



ILLUSTRATIONS

TO

rowning's oems.

PART I.

1. The Coronation of the Virgin, from the Painting by FRA LIPPO LIPPI in the *Accademia delle Belle Arti* at Florence, described in Browning's "*Fra Lippo Lippi*," lines 347—387.
2. Andrea del Sarto and his Wife, from the Painting by ANDREA DEL SARTO in the Pitti Palace, Florence, which gave rise to Browning's "*Andrea del Sarto*."
3. The Angel and Child, from the Picture by GUERCINO in the Chapel at Fano, in Italy, on the Adriatic, which is the subject of Browning's "*Guardian-Angel*."

THREE PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALINARI, BROTHERS, VIA NAZIONALE, FLORENCE,

WITH A

NOTICE OF THE ARTISTS AND THE PICTURES

BY

ERNEST RADFORD.

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PUBLISHED FOR

The Browning Society

BY N. TRÜBNER & CO., 57 & 59, LUDGATE HILL,
LONDON, E.C. 1882.



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[The COMMITTEE hope that the Second Part of these *Illustrations* will contain Photographs of the four Rafael

“Madonnas—

Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre.”

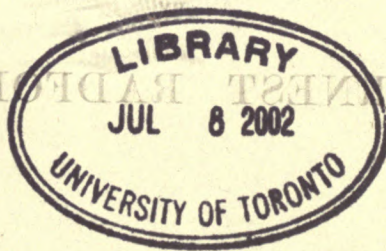
One Word More, lines 22-4.

and perhaps of *a.* the Market-“Square in Florence” where the “Book” of *The Ring and the Book* was bought (*R. & B. i.* 43—83), and *b.* John of Douay's Statue of “The Great-Duke Ferdinand . . . set . . . on horseback here aloft” in the Piazza of the Santissima Annunziata at Florence, for *The Statue and the Bust* (st. 68, l. 202-4).

But before this, will be issued the Photographs already made of Browning's house about to be pulld down, 19 Warwick Crescent, W., and his Library and Drawing-Room there. These will be sent out as soon as the Society has funds for printing them.—F. J. F.]

WITH A

NOTICE OF THE ARTISTS AND THE PICTURES



PUBLISHED FOR

The Browning Society

BY N. FRISHER & CO., 27 & 29, LUDGATE HILL,

LONDON, E.C., 1882.



Illustrations to Browning's Poems.

PART I.



DO not know how I can better fulfil my promise of letter-press to accompany this interesting issue of photographs, than by simply extracting from the pages of *Vasari* a few of those passages which throw most light upon the lives of the great artists, the problems of whose minds have furnished subjects to our poet. And this, with but a word prefaced, I propose to do.

Fra Angelico was born in 1387, *Masaccio* ("hulking Tom" of the poem) in 1401, and *Fra Lippo Lippi* in 1400. These dates are significant (though perhaps but roughly correct). Angelico was incomparably the greatest of the distinctively mediæval school, whose *dicta* the Prior in the poem has all at his tongue's end. To "paint the souls of men," to "make them forget there's such a thing as flesh," was the end of his art. "Give us *no more of body than shows soul*," says the Prior (quoting from Winckelmann, with quaint foreknowledge).

And, side by side with Angelico, Masaccio painted. His short life taught him a different lesson—"the value and significance of flesh." He would paint by preference the *bodies* of men, and would give us *no more of soul* than the body can reveal. So he "laboured," saith the chronicler,¹ "in naked," and his frescoes mark an epoch in art. From his time, and forward, religious painting in the old sense was at an end. Painters no longer attempted to transcend Nature, but to copy her, and to copy her in her loveliest aspects. The breach between the old order and the new was complete.

(1) In such a time of transition and conflict, our friend *Lippo Lippi* was born. Nothing, as I think, can be finer than the manner in which Browning, working upon such facts as *Vasari*² supplies, shows us the age reflected in the painter's mind. How closely the poet has followed the historian; yet how truly a *creation* is the character he sets before us!

¹ "The Complete Gentleman, fashioning him absolut in the most necessary and commendable Qualities concerning Minde or body, that may be required in a noble Gentleman." By Henry Peacham, Master of Arts. LONDON, 1634.

² The following extracts are from Mrs. Jonathan Foster's *Vasari*, published by Bohn, 1851.

