

**OF THE BEAUTY OF
WOMEN:
DIALOGUE**

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Of the Beauty of Women: Dialogue by Agnolo Firenzuola & Clara Bell & Theodore Child

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AGNOLO FIRENZUOLA & CLARA BELL & THEODORE CHILD

**OF THE BEAUTY OF
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DIALOGUE**

OF THE BEAVTY OF WOMEN

DIALOGVE BY MESSER

AGNOLO FIRENZVOLA

FLORENTINE

TRANSLATED

FROM THE ITALIAN

BY CLARA BELL WITH AN

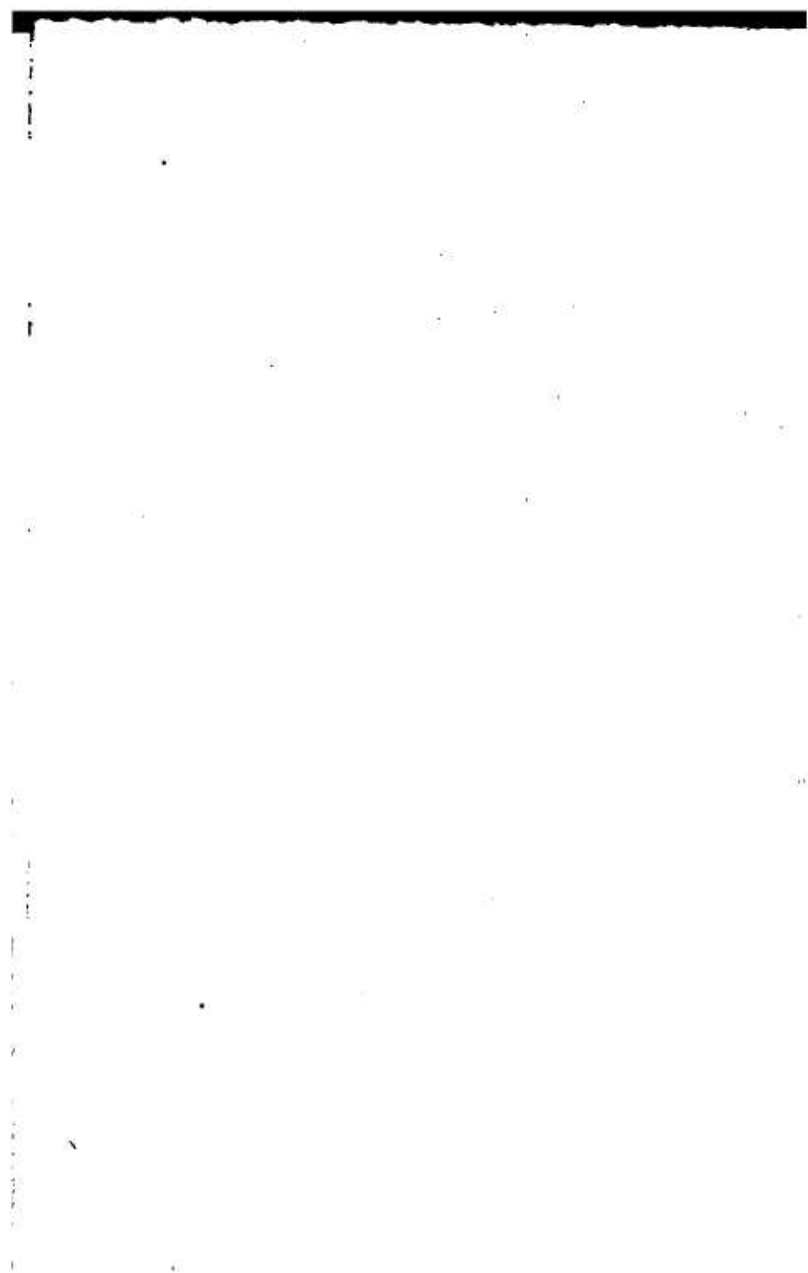
INTRODUCTION BY THEODORE CHILD



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DIALOGUE BY MES-
SER AGNOLO FIREN-
ZVOLA FLORENTINE
OF THE BEAVTY
OF WOMEN





INTRODUCTION.

THIS little volume appeals neither to the erudite alone, nor to the general public, but to all those who love refinement and pursue beauty. It is a book for women and a book for men, inasmuch as it treats of the beauty of women, which is one of the chiefest joys of men.

The author, Agnolo Firenzuola, was born in 1493 at Florence, where he died about 1546. His life, it appears, was not peculiarly exemplary, although he was a churchman; his writings, too, are not all

of an edifying nature, any more than those of Boccaccio; but in the age of Leo X. there was a separation between religion and morality; while, in literature, exquisite style and the manifestation of culture were thought to cover a multitude of sins. Firenzuola was a poet and a literary man of very great talent, and the extreme perfection of his Tuscan style was such that his free translation of the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius was eulogized as being the most perfect piece of Italian prose ever written.

Firenzuola's "DIALOGUE ON THE BEAUTY OF WOMEN," which is here presented for the first time in the English tongue, seems to us worthy of the honours of translation and of perusal for other reasons than those of mere antiquarian curiosity. Our ideal of feminine beauty is doubtless different from that of Botticelli, Perugino, Antonio Bazzi, Bellini, Leonardo or Titian; and yet, by the ardent and continual contemplation of

the masterpieces of these and other painters, we certainly influence our modern ideal in some subtle and unanalyzable way. The life of great works of art is eternal. In each succeeding age they acquire new eloquence and impart fresh lessons to those who study them. They retain an inexhaustible power of suggestion and boundless capacity of interpretation. It is in the interpretation of the painting of the Italian Renaissance that the Dialogue of Firenzuola seems to us to be of singular interest, and above all in its suggestiveness to modern women, and in its implied doctrine that beauty is to be pursued, and, within certain limits, to be attained even by those whom Nature has not lavishly favoured.

It is superfluous to ask whether the Italians of the Golden Age of Art had any theoretical plastic ideal. On what subject did not the contemporaries of Pico della Mirandola theorize? What questions did