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SEPTEMBER, 1901

VOLUME 2

Luca and Andrea

Della Robbia

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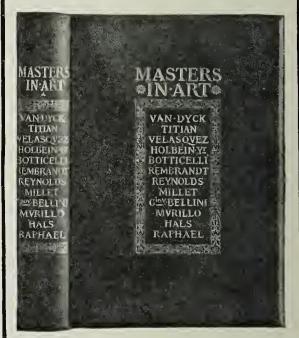
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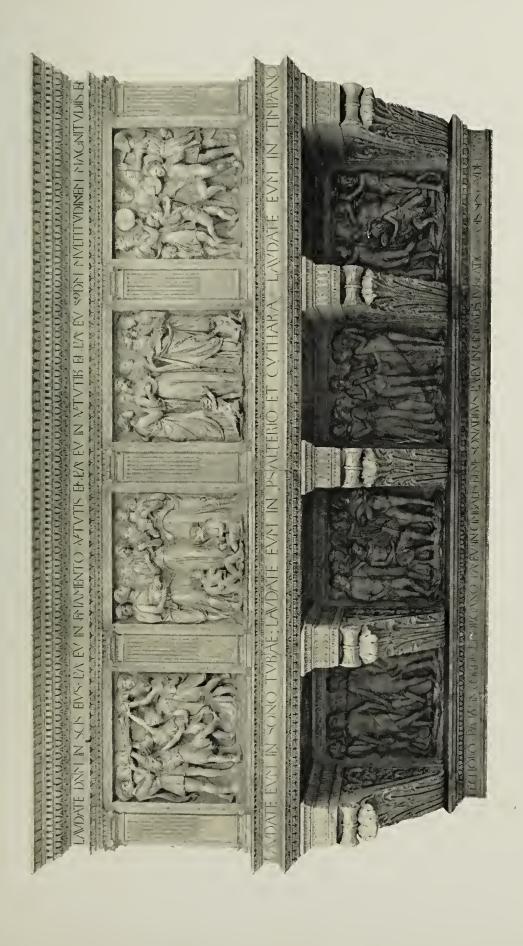
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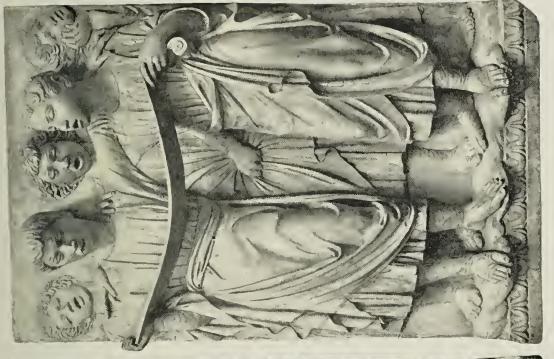
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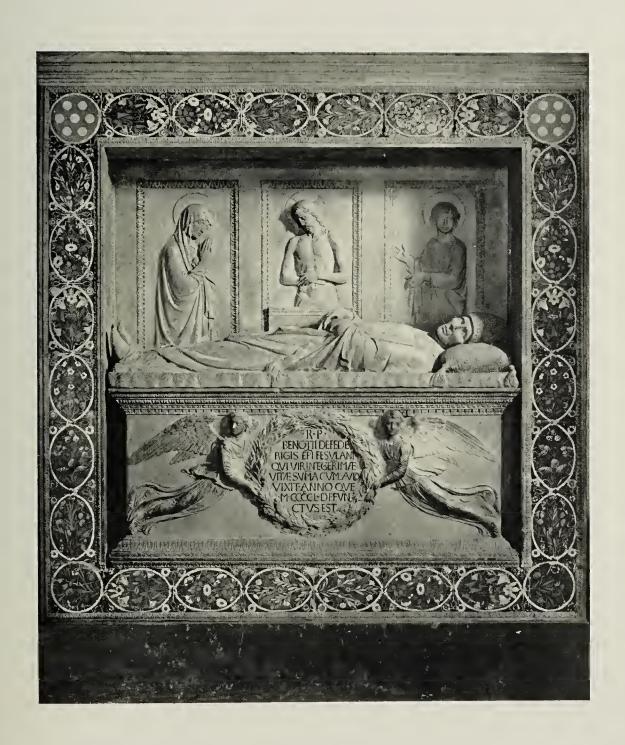








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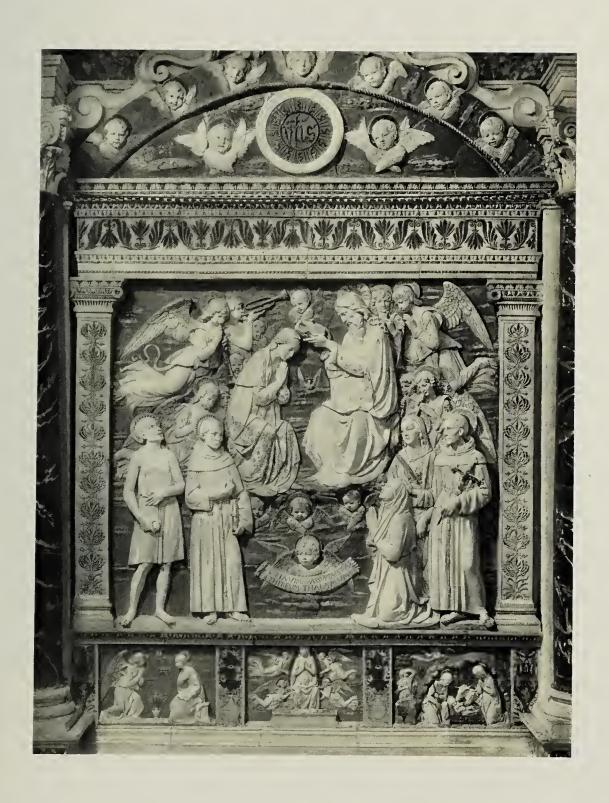




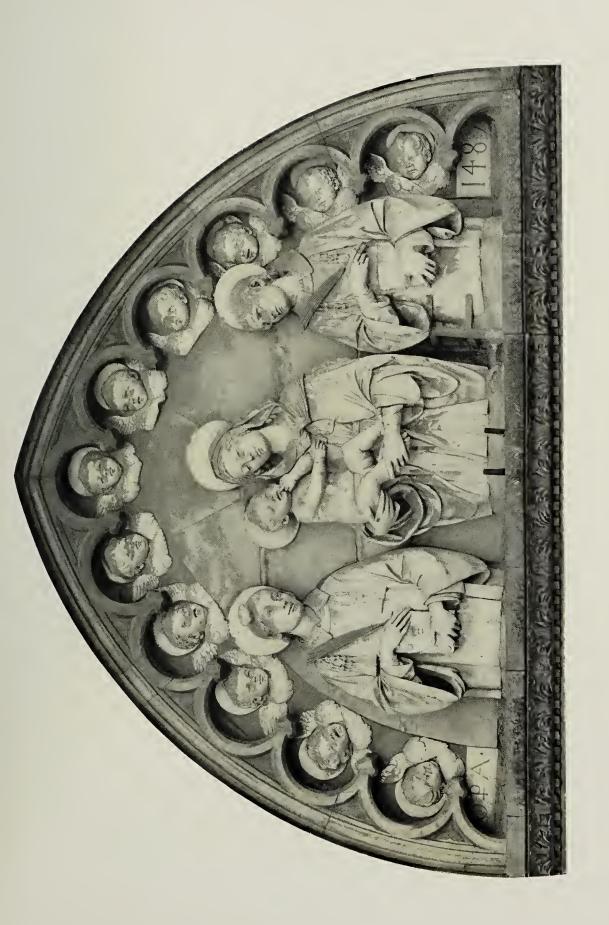














PORTRAITS OF LUGA AND ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA

No unquestionably authentic likeness of Luca della Robbia exists. The sketch of him here shown is from the engraving given by Vasari in the original edition of his "Lives," and as Vasari had seen and describes a now lost portrait of Luca, painted by Luca himself, it is not unlikely that the engraving was based upon this portrait, especially as the drapery corresponds with Vasari's description.

