

see a Crucis at an altitude of $6^{\circ} 10'$, it is necessary, taking the refraction into account, to be ten degrees south of Alexandria, in the parallel of $21^{\circ} 43'$ north latitude. In the fourth century the Christian anchorites in the Thebaid desert might have seen the Cross at an altitude of ten degrees. I doubt, however, whether its designation is due to them, for Dante, in the celebrated passage of the *Purgatorio*,

Io mi volsi a man destra, e posi mente
All'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
Non viste mai fuor ch' alla prima gente;

and Amerigo Vespucci, who, at the aspect of the starry skies of the south, first called to mind this passage on his third voyage, and even boasted that he now "looked on the four stars never seen till then by any save the first human pair," were both unacquainted with the denomination of the *Southern Cross*. Amerigo simply observes that the four stars form a rhomboidal figure (*una mandorla*), and this remark was made in the year 1501. The more frequently the maritime expeditions on the routes opened by Gama and Magellan round the Cape of Good Hope and through the Pacific were multiplied, and as Christian missionaries penetrated into the newly-discovered tropical lands of America, the fame of this constellation continually increased. I find it mentioned first by the Florentine, Andrea Corsali, in 1517, and subsequently, in 1520, by Pigafetta, as a wonderful cross (*croce maravigliosa*), more glorious than all the constellations in the heavens. The learned Florentine extols Dante's "prophetic spirit," as if the great poet had not as much erudition as creative imagination, and as if he had not seen Arabian celestial globes, and conversed with many learned Oriental travelers of Pisa.* Acos-

* I have elsewhere attempted to dispel the doubts which several distinguished commentators of Dante have advanced in modern times respecting the "*quattro stelle*." To take this problem in all its completeness, we must compare the passage, "Io mi volsi," &c. (*Purgat.*, l., v. 22-24), with the other passages: *Purg.*, l., v. 37; viii., v. 85-93; xxix., v. 121; xxx., v. 97; xxxi., v. 106; and *Inf.*, xxvi., v. 117 and 127. The Milanese astronomer, De Cesaris, considers the three "*facelle*" ("Di che il polo di quà tutto quanto arde," and which set when the four stars of the Cross rise) to be Canopus, Achernar, and Fomalhaut. I have endeavored to solve these difficulties by the following considerations. "The philosophical and religious mysticism which penetrates and vivifies the grand composition of Dante, assigns to all objects, besides their real or material existence, an ideal one. It seems almost as if we beheld two worlds reflected in one another. The four stars represent, in their moral order, the *cardinal virtues*, prudence, justice, strength, and temperance; and they, therefore, merit the name of the