CHAPTER XVI

THE ACCADEMIA AND S. MARCO

Michelangelo—The David—The tomb of Julius—Andrea del Castagno—"The Last Supper"—The stolen Madonna—Fra Angelico's frescoes—"Little Antony"—The good archbishop—The Buonuomini—Savonarola—The death of Lorenzo the Magnificent—Pope Alexander VI—The Ordeal by Fire—The execution—The S. Marco cells—The cloister frescoes—Ghirlandaio's "Last Supper"—Relics of old Florence—Pico and Politian—Piero di Cosimo—Andrea del Sarto—Tapestries of Eden.

THE Accademia delle Belle Arti is in the Via Ricasoli, that street which seen from the top of the Campanile is the straightest thing in Florence, running like a ruled line from the Duomo to the valley of the Mugnone.

Before the great War of 1914-1918 (one has to be particular in this way in Italy, where there are so many reminders of the earlier struggle with Austria) the Accademia was famous equally for its Michelangelo sculpture, its Fra Angelico painting, and for Botticelli's "Primavera"; but in the rearrangement that set in after the war was over, the Fra Angelicos were removed to the Museo of S. Marco close by, and the "Primavera" to the Uffizi. The Accademia remains important chiefly for the great sculptor, and for a series of galleries in which the growth of Tuscan art can be traced—more interesting perhaps to the student than to the ordinary visitor.

Since, as we have seen, the early rooms at the Uffizi are

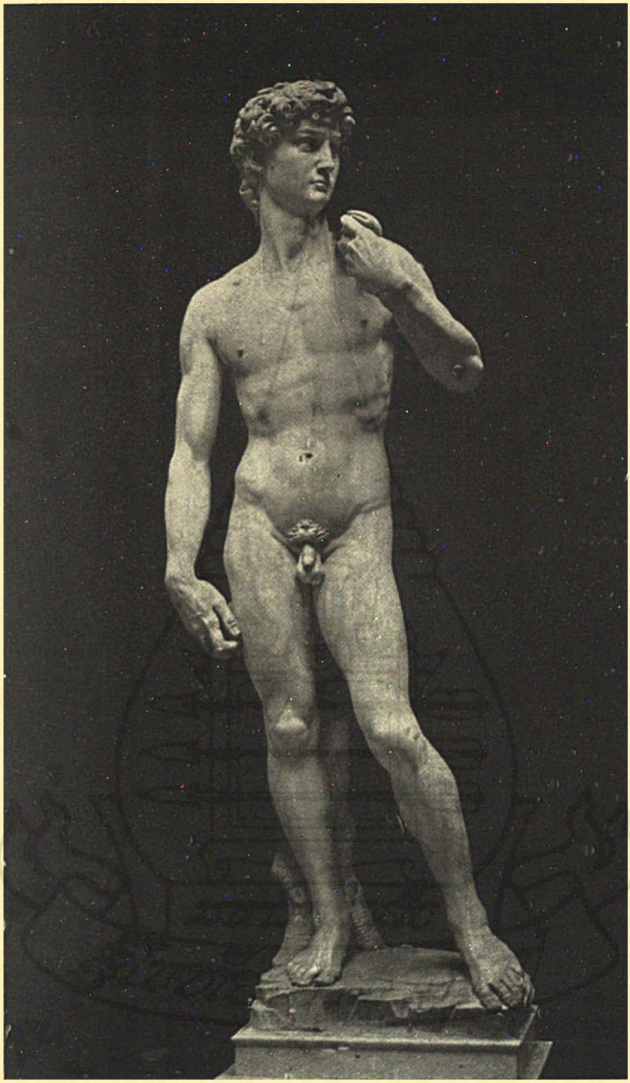
now, and with the highest selective skill, given up to the same end, I propose to leave these rooms without further comment, except to draw attention to one mature work in particular, which I reproduce from a photograph. I find this the Frate's most beautiful work. It may have details that are a little crude, and the pointed nose of the Virgin is not perhaps in accordance with the best tradition, while she is too real for an apparition; but the figure of the kneeling saint is masterly and the landscape lovely in subject and feeling.

In course of time the story of Florentine painting, begun on the ground floor of the Accademia, will be completed in the rooms upstairs, which once housed the modern pictures that now are on the way to the Pitti.

It is a simple matter to choose in such a book as this the best place in which to tell something of the life-story of, say, Giotto and Brunelleschi and the della Robbias; for at a certain point their genius is found concentrated—Donatello's and the della Robbias' in the Bargello and those others at the Duomo and Campanile. But with Michelangelo it is different, he is so distributed over the city—his gigantic David here, the Medici tombs at S. Lorenzo, his fortifications at S. Miniato, his tomb at S. Croce, while there remains his house as a natural focus of all his activities. I have, however, chosen the Medici chapel as the spot best suited for his biography, and therefore will here dwell only on the originals that are preserved about the David. The David himself, superb and confident, is the first thing you see in entering the doors of the gallery. He stands at the end, white and glorious, with his eyes steadfastly measuring his antagonist and calculating upon what will be his next move if the sling misdirects the stone. Of the objection to the statue as being not representative

of the Biblical figure I have said something in the chapter on the Bargello, where several Davids come under review. Yet, after all that can be said against its dramatic fitness, the statue remains an impressive and majestic yet strangely human thing. There it is—a sign of what a little Italian sculptor with a broken nose could fashion with his mallet and chisel from a mass of marble four hundred and more years ago (see the opposite page).