In one of the series of frescos in the Annunziata in Florence, Andrea del Sarto is said to have depicted Andrea della Robbia as a subordinate figure, representing him as an infirm old man. It is from Del Sarto's fresco that our portrait of Andrea della Robbia has been sketched.

Luca and Andrea della Robbia

BORN 1400: DIED 1482 BORN 1435: DIED 1525

CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW

VOLUME 21 (1885)

BORN in 1400, Luca della Robbia was the son of Simone di Marco della Robbia, a shoemaker, who lived in the Via Sant' Egidio at Florence. Here the boy grew up, and, after receiving a thorough education in all that was held necessary for a youth of his class, was apprenticed, according to Vasari, to the aged Leonardo di Ser Giovanni, then the best goldsmith in the city. But higher ambitions stirred his young heart, and, fired by the example of Lorenzo Ghiberti, who probably gave him his earliest training in art, he soon left the goldsmith's shop to work in bronze and marble. Such was the ardor with which young Luca devoted himself to his profession that Vasari assures us he forgot to eat or sleep, and spent the day in drawing and the night in modelling, careless of cold and hunger.

We know nothing of his earliest works, but by the time he was thirty his talents had attracted the attention of the Medici. On their recommendation he was employed by the administrators of the Cathedral works to execute ten bas-reliefs for the decoration of one of the organ galleries under that fair cupola which Brunelleschi had just raised to be the wonder of all Florence. The commission for this work, a worthy task for any Florentine master, was given to Luca in 1431; and two years later the decoration of the other organ gallery on the opposite side was assigned to Donatello, then at the height of his fame. During the next eight or nine years Luca worked at these bas-reliefs, and we may infer that his employers were satisfied with the result from the fact that the price of sixty florins, originally agreed upon for the larger bas-reliefs, was raised to seventy in consideration of the time and labor expended on them. . . .

Before these immortal works had left Luca's studio, fresh commissions came in from all sides. Once more he and Donatello were required to compete for the execution of a colossal head to be placed on the top of Brunelleschi's cupola; and when this project was abandoned for lack of funds a joint commission was given them to carve two altars for the chapels of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Duomo. Again, however, the money was not forthcoming; and Donatello never even attempted his share of the task, while Luca only carved two unfinished bas-reliefs, representing the deliverance

from prison of St. Peter and his crucifixion, fine fragments bearing strong marks of Ghiberti's influence, which are now preserved in the National Museum, Florence.

It is pleasant to learn that Luca, who was so often brought into competition with Donatello, had the greatest admiration for his illustrious rival, and inspired his own nephew, Andrea, with the same veneration. When Andrea himself was old, and long after Luca's death, he often spoke with enthusiasm of the master, and told young Giorgio Vasari with pride that he had been present at the great Donatello's funeral.

In May, 1437, Luca was entrusted with a still more honorable task,—the execution of the five lozenge-shaped bas-reliefs which were still wanting to complete the series representing the progress of civilization on the base of Giotto's Tower. All five were copied from Giotto's own designs, and, but for the sharpness and clearness of the work and the loving care with which every leaf of the foliage is carved, have little in common with Luca's finer style. But the longest and most laborious task on which Luca was employed in Santa Maria del Fiore was the execution of the bronze doors of the sacristy under the organ gallery. These had been originally assigned to Donatello in 1437, and it was not until 1446 that the administrators of the Cathedral works, tired of awaiting that master's pleasure, gave the commission to Michelozzo, Maso di Bartolommeo, and Luca della Robbia. Maso died, and Michelozzo being absent, Luca completed the doors alone in 1464.

Before he had even begun to work at these gates, however, he had already entered on the second period of his career, and had, in Vasari's words, enriched the world by another art, "nuova, utile, et bellissima." His fertile genius, ever seeking for new means of expression, could not rest content with the slow production of works in bronze and marble. Some easier, less costly material was needed for the more prompt and spontaneous expression of those countless forms of beauty which thronged upon his vision, and it is Luca's glory to have discovered an art exactly suited to his wants. It has been sometimes supposed that, as Vasari intimates, Luca della Robbia was the first to apply a glaze of enamel to pottery; but this is a mistake, for majolica was manufactured in Italy long before his time. On the other hand, there seems little doubt that he was the first to apply this stanniferous enamel to works of sculpture in terra-cotta, and thus give the clay he moulded the charms of transparency and brightness, while at the same time he rendered it durable enough to resist many centuries of exposure to the air.

How long he labored and how many times he failed in his experiments we do not learn, but by 1443 his success was complete, for in that year he was commanded to make a relief of the 'Resurrection' in glazed terra-cotta for the lunette above the sacristy door in the Duomo. There the work is still to be seen to-day. The figures are white on a blue ground, and little other color is introduced; but in the relief of the 'Ascension,' executed by Luca three years afterwards, and which occupies the space above the other sacristy door, green and brown and yellow are all employed to throw out the principal figures and avoid confusion. In the contract for this relief the

colors to be used are specified, and it is expressly said, "Mons sit sui coloris, arbores etiam sui coloris,"—a fact which sufficiently refutes the idea that Luca confined himself solely to blue and white, although it is true that as a rule his figures are white, and that he employed other colors only for the subordinate parts of the picture, while the tones he used are more delicate than those of his later followers.

Every day the new art became more popular with the Florentines, and Luca was called upon to adorn one building after another. His reliefs were not exclusively employed to ornament churches, and several Florentine palaces were decorated with shields and medallions by his hand. His masterpiece in this kind was Piero de' Medici's study, a small room which he decorated entirely, from the ceiling to the floor, with reliefs and enamelled tiles, "a rare thing," says Vasari, "and very useful for the summer-time."

Occasionally we find Luca still working in marble as well as in terracotta, and both are happily blended in the tabernacle now in a church at the village of Peretola, which bears a marble relief of a Pietà surrounded by a terra-cotta frieze, and also in the tomb of Benozzo Federighi, Bishop of Fiesole, which stands at present in the Church of Santa Trinità, Florence.

