



THE nobly descriptive poem of Thomas W. Parsons is a fit introduction to what we have to say of the portraits of Dante, and no apology is needed for giving it entire. These lines were prefixed to Dr. Parsons's translation of seventeen cantos of the *Inferno*, published in 1865, on the occasion of the six hundredth birthday of Dante:*

“ON A BUST OF DANTE.

“BY THOMAS WILLIAM PARSONS.

“See, from this counterfeit of him
Whom Arno shall remember long,
How stern of lineament, how grim
The father was of Tuscan song!
There but the burning sense of wrong,

Perpetual care and scorn abide—
Small friendship for the lordly throng,
Distrust of all the world beside.

“Faithful if this wan image be,
No dream his life was, but a fight;
Could any Beatrice see
A lover in that anchorite?
To that cold Ghibelline's gloomy sight
Who could have guessed the visions came
Of Beauty, veiled with heavenly light,
In circles of eternal flame?

“The lips as Cumæ's cavern close,
The cheeks with fast and sorrow thin,
The rigid front, almost morose,
But for the patient hope within,
Declare a life whose course hath been

* Boston : printed by John Wilson & Son.

Unstilled still though still severe,
Which through the wavering days of sin
Kept itself icy-chaste and clear.

“Not wholly such his haggard look,
When wandering once, forlorn, he strayed,
With no companion but his book,
To Corvo's hushed monastic shade;
Where, as the Benedictine laid
His palm upon the pilgrim guest,
The single boon for which he prayed
The convent's charity was rest.

“Peace dwells not here—this rugged face
Reveals no spirit of repose;
The sullen warrior sole we trace,—
The marble man of many woes.
Such was his mien when first arose
The thought of that strange tale divine,
When hell he peopled with his foes,
The scourge of many a guilty line.

“War to the last he waged with all
The tyrant canker-worms of earth;
Baron and duke, in hold and hall,
Cursed the dark hour that gave him birth;
He used Rome's harlot for his mirth;
Plucked bare hypocrisy and crime;
But valiant souls of knightly worth
Transmitted to the rolls of Time.

“O Time! whose verdicts mock our own,
The only righteous judge art thou!
That poor old exile, sad and lone,
Is Latium's other Virgil now.
Before his name the nations bow:
His words are parcel of mankind,
Deep in whose hearts, as on his brow,
The marks have sunk of Dante's mind.”

Dante Alighieri died A. D. 1321. In 1884 there are few more familiar or more easily recognized faces than his, and yet of the almost innumerable so-called portraits of him that now exist there are but two that can be called authentic—the two from which all the others must have been derived. To the first of these, which was painted by Giotto, the verses of Dr. Parsons do not apply, for it was made before the struggle with life's exigencies had begun; the beautiful features show the triumphant security of youth, and of a youth endowed with singular powers.

“The poet in a golden clime was born
With golden stars above;
Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.”

But the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, had not as yet been awakened.

Giotto was the greatest painter of his time, and the intimate friend of Dante. This portrait is in fresco on the walls of the chapel in the palace of the Podestà of Florence, now called the Bargello. It was a grand religious picture. The figure of Christ in the upper part was supported by saints and angels, and below were kings and great people of the city of Florence, among whom Dante stood with

a pomegranate in his hand, the face in profile; and the features, as yet unchanged by time and suffering, by care and contention, are noble and gracious. This picture has a strange history. Painted by the first artist of that time, on the chapel wall in one of the chief public palaces of the city of Florence, it ought to have been safe from destruction. In Vasari's “Life of Giotto,” published in 1550, is this account of the picture:

“Giotto became so good an imitator of nature, that he altogether discarded the stiff Greek manner, and revived the modern and good art of painting, introducing exact drawing from nature and living persons, which, for more than two hundred years, had not been practiced, or if, indeed any one had tried it, he had not succeeded very happily, nor anything like so well as Giotto. And he portrayed, among other persons, *as may even now be seen* in the chapel of the palace of the Podestà, in Florence, Dante Alighieri, his contemporary and greatest friend, who was not less famous as a poet than Giotto as a painter in those days.”

