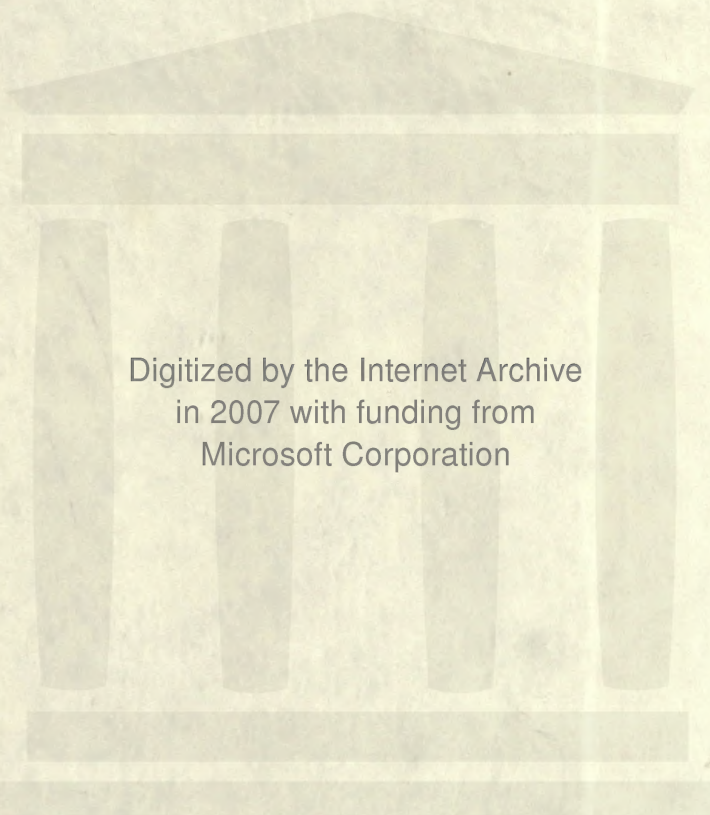


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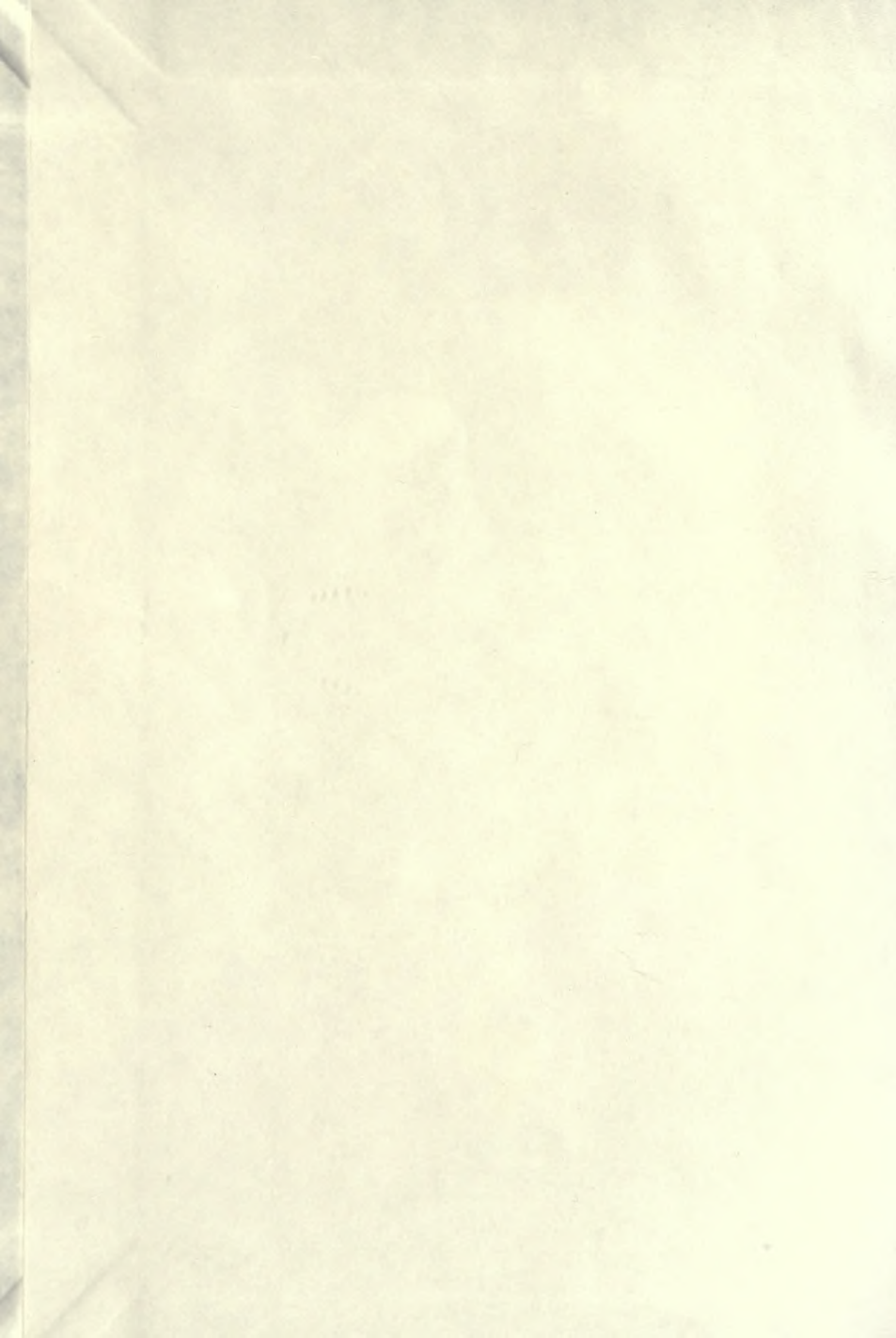


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Fra Filippo Lippi



Alinari photo

Accademia Firenze

The Nativity.

Fra Filippo Lippi

BY

EDWARD C. STRUTT



LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1906

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1906

*First published 1901
Cheaper reissue 1906*



OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

TO
THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

THE LATE

ARTHUR J. STRUTT

PREFACE

IN the history of Art the Quattrocento might not inappropriately be likened to one of those ideal landscapes, thickly strewn with lovely flowers, which Fra Angelico was so fond of depicting, and which form a fitting environment to Sandro Botticelli's wistful symbolic figures. So varied and imposing is the prospect which meets our gaze, so beautiful and luxuriant the vegetation, that we pause in bewilderment, not knowing which flower to select for special admiration and study. For as each floral species differs from the other in brilliancy of hue and distinguishing symmetry of form, so also do we discover characteristic merits and often unsuspected greatness in each individual master of the Quattrocento, though all obeyed, with greater or minor understanding and alacrity, the mysterious force then beckoning Art irresistibly forwards on the triumphant march which led her from the unsatisfactory gropings of the Giottesque limbo to the glorious apotheosis of the Renaissance. No period was more homogeneous in its general tendencies and aspirations, or more varied in the individual elements which contributed to the realization of those tendencies and to the final triumph of those aspirations.

In the beautiful garden of the Quattrocento the Muse of Art-criticism should wander serenely, like Dante's vision of Matelda,

“Cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore
Ond' era pinta tutta la sua via;”

not merely twining garlands wherewith to deck herself out, but selecting each flower judiciously and in the order to which the gracefulness of its shape, the charm of its colour, or the delicacy of its perfume entitle it. Nor should she, in my opinion, adopt the uncompromisingly scientific methods of modern *Kunstkritik*, whose intransigent votary, when he undertakes to study and describe one of the beautiful flowers which blossom in the garden of Art, usually proceeds to tear the delicate petals to pieces, dissects and analyses their component parts, then proudly embodies the result of his laborious investigations in a bulky volume. He may have succeeded in correctly classifying the subject of his research, in giving us its precise weight, an exact analysis of its chemical composition, a fair description of its physiological constitution; but where is the brilliant hue of the petals, the winning grace of the flower? These we would look for in vain, unless we evoke them, by an effort of the imagination, from the dry and amorphous pulp into which they have been reduced by the pestle and mortar of the hyper-scientific student.

I hold that the true mission of art-criticism does not merely consist in establishing figures and facts,

dates and dimensions. For these historical ingredients, however intrinsically precious, are valueless unless we boil them down in a sort of witches' cauldron and distil therefrom the magic elixir which will enable us to converse with the heroes of past ages, to see with eyes which have been closed for centuries, to search the circumvolutions of brains long since reduced to dust, to feel our hearts throb with the very hopes and passions and aspirations which perchance quickened the pulses of great artists as they toiled at the masterpieces which have survived them and still excite our wonder and admiration. But we can never hope to acquire this critical second-sight unless we discard all tendency to dry pedantry, and accustom ourselves to give quite as much weight and value to *human* documents as to those culled from libraries and dusty archives.

In selecting Fra Filippo Lippi as the subject of this study, I confess that I was attracted almost as much by the *human* interest attaching to the theme as by its undeniable artistic importance, an importance hitherto overlooked, for some incomprehensible reason, by most writers on art. That Fra Filippo's merits should have received such slight recognition and so slender a tribute of study and praise, is all the more remarkable in an age when followers of the modern school of criticism are digging for obscure painters, in their all-devouring thirst for notoriety, as ardently as the parched Arab digs for water in the sand.

My constant aim in the following pages has been to reconstruct, as faithfully and conscientiously as the evidence of contemporary documents and a careful study of the historical and artistic *milieu* would allow, the personality of Fra Filippo the *man* and Fra Filippo the *artist*. Perhaps, when attempting to grasp the inward meaning of his work, I have given to the purely human element a preponderance which some critics may think excessive and unscientific. But are they right who pin their faith on scientific theories and deductions, however plausible, however ingenious and interesting, rather than on the splendid evidence of the human document? For my part I venture to answer in the negative; and if, after perusing this volume, my readers will have arrived at the same conclusion, I shall consider myself amply repaid for the trouble its compilation has cost.

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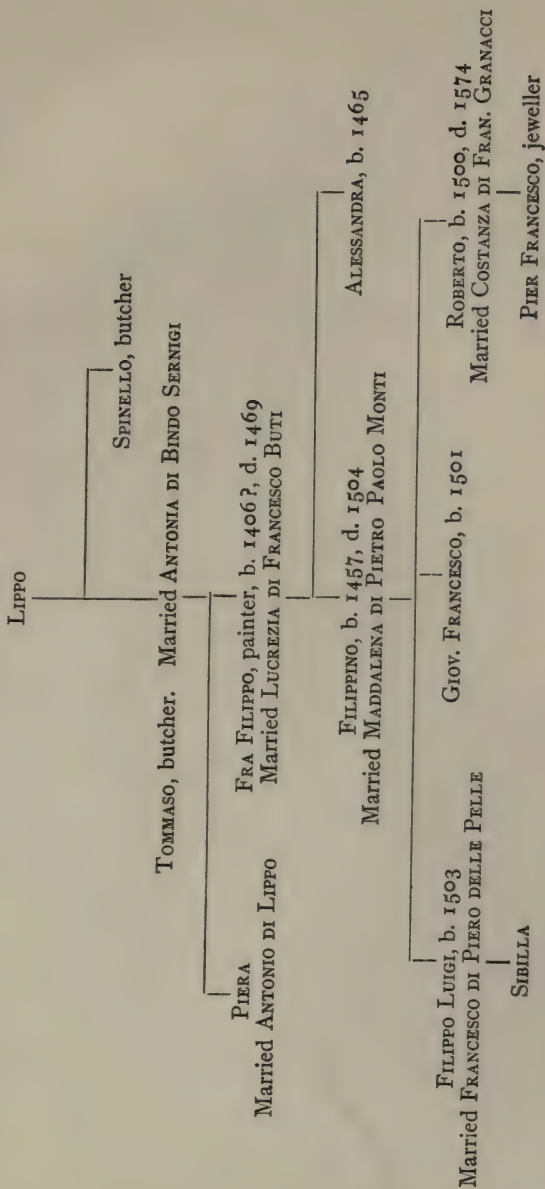
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CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES OF FRA FILIPPO'S LIFE AND WORKS

- 1406 (?) Is born in Florence, his father being Tommaso di Lippo, butcher.
- 1414 (?) Is placed in the convent del Carmine by his aunt.
1420. Assumes the religious habit in the same convent.
1421. Makes his profession, on the 8th of June.
- 1426-1427. Studies painting probably under Masaccio, when the latter was engaged on the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel.
1430. Is first referred to with the qualification of painter in the books of his convent.
1431. Abandons the convent del Carmine.
1434. Is commissioned to paint the Coronation of Our Lady for the high altar of Sant' Ambrogio.
1437. The Captains of Or San Michele commission him to paint a picture for the Barbadori Chapel in the Sacristy of Santo Spirito.
- 1440 (?) Paints a picture for the church of Sant' Egidio.
1442. Pope Eugenius IV, by a Bull dated February 23, appoints him Rector and perpetual Abbot of the parish of San Quirico in Legnaja, near Florence.
1446. Paints two pictures for the Cancelleria of the Town Hall of Florence, representing the Annunciation and St. Bernard.
1447. On the 16th of May receives 1,200 lire in payment of the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation.
1450. Is appointed chaplain to the monastery of San Niccolò de' Frieri in Florence.
- 1450-51. Quarrels with his pupil Giovanni da Rovezzano; is imprisoned and tortured.
1451. On the 16th of February Antonio del Branca commissions him to paint a panel for his chapel in the church of San Domenico at Perugia. In September of the same year Fra Filippo quarrels with his patron à propos of the panel.
1452. Binds himself by contract to paint a round panel for Leonardo Bartolini, representing an episode in the life of Our Lady. About the same time he begins working in the Cathedral of Prato.

1453. Paints a panel and a tabernacle for the hospital del Ceppo at Prato.
1454. On December 2 is chosen, together with Fra Angelico and Domenico Veneziano, to give an opinion on the work of Benedetto Bonfigli in the Town Hall of Perugia.
1455. May 19 is deprived of his Rectorship of San Quirico a Legnaja by the Archbishop of Florence.
- „ July 15, Pope Calixtus III confirms the sentence and issues a Bull against Fra Filippo.
1456. Is appointed chaplain to the nuns of Santa Margherita in Prato, paints a panel for the high altar of their church, and on May 1 abducts Lucrezia Buti.
1457. His son Filippino is born. Paints a panel for King Alfonso of Naples.
1460. Begins painting four lunettes on the vault of Messer Geminiano Inghirami's tomb in the cloister of San Francesco at Prato (February 11).
1461. May 8, *tamburazione* or secret accusation against Fra Filippo. On September 14 goes to Perugia and gives his opinion as expert on Bonfigli's paintings. Pope Pius II grants him a special dispensation, allowing him to marry Lucrezia Buti and dispensing him from the observance of his monastic vows and from all obedience to the Order.
1465. His daughter Alessandra is born. He finishes the paintings in the Duomo of Prato.
- 1467-1469. Works at the Cathedral of Spoleto.
1469. Dies at Spoleto on October 9 and is buried in the Cathedral.
1488. Lorenzo the Magnificent erects a marble monument to his memory in the Cathedral of Spoleto.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE LIPPI FAMILY



FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

INTRODUCTORY

“To such perfection did Fra Filippo attain, that in his own time he was surpassed by none, and even in our own days there are very few superior to him; wherefore Michelangelo not only praised him incessantly, but imitated him in many things. . . . Fra Filippo was indeed so highly estimated for his great gifts, that many circumstances in his life which were most blameable received pardon, and were partly placed out of view in consideration of his extraordinary abilities.”

Although some critics may be inclined to think Vasari's eulogy somewhat exaggerated, most students of that wonderful period of Florentine art which heralded the Renaissance like the glorious dawn of a resplendent day, will feel grateful to the quaint and gossipy, but seldom wholly unjust, Messer Giorgio, for this handsome tribute to the genius of a man, whose artistic greatness has too often been underrated and obscured by prejudiced writers. For it would be difficult, even among the galaxy of great artists who flourished in the Quattrocento, to find another personality so striking as that of Fra Filippo, or one that so perfectly embodied the characteristic merits and defects, the typical virtues and vices of

that most interesting transitional period. That he had more than his share of the latter, and a deficiency of the former, was undoubtedly due to the unfortunate circumstances of his abandoned childhood rather than to any natural perversity; but it is likewise to these very circumstances that we must, in a great measure, attribute the extraordinary, almost morbid, development of those artistic talents and tendencies which rendered Fra Filippo the most typical emanation of the Quattrocento.

An orphan whose mother died shortly after giving him birth, and who was left a fatherless waif at the age of two, far from being carefully guarded from all exterior influences during that peaceful *trêve de Dieu* which, in the case of more fortunate children, precedes the stern battle of life, he found himself in his earliest childhood, unarmed and unprepared, plunged in the very midst of that seething turmoil of passions and aspirations which formed the hidden motive of the Quattrocento, whose adoptive child, branded for life with its shortcomings and glorified by the halo of its greatness, he necessarily became.

Nor did his brief monastic career prevent Fra Filippo from coming into direct contact with the artistic movement of his age. Indeed he lived at a time when Art was only just beginning to emerge from the churches and cloisters which had guarded her lovingly, together with her sisters, Science and Learning, during centuries of barbaric oblivion, and stood hesitating, like a shy and beautiful maiden, only half awake and still smiling at the strange dreams of her long sleep, with one foot on the threshold of the convent and another timidly dipping in the cold, bracing waters of Paganism. Before taking the final plunge, from which she emerged rejuvenated and more beautiful than ever,

Art lingered many years among those hallowed walls which bore such touching traces of her childish efforts, and showed her gratitude by adorning them with the first splendid manifestations of her re-acquired power, with the *spolia opima* of her triumph over conventionalism.

It was Fra Filippo's singular good fortune to spend his early youth in the very cloister which this rejuvenated form of Art had just enriched with its most precious gift, Masaccio's epoch-making frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, and we shall see, when studying his works, how potently the young Carmelite was influenced by Masaccio, whose artistic heir and continuator he may be considered. There can be little doubt, therefore, that Fra Filippo's unhappy childhood, his mistaken monastic career, his constant struggles with his passions and with the poverty and suffering they engendered, not only were the indirect causes of his coming more closely in contact with the tendencies, good or bad, of his age, than most of his contemporaries, but also acted as powerful, if painful, stimuli on his eminently artistic, but indolent and sensual, temperament.

If Fra Angelico remained *un maître en retard*, lagging somewhat behind the feverish onward movement of the Quattrocento, so that by many he is still regarded as belonging to the fourteenth rather than to the fifteenth century¹, this was certainly due to the peaceful and uneventful retirement of his

¹ In his most able and interesting work on *Fra Angelico* (London, George Bell and Sons, 1900), Prof. Langton Douglas has successfully attempted to demolish the generally accepted theories, or rather prejudices, about one of the greatest painters of the early Quattrocento, whose artistic personality, hitherto unjustly dwarfed, he has restored to the high position pertaining to it in the history of art.

childhood and early youth quite as much as to his shrinking and timid nature, which made him instinctively prefer the mystic limbo of the Giottesques to the fiery vibrating atmosphere of the Quattrocento Purgatory, where giant spirits wrestled to cast off the leaden chains of conventionalism and soar, untrammelled and purified, up to the Golden Gates of the Renaissance.

At the very outset of this attempt to give an impartial account of the life and works of an artist whose moral failings have too often been used as an argument against his artistic greatness, a parallel between Fra Filippo and Fra Angelico suggests itself. In the first place it must be admitted that the traditional and popular conception of Fra Filippo is almost as exaggerated and erroneous as that of his saintly contemporary. The legendary account of the latter tells us a great deal of Fra Angelico the religious, Fra Angelico the saint. It reveals that side of him which most appealed to simple souls of monastic narrowness. "But the Dominican painter," says Prof. Langton Douglas¹, "was not merely a saint, a saint with a happy knack of illustration. He was above all else an artist—an artist to his very finger-tips—who carried about in one body two temperaments which are usually supposed to have but little in common, and which indeed are not often found inhabiting the same frame—the artistic and the saintly. But he was primarily an artist, *an artist who happened to be a saint.*"

Fra Angelico's artistic personality has been handed down to us so excessively diluted in the milk of sanctity as to render its scientific reconstruction a by no means easy task. Fra Filippo has fared but

¹ Op. cit., p. 4.

little better. For generations he has been held up to the finger of scorn as the *villain* of the Quattrocento, the monkish Falstaff whom critics and historians have delighted to place figuratively in the stocks. And yet, when we shall have gathered together, not without difficulty, the scattered limbs of the friar's legendary figure, and placed them on the dissecting table of scientific research, we shall be surprised to see how superficial was our subject's iniquity when compared with the depth and tenacity of his artistic nature. We shall find that the man, with his sensuality and his moral weakness, was inextricably mixed up with the artist, to such an extent, indeed, as to give a prima facie impression that the former sometimes overshadowed and eclipsed the latter.

But Fra Filippo's artistic temperament was the oak round which his sensuality grew and flourished like clinging ivy, and just as we see a sturdy plant, whose roots strike deep into the soil, support with impunity the heavy festoons of the beautiful but dangerous parasite which intermingles with, and almost hides, its own foliage from view, even so we find that although the luxuriant vegetation of Fra Filippo's passions partly concealed his artistic temperament, the latter was not suffocated, but merely prevented from reaching that spiritual elevation which Fra Angelico attained. The principal error of the popular conception of Fra Filippo consists in seeing the noxious ivy and ignoring the sustaining oak, in condemning the defects of the man without adequately appreciating the redeeming merits of the artist.

“. . . Zooks, sir, flesh and blood
That's all I'm made of!"

is the singularly mistaken definition of Fra Filippo

which Browning places in the friar's own mouth, and which epigrammatically gives voice to the legendary prejudices handed down to us by twelve generations of superficial or biassed critics.

We shall see, when studying Fra Filippo's suave Madonnas and majestic saints, that the Carmelite painter, though conspicuous for the powerful and natural rendering of his subjects rather than for that mystic spirituality which distinguished the works of his Dominican rival and contemporary, was more, infinitely more, than mere "flesh and blood," and could even attain, at times, a degree of perfection absolutely incompatible with that utter baseness of soul of which he is accused, a grandeur of conception and a technical skill which reveal him to us as the connecting link between Masaccio and Raphael and as the truest herald of the Renaissance.

Of Fra Filippo, therefore, whatever his moral failings may have been, it must be said that he too, like Fra Angelico, was above all else an artist; a rogue and a slave to his passions, if you like, but primarily a great artist, an artist who happened *not* to be a saint.

It is partly to the exaggeratedly pessimistic, if not altogether erroneous, conception of the Carmelite painter that we must attribute the surprising deficiency of biographies of Fra Filippo, and the superficial and unsatisfactory nature of most writings dealing with one of the greatest figures of the Quattrocento. Those writers who have charitably thrown a veil over the defects of the man, have seldom done justice to the merits of the artist; while others who did not scruple to expose Fra Filippo's deplorable *penchants* in all their ugliness, utterly failed to reconstruct his artistic personality, or to demonstrate its redeeming loftiness. Indeed, if we except the

interesting commentary with which Milanesi¹ supplements Vasari's incomplete and chronologically erroneous account, and the same author's painstaking investigations concerning that most eventful period in Fra Filippo's career which was passed at Prato², besides the ample notice in Crowe and Cavalcaselle³, there are remarkably few writings of even comparatively recent date which students desirous of making a closer acquaintance with the Carmelite painter and his works could possibly consult.

Fortunately, however, there is no lack of materials, both artistic and historical, of which the impartial student may avail himself in his attempt to reconstruct Fra Filippo's artistic personality. Time has dealt leniently with his works, which are not only still copious, but in the majority of cases admirably preserved: "We therefore have every facility for judging him as an artist," says Berenson⁴, "yet nothing is harder than to appreciate him at his due. If attractiveness, and attractiveness of the best kind, sufficed to make a great artist, then Filippo would be one of the greatest, greater perhaps than any other Florentine before Leonardo. Where shall we find faces more winsome, more appealing than in certain of his Madonnas—the one in the Uffizi, for instance—more momentarily evocative of noble feeling than

¹ Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori, con nuove annotazioni e commenti di G. Milanesi* (Firenze, Sansoni, 1878), vol. ii.

² *Fra Filippo Lippi*, a critical and historical essay by G. Milanesi, published in nos. 157, 158, and 160 of the French magazine *l'Art*, dated respectively Dec. 30, 1877, and Jan. 6 and 20, 1878.

³ *Storia della Pittura in Italia* (Firenze, Le Monnier, 1892), vol. v. pp. 135-258.

⁴ *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York and London, Putnam, 1900), p. 43.

his Louvre altar-piece? Where in Florentine painting is there anything more fascinating than the playfulness of his children, more poetic than one or two of his landscapes, more charming than is at times his colour? And with all this, health, even robustness, and almost unailing good humour."

Of all "the glad monk's gifts," and Fra Filippo was richly endowed with artistic merits, these three, a healthy interpretation of sentiment, robustness of conception and execution, and unailing good humour, are, if not the most precious, certainly the most evident and pleasing in his pictures. "Fra Filippo," says Vasari, "was extremely fond of cheerful company, and lived for his own part in a very joyous fashion." Far from sharing the Piagnone views which, even before the threatening apparition of Savonarola, who became their most earnest and relentless exponent, had found many proselytes in Florence and exercised a profound influence on the life and works of Fra Angelico, the jovial Carmelite painter looked out upon the world with eyes full of eager admiration for the good and beautiful things it contained, and pictorially reproduced what he saw and felt, not what he dreamt and imagined. Hence the fundamental difference between Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo, a difference due not so much to the latter's undeniable superiority of technique and execution, as to their diametrically opposed conception of life and of its finalities. Heaven and earth are not further removed than the moral and intellectual planes on which the two artists lived and worked. While Fra Angelico's paintings, therefore, are often so lacking in the sense of reality and so full of spirituality as to appear an anchorite's attempt to reproduce the ecstatic vision of his soul, Fra Filippo's pictures impress us as being a vivid portrayal of life, with

its joys and sorrows, by a man who has rejoiced and suffered, and who, having fought and struggled in the arena instead of timidly looking at the battle out of a convent window, renders the whole gamut of the emotions, from laughter to tears, with a forcible, unaffected naturalness which, if it does not attain Fra Angelico's ascetic sublimity, is certainly more affecting and true.

Indeed, nothing can give us a better idea of the gulf which separates Fra Filippo from Fra Angelico than a comparative study of their manner of rendering the emotions, and of their treatment of kindred subjects, such as the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Coronation, the Adoration of the Magi, and similar religious themes to which the genius and creative powers of artists were limited before the Renaissance broke over Italy like a mighty wave, on whose crest rode the resuscitated spirit of Paganism, followed by the beautiful myths of long-forgotten ages.

We shall see, when studying Fra Filippo's *emotional* pictures, such as the Deposition of St. Jerome and the Funeral of St. Stephen at Prato, that the Carmelite friar knew how to depict intense grief so vividly and sympathetically as to touch almost painfully in the heart of the beholder that chord of human pity which Fra Angelico, in all his Crucifixions, utterly fails to reach. And yet Fra Angelico, in his ascetic fervour, was rather partial to melancholy and even ghastly subjects, while Fra Filippo instinctively avoided them, as proved by the fact that we do not find a single Crucifixion in the long list of pictures by this master. Whether his figures reflect suave maternal joy, as in his numerous Madonnas, or innocent childish merriment, as in his flower-crowned groups of angels, or manly dignity and grief, as in some of his saints and

monks, Fra Filippo's rendering of expressions and emotions is always agreeable and striking, simply because it is so true. Life, movement, loveliness, though of a distinctly sensual order, even grandeur— all these are to be found in Fra Filippo's pictures; but we should look in vain for that ethereal beauty which his pupil Sandro Botticelli attained, or for the spirituality which shines like a mystic flame through the works of Fra Angelico.

Nor is it difficult to account for Fra Filippo's inability to soar above the world which he loved so well and to which his passions bound him as with chains of steel. "Homo sum" is written clearly on all his work; and indeed when we remember the circumstances of his stormy existence, can we wonder that Fra Filippo's life, with its worldly hopes and fears, its joys and griefs, even its petty cares and troubles, is clearly reflected in his pictures? Nothing could be more melancholy than the letters in which Fra Filippo, writing to his friends and protectors, Giovanni and Pietro de' Medici, bewails his poverty and financial straits, and speaks of "pressing need" having compelled him to the labours he was then executing in Prato. Do we not see the gradual loss of liberty and self-respect, without which an artist is as a giant shorn of his strength; the constant anxiety and inward humiliation checking inspiration in its flight, the petty annoyances of life dwarfing all grandeur of conception and execution? Nevertheless it must be thought that Fra Filippo struggled manfully against odds which would have overwhelmed a less powerful artistic temperament, and that he was in a great measure victorious is proved by some of his pictures; for instance, the Berlin Nativity, where he nearly attains that degree of spiritual elevation in which he was usually so lacking.

How striking the contrast between the thriftless, jovial, unscrupulous Fra Filippo and the "Angelico" of whom Vasari wrote that "he was entirely free from guile, of a most humane and temperate disposition, and living in chastity, did not become entangled in the world's snares. In fact he used often to say that he who practised art had need of quiet and of a life free from care, and that he who had to do with the things of Christ ought to live with Christ."

There are few instances of artists' lives in which the personal element vies so powerfully with the artistic for primacy of interest as that of Fra Filippo. The only clue to a just appreciation of his paintings, therefore, lies in a careful reconstruction of his personality. In attempting this far from easy task, we shall endeavour to describe the master and his works in the light of contemporary documents, and to point out the various circumstances of time, place, and *milieu*, which exercised a great and often decisive influence on Fra Filippo the man and Fra Filippo the artist.

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE AND WORKS

IT was in a shabby little by-street of Florence, known as Ardiglione, near the "Canto alla Cuculia¹," or *Cuckoo's Corner*, and just behind the Carmelite convent destined so soon to become his second home and the starting-point of his artistic career, that Fra Filippo first saw the light. Unfortunately the exact date of his birth has never been satisfactorily ascertained, and the confusion created by differing authors, from Vasari to Baldinucci and Milanesi, is all the more regrettable as it would be of primary importance, for the history of Fra Filippo's artistic development, to establish at what age he came under

¹ A long account of the "Canto alla Cuculia" will be found in Rossi, *L'Osservatore Fiorentino*, vol. vii. p. 83. The whole site of the Carmine convent was in ancient times known as the Cuculia, probably from the cuckoo being heard there. The name clung to the corner of the nearest street, which was called "Canto alla Cuculia." On the walls of a house, once Casa Maggi, there was formerly a tabernacle containing a picture of the Madonna with a cuckoo. From the mocking sound of the cuckoo came the word "cuculiare." This forgotten corner of Florence gave its name to a flourishing literary company called the "Cuculiani," which held its meetings first in the house of Carlo Dati, then in those of Orazio Rucellai, Lorenzini, Pandolfini, and Lorenzo Panciatichi. Although the name of "Canto alla Cuculia" has vanished, with scores of other old suggestive names, the little "Via dell' Ardiglione," where the house of the Lippis presumably stood, still exists, but I have been unable to find traces of the tabernacle.

Masaccio's potent influence. Vasari has been more than usually inaccurate (and that is saying a great deal) in his chronological references to the principal events of Fra Filippo's life. Indeed, some of his blunders are so contradictory that we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that they are the result of negligence on the part of the printers rather than of ignorance on the author's part. For instance, in the first edition of his *Vite*, published in 1550, Vasari says that Fra Filippo died in 1438, aged 67, thus placing the date of his birth at 1371, but he forgets that a few pages before he had stated, this time correctly, that Fra Filippo was still working at his Prato frescoes in 1463! In a subsequent edition (1568) we are told that Fra Filippo was 57 when he died, which would bring the date of his birth to 1381, while later on 1402 and 1412 are given as the correct dates, making a difference of 41 years between the first statement and the last. It is strange that Vasari, writing less than a century after Fra Filippo's death, should have been in ignorance of the date of that event, which Baldinucci found duly recorded in the archives of the Carmine as having occurred in 1469. The last-named author thinks Fra Filippo was born about 1400, while Milanesi, who at first adopted the last date mentioned by Vasari, namely 1412, subsequently arrived at the conclusion that the master first saw the light in 1406. I am all the more inclined to consider this as the correct date of Fra Filippo's birth, as it is confirmed by recently discovered documents, to which neither Vasari nor Baldinucci had evidently had access, and which I shall have occasion to quote presently.

In spite of the proud escutcheon, with its heraldic stars and crescents, which adorns his tomb in the Spoleto Cathedral, Fra Filippo came of far from

aristocratic stock, his father, Tommaso di Lippo, following the humble calling of a butcher, while his mother¹, Mona Antonia, was the daughter of a poor Florentine citizen named Ser Bindo Sernigi. Of the master's parents little is known beyond the fact that Mona Antonia died shortly after giving birth to Filippo, so called after his grandfather, and that Tommaso did not survive her long, leaving the two-year-old boy and a daughter named Piera absolutely unprovided for.

"I was a baby when my mother died,
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two,"

says the friar in Browning's well-known poem; but although we do not know what became of Piera until we hear of her marrying one Antonio di Lippo, it is difficult to believe that little Filippo was actually left "starving in the street," for Vasari tells us how his aunt, Mona Lapaccia (Tommaso's sister), brought up the orphan, with great difficulty and many sacrifices (being herself extremely poor), until he had attained his eighth year, when, no longer able to support the burden of his maintenance, she turned for aid and advice to the good fathers of the neighbouring Carmine, one of whom, Fra Albizo de' Nerli, an old friend of the Lippi family, persuaded the Prior to take charge of the poor little waif, giving him hospitality within the convent walls.

Thus we find Filippo, at an age when other children romp and play in blissful ignorance of all that is sad and serious in life, already shut out from

¹ Mona Antonia Sernigi being Tommaso di Lippo's second wife, some writers believe that Fra Filippo was the son of Tommaso's first wife, whose name we do not know; but there is nothing to prove this supposition.

the beautiful happy world, as it appears to childhood's eyes, and confined to an atmosphere of chill, awesome severity, with sad-faced monks for companions, the silent cloister and long convent corridors for a playground, and the subdued chant, the muttered prayer, the solemn voice of church bells constantly in his ears instead of the singing of birds and the merry laughter of playmates. Had Filippo ever known the meaning of joy and comfort and family ties, he must doubtless have suffered intensely in the austere *milieu* where fate had placed him; but his earliest recollections were of poverty and want and pain. He had never felt the soothing tenderness of a mother's kiss, or the protecting, reassuring influence of a father's love; so that in all probability the peaceful life which he led at the Carmine was not altogether distasteful to him.

If it utterly failed to awaken in his childish soul that profoundly religious tendency which so early an acquaintance with the cloister and its routine might have been expected to create, we are nevertheless certain that his naturally buoyant temperament was not in the least crushed by the monastic surroundings in which he found himself. Indeed his sprightly liveliness seems to have made him the *enfant gâté* of the community, who allowed him to do very much as he liked. Of this indulgent attitude Filippo took advantage in order to follow the bent of his own inclinations rather than the scholastic routine which his older companions, who were already in the novitiate, and consequently under convent rules and discipline, had to scrupulously obey. "In proportion as he showed himself dexterous and ingenious in all works performed by the hand," says Vasari, "did he manifest the utmost dullness and incapacity in letters, to which he would never apply himself, nor would

he take delight in learning of any kind. This boy—who continued to be called by his worldly name of Filippo¹, being placed with others in the house of novices, and under the care of the master of grammar, merely to see what he could do—instead of studying never did anything but daub his own books and those of his companions with childish drawings; whereupon the Prior determined to give him all means and every facility for learning how to paint.”

It is not surprising that the good Prior of the Carmine should have encouraged Filippo's artistic *penchant* instead of placing obstacles in its way. For art was still considered, in the early Quattrocento, as the handmaiden of religion, and as such held in high honour and successfully cultivated in convents and cloisters. A keen competition existed among the various monastic Orders, which vied with one another in the artistic adornment of their churches with frescoes and panel pictures all aglow with the religious fervour which inspired them. So closely, indeed, were art and religion connected in the monastic mind, that we find almost as high and reverent a meed of praise bestowed in convent records on the brethren who graced the Order with their art as on those who honoured it with their sanctity. Although none of the great brotherhoods could boast of so glorious an artistic tradition as that of the Dominicans, to whose long list of painters,

¹ It is customary for postulants, on entering the convent, to change their baptismal name for some other, usually that of a saint whom the candidate takes as a special model in his religious life. Thus Fra Giovanni da Fiesole's real name was Guido. In Fra Filippo's case this custom seems to have been departed from, constituting the only argument, a very feeble one, in favour of the theory that he was never a professed monk.

sculptors, and architects¹, a name destined to outshine all the preceding ones had just been added², it is no exaggeration to say that almost every convent in Florence was at this time a centre of artistic activity. Foremost among the schools of the miniaturists was the Camaldolese convent of Sta. Maria degli Angeli, which Lorenzo Monaco had raised considerably above the standard of Agnolo Gaddi's followers, a fact of which the Camaldolese were justly proud. And as petty jealousies have always existed between members of rival religious orders³, it may be conjectured that the artistic superiority of the monks of Sta. Maria degli Angeli was keenly felt by their neighbours of the Carmine, whose community could not at that time boast of a single painter⁴. In encouraging Filippo's artistic tendencies, therefore, the Prior of the Carmine was doubtless prompted by the hope that the strange boy who showed such a decided aversion to serious study, and who passed all his time in drawing, might after all, if properly taught, bring more glory to the Order with his paintings than he could ever be expected to do with his learning.

Before attempting to ascertain who initiated Filippo in the study and practice of art, or to reconstruct the

¹ Marchese, *Memorie dei più insigni Pittori, Scultori e Architetti Domenicani*. Fourth edition, Bologna, 1878. 2 vols.

² Fra Angelico was at this time in Cortona, and although at the commencement of his career, it may be presumed that his artistic skill was already known and admired, especially in the monastic world.

³ Even Fra Angelico was not entirely free from this defect, for in one of his "Last Judgements" he has filled hell with Franciscans.

⁴ It is not generally known that Paolo Uccello's daughter Antonia, one of the few women-painters of the Quattrocento (b. 1456, d. 1491), was a Carmelite nun.

first period of his most interesting artistic career, we must endeavour to establish a few dates and facts regarding his entrance and life in the Carmine.

According to Vasari, Filippo was eight years of age when his aunt, Mona Lapaccia, confided him to the care of the Carmelite monks, on the understanding that they should train him for a religious life. Indeed, Vasari's words, "Essendo egli già di otto anni, lo fece frate," would indicate that the boy was at once placed in the novitiate, without going through any preparatory course whatever. But that this was not the case we gather from Vasari himself, who shortly afterwards tells us that Filippo was placed with the novices, under the care of the master, "merely to see what he could do," adding that his pronounced antipathy for lessons and his remarkable artistic tendencies were alike humoured by the Prior. We may therefore conjecture that Filippo's first years in the Carmine were spent in acquiring the rudiments of letters and the very slender knowledge of Latin which he possessed¹, and that he was at least fourteen before he entered upon a special period of preparation, consisting in one year's novitiate, for the monastic life to which he was destined by the force of circumstances, and which he subsequently embraced, with no inclination and even less vocation, simply because it was the only course left open to the homeless orphan. That Filippo was forced to become a monk by his poverty and helpless position, and that the step, however unavoidable, was repugnant to him, is certain; but it would

¹ Fra Filippo's ignorance is evident not only from his letters, the spelling of which is as faulty as the style is confused, though forcible, but also from his pictures, the Latin inscriptions of which are invariably faulty. Thus we find *Ecce Angnus Dei*, *Gloria in ecelsis Deo*, *Pereegit* instead of *Perfecit*, &c.

be folly to maintain that he was a mere boarder at the Carmine, and that he never became a professed member of the Order, as Della Valle¹ and other writers have asserted. In fact there is documentary evidence to prove that Fra Filippo was duly entered on the books of the community as one of its recognized members. He is mentioned for the first time in the *Libro delle spese* of the Carmine² for the year 1421 among the novices who, being too poor to buy a habit, received a subsidy from the convent for that purpose. That he made his solemn profession in the same year is further proved by a document *rogato* or drawn up by the notary, Ser Filippo di Cristofano, stating that the ceremony took place on June 8, 1421, in the presence of the Prior, Fra Pietro da Prato, and of the other members of the community.

These documents are more than sufficient to destroy the elaborate arguments, set off by a sort of contemptuous incredulity³, with which certain well-meaning but most unscientific authors, in their anxiety to shield religion in general and the Monastic Orders in particular from all blame which might indirectly reflect on them through the misdeeds of an unworthy

¹ Padre Guglielmo della Valle, *Lettere Sanesi*. Roma, 1786. 3 vols.

² *Libro delle spese del Carmine*, anni 1418-1438.

³ Della Valle, op. cit., "Oramai convenghino gl' imparziali, che il lasciar l'abito regolare, che fece Fra Filippo Carmelitano di età di anni 17 ancora che ordinato negli ordini sacri a Vangelo, e lo sviamento di Madonna Lucrezia da Prato, non sono le sole favolette dal Vasari inserite nelle sue vite dei Pittori." Unfortunately, however, Della Valle brings no proof to back this denial of facts, which have since been confirmed, with the addition of even more damning details, by the discovery of contemporary documents, the existence of which was evidently ignored by Della Valle and other writers belonging to the pre-scientific period of art criticism and research.

member, have attempted to prove that Filippo was never a professed monk. These self-constituted champions of institutions so universally revered and in themselves so venerable as to render the very idea of a defence based upon misstatements and reticences ridiculous—these pygmies struggling to shield the pyramids—have pushed their most unnecessary zeal so far as to deny not only that Fra Filippo was a monk in holy orders, but also the whole story of his amours with Lucrezia Buti at Prato, and even that he had a son named Filippino¹! To admit that Fra Filippo was a most immoral man implies no disrespect to monasticism or to religion, just as the glory of the Papacy cannot be obscured by the immorality of an Alexander VI.