Luca's powers and industry showed no falling off as he advanced in years, and the vaulting of the Chapel of San Jacopo at San Miniato, executed when he was past sixty, is the finest and most complete scheme of roof decoration which he ever accomplished. This work was not completed until 1466, and is the last one of Luca's of which any record remains. Five years afterwards he was elected head of the Artists' Guild, but declined to accept the honor—the greatest to which a Florentine master could aspire—on the score of

his great age and increasing infirmities.

In 1446, at about the time that his glazed terra-cotta work first became famous, he had bought a house in the Via Guelfa, where he spent the remainder of his life with his two orphaned nephews, Andrea and Simone, the sons of his only brother, Marco. He had never married, and adopted them as his own children; and while Simone followed his father's and grandfather's trade of shoemaking, Andrea had been trained by his uncle to his own art, and was already a distinguished sculptor. To him Luca left, as his most precious possession, the practice of the art which he had invented, while to Simone he bequeathed the whole of his modest fortune. His reasons for this division are fully explained in the quaintly worded will which he made on February 19, 1471. Since he had in his lifetime taught Andrea his art, while he had never taught Simone anything, since the practice of the said art which Andrea inherited from Luca was sufficiently remunerative to support his family honorably, and as all the goods Luca had were not equal to this art which Andrea had received as a gift from Luca, and since it was well that Simone should have his share, and that no one should be able to reproach him, Luca, with injustice, he now left all his remaining fortune to the said Simone, his nephew.

After making his will Luca lived eleven years more in the same house with his nephews, who were both married and had children of their own. At

length, on February 20, 1482, he died, and was buried in his own sepulchre in the Church of San Pietro Maggiore, leaving a long roll of great works and the memory of a noble life to be the glory of his native Florence.

The pains which he had spent on his nephew Andrea's training had already met with their reward; and when Luca closed his eyes on this world he had the satisfaction of knowing that he left a successor well fitted to continue his work and perpetuate the name which he had made illustrious.

Born in 1435, Andrea della Robbia had married when he was about thirty, and in 1470, according to the tax-papers of that year, he had already three children by his wife, Nanna, aged twenty-one. He led the same simple, hardworking life as his uncle before him, never leaving the old house, where he reared seven sons to be his helpers. During the ninety years of his long life the new art enjoyed an ever-increasing popularity, and attained a fuller development than ever before. It was now applied with great success to a number of different objects. Altars of every size and description, friezes, statues, and shields, issued in countless numbers from the workshop in the Via Guelfa. While Luca's activity had been almost entirely confined to Florence, Andrea's works are to be found not only in every part of Tuscany, but among all the cities and convents of Umbria and Romagna.

After his uncle's death he was employed on works for the Cathedral, which have for the most part perished. In 1489 he finished a beautiful lunette for the Duomo of Prato. Two years later he completed a frieze of garlands and medallions for Santa Maria delle Carceri in the same town. He was back at Florence soon afterwards, working at the Hospital di San Paolo, and both he and his sons were witnesses of that great religious revival by which Savo-

narola made the close of the fifteenth century memorable.

The whole of Andrea's family, we learn from Vasari, were deeply attached to the friar of San Marco, and, like so many of the best Florentine artists, devoted their art to his cause. More than this, two of Andrea's sons— Marco, the eldest, and Paolo—took the vows, and received the Dominican habit at the hands of Savonarola himself. On that terrible night when the faithful Piagnoni rallied in the Convent of San Marco, three of Andrea's sons were among its defenders, and the best account we have of those last sad scenes was given by Fra Luca, otherwise known as Marco della Robbia, in his examination before Savonarola's judges. He it is who describes how, as night closed on that anxious day, the little band of armed monks met in the church, and how the frate, standing calm and unmoved in their midst with the sacrament in his hands, bade them lay down their arms; how, too, some of them disobeyed his word, and he among the rest struck wildly with his sword at the furious mob who rushed in to seize their victim. We know that it was all in vain, that Fra Luca and his brave friends were overpowered, and that Savonarola died. But the Della Robbias were among the faithful Piagnoni who revered his memory to the last; and we learn from Vasari that they commemorated his name in medals, bearing Savonarola's head on one side, and on the other a fortified city with the sword of the Lord descending upon her, as he had prophesied.

In his last years the aged Andrea executed several works for the Dominicans, to whom he was bound by so many ties. He adorned an altar in the Church of San Marco itself. For the monks of La Quercia at Viterbo he accomplished several important works between 1498 and 1514; and a Madonna, his last work of all, was destined for Pian di Mugnone, a house in the country, belonging to the monks of San Marco. This was finished in 1515, when Andrea was already eighty years old.

Ten years after he died, on the fourth of August, 1525, and was buried by the side of his uncle and master, the great Luca, in the Church of San

Pietro Maggiore.

The Art of Luca and Andrea della Robbia

ALLAN MARQUAND

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE: 1893

THE monuments of the Robbia school are well distributed throughout Tuscany; they are found also in the Marches and in Umbria, and as far south as Rome and Naples. Many of them have travelled to the museums and private collections of northern Europe, and a few have reached the United States.

These sculptured monuments are made of terra-cotta, and covered with an opaque stanniferous glaze, in which the colors are mixed as in enamel. The figured reliefs are sometimes white against a blue background, but often exhibit a variety of colors. The popular impression—for which Vasari is responsible—that the art of making these glazes was discovered by Luca della Robbia, that it was preserved as a secret, and perished with his school, has proved to be unfounded. Opaque glazes were applied to sculpture during the Gothic period in Spain, and found their way to Italy long before Luca della Robbia was born. They disappear in the late Renaissance, partly because paint and varnish produced brilliant effects on terra-cotta with less labor, and partly because stucco and paintings on canvas were cheaper than sculptures in marble and terra-cotta. The spirit of the age also demanded brilliant reds and naturalistic flesh-colors, and these were impossible in opaque glazes.

CAVALUCCI AND MOLINIER

'LES DELLA ROBBIA'

ALTHOUGH he stands in a somewhat different category, Luca della Robbia deserves to rank with the three greatest sculptors of the first half of the fifteenth century,—Ghiberti, Donatello, and Della Quercia. Lacking their originality and their higher gifts of conception, he yet achieved in his own day a reputation equal to theirs, and this reputation posterity has confirmed. The founder and chief of a family of artists who continued his work to the end of the century, he, still remaining a realist, yet contrived to imbue his works with so profound a sentiment, so much grace, and so

much naïveté, that few Renaissance artists so closely approach the classic in style.

Many writers have paid Luca della Robbia their tributes of praise, but to our thinking none has given a truer summary of his qualities in fewer words than the Marquis de Laborde, in his monograph upon the 'Château du Bois de Boulogne.' He writes:—

"Luca was a sculptor of the first rank. He set himself to seek beauty through the earnest study of classic models, through persevering imitation of nature, through purity of form, through truth of expression, and through graceful variation of pose; and he was so far successful that even in the face of Ghiberti's overpowering glory, and even in rivalry with Donatello, he was able to make his name equal to theirs in Florence itself. Such were his talents that he might have attained eminence had he done no more than join his contemporaries in that broad fifteenth-century highroad of art which had been opened for them by Niccola Pisano. But he did more; impatient of the slow processes of sculpture in marble, and perhaps weary of the monotony of its whiteness, he sought for a new path, or strayed into a longabandoned one, and struck out for himself. Whatever may have led him into the byway, whether he had seen the colored terra-cottas of the ancients, whether he had in mind the painted sculptures of the middle ages, or whether his own initiative led him to attempt to fuse the sister arts of sculpture and painting, there is no more interesting figure than that of this man, who rediscovered and taught to his family an art which for two centuries was to be monopolized by those who bore the name of Della Robbia."