This picture is supposed to have been painted when Dante was about twenty years old; and according to the above extract from Vasari, it was still to be seen in 1550. Professor Charles Eliot Norton, in his work on the original portraits of Dante (Cambridge, 1865), gives this account of the loss of the picture:

“One might have supposed that such a picture as this would have been among the most carefully protected and jealously prized treasures of Florence. But such was not the case. The shameful neglect of many of the best and most interesting works of the earlier period of art, which accompanied and was one of the symptoms of the moral and political decline of Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, extended to this as to other of the noblest paintings of Giotto. Florence, in losing consciousness of present worth, lost care for the memorials of her past honor, dignity, and distinction. The palace of the Podestà, no longer needed for the dwelling of the chief magistrate of a free city, was turned into a jail for common criminals, and what had once been its beautiful and sacred chapel was occupied as a larder or store-room. The walls, adorned with paintings more precious than gold, were covered with whitewash, and the fresco of Giotto was swept over by the brush of the plasterer. It was not only thus hidden from the sight of those unworthy indeed to behold it, but it almost disappeared from memory also, and from the time of Vasari down to that of Moreni, a Florentine antiquary in the early part of the present century, hardly a mention of it occurs. In a note found among his papers, Moreni laments that he had spent two years of his life in unavailing efforts to recover the portrait of Dante and the other portions of the fresco of Giotto in the Bargello, mentioned by Vasari; that others before him had made a like effort, and had failed in like manner; and that he hoped that better times would come, in which this painting, of such historic and artistic interest, would again be sought for and at length recovered. Stimulated by these words, three gentlemen, one an American, Mr. Richard Henry Wilde, one an Englishman, Mr. Seymour Kirkup, and one an Italian, Signor G. Aubrey Bezzi, all scholars devoted to the study of Dante, undertook new researches in 1840; and after many hindrances on the part of the

government, which were at length successfully overcome, the work of removing the crust of plaster from the walls of the ancient chapel was intrusted to the Florentine painter Marini. This new and well-directed search did not fail. After some months' labor the fresco was found, almost uninjured, under the

THE DEATH-MASK.

THE other authentic portrait is the well-known "Death-Mask." I call it authentic because, although its history is obscure, it



BRONZE BUST OF DANTE, IN THE MUSEUM OF NAPLES.

whitewash that had protected while concealing it, and at length the likeness of Dante was uncovered.

"But," says Mr. Kirkup, in a letter published in the "Spectator" (London, May 11th, 1850), "the eye of the beautiful profile was wanting. There was a hole an inch deep, or an inch and a half. Marini said it was a nail. It did seem precisely the damage of a nail drawn out. Afterward . . . Marini filled the hole and made a new eye, too little, and ill designed; and then he retouched the whole face and clothes, to the great damage of the expression and character. The likeness of the face, and the three colors in which Dante was dressed, the same with those of Beatrice, those of young Italy, white, green, and red, stand no more; the green is turned to chocolate color; moreover, the form of the cap is lost and confounded.

"I desired to make a drawing; . . . it was denied to me. . . . But I obtained the means to be shut up in the prison for a morning, and not only did I make a drawing but a tracing also, and with the two I then made a facsimile, sufficiently careful. Luckily, it was before the *rifacimento*."

"This facsimile afterward passed into the hands of Lord Vernon, well known for his interest in all Dantesque studies, and by his permission it has been admirably reproduced in chromo-lithography, under the auspices of the Arundel Society. The reproduction is entirely satisfactory as a representation of the authentic portrait of the youthful Dante, in the state in which it was when Mr. Kirkup was so fortunate as to gain admission to it."*

* C. E. Norton, "Original Portraits of Dante."

carries authenticity in its face. The portrait by Giotto gives us the poet in his youth, and there can be no doubt that all the later portraits are taken from the mask. The solemnly grave warrior head we see in the bronze bust at Naples, and the three heads by Raphael (one in the fresco of the Disputa in the Stanze of the Vatican, one in the Parnassus in the same room, and one in the School of Athens) are all of this graver and grander type. So also in a drawing by Raphael, probably a study for one of these, in the collection at Vienna. Raphael used the traditional features, but expressed them in grandiose poetic forms, and these again have been used as master types for succeeding portraits. These two portraits—the first being Mr. Kirkup's precious rescue from the destructive restorer, which gives the pure and beautiful outlines of youth, the second being the wonderfully expressive death-mask which has brought down to us not only the dead features of the poet but the expression stamped upon them in that supreme hour when, before abandoning the clay, the spirit takes entire possession of it—express the history of a life, and bring



HEAD OF DANTE.

FROM THE "DISPUTA" OF RAPHAEL, IN THE VATICAN.

this distracted, this stormy and suffering pilgrimage together into a coherent and most impressive whole.

