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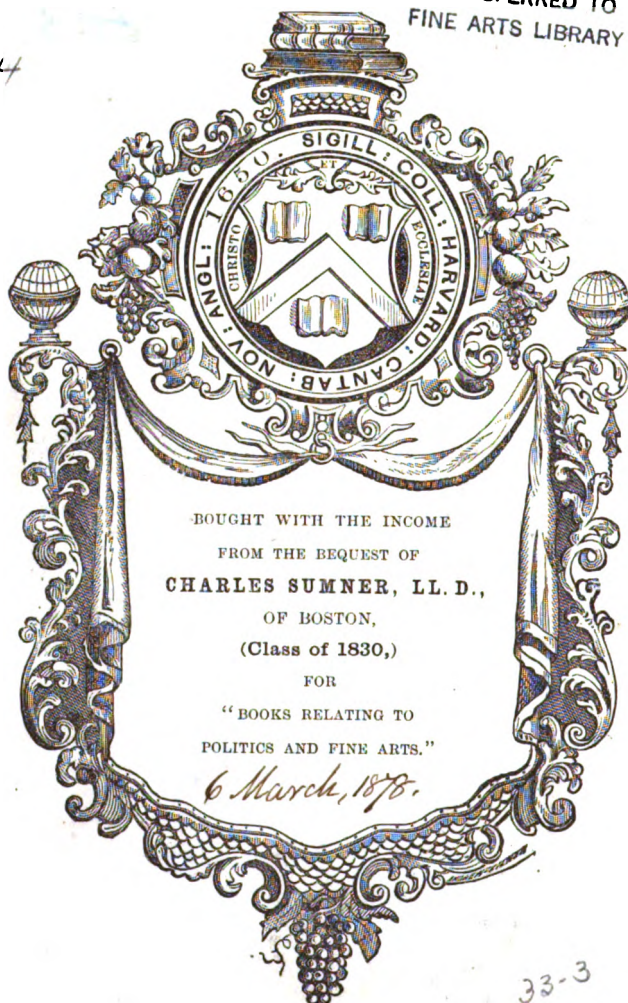
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DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO

AND HIS

FRESCO OF THE DEATH OF S. FRANCIS.

Austen Henry
By A. H. LAYARD, M.P.

2
PRINTED FOR THE ARUNDEL SOCIETY,
1860.

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DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO

AND HIS

Fresco of the Death of S. Francis.

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1878. Mar. 6,
Summer Fund.



THE SASSETTI CHAPEL.

MOST travellers in Italy know the old bridge—the “Ponte Vecchio”—of Florence, with its quaint jewellers’ shops, which have hung, from time out of mind, over the Arno. In

one of them, according to tradition, Tommaso di Currado Bigordi, a goldsmith of repute, followed his calling in the middle of the fifteenth century. He had shown much skill in chiselling votive offerings and various ornaments for the churches of his native city ; and he had become the fashionable jeweller of the day for certain garlands in gold and silver, which were worn in those luxurious times by the Florentine damsels.* He was consequently called "Il Ghirlandaio," or "Grillandaio," the Garland-maker, a name which passed to his descendants.

Tommaso was the father of eight children. Domenico, the eldest, born in 1449, was placed at an early age in the shop to learn his father's trade. But nature had intended him for a painter, not a jeweller. He soon showed his natural inclination by making rapid portraits of those who chanced to pass by his father's shop, instead of minding his work. His education as a jeweller was, indeed, favourable to the development of his talents as a painter, especially as a draughtsman. Many of the greatest artists of the fifteenth century, Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, Masolino, Verrocchio, the Pollaioli, and Botticelli, and even Andrea del Sarto, learnt the first rudiments of their art in the same way. The early practice of modelling and chiselling gives vigour, firmness, and decision to the hand, and to the eye accuracy of judgment as regards outline and a just perception of form. The faculty he had acquired of

* In the severer days of the republic, the use of such ornaments was forbidden by law. "Quod nulla mulier presumat deferre in capite coronam auream vel argenteam vel aliquem lapidem pretiosum," said a solemn ordinance (Gaye, Carteggio, i. 447). Vasari, in his Life of Ghirlandaio, attributes the invention of these garlands to Tommaso, an evident mistake, in which he is followed by Baldinucci in his *Notizie dei Professori del Disegno*.

making portraits from the life led to that feeling for nature, truth, and individuality for which his works afterwards became remarkable. Thus Domenico, without frequenting an academy, attending lectures, or studying from the professional model, laid the best foundation for an artist's successful career. His father was at length convinced that it was useless to keep him to a trade in which he took no delight, and finished by consenting that he should become a painter. But it was necessary that he should study the technical part of his new profession, and for this purpose he appears to have entered the "bottega" of Alessio Baldovinetti, a Florentine master of some fame.

Alessio has been unfortunate in having attributed to him by collectors and connoisseurs a number of pictures of uncommon ugliness, for which some other author could not readily be found. But, in truth, few authentic works by him have been preserved. Almost the only one of any importance is a much injured fresco of the Nativity, in the outer court of the church of the Annunziata at Florence, in which he has borrowed the principal group, the Virgin adoring the new-born Child, from Filippo Lippi. Vasari especially praises it for a truthful and diligent execution of details. A broad landscape, with towns, castles, rivers, and mountains, executed in a very minute but somewhat mechanical and conventional style, and some objects in the foreground well imitated from nature, justify to a certain extent his admiration. The heads, especially those in the ornamental border surrounding the subject, have a vigorous portrait-like character, which reminds one of the works of his distinguished pupil. His outline is, however, hard and dry, especially in his draperies, and his flesh tints have a heavy leaden hue, which

Ghirlandaio himself appears to have unfortunately copied in his tempera pictures.*

But there were models and examples in Florence better than any Alessio could furnish, and of these the young painter appears to have eagerly availed himself. Already, in the first half of the fifteenth century, Masolino and Masaccio had inaugurated a new era in painting by their works in the Brancacci Chapel in the Church of the Carmine. They had been the first since the revival of the arts to attempt successfully a close and truthful imitation of nature, not only in the action of single figures and in the disposition of different groups, but in an individuality of expression given to each actor in the scene represented. In thus adhering to truth they nevertheless selected—and this fact must always be borne in mind—that which was most elevated, dignified, and refined in nature, following her faithfully, but always in her happiest mood and in her most noble development.

The conventional art of the fourteenth century, with its poetry and its deep religious sentiment, was no longer in harmony with the feelings and belief of the age. The earnest faith, the mysticism and superstitions of that century, had been gradually fading away before the more profound study of philosophy and the spread of material civilisation. A new phase of human life required new

* Amongst the very few authentic works by Alessio Baldovinetti is an altar-piece on panel, in very fair preservation, now in the Uffizi, at Florence. It represents the Virgin and Child in the midst of a group of saints, and contains some fine original heads, but is marked by the same heavy leaden tone of colour in the flesh tints, as the fresco. An altar-piece in the National Gallery, attributed to Fra Filippo Lippi, may be in part if not entirely by Alessio. In the latter part of his life, he devoted himself to working in mosaic—an art in which he appears to have attained great proficiency and shown considerable taste.

exponents in art as in literature. In painting it found them in Masolino and Masaccio, in sculpture in Donatello and Ghiberti. As is ever the case, the period of transition had its representative painters, like Fra Angelico and Lorenzo Monaco, who, whilst adhering to the traditions of the past, were unable to resist the influences of the present. But the first who really embodied in their works the true spirit of the age were undoubtedly Masolino and Masaccio. They were followed, but not equalled, by Paolo Uccello and Benozzo Gozzoli—the one a bold and original painter, the other one of great richness of imagination, fertility of invention, and fondness for nature, but occasionally extravagant, and somewhat wanting in the highest qualities of his art.

Domenico Ghirlandaio was probably not much under thirty years of age when he first opened his own “bottega,” or shop—or “studio” as it would be called in these days—as a painter of pictures.* Of his earlier life we have no record of any kind. No authentic work by him bears date before 1480, and nearly all his works are dated, although not one of them, with the exception of a single fresco in the Church of Sta. Maria Novella of Florence, is signed with his name. He had already been thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the works of Masolino and Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel, which evidently influenced his style from the commencement of his career.† Like those painters, and indeed like

* According to the return or declaration of property (*denunzia de' beni*) made by his father in 1480, Domenico had even then no settled place of abode: “Domenicho mio figliuolo anni 31, è dipintore, non à luogo fermo.” Gaye, i. 266.

† The frescoes in this chapel were still unfinished, Filippino Lippi not having completed them until some years after. The Arundel Society has now secured admirable copies by Sig. Mariannucci of all these great works for publication.

all the great painters of the time of the revival of the arts, he chose fresco as best suited to his genius and to his conception of the highest aim of painting. All his best works are in that material.

Domenico's earliest works, according to Vasari, were some frescoes in the Chapel of the Vespucci family, in the Church of the Ognissanti in his native city. In one of them he introduced the portrait of Amerigo Vespucci, who was destined to give his name to a new world. Amerigo was then twenty-nine years of age, and unknown to fame. These interesting frescoes were destroyed in 1616, less than a century and a half after they had been executed. Probably about the same time, or soon after, he painted the large fresco of "The Last Supper," still existing in the refectory of the convent of the same church, and bearing the date of 1480.* In this work, which is evidently a very early one, there is little attempt at composition, or picturesque grouping of the figures. They are placed at table, as was the custom at that time in such pictures, as if they formed part of the assembly of monks who met in the hall to eat, in solemn silence, their daily meals. The heads, however, are marked by considerable diversity of expression; the various emotions, which the hearers of their Lord's words might be supposed to experience, are portrayed with skill, and in some instances there is much grandeur and elevation of character. These qualities are particularly shown in an apostle leaning his head upon his hand. The drapery, too, is marked by breadth and

* The fresco of "The Cintola," or of the Virgin Mary leaving her girdle when raised to heaven, in the sacristy of the Church of San Niccolò, in Florence, attributed to Ghirlandajo, has been so completely repainted, that it is difficult to say whether or not it is by the master. The date of 1450 now upon it is a bungling addition worthy of a Florentine restorer.

dignity of treatment, and falls in large and well-disposed folds. In the same church, but removed from its original position, is a fresco representing St. Jerome at his desk, also bearing the date of 1480, chiefly remarkable for the careful and minute execution of the details.

The fresco of "The Last Supper," in the refectory of the Convent of St. Mark, at Florence, appears by its style and character to belong to about the same period as that in the Convent of the Ognissanti, which it very closely resembles, especially in the background. The heads in this work have, however, less strength and character, especially that of the Saviour, which is deficient in dignity and grandeur. The composition is even more conventional. In these three works much mastery is already shown over the use of fresco—especially in the "St. Jerome," in which the colours are still remarkably clear, bright, and luminous.

Although Vasari mentions several important works, upon which Domenico Ghirlandaio must at this period have been engaged, such as the story of San Paolino in the Church of Santa Croce, none of them have been preserved. His reputation had now been established, and his fame had spread beyond his native city, for about this time he was invited to Rome, with other great masters of the day, to adorn the chapel recently built by Pope Sixtus IV.*

* Vasari, as usual, has involved the life of Ghirlandaio in inextricable confusion, as far as dates are concerned. He states that the painter was invited to Rome by Sixtus IV., after he had painted the "St. Jerome" in the Church of the Ognissanti, which bears the date of 1480, and yet he places the frescoes of the Sassetti Chapel, finished, according to the date upon them, in 1485, before this work. He also places the picture in the church of the Foundling Hospital at Florence, dated in 1488, before Ghirlandaio's visit to Rome. To

He had been engaged, probably a little earlier, by the Municipality, or Signoria, of Florence, to paint one side of the great hall which contained the celebrated clock of Lorenzo della Volpeia, and was hence called the Sala dell' Orologio, and afterwards the Sala dei Gigli, from the fleurs-de-lys on its remaining walls. That work appears to have been carried on at intervals and was not finished until 1485, as memoranda of payment to him of sums on account between 1481 and that year are still preserved.*

The fresco that Ghirlandaio, in rivalry with his eminent contemporaries, painted in the Sistine Chapel, representing the calling of Peter and Andrew, shows a decided advance on the works he had previously executed. In it he unquestionably displays the powers of a great painter. The influence of Masaccio is very evident in the

add still more to the confusion, he describes, in his life of Cosimo Rosselli, all the painters employed in decorating the Sistine Chapel as working there together, although Sandro Botticelli left Rome before 1480, and Luca Signorelli did not go there until 1483 or 1484. According to the biographer, Francesco Tornabuoni, a wealthy Florentine merchant residing in Rome, was so pleased with some frescoes that Ghirlandaio had painted over the tomb of his wife in the Church of the Minerva, that he gave the painter, on his return to Florence, letters to his relation Giovanni Tornabuoni, who thereupon commissioned Domenico to decorate the chapel of the choir behind the high altar of Sta. Maria Novella. But that great work was not commenced before 1485. I prefer, therefore, to place Ghirlandaio's residence at Rome between 1481 and 1483. Rumohr and Kugler assign an earlier date to it, before the execution of the frescoes in the Ognissanti (*Italian Schools of Painting*, v. i., p. 209). Baldinucci, on the other hand, by an evident error, says that he painted there after finishing the Sassetti Chapel; Sixtus IV. died in 1484, a year before that chapel was completed. Rosini, in his history of Italian painting (v. iii., p. 141), has fallen into the same mistake. The frescoes in the refectories of the Ognissanti and of St. Mark to my mind show evidence of being earlier works than the great fresco of "The calling of Peter and Andrew" in the Sistine Chapel. It is scarcely probable that he should have been summoned to Rome to enter upon so important a work as the decoration of the new building, unless his reputation had been already established by the execution of some great undertaking, and there is no proof whatever of his having executed any such prior to 1480.

* Gaye, *Carteggio*, i. 577. 581.

general composition, in the grouping of the figures, in the studied individuality of each head, in the noble and elevated character of the expression, and in the broad and truthful treatment of the drapery. In all these respects he shows himself a follower of that great painter, and of Masolino. At the same time, in the details of the landscape, in which there is an earnest desire to represent nature truthfully, but in a poetical spirit, he is much superior to both masters. He may have profited in this part of his art by the teaching of Alessio Baldovinetti, whom, however, he had already left far behind.

In this work, not inferior in some of the highest qualities of Art to any that adorn the side walls of that celebrated chapel, Ghirlandaio first shows himself a worthy exponent of the spirit of the age in which he lived, by his truthful and simple, yet noble and dignified representation of his subject. The newly-called Apostles kneel before the Saviour, who, accompanied by two followers, forms the centre and principal point of interest of the picture. To the right are many spectators, men, youths, and children, evidently portraits of contemporaries of the painter, dressed in the costume of his time. They contemplate the scene with solemn interest, and are introduced rather to give fulness and richness to the composition than as actors in the event. At the opposite side are other figures less individualised and in more lively action. In the distance two other parts of the same story, with the same principal actors, are represented, in accordance with the custom of the period. The background consists of a beautiful landscape, with a lake, hills, a walled town, castles, and various buildings—all represented with good effect, and with a knowledge of perspective in advance of the painters who had preceded him.

The "Resurrection of Christ," which he painted on the wall to the right of the principal entrance of the same chapel, appears to have been partly destroyed not very long after its completion. It was entirely repainted less than a century later by a Flemish painter, who was known in Italy as Arrigo Fiammingo.*

On his return to Florence, Ghirlandaio finished the fresco begun four years before in the hall of the Palazzo Vecchio, and commenced another great work, the decoration of a chapel for the Sassetti family in the Church of the Stma. Trinità. The painting in the Sala dell' Orologio consists of a grand and very elaborate architectural design in the Renaissance, or revived classic style, into which are introduced figures larger than life of San Zanobi, a patron saint of the city, enthroned, and two other saints. Behind them are seen the Duomo, the Campanile and the Baptistery. Two lions, in chiaroscuro, bear standards with the arms of the people and magistracy of Florence. Above, also in chiaroscuro, are six single figures of illustrious characters chosen from Roman history, and a lunette with the Virgin and Child, for whom the painter has chosen types of beauty and grace rarely seen in his pictures of the Holy Family. The whole composition is strictly architectural and decorative, and the subject is not one which would call forth the peculiar abilities of the painter. The figures are, however, treated with grandeur and dignity, and the work displays Domenico's usual skill in the practice of fresco.†

* Lanzi, v. ii. p. 129. Of the four subjects from the lives of the Virgin and John the Baptist, which, according to Vasari, he painted over the tomb of the wife of Francesco Tornabuoni, in the Church of the Minerva, at Rome, not a trace now remains.

† Ghirlandaio received sixty florins for the figure of San Zanobi. He was assisted in the work by one Sandro Marini. Gaye, i. 578.

On the 15th December, 1485, as an inscription still testifies, Ghirlandaio completed the frescoes which adorn the Sassetti Chapel. Francesco Sassetti wishing to raise a becoming monument to himself and his wife, Madonna Nera, employed the painter, whose fame was now very great, to paint the walls of the chapel in which they were to be buried, with the history of his patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi. "This work," Vasari says, "Ghirlandaio executed with wonderful ability, and with the utmost grace, tenderness, and love." In addition to six events in the history of the saint, he painted in fresco the portraits of Francesco Sassetti and his wife, admirably true to life, kneeling on either side of the altar, and, as was customary, a large picture on "*tavola*," or panel, and in tempera, representing the Nativity of Christ, to be placed upon it. The remains of the noble Florentine and his wife were subsequently deposited in two urns of black marble, in opposite vaulted recesses. The arches of these recesses are exquisitely carved with groups of figures and arabesques of classic character; whether designed or not by the painter I am ignorant. The chapel is still preserved without much alteration, except the removal of Ghirlandaio's altarpiece.*

The vaulted roof is divided into four compartments by ribs painted with garlands of flowers and fruit. In each compartment is painted a sybil—then a very common mode of decorating the ceilings of chapels. On the outside of the arch facing the church was a fresco of the Tiburtine Sybil announcing the coming of Christ

* This picture is now in the gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts, and also bears the date of 1485. For a general view of the chapel and its present contents, see woodcut from a drawing by Mrs. Higford Burr, at the head of this notice.

to the Emperor Augustus, much praised by Vasari for its brilliant and admirable colouring, but of which no traces now remain. The frescoes representing the history of the saint are six in number, and are unequal in merit, the painter having evidently been much assisted in some of them by his scholars. They have suffered from long neglect and the usual ill treatment, but are nevertheless for the most part fairly preserved, especially the most important and interesting of the series, "The Death of St. Francis," which the Arundel Society has selected for publication.*

The first in the series (filling the upper compartment on the left hand wall) represents the Saint renouncing his family and patrimony, and throwing himself naked at the feet of the Bishop of Assisi. The story is well told. The composition is simple and natural. The principal actors in the scene are the Bishop and the young enthusiast, whose father is restrained from advancing towards him by the bystanders. A number of persons, probably contemporaries of the painter, are introduced as spectators. In the next fresco the Saint is seen receiving, from a miraculous appearance of the crucified Saviour, the "stigmata," or the marks of His wounds, whilst a friar gazes with amazement upon the appa-

* The chromolith has been executed with their usual skill by Messrs. Storch and Kramer, of Berlin, under the superintendence of Professor Gruner, from an admirable copy by Sig. Mariannecci. These frescoes, as well as those behind the high altar of Sta. Maria Novella, have been copied and engraved by the two Lasinios. But the engravings, like all those executed by the same hands, are deficient in spirit, and fail to give the true character of the originals, especially in the heads. Still the Lasinios deserve great praise for their laudable attempts to preserve records of some of the most important remains of early Italian art, which they saw perishing around them at a time when there was but little feeling in Italy for such things, and public taste had not yet learnt to appreciate their interest and value.

rition. This subject is somewhat meagre and unsatisfactory in treatment, and has been much and very badly restored and repainted. In the third compartment St. Francis presents the rules of his newly established order to Pope Honorius III. In this composition the painter has endeavoured to represent as closely as possible the simplest conception of such an event. The Pope, enthroned, receives the document from the kneeling Saint. The cardinals are seated in two rows, extending across the picture, one row turning their backs upon the spectator. Groups of persons in the costume of the fifteenth century witness the ceremony, whilst others, ascending a flight of steps, in the immediate foreground, have only their heads and shoulders above the lower line of the picture, a mode of introducing figures more than once adopted by Ghirlandaio, but not always with good effect. In this fresco are many portraits of eminent Florentines, amongst whom Vasari records that of Lorenzo the Magnificent. In order to give still more reality to the scene, Ghirlandaio has represented it as occurring in the square of the Palazzo Vecchio, near the old palace itself and the celebrated Loggie of Bernardo Orcagna.*

Beneath this fresco is represented the Saint suddenly appearing and restoring to life a child of the Spini family, who had been killed by falling from a window. The child, seated upon a bier, is surrounded by groups of women and citizens, amongst whom the painter has introduced, as was his wont, several members of the Sassetti family, and many of his contemporaries. In the background he has represented the Church of the Stma. Trinità, with its

* Documents recently discovered prove that these Loggie were built not by Andrea, to whom they had been from time immemorial attributed, but by his brother Bernardo.

ancient façade, and some buildings which still exist. In the distance is seen the roadway over the bridge in perspective.