Although we know the exact date of Fra Filippo's solemn profession as a Carmelite monk, there are no documents to prove when or where he was ordained priest; but as Vasari says that he left the Carmine at the age of seventeen, and as—even admitting this to be inexact—Fra Filippo could not have been more than twenty-four years of age when he abandoned the monastic life towards the end of 1431, it is probable that he was ordained after his departure from the convent. That he was a priest in full orders, however, and not merely a deacon, is proved beyond all doubt by the fact that Pope Eugenius IV appointed him abbot and rector of the church of San Quirico a Legnaja, near Florence, and that he successively held the post of chaplain to the

¹ Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei*. Leipzig, 1867, vol. ii. p. 16: "Wir haben obige Darstellung nicht aus dem Zusammenhang reissen wollen, müssen aber allerdings hinzufügen, dass die ganze Erzählung Vasari's, der Austritt aus dem Kloster, sein Verhältniss mit Lucrezia Buti (sammt seiner Vaterschaft Filippino), gegenwärtig nur als Dichtung zu betrachten sind."

nuns of San Niccolò de' Frieri in Florence and of Santa Margherita at Prato. There are few events of any importance in the life of Fra Filippo the man and Fra Filippo the monk of which we cannot find the confirmation in contemporary documents; unfortunately, however, his artistic career, and more especially its opening period, is surrounded by so much doubt and uncertainty as to render its scientific reconstruction an enterprise by no means devoid of difficulty.

The first and most important question which confronts us is: Who was Fra Filippo's master? According to Vasari, the young Carmelite applied himself assiduously to the study of the Brancacci Chapel, Masaccio's masterpiece and the glorious foundation-stone on which successive generations of artists have built up the beautiful edifice of modern painting: "The chapel of the Carmine had then been newly painted by Masaccio, and this being exceedingly beautiful, pleased Fra Filippo greatly, wherefore he frequented it daily for his recreation, and, continually practising there, in company with many other youths who were constantly drawing in that place, he surpassed all the others by very much in dexterity and knowledge; insomuch that he was considered certain to accomplish some marvellous thing in the course of time. For not only in his earliest youth, but also in his riper years¹, he performed so many praiseworthy labours, that it was truly miraculous. . . . Proceeding thus, and

¹ The Italian wording is, "Ma negli anni acerbi, nonchè nei maturi," literally "in his earliest as well as in his riper years." It is difficult to understand how Mrs. J. Foster, in her translation of Vasari (Bell and Sons, London, 1892), could interpret the passage as follows: "For not only in his youth, but when almost in his childhood," &c.

improving from day to day, he had acquired Masaccio's hand so perfectly, and his works displayed so much similarity to those of the latter, that many affirmed the spirit of Masaccio to have entered the body of Fra Filippo." From the wording of the above passage it is evident that Vasari did not believe Fra Filippo to have been a pupil of Masaccio, but rather of his works, an opinion which has since been adopted by the great majority of writers¹ on the subject. And indeed it has every appearance of trustworthiness, although we shall see presently that if it is the truth, it is by no means the *whole* truth, and that Fra Filippo was not only indebted to Masaccio and to the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel for the remarkable degree of perfection which he attained in art.

That Fra Filippo owed all that was best and greatest in his manner to Masaccio and to the Brancacci frescoes is, however, undeniable. Therefore, before investigating who his other masters may have been, we shall attempt to throw some light on the vexed question as to whether he enjoyed the advantages of Masaccio's personal tuition, or whether he merely studied the great innovator's works. Much of the confusion and uncertainty existing on this subject is due to the most puzzling chronological errors of which that arch-culprit Vasari and many of his followers are guilty. Indeed some writers, accustomed to *jurare in verba magistri*, have been

¹ Rosini, *Storia della Pittura Italiana*, introduction to vol. ii: "Molti erroneamente lo fanno discepolo di esso (Masaccio), ma se nol fu della persona lo fu certamente delle opere."

Kugler, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 16: "Ob Masaccio Schüler gebildet, ist nicht bekannt; der Carmelitermönch Fra Filippo Lippi (geboren um das Jahr 1412, gestorben 1469), der als ein solcher genannt wird, hat sich, wie es scheint, wohl nur an Masaccio's Werken gebildet, welche die Kirche seines Ordens zu Florenz schmückten."

so completely led astray by these historical will-o'-the-wisps as to deny, for instance, that Fra Filippo could have studied under Masaccio or been influenced by his works, because, according to them, Masaccio began working at the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel in 1440, when Fra Filippo was already thirty-four years of age, and an accomplished painter. But recently discovered documents prove beyond the possibility of a doubt that the famous Carmine frescoes were executed not later than 1427, as Masaccio died in the following year in Rome, while hitherto it was believed that he lived till the year 1443¹. We know, also, that the Brancacci Chapel was consecrated in 1422, and that almost immediately afterwards Masolino da Panicale commenced that epoch-making series of historical frescoes which his pupil Masaccio continued, and which Filippino completed more than half a century later. It is therefore not only probable, but practically certain, that Fra Filippo watched both Masolino and Masaccio at their work, having entered the Carmine in 1414, and was a youth of sixteen when the Brancacci Chapel was consecrated. If we are to believe Vasari's statement that the Prior, struck with the boy's great talent for drawing, "determined to give him all means and every facility for learning how to paint," it is not likely that he would have neglected so favourable an opportunity as the one which presented itself when Masolino commenced working in the convent church. That Fra Filippo received much valuable instruction from Masolino, and followed his manner closely, is proved by the fact that two of his earliest pictures, the Nativity in the Florence Academy and the Munich Annunciation, were, until

¹ Both Vasari and Baldinucci say that Masaccio died in 1443 aged 40, but in reality he died at Rome in 1428 at the age of 26.

quite recently, attributed to Masolino, and figured in the catalogues under the latter's name. But it is equally evident, from a careful examination of these early works of Fra Filippo, that he had learned the rudiments of painting, and commenced his artistic career under another master, whose influence still made itself strongly felt when he began studying the methods of Masolino (at that time, together with Fra Angelico, one of the leading pioneers of the new movement in painting), which may even be traced in works of a much later date.

Although I have been unable to find documents in support of my assertion, a careful study of Fra Filippo's early works has convinced me that his first master—whose chief merits, rich colouring and fine technique he acquired, and whose Giottesque shortcomings he was saved from by a timely contact with the greatest innovators of his age—was the Camaldolese monk Don Lorenzo, usually known as Lorenzo Monaco. We have seen that in the beginning of the Quattrocento the school of the Camaldolese convent of Sta. Maria degli Angeli represented one of the conservative strongholds of art in Florence, in striking contrast with the glorious group of architects and sculptors, Jacopo della Quercia and Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and Donatello, whose chisels were then busily engaged in cutting out that path through which their brethren in art, the painters, were to throng presently on their way towards the triumphs of the Renaissance. While these pioneers advanced with giant strides towards perfection, the miniaturists of Sta. Maria degli Angeli did not aspire higher than mere prettiness, and the followers of Agnolo Gaddi continued to have as weak a sense of material significance as ever. That Lorenzo Monaco was deeply tainted with the defects

of both these retrograde schools is evident from the most superficial study of some of his best pictures, the *Trinità Annunciation*, for instance, and the *Adoration of the Magi*, in which an adequate sense of tactile values is lamentably lacking. But Lorenzo Monaco's accurate technique, due to his early training as a miniaturist, and the rich warm colour with which he almost succeeded in giving a fictitious life to flat and badly-drawn figures, redeemed his Giottesque failings to such an extent that we cannot but regret that his genius as a colourist was not coupled with the "dolce stil nuovo," which, had he been born a quarter of a century later, would doubtless have placed him in the foremost ranks of the early Quattrocento painters. It is in the *Florence Academy Nativity* that traces of Lorenzo Monaco's influence, modified and corrected by the teaching and the modern tendency of Masolino and Masaccio, are most apparent. This picture (see plate no. 1) is a small panel¹, exquisitely finished and remarkable for its rich transparent tints.

Although correct drawing and absence of conventionalism bear witness to the enormous distance which already separated Fra Filippo, at the commencement of his artistic career, from the school to which his first master belonged, nevertheless these circumstances of size, execution and colour all point to a certain affinity with the methods of the

¹ It was painted for the wife of Cosimo de' Medici, and intended, according to Vasari, for one of the cells in the hermitage of Camaldoli which she had caused to be constructed as a mark of devotion, and had dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The predella, containing stories in small figures, was sent as a gift by Cosimo to Pope Eugenius IV, and caused Fra Filippo to be held in the greatest esteem by that Pontiff. As Cosimo was recalled from exile in 1434, this picture was probably painted after that date. Unfortunately the small stories mentioned by Vasari are now lost.

miniaturists. And that Fra Filippo always manifested in his panel pictures a partiality for the details and ornamental *minutiae* so dear to the miniaturists, from whom in everything else he differed profoundly, is confirmed by Vasari, who says that "if Fra Filippo displayed excellence in his paintings generally, still more admirable were his smaller pictures; in these he surpassed himself, imparting to them a grace and beauty than which nothing finer could be imagined."

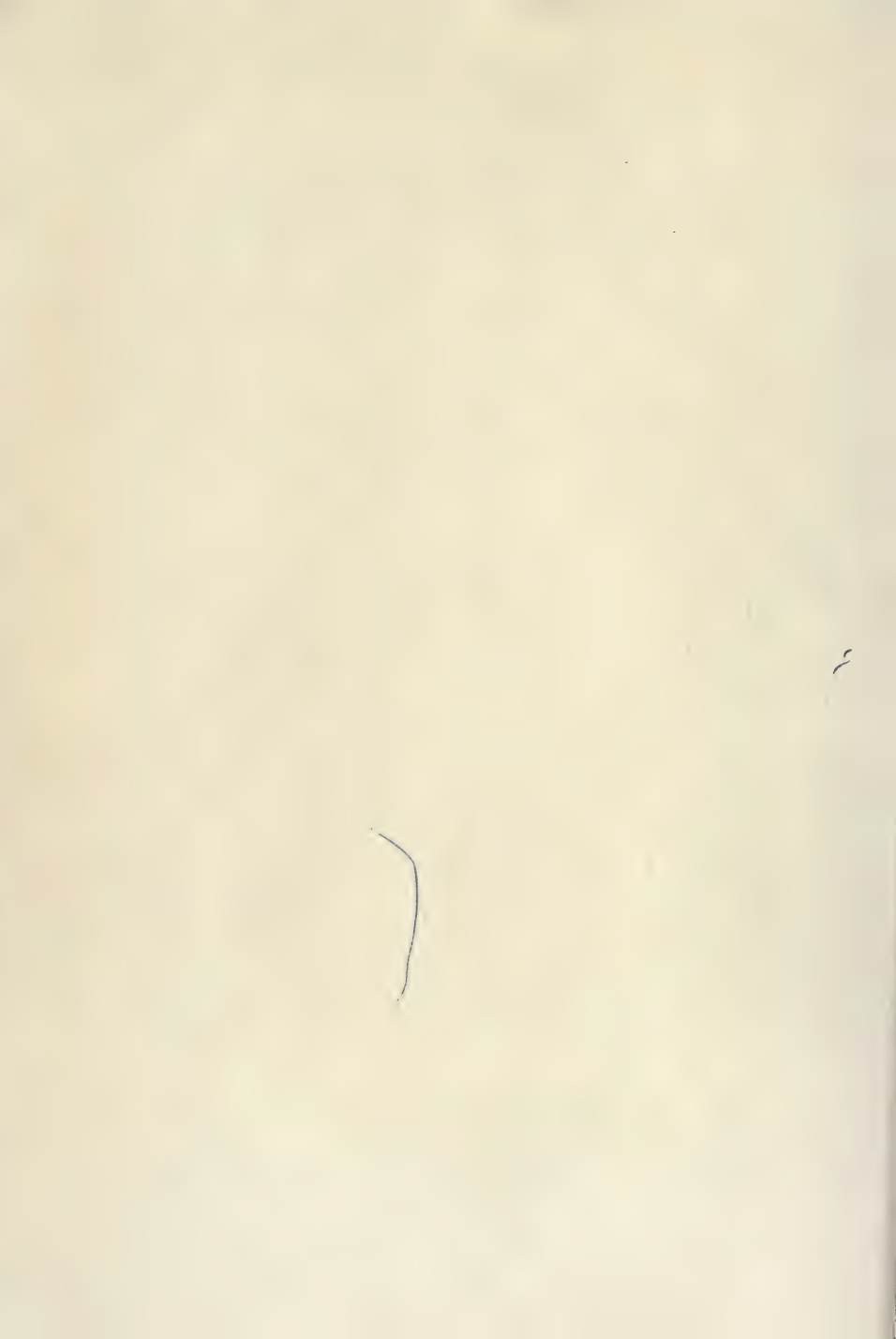
In the picture now before us, the central group of the Virgin kneeling by the side of the Divine Child, who is lying on a little patch of flowery meadow, stands out in strong relief against a curious allegorical background which often recurs in Fra Filippo's works, a "wilderness of scathed rock and arid grass," as Ruskin wrote, dotted here and there with trunks of trees which appear to have been blasted by the fury of a cataclysm rather than felled by the woodman's axe. So striking a contrast with the sombre, desolate landscape is formed by the light brilliant tints of the central figures, that the latter almost look as if they started out of the picture. In this judicious understanding of light and shade, which was so lacking among the Giottesques, it is not difficult to trace the influence of Masolino da Panicale. From the clouds above the group, two hands, representing Divine Power, emerge as if in the act of speeding the allegorical dove on its errand of peace and protection, while on either side of this somewhat conventional representation of the Godhead an angel kneels gracefully adoring. A youthful St. John the Baptist, carrying in his left hand a cross and in his right a scroll with the words *Ecce Agnus Dei*, advances hurriedly towards the central group, and the half-figure of a bearded and venerable Camaldolese saint, gazing with an ex-



Alinari photo.]

[*Accademia, Florence.*

THE VIRGIN ADORING THE DIVINE CHILD.



pression of ecstatic devotion towards the Virgin, occupies the right-hand corner of the composition, close to the reclining form of the Infant Jesus. The latter, besides being rather flat, presents the characteristic defects which in the majority of cases mar the naïve beauty of Fra Filippo's children, namely, an almost complete absence of neck, clumsy limbs, and sadly neglected hands and feet. But the face of the Divine Child is its redeeming feature. Evidently painted from life, it is not only an accurate and touching reproduction of that vague pensive expression which often lights up the features of infants, but possesses a majesty and gravity which we should vainly look for in Fra Angelico's representations of the Divine Child¹, and which we shall only see rivalled and surpassed by Raphael.

The finest figure in the composition, however, is that of the kneeling Virgin, in whose sad face, as she bends over the Child, the fond protecting love of a mother for her offspring is admirably blended with the intense adoration of the creature humbling itself before its Creator. Indeed this Nativity, like the Munich Annunciation and most of Fra Filippo's early paintings which have come down to us, is remarkable for a devout simplicity of conception and for a genuine religious sentiment which we are accustomed to find in the works of Masolino and of Fra Angelico, but which cease to be a characteristic of Fra Filippo's later productions, gradually giving place to a sort of rejoicing sensuality, so conspicuous, for instance, in the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, as the Carmelite departed further and further from the

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¹ In Fra Angelico's Madonna dei Linajuoli, in the Madonna d' Annalena, and in the Cortona Madonna, the Infant Jesus is little better than a prettily dressed doll, and in the two latter pictures especially of a decidedly Byzantine conception.

cloister and became more completely a prey to his passions. In this Madonna we already find the principal characteristics which we shall meet, slightly modified or more or less accentuated, when studying Fra Filippo's subsequent representations of the same theme, foremost amongst them being a maladive delicacy of expression which in the Pitti Madonna might almost be mistaken for a strangely fascinating form of spiritual sensuality. We observe, also, the light, gracefully arranged head-gear, the heavy, somewhat bunchy folds of the draperies which assume a curious fan-like disposition as they touch the ground, and the lavish use of gold (another miniaturist symptom) in the rays emanating from the Godhead, in the aureolas of the Virgin and Child, and in the hem of her tunic and ample mantle.

I have thought it advisable, even at so early a stage of our investigations, to describe this picture at some length because, if it indirectly proves the influence exercised by Lorenzo Monaco and by Masolino on Fra Filippo's artistic education, an influence so great as to justify the conjecture that the young Carmelite acquired the rudiments of art from those masters, it also tends to confirm the theory that Fra Filippo studied under Masolino's pupil and successor, Masaccio. Indeed, while there is nothing to prove that Fra Filippo never studied under Masaccio, numerous circumstances of time and place render it extremely probable, if not absolutely certain, that he did. Fra Filippo was still in the Carmine when Masaccio took up the work left unfinished by Masolino, probably in 1425, and must have been on intimate terms with the young painter of the Brancacci Chapel, only five years his senior, and evidently a great favourite

with the Carmelites, for we find him in 1426, although engaged on his great frescoes, painting a panel picture for their church at Pisa, and also a most quaint and life-like portrait of the old janitor of the Carmine, now in the Uffizi Gallery. It would be difficult to believe that Fra Filippo did not learn a great deal from Masaccio during the two years which the latter spent almost without interruption in the Carmine before starting on that journey to Rome, from which the bizarre young genius was never to return alive. And that Fra Filippo turned for guidance and instruction to Masaccio is all the more probable as Lorenzo Monaco had died in 1425, and Masolino was no longer in Florence. In the already quoted "libro delle spese" of the Carmine, Fra Filippo is mentioned with the appellation of *dipintore* for the first time in the year 1430, thus justifying the supposition that in 1427, when Masaccio completed his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, the young Carmelite was not yet an accomplished painter, but was still learning and studying, no longer in the *bottega* of Lorenzo Monaco or of Masolino, but most probably under Masaccio himself. Besides, if we carefully examine Fra Filippo's manner, the grandeur and striking modernity of his fresco paintings, nay, his very defects¹, we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that he drank at the fountain-head of that great movement which inaugurated the Quattrocento and rendered the Renaissance possible, and that the secret of his greatness was derived

¹ Fra Filippo was guilty of great neglect in the drawing of hands and feet. Masaccio's figures also display this failing, especially his Adam and Eve driven from Paradise, in which the feet are monstrous, absolutely deformed, contrasting strangely with the magnificent rendering of the dramatic scene, and the masterly drawing of the figures themselves.

from Masaccio directly, and not merely from a study of his works.

As to Vasari's assertion that the Brancacci Chapel had just been completed by Masaccio when Fra Filippo entered the Carmine, it is manifestly false, for even if we admit that the latter was born in 1412 instead of six years earlier, he would, according to Vasari's own version, have become a guest of the Carmelites in 1420, namely, two years before the chapel was consecrated. We may therefore conclude that Fra Filippo witnessed, at an age when impressions are deeper and more lasting than at any other time of life, the walls of the Brancacci Chapel beginning to glow with the stupendous frescoes which were to effect so great a revolution in art, and that he saw both Masolino and Masaccio at their immortal task. Although written proofs are wanting to confirm this theory, no more convincing documents could be desired than Fra Filippo's own works, which, if not always superior to those of the numerous other painters whose style was subsequently formed in the study of the Brancacci frescoes¹, nevertheless

¹ Thanks to Masaccio's frescoes, the humble church of the Carmine, situated in one of the poorest and most deserted quarters in Florence, became for upwards of a century the glorious school where all the great painters of the Renaissance diligently studied the new style. Although Fra Angelico was already an accomplished painter when the Brancacci frescoes were completed, he was nevertheless certainly influenced by them, and the long list of artists whose greatness is indirectly due to the Brancacci Chapel includes Fra Filippo and Filippino Lippi, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, Verrocchio, Domenico and Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo di Credi, Pietro Perugino, Fra Bartolommeo, Mariotto Albertinelli, Andrea del Sarto, Raphael, Michelangelo, il Rosso, Franciabigio, Perin del Vaga, the Flemish painter Franz Floris, &c. It was in this chapel that Michelangelo received from a fellow student, the burly Torrigiani, that tremendous blow on the nose which disfigured him

bear the striking imprint of Masaccio's genius and individuality so clearly and unmistakably as to prove Fra Filippo to have been a pupil and direct emanation of the great innovator himself. It cannot be claimed for Fra Filippo that he often attained that loftiness of conception and simple grandeur of manner on which Masaccio's fame principally rests¹, but he came near them in his Prato frescoes, and soared even higher in his last work, the frescoes which he executed in the Spoleto Cathedral, and which were interrupted by his death. Unlike Rosini², therefore, who dismisses all discussion on this most important subject with the surprising statement that Fra Filippo had no master at all, we have arrived at the conclusion that he was the pupil

for life. It was here that Raphael copied Masaccio's Adam and Eve and Filippino's St. Paul. The history of the Brancacci Chapel is the history of modern Italian art, and cannot be more than hinted at here. In it Masaccio introduced a style of composition and design which, until the appearance of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, experienced no material change. Leonardo and Fra Bartolommeo enlarged only upon Masaccio's style; Michelangelo invented a style of his own, but he outlived it, while the style of Masaccio, expanded to its utmost, still survived in the works of Raphael and the great painters of the Roman school, not because it was Masaccio's but simply because it was true. For a detailed description of the Brancacci Chapel see Layard, *The Brancacci Chapel* (London, Arundel Society, 1868), and Delaborde, *Des œuvres et de la manière de Masaccio* (extract from the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, Paris, 1876).

¹ Kugler, op. cit., ii. p. 18: "Aber der hohe Ernst, mit welchem Masaccio die Erscheinungen des Lebens auffasste, macht in Fra Filippo's Werken schon entschieden einer sinnlichen Lust und einem Wohlbehagen an gemeiner Weltlichkeit Platz. Zunächst spricht sich diese seine Richtung in den äusseren Zuständen seines Lebens aus, über welches wir genauere, wenn auch etwas novelistische, Nachricht besitzen."

² Rosini, op. cit., iii. ch. i. p. 10: "Il fatto di quest' uomo, che divenne sì gran maestro senza essere stato propriamente discepolo di veruno, è dei più singolari."

of Masaccio, and that he probably studied under Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino da Panicale as well.

Vasari tells us that "while still very young, Fra Filippo painted a picture in *terra verde* in the cloister, near Masaccio's painting of the Consecration, the subject of which was a Pope confirming the Rule of the Carmelites, with others in fresco on several of the walls in different parts of the church: among these was a figure of St. John the Baptist, with stories from the life of that saint. . . . On one of the pillars of the church, near the organ, he depicted the figure of San Marziale, a work by which he acquired great fame, seeing that it was judged to bear comparison with those executed by Masaccio." Unfortunately these early works of Fra Filippo were destroyed, together with Masaccio's Consecration, partly by time and partly by the great conflagration of 1771. We may conjecture, however, that they were executed in or about the year 1430, when Fra Filippo is first mentioned with the honorific title of *dipintore* in the "libro delle spese" of his convent; and that he was already held in high esteem by the Carmelites is evident from the fact that they allowed him to paint his *terra verde* picture by the side of Masaccio's Consecration.

During the first years of his artistic career, Fra Filippo appears to have devoted himself almost exclusively to fresco painting, as there are only three panel pictures which may be attributed with tolerable certainty to the period which immediately preceded and followed his departure from the Carmine, namely, the Nativity which we have already noticed, the Munich Annunciation, and the Annalena Nativity, a revised and corrected edition of the first representation of the same theme, now also in the

Florence Academy. The Munich Annunciation¹ exhibits all the characteristics of Fra Filippo's earliest manner, especially that accurate technique and suave spirituality which we shall miss in his later works, when the evolution of the Carmelite towards sensuality had become decided and complete, and when the calm and unruffled existence of the convent, which had rendered it possible for Fra Filippo to understand and imitate his Dominican rival's monastic style, had given place to a morbid perturbation of mind and spirit. The Virgin is represented standing at the entrance to her room, holding a book in her hands, and receiving, with a touching expression of exultation and maidenly confusion, the message of the announcing angel, who kneels before her in an attitude of noble humility. Vasari is not guilty of exaggeration when he says that "this work exhibits extraordinary care, and there is so much beauty in the figure of the angel, that it appears to be indeed a celestial messenger." How different from the sweet simplicity of the Virgin, indeed "full of grace," and the dignified, majestic attitude of the kneeling angel, are the sensual, though fascinating, Madonnas of a later period, and the heavy, earthly angels of the San Lorenzo Annunciation and of the Lateran Coronation—to quote only two most striking instances of Fra Filippo's spiritual *débâcle*!

Of the two Nativities now in the Florence

¹ There is every reason to believe that this is the Annunciation which Vasari mentions as having been painted by Fra Filippo for the church of Sta. Maria Primerana on the Piazza of Fiesole. Like all his early panel pictures, it is of small dimensions, and was formerly attributed to Masolino da Panicale, whose influence on Fra Filippo is here as apparent as in the Nativity which we have already noticed.

Academy, and both belonging to Fra Filippo's first period, the one which Vasari tells us was originally executed for the nuns of Annalena (see frontispiece) is unquestionably the finest, showing considerable technical progress and greater skill in composition, although it is evident that when he painted it Fra Filippo still followed the methods of Masolino and of Fra Angelico, and had not yet developed that artistic individuality and independence for which he afterwards became conspicuous. The treatment of the theme is practically identical with that of the first Nativity, only more figures have been introduced, and the kneeling Virgin is placed on the right instead of the left. The Divine Child, too, is lying before the Virgin in the same position described in the other picture, the only difference being that he rests on the folds of his mother's mantle and not on the bare ground. Again, the Virgin's attitude of humble adoration, and the loving expression which lights up the Child's face, are admirably depicted. Not so worthy of admiration is the figure of St. Joseph, seated upon a rock facing the Virgin, and pensively leaning his head on his left hand, while in his right he holds a staff. Indeed the face is considerably out of drawing, and the whole attitude and expression constrained and unnatural. In striking contrast with this artificial representation of St. Joseph is a half-figure clad in monkish garb, which appears to start up from the ground behind it, and which has evidently been painted from life, so vivid and natural is the expression of the hooded face gazing with intense earnestness at the Divine Child. From the inscription on its shoulder we learn that this figure was meant to represent Sant' Ilarione (mis-spelt *Larione* by Fra Filippo), but in reality it is the portrait of Ruberto Malatesti, brother of Anna-

lena, as we gather from the convent records¹. Further away is a St. Jerome, thickly bearded and of pleasant features, in the act of beating his breast with a stone, while he holds a crucifix in his other hand, and behind the Virgin, half-hidden by the crumbling wall of a ruined edifice, St. Mary Magdalene contemplates ecstatically a choir of nobly conceived angels, three of whom bear a scroll on which are the words *Gloria in excelsis* (sic), while two appear to be singing. The legendary ox and ass tied to the manger, and shepherds with their flocks in the distance, complete this elaborate composition, the background of which consists of a rocky landscape, as wild and desolate as that which we have seen in the first Nativity. It would not be fair to accuse Fra Filippo of having voluntarily crowded this picture with unnecessary figures, as he was evidently commissioned by his pious patroness to depict a given number of saints, whom he was forced to find room for, even at the sacrifice of a greater simplicity and harmony in the general effect. Although the Annalena Nativity is much damaged, only the life-like figure of Sant' Ilarione being well preserved, while all the rest of the picture is considerably discoloured, this very circumstance enables us to analyse Fra Filippo's technique more carefully, and tends to confirm our assertion that in his early works he closely followed the methods of Masolino and Fra Angelico.

From the preceding pages, in which we have attempted to throw some light on the question of

¹ See Richa, *Chiese Fiorentine*, vol. x. p. 145. That Fra Filippo painted a panel picture for the convent of Annalena is confirmed by Albertini, who says: "in San Vincentio vulgo Annalena, monasterio dignissimo, costruito la maggior parte dalla Casa de' Medici, è una tavola di Fra Filippo."

Fra Filippo's education and to describe the first steps of his artistic career, it has been seen that, so long as he remained in the peaceful retirement of the cloister, the young Carmelite devoted himself assiduously, almost exclusively, to the study of art. But as he grew older, and, frequenting the *botteghe* of sculptors and painters, he came in touch with the gaiety, the magnificence and the vices of his age, in which those pagan tendencies, which triumphed completely in the Renaissance, were already beginning to assert their sway, his ardent, pleasure-loving nature took fire, and the monotonous, uneventful life of the cloister became unbearable to him. Long before he summoned up sufficient courage to abandon the religious seclusion of the Carmine, however, Fra Filippo must have secretly caressed his project; and although naturally lazy and indolent, he applied himself with redoubled activity to the study of art, in which he saw the only way out of a life distasteful and uncongenial to him, and the possibility of realizing his dreams of greatness, wealth and pleasure.

But Fra Filippo had other and far more honourable motives for wishing to leave the convent and return to the world. In a letter which he wrote to Pietro de' Medici in 1439 (see Document i) the following most touching and significant passage occurs: "It is clear that I am the poorest friar in all Florence. God has left me with six unmarried nieces, infirm and helpless, and the little they have on earth comes to them from me. If you could only let me have a little corn and wine at your house, selling it to me on credit and putting it to my account, it would be a great joy for me. I implore you with tears in my eyes to grant me this favour, so that if I have to go away I may leave these poor children provided for." What an insight into the

friar's better nature these few lines give us, so simple and pathetic in their earnest pleading for the "poor children" confided by God to his care! Indeed they almost induce us to question, with Gaye, who quotes this interesting document¹, the exactitude of Vasari's accusations against Fra Filippo's moral character, and to ask whether a man who toiled, without any legal coercion, to support six helpless orphans, and who was not ashamed to humble himself before the great for their sake, could, after all, have been the hardened and unscrupulous libertine described by most of his biographers.

At any rate we may hazard the conjecture that Fra Filippo left the Carmine not only in hopes of acquiring wealth and greatness by the practice of his art, but also in order to support his poverty-stricken relatives, who must have starved had he egoistically remained in the convent. Vasari's statement that "Fra Filippo, hearing himself so highly commended by all, formed his resolution at the age of seventeen and boldly threw off the clerical habit" is doubly mistaken, in the first place because Fra Filippo is mentioned for the last time in the oft-quoted "libro delle spese" towards the end of the year 1431; so that, even admitting that he was born in 1412, he would have been nineteen when he left the Carmine; and secondly, because Fra Filippo never "threw off the clerical habit." In the letter which we have just quoted, and which was written eight years after his leaving the convent, he still alludes to himself as "the poorest friar in Florence," and the fact that he subsequently received several ecclesiastical appointments, and that the date of his death, accompanied by a eulogistic notice, is registered in the *Necrologium* of his Order, proves that

¹ Gaye, *Carteggio inedito di artisti*, vol. i. p. 141.

Fra Filippo lived and died a Carmelite. Considering, therefore, that he always continued to wear the habit of the Order, and that he remained in cordial relations of friendship with his former brethren, it is even probable that Fra Filippo left the Carmine with the prior's consent and permission. In the history of art, which is so often interwoven with that of the monastic Orders, Fra Filippo's departure from the cloister for the *bottega* of the painter is by no means an isolated case. The Camaldolese monk Don Lorenzo, whose influence we have traced in Fra Filippo's earliest works, left his convent of Sta. Maria degli Angeli about the year 1400, in order to devote himself with more liberty to painting, and only made return to the peaceful cloister a lifeless corpse, which the brethren reverently laid in the tomb already prepared for it: "Partissi," say the convent records¹ with touching brevity, "et tornòvi morto." He went his way, and returned when dead! Numerous other instances might be quoted of artist-monks abandoning the cloister with a serene conscience, thinking it equally meritorious to glorify God by their works as to serve Him in the solitude of their cells. And that they remained on a footing of the greatest friendship with their cloistered brethren is further proved by the case of Lorenzo Monaco, whom we find in 1412 diligently illuminating some choral books for the convent, and in the following year engaged in painting the great altar-piece of Sta. Maria degli Angeli, on which his fame as an artist and a colourist principally rests.

There is no reason why we should suppose Fra Filippo to have been an exception to this general rule; and it is certain that, in spite of the scandals to which his immoral *penchants* gave rise, he was

¹ *Archivio di Stato*, Firenze, Registro Nuovo, n. 96, p. 90.

never formally repudiated by the Carmelites, who appeared to think that the genius of their erring brother "covered a multitude of sins." Having accompanied Fra Filippo to the convent gates, we shall, in the following chapters, endeavour to follow his steps after leaving the Carmine, dividing his adventurous career into three periods, to be named after the cities which were the stepping-stones on his ascending progress towards perfection: Florence, Prato, Spoleto.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST FLORENTINE PERIOD : 1431-1441.

FRA FILIPPO could hardly have chosen a more favourable moment to carry out his long-cherished plan of abandoning the cloister. Florence was then going through a period of glorious transition. Her politics, her philosophy, her arts, even her religion, were alike affected by this momentous evolution, which culminated in the Renaissance. The Republic, about to fall a prey to the ambition of the Medici, was shedding its last bright rays, nominally still ruled by the greater guilds, but in reality sustained and swayed by those *nobili popolani* in whom art and learning found as generous and enlightened patrons as Cosimo and his successors were to be. In his *Storia Fiorentina* Guicciardini declares that the government at this epoch was the wisest, the most glorious, and the happiest that the city had ever had, a verdict cordially endorsed by the librarian Vespasiano Bisticci, who, though a fervent admirer of Cosimo de' Medici, says : " In that time, from 1422 to 1433, the city of Florence was in a most blissful state, abounding with excellent men in every faculty, and it was full of admirable citizens." Of these, if not the most admirable, Cosimo de' Medici, the scheming, ambitious banker of the Via Larga, was certainly the wealthiest, enjoying a well-deserved reputation as the intelligent and liberal

Maecenas to whom no artist or scholar of merit turned in vain for encouragement and support. We may presume that on leaving the Carmine, Fra Filippo, having for all earthly possessions nothing but his genius, and no more redoubtable weapons than his brush and pencil wherewith to drive the wolf from the door of his starving relatives, adopted the most sensible course which lay open to a struggling artist, not over-burdened with troublesome *amour propre*, and forthwith placed himself under the protection of the most liberal and intelligent of art patrons of his time. Although Vasari asserts that Fra Filippo became known to Cosimo by means of the Coronation which he was commissioned to paint for the nuns of Sant' Ambrogio in 1434, it is very probable that before that date, and in fact immediately after leaving the Carmine, he began working for the merchant-prince and future lord of Florence. The Camaldoli Nativity, noticed amongst his earliest works, and painted for Cosimo's wife, was probably one of the first commissions which Fra Filippo received from his patron. Another circumstance tends to prove that Fra Filippo was already a *protégé* and faithful follower of Cosimo de' Medici as early at least as 1433, in which year a Signoria hostile to Cosimo having been elected, the latter was first imprisoned, and then, in consideration of his popularity at home and powerful friendships abroad, merely banished to Padua, his brother Lorenzo and other members of his family being put under bounds at different cities. Now Vasari says that "some of Fra Filippo's works are to be seen in Padua," and although these paintings have subsequently been destroyed¹, there is every reason to believe that

¹ In Morelli's *Anonimo* these paintings are described as follows: "La coronazione di nostra Donna a fresco, nel primo pilastro a

Fra Filippo visited Padua in the year 1433-1434 as a member of the magnificent Cosimo's suite. For the wealthy exile was fond of repaying, in a manner worthy of his traditional munificence, the hospitality he received, and as the library of the Benedictines, built by Michelozzo at his expense, bore witness to his stay in Venice, in like manner we may conjecture that Fra Filippo was instructed to adorn with frescoes the church of St. Anthony at Padua, to which city Cosimo was nominally relegated.

That Fra Filippo visited Padua is therefore quite possible, although some writers deny this circumstance on the ground that there are none of his works to be seen in that city, and that the "fra Filippo da Florentia" mentioned in the document quoted by Gonzatti may have been some other artist-monk. But an adventure of which Vasari asserts that Fra Filippo became the unwilling hero shortly after leaving the convent, has every appearance of being a mere invention. This is how Vasari relates the imaginary disaster which befell the friar: "Some time after this event (viz., after having left the Carmine), and being in the march of Ancona, Filippo was one day amusing himself with certain of his friends in a boat on the sea, when they were all taken by a Moorish galley, which was cruising in that neighbourhood, and led captives into Barbary,

man manca intrando in chiesa (church of St. Anthony of Padua), è sopra l' altar della nostra Donna." Another important document is quoted by Padre Gonzatti, *La Basilica di Sant' Antonio di Padova*, vol. i. p. xxi of Documents, note 1. It is the entry of a payment, dated July 1, 1434, "per onze d' azzurro a fra Filippo da Florentia che adorna lo tabernacolo delle reliquie." The *Anonimo Morelliano* likewise asserts that Fra Filippo executed other paintings in the chapel of the Podestà, together with Ansovino da Forlì and Niccolò Pizzolo of Padua. See also Rossetti, *Guida di Padova*, p. 63.

where he remained, suffering many tribulations, for eighteen months¹. But, having frequent opportunities of seeing his master, it came into his head one day to draw his portrait, and when the occasion presented itself he took a piece of charcoal from the fire, and with that delineated his figure at full length on a white wall, robed in his Moorish vestments. This being related to the master by the other slaves, to all of whom it appeared a miracle, the arts of drawing and painting not being practised in that country, the circumstance caused his liberation from the chains in which he had so long been held." So persuaded is Vasari of the truth of this romantic story, that he cannot refrain from exclaiming: "Truly this was greatly to the glory of that noble art; for here was a man to whom belonged the right of condemning and punishing, but who, in place of inflicting torments and death, does the direct contrary, and is even led to show friendship and restore the captive to liberty! Having afterwards," continues Vasari, "executed certain works in painting for his master, he was then conducted safely to Naples, where he painted a panel picture for King Alfonso, then Duke of Calabria, which was placed in the chapel of the castle." The story of Fra Filippo's captivity is manifestly untrue, as there are no records of his having left Florence at that time, nor is it probable that the penniless young Carmelite indulged in pleasure trips to the sea. As to the panel picture painted for King Alfonso of Naples, two letters written by Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici to his agent Bartolommeo Serragli in Naples (see Documents iii and xiii) prove not only that

¹ F. le Comte, in his *Cabinet des singularitez*, Paris, 1699, makes the astounding assertion that Fra Filippo remained a slave of the Barbary pirates for eighteen years!

the work in question was executed a quarter of a century after Fra Filippo had left the Carmine, but, moreover, that it was painted in Florence, whence Giovanni de' Medici sent it to his agent for presentation to the king.

Hardly a year had elapsed since Cosimo's arrest and banishment, when a new Signoria, favourable to the Medici, having been chosen, Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Cosimo's arch-enemy, after a vain show of resistance, laid down his arms on the intervention of Pope Eugenius, who was then at Santa Maria Novella, and was in his turn banished for ever from the city with his principal adherents. And finally, in a triumphant progress from Venice, "carried back to his country upon the shoulders of all Italy," as he proudly said, Cosimo and his brother Lorenzo, followed by the faithful friends and retainers who had shared their exile, entered Florence on October 6, 1434, rode past the deserted palaces of the Albizzi to the Palace of the Priors, and next day returned in triumph to their own house in the Via Larga¹. The Republic had practically fallen, and Cosimo was virtually prince of the city and of her fair dominion. But this sudden accession of power had not the effect of turning his head, or of transforming the successful merchant into a bloodthirsty and ambitious tyrant, such as Francesco Sforza became when, thanks to Cosimo's pecuniary aid, he succeeded in carrying out his treacherous designs upon Milan. Although hard and cynical by nature, and accustomed to ruthlessly remove any obstacle which might stand in his way, Cosimo was not unnecessarily cruel, and far too refined to indulge in mere brutality. In his private life, indeed, he

¹ Cf. *The Story of Florence*, by Edmund G. Gardner (London, J. M. Dent & Co., 1900), p. 77.

was the simplest and most unpretentious of tyrants, leading the life of a wealthy merchant-burgher of the day in its nobler aspects, and loving above all things the society of artists and men of letters. And at that time artists and scholars abounded in Florence, which had become the centre of two great connected movements, having, in the field of art and learning, a common tendency and a common aim, "the emancipation of the individual from the tyranny of outward systems." In art this tendency took the form of a salutary reaction against conventionalism, and gave birth to individuality and character¹, two qualities which, together with a well-understood realism based upon a profound study of nature, constitute the principal and most striking merits of Quattrocento masterpieces. We have seen that the pioneers of this new movement in art were the architects and sculptors who boldly went back to the great models of antiquity for inspiration and instruction; Jacopo della Quercia, Filippo Brunelleschi, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, Michelozzo were already deservedly famous when Fra Filippo left the Carmine, and exercised a great and decisive influence over the young painter, as may be seen from a careful study of the architectural ornaments and accessories which Fra Filippo began to introduce in his pictures at an early period of his career.

When we reflect that at this time Lorenzo Ghiberti was still at work on his masterpiece, the gates of the Baptistery, "striving," as he says in his commentaries, "to imitate nature to the utmost," and succeeding so well that Michelangelo thought the gates

¹ Morelli calls the Quattrocento the epoch of character, "that is, the period when it was the principal aim of art to seize and represent the outward appearances of persons and things, determined by inward and moral conditions."

of heaven itself could not be fairer; that Filippo Brunelleschi¹ finished his dome in 1434, the very year which witnessed the establishment of the Medicean *régime* in Florence, and that some of Donatello's finest statues and of Michelozzo's most stately constructions date from this same period, it is not surprising that Fra Filippo was deeply impressed with the triumphs of the new school, and applied himself, with all the enthusiasm of his ardent nature, to the study of its methods.