The history of the mask I will give in Mr. Norton's words :

"There exists also a mask concerning which there is a tradition that it was taken from the face of the dead poet, and which, if its genuineness could be established, would not be of inferior interest to the early portrait. But there is no trustworthy historic testimony concerning it, and its authority as a likeness depends on the evidence of truth which its own character affords. On the very threshold of the inquiry we are met with the doubt whether the art of taking casts was practiced at the time of Dante's death. In his life of Andrea del Verocchio, Vasari says that this art began to come into use in his time, that is, about the middle of the fifteenth century; and Bottari refers to the likeness of Brunelleschi, who died in 1446, which was taken in this manner, and was preserved in the office of the works of the cathedral at Florence. It is not impossible that so simple an art may have been sometimes practiced at an earlier period; and if so, there is no inherent improbability in the supposition that Guido Novello, the friend and protector of Dante at Ravenna, may, at the time of the poet's death, have had a mask taken to serve as a model for the head of a statue intended to form part of the monument which he proposed to erect in honor of Dante. And it may further be supposed that, this design failing, owing to the fall of Guido from power before its accomplishment, the mask may have been preserved at Ravenna, till we first catch a trace of it nearly three centuries later. There is in the Magliabecchian library at Florence an autograph manuscript by Giovanni Cinelli, a Florentine antiquary who died in 1706, entitled 'La Toscana letterata, ovvero Istoria degli Scrittori Fiorentini,' which contains a life of Dante. In the course of the biography, Cinelli states that the Archbishop of Ravenna caused the head of the poet, which had adorned his sepulcher, to be taken therefrom, and that it came into the possession of the famous sculptor Gian Bologna, who left it at his death, in 1606, to his pupil Pietro Tacca. One day Tacca showed it with other curiosities to the Duchess Sforza, who, having wrapped it in a scarf of green cloth, carried it away, and God knows into whose hands the precious object has fallen, or where it is to be found. . . . On account of its singular beauty, it had often been drawn by the scholars of Tacca. It has been supposed that this head was the original mask from which the casts now existing were derived.

"Mr. Seymour Kirkup, in a note on this passage from Cinelli, says that 'there are three masks of Dante at Florence, all of which have been judged by the first Roman and Florentine sculptors to have been taken from life (that is, from the face after death),—the slight differences noticeable between them being such as might occur in casts made from the original mask.' One of these casts was given to Mr. Kirkup by the sculptor Bartolini, another belonged to the late sculptor Professor Ricci, and the third is in the possession of the Marchese Torrigiani. . . .

"In the absence of historical evidence in regard to this mask, some support is given to the belief in its genuineness by the fact that it appears to be the type of the greater number of the portraits of Dante executed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, and was adopted by Raphael as the original from which he drew the likeness which has done most to make the features of the poet familiar to the world. The character of the mask itself, however, affords the only really satisfactory ground for confidence in the truth of the tradition concerning it. It was plainly

taken as a cast from a face after death. It has none of the characteristics which a fictitious and imaginative representation of the sort would be likely to present. It bears no trace of being a work of skillful and deceptive art. The difference in the fall of the two half-closed eyelids, the difference between the sides of the face, the slight deflection in the line of the nose, the droop of the corners of the mouth, and other delicate, but none the less convincing indications, combine to show that it was in all probability taken directly from nature. The countenance, moreover, and expression are worthy of Dante; no ideal forms could so answer to the face of him who had led a life apart from the world in which he dwelt, and had been conducted by love and faith along hard, painful, and solitary ways to behold

"'L'alto trionfo del regno verace.'

"The mask conforms entirely to the description by Boccaccio of the poet's countenance, save that it is beardless, and this difference is to be accounted for by the fact that, to obtain the cast, the beard must have been removed.

"The face is one of the most pathetic upon which human eyes ever looked, for it exhibits in its expression the conflict between the strong nature of the man and the hard dealings of fortune—between the idea of his life and its practical experience. Strength is the most striking attribute of the countenance, displayed alike in the broad forehead, the masculine nose, the firm lips, the heavy jaw, and wide chin; and this strength, resulting from the main forms of the features, is enforced by the strength of the lines of expression. The look is grave and stern, almost to grimness; there is a scornful lift to the eyebrow, and a contraction of the forehead as from painful thought; but, obscured under this look, yet not lost, are the marks of tenderness, refinement, and self-mastery, which, in combination with the more obvious characteristics, give to the countenance of the dead poet an ineffable dignity and melancholy. There is neither weakness nor failure here. It is the image of the strong fortress of a strong soul, 'buttressed by conscience and impregnable will,' battered by the blows of enemies without and within, bearing upon its walls the dints of many a siege, but standing firm and unshaken against all attacks until the warfare was at an end.