"By the death of his father he [Fra Lippo Lippi] was left a friendless orphan at the age of two years, his mother also having died shortly after his birth. The child was for some time under the care of a certain *Mona Lapaccia*, his aunt, the sister of his father, who brought him up with great difficulty till he had attained his eighth year, when, being no longer able to support the burden of his maintenance, she placed him in the above-named convent of the Carmelites."

Here is Browning's vivid paraphrase of the simple story:

"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
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up, and down I went.
Old aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger, as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the Convent."

But in the Carmelite convent, continues *Vasari*,

"in proportion as he showed himself dexterous and ingenious in all works performed by hand, did he manifest the utmost dulness and incapacity in letters, to which he would never apply himself, nor would he take any pleasure in learning of any kind."

"Such a to-do!" says our Lippo of the poem. "They tried me with their books. Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!" But all the more for that ignorance he learnt the "looks of things," and covered the blank cloister walls with the things he saw, and all the monks

"Closed in a circle and praised loud,
Till checked (taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies). 'That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!'"

We turn again to our history.

"It is said that Fra Filippo 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 which had attracted his attention in his paintings, and endeavour by discoursing and reasoning with himself to diminish the violence of his inclination. It was known that whilst occupied in the pursuit of his pleasures the works undertaken by him received little or none of his 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 time in running about; but, having endured this confinement for two days, he then made ropes with the sheets of his bed, which he cut to pieces for that purpose, and so, having let himself down from a window, escaped, and for several days gave himself up to amusements."

I cannot forbear quoting from the poem again, though I make my paper long, so as to place side by side the two accounts of this charming episode.

"I've been shut *three weeks* 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.
There came a hurry of feet, and little feet,
A sweep of lute strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—

Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our Earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?
Flower o' the thyme,—and so on. Round they went.

Scarce had they turned the corner, when a titter,
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim
shapes—

And a face that looked up. . . . Zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them."

Browning's account of the monk's dissipations, though incomparably the more vivid, is yet the more temperate of the two. It was *three weeks*, according to him, before the rebellion of the flesh becomes irresistible. *Vasari* says *two days*, which indeed seems the likelier period. And *Vasari* says also that for "three days" he was irreclaimable. Browning gives him only one night's license, and then we meet him returning to

"go work

On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast,
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh!"

Cosimo, it seems, abandoned these coercive measures.
When he

"found that the painter had disappeared, he caused him to be sought, and Fra Filippo at last returned 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 afterward, 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 rare genius were as forms of light, and not beasts of burden."

It has been stated, I observe, that "critical comments" upon the pictures which have been photographed for the Society are to proceed from my pen. Indeed there is little that I can say by way of criticism upon them, and still less that appears called for. The photograph of Lippo Lippi's work will be before all who read these notes. It is good enough for all to judge for themselves of its general character, and for all to be able to compare with it the description introduced into the poem. It is a picture of the greatest beauty, and eminently characteristic of the painter. In subject and general disposition it belongs still to the old religious school. But those "sweet, angelic slips of things," those "little lily things," are a new kind, and purged not wholly of the flesh. Those "soft palms" are fitted for a softer terrestrial service; and those soft eyes, soon a-weary of up-looking, will throw disengaged shy glances on Florentine gallants, and even (and these God fortify) on priests of the holy Church!

Space does not allow me to quote, but I cannot abandon these desultory remarks on Filippo without referring to the 'Imaginary Conversation' which *Landor* gives as between the painter and Pope Eugenius. Lippo Lippi has been a captive in Barbary, and is admitted upon his return to the presence of the Pope that he may recount his experiences. The treatment of the subject by Browning and by *Landor* is very different, yet each has divined truly, and presents clearly, the vital character of the man and of his age.

(2) In the poem of *Andrea del Sarto* the imagination of the poet soars higher; his verse strikes a deeper chord. He has a finer subject, though he follows a fainter clue. There is nothing in the character of *Andrea*, as Browning reads it, incompatible with the account of *Vasari*; yet the ordinary reader will see little in the bare facts of the life there superficially detailed to suggest the melancholy depths of thought revealed by the poet.

Of the picture which immediately inspired the poem I have already written.¹ The photograph which is before the Society is from a negative very considerably retouched by the artist. The original 'proof,' taken *directly* from the picture, is now, I believe, in the possession of our founder and director, and is an undistinguishable smudge. To my mind that photograph conveys but little idea of the work, though it is interesting enough as showing its general character. It is fair, however, to say that others think it as good as can be, and are pleased exceedingly.

