

ON A MONUMENT IN THE CLOISTER OF ST. MARIA
ANNUNCIATA, AT FLORENCE.

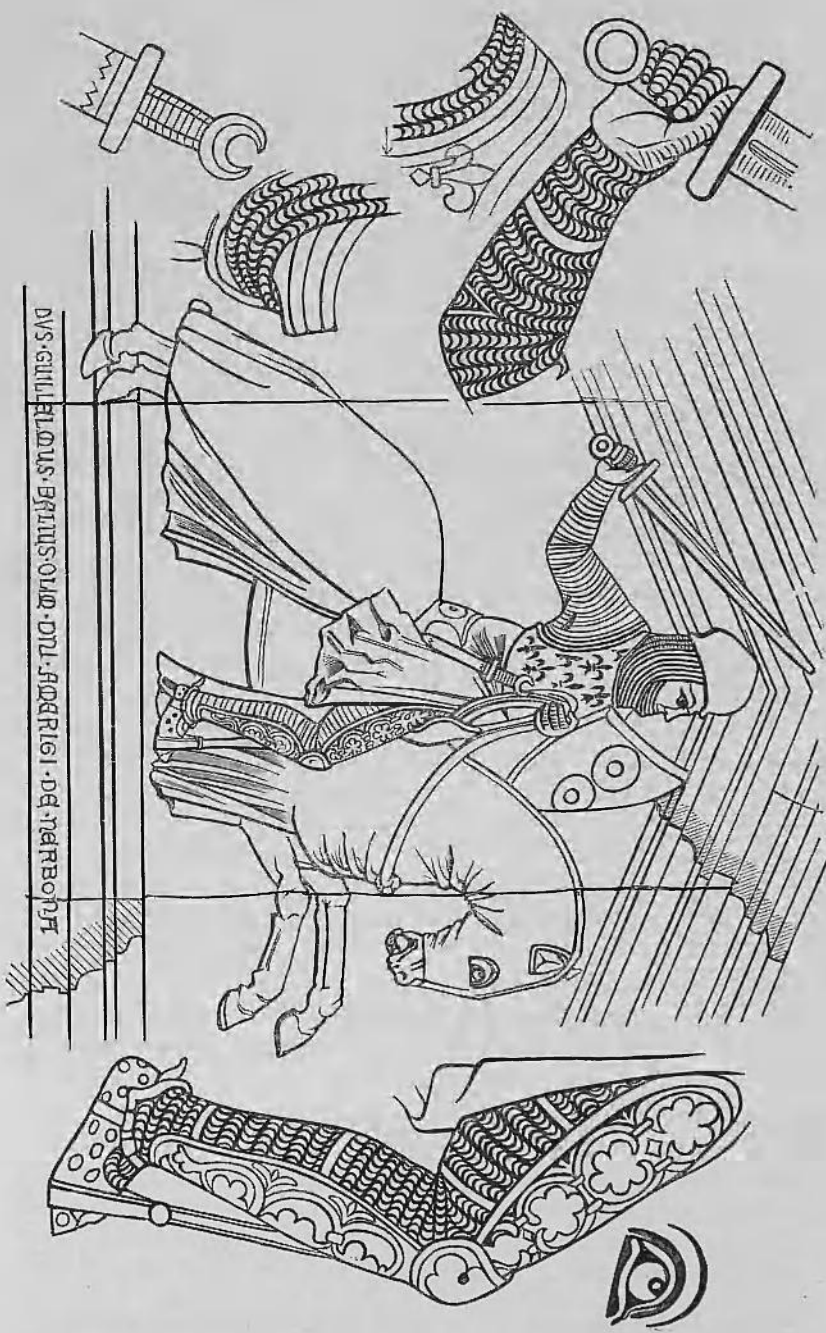
By W. BURGESS.

FEW travellers who go to Florence fail to visit the famous Madonna del Sacco in the great cloister of the Church of the Annunciata. Close to the *chef d'œuvre* of Andrea del Sarto is a marble monument, which will hardly claim notice except from the antiquary, but which has a history as stirring as those connected with the monuments of Athens or of Rome; and as the battle of Marathon was the commencement of the supremacy of Athens, the fight at Campoldino gave Florence the predominance in Tuscany.