The fifth fresco represents St. Francis before the Sultan of Syria, offering to prove, by passing through fire, his divine mission. The last is the death of the Saint, and is not only the most important and interesting of the series, but the one which, perhaps more than any other of his works, combines the highest qualities of Ghirlandaio as a fresco painter.* The body of the dying Saint, wrapped in the coarse garment of his order, is stretched upon a bier. His disciples gather round him. One looks with an expression of most lively grief into the face of his expiring master. Others, kneeling, press his hands and feet to their lips with deep emotion. A citizen, in the dress of the painter's time, opens the garment of the Saint, and places a finger on the miraculous wound in his side. Another, amazed at the sight of the "stigmata," turns to a friar behind him. At the head of the bier stands a bishop, with spectacled nose, chanting the office for the dead.† On either

* Kugler observes of this fresco, (*Schools of Painting in Italy*, v. i., p. 210):—"The Death of the Saint is the most beautiful of these pictures, and one of the few really historical works of Ghirlandaio. The simple, solemn arrangement of the whole; the artless, unaffected dignity of the single figures; the noble, manly expression of sorrowing sympathy; the perfection of the execution—combine to place this picture among the most excellent of modern art."

† Vasari, *Life of Ghirlandaio*, says, in his quaint way, of this capital figure and of one of the friars—"A friar is seen kissing the Saint's hand, so admirably represented that it would be impossible better to describe the scene in painting. There is also a bishop in his robes with spectacles on his nose, chanting the vigils for the dead. It is only because we do not hear his voice that we are at last persuaded that he is but a picture." The heads of the bishop, and of the priest standing at his left side, are now published, in facsimile from the originals, by the Arundel Society. Such reproductions are valuable to those who would study the handling of the ancient masters, and their mode of executing their subjects in fresco.



FRESCO BY GIOTTO, IN THE CHURCH OF STA. CROCE, FLORENCE.

side of him is a priest, one bearing a censer, the other ready to sprinkle the corpse with holy water. At the other end of the bier are three acolytes, carrying a cross and lighted torches. Several citizens of Florence, also in the costume of Ghirlandaio's day, appear as spectators. The one in the red headdress immediately behind the bishop is the painter himself. He has frequently thus introduced his own portrait into his works. The background consists of an apse with an altar, and an open colonnade of classic architecture, through which is seen a distant landscape of hill, plain, and river.

The composition of this fine fresco has been justly admired for its simplicity and truth, and, at the same time, for the very skilful arrangement of the figures. It is worthy of note, that Ghirlandaio has followed in it, with little variation, a traditional representation of the subject. The earliest example of it is, I believe, Giotto's fresco in the Bardi Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce, at Florence, the walls of which were until recently covered with the usual coat of whitewash. The great painter had there represented the death of the same Saint, a subject which, from the influence St. Francis had exercised over the whole Catholic world, was one of the most popular of the age. It will be seen by the accompanying woodcut, that not only the general composition, but even the choice and arrangement of the figures are nearly the same as in Ghirlandaio's fresco. Indeed, almost the only change Ghirlandaio has made is the transfer from one side of the bier to the other of the citizen who exposes the miraculous wound of the Saint, and the omission of one of the kneeling friars, in order to avoid the monotony of a repetition of two figures in nearly the same relative position. Giotto had,

however, a reason for introducing four kneeling figures—they suited his idea of symmetry, and at the same time indicated that there were four “stigmata” on the hands and feet of the Saint. He has introduced his own contemporaries as spectators of the event, giving them the dress of his time, as Ghirlandaio has depicted that of a later period. It is possible that even Giotto may have taken the composition from some earlier painter, who had attempted to represent truthfully, but rudely, an event which had occurred during his own lifetime, and of which he may have received a description from an eye-witness. But the general arrangement of the figures, the inimitable truth and simplicity of the expression, and the admirable manner, so true to nature, in which the story is told, bear evidence of Giotto’s own invention. He was followed in this mode of representing similar subjects by many painters and sculptors. Ghirlandaio himself repeated it, with some little variation, in a fresco of “The Death of Sta. Fina,” painted for the Collegiate Church of San Geminiano; it was imitated to a certain extent by Fra Filippo Lippi, in his fine fresco of the death of St. Stephen, in the Duomo of Prato; and even by Andrea del Sarto, in the fresco at the Annunziata, representing the miracle of the raising to life of two children. Amongst the sculptors of the fifteenth century, Benedetto da Majano almost copied it in one of his bas-reliefs on the pulpit of the Church of Sta. Croce, at Florence. Each artist, as he borrowed the idea, enlarged or endeavoured to improve upon it, seeking to render it as perfect as possible; although, indeed, in many respects there was little to improve in Giotto’s admirable composition. Thus we find that progress mainly consists in the development of that which has gone before rather than in purely original invention, and is as slow

and gradual in the fine arts as it is in every other branch of human knowledge.

As Ghirlandaio had not disdained to take, like other eminent masters, the composition of his fresco from an earlier painter, so his general treatment, as I have already observed, is evidently founded upon the works of Masolino and Masaccio. But by his earnest seeking after truth and nature, and by his power of representing them worthily, he advanced his art both in the technical part and in those higher qualities which should distinguish it. Ghirlandaio thus placed himself in the front rank amongst those artists who were the especial exponents of the most dignified manners, the most enlightened opinions, and the noblest sentiments of the Florentine citizen of the second half of the fifteenth century. It is thus that the truly great painter is the one who portrays with his brush, as the truly great poet is the one who describes in his verse, the best moral and intellectual features of the age in which he lives. If these features be really great and noble, and therefore for ever worthy of admiration, the poet sings and the painter paints for all time. If they be not, they sing and paint for their generation alone.

Ghirlandaio's "Death of St. Francis" is one of those works of the fifteenth century which is especially characteristic of an epoch in the history of painting, when the imitation of nature was no longer controlled by the conventional and religious spirit which had distinguished the fourteenth century, and had not yet yielded to the influence of the academies, who took their models from the stagnant pools of artificial life, and not from the fresh and living springs of

nature. In the works of the painters of this period, and especially in those of Masaccio, Ghirlandaio, and the two Lippi, we have the source from which Raphael, and the greatest masters of the golden age of painting, drew some of their noblest inspirations, when they combined with the strictest imitation of nature the most poetical and elevated treatment of it, and before they felt the influence of the new and evil taste gathering around them. Yet how essentially do they differ in spirit and conception, and indeed in every particular and detail, from those modern works to which it has been the fashion to apply the epithet of "Pre-Raphaelite!" In them, that which should be the principal object and end of the painter is never made secondary and subservient to insignificant and meaningless details. Whilst nothing that may add to the interest or effect of the whole is neglected, everything holds its relative place. To every object is given just the importance which may be due to it, and no more. The first aim of the painter is to place before the spectator, in the most intelligible and simple form, yet with the highest degree of dignity and grace, compatible with a strict adherence to nature and truth, the story which he has to tell, the sentiments and emotions he has to express. He then adds such details and accessories, and only such, as are absolutely necessary to make the story complete, and to give to it the impress of reality. He feels that any overloading or overcrowding of them—any attempt to give more importance to them than they would have in a scene of every-day life, would detract from that aspect of reality. Whilst he knows that even the best development of human nature may be disfigured by vulgar and ignoble details, he endeavours, like the true poet, to keep them out of view as much as may be consistent with truth, or to make them so subordinate to the main

action, or subject, that they only serve to add grandeur and dignity to it. Whilst ugliness and deformity are as characteristic of the physical condition of man, as depravity and vice are of his moral state, he seeks only to represent that which is beautiful, good, and noble ; thus always striving to elevate and chasten that which he touches. These are the principles, whether as regards composition, the selection of types of female beauty and of manly dignity, the arrangement of drapery and the choice of accessories, which guided the painters of the fifteenth century, who prepared the way for Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and the great masters of the beginning of the sixteenth. They are precisely those which are most neglected, or rather, it would seem, intentionally reversed by the modern followers of the so-called "Pre-Raphaelite" schools.

In Ghirlandaio's fresco we see these principles strikingly illustrated. The painter, having chosen the composition which seemed to him best suited to his subject, seeks to give every actor in the scene represented, by expression and action, his relative place in the story. This he has accomplished with admirable skill and judgment. The dying Saint is the centre of interest. The hue of death has already crept over his wan and sunken features. Nearest to him are those disciples who would be most deeply affected by his death, and who testify the depth of their feelings by the liveliest outward signs of grief. Those further off are less moved, whilst the citizens, who stand around as spectators, show only a manly, sober sorrow becoming the solemn occasion. The bishop, his priests and the acolytes, called in to perform the last rites over the expiring Saint, are, by a fine touch of satire, represented as cold and indifferent to what is passing around them, and as merely hurrying

through an accustomed and tedious duty. To bring the scene still more vividly before those for whom he especially painted, Ghirlandaio has introduced into his picture men of the period in which he lived, dressed in their own costume, and has placed them in an edifice of his own day, instead of attempting to represent the architecture of the time and place in which the event really occurred.*

This custom of introducing the portraits of living persons into pictures painted in public places, such as churches and town-halls, was followed by nearly all the great painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, from Giotto to Raphael. Whilst a worthy memorial is thus preserved of the illustrious men who may have lived in the painter's day, great truth and apparent reality are given to the scene represented, and a corresponding effect is produced upon the mind of the spectator.

The admirable technical qualities of this work, as indeed of nearly all Ghirlandaio's frescoes, cannot be too highly praised, or too strongly recommended for study to those who are pursuing this branch of their art. He was essentially a painter in fresco, looking upon this material as the one best adapted to the display of his own powers, and to the attainment of the great object and end of painting—the instruction and refinement, as well as the amusement, of mankind. There is no careless work, nor any

* The spot where St. Francis died is now covered by the fine Church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli, at the foot of the hill on which Assisi is built. The hut in which the Saint lived still stands beneath the dome of the modern church, and is an object of peculiar veneration to all the Roman Catholic world.

over-careful and too minute. The effect required is perfectly attained. The colours are now dim, and the "intonaco" or plaster has in parts fallen away, but this is the result of wilful neglect and ill treatment, and not any carelessness in the execution, or any badness in the materials used by the painter. The general tone of colouring is sober and truthful, and admirably suited to the subject. The subtle gradations of tints, and the manner in which he has arranged the bright colours in sufficient quantities to break the monotony of the sombre garments of the friars who are the principal figures, show the consummate skill of the master.

After he had completed the frescoes of the Stma. Trinitá, Ghirlandaio was engaged with his favourite pupil and brother-in-law, Bastiano Mainardi, in painting the Chapel of Sta. Fina in the Collegiate Church of San Geminiano.* There, in the death of the Virgin Saint, he has shown the same mastery over his art as in the death of St. Francis. The figures are smaller, but the composition, as I have already observed, is nearly similar. He has, however, introduced into it several graceful female forms which make a pleasing variety. The girl stretched upon the bier is a figure of singular beauty and of touching simplicity. As usual, the bystanders are probably portraits in which a strong individuality of character is given with great dignity. The other fresco of this chapel, "St.

* There is no positive proof that the Chapel of Sta. Fina was painted at this precise time, but I am willing to accept the date given by the latest annotators of Vasari which is inferred from the existence at San Geminiano of frescoes executed by Mainardi in 1487. The relics of the Saint were deposited in the chapel in October, 1488, probably immediately after its completion. (Peccori, *Storia della terra di S. Geminiano*.) A fresco of "The Annunciation" in the oratory of San Giovanni in San Geminiano, attributed to Ghirlandaio, is dated in 1482.

Gregory appearing to Sta. Fina and announcing her approaching death," appears to have been for the most part, if not entirely, the work of his scholar, Mainardi.

The frescoes at San Geminiano were probably executed during a temporary absence from Florence, for Ghirlandaio must have commenced his last and most important undertaking, the decoration of the choir in Sta. Maria Novella, as soon as he had finished the Sassetti Chapel. That great work appears to have been completed in 1490, after a lapse of between four and five years—a short time indeed to accomplish so vast a labour, although he evidently received very considerable assistance in it from his numerous scholars.* Vasari relates how Ghirlandaio came to be employed on this work. The walls of the choir had been originally painted by Andrea Orcagna, one of the most accomplished artists of the fourteenth century, but owing to the bad condition of the roof the frescoes had already, in the middle of the following century, suffered very considerably from the damp. Many enlightened citizens of Florence desired either to have those interesting works restored, or to see the chapel adorned anew by some painter worthy of the task. But the family of Ricci, who had a proprietary right in this part of the church, were not only unwilling to incur the necessary cost themselves, but even refused to allow others to pay it for them, fearing lest their coats of arms and shields should be removed, and their hereditary claims to the chapel should be subsequently disputed.

* According to Vasari the work occupied him four years, and was finished in 1485; but it would appear from contemporary evidence that he is mistaken. The frescoes were probably commenced in that year, and completed in 1490, when the chapel was first exposed to public view (Le Monnier's edition of Vasari's Lives, vol. v. p. 72, note).

At length Giovanni Tornabuoni, to whom Ghirlandaio had brought the letters of recommendation from his brother, the merchant established at Rome, prevailed upon them to allow him to undertake the repairs at his own expense, on the condition that when they were finished the Ricci escutcheons should be placed in the most honourable and conspicuous part of the choir. A solemn contract to this effect was accordingly entered into. Giovanni selected Ghirlandaio to execute the work, and agreed to pay him one thousand two hundred gold ducats, promising to add two hundred ducats more in the event of his being well satisfied with it. The painter did execute his commission to the satisfaction of his employer, but the latter hinted that he would be much pleased if he were released from his promise to pay the additional sum. "Domenico," says his biographer, "who esteemed glory and honour far more than riches, consented at once to abandon any further claim, declaring that he was much happier in having given satisfaction by his work, than he should have been in receiving the two hundred additional ducats for it."

When the repairs of the chapel were complete, Giovanni Tornabuoni fixed on the outer pilasters two great escutcheons in stone, bearing the arms of his own family and those of the Tornaquinci, with which it was allied. But the arms of the Ricci he only placed in a very small shield on the tabernacle of the Sacrament over the high altar. So that when the public were first admitted to the chapel the Ricci in vain sought for their armorial bearings, and loudly complained to the Council of Eight of the breach of contract, demanding immediate justice. However, they obtained no redress, as it was proved to them that their arms, being close to the most holy

Sacrament, occupied, according to the terms of the agreement, the most honourable place in the chapel. This anecdote is a curious illustration of the manners of the time, and of the estimation in which the arts were at that period held in Florence.

It may be gathered from what Vasari says, but his statements are not always entitled to much confidence, that Ghirlandaio adopted the same subjects, as had been previously painted by Orcagna—following that painter in their arrangement. The four divisions of the groined roof contain the four evangelists. On that part of the end wall behind the high altar not occupied by the great window, he painted figures of various saints, protectors of the city of Florence, events from the history of St. Dominic, and St. Peter Martyr, John the Baptist in the desert, the Annunciation, and, as he had done in the Sassetti Chapel, portraits of his patrons, Giovanni Tornabuoni and his wife. The side walls he covered with fourteen frescoes—seven on the right hand representing the history of the Virgin, and seven on the left representing the history of John the Baptist. It would be out of place to enter into a minute description of each of these very remarkable pictures. I trust the time will come when the Arundel Society will be able to obtain copies of them, and to make known and accessible, as it ought to be, this mine of artistic wealth. These frescoes show to a remarkable degree all the great qualities which Ghirlandaio possessed as a painter. In them he has displayed an infinite variety of resource, and a rich and poetic imagination, in which he is not even excelled by that most imaginative of painters, Benozzo Gozzoli, who is frequently apt to be extravagant and fantastic, and to overcrowd his compositions

—faults never committed by Ghirlandaio, who is always simple and dignified. The exquisite grace and beauty of his female figures—qualities in which his easel pictures are sometimes deficient—give an additional interest to these works. The “Visitation of St. Elizabeth” and the “Birth of the Virgin,” two of the finest compositions in the series, may be cited as instances. He has, as usual, introduced into nearly every fresco the portraits of distinguished citizens and of men illustrious in his day.* Many of the heads are masterpieces of the most elevated portraiture. The drapery is disposed with that breadth and grandeur in the folds, yet with that perfect ease, which marks the best period of the Florentine school. The compositions are carefully studied, and the figures most skilfully, but naturally arranged. There is no violence, nor yet any tameness, in the action. The story is always simply, yet well and clearly told. In the background there is great variety, elegance, and richness of detail, chiefly architectural. The buildings are of the “renaissance” style, and are cleverly drawn in perspective. The landscapes which occur in a few of these frescoes are painted with his usual feeling for nature in her most poetic aspect. In execution these great works show the most complete mastery over the technical part of his art—bold resolute drawing, admirable

* Amongst them may be mentioned those of Marsilio Ficino, Poliziano, Cristofano Landino, and the celebrated Greek, Demetrius Chalcondylas (according to good authority, however, the portrait is that of Gentile de’ Becchi, bishop of Arezzo, and not of Demetrius), his own portrait, those of his master Baldovinetti, his brother David, his brother-in-law and pupil Bastiano Mainardi, Ginevra de’ Benci (a celebrated beauty of the day, but who had been already married for some years when the fresco was painted), and of many members of the Medici and of the Tornabuoni and Tornaquinci families. Old drawings, made at the time, and indicating the original of each portrait, still exist. One is in the possession of the Tornaquinci family (Le Monnier’s edition of Vasari’s *Lives*, vol. v. p. 76, note).

