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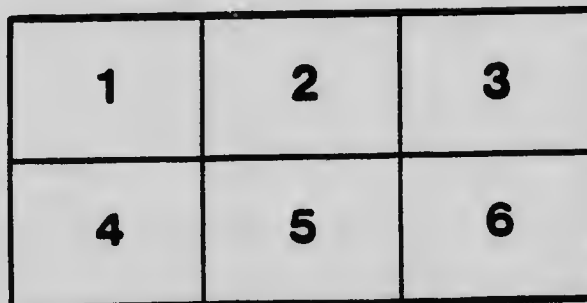
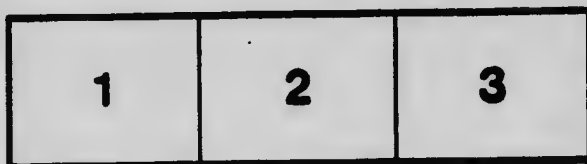
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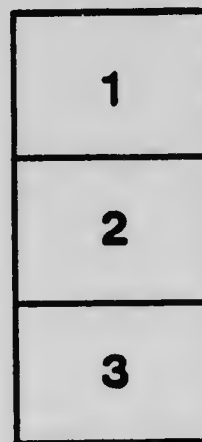
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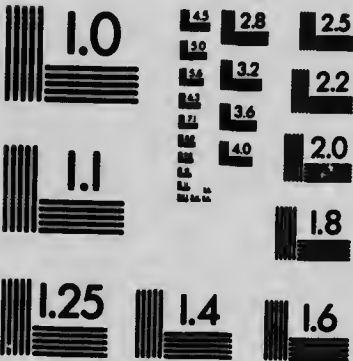