The same tendencies and aspirations which found such noble exponents in the field of art, were represented by no less eminent men in that of learning. At the close of the fourteenth century the great reformer of the Florentine studio, Palla Strozzi, brought the Greek Manuel Chrysoloras to make Florence the centre of Italian Hellenism. When exiled by the relentless Cosimo in 1434, Palla had already lavished his wealth in the hunting of precious codices, a noble quest in which he was closely followed by Niccolò Niccoli, and his reform of the university had attracted throngs of students, all eager to drink at the renovated springs of classical literature, to the Tuscan Athens. Even Cosimo, practical man of business as he was, threw himself heart and soul into the Neo-Platonism of the early Quattrocento: "To Cosimo," writes Burckhardt, "belongs the special glory of recognising in the Platonic philosophy the fairest flower of the ancient world of thought, of inspiring his friends with the same belief, and thus of fostering within humanistic circles themselves another and a higher resuscitation

¹ Mr. Perkins remarks that "indirectly Brunelleschi was the master of all the great painters and sculptors of his time, for he taught them how to apply science to art." The same might be said more appropriately of Ghiberti.

of antiquity." But the early humanists, men like Palla Strozzi, Niccolò Niccoli, Giannozzo Manetti, Tommaso Parentucelli, and Ambrogio Traversari, although they initiated the revival of Grecian culture and the blending of Christianity with Paganism, differed profoundly from the men who completed that great movement which Carducci calls "il rinascimento della vita italiana nella forma classica." Lorenzo Valla and Francesco Filelfo, Poliziano and Lorenzo the Magnificent, enamoured with purely pagan ideals and carried away by their desire to ape antiquity in theory and practice, almost completely discarded Christianity, while their predecessors not only held, with Dante, that the pursuit of classical culture tended rather to confirm a good Christian in his faith, but professed a Neo-Platonic religion of love and beauty, "a creed that could find one formula to cover both the reception of the stigmata by St. Francis and the mystical flights of the Platonic Socrates and Plotinus; that could unite the Sibyls and Diotima with the Magdalene and the Virgin Martyrs¹." Thus Cosimo, as his end drew near, would alternately commune with the Dominican Archbishop Sant' Antonino in a cell of San Marco and listen to Marsilio Ficino's growing translation of Plato at his villa of Careggi.

To say that Fra Filippo, profoundly ignorant as he was, cherishing since his childhood a rooted aversion for learning, and moreover troubled and harassed by family cares and financial straits, could have been directly influenced by the humanist movement of his age, would be manifestly absurd. But indirectly, perhaps unconsciously, he too was benefited

¹ See Gardner, op. cit., p. 105. In the compilation of this chapter I have been greatly indebted to Mr. Gardner's excellent *Story of Florence*.

by those tendencies and aspirations which he was so far from sharing and understanding, but which nevertheless made an impression upon his keen artistic perception. Indeed it would have been almost impossible for Cosimo's *protégé*, whose lot was cast in the midst of that brilliant assemblage of artists, scholars, and philosophers who surrounded the *Pater Patriae*, not to feel himself vaguely fired with the same enthusiasm which animated them. And is it not a ray of the true Hellenic spirit of beauty which shines in the sad, fascinating, yet strangely sensual faces of Fra Filippo's Madonnas, lurks in the smile of his angels, alternately resembling Cupids and fauns, and gives so striking an imprint of power and grandeur to the figures of his Prato frescoes? But this Hellenic tendency, scarcely perceptible in Fra Filippo's works, like a seed half hidden in unsuitable soil, was destined to become "flower and fruit" in the exquisite creations of his pupil Sandro Botticelli, whose Venus rising from the sea, for instance, is, in the opinion of an eminent writer on art, "a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves, even of the finest period¹."

Although Fra Filippo was undoubtedly influenced by the new tendencies in art and learning, it is not before the end of this first Florentine period, extending from his departure from the Carmine to the completion of his great Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, that we begin to find unmistakable traces of the "stil nuovo." In the Angelic Salutation which he painted for the nuns of the Murate², and which is

¹ Cf. Walter Pater's *Renaissance*.

² According to Vasari, Fra Filippo executed two pictures for the nuns of the Murate, one, an Annunciation, placed on the high altar, and the other representing stories from the lives of St. Bene-



Hanfstängl photo.

[Munich Gallery.]

THE ANGELIC SALUTATION.

now in the Munich Gallery, the characteristics of Fra Filippo's earliest manner are still plainly visible, showing that Masolino's influence and methods were not easily dethroned by the new tendencies. The composition of this picture reminds us of the other Munich Annunciation, already described, but contains more figures; and altogether the painting now before us, in spite of its damaged condition and of the extensive restoration which it has undergone, is superior in execution and technique to the other representation of the same theme. Here, too, the scene takes place underneath a portico, the severe architecture of which is gladdened by glimpses of a fair garden. The announcing angel, crowned with celestial roses and bearing a lily in his left hand, kneels gracefully before the Virgin, while another angel, also bearing the emblem of purity, stands on the threshold in an attitude of humble salutation. The heavenly messengers have evidently surprised the Virgin at her morning prayer, and she has risen hastily to her feet, pressing a hand to her bosom, as if to stop the tumultuous beating of her heart. But the expression on her face is one of celestial peace and fortitude, she looks at the kneeling angel and is no longer "troubled at his saying," for she sees, as in a vision, the Godhead in glory and feels herself bathed in the rays of its power. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," is the text that Fra Filippo evidently had in mind when he painted this wonderful Annunciation, which expresses the mystic solemnity of the scene far better than the

dict and St. Bernard. In 1812 the convent was suppressed, and both pictures were lost sight of; the first found its way to the Munich Gallery, while the fate of the other is still unknown. See Richa, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 109.

most eloquent verbal description. The wealth and beauty of the details, the rich colouring, the accurate technique, all add charm to what may be considered as one of Fra Filippo's most attractive paintings of this period.

That Fra Filippo hesitated so long before shaking off the influence of his first masters and giving way to the new tendencies of his age, is all the more remarkable when we remember that he not only came into direct contact with men who were in the very forefront of the movement, but actually received commissions from them. One of his finest pictures, which still presents, however, all the characteristics of his early manner, namely, the Lateran Coronation, was painted for Carlo Marsuppini, the humanist noted for his frank paganism, and who ranked among the most famous and influential philosophers of the age.

The Lateran Coronation is an altar-piece, which Fra Filippo was commissioned to paint for the chapel of St. Bernard, belonging to the monks of Mount Olivet¹. Although Vasari says that when he saw it, "the work had maintained itself in so remarkable a degree of freshness as to look as if it had but just left the hands of the master," its present condition is unfortunately very different, the picture having been unskilfully cleaned and clumsily restored. Enough of its original merits remain, however, to give this Coronation a high place among Fra Filippo's early works.

¹ This convent having been suppressed in 1785, the picture was bought by the Lippi family of Arezzo, who retained possession of it until 1841, when they sold it to Signor Ugo Baldi, who in his turn sold it to Signor Carlo Baldeschi of Rome, from whom it was finally purchased by Pope Gregory XVI and placed in the Lateran Gallery.



Alinari photo.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.

[*Lateran Gallery, Rome.*]

The treatment of the theme is (let us admit it at once) thoroughly inadequate. Here we have neither the gorgeous, although profane, solemnity of the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, nor the sublime grandeur which marks Fra Filippo's unfinished Coronation in the Spoleto Cathedral. It is, so to say, a Coronation *en petit comité*—merely a few saints and monks asked in to witness the ceremony, and everything done on the smallest scale possible consistent with the heavenly surroundings. But the figures, taken separately, and the central group of Christ enthroned crowning his kneeling Mother, are admirable. The throne, raised above two steps and of a decidedly classical pattern, is perhaps the only concession to the new movement perceptible in this picture, which reminds us not a little of Fra Angelico's San Marco and Louvre Coronations, the group of Christ lovingly placing the celestial crown on the Virgin's bowed head being conceived and carried out in an almost identical spirit. On either side of the throne, strongly outlined against the azure sky, are three angels playing musical instruments with an energy which is absolutely grotesque; indeed, of all the coarse and earthly figures doing duty as angels in some of Fra Filippo's works, none are more coarse and earthly than these painful misrepresentations of those ethereal denizens of heaven whom Fra Angelico knew so well how to depict. More pleasing and natural is the kneeling figure of the donor, Carlo Marsuppini, presented by his heavenly Protector, a saint of the Benedictine Order, near whom is another Benedictine saint, clasping with a rapt expression a closed book to his bosom, as if inspired by the Holy Ghost, represented by a dove. A young man, probably the donor's son, in an attitude of devout prayer, likewise presented by his Protector, and a Camal-

dolose saint, seen full face, complete the composition. In this picture the skill with which Fra Filippo has arranged the draperies, which fall in natural and graceful folds, is especially remarkable. Vasari relates that Carlo Marsuppini, in commissioning Fra Filippo to execute this altar-piece, exhorted him to give particular attention to the hands, his painting of which, in many of his works, had been much complained of, "whereupon Fra Filippo, wishing to avoid such blame for the future, ever afterwards sought to conceal the hands of his figures, either by the draperies or by some other contrivance." The figure on the right, hiding its hands with a movement which appears very natural and is much affected by Italian monks, would seem to confirm the truth of this story.

Greatly superior to this altar-piece, although evidently painted at about the same time, is a panel picture now in the Berlin Gallery, without doubt the finest Nativity executed by the friar at this or any other period of his artistic career. Moreover, of all Fra Filippo's works, with the sole exception, perhaps, of his Spoleto frescoes, this Nativity is the only painting in which a genuine religious spirit prevails, so sweet and solemn as to appear like a sinner's peace-giving vision of grace. In this solitary instance Fra Filippo has attained the spiritual elevation of his Dominican rival, showing us what an incomparable artist he might have been, had his exquisite sense of form and colour been ennobled by a soul like that of Fra Angelico¹.

¹ Some writers, including Crowe and Cavalcaselle, have supposed that this is the Nativity painted, according to Vasari, for Pulidoro Bracciolini, who placed it in his house at Pistoia. But I have arrived at the conclusion that this panel was formerly in the chapel of the Medicean Palace. E. Müntz, in his valuable



Hanfstätgl photo.

[Berlin Gallery.]

THE NATIVITY.

The composition of the Berlin Nativity, and the spirit in which it is conceived, forcibly remind us of the Camaldoli and Annalena Nativities which we have already described. For Fra Filippo was of an indolent and not very imaginative nature; so that when he had interpreted one of the set religious themes to his satisfaction, he did not scruple to repeat the same interpretation in subsequent paintings, merely adding a few details or changing the position of a figure from right to left. Here, too, the background is formed by a rocky landscape, to which, however, patches of luxuriant vegetation and a winding river give a less desolate aspect; and against this dark forest background, brought forward in strong relief, the central group of the Virgin adoring the Divine Child, who is lying on a soft carpet of flowery meadow, appears luminous and striking in the extreme. On the left a youthful St. John the Baptist is standing in an attitude of ecstatic contemplation, carrying a cross on which, as in the Camaldoli Nativity, is a scroll with the inscription *Ecce Agnus Dei Ecce M . . .*, in which the identical mistake occurs. Further back St. Bernard kneels in prayer. But all these accessories of

work on *Les collections des Médicis au quinzième siècle*, p. 64, reproduces the following item from a catalogue of works of art contained in the palace of the Medici: "Nella chappella di detto andito: Una tavola in sudetto altare di legname chon cholonne dal lato a canali dipinte a marmo bianco e chapitelli messi d' oro, e cornice, e architrave messe d' oro chon un fregio in ismusso messo d' oro dipintovi cherubini, e in detta tavola *una nostra Donna che adora il figliuolo che sta innanzi a piedi e un San Giovanni e uno Santo Bernardo e Dio padre cholla cholomba innanzi di mano di . . . f . . .*" This description corresponds perfectly with the Berlin Nativity, while it has nothing to do with the Uffizi Madonna and Child, which Crowe and Cavalcaselle and other writers believe to have occupied the space round which Benozzo Gozzoli's lovely angels seem still to linger in attendance.

landscape and secondary figures, though exquisitely finished, fail to attract our attention, which centres almost exclusively on the beautiful group of the Virgin and Child, the Mother passionately adoring, while the Child seems to glow with the rays of Divine power and love emanating from the God-head and descending upon him in a torrent of light. That Fra Filippo regarded this painting as one of his best works may be inferred from the fact that it is the only picture, besides the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, which bears his signature¹.

Apart from its artistic merits, the Berlin Nativity (probably finished about 1435) marks an epoch in Fra Filippo's career; for in this painting, which glows with a strangely melancholy but genuinely religious spirit, the Carmelite seems to have bidden a last farewell to that devout monastic manner which lent a peculiar charm to his earliest works. Whether he merely followed his natural bent towards luxury and sensuality, or whether the newly introduced magnificence of the Medicean court reflected itself in his pictures, it would be difficult to decide. Henceforth, however, we shall find that his art, while it undoubtedly progresses, at the same time becomes more worldly. When Fra Filippo, after leaving the Carmine, came under the influence of Cosimo's brilliant court, with its dazzling splendour and pagan tendencies, the friar's mundane transformation was rapid and complete. Nor would it appear that he made any effort to conquer or hide his foibles, so that the enterprising artist-monk and his escapades soon became the talk and byword of Florence. "It was known," says Vasari, "that while occupied in the pursuit of his pleasures, the works

¹ On the left of the composition, painted almost vertically upon a stick, are the words FRATER · PHILIPPUS · P.

undertaken by him received little or no attention ; for which reason Cosimo de' Medici, wishing him to execute a work in his own palace, shut him up that he might not waste his time in running about ; but having endured this confinement for two days ¹, one night Fra Filippo, goaded by a violent, not to say bestial passion, made ropes with the sheets of his bed, which he cut into strips with a pair of scissors ; and so having let himself down from a window, escaped and for several days gave himself up to his amusements. When Cosimo found that the painter had disappeared, he caused him to be sought, and at last induced Fra Filippo to return to his work. But from that time forward Cosimo gave him liberty to go in and out at his pleasure, repenting greatly of having previously shut him up when he considered the danger that Fra Filippo had incurred by his folly in descending from the window ; and ever afterwards labouring to keep him to his work by kindness only, he was by this means much more promptly and effectually served by the painter, and was wont to say that the excellencies of genius are as forms of light and not beasts of burden." It is very probable that the paintings mentioned by Vasari in this quaint narrative, which has all the appearance of truth, as having been executed by Fra Filippo in the house of Cosimo de' Medici, are the two lunettes now in the National Gallery, representing respectively the Annunciation and St. John sitting in the

¹ Cf. Browning :

"Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out Carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air," &c.

midst of six other saints¹. Both these pictures are so exquisitely finished as to remind us of the methods of the miniaturists; moreover, the fact that they bear Cosimo's crest (three feathers in a ring), and that they were originally in the Riccardi Palace², tends to confirm the supposition that they are the identical paintings executed by Fra Filippo during his temporary imprisonment.

In this Annunciation the treatment of the theme differs considerably from that of the two Annunciations now in the Munich Gallery. Fra Filippo the monk has already given way to Fra Filippo the courtier, and the wealth of details, manifesting a growing tendency to *genre* painting, added to the luxurious appearance of the room in which the Virgin sits, have the effect of diminishing the purely artistic value of this work, which nevertheless proves that Fra Filippo gained in technical ability what he lost in simplicity of style and intensity of religious sentiment. The kneeling figure of the Archangel Gabriel, however, is majestic and expressive, while the graceful and natural attitude of the Virgin, on whom the Holy Ghost, represented by the symbolic dove, descends, is conceived in Fra Filippo's best manner.

The companion picture to this lunette represents St. John the Baptist, having on his right St. Francis, St. Lawrence, and St. Cosmo, and on his left St. Dominic, St. Anthony, and St. Peter Martyr. Here the composition is of the simplest, the seven figures

¹ These lunettes were formerly in the possession of the brothers Metzger, who sold the first in 1861 to Sir Charles Eastlake, by whom it was presented to the National Gallery; and the second, also in 1861, to Mr. Barker, who subsequently sold it to the National Gallery.

² The palace of the Medici was sold by the Grand Duke Ferdinand II in the seventeenth century to the Riccardi family, from whom it derived its present name.



Hans Baldung Grien, photo.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

[National Gallery, London.]



Hanfstaingl photo.

[National Gallery, London.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND SAINTS.

occupying a semicircular marble seat, as if engaged in a theological discussion; but the expression of each individual saint is most striking and natural, the draperies are lightly and gracefully arranged, and the colouring and technique agreeable and accurate.

The friendship and protection which Cosimo de' Medici had graciously extended to the young Carmelite proved of the greatest assistance to the latter in the commencement of his artistic career, for we find him, even at this early period, receiving numerous commissions, so numerous indeed, that, owing to his natural indolence and his love of pleasure, he never succeeded in fulfilling them within the allotted space of time. Thus as early as the year 1434 he was commissioned to paint an altar-piece, representing the Coronation of the Virgin, for the high altar of Sant' Ambrogio, but he did not complete the work until seven years had elapsed, although he accepted numerous other commissions in the meantime. Among the latter the most important was the one which he received in 1437 from the Captains of the Company of Or San Michele, for whom he agreed to paint a panel picture, to be placed in the Barbadori Chapel of Santo Spirito.

It is to this work that Domenico Veneziano evidently alludes in a curious letter to Pietro de' Medici, dated from Perugia, 1438¹, in which the following passage occurs: "I learn that Cosimo has decided to order an altar-piece, and wishes it to be a magnificent work. This pleases me greatly, and would please me even more if it were possible through your magnanimity that I should be allowed to paint it. And in the event of my receiving this commission, I hope with the help of God to show

¹ See Document iv.

you marvellous things, inasmuch as there are good masters, such as Fra Filippo and Fra Giovanni, who have a great deal of work on their hands. *And especially Fra Filippo has a panel which is to go to Santo Spirito, but which he cannot finish in five years, though he should toil at it night and day, so great a work is it.*"

From this letter, in which so competent an authority as Domenico Veneziano mentions Fra Filippo as the equal of Fra Angelico, who at that time had already acquired the greatest artistic fame, we may gather that the Carmelite, even at so early a period of his career, was held in high esteem by his fellow citizens, and that he never lacked commissions. The painting which he executed for the church of Santo Spirito, and which is now in the Louvre, doubtless contributed not a little to increase his reputation, for it is one of the finest of his works.

The Blessed Virgin is represented standing on the first step of a classically designed throne, holding the Child in her arms, as if to present it to the adoration of two kneeling saints; on either side of the throne are angels bearing lilies, and behind a sort of parapet some monks reverently observe the scene. Although this painting, one of the largest of Fra Filippo's panel pictures, has been considerably damaged by the ravages of time and by faulty restorations, it still deserves to be described, in Vasari's words, as "a work of rare excellence, which has ever been held in the highest esteem by men versed in art." The figures of the Virgin and Child are full of majesty and grandeur, while the angels are among the most graceful and dignified that Fra Filippo ever painted. The colouring has suffered considerably, the flesh tints especially appearing of a reddish hue with greenish shades, almost reminding



Neurdein photo]

THE VIRGIN ENTHRONED.

[*Louvre, Paris.*



Alinari photo.]

THE MIRACLE OF SAN FREDIANO, BISHOP OF LUCCA.

[*Accademia, Florence.*

us of that cold cadaverous colour which is a characteristic of Botticelli's works. Throughout this painting, however, which—of all the friar's panel pictures—is the one in which he more closely approached Masaccio's dignified art, an immense progress is noticeable in Fra Filippo's manner. There is a greater variety in the types of the different figures, the hands and articulations are more carefully and naturally executed, and in the arrangement of the draperies, especially those of the angels surrounding the throne, the master has avoided that bunchiness and conventional stiffness which mar the beauty of so many of his pictures. The architectural details and correct perspective, which are not the least merits of this painting, likewise indicate that Fra Filippo was diligently studying the methods of men like Michelozzo and Donatello, whose influence becomes more and more clearly perceptible and decisive in the friar's subsequent works, when Masolino's follower was definitely caught in the great movement of his age.

The predella belonging to the Louvre Madonna is in the Florence Academy. It contains three stories, representing San Frediano, Bishop of Lucca, miraculously deviating the course of the river Serchio; the announcing to the Virgin of her coming decease, and St. Augustine in his study. It can hardly be said that Fra Filippo in this instance quite deserves the praise lavished by Vasari on his predellas, for the story of San Frediano, in the first compartment, is deficient in drawing and perspective; but the kneeling angel in the next compartment, and the Virgin's beautiful attitude of patient resignation, are admirable, while the figure of St. Augustine—pierced by the "three arrows of the three-stringed bow," to adopt Dante's phrase, and meditating in

his cell on the mystery of the Trinity—is both natural and impressive.

We know that Fra Filippo received the sum of forty gold florins for this picture, and as Domenico Veneziano, writing in 1438, says that the friar “had a great deal of work on his hands,” it might be supposed that Fra Filippo was “living honourably by his labours,” as Vasari suggests, and that his earnings were amply sufficient to support his destitute relatives. But that this was not the case is proved by the begging letter which Fra Filippo addressed to Pietro de’ Medici¹ on the 13th of August of the following year, in which the painter, after having implored his patron to help him for the sake of the children dependent upon him, adds that he has received an offer of employment from a certain Marchese, who would only advance him the sum of five florins, however, for travelling expenses, “so that I see I shall not even be able to buy myself a new pair of hose.” It appears that the poor Carmelite was so unmercifully dunned by his creditors that he was most anxious to get away from Florence, and only waited for a letter of introduction from his patron to the Marchese who had engaged his services. “Answer immediately,” he urges, “that I may start on the following day; for if I have to stop another eight days here I shall be dead, so great is my apprehension².”

In spite of these financial troubles, and perhaps because of them, Fra Filippo’s artistic activity

¹ Pietro de’ Medici was spending the summer at Trebbio, in the valley of the Mugello.

² See Document i. I have been unable to discover who this Marchese was; but as there is no record of Fra Filippo having left Florence at this time, he probably abandoned the project mentioned in the letter.



Alinari photo.]

[*Accademia, Florence.*

THE ANNOUNCING TO THE VIRGIN OF HER COMING DECEASE.



Alinari photo.

ST. AUGUSTINE IN HIS STUDY.

[*Accademia, Florence.*]

towards the end of this first Florentine period was remarkable, and his works, still highly finished and of accurate technique, show no traces of mental pre-occupation or negligence. Take, for instance, his Adoration of the Magi, the beautiful *tondo* formerly in Sir Francis Cook's collection at Richmond and now in the National Gallery. This picture was probably painted in the year 1440, when the artist's mind was still full of the gorgeous processions and Oriental magnificence which he had witnessed in the preceding year. For in January, 1439, the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople and the Emperor of the East, John Paleologus, came to meet Pope Eugenius for the Council of Florence, which was intended to unite the Churches of Christendom, and the city was full of foreigners in quaint and costly garb. The same event which inspired Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco in the Riccardi Palace, where the Emperor and the Patriarch are represented riding in the gorgeous train of the Three Kings, personified by the Medici, as if forced to take part in the triumph of the latter, may have suggested to Fra Filippo this *tondo*¹, which, if it does not rank among his greater works, is certainly one of the most attractive.

The Holy Family has sought shelter in the ruins of a stately edifice, and it is here that the Magi have come to do homage to the new-born Saviour, while all around their followers and retainers, in picturesque groups full of life and movement, await their return. Far away to the right the towers of Bethlehem are seen, and the delightful landscape, rendered more natural and striking by the correct aërial

¹ Fra Filippo was one of the first, if not the very first, to adopt the round panel or *tondo*, which gives greater scope and harmony to the composition than the usual rectangular panel.

perspective, adds an ineffable charm to the scene. The composition is extremely harmonious, showing the possibilities of the *tondo*; but we have here another proof of Fra Filippo's tendency to forget the principal theme and to descend to mere illustration. Our attention is almost exclusively attracted by the beautiful groups of men and horses, the latter of a distinctly classical type, reminding us of the sturdy short-necked steeds of Athens and Rome, while the Holy Family and the adoring Magi are so far removed from the foreground as to form an absolutely secondary episode. In few of Fra Filippo's pictures do we observe such minute attention to details as in this *tondo*, in which, moreover, the traces of another hand are visible, perhaps that of Francesco Pesello. When we remember that the latter was very fond of introducing animals in his pictures, and that here—besides the horses and the usual animals of the crib—we have a peacock, two monkeys, a dog, and even deer running in the distance, the hypothesis of Pesello's collaboration in this painting will appear at least acceptable. And that Fra Filippo sometimes availed himself of his pupil's exquisite skill in ornamental details and small figures is further proved by the fact that Pesellino painted the predella of the Madonna and Child with Saints which Fra Filippo executed about this time for the Medicean Chapel in Santa Croce¹.

This altar-piece, now in the Florence Academy,

¹ Cf. Albertini, op. cit., in his description of Santa Croce, "nel noviziato costruito dalla casa de' Medici una tavola di Fra Filippo, et la predella di Francesco Pesello." Richa (*Chiese Fiorentine*, vol. i. p. 104) mentions this picture as existing in the Medici Chapel of Santa Croce in his time. See also Document xv. Pesellino's predella is described by Richa as being "piena delle storie del martirio di questi Santi" (Cosmo and Damian) "fatta dal Pesellino con tale artificio, che niuno si sazia di lodarla."



Hanfstängl photo.]

[*National Gallery.*

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

although probably the least characteristic and most academic of all Fra Filippo's works, is nevertheless interesting, as it gives us an idea of the friar's gradual and decisive evolution towards the new movement in art. The throne on which the Virgin is seated is the most classically designed that we have hitherto met with in Fra Filippo's pictures, and the architectural details and perspective denote extraordinary care on the artist's part. Moreover the Child, standing on its Mother's knees, is entirely nude, another indication of the friar's progress in classical methods. The four saints, St. Damian and St. Francis on the right and St. Cosmo and St. Anthony of Padua on the left of the throne, are well drawn and not without a certain majesty, but cold and expressionless as their marble surroundings. We notice a decided improvement in the treatment of the draperies, although the characteristic fan-like disposition of the folds as they reach the ground is somewhat stiff and formal. As to the colouring, it cannot be said to attain that high standard which we are accustomed to in Fra Filippo's works, the Virgin's mantle, for instance, being of a peculiarly crude blue, with little light and shade, which almost suggests repainting.

But the very defects of the Santa Croce altarpiece are indications of the earnestness with which Fra Filippo was striving to assimilate the new methods introduced by the leading lights of his age. In his anxiety to impart to his figures the serene gravity and august severity of ancient masterpieces, he has lost his natural gift of expression and vitality; and so absorbed is he in the classically correct designing of the architectural motive, that he neglects the colouring which usually forms one of the greatest charms of his pictures. Although inferior to some

of his preceding works, therefore, this painting is nevertheless indicative of the progress made by Fra Filippo on the road which he was destined to follow, and which led to his complete emancipation from the methods of his first masters. After the Santa Croce altar-piece, traces of these early influences become less and less perceptible, so that this picture may be regarded as an important milestone in Fra Filippo's artistic career, marking the transition from his first Florentine period—during which the influence of Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino was still strongly felt—to the second period, in which the new tendencies are predominant.



[Vinari photo.]

[Accademia, Florence.]

THE MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH SAINTS.

CHAPTER III

SECOND FLORENTINE PERIOD : 1441-1452

THE period which opens with the year 1441, in which Fra Filippo completed his great Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, is of signal importance not only in the master's career, but also in the history of Quattrocento art. At this time the new movement was at its height. Brunelleschi's dome had just been consecrated by Pope Eugenius IV himself; Ghiberti was engaged upon the second doors of the Baptistery; Donatello was working in the sacristy of San Lorenzo; Luca della Robbia had nearly finished his *cantoria*, and Michelozzo was erecting the beautiful convent of San Marco, Cosimo's princely gift to the Dominicans. And, closely following in the footsteps of the sculptors and architects, a host of eminent painters—Fra Angelico and Andrea del Castagno, Domenico Veneziano and Paolo Uccello, surrounded by pupils like Benozzo Gozzoli, Pesellino and Alessio Baldovinetti—were busily at work in Florence. That Fra Filippo already occupied an honourable place in this brilliant brotherhood of artists is proved by the letter which Domenico Veneziano wrote to Pietro de' Medici three years earlier, when Fra Filippo was engaged upon his Santo Spirito altar-piece.

Although his reputation as one of the leading painters of the time was certainly increased and confirmed by the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation,

Vasari's assertion that this "most beautiful picture" was the means of the friar's becoming known to Cosimo de' Medici and the beginning of his fame and fortune is obviously incorrect, as we have seen that one of Fra Filippo's earliest works, the Camaldoli Nativity, was painted for Cosimo's wife. According to Milanese¹, this altar-piece was commissioned by the nuns of Sant' Ambrogio as early as the year 1434, but Fra Filippo only finished it seven years later². He appears to have been enamoured with his subject, working at it during the intervals of the numerous other commissions which he received, and devoting the most loving care and diligence to the painting which he evidently considered as his masterpiece. Even now, in spite of its damaged condition, it is easy to understand and to share the admiration which Fra Filippo's contemporaries felt for this "tauola honoratissima et gratiosa," as Antonio Billi describes it. The fine, exquisitely balanced composition, in which the master has introduced a larger number of figures than in any other of his panel pictures, the rich colouring and harmonious blending of tints, the accurate technique and careful attention to details, all concur in rendering the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation the greatest and certainly the most attractive of the works executed by Fra Filippo during the first two periods of his artistic career.

The painting is arched into three at the top, and two little *tondi* in the spandrils represent the Virgin

¹ *Vasari*, edited by Sansoni, Florence, with notes by G. Milanese, vol. ii. p. 645.

² In Borghini's *Riposo* (Siena, 1797) it is stated that the picture bore the following inscription: *Ab huius ecclesie priore Francisco Maringhio An. MCCCCXLI facta et a monialibus ornata fuit An. M.D.LXXXV.*



Alinari photo.]

[Accademia, Florence.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.

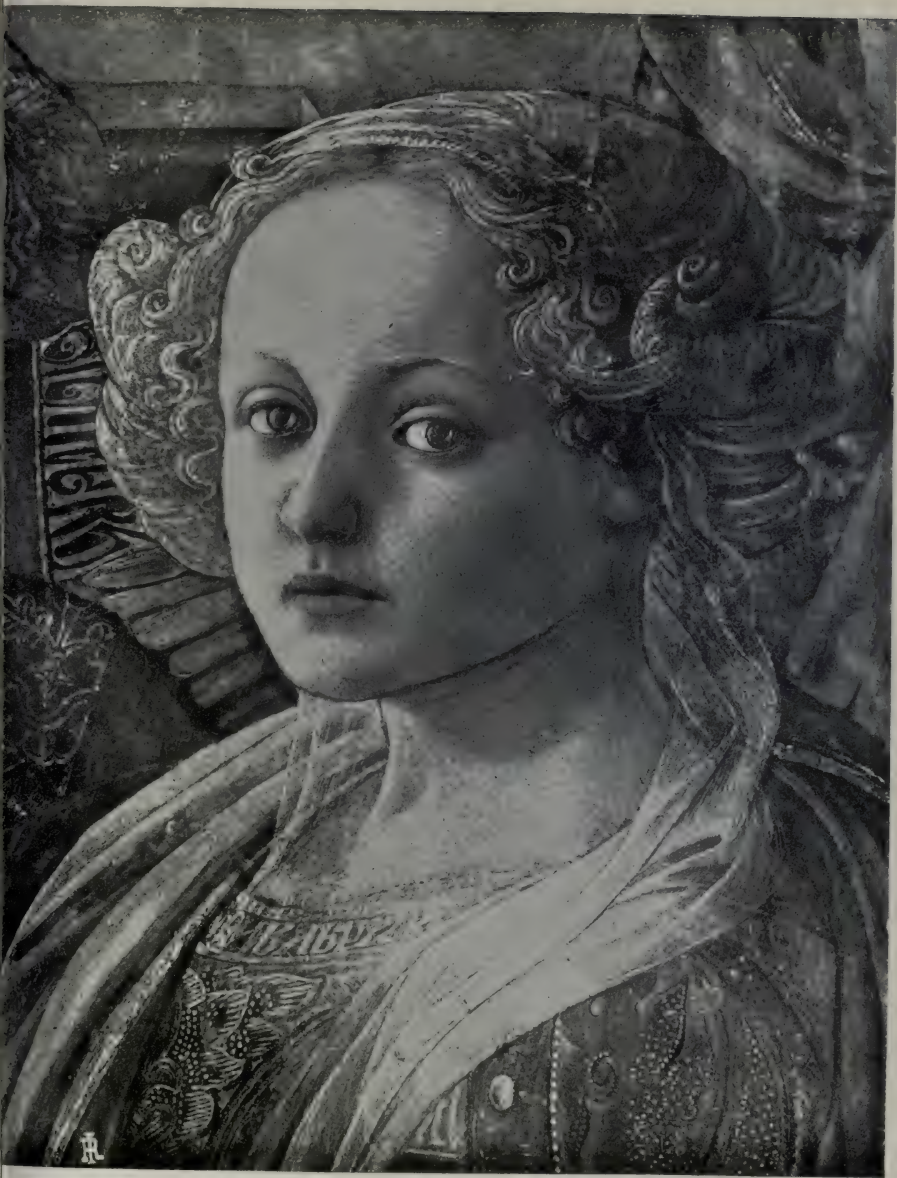
and the Archangel Gabriel respectively. In few of Fra Filippo's works is the imprint of the friar's powerful, if somewhat bizarre, individuality more evident than in this Coronation. Nevertheless it is impossible not to perceive, in the general treatment of the theme and in some of the details, traces of the influence of Fra Angelico's Louvre Coronation, painted about ten years earlier, which the master certainly had in mind when working at this altar-piece. But while the Louvre Coronation was painted at a time when the Dominican artist was still entirely under Gothic influences, as proved by the heavy Gothic canopy which is its chief architectural feature, the Sant' Ambrogio altar-piece may be regarded as the *spolia opima* of Fra Filippo's final triumph over conventionalism, the proof of his emancipation from the methods of Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino, and the master's nuptial gift to that renovated form of art which he had so ardently espoused.

It is in the group of God the Father crowning the kneeling Virgin that we discern most clearly traces of Fra Angelico's style, as if the worldly friar, conscious of his own deficiency in religious sentiment, had followed his saintly contemporary's manner so as to make sure that the principal figures at least should not be lacking in that spirituality which the Dominican knew so well how to interpret. But while evidently striving to catch a ray of Fra Angelico's style, the master has by no means sacrificed his own individuality; indeed the figure of God the Father is instinct with a majestic grandeur which the Dominican painter seldom if ever attained, and which Fra Filippo himself only surpassed, perhaps, in his Spoleto representation of the Godhead. On either side of the throne, and standing at its foot, are angels reverently supporting a long scroll

which rests on the knees of God the Father, while numerous figures of saints, monks and children occupy the foreground. In this picture Fra Filippo has almost entirely discarded the conventional and inartistic aureolas, substituting wreaths of roses, which give a most pleasing if somewhat profane air of festivity to the scene. The throngs of boys and girls bearing lilies have nothing angelic about them; indeed they look like happy children playing at being angels, and the whole work is conceived in a spirit of rejoicing materiality which gives us a deeper insight into Fra Filippo's character than we could possibly derive from a study of his biographies.

In a theme like this, the artist's principal aim was to depict the celestial joy of the elect; but from his treatment of the subject it is evident that Fra Filippo was quite unable to dissociate the idea of happiness, even of heavenly happiness, from that of luxury, sensual love and profane beauty, and that he could not so much as conceive that abstract, ecstatic beatitude to which Fra Angelico aspired, and which he almost succeeded in pictorially describing. Look at the various episodes in this composition, that, for instance, of a female figure on the right, petting two little children. What could be more fascinating than the graceful, half-shy expression of the little ones, or more charming than the sad, pensive beauty of the saint? But the group has absolutely no spiritual significance; the children are mere children, and the saint is a lovely Florentine lady, slightly *ennuyée* and wearing her most gorgeous and costly attire¹. Indeed it would appear that Fra

¹ Cf. Kugler, op. cit., vol. ii. p. 16: "Bemerkenswerth ist, dass jetzt auch die Gewandung dem consequenten Realismus gemäss umgebildet wird. Nicht nur dringt das Zeitcostüm immer weiter in die heiligsten Scenen hinein, so dass selbst die Engel in bunter



Vinari photo.]

[*Accademia, Florence.*

DETAIL FROM THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.

Filippo, in his anxiety to avoid conventionalism, had erred in the opposite direction, adopting a form of exaggerated realism which is superficially attractive, but fails to evoke any noble or religious sentiment. A notable exception, however, is afforded by the dignified figures of St. Eustace, St. Martin and St. Job in the foreground, while on the left, patronized by St. Ambrose, are two admirably characterized monks, evidently portraits, watching the scene with ecstatic rapture. Strikingly majestic, too, is the figure of St. John, on the right clothed in camel-hair and bearing the cross in one hand, while the other is raised as if to attract attention to a kneeling monk, before whom an angel stands with a scroll on which are the words: *IS . PEREGIT . OPUS*.

Following a custom very prevalent among painters at that time, Fra Filippo has introduced his own portrait in what he evidently regarded as his masterpiece. Although the friar could not be more than thirty-five years of age when he painted the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, the figure before us looks considerably older. The features, inherited from his butcher ancestors, are coarse and vulgar, and the thick sensual lips bespeak a passionate, pleasure-loving temperament. But the earnest, good-natured expression of the monk—as, with hands joined in prayer, he gazes humbly yet hopefully towards the Dispenser of all happiness, like a beggar patiently waiting for a scrap from this feast of love and joy and splendour—appeals irresistibly to our human sympathies, and we feel that “the glad

florentinischer Tracht auftreten, sondern auch die Idealgewandung, z. B. der Madonna, des Gottvaters, &c., wird jetzt realistisch behandelt, und zwar vor der Hand ohne besonderes Geschick. Einzelne Madonnen aus Filippo's Schule tragen geradezu florentinische Modetracht.”

monk" could not, after all, have been such a desperately bad man. The kneeling, expectant figure of Fra Filippo gives us an idea of the master's features, but the whole picture completes the portrait, which would be meaningless without its surroundings. The sweet, flower-crowned children, doing duty for angels, might, if despoiled of their tunics, figure in one of Donatello's marvellous festoons of dancing *putti*; and not only prove Fra Filippo's diligent study of the new methods, but are characteristic of his deep and never-failing sympathy with child life. It is here, too, that the sad, pensive, yet sensual type of womanhood, which we shall meet so often in Fra Filippo's subsequent paintings, first makes its appearance, as if the charming figure of Lucrezia Buti already overshadowed the monk's imagination. The whole picture is a masterly translation of the spiritual into the profane, of celestial joy into voluptuousness, of heavenly splendour into mere earthly pomp¹.

With the completion of this Sant' Ambrogio Coronation a period of comparative prosperity began for Fra Filippo. For if Vasari is wrong when he states that the painting in question was Fra Filippo's first introduction to Cosimo, it is certain that the latter "was thereby rendered his most assured friend," and warmly recommended the poor artist-monk to Pope Eugenius IV, who was at that time still in Florence. And as a result of Cosimo's kindly interest we find that on the 23rd of February, 1442, Fra Filippo was appointed perpetual abbot and *rettore commendatario* of San Quirico a Legnaja, near

¹ Cf. Kugler, op. cit.: "Ein figurenreiches Bild . . . Doch haben hier seine Engel und Heiligen wiederum eine Fisiognomie die mehr auf Schalkheit, Sinneslust und Genuss als auf sittliche Würde hindeutet; der himmlische Vorgang ist durchaus ins irdische übersetzt."



[Sinari photo.]

[Accademia, Florence.]

PORTRAIT OF LIPPI. 18, 2, 1884.

(A detail from the 'Coronation of the Virgin.')



Atinari photo.

GROUP FROM 'THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.'

[*Accademia, Florence.*]

Florence, in which honorific post he was formally installed on the 27th of the same month, receiving the investiture at the hands of Messer Ugolino Giugni, specially delegated for the occasion by Sant' Antonino, the Dominican Archbishop of Florence. Nor can we suppose, after what has already been said concerning the friar's tenor of life, that the appointment was made in recognition of his moral or religious merits.

Unfortunately for Fra Filippo, his tenure of this clerical benefice, a veritable sinecure which must have been a welcome addition to his professional gains, was not of very long duration, and we shall see how he was deprived of it under extremely disgraceful circumstances.

The Sant' Ambrogio altar-piece, confirming Fra Filippo's fame as one of the leading artists in Florence, had the effect of bringing him numerous commissions and was followed by a period of great activity. One of the finest pictures executed by the friar about this time is the Vision of St. Bernard, a hexagonal panel, now in the National Gallery and originally placed over a door in the Palazzo della Signoria. The saint, wearing the monastic habit, is represented in the act of writing in a book which rests upon a rock, while the Virgin, surrounded by angels, appears to comfort and console the drooping anchorite. St. Bernard cherished a profound devotion for the Blessed Virgin, and a monastic tradition relates that one day, while he was writing his Homilies, and was so weak and ill that his trembling fingers could hardly hold the pen, he had a glorious vision of the Madonna, who inspired him with fresh courage and strength¹. The artist seems to have had this legend in mind when painting

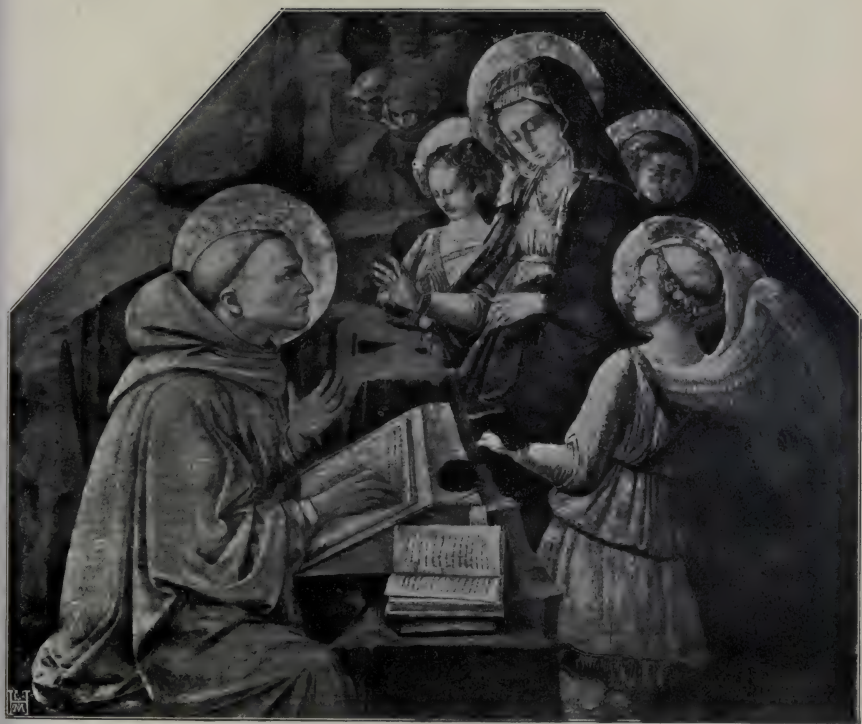
¹ Mrs. Jameson, *Legends of the Monastic Orders*, p. 152.

the picture before us. We are particularly struck by the expression of intense, ecstatic devotion which lights up the emaciated features of the saint, as if he were in the very act of giving voice to that magnificent hymn in honour of the Virgin which St. Bernard pronounces in the last canto of Dante's *Paradiso*. Although this picture, owing to its somewhat neglected execution, is far from ranking among Fra Filippo's best works, it is nevertheless worthy of special attention, because we find here in an eminent degree that spirituality which is so often lacking in the friar's paintings¹.