Its history is curious. In 1501, when Michelangelo was twenty-six and had just returned to Florence from Rome with a great reputation as a sculptor, the joint authorities of the cathedral and the Arte della Lana offered him a huge block of marble that had been in their possession for thirty-five years, having been worked upon clumsily by a sculptor named Baccellino and then set aside. Michelangelo was told that if he accepted it he must carve from it a David and have it done in two years. He began in September, 1501, and finished in January, 1504, and a committee was appointed to decide upon its position, among them being Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, and Andrea della Robbia. There were three suggested sites: the Loggia de' Lanzi; the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, where Verrocchio's little boudoir David then stood (now in the Bargello) and where his Cupid and dolphin now are; and the place where it now stands, then occupied by Donatello's Judith and Holofernes. This last was finally selected, not by the committee but by the determination of Michelangelo himself, and Judith and Holofernes were moved to the Loggia de' Lanzi to their present position. The David was set up in May, 1504, and remained there for three hundred and sixty-nine years, suffering no harm from the weather but having an arm broken in the Medici riots in



DAVID

FROM THE MARBLE STATUE BY MICHELANGELO IN THE ACCADEMIA

(A replica of this statue in marble is outside the Palazzo Vecchio and in bronze in the Piazzale Michelangelo)

1527. In 1873, however, it was decided that further exposure might be injurious, and so the statue was moved here to its frigid niche and a replica in marble afterwards set up in its place. Since this glorious figure is to be seen thrice in Florence, he may be said to have become the second symbol of the city, next the fleur-de-lis.

The Tribuna del David, as the Michelangelo salon is called, has among other originals several figures intended for that tomb of Pope Julius II (whose portrait by Raphael we have seen at the Uffizi) which was to be the eighth wonder of the world, and by which the last years of the sculptor's life were rendered so unhappy. The story is a miserable one. Of the various component parts of the tomb, finished or unfinished, the best known is the Moses at S. Pietro in Vincoli at Rome, reproduced in plaster here in the Accademia, beneath the bronze head of its author. Various other parts are in Rome too; others here; one or two may be at the Bargello (although some authorities give these supposed Michelangelos to Vincenzo Danti); others are in the grotto of the Boboli Gardens; and the Louvre has what is in some respects the finest of the "Prisoners".

The first statue on the right of the entrance of the Tribuna del David is a group called "Genio Vittorioso". Here in the old man we see rock actually turned to life; in the various "Prisoners" near we see life emerging from rock; in the David we forget the rock altogether. One wonders how Michelangelo went to work. Did the shape of the block of marble influence him, or did he with his mind's eye, the Röntgen rays of genius, see the figure within it, embedded in the midst, and hew and chip until it disclosed? On the back of the fourth statue on the left a monkish face has been incised: probably some visitor to the studio. After

looking at these originals and casts, and remembering those other Michelangelo sculptures elsewhere in Florence—the tombs of the Medici, the Brutus and the smaller David—turn to the bronze head of the artist by Daniele da Volterra and reflect upon the author of it all: the profoundly sorrowful eyes behind which so much power and knowledge and ambition and disappointment dwelt.

Before leaving the Accademia for the last time, one should glance at the tapestries near the main entrance, just for fun. That one in which Adam names the animals is so delightfully naïve that it ought to be reproduced as a nursery wall-paper. The creatures pass in review in four processions, and Adam must have had to be uncommonly quick to make up his mind first and then rattle out their resultant names in the time. The main procession is that of the larger quadrupeds, headed by the unicorn in single glory; and the moment chosen by the artist is that in which the elephant, having just heard his name (for the first time) and not altogether liking it, is turning towards Adam in surprised remonstrance. The second procession is of reptiles, led by the snail; the third, the smaller quadrupeds, led by four rats, followed desperately close (but of course under the white flag) by two cats; while the fourth—all sorts and conditions of birds—streams through the air. The others in this series are all delightful, not the least being that in which God, having finished His work, takes Adam's arm and flies with him over the earth to point out its merits.

From the Accademia it is but a step to S. Marco, across the Piazza, but it is well first to go a little beyond that in order to see a certain painting which, both chronologically and as an influence, comes before a painting that

we shall find in the Museo S. Marco. We therefore cross the Piazza S. Marco to the Via d' Arrazzieri, which leads into the Via 27 Aprile,[1] where at a door on the left, marked A, is an ancient refectory, preserved as a picture gallery: the Cenacolo di S. Apollonia, all that is kept sacred of the monastery of S. Apollonia, now a military establishment. This room is important to students of art in containing so much work of Andrea del Castagno (1390-1457), to whom Vasari gives so black a character. The portrait frescoes are from the Villa Pandolfini (previously Carducci), and among them are Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Dante—who is here rather less ascetic than usual—none of whom the painter could have seen. There is also a very charming little cupid carrying a huge peacock plume. But "The Last Supper" is the glory of the room. This work, which belongs to the middle of the fifteenth century, is interesting as a real effort at psychology. Leonardo makes Judas leave his seat to ask if it is he that is meant—that being the dramatic moment chosen by this prince of painters: Castagno calls attention to Judas as an undesirable member of the little band of disciples by placing him apart, the only one on his side of the table; which was avoiding the real task, since naturally when one of the company was forced into so sinister a position the question would be already answered. Castagno indeed renders Judas so obviously untrustworthy as to make it a surprise that he ever was admitted among the disciples (or wished to be one) at all; while Vasari blandly suggests that he is the very image of the painter himself. Other positions which later artists converted into a convention may also be noted: John, for example, is reclining on the table in an ecstasy of affection

[1] 27 April, 1859, the day that war with Austria was proclaimed.

and fidelity; while the Florentine loggia as the scene of the meal was often reproduced later.

Andrea del Castagno began life as a farm lad, but was educated as an artist at the cost of one of the less notable Medici. He had a vigorous way with his brush, as we see here and have seen elsewhere. In the Duomo, for example, we saw his equestrian portrait of Niccolò da Tolentino, a companion to Uccello's Hawkwood. When the Albizzi and Peruzzi intrigues which had led to the banishment of Cosimo de' Medici came to their final frustration with the triumphant return of Cosimo, it was Andrea who was commissioned by the Signoria to paint for the outside of the Bargello, a picture of the leaders of the insurrection, upside down. Vasari is less to be trusted in his dates and facts in his memoir of Andrea del Castagno than anywhere else; for he states that he commemorated the failure of the Pazzi Conspiracy (which occurred twenty years after his death), and accuses him not only of murdering his fellow-painter Domenico Veneziano but confessing the crime; the best answer to which allegation is that Domenico survived Andrea by four years.

