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BOTTICELLI

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BOTTICELLI

Bell's Miniature Series of Painters.

Edited by G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.

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MADONNA AND CHILD.

(*From the Chigi Palace, Rome.*)

Bell's Miniature Series of Painters

BOTTICELLI

BY

R. H. HOBART CUST, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "GIOVANNI ANTONIO BAZZI," "THE PAVEMENT MASTERS OF SIENA," ETC. ETC.

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TO

G. C. W.

TO WHOM THE AUTHOR OWES HIS
FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE GREAT WORLD
OF LETTERS,
THIS TINY WORK IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

5:5:77

PREFACE

IT may, perhaps, seem somewhat presumptuous at a moment when scholars and students are anxiously awaiting the early appearance of Mr. Herbert Horne's long-expected and monumental monograph on BOTTICELLI, for anyone less well equipped with knowledge to venture upon another sketch, however limited in scope, regarding this charming painter. Nevertheless, the author is fain to take his courage in his hands, and to hope that as far as his modest work goes, he has not fallen into any very gross errors, or such as may bring upon him the contempt of so distinguished a critic.

December, 1907.

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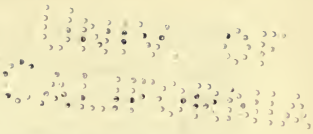


SANDRO BOTTICELLI

HIS LIFE

NO Tuscan painter of the Italian Renaissance has laid more sudden and complete hold of the imagination of the modern art-student than Alessandro Filipepi, commonly called SANDRO BOTTICELLI. Five-and-twenty years ago, except to a limited number of unprejudiced connoisseurs, his name was scarcely known out of Italy; his aims and methods were frankly despised or made objects of derision; and numberless examples of his work lay hidden in lumber-rooms or dark corners of galleries, public and private. With the Pre-Raphaelite Revival, however, and, following that, the so-called "Æsthetic" movement, a vast change took place in art appreciation throughout Europe: and now the pendulum has swung almost too much in the opposite direction. Every scrap of painting that can by any stretch of imagination be attributed to the School of Botticelli, or to the weakest of his

imitators, is boldly labelled as the work of the Master himself; and bitter and fierce are the contests that rage over the genuineness and probable date of execution of this or that painting:—even over those few that apparently are supported by documentary evidence.

The authenticated facts of Botticelli's history are comparatively scarce, and some of them even difficult to reconcile with each other, or with his known commissions; but certain biographical assumptions may justly be drawn from his paintings themselves.

Alessandro Filipepi was the fourth and youngest son of a certain Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, a prosperous tanner of Florence, living in what was then called the Via Nuova (now Via Porcellana), a side street close to the church of S. Lucia in the Borgognissanti.

M. Jacques Mesnil has recently identified his house with No. 28 in that street, and has further discovered that Messer Mariano rented his dwelling from the heir of a certain Simone Manovelli for a sum of ten florins a year.

Till recently, moreover, the date of our artist's birth had been approximately fixed by a document, "a 'Denunzia dei Beni,'" as having taken place some time in the year 1447: since he is

therein described (1480) as being thirty-three years of age. Mr. Herbert Horne has, however, discovered another Income Tax Return, dated February, 1457 (Florentine Style), wherein Sandro is recorded as being then *thirteen* years of age. This would throw the date of his birth back to the year 1444, a date which is further confirmed by another document dated 1st March, 1446, in which Mariano Filipepi declares that his youngest son was then at the age of *two*. M. Mesnil, who made this latter discovery, points out that our artist must therefore have seen the light somewhere between 1st March, 1444, and 1st March, 1445 (New Style).

These two learned critics then differ as to whether the young Sandro was still a schoolboy in 1458; Mr. Horne maintains that, owing to his delicate health (*malsano*) he was unable to commence regular work like other Florentine boys of his class, and was still at school. M. Mesnil, on the other hand, denies that the expression used in the document (for which he, however, admits that he can find no other satisfactory meaning) bears that interpretation.

Nevertheless, we learn from Vasari that schoolboy discipline proved excessively irksome to our lively, high-spirited young friend, and that his

wilful idleness was the occasion of much anxiety and annoyance to his worthy father. In despair at his son's vagaries, says the Aretine historian, Messer Mariano apprenticed his son to a goldsmith, named BOTTICELLI, whence he obtained the nickname by which he is usually known. Here, as is too often the case in the chronicles of that fascinating, but somewhat unscrupulous, historian, we are in danger of being led into error; since no trace can be found of any goldsmith bearing that, or any similar name. On the other hand, Sandro's eldest brother, Giovanni, nearly twenty years his senior—a leather merchant like their father—bore, for some reason that has not come down to us, the nickname of *il Botticello* or the *little cask*. From him no doubt the appellation *di Botticelli* was transferred to his younger brother. By that pseudonym he was apparently known by his friends and contemporaries, and is best known to us now.

Sandro's second brother, Antonio, was a goldsmith (who subsequently became a bookseller in Bologna), and it is, of course, quite possible that Mariano may have at first placed his youngest son with the elder brother to learn that highly lucrative trade. Nevertheless, in 1460 the young artist, at the age of about fifteen or sixteen, seems

to have achieved the desire of his heart and entered the *bottega* of Fra Filippo Lippi, from which time he appears to have devoted himself heart and soul to the study of the art of painting. We hear that his enthusiasm, genius, and, no doubt, personal charm, won the heart of his master, who spared no effort to encourage and help him.

The Frate had in 1452 undertaken to decorate the choir of the Collegiate church at Prato, but had delayed the work from time to time, so it was not until 1465, under the Priorship of Carlo dei Medici, natural son of Cosimo the Elder, that the fine series of scenes from the *Lives of SS. Stephen and John*, still to be seen there, was completed. From these frescoes by his talented master it is evident that our young hero obtained many of the inspirations that served him so well in after-life. The graceful floating form of Salome as she dances before Herod, and the mournful looks of the Apostles gathered around the dead Stephen, reappear continually in Botticelli's work throughout his career.

In the early months of the year 1465, Fra Filippo having finished his task at Prato returned to Florence. When two years later the Friar proceeded to Spoleto to carry out his last important

work in the Duomo there, Sandro did not accompany him, but so strong a similarity exists between the work of the two painters as to lead us to the possible hypothesis that in some way or other—perhaps in the composition of cartoons, or subsequently when on his way to Rome—Botticelli may have contributed a share to this fine creation.

A deep sense of gratitude for his master seems to have remained in our painter's mind, for when after Fra Filippo's death in 1469 his young son Filippino was brought back to Florence, a warm welcome was offered to him by his father's former pupil.

It is not possible to fix upon any one painting as being actually Sandro's *first essay*; but an interesting work of this earliest period of his career was recently discovered by Mr. Berenson and Mr. H. Horne in a tiny wayside shrine near Settignano, called *La Madonna della Vannella.* It is a very badly injured *Madonna and Child*, but it displays traces of all the characteristics by which our artist's work is best known.

At about the same period we would date the long narrow *Adoration of the Magi*, now in the National Gallery, in London (No. 592). Here, however, new influences are evident in the young

[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

FORTITUDE.

painter's style. After Fra Filippo's departure Botticelli formed close relations with the goldsmith-brothers, Piero and Antonio Pollajuolo; and *in competition with* (*not*, as has been hitherto supposed, *under the direction of*) these gifted craftsmen, he executed one of seven allegorical figures to adorn the large Council Hall of the Palace of the Mercatanzia. These figures represent the *Three Theological* and the *Four Cardinal Virtues:* and it was through the influence of Tommaso Soderini, who on 17th May 1470 was added to the Committee of Direction, that one of them—that of *Fortitude*—was withdrawn from Piero Pollajuolo and allotted to Sandro. Soderini's affection for the artist does not appear to have stopped short at procuring him employment, for, to the dismay of the unhappy painter, he also threatened to procure him a wife.

From the documents recently published by M. Jacques Mesnil and Miss Cruttwell, it would seem, moreover, that a sum of forty florins was originally provided for Botticelli's share in this work, which, according to the standard of payment for the other figures, seems rather to suggest an intention that he should execute *two* of them. Furthermore it has been proposed with great show of probability that a drawing by Botticelli

for *Hope*, still existing in the Uffizi Collection, is a sketch for that Virtue in this series, planned but never carried out by him. However this may be, only *one* was completed by him, and he was eventually paid but twenty florins. The figure of *Fortitude*, which is one of the best preserved of the series, is a *pendant* to Piero Pollajuolo's *Prudence* (long attributed, though wrongly, to his brother Antonio). It shows very strongly the influence of these two gifted brothers: so much so in fact, that keen critics, even Morelli himself, were tempted to doubt an authorship now documentarily proved.

From this point we can take a definite point of departure in estimating our artist's style, and we can proceed to fix approximately the date of certain other paintings. Foremost among these are two charming little works, now in the Uffizi (Nos. 1156 and 1158), painted with almost the delicacy of miniatures. They once belonged, we are told, to Bianca Cappello—a gift to her from Messer Ridolfo Sirigatti—and they illustrate the *Story of Judith and Holofernes*. In one we see Judith, the saviour of her country, proceeding victoriously home from Holofernes' camp, attended by her maid, bearing the tyrant's head in a basket. In the other the soldiers and

servants of the dead general are gazing through the curtains of his tent upon his headless corpse. The drawing and modelling in these two paintings show clearly how very much Botticelli owed to a careful study of the work of those incomparable draughtsmen, the Pollajuoli. A similar devotion to the faithful portrayal of anatomy is evident in a dignified *S. Sebastian*, now in the Berlin Museum, but painted, Vasari tells us, in January 1473 and 1474 to the order of Lorenzo dei Medici (*il Magnifico*), for the church of Sta Maria Maggiore. This painting was also at one time attributed to Antonio Pollajuolo.

Of the same period and revealing many of the same characteristic features, is the charming *Madonna and Child with an Angel*, formerly in Prince Chigi's Collection in Rome, a reproduction of which forms the frontispiece to this present volume.

It was at this time no doubt that Botticelli became acquainted with another young Florentine, who in after years—though rallying him vigorously on his methods of painting landscapes—honoured him above all other contemporary painters by a special and an affectionate allusion (*il nostro botticello*) in his famous "Treatise on

Painting." This was Leonardo da Vinci, his junior, it is true, by some years, but even then a personality which could not have failed to extend its influence upon so impressionable and earnest a soul as that of our artist.