"The intrinsic evidence for the truth of this likeness, from its correspondence, not only with the description of the poet, but with the imagination that we form of him from his life and works, is strongly confirmed by a comparison of the mask with the portrait by Giotto. So far as I am aware, this comparison has not hitherto been made in a manner to exhibit effectively the resemblance between the two. A direct comparison between the painting and the mask, owing to the difficulty of reducing the forms of the latter to a plain surface of light and shade, is unsatisfactory. But by taking a photograph from the mask in the same position as that in which the face is painted by Giotto, and placing it alongside of the facsimile from the painting, a very remarkable similarity becomes at once apparent. . . . The differences are only such as must exist between the portrait of a man in the freshness of a happy youth and the portrait of him in his age, after much experience and many trials. Dante was fifty-six years old at the time of his death, when the mask was taken; the portrait by Giotto represents him as not much past twenty. There is an interval of at least thirty years between the two. And what years they had been for him!

"The interest of this comparison lies not only in the mutual support which the portraits afford each other, in the assurance each gives that the other is genuine, but also in their joint illustration of the life and character of Dante. As Giotto painted him, he is the lover

of Beatrice, the gay companion of princes, the friend of poets, and himself already the most famous writer of love verses in Italy. There is an almost feminine softness in the lines of the face, with a sweet and serious tenderness well befitting the lover and the author of the sonnets and *canzoni* which were, in a few years, to be gathered into the incomparable record of his new life. It is the face of Dante in the May time of youthful hope, in that serene season of promise and joy which was so soon to reach its foreordained close

Dr. Theodor Paur, in his paper on the Dante portraits in the "Jahrbuch der Deutschen Dante Gesellschaft" (Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1869), speaks of a fourth death-mask said to have been found in Ravenna more recently by L. C. Perucchi of Florence. It is a profile raised in rilievo on a marble slab, and is spoken of as now in Rome at San Pietro in



GIOTTO'S PORTRAIT OF DANTE, FROM TRACING BY SEYMOUR KIRKUP, ESQ. (BY PERMISSION OF ARUNDEL SOCIETY.)

in the-death of her who had made life new and beautiful to him, and to the love and honor of whom he dedicated his soul and gave all his future years. It is the same face with that of the mask, but the one is the face of a youth 'with all triumphant splendor on his brow,' the other of a man burdened 'with the dust and injury of age.' The forms and features are alike; but, as to the later face,

"That time of year thou may'st in [it] behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

"The face of the youth is grave as with the shadow
of distant sorrow; the face of the man is solemn, as
of one who had gone

"Per tutti i cerchi del dolente regno."

"The one is the young poet of Florence, the other
the supreme poet of the world,—

"che al divino dall' umano
All' eterno del tempo era venuto."

Vincoli. Perucchi asserts that this is the first authentic one. A frontispiece to the same volume is a profile likeness of Dante, engraved from a portrait in the Munich collection, said to be by Masaccio. The cast of the features is not very unlike that of Giotto's portrait; that is to say, in the way in which the face is put together, which more than identity of feature makes likeness. In this vital point the many portraits vary; and if we take the Giotto portrait and the death-mask, which are alike in this respect, we have a standard which will exclude many of the portraits of Dante which are supposed to be of some authority. A greater difference between these two and most of the others that I have seen is the difference in expression. In both of these is to be seen a calm serenity which marks the strong man, the man strong in all his intellectual faculties, in his clear



PROFILE OF DANTE, IN RELIEF, ON THE MAUSOLEUM AT RAVENNA.

moral sense, and his unvarying strength of will, which sustains all the higher powers in their work. The Masaccio portrait seems weak, though not varying much from the original type. This may be through fault of the engraver.