The monument in the cloister of the Annunciata consists of three principal slabs of marble, forming an oblong panel, in the centre of which rises a low pediment. There is also a base below and a label above, formed of sundry other pieces of marble. In the midst of the panel, in high relief, is a warrior on horseback: the rest of the ground being occupied by two ornaments; that on the dexter side is a conventional tree, with a couple of birds on the topmost branches, while the sinister side has simply a flat circular boss, not unlike the ornament a modern builder puts up in the centre of a drawing-room ceiling. On the flat space which occurs between the moulding of the bottom of the panel and the base there is the following inscription in Lombardic characters:—

ANĪ · DNĪ · MCCLXXXIX · HIC · JACET
DNS · GULLIELMUS · BALIUS · OLIM · DNI ·
AMERIGI · DE · NERBONA.

At present the monument is placed against the wall, the base resting on the ground; but from its shape the conjecture may, perhaps, be hazarded that it may have been placed over the lintel of a doorway, which would account



DVS·GUILLELMVS·BRIYS·OMN·DNI·FOEDRIGI·DE·MARBORGH

for its extreme length in proportion to its height, and the employment of the foliage on either side of the figure.

Curiously enough, a nearly similar figure, only of earlier date and of ruder workmanship, occurs on the side of a sarcophagus in the museum at Toulouse. The arms on the shield have also a certain resemblance to those on the monument at Florence. The principal points to be noticed in the latter are—1. The shape of the helmet. 2. The direction of the bands of mail at the chin. 3. The edge of the breastplate under the surcoat. 4. The direction of the bands of mail on the arm, one band being left uncarved, as if to show the attachment of the glove. 5. The adjuncts to the thighs, the knees and the shins. Mr. Hewitt, who has described and engraved this figure from the Kerrich collection in the British Museum, thinks that the “abundance of ornament seems to imply a moulded material, cuir bouilli,” but of course there is no authority for this opinion, as the ornament was just as likely to be beaten out of metal as moulded in leather. 6. The shoes, which are likely to have been made of leather, in which case the circles may possibly indicate brass ornaments or nails. 7. The crescent shape of the dagger pommel. This is found as late as the beginning of the 15th century, in the woodcuts of Burgmaier. 8. The covering of the horse, which appears to be simply of cloth, and shows no appearance of mail beneath. 9. The surcoat of the knight, powdered with fleur-de-lys down to the waist, but below quite plain. At present there are no vestiges of paint upon the monument, although the plate of it in Bonnard’s “Costumes”¹ is highly coloured and the drawing improved.

Now as regards the state of art shown in this sculpture. If we remember its date, and if we compare it with contemporary works in France and England, we cannot fail to be astonished at its comparative rudeness, even when we take into account the extra difficulty of the material, viz., white marble. Because Italy at a later period did take the lead in the arts, some authors choose to imagine that she always did so, and it is thus that we see the statement continually repeated, that the effigies of Henry III. and Queen Eleanor were the work of a Florentine of the

¹ *Costumes Historiques des XIII., XIV., et XV. siècles*, par Camille Bonnard. London: Colnaghi, 1844, No. 42.

name of Torelli; whereas, we know that William Torel was a citizen of London, and that the name occurs in the Domesday Book. But apart from all documentary evidences, a careful comparison of the 13th century sculpture in Italy and of that of France and England, will be entirely in favour of the latter two countries: and this tomb at Florence is only one example out of many.

The circumstances which led to the death of the tutor of Amerigo de Narbonne, and consequently to the erection of the monument, are very fully described by Giovanni Villani, from whom I extract the following account, merely premising that Florence and Arezzo were at the time in question at war with each other, for the great reason, *inter alia*, that Florence belonged to the Guelph party, whereas Arezzo held for the Ghibelline. At the same time Charles II. of Naples had been liberated from his captivity in Spain, and was then going from France to take possession of his kingdom. His father, the great Charles d'Anjou, having been dead some three years.²

"In the said year (1289), on the 2nd of May, there came to Florence the Prince Charles, son of the great King Charles, who, returning from France, and on his way to Rieti to the Pope, was received by the Florentines with great honour and presents, and after stopping three days in Florence he left to make journey by way of Siena.

. The prince being asked by the Commune of Florence for a captain of war, and to allow them to carry the Royal standard with their host, he granted their request, and knighted Amerigo di Nerbona, a great gentleman, brave and wise in war, and gave them him for captain, and the said Messer Amerigo with his company, above a hundred mounted men, came to Florence with the aforesaid cavalry, and the prince went to court and was honourably received by Pope Nicholas."