Early in 1474 Botticelli's fame having spread beyond his native town he was invited to Pisa to assist Benozzo Gozzoli, his fellow-citizen, in the adornment of the Campo Santo there. In May therefore he paid a first visit to that city, and his iourney expenses—one florin—were defrayed by the Duomo Office of Works. He agreed to paint an *Assumption* in the chapel of the Incoronata in the Cathedral as a proof of his skill before being engaged to represent the same subject in the Campo Santo. From July to September the Duomo Archives record allowances in food-supplies and money for materials made for this work. In September, however, they cease abruptly. Vasari tells us that the work did not give satisfaction, but this scarcely seems likely. There was probably some other reason, which we do not know.

In any case Sandro returned to his native town, where he found himself warmly welcomed; and the opening of his *bottega* was the signal for the commencement of the most prosperous and interesting period of his career.

This was the Golden Age for Florence. Lorenzo dei Medici ruled with almost royal splendour over a city nominally republican, and around him gathered a Court almost unequalled in its own and every other time for brilliance and learning. Botticelli's earliest teachers had enjoyed Medicean protection and thriven under it, so that it was scarcely likely that his pre-eminent abilities would escape the notice of the "Magnificent" Lorenzo: and some of our artist's most poetic and characteristic work was carried out to the order of this appreciative and munificent patron.

He had already, as we have seen, painted a *S. Sebastian* for Lorenzo; but at the end of 1474 he was directed to prepare an emblematic banner to be used by Giuliano, the handsome younger brother and the darling of the Florentine populace, at a tournament held in the Piazza Santa Croce in January of the following year. Giuliano, splendidly attired in silver armour and magnificent jewels, before the eyes of his beloved Simonetta Vespucci, vanquished all rivals. The emblem borne by him on this occasion has been described for us in an account of the Tournament, still existing in the Magliabecchian Library; as follows:

The Goddess Pallas Athene was painted on a blue ground with a rising sun above her head. She was robed in white with a fine golden vest, and stood upon burning boughs of olive. In her right hand she held a lance, whilst her left grasped a shield, upon which was the head of Medusa. Behind her lay Cupid bound by golden cords to an olive tree. The chronicler has not reported for us the name of the author of this device, but so exactly does this description tally with that of a painting of *Pallas* which Vasari tells us was executed by Botticelli for Lorenzo himself, that we have good reason for supposing the two paintings to have been one and the same. This *Pallas* is again alluded to n an inventory dated 1512, of the treasures in the Medici Palace, copied from one made in 1492 at the death of "the Magnificent," as follows: "In the room of Piero—a cloth (*panno*) set in a gold frame, about 4 braccia high by 2 wide, bearing a figure of Pa—[Pallas] with a burning shield and an arrow, by the hand of Sandro da Botticelli."

This and certain other recorded paintings have unfortunately perished: a *Bacchus* (recorded by Vasari) and some Medici family portraits. Among these were likenesses of

[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

GIOVANNI DE MEDICI.

Lorenzo's mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, and of the lovely and universally beloved Simonetta Vespucci. Existing portraits of this beauteous lady (in the Pitti Palace) and of her devoted lover, Giuliano de' Medici (in the Morelli Gallery at Bergamo;—with a replica in the Royal Museum at Berlin), once attributed to Botticelli are now assigned to that gifted but unknown pupil, for whom Mr. Berenson has invented the ingenious name of "Amico di Sandro."

Two portraits belonging to this period do however exist. One of these a delightful likeness of an unknown Florentine boy in a red cap, now in the National Gallery (No. 626), was once assigned to Masaccio; whilst the other is in the Uffizi (No. 1154) and was once called a *Portrait of a Medallist*, from the golden medal bearing the head of Cosimo the elder conspicuously displayed in the hands of the sitter. Many and various have been the conjectures as to whom this portrait represents. Pico della Mirandola, the medallist Pietro Razzanti, and later, Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici are among the various names given to it at different times. The general consensus of opinion is now, however, agreed that it is a portrait of *Giovanni di Cosimo dei Medici*, painted (since he died in 1463) after his death.

Various other portraits have been from time to time attributed to our artist, but it seems more probable that they are the work of the assistants. It is sufficient however for our purpose to note that Botticelli's repute as a portrait-painter was well established by 1478, when he was commissioned to perpetuate the eternal infamy of the Pazzi conspirators.

Before recording that event the subject of portraits brings us to the celebrated *Adoration of the Magi,* once in the church of Santa Maria Novella, now in the Uffizi Gallery (No. 1286), the date of which may be approximately fixed at 1476-7, and into which a vast number of portraits of the Medici family and their friends have been introduced. This justly renowned work is here illustrated, and will be more particularly described later on (p. 75). It is, however, not the only representation of this subject painted by Botticelli; neither is it the earliest, nor indeed the only one into which he has introduced portraits of contemporary personages. The two earlier examples (dated probably 1468 and 1477 respectively), are in the National Gallery, and are numbered 592 and 1033. Both these paintings bear close resemblances to the style of Filippino Lippi, to whom they

are still attributed in the Official Catalogue of the Gallery; but Signor Morelli, and, following him, Messrs. Berenson and Herbert Horne are unanimous in correcting these attributions. The latter example, which is of the *tondo* form, and may well be the work which Vasari tells us that he saw in the palace of the Pucci family, shows markedly the influence of the Pollajuoli brothers.

The anonymous author of the *Codice Gaddiano* records another *Adoration* as having been painted by our artist in the Palazzo dei Signori, "above the staircase that leads to the Catena"; but of this work no trace, except some detached drawings now exists. Nevertheless much later on in our painter's career he sketched in *tempera* the striking, but cruelly injured *Adoration* (No. 3436 in the Uffizi Gallery), wherein once more it is alleged may be traced a vast number of portraits, including that of the Reformer Fra Girolamo Savonarola. Some critics are inclined to consider that these two *Adorations* are one and the same, but Mr. Herbert Horne has conclusively proved that this is impossible.

The same anonymous writer tells us of yet another *Adoration of the Magi*, painted by Botticelli during his stay in Rome, which he adds was "the most beautiful work that the

artist ever did." This has been identified with the exquisite painting in the Hermitage Gallery at St. Petersburg (No. 163). It resembles in many respects both the *tondo* in the National Gallery and the earlier of the two *Adorations* in the Uffizi, but in composition it shows a strong advance on both. It is neither so crowded nor so confused; the exaggerated action that mars so much of the painter's later work is absent; nor do we notice so many obvious portraits.

We must now retrace our steps and return to the year 1476-7, about which date, as we have seen, our artist painted the *Adoration of the Magi* for the church of Santa Maria Novella. The introduction of so many portraits into that remarkable work proves the strong tie existing between the painter and the all-powerful house of the Medici, then ruling in Florence. So that it is not surprising to find from Vasari and other writers that during these years he was employed by various members of that family to paint secular subjects, and to illustrate for them the Neo-Classic myths that had taken so strong a hold upon the imagination of the cultured classes of that day. Into the execution of the ideas of his patrons he clearly entered *con amore*, and his own vivid and exuberant fancy still further

tended to assist in producing those exquisite creations which are so characteristic of his own personality, and at the same time so truly an expression of the age in which he lived. We learn that he painted "many figures of nude women that were surpassingly beautiful." Comparatively few of these have come down to us, but from these we can frankly admit that our informant was not incorrect in his admiration. The two most famous of these fanciful creations seem to have been painted for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, great-nephew of Cosimo the Elder, and head of the younger branch of the Medici, whose villa at Castello they once adorned. They represent an *Allegory of Spring* (*La Primavera*), and the *Birth of Venus* respectively. As we have fully described them later on we need not do more here than remark that though from superficial general resemblances they are often classed together, very strong differences do exist between them: and that several years,—how many, critics are not agreed—passed between their respective execution.

On Sunday, 26th April 1478, all Florence was startled by the outbreak of the Pazzi Conspiracy, in which Giuliano, the idol of the people of Florence, perished on the steps of the Duomo

Choir, whilst the Magnifico himself barely escaped with his life. The fury of the Florentines was not content with meting out swift and condign punishment upon the murderers (including even the Archbishop of Pisa), but to perpetuate their eternal infamy, Botticelli was employed to paint their effigies upon the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico, from the windows of which they had met their death.

1450

Two years later, when peace was again restored and Lorenzo's power more firmly established than ever, our artist seems to have undertaken another semi-classic allegory. This was the painting representing *Pallas and a Centaur*, which for many years lay hid in a dark corner of the Royal Apartments in the Pitti Palace. At the time of its re-discovery great controversies arose, since attempts were made to identify it with the *Pallas* recorded by Vasari of which we have already made mention above. But the descriptions of the two works do not in any respect tally, and, moreover, this composition shows a later aspect in the artist's technical development. In an inventory, made in October 1516, of the Medici collections in their palace in the Via Larga, occurs an entry recording a painting which represented a *Minerva and a Centaur:* an entry

which may reasonably be supposed to refer to this picture. The Goddess tall and stately, armed with buckler and halberd, grasps the Centaur by his forelock; symbolizing we may justly infer, the victory of the Medici over their enemies, and their wise and beneficent rule. The white robe of Pallas is adorned with the favourite Medici device of the intertwining rings, and her breast and arms are garlanded with the olive-boughs of peace. The Centaur, strange to relate, is no revolting monster full of ugliness and vice, but has a strangely pathetic and even somewhat venerable countenance, recalling some of our artist's elderly saints. The distant view of the Bay of Naples, upon which a ship is sailing, probably alludes to Lorenzo de Medici's recent successful embassy to the Neapolitan Court. The painting, though badly injured and still more cruelly restored, yet remains a very fine and imposing work.