knowledge of effect, and an excellent colouring. Although they have been exposed to a long period of neglect and wilful injury, to damp, to the fumes of incense and the smoke of torches, and to the ladders, nails, and tawdry hangings used upon nearly every church festival ; yet until recently they had preserved much of their original beauty and freshness. They have suffered more during the last two or three years than probably at any other period ; but they are still noble monuments of the best period of Italian fresco painting.*

Although Ghirlandaio had acquired great skill in the use of tempera (he never, as far as I am aware, painted in oil), his altar-pieces and easel pictures are much inferior to his frescoes. He would seem to have paid little attention to this branch of his art,

* About three years ago the monks of the Convent of Sta. Maria Novella, having waxed rich, determined to restore their church. They set about the business after the usual fashion, and what with repainting many of the frescoes, restoring the architecture, destroying or removing some of the most interesting monuments, and selling others, they have done their best towards utterly spoiling one of the finest ecclesiastical buildings in Italy. Fortunately, the hand of the restorer was stayed, partly I believe through a protest I made against these barbarous proceedings, before it had reached Ghirlandaio's frescoes, but not before it had hopelessly injured some of the finest by Filippino Lippi. But even Ghirlandaio's were left exposed to all the damp, dust, and dirt which would accumulate in an edifice undergoing almost complete internal reconstruction, and to such injuries as might befall them from poles, ladders and the various incidents of workmen's proceedings. They were only covered up with canvas in the month of November last (1860), when the interference of the Florentine Academy of Fine Arts, I believe, had shamed the monks into doing something to preserve these treasures. But they had already suffered very severely and irreparably. Such is the fate of some of the noblest legacies bequeathed to Italy by her great men ! It is much to be feared that what with the suppression of the convents, decreed by the new government, and what with restoration and neglect, little will be left of these precious relics in a few years. A successful struggle for political regeneration is not, unfortunately, always favourable to the preservation of monuments of early art. The removal of the high altar in Sta. Maria Novella will, however, allow Ghirlandaio's frescoes to be better seen than formerly.

and to have executed few such works with his own hand. He never refused a commission, but ordered his apprentices and pupils to accept any work that might be brought to his shop, were it even to paint the hoops for women's baskets, declaring that if they would not undertake it, he would himself. This he did, not from any love of gain, but because he was unwilling that any one, however humble, should depart from his door dissatisfied.* If this statement be true, it would seem to prove that he left most of his shop business—the painting of easel pictures—to his scholars. His “tavole” frequently show elegance of design, richness and variety of composition, a very careful and conscientious execution of details, and that individuality of expression in the heads—generally portraits—which is so strikingly displayed in his frescoes. But the colouring is often dull, heavy, and leaden, sometimes raw and harsh. He is fond of violent contrasts in the flesh tints, using bright red too freely for this purpose. He improved, however, in this respect in his latest pictures, which are much richer and more harmonious in colour, approaching to those of his son Ridolfo. His earlier and later styles may thus be distinguished. The types he chooses for the Virgin, the Infant Christ, and angels, are generally wanting in elevation, beauty, and religious sentiment; and his representations of these sacred personages are consequently inferior to those of many of his contemporaries who were, in other respects, painters of less merit. But the saints he introduces into his pictures are generally of a higher character, and show his feeling for dignified yet individualised expression. The extremities of his figures—their hands and feet—are not always drawn with

* Vasari, *Life of Ghirlandaio*.

care and correctness. These various defects seem to show that whilst he made the designs for his pictures himself, he was in the habit of leaving their execution to others. This is not surprising, considering the large number of great and important works upon which he was occupied during the short period of ten years.

Whilst many pictures in public and private collections are attributed to him, genuine works by his hand are comparatively rare. Most of those which are authentic, and are of any importance, bear dates, like his frescoes, between 1480 and 1491. None are signed. The principal with which I am acquainted are the following :

In the Gallery of the Uffizi at Florence an altar-piece, formerly in the Church of the Calza, greatly praised by Vasari as a perfect example of tempera painting. This picture was bought for the National Gallery, and having been seized by the late Grand Ducal Government, became the subject of an angry diplomatic correspondence.* It represents, according to the conventional

* In the last catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery, it is described as having been 'purchased' by the Tuscan government. It was in fact seized, and *not* paid for, in contravention of their own law—a very small annual sum being only promised to the owners. A true and genuine love of art, which sought to retain in Italy, by fair and just means, its best monuments, would be a very praiseworthy sentiment; but a mere petty jealousy of foreigners, which enacts or threatens laws prohibiting the exportation of all pictures and other works of art without special permission, whilst some of the finest paintings are allowed to decay and perish, deserves anything but commendation. The Italians should remember that, after all, they owe the preservation of many of their most valuable monuments of art to the liberality of enlightened strangers; that long before they appreciated the remains of those ancient works, which they had left to fall to decay, German, English, and French writers and travellers had understood their value, and had called public attention to them, and that much of the interest and sympathy now felt for Italy in her vital struggle may be attributed to the knowledge and admiration of her, founded

treatment of the early masters, the Virgin and Child enthroned amidst saints. The colours are raw and wanting in harmony ; though this is partly owing, perhaps, to injudicious cleaning. The details are painted with great minuteness and care. The picture is not dated ; judging from its execution, it appears to belong to about the same period as the fresco of "St. Jerome" in the Ognissanti (1480).

Also in the Uffizi, a large circular picture, representing the "Adoration of the Magi ;" a rich composition, full of figures, some of much beauty. The colour is rather leaden and heavy. In the distance is a view of Venice with the grand canal, very minutely and skilfully painted, apparently showing that the painter had visited that city. Dated 1487.

A circular picture in the Pitti Palace, of smaller dimensions, similar in subject and nearly similar in the details, many of the figures being repeated ; apparently painted about the same time.*

upon the evidence of the genius and greatness of her sons in former ages, displayed throughout the civilised world by works of art. It is scarcely creditable to their authors to see the constant repetition, in modern Italian books, of the stereotyped phrase that "Italy has been despoiled of such and such a picture by the Ultramontane barbarians ;" nor can I admire the answer given by an Italian statesman to one who remonstrated against a law which prohibited the exportation of paintings—"We would rather that our pictures should rot upon the walls than that they should go to England." It is very doubtful how far the accumulation of ancient pictures in public galleries will contribute to the formation of truly great painters in Italy. The result has hitherto not been favourable to the development of genius. Italian artists have scarcely escaped becoming a mere race of copyists. No man, not being an Italian, can feel a greater love for Italy, a deeper interest in her prosperity, and a sincerer desire for her future greatness, than myself. It is in this spirit that I have made the above remarks.

* A third picture of the same character, painted for a member of the Tornabuoni family, and afterwards in the Palazzo Pandolfini, is said to be in England.

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Two pictures in the gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts at Florence. A "Nativity," dated 1485, originally the altar-piece of the Sassetti Chapel, contains some fine characteristic heads—one amongst them the painter's portrait—but has defects of colour. It is remarkable for a very elaborate landscape background, treated in a somewhat conventional manner, the high lights being touched with gold—a practice often followed by Ghirlandaio in his easel pictures and even in his frescoes, as in the "St. Francis receiving the stigmata," in the Sassetti Chapel; although Vasari says that he was the first to abandon the use of gilding in painting, skilfully imitating the effects of gold by the simple means of colour. A second altar-piece, representing "The Virgin and Child between angels and saints," without date, but probably painted about the same time, with a "predella" of five small subjects very gracefully and delicately treated. The details are careful, and some of the heads fine, but there is a want of dignity and religious feeling in the Virgin, and the colour is leaden.

The large altar-piece of "The Adoration of the Magi," in the Church of the Esposti (or Foundling Hospital)—Ghirlandaio's most important work of this nature in Florence, dated 1488. It is very rich in figures, and contains many graceful and pleasing groups, and some fine portrait heads. In the background is a distant view of a city, the sea and a harbour with shipping, poetically conceived, but somewhat hard in treatment. The details are most conscientiously and minutely executed. The general tone of colour is more harmonious than that of most of his pictures; but the flesh tints, which are curiously hatched, are still too green and leaden; and the heads of the Virgin and Child, the types of which

are scarcely worthy of the subjects, are somewhat disfigured by ruddy cheeks.

An altar-piece in the Church of San Giusto, at Volterra, representing Christ in glory and saints beneath, judging by its colouring, of his later time.* It has been badly restored. A second picture, painted, according to Vasari, for the same church, has disappeared.

In the sacristy of the Church of San Martino at Lucca, an altar-piece, unfortunately much injured by a restorer.

An altar-piece painted for Carlo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, still preserved in the town-hall of that city.

A picture in several compartments, painted about 1490, for the altar of the choir in Sta. Maria Novella. Part is now in the Pinacothek at Munich, and part in the Royal Gallery of Berlin. It was finished by his brothers David and Benedetto, to whom may probably be attributed the whole of one compartment—the “Resurrection of Christ,” in the Berlin Collection. The grand individualised character of the heads, and the broad drapery in ample folds in those parts which are evidently by Ghirlandaio, as the panels with the single saints at Berlin, resemble his frescoes. The colour is also remarkably rich and harmonious, and furnishes an

* Vasari states that this picture was ordered by Lorenzo the Magnificent, when the convent was held ‘in commendam’ by his son Giovanni de’ Medici, afterwards Pope Leo X., who was created a cardinal in 1488, and received holy orders four years later.

excellent example of his latest and best style.* The hands and feet are very carefully drawn. The centre subject, representing the Virgin in glory and the Archangel Gabriel, John the Baptist, St. Dominic, and John the Evangelist, is at Munich.

In the Louvre "The Visitation of the Virgin," commenced for the church of Cestello, and finished, according to Vasari, by his brothers David and Benedetto. The colouring is defective, but the figures are very graceful. Dated 1491, and consequently the latest authentic work by the master.

I know of no genuine work entirely by the hand of Ghirlandaio in England, although several pictures in private collections are attributed to him.† The beautiful picture of "The Virgin and Child between two angels," in the National Gallery, assigned to him, is undoubtedly by another and very different painter.‡

Ghirlandaio's drawings and sketches, of which many are preserved

* Other pictures in the Berlin Gallery are attributed to Ghirlandaio. A "Virgin and Child between saints" may be from a design by the master, but the execution and colour betray a scholar. The 'Pietà,' in the Pinacothek at Munich (No. 538), though assigned to him, is undoubtedly by Filippino Lippi.

† Dr. Waagen mentions two portraits, conjectured to be those of Maria Tornabuoni and her husband, in the collection of Mr. Drury Lowe, which may be by him.—(Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain, vol. iv. p. 498).

‡ It is difficult to determine who may have been the painter of this picture. It closely resembles in many respects, especially in the colour of the flesh and the peculiar character of the hands, a picture of three saints in the Uffizi, which is described by Vasari as having been painted by Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo, for the Church of San Miniato. That picture is, however, in oil. Some have attributed the National Gallery picture to Pesello or to Pesellino, of whom little is known. By the same hand are undoubtedly other works in public and private collections, as in Lord Ward's, Mr. Barker's, &c. In delicacy and refinement of colour, and in a peculiar beauty in the type of the Virgin and Angels, the painter, whoever he may have been, was perhaps superior to Ghirlandaio.

in the Uffizi and elsewhere, are marked by great vigour and decision of outline, and are usually on grey or bluish paper, and much relieved with white. They show a careful and conscientious study of nature and of detail, especially of drapery, which is marked by great breadth of folds admirably disposed. They correspond in these respects with his frescoes, some of the original sketches for which are to be seen in the Florentine Gallery.

The frescoes in Sta. Maria Novella appear to have been the last great work of painting undertaken by Ghirlandaio.* After he had finished them he seems to have devoted himself to mosaic, for which he had probably contracted a taste when with Alessio Baldovinetti, who was one of the most esteemed workers in this material of his day. Ghirlandaio was wont to say that mosaic, from its durability, was better adapted than any other material to the expression of the painter's ideas.† In 1490 he executed in it

* Other frescoes by Ghirlandaio mentioned by Vasari, and which have perished, or the dates of which are unknown, are: the front of the principal chapel of the Badia di Settimo, near Florence, no traces of which exist; a chapel in the villa of the Casso Macherelli, also near Florence, where some remains are still to be seen; on the arch over the high altar of the Duomo of Pisa, several graceful angels, recently restored, and consequently destroyed; another fresco at Pisa, on the façade of the "Opera," or Warden's office, of the Duomo, destroyed; a "St. George and the Dragon," in the Church of the Ognissanti, and a St. Michael in full armour, over the entrance to the cemetery of Sta. Maria Nuova, Florence, both destroyed; a hall in the Spannocchi Palace at Siena, with many subjects in tempera, of which no trace or record remains (it is very doubtful whether any such work was executed. An "Annunciation," over the entrance to the Church of Orbatello, dated 1485, is attributed to him by the last editors of Vasari's *Lives*; and a circular fresco in the Chapel of the Bargello, Florence, dated 1490, is also assigned to him, but doubtfully. Of several pictures described by Vasari, some have been lost, whilst others may still be preserved in private collections. Amongst the most important which have disappeared is one, originally at Pisa, representing St. Sebastian and St. Rocco, and bearing the arms of Leo X.

† "Usava dire Domenico la pittura essere il disegno, e la vera pittura per la eternità essere il musaico." Vasari, *Vita del Ghirlandaio*.

a lunette representing the "Annunciation," over one of the northern entrances to the Duomo of Florence,—the only authentic example remaining of his skill in this art. It is very graceful in design, and is distinguished by that beauty and minuteness of detail which characterise his paintings. According to Vasari, he had commenced the decoration, in the same material, of the Chapel of San Zanobi, in the Duomo, when he was induced by Lorenzo the Magnificent, who became his surety for 20,000 ducats, to complete the mosaics of the façade of the Duomo at Siena, and died whilst engaged in that undertaking. But this is an error on the part of Vasari. Documentary evidence proves that it was Domenico's brother David and not himself who was employed at Siena. It appears, from the archives of the cathedral of Orvieto, that in 1492, and in the following year, if not at a later period, he was engaged in repairing and renewing the mosaics which adorned the exterior of that splendid building.* We have no further record of the painter from that time to his death. Vasari places that event in 1495, but there is reason to infer that it occurred two or three years later, when Ghirlandaio was in the 46th or 47th year of his age.†

Ghirlandaio had received a commission in 1491 to paint a picture for the high altar of the Church of the Palco, near Prato, which he failed to execute, and which was consequently transferred to Filippino Lippi. In the same year he left the "Visitation," now in the

* Vasari's *Lives*, Le Monnier's edition, vol. v. p. 83, note. An entry of a payment of forty-two ducats to him occurs in the books of the cathedral under date of the 20th April, 1493.

† The last edition of Vasari gives 1498 as the date of his death, but it may have occurred a little earlier, perhaps in 1497. The declaration of the property left by him at his decease, made by his brother in 1498, does not prove that he actually died in that year.

Louvre, unfinished. His career as a painter seems therefore, as far as can be ascertained from authentic records, to have been limited to ten years—from 1480 to 1491, during which period he executed a larger number of great and important works than probably any other painter who ever lived, not even excepting his prolific contemporary, Benozzo Gozzoli.

He had many scholars. The most eminent was Michelangelo, who from him learned the first rudiments of his art,* and who, according to tradition, assisted him in the frescoes of Sta. Maria Novella. As he was born in 1475, and apprenticed to Ghirlandaio on the 1st of April, 1488, he was but a boy when those great works were painted. The firm and vigorous drawing of Ghirlandaio, and his dignified conception and rendering of character had no doubt their influence upon the youthful genius of the illustrious artist, but that genius was destined to create a new era in art, and to be the representative of a new order of ideas and sentiments. Whatever Michelangelo may have learnt from his first master—and he could not have remained long under him—there are certainly few, if any, traces of Ghirlandaio's influence in such of his early works as are known to us. He seems to have struck out a new path for himself, in the technical, as well as in the other branches of his art, almost before he had emerged from boyhood.†

* Condivi.

† The well-known unfinished picture, now in the possession of Lord Taunton, and generally believed to be an early work by Michelangelo, was at one time attributed to Ghirlandaio; this may show that there are *some* traces of Ghirlandaio's manner in it, but it certainly bears no resemblance to any of that master's works with which I am acquainted.

Those pupils who most closely followed in Ghirlandaio's footsteps were his brothers David and Benedetto, painters of no great merit, but whose works frequently pass for those of Domenico; his brother-in-law, Bastiano Mainardi of San Geminiano, who executed frescoes in his native town and in Florence (as in the Church of Santa Croce), very closely imitating the style of his master, but wanting his vigour and invention; his son Ridolfo, who, as a painter of easel pictures and altar-pieces, acquired great fame, and imitated his father in the strongly individualised and dignified character of his heads, but exceeded him in the richness and power of his colouring; and Francesco Granacci, who, with much grace of drawing and a refined feeling for colour, was deficient in originality of invention and in a dignified conception of character. To these Vasari adds Niccolò Cieco, Jacopo del Tedesco, Jacopo dell' Indaco, and Baldino Baldinelli, of whose works little or nothing is known.

Ghirlandaio would seem to have died in poverty, for according to Vasari the family of Tornabuoni, probably ashamed of the meanness of Giovanni in the matter of the Sta. Maria Novella frescoes, sent him one hundred ducats during his last illness. He was greatly deplored by the city of Florence as a distinguished and worthy citizen, and by his pupils as a kind and affectionate master. He was buried with much pomp in the public cemetery of the Church of Sta. Maria Novella. But his remains were afterwards removed by his son Ridolfo to a more honourable site in the outer cloisters, where they were deposited in a separate tomb amongst those of the most noble families of his native city. In the arched recess over his sarcophagus were placed his arms, consisting of an

armed horseman, and his portrait, which has long since perished. An epitaph, in the inflated style of Italian mortuary inscriptions, recorded his fame as a painter.*

Vasari's account of Ghirlandaio, and Vasari had known many of his contemporaries and pupils, conveys the impression that he was a gentle, honest, conscientious, and industrious man,—an impression fully borne out by the character of his works. As a painter in fresco he stands almost unrivalled in the technical part of his art. The rapidity and certainty of his execution were surprising. He was heard to declare, says his biographer, that he should rejoice if he had to paint with stories the whole circuit of the walls of Florence. The excellent preservation of such of his works as have not been exposed to wanton injury or neglect, was owing to his habit of finishing them "in buon fresco," or true fresco, on the wet surface, not using tempera for this purpose like many contemporary artists.† This practice requires great decision of execution—a ready hand to obey a clear intellect. His outline is firm, his forms graceful, and his composition skilful. The fertility of his imagination and his power of arrangement and combination are strikingly shown in his great series of frescoes in Sta. Maria Novella. He was so correct of eye that he would design the most difficult architectural perspective without rule,

* Fineschi, *Memorie sopra il cimiterio antio della chiesa di S. Maria Novella*. The epitaph was as follows:—

Troppo presto la morte
Troncò il volo alla fama che alle stelle.
Pensai, correndo forte,
Passar Zeusi e Parrasio, e Scopa, e Apelle.