To this period may be attributed three of Fra Filippo's minor representations of the Madonna and Child, evidently executed at a time when the friar had much work on hand and was consequently preoccupied and nervous. Although we cannot compare these paintings with the Uffizi and Pitti representations of the same theme, it is easy to perceive that Fra Filippo was constantly progressing, as even his most hurried and neglected work bears unmistakable traces of a larger manner and a masterly frankness of execution.

In the Berlin Madonna and Child, the Virgin is represented in the act of tenderly caressing the Infant Jesus, who is seated on a sort of parapet in front of her, both figures being extremely natural

¹ Baldinucci, op. cit., vol. v. p. 353, says that Fra Filippo received 40 lire for this picture in 1447. From an entry in the ancient book of the sacristy of Sant' Ambrogio, quoted by Rosselli in his *Sepoluario*, it appears that on the 16th of May of the same year the friar was paid 1200 lire for his Coronation, which he had finished six years earlier. From this circumstance it would appear that the nuns were determined to punish Fra Filippo for his delay in completing his work, and made him wait for his money as long as they had waited for the altar-piece, which, commissioned in 1434, was not finished before 1441. See also Document viii.



Hanfstätgl photo.

[National Gallery, London.]

THE VISION OF ST. BERNARD.



Hanfsängl photo.

[Berlin Gallery.]

THE MADONNA AND CHILD.

and pleasing. Time and unskilful restorations have greatly damaged this picture, but the colouring, technique, and characteristic arrangement of the draperies leave no doubt as to its authorship. It is probably to this work that Vasari alludes when he states that "in the hall of the Council of Eight, in Florence, is a picture of the Virgin with the Child in her arms, painted in *tempera* on a half *tondo*." More important than the preceding one is the Madonna and Child to be seen in the sacristy of the Innocenti at Florence, which may be regarded as the precursor of the great Uffizi panel. The composition is almost identical, with the only difference that the Child is upheld by one angel instead of two, and the Mother, instead of being in an attitude of adoration, holds out her arms lovingly to take up her Son from the angel's hands, while the Child clasps the hem of her mantle. Unfortunately this picture too has suffered considerably and is partly repainted.

The third Madonna and Child, now in the Munich Gallery, is a somewhat smaller panel, more accurately finished and in every respect superior to the other two. The Virgin is represented seated and in profile, while the Child, supported by his Mother's hands and standing on her knees, looks out of the picture with an expression of peculiar winsomeness, which makes us forgive his short neck and clumsy limbs. One little hand clutches the hem of the Virgin's tunic, while the other caresses her chin with an indescribably tender and natural gesture. The background is formed by a rocky landscape through which a river flows, and on a hill in the right corner of the composition a little temple is seen.

These three pictures are conceived in a severe,

almost classical style, which proves that Fra Filippo was becoming more and more imbued with the spirit of his age. The architectural accessories, for instance, are purely antique, and no trace of Gothic reminiscences is visible.

But the most attractive, and certainly one of the most important, of the works executed by Fra Filippo during this period, is the beautiful Annunciation which he painted in the Martelli Chapel of San Lorenzo, the fine old church which was to become the mausoleum of Cosimo, *Pater Patriae*, and of so many of his descendants¹. Here, as in Fra Filippo's other representations of the same theme, the scene takes place in an arched portico, but so perfect are the architectural lines and details, and so correct the perspective, that it is evident the friar borrowed the severe yet elegant architectural motive from some Florentine cloister, and not merely from his imagination. In the right corner is a tall desk before which the Blessed Virgin is standing, evidently reading, when the announcing Archangel appears to her. Nothing could be more graceful or natural than the quick movement of surprise and alarm with which the Virgin becomes aware of the celestial presence. In spite of the somewhat heavy and superfluous draperies, this figure is one of the finest ever conceived by Fra Filippo, and may be traced in the works of many pupils and imitators, especially in those of Botticelli and Filippino. The kneeling Gabriel, bearing a lily in his right hand, glows with a spirituality which contrasts vividly with the ponderous earthliness of the two angels

¹ Albertini in his *Memoriale* says: "In San Lorenzo nella cappella degli Operai è una tavola di fra Filippo carmelita et una disegmata nella cappella di Sant' Andrea." The latter work has disappeared.



St. Ann, photo

Museo degli Innocenti, Firenze

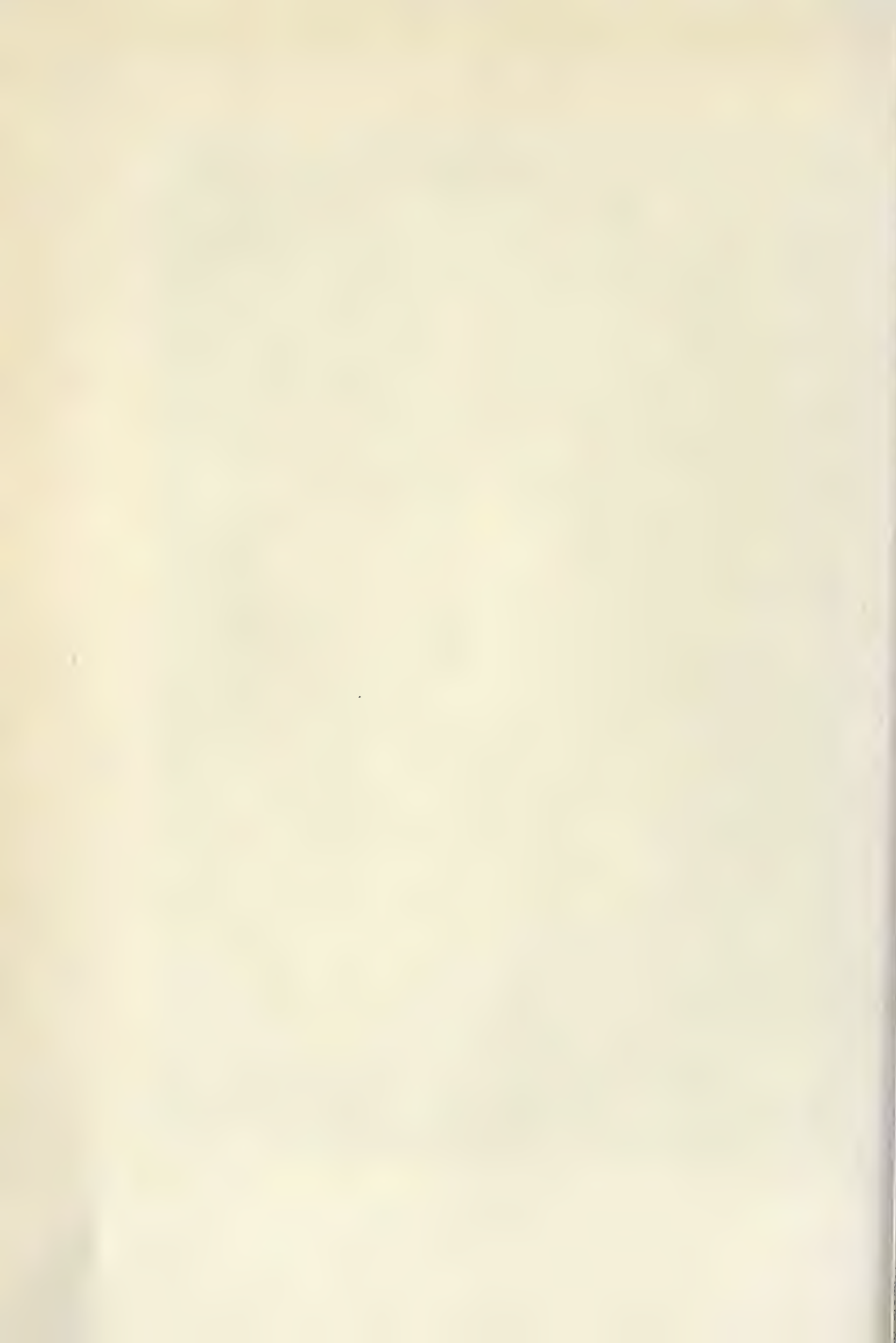
Angel presenting the Divine Child to the Virgin.



Hanfstätgl photo.

[Munich Gallery.]

MADONNA AND CHILD.



standing behind him, who appear to be squires in waiting upon the great Prince of the Archangels. Seldom has Fra Filippo been more unfortunate in the treatment of his draperies than in the heavy, vulgar figure of the angel on the left, in which all the principal defects of the Carmelite seem to be condensed¹. While we feel that Gabriel is a denizen of the empyrean, to which he may return at any moment with a rapid beating of wings, the very idea of this clumsy "fat boy," swathed in many yards of bunched stuff, being able to fly an inch above the ground, makes us smile. We could not understand the possibility of the same artist painting two such widely different figures as that of the Virgin—instinct with animation and spiritual beauty—and this earthly spiritless angel, if we did not remember the extraordinarily complex nature of Fra Filippo's temperament, which was a strange medley of sublime aspirations and of shameful failings, the union of a willing spirit with a flesh that was all too weak.

Although this picture has been extensively restored, it is still one of the finest examples of Fra Filippo's colouring, in which the Carmelite was *facile princeps* among the painters of the early Quattrocento.

To this Annunciation is attached a predella representing three stories from the life of St. Nicholas of Bari, most exquisitely finished and quite up to the high standard of perfection which Fra Filippo attained in his smaller paintings. In the first compartment to the right St. Nicholas is seen liberating three youths who had been confined in a cask, while other figures are depicted in various attitudes of

¹ Kugler, op. cit. : "Man glaubt einen schweren Wollenstoff zu sehen, der sich weder dem Körper anschliesst, noch schöne Massen und Falten bildet."

reverent surprise. The central compartment represents the saint about to throw a golden ball in a room where three young women are asleep, lying on the floor in attitudes expressive of the greatest weariness, while an old man, their father, sits beside them, plunged in a deep reverie. The scene depicted in the third story, where St. Nicholas saves a condemned man from the executioner, whose sword is already raised to strike the fatal blow, is one of Fra Filippo's most dramatically conceived works. Throughout this predella a stronger sense of tactile values is perceptible, indicating that Fra Filippo did not neglect the study of the nude, and that he was gradually mastering the new methods followed by Donatello, Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno. During this period Fra Filippo appears to have given special attention to the human figure, and the splendid results of his painstaking studies may be seen in all his subsequent pictures, but more especially in the Prato and Spoleto frescoes.

In the Florence Academy are two panels, which evidently formed part of a larger painting, and were perhaps the shutters of an altar-piece, since lost. Each panel contains two figures of exquisite workmanship and fine colouring. On the left is the Virgin, standing and gazing ecstatically at the symbolic dove which is flying towards her. In the opposite panel the Archangel Gabriel is seen, bearing a lily in his hand and crowned with a wreath of white roses. The colours are most harmoniously blended, forming a pleasing symphony of red and blue, enhanced by scarcely perceptible touches of gilding in the borders of the skilfully arranged draperies. Underneath is St. Anthony, a severe, somewhat sad figure, with the expression of an



Alinari photo.]

[*Church of San Lorenzo, Florence.*

THE ANNUNCIATION.

earnest searcher, and in the opposite panel a majestic St. John the Baptist. Like all the representations of the Precursor belonging to this period, the figure of St. John, clad in a rough camel-hair garment, has a wild, almost uncanny expression, as if his long penitential sojourn in the desert and his close communion with the mysterious forces of nature had transformed him into a kind of sylvan god, half saint and half satyr. Here, as in the Sant' Ambrogio altarpiece, this strange impression is further enhanced by the crescent-like arrangement of the saint's hair, beneath which two little horns seem to lurk. Not only are these four figures extremely beautiful and natural, but the artist has drawn them with the greatest care and correctness, proving how diligently he was at this time applying himself to the study of the human frame.

Another picture from which we may conclude that Fra Filippo did not neglect those anatomical problems so ardently cultivated by the sculptors of his age and by painters like Antonio Pallaiolo and Andrea del Castagno, is the St. Jerome doing penance, now in the Florence Academy. The saint is kneeling before a crucifix, on which he gazes with ascetic fervour. In his right hand he holds a stone, with which to beat his breast, while his left is half raised in an attitude of humble supplication. His emaciated but muscular body is only half covered by a garment fastened round his loins, thus giving the artist an opportunity of displaying his knowledge of anatomy. But although Fra Filippo has succeeded admirably in reproducing the anatomical details of the human frame, faithfully transferring to his picture the muscular masses, the tendons and veins which he saw in his model, nevertheless he has failed to turn these elements to artistic account, lapsing into

a realism quite devoid of spiritual significance. Art had not yet produced a Michelangelo to mould, Prometheus-like, the human frame—to bend and shape it like clay beneath his powerful hands and then to breathe life into it with his genius.

In front of the saint is a human skull, also drawn with extraordinary fidelity and care, and near him a lion crouches on the ground. Episodes in the life of St. Jerome are depicted in the distance, and no more appropriate surroundings could have been found for this weird composition than the cavern at whose mouth the saint is kneeling, or the frowning mountains which hem in the scene on either side. This picture is one of Fra Filippo's most realistic works, showing that the Carmelite had ardently embraced the methods of the new movement, interpreting to the letter the maxim enunciated by Lorenzo Ghiberti, who in designing the famous Baptistery doors "strove to imitate nature to the utmost."

A careful examination of this St. Jerome will convince us, however, that although it was undoubtedly designed by Fra Filippo, the latter was assisted by one of his pupils. The colouring especially, with its ghastly greenish tints, differs considerably from anything we have seen in the friar's other paintings, usually conspicuous for their warm, rich colour, and there is something in the whole style and manner which suggests another hand—forcibly reminding us of the school of Andrea del Castagno. It was by no means unusual in the Quattrocento for mediocre painters who had not sufficient merit or determination to emerge and conquer an individual position in the world of art, to gain a precarious living by passing from one *bottega* to another, accepting chance jobs from more successful artists, and working under their direction.



Alinari photo.]



[Accademia, Florence.

ST. ANTHONY AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

These rolling-stones have contributed more than anything or anybody else towards rendering art criticism an arduous and complicated study. It is entirely their fault if the puzzled critic often pauses in despair before a picture bearing the characteristic signs, the trade-mark, so to speak, of two different and often diametrically opposed schools. Almost invariably retaining the style acquired under their first master, and taking little or no interest in the progress of their art—from which they derived no glory and meagre profits—these wandering painters remained well within the line of the *aurea medietas*; but as they possessed the imitative spirit in an inverse ratio to their creative powers, the result of their promiscuous collaboration in various *botteghe* was most confusing. Typical instances of the “journeyman artist” of the Quattrocento are Giusto d’ Andrea, who worked under Neri di Bicci, Benozzo Gozzoli and Fra Filippo; Zanobi Machiavelli, a familiar figure in the Florentine *botteghe*, and Giovanni da Rovezzano¹, a pupil of Andrea del Castagno, who left his first master to join Fra Filippo towards the end of the year 1448. In all probability it was precisely this Giovanni da Rovezzano who helped Fra Filippo to finish the St. Jerome, which bears such evident traces of Andrea del Castagno’s manner. His collaboration with the Carmelite, however, or rather the latter’s failure to carry out the conditions of the contract, gave rise to a litigation which had most serious consequences for the friar, and would undoubtedly have ruined him but for the all-powerful protection of the Medici.

When Fra Filippo took Andrea’s pupil into his

¹ According to Vasari, Giovanni di Francesco della Cervelliera, of Rovezzano, painter and miniaturist, died in 1459, two years after Andrea del Castagno.

bottega he stipulated that his assistant was to receive no monthly salary, but that a sum of forty gold florins should be paid to him at the end of the year 1450. A written agreement to this effect was drawn up and signed by master and *garzone*. But when the latter, on the expiration of his engagement, claimed the reward of his services, Fra Filippo, suffering as usual from chronic impecuniosity, was unable or unwilling to pay. Giovanni, who had worked and waited patiently for a whole year, became obstreperous, and finally sued Fra Filippo before the episcopal *curia* or tribunal. What followed constitutes the blackest page in the history of the friar's troubled existence. Relying on his ecclesiastical status, which he hoped would add authority and credibility to his assertions before a clerical court, Fra Filippo had recourse to a base stratagem. He forged Giovanni's receipt underneath the contract, and then exhibiting this document swore that he had already paid his assistant. But Giovanni protested so vigorously and with such evident sincerity that the Archbishop's Vicar-General, Messer Raffaello de' Primatecchi of Bologna, suspecting a fraud, caused both plaintiff and defendant to be imprisoned pending further inquiries. An investigation into the friar's precedents and mode of living fully confirmed the magistrate's suspicion, and as Fra Filippo persisted in his false assertions, he was finally submitted to the *ultima ratio* of mediaeval justice—torture—which an inhuman or inexperienced executioner applied so ruthlessly as to cause an abdominal lesion from which the friar never recovered, and which may even indirectly have led to his death¹. There is something pitiful and at

¹ A contemporary document states that in consequence of the rough handling he underwent on this occasion Fra Filippo was



Alinari photo.]

[*Accademia, Florence.*

ST. JEROME.

the same time revolting, in the idea of the jovial, pleasure-loving monk undergoing the hideous torments of the rack, but it appears that he went through the appalling ordeal bravely, and only gave up the struggle and confessed his guilt when he saw that he was seriously injured.

The consequences of this scandalous affair were not so disastrous as might have been expected. Indeed, with characteristic levity, he appears to have attached very little importance to an ignominy which would have bowed down a more sensitive man with shame. Instead of mending his ways and attending to his clerical duties as Rector of San Quirico in Legnaja, Fra Filippo never gave a thought to his parishioners, keeping away from the church for months together, and serenely disregarding the repeated warnings and injunctions of the Archiepiscopal Curia. At last, all other steps having remained fruitless, and as a result of his unpardonable negligence, Sant' Antonino's Vicar-General pronounced a sentence against Fra Filippo, dated May 19, 1455, depriving him of his benefice.

Alarmed at the prospect of losing his sinecure, the friar appealed to the Pope and obtained that the Bishop of Fiesole and Messer Ugolino Giugni should be appointed to investigate the matter. But the Archiepiscopal Curia of Florence intimated to the Bishop of Fiesole not to interfere, at the same time writing to Rome and denouncing Fra Filippo for having falsely represented the facts of the case in his appeal. The result of this prompt action on the part of the inflexible Sant' Antonino was a Bull from Pope Calixtus III, dated July 15, 1455, fully confirming the original sentence, and ruptured. "He bore the pain bravely," says the chronicler, "but confessed when he saw his intestines protruding from his wounds."

ordering that the painter, *qui plurima et nefanda scelera perpetravit*, should be immediately deprived of the office he had so unworthily filled. And that the sentence was carried out is proved by a contemporary record, from which we learn that the Bostichi family—in whose gift the church of San Quirico was placed—appointed Maestro Tommaso dei Quercetani, a Dominican, to the post from which they had ousted Fra Filippo. But it is evident that the latter, although he gave up his spiritual prerogatives with a good grace, managed to retain the temporal administration of San Quirico; for we find him four years later, namely, on the 10th of October, 1459, still referred to as “*rettore e commendatario perpetuo della chiesa di San Quirico a Legnaia*” in a public document¹. What is still more surprising, however, and indeed can only be explained by attributing it to the powerful protection of the Medici, and to the deficient moral sense of the age, is the fact that in 1452, hardly two years after his ignominious imprisonment, so notorious a libertine as Fra Filippo should have been appointed chaplain to the nuns of San Niccolò de' Fieri in Florence, and that the Papal condemnation contained in Calixtus III's Bull, emanated in 1455, should not have prevented him from obtaining a similar appointment with the nuns of Sta. Margherita at Prato before many months had elapsed.

Fortunately for Fra Filippo, and also for art, the

¹ *Archivio di Stato di Firenze* (Tribunale di mercanzia, causa ordinaria, n. 1406, p. 25, Ottobre 10, 1459. Petizione di fra Filippo di Tommaso, rettore e commendatario perpetuo della chiesa di San Quirico a Legnaia, contra monna Lucia donna del fu Andrea di Gano, beccaio). This is a law suit in which Fra Filippo sought to recover rent from the widow of a butcher who occupied the half of a house which the monk possessed in Borgo San Frediano, near the Piazza dei Nerli.



Neurdein photo.]

[*Louvre, Paris.*

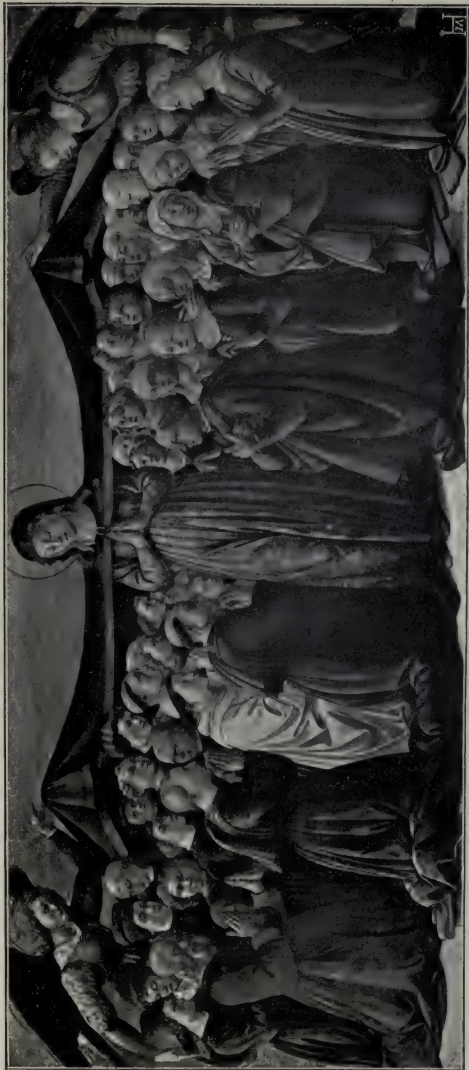
THE MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH ANGELS.

monk was possessed of so buoyant and optimistic a temperament that in spite of all these troubles and calamities he continued working just the same. To this period, in fact, we may assign the *tondo* in Casa Alessandri, painted, according to Vasari, for Messer Alessandro degli Alessandri, and formerly in the chapel of the latter's country seat at Vincigliata. It represents St. Lawrence enthroned between St. Cosmo and St. Damian, before whom kneel the donor and his two sons. Attached to this panel, which may originally have been of a rectangular form, were the two figures of St. Anthony and St. Benedict, now in the Uffizi Gallery. Another picture probably painted about the same time, with the assistance of some *garzone* whose manner bears a striking resemblance to Verrocchio's ponderous style, is the large panel in the Hospital of Sta. Maria Nuova, representing the Madonna and Child with an angel and two saints. There is a Madonna and Child with angels in the Louvre which some writers have attributed to Fra Filippo, and which bears a striking resemblance to his style; but a careful examination of this work will convince us that it is by a pupil or imitator, who probably took for his model the Pitti *tondo*. The features of the Madonna have the same expression of vague melancholy, and the whole group is conceived in an identical spirit. Even if we admit that the two principal figures are by Fra Filippo, however, it is certain that the angels in the background are not by his hand.

But one of the finest works of this period, and one to which singular interest attaches—as it would appear to have been suggested to the friar by the numerous troubles he was just going through—is the *Madonna della Misericordia*, an oblong panel now in the Berlin Gallery. The Mother of Mercy is

represented standing, and gazing with ineffable sweetness and compassion at the numerous kneeling figures which have sought refuge underneath the protecting folds of her mantle. Hope, filial love, and ecstatic devotion are admirably depicted in the various expressions of the faces confidently turned towards the "Refugium Peccatorum." In the midst of his trials and tribulations, the harassed painter seems to have derived strength and comfort from the portrayal of that maternal pity and protection extending like a mantle over all repentant sinners.

But if Fra Filippo repented of his sins, we must suppose that the remorse they occasioned him was of very short duration, for we find him constantly lapsing into the same errors. Less than a year after his unsuccessful attempt to swindle Giovanni da Rovezzano, the unscrupulous painter was summoned before the Tribunale della Mercanzia, or Commercial Court, to answer a charge of fraud, the plaintiff in this case being one Antonio del Branca, a native of Perugia residing in Florence. The latter had commissioned Fra Filippo to paint a panel for the church of San Domenico in Perugia, depositing the price agreed upon, namely, seventy gold florins, with the monks of San Marco, to be paid on completion of the work. A regular *allogazione*, or contract, to this effect was drawn up and duly signed by the parties on the 16th of February, 1451. From the reports of this curious law suit, which may be read in the proceedings of the Tribunale della Mercanzia for the same year, it would appear that Fra Filippo, in his anxiety to get the money, of which he stood as usual sorely in need, hurried over the work and called in the assistance of his *garzoni* to such an extent, that when he presented the picture to his patron and demanded payment for it, the indignant



Hansjörgel photo.

THE MADONNA DELLA MISERICORDIA.

[*Berlin Gallery.*

Antonio del Branca refused to give him a farthing, maintaining before the court that the picture was so inferior as not to be the work of Fra Filippo at all. It seems, however, that he was forced to accept the painting all the same, as it was still to be seen in the church of San Domenico at Perugia when Vasari visited that city¹.

Fra Filippo's second Florentine period, which opened under such favourable auspices with the completion of his glorious Sant' Ambrogio altar-piece, was therefore destined to end ignominiously in a series of litigations and criminal prosecutions. But it is a curious fact that while Fra Filippo *the man* became more and more deeply engulfed in his passions and in their deplorable consequences, Fra Filippo *the artist* continued serenely to advance towards perfection. His career was one of uninterrupted development—of constant progress—although the periods into which we have divided it are characterized by a gradual ampliation rather than by any fundamental change in style or in colouring. In his early works we have watched the friar's successful struggle against the cloying influence of the Giottesques and miniaturists; the first Florentine period marks his entrance into the vortex of the new movement; in the second Florentine period he has so

¹ No mention of this picture is made by Mariotti in his *Lettere pittoriche perugine*, although Orsini (*Guida di Perugia*, p. 60) attributes to Fra Filippo a panel formerly near the baptismal font, which was removed in 1820 to the chapel of St. Ursula. But the saints in this panel are not the same as those described by Vasari, so that other critics attribute it to Fra Angelico. Another panel, divided in two parts, and containing four figures of saints, removed in 1818 from San Domenico to the adjoining chapter-house, is also attributed by some to Fra Filippo, but in my opinion this work bears evident traces of the manner of the Perugian Buonfigli, who was influenced by Fra Filippo.

completely discarded the old conventionalism as almost to fall a prey to realism. It is not before Prato that Fra Filippo regains his artistic equilibrium, and introduces in his works that grandeur which he had inherited from Masaccio, and which formed the prelude to that heavenly symphony which death interrupted at Spoleto. While *the man* wallowed in the mire of his base passions, *the artist*, eagle-like, was soaring in ever-widening circles towards perfection.

CHAPTER IV

PRATO : 1452-1467

IN the lives of most eminent men, and more especially of artists, there are often certain momentous dates marking an epoch not only in the history of the individual, but in that of the particular branch of art or learning in which he excelled—places which may be regarded as milestones in the onward march of humanity as well as in the progress of the man. Of such decisive importance in the life of Fra Filippo and in the history of Quattrocento art is the year 1452, in which the friar left Florence for Prato, commencing that epoch-making series of frescoes in the choir of the Duomo which constitutes the greatest achievement of his career and the most remarkable artistic event since the completion of Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. As early as the year 1430 Niccolò Milanese, *proposto* (or spiritual governor) of the commune of Prato, a little town twelve miles from Florence, had conceived the idea of adorning the choir of the Duomo with frescoes¹, but it was not until twelve years later that the project, temporarily abandoned for some unknown reason, was again taken into consideration by the magistrates of the city, who sent messengers to Fiesole, requesting Fra Angelico to execute the work².

¹ Diurno della Comunità, quoted by Baldanzi, *Delle Pitture di Fra Filippo Lippi in Prato* (Prato, Fratelli Giachetti, 1835), p. 12.

² See Documents xvi and vi.

At first he appears to have favourably considered the proposition, for we find that he visited Prato twice, for the last time on April 1, 1452, when the negotiations, opened on the 21st of March, were abruptly broken off, Fra Angelico absolutely refusing to accept the proffered commission, although the city magistrates, bent upon securing the services of so eminent a painter, even wrote to Sant' Antonino, Archbishop of Florence, asking him to intercede with his brother Dominican. But Fra Angelico remained obdurate. In 1449 he had returned for a brief while to the peaceful retirement of his beloved Fiesole, after having completed his greatest achievement, the frescoes in the chapel of Nicholas V at the Vatican. He was tired and felt that his artistic career was drawing to a close. Conscious of having attained the highest degree of perfection of which he was capable, not stimulated by ambition or by the desire of gain, and perhaps dimly presentient of his approaching dissolution, which was to take place three years later, Fra Angelico felt unable to accomplish so important a work; and prayers and pressure were alike powerless to swerve the gentle but resolute monk from his decision. The new *proposto*, Messer Geminiano Inghirami, and the magistrates of Prato appear to have been not a little pained by this rebuff; but they were evidently anxious to avoid all further delay, and consequently lost no time in looking for another artist.

From the book of expenses of the "Opera del S. Cingolo" of Prato we learn that on the 5th of April Bernardo di Bandinello, the same messenger whose mission to Fra Angelico had proved unsuccessful, was again dispatched to Florence "a cierchare di dipintori che venghano a dipignere la chapela maggiore," this time returning in triumph with no

fewer than four candidates, whose names, however, are not mentioned. But it is certain that, whoever the remaining two may have been, they were discarded in favour of Fra Filippo and his youthful friend and assistant, Fra Diamante, of whose collaboration we shall have much to say in the following pages. That they immediately set to work is evident from an entry in the "Libro delle spese" of the Ceppo, a pious institution founded by Francesco di Marco Datini in Prato, dated May 29, 1452, recording the payment of fifty lire "a frate Diamante di Feo da Terra nuova, gharzone di fra Filippo di Tommaso dipintore e che dipigne la chapela de l' altar magore¹." More than a month, however, must have been employed in the preparation of the cartoons and in other preliminaries, as we find that the scaffolding was not ready before the 17th of July². Fra Filippo appears to have commenced work with characteristic ardour and enthusiasm, neglecting all other commissions which he had in hand, much to the annoyance of his Florentine patrons, some of whom had unwisely paid him in advance. Indeed one Leonardo di Bartolommeo Bartolini, who had commissioned the friar to paint a *tondo* representing stories from the life of the Blessed Virgin, had such grave misgivings about the probability of ever seeing his picture finished or of recovering the twenty-two gold florins paid for it, that he applied for redress to the committee of four *probiviri* who presided over the Ceppo, obtaining from them on the 8th of August the assurance that they would reimburse the price of the picture if Fra Filippo had not finished it by

¹ See Document xi. This document is a conclusive proof that Baldanzi and other writers are mistaken in stating that Fra Filippo only commenced his Prato frescoes in 1456.

² See Document vi.

the 8th of December, 1452¹. As the already quoted "Libro delle spese" for this year contains no entry showing that the administrators of the Duomo were put to this expense, we may safely conjecture that they forced the friar to keep his word, and that the latter completed the *tondo* before the end of 1452.

Following our system of examining the master's works in chronological order, we shall describe the painting in question, together with some other panel pictures belonging to this period, before devoting our attention to the magnificent frescoes in the choir-chapel of the Duomo.

It is not difficult to identify the famous Madonna and Child with the pomegranate, now in the Pitti Gallery, as the *tondo* containing "certa storia della Vergine Maria," commissioned by Leonardo Bartolini to Fra Filippo before the latter left Florence, and finished under pressure at Prato. Of all Fra Filippo's panel pictures, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the Uffizi Madonna, this *tondo* is undoubtedly the finest, and the one which exercised the greatest influence on the art of the later Quattrocento. In the foreground, seated upon a richly carved chair, is the Madonna, on whose knees, resting upon a cushion, lies the Divine Child, whom she lovingly supports with one hand, while she holds a pomegranate in the other. The Infant stretches out a little hand towards the tempting fruit, a grain of which it holds up with a peculiarly winning and natural movement towards its Mother. But the latter does not seem to notice the Infant's graceful gesture or indeed any of her surroundings. As if plunged in a deep prophetic reverie overshadowed by the gloom of Calvary, the Mother gazes with an expression of ineffable melancholy, half interroga-

¹ See Document xvii.

tively, into the future, forgetful of the smiling, caressing babe on her lap—dead to everything around her, and wholly absorbed in a solemn vision of the torments, humiliations, and death fatally awaiting the Son of Man. And yet, strangely illumining the fair, almost girlish face, and adding, if possible, to its melancholy, there lurks in the corners of that sensitive mouth a sweet sad smile—such a smile as is only elicited by the memory of things long past and destined never to return. Perhaps before the Virgin Mother's troubled mind, soothing its anguish, float the dim memories of childhood, of the room where she first saw the light, and of the home in which she lived before becoming "espoused to Joseph of the House of David."

This *tondo* is in itself sufficient to prove that Fra Filippo could at times soar above the suffocating atmosphere of his baser nature, attaining a spiritual height and intellectual penetration rarely, if ever, surpassed by any other artist of the Quattrocento. What could be more simple, and yet more impressive and sublime, than Fra Filippo's conception of his theme? Instead of laboriously representing, in a series of compartments or independent groups, the "stories from the life of the Virgin" commissioned by his patron, as an intellectually inferior artist would very probably have done, Fra Filippo solves the problem with a masterly simplicity. Having devoted the background to episodes illustrating the birth of Mary, he sums up all her subsequent career, with its joys and sorrows, in the wonderfully expressive figure which is at once the timid Virgin of the Annunciation and the tender Mother of the Nativity, the Mater Dolorosa and the Regina Angelorum.

What most attracts our attention in this marvel-

lously original conception of the Madonna, however, is not so much the sad, maladive beauty of the girlish face, as its striking originality. We feel that this is no conventional, academic interpretation of a set religious theme—such as the Madonnas of Fra Filippo's first period—but the idealized portrait of a woman painted by the man who loved her, as yet with a pure adoring love; and this knowledge thrills us with a degree of interest and sympathy which Fra Angelico's most spiritual representations of the Virgin fail to excite. For we shall see how this beautiful picture was the first link in that romantic chain which bound Fra Filippo to Prato.

The episodes in the background and the accessory figures of this *tondo* are likewise treated in a masterly manner. For the first time in any of his panel pictures Fra Filippo attacks and triumphantly solves one of the most difficult problems of perspective, showing us a flight of rooms, in the first of which, lying on a bed and supported by cushions, is St. Anne caressing the infant Mary, presented to her by another woman. Various other female figures, depicted in wonderfully graceful and natural attitudes, give life to the composition. Especially remarkable is the figure of a handmaiden hurrying towards the room where she is evidently expected, and carrying on her head a basket which she steadies with her right arm, while she holds another basket with her left. Nothing could be more elegant than the swift, gliding movement of the girl¹, the graceful outline of whose frail body is plainly discernible underneath the clinging folds of the light drapery.

¹ Readers may remember having noticed, especially in central and southern Italy, the graceful carriage of peasant women accustomed to bear heavy loads on their heads with perfect ease, walking erect to preserve the equilibrium of their burden.



Madonna and Child.

Det. Gallery, Florence

The head is slightly turned backwards as if to encourage a little child who follows, holding on to her flowing robes. Beyond this beautiful little group, the importance of which we shall further endeavour to explain when illustrating Fra Filippo's influence on the art of the Renaissance, St. Joachim is seen ascending some steps, affectionately greeted by St. Anne, who holds out her hands towards him as if to support his tired, bent frame.

We have said that the Pitti Madonna is one of Fra Filippo's finest panel pictures. It is also one of the most important in the history of Quattrocento art, because in this *tondo* Fra Filippo has opened new horizons and disclosed fresh possibilities to painters. Boldly shaking off every vestige of conventionalism, he accomplished in painting what Donatello, Luca della Robbia and Desiderio da Settignano had already achieved in sculpture, and, first among the painters of his time, dared to give a human interpretation to a heavenly theme. The unapproachable, almost forbidding Madonna of conventionalism, surrounded by equally unreal angels and saints, has been dethroned by the human mother, with her human joys and fears and sorrows; the grave, majestic Child is transformed into a laughing babe, and, instead of the solemn grandeur of a religious *milieu*, we gaze upon a purely human description of the sublime joys of maternity. It is no exaggeration to say that the Pitti Madonna inspired and powerfully influenced at least two generations of painters, and that without this bold departure from conventionalism—this masterly translation of the abstract into the real, of the hieratic into the human—the art of Botticelli and of Filippino would not have been possible.

While still engaged upon his epoch-making *tondo*,

it is evident that Fra Filippo was also working for the *probiviri* of the Ceppo, as we have seen that the latter held themselves responsible to Leonardo Bartolini for the completion of his previously commissioned painting. An entry in the "Libro delle spese," dated 28th of May, 1453, and recording the payment of eighty-five florins to the friar for a panel picture painted in a tabernacle over the well of the Ceppo¹, leaves no doubt as to the nature of this work, which is still in existence, although partly repainted and much damaged by time and exposure. The panel represents the Madonna and Child enthroned, with St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen, while the foreground is occupied by the kneeling figures of Francesco di Marco Datini, the pious founder of the Ceppo, and of the four *probiviri* then in office². This painting has many points in common with the Santo Spirito altar-piece, the heads of the Madonna and Child reminding us especially of the latter picture, but in spite of its damaged condition it is not difficult to perceive that it is not entirely the work of Fra Filippo, traces of another hand being clearly perceptible, especially in the stiff Gothic treatment of the Madonna's draperies. Fra Filippo, in his anxiety to finish the *tondo* for Leonardo Bartolini, evidently left the completion of this panel to his *garzone*, Fra Diamante, after having designed the whole composition and painted the five portraits of the donors, which are certainly by his hand. We shall therefore have occasion to mention this work later on, when dealing with Fra Diamante and his manner.

Another picture which we may safely attribute to the first years of Fra Filippo's residence in Prato

¹ See Document xviii.

² The names of these *probiviri* will be found in Document vi.



Brogi photo.]

[*Pitti Gallery, Florence.*

HEAD OF THE VIRGIN.

(A detail from the 'Madonna and Child.')

is the Death of St. Jerome¹, in the Duomo, commissioned to the friar by Messer Geminiano Inghirami, who was *proposto* or spiritual governor of Prato from 1451 to 1460. A careful comparison of this altar-piece with the first frescoes executed by Fra Filippo in the Duomo will convince us that it was not painted before 1453, but certainly not much later². The composition, like that of most Quattrocento Depositions and similar funereal themes, is modelled on Giotto's famous Death of St. Francis in the Bardi Chapel of Santa Croce. Stretched upon a bier, which the reverent love of his disciples has covered with a rich cloth of gold studded with bright red flowers, lies the lifeless body of the saint, a venerable bearded figure in monastic garb. All around press the weeping brethren, loudly bewailing

¹ Most writers, led astray by Vasari, still maintain that this painting is really meant to represent the death of St. Bernard. The Aretine biographer alludes to it as follows: "In the Capitular Church of Prato, on a small panel which is over the side door as one ascends the steps, Fra Filippo depicted the death of St. Bernard, by the touch of whose bier many lame persons are restored to health." Were it not for the sincere and well-deserved praise which Vasari subsequently bestows on this picture, it might be questioned whether he had seen the work at all, for it is not a small panel, but one of the friar's largest panel pictures. Besides, there are not many lame persons, but only one. That the subject of the picture is the death of St. Jerome, and not of St. Bernard, is confirmed by Gaetano Guasti (*I quadri della Galleria del Comune di Prato*, Prato, 1888, pp. 42, 43). An interesting article on this controversy appeared in the *Industriale Pratese* for March, 1877.