Another interesting work, composed on classic lines and dating from this period, is the long panel of *Mars and Venus*, now in the National Gallery (No. 915). Like the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*, this painting seems also to have been suggested by certain passages in Poliziano's 'Stanze per la Giostra.' In a flowery mead and

under the shelter of a hedge of myrtle, Mars, a handsome nude youth, having laid aside his armour lies sunk in deep slumber. Around him frolic four baby-Fauns, playing various tricks with his weapons. One of these is endeavouring to awaken the God by blowing a blast through a conch-shell in his ear. Over against him, half raising herself on her right elbow which rests upon a crimson cushion, reclines Venus. Robed in white and gold, with carefully arranged tresses of blonde hair, she gravely contemplates her sleeping lover. The drawing and colouring of this work are admirable, and so lifelike are the features of the two deities that it has even been suggested, that, as in the *Primavera*, we may also here discover a secondary meaning to the composition, allusive to the devotion shown by the young Giuliano dei Medici, so tragically slain, for the beautiful Simonetta Vespucci, whose early death from consumption was cause for such widespread sorrow throughout the city of Florence. From its rather peculiar long shape it seems probable that the painting was intended to surmount a door. The companion picture (No. 916), which reached the National Gallery at the same time and from the same (Barker) collection, and once also bore the Master's

[*Accademia, Florence.*

LA PRIMAVERA.

name, is now assigned with good reason by Mr. Berenson to one of his most skilful assistants, Jacopo del Sellajo. Here Venus is seen alone, reposing upon a couch, whilst three Amorini play around her with red and white roses and bunches of grapes. It is a painting of very considerable charm, bearing very strong evidence of the Master's direct influence, and it may well have been at first sight attributed to him, though close inspection reveals its true author.

The name of Simonetta Vespucci recalls the fact that in the year 1480 the family of that ill-fated lady commissioned Botticelli to paint in fresco on one of the walls of the church of the Ognissanti a figure of *St. Augustine*, to rival a *St. Jerome* by Domenico Ghirlandajo on the corresponding wall. Later alterations in the internal structure of the church necessitated the removal, —which, Vasari tells us, was most skilfully accomplished,—of both these works to their present position, right and left of the nave. Both are works of great merit, and in both the Saints are depicted at their studies: but whereas the character and learning of St. Jerome are expressed by elaborate accessories—furniture, books, and instruments,— the less overladen conception of St. Augustine—his eyes raised to Heaven as if

in contemplation of the Beatific Vision and seeking from thence strength and inspiration—is infinitely the more impressive. Moreover, the less strident scheme of colour in the painting by Botticelli strikes a quieter and more appropriate note.

It is in this same year that we gain another glimpse of the painter's domestic circle. An Income Tax Return dated 1480 enables us to obtain an idea of the number and circumstances of the Filipepi family. Mariano, now eighty-six years of age and a widower, still resides in the same house in the Via Nuova, but, in order to accommodate the tribe of children, grandchildren, and other relatives—twenty souls in all—who are living under his roof, he has been obliged to overflow into the house next door, which he rents for a sum of nine florins per annum. His own working days are over, and Monna Vangelista, aged seventy, his late wife's sister and widow of his brother Amedeo, manages his house for him. Giovanni (*il Botticello*), his eldest son, the leather merchant, now sixty, has a wife, Nera di Benincasa dei Chori, and seven children. Of these children, Benincasa, the eldest (nineteen), is a clerk in the Salviati Bank in Rome, but costs his parents more than he earns; Amedeo (eleven),

also a bank clerk, has excellent prospects but so far is earning nothing; two little boys, Agnoletto (aged eight) and Jacopo (three) are still at school; whilst three girls—Alessandra, Anna, and Smeralda (an infant in arms) are dowerless. Antonio (aged fifty-one), the second son, once a goldsmith, is now a bookseller at Bologna, making about two florins a month and expenses. He too is married, to Bartolommea Spigolati, and besides three children—Elisabetta (nine), Mariano (now seven, who became afterwards an artist and died in 1537), and Bartolommeo (five)—shortly expects another. The third brother, Simone (aged about forty-one), is living in Naples, apparently unemployed; whilst our friend Sandro, Mariano's youngest son, whose age is given (as we have shown *incorrectly*) as *thirty-three*, "works in the house when he chooses." Although, with that touch of human nature common to all times and all classes the Filepepi family protest their poverty, we learn that they must have been in comfortable circumstances. Mariano had inherited from his childless brother Jacopo, likewise a tanner, all his property; besides which he owned houses and land at Peretola producing seventy-two bushels of wheat and thirteen measures of wine per annum. He moreover rented

a farm near the Magnifico's famous residence at Careggi, as a refuge in time of plague. He must therefore have been a man of some substance, and could afford to let an almost middle-aged son live at home and "work as he pleased."

Vasari, in the same sentence in which he alludes to Botticelli's very beautiful "nude" studies tells us of certain *tondi* by his hand. A great number of paintings in this form by the Master and by his pupils have come down to us, but the dates of their execution respectively can only be approximately inferred from their style.

It is at about this period that critics usually date the creation of the most beautiful of these works: the world-renowned *Madonna of the Magnificat* (Uffizi Gallery, No. 1267 *bis*). No facts regarding its history have come down to us, and the restorer (?) has worked cruel havoc upon it; but nothing can destroy its simple charm and extraordinary fascination. As, however, it is fully described later on we will not pause to dwell upon it any further here.

Another of these compositions, known as the *Madonna of the Pomegranate* (*della Melagrana*) (Uffizi Gallery, No. 1289), is also generally assigned to these years. Beside the *Magnificat* this lovely painting looks somewhat pale and

cold, but it is no less beautiful in its own way, and has perhaps suffered less at the hands of the renovator. The Virgin is shown full-face, with the Divine Babe in her lap. His Right Hand is raised in blessing, whilst with the other He plays with a pomegranate that His Mother supports with her left hand. Behind them, three on either side, are six adoring angel-youths, holding lilies and choir-books; whilst from above rays of golden light illumine the entire group. Of this work also no definite information is forthcoming, but it seems probable that it may be identified with a *tondo*, representing "the *Madonna* with several life-size attendant angels" recorded by Vasari as being in his time in the church of San Francesco, outside Porta San Miniato.

It appears probable also that it was in this time that Botticelli at least *began* the wonderful series of drawings to illustrate Dante's "Divina Commedia" of which no less than ninety-three have fortunately come down to us. Vasari alludes to a Commentary on Dante made by the painter as a waste of time on his part: and the Anonimo Gaddiano mentions a work of this kind executed by him for his wealthy patron and friend, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici. Both these notices may reasonably be supposed to

refer to the same work. Nevertheless there are many reasons which lead us to believe that the execution of the series extended over a good many years: and the first part may even have been repeated twice. In 1481 Cristoforo Landino published in Florence a Commentary on Dante, illustrated with nineteen plates executed by the German painter, Nicolaus Lorenz (or, as the Italians called him, Nicolò della Magna). These plates bear a striking resemblance to the earlier designs in our artist's series: too striking, in fact, to be altogether fortuitous. It is therefore probable that these designs must have been seen by della Magna,—were perhaps even made for this work,—but left incomplete when the artist was summoned to Rome. Hence their abrupt termination.

The series apparently originally consisted of one hundred drawings with a title page and a plan of Hell. They were executed in soft silver-point, and afterwards roughly traced over with pen and ink. Eighty-eight pages of the manuscript, containing eighty-five drawings, were found about half a century ago by Dr. Waagen among the collections of the Duke of Hamilton, at Hamilton Palace in Scotland; whilst eight more, including the diagram of Hell, were discovered

by Dr. Strzygowski in the Vatican Library amongst a number of miscellaneous papers, etc., which formerly belonged to Queen Christina of Sweden. The compositions, of very unequal merit, are badly damaged, and eight of the earliest designs are still wanting; but enough remains to prove to us that in them we have some of the finest and most imaginative work of the Renaissance. Three of the drawings have been painted over in body-colour, whilst a fourth, illustrating Canto X, is partially tinted. From this fact it might be inferred that it was originally intended that all the illustrations should be coloured, but it is doubtful whether this colouring was done by the Master himself. For what reason such an idea, if ever proposed, was abandoned, we do not know, but it can hardly be said that we have lost much by the absence of colour, since the supreme merit of these designs lies in their exquisite feeling for line. In unity of composition many of them—especially the earlier ones--are sadly lacking: the repetition of the figures of Dante and Virgil many times over in the same design, in order to slavishly picture *every single episode* in the Canto illustrated, creates a somewhat disconcerting confusion. We may therefore not unreasonably

surmise that the increasing simplicity, with a concurrent advance in *pure decoration*, is due to the fact that the work was not completed all at once; and that the development observable in the artist's larger compositions in *tempera* and *fresco* is reflected here in miniature.

Many propositions have been put forward regarding the exact reason why Botticelli was selected by Pope Sixtus IV to assist in the adornment of his newly-erected chapel in the Vatican. Vasari tells us that it was the direct result of the fame acquired by the painter on the completion of the *Adoration of the Magi* in Santa Maria Novella, and on that account the Pontiff chose him as *overseer* for the entire work. It is not altogether easy to understand this, since Sixtus was the bitterest enemy of the House of Medici, and his nephew, Girolamo Riario, was the prime mover of the Pazzi Conspiracy, wherein the beloved Giuliano perished. To punish the Florentines for having in their righteous indignation hung the Archbishop of Pisa and imprisoned Cardinal Raffaelle Riario, the Pope laid the city under an interdict. This ban was only removed in December 1480, but one of the first stipulations was that the effigies of the conspirators, which, as we have already

related, Botticelli had been commissioned to paint on the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio, should be effaced. And now this same artist goes to Rome in the employ of the very Pope who had commanded the destruction of his earlier work. It has been suggested that he found favour in the eyes of another of the Pope's nephews, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who visited Florence in June 1481, but this would be too late, since the Tuscan painters were already at work long before that date. It seems more probable that one of the envoys sent by Florence to the Pope in 1480, either Giovanni Tornabuoni or Guido Antonio Vespucci (who both belonged to families that had already patronized the artist), put in a word for him.

All that is known, however, for certain, is that on the 27th of October 1481, the four painters, Alessandro di Mariano, Cosimo Rosselli, Domenico Tommaso (Ghirlandajo) of Florence, and Pietro Perugino of Citta della Pieve, agreed with the Papal Commissioner, Giovannino dei Dolci, to paint ten frescoes, which were to be completed by the 15th of the following March. Mention is made in the same document of work already done by the same artists, and we have

reason to believe from a contemporary writer that the chapel was in the hands of workmen throughout the whole of that year.

There is nothing to show that Botticelli was in any way the *overseer* of his fellow-painters, and his actual work seems to have been limited to three of the larger historical frescoes, together with some of the portraits of former Popes, which stand in niches above them. How many of these latter may be assigned to him is a matter of considerable discussion between critics: made still more difficult to decide, owing to their present damaged condition. Those of Sixtus II, Stephanus Romanus, and perhaps Cornelius, may be attributed to him. Some at least of the others, it has been suggested, may be the work of Fra Diamante, his fellow pupil under Fra Filippo Lippi, who certainly was employed in this chapel, receiving an exceptionally large payment therefor, but whose work we cannot otherwise identify.