† Vasari's *Life of Ghirlandaio*.

compass, or measure ; and a drawing that he thus made of the Colosseum is said to have been so accurate, that it could be measured in all its parts by mere reference to a human figure which he had introduced as standing in the centre of the building.*

Although in his religious pictures he still adhered, to some extent, to the conventional mode of arrangement followed in the previous century, especially in the grouping of his figures and in the draperies of sacred personages ; in his frescoes he abandoned it altogether, and sought to represent nature with the utmost truth — a distinction between easel pictures and wall-paintings not unfrequent amongst his contemporaries and the great painters who immediately succeeded him. He avoided as much as possible all violence of action and contortion, all exaggeration and affectation of expression, giving a dignified, calm repose to the scene he represents, which might degenerate into monotony, were it not combined with great variety, and an elevation of character that cannot fail to impress and interest the spectator. In a just disposition of light and shade and in the perspective of colour, especially in his heads, he was much in advance of Masaccio, who had not succeeded in giving that entire and complete relief to his forms which in Ghirlandaio's best works, and still more in those of Filippino Lippi in the Brancacci Chapel, carry almost to the highest perfection the art of imitation. As a portrait painter he holds a very high rank. Whilst adhering to truth and nature, he always gives to his portraits the highest elevation and dignity of

* Vasari's Life of Ghirlandaio.

which his subject is susceptible. In this respect he is entitled to our admiration, and presents one of the best models for imitation in this most important branch of painting. He seldom attempted the nude, not having attained in it that proficiency which distinguishes the later painters of the Florentine School. Even the extremities—the hands and feet—of his figures, as I have already remarked, are not always correctly drawn. Lanzi says that he was the first amongst the Florentines, who, by the means of true perspective, arranged his compositions properly and gave them depth.*

Ghirlandaio may be entitled to the place which an eminent modern critic has assigned to him “amongst the greatest masters of his own or any other age.”† Still he was undoubtedly inferior to Masaccio in original genius, and to Fra Angelico in that deep and fervent love of purity and holiness, which appeals to men’s best feelings and their best sympathies. His merits as a painter consist in his having carried almost to the highest perfection of which it was capable that new school of painting which had been founded in the beginning of the fifteenth century by Masolino and Masaccio. He gave the best expression of which his art could then admit, to the best phase of the condition of society in which he lived. Florence had risen to the first place amongst the Italian states in material prosperity, and in the power based upon great commercial activity and riches, when Ghirlandaio began to paint. Her wealth, her vast trade, the luxury of her citizens, were

* *Storia Pittorica*, vol. i. p. 73.

† Kugler, *Schools of Painting in Italy*, vol. i. p. 207. Vasari calls him “uno de’ principali e piu eccellenti maestri dell’ età sua.”

gradually leading her to forget the most precious heritage of a people—their liberties. Lorenzo the Magnificent, whilst contributing to her splendour at home and her power and influence abroad, was fast undermining her free institutions, to which she owed her real greatness. Yet there were still living in Florence great and good men who had watched the growth of her freedom, and were ready to make any sacrifice in its defence. The conspiracy of the Pazzi, planned after the barbarous fashion of the times, but directed against the usurpation and tyranny of the Medici, had but recently failed. But the childlike religion and political enthusiasm which had distinguished the fourteenth century, and which inspired the verse of Dante and the pencil of Giotto, had passed away. The imaginative and superstitious spirit which characterised that century was everywhere yielding to one more rational and matter-of-fact, founded upon a deeper study of the writings of the ancient philosophers, a better acquaintance with the laws of nature, and a more extended intercourse between nations. In this new age men displayed a sense of their dignity by polished manners, by richness of costume, by costly living, by magnificent ceremonies, and by the foundation of splendid monuments and a munificent patronage of the arts, not for great national or religious purposes as in the previous century, but for the fame or aggrandisement of themselves and of their families.* These are the leading characteristics of this period of Florentine history. They are precisely those which find their best exponent, in painting, in Ghirlandaio. In his frescoes we have that mixture of reality and truth with the supernatural, in the treatment of religious

* We have an illustration of this in the quarrel about the coats of arms between the Tornabuoni and Ricci, when the choir of Sta. Maria Novella was painted.

incidents, which serves to show their divine nature, and yet to give them the appearance of actual events of the day. The portrait-like character both of the actors in these scenes, and of those who are introduced into them as spectators, contribute still more to produce this effect. Even in his altar-pieces, or what are termed "devotional" pictures, that deep religious feeling which gives almost an unearthly appearance to the representations, by the early painters, of the Virgin, of the Saviour, of angels, and other sacred personages, is replaced by a worldly and common-place character, which sometimes almost verges on coarseness. By their rich costume, by the calm dignity of their expression and attitude, and by the grave and solemn part they appear to play in the scene depicted, he admirably portrays the great men of his day, to whom he thus dedicates a worthy monument—the last protest, as it were, against the ambition of the Medici, who extinguished, with their country's liberties, those noble and generous qualities which, with all his faults and his vices, distinguished the citizen of free Florence.

To those who would study the history of art in a philosophical spirit, the interest and importance of Ghirlandaio's works rest upon the view that may be thus taken of them, as well as upon their real beauties and the influence they exercised over the Florentine school of painting; that school which numbered amongst his contemporaries the Pollaioli, Sandro Botticelli, Andrea Verrocchio, Filippino Lippi, and Luca Signorelli; which produced Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Fra Bartolomeo, and Andrea del Sarto, and formed the maturer style of Pietro Perugino, Pinturicchio, and the immortal Raphael himself; a school which in its highest

development in Ghirlandaio's time held the grand and just middle place between the conventional and the academic in art—the high land, as it were, between the rise of the fourteenth century and the fall of the sixteenth.

A. H. LAYARD.

THE END.

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THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

AND

MASOLINO, MASACCIO, AND FILIPPINO LIPPI,

Austen Henry

By A. H. LAYARD, M.P.



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PRINTED FOR THE ARUNDEL SOCIETY,

1868.

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THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

AND

Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi.

BY

A. H. LAYARD, M.P.

1878. Mar. 6,
Summer Fund.



HEADS OF MASOLINO, MASACCIO, AND FILIPPINO LIPPI

ON the walls of a chapel to the right of the high altar in the Church of S. Maria del Carmine at Florence, is preserved a series of frescoes, which exceed in interest and importance all other works of the same class existing in this city, so rich in similar monuments of art. The chapel was built in the early part of the fifteenth century, by Felice Michele di Piuvichese Brancacci, a noble Florentine, who had distinguished himself in the service of the republic. Its decoration was not, however, completed until about eighty years later. The smoke of candles and of incense has combined, with the dust and decay of centuries, to darken the surface of the walls, and to dull the colours of the frescoes. It is only in the middle of a bright summer's day that some of the paintings can be seen in all their details. Those that surround the

solitary and half-closed window which lights the chapel are rarely, at any time, more than just visible through the gloom.

The importance of these frescoes arises from the fact that they hold the same place in the history of art during the fifteenth century, as the works of Giotto, in the Arena Chapel at Padua, hold during the fourteenth. Each series forms an epoch in painting from which may be dated one of those great and sudden onward steps, which have, in various ages and countries, marked the development of art. The history of Italian painting is divided into three distinct and well-defined periods by the Arena and Brancacci chapels, and the frescoes of Michelangelo and Raphael in the Vatican.

If, moreover, as Vasari states—and his statement can be tested and verified—all the great painters of the Tuscan and Umbrian schools of the end of the fifteenth and of the whole of the sixteenth century—including Fra Angelico, the two Lippis, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, Fra Bartolomeo, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto, studied the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, and to a certain extent formed their style upon them; the influence of those remarkable works reached far beyond the century in which they were painted. It may, indeed, be said that it has not even now passed away.

When we consider the condition of painting during the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, the influence

exercised by these frescoes, and the admiration felt for them by the great masters, will cause us no surprise. The progress made by Giotto had been truly wonderful. However superior the works of Cimabue may have been to those of a race of ignorant painters, who, since the fall of the Roman Empire, were to be found in almost every city and town of Italy, covering the walls of churches and other sacred buildings with hideous effigies of virgins and saints, they are wanting in those qualities which mark a new birth in art. This artist, to whom Vasari, in his zeal for the reputation of the school of his native province, would attribute the revival of painting, was but the best of that long line of painters, who had followed each other in monotonous succession, and in whom rapidly faded away the influence of Roman art, leaving only a trace of its traditional forms in their grotesque conceptions. Not that such of the authentic works of Cimabue as have been preserved are deficient in a certain feeling for nature and a striving after grace in form and sentiment in expression. These qualities, which alone would distinguish him from the painters who preceded him, are to a certain extent visible in his celebrated altar-piece in the Rucellai Chapel of the Church of S. Maria Novella at Florence, the first exhibition of which, according to an apocryphal story related by Vasari, caused so great a manifestation of joy and surprise amongst the inhabitants of his native city. There is a peculiar sentiment and grace in the expression of the Virgin, and in the Angels supporting her throne, which it is very difficult to separate from the stiff and archaic character of the figures; and which, consequently, such copies of the picture that I have seen fail

to give. But when we compare the best of Cimabue's works with those of Giotto, it is impossible not to be struck by the immense distance which divides them—a distance little less than that which separates the rude and spiritless rhymes of the predecessors of Dante from the *Divina Comedia*. With Giotto we find ourselves in the presence of an almost new art. The bonds of tradition which had hitherto limited and deadened the human intellect, although not altogether thrown off, have been broken through; and genius has given to painting a new starting-point, from which the development of all its highest qualities can be traced.

The genius of Giotto had led him to feel and to strive after the loftiest and noblest ends of art: correct and natural delineation of form; the rendering of individual sentiment and feeling; the representation of an incident by the combined expression and action of those who are taking part in it; and the pleasing and harmonious arrangement of lines and masses called composition. He only failed to reach the height to which he aimed, because there was no school of painters, no accumulated experience, from which he could learn the best technical processes of his art, and could correct and develop his own ideas. The laws of light and shade, and of linear and aërial perspective, and the proper representation of form which can only be acquired by the application of rules founded upon long experience, had all to be worked out by him without any previous example to guide and teach him. Great, therefore, as was the advance made by Giotto in the art of painting, it is not surprising that he failed to

carry out his magnificent conceptions in a manner altogether worthy of them. His followers and imitators, who form the greater part of the Italian Schools of the fourteenth and of the first half of the fifteenth century—especially that of Tuscany—and whose names and performances have been so carefully chronicled by Vasari, were far behind their master in intellect and power, but they had the advantage of his teaching and experience. Their works have consequently a trace of Giotto's sentiment and vigour, but exaggerate his defects; whilst they show some little progress in mastery over the technical part of the art, in which Giotto was deficient.

It remained for one of the painters of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, for Masaccio, to take up painting from the point at which Giotto had left it, and to carry it forward the next great step towards its maturest development. And this he accomplished, although his span of life was short, because he possessed, like Giotto, that rare genius which enabled him to shake off the trammels of convention, and to seek for truth in nature by ways of his own.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the human intellect was rapidly emancipating itself from those traditions of the dark ages which still weighed upon it. The arts followed letters in this great struggle. As the object of literature and science was to arrive at truth, so sculpture and painting strove in the same direction, by going back to nature, and seeking in her alone their models. Sculpture—as it has ever been the case—preceded painting in this onward movement. As

Niccola Pisano had gone before Giotto, so Ghiberti, in the gates of the Baptistery of Florence, first showed the way to that truthful imitation of nature, combined with the just application of the laws of art, which Masaccio was the first to carry out in painting. Rejecting the traditional forms which were still used by the followers of Giotto, he refused to accept conventional types for realities, and sought in nature herself for the principles of his art. He studied the laws of form and colour in all their details—laws which, for the most part, had been unknown to Giotto, or imperfectly understood by him; and laboured with singular success to carry them out in his works. And not only did Masaccio seek to imitate nature in her mere forms, but he also sought to represent the various aspects and subtle shades of human feeling and passion. He endeavoured to produce, as it were, actual deception upon the spectator. This he strove to accomplish by that proper and natural distribution of light and shade, which is technically called “modelling,” and which can alone give the effect of roundness and relief to substances delineated on a flat surface; and by the most careful study and rendering of the proportions of the human frame and of all its subordinate details. At the same time he disposed his figures in groups, and gave to each one an appropriate expression, so that the subject of the picture, and his meaning, might be at once understood. He arranged his draperies in graceful, easy, and massive folds, which followed and showed the forms beneath; and he applied to his figures and backgrounds those laws of perspective which are absolutely necessary to give reality to a picture. He added to this strict imitation of nature, a feeling for rich and

harmonious colouring, and for graceful composition, and the power of selecting the most elevated and beautiful types appropriate to each class of subjects which he treated. Masaccio thus showed that he possessed the qualities which distinguish the great poet as well as the great painter ; qualities forming, when united with the most consummate mastery over the technical processes of the art—as in the frescoes of Michelangelo and Raphael in the Vatican—the highest perfection which painting has hitherto attained.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, although he had little admiration for the painters who preceded the golden period of Italian art, and rarely notices their works, was sensible of the greatness of Masaccio, and of his influence upon the development of painting. He says of him, in his Twelfth Discourse: “ Raphael had completely studied his works; and indeed there was no other, if we except Michelangelo (whom he likewise imitated), so worthy of his attention ; and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal and not enough diversified, according to the custom of painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompany, and even sometimes proceed from, regularity and hardness of manner. We must consider the barbarous state of the arts before his time, when skill in drawing was so little understood, that the best of the painters could not even foreshorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon his toes ; and what served for drapery had, from the hardness and smallness of the folds, too much the appearance of cords clinging round the body. He first introduced large drapery, flowing in an easy and natural

manner; indeed he appears to be the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the art afterwards arrived, and may, therefore, be justly considered as one of the great fathers of modern art."

It will be seen, however, that much of the praise of Reynolds belongs in right to Filippino Lippi, whose works were confounded, in the English critic's time, with those of Masaccio.

Masaccio was the painter of only part of the series of frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, although it is undoubtedly to his genius that they owe their renown. It is curious that, notwithstanding the celebrity which they had attained immediately after their execution, there is scarcely any question connected with art that has given rise to more controversy than the authorship of each separate fresco. Vasari attributes them to Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi, and assigns to each painter his share in the work.* Modern critics have for the most part followed Vasari in ascribing the frescoes to these three painters, without, however, accepting his statements as to the authorship of each separate work; but have endeavoured, by a close examination of each fresco, to determine its author. The most recent writer on the

* ALBERTINI, whose treatise on the principal Monuments of Art in Florence was published as early as the year 1510, says: "La capella de' Brancacci mezza di sua mano (di Masaccio) e l'altra di Masolino, excepto Santo Pietro crucifixo, per mano di Philipppo." We shall see that he was certainly in error as regards some of the frescoes which he assigns to Masaccio.

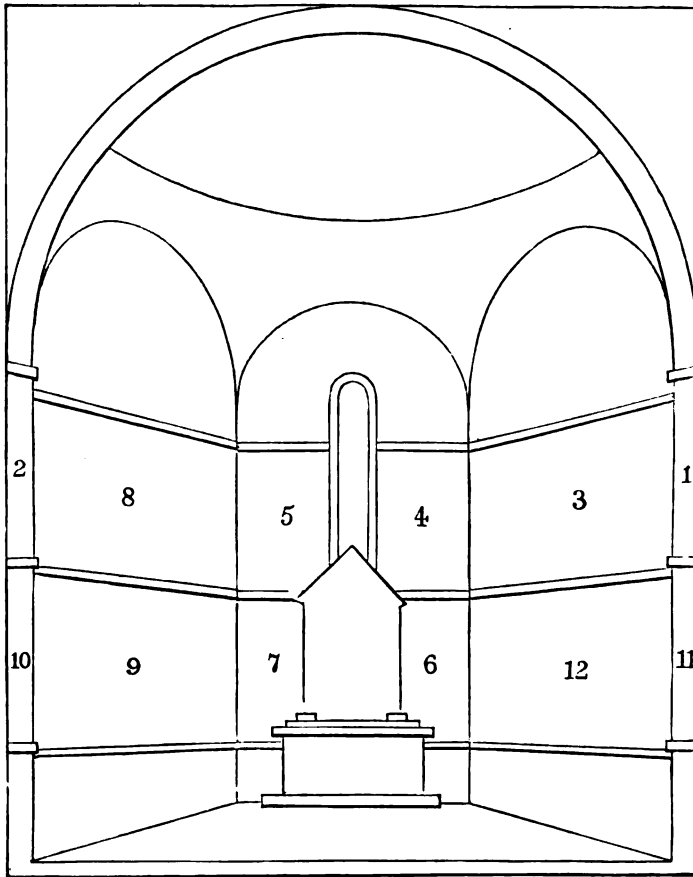
subject, Signor Cavalcaselle,* a critic of much acuteness and knowledge, and a patient investigator of the documentary evidence through which so much of modern art-criticism has been placed upon a solid foundation, maintains that only two of the painters mentioned by Vasari, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi, executed the frescoes now existing.

The accompanying plan will enable the reader to understand the form of the Brancacci Chapel and the position of the frescoes upon its walls. At its entrance are two pilasters supporting the arch which opens into the nave of the church. The walls end in lunettes, from which spring four spandrels and the vault. Twelve spaces (numbered from 1 to 12 in the plan), four of which are on the pilasters, are now occupied by frescoes. The paintings, which, according to Vasari, once occupied the lunettes and the vault, have either been destroyed, or are concealed beneath the modern decoration with which this part of the chapel has been covered.

The existing frescoes, with the exception of the first two, represent the principal events in the life of S. Peter, taken from the New Testament and from the legends, and are divided into the following subjects : †

* The principal modern authorities upon the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are KUGLER, in his "Handbook of Italian Painting" (edited by Sir Charles Eastlake); the author of the notes and appendices to the lives of Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi, in Le Monnier's edition of Vasari; and CROWE and CAVALCASELLE, who, in their admirable "History of Painting in Italy," have almost exhausted the subject.

† In numbering the frescoes, I have followed the order of the subjects. All of them have been published by the Arundel Society.



PERSPECTIVE OF THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL IN THE CARMINE AT FLORENCE.*

1. Adam and Eve standing beneath the tree of knowledge, round which the serpent is entwined.
2. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.
3. The Apostle Peter raising Tabitha, and the Apostles Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple.
4. S. Peter baptising.
5. S. Peter preaching.
6. S. Peter distributing alms.

* Taken from CROWE and CAVALCASELLE'S "History of Painting in Italy."

7. S. Peter and S. John curing the infirm and the sick.
8. Christ directing S. Peter to take the tribute money from the mouth of a fish, and the payment of the tribute money.
9. S. Peter restoring the King's son to life, and the Apostle enthroned.
10. S. Paul addressing S. Peter in prison.
11. The Angel delivering S. Peter from prison.
12. S. Peter and S. Paul before the Proconsul, and the Martyrdom of S. Peter.

Before proceeding to describe these frescoes, I will give a sketch of the lives of the three painters to whom they are ascribed, and an account of their principal works.

According to Vasari, Masolino was born in 1403, in the town of Panicale of Valdelsa, in the Florentine territory. He is, therefore, commonly known as Masolino da Panicale, to distinguish him from an eminent painter of the same name, who, at a later period, flourished at Ferrara. As a youth, he studied under Ghiberti; and having been employed by that great sculptor on the celebrated bronze gates of the Baptistry at Florence, he became an excellent worker in metal. He did not, however, follow the profession of a sculptor, but left his master at an early age. When nineteen years old he gave himself to the study of painting under Starnina, an artist of some reputation and a fair colourist. After making some progress under this painter, he went to Rome in order to perfect himself in his art, but finding the air of that city injurious to his health, he returned to Florence. Soon afterwards he

gained so much fame by a fresco representing S. Peter, which he executed in the Church of the Carmine, that he was chosen to decorate the Chapel recently erected there by a member of the Brancacci family. The untiring energy and earnestness with which he devoted himself to this undertaking, brought on a fatal illness, and he died in the year 1440, at the age of thirty-seven, before completing the work which he had commenced. The only frescoes which he had executed were the figures of the four Evangelists on the vault; and, on the walls, Christ calling Andrew and Peter from their nets; the repentance of Peter after he had betrayed his Master; the Apostle preaching to the Gentiles; his shipwreck; S. Peter healing his daughter Petronilla (more correctly described as the raising of Tabitha); and the Apostle and S. John curing the lame man at the gate of the Temple.