To affirm, as some critics have done, that Luca della Robbia was entirely under the influence of Ghiberti's mysticism, and only rarely felt the naturalistic impress of that school of which Donatello was the great representative, is an over-statement. M. Rio, who has shown himself the warmest partisan of mysticism in the art of the Italian Renaissance, claims for Luca the honor of having revolted against naturalism. "The credit of having kept sculpture in a path so opposed to contemporary prejudices," he writes, "must be shared by three men, all advanced in age when Donatello died, but who outlived him long enough to change the course into which he had directed contemporary art. These men were Luca della Robbia, Desiderio da Settignano, and Mino da Fiesole." This statement may be true to some extent, but it is surely misleading to add, as Rio does, that because of the influence of these men the study of the antique marbles in the Medici gardens "came to occupy only a secondary place in the education of the best-known Florentine artists." The bas-reliefs of the 'Singing Gallery' are alone quite sufficient to demolish, in regard to Luca at least, any such theory. Indeed, it is impossible to misunderstand the influence which classic art must have had upon his genius when we look at this work. Luca's naturalism is more temperate than the naturalism of Donatello, but it is quite sufficiently marked, and especially in this, his greatest work, to falsify any such sweeping statement. The truth is that Luca cannot be ranked as either wholly naturalistic or wholly mystic in his art. The two influences swayed him conjointly, and neither ever completely outweighed the other. In a word, the education which Ghiberti may himself have given Luca della Robbia never effaced Luca's profound admiration for Donatello. . . .

If we were obliged to briefly summarize the preëminent qualities of Luca's art, we should be tempted to call them simplicity and nobility. Symmetry is also one of his prime characteristics—a symmetry so perfect that it sometimes recalls the sculpture of a previous age, yet without its monotony. To fully recognize these qualities, we should not confine our studies to his works in terra-cotta alone. The latter unquestionably brought him his wide renown, but on the other hand, they have done no little wrong to his true genius. Luca's name has been so often connected with works in terracotta which were produced in the decadence of that style during later years that amateurs in general have come to regard him, while no doubt an artist of the greatest talent, yet as one whose distinguishing characteristics are amiability and grace. But Luca had higher and stronger qualities. Indeed, we must repeat that it is not in his works in Della Robbia ware at all, but in the bas-reliefs executed for the 'Singing Gallery' of the Cathedral—executed when he was still young in years but already mature in talent--that we must turn if we would see him at his very best. If he was unquestionably and above all a Quattrocentist, if he knew how to be most supple in his workmanship, yet he could also give his personages attitudes so full of calm and dignity, and expressions so noble, that we may, without partisanship, rank him among the greatest sculptors of his day. . . .

Luca's death did not check the production of the Della Robbia reliefs. Indeed, a great number of enamelled terra-cottas were produced by Andrea, his nephew and successor, before Luca's death. But although taught and educated by Luca himself, Andrea stamped his own productions with an individuality which makes them in general easy to distinguish from those of his uncle. Master to the full of Luca's finest qualities of suppleness and grace, and, indeed, often surpassing him in these respects, Andrea, on the other hand, cannot be defended from the charge of over-delicacy, and never succeeded in imparting to his figures that strength and nobility by which Luca atoned for frequent over-minuteness in the treatment of details. Lovely as they are,—and they are invariably lovely,—Andrea's Virgins (and, like many Renaissance sculptors, Andrea wrought the effigy of the Virgin oftener than any other subject) are far less living than those of the elder sculptor; and if they evince a genuine striving after the ideal, their expressions are, on the other hand, sometimes a trifle affected, and the modelling is somewhat too soft and round.

But though Andrea was incontestably inferior to his uncle, and did not possess either the latter's originality or strength, it is not fair, nevertheless, to attribute the whole of this inferiority to lesser genius on his part. It should be remembered that while Luca lived in the first half of the fifteenth century, Andrea was not born until 1435, and that it was not until after 1450 that he began to wield the chisel. He was, at least, no more inferior to Luca than his own age was inferior to those nobler days in art during which Luca had wrought.—FROM THE FRENCH.

E. H. AND E. W. BLASHFIELD AND A. A. HOPKINS, EDITORS (VASARI'S LIVES

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA'S style is so sober and contained, so delicate and yet so healthy, so lovely yet so free from prettiness, so full of sentiment and devoid of sentimentality, that it is hard to find words for any critical characterization. The work, exactly suited to its place, leaves little to be said but that it is one of the loveliest inheritances which the Renaissance has bequeathed to us, looking, indeed, says Walter Pater, "as if a piece of the blue sky had fallen down into the streets of Florence" to be fixed above some door or window. Here there is not one bit of the bravura of Verocchio (in his Colleone) or of Pollajuolo (in his papal monuments), none of the "feverish vitality" of Donatello; all is contained and measured, his range of subject like the rest, for Luca varies the latter but little, and sings one long hymn to Madonna, with angels for choristers. . . .

Andrea della Robbia, a little less measured and grave than Luca, is just as lovely. Somewhat more florid, his work is still none too much so to be perfectly decorative. And in looking at his 'Annunciation' of the Innocenti, the children's heads in his altar-pieces of Arezzo, above all at his lunette over the cathedral door at Prato, one is tempted to set him side by side with Luca, or at the least to call him a most worthy successor.

MRS. OLIPHANT

'THE MAKERS OF FLORENCE'

It is one of the most striking evidences of an age of great activity and warmth of intellectual impulse, that genius, getting impatient of universal repetition, strikes out for itself new paths on every side—not so great, indeed, as the old broad highways of everlasting art, yet always interesting so long as genius continues to tread them, and they are not left to that feeble imitation which sooner or later succeeds to every original work. Luca della Robbia was not one of those great men who dominate art and leave upon it an impression which lasts for generations. He had not the vigor and force of his contemporary, Donatello, to take possession of and give a new, bold impulse to the highest branch of sculpture; but it would seem that he was impatient of the meaner fate of toiling after another's footsteps and taking a secondary place in the profession he loved. Perhaps even the inferior effect, when carried to their places, of his own carefully finished groups in comparison with Donatello's dashing bozza may have stimulated the artist to seek for a way of his own in which his special qualities might tell at their best.

"Feeling," Vasari says, "that he had advanced but little with very great labor" in that larger field of art where there were so many competitors, "he resolved to leave marble and bronze, and to see if he could find better fruit elsewhere. Therefore, considering that clay was easily worked with little labor, if a method could only be found to make it adhere and to defend it from the action of time," he betook himself to scientific experiments to find an *invetriamento*, glassing or glaze, which "should make works in clay almost eternal." It is not within our range to discuss whether Luca was really the sole and first inventor of this method; but at least he was the first great

artist who worked in majolica, and his beautiful groups in this material are the chief things that will occur to any reader in connection with his name. Nothing more lovely, pure, and tender than his white visionary Madonnas and divine children can well be conceived; the spotless material and the delicate art lend themselves to each other, and to this oft-renewed and always delightful subject, with a touching appropriateness. They are like embodied dreams, ethereal and pure and colorless, things made of heavenly mist or cloud.