The Pope, who had attained considerable renown as a theologian before his elevation to the Chair of St. Peter, chose, we learn, the subjects for the adornment of his chapel himself. Six scenes from the *Life of Moses*, as the *Type*, cover the left wall, whilst six others from the *Life of*

Our Blessed Lord, as the *Antitype*, correspond with them on the opposite wall; thus outlining the chief events in the Old and New Covenants. Originally these were completed on the end wall by *The Assumption of the Virgin*, between the *Finding of Moses* and the *Birth of Christ*. These three frescoes, painted by Perugino, were subsequently destroyed by order of Paul III to make way for Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*.

The first of our artist's three larger works is placed exactly opposite the Papal Throne. The subject of the painting ostensibly is the *Temptation of Christ*, but the three episodes dealing with that event are shown in the background; whilst the entire foreground is occupied by a group of many persons intent upon what is evidently some ceremonial connected with the Jewish cult. For a long time it baffled students and critics to divine what this ceremony could be, and what connection it could have with the real subject of the picture, or with the Pope himself. It was left to the late Dr. Ernest Steinmann to explain the mystery. He pointed out that the handsome Renaissance Temple in the centre of the composition is the exact *facsimile* of the façade of the old Hospital of Santo Spirito in Rome, an institution that Pope Sixtus IV had

recently largely endowed and partially rebuilt on a magnificent scale. The scene depicted in the foreground of the composition represents in all its elaborate detail that enjoined by the Law of Moses to be carried out for the *Purification of a Leper*. Now the nursing of those unhappy beings was one of the special duties enjoined upon his followers by St. Francis, and to that Order the Pope himself belonged. Hence the connecting idea of the fresco is to commemorate the Pontiff's own pious and charitable acts. Moreover, among the crowd of onlookers are a number of portraits of members of the Papal Court, among them his nephews, Girolamo Riario (the husband of Caterina Sforza, and Gonfaloniere of the Church), and Cardinal Giovanni della Rovere.

In the background upon a rocky eminence to the left amid a grove of oak trees (the Della Rovere emblem), we may observe Satan requesting that Christ will prove his Almighty Power by making bread out of the stones that lie in his path. On the roof of the temple in the centre the Devil endeavours to persuade the Saviour to tempt His Father by risking self-destruction: whilst on a mountain-top to the right, the Tempter, finally worsted, throws himself from a

high precipice, and angels are seen preparing a repast for the Redeemer of the World. It is curious to note that the Foul Fiend is represented clothed in the habit of a Franciscan friar.

On the opposite wall Botticelli depicts no less than seven episodes from the *Life of Moses*. The central motive is a particularly charming one; showing Moses in converse with the daughters of Jethro the Midianite beside the Well. The figure of Zipporah, crowned with myrtle, is one of our artist's most graceful female types. Around this group are arranged six other events, as follows, beginning on the left: Moses kills the Egyptian: he flies into the desert: he drives away the shepherds who are molesting the daughters of Jethro: while watching the flocks of his father-in-law he is told by the Almighty to remove his sandals: God speaks to him out of the Burning Bush: and lastly, he and his family are seen journeying out of Egypt. The approximation of all these subjects into a single painting is ingeniously managed, but there is inevitably a loss of unity in general effect. It is, however, characteristic of Botticelli that both in this composition and in its pendant a comparatively insignificant episode is selected as the link to unite several others relatively far more important. The fresco has un-

fortunately been very badly injured in the erection of a baldacchino over the Papal Throne, and consequently the figures on the right-hand side have been repainted.

Botticelli's third design which forms the pendant to Perugino's *Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter*, represents the *Punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*: and the words of the text, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4), in Latin, is inscribed conspicuously over the Arch of Constantine, which appears in the background of the composition. The choice of this subject was suggested, it has been supposed, by the revolutionary proceedings of Andrea Zamometic, Archbishop of Krain in Hungary, who, in March 1482, having denounced the Pope as the "child of the Devil," had proclaimed a General Council at Bâle in opposition to his authority. Sudden and swift vengeance, like that which overtook the three rebellious Israelites, fell upon this unruly prelate, and he perished miserably in prison by his own hand. A coincidence such as this could hardly be entirely fortuitous, and if we allow it any weight would lead us to believe that this was the latest of the three frescoes in point of date, and

was painted subsequent to December 1482: a conclusion which would accord with its more restrained style. Only three episodes are shown. In the centre, beside a Jewish altar, are seen Moses and Aaron; and the Patriarch is calling down Divine Vengeance upon the rebels. To the left Moses challenges their leaders to prove their claims, and the earth is opening under their feet: whilst in the group upon the right we may observe him directing the stoning of a blasphemer. One of the faces—a youngish man seen full-face, the second figure from the right in the back row—is said to be another representation of our artist himself; but it bears but small resemblance to either of the other two alleged portraits.

It is known that the young Filippino Lippi was at this time absent from Florence, and the late Dr. Ulmann has suggested that he may have been in Rome assisting his master in the details of these frescoes. That critic has reminded us further that Botticelli was *not a landscape painter*, whereas Filippino was: and was, moreover, an enthusiast for reproducing architecture drawn from the remains of Ancient Rome. That Botticelli himself did not fail to be influenced by these relics of a past age is evidenced by the figure of a child holding an arm-full of grapes, in the scene

of the *Purification of a Leper*, which is modelled after an antique statue now in the Capitoline Museum; but it seems probable that another hand contributed at least some portion of the landscape and architecture, notably in the last fresco of the *Destruction of Korah.*

These works, although they cannot be considered by any means masterpieces, are full of fine and beautiful details, and certain well-known, and agreeably characteristic types and figures reappear throughout them. They have not, it must be admitted, the grandeur of composition of Ghirlandajo, nor the sense of space of Perugino, but they have all the charm which is so essentially Botticelli's own; and we learn that they greatly pleased the Pope, who paid the artist very handsomely for his work: money, which we further read he speedily dissipated so recklessly that he was compelled to return hastily to his native city in order to renew his means of livelihood.

It is at this point that Vasari alludes to the Commentary on Dante's "Divina Commedia," and it is observable that he speaks of our painter as a "*persona sofistica*," a statement in direct contradiction to his earlier assertion that Sandro as a boy would not even learn to read or count. If he

had been as idle and ignorant as the Aretine biographer would have us believe, how are we to account for the unusual learning and insight evidenced in the choice of subject, and the fanciful play of imagination displayed by the painter in the many works that have come down to us. Furthermore, it is impossible to suppose that a man, who had eschewed all education in his boyhood, could have secured and kept a place of honour and emolument amid so cultured a circle, as that which surrounded the Medici and their Court.

Botticelli seems to have returned to Florence in the early autumn of 1482, since on the 5th of October in that year he received a commission to adorn in fresco a Hall in the Palazzo Vecchio. He was to be assisted by his own pupil, Biagio Tucci, and to work in company with Ghirlandajo and Perugino, but since we hear no more of this work, it would seem that it must have been countermanded. A few years later however (1487) Botticelli painted a *tondo* for the Hall of Audience of the Council of the Massari.

Although when recording our painter's lovely creation, *La Primavera*, we also chronicled its rival, the *Birth of Venus*, it should be noted that this latter painting not improbably belongs

to a date *subsequent* to Botticelli's visit to Rome: but from the absence of all documentary proof for any of these dates we are compelled to fall back upon such inferences as may be drawn from style and technique.

We know that Botticelli was among those favoured artists to whom the Magnifico gave almost constant employment in one or other of his villas, and we hear specially of fresco decoration at his villa of Lo Spedaletto, near Volterra. All these, however, perished in a fire during the last century.

In June 1486, took place the wedding of the young Lorenzo, son of the wealthy banker, Giovanni Tornabuoni, and first cousin to Lorenzo the Magnificent, with the beautiful Giovanna degli Albizzi, whose portrait we know so well from Ghirlandajo's paintings. In honour of this wedding Botticelli was employed to decorate in fresco a room in the Tornabuoni Villa at Chiasso Macerelli, near Careggi, where the young couple were to reside. These frescoes for centuries lay hidden beneath a coat of whitewash, being only discovered accidentally in 1873 by the then owner, Dr. Lemmi. The larger portions of the two principal subjects were saved, and being sold to the French Government, have been placed

in the Picture Gallery at the Louvre; but the remainder were too much injured to bear removal. These two compositions represent: first, Giovanna, the Bride, saluted by Venus, who is attended by the Three Graces, or, as some critics suggest, the Four Cardinal Virtues: and secondly, Lorenzo, the Bridegroom, introduced by Dialectic into the Court of Queen Philosophy, who sits enthroned amid the other Sciences: Arithmetic, Grammar, Rhetoric, Geometry, Astronomy and Music. In spite of their sadly damaged condition these frescoes display unusual beauty and simplicity in arrangement, the limited number of figures being grouped with greater taste, and without the confusion that so often mars our artist's larger works.

The fate of this young couple was almost as tragic as that which overtook Giuliano dei Medici and his beloved Simonetta Vespucci. Giovanna died a few years after marriage at the birth of her third child; whilst Lorenzo in 1497, at the age of thirty-two, was put to death in connection with a conspiracy to bring back Piero de' Medici.

In the following year (1487) another wedding was the occasion of an order for a specimen of Botticelli's talents. This was the marriage of Pier Francesco Bini with Lucrezia, daughter

of Francesco Pucci: and the work ordered was to take the form of a *cassone*, or marriage chest, decorated with the *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* from Boccaccio's *Decameron* The designs for this order were no doubt made by our artist himself, but the execution was certainly consigned to the hands of pupils, probably Bartolommeo di Giovanni and Jacopo del Sellajo.

It was probably at this time that there issued from Botticelli's *bottega*, bearing more or less the impress of his designs or his teachings, most of those charming works dealing with well-known histories, Sacred and Profane, and with Classic Myths, that modern criticism is by degrees classifying, and, as far as may be, assigning to his various pupils and followers. Mr. Berenson suggests as a reason why so few genuine drawings by the painter himself have survived, that they were so constantly employed and handled by his pupils that they literally fell to pieces from continual use. This would account for the strong resemblances that all these works bear to one another: and the fact that such works were multiplied so largely, proves how keenly the Master and his circle entered into the spirit of their age.