² Baldanzi's assertion that Fra Filippo painted this altar-piece in order to prove his artistic ability, and that Geminiano Inghirami was so pleased with the performance that he entrusted the friar with the execution of the frescoes in the Choir, had only a shadow of probability as long as the year 1456 was accepted as the date of the commencement of the frescoes. But as I have quoted documents proving that Fra Filippo began working in the Duomo in 1452, Baldanzi's hypothesis falls to the ground.

the loss of their beloved father and master. Rarely has deep affliction been more vividly depicted than in the faces and attitudes of these weeping monks. The violence of their grief is almost painful to witness. Casting aside all sense of manly fortitude and clerical dignity, the bereaved brethren seem to writhe in a very paroxysm of grief; their features are contracted as if by intense pain, giving them that half-congested appearance which is only produced by an excess of laughter or of tears¹: they do not mourn resignedly over the departed patriarch, but seem to howl in their despair. How different from the stately serenity of the Funeral of St. Stephen in the Choir, and yet how much more natural, if less dignified, how much more human is this representation of a kindred theme! On the left of the foreground is a kneeling monk encouraging a cripple to approach the bier, by whose touch he may hope to regain health, and on the right, likewise kneeling, is the portrait of the donor, Geminiano Inghirami, whose coat-of-arms is seen at the bottom of the picture. This lifelike portrait may be considered as the precursor of the stately figures in the Funeral of St. Stephen, and forcibly reminds us of the donor in Masaccio's Santa Maria Novella Trinity. Indeed, Masaccio's powerful influence is clearly perceptible throughout this picture, but more especially in the finely modelled heads of the monks, which are full of force and character, and in the treatment of the draperies, falling in well-arranged folds and masses.

Not without reason does Vasari² bestow special

¹ Cf. Petrarch:

“Conviensi

Che l'estremo del riso assaglia il pianto.”

² A passage in the description of this painting reveals such



Alinari photo.

[*Duomo, Prato.*

THE DEATH OF ST. JEROME.

praise on Fra Filippo for the triumphant manner in which he has solved a most difficult problem, the artistic treatment of a set uniform kind of drapery such as the monastic habit. Even Donatello never succeeded in entirely overcoming this difficulty, with which Signorelli, and Sodoma, in the frescoes of the Life of St. Benedict at Monte Oliveto near Siena, struggled in vain¹. Without introducing accessory figures in more brilliant apparel, like some artists who relieved the monotony of the monastic garb to the detriment of the religious *milieu*, Fra Filippo's treatment of the draperies is so varied and perfect that we could not wish for a more harmonious or spirited composition.

The background is formed by one of those rocky landscapes of which the master was so fond, with a Nativity on the left and episodes from the life of the saint. On high God the Father is seen, surrounded by angels, and with one hand raised in benediction

genuine admiration that it is worth quoting: "In this work," says Vasari, "are monks bewailing the loss of their master; and the exquisite grace of their heads, the truth and beauty with which their grief, and the plaintive expression of their weeping, are conveyed to the spectator, is a thing marvellous to behold. Some of the hoods and draperies of these monks have most beautiful folds, and the whole work merits the utmost praise for the excellence of its design, composition, and colouring, as well as for the grace and harmony of proportion displayed in it, completed as it is by the most delicate hand of Fra Filippo."

¹ Cf. Müntz, *L'Arte Italiana nel Quattrocento* (Milan, C. Rebeschini, 1894): "Osserviamo come i più grandi artisti abbiano trovato difficoltà gravi ogni qualvolta essi si trovarono alle prese con un costume prefisso, quale era la veste monacale. . . . Le sole storie accettabili sono quelle in cui questi maestri hanno potuto girare la difficoltà introducendovi figure accessorie. Sta il fatto che per la grande pittura di stile, l'artista ha bisogno di illimitata latitudine e libertà. Ed è perciò che i pittori del Rinascimento fino a Raffaello, e questi compreso, non hanno esitato a combinare il costume artistico con gli elementi della moda del tempo loro."

while in the other is a book with the letters A and Ω . Let us say at once that these accessory groups are infinitely inferior to the magnificent figures in the foreground. The perspective, especially in the representation of the Godhead, is decidedly faulty, reminding us more of Masolino's mediocre Glory in the Baptistery of Castiglione d' Olona than of Masaccio's impressive God the Father in the Madonna della Neve at Naples, or of his Angel in the Expulsion from Paradise of the Brancacci Chapel, both perfect models of how a similar problem of foreshortening should be solved. Moreover, the expressionless, frail-bodied angels, in which an adequate sense of tactile values is lamentably lacking, contrast so vividly with the powerfully conceived monks in the foreground, that it is impossible to believe that they were painted by the same hand. We may therefore arrive at the conclusion that Fra Filippo confided the execution of the background to his assistant Fra Diamante, whose inferior manner it reveals.

It now becomes necessary, before proceeding with our systematic examination of the master's works, to open a long parenthesis, in which we shall endeavour to throw some light on the romantic vicissitudes of Fra Filippo's sojourn in Prato. For the romance of the friar's life is so inextricably linked with his artistic production, especially during this most interesting period of his career, that an adequate appreciation of his works would be impossible without an impartial narrative of the circumstances which in a great measure inspired them. We have seen that Fra Filippo, having been selected by the *proposto* and *probiviri* to adorn the choir of the Cathedral with frescoes, took up his residence in Prato early in the year 1452. Although Vasari asserts that the friar

had several relatives in the little town, this statement appears very doubtful; at any rate Fra Filippo did not live with them, for we gather from contemporary documents that he bought a little house in the Piazza del Mercatale, paying rent to the owners, the Canons of Sta. Maria Nuova in Florence, until he could afford to disburse the whole sum agreed upon¹.

On the other side of the Piazza, just opposite Fra Filippo's residence, stood the ancient monastery of Sta. Margherita, occupied by a small community of Augustinian nuns. In the preceding year two young novices had joined the community, which, owing to the limited accommodation afforded by the old edifice, usually numbered not more than eight professed nuns. The new-comers were the orphans of a small Florentine silk merchant, Fran-

¹ From the books of the "Opera del Sacro Cingolo" we learn that on May 4, 1455, Fra Filippo bought another house in Prato, situated near the Gorellina or Via delle Tre Gore. It was here that Filippino was born two years later. The house may still be seen in the beginning of the Via Magnolfi, opposite the railway station, and bears the following inscription on its façade:

FILIPPO LIPPI
 COMPRÒ E ABITÒ QUESTA CASA
 QUANDO COLORIVA GLI STUPENDI AFFRESCHI DEL DUOMO
 E QUÌ NACQUE NEL MCCCCLIX FILIPPINO
 PRECURSORE DI RAFFAELLO

IL COMUNE
 PONEVA NELL' OTTOBRE DEL MDCCCLXIX

in which the date of Filippino's birth is mistaken. That Fra Filippo retained possession of both these houses, which he bequeathed to his son, is proved by reference to the latter's will (see Document xii), in which he provides that his beloved mother Lucrezia shall "uti et frui donec ipsa vixerit habitatione domuum emptarum per dictum Filippum a monasterio de Angelis de Florentia et omnibus supellectilibus dicti Filippi, *ac etiam habitatione domus de Prato posita iuxta dictam aliam domum, ut supra relictam dicte eius sorori.*"

cesco Buti, who, having lost his first wife—by whom he had had a son named Antonio—married in 1430 Caterina di Jacopo Ciacchi, a widow who presented him with another family of twelve children. The worthy merchant died towards the end of 1450, aged 78, leaving his son Antonio in charge of his numerous family¹. In the following year Antonio gave his eldest sister Margherita in marriage to one Messer Antonio Doffi, at the same time placing his step-sisters Spinetta, born 1434, and Lucrezia, born 1433, in the monastery of Sta. Margherita at Prato. Both girls were strikingly handsome, and—judging from the expression of *spirituelle* sensuality which gives such a strange charm to their portraits—felt no pressing desire to abandon the world, perhaps not even to renounce “the flesh and the devil.” But their step-brother was anxious to get rid of a troublesome responsibility, and as the dowry necessary for admittance into the monastery only amounted to 50 gold florins, while a much larger jointure would have been required to attract suitable husbands, Antonio did not hesitate a moment, with the result that at the age of seventeen and eighteen respectively Spinetta and Lucrezia Buti found themselves immured for life within the convent walls. Some writers, in their wholly unnecessary zeal to protect a religious institution from the breath of scandal, have asserted that the two girls were merely boarders, and even Vasari says that Lucrezia “had been sent to the convent either as a

¹ Writers like Della Valle and Kugler have so often and persistently denied either in part or *in toto* Fra Filippo's romance, that I have thought it advisable to furnish the most ample details based upon contemporary documents, availing myself of Milanesi's learned researches published in his commentary to Vasari's *Life of Fra Filippo*, and in a series of articles contributed to *L'Art* (see Bibliography).

novice or boarder"; but that they became professed nuns and recognized members of the community is proved by a report of a general meeting of the chapter held on the 8th of April, 1454, in which it was decided to sell an estate situated at Cojano, near Prato, in order to finish paying for a house which the Monastery had bought from Stagio Strozzi. In this document the names of both Lucrezia and Spinetta Buti figure among the "choral and professed nuns" who gave their vote on the occasion.

We may presume that Fra Filippo, in his clerical capacity, saw a good deal of his neighbours, and that he made the acquaintance of the nuns shortly after his arrival in Prato. For the girlish, strangely fascinating type of female beauty which we shall admire in the Dancing of the Daughter of Herodias—and which replaced the stately but somewhat conventional Madonnas of Fra Filippo's first period—already makes its triumphant entry in the Pitti *tondo*, painted, as we have seen, in 1452, when Lucrezia Buti was barely nineteen. The friar must have been deeply struck with the lively grace of the young Florentine, and even before conceiving that violent passion which culminated in his abduction of the nun, it is probable that his artistic instinct prompted him to reproduce those charms which had made so great an impression upon him. Perhaps, too, he attempted to subdue the rising passion in his breast by giving it a purely artistic interpretation: "Fra Filippo," says the Aretine biographer, "was much addicted to the pleasures of sense, insomuch that he would give all he possessed to secure the gratification of whatever inclination might at the moment be predominant; but if he could by no means accomplish his wishes, he would then depict the object of his

love in his paintings, and endeavour by reasoning with himself to diminish the violence of his flame." If we are to believe Vasari's statement that Fra Filippo painted the portrait of his beloved Lucrezia, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the portrait in question is contained in the Pitti *tondo*. Not even in the dancing figure of Herodias, although it belongs to the same type, do we find such striking originality as in the Pitti Madonna; nor has Fra Filippo ever been able to reproduce, in his subsequent representations of female beauty, that girlish loveliness and serene purity which he conceived during the lull which preceded the breaking of the storm, when respect and adoring admiration had not yet been supplanted by desire.

Fra Filippo's scandalous reputation does not appear to have preceded him to Prato, where his criminal prosecutions and the Bull fulminated against him by Pope Calixtus III failed to create an atmosphere of distrust or contempt around the "glad monk." Indeed he seems to have been held in such consideration by the ecclesiastical authorities of the little town, that early in the year 1456 they appointed him chaplain to the nuns of Sta. Margherita. We cannot help thinking, however, that Fra Filippo obtained this nomination after much scheming, and that it was part of a Machiavelian plan, having for its object the abduction of Lucrezia Buti.

Far from arousing the suspicion of the nuns, however, Fra Filippo evidently made an excellent impression on the Abbess, Bartolommea de' Bovacchiesi, as we find that, shortly after his nomination to the post of chaplain to the community, that venerable lady, who belonged to an ancient family of Prato, "being desirous of leaving a souvenir of her pious rule," commissioned Fra Filippo to paint

a panel picture representing the Madonna della Cintola¹ for the high altar of the convent church. Once within the very walls of the citadel, the enamoured monk, as might have been expected, lost no time in turning his privileged position to account. He immediately set to work on the panel, and, having designed the whole composition, asked the Abbess, as a special favour, for permission to paint Lucrezia Buti's portrait as the Madonna. It was not without many misgivings and great hesitation that his request was granted. For the nuns cannot have been in complete ignorance of Fra Filippo's numerous escapades and disreputable character; moreover, they knew that Lucrezia Buti had no special vocation for the monastic life, which she had embraced sorely against her will—a fact certainly not calculated to lessen the dangers of long *tête-à-tête's* between the amorous friar and the "exceedingly beautiful and graceful"² nun. But the violence of Fra Filippo's passion must have lent a persuasive eloquence to his pleading, for he at last succeeded in overcoming the scruples of the Abbess, who granted him the fair young model, stipulating, however, that another nun should always be present during the sittings.

In all probability the monk's age and appear-

¹ Our Lady of the Girdle was held in special veneration at Prato, as the miraculous relic was preserved in the Duomo. See Bianchini, *Notizie storiche intorno alla Sacratissima Cintola*.

² Cf. Vasari: "Fra Filippo, dato d'occhio alla Lucrezia, che così era il nome della fanciulla, la quale aveva bellissima grazia ed aria," &c. Vasari supposes that Fra Filippo first saw Lucrezia while he was painting the Madonna della Cintola. But the Pitti tondo, in which the girlish features of the nun already appear, would tend to prove, as I have said, that the friar had seen and admired Lucrezia four years earlier, shortly after his arrival in Prato.

ance were more instrumental in winning the day than all his eloquence; and the good Abbess must have dismissed her fears with the thought that so plain a man, already fifty years of age, and old enough to be Lucrezia's father, could not possibly be suspected of harbouring, much less of exciting, a tender passion. If Fra Filippo's portrait in the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, painted fifteen years before the Madonna della Cintola—namely, when the monk was in the flower of his manhood—shows him to us as a coarse-featured, decidedly obese, and most unsentimental looking personage, we may conjecture that age had certainly not improved him from an aesthetic point of view. That good looks are not essential to love-making, however, is an axiom well known to the most superficial student of historical romance, and one which the sequel in this case amply confirmed. But although Fra Filippo was neither young nor handsome, his energetic, passionate nature—almost bordering upon violence whenever the gratification of his unruly desires was at stake—made up for those sentimental gifts in which he was completely lacking, and exercised a more powerful fascination upon the timid, inexperienced young nun than all the wooing of a more graceful but less manly suitor could have done.

Imaginative writers have woven a pretty legend around the loves of the Carmelite and the nun, artists have selected the theme for some of their most dramatic pictures¹, but in reality there is more pathos than romance in Fra Filippo's court-

¹ A well-known pictorial representation of Fra Filippo's romantic adventure is that by the French artist Paul Delaroche, in which, however, the friar is depicted as a layman, in the elegant Florentine garb of the period. Another interpretation of the same theme may be seen in the Florence Galleria d' Arte Moderna.

ship of Lucrezia Buti. We have said that the latter had been immured in the convent of Sta. Margherita by her egotistical step-brother Antonio, and that she cordially hated her monastic surroundings. In those days, even more than now, a professed nun was as effectively isolated from the outer world as if she were already in the grave; moreover, Lucrezia knew that all appeals to her heartless relatives would remain unheard. During the five years which preceded her exit from the cloister, Lucrezia must have gone through the pathetic *via crucis* which so many unknown victims of their parents' cruelty or of their own passing delusions have suffered: first the frantic beating of wings against the bars of the monastic cage, then rebellious despair, followed by the gradual bowing of the proud young spirit and the breaking of the poor young heart. When Fra Filippo entered her monotonous existence, Lucrezia had perhaps already sunk into that state of listless resignation which follows the frenzy of despair; but it is not likely that, at the age of twenty-three, she should have completely abandoned all hope of some day reacquiring her liberty. And in the solitude of her cell, away from the scrutinizing glances of the older nuns, she must often have indulged in "a good cry" with her younger sister Spinetta at the thought of the fair world from which they were both forever exiled. The "psychological moment," therefore, was most favourable for the realization of Fra Filippo's plans, nor can we believe that so experienced and unscrupulous a Don Juan should have neglected to make capital out of the poor girl's mental and moral condition. Had the friar been less old and less ugly, we might almost be tempted to believe that the long sittings in the little convent church, during which the ena-

moured painter strove with trembling hand to depict the features of the beautiful young nun, gave rise to a mutual attachment of the Paolo and Francesca order. But it is far more probable that Lucrezia merely regarded Fra Filippo as an indispensable confederate, without whose aid she could never realize her cherished dream of returning to the world. Whether she knew at what price she was going to buy her liberty is more than doubtful. As we can never hope to solve the mystery of this strange romance, however, it is best to cut all conjectures short, coming at once to its *dénouement*.

On May 1, 1456, the little town of Prato presented an unusual appearance of festivity and bustle. From all the neighbouring villages, and even from Florence, crowds of devotees had come to celebrate the feast of the Madonna della Cintola, and to do honour to the miraculous girdle, which venerated relic was exhibited on that occasion in the Duomo. Among the faithful who thronged the sacred edifice were the nuns of Sta. Margherita, accompanied by their chaplain. But when the little community re-assembled in the monastery that evening, they discovered, to their dismay, that Sister Lucrezia was missing. So was Fra Filippo. Whether it was a preconcerted affair, or whether the monk profited by the crowd and confusion, which had dazed and frightened the young nun, to overcome Lucrezia's last scruples, we shall of course never know: at any rate the friar carried off his love to the new dwelling which he had bought the preceding year, and Lucrezia, "whether retained by fear or by some other cause, would not return to the convent, but remained with Filippo. By this event," continues Vasari, "the nuns of Sta. Margherita were deeply disgraced," a fact which we can readily believe; but it is false

that "Lucrezia's father was so grievously afflicted thereat that he never more recovered his cheerfulness," for we have said that the worthy silk-merchant died in 1450, and was thus spared the grief which his daughter's misconduct would certainly have occasioned him.

The sequel of this scandalous affair gives us a far from edifying insight into the morals of the age. Although he had abducted one of the sisters, Fra Filippo was not dismissed from his post as chaplain to the community, and the consequences of this deplorable leniency in his regard were disastrous. So deleterious an influence did the licentious friar exercise on the nuns, that shortly after his abduction of Lucrezia he persuaded Spinetta to join her elder sister, an example which three more nuns followed in rapid succession. The monastery was practically deserted, and the poor Abbess, Bartolommea de' Bovacchiesi, was so overwhelmed with shame and confusion that she died towards the end of the year.

Before proceeding any further with the melancholy narrative of Fra Filippo's misdeeds, it will perhaps be advisable to describe the picture which marked as important a climax in the history of the friar's courtship as the famous book of Lancelot and Guinevere in Paolo's pathetic wooing of Francesca: "Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse!"

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the painting now in the Prato Gallery, representing the Madonna della Cintola with various saints, is precisely the panel which the Abbess, Bartolommea de' Bovacchiesi, commissioned for the high altar of Sta. Margherita, although the majority of critics, until quite recently, maintained that the Louvre Nativity should be regarded as the picture for which Lucrezia Buti sat to Fra Filippo. Quite apart from con-

siderations of style, however, the latter theory is, as we shall see, absolutely untenable.

The Madonna is seated upon a throne, supported by angels and surrounded by rays of light in the form of a *mandorla*, while in her right hand she holds the miraculous girdle and offers it to St. Thomas, who kneels ecstatically near the empty tomb, from which many roses blossom forth¹. On the right of the composition are St. Augustine and the Archangel Raphael with Tobias, and on the left St. Gregory and St. Margaret are seen in the act of presenting a kneeling nun to the Blessed Virgin. In all probability the figure of the nun, one of the finest in the whole picture, is the portrait of the pious Abbess, Bartolommea de' Bovacchiesi, who commissioned the work to Fra Filippo. This supposition is confirmed by the presence of St. Augustine, Protector of the Order to which the community belonged, and of St. Margaret, Patron Saint of the little monastery at Prato. The youthful figure of St. Margaret reminds us of the Pitti Madonna, but recalls even more the features of the Uffizi Virgin, while the Archangel Raphael has many points in common with the kneeling Archangel in the San Lorenzo Annunciation; and it would be easy to recognize the childish type of Tobias among the flower-crowned angels of the Sant' Ambrogio altar-piece. These figures, therefore, were undoubtedly executed by Fra Filippo himself, but traces of another hand are evident throughout the picture. The figure of the Madonna, too, although considerably repainted, may be attributed to the master, but is by no means a creditable specimen of his manner, the treatment of the

¹ A pious legend says that when the Blessed Virgin's tomb was opened it was found to be full of beautiful flowers, while the body had disappeared.



Alinari photo.]

[*Municipal Palace, Prato.*

THE MADONNA-DELLA-CINTOLA WITH VARIOUS SAINTS.

draperies, which fall in heavy conventional masses on the arms and feet, entirely hiding them from view, being especially defective. It is evident that the friar's attention was absorbed by the model, to the serious detriment of his work. In the kneeling St. Thomas this defective treatment of the draperies is even more apparent, the folds of the red mantle being arranged in a decidedly Gothic manner, very different from the graceful style adopted by Fra Filippo in the kneeling figures of the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation, of the Louvre altar-piece, and above all in the graceful Salome bearing St. John's head, in the Prato Cathedral.

We may therefore reasonably arrive at the conclusion that, although Fra Filippo designed the whole composition and executed some of the figures, he left his work unfinished, perhaps in consequence of his romantic adventure, and that his assistant, Fra Diamante, finished it. A careful examination of the picture fully confirms this theory. The type of St. Augustine, for instance, is one which we never meet in Fra Filippo's works, but which is familiar in those of Fra Diamante; while the gorgeously arrayed St. Gregory, with his jewelled tiara and carefully painted vestments of gold cloth adorned with pearls, is a direct precursor of the Pontiffs executed by Fra Diamante in the Sistine Chapel. Again, the treatment of the draperies is identical with that which we shall have occasion to observe in some of the Spoleto frescoes, completed by Fra Diamante after his master's death¹.

¹ Fra Filippo was always ready to avail himself of the collaboration of his *garzoni*, either because he undertook more work than he could himself execute, or owing to his natural laziness and love of pleasure. We have seen that Antonio del Branca accused him of having confided to his assistant a picture commissioned to him

From this brief description it will be seen that the Madonna della Cintola is far more interesting on account of its romantic associations than conspicuous for its artistic merits. The same picture was destined to figure once more, under extremely dramatic circumstances, in the unhappy life of Lucrezia Buti. A year after her abduction she had given birth to a son, who was called Filippino, or "little Philip," after his father; but the joys of maternity do not appear to have increased Lucrezia's attachment for her paramour, or to have reconciled her to the new and irregular mode of life which she had led since her abrupt departure from the cloister. The continual privations and hardships which she had to endure in consequence of the friar's incorrigibly thriftless conduct, which gave rise to endless difficulties and persecutions on the part of enraged creditors¹, added to the loss of self-respect and to the humiliating consciousness of her shameful position, must gradually have had the result of making the escaped nun sigh for the peaceful, if somewhat monotonous retirement of her convent cell. Whatever may have been the

by the former in 1451; moreover we find that a picture representing St. Jerome and St. Francis figured in the catalogue of the works of art in the possession of the Medici as the joint work of Fra Filippo and Pesellino, proving that the friar made no secret of his methods. See E. Müntz, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹ Although Fra Filippo had resided in Prato since 1452, he had retained his *bottega* in Florence. But having neglected to pay rent, in August, 1457, his landlord seized all the furniture and everything else he could lay hands upon, including colours—at that time very expensive—and gold which had been confided to Fra Filippo by his patrons, and which were not his property. This characteristic incident proves that the painter was as impecunious as ever in 1457, when his son was born, and when, moreover, he had to provide for the maintenance of Lucrezia and Spinetta Buti. See Document xiv.

cause which prompted her resolution, however, it is certain that in December, 1458, Lucrezia Buti, broken spirited and repentant, humbly sought re-admission to the monastery of Sta. Margherita, where she was soon followed by her sister Spinetta and by the other three nuns, whose brief experience of the world had been equally unsatisfactory. But having forfeited their monastic character, the five repentant sinners, before being re-installed in their dignity of professed nuns, had to go through a year of novitiate, as if entering the religious life for the first time. This period of probation was passed in a most exemplary manner, and on the 23rd of December, 1459, a touching ceremony took place in the little convent church of Sta. Margherita: Lucrezia and Spinetta Buti, Piera di Vanni Sensi, Simona di Michele Lottieri and Brigida d' Antonio Peruzzi, veiled and carrying lighted tapers, knelt before the very picture which had been the indirect cause of their undoing, and solemnly renewed their monastic vows, in the presence of Messer Donato de' Medici, Bishop of Pistoja, Messer Ottaviano Guasconi, Abbot of Sta. Maria di Grignano and Vicar-General of Prato, and the Abbess, Jacopa de' Bovacchiesi, who had succeeded her sister Bartolommea: "Et solep-niter (*sic*) promiserunt," says the document drawn up by a notary on this occasion¹, "habentes in manibus et legentes quandam cedula[m], *stabilitatem, conversionem suorum morum, et castitatem*, et obedientiam debitam secundum regulam et ordinem dicti monasterii, facere et observare."

There can be no doubt as to the sincerity of the vows of the three nuns, no coercion having been used, and their return to the cloister having been perfectly

¹ Rogiti di Ser Dietajuti Spighi da Prato, protocollo dal 1457 al 1459.

voluntary. All might have been well, therefore, had the primary cause of the evil been removed. But, incredible as it may seem, Fra Filippo was allowed to retain his chaplaincy, a culpable imprudence on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities which was naturally followed by the most disastrous results. From a *tamburazione*¹ or anonymous charge dated May 8, 1461, brought conjointly against Fra Filippo and the procurator of the convent, Ser Piero di Vannozzo, and still visible in the archives of the *Ufficiali di Notte e Monasterii*², we learn that a

¹ The nature of the *tamburazione* or *intamburazione* is fully described in the old Florentine Statutes, Section III, book 3, entitled "Ordinamenti della Giustizia," under rubrics 96 and 97, quoted by Giovanni Villani. These anonymous accusations were so called because they were deposited in a box or *tamburo* (drum) placed outside the house of the *Esecutore degli ordinamenti di Giustizia*, one of the three *Rettori Forestieri*, whose principal duty—which he shared with the *Potestà* and *Capitano del Popolo*—was to protect the people against the oppression of the great. Florence being an essentially democratic commonwealth, having many points in common with Athens, this method of anonymous accusations could not be applied to the *gente bassa* or plebs, but was held over the heads of the great as a salutary terror. It is to this democratic privilege that Fazio degli Uberti, Dante's contemporary, alludes in his *Dittamondo* :

" Qui non temeua la gente comuna
Trovarsi nel tambur ned esser preso
Per lo Bargello senza colpa alcuna."

Subsequently the boxes or *tamburi* for the reception of the charges were placed near the entrance to the principal churches, such as Sta. Maria del Fiore, each bearing the name of the officer or magistrate under whose jurisdiction the denunciation came. The object was to allow the humblest citizen, without fear of evil consequences, to expose crime for the benefit and safety of the commonwealth. See Document vii.

² These magistrates, first instituted in 1421, exercised a sort of government control over the monasteries in Florence and within a radius of four miles from the Piazza della Signoria. They were nine in number, two chosen from the minor and seven from the

most scandalous state of things prevailed in Sta. Margherita, and that the monastic rules of the community had been supplanted by the most unbridled moral anarchy¹. It is only fair to state, however, that these anonymous accusations were in the great majority of cases dictated by personal animosity, and consequently grossly exaggerated if not altogether false. When Lorenzo Ghiberti, at that time still engaged on the doors of the Baptistery, was proposed for election, in 1443, as one of the twelve *Buonomini*, the *Conservadori di Legge* received a long *tamburazione*, still extant, denouncing Lorenzo as unfit to hold office, for various reasons which were enumerated in the document, and which bore every appearance of truth². But Lorenzo, being called

major "Arti." Only married men at least fifty years of age were eligible for this delicate office.

¹ The following is a translation of the *tamburazione*: "Unto you, officers of the night and monasteries of the city of Florence, it is notified that Ser Piero d' Antonio di Ser Vannoza has frequented, and continues to frequent, the monastery of Santa Margherita at Prato, and that about two months ago the said Ser Piero begot a male child in the said monastery. And he sent the child by night out of the town through an aperture in the walls to Pietriccio (a neighbouring hamlet), and next morning had it brought to Prato to be christened: and this is known to many persons in Prato. And if you wish to find him, you will find him every day in the monastery, together with another man called Frate Filippo: and the latter excuses himself by saying that he is the chaplain, while the former says he is the procurator. And the said Frate Filippo has had a male child by one called Spinetta. And he has in his house the said child, who is grown up and is called Filippino."

² Lorenzo's anonymous accusers submitted that he was not eligible: 1st, Because he was an illegitimate son; 2nd, Because as such he had usurped his father's inheritance; 3rd, Because he had not paid the taxes. Lorenzo, however, produced documentary evidence to prove that his father Bartolo married Mona Fiore in 1374; that he, Lorenzo, was born in 1378, and that he had regularly

upon to defend himself, proved all the charges to be false, and was acquitted and solemnly invested with his new dignity, the *tamburazione* being declared libellous and its unknown writers threatened with all the rigours of the law.

In the anonymous accusation brought against Fra Filippo, we find a misstatement which might almost induce us to believe that the whole charge was as false as this detail, namely, the mention of Spinetta Buti as Filippino's mother¹. Unfortunately, however, this error has all the appearance of an aggravating circumstance, indicating that the monk was on equally intimate terms with both sisters. And that the charges contained in the *tamburazione* were not unfounded is proved by the fact that the ecclesiastical authorities at last opened their eyes to Fra Filippo's iniquities, depriving him of his chaplaincy, while the *Uffiziali di Notte e Monasterii* strictly forbade him to ever again cross the threshold of the monastery he had so deeply disgraced. But Fra Filippo, who, in spite of all his defects, cherished a passionate love for the mother of his child, and was distracted with grief at the thought of having to part for ever from Lucrezia, turned for aid and protection to the Medici, as was his wont whenever his misdemeanours landed him in some particularly ugly scrape, and was so successful in enlisting the sympathies of his powerful patrons, that the latter submitted his case to the Holy See,

paid all taxes to the Republic. For further details regarding the *tamburazione* see Baldinucci, op. cit., iii. 39.

¹ In his work entitled *La scrittura di artisti italiani* (sec. xiv-xvii) (Florence, Le Monnier, 1876), Milanese inclined to believe that Spinetta was Filippino's mother, but in subsequent writings he abandoned this hypothesis, rendered untenable by recently discovered documents, including Filippino's will (Document xii), in which he repeatedly refers to his mother Lucrezia.

asking the Pontiff to grant a special Brief dispensing both the friar and Lucrezia from their monastic vows and allowing them to marry. Fortunately for Fra Filippo, Pius II¹ was not only a good and learned Pontiff, but above all a man of the world, for whom the intricacies of the human heart and the frailties of human nature had no secrets, and who, as Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, had written that masterly series of amorous letters describing the unfortunate passion of two lovers², which for several generations formed the delight of courts and castles. Regarding the case with the indulgence of a father rather than with the severity of a judge, and wishing that the scandal should cease, Pius II readily granted the dispensation, and Lucrezia was restored to Fra Filippo. But we have no documents or records to show that the latter ever availed himself of the Papal permission to marry Lucrezia; indeed, Vasari says that the friar, "desiring to retain the power of living after his own fashion and of indulging his love of pleasure as might seem good to him," never went through the ceremony of marriage at all. Be this as it may, it is certain that he continued to live in good harmony with Lucrezia, by whom he had a daughter, Alessandra,

¹ Vasari is in error when he says that the dispensation was granted by Eugenius IV, that Pontiff having died fourteen years earlier.

² The *Historia de Eurialo et Lucretia se amantibus* was originally written in Latin, and first translated into Italian by Alessandro Bracci, who introduced many incidents which are not in the original, and altered the whole work considerably, giving it a decidedly immoral tone. This accounts for the erroneous opinion prevalent with regard to Aeneas Piccolomini. "Few of these letters," says Weiss (*Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini*, Gratz, 1877, p. 25), "would deserve condemnation, even if we were not to make allowance for the wantonness of the age in which they were written."

in 1465, and that he never deserted her, as some writers have erroneously stated ¹.

In relating Fra Filippo's amours with Lucrezia Buti at a length which critics of the hyper-scientific school may condemn, but which, in my opinion, was not only justified but rendered necessary by the fact that this adventure and its attendant circumstances exercised a most powerful influence on all the friar's works belonging to the Prato period, I have sought to base my narrative exclusively on documentary evidence, and to "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." But it would hardly be fair to close this long parenthesis without saying a few words not in defence of Fra Filippo, but in extenuation of his guilt, which was as much the product of the age in which he lived as the outcome of his passionate temperament. The cult of love and beauty, vainly opposed by the precursors of Savonarola, had already dethroned virtue and religion in the latter half of the Quattrocento, and the rule of the Medici, who strove by perpetual festivities and licentious shows to keep the minds of the citizens contented and occupied, helped to sap the morality of that people which Dante had once dreamed of as *sobria e pudica*. It would be absurd to suppose that, in the midst of this general *débâcle* of public morality, the severity of the rules governing religious communities should not have become considerably relaxed. In-

¹ It would be interesting to know what authority M. E. Breton had in making the following singularly mistaken assertions: "Après avoir parcouru toute l'Italie," says the writer in question, "traînant Lucrezia à sa suite, Lippi l'abandonna au moment où le Pape, pour faire cesser le scandale, venait d'accorder les dispenses nécessaires pour leur mariage, et la pauvre délaissée dut rentrer dans son couvent. Enfin, juste punition de son inconstance, Filippo Lippi mourut empoisonné à Spolète, à l'âge de 57 ans, par les parents d'une dame qui l'honorait encore de ses faveurs."

deed, Savonarola's biographers relate that Lorenzo de' Medici had so poor an opinion of the monks of his time, the fiery Dominican alone excepted, that he was wont to say: "Io non ho mai trovato uno che sia vero frate se non lui." But although he wore the monastic garb, Fra Filippo was more closely in contact with the artists than with the monks of the age; and as an artist, keenly alive to beauty in all its manifestations, and athirst for pleasure, he was naturally drawn into the vortex of the Quattrocento *bel vivere*, with all its loveliness and all its immorality¹.

However much we may deplore the friar's misconduct, it cannot be denied that his love for Lucrezia Buti inspired some of his finest works. The sad, sweet face of the young nun excites our compassion and admiration in the Pitti *tondo*, gazes down upon us from the frescoes of the Duomo, and may be traced through the whole series of panel pictures executed at Prato. Even in the friar's last masterpieces, the Spoleto Coronation and Death of the Virgin, painted by Fra Filippo almost on the eve of his demise, we recognize Lucrezia's face, transfigured by a strange mystic expression, as if the artist, conscious of his approaching end, had devoted his dying energies to depicting the features which he loved so well. Whether he painted a Madonna or the dancing

¹ The history of art in the latter Quattrocento and during the Renaissance proves that art and immorality were at that time almost synonymous. In Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography we find a vivid portrayal of artist life in the Cinquecento, and even so refined and lofty a genius as Raphael was tainted with the general corruption of his age. It is therefore not surprising that Giovanni de' Medici, writing to Bartolommeo Serragli on the 27th of May, 1456, should say that Fra Filippo's adventure had excited mirth rather than condemnation; "et così dello errore di Fra Filippo naviamo riso un pezzo." See Document iii.

figure of the daughter of Herodias, whether he wished to portray joy or sorrow, Fra Filippo seems to have had the image of Lucrezia constantly before "his mind's eye," repeating with Dante :

"Io non la vidi tante volte ancora
Ch' io non trovassi in lei nuova bellezza."

In 1457 Giovanni de' Medici commissioned Fra Filippo to paint a panel which he wished to present to the King of Naples, and in order to execute the work under the direct supervision of his patron, Fra Filippo left Prato and temporarily resumed his residence in Florence. Although this picture has unfortunately been lost, we can form an idea of the composition from a pen-and-ink sketch contained in a letter which the friar addressed to Giovanni, who was then spending the *villeggiatura* at Fiesole¹. The drawing represents the Madonna kneeling between St. Michael and a bearded monk, probably St. Bernard, in the act of adoring the Divine Infant, behind whom two angels are seen. The dimensions of the painting are given as follows, in the friar's crabbed and almost illegible writing : *Alta braccia due e due terzi; braccia tre per lunghezza*. As usual, Fra Filippo asks Giovanni for money, professing himself the great man's slave, and complaining bitterly that he has only received fourteen florins for the necessary expenses (frame, gilding, &c.), while thirty at least are required. In consequence of this lack of funds he has been obliged to interrupt his work, and therefore implores his patron to instruct his agent, Bartolommeo Martelli, to advance him a small sum, in consideration of which favour he will be content with sixty florins instead of one hundred as total payment for the work, which

¹ Dated July 20, 1457. See Document ii.



Alinari photo.]

[*Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

MADONNA ADORING THE DIVINE CHILD.

he promises to finish before the 20th of August¹. But we gather from another letter, dated the 31st of August, and addressed by Francesco Cantansanti to Giovanni, that the friar, having obtained the money, did not keep his word, so that Francesco was obliged to sit by the recalcitrant artist for hours together, goading him on with threats and remonstrances, until the picture was completed just in time to avoid being confiscated by Fra Filippo's landlord, who seized all the contents of his *bottega* for non-payment of rent²: "You see now," exclaims Francesco, "to what dangers this man exposes himself!"

It was in all probability during this temporary residence in Florence that Fra Filippo painted his famous Uffizi Madonna³. At any rate, a close study of this picture will convince us that it could not have been painted much before the year 1457. The Virgin is represented seated, and tenderly gazing, with hands joined in prayer, at the Divine Child, who is supported by two angels and holds out its arms towards its Mother, as if desirous of embracing her. In the background a pleasant landscape is seen, intersected here and there by trees and masses of rock, while the towers and spires of a city crown a distant range of undulating hills. The pyramidal

¹ This most characteristic epistle ends with the words: "Answer immediately, I implore you, as I am dying here and wish to depart." Fra Filippo was evidently anxious to return to Prato, as Lucrezia was about to give birth to her first child.

² See Document xiv.

³ Formerly at Poggio Imperiale, and transferred in 1796 to the Uffizi Gallery. Ulmann, *op. cit.*, p. 35, is of opinion that Fra Filippo presented this panel to Giovanni de' Medici, in token of thanks for having acted as intermediary between the friar and the King of Naples. We have already seen that the picture mentioned by Vasari as having been executed for the chapel of the Medici Palace is the Berlin Nativity, and not this Madonna, as was hitherto believed.

composition, and the harmonious arrangement of the foreground with the principal lines of the background, forcibly suggest the methods followed by the sculptors of Donatello's school in their bas-reliefs.

Although the features of the Madonna bear a distant resemblance to those which we admired in the Pitti *tondo*, the pathetic, girlish loveliness of the latter has been replaced by a more womanly and mature type of beauty, reminding us of the powerfully conceived heads and female figures to be met with in some of the Prato frescoes, especially in that of Herod's Feast. The Divine Infant, too, is infinitely superior to its predecessors, and the supporting angels appear to have stepped out of the Spoleto frescoes, so profoundly do they differ from those of the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation or the Louvre altar-piece. Particularly worthy of attention is the little angel on the right, looking out of the picture with a roguish smile more expressive of mischief than of seraphic perfection. That this picture was painted long after Fra Filippo had commenced working in the Duomo at Prato is proved not only by the resemblance of the figures to those which are to be met with in the frescoes, but also by the frank, effective execution, which reveals a great familiarity with the technique of fresco painting. For instance, the colouring is applied in bold, almost independent strokes, the artist evidently taking very little trouble to ensure the harmonious blending of the various tints; while in his earlier works, and even in the Pitti *tondo*, painted in 1452, when he began the Duomo frescoes, Fra Filippo's execution and technique are most accurate and careful, almost scrupulously so, proving that he was not yet entirely emancipated from the methods of the miniaturists. Of all Fra Filippo's smaller panels, the Madonna of the Uffizi is perhaps



Neurdein photo.]

[*Louvre, Paris.*

THE NATIVITY.

the best, certainly the most characteristic and attractive. We shall see, when dealing with the influence which the friar exercised on the painters of the latter Quattrocento and of the Renaissance, of what unique importance this little masterpiece is in the history of art¹.

Belonging to the same period—although so inferior and fundamentally different as to justify the doubt whether it was painted by Fra Filippo at all—is the Louvre Nativity, formerly in the church of Sta. Margherita at Prato, and for this reason regarded, until recently, as the panel which the friar executed for the high altar of the convent church, and in which he introduced Lucrezia's portrait. The Infant Jesus, on whom the symbolical dove descends, is represented lying on the ground between the kneeling figures of the Virgin and of St. Joseph, in the vicinity of a ruined edifice, among the loose stones of which lizards creep, while a bird is perched on the top. In the background, surrounded by an agreeable landscape, shepherds are seen tending their flocks. It is difficult to understand why this painting, in which neither the technical execution nor the colouring, much less the types of the figures and the treatment of the draperies, remind us of the friar's manner, should have been attributed to Fra Filippo. Dr. Waagen is of opinion that it is the work of Alessio Baldovinetti, and we must admit that this Nativity has many points in common with the representation of the same theme by Baldovinetti in the cloister

¹ From an inventory of Lorenzo il Magnifico's pictures, quoted by Müntz, *op. cit.*, p. 85, it would appear that Fra Filippo's pupil, Francesco Pesellino, copied this painting. The following is the item in question: "Uno colmetto picholo cornice messe d' oro entrovi dipinte una Nostra Donna a sedere col bambino in braccio con due agnoletti a piedi di mano di Francesco Pesello f. 10."

of the Annunziata at Florence. But considerations of style, which it is impossible to enumerate here, have convinced me that the painting before us is the work of Fra Diamante, who may have borrowed the general idea of the composition from his master.

Assuming this hypothesis to be correct, it is difficult to explain how the predella now in the Prato Gallery, which, according to most critics, was formerly attached to the Louvre Nativity, can possibly have been painted by Fra Filippo. For there can be no doubt that the Circumcision, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Massacre of the Innocents are among the friar's most characteristic works. But Vasari does not mention any predella in connexion with the Sta. Margherita panel, nor is there anything to prove that this predella was originally in the latter church; so that we are quite justified in presuming that the predella in question belonged to one of the numerous works by Fra Filippo which have unfortunately been lost.

In the first of the three compartments forming this predella the artist has depicted the scene of the Circumcision, which he has placed in a basilica, the architectural details being accurately drawn and the perspective correct. The composition is almost identical with that of the Presentation of the Infant Christ in the Temple in the church of the Spirito Santo. On the right of a square altar stands the Blessed Virgin, holding out her hands to the Infant Jesus, who is supported by St. Simeon, while on the left is St. Joseph, carrying the expiatory offering of doves. In the foreground on the right is a group of three women, and two male figures occupy the left corner behind St. Joseph. All the negative characteristics of the friar's manner are to be found in this work, which was evidently executed carelessly and



Alinari photo.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

[Municipal Gallery, Prato.]