Dino Compagni,³ also a contemporary of the events in question, in his *Cronica Fiorentina*, gives rather a different account of Messer Amerigo. He says that "the prince left with them Messer Amerigo di Nerbona, his baron and gentleman, young and handsome in body, but not very expert in

² *Cronica di Giovanni Villani*, lib. 7, cap. cxxx. Firenze per il Magheri, 1823. I have endeavoured to translate the extract as literally as the idiom of the

language will allow.

³ *Cronica Fiorentina di Dino di Compagni*. Firenze: Barbera Bianchi, 1858, p. 17.

deeds of arms, but there remained with him an old knight, his tutor (Balio), and many other knights apt and expert in war, and with great pay and rations."

Villani then proceeds to tell us how the Florentines having got the royal standard and Messer Amerigo, immediately proceeded to make use of them, for on the 13th of May they set out on an expedition against Arezzo. In the enumeration of the forces we are informed that there were one thousand six hundred knights, and ten thousand foot, of which there were six hundred citizens with horses, the best armed and mounted that ever went out from Florence, and four hundred soldiers with the people of the Captain Messer Amerigo in the pay of the Florentines. Now, in the previous chapter Villani says that Amerigo had about one hundred men on horseback; we must therefore suppose that he had also three hundred foot soldiers in addition, or that that number of mercenaries had been added to his troupe. The actual battle which took place on the 11th of June is thus described by Villani:

"And the Florentines having joyfully received the challenge of a battle, the two hosts mutually skirmished and faced each other in better order than had ever been done in Italy, in the plain at the foot of Poppi, in a country called Certomundo, for so the place is named; and there is a church of minor friars close by, and a plain which is called Campoldino, and this happened on a Saturday morning the 11th day of the month of June, the day of St. Barnabas the Apostle.

"Messer Amerigo and the other captains of the Florentines skirmished well and in good order. Making a vanguard (feditori) of one hundred and fifty of the best of the host, among which were twenty new knights who were then made. And Messer Vieri De'cerchi, one of the captains, having a bad leg, persisted in being one of the vanguard, and having to choose his men, he wished to have nobody against his will, but chose his son and his nephew. For which thing he had great praise, and through his good example, and through shame, many other noble citizens put themselves in the vanguard. This being done, on either wing of the pavisers were placed cross-bowmen and foot soldiers with long lances; and behind the vanguard the great battalion (of cavalry), also with foot soldiers on the wings.

Behind all was the baggage collected together, so as to retain the great battalion, and without the said battalion were placed two hundred knights, with foot soldiers from Lucca and from Pistoia, and other strangers, of whom the captain was Messer Corso Donati, who was then Podestà at Pistoia, whose duty it was, if he saw occasion, to take the enemy on the flank."

Villani's description of the arrangement of the army is very obscure, but I have given what appears to me to be his meaning. Dino Compagni tells us—"The captains of the war put the vanguard (*feditori*) in the front of the army, and the pavisers with the white field and red lily were drawn up before them. Then the Bishop (of Arezzo), who was short-sighted, asked, 'what are those walls?' To which it was replied, 'the pavisers of the enemy.'"

Villani thus continues: "The Aretini on their part ordered wisely their battalions, for they had, as we have said before, good captains, and they made a vanguard of three hundred, among whom they had chosen twelve of the largest size, who were called the twelve paladins; and the word being given to the host on either side, the Florentines '*Nerbona cavaliere*,' and the Aretini, '*San Donato cavaliere*,' the vanguard of the Aretini, with great spirit, charged at gallop the host of the Florentines; and the other battalions followed after, excepting that the Conte Guido Novello, who, with a company of a hundred and fifty men, with instructions to make a flank charge, was afraid to go into the battle, but stood still, and then went off to his castle. The charge and assault of the Aretini on the Florentines was such as might be expected from excellent men-at-arms, whose intention was to break and put the Florentines to flight at the first attack, and so strong was the shock that most of the vanguard of the Florentines were unhorsed, and the great battalion was beaten back a good deal; but they did not lose their spirit, nor did they break, but received the enemy with constancy and fortitude; and the wings on either side of the foot soldiers enclosed the enemy between them fighting bravely a good time. Then Messer Corso Donati, who was apart with the people of Lucca and Pistoia, and who had been ordered to remain still and not to fight, under penalty of his head, when he saw the battle begun, said, like a valiant man, 'If we lose, I wish to die in