Nor were historical and imaginative works the

only product of the painter and his pupils during these years. Although it is impossible, in the absence of documentary evidence, to assign Botticelli's *Madonnas* and *Groups of Saints* of this period to any particular year, there is one exception, namely, the *Madonna and Child enthroned between St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist*, painted to the order of Giovanni dei Bardi, for his family chapel in the church of San to Spirito, then but recently restored by Brunelleschi. We are enabled to fix the execution of this work by a document recently discovered among the Guicciardini Archives, and dated 7th February, 1485, recording payments made to Giuliano di San Gallo for the frame enclosing this picture. The painting, which is now in the Royal Museum at Berlin, represents the Blessed Mother seated upon a marble throne with her Babe upon her lap. Behind and above her rises a bower of interlaced palm-branches, whilst against backgrounds of myrtle and cypress stand the two SS. John. Upon either side of the throne extends a marble balustrade, upon which stand enamelled pots containing olive-branches, and bowls of red and white roses. Below the step of the throne, on a small tablet, is a representation of the *Crucified Saviour*. The

sorrow and grief expressed in the Virgin's countenance is intense, but the Holy Child is for Botticelli an unusually joyous conception of babyhood. The picture is painted with great care, and the general effect is exceedingly decorative.

Another composition, which probably also dates from this period is the large *Madonna and Child with Six Saints* (No. 85 in the Florence Academy), painted for the church of San Barnaba. The Madonna is seen on a lofty throne supported by fine Renaissance columns of marble. The crimson velvet curtains of a canopy above are drawn away on either side by an angel, whilst two more, with gestures expressive of profoundest grief, display the Symbols of the Passion. Upon his Mother's knee stands the Infant Saviour, His Right Hand raised in blessing. Below the throne stand Six Saints: on the right, SS. Barnabas, Ambrose, and Catherine: on the left, SS. John the Baptist, Augustine and Michael. The conception of this work is very fine, but the whole composition is pervaded with a melancholy that is almost painful, and a later restorer has lengthened the work both at the top and at the bottom with unpleasing results. Part of the predella is also

in the same Picture Gallery (Nos. 157, 158, 161, 162): *A Risen Christ: The Death of St. Ambrose: St. Augustine and the Child: and Salome with St. John the Baptist's Head.* The remainder has been lost.

But in 1491 a great change came over Florence, and our painter, swept into the religious current of enthusiasm, showed even greater vehemence in the expression of his religious convictions than he had already done in more mundane affairs. Fra Girolamo Savonarola —whose influence had already made itself felt within the enlightened circle of thinkers and writers who surrounded the House of Medici— in the Lent of that year began to preach in the Duomo the famous course of sermons that was to stir up so powerfully the hearts of the citizens of Florence. Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, the poets Girolamo and Benevieni, the youthful Michelangelo and many others, deeply impressed by his sermons, had become his followers. But whilst it was his mysticism affected the Medicean circle, it was the element of prophecy in his discourses that appealed most vividly to Botticelli; and we can trace his influence most strongly throughout the painter's later work. According to Vasari the

impression made by the Frate resulted in an entire abandonment of artistic work, so that the painter was reduced to the point of starvation; but such a statement is not warranted by fact. It is true, however, that becoming one of that band of enthusiasts, known by the name of *Piagnoni* (weepers), he for the most part abandoned secular subjects, and devoted himself more than ever to religious compositions. From his *bottega*, besides the paintings above mentioned, there issued engravings and illustrations for books of devotion—Vasari also deprecates his *waste of time* in unsuccessful work of this nature—many of which show traces of Savonarola's teachings.

To this period belong two interesting compositions, to one of which we have already had occasion to allude. This is the powerful design for the *Adoration of the Magi* (Uffizi Gallery, No. 3436). Originally executed in *tempera* it has been wickedly injured, and furthermore coarsely coloured in oils at some time in the seventeenth century. Amid a wide and stony landscape, in a cavern beneath precipitous cliffs, are grouped the Holy Family. Before them kneel eight figures, who, it has been suggested, may represent the eight chief magistrates of Florence; since they bear none of the attributes

[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

usual in representations of the Magi. From all directions stream long processions of people of all ages and sexes in attitudes of wonder or worship. Many of the figures are apparently portraits, which have been variously identified by different critics. Of all Botticelli's compositions this is perhaps the most crowded, but in spite of all its multitude of figures, and the destructive results of retouching, it remains singularly free from confusion in composition and effect.

This *Adoration* certainly *seems* to allude to the great religious revival and to the proclamation of Christ as King of Florence. After the collapse of the movement and the death of its prime instigator at the stake, the picture would no doubt have been thrust aside and it lay hidden away until but a few years since, when it was once more produced from the lumber-rooms of the Uffizi. Such has been the general consensus of critical opinion regarding this work: an explanation which sounds plausible enough; but it is only fair to remark that Mr. Herbert Horne, the greatest modern authority on Botticelli, is *entirely opposed* to this date and interpretation, considering that the design belongs to a much earlier period (about 1481), before even Botticelli's visit to Rome.

The other work is the great *Coronation of the Virgin* (No. 73 in the Florence Academy), painted to the order of the Guild of Silk Workers for the church of San Marco. The upper portion of this composition resembles the work of earlier painters, in as much as it is painted on a gold ground, and as the figures of God the Father, wearing a triple crown, and of the kneeling Virgin are posed after the traditional manner. But the troop of wildly-dancing angels, scattering roses in their flight, are entirely Botticelli's own. Below, in characteristic attitudes, stand four Saints: to wit, SS. Jerome, Augustine, John the Evangelist and Eligius. The predella shows the *Annunciation* and a scene from the Life of each of the four Saints represented in the picture above. This again is a picture, over the date of which critics of eminence radically differ. Dr. Julius Meyer places it as late as 1497, whilst Mr. Berenson would throw it back to 1480. It is, however, to be noticed that both the paintings just described express a very strong emotion, which is certainly foreign to the painter's earlier work, before the influence of the Reformer took such hold upon his imagination.

A word ought to be said here regarding a composition now in the National Gallery (No.

1136), which, on the authority of Vasari and other early writers, for centuries bore the name of Botticelli, but which modern criticism has convincingly proved to be the work of *Francesco Botticini*. This is the large *Assumption of the Virgin*, painted originally for the church of San Piero Maggiore in Florence, which, in 1882, found its way into the National Collection from that of the Duke of Hamilton at Hamilton Palace. It was said to have been ordered by the poet, Matteo Palmieri, whose poem, "The City of Life," it is supposed to illustrate. It is a vast composition and the Heavenly Personages are encircled by the celestial hosts in three compact semicircles. Below, the sorrowing Apostles surround a tomb, full to the brim with lilies, whilst on either side kneel the Donor and his wife. Behind spreads a wide landscape resembling the Arno Valley. Vasari and general tradition add the information that, after the death of Palmieri, his poem was condemned by ecclesiastical authorities, since he was supposed to have fallen into the heresy of Origen regarding the nature of angels: that the picture was also attacked as tending to support this false doctrine, and was not only itself shrouded by a curtain, but the chapel in which it hung was closed for

public worship. It is questionable how much of this tradition is warranted by fact, but there is no doubt that the composition is not the work of Botticelli; and that it was attributed to him under a mistake arising from similarity in the sound of his name to that of Botticini.

To this period, however, there does belong one picture that cannot strictly be described as religious. This is the small painting known as the *Allegory of Calumny* (Uffizi Gallery, No. 1182), painted for the artist's closest friend, Antonio Segni. The subject is taken from Lucian's "Dialogues," as interpreted by Leon Battista Alberti in his "Treatise on Painting." The elaborately decorated portico in which the scene is laid shows a strange mixture of Greek myth and Biblical story in its adornments: Pallas is ranged beside Judith, St. George jostles Apollo, etc. On a throne to the right of the spectator, with crown and sceptre and robed in green, sits the Unjust Judge. Into his long ass's ears, Ignorance and Suspicion whisper their accusations. Pale Envy stretches out a hand to call the Judge's attention to Calumny, a beautiful and splendidly dressed woman, who is dragging Innocence, a nude youth, by the hair to the foot of the throne. Fraud and Treachery, her hand-

maidens, wreathe her hair with roses, whilst Innocence in vain lifts imploring hands to Heaven. At the feet of Innocence stands an old woman, wrapped in a ragged black mantle and leaning on a crutch, in whom we have no difficulty in recognizing Remorse, gazing at naked Truth, who lifts her hands on high in protest against the wrong that is being committed. Through the arches of the portico we perceive a wide expanse of green sea. The work is exquisitely finished, whilst the vehement action expressed in the figures displays strong emotion on the part of its author.

On 4th January 1491, Botticelli was elected on the Committee chosen to select a design for the façade of the Duomo, and on 14th May of the self-same year, in company with the two brothers Ghirlandajo, and Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni, painters in miniature, he was appointed to decorate in mosaic the chapel of San Zenobio, in the same building. The death of Lorenzo the Magnificent on the 8th of April in the following year, however, put an end to all these commissions. The decease of that powerful Prince was a great loss to our artist, although he still retained the friendship of Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici, from whom, as we

have already seen, he had received important employment. This wealthy and intelligent patron had also taken under his protection the young Michelangelo, who, likewise imbued with the religious spirit of the times, writing from Rome to his noble patron at this period, under cover to Botticelli, marks his letter with the inscription "Christus" so characteristic of the followers of Savonarola.

Another Income Tax Return, dated 1498—the year when the Friar met his death—once again tells us something of the Filipepi family. Sandro is still living in the old home, but both his father, Mariano, and his eldest brother, Giovanni, are dead, and the house belongs to two of our artist's nephews, Benincasa and Lorenzo. Simone Filipepi, who had returned from Rome at the end of 1493—soon after his father's death—is living in the family home; but the brothers had in April 1494 also bought a country house in the parish of San Sepolcro, outside the Porta San Frediano, together with some fields and an old vineyard, subject to a quit-rent of four soldi and two capons, payable yearly to the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. The possession of this property should dispose of Vasari's assertions regarding Botticelli's extreme poverty.