The special use of this new invention, as not only beautiful in itself but affording a means of ornamentation for places dove sono acque, where pictures cannot be placed in consequence of the damp, is much insisted upon by Vasari. Even the damp corners demanded ornament in those wealthy days when artists abounded, and imagination could not picture to itself the humblest sanctuary or the most common house without some attempt at beauty as well as use. The invention binds together the craft of the workman with the genius of the artist.

Nothing can be more poetical than those white foam-groups glancing out of dark corners, over doorways, always with a delightful surprise to the spectator which is almost like a natural effect; for there is nothing that more piques and pleases the fancy than the adaptation of a thing so common to uses so beautiful. The soft, sympathetic angels, the round limbs of the lovely children, the serious, sweet Madonnas, glimmering in a light which proceeds from themselves, or seems to do so, are always delightful to behold. In convent cloisters, over the doors of hospitals, here and there hung on a bit of dark wall in some aisle chapel, they make a mild radiance about them, a softened homely illumination, not great, but sweet, and full of ethereal and visionary grace.

And at the same time what a busy bottega the new invention made! All the princes and the trades sent their commissions to the master. "The fame of his works flew not only through Italy, but over all Europe, and so many wished to have them that the Florentine merchants kept Luca continually at work." The Della Robbias made a school of themselves, keeping the secret among them with all the precautions natural to a family treasure. Andrea became famous like his uncle; and the race did not last long enough to fall into much bad work, but came to an end in the third generation, carrying with it the invention and the secret. Perhaps it was well so, both for the fame of the Della Robbia work and for the taste of posterity. So easy a material could scarcely have avoided debasement and degradation in times of less originality and power.

MARCEL REYMOND

'LES DELLA ROBBIA'

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA, younger by some years than either Ghiberti or Donatello, learned from both of them, and in a certain measure succeeded in reconciling their divergent styles. From Ghiberti he took something of his harmony of line and beauty of form, like him he loved to depict the figures of youth, like him he preferred to express the tenderer sentiments;

and in general bent of mind he resembled Ghiberti rather than Donatello. He was less ardent, less violent, less audacious than the latter, nor did he question nature with the same wish to be faithful to her even in her irregularities. He was not so inventive, and did not explore so many different paths; and yet if we consider the merely exterior forms of his art it would seem that he was, on the whole, more under the influence of Donatello than of Ghiberti, for it was from Donatello that he borrowed his general style of treating the bas-relief and the management of its different planes. But if Luca della Robbia was inspired by the work of Ghiberti and Donatello he should by no means be considered as an imitator, for he evolved a type of art different from theirs, and quite personal to himself; and it is because of his evolution of this type, and because he was one of the last great innovators of the fifteenth century, that he deserves to be ranked with the greatest geniuses of Italian art.

It is true that he limited the already constrained scope of the bas-relief, for he not only abandoned historical compositions, but discarded all complicated scenes, and all representations of architecture and landscape, to present only one or two figures instead. Indeed, in his hands the scope of bas-relief art underwent a real diminution. It gained, however, compensating advantages. His more restrained form allowed special importance to be given to the outline of the human body. In the more complex reliefs the individual silhouette loses its importance, and the careful drawing of each figure becomes superfluous. In Luca's work, however, the individual form predominates, and impresses itself upon the eye as does a statue. Moreover, by the same simplification, Luca attained a second advantage, that of concentrating the observer's attention upon the face. Perhaps it was mainly for this reason that he limited the number of personages in a group and often showed them only to the waist.

By his attempt to gain greater individual expressiveness he seems rather to be ranked with Donatello than with Ghiberti; but where Donatello would have sought for emotion, violence, and effectiveness Luca seeks only for the smiling and the tender, and seems never to have dreamed of sacrificing physical beauty to the revelation of thought. Indeed, one might say that no other artist ever so strictly limited himself to the depiction of beautiful ideas in beautiful human forms. The human beings which he chose to body forth his ideas were those most sensible of beauty and purity,—the woman and the child. The woman, upon whom Donatello scarcely looked, and whom Ghiberti apparently only studied for a certain cold charm of outline, Luca presents with all her seductive grace of form, smile, and look. The child, which Donatello only considered as a moving vivacious and agitated little animal, was to Luca the ideal flower of human creation, and he seems to have known how to love children as only mothers know how to love them.

Compared to his predecessors, who solved so many great problems and sought to express innumerable, thronging ideas, one might consider that Luca worked in a limited and lesser field. True as this may be, it is no less true that in all the domain of art there are no figures which haunt our memories

more persistently than the Virgins and children of Luca della Robbia, and none which inspire us with deeper sympathy. There have been greater masters than he; there have been none whose works we love more. . . .

Andrea della Robbia was born thirty-five years later than Luca. In the fifteenth century—that active period when minds were in constant ebullition and incessantly creating—this short lapse of time was sufficient to produce profound modifications in the arts. Although Andrea was educated by Luca, the differences between them in thought and grasp were so marked that no real doubt can exist as to the differences of their styles. Andrea did no work comparable to the 'Singing Gallery'; that charming motive of children playing, singing, and running was too naturalistic for his time. The great geniuses of the beginning of the fifteenth century had been able to give such subjects as these artistic distinction, but their followers preferred to confine themselves to motives based more strictly upon Christian doctrine, and devoted their art to more complex scenes which seemed to them richer in religious significance.

As a result of this same change of temper, the intimate study of nature, including in its scope all created things, which had led Ghiberti to model the borders of the Baptistery doors, and Luca to create the garlands of Or San Michele, ceased to interest the masters of the latter half of the century. True, Andrea reproduced some of Luca's motives in this kind, but he reproduced them perfunctorily and without attempting to breathe new life into his copies. We see, therefore, that Andrea discarded some of the essential

qualities of Luca's art. Let us see what he preserved.

He preserved all the high religious quality of his uncle's works, but there had come a change of times, even in this respect. The great nobility of sentiment handed down from the thirteenth century, and which we find still echoed in the earlier works of Luca, no longer existed in Andrea's day; but, on the other hand, Andrea's art was more profoundly and exclusively religious. With him the Virgin is neither the Queen of Heaven upon her exalted throne, nor is she merely a human sister playing with her little brother. She might have been either in Luca's works. With Andrea, however, she is always the Virgin Mother, the Mother of God, and the servant of the Lord, sometimes on her knees to adore Him with clasped hands, sometimes holding Him in her arms with a grace which breathes both joy and humility. Andrea was more exclusively Christian in his art than was Luca, his thoughts seem never to have been distracted by any profane preoccupation; his talent embraced the whole scope of that art, and he treated the most grandiose and moving scenes. Indeed, Andrea, who is so often considered as having had merely the gift of grace, and never to have expressed the virile or the passionate, shows himself, on the contrary, as sometimes one of the most moving and most forceful masters of the fifteenth century. We may say, by way of summary, that Andrea's was such a soul as was that of St. Francis of Assisi, with all its ardent sensibility, its asceticism, its despite of life, and its upward yearning toward the love of God; but tender and impressionable

as it was, this soul was equally fitted to express the ecstasy of celestial love and the griefs and the sufferings of human life.