We may now make for the Museo of S. Marco, once a convent built by Michelozzo, Donatello's friend and partner and the friend also of Cosimo de' Medici, at whose cost he worked here. Antonino, the saintly head of the monastery, having suggested to Cosimo that he should apply some of his wealth, not always too nicely obtained, to the Lord, Cosimo began literally to squander money on S. Marco, dividing his affection between S. Lorenzo, which he completed upon the lines laid down by his father, and this Dominican monastery, where he even had a cell reserved for his own use, with a bedroom in addition.

whither he might now and again retire for spiritual refreshment and quiet.

It was at S. Marco that Cosimo kept the MSS. which he was constantly collecting, and which now, after curious vicissitudes, are lodged in Michelangelo's library at S. Lorenzo; and on his death he left them to the monks. Cosimo's librarian was Tommaso Parenticelli, a little busy man, who, to the general astonishment, on the death of Eugenius IV became Pope and took the name of Nicholas V. His energies as Pontiff went rather towards learning and art than anything else: he laid the foundations of the Vatican library, on the model of Cosimo's, and persuaded Fra Angelico to Rome to paint Vatican frescoes.

The magnets which draw every one who visits Florence to S. Marco are first Fra Angelico, and secondly Savonarola, or first Savonarola, and secondly Fra Angelico, according as one is constituted. Fra Angelico, at Cosimo's desire and cost, came from Fiesole to paint here; while Girolamo Savonarola ceased to leave Ferrara during the war, entered these walls in 1482. Latterly all the pictures of the "Frate Beata" have been placed in his old home.

Fra Angelico—the sweetest of all the Florentine painters—was a monk of Fiesole, whose real name was Guido Petri di Mugello, but becoming a Dominican he called himself Giovanni, and now through the sanctity and happiness of his brush is for all time Il Beato Angelico. He was born in 1390, nearly sixty years after Giotto's death, when Chaucer was fifty, and Richard II on the English throne. His early years were spent in exile from Fiesole, the brothers having come into difficulties with the Archbishop, but by 1418 he was again at Fiesole, and when in 1436 Cosimo de' Medici, returned from exile at Venice, set his friend Michelozzo

upon building the convent of S. Marco, Fra Angelico was fetched from Fiesole to decorate the walls. There, and here, in the Accademia, are his chief works assembled; but he worked also at Fiesole, at Cortona, and at Rome, where he painted frescoes in the chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican and where he died, aged sixty-eight, and was buried. It was while at Rome that the Pope offered him the priorship of S. Marco, which he declined as being unworthy, but recommended Antonino, "the good archbishop". —That practically is his whole life. As to his character, let Vasari tell us. "He would often say that whosoever practised art needed a quiet life and freedom from care, and he who occupies himself with the things of Christ ought always to be with Christ. . . . Some say that Fra Giovanni never took up his brush without first making a prayer. . . . . He never made a crucifix when the tears did not course down his cheeks." The one curious thing—to me—about Fra Angelico is that he has not been canonized. If ever a son of the Church toiled for her honour and . the happiness of mankind it was he.

The Ospizio at S. Marco gives us the artist and rhapsodist most completely. In looking at Fra Angelico's pictures, three things in particular strike the mind: the skill with which he composed them; his mastery of light; and—here he is unique—the pleasure he must have had in painting them. All seem to have been play; he enjoyed the toil exactly as a child enjoys the labour of building a house with toy bricks. Nor, one feels, could he be depressed. Even in his Crucifixions there is a certain underlying happiness, due to his knowledge that the Crucified was to rise again and ascend to Heaven and enjoy eternal felicity. Knowing this (as he did know it) how could he be wholly

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

FROM THE PAINTING BY FRA ANGELICO IN THE MUSEO DI SAN MARCO

cast down? You see it again in the Flagellation of Christ, in the series of six scenes in the second bay. The scourging is almost a festival. But best of all I like the Flight into Egypt. Everything here is joyous and (in spite of the terrible cause of the journey) bathed in the sunny light of the age of innocence; the landscape; Joseph, younger than usual, brave and resolute and undismayed by the curious turn in his fortunes; and Mary with the child in her arms, happy and pretty, seated securely on an amiable donkey that has neither bit nor bridle. It is when one looks at Fra Angelico that one understands how wise were the Old Masters to seek their inspiration in the life of Christ. One cannot imagine Fra Angelico's existence in a pagan country. Look at the six radiant and rapturous angels clustering on the roof of the manger. Was there ever anything prettier? But I am not sure that I do not most covet the Christ crucified and two saints, and the Coronation of the Virgin, for their beauty of light.

Strangely enough the gayest picture in the room is the radiant altar-piece at the far end—the "Deposition," with surrounding saints by Lorenzo Monaco. Try as he might, Beato Angelico could not make any one more than pretending to be sorrowful. It is all exquisite and it ought to be still enriching a real temple of Christianity.

What, by most visitors, is generally considered the most important work in this room is the Last Judgment, which is certainly extraordinarily interesting, and in the hierarchy of heaven and the company of the blest Fra Angelico is in a very acceptable mood. The benignant Christ Who divides the sheep and the goats; the healthy rine-lipped Saints and Fathers who assist at the tribunal

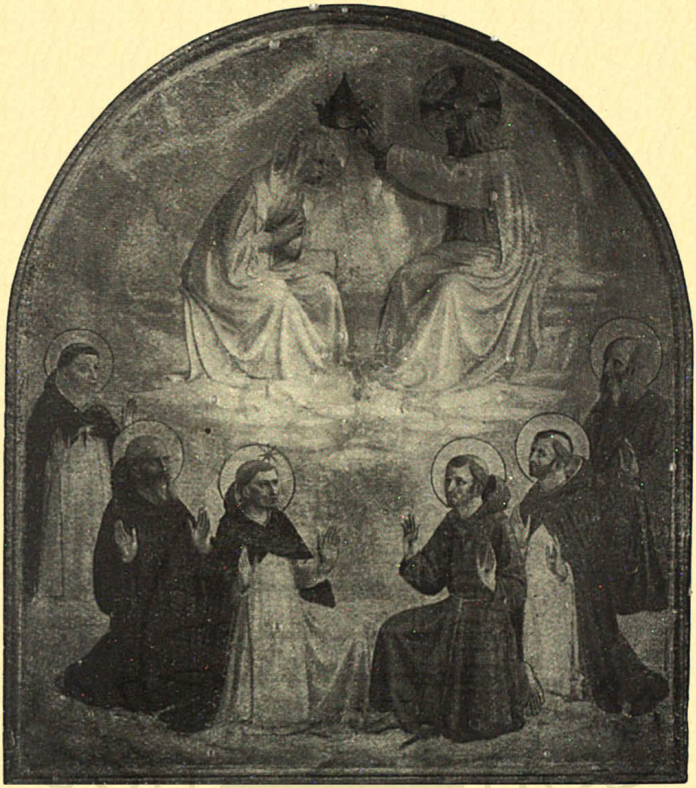
and have never a line of age or experience on their blooming cheeks; the monks and nuns, just risen from their graves, who embrace each other in the meads of paradise with such fervour—these have much of the charm of little flowers. But in delineating the damned the painter is in strange country. It was a subject of which he knew nothing, and the introduction among them of monks of the rival order of S. Francis is mere party politics and a blot.