The Browning Society is perhaps aware that doubt has been thrown upon the authorship of this picture,—as to whether it is from *Andrea's* hand or not; and also upon its subject,—as to whether it represents the painter and his wife, or a lady and gentleman unknown.

¹ 'Browning Bibliography,' p. 160 1.



P. 2° N. 15931 FIRENZE-GALLERIA PITTI RITRATTO DI ANDREA DEL SARTO E DI LUCREZIA DEL SARTO E DI LUCREZIA DELLA FEDE SUA MOGLIE (ANDREA DEL SARTO)

With regard to these points, the authors of the catalogue of the gallery in which the picture hangs are complacently content to believe, as to the first, that it is an original work of Andrea del Sarto, and, as to the second, that it represents him and his wife.

The picture appears to be without a history that can be traced, and is therefore the proper prey of the cunning connoisseur. I have no knowledge by which to determine its authorship, and (so open is my mind) no faith in the opinions of brother amateurs. The experts, whose opinions are law when, by chance, they coincide, appear silent for the most part on the point.

With regard to the portraits themselves, I have seen many of Andrea. No two are much alike, but this one has always seemed to me to hold its place in the series of them, and (if the Hibernicism be excused) to be more like the painter than any. In plainer language I would say, it is the best *representative* of the series. The magnificent portrait by Andrea in the National Gallery bears the least resemblance to the others, and may very probably not be the painter's portrait at all, yet I fancy it must have been vividly before Browning's eye as he wrote. The quiet "silver-gray" tone of that picture is wonderfully in accord with the twilight melancholy of the poem.

Let us turn again to *Vasari*. Andrea del Sarto, "the faultless painter" (an appellation in praise of his excellence in art which our Cambridge Public Orator has happily rendered in Latin by *sine fraude*), was, as sufficiently appears in the poem, a contemporary of Raphael and Michel Angelo. In taking some extracts from *Vasari* as to his art and life, I must leave to the reader the task of comparing them with the poem. First of his art. In Andrea del Sarto, says Vasari,

"art and nature combined to show all that may be done in painting when design, colouring, and invention unite in one and the same person. Had this master possessed a *somewhat bolder and more elevated mind*, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would beyond all doubt have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardour and animation which are proper to the more exalted character should ever appear in him; nor did he ever display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him truly a divine painter; wherefore the works of Andrea are wanting in those ornaments of grandeur, richness, and force which appear so conspicuously in those of many other masters. *His figures are nevertheless well drawn, they are entirely free from errors, and perfect in all their proportions, and are for the most part simple and chaste.* The expression of his heads is natural and graceful in women and children, while in youths and old men it is full of life and animation. The draperies of this master are beautiful to a marvel, and the nude figures

are admirably executed; the drawing is simple, the colouring is most exquisite, nay, it is truly divine."

The italics in the foregoing extract are mine. I have thought it worth quoting *in extenso*, in part because it seems to me a just criticism of the painter, better far than in words of my own I could frame, but chiefly because, as all will see, nearly the whole *poem* of *Andrea del Sarto* is a mere translation into the *Subjective Mood* (if I may so say) of this passage in which the painter's work is criticized from an external standpoint.

Except for the account which Vasari gives of his ill-assorted marriage, the reader of this biography would not suppose Andrea's life to have been a specially sad or unfortunate one. He appears to have been in his element in many of the social entertainments of the times. The life of the painter *Francesco Rustici*, which Vasari writes, is mainly devoted to a diverting account of the astounding orgies of the two societies of the "Trowel" and the "Cauldron," of both of which Andrea appears to have been a quite indispensable member. I hardly know any more entertaining reading than the account of these societies, nor any (unless in Cellini's incomparable memoirs) which brings so vividly to the mind the life of a past age. It is long for quotation, and I must confine myself to such extracts only as may be considered to have supplied the materials of the poem. Recent researches into Andrea's life throw doubt upon a good deal that Vasari has written concerning the unhappiness of his marriage and the manner of his death. And the biographer himself modifies, in his second edition, the account he had given of the fair Lucrezia. Vasari, it should be said, was a pupil of Andrea, and therefore must in this instance have had special opportunities of knowledge, though he may, on the same account, have had some special *animus* when he wrote. For the purposes of his poem, Browning is content to take the traditional account of the matter, which, after all, seems to be substantially accurate. The following is from the first edition:—

"At that time there was a most beautiful girl in Via di San Gallo, who was married to a cap-maker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and amongst others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents."