Technically, Andrea availed himself of all the possibilities of the process which Luca had bequeathed to him. In his hands glazed and tinted terra-cotta work advanced almost to the rank of painting, and he produced reliefs which in richness and complexity are not undeserving to rank with pictures. He did not limit his scope, as Luca had done, to one or two figures, but attempted more complex scenes. Indeed, he made bas-relief an altogether different thing from what it had been under Ghiberti and Donatello; but without attempting to utilize perspective and without employing Donatello's delicate gradations of modelling, or the violent contrasts of Ghiberti. Keeping his figures almost invariably in the same plane and rarely introducing any detail of landscape, Andrea contented himself with gaining contrast by the simple juxtaposition of two colors, with an occasional added touch which allowed him to give additional expression to his faces, such as marking the pupil of the eye and the line of the brow. In a word, he composed his altarpieces in the old complex, hieratic manner of Giotto's followers. Luca had set him an example of this type of large religious works in the bas-reliefs of the 'Resurrection' and the 'Ascension,' and these are precisely the two compositions which Andrea seems to have most studied, and of which the influences are most generally visible in his works. - FROM THE FRENCH.

WALTER PATER

'THE RENAISSANCE'

I SUPPOSE nothing brings the real air of a Tuscan town so vividly to mind as those pieces of pale blue and white earthenware, by which Luca della Robbia is best known, like fragments of the milky sky itself, fallen into the cool streets, and breaking into the darkened churches. And no work is less imitable: like Tuscan wine, it loses its savor when moved from its birth-place, from the crumbling walls where it was first placed. Part of the charm of this work, its grace and purity and finish of expression, is common to all the Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century; for Luca was first of all a worker in marble, and his works in earthenware only transfer to a different material the principles of his sculpture.

These Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century worked for the most part in low relief. They are haters of all heaviness and emphasis, of strongly-opposed light and shade, and seek their means of expression among those last refinements of shadow, which are almost invisible except in a strong light, and which the finest pencil can hardly follow. What is the precise value of this system of sculpture, this low relief? Luca della Robbia and the other sculptors of the school to which he belongs, have before them the universal problem of their art; and this system of low relief is the means by which they meet and overcome the special limitation of sculpture—a limitation resulting from the material and essential conditions of all sculptured work, and which consists in the tendency of this work to a hard realism, a one-sided presentment of mere form, that solid material frame which only

motion can relieve, a thing of heavy shadows, and an individuality of expression pushed to caricature. Against this tendency to the hard presentment of mere form trying vainly to compete with the reality of nature itself, all noble sculpture constantly struggles: each great system of sculpture resisting in its own way, etherealizing, spiritualizing, relieving its hardness, its heaviness and death. The use of color in sculpture is but an unskilful contrivance to effect, by borrowing from another art, what the nobler sculpture effects by strictly appropriate means. To get not color, but the equivalent of color; to secure the expression and the play of life; to expand the too fixed individuality of pure, unrelieved, uncolored form—this is the problem which the three great styles in sculpture have solved in three different ways.

Allgemeinheit—breadth, generality, universality—is the word chosen by Winckelmann, and after him by Goethe and many German critics, to express that law of the most excellent Greek sculptures, of Phidias and his pupils, which prompted them constantly to seek the type in the individual, to abstract and express only what is structural and permanent, to purge from the individual all that belongs only to him, all the accidents, the feelings, and actions of the special moment, all that (because in its own nature it endures but for a moment) is apt to look like a frozen thing if one arrests it.

In this way their works came to be like some subtle extract or essence, or almost like pure thoughts or ideas: and hence the breadth of humanity in them, that detachment from the conditions of a particular place or people, which has carried their influence far beyond the age which produced them, and insured them universal acceptance.

That was the Greek way of relieving the hardness and unspirituality of pure form. But it involved to a certain degree the sacrifice of what we call expression; and a system of abstraction which aimed always at the broad and general type, at the purging away from the individual of what belonged only to him, and of the mere accidents of a particular time and place, imposed upon the range of effects open to the Greek sculptor limits somewhat narrowly defined; and when Michelangelo came, with a genius spiritualized by the reverie of the middle age, penetrated by its spirit of inwardness and introspection, living not a mere outward life like the Greek, but a life full of inward experiences, sorrows, consolations, a system which sacrificed so much of what was inward and unseen could not satisfy him. To him, lover and student of Greek sculpture as he was, work which did not bring what was inward to the surface, which was not concerned with individual expression, with individual character and feeling, the special history of the special soul, was not worth doing at all.

And so, in a way quite personal and peculiar to himself, which often is, and always seems, the effect of accident, he secured for his work individuality and intensity of expression, while he avoided a too hard realism, that tendency to harden into caricature which the representation of feeling in sculpture must always have. This effect Michelangelo gains by leaving nearly all his sculpture in a puzzling sort of incompleteness, which suggests rather than realizes actual form. Many have wondered at that incomplete-

ness, suspecting, however, that Michelangelo himself loved and was loath to change it, and feeling at the same time that they too would lose something if the half-realized form ever quite emerged from the stone, so rough hewn here, so delicately finished there; and they have wished to fathom the charm of this incompleteness. Well! that incompleteness is Michelangelo's equivalent for color in sculpture; it is his way of etherealizing pure form, of relieving its hard realism, and communicating to it breath, pulsation, the effect of life.

Midway between these two systems—the system of the Greek sculptors and the system of Michelangelo—comes the system of Luca della Robbia and the other Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century, partaking both of the Allgemeinheit of the Greeks, their way of extracting certain select elements only of pure form and sacrificing all the rest, and the studied incompleteness of Michelangelo, relieving that expression of intensity, passion, energy, which might otherwise have hardened into caricature. Like Michelangelo, these sculptors fill their works with intense and individualized expression, and they unite the elements of tranquillity, of repose, to intense and individual expression, by a system of conventionalism as skilful and subtle as that of the Greeks, subduing all such curves as indicate solid form, and throwing the whole into lower relief. . . .

The work of Luca della Robbia possessed in an unusual measure that special characteristic which belongs to all the workmen of his school, a characteristic which, even in the absence of much positive information about their actual history, seems to bring those workmen themselves very near to us—the impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call *intimité*, by which is meant some subtler sense of originality—the seal on a man's work of what is most inward and peculiar in his moods and manner of apprehension: it is what we call *expression*, carried to its highest intensity of degree.

The Works of Luca and Andrea della Robbia

SINGING GALLERY

MUSEUM OF THE CATHEDRAL: FLORENCE

THE earliest known work by Luca della Robbia is the world-renowned 'Singing Gallery' (cantoria), executed in 1431-40 for the Cathedral of Florence, to be placed over one of the doors of the sacristy; Donatello being commissioned two years later to make a corresponding gallery for a similar position over an opposite door. Both Donatello's and Luca's galleries are now in the Museum of the Cathedral.