In the third bay is the lovely Madonna della Stella, the picture which was stolen in 1911, but quickly recovered. It is part of the strange complexity of this world that it should equally contain artists such as Fra Angelico and thieves such as those who planned and carried out this robbery: nominally custodians of the museum. To repeat one of Vasari's sentences: "Some say that he never took up his brush without first making a prayer". . . .

Fra Angelico in his crucifixion picture in the first cloisters and in his great scene of the Mount of Olives in the chapter house shows himself less incapable of depicting unhappiness than we have yet seen him; but the most memorable of the ground-floor frescoes is the symbol of hospitality over the door of the wayfarers' room, where Christ is being welcomed by two Dominicans.

The "Peter" with his finger to his lips, over the sacristy, is reminding the monks that that room is vowed to silence. Beneath the large crucifixion in the chapter house are portraits of seventeen famous Dominicans with S. Dominic in the midst. Note the girl with the scroll on the right—how gay and light the colouring.

Upstairs, in the cells, and pre-eminently in the passage, where his best known work of all, the Annunciation, is to



THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

FROM A FRESCO BY FRA ANGELICO IN THE CONVENT OF S. MARCO

be seen, Angelico is at his best. In each cell is a little fresco reminding the brother of the life of Christ—and of these by Angelico it may be said that each is as simple as it can be and as sweet: easy lines, easy colours, with the very spirit of holiness shining out. I think perhaps that the Coronation of the Virgin (who is still the simple Virgin and not the Queen of Heaven) in the ninth cell, reproduced in this volume, is my favourite, as it is of many persons; but the Annunciation in the third, the delicate figure of the nun in the Pretorium scene in No. 7, the two Maries at the Sepulchre in the eighth, and the Child in the Stable in the fifth, are ever memorable too. His own cell was No. 33.

In the cell set apart for Cosimo de' Medici, No. 38, which the officials point out, is an Adoration of the Magi, painted there at Cosimo's express wish, that he might be reminded of the humility proper to rulers; and here we get one of the infrequent glimpses of this best and wisest of the Medici, for a portrait of him adorns it.

Here also is a sensitive terra-cotta bust of S. Antonino Cosimo's friend and another pride of the monastery: the monk who was also Archbishop of Florence until his death, and whom we saw, in stone, in a niche under the Uffizi. His cell was the thirty-first cell, opposite the entrance. This benign old man, who has one of the kindest faces of his time, which was often introduced into pictures, was appointed to the see at the suggestion of Fra Angelico, to whom Pope Eugenius (who consecrated the new S. Marco in 1442 and occupied Cosimo de' Medici's cell on his visit) had offered it; but the painter declined and put forward Antonino in his stead. Antonino Pierozzi, whose destiny it was to occupy this high post, to be a confidant of Cosimo de' Medici, and ultimately, in 1523, to be enrolled

among the saints, was born at Florence in 1389. According to Butler, from the cradle "Antonino" or "Little Antony," as the Florentines affectionately called him, had "no inclination but to piety," and was an enemy even as an infant "both to sloth and to the amusements of children". As a schoolboy his only pleasure was to read the lives of the saints, converse with pious persons or to pray. When not at home or at school he was in church, either kneeling or lying prostrate before a crucifix, "with a perseverance that astonished everybody". S. Dominic himself, preaching at Fiesole, made him a Dominican, his answers to an examination of the whole decree of Gratian being the deciding cause, although Little Antony was then but sixteen. As a priest he was "never seen at the altar but bathed in tears". After being prior of a number of convents and a counsellor of much weight in convocation, he was made Archbishop of Florence: but was so anxious to avoid the honour and responsibility that he hid in the island of Sardinia. On being discovered he wrote a letter praying to be excused and watered it with his tears; but at last he consented and was consecrated in 1446.

As archbishop his life was a model of simplicity and solicitude. He thought only of his duties and the well-being of the poor. His purse was open to all in need, and he "often sold" his single mule in order to relieve some necessitous person. He gave up his garden to the growth of vegetables for the poor, and kept an ungrateful leper whose sores he dressed with his own hands. He died in 1459 and was canonized in 1523. His body was still free from corruption in 1559, when it was translated to the chapel in S. Marco prepared for it by the Salviati.

But perhaps the good Antonino's finest work was the foundation of a philanthropic society of Florentines which

still carries on its good work. Antonino's sympathy lay in particular with the reduced families of Florence, and it was to bring help secretly to them—too proud to beg—that he called for volunteers. The society was known in the city as the Buonuomini (good men) of S. Martino, the little church close to Dante's house, behind the Badia: S. Martin being famous among saints for his impulsive yet wise generosity with his cloak.

The other and most famous prior of S. Marco was Savonarola. Girolamo Savonarola was born of noble family at Ferrara in 1452, and after a profound education, in which he concentrated chiefly upon religion and philosophy, he entered the Dominican order at the age of twenty-two. He first came to S. Marco at the age of thirty and preached there in Lent in 1482, but without attracting much notice. When, however, he returned to S. Marco seven years later it was to be instantly hailed both as a powerful preacher and reformer. His eloquent and burning declarations were hurled both at Florence and Rome: at the apathy and greed of the Church as a whole, and at the sinfulness and luxury of this city, while Lorenzo the Magnificent, who was then at the height of his influence, surrounded by accomplished and witty hedonists, and happiest when adding to his collection of pictures, jewels, and sculpture, in particular did the priest rebuke. Savonarola stood for the spiritual ideals and asceticism of the Baptist, Christ, and S. Paul; Lorenzo, in his eyes, made only for sensuality and decadence.