Of the frescoes thus assigned by Vasari to Masolino, only two now remain, S. Peter healing Petronilla (or the raising of Tabitha) and the Apostle preaching. The biographer mentions no other works by this painter except a fresco in the casa Orsina at Rome, which has perished. His life of Masolino is singularly meagre and unsatisfactory, considering the important position which he assigns to him in the history of art. After the death of Masolino, his pupil Masaccio was, according to Vasari, appointed to complete the decoration of the Brancacci Chapel.

As Vasari must have been acquainted with contemporaries of Filippino Lippi, one of the painters who was employed

in executing the frescoes existing in the chapel, it might be fairly presumed that he had good authority for ascribing a part of them to Masolino. Even tradition, when attaching to works so important and well-known, might, in Vasari's day, have been accepted as almost sufficient evidence of the fact; and Albertini, whose treatise I have already quoted, and who only wrote five years after the death of Filippino Lippi, confirms his statement as to Masolino's share in the work. But it has been called in question by Signor Cavalcaselle on two distinct grounds : first, on account of proof, obtained from the most authentic sources, that nearly all the dates which Vasari has given in connection with Masolino's career are incorrect; and secondly, on the evidence furnished by a critical examination of the works themselves, and by a comparison between them and others undoubtedly executed by Masolino, recently discovered, and apparently unknown to Vasari.

It would appear from documents chiefly existing in the Florentine archives, that Masolino was the son of one Cristoforo Fini, and that he was born at Florence, and not at Panicale, in the year 1383, twenty years earlier than the time assigned for his birth by Vasari. His name was Tommaso, of which Masolino is the diminutive. There is no proof whatever that he worked under Ghiberti, and Vasari appears to have confounded him with another Tommaso, or Maso, the son of one Cristoforo Braccii, a goldsmith and worker in metals, who was employed on the gates of the Baptistery. It is probable that he studied painting under Starnina, as his biographer has stated. In the year 1423 he was admitted

into the guild of the doctors and apothecaries (*medici e speziali*) of Florence, a guild which seems to have received many painters. Not long afterwards he accompanied to Hungary the celebrated Filippo Scolari, better known as Pippo Spano, the *Obergespann* of Temeswar. He must have returned to Italy after a residence of three or four years abroad, for we find him in 1428, according to an inscription still extant, painting frescoes in a church and baptistery for Cardinal Brenda di Castiglione, in the pleasant town of Castiglione d' Olona, in the beautiful Lombard plains to the north of Milan. No further traces have as yet been found of this painter; and with the exception of the statement of Vasari, we have no account of the time and manner of his death.

Masaccio probably died, as it will be seen in the sequel, in 1429. Consequently, if Vasari's statement be true, that this painter continued the work that Masolino had commenced in the Brancacci Chapel, either Masolino must have executed the frescoes there previously to those at Castiglione d' Olona, or between his visit to that place and the death of Masaccio. A comparison of the frescoes at Castiglione d' Olona with those in the Carmine prove, in Signor Cavalcaselle's opinion, that the first supposition is untenable; as the latter works show a far greater acquaintance with the true principles of painting, and a more matured judgment and skill, than the former. It would be against all experience, he contends, to suppose that Masolino could have had less knowledge of his art in the later than in the earlier part of his career. On the other hand, it seems equally improbable that he should have painted

the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel attributed to him by Vasari within the few months which elapsed between the completion of his work at Castiglione d' Olona in 1428 and Masaccio's death in 1429. So that Signor Cavalcaselle comes to the conclusion, after a careful examination of dates and a critical comparison of the frescoes in the two places, either that there are no paintings by Masolino now existing in the Brancacci Chapel; or that, instead of Masaccio carrying on the work commenced by Masolino, the reverse was the case, and that it was the latter who was employed to finish the frescoes begun by Masaccio. The last supposition he rejects on critical grounds, and suggests that if the Brancacci Chapel did ever contain works by Masolino they must have been upon the vault and in the lunettes, and that they have been destroyed, or are concealed beneath the comparatively modern decoration with which the upper part of the chapel is now covered.*

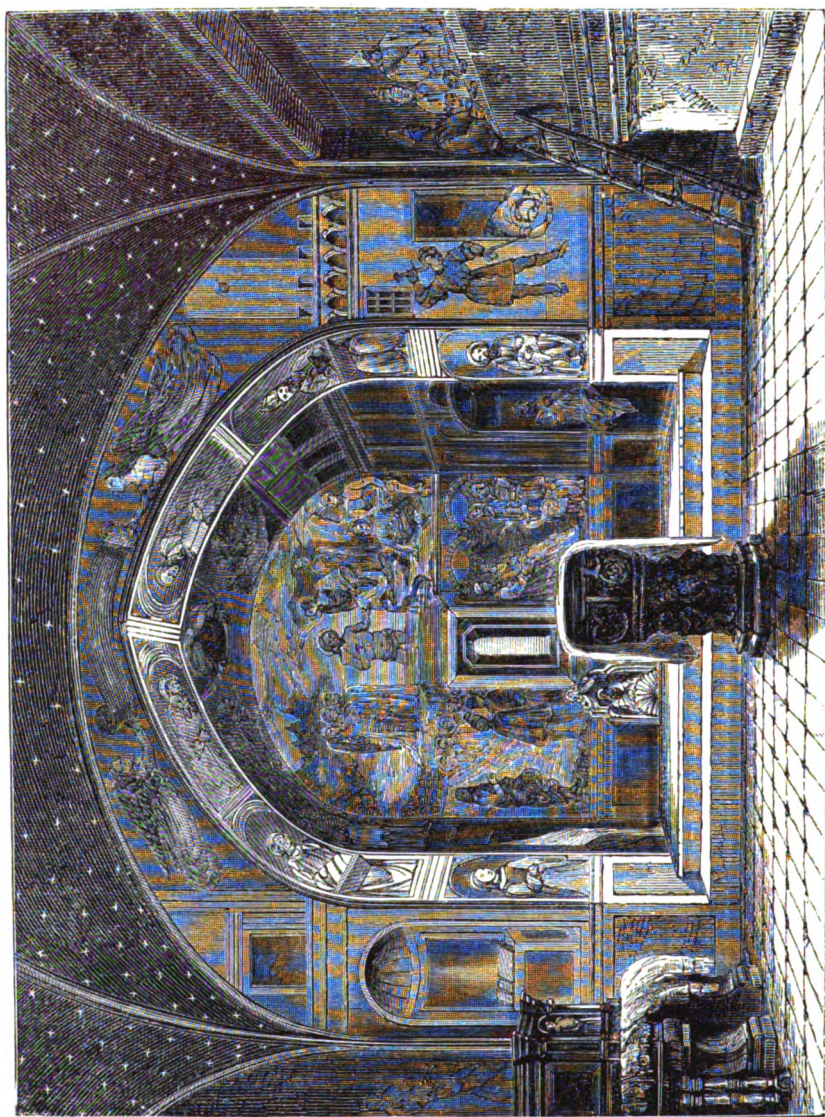
It is evident that no reliance can be placed upon Vasari's account of Masolino, especially as regards the dates. Assuming that the records which I have quoted do not refer to another painter of the same name, Masolino could not have died at the age of thirty-seven in 1440, leaving Masaccio to continue the decoration of the Brancacci Chapel. There can be no doubt as to the authorship and date of the frescoes at Castiglione d' Olona. The inscription upon a bas-relief over the principal entrance to the church, representing the Virgin

* The arguments on the subject of the authorship of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are very fully stated in CROWE and CAVALCASELLE's *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. i., chap. xxiv.

holding the infant Christ, who is blessing Cardinal Branda, records the erection of the building by that dignitary in 1428. This date is repeated in the interior, where a contemporary inscription states that Masolino painted the frescoes—"MASOLINUS DE FLORENTIA PINSIT."

In this confusion of dates, arising out of Vasari's mistakes, it is necessary, in order to form an opinion as to the authorship of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel attributed to Masolino, to compare them carefully with his undoubted works at Castiglione d' Olona. At the same time, as nothing now remains of the paintings which, according to his biographer, he executed in the lunettes and on the vault, we have no means of testing Vasari's statement with regard to them.

It appears to me that the only fresco now existing in the Brancacci Chapel which has any claim to be considered as a work of Masolino, is the "Raising of Tabitha" (No. 3). I agree with Signor Cavalcaselle in attributing to Masaccio the other fresco, the "Preaching of S. Peter" (No. 5), assigned by Vasari to Masolino. In style and technical treatment, in composition, in the costumes of the figures, and in the architecture, the "Raising of Tabitha" seems to me to approach much nearer to the frescoes of Castiglione d' Olona than to those undoubtedly by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel. That there should be a certain resemblance between the works of the two painters need cause us no surprise, as it is most probable that Vasari was right in saying that Masaccio was the pupil of Masolino. But there appears



THE BAPTISTRY AT CASTIGLIONE D' OLONA.
FROM A DRAWING BY MRS. HIGGINS BURR

1. The first of these is the fact that the
theology of the Church is not a static
entity, but a living and growing body of
thought and action.

2.

3.

4. The second of these is the fact that

the

theology of the Church

is not a static entity,

but a living and growing body

of thought and action.

5. The third of these is the fact that

theology of the Church

is not a static entity,

but a living and growing body

of thought and action.

6. The fourth of these is the fact that

theology of the Church

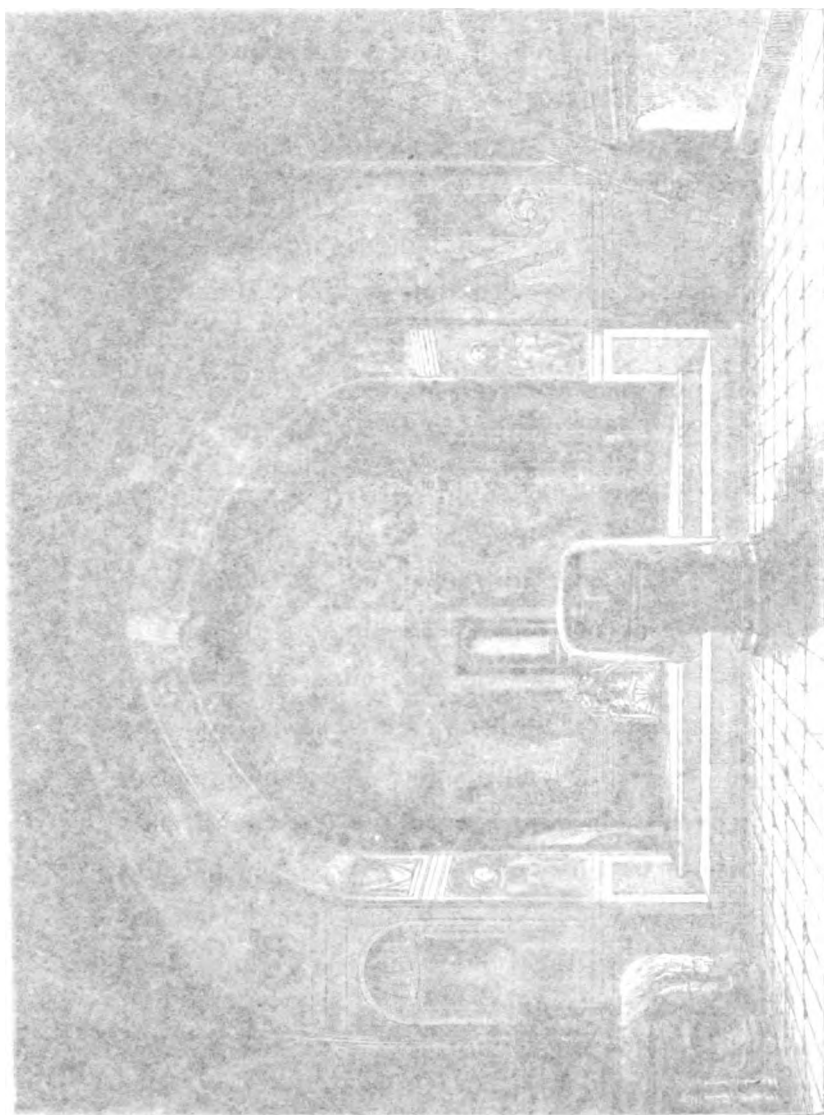
is not a static entity,

but a living and growing body

of thought and action.

7. The fifth of these is the fact that

theology of the Church



to me to be so marked a difference between this fresco and the rest of the series in the Brancacci Chapel—it shows so evident an inferiority in composition, that I can scarcely bring myself to believe that they are by the same hand. It resembles the frescoes of Castiglione d' Olona in the introduction of fanciful costumes and head-dresses; and the action and expression of the figures are weak and commonplace, when compared with the works of Masaccio.* The difficulty of reconciling dates is no doubt considerable, and the question must perhaps be considered as undecided, until further records of an authentic character, illustrating the lives of the two painters, are discovered.

The frescoes of Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona were executed on the walls of two separate buildings, a church and an adjoining baptistery. On the vaulted ceiling and walls of the octangular choir of the church he painted scenes from the lives of the Virgin, S. Stephen, and S. Lawrence, and in one of the compartments he introduced the portrait of Cardinal Branda Castiglione, at whose expense the building was erected and decorated. The frescoes have suffered much from time and wanton injury. Towards the end of the last century they

* The description which Signor Cavalcaselle gives of Masolino's style and his defects, would appear to be especially applicable to the fresco of "The Raising of Tabitha." "He neglected the great maxims of composition—the general mass is forgotten for the sake of the detail—solitary figures are unduly prominent—wanting form, and absence of mass in light and shadow. He was careless of the traditional garb of time-honoured scriptural figures, and his personages were dressed in vast caps and turbans and tight-fitting clothes." *History of Italian Painting*, vol. i., p. 508, &c. These criticisms apply to the "Raising of Tabitha," but to no other fresco in the Brancacci Chapel.

were covered with whitewash by the rector. In the year 1843 the whitewash was removed, but not without great damage to the paintings

These frescoes are distinguished by considerable merit. The figures are not deficient in grace, and are well conceived; the colour is subdued and harmonious. At the same time there is a dryness of manner and a conventional treatment of the subjects, which show that Masolino was still under the influence of the school of Giotto.

The inscription containing the name of the painter is written on a "cartellino," in an angle of the wall to the right of the high altar.

On the walls of the Baptistery, Masolino represented the history of S. John, and on the vaulted ceiling, Christ surrounded by Angels, the four Evangelists, and various Saints. The principal subjects are "S. John Preaching," the "Baptism of the Saviour," the "Daughter of Herodias before Herod,"* and the "Execution of the Baptist." In the fresco of "S. John Baptising," the figures of the men preparing for the rite are drawn with much spirit, and show a careful study of the nude. In treatment they are not unlike those of "S. Peter Baptising," by Masaccio, in the Brancacci Chapel. On the keystone of

* The woodcut of this fresco is from a drawing by Signor Cavalcaselle, and has been kindly lent to me by Mr. Murray, to whom I am also indebted for the woodcuts of Masaccio's fresco in S. Clemente at Rome, and of "S. Paul addressing S. Peter," by Lippi.



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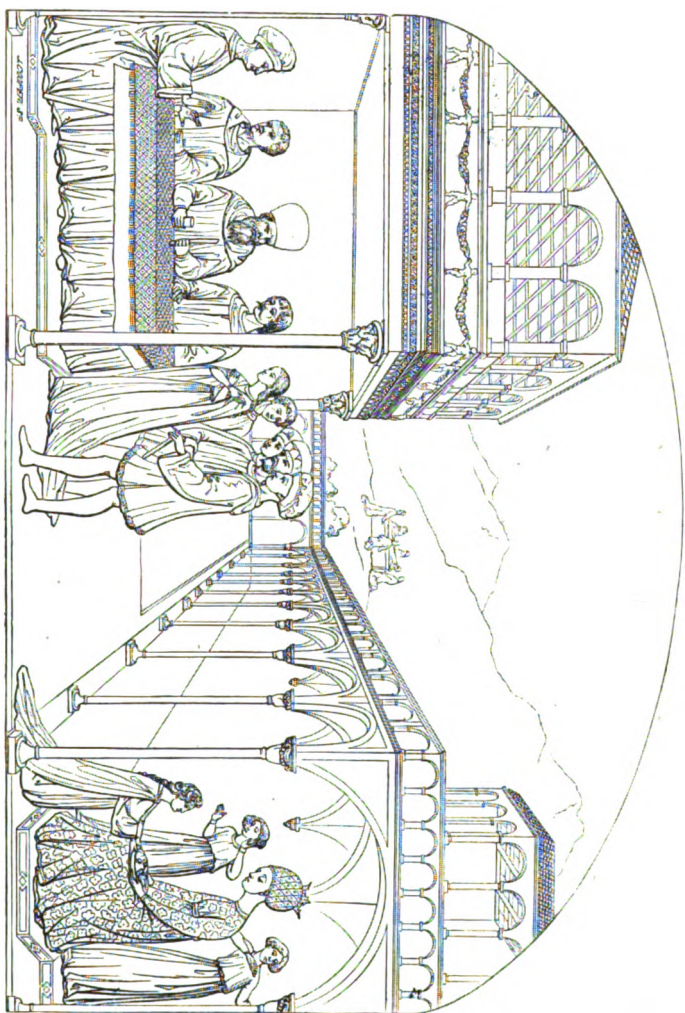
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1930

1931

1932

1933



THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS BEFORE HEROD.
A PAINTING BY MASOLINO IN THE BAPTISTERY OF CASTIGLIONE D' OLONA

an arch is painted a date, 1435, which Signor Cavalcaselle believes to have been added long after the execution of the frescoes.*

No works by Masolino, except those which I have mentioned, are known to have been preserved, and there is no example of an easel picture or altar-piece by him.

Of the many illustrious painters who flourished in the fifteenth century, including Paolo Ucello, Fra Filippo Lippi, Ghirlandaio, and Sandro Botticelli, Masaccio was undoubtedly the one whose genius has had the greatest influence on the progress of painting, and who approaches the nearest to that high standard of perfection which was achieved by the great masters of the sixteenth century. And this is the more extraordinary when we consider the early age at which he died, and the small number of works which he appears to have left behind him. Vasari—no mean judge and critic of painting, and intimately acquainted with the practice of the art—says of him: “We are most especially indebted to Masaccio for that which regards the good method of painting; since it was he who, desirous of acquiring fame, first felt that painting was a close imitation, by outline and colour, of the various objects that nature herself has produced, and that he who best succeeds in accomplishing this, may be considered as having attained to the highest excellency in his art. Convinced of

* The editors of Le Monnier's edition of Vasari's “Lives” (Florence, 1848), believe this date to be contemporary with the frescoes. They would place the death of Masolino in 1440.

this truth, Masaccio, by constant study, so taught himself, that he may be classed amongst the first who freed painting almost completely from the dryness and imperfections by which it was characterised before his time. He was the first who introduced into painting beautiful action and movement, loftiness of character and life, and that appropriate and natural relief in his figures, which no painter before his time had succeeded in giving." Vasari adds, that "Masaccio's paintings will bear comparison with any modern work for correct drawing and for colour."