Alinari photo.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

[Municipal Gallery, Prato.

in a great hurry. Especially neglected is the clumsy, unfinished figure of the Child, while the cloying abundance of bunchy, massive draperies is positively offensive.

Much better are the two remaining compartments. The Virgin in the Adoration of the Magi, holding up her hand with a gesture of surprise as the Three Kings do homage to the Child, recalls the delicate, maladive features of the Pitti Madonna. Behind her is St. Joseph leaning on a staff in a somewhat unnatural and not very dignified attitude. The attendants and horses forcibly remind us of the National Gallery Adoration of the Magi. It is evident that the three persons looking on were taken from life, the figure in the centre of the group strongly resembling the portrait of Carlo de' Medici in the Funeral of St. Stephen. On the right, half hidden by the rising ground, several horsemen are seen approaching.

There is a great deal of life and movement in the Massacre of the Innocents, which reminds us of Fra Angelico's representation of the same theme, the episode of the mother flinging herself in a paroxysm of grief on the dead body of her babe being almost identically treated. But there is more ferocity and less sentiment in Fra Filippo's interpretation, some of the slayers, for instance the young man with a sword on the left, having a truly diabolical expression, which Filippino successfully imitated in his Crucifixion. The same defects which we have noticed in the other two compartments, namely, bunchy, heavy draperies and neglected execution, are very apparent here as well, and the whole predella bears every indication of having been painted, like so many of the master's works, under pressure.

On the 11th of February, 1459, Fra Filippo

bound himself by contract¹ to paint four lunettes above the tomb of Messer Geminiano Inghirami, *proposto* of Prato, in the cloister of San Francesco, representing respectively the Madonna and Child, St. Francis receiving the stigmata, St. Jerome, and St. Stephen and St. Lawrence. For this work he was to receive twenty gold florins, payable not before the 20th of September of the following year, when the artist promised to have completed the lunettes. Although an entry in the "Libro di spese" of the *Propositura*² proves that Fra Filippo carried out his commission, the paintings in question have been lost.

About the same time Fra Filippo painted two panel pictures in San Domenico, only one of which, representing the Nativity, is now in existence. This composition reminds us of the Berlin Nativity and of the two representations of the same theme in the Florence Academy, especially the central group of the Virgin and St. Joseph adoring the Divine Child, lying on the ground, being treated in an almost identical manner. Near the Madonna is St. George with hands folded in prayer and bearing the standard of the cross, and opposite to him is the inspired figure of San Vincenzo Ferreri holding an open book, in which are the words, *Timete Deum quia venit hora iudicii eius*, and gazing ecstatically, with hand uplifted, towards a vision of Christ the Judge. On high six angels in glory are seen. The background is formed by a rocky landscape with shepherds in the distance, while two more shepherds are seated on the right, playing the bagpipe. The type of the Madonna closely resembles that of the Uffizi panel, and the figure of St. Joseph reminds us of St. Zacharias in the Choir frescoes. Although con-

¹ See Document xxi.

² See Document xxii.



Alinari photo.]

[*Municipal Gallery, Prato.*

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.



Alinari photo.]

[*Municipal Palace, Prato.*

THE NATIVITY.

siderably repainted and otherwise damaged, the finely designed St. George is conceived in the same spirit as the St. Raphael in the Madonna della Cintola, and the foreshortening of the face of San Vincenzo recalls some figures in the Funeral of St. Stephen and in other scenes of the frescoes. We may therefore conclude that this painting, not the least merit of which is its clear, luminous colouring, was executed after the year 1460.

The last panel picture painted by Fra Filippo before leaving Prato¹ was the Presentation of the Infant Christ in the Temple, an altar-piece commissioned to him by the Servite Fathers in 1466, and still existing in the church of Spirito Santo. From an entry in the "Libro delle spese" of the convent we learn that this work was not yet finished on the 17th of March, 1467, but in March of the following year it is mentioned as already in its place on the high altar². Here, as in the predella of the Louvre Nativity, the scene takes place in a basilica, the architectural lines and perspective of which are, if possible, even more accurate and correct. The central group round the altar is almost identical with that in the predella Circumcision, only the Child is much more natural and better finished. On the right, behind a marble balustrade, are St. Bartholomew and a holy bishop; on the left a bishop, probably San Zenobio, with a holy monk. Kneeling in front of the altar, in the attitude of donors, and seen in profile, are two of the Servite Fathers, evidently

¹ In all probability this was the last panel picture ever painted by the friar, who left almost immediately after its completion for Spoleto, where it is not likely that he received other commissions while engaged on the frescoes in the cathedral.

² See Document xix. For this altar-piece Fra Filippo only received twelve ducats.

portraits, and undoubtedly the finest and most powerful figures in the whole composition. This altarpiece is in such a deplorable state of preservation, having been partly repainted in oil colours, that it would be difficult to pronounce an opinion as to its original artistic merits. Traces of Fra Diamante's collaboration are visible in the figures of St. Simeon and the bishop on the right, the latter reminding us of the St. Augustine in the Madonna della Cintola; but the graceful figure of the Virgin and the portraits of the donors are certainly by Fra Filippo's own hand. I think Botticelli had the stern, dignified features of these kneeling monks in his mind when painting those imposing groups of grim-visaged personages in his fresco of the Temptation at the Vatican.

From the preceding pages, in which we have briefly reviewed Fra Filippo's panel pictures, it will be seen that the latter constitute in themselves an artistic production sufficient to give the Prato period an important place in the history of the friar's ascending career. The Pitti *tondo* and the Uffizi Madonna alone are worth all Fra Filippo's earlier works. But it was with his epoch-making frescoes in the Duomo of Prato, as I have said in the beginning of this chapter, and not with his panel pictures, that the friar made a successful bid for immortality and stepped at once into the foremost rank of Quattrocento artists.

We have seen, when describing the Pitti *tondo*, that Fra Filippo commenced working at his masterpiece in the Choir of the Duomo as early as the year 1452. During the first three years he appears to have made satisfactory progress, in spite of other important commissions, such as the Death of St. Jerome and the Datini Madonna and Saints, which he executed for Messer Geminiano Inghirami.



1850, 1850

Church of Santa Maria...

Presentation of the Infant Christ at the Temple.

It was in 1456 that his work suffered the first serious interruption, caused by his romantic adventure with Lucrezia Buti and all its attendant circumstances. In the following year we find him in Florence engaged upon the panel commissioned by Giovanni de' Medici for the King of Naples and painting the famous Uffizi Madonna. Lucrezia's return to the convent in 1458 must have robbed the forlorn lover of his peace of mind and left him little disposition for work until 1461, when the object of his affections was restored to him by virtue of the Papal dispensation.

Precisely in that year, however, we find that Fra Filippo was again obliged to absent himself from Prato for a period which probably extended over several months¹. It is therefore not surprising that the *probiviri*, whose duty it was to superintend the execution of the frescoes in the Choir, at last became impatient, and protested all the more energetically against this interminable delay as they had already paid Fra Filippo a considerable portion of the 1,200 florins, for which sum he had agreed to carry out the important commission². But the friar appears to have taken little notice of threats and exhortations alike, as we learn from an entry in the *Diurno*

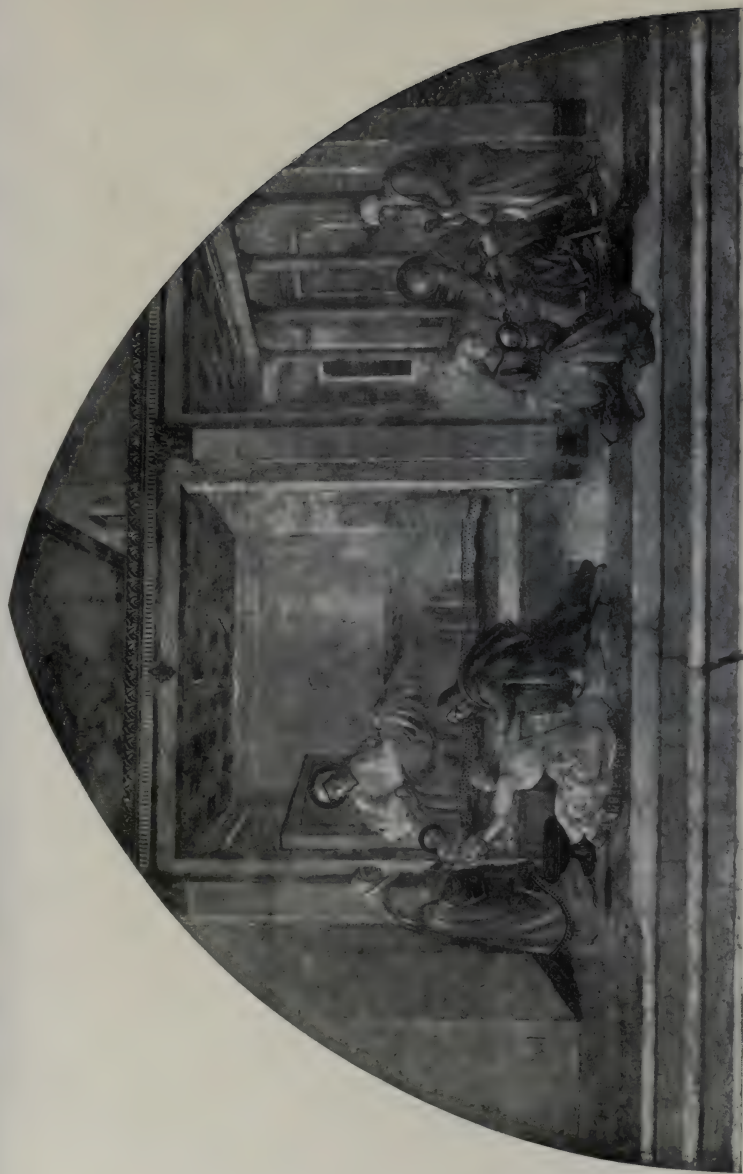
¹ In 1454 the Signoria of Perugia had commissioned Benedetto Bonfigli to paint part of the chapel of the Palazzo del Comune, at the same time stipulating that the price to be paid for this work should be decided by one of the three following artists: Fra Angelico, Domenico Veneziano, or Fra Filippo. The Dominican painter died in 1455, and Domenico having likewise died on the 15th of May, 1461, in which year Bonfigli finished his painting, the duty of acting as arbitrator devolved upon Fra Filippo, who accordingly journeyed to Perugia and pronounced his *lodo* on the 4th of September. See G. Milanesi, *Sulla Storia dell' Arte Toscana* (Siena, 1873), p. 297.

² See Documents vi and xx.

della Comunità di Prato¹, that on the 21st of November, 1463, the magistrates of the city held a meeting to consider by what means Fra Filippo could be compelled to finish his work. Again, on the 6th of April of the following year, the four *probiviri* reported "that there was little hope of the friar ever completing the frescoes in the Choir, unless he were forced thereto by Messer Carlo de' Medici." The latter prelate, who had succeeded Messer Geminiano Inghirami² as *proposto* of Prato, was an illegitimate son of the powerful *Pater Patriae*, and consequently inspired the recalcitrant monk with a salutary dread. Acting upon the advice of the *probiviri*, he sent Fra Filippo an ultimatum, threatening him with dire results unless his work was finished by the end of August, 1464. This time the friar understood that he was incurring a serious risk, and must have toiled in feverish haste to make up for lost time, as we find that early in the year 1465 he at last completed the great achievement of his life. Although Fra Filippo had been nominally engaged on the Choir frescoes for thirteen years, it is certain that a long interval of almost absolute inactivity separated the two periods of his greatest activity, the first extending from 1452 to 1456, and the second from April, 1464, to the beginning of 1465. Traces of this fitful, irregular system of working, as also of the deleterious influence of pressure brought to bear upon the artist, who in his anxiety had recourse to the collaboration of his assistant, Fra Diamante, even more than was usually his wont,

¹ Quoted by Baldanzi, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

² Messer Geminiano died in 1461. An interesting biographical notice of this learned and pious prelate, by a contemporary, will be found in Guasti's *Bibliografia Pratese*.



Alinari photo.]

[*Duomo, Prato.*

THE BIRTH AND THE NAMING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

are plainly visible throughout these frescoes, the style of which completely lacks uniformity.

The two parallel walls of the Gothic Choir, flooded with the mystic light which pours in through the magnificent stained glass window¹, constitute the field in which Fra Filippo won his greatest battle. Moreover, the theme assigned to him, namely, "stories from the lives of the Baptist and of St. Stephen²," is full of dramatic possibilities, and one especially adapted to the friar's artistic temperament. In two niches, on either side of the window in the apse, are San Giovanni Gualberto, founder of the Vallombrosans, and St. Albert, founder of the Carmelite Order, while the four Evangelists are represented in the sections of the vaulted roof. These majestic figures, especially those of St. Mark and St. John, are at the same time impressive and natural, differing in this particular from the stiff conventional Evangelists, enthroned on their artificial clouds, which we have hitherto been accustomed to see in Masolino's frescoes at Castiglione d' Olona, in Masaccio's San Clemente paintings, and even in Fra Angelico's masterpiece, the chapel of Pope Nicholas V at the Vatican. Boldly discarding the antiquated, genre-like motives adopted by his predecessors, Fra Filippo has conveyed the individuality of each Evangelist, from the youthful St. Luke to the white-bearded Seer of Patmos, less by the use of

¹ This window, representing Our Lady delivering the Girdle to St. Thomas, was executed by the priest Lorenzo da Pelago, probably after Fra Filippo's designs. From the Diurno della Comunità di Prato we learn that it was finished in 1459, the artist receiving 200 florins. See also Documents vi and xvi.

² St. John the Baptist was the protector of Florence, and St. Stephen the patron saint of Prato.

conventional symbols than by a masterly treatment of the figures, in whose varied attitudes and expressions are plainly depicted the distinguishing characteristics, almost the thoughts and aspirations, of each. We may therefore say without exaggeration that these Evangelists mark the beginning of a new epoch in art, entitling Fra Filippo to a foremost place among the truest precursors of the Renaissance; for without these imposing figures, instinct with life and majesty, it is doubtful whether Michelangelo's Prophets and Sybils of the Sistine Chapel would have been possible.

A study of the frescoes on the right wall of the Choir, representing stories from the life of St. John the Baptist, will show that it was on these that Fra Filippo commenced working. In the ample lunette he has depicted the birth and naming of the Precursor, laying the scene in the interior of a classically designed building. The treatment of this theme forcibly reminds us of the background in the Pitti *tondo*: here too we see the reclining figure of St. Elisabeth, resting on the right elbow, while a woman standing at the head of the bed is represented in the act of confiding the infant to a handmaiden seated on the floor, who holds out her arms to receive it. Behind her kneels a third female figure in an attitude of profound veneration, as if full of that awe and fear which, according to the Evangelist¹, came upon all who heard of the portents accompanying the birth of the Precursor. In a neighbouring room, seated to the right near a pillar, the aged Zacharias, who has not yet recovered the power of speech, is seen writing the infant's name on a scroll, while a nurse sitting at his feet shows him the child. Behind the patriarch stands a most

¹ St. Luke i. 65.



Alinari photo.]

[*Duomo, Prato.*

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST LEAVING HOME AND PREACHING IN THE DESERT.



Alinari photo.]

[*Duomo, Prato.*

ST. JOHN TAKING LEAVE OF HIS PARENTS.

(A detail from the fresco.)

dignified female figure, which again reminds us of Michelangelo's Sybils. Although the painting in this lunette has been greatly damaged by dampness, it is easy to see that this part of the work, executed at a time when the artist was still under the influence of his first enthusiasm, comprises some of the finest and most carefully executed frescoes in the whole Choir. The pyramidal composition, the accurately designed architectural details, the correct perspective, and above all the magnificent treatment of the figures, which are by no means inferior to those in Masaccio's Brancacci frescoes, all indicate that Fra Filippo was rapidly nearing the highest degree of perfection of which he was capable.

The compartment underneath the lunette represents the youthful St. John taking leave of his parents and preaching in the desert. Especially worthy of attention and admiration is the beautiful group on the right, in which the scene of the Precursor's departure from his home is depicted. The expression of spiritual exaltation and celestial ardour which lights up the boyish features of the saint, impatient to set out on his heavenly quest, contrasts vividly with the grief and anxiety of the mother, as she presses her only child to her bosom, and with the father's tacit resignation to the Divine will, while nothing could be more natural than the gesture of surprise and wonder with which a third figure, probably a servant, is watching the pathetic scene, as if exclaiming with the Evangelist, "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?"

The noble composition of this group, the treatment of the figures and draperies, plainly reveal an intimate knowledge of the methods followed by Quattrocento sculptors, which, when applied to painting, gave that characteristic grandeur which is

one of the principal merits of the works of Fra Bartolommeo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. In the remaining portion of this compartment, occupied by a rocky and desolate landscape, the artist has depicted various episodes of St. John's life and predication in the desert. The first of these, representing the youthful Precursor kneeling in fervent prayer by the side of a torrent, might be mistaken for an early work of Raphael, or for one of Perugino's finest productions, so thoroughly is it conceived in the purest and most sublime style of the Renaissance. Further to the left, St. John, standing upon a rocky platform, is seen in the act of preaching to a multitude of eager listeners. It is probable that Fra Filippo derived the inspiration for this group from Andrea Pisano's bronze door of the Florence Baptistery; but as the friar was never a servile imitator, he has greatly improved upon the original, giving more life and movement to his figures, one of which, representing a young man leaning against a rock and gazing with an expression of intense and wondering interest at the speaker, is especially remarkable: "In the picture of the preaching," says Vasari, "the Divine Spirit inspiring the speaker is most clearly manifest in his face, while the different emotions of hope, anxiety, gladness, and sorrow of the crowd, women as well as men, who are listening around him, charmed and mastered by the force of his words, are equally well expressed." If Fra Filippo borrowed the original idea of this composition from Andrea Pisano, he was in his turn even more closely imitated by Ghirlandajo in the frescoes with which the latter adorned the Choir of Sta. Maria Novella, and by Andrea del Sarto in the Scalzo cloister at Florence. Nor is it surprising that this work should have excited the admiration of great artists such as



Alinari photo.

[Duomo, Prato.

THE DANCING OF THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS AND ITS RESULT.

those I have mentioned, as the grandeur of its composition, the accuracy of its technique, and the noble treatment of its figures entitle it to bear comparison with Masaccio's famous Preaching of St. Peter.

The last, and certainly the most important, of these three compartments is devoted to illustrating the Precursor's tragic fate, and the circumstances which led to it. Unfortunately for the dramatic efficacy of these paintings—which, if properly subdivided, would have constituted a veritable pictorial tragedy—the artist has laid the various scenes simultaneously before us, on the same line and plane, without troubling to separate one from the other by an ornamental pillar or by some such device. The frequent repetition of the same personages is most puzzling and completely destroys any dramatic illusion¹. Fra Filippo was only anxious, apparently, to utilize every square inch of space at his disposal, and to this consideration he sacrificed dramatic verisimilitude and chronological sequence alike.

The centre of the fresco is occupied by the Dancing of the Daughter of Herodias, with the Decapitation of St. John on the left, near the window, and on the right, Salome presenting the bleeding head of the victim to her mother. Owing to its position, which exposes it more than the rest of the paintings to the deleterious influence of dampness, the Decapitation is so damaged as to be almost irre recognizable. We can just guess that the prostrate mass in the foreground represents the lifeless body of the saint, while the executioner, a tall shadowy figure carrying a long sword, strides up and down the narrow cell, surveying his work with grim satisfaction.

¹ The same utter disregard for the dramatic element of painting mars the beauty of Masolino's frescoes in the Baptistery of Castiglione d' Olona.

Much better preserved is the central scene. In a classically designed banquet hall of noble proportions, lighted by two ample casements through which a beautiful landscape is seen, Herod is feasting with his courtiers. At his left sits Herodias, and both are watching, as if under the spell of a strange fascination, the swift, graceful movements of the dancing Salome, as she lightly sways to the music of a group of minstrels. The delighted father has been so captivated with the performance that he has rashly granted the beautiful dancer's cruel request, for on the left, preceded by a herald, Salome is seen carrying her horrible prize, the Precursor's severed head, on a dish. To the right of the composition we see the beautiful girl kneeling before her mother, while Herodias gazes with an expression of triumphant hatred upon the pale, lifeless features of the Baptist, whose voice will never again be heard crying in the wilderness or in the far more dangerous palaces of the unforgiving great. Suddenly, perceiving all the horror of his crime, Herod wrings his hands in an agony of fear and remorse, while the guests and servants instinctively shrink back. Especially admirable is the group representing two handmaidens who, under the first impression of their terror, have fallen into each other's arms, but nevertheless are unable to restrain their morbid curiosity, and timidly turn back to look at the bleeding head¹.

It is interesting to compare this composition with the interpretations of the same theme by Giotto, Andrea Pisano, and Masolino on the one hand and by Donatello on the other. In the frescoes of the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce, in the bronze door of the Florence Baptistery, and in the paintings

¹ In the Uffizi collection of drawings there is a sketch of this group, wrongly attributed to Fra Diamante.



Alinari photo.]

[*Duomo, Prato.*

THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS.

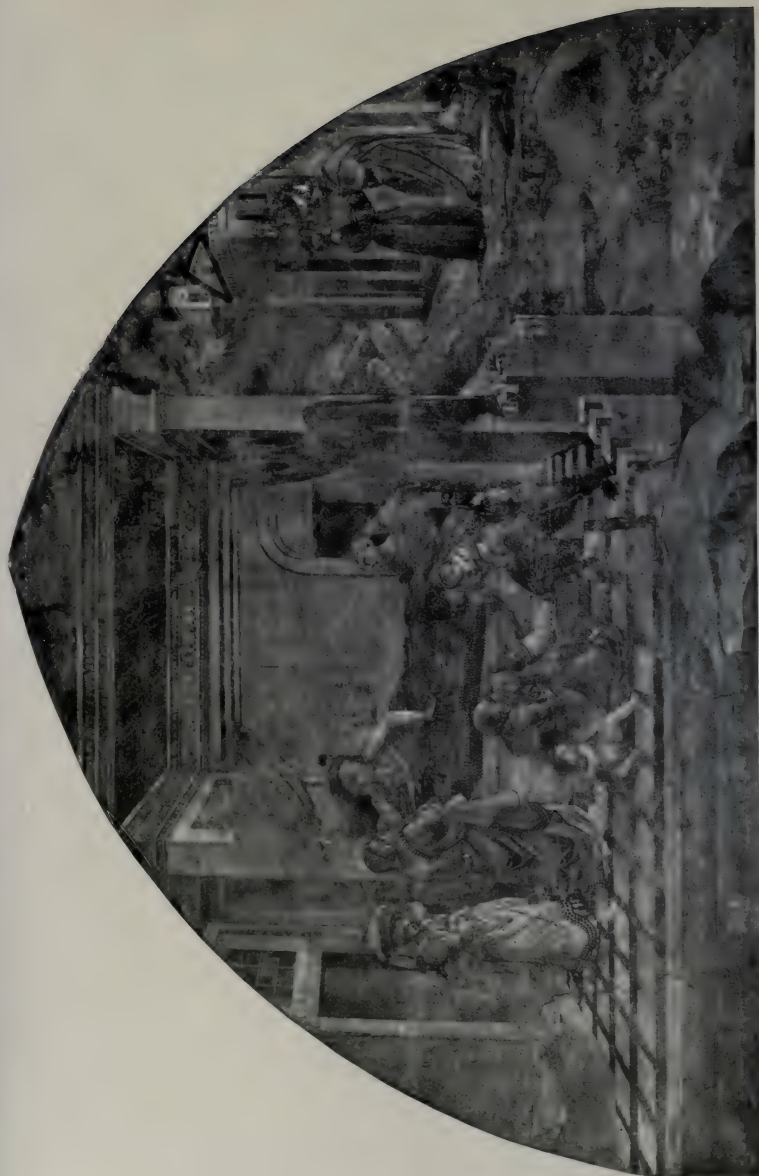
Portrait of Lucrezia Buti.

at Castiglione d' Olona, the daughter of Herodias is represented dancing with all the stately decorum of a seventeenth-century minuet, while the "glad monk" evidently aimed at illustrating the charms of a graceful female figure enhanced by the dishevelled *entrain* of rapid motion. Fra Filippo's composition is full of life and movement, but it does not attain to that dramatic loftiness which forms the most striking merit of Donatello's bas-reliefs in the Baptistery at Siena. Following the simple but impressive methods of ancient sculpture, Donatello depicts the horror which seizes hold of the guilty Tetrarch and of his courtiers, as the severed head of the Precursor is brought in, far more vividly than Fra Filippo has done. The latter has only succeeded in expressing terror and remorse, while the scene, as conceived by Donatello's classically inclined genius, might, in its tragic intensity, be taken to represent Cepheus and his guests petrified by the death-dealing features of Medusa. Infinitely more effective, too, because possessing more unity, is Donatello's composition, the great sculptor having focussed his attention on the most salient point of the story, namely the presentation of the Baptist's head, relegating the episodes of minor importance to the background. Even at so advanced a period of his career Fra Filippo had not yet mastered the secret of a compact and simple method of composing.

But if the composition is defective, numerous merits concur in rendering this painting one of the most perfect ever executed by the friar. Tactile values are admirably rendered, the perspective is correct, the faces full of character and of varied expression, while the treatment of the draperies, which fall in ample and unconventional folds and masses, deserves the highest praise. A touch of wholesome

realism, which we do not find in the preceding compartments, adds force and geniality to the work. Of the numerous figures which give life to the composition, that representing the dancing daughter of Herodias is the most important from an historical, as well as from an artistic, point of view. For it is generally believed that Lucrezia Buti served as model for this masterpiece of rhythmic movement, a theory which we shall be all the more inclined to accept as true if we compare the features now before us with those which Fra Filippo portrayed in the Pitti *tondo*. We have here the same high forehead, the same expressive eyes, the full lips, the dilated nostrils, which give the girlish face such a strangely fascinating imprint of maladive sensuality. Another very remarkable figure is that of the colossal herald in the foreground, to which the friar has evidently devoted special care and attention. Throughout this painting we are struck with the masterly manner in which the artist has contrived to draw out his figures in such strong relief that they seem to be almost entirely detached from the background, and actually appear to live and move—well-rounded, solid figures of flesh and blood. And the psychological characteristics of each personage are expressed with equal evidence and skill. Observe, for instance, how vividly the crafty, sensual but not unrefined features of Herodias contrast with the vulgar type of the two handmaidens, whose coarse faces are all aglow with brutal curiosity.

In this compartment, more than in the preceding two, Fra Filippo adopts a simple grandeur of manner and execution which at once proclaims him to be the continuator of Masaccio's potent style. On a closer examination of this painting, however, we are surprised to find that the most insignificant details, such



Alinari photo.]

TWO EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF ST. STEPHEN.

[*Duomo, Prato,*

as jewelled ornaments and decorations, lines and patterns of stuffs and brocades, should reveal a degree of scrupulous exactitude not at all in keeping with the broad style apparent throughout the rest of the work. Not even in the friar's early paintings, in which the influence of the miniaturists is still at times perceptible, do we find such exaggerated attention paid to similar inartistic minutiae. We may therefore arrive at the conclusion that the master was not responsible for this discordant note, and that he must have confided to his assistant, Fra Diamante, whose predilection for gorgeous jewellery we have already mentioned when describing the Madonna della Cintola, the task of decking out his noble figures in all this carefully executed but absolutely superfluous finery.

On the left wall of the Choir Fra Filippo has illustrated the legend of St. Stephen, patron saint of Prato. The lunette containing episodes relative to the birth and childhood of the saint is in an even more damaged condition than that on the opposite wall, several figures being completely destroyed. Nevertheless we can follow the general lines of the composition sufficiently to understand the full value of the loss which art has sustained by the deterioration of these admirable paintings. The architectural motive of the scene representing the Birth of St. Stephen differs but little from those which we have already described in the background of the Pitti *tondo* and in the Birth of St. John. The treatment of the whole composition, too, is almost identical. Reclining on a bed of ample proportions is the saint's mother, near whom another female figure is standing, while on the left a handmaiden approaches, carrying a well-filled basket on her head. In the foreground is a cradle with the new-born babe, near whom sits a woman, apparently asleep, while another figure,

completely destroyed, is dimly discernible. According to Baldanzi¹, who described the frescoes in 1835 shortly after they had been ably restored by Prof. Marini, this shadowy figure represents Satan in the act of substituting a changeling for the saintly babe, whose future greatness the arch-enemy foresees. Away to the right stretches a rocky desert, where the infant had been exposed to die of starvation, but where a doe miraculously tended it until found by a pious woman, who is seen presenting the child to a venerable priest issuing forth to greet the foundling and its saviour from a temple which rises in the distance. Underneath the lunette are Episodes from the Preaching and Spiritual Career of the Saint. Beginning from the left, the artist has represented the ordination of St. Stephen by a bishop², assisted by five priests. The scene takes place outside a church, surrounded by the desolate landscape of the lunette. Kneeling before the consecrating bishop, the youthful Levite kisses one of the latter's hands while the other is raised in benediction. We next see the Proto-martyr comforting and embracing a man in rich raiment, apparently the father of a youth who is represented chained to a pillar, being possessed of the devil, in a room of the stately palace near which the affecting encounter takes place. The exorcizing and casting out of the evil spirit are depicted with much dramatic force, especially natural being the gestures of surprise and joy with which the parents of the sufferer hail his miraculous liberation.

The Disputation with the Jews, which follows, although very considerably damaged, may be re-

¹ Op. cit., p. 32.

² According to the legend, St. Stephen was ordained by the prince of the Apostles himself.



Alinari photo.]

TWO EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF ST. STEPHEN.

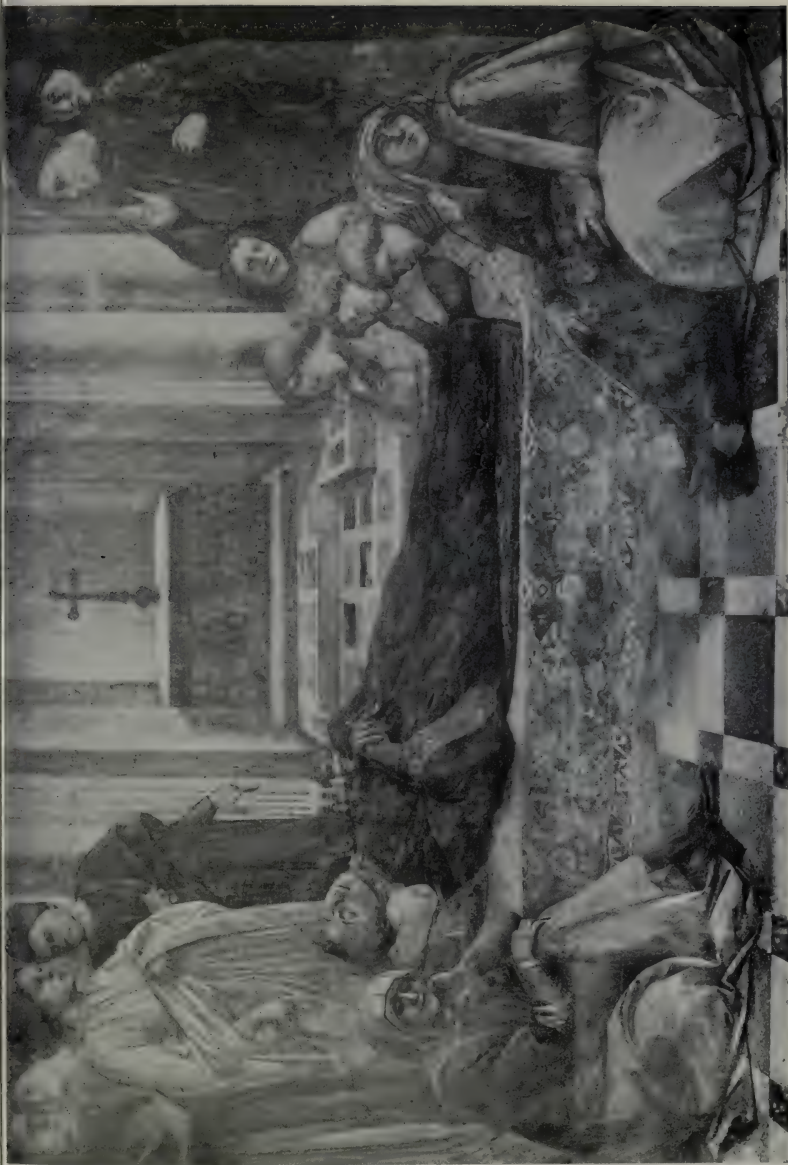
[*Duomo, Prato.*

garded as the finest episode of this compartment. On a raised seat outside the palace, listening sullenly and with evident disapproval to the impassioned words of the saint, who stands before them in a dignified oratorical attitude, are the Scribes and Pharisees. All around presses a motley crowd, so hostile to the speaker that it is with difficulty prevented by a herald from violently interrupting the discussion. We cannot help comparing this tumultuous scene, full of life and movement, with Fra Angelico's Preaching of St. Stephen in the chapel of Nicholas V at the Vatican. The Dominican has represented the saint quietly holding forth to a group of wondering females seated at his feet; there is nothing, in this atmosphere of security and peace, even remotely foreshadowing the tragic consequences of the youthful Levite's predication. Fra Filippo's conception of the scene, on the contrary, is far more natural and powerful. We see the speaker's death-sentence written clearly in the livid features of his enraged listeners, who are presently to become his judges and his executioners, and even before looking at the next compartment we know that it must logically represent the Stoning and the Death of the Proto-martyr. It is precisely this deep psychological insight, this masterly and comprehensive presentation of the spiritual moment, which once more prove Fra Filippo to have been not merely a coarse, unthinking libertine, not merely "flesh and blood," as Browning and other prejudiced writers would have us believe, but an artist-philosopher, who understood and knew how to express the subtlest movements of the human mind and soul.

The praises lavished by Vasari on this painting will not be found exaggerated by those who minutely study it. "In the Disputation of St.

Stephen with the Jews," says the Aretine biographer, "the countenance of the saint exhibits so much zeal and fervour that it is difficult to imagine or to express it in words; while in the attitudes of the Jews, hatred and rage, with the anger they feel at finding themselves vanquished by the saint, are equally manifest." Nevertheless, the compartment which we have just described, taken as a whole, does not quite attain the high standard of perfection which we find in the others. This inferiority is partly due to the fact that, the master having introduced four stories instead of three, the various episodes are crowded together and often imperfectly developed. Moreover, it is not difficult to trace the inferior manner of Fra Diamante throughout this compartment, although the composition and the principal figures are undoubtedly by Fra Filippo.

In the third and last compartment Fra Filippo has represented the Stoning and the Funeral of St. Stephen. The damaged condition of the first scene, which occupies the wall near the window, and which has been almost entirely destroyed by dampness and by unskilful restorations, is all the more to be deplored inasmuch as Vasari, who saw it when still in a good state of preservation, describes it as the finest of the whole series. The general lines of the composition, however, are fortunately still clearly discernible. A vast rocky wilderness, strewn with the bones of innumerable victims, forms a fitting *milieu* for the tragic scene, which is witnessed by a crowd of stern, relentless Pharisees. Struck down by the stones of his cruel persecutors, the protomartyr, who is arrayed in the rich vestments of a deacon, has sunk upon his knees, and, as if unconscious of the pain he is enduring, gazes ecstatically, with outstretched arms, towards the beatific vision



Atinari photo.]

THE FUNERAL OF ST. STEPHEN.

[*Duomo, Prato.*

of Christ in glory, from whom he is about to receive the celestial palm. Behind the kneeling saint is a wonderful group of three men, half bent in the evident effort to hurl the death-dealing missiles with the greatest possible amount of violence. So vividly has Fra Filippo contrived to lay the scene before us, that we watch the upraised hands of the executioners with a strange fascination, as if expecting at every moment to see the muscular arms shooting out and the victim fall bleeding to the ground. "Still more forcibly than in the Disputation," says Vasari, "has he depicted the brutal rage of those who slew the martyr with stones, which they grasp, some large, others smaller ones, with grinding teeth, horrible to behold, and with gestures of demoniac rage and cruelty. St. Stephen, calm and steadfast in the midst of their terrible violence, is seen with his face towards heaven, imploring, with the utmost piety and fervour, the pardon of the Eternal Father for those who thus attack him. This variety of expressions," adds the writer, "is indeed admirable, and well calculated to teach artists the value of imitative power and the importance of clearly expressing the affections and emotions of the characters represented, a point to which Fra Filippo devoted the most earnest attention." Especially striking is the contrast between the pale, delicate features of the martyr and the coarse violent type of his executioners, which greatly enhances the dramaticity of the scene. In Fra Angelico's Martyrdom of St. Stephen, on the contrary, the men engaged in stoning the victim to death, and the Pharisees who witness the execution, look almost as venerable as the saint himself.

The rest of this compartment is entirely occupied by the imposing representation of the Funeral of

St. Stephen. The lifeless body of the martyr, clad in monastic garb, is stretched on a bier placed in the nave of a vast basilica. At either end of the catafalque sits a female form, while four young men¹ devoutly kneel to kiss the feet of the saint. To the left of the composition, standing upon a low marble dais on which are the words *Frater · Filippus · Op.*, is a priest in pontifical vestments reading the funeral service from a book which he holds with both hands, and surrounded by various other ecclesiastics, one of whom carries a cross. Opposite is another group of dignified personages in clerical garments, apparently taking no part in the religious ceremony, however, beyond that of mourners or spectators.

In this stately composition, the simple grandeur of which is enhanced by the total absence of hagiographic servility, Fra Filippo, arrived at the full maturity of his powers, has triumphantly defied conventionalism, rejoicing in his final emancipation from its cloying influence. A veritable gulf separates the Funeral of St. Stephen from the Death of St. Jerome, although both were painted in the same period of the friar's artistic career. But while the latter work is a direct product of Giotto's Death of St. Francis, and still reveals, especially in the treatment of the background, a scrupulous regard for hieratic tradition, nothing could exceed the frank, almost aggressive realism everywhere apparent in the work now before us. As if heartily tired of painting "saints, and saints, and saints again," Fra Filippo has boldly set aside all the requirements of legendary verisimilitude, representing, instead of

¹ Baldanzi says that the kneeling youth with his hands crossed upon his bosom is Messer Giuliano Guizzelmi, who afterwards became a famous writer on jurisprudence.

the Funeral of St. Stephen, the obsequies of some eminent prelate of his own day, perhaps, as Ulmann suggests, of the *proposto* Inghirami, who died in 1460. No aureola adorns the head of the dead monk, no symbolical dove flutters down in a ray of celestial light upon the bier, nor do the costumes or any of the other accessories reveal the slightest attempt at historical reconstruction. Instead of painting a number of imaginary figures, Fra Filippo has filled this work with the lifelike portraits of friends and contemporaries. All the heads are finely individualized and full of power and character. These stately ecclesiastics strike us as being strangely familiar; we seem to feel vaguely that we have met them somewhere before, so vividly do they recall living types of every-day life. It would be impossible to suppose that Fra Filippo evoked these magnificent figures, instinct with life and energy, merely from his imagination. The dignified prelate to the right, for instance, clothed in purple vestments, is Messer Carlo de' Medici, Cosimo's illegitimate son and Messer Geminiano's successor in the *propositura* of Prato, while the figures on either side of him represent, according to Baldanzi, his Vicar, Messer Paolo della Torricella, and a canon of the Cathedral, Messer Niccolao Spighi by name. "Among the persons who bewail the death of St. Stephen," says Vasari, "are the portraits of Fra Filippo himself, which he took with his own hand by help of a mirror, robed in black in the vestments of a prelate, and of his disciple Fra Diamante." Also, according to Baldanzi, the prelate standing with upraised hand at the foot of the bier, clothed in an ample toga-like garment and wearing a violet headdress, represents Fra Filippo, while the boyish face looking over his shoulder is the portrait of Fra Diamante.

We have however absolutely no evidence to prove that these are the figures alluded to by Vasari. Indeed, the thin, almost ascetic features of the alleged portrait of Fra Filippo have nothing whatever in common with the coarse, sensual type of the kneeling monk in the Sant' Ambrogio altar-piece, nor do they bear the slightest resemblance to the bust over the friar's tomb in the Spoleto Cathedral. It is therefore quite possible that the stout figure behind Messer Carlo de' Medici, in the right-hand corner of the composition, also clothed in black robes as described by Vasari, represents Fra Filippo, an opinion which I hold in common with Ulmann and with Crowe and Cavalcaselle. As to the authenticity of Fra Diamante's likeness, it is even more dubious; for the boyish face which Baldanzi would have us accept as the portrait of Fra Filippo's assistant cannot possibly be meant to represent a man of over thirty¹.

In the Funeral of St. Stephen, which, if considered from a purely artistic point of view, is undoubtedly the most perfect of the whole series, Fra Filippo appears to have deliberately sacrificed sentiment and dramatic effect on the altar of cold realism. When we remember the friar's emotional temperament, so apparent in his dramatic rendering of other subjects which in themselves offered far less favourable opportunities for the display of sentiment, we at first fail to understand why Fra Filippo, who expressed grief and even despair so vividly in the Death of St. Jerome, should not even attempt to depict the same emotions in a kindred theme.

The only reason for this apparently inexplicable difference of treatment is the friar's partiality for

¹ Fra Diamante was about thirty-three years of age when this painting was executed.



Alinari photo.

PORTRAITS OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI AND OF FRA DIAMANTE.

From the 'Funeral of St. Stephen.'