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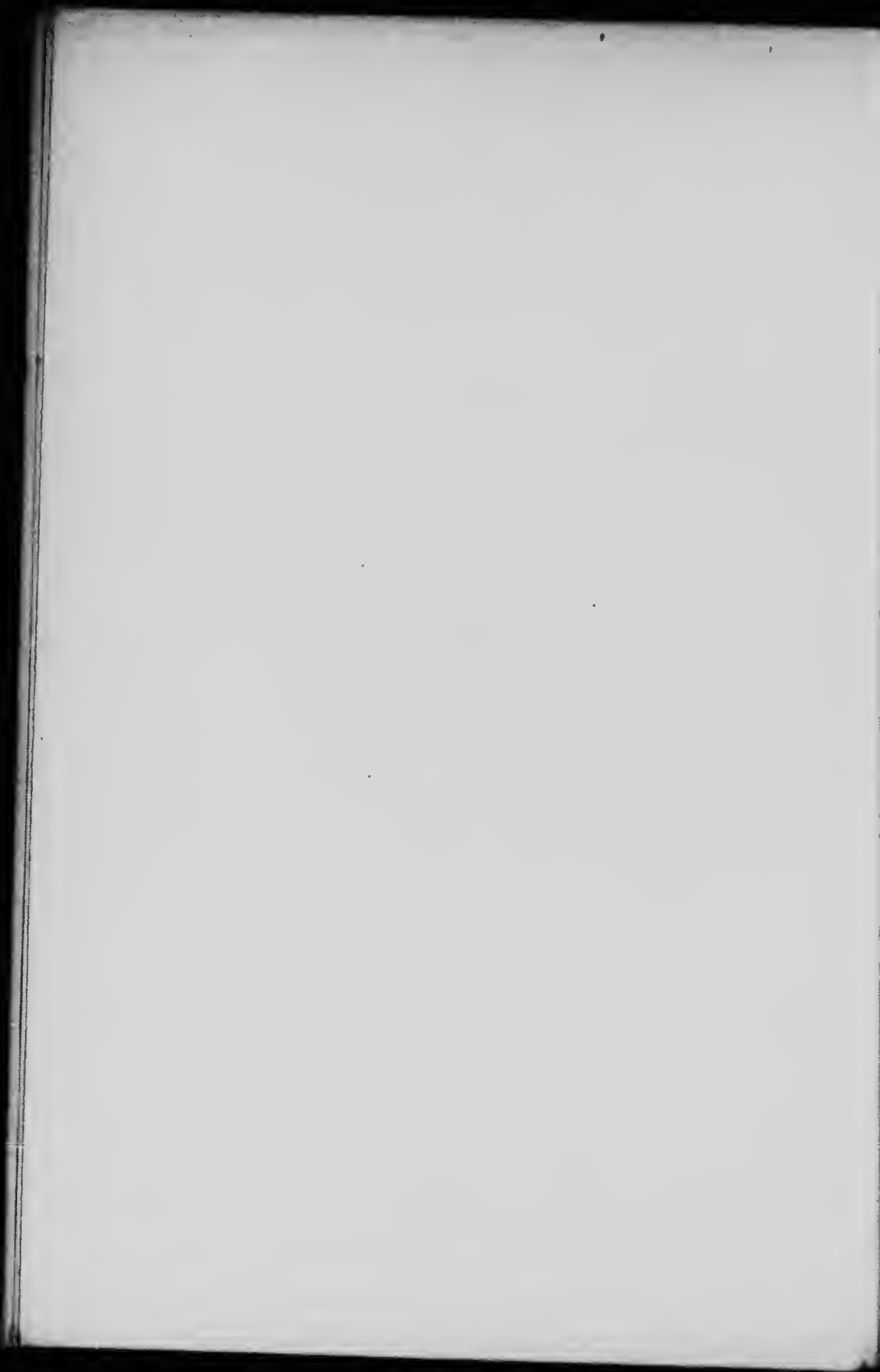
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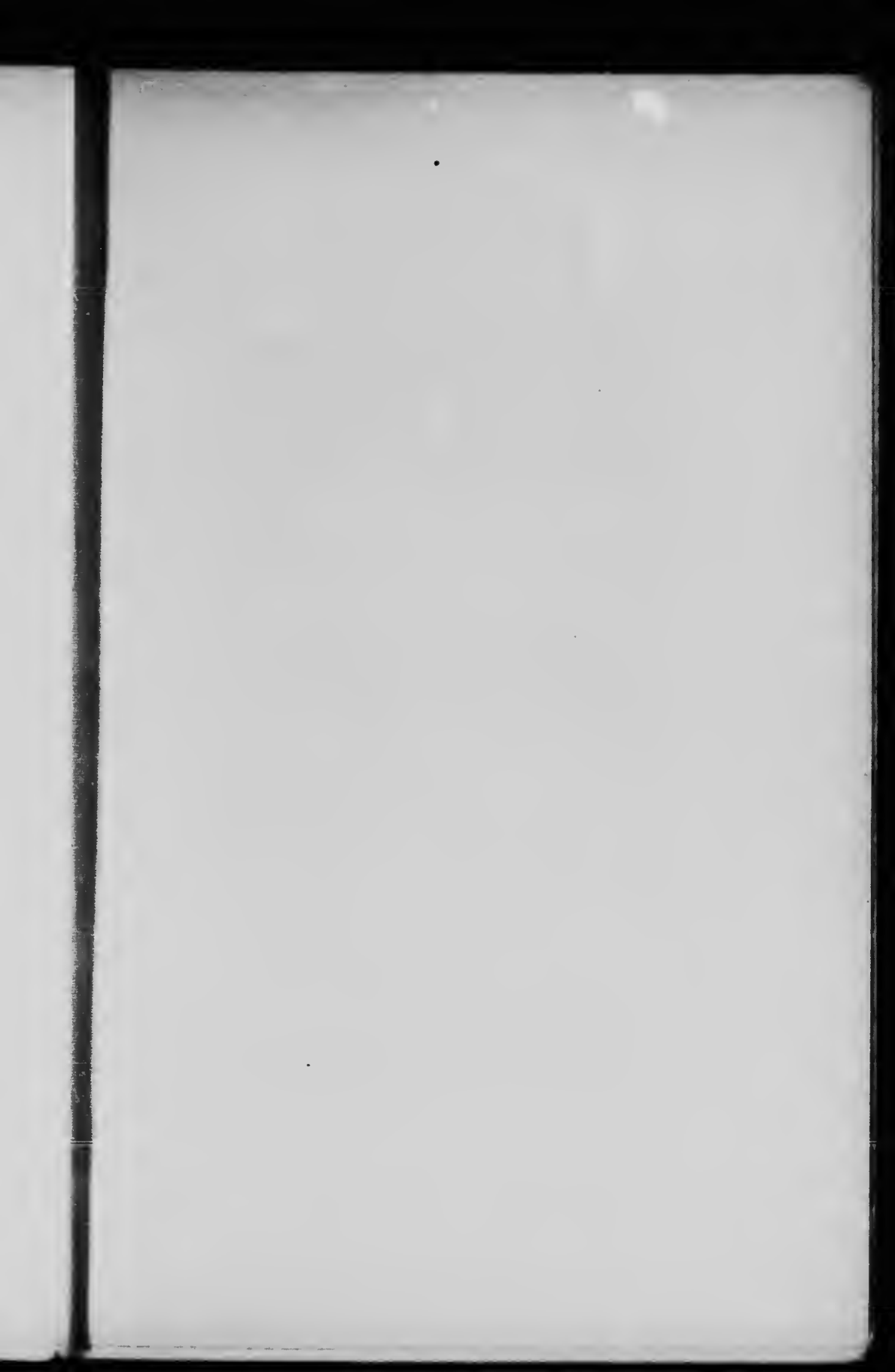
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**THE ROMANCE OF
FRA FILIPPO LIPPI**