Certain pictures of Andrea's which had been painted for the King of France were received with much favour, and an invitation to Andrea soon followed their delivery, to "go and paint at the French court." He went accordingly, and "painted proudly," as Browning relates, and prospered every way. But

"one day, being employed on the figure of a St. Jerome doing penance, which he was painting for the mother of the king, there came to him certain letters from Florence; these were written him by his wife; and from that time (whatever may

have been the cause) he began to think of leaving France. He asked permission to that effect from the French king accordingly, saying that he desired to return to Florence, but that *when he had arranged his affairs in that city he would return without fail* to his Majesty: he added that when he came back his wife should accompany him, to the end that he might remain in France the more quietly; *and that he would bring with him pictures and sculptures of great value.* The king, confiding in these promises, gave him money for the purchase of those pictures and sculptures, Andrea taking an oath on the gospels to return within the space of a few months, and that done he departed to his native city.

"He arrived safely in Florence, enjoying the society of his beautiful wife and that of his friends, with the sight of his native city, during several months; but when the period specified by the king, and that at which he ought to have returned, had come and passed, he found himself at the end, not only of his own money, but, what with building" (the "melancholy little house they built to be so gay with"), "indulging himself in various pleasures, and doing no work, of that belonging to the French monarch also, the whole of which he had consumed. He was, nevertheless, determined to return to France, but the prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king."

And so, for a pretty woman's sake, was a great nature degraded. And out of sympathy with its impulses, broad and deep and tender as only the greatest can show, *Andrea del Sarto*, our great, sad poem, was written.

(3) About the third of these pictures I have little to say. I have not had the happiness, in this case, of having seen the original, and can only accept Signor Alinari's perhaps partial account of the excellence of his photograph.

Guercino was born in 1590, and Vasari's history of course does not include an account of his life. He was a very active painter in the time of the decadence, and his style was well calculated to hasten the decline. Loose drawing, and flashy chiaroscuro, and superficial bad colour, and a swift, flat manner of painting seem to have been his technical qualifications. The qualities of his mind were in accord with those of his hand and eye. He tries to be tragic, and is sensational.

"Guercino drew this angel I saw teach that little child to pray."

On this I would only remark that I hope he *did*. And I have no good reason for supposing that he did not, yet I say this advisedly, because for some four years I have been basking in the beauty of a "St. Cecilia, by Guercino," in our gallery at Dulwich, and have taken my friends to see it, and to enjoy it with me; and have explained, to those who knew not the painter, that "dear Guercino" did not always "work so earnestly," or so sweetly; and now, to my horror, I find that the catalogue of that gallery has been "carefully revised" (not at all before it needed it), and dear Guercino's picture is taken from him, and given to I know not whom! That was the sole picture which made me believe it possible that Guercino could inspire a poem of Browning's. But now, and as matters stand, I feel that we should reserve our judgment until the *Fano* local authorities, little knowing what they do, have invited Mr. Richter to inspect their treasures. You have the photograph and you have the poem. *My* faith in "dear Guercino" is all gone.



AM asked to add to the foregoing a few words more strictly "descriptive" than anything that there appears. This is a kind of writing for which I have a rare inaptitude, and upon this account I avoided it; and I avoided it also because, even when well done, there are few to enjoy it, and, with the illustrations before us, it seemed as though much writing in this kind would be superfluous.

I have before me a very fine photograph of Lippo's "Coronation." It is perhaps five times the size of that supplied to the Society, and better every way.¹ In it may be seen and, what is better, enjoyed all the details that Browning enumerates (except the "babe"—the "Madonna" is there at the Father's feet, but her immaculate offspring has no place in the picture). There on the right and left are the "bowery flowery angel-brood," with their "lilies and vestments and white faces," such as Lippo had seen in the

street, and loved to think of and to paint in the cloister. On the extreme right is "St. John," the patron saint of Florence, who supplanted the god Mars in the Baptistery "di San Giovanni." St. Ambrose, who "puts down in black and white the convent's friends," is one or other of the two bishops, if he is there at all. But neither of them has the trade-mark by which in other pictures the saint may be known,—the bee-hive, recalling the fable of the swarm of bees that settled on his infant lips, and departed and did no hurt, or the scourge with its triple thong, emblematic of triumphant Trinitarianism. These important hagiological adjuncts being absent, the good bishop is hard to identify. Browning's description of him as the saint who "puts down in black and white the convent's friends" does not much help us, because neither of these mitred men allows us to detect him in the act of reporting the ceremony. The "man of Uz" has his name written very legibly on his shoulder, so there is no difficulty with him.