[*Duomo, Prato.*]

portrait painting¹, a hobby which he has freely indulged in this work, and which naturally excluded the possibility of an accurate dramatic interpretation. It would have been obviously absurd to represent the stately Messer Carlo de' Medici, for instance, writhing in a paroxysm of grief, and Fra Filippo's other models would doubtless have resented any attempt on the artist's part to depict them in the undignified attitudes of despairing sorrow which give such dramatic force to the Death of St. Jerome. But Fra Filippo was too fine a psychologist not to understand that in a similar theme the manifestation of grief was absolutely essential; he therefore had recourse to an ingenious stratagem, introducing in his composition the two female mourners, in whose features he sought to condense, so to say, all the emotion and dramaticity which he was debarred from expressing through the medium of his portrait figures. The effect, however, is incomplete and hardly conducive to dramatic efficacy, much less harmony, for the despair of the weeping women, so vividly and naturally depicted as to forcibly remind us of Mantegna's manner, contrasts strangely with the icy reserve, amounting almost to absolute indifference, of the remaining spectators. Singularly in harmony with this silent, emotionless assembly of stately prelates, on the contrary, is the architectural motive, a majestic

¹ Fra Filippo never lost an opportunity of introducing portraits in his pictures, and these lifelike figures were usually the most important of the whole work. In the Annalena Nativity, for instance, we have admired the fine portrait of Ruberto Malatesta as St. Hilarion, while the figures of the donors in the Datini Madonna, in the Death of St. Jerome, in the Madonna della Cintola, &c., must rank among the finest of Fra Filippo's productions.

basilica bare of any ornament except a cross placed above the altar in the apse.

In the Funeral of St. Stephen Fra Filippo has at last attained that unity and compactness of composition the absence of which we have so often had occasion to deplore in his preceding works. Our attention is no longer distracted from the principal theme by secondary episodes which only gave rise to an irritating confusion instead of helping our comprehension of the subject. All the rules and conditions of a severe, monumental art are here respected and fulfilled; indeed, we can hardly believe that the artist who created these stately demi-gods, instinct with life and power, is the same who had hitherto been content with painting conventional Madonnas and Nativities, stiff saints and roguish angels. In the whole artistic production of the Quattrocento it would be difficult to find a work which could compare with this admirable fresco for grandeur of treatment and conception, for perfect technique and masterly execution.

We have said that Fra Filippo employed thirteen years to complete his frescoes in the choir of the Prato Cathedral. So long a period in the life of an artist, especially of the friar's restless temperament, cannot have elapsed without leaving very perceptible traces of an important evolution in style and manner. By following Fra Filippo's gradual progress towards that high standard of perfection which he attained in the last fresco of the series, namely, the Funeral of St. Stephen, we shall have little difficulty in reconstructing the chronological sequence of the various compartments. That Fra Filippo began by painting the four Evangelists on the vaulted roof is certain, as he could not otherwise have symmetrically subdivided the remaining space. The two lunettes

followed, probably in the same year, 1452, as their striking resemblance to the Pitti *tondo* would prove. The Preaching of St. John the Baptist, which reveals evident traces of neglect and of Fra Diamante's collaboration, may date from the period of Fra Filippo's romantic adventure with Lucrezia Buti.

In 1457 the friar returned to Florence, as we have seen, where he certainly met Benozzo Gozzoli, and admired the frescoes, full of life and movement, which the latter was then painting in the Palace of the Medici¹. The Dancing of the Daughter of Herodias reminds us so much of Benozzo Gozzoli's illustrative manner that we may safely assign its date to the period immediately following Fra Filippo's visit to Florence. With regard to the Stoning and Funeral of St. Stephen, it cannot have been painted before 1460, in which year Messer Carlo de' Medici became *proposto* of Prato. But it is far more probable that Fra Filippo did not begin working at this last compartment until after his trip to Perugia, as we have seen that in 1463, and again in 1464, the *probiviri* bitterly complained of the friar's delay in completing the frescoes. Considerations of style further confirm the theory that this compartment was painted after Fra Filippo's Umbrian journey. Passing through Arezzo, Fra Filippo must have studied the works of Piero della Francesca, for we find in the Stoning and Funeral of St. Stephen a grandeur in the treatment of the figures, and a correctness in rendering the architectural motives, which the master had not yet attained in the stories from the life of the Baptist. It is in the compo-

¹ From three letters addressed by Benozzo Gozzoli to Pietro de' Medici on the 10th of July and on the 11th and 23rd of September, 1459, we learn that the frescoes in the Medici Palace were nearly completed in that year. See Gaye, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 121.

sition of the Stoning and in the foreshortening of the figure of Christ appearing to the martyr that Piero della Francesca's influence is especially apparent. Very probably, too, Fra Filippo had in mind Buonfigli's Deposition of St. Louis of Toulouse, which he had seen at Perugia, when painting his great Funeral of St. Stephen. We cannot help admiring the facility with which, even at an age when most artists are no longer capable of introducing any marked improvement in their style, Fra Filippo was still able to assimilate the merits of other schools and masters, gladly leaving the beaten track for new methods, and striving eagerly and indefatigably towards perfection.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Fra Filippo's Prato frescoes. Whether we regard them from the point of view of their intrinsic merit as a work of art, or whether we consider the influence which they exercised upon successive generations of artists, these paintings, like Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel¹, must ever rank among those epoch-making manifestations of genius by which, more than by the lapse of ages, the onward march of humanity towards intellectual and artistic perfection is marked. In these frescoes Fra Filippo not only reveals himself as the worthy continuator of Masaccio's noble traditions, but as the direct precursor of the giants of the Renaissance. The "epoch of character," as Morelli appropriately terms the Quattrocento, may be said to have derived its name quite as much from Fra Filippo's masterpiece as from Masaccio's Brancacci frescoes or from

¹ Baldanzi even maintains that, had Fra Filippo's masterpiece been executed in Florence or in Rome, instead of being relegated to the cathedral of a little provincial town, its fame would have outshone that of the Brancacci frescoes.

the admirable paintings which Mantegna was executing about this time at Padua.

During the Prato period Fra Filippo, progressing steadily and uninterruptedly, attained the highest degree of purely artistic perfection of which he was capable. It was reserved to the last period of his career, however, to witness his complete emancipation from the grosser tendencies which had hitherto retarded the full development of his artistic faculties. At Spoleto Fra Filippo at last added spiritual elevation to technical skill.

CHAPTER V

SPOLETO : 1467-1469.

ALTHOUGH Fra Filippo finished the noble series of frescoes in the Choir of the Prato Cathedral early in the year 1465¹, he did not return to Florence, having permanently settled in the quiet little town where his artistic talents had received such generous appreciation, and to which he was now bound by so many endearing links. But his fame as one of the leading painters of the age was not confined to Prato, or indeed to Tuscany alone, for we know that even before the completion of his Choir frescoes, namely, in 1464, the commune of Spoleto requested him, through the medium of Cosimo de' Medici, to paint the principal chapel of their Cathedral. In the same year Fra Filippo's illustrious patron, Cosimo *Pater Patriae*, died at Careggi, one of the last actions of his stormy, scheming existence being an act of kindness towards the thriftless monk whom he had extricated from so many scrapes, and for whom the great man bore a genuine affection.

Whether Fra Filippo needed rest and quiet after the laborious task which had kept him busy for thirteen years, or whether he had accepted other commissions which he was obliged to finish before

¹ Vasari is of course in error, as proved by the documents which we have quoted, when he asserts that Fra Filippo finished the Choir frescoes in 1463.

leaving Prato, we cannot know positively; perhaps both reasons prevented him from at once accepting the invitation of the commune of Spoleto. Moreover Lucrezia had given birth to another child, a girl named Alessandra, in 1465, and Fra Filippo, who, in spite of all his defects, was a most affectionate husband and father, perhaps hesitated before undertaking a work which would render a long separation from his little family necessary. Be this as it may, we know from an entry in the *Libro delle spese* of the Servite Fathers, for whom Fra Filippo painted the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple, now in the church of Santo Spirito, that the master was still in Prato on the 14th of March, 1467, when he received the last instalment of the sum due to him for the picture¹. Shortly after this date Fra Filippo bade farewell to his beloved Lucrezia and to his children, whom he was destined never to see again, and accompanied by his faithful friend and assistant, Fra Diamante, sallied forth on his last journey.

The difficulties which Fra Filippo had to contend with in the Spoleto Cathedral were much greater than those which had confronted him at Prato. For while the vaulted roof of the Gothic Choir was subdivided into four triangular spaces, forming a symmetrical scheme which the master had no difficulty in adorning with the figures of the Four Evangelists, the half-cupola of the apse in the Spoleto Cathedral was by no means so favourable to unity and harmony of composition. The Cathedral being dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the theme assigned to Fra Filippo was Episodes from the Life of Our Lady. On the walls of the apse the artist has represented the Annunciation, the Nativity,

¹ See Document xix.

and the Death of the Virgin, while the half-cupola is occupied by the Coronation. Although so badly damaged by dampness and unskilful restorations that some of its figures are completely destroyed, nevertheless the Spoleto Coronation may be regarded as Fra Filippo's last masterpiece. Throning on high in the empyrean, above the sun and moon which are seen in the blue sky beneath, is God the Father, a colossal and majestic figure wearing a tiara, who places the crown of glory on the bowed head of the kneeling Virgin. All around throng the angelic host, singing, dancing, and strewing flowers before the chosen of the Lord, while on either side of the composition is a group of three angels larger than the rest, in various and most graceful attitudes. Fra Filippo has represented Paradise as a beautiful garden, in which bloom wonderful roses and other celestial flowers. Forming a half-circle in the clouds and completing the composition are the Prophets of the Old and the New Covenants on the left, and the Sybils, together with other saintly women, on the right¹.

Although Fra Filippo undoubtedly designed the whole of this fresco, successfully overcoming the obstacles which the shape of the half-cupola placed in the way of a compact and harmonious composition, it is more especially in the figures on the left that we recognize the imprint of his powerful genius, while those on the right appear in a great measure to be the work of his assistant. The fair-haired angels on the left², every line of whose graceful

¹ The group on the left comprises Adam, John the Baptist, Daniel, and five Prophets. On the right are Eve, Sibylla Tiburtina, Rachel, Bersabe, Lia, and another female figure.

² The two dancing angels in the foreground on the left are perhaps among the most perfect figures ever painted by Fra

bodies is revealed by the clinging draperies, and the majestic figures of the Prophets, full of force and character, contrast most vividly with the insipid angels on the opposite side, where the treatment of the draperies is stiff and conventional, the kneeling women reminding us of the Madonna in the Ceppo panel. Whether Fra Filippo painted the central group of the Coronation it would be impossible, in its present state of preservation¹, to affirm positively. It is certain, however, that the type of the Madonna does not belong to the friar's last period, reminding us more of those early Madonnas in the style of Masolino which we have described when dealing with the first Florentine period of the master's career. And if we take into consideration the excess of gorgeous ornaments, the starry aureolas and the jewelled tiara, we are justified in suspecting Fra Diamante's collaboration even in so important a group of the composition. But in spite of the numerous traces of another hand everywhere perceptible in this Coronation, Fra Filippo's spirit still pervades it entirely; moreover we find here a sort of mystic grandeur which amply compensates for the technical inferiority apparent in this fresco, if we compare it with the master's great achievement in Prato.

There can be no doubt that Fra Filippo began work in the Spoleto Cathedral by painting the half-cupola of the apse. If, therefore, he availed himself so extensively of Fra Diamante's collaboration at the very commencement of his task, we may expect

Filippo, and scarcely surpassed for graceful spirituality even by any of Botticelli's creations.

¹ The features of the Madonna have been considerably repainted, and her mantle, originally blue, has been replaced by a white mantle with gold flowers.

to find still more evident traces of his assistant's manner in the paintings on the walls.

There is nothing new or original in the treatment of the Annunciation, which occupies the first compartment, and forcibly reminds us of Fra Filippo's numerous other representations of the same subject, more especially of those in San Lorenzo, in the National Gallery, and in the Munich Pinakothek. The composition, however, differs slightly; for the Virgin is seated in her room while the announcing angel kneels in the porch, but at the same time seems to be approaching towards her—

“Smooth-sliding without step,”

as Milton beautifully expresses the continuous motion of incorporeal beings. High in the heavens, surrounded by angels, God the Father appears, irradiating light on the Virgin, whom he is in the act of blessing. The architectural background is admirably executed, reminding us of the Prato frescoes; and the landscape, too, representing a hilly, thickly-wooded country, through which a road winds in the direction of battlemented city walls, deserves particular attention, as it reproduces, in all probability, the surroundings of Spoleto, and proves once more that Fra Filippo could be one of the best landscape painters of the Quattrocento when he took the trouble to copy nature instead of introducing imaginary wildernesses of “scathed rock and arid grass” in his paintings.

The treatment of the figures reveals all the characteristic merits of the friar's best manner, but although the half-startled attitude of the Virgin and the frightened expression with which she gazes at the celestial messenger are most naturally rendered, it is to be regretted that Fra Filippo should have



Alinari photo.

[Duomo, Spoleto.]

THE ANNUNCIATION.

selected a model whose features recall the somewhat coarse faces of the handmaidens in the Dancing of the Daughter of Herodias and of the two female mourners in the Funeral of St. Stephen, instead of the fascinating, maladive type of his last period. The master appears to have given special attention to the hands of his figures, which are naturally and correctly modelled, and to the treatment of the draperies, arranged in simple but effective folds and masses. Although it is badly damaged¹, it is not difficult to perceive throughout this fresco, which was evidently painted immediately after the Coronation, the undeniable traces of Fra Filippo's own hand.

The same cannot be said of the next compartment, representing the Nativity, which appears to have been painted almost entirely by Fra Diamante, who borrowed the composition from his master's San Domenico Nativity. The Divine Infant is lying on the ground outside the usual ruined edifice, in which are the legendary ox and ass. To the left kneels the Virgin in adoration, while behind her two shepherds are seen approaching, and opposite is St. Joseph, seated near a pack-saddle and staring dreamily into space. The type of St. Augustine in the Madonna della Cintola is again easily recognizable in this figure. Three angels reverently view the scene from the clouds, which partly hide their swaying figures, a stratagem adopted by Fra Diamante in order to shirk the difficulties of foreshortening. We can hardly believe that the nude, sickly child lying on the ground is the work of a Florentine painter of the Quattrocento, as it reminds us much more of those thin, half-frozen infants to be

¹ The wings of the angel, and the lily which he carries in his hand, having been painted *a secco*, are completely discoloured, the outlines alone being visible.

met with in the paintings of Hugo van der Goes and other northern masters. Fra Diamante's characteristic manner is again clearly perceptible in the treatment of the crib. We almost fancy that we can count every hair of the ass's mane and every straw in the thatched roof of the ruined building, so scrupulously careful and minute is the execution. It has already been said that Fra Diamante gave the most painstaking attention to insignificant details, a particularity which he had in common with Pesellino and with Alessio Baldovinetti.

From this work of inferior merit we turn with a feeling of satisfaction to the central compartment, representing the Death of the Virgin, for here we again find the unmistakable imprint of Fra Filippo's genius. The composition reminds us more of Fra Angelico's two Dormitions of the Virgin, at Cortona and in the Uffizi, than of the Death of St. Jerome or of the Funeral of St. Stephen. It also differs from the latter owing to the fact that the scene takes place in an open, rocky landscape instead of being confined by architectural lines. But the figure of the dead Virgin, lying on a bier precisely in the same position as that of the Proto-martyr, one hand resting on the other, and the two female mourners, half-kneeling and half-crouching in the foreground, reveal the artistic derivation of this painting from the Funeral of St. Stephen. At the head of the catafalque we see the sorrowing Apostles grouped around St. Peter, who is reading prayers from a book, just as in Fra Angelico's Dormition in the predella of the Cortona altar-piece, while at the foot stand three angels carrying lighted tapers, and behind them, in the right corner of the composition, are four most life-like figures, evidently portraits. The background is so damaged that we have some



Alinari photo]

[*Duomo, Spoleto.*

THE NATIVITY.

difficulty in distinguishing the meaning of the confused group which, according to Rosini¹, whose opinion has been adopted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, represents Christ in glory welcoming the soul of his Mother, symbolized by a kneeling maiden. But a close study of this group has convinced me that Ulmann² is right in maintaining that Fra Filippo intended to represent the well-known theme of the Madonna della Cintola bestowing the miraculous girdle on St. Thomas, who stretches out his arms eagerly to receive it. There is something infinitely pathetic in the thought that Fra Filippo, when the shadow of death was already upon him, turned back with tender longing to the days of his ardent wooing of Lucrezia, and sought to perpetuate its most romantic episode in his last masterpiece.

It is worthy of notice that, as he approached the close of his career, Fra Filippo appears to have gradually lost the precious faculty, which he formerly possessed in so eminent a degree, of expressing the emotions. Already in the Funeral of St. Stephen we have remarked that a stately decorum has taken the place of despairing grief. But in the Prato fresco there was at least a *raison d'être* for this dignified chilliness, most of the figures being portraits of eminent prelates of the age, while here we are completely at a loss to explain the artist's failure to give life and expression to his figures. An atmosphere of frigid indifference seems to prevail in this painting, although its subject is perhaps the most pathetic and best adapted to an emotional inter-

¹ Rosini, *Storia della Pittura Italiana*, Plate LXXIII.

² Op. cit., p. 49. Throughout this chapter and the preceding one I have been greatly indebted to Dr. Ulmann for his valuable researches on Fra Filippo's artistic activity in Prato and Spoleto.

pretation in the whole series of set religious themes. We miss, too, that grandeur and striking characterization which form the principal merits of the Prato frescoes, and which are here only to be found, but in minor degree, in the two Apostles occupying the left corner of the composition. Indeed, traces of a veritable artistic reversion are visible, as, for instance, in the excessively light, almost straw-coloured hair, which was a characteristic of Fra Filippo's earliest manner, especially noticeable in works belonging to his first Florentine period, such as the Lateran Coronation painted for Carlo Marsuppini about the year 1435. The master was evidently tired and discouraged, and, far from all that was dearest to him on earth, took little interest in his work, the execution of which he confided more and more to his young assistant, Fra Diamante. It is almost certain that the figure of St. Peter, which greatly resembles that of St. Augustine in the Madonna della Cintola, was painted by Fra Diamante, who is also responsible for the group of the Apostles, with the sole exception of the two figures already mentioned in the left corner. In these, as well as in the figure of the dead Madonna, in the two female mourners, and in the portrait figures¹ standing at the foot of the bier, we at once recognize Fra Filippo's hand.

As if conscious of his approaching dissolution and strangely fascinated by the idea of death, the friar seems to have taken great pains to give us a realistic representation of the scene, and in this he has been eminently successful. Boldly

¹ The figure in white with a black cap is probably the master's portrait, as it strongly resembles the bust of Fra Filippo placed on the latter's tomb at Spoleto, and also reminds us of the figure in the right corner of the Funeral of St. Stephen.



Alinari photo.

THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN.

[Duomo, Spoleto.]

discarding every vestige of conventional sentiment, he has shown us, not an idealized, aureola-crowned Madonna gracefully reclining, as if asleep, on a rich catafalque, as Fra Angelico has done, but the pathetic spectacle of human mortality typified by a lifeless female, on whose thin, livid features grim death has already set its indelible seal. Indeed the treatment of this figure is almost excessively realistic, contrasting strongly with the absolute indifference depicted on the features of the Apostles. The whole scene, hemmed in by ghostly mountains, the summits of which enter into the composition of the Coronation above, gives us the impression that it is being enacted in the shadow of the valley of death.

There is every reason to believe that Fra Filippo was engaged precisely on this funereal theme when he fell ill and died, somewhat suddenly, on the 9th of October, 1469¹, leaving his work unfinished. Although at least sixty-three years of age, the friar, judging from his last portraits, was still robust and hearty, so that his sudden end gave rise to the rumour that he had been poisoned: "It was said," writes Vasari, "that the libertinism of his conduct occasioned this catastrophe, and that he was poisoned by certain persons related to the object of his love." At any rate it would be absurd to suppose, as some writers have done, that Lucrezia Buti's relatives waited patiently thirteen years before avenging the honour of their family. If, therefore, we accept the more than dubious version of Fra Filippo's tragic death by poison, we must presume that the enterprising monk, in spite of his venerable age, had got entangled in some fresh amorous intrigue, the con-

¹ See Document x.

sequences of which proved more serious than those of his romantic adventure at Prato.

Whatever the good citizens of Spoleto may have thought of Fra Filippo's morals, they certainly held the artist's memory in the greatest esteem and veneration, for when, a few years after his death, Lorenzo de' Medici, journeying to Rome on an embassy to Pope Sixtus IV, purposely went to Spoleto in order to demand the remains of Fra Filippo, that they might be interred in Sta. Maria del Fiore, at Florence, the magistrates of the commune absolutely refused to grant his request. "The Spoletines replied," says Vasari, "that they were poorly provided with ornaments, and could boast of but few excellent men; they consequently begged permission as a favour to retain the remains of Fra Filippo, that they might honour themselves therewith, adding, that since the Florentines possessed so many great men as almost to have a superfluity, they might be content without this one." Touched by this delicate homage to the Tuscan Athens, Lorenzo did not persist in his demand, but he took an early opportunity of carrying into effect his intention of honouring Fra Filippo's memory. In the meantime he extended to the artist's son Filippino the same generous protection which Fra Filippo had enjoyed under Cosimo, and it was through his recommendation that Cardinal Caraffa called the young painter to Rome. On his way thither Filippino visited Spoleto and was commissioned by Lorenzo, who well deserved his surname of *il Magnifico*, to design a monument wherein to definitely place Fra Filippo's honoured remains. And eighteen years after the master's death the monument was completed. It is a stately marble tomb, surmounted by a bust of Fra Filippo, and



[Duomo, Spoleto.]

Alinari photo.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.

bearing the following pompous but not wholly undeserved eulogium by Agnolo Poliziano—

“Conditus hic ego sum picturae fama Philippus
 Nulli ignota meae est gratia mira minus;
 Artifices potui digitis animare colores
 Sperataque animos fallere voce diu:
 Ipsa meis stupuit natura expressa figuris
 Meque suis fassa est artibus esse parem¹.
 Marmoreo tumulo Medices Laurentius hic me
 Condidit, ante humili pulvere tectus eram².”

Fra Filippo having been overtaken by death before he could finish his task, the frescoes in the Spoleto Cathedral were completed, early in the year 1470, by Fra Diamante, who received, according to Vasari, three hundred ducats from the Commune, “with which sum,” adds the gossipy biographer, “he purchased a certain property for himself, setting aside but a small share of the money for his master’s child³.” This ungenerous conduct on Fra Diamante’s part is all the more to be condemned, as by Fra Filippo’s will⁴ he had been appointed guardian to the boy, who, though only eleven years of age when his father left Prato, had, it would appear, accom-

¹ The same idea is expressed in Raphael’s epitaph.

² This is surely an exaggeration, as we read in the *Necrologium* of the Carmine (see Doc. x): “obiit Spoleti pingens cappellam majorem in ecclesia Cathedrali, et ibidem maximo honore in tumba marmorea ante portam mediam dictae ecclesiae sepultus.” Fra Filippo’s remains had therefore already received honourable if not princely burial.

³ Baldanzi gives the sum at 200, remarking, not wholly without reason, that before accusing Fra Diamante of injustice to the child, it would be necessary to ascertain the sum due to Fra Diamante himself for his share in the work.

⁴ My efforts to discover this important document at Florence, Prato or Spoleto have unfortunately not been crowned by success. Fra Filippo’s will is not quoted by Gaye in his *Carleggio*, and no mention of it is made in Milanese’s *Nuovi Documenti per la Storia dell’Arte Toscana*.

panied Fra Filippo to Spoleto, for Vasari says that Filippino "returned to Florence with Fra Diamante and was by him instructed in the art of painting." Whether this assertion is based upon the truth, or whether we must regard it as another instance of Vasari's inaccuracy, is a question which I cannot enter upon here, as it will be amply discussed in a volume now in course of preparation, and destined, I hope, to throw some light on several obscure points of Filippino's most interesting career. Of Fra Diamante, too, I shall have occasion to write at length in the same work, but the *garzone's* participation in the two last periods of his master's artistic production is of such exceptional importance, that I cannot close this chapter without giving a brief account of his life and collaboration with Fra Filippo.

He was born at Terranuova, in the Val d' Arno, in 1430¹, and at an early age was placed by his father, Feo, as a novice in the Carmelite convent of Prato, where he must have acquired more than the simple rudiments of painting before he became *garzone* to Fra Filippo, for as early as the year 1452, when the latter commenced his frescoes in the Duomo, we find that Fra Diamante received from the administrators of the Ceppo the sum of fifty lire in payment of his work². He appears to have had little initiative of his own, however, for during this early period his artistic production was limited to an assiduous collaboration with Fra Filippo. So devoted did he

¹ Vasari's assertion that Fra Filippo and Fra Diamante spent their novitiate together in the Carmine at Florence is obviously incorrect, as there was a difference of twenty-four years between their respective ages, and moreover Fra Diamante entered upon his monastic career in Prato, as proved by contemporary documents.

² See Document xi.

become to his master, that he was even accused of "aiding and abetting" the glad monk in his scandalous amours, which rumour having reached the ears of his Superior-General, the latter summoned him to Florence and had him thrown into prison. After nearly a month of durance vile, Fra Diamante was liberated on the 22nd of January, 1463, on the representations of the magistrates of Prato, who petitioned the Patriarch of Florence on behalf of "frate Diamante dipintore¹." Nettled by this severe treatment on the part of his superiors, the Carmelite abandoned his Order and became a Vallombrosan monk, succeeding in 1466 Fra Filippo as chaplain to the nuns of Sta. Margherita.

After finishing the Spoleto frescoes in 1470 he returned to Prato, and two years later he settled in Florence, as we find from an entry in the records of the Guild of Painters, a member of which he became in 1472. We next hear of him in Rome, where he was engaged on the frescoes in the Sixtine Chapel during the years 1481 and 1482, receiving from Pope Sixtus IV a pension of 100 ducats a year, to be paid by the Vallombrosan Abbot of San Fedele de' Poppi in the Casentino. But the latter absolutely refused to carry out the generous disposition of the Papal rescript, and was sued by Fra Diamante, who at last had to be content with a pension of only thirty ducats. Fra Diamante, like his master, was always involved in legal proceedings, as proved by the fact that when in 1483 he became prior of the convent of San Pietro di Gello, near Volterra, he made over to the Bishop of the latter diocese, Francesco Soderini, all his rights in a lengthy law suit against another Vallombrosan monk, Don Riccardo di Michele, of Florence.

¹ Cf. Gaetano Guasti, *Quadri e altri oggetti d' arte della Galleria del Comune di Prato* (Prato, 1888), p. 107, n. ii.

Hitherto it was thought that all traces of Fra Diamante were lost after the year 1490, but Prof. A. Venturi has recently discovered an interesting letter from Manfredo de' Manfredi, ambassador of Ferrara in Florence, to the Duke Hercules I, dated 2nd January, 1498, in which it is stated that the unfortunate painter had been imprisoned by the Abbot of San Salvi, and the Duke's intervention in his behalf is demanded in the name of numerous Florentine admirers¹.

A careful examination of the works which may, with some degree of certainty, be attributed to Fra Diamante, would not tend to justify the admiration which he inspired in his contemporaries. His manner, as revealed in some figures of the Datini Madonna, in the Louvre Nativity, and above all in the Spoleto frescoes, contrasts most unfavourably with the frank, vigorous style of his master. Fra Diamante never succeeded in rendering tactile values adequately, most of his figures being flat and unnatural, and revealing a profound ignorance of the anatomy of the human

¹ This letter, discovered by Venturi in the archives of Modena, and first published in *Arte e Storia*, throws so much light on the evident esteem in which Fra Diamante was held by his contemporaries, that it may be advisable to reproduce it here. The text is as follows: "Ill^{mo} et Ec^{mo} Sign. mio: Alchuni Citadini homini da bene de qui me hanno astrecto a pregare la Excellentia Vostra che al loro satisfacione la voglia scrivere a questa Excellentissima signoria: in comendatione de uno frate nominato dom Diamante che ha incarcerato lo abbate de san Salvi, ad fine che le sue signorie fazino opera, de farlo liberare; a complacencia della Excellentia Vostra: la quale desidera dicta liberatione, per avere informatione dicto frate essere eccellente pittore: per vedersene in Roma evidente opera, la qual cosa mi persuado succederà facilmente per essere la dimanda honesta et anche per questi S^{ri} sonno inclinati a fare cosa grata da Ill^{ma} s.v. ala quale humilmente me ne ricomando. Que felix ac diu bene valeat. Florentiæ IJ^o Jan. 1498. Humilissimus Manfredus de Manfredis."

frame. When to this serious defect we add an absolute lack of spirituality and dramaticity, a stiff, Gothic treatment of draperies, a vulgar taste for gaudy ornamentation, we cannot but come to the conclusion that Fra Diamante hardly deserved the honorific title of *excellente pictore*.

No better proof of Fra Filippo's commanding genius could be desired than the fact that it shines through the mist of his assistant's inferior collaboration, even imparting to the latter something of its own splendour.

To see Fra Filippo's work alternating with that of Fra Diamante in the Spoleto Cathedral is like watching a fight between the clouds and the sun, whose glorious rays are mitigated, but never wholly obscured, by the vaporous veils, through which they now and then dart victoriously, illuminating everything around.

It cannot be denied that in spite of the unfinished condition in which they were left by the master, of the preponderance of Fra Diamante's inferior work, and of their deplorable state of preservation, the Spoleto frescoes are another milestone, the last, on Fra Filippo's long, uninterrupted progress towards perfection. They do not mark an advance beyond that high standard of purely artistic perfection which the friar attained in his greatest achievement, the Prato frescoes; indeed, as I have said, we are often surprised to find in Fra Filippo's last work the characteristic failings of his earliest periods. But the redeeming merit of the Spoleto frescoes is that they glow with a mystic spirituality which we had never before met with in Fra Filippo's paintings, and which we notice for the first time in the Coronation and Death of the Virgin. After carefully studying these masterpieces, therefore, it is impos-

sible for us not to share the honest enthusiasm of the Aretine biographer, who, having revisited Spoleto and its Cathedral in 1566, wrote to his friend Don Vincenzo Borghini¹: "It is a marvellous work, and Fra Filippo was indeed a great man!"

¹ Cf. Gaye, *op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 207: "Et passai d' Ascesi, Fuligno, Spuleti, dove io rividi la cappella di fra Filippo nel Duomo, cosa molto bella! fu gran uomo!"

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

FROM the preceding chapters, in which we have endeavoured to trace the story of Fra Filippo's artistic career side by side with the vicissitudes and adventures of his stormy existence, it will be seen that both as a *man* and as an *artist* Fra Filippo was one of the most striking and interesting personalities of the Quattrocento. To sum up the characteristic traits of his most complex temperament, however, is a task which will be found far less difficult by the sympathetic philosopher who regards human failings with the indulgence born of his knowledge of human frailty, than by the hyper-scientific follower of Lombroso, whose scalpel would search the circumvolutions of Fra Filippo's brain more with the object of confirming preconceived theories and prejudices than with the honest intention of finding out what was really there.

I have attempted, in the first pages of this book, to explain the circumstances which acted as potent factors in the formation of Fra Filippo's character, showing, moreover, how the germs of sensuality and passion, latent in the young monk's breast, blossomed forth and flourished in the corrupt atmosphere of the Medicean court, until the poisonous weed almost stifled the beautiful flower of his better nature. In describing Fra Filippo's works we have seen how deeply his art was influenced by his passions, and what pathetic traces it bears of the poverty, humilia-

tions, and untold suffering which they engendered. And we have watched with growing interest the constant struggle between his coarser nature and his artistic temperament, his earthly propensities and his vague aspirations towards the beautiful and the sublime. Our object, however, throughout these pages has been not so much to analyse the character of the man as to follow in all its phases the gradual, uninterrupted evolution of the artist towards perfection. Indeed the story of Fra Filippo's artistic development is of such exceptional interest and importance, as a typical instance of Quattrocento tendencies, that it will not be deemed superfluous to briefly recapitulate it here.

There is very little doubt that Fra Filippo acquired the rudiments of painting from a Giottesque master, probably Lorenzo Monaco, whose retrograde influence, however, was fortunately overpowered, if not wholly eliminated, by a timely acquaintance with the methods of Masolino and, above all, of Masaccio. The Brancacci Chapel, and not the *bottega* of his first master, whoever he may have been, was the real birthplace of Fra Filippo's artistic greatness. In his early works, however, the struggle between the miniaturist tendencies of his youth and Masaccio's potent influence is clearly perceptible. It was not before his second Florentine period, when he came in close contact with the great sculptors and architects of his age, adopting their methods with all the enthusiasm of a keenly appreciative searcher who has at last found what he vaguely aspired to, that Fra Filippo succeeded in completely shaking off the deleterious bondage of the Giottesques. But he was never a servile imitator, and while assimilating the merits of the new school, he contrived to retain his own powerful individuality, the imprint of which is discernible in all his works.

Having acquired the classical methods of Donatello and Michelozzo, of Ghiberti and Brunelleschi, Fra Filippo was prepared to undertake the great task of his artistic career, the epoch-making frescoes in the Prato Cathedral. In this stupendous achievement Fra Filippo attained a degree of perfection of which we should have thought him incapable had we judged his merits merely from a study of his panel pictures. For there is a grandeur and impressive loftiness in these frescoes which had as yet only been attained by Masaccio, and which was subsequently never equalled or surpassed before Michelangelo and Raphael. Indeed we may claim for Fra Filippo the glory of having been the first to introduce that grandeur of manner in fresco painting which was afterwards brought to its highest perfection in the Sistine Chapel. Earlier masters, as for example Buffalmacco, Taddeo Bartoli, Lorenzo di Bicci, and others, had, it is true, painted colossal figures; but, as Förster justly observes, their style was nevertheless not a grand one. Fra Angelico too failed to attain, in his Vatican frescoes, that grandeur of style which Fra Filippo displayed at Prato not only in his large figures, such as the four Evangelists, but even in those of smaller dimensions. Fra Filippo also revealed himself as an innovator by the new and varied treatment of the draperies and vestments in which he clothed his figures, "whereby the minds of others were awakened, and artists began to depart from that sameness which should rather be called obsolete monotony than antique simplicity."

The last brief period of Fra Filippo's artistic career is more noticeable for the mystical spirituality of the Spoleto frescoes than for any real progress in manner or technique. His purely artistic development stopped short at Prato; the Duomo frescoes mark

the high-water line of Fra Filippo's achievement as a painter; but his evolution towards that spirituality in which he was so lacking when under the powerful spell of the new movement continued uninterrupted till the hour of his death, transforming the pagan artist of the Sant' Ambrogio Coronation into the mystic dreamer of the Death of the Virgin.

Two distinct tendencies prevailed in Florentine art between 1430 and the end of the Quattrocento: the one aimed at the naturalistic reproduction of objects, the other at the expression of emotion. Paolo Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, and Domenico Veneziano were the leading representatives of the first, while Fra Filippo was the pioneer of the second: "Filippo's strongest impulse," writes Mr. Berenson¹, "was not toward the pre-eminently artistic one of recreation, but rather toward expression, and within that field—toward the expression of the pleasant, genial, spiritually comfortable feelings of ordinary life. His real place is with the genre painters; only his genre was of the soul, as that of others, of Benozzo Gozzoli, for example, was of the body. Hence a sin of his own, scarcely less pernicious than that of the naturalists, and cloying to boot—expression at any cost." But this defect, if such it may be called, was by no means the artist's only failing. Fra Filippo displays in many of his pictures that tendency to mere illustration of which most of his contemporaries were guilty, and which is even more noticeable in the works of his pupils and artistic continuators, such as Botticelli and Filippino. Working under the inspiration of Masaccio, he usually renders tactile values admirably, but in some of his early works he betrays no genuine feeling for them, failing in his attempt to render them by the introduc-

¹ Op. cit., p. 44.



Hanf.stängl photo.

[National Gallery, London.]

THE MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH AN ANGEL.

tion of bunchy, billowy, calligraphic draperies. But as he advanced towards that high standard of perfection which he finally attained, Fra Filippo's treatment of draperies and his rendering of tactile values improved continually, as may be seen from the Uffizi Madonna and the Pitti *tondo*, and later on from the graceful figure, instinct with life and energy, of the Dancing Daughter of Herodias, and in the beautiful angels of the Spoleto Coronation.

Fra Filippo appears to have been conscious of his defects, for he continually strove to correct them, and in a great measure succeeded. He was always eager and ready to learn, and kept well in touch with the artistic movement of his age. Thus he was not slow in abandoning the methods of his first masters, the Giottesques and miniaturists, for Masaccio's noble art, and during the first two periods of his career he applied himself assiduously to the study of those classical forms with which the great sculptors and architects of the early Quattrocento laid the foundations of the Renaissance. Together with Fra Angelico, he was one of the first and most enthusiastic pioneers of the new movement. Even at an age when most artists are unwilling or unable to improve or modify their style, Fra Filippo continued to learn and to progress. Thus in Herod's Feast he adopted Benozzo Gozzoli's bright illustrative manner, and in the Funeral of St. Stephen he introduced that architectural severity and grandeur which he had admired in the works of Piero della Francesca when passing through Arezzo in 1464 on his way to Perugia. Up to the last he sought to perfect himself in the art which he loved so well. Nothing could be more interesting for the student than to trace the gradual development of his technique, from the minute, painstaking manner of

his early Nativities, in which the influence of the miniaturists is still clearly discernible, to the broad, effective style which he adopted in his later works, in the Uffizi Madonna, for instance, where he may be said to have applied the fresco technique, in which he had become the greatest adept of the age, to panel painting. His colouring, bright, transparent, but somewhat gaudy and surcharged with gold in his early works, also improved considerably in the later periods of his career, the tints becoming more sober and subdued, but at the same time more harmoniously blended.

That Fra Filippo was an admirer, and, when he chose, a skilful reproducer of nature, several charming landscapes in the backgrounds of such pictures as the National Gallery Adoration of the Magi and the Uffizi Madonna suffice to prove. Unfortunately, however, Fra Filippo appears to have made no effort whatever in this direction, preferring in the majority of cases to follow the conventional, highly artificial manner of his predecessors and of some of his contemporaries in the representation of imaginary wildernesses full of rocks and stumps of trees, as in his early Nativities, in the St. Jerome, and in the Death of the Virgin.

“Fra Filippo,” says Vasari, “drew exceedingly well, as may be seen in our book of drawings by the most famous painters, more particularly in certain specimens wherein the Santo Spirito altar-piece is delineated, with others which present drawings of the fresco in the Duomo of Prato.” It is greatly to be regretted that Vasari’s collection, without doubt the most curious and interesting in the history of art, should have been dispersed.

Drawings by Fra Filippo are now exceedingly scarce; indeed, besides the sketch contained in the



Alinari photo.

[Città di Castello Gallery.]

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.

letter to Giovanni de' Medici representing the panel which the friar was then painting for the King of Naples, there is only one other drawing by Fra Filippo to be found in the Florentine Collection¹. In the British Museum are certain studies of hands and draperies by the master, showing how patiently and assiduously he strove to perfect himself in those details in which he knew that he was wanting. But there is no need of drawings to convince us that Vasari's praise of Fra Filippo's draughtsmanship was well deserved. All his pictures reveal a thorough knowledge of drawing, and although we may sometimes find fault with his perspective and foreshortening, Fra Filippo improved continually in this as in every other branch of his art, his line becoming more functional and his drawing more accurate and correct in his later periods.

Fra Filippo was gifted with so powerful an individuality that his characteristic merits and defects may be easily traced in the works of his pupils. Of these the most distinguished were Botticelli, Francesco Pesellino, Fra Diamante, and Jacopo del Sellaio, whose works and artistic derivation from Fra Filippo will be fully discussed in the volume on Filippino. But there can be no doubt that a great many more artists of inferior merit worked and studied in Fra Filippo's *bottega*. Hence the abundance of pictures wrongly attributed to the master merely because they bear a distant resemblance to his manner. Among these works I may quote a Madonna and Child in the National Gallery, a Coronation of the Virgin in the Gallery of Città di Castello, a Christ and St. John the Baptist at Berlin², a Madonna and Child with

¹ See Passavant, *Kunstreise*, p. 224.

² This work has many points in common with the school of Verrocchio. The following represents the Madonna and Child

Saints at Lucca and another Madonna and Child in the Colonna Gallery at Rome. All these works, and many others scattered throughout the galleries of Europe, remind us more or less distantly of Fra Filippo's style, but lack the characteristic imprint of his genius, and must unhesitatingly be put down as the work of obscure disciples or unskilful imitators.

Few painters of the Quattrocento have exercised a more powerful or abiding influence on art than Fra Filippo. To describe Botticelli's artistic derivation from the friar would in itself require a volume. For although Francesco Pesellino was Fra Filippo's most imitative pupil, his real continuator and the link which bound the art of Fra Filippo to that of the Renaissance was Botticelli. The latter had the good fortune to come under Fra Filippo's influence at a time when the master had already shaken the dust of Giottesque methods from his feet and was advancing with giant strides towards the completion of his great achievement, the Prato frescoes. Botticelli, over forty years younger than his master, knew the latter not as a follower of Masolino or of Fra Angelico, but as a vigorous continuator of Masaccio's manner, nay more, as an innovator. He therefore profited by all that was best and greatest in Fra Filippo, without contracting any of his early defects¹. Indeed we may affirm without exaggeration that the

with St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine on one side, and St. Luke and St. Joseph on the other. The angelic salutation is represented in the panels. It is very much in the style of Filippino, or of his pupil, Raffaellino del Garbo.

¹ Kugler, op. cit., p. 46: "Jene Hastigkeit und leidenschaftliche Bewegung, die wir in den historischen Werken des Fra Filippo bemerkten, vererbte sich auf den Schüler; verband sich hier jedoch zugleich mit einer eigenthümlich fantastischen Auffassungsweise, welche ein gewisses Bestreben zeigt, den Gegenstand über das gewöhnliche hinaus zu erheben."