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"Lucrezia must have been very sweet."

THE ROMANCE OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

A NEW VERSION OF THE LOVE
STORY OF THE FRIAR-ARTIST
AND THE NUN LUCREZIA

BY

A. J. ANDERSON

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE PAINTINGS
OF THE FRIAR-ARTIST HIMSELF

THE COPP, CLARK CO., LIMITED
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Miss Florence

Sweetie must have been very sweet.

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To
LADY AND MISS HEMMING

IN MEMORY OF
FLORENCE, 1908

PREFACE

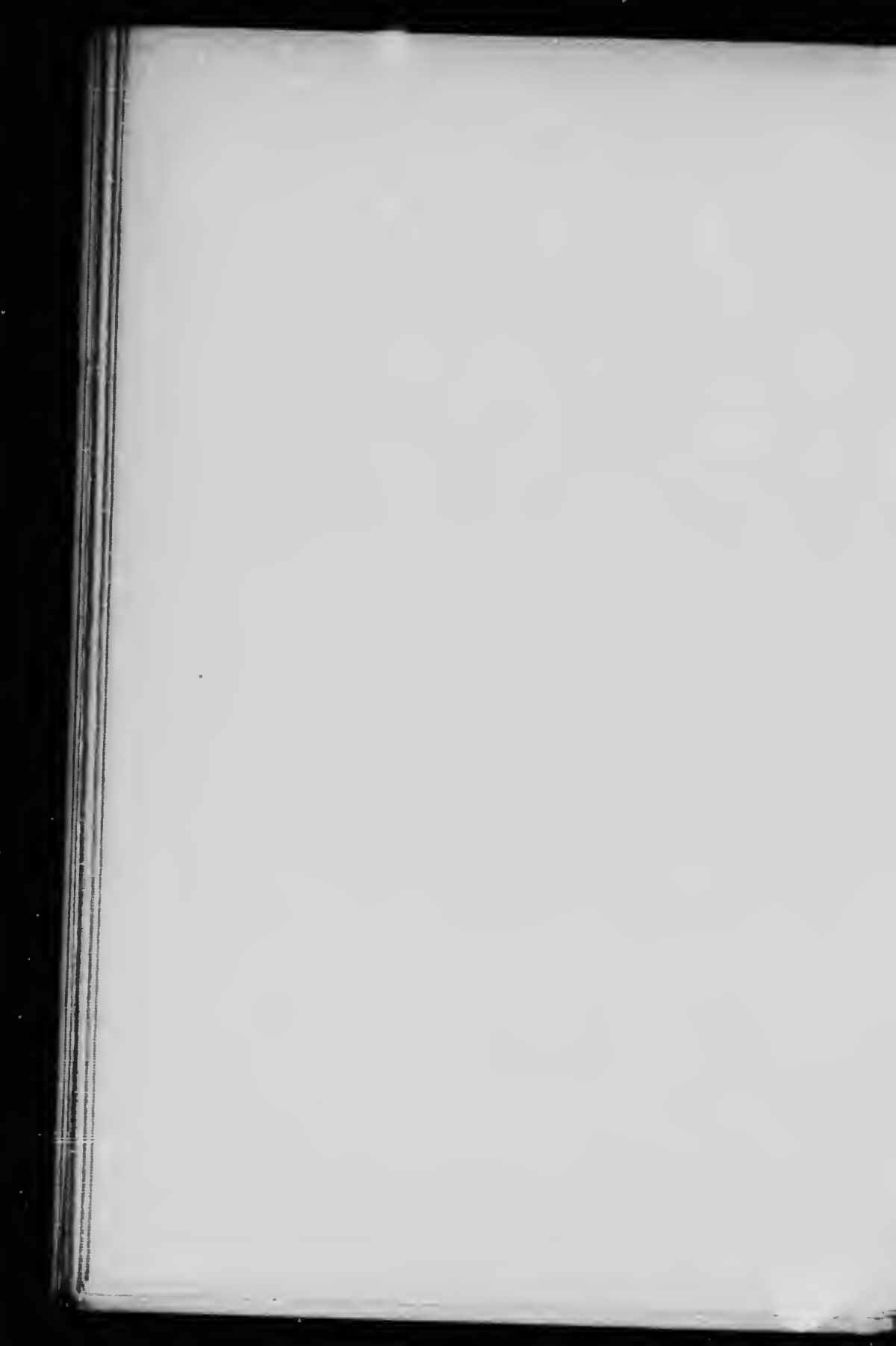
As I write this, the great bell of the Duomo, once the Pieve, is sounding in my ears, and the magnificent frescoes of Fra Filippo seem still before my eyes. Across the Piazza I see the house which Filippo bought, and in which the baby Filippino was born.