There is an interesting portrait in Rome, an old painting in oils, owned by Mr. Morris Moore, which appears to have been copied by a skillful artist from the work of Giotto. It has the same facial angle, the same beautiful profile, the same serene, composed expression of a harmonious and happy existence before the peace was broken. Mr. Moore believes this to be a copy by Raphael. It has a laurel crown above the cap, wanting in the Giotto, and the vest has three peculiarly shaped buttons, in this point also differing from the Giotto portrait, but resembling the Dresden bust.*

Professor Theodor Paur, in his learned paper on the portraits of Dante, enumerates many of earlier date than the present century. As, however, they may be traced to the two sources already indicated, we will not here give their catalogue. One of these was a me-

* The pedigree Mr. Moore gives of this portrait is that it was painted for Cardinal Bembo, and is of the period of the Entombment in the Borghese gallery. From the Bembo family it passed into another great Venetian patrician family, that of Gradenigo, and from this into the family of the Counts Capodilista of Padua. It came into Morris Moore's possession in 1857.

dallion owned by Goethe, which he believed to have been made during the poet's life-time.

The description of Dante's person in Boccaccio's life is interesting:

"Our poet was of middle stature, and had a long face and aquiline nose; jaws prominent, and the under lip projecting so that it was as much advanced as the upper; shoulders somewhat bent, and the eyes rather large than small; complexion dark, hair and beard thick, crisp, and black, and his countenance always sad and thoughtful. For this reason it happened, one day in Verona, the fame of his work being already spread everywhere, and his person known to many men and women, that, in passing before a door where several women were sitting, one of them, speaking softly, but not so that it was not audible to himself and to those who were with him, said to the other women, 'Behold the man who goes into the Inferno, and returns when he pleases, and brings news of those who are down there!' To which one of the others answered, simply, 'Truly it must be so. See how brown he is, and how his beard is scorched, through the heat and smoke!' It is said that Dante, seeing that she spoke in good faith, passed on, smiling. He was always decently dressed, and in clothing suited to his years. His bearing was grave and gentle, and, whether at home or in public, wonderfully composed and courteous. He was temperate in eating and drinking, was greatly inclined to solitude, and, though eloquent in speech, he rarely spoke unless when addressed."

At the end of a manuscript of the *Divina Commedia* of the fourteenth century are two short poems in honor of Dante. The first speaks of his glory and misfortunes, the second gives his physical portrait, which is in strict conformity with that traced by Boc-

caccio in his life of the poet, so much so that it is, in nearly the same words, arranged in verse. It has been observed that, although the verbal descriptions of his person all give him a beard, only one of the portraits does so—an old one, painted in the fourteenth century. This is mentioned by Dante's biographer Misserini in 1832. Giotto's portrait has no beard, perhaps because the younger men of that day wore none; the death-mask has no beard, perhaps because it was removed before taking the cast.

I have not mentioned the basso-rilievo at Ravenna, which every traveler sees, or tries to see. The light in that little building is so imperfect that, looking through the grated door, one but just sees that there is something of the kind there. A cast of this head shows something more, and, though it is crude in treatment, both likeness and expression are

there. Of this work the sculptor William W. Story says, in a letter to the writer:

"The photograph of the basso-rilievo in the tomb of Dante at Ravenna, representing the poet himself, is interesting, and, though a little weak, has a good deal of expression and feeling. There is no special authority for it as a likeness other than what it draws from material still at command of any artist. It was executed by Pietro Lombardi in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the same artist who designed the tomb itself. The photograph only represents a part of the figure existing in the basso-rilievo, which is a half figure leaning his arm on a reading stand, on which is an open book, at which the poet is looking. The likeness was undoubtedly made up by the artist from the pictures and mask of Dante then existing."

Of the Naples bust in bronze Mr. Story says:

"It is not only very fine in itself and carefully executed, but was probably made in the fourteenth century, and possibly may be an authentic portrait from life. Of all the likenesses of Dante, this is the best and most characteristic. I mean I think so."

Sarah Freeman Clarke.



A SONG OF HOPE.

THE morning breaks, the storm is past. Behold!
 Along the west the light grows bright; the sea
 Leaps sparkling blue to catch the sunshine's gold,
 And swift before the breeze the vapors flee.

Light cloud-flocks white that troop in joyful haste
 Up and across the pure and tender sky;
 Light laughing waves that dimple all the waste,
 And break about the rocks and hurry by!

Flying of sails and clouds, and tumult sweet,
 And tossing buoys, and warm wild wind that blows
 The scarlet pennon, rushing on to greet
 Thy lovely cheek and heighten its soft rose!

Beloved, beloved! is there no morning breeze
 To clear our sky and chase our clouds away,
 Like this great air that sweeps the freshening seas,
 And wakes the old sad world to glad new day?

Sweeter than morning, stronger than the gale,
 Deeper than ocean, warmer than the sun,
 My love shall climb, shall claim thee, shall prevail
 Against eternal darkness, dearest one!

Celia Thaxter.