[Berlin Gallery.]

CHRIST AND ST. JOHN.

[Hauptstadt photo.]



Alinari photo.

[*Lucca Gallery.*

THE MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH SAINTS.

Prato frescoes gave rise to Botticelli's exquisite art. The healthy realism and the harmony of line so prevalent in the Dancing of the Daughter of Herodias, for instance, are a prelude to the dancing nymphs and graces, and to the swaying angels of Botticelli.

In the Pitti *tondo* Fra Filippo introduced a new interpretation of the old theme of the Madonna and Child, which was followed by a whole generation of Florentine artists, especially by Verrocchio's school, who took up this genre-like representation, modifying and perfecting it until it reached its highest manifestation in Raphael's Madonna della Sedia. The Uffizi panel, too, is the first of a long series of Madonnas of a type which soon became familiar even outside the Tuscan school. It served as a model to Verrocchio, was introduced in the Umbrian school by Fiorenzo di Lorenzo and by Perugino, and in the Lombard school by Leonardo da Vinci. But the most conclusive proof of the influence exercised by Fra Filippo on the art of the Renaissance is furnished by the Pitti *tondo*. In describing the latter work we noticed a most graceful figure representing a handmaiden carrying a basket on her head and walking swiftly towards the room where St. Anne is lying. This same figure, with but slight modifications, recurs in Domenico Ghirlandajo's frescoes in the choir of Sta. Maria Nuova, in Botticelli's Temptation in the Sistine Chapel, and is the direct precursor of the female figure carrying a jar of water on her head in Raphael's Incendio di Borgo. Ghirlandajo also copied the female mourners in the Funeral of St. Stephen when painting the Vision of Sta. Fina at San Gemignano¹. It may

¹ The Spoleto frescoes, although by no means the most important work of Fra Filippo, also exercised an important influence on art.

therefore be said that Fra Filippo had almost as great a share in indirectly creating the great historical paintings of Ghirlandajo and Raphael as Masaccio himself.

In the history of art Fra Filippo occupies a most important position, the most important, perhaps, after Masaccio, in that momentous epoch of transition termed the Quattrocento. And as Masaccio was "a Giotto come to life again and glorified," even so Fra Filippo must be regarded as Masaccio's continuator and Raphael's truest precursor, a link in that golden chain which leads humanity ever higher on the road of intellectual progress and artistic achievement; a torch-bearer in that race towards perfection in which, as each runner falls back into the darkness, he transmits the flaming firebrand to a successor:

"Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt."

Thus is the undying fire of genius kept for ever coursing through the world, now flickering down, now bursting forth into glorious flame. Nor are the bearers of the sacred fire forgotten by the grateful world whose patrimony of light and beauty they have helped to increase. Of Fra Filippo, therefore, we may repeat, with Vasari, that "so long as his admirable labours can be preserved from the voracity of time, his name will be held in veneration by all coming ages."

The Coronation was copied by Spagna in the church of San Jacopo and in Santa Maria ad Arone. "Those who have not examined these frescoes," says Mr. Symonds, "ruinous in their decay and spoilt by stupid restoration, can form no just notion of the latent capacity of this great master." Fra Filippo's influence is also clearly perceptible in the works of Bonfigli, who introduced his manner in the Umbrian school.



Alinari photo.]

[*Colonna Gallery, Rome.*

THE MADONNA AND CHILD.

DOCUMENTS

I.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Arch. Mediceo, filza 16. Quoted by Gaye, "Carteggio inedito di artisti," i. p. 141, No. 52.

Fra Filippo Lippi to Pietro de' Medici. Written at Florence, August 13, 1439. (Holograph.)

Jhesus, ad dñ xiiii dagosto CCCXXXVIII.

"Per risposta duna vi mandai orriceuta da Voi, chè penata tredici di avella, chennò auto danno assai. Voi mi rispondete in ihoncrusione cheddella tavola nè altro partito ne potete pilgliare, e chio vela chonservi, che per dio ò male el modo sio' mi parto, epiù non mi potete dare un quatrino. Io di questo ò auuto grande dolore per piú rispetti; e questo è uno di quelli, edè chiaro essere uno de piú poveri Frati, che sia in Firenze, sono Io. ed àmi lasciato dio chon sei nipote fanciulle da marito, e infermi e disutili, e quello pocho è assai di bene alloro sono io. seppotessi farmi dare a chasa vostra uno pocho di grano e di vino, che mi vendete, mi sará grande letizia, ponendolo a mio conto. Io vene gravo colle lagrime alliochi, ché sio mi parto lo lasci a questi poveri fanciulli. Io vaviso chio sono suto cho Ser antonio del marchese, e voluto sapere dallui quello mi volesse fare, dicie che adando a servire el marchese, cipresterrá cinque fiorini per uno; eppardoci dachasa, vego che non mi potrei fare uno paio di chalze. Io vi priegho non vi sia grave due versi allui a Ser Antonio, chio li sia rachomandato. ella risposta vostra sia subito partirmi l' altro dí; che sono chiaro sio cistó otto dì, Io sono morto; tanto èlla paura. Perdio rispondete a chasa vostra che chosí lado, acciò non intervenga chome dell'altra.

Frate Filippo dipintore
in Firenze

(Address) "Piero di Chosimo altrebbio in Mugello."

II.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Arch. Mediceo, filza 6. Quoted by Gaye, "Carteggio," i. p. 175, No. 66.

Fra Filippo Lippi to Giovanni de' Medici. Written at Florence, July 20, 1457. (Holograph.)

Maria Virgo.

"Charissimo e maggior etc. Io feci quanto m' imponesti della tavola, et missimi in punto d'ogni cosa. el santo michele è in tal perfezione, che per chelle sue armadure sono d'ariento e doro e chosí laltre sue vesta, ne fui con bartolomeo martello; disse delloro e di quello vi bisognava lo direbbe chon Ser francescho, e chio altutto faciessi quanto era di vostra volontà; e molto mi riprese mostrando io avere el torto contro divoi.—Ora Giovanni io sono quí al tutto esservi schiavo, effaró chon effetto. Io ò auto da voi quattordici fiorini, et io vi scrissi vi sarebbe trenta di spesa, e stia cosí, perché bella dornamenti. priegovi per dio chomettiate in bartolomeo martelli, sopra questo lavoro chonducitore, essio oddi bisogno dalchuna cosa per rispaccio dellopera, io vada a lui e vedralla. io liene faró honore; e olgli detto che tra voi e me lui ne sia mio mallevadore. ellui dicie essere chontento, e vullò fare, pure chio vi spacci, epiù chio vene scriva. esse vi pare fatelo, chio mi sto; perché io non nò più oro, neddanari per chille mette. Io vi priegho chio non mi stia; è tre dì chio non fo niente, e aspetto ci siate. Epiù se vi pare che a ongni mia spesa, chome è, di sopra trenta fiorini, ched dogni e ciascheduna cosa, finita di tutto, voi mene diate sessanta fiorini larghi di legniam, doro, di mentitura, eddipintura, e chome detto bartolomeo sia quanto eddetto, per meno impaccio di voi io larò di tutto finita per tutto dì venti daghosto dalla parte mia, e bartolomeo fia mio mallevadore. essella spesa non vè, staró a quella vi fia. e perché voi siate bene avisato, vi mando el disegno chomé fatta di legniam e daltezza e larghezza; e voglio perramore di voi non torvene più chellavoro di ciento fiorini; dimandogni altro. Prieghovi rispondiate, che quí ne muoro; e vorè poi partirmi. essio fussi prosuntuoso innavervi scritto, perdonatemi. effaró

sempre quel piú e quell meno piacerá alla reverenza vostra.
valete addi xx luglio 1457.

frate filippo
dipintore in firenze.

(Address) "Nobili viro Giovanni di Chosimo de' Medici."

III.

Autograph letter in the possession of Signor Luigi Scotti, Florence. Quoted by Gaye, "Carteggio," i. p. 180, No. 70.

Giovanni de' Medici to Bartolommeo Serragli, his agent in Naples. Dated Florence, May 27, 1456.

"Io ho hauto adì passati piú tue lettere, per le quali ho inteso che avevi presentato la tavola alla Mtà. del Re, et che glera assai piaciuta; et cosí dello errore di Fra Filippo naviamo riso un pezzo. . ."

IV.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Arch. Mediceo, famiglia privata, filza 1. Quoted by Gaye, "Carteggio," i. p. 136, No. 49.

Domenico Veneziano to Pietro de' Medici. Dated Perugia, April 1, 1438. (Holograph.)

"Hora al presente ho sentito che chossimo à deliberato de far fare, ciò dipinghiere una tavola daltare, et vole un magnificho lavorio. la quale chosa molto me piace, et piú mi piacerebe se possibile fuse per vostra megianità chio la dipingiese. et se ciò aviene, ho speranza in dio farvi vedere chose meravigliose, avengna che ce sia di bon maestri chome fra filipo et fra giovane, i quali anno di molto lavorio a fare. e spetialmente fra filipo à una tavola che va in santo spirito, la quale lavorando lui di e noto, non la farà in cinq' ani, sì è gran lavoro."

V.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Rogiti di Ser Domenico da Fighine. Protocollo dal 1449 al 1455.

"In nomine Domini Amen. Anno dominice Incarnationis 1451, inditione prima et die xiiij Julii. Actum

Florentie, in domo habitationis infrascripti domini Vgolini, etc.

“Cum hoc sit quod inter fratrem Filippum pictorem ex una et Laurentium de Manettis partibus ex altera, esset lis et questio super quadam pecuniarum summa et quodam quadro in quo est pictus sanctus Yheronimus, et supra dicta lite dictus Laurentius inpetrauerit commissionem in dominum Ugolinum de Giugnis et dominum vicarium Archiepiscopalis Curie Florentine; et volentes concordare et evitare sumptus et expensas litis, remanserunt in hac compositione et concordia; quod idem Frater Filippus teneatur et obligatus sit tradere et consignare in manibus ejusdem domini Ugolini commissarii dictum quadrum per totum mensem augusti proxime futurum, et illam quantitatem pecunie quam laudabit et sententiabit idem dominus Ugolinus, quem elegerunt in arbitrum ad predicta. Et quod idem dominus Ugolinus de dicto quadro disponat ad libitum suum, tam super salario, quam rebus aliis. Et constituit procuratores omnes notarios Archiepiscopalis curie Florentine ad consentiendum, quod idem frater Simon (*sic*, a curious mistake, instead of *Filippus*) excommunicetur publice et denuntiatur excommunicatus per dictum dominum Ugolinum, et quemcumque judicem ordinarium et delegatum, et obligavit se in forma Camere.”

VI.

Archivio dei Ceppi di Prato. Libro di Entrate e Uscite, P. 54.

1452.

“La chapella dell' altare maggiore della pieve di Prato de' avere fiorini mille dugento, i quali si debbono ispendere fra dipintura di detta chapella e nella finestra del vetro di detta chapella sechondo la deliberazione fatta per lo chomune di Prato a que' tempi che nella deliberazione si contiene; e' quali denari s' ano a paghare a posta e a volontá degli infrascritti, cioé: ser Andrea di Giovanni Bertelli, Filippo di Francesco Malassei, Pietro di Messer Guelfo Pugliesi, Jachopo degli Albizi, buonomini di balla del comune di Prato sopra e' detti lavori, e di tre di loro d' achordo a quelli maestri di dipintura.”

1451-1452, 21 Marzo.

“Bernardo di Bandinello provveditore detto di 21 Marzo per un dì mandato a Firenze a l' arciveschovo . . . cho lettere del Chomune, e che io faciessi venire frate Giovanni da Fiesole, maestro di dipingere, per fargli dipignere la Chapela de l' altare maggiore.”

“E a dì 29 e dì 30 di marzo per due dì andò a frate Giovanni da Fiesole, che vengha, e così lo menò.”

1452, 17 Luglio.

“Al Bugnola a dì 17 di Luglio sol. venti contanti, perchè ci aiutò fare il palcho. A la chapella dell' altare maggiore, cioè al palcho della dipintura bracci 96 di tavole d' albero in su detto palcho.”

“A Bernardo di Bandinello a dì 6 magio per un dì mandato a Firenze a sapere quello che era del piato di mess. Pacie; e fui cho frate Filippo, e cho ser Lorenzo a solecitargli.”

“E a dì 16 di luglio per uno dì andò a Firenze a ser Lorenzo a portargli il disegno di Santo Stefano. . . .”

VII.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Deliberazioni degli ufficiali di Notte e Monasterii dal 1459 al 1462 a carte 60.

(“Tamburazione,” or anonymous accusation against Fra Filippo.) “Die viii mensis maii (1461). Dinanzi a voi signori Ufficiali di nocte et de Munisterii della città di Firenze. Si notifica Ser Piero d' Antonio di Ser Vannozzo, porta Sancta Trinità di Prato, chome detto Ser Piero à usato e usa al Munisterio di Sancta Margherita di Prato, e già fa mesi due o circa ebbe detto ser Piero un fanciullo maschio in detto Munisterio. E l' detto fanciullo mandò di nocte tempo fuori della porta per una certa buca, e fu portato allo Pietriccio, e la mattina poi fu arechato in Prato a battezzare: e questo è noto a molte persone in Prato: e quando lo volete trouare, ogni dì ve lo trouerete lui e un altro che si chiama Frate Filippo: e lui si schusa con essere chappellano, e l' altro con essere procuratore. E l' detto frate Filippo à avuto uno figliuolo maschio d' una che si chiama Spinetta. E detto fanciullo à in casa: è grande, e à nome Filippino.”

VIII.

The ancient book of the Sacristy of Sant' Ambrogio in Florence contains the following entry, dated 1447 :

“Danari che si pagano per l' ereditá di M. Francesco Maringhi.

“Fra Filippo Dipintore deve avere a dì 9 di Giugno lire 1200 per dipintura della tavola di S. Ambrogio, computato in esso prezzo pannolino, con che s' impannó detta tavola, che ne é debitore Fra Filippo, e colori, e ogni altra cosa d'accordo con Mes. Domenico Maringhi, Lorenzo Bartolucci, e Gio. di Stagio.”

IX.

From the diary of Neri di Lorenzo di Bicci. Quoted by Baldinucci, “Notizie dei Professori del Disegno.”

“A dì 1 Febbraio 1454, Fra Filippo del Carmine lasciò 230 pezzi d' oro fine in serbo al medesimo Neri di Bicci: ed il medesimo ne fece nota.”

X.

“Negrologium, hoc est codex mortuorum Conventus Frat. B. Mariae de Monte Carmelo Florentiae” for the month of October, 1469.

“Die nona obiit Fra Philippus Thomae Lippi de Lippis, Florentinus pictor celeberrimus, qui cum Spoleti depingeret Cappellam majorem Ecclesiae Cathedralis, ibidem sepultus fuit in tumba marmorea a latere mediae portae Ecclesiae prefatae. Quantus in arte pingendi fuerit, plurimae picturae ab eo factae satis declarant, praesertim quaedam cappella in oppido Pratensi ab eo depicta. Obiit autem anno Domini 1469.”

This entry, quoted as above by Baldinucci, who says he found it accidentally while making investigations concerning the works of Masaccio in the archives of the Convent del Carmine, is reported differently by Milanese, in his Notes on Vasari. The following is his version :

“Negrologium antiquum conventus Carmelitarum Florentie” (Biblioteca Magliabechiana, No. 785, E. 4).

“viii octobris F. Philippus Thomae Lippi de Lippis de Flor. pictor famosissimus, obiit Spoleti pingens cappellam

majorem in ecclesia Cathedrali, et ibidem maximo honore in tumba marmorea ante portam mediam dictae ecclesiae sepultus. Huic tanta fuit in pictura gratia, ut vix nullus eum nostris temporibus pingens attigerit: qualis pictor fuit, cappella Prati depicta, et alia ejus mira opera testantur .MCCCLXVIII."

XI.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Libro di Entrate e Uscite, 1452, 29 Maggio.

"Frate Diamante di Feo da Terra nuova, gharzone di fra Filippo di Tommaso dipintore e che dipigne la chapela de l' altar magore, de' avere a dì 29 di maggio lire cinquanta, le quali se gli promisero per frate Filippo e al detto frate Filippo per la chapela de l' altar magiore, etc."

XII.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Sezione dell' Archivio Notarile. Rogiti di Ser Giovanni di San Marco da Romena. Protocollo dal 1486 al 1504.

"In dei nomine Amen. Anno dni. ab ejus salutifera incarnatione Millesimo quadringentesimo octuagesimo octavo, indictione septima et die vigesima prima mensis septembris. Actum Florentie in populo Sancti Michaelis Vicedominorum et in hospitali Sancte Marie Nove de Florentia, presentibus infrascriptis testibus ad infrascripta omnia et singula vocatis et habitis et ore proprio infrascripti testatoris rogatis, videlicet:

Ser Cetto bernardi ser Cetti de loro notaio et cive floren: no.

Niccolao Uberti de Nobilibus cive florentino.

Pierozzio castellani pierozzii de castellanis cive florentino.

Marco luce Marci etiam cive flor: no.

Michaele Benedicti pop. S. Laurentii de Flor: tia.

Jacobo Stephani Jacobi pop. S. Laurentii extra muros Florentie

Ser Antonio Marci.

Quum nihil este certius morte et nil incertius ejus hora, iccirco providus vir Filippus alterius Filippi thommasii de Lippis civis et pictor florentinus, sanus mente, sensu, corpore, visu et intellectu, ne contigat eum propter inopinatum mortis eventum decedere intestatum, rerum et bono-

rum omnium suorum per hoc presens quod dicitur sine iscriptis testamentum, dispositionem fecit et facere procuravit et suam ultimam voluntatem condidit in hunc modum et formam, videlicet :

In primis quidem animam suam omnipotenti deo ejusque matri virgini gloriose humiliter ac devote recommendavit et de bonis suis reliquit et legavit operi sancte Maria del Fiore et constructione murorum civitatis Florentie libras tres in totum, secundum ordinamenta dicti comunis.

Item legavit et reliquit de bonis suis domine Alexandre ejus sorori et uxori Ciardi Johannis Ciardi de villa Tabule, comunis Prati, unam domum positam Prati in via detta la via delle tre ghore, cui a primo dicta via, a secundo, via juxta muros terre Prati, a xiiij^o Michelis domine Aghate, a iiij alia domus dicti Filippi; in qua domo, ut supra, dicta habitat ad presens, ut dixit Michael Nannis Uoterini ut inquilinus dicte domus, et hoc pro fundo dotali dicte domine Alexandre, ita quod non possit de dicta domo disponere, nisi ipsam domum tradere pro fundo dotali dicto uel altero ejus viro; et casu quo contrafaceret, dictam domum reliquit infrascripte domine Lucretie, durante ejus vita et post eam infrascriptis suis heredis.

In omnibus autem suis bonis, juribus, nominibus et actionibus presentibus et futuris et aliis quibuscumque suum heredem universalem instituit fecit et esse voluit hospitale Sancte Marie Nove de Florentia cum hoc honore, videlicet: quod dictum hospitale et ejus pro tempore hospitalarius et administrator dent et solvant sine aliqua exceptione, Florentie, omnibus sumptibus dicti hospitalis etiam gabelle, domine Lucretie ejus dilecte matris et filie olim Francisci de Butis de Florentia, quolibet anno, donec ipsa vixerit, staria triginta grani, barilia quindecim vini, catastas duas lignorum quercium, duodecim salmas fraschonum, modia tria bracie, libras quinquaginta carniarum porcinarum salitarum, barile unum olei et libras quinquaginta floren: parvor:; et ultra predicta, permittant dictam dominam Lucretiam uti et frui donec ipsa vixerit habitatione domuum emptarum per dictum Filippum a monasterio de Angelis de Florentia et omnibus supellectilibus dicti Filippi ac etiam habitatione domus de Prato posita juxta dictam aliam domum, ut supra relictam dicte ejus sorori, ita quod dicta domina Lucretia possit et valeat durante

tempore ejus vite naturalis dictas domus et quamlibet earum penes se retinere et alteri locare et in eis stare et habitare, prout ipsa voluerit et absque aliqua solutione alicujus pensionis uel contradictione dicti sui heredis, et dictis suppellectilibus tam existentibus Florentie quam ruri libere uti et frui toto tempore dicte sue vite et de illis etiam possit disponere, distrahere et vendere et facere velle suum quatenus et prout sibi libere placuerit, et pretium dictarum suppellectilium convertere in quamcumque causam ipsa voluerit et ita quod non teneatur facere de predictis vel aliquo earum inventarium vel aliquam cautionem prestare de utendo et fruendo arbitrio boni viri, vel de aliquid (*sic*) aliud faciendo: et casu quo dictus ejus heres predictis contrafaceret, tunc instituit suum heredem universalem hospitale innocentium de Florentia cum onere infrascripto, et casu quo dictum hospitale innocentium de Florentia contrafaceret, tunc dictam dominam Lucretiam ejus matrem heredem universalem instituit et esse voluit; et predicta fecit etiam cum onere quod quicumque fuerit heres dicti Filippi, teneatur et debeât post mortem dicti Filippi et dicti sue matris quolibet anno in perpetuum facere celebrari unum officium mortuorum pro anima dicti Filippi et eius parentum, in quo intersint ad minus viginti sacerdotes qui missas celebrent in ecclesia Sancti Egidii dicti hospitalis cum cera et aliis opportunis et precipue oretur deus pro animabus predictorum: in hoc conscientiam dicti sui heredes strictissime onerando.

Item postea dictis anno, indictione die et loco.

Supradictus Filippus—fecit procuratricem—dictam dominam Lucretiam ejus matrem—ad agendum—ad intrandum in tenutam—ad faciendum capi, etc.

Item postea dictis anno inditione die et loco.

Prefatus Filippus fecit eius procuratorem—Franciscum Filippi del Pugliese civem Florentinum specialiter et nominatim ad petendum et exigendum et se habuisse et recepisse confitendum particulariter—a quocumque et seu quibuscumque—quamcumque summam—dicto Filippo quomolibet debitam vel debendam pro pretio et mercede duarum tabularum imaginum Virginis Marie et aliorum Sanctorum per eum pictarum ad instantiam mandatarii Ill:^{mi} domini regis Ungariae, et ad tradendum dictas tabulas et pretium recipiendum.”

XIII.

Letter from Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici to his agent in Naples, Bartolommeo Serragli. (Quoted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, to whom it was communicated by Signor Jacopo Cavallucci.)

“Ho hautu una tua de dì 29 et simile prima più altre, in modo stimo haverle tutte che hai scritte. Et simile tò risposto due volte et per la via di Roma lò mandate, et credo l' arai haute, ben che vegho vengono tarde tanto, e che damme non resta lo scriverti, et simile ti farò contra io. Intendo che la Mtà. del Re è a buon termine et fuori di pericolo che mè piacere singulare. Credo pure li sarebbe giovato assai se Monsignor di Modona l' avesse potuto vedere et curare; et meraviglomi assai come chi ama la Sua Mtà. non ordina che lui intenda tutto: pure si vuol presumere che a qualche buon fine si faccia. Idio provegha alla sua salute.

“Vegho quanto scrivi la Mtà. havere stimata la tavola che mè grato. Et se il Signor Conte d' Ariano ne vuole un' altra, tornando tu in qua puoi pigliare il disegno et esserne sollicitatore. Et se lui non hara pressa, credo la potrà havere, maxime hora che fra Filippo è ridotto a Prato. Penso, che poi scrivessi, la Mtà. del Re sarà suta a tal termine che harai fatto il bisogno intorno a tuo spaccio; et credo ci sarai per San Giovanni, et cosí t' aspettiamo che ciè buon essere. Del conte Jacopo quasi dicie lui havere hauti denari, credo sarà suto poi scrvesti, ma pochi. Di nuovo niente ciè, se non che si dicie a Giénova armano sei navi grosse per mandare a Bonifazio per quelle altre sei tornano di Levante. Sentiremo alla giornata che seguirá. Nè altro. Cristo ti conservi. In Firenze a dì 10 di giugno 1458.

“Tuo Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici.”

XIV.

Archivio di Stato, Florence. Mediceo innanzi il principato, filza 6, c. 272.

(Extract from a letter written in Florence on August 31, 1457, by Francesco Cantansanti, and addressed to Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici, in Cafaggiuolo.)

“Fra Filippo de' amettere doro quelli civori della tavola

a un debitore stava a Buondalmonti. E io l'ò sollecitato ogni dì; insino a sabato sera stè con lui un ora a farlo lavorare. Restavali a fare; quindi come mi partì dallui, gli prese quel fatto e andone a casa, e hiersera si spacciò. Quelle cose sono restate pegno per la pigione. Io lascio questa trama sbrigare al Serraglio; senon alla tornata ne trarrò le mani io. Ma vedete a che pericolo l'uomo va!"

XV.

Codex Magliabechianus, Classe xxv, Nro. 636. Libro di Antonio Billi, by Antonio Petrei, Canon of Sta. Maria del Fiore.

"Fra Filippo Lippi Fiorentino fu artitfioso sopra modo. Valse molto nelle compositioni et uarieta, nel colorire, nel rilievo, nello ornamento d' ogni sorte et imitatore del vero.

Dipinse una tauola nel novitiato di Santa ✠ (*Santa Croce*).

Anchora in Firenze et di fuori di molte cose et la cappella maggiore della pieve di Prato et in Santo Ambrugio di Firenze una tauola allo altare grande, honoratissima et gratiosa.

Fecie una tauola in Santo Spirito nella cappella de Barbadori et una tauola nella cappella degli operaj di Santo Lorenzo.

Una predella alla Nuntiata di Santa ✠ (*Santa Croce*).

Nel palazo de Medici una tauola, la quale è oggi nel palazo di Signori, che ui si messe, quondo loro furno fatti rubegli.

La tauola dello altare maggiore delle Murate doue è Santo Bernardo, che ha legato il diavolo; et una tauoletta doue è il presepio, in Annalena."

XVI.

Archivio del Patrimonio Ecclesiastico, Prato. Arch. dell' Opera del S. Cingolo di Prato. Entrata e Uscita del Provveditore, 1451 e 1452.

C. 24. "A Bernardo (di Bandinello Provveditore) detto a dì 21 di Marzo, per un dì mandato a Firenze a l'Arciveschovo chon lettere del Comune, e che io facessi venire frate Giovanni da Fiesole maestro di dipignere per fargli dipignere la chapella del' altare maggiore. L.¹

"A Bernardo di Bandinelo, a dì 29 et a dì 30 di marzo,

¹ Curiously enough, the amount of these payments was never entered.

per due dì mandato a Firenze a Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, e digli che a ogni modi ci venisse per intendessi chon quegli quatro et chol potestà, a dipignere la chapela magiore; et chossì lo menai. L.¹

“A cholui che sta a lato a Checo malischalcho da Firenze, che presta e chavali a vetura, a dì deto, per due dì teni e ronzino suo quando ci menai e frate che dipigne che vi vene suso, e menalo in sino a Fiesole; in tutto che le spese, grossi cinque. L. 1. 7. 6.

“A Bernardo di Bandinelo, a dì primo d' aprile, per un dì che andò a Firenze a rimenare el frate a Fiesole, che mi disono che chossi faciessi. L.¹

“A Bernardo di Bandinello, a dì 5 d' aprile, per un dì mandato a Firenze a cierchare di dipintori che venghano a dipignere la chapela magiore; e a cierchare d' uno maestro di vetro per fare la finestra; e chossì ce ne menai quatro. L.¹”

(From these entries it is clear that the *Potestà* of Prato and the four deputati or *probiviri* who assisted him in this matter spared no efforts to persuade Fra Angelico to undertake the painting of the Choir in the Duomo, and only accepted the services of Fra Filippo in consequence of the Dominican's decided refusal.)

XVII.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Debiti e Crediti D, 1440-1452, p. 436.

“Leonardo di Bartolommeo Bartolini cittadino fiorentino, de' avere a dì VIII d' aghosto 1452, fior. ventidue d' oro larghi; e' quali gli promettiamo per frate Filippo di Tomaso di Firenze, dipintore della chapella magiore della Pieve di Prato, di darglieli per di quì a dì VIII di dicembre prossimo che verrà 1452, in caso che detto frate Filippo non gli avesse finito un cierto tondo del legniamè ch'è del detto Lionardo, cioè di dipignerlo di certa storia che gli aveva chominciata della Vergine Maria. Posto chella chappella debba dare a libro verde Debit. e Cred. E.”

(The *tondo* here referred to, representing a “history of

¹ Curiously enough, the amount of these payments was never entered.

the Virgin Mary," is evidently the Madonna and Child now in the Pitti Gallery, in the background of which the meeting of St. Anne and St. Joachim and the birth of the Blessed Virgin may be seen.)

XVIII.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Debiti e Crediti E, p. 33.

"Frate Filippo di Tomaso dipintore controscritto, de' avere fior. ottantacinque a lir. quatro, sol. cinque per fior., per suo maistero del dipignere el tabernacholo ella tavola ci ha fatta, et d' ogni altra spesa appartenente al detto tabernacholo, e della cholonna del pozzo e ferramenti della charucola, e d' ogni altra spesa avesse fatto per detto tabernacholo, d' achordo chollui questo dì XXVIII di magio 1453.

"Sono in tutto lir. trecento sessantuna, sol. cinque.— L. 360. 19. 11 (*sic*)."

(This document refers to the small panel picture, now badly damaged, in the Ceppo at Prato, representing the Madonna and Child, together with the portrait of Francesco di Marco Datini and four *probiviri*.)

XIX.

Archivio del Patrimonio Ecclesiastico, Prato. Carte del Convento dei Servi, Entrate e Uscite, 1465-1470.

"A dì 2 dete (February 2, 1467), a frate Philipo dipintore per fornito pagamento della taula, de 12 duchati che li promise el padre generale, detteli duchati sei larghi; valsero a moneta lire trentatre soldi dieci."

"1468, Marzo. Queste sono spese fatte dal reverendissimo padre generale e da me fate in più persone . . . e al battiloro dessemo firini (*sic*) cinque larghi per oro batutto, che dette a Frate Filippo depentore per la taula ch' è all' altare grande, che ebelli in più volte a dì 28 de genaio, a dì 7 di marzo e a dì 14 di marzo 1467."

(These two payments refer to the altar-piece of the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple in the church of Santo Spirito, Prato.)

XX.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Libro di stanziamenti e deliberazioni del 1453. Rogiti di Messer Bartolommeo de' Migliorati da Prato, notaro pubblico fiorentino.

“Die 8 di dicembre 1456. Deliberarono e sopraddetti rettori tucti e quatro dacordo che Giovanni camarlincho detto, possa dare et pagare senza suo preiudicio et dano a Frate Filippo dipintore, uno resto di fiorini dieci de avere da questo ceppo chome apare a libro debitori e creditori.”

XXI.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Quoted by Amadio Baldanzi.

“Sia noto e manifesto a qualunque persona, come io frate Filippo di Tommaso dipintore otolto a fare oggi questo di detto 11 di febbraio 1459, di sopra la volta la quale è sopra la sepoltura di M. Gimignano nel chostro dei frati di S^o. Francesco di Prato, la quale o tolto a fare da d^o. M. Gimignano proposto di Prato, della quale siamo rimasti d' accordo vi sia dentro in ogni lunetta di detta volta, cioè nella prima la Nostra Donna col Figliuolo in braccio, e nell' altra lunetta S^o. Francesco colle stimate, e nell' altra S^o. Girolamo, e nell' altra S^o. Stefano e Santo Lorenzo, che viene in una di dette lunette due figure, che sono in tutto quattro lunette, che sono in tutto figure cinque, che così siamo d' accordo, e fatte in tal modo come è in questo foglio il disegno¹, e ogni e ciascun cosa a sue spese; e più siamo d' accordo sia ¹ mio pagamento fiorini venti larghi, e detto lavoro lo prometto esser fatto per tutto settembre prossimo da venire 1460; e più siamo d' accordo che benchè io avessi fatto detto lavoro, non possi addimandare il detto prezzo di fiorini venti larghi che di qui a tutto detto tempo, cioè per tutto settembre d^o. di sopra; e quando me li desse, sarebbe per sua cortesia: e più se accadesse detta dipintura non fusse fatta, o fatta fare in detto tempo, M. Gimignano la possa allogare e far finire chi piacesse a lui, senza alcuno danno di se; e per questo osservare detto M. Gimignano obbliga se e sui rede e beni presenti

¹ On the back of this document is the drawing, with the following inscription: “Copia fatta e riscritta questo dì 11 febb. 1459 d' un foglio del disegno della pittura de chiostri di S. Francesco.”

e futuri; e per chiarezza di ciò, io Fra Filippo sopra d^o. o fatto questa di mia propria mano, anno e mese di detto dì sopra, e con volontà di detto M. Gimignano con dua testimoni, cioè Jacopo di Piero da Centina, e Bartolomeo di Sebastiano da Prato, i quali si sottoscriveranno di lor propria mano essere stati presenti a quanto sopra si contiene.”

XXII.

Archivio dei Ceppi, Prato. Libro d' Entrata e Uscita della Propositura, c. 14 e 52.

“1460. A dì 17 giugno, ebbe Biagio muratore chiamato Malviso, staia tre di grano per parte di pagamento di lire cinque, sol. 8, per tavole per fare lo ponte a fr. Filippo a Sco. Francesco per fare le figure di mess. lo Proposto (Inghirami), a ragione di sol. undici, che sono lire una, soldi tredici: portò detto grano Michele di Giovanni da Filettole.

“A dì 7 di detto (luglio), ebbe Biagio Malviso, soldi diciotto di chontanti, per resto di tavole vendè a Mess. lo Proposto per fare lo palcho a frate Filippo dipintore, cioè a Sco. Francesco.

“A dì 8 di luglio, ano sopradetto, ebbe Biagio sopradetto staia sei di grano, per resto di pagamento di sopradette tavole, cioè per soldi dieci lo staio, che sono lire tre; lo quale grano portò Michele di Giovanni da Filettole.”

CATALOGUE OF THE WORKS OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THE GALLERIES IN WHICH
THEY ARE CONTAINED.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY.

BUDAPESTH. *Esterhazy Gallery.*

The Virgin and Child with St. Antony and St. Lawrence.

A panel; evidently from Fra Filippo's *bottega*, but not by his hand.

BRITISH ISLES.

LONDON. *National Gallery.*

The Annunciation.

A lunette; formerly in the Riccardi Palace, Florence, later in the Metzger Collection; bought in 1861 by Sir Charles Eastlake, who presented it to the National Gallery. [666]

St. John the Baptist and Saints.

A lunette; same origin as preceding one; bought in 1861 by Mr. Barker, who sold it to the National Gallery. [667]

The Vision of St. Bernard.

Hexagonal panel; from the Palazzo della Signoria, Florence. [248]

Angel presenting Infant Jesus to Blessed Virgin.

Panel; probably by a pupil of Fra Filippo, but of inferior technique; formerly in the collection of Signor Zambrini of Imola, who sold it to the National Gallery in 1857. [589]

Madonna and Child with Saints.

Panel ; by an imitator of Fra Filippo. [586]

ASHRIDGE. *Lord Brownlow's Collection.*

The Madonna and Child.

A panel picture.

RICHMOND. *Exors. of the late Sir Francis Cook's Collection.*

Adoration of the Magi (*tondo*).

Panel.

Archangel Michael and St. Anthony.

Panel.

FRANCE.

PARIS. *The Louvre.*

Madonna and Child with Angels and Saints.

Panel ; formerly in the sacristy of Santo Spirito,
Florence. [234]

The Nativity ; from the church of Santa Margherita in
Prato.

A panel picture. [233]

Collection of the Duc d'Aumale.

The Virgin and Child, with six Angels and St. Peter
and St. Anthony.

A small panel ; formerly in the Reiset Collection,
and attributed at first to Masaccio.

GERMANY.

BERLIN. *The Museum.*

The Nativity.

Panel ; originally in the possession of Polidoro
Bracciolini of Pistoja ; later in the Solly Collection.

[69]

Madonna and Child.

Panel ; bought from the Solly Collection in 1821 ;
considerably damaged. [58]

The Madonna della Misericordia.

Panel ; also bought from the Solly Collection in
1821. [95]

Meeting of Christ with St. John the Baptist.

An altar-piece, by one of Fra Filippo's pupils ;
presented to the Gallery in 1842 by King Frederic
William IV. [94]

The Coronation of the Virgin.

Altar-piece, probably by an imitator of Botticelli's
manner ; was bought for the Gallery by Rumohr. [72]

Madonna and Infant Jesus.

Panel ; by a good follower of Lippi's manner ;
originally in the Solly Collection. [70]

Madonna and St. John the Baptist adoring Infant Jesus.

Panel ; evidently from Fra Filippo's designs, but
of inferior technique ; bought from the Solly Collec-
tion in 1825. [110]

The Annunciation.

Panel ; probably by Fra Diamante after his
master's designs. [1065]

MUNICH. *The Gallery.*

The Virgin and Child.

A panel picture, bought at Florence in 1808 by
King Louis of Bavaria. [1006]

The Annunciation.

A small panel, somewhat damaged, formerly
attributed to Masolino da Panicale, and bought as
such in 1808 by the Abbé Rovanni in Florence. [1007]

The Angelic Salutation.

A panel picture, from the Murate monastery in
Florence. [1005]

ITALY.

FLORENCE. *The Academy.*

The Virgin adoring the Divine Child.

Panel, from the convent of Camaldoli outside
Florence. [12]

The Nativity.

Panel, from the monastery of Annalena. [12]

{ The Miracle of San Frediano, Bishop of Lucca.

{ The announcing to the Virgin of her approaching
decease.

{ St. Augustine in his study.

These three pictures formed the predella to the

- Louvre Madonna and Child, formerly in the sacristy of the church of Santo Spirito, Florence. [42]
 The Coronation of the Virgin.
 Altar-piece, from the church of Sant' Ambrogio. [41]
- Madonna and Child with Saints.
 A panel picture, formerly in the church of Santa Croce. [40]
 The Annunciata and St. Anthony.
 Panel, forming, together with the following, the lateral parts or shutters of an altar-piece. [47]
 The Archangel Gabriel (above), St. John the Baptist (below).
 Panel. [48]
 St. Jerome.
 A panel picture, formerly in the monastery of Annalena. [44]
- Pitti Gallery.*
 Madonna and Child.
 A panel picture. [338]
- The Uffizi Gallery.*
 Madonna and Child with two Angels.
 A panel picture, painted for the chapel of Cosimo de' Medici (*il vecchio*), and formerly in the guard-
 roba of the Pitti Palace. [1307]
 St. Augustine writing.
 A small panel, formerly in the Hungerford Collec-
 tion; bought for the Gallery in 1779.
 (Probably one of Botticelli's early works.) [1179]
 Madonna and Child with Saints, from Santa Maria Nuova.
 A large panel picture, probably by one of Fra Filippo's pupils. [23]
- Church of San Lorenzo.*
 The Annunciation, with predella containing episodes in the life of St. Nicholas of Bari.
 A panel picture, extensively restored.
- Chiesa degl' Innocenti.*
 Angel presenting Divine Child to the Virgin.
 A panel picture, much restored.

Casa Alessandri (in Borgo degli Albizi).

San Lorenzo enthroned, with SS. Cosmo and Damian.

A *tondo*, from the church of Vincigliata.

Palazzo Strozzi.

The Annunciation.

A small panel, much damaged.

LUCCA. *Gallery.*

Madonna and Child with Saints.

Panel, probably by Filippino ; much restored. [16]

NAPLES. *Galleria del Museo Nazionale.*

Two Angels presenting Infant Jesus to Virgin.

Panel ; the composition greatly resembles the two pictures by Fra Filippo on the same subject in the Uffizi and in the church of the Innocenti, but the colouring and technique are very inferior, showing it to be the work of a poor imitator of the Friar, certainly not Botticelli, to whom it is attributed in the Catalogue. [31]

PRATO. *The Municipal Gallery.*

Madonna and Child with Saints.

A large panel picture, formerly in the Ceppo at

Prato. Considerably damaged and restored. [21]

Predella of the Louvre Nativity, representing :

{ The Circumcision.

{ The Adoration of the Magi.

{ The Massacre of the Innocents. [22]

The Madonna della Cintola.

A panel picture, formerly in the church of Santa

Margherita. [11]

The Nativity.

A panel picture, formerly in the refectory of San Domenico.

Church of Santo Spirito.

Presentation of the Infant Christ in the Temple.

A panel picture ; much damaged and partly repainted in oil.

The Duomo.

Death of St. Jerome.

A panel picture, in good preservation.

Frescoes representing episodes in the lives of St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen.

The Ceppo.

Madonna and Child, with portrait of Marco Datini.
A small panel, badly damaged.

ROME. *Lateran Gallery.*

The Coronation of the Virgin. (6th Room, wall of egress.)
Altar-piece, from the chapel of St. Bernard in the Olivetan Convent of Arezzo. Tryptich.

Mr. Ludwig Mond's Collection.

The Angelic Salutation.

Panel; formerly in the possession of the Piccardi family at Bagno a Ripoli, near Florence. In this composition Fra Filippo was probably assisted by his friend and pupil Fra Diamante.

Doria Gallery.

The Annunciation.

Panel picture, in which Fra Diamante's collaboration may also be traced.

Colonna Gallery.

Madonna and Child.

Panel picture; inferior imitation of Fra Filippo's manner.

SPOLETO. *The Duomo.*

Frescoes representing the Annunciation, Nativity, Death, and Coronation of the Virgin (unfinished).

TURIN. *Accademia di Belle Arti.*

Two Saints.

A large panel picture.

[103]

St. Anthony Abbot and a Holy Bishop.

Panel, evidently forming, together with the preceding picture, part of an altar-piece. These two panels are attributed to Girolamo Giovenone, but show all the characteristics of Fra Filippo's manner and technique. They are much damaged. [404]

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