With all the known facts before me, I have woven my story; supplying the motives and details through much reading of contemporary writings, some experience of human life, an intimate knowledge of Catholics, and a close study of Fra Filippo's paintings.

A. J. ANDERSON.

PRATO,

April 10, 1908.



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THE ROMANCE OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

CHAPTER I

IN VINO VERITAS

IN the year of Our Lord 1456, when men had come to appreciate the learning and art of ancient Greece at their true value, and were trying to restore the old culture, there stood an unassuming house in the Piazza del Mercatale of the town of Prato.

The night was cold: a bright fire of pine logs blazed on the hearth, and before it sat two friars resting.

There were certain touches of refinement in the room—a strip of embroidered silk here, an antique bronze there, a finely modelled terracotta bust of the Madonna above the mantel-

piece, all of which showed that these men did not belong to the ordinary ranks of their fraternity ; several half-finished pictures, as well as a litter of brushes, pigments, and the like, announced that they were painters by profession.

Presently the elder of the two rose, and walking across the apartment, somewhat painfully, reached down a flask of Chianti and a couple of glasses decorated with a narrow strip of gilt foliage round the lip and base. He removed the straw stopper from the bottle, and throwing off the floating oil, which protected the wine from the atmosphere, with a rapid turn of the wrist, filled his own and his companion's glass.

"Diavolo!" he grumbled, "this cold finds out my rupture."

"Filippo," the younger friar paused to sip his wine, "if you attempt the same originality in your business transactions that you achieve in your paintings, you must expect to suffer."

Fra Filippo laughed: "The Vicar-General has twice measured swords with me, but I have won in the end."

"My dearest friend, that may be true; but consider the cost of your victories: an abdominal lesion, as the leeches term it, and the distinction of a special Papal Bull."

Again Filippo Lippi laughed. He was a man of fifty, moderately tall, irregularly featured, and stamped with that uncommon charm which marks great creative genius: also his face had earned him the name of "the Glad Friar."

"I cannot confess that he won, even in the first contest."

"Tut, man! Consider the case! Here we see the leading artist of the age racked by the Vicar-General of Florence until he confessed that he had forged a receipt in order to defraud a poor journeyman painter of his just wages."

The friar settled himself comfortably, drawing up his habit so that his legs might feel the full warmth of the fire: "I wish I had you on the rack, Diamante."

"Why, Padre?"

"I would turn the rack so" (he moved his arms), "I would again turn it, and long before you were drawn like a rabbit (as I was) I would make you confess that you yourself hanged Judas Iscariot."

"Probably! But still the Vicar carried his point."

"In what manner, Diamante? He never succeeded in making me pay that rat Giovanni da Rovezzano a second time; and he now finds himself in ill-favour with the Medici."

"You should retain all receipts, and write up your accounts, Filippo."

"I own that I am careless about money matters, but after all one is an artist, and not a merchant."

Friar Diamante was in a teasing mood: "How about your second contest with the Vicar-General?" he asked.

Once again Fra Filippo laughed: "I was appointed rector of San Quirico as a sinecure, and I still retain the stipend."

"You forget that you were removed from all active work in your parish by a special Bull, accusing you of 'many and base crimes.'"

"You forget, Diamante, that I appealed for a special court of inquiry to be held by the pious Bishop of Fiesole and Messer Ugolino Giugni, who knew my manner of living."

"In days to come, Padre, men will forget this appeal and remember the Pope's Bull."

