend the mount,*
Where seated is the Church that lordeth it
O'er the well-guided, above Rubicone,
The bold abruptness of the ascent is broken
By stairways that were made there in the age,
When still were safe the ledger and the stave.

Longfellow's translation.

Dante, in describing a certain site in the Purgatory compares it to the stairway that leads to the *Monte alle Croce*. The church of *San Miniato* is situated on the height that overlooks the Arno, where

it is crossed by the *bridge of Rubiconte*, (now Ponte alle Grazie) so called from Messer Rubiconte da Mandella of Milan, Podestà or chief magistrate of Florence, by whom the bridge was constructed in 1237 (Villani). Dante speaks ironically, when he calls Florence "*the well guided city*", and "*that time, when the ledger and stave were safe*" alludes to certain instances of fraud, committed in Dante's time with respect to the public accounts and measures. A certain Messer Niccolò tore out a leaf from a ledger to hide his fraud.

N. 30. - *Inscription in S. GIOVANNI on the pavement at the side of Via Cerretani:*

"Nel mio bel San Giovanni."

DANTE, *Inferno*, XIX, 17.

In my beloved Saint John's dome.

In the third gulf are punished those who have been guilty of simony; they are fixed with their heads downwards in certain apertures, so that only their legs appear, and on the soles of their feet are seen burning flames. — Dante says: the holes were as wide "*as those fonts in St. John's dome, destined to hold the baptismal streams,*" one of which he had broken some years ago, to save a child, that had fallen in.

His enemies having represented the motive of his breaking the font maliciously, he mentions the fact here, to prove his innocence.

.... "and one of which, not many years ago,
I broke for some one, who was drowning in it;
Be this a seal, all men to undeceive! "

N. 31. - *Inscription at SAN GIOVANNI on the pavement at the side of the Duomo :*

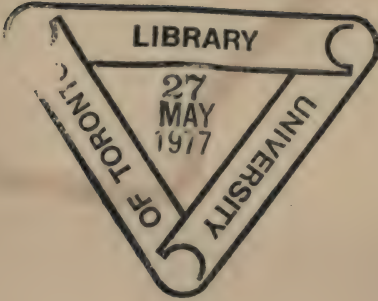
*Se mai continga che il poema sacro,
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra
Sì che m' ha fatto per più anni macro,
Vinca la crudeltà, che fuor mi serra
Del bello ovile, ov' io dormii agnello
Nimico ai lupi che gli danno guerra;
Con altra voce ormai, con altro vello
Ritonerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
Del mio battesmo prenderò il cappello.*

DANTE, *Paradiso*, XXV, 1-9.

If e'er it happen that the sacred Poem,
To which both heaven and earth have set their hand,
So that it many a year has made me lean,
O'ercome the cruelty that bars me out
From that fair sheep-fold, where a lamb I slumbered,
An enemy to the wolves that war upon it,
With other voice forthwith, with other fleece
Poet will I return, and at my font
Baptismal will I take the laurel crown.

Longfellow's translation.

The verses form the beginning of the 25th Canto wherein St. James questions Dante concerning Hope. It appears from one of his "Epistles", that about 1316 Dante had the option given him of returning to Florence on the ignominious terms of paying a fine, and of making a public avowal of his offence. — It may perhaps be in reference to this offer, which he indignantly rejected, that he promises himself, he shall one day return "in other guise and, standing up at his baptismal font, shall claim the wreath due to the poet's temples". — His fame at that time had spread so far and the glory, which his Poem had gained him was such, that he himself declares in the treatise "De Vulgaris Eloquentia", it had in some measure reconciled him even to his banishment.



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of Florence