According to his biographer, Masaccio was born in the castellated town of S. Giovanni, in one of the most delightful parts of the valley of the Arno. His name was Tommaso, but he was familiarly called Masaccio, a reproachful corruption of it, meaning "slovenly, or dirty, Tom," on account of his negligent habits and dress. He was of a kindly and honest disposition, and ready to help others although careless of his own interests. He commenced the practice of his art when very young, and whilst Masolino was painting his frescoes in the Brancacci chapel. The works of Fra Filippo Lippi and Donatello were the chief objects of his study. His attention was principally directed to the laws of perspective, and Vasari especially mentions a picture by him, preserved in the house of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, the painter, representing Christ casting out devils, in which the outside and inside of several houses were represented with extraordinary skill. He also diligently employed himself in drawing from the nude, and in executing difficult foreshortenings.

After painting various altar-pieces and frescoes in Florence and the neighbourhood, he went to Rome in order to improve himself still more in his art. There he attained great fame by decorating with frescoes the Chapel of the Cardinal of S. Clemente, in the church dedicated to that saint. He painted besides several altar-pieces in tempera, on one of which Michelangelo one day bestowed high praise, in Vasari's presence. On the recall from exile of Cosimo de' Medici, who had always befriended and aided him, Masaccio returned to Florence. During his absence, Masolino had died, leaving unfinished the great work which he had commenced in the Brancacci chapel. Masaccio received a commission to complete it; but before undertaking a labour of so much importance, he desired to give some proof of the progress which he had made in his art. He accordingly painted in fresco a figure of S. Paul, in the Church of the Carmine, extolled by Vasari as a work of extraordinary power, in which the painter succeeded in conveying, in a most wonderful manner, the character of the Apostle by the expression of his countenance.* Whilst he was thus occupied the church was consecrated. In order to preserve a record of the ceremony, Masaccio represented it in a fresco over a doorway which led into the convent from the cloisters. It was painted in *chiaroscuro*, or *terra verde*, and he introduced into it, with consummate skill, a procession of Florentine citizens, including many of the most distinguished men of the time, and amongst them Masolino,

* This fresco, together with the figure of S. Peter, by Masolino, in the same church, was destroyed in 1675, when a chapel was built by one Andrea Corsini.

who had been his master. After finishing this work he painted various frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, which Vasari particularly describes. But before he could complete the task confided to him, he died, at the early age of twenty-six—so suddenly as to give rise to a suspicion that his death had been caused by poison. He was buried in the year 1443, in the Church of the Carmine, but no monument records the spot where he was interred.

Such is the history of this great painter, as given by Vasari. It abounds with mistakes, and errors of date. As in the case of Masolino, contemporary documents of undoubted authenticity furnish more trustworthy materials for the life of Masaccio than the mere traditions which appear to have been used by his biographer. He was born in 1402, fifteen years before the time assigned by Vasari, and was the son of a notary, named Sér Giovanni di Simone Guidi, of the family of Scheggia. The place of his birth appears to have been, as Vasari states, Castel S. Giovanni, in the Val d' Arno. Already at the age of nineteen (in 1421) he was enrolled in the guild of the apothecaries at Florence ; two years before Masolino was admitted into the same corporation. In the year 1424 he was registered as a member of the guild of painters, as "Maso di Ser Giovanni di Chastello Sangiovanni."*

The next authentic mention of Masaccio has been found in the registers of the property and incomes of the citizens of

* The registers quoted in the text are still preserved in the Florentine archives.

Florence, made in pursuance to a decree of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, in the year 1427. The return given by Masaccio and his brother Giovanni, declares that they lived in Florence with their mother, and that Masaccio was twenty-five years of age. They resided in a house belonging to one Andrea Macigni, for which they paid an annual rent of 10 florins. Masaccio earned 6 soldi a day, and occupied part of a shop belonging to the Badia of Florence, at the yearly rent of 2 florins. He declares himself debtor to Nicolo di Ser Lapo, painter, in 102 lire and 4 soldi. The family owe Pietro Battiloro about 6 florins, and to the pawnbrokers, at the signs of "The Lion," and "The Cow," for articles pawned at various times, 4 florins. There was, moreover, owing to his assistant, Andrea di Giusto, for arrears of salary, 6 florins.*

* This return of Masaccio's property, first published by Gaye, in his "Carteggio," vol. i., p. 115, is very curious. It is in the following words:—

"Dinanzi a voi Signori ufficiali del chatasto di firenze, e chontado e distretto, qui faccio tutti nostri beni e sustanze, mobili e immobili, di noi tommaso e giovanni di S. Giovanni da Castel Sangiovanni, valdarno di sopra, abitanti in firenze. Abbiamo dextimo soldi sei.

"Siamo in famiglia noi due chonnostra madre, la quale è d'età danni quaranta cinque; io tomaso sono detà danni venticinque e giovanni mio fratello sopradetto è detà danni venti.

"Siamo in una chasa dandrea macigni, della quale paghiamo lanno di pigione fiorini 10, che da 1° via, da 2° il detto andrea, da 3° larcivescovo di firenze, da 4° il detto andrea.

"Tengo io tomaso parte duna bottega della badia di firenze, della quale pago lanno lanno (*sic*) fiorini 2, che di 1° via, da 2° e 3° da 4° la detta badia. Sono debitore di nicholo di s. lapo dipintore di lire 102 s. 4.

"Siamo debitori di piero battiloro di fior 6, o circa. Siamo debitori al presto di lioni e quello della vacha per pegni nabbiamo posti in più volte, di fior 4.

"Siamo debitori dandre di giusto, il quale stette chomeco tomaso sopradetto, di suo salario fior 6.

In the return of Nicolo di Ser Lapo for the same year, the debt owing to him is stated to be 200 lire, or nearly double the amount mentioned by Masaccio; and in that for the year 1430, he declares that the heirs of Tommaso di Ser Giovanni the painter, still owe him 68 lire. "This Tommaso," he adds, "died at Rome, and I know not whether I shall ever get any part of my money, as his brother says that he is not his heir."* Masaccio's income return for the same year still exists, but only in part filled up, and with these words written in a strange hand upon it: "dicesi é morto in Roma" —"He is said to have died in Rome." He would then have been about twenty-eight years old, and the statement of Vasari as to his death at the age of twenty-seven, would be confirmed, but not the biographer's account of the locality at which it took place, and the circumstances attending it. No other documentary evidence has been discovered relating to Masaccio.

Of the various works which, according to Vasari, Masaccio executed at Florence before his first visit to Rome, none remain

"Nostra madre dè avere fior 100 per la sua dota, quaranta da mona d'andreuccio di chastel sangiovanni, e sessanta dalle rede di tedesco di chastel sangiovanni, il quale fu suo sechondo marito. Nostra madre sopradetto dè avere dalle rede del sopradetto tedesco il frutto duna vigna, posta nella piscina nella corte di chastel sangiovanni, per un lascio fatto dal sopradetto tedesco, nonne schriviamo la rendita dela vigna, nè chonfini, perchè nogli sappiamo, nè nonà nostra madre alchuna rendita della detta vigna nè abita nella detta chasa."

* "Rede di Tommaso di Ser Giovanni dipintore den dare lire sessanta otto. Questo Tommaso morì a Roma, non so se mai n'aro alcuna cosa, poichè dice il fratello non essere rede."

except the fresco in the Church of S. Maria Novella. It is highly praised by his biographer, especially that part of it which represents a vaulted ceiling in perspective; but curiously enough it remained concealed for two centuries by a vast altarpiece, of no great merit, painted by Vasari himself. When the Church of S. Maria Novella was restored a few years ago, Masaccio's fresco was uncovered, and having been detached from the wall was removed to another part of the building. Unfortunately it was exposed at the same time to the destructive process of restoration, and it has consequently suffered so much, that little remains to show its original character. It represents the Trinity between the Virgin and S. John the Evangelist, with two kneeling figures, probably portraits of the persons, man and wife, for whom the fresco was executed. From the vigour of the treatment, as compared with the frescoes in S. Clemente at Rome, Signor Cavalcaselle believes it to be of a later period than that assigned to it by Vasari, who places it amongst the painter's earliest works. It is remarkable for a careful study of anatomy; the expression of the various heads is dignified and life-like, and the whole is executed with a power and a mastery over the materials employed, which are characteristic rather of a mature painter of the sixteenth century, than of one who had commenced his career at the beginning of the fifteenth. At the same time, in composition and style this fresco is inferior to those in the Brancacci Chapel.

Amongst the earliest known works by Masaccio, are the

frescoes in the Church of S. Clemente at Rome.* Except from Vasari's statement, we have no knowledge of the time at which they were painted, but they bear signs of having been executed at the commencement of the painter's career, probably in the year 1423 or 1424, when Masaccio was about twenty-one years of age.† They cover the vault, an arch, and the walls of a chapel. Those on the vault and arch represent the Evangelists, various saints, the Twelve Apostles, and the doctors of the church. Those on the walls, the Crucifixion and scenes from the histories of S. Catherine, S. Clemente, and of some other saint who has not been satisfactorily identified. In the Crucifixion, Masaccio has followed, in the general composition and disposition of the principal figures, the traditional arrangement of Giotto and his followers. In the centre, beneath the Saviour crucified between the two thieves, is the usual group of the fainting Virgin supported by the three Maries and S. John the Evangelist; Roman soldiers, some on horseback, and various spectators, are assembled round the cross. In knowledge of anatomy and in technical execution, this fresco shows

* It is to be observed that the editors of the last edition of Vasari's *Lives*, maintain that the frescoes in the Chapel of S. Clemente are not by Masaccio, but by an earlier master of the school of Giotto. (Le Monnier's ed. *Life of Masaccio*.)

† Signor Cavalcaselle (*History of Italian Painting*, vol. i., p. 525) suggests that the frescoes were painted previous to 1421, but they could scarcely have been executed by Masaccio at the age of seventeen. He assigns this early date to them in order to explain Vasari's statement that Masaccio returned to Florence from Rome upon the recall of Cosimo de' Medici, which took place in 1434, some years after the painter's death: an event which, he suggests, the biographer may have confounded with the return to power of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, in 1420.

considerable advance upon the works of the painters of the previous century, and the head of the dying Christ is singularly fine. But it is in the frescoes representing the life and martyrdom of S. Catherine, that Masaccio has given evidence of his power as an original painter. The finest and best known of these compositions is the one which represents the Saint disputing with the doctors before Maxentius. The



S. CATHERINE DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS.
A FRESCO BY MASACCIO, IN S. CLEMENTE AT ROME.

Emperor is on his throne at the end of a room, on either side of which are seated four doctors. They are earnestly listening to S. Catherine, and their action and expression are admirable for variety and truth to nature. The figure of the youthful Saint is full of grace and innocence. She stands calmly in the midst of the doctors enforcing her argument by a gesture

of her two hands, still natural to Italian disputants. The composition is very simple, and vividly recalls the works of Fra Angelico.

Of the other frescoes, the most interesting are S. Catherine refusing to worship the idols, the Saint converting the Queen from the window of her cell, the executioners endeavouring in vain to break her upon the wheel, and her final martyrdom, and that of the Queen, by decapitation. They are each distinguished by the same simple and pleasing composition, by natural and graceful action and expression, and by that knowledge of form which the painter subsequently displayed so remarkably in the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel. Unfortunately they have suffered so much from decay and unskilful restoration, that but little of Masaccio's original work remains. The other frescoes are of less interest, and are in a worse condition than those representing the history of S. Catherine.*

The resemblance in style between the frescoes of the chapel of S. Clemente and those of Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona confirms the statement of Vasari, that Masaccio had studied and formed himself upon the works of that painter.

After painting these frescoes, Masaccio probably returned to Florence and obtained the commission to decorate the walls of the Brancacci Chapel, but first executed fresco representing

* Engravings of the frescoes and of tracings from the principal heads, were published in Rome, in 1830, by Giovanni dall' Armi.

the consecration of the church. It still existed in the lifetime of Vasari, who praises the singular skill with which the painter had arranged and grouped the figures in procession, and the truthfulness of their expressions, but shortly afterwards entirely disappeared. According to the author of an old work on the principal monuments of Florence,* it had not been destroyed, but had been concealed by a wall which had been built up in the cloister when some alterations were made in the church, in the early part of the seventeenth century. Mr. Kirkup, so well known in connection with the interesting discovery of Giotto's portrait of Dante, in the Bargello at Florence, and for his intimate acquaintance with the history and ancient monuments of the city, was convinced that if the wall were taken down the fresco would be found preserved behind it; and he endeavoured to persuade the authorities of the church to try the experiment. However, only a part of the whitewash in the cloister was removed, but a fresco was discovered beneath it; not the one representing the consecration of the church painted in *chiaroscuro*, as described by Vasari, but apparently a fresco by Masaccio, and not unworthy of him. It has, fortunately, escaped the brush of the restorers, and some judgment can, therefore, be formed as to its merits. It is in colour; and in the part uncovered are groups of friars, with buildings, and a landscape in the background. Masaccio's great fresco may still remain, and it is to be regretted that after the discovery of this fragment no further attempt has been made to recover it.

* Bocchi. *Bellezze di Firenze*, ed. 1671, p. 337.

Of the various paintings in public galleries and private collections attributed to Masaccio, none appear to have any well-founded claim to authenticity except an altar-piece, called "The Conception," described by Vasari as having been originally painted for the Church of S. Ambrogio, at Florence, and now in the gallery of the Academy of Arts in that city. This picture is believed to be a genuine though youthful work of the painter. It has been much injured by restoration, and has been further damaged by the use of bad varnish; but it recalls the manner and method of Masaccio, especially in the proportions and outlines of the figures, and in the peculiar mode of using high-lights in order to give relief and roundness of form. The fine head of a youth, in a red cap and dark brown dress, in the National Gallery, assigned to him, and sometimes called his own portrait, is probably a work by Filippino Lippi. It is remarkable, considering the reputation which he had acquired, that so much mystery should hang over Masaccio's death. The tradition recorded by Vasari, that he had died of poison, was probably without foundation; but it is evident from the documents which I have quoted that he had left Florence in a secret and mysterious way. It is probable that the unfortunate painter, overwhelmed with debt and hard pressed by relentless creditors, had fled to Rome, leaving unfinished the great work which he had undertaken in the Brancacci Chapel; thus furnishing another example of the unhappy end to the career of men of genius of the same stamp.

Many years elapsed before a painter was found to complete

Masaccio's work. At length, towards the end of the century, between the years 1482 and 1490, Filippino Lippi, who had acquired great fame as a master, was commissioned to finish the series of frescoes which Masolino had commenced more than half a century before.

Vasari, in writing the life of Filippino Lippi, accepted, as was too much his habit, all the traditional gossip which was current in his day, and treated it as authentic history. Consequently his account of this painter is full of errors, and wrong dates. Filippino, he states, was the natural son of Fra Filippo Lippi, the celebrated painter and Carmelite friar, by a novice named Lucrezia Buti, whom he had seduced, and who had eloped with him from her convent. The story of Fra Filippo, as related by Vasari, is apparently a pure romance. The friar, he tells us, was captured by Barbary pirates, and carried into slavery, but was released from his chains as a reward for drawing his master's portrait in charcoal. On his return to his native country he ran away with Lucrezia, and was expelled the Carmelite order. He refused to avail himself of a dispensation offered to him by Pope Eugenius IV., which would have enabled him to marry the nun, and continued to live an immoral and disorderly life until his death. This romantic story, like many others related by Vasari, has been disproved by documentary evidence. Fra Filippo appears to have remained until the close of his life a poor friar. A letter is preserved in which he begs Piero de' Medici to give him some corn and oil in part payment of a picture which he had painted, in order that six marriageable

nieces, who were entirely dependent upon him, might not starve. At the age of forty he was chaplain to the convent of nuns of S. Giovanni, in Florence, and five years later he was rector of the Church of S. Quirico, at Legnaia. It is not likely that the seducer of a nun, and one who continued to lead the dissolute life attributed to him by his biographer, would have held these offices in the church. Filippino Lippi was probably the relative and scholar, and not the natural son, of Fra Filippo, and, in accordance with a custom prevalent at that time amongst artists, had been adopted by the friar. Filippino appears to have been born at Prato, a town of some importance near Florence; but the precise period of his birth has not been ascertained: it may have been about the year 1460. He was taught painting as a boy by Fra Filippo, who, however, died when Filippino was still a youth. He probably finished his studies under Fra Diamante, a painter of no great eminence, and a friar of the Carmelite convent, to whose care Fra Filippo had left him. According to Vasari, however, Sandro Botticelli was his master, and there is, indeed, much in his style and mode of colouring to remind one of that great painter, so much so that their works are frequently confounded. But as they were nearly of the same age it is more likely that they were fellow-students, and that they both acquired the same manner in the studio of Fra Filippo.

One of the earliest works of Filippino was an altar-piece on panel, representing the Vision of S. Bernard, painted for the Chapel of Francesco del Pugliese, at Campara, outside one

of the gates of Florence, and now placed in the church of the Badia, within the walls of that city. It was finished in 1480, when Filippino had only reached his twentieth year, and is still in admirable preservation.* Although in this picture he does not display the breadth of treatment and large style of Masaccio, but shows in its details and composition that he was still under the influence of the hard, conventional manner of the *quattrocentisti*, and to a certain extent of his first teacher; yet he had already carried the technical part of the art far beyond them, and had attained a richness and harmony of colour never reached by Fra Filippo Lippi. The Virgin suddenly presenting herself before the musing Saint, and turning over the leaves of his book, is a figure of singular dignity, grace, and beauty. The angels who attend her and nestle round her, are amongst the most charming creations of the playful fancy of the painter. The action and expression of the Saint, who starts from his reverie and contemplates the vision with astonishment, are very truthfully represented. The portrait of the donor, who kneels in the corner, is vigorously painted and life-like, but is awkwardly introduced, and interferes with the symmetry of the composition. The background with groups of friars, rocks, trees, and buildings, forms one of those conventional landscapes adopted by most painters of the time in their easel pictures. It, however, shows a feeling for nature, and an attempt to reproduce her forms, which has earned the praise of Vasari. The colour, which is

* A copy of this beautiful work has recently been made for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci. It will be included in the "second" annual publications of the Society for the present year (1868).

of tempera of the finest description, is singularly rich and pleasing. The figure of S. Bernard is defective in drawing, especially in the unnatural length of the body—a fault not apparent in the other figures.

This picture may be compared with the representation of the same subject by Filippino's adopted father, Fra Filippo Lippi, now in the National Gallery—the graceful imagination and playful fancy of the scholar with the severe and simple treatment of the master. The contrast between the two works shows the direction in which painting was rapidly advancing towards the end of the fifteenth century, and how the way was being prepared for the great school which was founded by Raphael and Michelangelo.