The two men, however, ecognized each other's genius, and Lorenzo, with the tolerance which was as much a mark of the first three Medici rulers as its absence was notable in most of the later ones rather encouraged Savonarola in

his crusade than not. He visited him in the monastery and did not resent being kept waiting; and he went to hear him preach. In 1492 Lorenzo died, sending for Savonarola on his death-bed, which was watched by the two closest of his scholarly friends, Pico della Mirandola and Politian. The story of what happened has been variously told. According to the account of Politian, Lorenzo met his end with fortitude, and Savonarola prayed with the dying man and gave him his blessing; according to another account, Lorenzo was called upon by Savonarola to make three undertakings before he died, and, Lorenzo declining, Savonarola left him unabsolved. These promises were (1) to repent of all his sins, and in particular of the sack of Volterra, of the alleged theft of public dowry funds and of the implacable punishment of the Pazzi conspirators; (2) to restore all property of which he had become possessed by unjust means; and (3) to give back to Florence her liberty. But the probabilities are in favour of Politian's account being the true one, and the later story a political invention.

Lorenzo dead and Piero his son so incapable, Savonarola came to his own. He had long foreseen a revolution following on the death of Lorenzo, and in one of his most powerful sermons he had suggested that the "Flagellum Dei" to punish the wicked Florentines might be a foreign invader. When therefore in 1493 the French king Charles VIII arrived in Italy with his army, Savonarola was recognized not only as a teacher but as a prophet; and when the Medici had been again banished and Charles, having asked too much, had retreated from Florence, the Republic was remodelled with Savonarola virtually controlling its Great Council. For a year or two his power was supreme.

This was the period of the Piagnoni, or Weepers. The citizens adopted sober attire; a spirit as of England under the Puritans prevailed; and Savonarola's eloquence so far carried away not only the populace but many persons of genius that a bonfire was lighted in the middle of the Piazza della Signoria in which costly dresses, jewels, false hair and studies from the nude were destroyed.

Savonarola, meanwhile, was not only chastising and reforming Florence, but with fatal audacity was attacking with even less mincing of words the licentiousness of the Pope. As to the character of Lorenzo de' Medici there can be two opinions, and indeed the historians of Florence are widely divided in their estimates; but of Roderigo Borgia (Pope Alexander VI) there is but one, and Savonarola held it. Savonarola was excommunicated, but refused to obey the edict. Popes, however, although Florence had to a large extent put itself out of reach, have long arms, and gradually—taking advantage of the city's growing discontent with piety and tears and recurring unquiet, there being still a strong pro-Medici party, and building not a little on his knowledge of the Florentine love of change—the Pope gathered together sufficient supporters of his determination to crush this too outspoken critic and humiliate his fellow-citizens.

Events helped the pontiff. A pro-Medici conspiracy excited the populace; a second bonfire of vanities led to rioting, for the Florentines were beginning to tire of virtue; and the preaching of a Franciscan monk against Savonarola (and the gentle Fra Angelico has shown us, in the Academia how Franciscans and Dominicans could hate each other) brought matters to a head, for he challenged Savonarola to an ordeal by fire in the Loggia de' Lanzi, to test which of them spoke with the real voice of God. A

Dominican volunteered to make the essay with a Franciscan This ceremony, anticipated with the liveliest eagerness by the Florentines, was at the last moment forbidden, and Savonarola, who had to bear the responsibility of such a bitter disappointment to a pleasure-loving people, became an unpopular figure. Everything just then was against him, for Charles VIII, with whom he had an understanding and of whom the Pope was afraid, chose that moment to die.

The Pope drove home his advantage, and getting more power among individuals on the Council forced them to indict their firebrand. No means were spared, however base; forgery and false witness were as nothing. The summons arrived on April 8th, 1497, when Savonarola was at S. Ma---- The monks, who adored him, refused to let him go, and for a whole day the convent was under siege. But might, of course, prevailed, and Savonarola was dragged from the church to the Palazzo Vecchio and prosecuted for the offence of claiming to have supernatural power and fomenting political disturbance. He was imprisoned in a tiny cell in the tower for many days, and under constant torture he no doubt uttered words which would never have passed his lips had he been in control of himself; but we may dismiss, as false, the evidence which makes them into confessions. Evidence there had to be, and evidence naturally was forthcoming; and sentence of death was passed.

In that cell, when not under torture, he managed to write meditations on the thirteenth psalm, "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped," and a little work entitled "A Rule for Living a Christian Life". Before the last day he administered the Sacrament to his two companions, who were to die with him, with perfect composure, and the night preceding they spent together in prayer in the Great Hall which he had once dominated.

The execution was on May 23rd, 1498. A gallows was erected in the Piazza della Signoria on the spot now marked by the bronze tablet. Beneath the gallows was a bonfire. All those members of the Government who could endure the scene were present, either on the platform of the Palazzo Vecchio or in the Loggia de' Lanzi. The crowd filled the Piazza. The three monks went to their death unafraid. When his friar's gown was taken from him, Savonarola said: "Holy gown, thou wert granted to me by God's grace and I have ever kept thee untained. Now I forsake thee not but am bereft of thee." (This very garment is in the glass case in Savonarola's cell at S. Marco.) The Bishop replied hastily: "I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant". "Militant," replied Savonarola, "not triumphant, for that rests not with you." The monks were first hanged and then burned.

The larger picture of the execution which hangs in Savonarola's cell, although interesting and up to a point credible, is of course not right. The square must have been crowded: in fact we know it was. The picture has still other claims on the attention, for it shows the Judith and Holofernes as the only statue before the Palazzo Vecchio, standing where David now is; it shows the old *ringhiera*, the Marzocco (very inaccurately drawn), and the Loggia de' Lanzi empty of statuary. We have in the National Gallery a little portrait of Savonarola—No. 1301—with another representation of the execution on the back of it.