Simone, like his brother Sandro, seems also to have become an ardent admirer of Savonarola, and like him was a *Piagnone*. He too was a man of some culture, and wrote a Commentary on one of Dante's "Canzone." Moreover, he compiled a Chronicle of the leading events in the Florence of his day, which gives us very intimate information regarding the Reformer and his followers. The following conversation, which took place on the Feast of All Souls (2nd November, 1499), is worth recording in connection with our painter: "Alessandro di Mariano, my brother, one of the good painters which our city had in these times, being at home, by the fire, about eight o'clock at night, related how that day in his shop in the house of Sandro he had reasoned with Doffo Spini on the fate of Fra Girolamo. Sandro, knowing Doffo to have been one of the chief persons who were present at his examination, adjured him to tell him truthfully what crimes were found in him which could deserve so shameful a death. Upon which Doffo replied, 'Sandro, must I speak the truth? We never found in him any venial, much less any mortal sin.' Then Sandro asked, 'Why did you put him to so shameful a death?' He replied, 'It was not I, but Benozzo Federighi. For if we had not made

this prophet and his companions die, and had sent them back to San Marco, the people would have sacked our houses and cut us all to pieces.'"

The following year saw the creation of Botticelli's beautiful *Nativity*, now in the National Gallery (No. 1034), upon which he has inscribed his own comment on the events of the time. This painting we have fully described further on.

Whether this was, as some have supposed, his *last* work is uncertain, for he lived ten years longer, and to this period has been assigned the small *St. Augustine* (No. 1179, Uffizi Gallery) and certain other less important works; but here again there is considerable diversity of opinion.

One extremely interesting painting, however, must surely have had its origin at about this time. It is in the possession of Prince Pallavicini in Rome, and is called *The Outcast* (*La Derelitta*). Upon some steps before an archway leading to closed gates is seated the half-clad figure of a woman. Other garments lie scattered on the steps below, and her whole attitude is expressive of the most utter and complete despair. This picture is remarkable for the curiously modern sentiment that emanates from it, which makes it difficult

for us at first to believe that it is a work of the Renaissance at all. Some authorities suggest that it illustrates the story of the Unhappy Woman described in the Book of Judges, Chapter xix.

On 25th January 1504 all the principal artists then in Florence were summoned to the Opera del Duomo to debate regarding a site for the erection of Michelangelo's colossal *David*. Botticelli's opinion, we read, was that it should stand at the corner in front of the Duomo, so that it might be well seen by passers-by.

From this time we have no further information regarding our painter, except a statement by Vasari that, as old age crept on, he became very infirm, and was obliged to support his tottering limbs upon two crutches. On 17th May 1510—not in 1515, as Vasari asserts—he died and was buried in the family vault in the church of the Ognissanti.

THE ART OF BOTTICELLI

ALTHOUGH it cannot truthfully be said that Botticelli reached the heights of artistic power and merit attained by Raphael, Michelangelo, or Leonardo da Vinci, still he had certain gifts and qualities in which he was unsurpassed even by these colossal geniuses. His delicate play of fancy and his absolutely certain control over pure line is unequalled by any European artist, and to rival it, as Mr. Berenson justly remarks, we must turn to Japan and Oriental Art. His drawing is too often faulty—anatomy and proportion are disregarded—but the lovely curve and sweep of his sure and graceful line is never for a moment absent. No matter whether he be designing one of his exquisite representations of the Divine Mother, painting a portrait of some contemporary worthy, or indulging his imagination in some pseudo-mythic or romantic story, the same supreme quality may always be traced firm and true. Moreover, as Mr. Berenson further points out, "the same touch of the whimsical, the same

dreamy grace, the same subtlety of refinement that we learn to love in his pictures, meet us once more in his sundry sketches; and always the line which envelops, which models, which realizes with such vivacity, with such a speed in communicating itself, that, if you do not frighten away its shy influence by too coldly assaying the anatomical correctness of its creations, you quickly find yourself not looking at the form, but kissing it with your eyes, not discerning but living the action."

That Botticelli at the outset of his career was deeply influenced by his master, Fra Filippo, is plainly evident; and that, further, the strong personalities of those craftsmen, with whom he came into such close contact in his youth, Verrocchio and the Pollajuoli brothers, played great part in the formation of his artistic character, was almost inevitable from the circumstances under which artists in Florence at that period lived and worked. Nevertheless, Botticelli was no slavish imitator, content to follow in conventional lines: rather he was a leader and an innovator; and, if himself susceptible to external influence, never allowed it to interfere with an individuality which he in his turn communicated to his followers.

Although the system of *bottega* work, in which master and pupil together, or pupils under the eye of the master, carried out works that subsequently bore the master's name, tends to confuse our judgements: a confusion further increased by the wilful ruin wrought on too many of our artist's own pictures by the hands of the restorer (?): still enough remains to show how fully Botticelli deserved the estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries. That his Art could not appeal to a generation that revelled in the grandiose and the academic is quite understandable. We know that throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Botticelli's merits remained under a cloud; the gentle appeal of his fanciful imagination, his soft and often somewhat pallid colouring, and even the beauty of his line, failed to obtain for him the notice he so well deserved. The writer himself can well remember how, on a visit to Italy so recently as the early eighties, he was rallied severely for venturing to express any sort of admiration for so poor and crude an artist.

We are bound to admit that the somewhat angular pose and the eternal melancholy expression in the eyes and mien of Sacred and Classic Personages alike become at times some-

what tiresome: whilst Leonardo himself complained of the poorness of Sandro's ideas in painting landscape, and the faulty anatomy of such figures as *Fortitude* amount almost to deformity. To explain the first of these faults we have to remember the age in which Botticelli lived; and to recollect how typical a creature of that particular age he was. The minds of men of every rank and of every variety of type had been deeply stirred by the Neo-Classic Revival, and the conflict between the Pagan Ideal, with its visions of earthly beauty, and the Christian one, with its promises of an intangible world beyond this present life, were sharp and fierce. And whilst the world of thought was going through a period of upheaval, Italy was torn and rent by invaders and by the ambitions of her own princes, and Florence herself was enduring the miseries of constant internecine struggle amongst her citizens. Upon a genius quickened by a vivid imagination, like that of Botticelli, such events, political, social, religious and literary, could not have remained without their impression: and if his personages, saintly and secular alike, exhibit in their countenances an expression of sadness, it is the reflex of a mind ever seeking something—it knows not what—

better or more beautiful, which it desires to convey to others. Vasari tells us that, at least in his younger days, Botticelli was a gay and sportive person, full of fun and tricks,—some of which he relates to us,—but it is not easy to associate the idea of levity with the painter of the *Magnificat*, or even with the creator of the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*. Of exuberance of feeling—intense joy or deepest sorrow—we know that he was profoundly capable; but there is a certain religious awe even in his angels wildly dancing in celestial joy, whilst there is an entire absence of the serio-comic element dear to mediaeval artists in his illustrations of the Infernal Regions and their inhabitants.

In portraiture we have plenty of evidence to show how apt Botticelli was in securing the essential characteristics of his sitter; and that he thoroughly enjoyed this branch of pictorial art is clear from the vast number of portraits with which certain of his pictures teem: each individual being so carefully individualized as to leave no mistake as to whom he intended to represent. His favourite types, we are told, lack virility. This is no doubt in a sense true: but where he fails in producing the impression of muscularity and the rather brutal strength con-

veyed by Verrocchio and the Pollajuoli, he gains considerably in sweetness and delicacy of line. That he was not wholly incapable of understanding the importance of expressing muscular development in the service of illustration is evidenced by his design for the *Giants* in Canto XXXI of Dante's *Inferno*. Nevertheless it is clear that his own predilection lay in the direction of long-limbed figures, instinct with somewhat feminine languor or glowing with ascetic zeal. This tendency too often leads him into an excess of slenderness, and thence into the anatomical faults, for which he has been taken to task by the academic: the over-long neck and small head of some of his female creations, and the exaggerated hip-curve. The shape of *Fortitude*, for example, did she rise from her throne, would certainly be surprising, and both her great toes are absolutely deformed.

Our artist's success in composition is wholly due to his vivid genius for decorative effect. In a few, therefore, of his most famous works, wherein he has been able to concentrate his lines according to the principle of pure design, he has been most pre-eminently successful. For which reason the *tondo* form of composition seems specially to have appealed to him: finding

its highest expression in the *Madonna of the Magnificat*, which Mr. John Addington Symonds not inaptly likens to "the corolla of an open rose." Too often, however, in his larger works, as in the Sistine Chapel frescoes, he becomes confused, and in his endeavours to depict a number of different events in one composition loses his grasp over the whole; so that for want of a central idea the painting pictorially becomes chaos. The painter would seem to have in some sense realized this when painting these frescoes, since in at least two of them he has endeavoured to concentrate the action of the figures; not around the main subject, which of necessity had to be told in more than one episode, but, in one case upon a subordinate, and in the other upon a totally different and apparently irrelevant, idea; whereby he has been able to bind the composition together, and to produce an harmonious whole. But his love of the complex and the intricate is more often too much for his sense of unity.

Of Botticelli's colouring it is not easy to judge fairly at the present day. Time and natural accidents have necessarily done much to dim their original hues and to mar their harmony: but successive repaintings and wanton restoration (?)

have done much more. It is always clear and transparent, but whereas the *Adoration of the Magi* from Santa Maria Novella, the two panels of *Judith* and *Holofernes*, and some others glow with a brilliance like that of jewels, the *Primavera*, the *Birth of Venus* and the large frescoes are pale in the extreme. Apparently though, Botticelli in his colouring too often fell into the same faults as in his composition: he attempted too great an intricacy of colour scheme, producing thereby an effect of confusion and patchiness.

His good-natured friend, Leonardo da Vinci, laughed at him, as we know, over his methods of depicting landscape—asserting that for Botticelli a sponge full of colour thrown against the wall sufficed to produce one of his "melancholy landscapes": perspective was not indeed a strong point with our artist; whilst for space composition he shows but little skill. Nearer objects are painted by him with meticulous care and neatness, but to express different planes with reference to one another is often beyond him, so that he rarely ventures on compositions requiring great variation in perspective. The backgrounds, with their elaborate architectural effects copied from the remains of ancient Rome, introduced into

his Vatican frescoes are perhaps the work of Filippino Lippi, who we have good reason to believe assisted in their execution.

No work by Botticelli in oils is known, nor have we any record that he ever worked in that medium. *Buon fresco* or *tempera* sufficed for him, and such advances as he attempted on time-honoured methods were in the nature of improvements on the latter. In this way he acquired a lightness of touch and such a skill in the fusion of tints as enabled him to produce desired effects with but slight recourse to *hatching*. He also made innovations and experiments in the preparation and employment of varnishes, which he often laid on so thickly as to make the picture appear embossed, or even to resemble oil painting. His preference seems to have been for painting on panels of wood, although certain of his works are executed on prepared canvas.