In the "Vision of S. Bernard" and in other pictures painted in his early youth, Filippino Lippi had not risen to the dignity and the truthful representation of nature which distinguish his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, and which he acquired from the study of the works of his great predecessor, Masaccio. No record has hitherto been discovered which enables us to fix with certainty the date of his employment in the Church of the Carmine. His frescoes there show the results of long and careful study, and of mature experience. When we compare them with the "Vision of S. Bernard" and other pictures by him of the same period, it is scarcely possible not to feel convinced that some years must have elapsed between their execution, and that the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel were not, as

Vasari has asserted, amongst his earliest works. It was probably, therefore, after he had had much practice as a painter, and towards the end of the century, that they were undertaken. We know, from existing records, that he was in Rome from the year 1489 to about 1493, in the service of Cardinal Olivero Caraffa, for whom he painted a series of frescoes in a chapel in the Church of the Minerva. It seems to me that these works show an inferiority of style and execution to those in the Brancacci Chapel, which tends to prove that they are of an earlier date.*

The frescoes in the Caraffa Chapel represent incidents from the legend of S. Thomas Aquinas. They are distinguished by a rich fancy, boldness of execution, variety in the expression, attitudes, and grouping of the figures; a life-like truth and individuality in the various heads, giving them the character of portraits; and a considerable knowledge of the laws of composition. The architectural backgrounds are rich in ornaments and arabesques, classic in design and spirit, and such as, according to Vasari, Filippino first introduced into painting, after he had made careful studies and drawings from the ancient monuments by which he found himself surrounded in Rome. In the most important of these frescoes, S. Thomas

* Signor Cavalcaselle, however, is of a different opinion (CROWE and CAVALCASELLE, *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. ii., p. 441); and it must be admitted that there is strong evidence to favour his view, if Vasari is right in placing amongst the portraits introduced into one of the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel those of Messer Soderini, who died in 1485, and of the poet Pulci, who died in 1486; but little dependence can be placed upon this writer's statements.

Aquinas is represented seated on a richly-ornamented architectural throne, between four allegorical female figures, amongst which are Theology and Philosophy. He is defending the church from the attacks of her enemies, and he tramples under foot a prostrate unbeliever. Before him stand two groups of discomfited heretics, including Arius, Sabellius, Averroes, and other promoters of heresy. On the ground, in the midst of them, lie their books, scattered and torn. Distant views of mountains and buildings are seen in the background, and the subject is enclosed by two pilasters ornamented with elegant arabesques.* Vasari possessed Filippino's original design for this fresco, upon which he bestows much praise. Amongst the other frescoes in the chapel, are those of S. "Thomas kneeling before the Crucifix," when, according to the legend, the figure of Christ spake, and addressed to him the words, "Bene scripsisti de me, Toma," and the "Annunciation" and "Ascension of the Virgin."†

The proportions of the figures in these works are not always correct, the heads being too large; and the drawing, in general, is somewhat weak and constrained—defects which are not apparent in Filippino's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. The colour is also rather monotonous in tone and wants vigour, but this may be the result of repainting and of injudicious restoration, which have impaired its original

* A careful copy of this fresco, and facsimiles of some of the finest heads, have been made for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci.

† Several frescoes which existed in Vasari's time were destroyed when a monument was erected in the chapel to Pope Paul IV.

brightness and transparency. The heads are full of character and individuality, and are amongst the best examples of the painter's style.

One of the most charming and characteristic paintings executed by Filippino after his return from Rome, was a Madonna, with Saints and Angels, in a "tabernacolo" or small way-side oratory, in the picturesque town of Prato. Time and neglect have dealt hardly with this fresco, but still in the perishing outlines and in the tender fading colours may be traced one of the most graceful and beautiful creations of the painter.

He married, in 1497, one Margherita, whose family name has not been preserved. He had by her one son, who inherited his collection of sketches, drawings, and studies from the antique, some of which appear to have passed into the collection of Vasari.

In the year 1500 Filippino was employed at Florence on his last considerable work, the decoration in fresco of the Chapel of the Strozzi family in the Church of S. Maria Novella. He had received the commission for it some years before. The frescoes which he executed and which cover the walls and vaulted ceiling, represent incidents from the legends of S. Drusiana, S. John, and S. Philip. In composition, in execution, and in general interest they are inferior to those which he painted in the Caraffa Chapel. They are overloaded with architectural details and with Roman ornaments and

emblems, which are not wanting in fancy and elegance, but are out of place and mar the general effect. The figures are frequently characterised by weak and defective drawing and incorrect proportions, and the colour is deficient in richness and harmony—this, however, may be in part owing to recent repainting and restoration.

The frescoes in the Strozzi Chapel appear to me to mark a decline of the powers of the artist, whilst those in the Caraffa Chapel show progress, and a bold and vigorous hand. I am, therefore, inclined to think that the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel—undoubtedly the best of his works—were painted in the interval between the execution of these two undertakings.

Filippino Lippi died of fever and quinsy in 1505, at the age of forty-five years, whilst painting a picture for the high-altar of the Church of the Annunziata. He was buried in the Church of S. Michele Bisdomini, at Florence. During his life-time he had been held in high esteem by his fellow-citizens, and like many great artists of his time, seems to have exercised a good deal of influence in his native city. We find by the records of the period that he was frequently called upon by the magistrates and chiefs of the republic to act upon commissions in matters of art, and to aid them with his opinion and advice. Vasari says that he was of a very courteous and amiable disposition, and that his death was lamented by all who knew him, and especially by the youth of Florence, whom he was always ready to help in their public festivals, masks, and other amusements, with his fruitful fancy and merry inventions

—in which he had no equal. So much was he beloved that the shops were closed in the streets through which his funeral passed, a mark of honour and respect only shown on the rarest occasions to illustrious citizens.

In addition to the frescoes which I have described, Filippino painted many altar-pieces and easel pictures, all on panel, some of which are still to be found in the churches of Florence and of the neighbourhood, or are preserved in public galleries and private collections. They are generally pleasing in colour and in composition. His female figures, especially his representations of the Virgin, are distinguished by much grace and religious sentiment; and there is a vigorous portrait-like character in his male heads which adds interest to his pictures. The most remarkable of his larger works are the altar-piece in the Chapel of the Nerli family in the Church of S. Spirito, at Florence, and the Adoration of the Magi, in the Gallery of the Uffizi; both of them excellent examples of his best qualities—of his playful fancy, of his truthful rendering of nature, of the life-like individuality of his figures, and of his rich and harmonious colouring. The picture upon which he was engaged at the time of his death, representing Christ taken down from the cross, was finished by Pietro Perugino, and is now in the gallery of the Academy at Florence. The large altar-piece by him, painted for the Rucellai family, and now in the National Gallery, of the Virgin and Child, with S. Jerome and S. Domenick, and the “predella,” with half-length figures of the Magdalen, S. Francis, and the dead Christ supported by Joseph of Arimathea, is a work of his later period. It is less pleasing

in composition, and less graceful in the forms, than some of his earlier productions, and the colour has lost much of its richness, and has become dark and heavy through age; but the picture is marked by his vigorous treatment, and the individuality of his heads. The national collection contains two other pictures attributed to him—the Adoration of the Magi, apparently part of a “cassone” or chest, and a small picture representing S. Francis in glory, surrounded by graceful and fanciful figures of angels playing on various instruments of music. Although both are pleasing works, they are not to be classed amongst the best specimens of Filippino’s skill.

Having thus given a sketch of the lives of the three painters who, according to Vasari and other authorities, were employed upon the walls of the Brancacci Chapel, I will proceed to describe the works which have been attributed to each of them.

Of the paintings which once adorned the vault and the lunettes, no traces, as I have already mentioned, can now be seen. It is doubtful whether they have been entirely destroyed, or whether—like many other works of the great painters of the early periods of Italian art—they are still concealed beneath modern decoration and whitewash. They were executed, according to Vasari, who gives a description of them, by Masolino. Those in the vault represented the four Evangelists—those in the lunettes, Christ taking S. Peter and S. Andrew from their nets, S. Peter denying Christ, and the shipwreck of the Apostles. The frescoes which now remain do

not follow any particular arrangement. With the exception of two, the whole series refers to incidents in the life of S. Peter. The two exceptions are Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the Expulsion from Paradise, which occupy the upper parts of the two pilasters at the entrance to the Chapel (Nos. 1 and 2).^{*} The first has been generally attributed to Masolino, and the other to Masaccio. Signor Cavalcaselle assigns both to the last-named painter. There is no doubt that both are marked by his peculiar manner of seeking to give the effect of roundness and relief by applying the high lights to the edges of his forms, and by that warm reddish hue which pervades his flesh tints. In both the nude shows a careful study of nature, and perhaps of classic examples. The proportions are, on the whole, correct, as are the general indications of the anatomical details. The action of the figures is natural, and proper relief is given to them by just distribution of light and shade; nor are they deficient in a certain grace. In all these respects these frescoes display a very great advance upon any previous and contemporary works—more especially in the successful attempt to represent the human form, from a careful study of nature herself. In this alone they mark an epoch in the history of painting.

In the first fresco Adam and Eve are represented standing under the tree of knowledge, round which is coiled the serpent, with the head of a woman, as is usual in pictures of the time.

^{*} These two frescoes were included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1861.

Eve holds in her hand the fatal apple, and turns toward Adam with a calm expression of entreaty, whilst he extends one hand towards her, as if in the act of remonstrating. In the Expulsion, Adam hides his face with both hands as if in a paroxysm of grief, and Eve looks towards heaven with an expression of anguish and despair. An angel floating in the air holds a drawn sword in one hand, and with the other points to the way out of Paradise. Raphael appears to have felt so much admiration for this group that he introduced it into the series of scripture subjects, which he executed in the Loggie of the Vatican, making some slight alterations in it to improve the composition. He reversed the position of the arms of Eve, and connected the angel more closely with the two central figures, although perhaps not thereby adding to the dignity of the composition, by placing one of its hands upon the shoulder of Adam, as if it were forcibly expelling him from Paradise. The figure of Adam he has left as Masaccio conceived it, probably thinking that it could not be improved.

The next fresco, following the most convenient arrangement according to subjects, is the upper one to the right on entering the chapel (No. 3). It is divided, according to the habit of painters of that time, into two distinct parts, representing two different incidents, in both of which the same person plays the principal part. To the right is Peter raising Tabitha,* to the left the Apostle healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple.

* Acts, chap. ix.

Vasari incorrectly describes this fresco as "S. Peter releasing his daughter Petronilla from her infirmity." This legend has rarely, if ever, been painted by the early Italian masters, and it is probable that in designing a series of frescoes illustrating the life of S. Peter, the painter would rather have chosen an incident described in scripture than an apocryphal and little-known story. S. Petronilla, according to the Roman legend, was a daughter of the Apostle, who accompanied him to Rome, where she became paralysed in her limbs, and was unable to move from her bed. The disciples of S. Peter having made it a reproach to him, that whilst he healed others he permitted his daughter to remain stricken with infirmity, he caused her to rise and to serve them at table, after which she returned to her couch helpless as she was before. After many years of suffering and of prayer she was healed. A noble Roman, of the name of Valerius Flaccus, then became enamoured of her and sought her for his wife. Fearing to refuse him she desired him to return in three days, when she would go with him to his home. In the meanwhile she prayed fervently to be delivered from this sore trial. Before Flaccus came back she died. She was borne to the grave, crowned with roses, by her lover and the company of young nobles who had accompanied him to claim her as his bride.*

This fresco is the only one in the Brancacci Chapel, the authorship of which is open to any doubt. Vasari attributes it

* This legend is related by Mrs. Jameson, in her *Sacred and Legendary Art*, vol. i., p. 185, from the *Legendario*.

to Masolino, and his opinion had been accepted by all writers on art who had investigated the subject. But recently it has been rejected, as I have already stated, by Signor Cavalcaselle, who assigns it to Masaccio.

Tabitha, clothed in white, is raising herself upon her bed. Kneeling by her side are two women, dressed as nuns, "the widows" of the story. Near her are three men, one of whom wears an eastern dress and a turban. They show their astonishment at the miracle by rather violent action of the hands, and by somewhat exaggerated expression of countenance. The Apostle, with a companion, stands at the entrance to the kind of portico beneath which the bed of Tabitha has been placed. He stretches out his right hand, extending two fingers, as in the act of blessing and calling the dead woman to life.*

It will be perceived that the painter has not closely followed the scripture narrative. The miracle is said to have taken place in "an upper chamber," and after Peter had put out those who stood by him weeping. The Apostle then knelt down, and when, at his command, Tabitha opened her eyes, and sat up, he gave her his right hand and lifted her up.† The painter has represented the miracle as taking place in an open portico, in the street of a city, and in the presence of various spectators.

* A copy of this fresco was included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1862.

† Acts, chap. ix.

The group which I have described, is so inferior in its composition, and in dignity and refinement, to the other frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, attributed, upon the best evidence, to Masaccio, that it is difficult to convince oneself that they are by the same hand.* At the same time there are many points of resemblance between them, especially in the distribution of light and shade, and in the general tone of colour, which would tend to show that they are the works of two men who had studied in the same school, or who stood in the relation to each other of master and scholar. The same remark will apply to the remaining half of the fresco, which is not connected with the part just described in the general composition, and represents a different subject. S. Peter, accompanied by S. John, is seen healing a cripple. The figure of S. Peter is dignified, but inferior in conception to that of the Apostle in the other frescoes in the chapel. His action, and that of the deformed man who appeals to him, is natural. Two youths standing near are dressed in fantastic costumes, after the manner of Masolino. They are not necessary to the composition, which wants unity and spirit. The background, which represents a street, probably in old Florence, resembles one in a fresco by Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona.

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Following the upper line of frescoes we next come to "S. Peter Baptising"† (No. 4), which Vasari attributes, and no

* The inferiority in the treatment of this fresco may be seen by comparing the facsimile of the head of S. Peter, published by the Arundel Society, with the facsimiles of other heads by Masaccio, also included in the Society's publications.

† Published by the Arundel Society in their issue for 1861.

doubt rightly, to Masaccio. It is impossible not to be struck with the superiority of this great work over the one I have just described—in the grandeur and dignity of the figures, in the lofty character of the heads, in the natural grace of the action of the persons represented, in the broad and skilful arrangement of the draperies, and in the composition. If they were both painted by Masaccio, his progress during the short interval which must have elapsed between the time of their execution is without example.

S. Peter is represented standing on the bank of a small stream. With his left hand he gathers together his ample garments, whilst with his right he pours water from a small vessel upon the head of a youth, who kneels in the stream, and joins his hands together in prayer with a devout and earnest expression. The countenance of the Apostle is grave, and his action natural and dignified. Around this group are several men preparing to receive the rite of baptism. One, already undressed, stands shivering in the cold. Vasari especially praises the natural action of this figure, which, he declares, had attracted the admiration of the greatest painters, and which was altogether a new feature in art. Behind S. Peter are two men in turbans. In the background are sketched, with remarkable freedom of touch, some distant hills.

The nude in this fine composition is more carefully studied and understood, and more truthfully and broadly rendered than, in the figures of Adam and Eve already described. The types which the painter has adopted for the Apostle and his disciples,

differ from those in the "Raising of Tabitha," and reappear in the other frescoes by Masaccio. Had this work alone been preserved, it would have been sufficient to justify the reputation of its author as the greatest and most original painter of the century in which he lived, so rich in great painters, and as the founder of what Vasari has termed "modern art"—that is to say, of its last and most perfect phase, the union of the highest idealisation of form, action, and expression, with the most truthful representation of nature, and the most intimate knowledge of the laws of composition and of colour, and the most consummate technical skill.

The next fresco in order of arrangement represents S. Peter Preaching* (No. 5). It is assigned by Vasari and by some modern critics to Masolino, but there can be little doubt that it is by Masaccio, as it is almost identical in character with the one last described. The Apostle stands with his right hand raised, in the act of addressing the multitude. Behind him are his two companions in turbans, as in the previous fresco. In front of him is a group of men and women, some seated and others standing. They are listening with deep attention to the words of the Apostle, and the effect produced upon each of them is shown by an appropriate expression of countenance. Sir Joshua Reynolds suggests that Raphael borrowed one of the figures in his cartoon of S. Paul Preaching at Athens—that of the listening bystander to the right—from the representation, in this fresco, of the old

* Arundel Society's Publications for 1861.

man seated on the ground, with "his head sunk in his breast and with his eyes shut, appearing deeply wrapt up in thought."*

Masaccio has shown in this fresco that remarkable power of telling a story in a simple and natural way, which distinguishes his earliest works in the Church of S. Clemente at Rome.

The frescoes that apparently succeed in order of execution and arrangement are those on the lower part of the same wall. They continue the history of the miracles and acts of S. Peter. In the one to the right (No. 6), the Apostle and S. John are represented distributing alms to the poor, and in the one to the left (No. 7), they are seen walking by the sick, who are cured by the shadows of the Apostles passing over them. These two frescoes are rightly assigned by Vasari to Masaccio. The composition in both is admirable for its simplicity. In the fresco of the distribution of alms, S. Peter and his brother disciple are seen in the midst of the sick, the poor, and the deformed. The countenance of the elder Apostle is singularly grand and dignified.† His hair is arranged in three bands, as typical of the triple crown of the papacy. In one hand he holds a money-box, and with the other gives a coin to a poor woman, who stands before him with a child in her arms. A cripple on crutches drags himself towards the two Apostles, and a young man lies stretched on the ground at their feet.

* Twelfth Discourse.

† A facsimile of the head of S. Peter was published by the Arundel Society in its issue for 1863.

Several men and women complete the picture, the background of which is formed by houses and distant hills.

In the other fresco S. Peter, accompanied by S. John, is walking with stately and solemn step through the streets of a city, apparently unmindful that three miserable cripples, deformed and maimed — horrible objects, such as are constantly met with on the steps of a Roman church — are seeking his shadow in order that they may be healed. The figure in a red cap, to the right of S. Peter, is believed to be the portrait of Masolino.* The draperies in this fresco are treated with a breadth and dignity worthy of the highest class of sculpture, and are far in advance of the works of any contemporary painter.

The upper fresco on the wall to the left (No. 8), is in some respects the most important and interesting of the whole series.† It is unquestionably by Masaccio, and is a noble monument of his genius. The subject is taken from Matthew, ch. xvii., v. 27, where Christ says to Peter, “Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take and give unto them (that receive tribute money) for me and thee.” Three distinct incidents are represented in the fresco: Christ addressing those words to S. Peter, and the Apostle taking the money from the mouth

* Vasari used it to illustrate his biography of the painter.

† Included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1861.

of the fish, and afterwards paying it to the receiver of the tribute. The three incidents are, however, so combined as to form part of one grand composition, unlike the scattered arrangement of the figures in the "Raising of Tabitha."

The whole interest is concentrated in the centre group, in which Christ is represented in the midst of his apostles and disciples. Before him stands the officer demanding payment of the tribute. The Saviour points towards the sea, and directs Peter to seek the money in the mouth of the fish. In the distance, to the spectator's left, the Apostle is seen bending down at the water's edge and obeying the commands of his Master. To the right, he is placing the tribute money in the extended hand of the officer. In the background is a landscape, with distant hills.