So far as I can understand Savonarola, his failure was due to two causes: firstly, his fatal blending of religion and politic, and secondly, the conviction which his temporary success with the susceptible Florentines bred in his heated mind that he was destined to carry all before him,

totally failing to appreciate the Florentine character, with all its swift and deadly changes and love of change. As I see it, Savonarola's special mission at that time was to be a wandering preacher, spreading the light and exciting his listeners to spiritual revival in this city and that, but never to be in a position of political power and never to become rooted. The peculiar tragedy of his career is that he left Florence no better than he found it: indeed, very likely worse; for in a reaction from a spiritual revival a lower depth can be reached than if there had been no revival at all; while the visit of the French army to Italy, for which Savonarola took such credit to himself, merely ended in disaster for Italy, disease for Europe, and the spreading of the very Renaissance spirit which he had toiled to destroy. But when all is said as to his tragedy, personal and political, there remains this magnificent isolated figure, single-minded, austere and self-sacrificing, in an age of indulgence.

For most people "Romola" is the medium through which Savonarola is visualized; but there he is probably made too theatrical. Yet he must have had something of the theatre in him even to consent to the ordeal by fire. That he was an intense visionary is beyond doubt, but a very real man too we must believe when we read of the devotion of his monks to his person, and of his success for a while with the shrewd, worldly Great Council.

Savonarola had many staunch friends among the artists. Fra Bartolommeo and di Credi were devoted to him. Two of Luca della Robbia's nephews were monks under him. Cronaca, who built the Great Council's hall, survived Savonarola only ten years, and during that time all his

THE VISION OF S. BERNARD

FROM THE PAINTING BY FRA BARTOLOMMEO IN THE ACCADEMIA

stories were of him. Michelangelo, who was a young man when he heard him preach, read his sermons to the end of his long life. But upon Botticelli his influence was most powerful, for he turned that master's hand from such pagan allegories as the "Primavera" and the "Birth of Venus" wholly to religious subjects.

Savonarola had three adjoining cells. In the first is a monument to him, his portrait by Fra Bartolommeo and three frescoes by the same hand. In the next room is the glass case containing his robe, his hair shirt, and rosary; and here also are his desk and some books. In the bedroom is a crucifixion by Fra Angelico on linen. No one knowing Savonarola's story can remain here unmoved.

We find Fra Bartolommeo again with a pencil drawing of S. Antonino in that saint's cell. Here also is Antonino's death-mask. The terra-cotta bust of him in Cosimo's cell is the most life-like, but there is an excellent and vivacious bronze in the right transcept of S. Maria Novella.

Before passing downstairs again the library should be visited, that delightful assemblage of grey pillars and arches. Without its desks and cases it would be one of the most beautiful rooms in Florence. All the books have gone, save the illuminated music.

After Savonarola's death Fra Bartolommeo entered the monastery of S. Marco, which he did so much to enrich, most of the frescoes over the cells being from his hand. His own cell was No. 34. This illustrious painter-monk was born in 1475 and was apprenticed to the painter Cosimo Roselli; but he learned more from studying Masaccio's frescoes at the Carmine and the work of Leonardo da Vinci. It was in 1495 that he came under the influence of Savonarola, and he was the first artist to run home and

burn his studies from the nude in response to the preacher's denunciations. Three years later, when Savonarola was an object of hatred and the convent of S. Marco was besieged, the artist was with him, and he then made a vow that if he lived he would join the order; and this promise he kept, although not until Savonarola had been executed. For a while, as a monk, he laid aside the brush, but in 1506 he resumed it and painted until his death in 1517. He was buried at S. Marco.

In the first cloisters, which are more liveable-in than the ordinary Florentine cloisters, having a great shady tree in the midst with a seat round it, and flowers, are the Fra Angelicos I have mentioned. The other painting is rather theatrical and poor. In the refectory is a large scene of the miracle of the Providenza, when S. Dominic and his companions, during a famine, were fed by two angels with bread: while at the back S. Antonio watches the crucified Christ. The artist is Sogliano.

In addition to Fra Angelico's great crucifixion fresco in the chapter house, is a single Christ crucified, with a monk mourning, by Antonio Pollaiuolo, very like the Fra Angelico in the cloisters; but the colour has left it, and what must have been some noble cypresses are now ghosts dimly visible. The frame is superb.

One other painting we must see—the "Last Supper" of Domenico Ghirlandaio. Florence has two "Last Suppers" by this artist—one at the Ognissanti and this. The two works are very similar and have much entertaining interest, but the debt which this owes to Castagno is very obvious: it is indeed Castagno sweetened. Although psychologically this picture is weak, or at any rate not strong, it is full of pleasant touches: the supper really is a supper, as it too