Lastly, we should point out that Botticelli's creations themselves are in flat contradiction to Vasari's statement as to his ignorance through wilful idleness in his early years. The evidence of such highly imaginative works as have come down to us, even without the further proof brought forward by the Dante designs, would

suffice to prove a more than ordinary degree of culture on our artist's part, which could scarcely have been acquired without some early scholastic training.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS

IT is no easy task to select from among the number and variety of the works of Botticelli eight examples such as may be specially representative of his style at different periods of his career. The size and shape of this present work excludes his remarkable frescoes in the Sixtine Chapel in Rome and for the Villa Lemmi (now in the Louvre); whilst his illustrations to Dante's *Divina Commedia* are from their already delicately minute form unsuited to further reduction.

We have, however, endeavoured to select characteristic specimens, the originals of which can be easily examined, or of which larger photographs can be obtained by the student without difficulty.

The first of these is an extremely interesting example of our artist's earliest methods, whilst still under the influence of his first master Fra Filippo Lippi; to several of whose panels the composition bears a very close resemblance. The painting till a comparatively few years ago

lay hidden in a corner of the picture gallery of Prince Chigi in Rome, whence its sale and removal to the collection of Mrs. J. L. Gardner of Boston, U.S.A., was the subject of a notorious law-suit.

The Madonna is seated against a marble screen, through which is seen a glimpse of a pleasant landscape of river and mountain. She gazes pensively at her Divine Infant, seated upon her knees, who raises His tiny Right Hand in blessing over a basket of grapes and ears of corn, presented to Him by one of the most charming of the many beautiful boy-angels that Botticelli throughout his artistic career was so fond of portraying. The entire work expresses the naïve charm characteristic of our artist's youth; but it also displays already many of the qualities which constitute the particular attraction for which we admire his more mature work.

Our next illustration presents a very different subject and type of work. A stately lady, partially clad in armour and wielding a mace, is enthroned in a niche adorned with handsome Renaissance mouldings. This is Botticelli's conception of *Fortitude*; executed in 1470 for the Tribunal of the Mercatanzia. Till recently this painting was considered to be the earliest ascer-

tained work by our painter. Later criticism has however proved this to be incorrect: a fact that might have been surmised earlier from its date and the circumstances that gave origin to it. It is scarcely likely that unless Botticelli had already distinguished himself by some work of merit he would, without any guarantee of ability, have received so important a commission. Furthermore we learn that it was executed, not *under the direction*, but *in competition with*, the Pollajuoli brothers, and so closely does it resemble the work of those famous craftsmen, that even Signor Morelli was at one time inclined to doubt its parentage. Grave faults in drawing, anatomy and proportion cannot wholly destroy the impression of force expressed by this fine figure, which moreover thus early displays the quality of line for which our artist was so specially gifted. It has been unfortunately cruelly restored and repainted. It hangs now in the Uffizi Gallery (No. 1299).

For our third illustration we have chosen a portrait (Uffizi Gallery, No. 1154). It represents a handsome clean-shaven young man, with a melancholy expression on his countenance. He is clad in black, and long curls of fair hair flow on to his shoulders from under a scarlet cap.

With both hands spread around it, he exhibits a gold medal bearing the effigy of Cosimo de' Medici. Behind him stretches a pleasant landscape, through which meanders a wide river. This portrait has been the object of much debate. Not only has the execution of the work been attributed to a variety of authors other than Botticelli, but the subject of the painting has been hotly contested. It was long designated as a portrait of Pico della Mirandola, and subsequently of Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici—a name that it still bears in the gallery to which it now belongs. Most authorities are now however agreed that it is a portrait of Giovanni, the younger and best-beloved son of Cosimo de' Medici, but that it was probably painted after the death of that popular personage from some earlier portrait, or from a death mask.

The famous *Adoration of the Magi*, painted about 1477 for the church of Santa Maria Novella (now also in the Uffizi, No. 1285) forms our fourth illustration. This beautiful painting, since it includes portraits of at least three of the Medici family, was long supposed to have been commissioned as a votive offering to commemorate the miraculous escape of the principal members of that house from the daggers of the

Pazzi conspirators. This theory Mr. Herbert Horne ("Monthly Review," February 1902) has proved to be incorrect, since the painting originally formed part of the altar of the Lami family, and seems to have been commissioned by Giovanni Lami, or del Lama, a well-to-do Florentine merchant and an adherent of the Medici.

In the centre of the composition the Holy Family are seen grouped under a rude shed, upon the broken wall of which is perched a handsome peacock. The building is raised upon a slight eminence, so that the three approaching Magi may be easily distinguished from one another, and from their respective suites. The foremost of these, a venerable old man, in a dark green mantle embroidered with gold and edged with fur, bends down to kiss the Foot of the Divine Babe. This figure is the aged Cosimo de' Medici, the founder of the fortunes of that house: taken, of course, by the artist from the medal attributed to Michelozzo Michelozzi. Below, in the centre of the foreground, clad in scarlet and ermine, kneels with his back to the spectator,—not, as Vasari would have us believe, Giuliano de' Medici,—but his father Piero, surnamed *il Gottoso*. To his right we see Giovanni

de' Medici, robed in white, also kneeling and turning slightly to speak to his elder brother. Among the crowd of attendants on either side, whose splendid attire gives to this work the appearance of a mass of gorgeous jewels, there must undoubtedly be a vast number of portraits of personages well known at the time. Among them various critics have indicated Giuliano and Lorenzo (*il Magnifico*); but the evidence in support of these, and of other identifications is small and somewhat arbitrary. One other portrait, however, has the sanction of some probability, from its resemblance to another portrait in Filippino Lippi's fresco of *Scenes from the Lives of SS. Peter and Paul* in the Brancacci Chapel of the church of the Carmine. This may be traced in a figure of a man in a yellow robe, who stands at the extreme right of the composition, and, unlike all the other persons represented, gazes *out of the picture*. It is not easy to account for the unwonted splendour of his attire, considering his rank and circumstances, but nevertheless this figure is generally held to be a likeness of the artist himself.

The picture underwent many vicissitudes ere it reached its present resting-place, and even then remained unrecognized until 1849, being

up to that time attributed to Domenico Ghirlandajo.

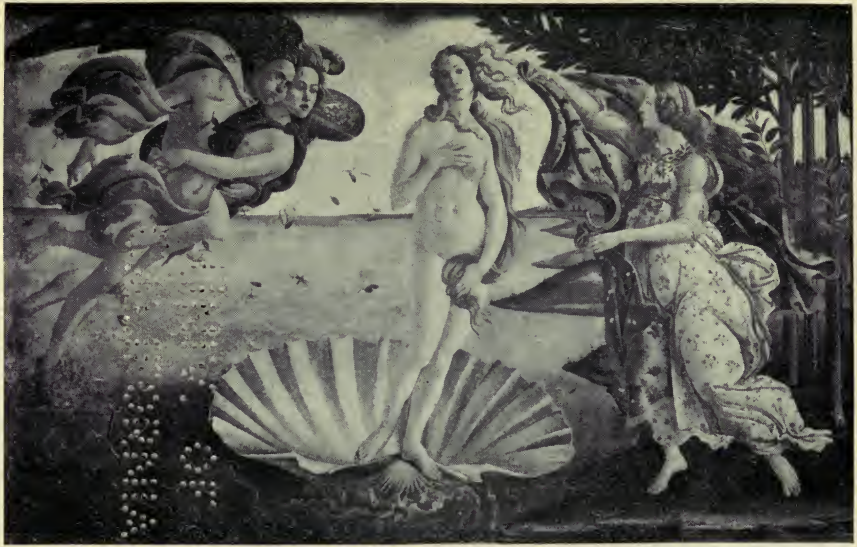
We now come to a reproduction of what is perhaps the best-known, and is certainly the most discussed, of all the works of Botticelli. Its subject is clearly allegorical; in fact an *Allegory of Spring*. Hence it is generally known as *La Primavera*. It is reasonably probable, moreover, that it was also intended to convey some secondary meaning, allusive to some event then well known;—especially since it was executed to adorn the Medici Villa at Castello. Endless therefore are the conjectures and interpretations suggested by critics of all nationalities. Even the probable date of the painting has been fiercely contested, though opinion is generally in favour of fixing it at about 1478. It is further held that the patron, to whose order both it and subsequently the *Birth of Venus* were executed, was the young Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici, the wealthy grandson of Cosimo's younger brother, Lorenzo, and head of the junior branch of that family. Its marked resemblance to the description of the "Realm of Venus" given in Angelo Poliziano's "Stanze per la Giostra,"—a poem wherein are celebrated the amorous and martial exploits of the handsome

Giuliano de' Medici, victor in the famous Tournament held in January 1475,—is beyond dispute. How far, though, this or that figure may be identified with Giuliano himself, or with his beloved Simonetta Vespucci, then but recently deceased, involves questions too long to argue here. The beautiful harmony of colour in this work has suffered sadly at the hands of the restorer (?), but it nevertheless remains one of the most lovely and characteristic examples of the Art of its period, and attracts every visitor to the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence, where it now hangs (No. 80).

The scene is laid in a grove of orange-trees, laden with ripe fruit and carpeted with masses of the loveliest Spring-flowers. In the centre of the composition, against a background of myrtle-boughs stands Venus. Over her long robe of white and gold she carries a red mantle. Before her, with fingers interlaced, dance the Three Graces, attired in robes of thinnest muslin. Still further to the left stands a charming figure of a youth, who bears the attributes of Mercury. A red drapery partially conceals his finely modelled limbs; a baldrick slung across his body supports his sword. Toe-less buskins cover his feet and a winged helmet his thick dark hair. His left hand

rests upon his hip, whilst his right with uplifted *caduceus* disperses the clouds before the coming of Venus. Over the head of the Goddess floats a Cupid, blindfolded but with drawn bow, aiming an arrow in the direction of Mercury. To the extreme right of the picture Zephyr, endeavouring to burst somewhat violently into the grove, and bending the tree trunks in his path, essays to embrace the flying Flora, who turns her face toward him, half-terrified by his vehemence. A scanty muslin garment drapes her form, and from her lips there pours a stream of Spring-blossoms. Between this figure and Venus stands the chief figure in the composition: the Genius of Spring. Robed in a garment covered with flowers of every hue, her long fair hair crowned with daisies and cornflowers, garlanded with ivy and briar roses, and with even the folds of her robe filled with countless blossoms, she trips bare-foot over the flower-decked grass. A more poetic personification of *Spring* it would be difficult to imagine; and it is easy to understand the fame that this charming painting has acquired.