"Luca's work," writes Dr. Bode, "exhibits in ten reliefs groups of youths and maidens of different ages, singing in chorus, playing upon musical instruments, or dancing hand in hand. The variety in the composition, the diversity of the types, the entirely naturalistic rendering of the expressions

of the youthful singers and musicians, each in accordance with his voice or instrument, the rich and yet perfectly simple arrangement made possible by the classic style of high relief, and the finished execution of this work in marble, would ensure it a place among the masterpieces of the Renaissance even were it not for the beauty of the forms and grace of the movements which have given it its popularity."

"Among those dancing children and players upon musical instruments," writes Perkins, "there is one group of choristers whose music has gone out unto the ends of the world. Who that has listened to the shrill treble, the rich contralto, the luscious tenor, and the sonorous bass has failed to feel with the poet when looking upon another 'marble brede of men and maidens,' that 'heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter'?"

"Luca's organ gallery still remains the finest and most characteristic of his achievements," writes Cosmo Monkhouse. "It appears to have been the only opportunity that he had of displaying his gifts with perfect, or almost perfect, freedom. He had no tradition to follow, no archaic type or ecclesiastical model to which he must conform. The love of nature and his sense of art were his only guides, and he produced these lovely reliefs, in which observation and fancy were regulated by classical feeling, in a manner before unknown and scarcely equalled since. For once in that age the artist was emancipated."

TOMB OF BISHOP BENOZZO FEDERIGHI CHURCH OF SANTA TRINITÀ: FLORENCE

NE of the most beautiful of the numerous fifteenth-century tombs of Tuscany is that of Benozzo Federighi, Bishop of Fiesole. In the year 1455, some five years after the death of the bishop, Luca della Robbia engaged to execute this monument in marble, and according to the official register, it was completed before 1457.

Cavalucci and Molinier regard it as a transition between the works of Luca in marble and those in terra-cotta, and consider that in this, one of his very greatest creations, the artist has most happily combined the art of the sculptor proper and that of the worker in majolica. In describing it Professor Middleton writes: "A very beautiful effigy of the bishop, in a restful pose, lies on a sarcophagus sculptured with graceful reliefs of angels holding a wreath which contains the inscription. Above are three-quarter length figures of Christ between St. John and the Virgin, delicately carved in low relief. The whole is surrounded by a rectangular frame formed of painted majolica tiles of the most exquisite beauty. On each tile is painted, with enamel pigments, a bunch of flowers and fruit in brilliant realistic colors, the loveliness of which is very hard to describe. The perfect mean between truth to nature and decorative treatment has never been more thoroughly obtained than in these wonderful tile pictures, which are of special interest as being among the earliest examples of Italian majolica."

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ANGELS

VIA DELL' AGNOLO: FLORENCE

OVER the door of a small shop in a narrow by-street of Florence is set a beautiful relief representing the Virgin—"here wholly human, and we love her none the less for that reason"—with the infant Saviour, who holds a scroll upon which are inscribed the words "EGO SUM LUX MUNDI," while on each side is a lovely angel bearing a vase filled with lilies. The whole is surrounded by an exquisitely wrought garland of flowers, tinted in various pale colors. There is no question that this lunette is Luca della Robbia's handiwork. The date which should be assigned to it is, however, uncertain. Dr. Bode has placed it before 1431, Professor Marquand dates it as between 1430 and 1440, and Reymond considers it as a still later work, dating about 1450.

"It seems strange," writes Marquand, "that this Madonna does not occur again in Luca's work. Her face perhaps modified his angel type, but as a Madonna she disappears. After this burst of realistic inspiration, in which he may have portrayed the features of some living woman, he returns to a type more along the old lines, to which he adheres, more or less closely, in

all his later works."

THE VISITATION

CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI FUORCIVITAS: PISTOJA

IN a dimly lighted niche over one of the altars of the old Church of San Giovanni fuorcivitas, Pistoja, is placed this life-sized group, in white enamelled terra-cotta. It has frequently been ascribed to Fra Paola, a Pistojan painter, who, however, is not known to have worked in sculpture. Cavalucci, Gsell-Fels, and Marcel Reymond attribute it to Andrea della Robbia, while Professor Marquand and Dr. Bode (who calls it "the most perfect group of the early Renaissance") pronounce it without hesitation the work of Luca.

"Its exquisite loveliness will long be remembered by those who have seen it," writes Bianciardi. "Elizabeth has rushed to meet the Virgin and thrown herself on her knees. Her upturned face and parted lips betoken the excitement of joyful surprise tempered by humility and awe. 'Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' Mary, on the contrary, is calm and dignified. Her slight figure is almost erect, and her right hand rests on the shoulder of Elizabeth. Her face is very noble and pure in its outlines. She has not yet spoken, but her answer to Elizabeth's salutation is already framed within her heart."

BAMBINI

HOSPITAL OF THE INNOCENTI: FLORENCE

THE medallions of bambini, or infants in swaddling-clothes (two of which are shown in our plate), from the façade of the Foundling Hospital in Florence, are among the first works executed by Andrea della Robbia alone. Cavalucci and Molinier consider them to date from about 1463, when Andrea was but twenty-eight years old, and Luca was still alive.

"They are the simplest of all Andrea's works," writes Reymond, "and

those which show Luca's influence most, and it is not unlikely that the elder master here advised and counselled his young nephew. It is not improbable that it was Luca who pointed out how effective this repetition of the same motive in successive medallions might be made, and the interest that might be derived from presenting the same idea again and again in varying forms; for, accomplished artist as Andrea must have been at this time (and Luca's will makes it clear that in 1471 his nephew was already renowned), the masterly simplicity of the charming conception of decorating the façade of a hospital for foundlings by a series of medallions, each enclosing one little swaddled child, must have been due to a master thoroughly familiar with all the resources of his especial art."

"These delightful little foundlings," write Cavalucci and Molinier, "who by their gestures seem to invoke our aid and pity, combine in the most decorative way to adorn the loggia. The white enamel of their flesh, and the swaddling-bands, occasionally tinted with brown, relieved against the bright blue of the backgrounds, form cheerful notes against the sombre tones of the wall. Perhaps these *bambini* are the best known of Andrea's works, and they fully deserve their popularity."

MEETING OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. DOMINIC LOGGIA DI SAN PAOLO: FLORENCE

ONE of Andrea della Robbia's latest and most perfect works, this basrelief depicts a meeting between the founders of the two great monkish
orders, St. Francis and St. Dominic. In the expression of the faces (which
Andrea left without enamel in order that the finer lines might not be obscured), in the treatment of the draperies, which recall those of Fra Bartolommeo or Raphael, and in the carving of the hands, the work is unsurpassed.
"It may be counted," write Cavalucci and Molinier, "as among the very
best productions of the Della Robbia family, and has all the simplicity and
dignity of the works of Luca himself. Andrea was rarely able to produce so
great an effect with so simple a motive. The movement of St. Francis as
he hastens into St. Dominic's outstretched arms, the effective contrast between the two costumes, the care with which the heads are modelled, and
the depth and fineness of the expressions render this bas-relief, as a whole, a
veritable masterpiece."