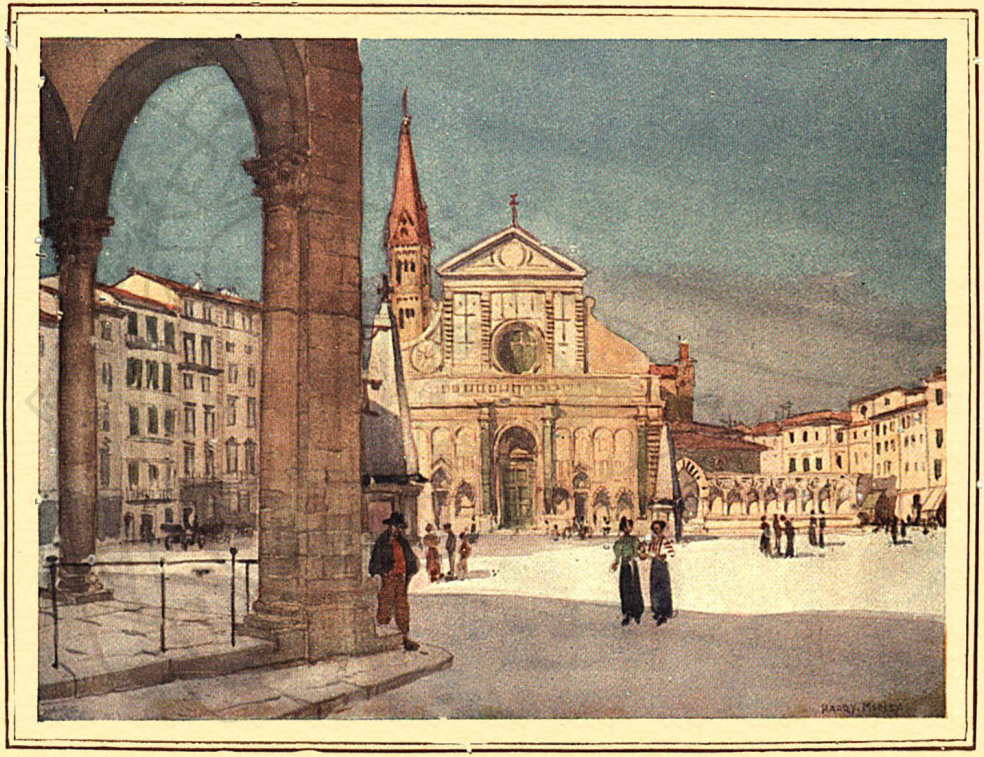
often is not, with fruit and dishes and a generous number of flasks; the tablecloth would delight a good housekeeper; a cat sits close to Judas, his only companion; a peacock perches in a niche; there are flowers on the wall, and at the back of the charming loggia where the feast is held are luxuriant trees, and fruits, and flying birds. The monks at food in this small refectory had compensation for their silence in so engaging a scene. This room also contains a beautiful della Robbia "Deposition".

The little refectory, which is at the foot of the stairs leading to the cells, opens on the second cloisters, and these few visitors ever enter. But they are of deep interest to any one with a passion for the Florence of the great days, for it is here that the municipality preserves the most remarkable relics of buildings that have had to be destroyed. It is in fact the museum of the ancient city. Here, for example, is that famous figure of Abundance, in grey stone, which Donatello is popularly said to have made for the old market, where the Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele now is, in the midst of which she poured forth her fruits from a cornucopia high on a column for all to see. The real artist was Foggini. Opposite is a magnificent doorway undoubtedly designed by Donatello for the Pazzi garden. Its original situation was where the Bank of Italy now stands, at the corner of the Via dell' Orivolo and the Via Portinari. Old windows, chimney-pieces, fragments of cornice, carved pillars, painted beams, coats of arms, and beautiful bronze bells, are everywhere. How reverently one looks upon these bells, for they are silent.

In cell No. 3 is a pretty little coloured relief of the Virgin adoring, which I covet, from a tabernacle in the old Piazza di Brunelleschi. Here too are relics of the

guild houses of some of the smaller Arti, while perhaps the most humanly interesting thing of all is the great mournful bell of S. Marco in Savonarola's time, known as La Piagnone.

In the church of S. Marco lie two of the learned men, friends of Lorenzo de' Medici whose talk at the Medici table was one of the youthful Michelangelo's educative influences, what time he was studying in the Medici garden, close by: Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494), the poet and the tutor of the three Medici boys, and the marvellous Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), the enchanted scholar. Pico was one of the most fascinating and comely figures of his time. He was born in 1463, the son of the Count of Mirandola, and took early to scholarship, spending his time among philosophies as other boys among games or S. Antonino at his devotions, but by no means neglecting polished life too, for we know him to have been handsome, accomplished, and a knight in the court of Venus. In 1486 he challenged the whole world to meet him in Rome and dispute publicly upon nine hundred theses; but so many of them seemed likely to be paradoxes against the true faith, too brilliantly defended, that the Pope forbade the contest. Pico dabbled in the black arts, wrote learnedly (in his room at the Badia of Fiesole) on the Mosaic law, was an amorous poet in Italian as well as a serious poet in Latin, and in everything he did was interesting and curious, steeped in Renaissance culture, and inspired by the wish to reconcile the past and the present and humanize Christ and the Fathers. He found time also to travel much, and he gave most of his fortune to establish a fund to provide penniless girls with marriage portions. He had enough imagination to be the close friend both of Lorenzo de'



S. MARIA NOVELLA AND THE CORNER OF THE LOGGIA DI S. PAOLO

Medici and Savonarola. Savonarola clothed his dead body in Dominican robes and made him posthumously one of the order which for some time before his death he had desired to join. He died in 1494 at the early age of thirty-one, two years after Lorenzo.

Angelo Poliziano, known as Politian, was also a Renaissance scholar and also a friend of Lorenzo, and his companion, with Pico, at his death-bed; but although in precocity, brilliancy of gifts, and literary charm he may be classed with Pico, the comparison there ends, for he was a gross sensualist of mean exterior and capable of much pettiness. He was tutor to Lorenzo's sons until their mother interfered, holding that his views were far too loose, but while in that capacity he taught also Michelangelo and put him upon the designing of his relief, or the battle of the Lapithae and Centaurs. At the time of Lorenzo and Giuliano's famous tournament in the Piazza of S. Croce, Poliziano wrote, as I have said, the descriptive allegorical poem which gave Botticelli ideas for his "Birth of Venus" and "Primavera". He lives chiefly by his Latin poems; but he did much to make the language of Tuscany a literary tongue. His elegy on the death of Lorenzo has real feeling in it and proves him to have esteemed that friend and patron. Like Pico, he survived Lorenzo only two years, and he also was buried in Dominican robes. Perhaps the finest feat of Poliziano's life was his action in slamming the sacristy doors in the face of Lorenzo's pursuers on that fatal day in the Duomo when Giuliano de' Medici was stabbed.

Ghirlandaio's fresco in S. Trinità of the granting of the charter to S. Francis gives portraits both of Poliziano and Lorenzo in the year 1485. Lorenzo stands in a little

group of four in the right-hand corner, holding out his hand towards Poliziano, who, with Lorenzo's son Giuliano on his right and followed by two other boys, is advancing up the steps. Poliziano is seen again in a Ghirlandaio fresco at S. Maria Novella.