The *Birth of Venus*, which is our next illustration, bears a strong superficial resemblance to the *Allegory of Spring*, is incidentally derived from the same poem, and was seen by Vasari



[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

THE BIRTH OF VENUS.

and others in the same Villa. Nevertheless there are marked differences between the two paintings, and critics are very divided in their views as to the probable date of this latter work. At first sight the two paintings would appear to be companions: but although they once hung together, neither in size nor in material do they really correspond: the *Primavera* is painted on wood, the *Birth of Venus* on canvas. Strong differences are moreover apparent in the style and treatment of the subjects portrayed. The latter picture was certainly not painted before 1480: but whether before or after Botticelli's visit to Rome in 1481-2 is a matter of considerable conjecture. It undoubtedly shows a great advance in technique upon, and is happily in a better condition than, the *Primavera*. It is preserved now in the Uffizi Gallery (No. 39). Over the summer sea, standing erect upon a large open shell, and nude save for the long tresses of her golden hair, Venus approaches the shore whereon, beneath the shadow of a grove of orange trees, stands the Genius of Spring. Clad in a robe embroidered with cornflowers and garlanded with sprays of olive, she extends a pink mantle dotted over with daisies, wherein to clothe the Goddess upon her landing. On the opposite side two Zephyrs

closely intertwined waft the shell with its lovely occupant across the lightly-rippling billows. The exquisite modesty in pose of the central figure: the graceful tripping movement of Spring, as she hurries forward to meet the approaching Deity: and the force expressed in the wild rush of the two young Breezes: form an ensemble of immense charm and skill in composition. There can be no doubt that the subject was inspired by one of the "Homeric Hymns," but it has reached our artist through the medium of Poliziano's poem on the "Giostra" above alluded to. It is therefore filled with Renaissance rather than Classical sentiment, which would account for important variations from the Homeric description. For example Zephyr is here represented by two figures, whilst the Hours are resolved into but one, who wears the semblance of the Genius of Spring. The colouring of this beautiful painting has no doubt paled somewhat through the passage of time, but at all times it must have been delicately harmonious, with its shades of tender pink and green. The most striking feature, however, is the delicate rhythm of *line in motion:* a quality for which Botticelli is so deservedly renowned, and in which he pre-eminently excelled.

[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

THE MADONNA OF THE MAGNIFICAT.

To show this quality at its highest perfection we could choose no better example than this one.

Next to the *Madonna della Seggiola* of Raphael no representation of our Blessed Lady and her Divine Infant is more widely known among the pictures to be visited in Florence than the lovely *tondo* here reproduced: usually designated as the *Madonna of the Magnificat.* Injudicious restoration has reduced this work to a glaring combination of violent and crude colour, but nothing can destroy the lovely sentiment, or the exquisite grace of its composition and harmony of line. No documentary evidence exists regarding it, but critics are generally agreed in fixing its date at about the year 1479. The *tondo* form was one specially affected by Botticelli and his followers, but in this work he has unquestionably reached the highest point attainable in this attractive species of composition. Mr. John Addington Symonds has aptly likened it to "the corolla of an open rose." The Madonna is seated on one side of the picture, bending forward over her Babe seated upon her lap. Their left hands hold between them a pomegranate, whilst with His Right He directs hers in dipping a quill-pen into an ink-stand, held by a

boy-angel. This angel, assisted by a companion supports an open book on the page of which may be read the opening words of the Canticle: *Magnificat anima mea.* Another angel bends over the first two with an air of gentle interest; whilst two more,—one on either side of the entire composition,—raise a jewelled crown above the head of the Mother of God. Between the Mother and Child and the first-named group of the three angels we see a glimpse of a charming landscape with a winding river. The skill, wherewith the two lesser groups are linked together by their attitudes and by the two outer angels with their uplifted hands, is incomparably beautiful. The painting now forms one of the chief ornaments of the Uffizi Gallery (No. 1267 bis).

Our last illustration is remarkable in many ways. It is one of the very few works which bear the artist's own signature with the date of execution. It is moreover, with the exception, perhaps, of some of his Dante drawings, his latest work; and it bears obvious traces of the influence of that powerful Reformer, Fra Girolamo Savonarola. The painting, which, coming from the Fuller-Maitland Collection, is now one of the gems of the National Gallery in London (No. 1034), is quite a small—almost a

[*National Gallery.*

THE NATIVITY.

miniature—work; but it is full of movement, and shows an exuberance of feeling worthy of Botticelli's best period. We do not know the occasion of the painting, nor whether or no it was the result of a commission. All that we can ascertain concerning it is embodied in an inscription written in Greek characters along the upper edge of the panel, which has been translated by Mr. Sidney Colvin as follows: *This picture I, Alessandro, painted at the end of the year* 1500, *during the troubles of Italy in the half-time after the time which was prophesied in the Eleventh of St. John and the Second Woe of the Apocalypse, when the devil was loosed upon the earth for three years and a half. Afterwards he shall be put in chains according to the Twelfth, and we shall see him trodden under foot as in this picture.*

Upon an eminence in the centre of the panel, beneath a rude pent-house set up against a rocky cavern, the Virgin adores the Infant Christ, who lies upon the ground before her. Behind the Holy Child Joseph sleeps soundly, his head buried on his knees. At the back of the shed are seen the Ox and the Ass. On the right of the hut a winged angel encourages two kneeling shepherds: on the left another heavenly mes-

senger points out the Holy Family to three men—probably intended to represent the Magi,—who are also on their knees in adoration. Garlands of olive adorn the heads of both groups of worshippers, and branches of the same plant are in the angels' hands. Upon the thatched roof kneel three more angels supporting a book from which they are singing canticles of joy. They are clad respectively in red, white and green, and likewise carry branches of olive. Above in the blue vault dance twelve seraphs in a rainbow circle of many-coloured floating garments, waving branches of olive and fluttering ribands, to which are attached golden circlets. In the foreground of the composition, below the hut, three other angels, again with olive branches, are effusively embracing three olive-crowned figures, who may reasonably be supposed to represent Savonarola himself and his two martyred companions, Fra Domenico Buonvicini and Fra Silvestro Marussi. Behind them devils are seen shrinking away into the crevices of the rocks. The most striking feature with regard to this painting is its wild, almost frantic, expression of pure religious fervour. The denizens of Heaven, who have descended to earth to celebrate the Birth of God Incarnate, and to direct all Nature to do

Him honour, seem utterly unable to restrain their joy; and few paintings exist that so fully express outwardly the inner emotion fermenting in the craftsman's soul. That Botticelli was gifted with a very vivid and fertile imagination his whole life's work bears evidence; but he has here given it fullest play in a religious subject, with even more ardour than he ever showed for Classic myth or purely secular illustration. It would be easy captiously to find fault with the drawing and other details, but Botticelli's sureness and delicacy of line is still to be traced here; whilst the lightly-poised grace of his dancing seraphs is unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF BOTTICELLI

NOTE.—In the face of very diverse, and in some cases absolutely contradictory, views of various critics with regard to the dates of most of Botticelli's paintings, it is impossible to make a reliable chronology of them in detail. All that one can attempt is to state approximately the chief events of his life.

1444. Born in Florence.

1459-60. Enters the studio of Fra Filippo Lippi.

1467-68. Returns from Prato to Florence.

1470. Paints a *Fortitude* for the Tribunal of the Mercatanzia.

1472. Takes charge of Filippino Lippi.

1474. Commissioned to paint a *St. Sebastian* for Lorenzo the Magnificent.

1474. Sent for to Pisa to paint an *Assumption* for the Opera del Duomo.

1475. Paints an emblematical *Pallas* for Giuliano de' Medici.

1476. Paints an *Adoration of the Magi* for Sta. Maria Novella.

1480. *Pallas subduing the Centaur.*

1480. *Denunzia de' Beni* of the property of the Filipepi family.

1480. Paints a fresco of *St. Augustine* in the church of the Ognissanti for the Vespucci family.

1481. Publication of Cristoforo Landino's Commentary on Dante's *Inferno.*

1481. Botticelli goes to Rome to paint frescoes in the Sixtine Chapel.

1482. Commissioned to adorn a Hall in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

1485. Paints a *Madonna and Child with SS. John the Evangelist and the Baptist* for the Bardi chapel in Santo Spirito.

1486. Frescoes in the Tornabuoni Villa at Chiasso Macerelli.

1487. Commissioned to make a marriage chest on the occasion of the Bini-Pucci wedding.

1487. Paints a *tondo* for the Hall of Audience of the Council of the Massari.

1489. Savonarola began to preach in Florence.

1491. Botticelli appointed on a committee regarding the façade of the Duomo.

1491. Commissioned to decorate with mosaics the chapel of San Zenobio.
1492. Death of Lorenzo *il Magnifico.*
1494. Sandro and Simone Filipepi purchase property at San Sepolcro outside the Porta San Frediano.
1496. Michelangelo writes to Botticelli from Rome.
1498. Execution of Savonarola.
1498. Another *Denunzia* of the Filipepi family.
1500. *The Nativity* in the National Gallery, London.
1504. Committee regarding a site for Michelangelo's *David.*
1510. Death of Botticelli.

LIST OF THE CHIEF WORKS BY BOTTICELLI

CATALOGUED ACCORDING TO LOCALITY

THE BRITISH ISLES

LONDON, THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

No. 592, *The Adoration of the Magi.* Tempera on wood. (Ascribed in the Catalogue to Filippino Lippi.)

No. 626, *Portrait of a Young Man.* Tempera on wood. (Formerly ascribed to Masaccio.)

No. 915, *Mars and Venus.* Tempera on wood. (From the Barker Collection.)

No. 1033, *The Adoration of the Magi.* Tondo. Tempera on wood. (From the Fuller-Maitland Collection. Also ascribed in the Catalogue to Filippino Lippi). This is perhaps the painting that Vasari saw in the Casa Pucci.

No. 1034, *The Nativity.* Tempera on canvas. 1500. (From the Fuller-Maitland Collection.)

THE COLLECTION OF MR. J. P. HESELTINE.

Madonna and Child with St. John. Tempera on wood. (Partly by Botticelli.)

THE COLLECTION OF DR. LUDWIG MOND.

Scenes from the Life of San Zenobio. Tempera on wood. (2 Panels.)

FRANCE.

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