The painter himself is on the right, come half up "out of a corner . . . as one by a dark stair into a great light, music,

¹ It is no. 2342; 15½ by 21½ inches; and is published by Brogi, of Florence and Naples, at 6 or 8 francs.



P. 2.ª N.º 15825 FANO-CHIESA DI S. AGOSTINO. L' ANGELO CUSTODE. (GUERCINO).

and talking." And there is the "sweet, angelic slip of a thing," with one hand beckoning, and with the other holding the scroll—*Is · perfecit · opus*. I have not language wherewith to detail the beauties of this great picture. There are female faces of haunting loveliness, and faces of men as full of dignity and fine power as the austerities of the priesthood allow; and again, there is a face, and this reveals the true Lippo Lippi beneath the cowl which made him a monk, which shows a mere man not elevated at all by his surroundings, nor moved before the very throne of God. We see him on the left of the picture, his chin supported on his hand. Of the earth earthy, and carnal before the Incarnate, somewhere or other Lippo had marked his face, and now he puts a crown upon his head, and sets him down before the heavenly throne. The sanctity of that neighbourhood is nohow better suggested than by the intrusion of this sensual outsider. Perhaps Lippo was not conscious of his irony, and the perception of it is our own. But this juxtaposition of the pure and impure, of heavenly and earthly, is the *note* of the painter. In no picture can it be seen better than in a small work in the National Gallery, which now I can only imperfectly recall. There are monks seated in a row, and amongst them is one with a young face full of beauty, of earnestness and intense devotion. There are others that I remember little, but at the extreme end of the row is a face which seems, without being a caricature, to be the fleshly embodiment of all that is distinctively ungodly in man's impulses. If any one going into the National Gallery will look once at this picture, he will get at a glance the whole idea of Lippo Lippi's art, and of his character as history (or Vasari) has revealed it. Those who have patience to search beneath the shiny surface of this photograph, and peer into its black depths for the faces half hidden in muddy *-oscuro*, will get a faint feeling of the beauty of the original work. The larger photograph, however, is very fine, and shows innumerable beauties of detail of which the small one gives no sign. The angelic faces, the pure white lilies, the exquisite flower wreaths upon the fair heads of the girl choir, all these can be enjoyed. Those who would have the colour (not now what it was), and would *see the paint* (and the sad repainting), must take scrip for their journey and travel.

Passing now to the representation of Andrea del Sarto and his wife, I make no apology for reprinting a letter which in the first instance was not written as if for the press, and which I never supposed would be printed at all. It was written when the picture was more vividly in my eye than it is now, and, rough as the expression must be, I do not know how to describe it better than in the words which came first to my mind. I am glad to hear that the photograph which I have been bold enough to abuse has been condemned by so good a judge as Mr. Fairfax Murray, and that the very beautiful copy which that artist has made has been finely reproduced in facsimile by Messrs. Dawson.

"In the gallery of the Pitti palace, numbered in the catalogue 118, and painted by Andrea del Sarto, is a portrait of himself and his wife. I think no one can look at this picture, with Browning's most beautiful poem in his mind, without being deeply moved, and without feeling at the same time sure that it was from this picture that the poet received the *impulse* to his work. The mere facts (as we all know) are as old at least as Vasari.

"As a student, Browning's deep penetration into matters of art has always delighted me. His clear divination of the restless *individualities* that can be subjugated, and *lost* sometimes to a careless eye, in the exhibition of the ordered graces of art (whether that art be a painter's, a musician's, or a poet's), he has shown again and again. There is a great band of artists—in all kinds—to whom he has revealed himself as a true friend; and we love him because he first loved us. The poem of *Andrea del Sarto* exhibits this power of penetration in a remarkable degree. Any one who has sat, as I have, looking at the picture of which I write, will feel that the poem is *true*—not merely typically but historically.

"The catalogue says: 'The painter, seen in three-quarter face, appears by the gesture of his left hand to appeal to his wife Lucrezia Fede. His right hand rests on her shoulder' (his arm is *around* her, I may remark—an act of tenderness which has much to do with the pathos of the composition). 'Lucrezia is presented in full face, with a golden chain on her neck, and a letter in her hands.'