From S. Marco we are going to SS Annunziata, but first let us just take a few steps down the Via Cavour, in order to pass the Casino Medici, since it is built on the site of the old Medici garden where Lorenzo de' Medici established Bertoldo, the sculptor, as head of a school of instruction, amid those beautiful antiques which we have seen in the Uffizi, and where the boy Michelangelo was a student.

A few steps farther on the left, towards the Fiesole heights, which we can see rising at the end of the street, we come, at No 69, to a little doorway which leads to a little court-yard—the Chiostro dello Scalzo—decorated with frescoes by Andrea del Sarto and Franciabigio and containing the earliest work of both artists. The frescoes are in mono-chrome, which is very unusual, but their interest is not impaired thereby: one does not miss other colours. No. 7, the Baptism of Christ, is the first fresco these two associ-ates ever did; and several years elapsed between that and the best that are here, such as the group representing Charity and the figure of Faith, for the work was long interrupted. The boys on the staircase in the fresco which shows S. John leaving his father's house are very much alive. This is by Franciabigio, as is also S. John meeting with Christ, a very charming scene. Andrea's best and latest is the birth of the Baptist, which has the fine figure of Zacharias writing in it. What he is writing is explained by the first chapter of S. Luke's gospel: "His name is John" On the wall is a terra-cotta bust of S. Antonino, making him much younger than is usual.

Andrea's suave brush we find all over Florence, both in fresco and picture, and this is an excellent place to say something of the man of whom English people have perhaps a more intimate impression than of any other of the old masters, by reason largely of Browning's poem and not a little by that beautiful portrait which for so long was erroneously considered to represent the painter himself, in our National Gallery. Andrea's life was not very happy. No painter had more honour in his own day, and none had a greater number of pupils, but these stopped with him only a short time, owing to the demeanour towards them of Andrea's wife, who developed into a flirt and shrew, dowered with a thousand jealousies. Andrea, the son of a tailor, was born in 1486 and apprenticed to a goldsmith. Showing, however, more drawing than designing ability, he was transferred to a painter named Barile and then passed to that curious man of genius who painted the fascinating picture "The Death of Procris" which hangs near Andrea's portrait in our National Gallery—Piero di Cosimo. Piero carried oddity to strange lengths. He lived alone in indescribable dirt, and lived wholly on hard-boiled eggs, which he cooked, with his glue, by the fifty, and ate as he felt inclined. He forbade all pruning of trees as an act of insubordination to Nature, and delighted in rain but cowered in terror from thunder and lightning. He peered curiously at clouds to find strange shapes in them, and in his pursuit of the grotesque examined the spittle of sick persons on the walls or ground, hoping for suggestions of monsters, combats of horses, or fantastic landscapes. But why this should have been thought madness in Cosimo when Leonardo in his directions to artists explicitly advises them to look hard at spotty walls for inspiration, I cannot say. He was also the first, to my knowledge, to don ear-caps in tedious society—as

Herbert Spencer later used to do. He had many pupils, but latterly could not bear them in his presence and was therefore but an indifferent instructor. As a deviser of pageants he was more in demand than as a painter; but his brush was not idle. Both London and Paris have, I think, better examples of his genius than the Uffizi; but he is well represented at S. Spirito.

Piero sent Andrea to the Palazzo Vecchio to study the Leonardo and Michelangelo cartoons, and there he met Franciabigio, with whom he struck up one of his close friendships, and together they took a studio and began to paint for a living. Their first work together was the Baptism of Christ at which we are now looking. The next commission after the Scalzo was to decorate the courtyard of the Convent of the Servi, now known as the Church of the Annunciation; and moving into adjacent lodgings, Andrea met Jacopo Sansovino, the Venetian sculptor, whose portrait by Bassano is in the Uffizi, a capable all-round man who had studied in Rome and was in the way of helping the young Andrea at all points. It was then too that he met the agreeable and convivial Rustici, of whom I have said something in the chapter on the Baptistery, and quickly became something of a blood—for by this time, the second decade of the sixteenth century, the simplicity of the early artists had given place to dashing sophistication and the great period was nearly over. For this change the brilliant complex inquiring mind of Leonardo da Vinci was largely responsible, together with the encouragement and example of Lorenzo de' Medici and such of his cultured sceptical friends as Alberti, Pico della Mirandola, and Poliziano. But that is a subject too large for this book. Enough that a worldly splendour and vivacity had come into artistic life and Andrea was an impressionable young man in the midst of it. It does not seem to

have affected the power and dexterity of his hand, but it made him a religious court-painter instead of a religious painter. His sweetness and an underlying note of pathos give his work a peculiar and genuine character; but he is just not of the greatest. Not so great really as Luca Signorelli, for example, whom few visitors to the galleries rush at with gurgling cries of rapture as they rush at Andrea.

When Andrea was twenty-six he married. The lady was the widow of a hatter. Andrea had long loved her, but the hatter clung outrageously to life. In 1513, however, she was free, and, giving her hand to the painter, his freedom passed for ever. Vasari being among Andrea's pupils may be trusted here, and Vasari gives her a bad character, which Browning completes. Andrea painted her often, notably in the fresco of the "Nativity of the Virgin," to which we shall soon come at the Annunziata: a fine statuesque woman by no means unwilling to have the most popular artist in Florence as her slave.

Of the rest of Andrea's life I need say little. He grew steadily in favour and was always busy; he met Michelangelo and admired him, and Michelangelo warned Raphael in Rome of a little fellow in Florence who would "make him sweat". Browning, in his monologue, makes this remark of Michelangelo's, and the comparison between Andrea and Raphael that follows, the kernel of the poem.

Like Leonardo and Rustici, Andrea accepted, in 1518, an invitation from Francis I to visit Paris, and once there began to paint for that royal patron. But although his wife did not love him, she wanted him back and in the midst of his success he returned, taking with him a large sum of money from Francis with which to buy for the king works of art in Italy. That money he misapplied to his own

extravagant ends, and although Francis took no punitive steps, the event cannot have improved either Andrea's position or his peace of mind; while it caused Francis to vow that he had done with Florentines. Andrea died in 1531, of fever, nursed by no one, for his wife, fearing it might be the dreaded plague, kept away.