the fight with my fellow-citizens, and if we conquer, let who likes come to Pistoia to see me condemned.' He then put his company in motion, and charged the enemy on the flank, and was the great cause of their rout; and when he had done this, as it pleased God, the Florentines had the victory, and the Aretini were broken and discomfited, and there were killed more than one thousand seven hundred of horse and foot, and there were taken more than two thousand, of whom many even of the best escaped, some through friendship, others by ransom, but there were led bound into Florence seven hundred and forty. Among the dead there remained Messer Guiglielmino degli Ubertini, Bishop of Arezzo, who was a great warrior, and Messer Guiglielmino de' Pazzi di Valdarno and his nephews, who was the best and most experienced captain of war in Italy of his time. And there died Bonconte, son of Count Guido da Montefeltro, and three of the Uberti, and one of the Abati, and two of the Griffoni da Fegghine, and many more Florentine exiles, besides Guiderello d'Alessandro da Orbivieto, who carried the imperial banner, and many others. On the side of the Florentines no man of note was killed, except Messer Guiglielmo Berardi, tutor of Messer Amerigo de Nerbona and Messer Bindo del Baschiera de' Tosighi and Tuci de Visdomini, but many other citizens and strangers were wounded. The news of this victory came to Florence the same day and at the same hour at which it took place; for when after breakfasting the Priori had gone to sleep and to rest themselves on account of the care and watchfulness of the past night, suddenly the door of the chamber was knocked at, and a voice cried 'Get up, for the Aretini are discomfited,' and they did get up and opened the door, but found nobody, and their servants who were without, heard nothing; whence it was held to be a marvellous and notable thing, for it was the hour of vespers before any one came from the battle with the news. And this is true, for I both heard and saw it, and all the Florentines wondered whence this arose, and they were very anxious. But when those arrived who came from the host, and brought the news to Florence, there was great joy, and well they might be joyful. For in that discomfiture there were killed many captains and valiant men of the Ghibelline party, and enemies of the Commune of Florence; and there was abated

the pride not only of the Aretini, but also of the Ghibelline party, and of that of the empire."

Thus far Villani. The account of Dino Compagni is much shorter, if not quite so clear, but it has all the appearance of being the description of an eye-witness, who would naturally remember the discomforts of the clouds, the dust, and the bolts. I venture to give it, as it is so seldom that the historian is an eye-witness of the events he describes :—

"Messer Baroni de Mangiadoro da San Miniato, a brave and expert knight in matters of war, having collected the men-at-arms, said to them :—'Gentlemen,—In the wars in Tuscany we have been accustomed to conquer by assault. They did not last long, and few men died, for it was not the custom to kill them (? prisoners). Now the fashion has changed, and we conquer by standing firm. I, therefore, advise you to stand well, and let them assail,' and thus they settled to do. The Aretini assailed so vigorously, and with such force, that the battalion of the Florentines was driven back a good deal. The battle was very fierce and hard. New knights were made, both on one side and on the other. Messer Corso Donati, with his command of the Pistolesi, charged the enemy on the flank. The bolts came down like rain. The Aretini had few of them, and were charged on the flank, where they were unprotected. The air was covered with clouds, the dust was very great. The foot-soldiers of the Aretini crawled under the bellies of the horses, with knives in their hands, and ripped them up, and they got through their vanguard so far that, in the midst of the battalion, there were many dead on either side. Many that day who were esteemed of great valour were found out to be cowards; and many who had never been talked about were esteemed. Much praise had the tutor of the captain, and there was he killed."

Ammirato, in his *Istorie Fiorentine*, edition 1647, copies his account of the battle from Villani, but, in his enumeration of the Florentine losses, the following passage occurs :—

" and the tutor of the captain, a knight of great worth, named Guglielmo Bertaldi, whose sepulchre is to be seen at the present day in the cloister of the Nunciata; he much distinguished himself in this deed of arms"

It will be observed that both the monument and Dino Compagni are silent as to the surname of the tutor of

Amerigo, while Villani and Ammirato give us respectively Berardi and Bertaldi. However, as the former was a contemporary of the event, we may well prefer his authority to that of Ammirato, who did not write until the end of the sixteenth century.

I have made an ineffective search for the arms sculptured on the monument, in the hope that it might confirm one or other of the two names. In the *Priorista di Firenze* in the British Museum (Egerton, 1170), under the year 1363, the name of Berardi occurs, but the arms have no resemblance whatever with those on the monument. But after all, it is to France that we must refer for any information respecting the person commemorated.