THE ANNUNCIATION

HOSPITAL OF THE INNOCENTI: FLORENCE

THIS exquisitely decorative lunette, with its white figures relieved against a blue ground, was by the elder critics considered as Luca della Robbia's work; but modern authorities (with the exception of Dr. Bode, who has recently changed his opinion in favor of Giovanni della Robbia) are practically unanimous in considering it as Andrea's handiwork, and Cavalucci and Molinier regard the angel in particular, which is more graceful than any of Luca's figures and yet without that insipidity which marks the later work of the school, as being "as good as a signature by Andrea." They go on to say: "This subject, although a very common one in the

works of the Della Robbias, has never been treated with greater loveliness or charm. Demanding little skill in composition, and eminently fitted to exhibit skill in handling the processes of bas-relief, it was eminently suited to Andrea's graceful talent."

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

CHURCH OF THE OSSERVANZA: NEAR SIENA

In the little church belonging to the suppressed Franciscan monastery of the Osservanza, outside the walls of Siena, may be seen this 'Coronation of the Virgin,' one of the most celebrated and most beautiful of the works of Andrea della Robbia. The figures are white upon a blue ground, no other color being used, with the exception of delicate touches of gold in the drapery of the angels and in the pattern of the Virgin's robe. Upon the predella are represented the 'Annunciation,' the 'Assumption,' and the 'Nativity.'

Marcel Reymond calls this 'Coronation' "one of the masterpieces of Italian art," and says: "In the tenderness of its sentiment Fra Angelico alone can here be compared with Andrea della Robbia. The charm and poetry of the composition are indescribable—the affectionate gesture of God the Father, the Virgin's look of joy and humility, and the science with which the group of angels is arranged around her kneeling figure, and the expressions of ecstasy and love transfiguring the faces of St. Jerome and St. Francis of Assisi."

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS

CATHEDRAL OF PRATO

THIS relief, which stands above the door of the Cathedral of Prato, is one of the loveliest of Andrea della Robbia's works, and bears the date 1489. It was for long, and even at Prato, considered to be by Luca, but critics are now unanimous in assigning it to his nephew.

The Madonna, with the Christ-child on her arm, stands between the martyred saints, St. Stephen on her right, and St. Lawrence on her left. The Child carries his finger to his mouth,—a characteristic action to be found in almost all Andrea's representations of the Child at the period when this work was executed.

"The relief is especially remarkable," says Reymond, "for the tender loveliness of the Virgin's expression, and the beautiful figures of the accompanying saints. The excellence of the draperies, too, should be noticed. They show more complication than in Andrea's previous works, yet without losing anything of his perfection of handling."

THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF LUCA DELLA ROBBIA, WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

ENGLAND. London, South Kensington Museum: Coat of Arms of King René of Anjou—FRANCE. Paris, Cluny Museum: Justice and Temperance (medallions)—Paris, Louvre: Virgin and Six Angels; Virgin and Four Saints—Paris, Collection of M. Foulc: Adoring Madonna—GERMANY. Berlin Museum: Madonna and Angels; Madonna (5)—ITALY. Florence, Campanile: Five marble bas-reliefs—Florence, Cathedral: Resurrection; Ascension; Sacristy Doors; Two Angels—

FLORENCE, MUSEUM OF THE CATHEDRAL: Singing Gallery (Plates 1 and 11); God the Father; Madonna and Child — FLORENCE, HOSPITAL OF THE INNOCENTI: Madonna and Child — FLORENCE, NATIONAL MUSEUM: Deliverance of St. Peter; Crucifixion of St. Peter; Madonna of San Pierino; Madonna of the Roses; Madonna of the Apple; Adoring Madonna; Madonna and Child (2) — FLORENCE, CHURCH OF OR SAN MICHELE: Four Medallions — FLORENCE, CHURCH OF SANTA CROCE, PAZZI CHAPEL: Evangelists and Apostles -Florence, Quaratesi Palace: Coat of Arms (2) - Florence, Church of Santa TRINITÀ: Tomb of Bishop Benozzo Federighi (Plate III) - FLORENCE, VIA DELL'AGNOLO: Madonna and Child (Plate IV) — FLORENCE, COLLECTION OF MARCHESE CARLO VIVIANI DELLA ROBBIA: Virgin and Child — IMPRUNETA, COLLEGIATE CHURCH: Two Tabernacles; Crucifixion — PERETOLA, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA: Tabernacle — PISTOJA, CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI FUORCIVITAS: The Visitation (Plate v)—SAN MINIATO, CHURCH: Ceiling of the Chapel of the Crucifix; Ceiling of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal — Urbino, CHURCH OF SAN DOMENICO: Madonna and Child - UNITED STATES. Boston, Col-LECTION OF QUINCY A. SHAW, Esq.: Madonna and Child-New York, Metropol-ITAN MUSEUM: Madonna and Child.

THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA, WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

RIGLAND. LONDON, SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM: Adoration of the Magi; Madonna and Child—GERMANY. BERLIN MUSEUM: Annunciation; Madonna and Saints — ITALY. Arezzo, Cathedral: Altar-piece; Crucifixion; Madonna and Saints — Arezzo, Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie: Marble Altar — Arezzo, Church of Santa Maria in Grado: Altar-piece—Assisi, Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli: Altar-piece — Camaldoli (Casentino): Altar-piece — Florence, Academy: Resurrection; Assumption; Madonna and Child (4) — FLORENCE, HOSPITAL OF THE INNO-CENTI: Bambini (Plate VI); Annunciation (Plate VIII) — FLORENCE, LOGGIA DI SAN PAOLO: St. Francis and St. Dominic (Plate VII) - FLORENCE, MUSEUM OF THE CATHEDRAL: Madonna — FLORENCE, NATIONAL MUSEUM: Madonna and Child (5); Adoring Madonna (5)—FLORENCE, HOSPITAL OF SANTA MARIA NUOVA: Madonna and Child—FLORENCE, CHURCH OF SAN GAETANO: Madonna of the Bertello — FOJANO, COLLEGIATE CHURCH: Madonna of the Girdle — Gradara (Rocca di), Palazzo Bianco: Altar-piece — Memme-NANO, CHURCH OF SAN MATTEO: Altar-piece — MONTEPULCIANO: Altar-piece — PISTOJA, CATHEDRAL: Madonna and Angels—PRATO, CATHEDRAL: Madonna and Child (Plate X) -Prato, Church of Santa Maria delle Carceri: Medallions of Evangelists SANTA FIORA MONTE AMIATA: Madonna of the Girdle; Baptism of Christ-SIENA, CHURCH OF THE OSSERVANZA: Coronation of the Virgin (Plate IX) — LA VERNA: Annunciation; Adoration; Crucifixion; Ascension; Madonna of the Girdle; Madonna and Saints —VITERBO, CHURCH OF THE MADONNA DELLA QUERCIA: Madonna and Saints; St. Peter Martyr; St. Thomas Aquinas—UNITED STATES. New YORK, METROPOLI-TAN MUSEUM: Altar-piece.

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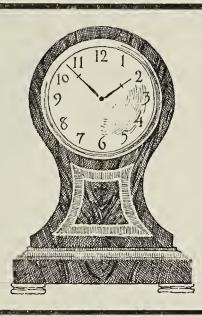
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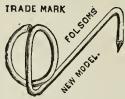
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