In this fine composition, Masaccio has shown a knowledge of the laws and practice of painting far in advance of his contemporaries, and such as to excite our wonder, when we consider the time in which he lived, and the state of the art at that period. The story is told in his usual simple and natural way. There is not a figure too much. He has not introduced any unnecessary details for mere effect. In the principal group the painter has only given action to the three persons who take a direct part in the incident—to Christ, S. Peter, and the officer. The collector of the tribute stands in the foreground, with his back to the spectator. There is more energy in his attitude and in his expression, than in those of the other two figures. With one hand

extended, he appears to insist upon the payment of his due, pointing with the other towards a building, which may be the office of customs, whilst he looks towards Christ as if appealing to His sense of justice and to His respect for the law. Our Lord points towards the sea, in the act of addressing Peter and telling him where to seek the money. The Apostle, with a natural gesture, denoting doubt and surprise, repeats the action of his Master, as if enquiring whether he had heard rightly. The other disciples* stand round as spectators. The interest which they take in what is passing is expressed in their countenances, but no action interferes with that of the principal persons of the group. The types of the heads chosen by the painter are noble and have a strong individuality. In the subordinate incident of the payment of the tribute money, which, although skilfully introduced, ought not to have formed part of the composition, the action of S. Peter is dignified and appropriate. The hills and trees forming the background are drawn with much boldness and freedom, and blend harmoniously with the figures. They show that Masaccio had rejected the conventional mode of representing a landscape, such as was practised by contemporary painters and even by some who lived long after him.

The figure and countenance of Christ are youthful, yet grave and majestic; His action full of dignity. The individuality of S. Peter is maintained through the whole series of

* Four figures to the left of Christ are without the glories round their heads, which mark the others as apostles. They may, therefore, represent mere spectators; but they make up the number twelve.

frescoes which Masaccio painted. He is represented as a man advanced in years, with a somewhat solemn expression of countenance, and his action is always in agreement with the character which the painter evidently wished to portray.

The figure to the spectator's right, with a broad forehead, denoting much strength of character, wearing an ample red cloak, which is thrown over his shoulder, is traditionally believed to be the portrait of Masaccio himself, painted, according to Vasari, by the aid of a mirror.*

The draperies in this fresco are remarkable for their broad and classic treatment, so different from the hard and angular conventional style of the fourteenth century. They are disposed in massive folds, and so arranged as to produce flowing and graceful lines, and at the same time to indicate the forms beneath. The general tone of the colour has been much lowered by time, and by the dirt and dust which cover the surface of the intonaco, and its original brightness and transparency have disappeared. Fortunately, however, the fresco has escaped the fate of so many great works in Italy, and has not been destroyed by repainting and injudicious restoration. In the reproduction published by the Arundel Society the colours are restored as nearly as possible to their original state. Masaccio's colouring is warm and ruddy (perhaps somewhat too red and hot in the high lights), and rich and dark in the shadows.

* The head, together with that of the last Apostle to the spectator's left, has been published by the Arundel Society in facsimile in their issue for 1861.

His peculiar method of giving the effect of relief and roundness, by placing the high lights on the edge of his forms, is well illustrated in this fresco. He does not appear to have been followed in it by any other painter.

When we remember that this work was executed at the commencement of the fifteenth century, when the art of painting was still almost in its infancy, and when it was trammelled by the conventional forms and traditions, upon which the followers and imitators of Giotto had founded their schools in different parts of Italy; when the laws of light and shade and of perspective were almost unknown; and when Masolino alone appears to have made any attempt to study from nature herself, and to portray her truthfully, the genius of Masaccio cannot but command our admiration. It is true that his master, Masolino, had pointed out the way to him, and had himself made considerable progress in a right direction. But the distance between them is so great that they almost seem to belong to a different age. Masaccio appears to have been the first painter to understand thoroughly the laws of composition, and of the distribution of light and shade, and the true principles of foreshortening. There remained indeed little for those who came after him to do, except to develop and to perfect what he had begun. In the technical part of his art he was still deficient, and he wanted that intimate knowledge of the human frame and that power of portraying it, which painters who came after him could acquire by the study and imitation of models and examples which in Masaccio's time did not exist. But in the perception of the true aim and object of

painting; in the power of conveying his meaning in the simplest and yet most effective manner; in a lofty conception of character; and in that highest quality of the painter and the poet, which consists in the selection of the most elevated types, and which substitutes the noblest and yet most truthful rendering of nature for that which is vulgar, conventional, and false, Masaccio must be ranked amongst the greatest painters of any age or country. The fresco of the "Tribute-money" is not unworthy to be ranked with those of Raphael in the Vatican. This illustrious painter, who had diligently studied and frequently imitated the works of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel, appears to have had this fresco in his mind when he designed the noble cartoon of "Christ delivering the keys to Peter." He adopted a somewhat similar composition, and the action he has given to Christ recalls that of the Saviour in the "Tribute-money." It may even be doubted whether, by introducing more energy into the attitude and expression of the Apostle, he has not shown a less dignified conception of his character than Masaccio.

Masaccio had attained the highest eminence in his art when he commenced the fresco which he did not live to finish. It is on the same side of the chapel as the one just described, and below it (No. 9). The subject, called by Vasari "The Raising of the King's Son," is taken from an apocryphal incident in the life of S. Peter, related in the Golden Legend. Theophilus, king of Antioch, having cast the Apostle into prison for preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of that city, S. Paul interceded in his behalf and represented to the king that Peter could cure the infirm and raise the dead. Theophilus

asked that his son, who had been dead for fourteen years, should be restored to life as the condition for the release of the Apostle. S. Peter having been brought out of his prison prayed over the body of the boy, who immediately lived again. Theophilus and his subjects were converted to Christianity by this miracle, and, building a church, they raised in the middle of it a splendid throne for the Apostle.*

This incident is represented in the fresco as taking place in the courtyard of a spacious building. To the left Theophilus is seen enthroned, with his sceptre in his hand. Beneath him are seated his counsellors, one of whom turns towards him as if expressing astonishment at the miracle. Around the throne are various bystanders. S. Peter performs the miracle before the king, and in the midst of a crowd of spectators; S. Paul kneels by his side, and with joined hands offers up prayers for its success. The king's son, a naked boy on one knee upon a cloth spread upon the ground, raises his two hands in an attitude of fear and astonishment. Lying around him are human skulls and bones. In the right-hand corner of the fresco, a second incident is represented. S. Peter is seen seated on a throne, with his face turned towards heaven and his hands joined in prayer. Before him kneel three men, and around him are various figures, including three in Carmelite dress, probably portraits of friars

* According to some writers the subject of this fresco is the restoring to life of Eutichus, who had fallen from a window. (Acts, ch. xx.) According to others, S. Paul confounding Simon the Sorcerer by the miracle of restoring a dead youth to life.

in the convent to which the Church containing the Brancacci Chapel belonged.

Vasari tells us that Masaccio died whilst employed upon this fresco, and that many years afterwards it was finished by Filippino Lippi. This statement is fully borne out by the fresco itself. If we compare it with those executed entirely by Masaccio, we recognise in it two distinct styles and the work of two different artists. We can easily detect the parts which were painted by him. His peculiar reddish tone of colouring, and his mode of applying the high lights to the edges of his forms, contrast strongly with the more sober and rather grayish tints, and slighter modelling of Filippino Lippi. In the copy of the fresco published by the Arundel Society* the difference between the styles of the two painters is very distinctly marked, and we can readily recognise those parts which are by Masaccio. They are, to the left, the king, the two counsellors seated beneath him, and the centre group, as far as the figure in green immediately behind the king's son; and to the right, S. Peter enthroned, the three kneeling figures, and the groups on both sides of the Apostle. The remainder of the fresco, that is to say, the four figures behind the king, and nine forming the centre of the picture, together with the king's son, is by Filippino Lippi.†

* Arundel Society's Publications for 1863.

† Signor Cavalcaselle further attributes half the arm and the foot of S. Peter, and all but the head of the kneeling S. Paul to Filippino Lippi. (History of Italian Painting, vol. i., p. 537.)

It is impossible to determine how far Filippino may have modified Masaccio's original design, or whether he merely finished that which had already been sketched upon the wall, or in a working cartoon, by his predecessor. But the parts painted by him are influenced by a different spirit from that which guided Masaccio. Nearly three quarters of a century had elapsed since that great painter had died. During this interval, Ghirlandaio and other illustrious fresco painters of the Florentine school, had further developed the "modern style" which Masaccio had founded. They had been able to improve the technical processes, and had consequently advanced another step in the art. They had sought to give a more naturalistic character to their works, by introducing the portraits of eminent citizens of their time into their compositions, rather as adding an historical interest to their frescoes and giving to them a reality which mere ideal heads could not produce, than as forming a necessary part of the incident represented. But if that was their object they scarcely attained it. Interesting as these portraits undoubtedly are, the persons introduced appear to be present rather as unconcerned spectators of what is passing, than as taking any share in it; and this gives an unreal and artificial aspect to the composition. Masaccio, as we have seen, had, according to a tradition, introduced his own portrait and that of Masolino into his frescoes, but if such be really the case, they both appear as actors in the incident represented.*

* Giotto appears to have been the first painter, as far as we know, who introduced portraits of his contemporaries into his frescoes. That in the

In the fresco of the "Raising of the King's Son," Filippino Lippi has imitated Ghirlandaio. He has introduced a number of persons for the purpose of portraying many of his most distinguished friends and fellow citizens, and not because they were necessary to the story; but he has placed them in a natural way, and although the composition is somewhat crowded, the nature of the subject may have required this mode of treatment. The portraits are most vigorously and truthfully painted. Vasari has mentioned several of them.* The King's son was the painter Granacci, then a boy. The figure in the left-hand corner of the fresco is believed to represent Tommaso Soderini; by his side stands Luigi Pulci, the poet. Piero Guicciardini and Piero del Pugliese, two other eminent Florentines introduced into the composition, have not been satisfactorily identified. The portrait of Sandro Botticelli, which Vasari has inadvertently placed in this fresco, is to be found in the one on the opposite side, representing the Martyrdom of S. Peter.

Filippino Lippi did not possess the genius of Masaccio; he was inferior to that great painter in vigour and inventive power, and was more mannered, but he had much of his noble and elevated conception of character. His colouring is sometimes monotonous in his frescoes, and lacks that richness and brilliancy which distinguish his pictures on panel. This

Bargello contained, besides the portrait of Dante, those of some of the principal citizens of Florence, but there was a reason for introducing them.

* Three of them have been copied in facsimile for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci.

may perhaps be traced to the influence of Fra Filippo or Sandro Botticelli. He is superior to Masaccio in certain technical qualities, in a knowledge of the true laws of perspective and of the distribution of light and shade, which give roundness and relief to the forms, and place the various objects represented in their relative positions. His draperies are broadly painted, and well disposed in graceful folds. On the whole, no painter of the time was more worthy to finish the work which Masaccio had begun, and to complete the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, than Filippino Lippi. It must not be forgotten that these celebrated paintings owe much of their renown to the subjects executed by him, and that a great part of the praise bestowed by Sir Joshua Reynolds on Masaccio, is really due to Lippi, whose works the English critic erroneously attributed to the former painter. The fresco of the "Raising of the King's Son," the combined work of these two great masters, is one of the noblest monuments of painting of the fifteenth century.

The subjects which follow the fresco just described are on the lower part of the two pilasters at the entrance to the chapel. That to the left of the spectator (No. 10) represents S. Paul addressing S. Peter, who is looking through the window of his prison; that to the right (No. 11) the Angel releasing the Apostle. They are both by Filippino Lippi, and are very characteristic examples of his genius and of his peculiar manner. The majestic figure of S. Paul addressing his brother apostle has been introduced, with little change, by Raphael into his magnificent cartoon of

"S. Paul Preaching at Athens," and again in the cartoon of "The Punishment of Elymas the Sorcerer." It is probable that Filippino Lippi himself was indebted for the original conception of the figure to Masaccio's fresco of S. Peter Preaching, which he had before him when painting in the Brancacci Chapel. There is much which is alike in the attitude and the arrangement of the drapery in both figures.

The only change which Raphael has made in Filippino Lippi's figure, is to raise both the Apostle's arms and to show both his hands. He did this in order to give additional vehemence and energy to the action, as more appropriate to an orator addressing a large concourse of persons, than the mere lifting of one hand, which would be the natural gesture in speaking to a single person.* It would, indeed, have been

* Sir J. Reynolds (Twelfth Discourse) points out that Raphael took two figures of S. Paul from the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, one for the cartoon of S. Paul Preaching at Athens, the other for that of the Apostle Chastising the Sorcerer Elymas. One of these figures is undoubtedly that in Filippino Lippi's fresco, which Reynolds has attributed to Masaccio; the other is either that by Masaccio in the subject representing S. Paul Preaching, or that in the Raising of the King's Son by Lippi. Sir Joshua adds, "that the most material alteration that is made in these two figures of S. Paul, is the addition of the left hands, which are not seen in the original. It is a rule that Raphael observed (and, indeed, ought never to be dispensed with) in a principal figure, to show both hands; that it should never be a question what is become of the other hand." Filippino Lippi has not observed this rule in his figure of S. Paul. Masaccio, however, has shown both the Apostle's hands. Of Filippino's figures of S. Paul, Reynolds further observes, "that they are so nobly conceived that perhaps it was not in the power even of Raphael himself to raise and improve them, nor has he attempted it; but he has had the address to change in some measure, without diminishing the grandeur of their character. He has substituted, in the place of a serene,



S. PAUL ADDRESSING S. PETER. FILIPPINO LIPPI



ST. JOHN





S. PAUL PREACHING. RAPHAEL.

difficult for even Raphael to improve upon this representation of the Apostle, which for its noble and dignified expression and action, for the broad and well disposed folds of the drapery, and for its rich yet sober colouring, may be ranked amongst the finest productions of the art.* In the fresco of the "Delivery of S. Peter from Prison," we are again reminded of Filippino's master, or more probably fellow pupil, Sandro Botticelli, by the dullish gray tone of the colouring, and by the graceful and somewhat effeminate expression and form of the angel who leads the Apostle by the hand, and by the youthful soldier, who sits at the prison gate deep in sleep, leaning upon his lance.

The last fresco of the series is also the undoubted work of Filippino Lippi (No. 12). It represents two distinct subjects, forming separate groups—the painter having followed in this respect the example set by his predecessors, and adopted a mode of composition which was rarely practised by painters of his time. The subject to the right of the spectator has been variously described by different writers. Vasari, in the first edition of his *Lives of the Italian Painters*, calls it "The dispute of Simon the Sorcerer with S. Peter before Nero," but it is now usually known as "S. Peter and S. Paul before the

composed dignity, that animated expression which was necessary to the more active employment he assigned them." As I have pointed out in the text, the difference lay in the fact that in Filippino Lippi's fresco the Apostle is represented as addressing a single individual, in Raphael's cartoon as addressing a multitude.

* A facsimile of the head of S. Paul has been published by the Arundel Society, in its issue for 1862.

Proconsul Felix." It is not, however, quite clear, what incident in the life of S. Peter the painter has intended to represent. The Roman judge appears to be stretching forth his hand as if he were in the act of ordering S. Peter to be led away to execution. Before him stand the two Apostles and a person who appears to be their accuser, and with whom S. Peter, by the action of his hands, would seem to be disputing or remonstrating. Two counsellors are seated near the throne of the Proconsul, and five spectators complete the group.

Raphael appears to have borrowed his figure of Sergius Paulus, in the cartoon of "Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind," from that of the Proconsul in this fresco.*

In the other half of the fresco is represented the martyrdom of S. Peter, who is crucified with his head downwards, according to the tradition. The executioners are about to raise the cross to which the Apostle has been nailed. Nine spectators stand around. The background of the entire

* Sir J. Reynolds in his Twelfth Discourse observes: "the figure of the Proconsul Sergius Paulus (in Raphael's cartoon) is taken from the Felix of Masaccio (Lippi), though one is a front figure and the other seen in profile; the action is likewise somewhat changed; but it is plain Raphael had that figure in his mind. There is a circumstance, indeed, which I mention by the bye, which marks it very particularly. Sergius Paulus wears a crown of laurel; this is hardly reconcilable to strict propriety and the costume, of which Raphael was in general a good observer; but he found it so in Masaccio (Lippi), and he did not bestow so much pains in disguise as to change it. It appears to me an excellent practice, thus to suppose the figures which you wish to adopt in the works of those great painters to be statues; and to give, as Raphael has here given, another view, taking care to preserve all the spirit and grace you find in the original."

fresco is formed by a building, through an open archway in which is seen a distant landscape.

In this fresco Filippino Lippi has introduced his own portrait and those of his celebrated contemporaries, the painters Antonio Pollaiuolo and Sandro Botticelli. Filippino has represented himself as a young man, in a dark cap, looking towards the spectator, and standing behind the throne of the Proconsul. Pollaiuolo is the first standing figure to the right of the Proconsul, dressed in a high red cap and reddish mantle. Sandro Botticelli, in a blue cap and long violet cloak, is the last figure to the right of the group representing the martyrdom of S. Peter.

This fresco, fine as it undoubtedly is, and not undeserving of the praise which it has received from Italian writers on art, is inferior in many respects to those of Masaccio. It lacks the unity and concentration of subject, and that quiet and earnest dignity, which characterise the compositions of that great painter. But the figures are for the most part nobly conceived ; the drawing of the nude vigorous and correct ; the action truthful and appropriate ; the draperies broad and well arranged. The colour is less rich and ruddy than that of Masaccio, but perhaps more agreeable to the eye. It is laid on with a much lighter brush, and in this respect contrasts with the careful and somewhat heavy modelling of the earlier painter. Nevertheless, by a skilful disposition of light and shade, Filippino has given relief and roundness to his figures, which stand out boldly

from the surface. The heads have that portrait-like and individual character which distinguishes all the works of the painter.

Such are the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. Although, considering their age and the injury and neglect to which they have been exposed, they have been fairly preserved, yet the accidents to which such monuments are constantly and, perhaps, unavoidably liable, rendered it very desirable that accurate copies of them—copies which could convey some idea of the beauty and character of the original works—should be made.* Already, many years ago, a part of the Church of the Carmine, containing some of the most remarkable and important of the works of Giotto, was destroyed by fire.† The same fate might befall the Brancacci Chapel. The lamentable destruction, only a few months ago, of two of the grandest and most precious pictures of the Venetian School, the great altar-piece by Gian Bellini, and the “Death of S. Peter Martyr,” by Titian, should be a warning to us. Now that the principal ecclesiastical edifices in Italy which contain works of art have been placed under the care of public bodies and the local authorities, it may be hoped that proper precautions

* Engravings and outlines from these frescoes have been published at various times. The most complete collection is that published by Lasinio, at Florence, about thirty years ago, but it gives a very inadequate idea of the originals.

† Only one or two fragments of Giotto's frescoes were saved—amongst them the fine heads of two Apostles, which were purchased at the sale of Mr. Samuel Rogers, and are now in the National Gallery.

will be taken to protect and preserve them, and to guard these national treasures from unnecessary risk and wanton injury, and especially from the damage to which they have been exposed through the barbarous ignorance and carelessness of those in whose custody they have hitherto been.* But the Arundel Society has done well, and has fulfilled one of the principal objects for which it was founded, in having copies executed and published of works which hold so high a place in the history of art, and have exercised so marked an influence upon the development of painting.

A. H. LAYARD.

* Some of the finest pictures and frescoes in Italy, including those of the Brancacci Chapel, have received irreparable injury from the nails which the priests have been in the habit of driving into them for the purpose of "decorating" the church with those vulgar tawdry hangings that mark a feast day. The Italian Government has recently directed the removal of some of the most important pictures from churches and suppressed convents to public museums.

THE END.

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A chromolithograph, after the fresco by ANDREA DEL SARTO, in the cloister of the
Annunziata at Florence.

II.

THE VISION OF ST. BERNARD.

A chromolithograph, after the painting by FILIPPINO LIPPI in the Badia at Florence.

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Domenico Ghirlandaio and his fresco
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