In Vaissette's *Histoire Générale de Languedoc* we find the name of Berard occurring several times. Thus we come across a Comte Berard, podestà of Avignon, under the year 1240. Now as the person in question is described, both by Villani and Dino Compagni, as an old knight, it is just within the bounds of probability that this may be the same person.

From the document in Vaissette, vol. vi., p. 418, it appears that the Vicar-general of the Emperor demanded the Count of Toulouse (Raymond VII.) to give up the government (podesteria) of the city of Avignon into his hands. This the Count refused to do, alleging that he himself held the government to the honour and profit of the Emperor; "and that because Count Berard would not or could not give up (refere) the aforesaid city of Avignon there was a great scandal in the town, so that the enemies of the Emperor rose up in arms against the aforesaid Count Berard, proposing to expel Count Berard himself from the city, and to make a government of their own, whence the whole city, if they obtained their object, would be against our Lord the Emperor, and with the Count of Provence, and with the clergy, and all on account of the defective government of Count Berard, and thus at the prayer of the Count Berard himself, and at the prayer of the general council and parliament of the said city of Avignon, he (the Count of Toulouse) received the government (podesteria) of the aforesaid city," &c.

This, and an allusion to him in another document, in which he is mentioned in connection with the people of

Avignon, is all that I have been enabled to find concerning the subject of the present notice ; but it is very possible, considering the time between the date of the document and the battle of Campoldino—some forty years—that the podestà of Avignon may have been an ancestor of the knight commemorated by the monument, instead of the knight himself.

Some day, perhaps, when the Florentine archives shall have been properly examined, we may be able to discover whether the tomb was erected by the gratitude of the Republic or by the friendship of Amerigo.

Concerning the latter, Vaissette, in the *Histoire de Languedoc*, gives the following account, although omitting to mention his authority (l. 28, c. 9). After telling us that Amalric, son of the Vicomte of Narbonne, accompanied Charles II. of Sicily into Italy, and was appointed by Charles to the command of the Florentine forces, he thus proceeds :—

“Amalric had led with him a hundred knights from the Vicomté of Narbonne, or from the rest of the province, who entered under his banner into the service of the Guelfs, and having entered into campaign, he carried off several advantages; among which was the victory over the Aretines, the 11th of June following. The people of Florence were so delighted with this victory that they ran in crowds to meet Amalric, who was carried upon the lances of the soldiers. They covered him with a cloth of gold and made him a magnificent entry into the town.”

The reputation of the exploits of Amalric caused all the Guelph towns, who were leagued together under the title of *Société de Toscane*, to elect him in January, 1290, the captain of a corps of 450 knights, who were engaged at their expense to continue the war against the Ghibellines for the space of a year. Among this number there were thirty knights who were called *De Corredo*. These had already given proof, and had grown old in the exercise of arms. They had the right to wear gilt spurs. The wages of each of these knights was a florin a day. Amalric served with distinction the Florentines and other people of the *Société de Toscane* during the years 1290 and 1291. On the 4th of December of this last year the syndic of the people of Florence declared that the noble and magnificent

man, the Lord Almeric, the eldest son of the illustrious and magnificent man, the Lord Aymeri, Viscount and Lord of Narbonne, captain general "*militum et equitatorum taillæ communitatum Tosciæ*," since the first of January of the preceding year up to the first of January following, had perfectly fulfilled his engagements. Amalric recrossed the Alps in the month of January, 1292. On his return he succeeded to his father, was employed in various offices by Philip le Bel, and died in 1325.

A great deal more may be written concerning the battle of Campoldino, more especially of its connection with Dante and the *Divina Comedia*. All the biographers assert that the poet served in this battle among the cavalry under the command of Messer Mangiadori di Sanminiato. Arrivabene,⁴ quoting from Ammirato, refers to a letter of Dante, now lost, in which occur the following words:—"In the battle of Campoldino the Ghibelline party was almost entirely killed and undone. I was there as a young man, and I was in great fear, but in the end I had great joy on account of the various occurrences of the battle."

Every student of Dante will remember the beautiful episode of Buonconti de Montefeltro in the *Purgatorio*; but nearly every name connected with the battle is more or less interwoven into the great Christian poem.

⁴ *Il secolo di Dante*, Monza, 1838, p. 172.