"The artist and his wife are represented at half-length. Andrea turns towards her with a pleading expression on his face—a face not so beautiful as that in the splendid portrait in the National Gallery; but when once felt, it strikes a deeper chord. It wears an expression that cannot be forgotten—that nothing can suggest but the poem of Browning. Andrea's right arm, as I said, is round her; he leans forward as if searching her face for the strength that has gone from himself. She is beautiful. I have seen the face (varied as a musician varies his theme) in a hundred pictures. She holds the letter in her hand, and looks neither at that nor at him, but straight out of the canvas. And the beautiful face, with the red brown hair, is passive and unruffled, and awfully expressionless.

'I've but one simile, and that's a blunder,
For a *proud angry woman*, and that's silent thunder!'

writes Byron (I will not vouch for my quotation). There is 'silent thunder' in this face if there ever was, tho' there is no anger. It suggests only a very mild, and at the same time immutable determination to 'have her own way.' It seems rather a personification of Obstinacy in the female type (which would have looked well *in stone*, had the Greeks thought of it) than a portrait. She is a magnificent *Rosamund Vincy*, and will lure her husband to his own damnation as kindly and surely as George Eliot's heroine does the unfortunate Lydgate.

"There is no photograph of this picture, or I should have sent you one. Really whilst looking at it the words of the poem come little by little into my mind, and it seems as if I had read them in Andrea's face. And so now when I read it in my room, the picture is almost as vividly before me as when I am in the gallery, so completely do the two seem complementary. Wishing your society all success,

"I remain, &c.

"Florence, Nov. 11th, 1882."

As to the angel which "dear Guercino" painted, I have already expressed myself unable to give any opinion. The face as shown in the photograph is certainly of great beauty, and her tender guardianship of the wingless infant, who has the natural aspiration of all young people (and many who are old) to have pinions and gyrate in a space of three dimensions, gives a feeling to the picture which makes it a subject very worthy of the poet. As to the authenticity of the work, a "retouched" photograph supplies no *data* upon which to base any criticism. I have not had the advantage of seeing the original work, and am very well content to believe that Guercino did it. Clearly it is of his time.¹ It may be remarked that the drapery and the stiff amorphous right leg of the winged visitor are more suggestive a great deal of Guercino's manner than is the lovely and dignified face, and the true tenderness of the composition viewed as a whole.

ERNEST RADFORD.

¹ P.S. I have just found an old print by *Vitalba*, contemporary of Bartolozzi, of a pen drawing by Guercino, which it seems likely was one of his original studies for the picture. The angel and the child are seen only in half length, and the other details of the finished work are wanting. But it is a charming print, and as good an illustration of the poem as could be wished. [It is being reduced and engraved for the Society.—F.]

Florence, so long the Brownings' home, the home too of Fra Lippo and Andrea.² The following description of it from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 6, 1882, entitled 'The Crown of Florence,' will be welcome to our Members.—F. J. F.

"Few survivals of ancient appellation are so happy as that of Florence, the *Fiorentia*—flower-land—of the Romans. Founded after the days when a hill-top was reckoned a necessity for a strong city site, and the Roman wall, like our modern earthworks, made strongholds anywhere, it was built in the midst of the leveliest plain in Italy—the Arno, running by it, in those days of still wooded hills probably a navigable stream all the way from the sea;—and, circling round it, a crown of hills and mountains, the Carrara range dim in the west, and the mountains of Vallombrosa closing the view to the east. A garden it must have been, for it is so still; roses never fail, and how the florist lives, one can hardly comprehend, for he sells his harvest for less than a song, the street singers being better paid. No one knows Florence who has not stayed there through the heats of June, when flower and fruit are in their perfection and abundance, and when the whole country round is in the glow of the early sultry heats, still refreshed by occasional showers, and while the landscape is still wrapped in vivid green, and the vine and olive in their highest state of growth, loading the air with the fragrance of their blossoming. It is hot in the city at times, but the evenings are delicious—before the mosquito begins his piping career, and while the wandering bands of singers have not wearied the visitor by the repetition of their limited repertory of songs.

"When the days get too hot, we, who cling to Florence in spite of the fervid summer, take refuge in the hills that surround it—the mural crown on whose battlements innumerable villas furnish cool retreat by day, and fresh and bracing nights. Our villa crowns one of the Fiesolan range, which makes the wall on the north side, and from which we

command a superb view of the whole valley of the Arno—Fiesole, the prehistoric predecessor of Florence, to the east, a little overtopping us; to the west, the minor branch of the Apennines above Pistoia, and across the valley roll away the gentler acclivities of the Val di Chianti and the hills behind which lies Siena; and in the very furthest south, the dim ridges on the thither side of which runs Tiber.

"But down in the plain glistens the Flower City, apparently a rifle-shot away, with its campanile and the domes of its two domed churches, with white-fronted S. Croce—and above them, on its little eminence, the lovely San Miniato church—with far-off glimpses of the Arno winding to the west. Then, from where we stand, the olive orchards and vineyards, mingling and alternating, sink, undulating, down to the plain, in the centre of which stands Florence: a gentle, rolling landscape like that of Surrey in its general character, but with the prevailing occurrence of the olive and cypress in place of the oak and the elm; and with the singular feature, and one utterly unnoticeable to those who remain on the plain, of the multitude of country houses—villas and villini, castelli and poderi—scattered over the whole landscape; so many, indeed, that they become painful to the eye, with their dazzling white squareness flecking the view almost as thickly as daisies in a meadow. Why won't they paint them brown or green or red, or leave the stone unwhitewashed or unpainted? This brilliant white in the unsubdued sunshine of Tuscany is too much; it is the one flaw in an ensemble of quiet, radiant loveliness of nature in the robes of art, which I venture to say can be found nowhere else, not even in Italy. It is no compensation to be told that the most of these villas are the houses of the days of the Medici or their predecessors; that many of them have seen the wars and tumults of the epoch when Florence was waging her wars of conquest on the surrounding municipalities—Fiesole, the impregnable (only finally taken by blockade and starvation), Prato, Pistoia, Pisa, Siena:—no association of the olden times can hang on those white and glistening walls, which look as though the mason had just finished them, and, being ashamed of his masonry, had covered them with a copious whitewash. A curious taste has the Florentine. He builds a new villa in the suburbs, and paints it in imitation of ruins or of Swiss chalets, with elaborate mockery of wood and stone, doves painted on pictured window-sills, and sometimes painted faces looking over them. And then all his really old villas, the buildings where was wrought, to a certain extent, the history of independent Florence, he whitewashes till you cannot tell that they were not built last year.

"As the sun sinks, and the ruddy glow falls across the landscape, the white of the villas melts away in the general softening of its tone, and the sharp, blue shadows of the Upper-Arno hills bring out the exquisite anatomy of their construction. The long shadows of the olive-trees, with their chrysolite green, the russet grey of the lighted olive foliage in the deepening red of the sunshine, and the tender "golden-apple green" of the sky, radiant and cloudless, passing as the sun goes lower to that most marvellous of all the sky colours, the violet-blue of the East, as the direct sunlight is leaving it; all these elements combine to show one what Italy is in her best moments and localities; and one wonders that so few really know it. Then, as the deeper twilight comes on, soft, grey, and indistinct, with outlines melting into the shadows, and the white villas coming out in ghostly blue, the purple sky, and the mists gathering grey along the Arno, the peasants, their work finished for the day, gather in the piazzas of the little hamlets; and we hear from the depths below us, the cheery voices, with song and laughter, coming up and mingling with the songs of the nightingales, who have all day long kept up their piping from their hiding-places in the laurels around, and who will go on when the peasants have gone to sleep, and until the distant landscape, buried in the silence and vapours of night, shows us only the numberless lights of Florence, like a piece of the Milky Way dropped into the plain. And we sit on our terrace long into the night, the olive orchard near-by filling the air with a fragrance like that of a Floridan magnolia grove, and the cloying odour of the vine blossoms coming out to the caressing of the night air with redoubled intensity. One by one, or dozens by dozens, the lights of Florence go out as the shops are shut and the inhabitants go to sleep; the serene and cloudless sky, with its multitude of lights, and the great street lamps along the Lung' Arno, or marking out the Viali, are alone distinctly visible, and the night wears on, more beautiful and tempting than the day, with the nightingale still unwearied, and alone, with us, *forestieri*, to enjoy it."

¹ Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri) was born at Ceuto, in the duchy of Ferrara, in 1590.—Cooper.