"Bah! Men will know that if one is guilty of many and base crimes one does not appeal for an inquiry by a local bishop and a man of good name, who live in the same city."

Diamante sighed sadly: "I trust it may be so, Filippo, but mud sticks."

"Is it conceivable that I should be held in

good repute by my order, appointed chaplain to the nuns of Santa Margherita, and above all be accepted as a familiar friend by one so refined, so particular, as Cosimo de' Medici, if I were a base criminal who had forged a quittance to avoid paying the wages of a poor journeyman-painter?"

"Men will overlook the evidence in your favour and remember the accusations."

The friar pondered for some moments. "I do not care about the judgments of the future," he said. "But after all the Vicar-General has the best of me—here am I, a vigorous man in the prime of life, almost a cripple. The devil fly away with the Vicar-General!"

Diamante laid his hand gently on his friend's shoulder, for he loved him much: and of a truth this glad and merry friar seemed to have inspired love on all sides, in spite of his somewhat uncertain morals.

They sat and sipped their wine, exchanging a word now and again, until the flask was empty; then Diamante rose quietly and fetched a fresh bottle.

"Not another drop, Diamante! I must keep my eyes keen and my hand steady for to-morrow. Well, since you have opened another flask of the old Chianti, one more glass will do no harm."

Filippo raised the glass to the light. "Here's a toast!" he cried. "To my new model! Evviva!"

"So you have discovered a new model? We needed one badly; this place is not like Florence."

"This one is a model for the Madonna—the model I have been searching for all my life. You know my ideas of Our Lady, Diamante?"

"I know that you have painted a new type of face, different from all that have gone before; but I do not know what ideas inspired you."

"The old craftsmen all painted the same type of face, a long face with broad forehead and pointed chin, with slanting eyes and tiny mouth—a lifeless face, a grotesque face, an absurd face. Fra Angelico was the first to paint the Madonna beautiful."

"That is so, Filippo."

"But Angelico's Madonnas were not human, since they had the calm, passionless beauty of the angels; you have only to add a pair of wings to one of Angelico's Madonnas to transform her into an angel."

"This is true," said Diamante, frowning. "But I confess this beautiful passionless type of Madonna appeals to my intellect. However, what type of face do you picture?"

"My Madonna must have a woman's face,

and not that of an angel ; it must be the purest and most beautiful face ever created, but it must have sex. You understand ? ”

“ Of course, naturally : it must be of the feminine gender, it must neither be the face of a dressed-up boy, nor that of a carved statue.”

Fra Filippo stamped his foot. “ O dull one ! Cannot you comprehend ? The face must be one of flesh and blood, with the possibilities of passion, and yet pure and innocent.”

“ This is a novel doctrine ! ”

“ I am no theologian, yet I have learnt much of human nature ; also, though I am no scholar, I have mingled with Cosimo de' M' dici and his circle, and acquired something of ancient learning. Is there any merit if a deaf-and-dumb man keeps holy silence ? Is there any merit if a pauper practises holy poverty ? Is there any merit if an angel follows the rule of chastity ? Answer this.”

Diamante knit his brows. “ You have learnt from Cosimo to some purpose,” he said.

“ Therefore, when I picture Our Lady I picture a face that is pure and innocent because God desired her to remain *semper Virgo*, and she obeyed His will, and yet I picture the face of one who would have made a loving wife if God had so planned.”

“ I mislike the idea, Filippo. But this model ? ”

“ I have hunted through Tuscany for a model : one girl has a face that is pure and beautiful, cold and phlegmatic ; another has a face that is full of life and intelligence, but lacking the suggestion of perfect chastity ; a third displays life, intelligence, and purity, but is deficient in comeliness.”

“ If you were not in orders, Filippo, and were free to wed, which of these three would you choose for your wife ? ”

Fra Filippo was too much in earnest to see the trap that had been laid for him : “ The homely maid, who combined purity, passion, and intelligence.”

“ And if you found one who possessed these qualities, and added the gift of perfect beauty ? ”

“ She would be the ideal wife ! ”

“ Exactly ! So this Madonna of yours is merely the picturing of your ideal wife, and not the image of the Madonna. One does not seek traces of passion in one’s mother’s face.”

If Fra Filippo had lived thirty years later, when the Renaissance had succeeded in blending Christianity and paganism together, he could have met this argument ; but having the germs of faith still latent in his soul, he was check-

mated : it is one thing to generalise, and assert that the Blessed Virgin would have made a perfect wife if Providence had so ordained ; it is quite another thing to say that she is one's ideal of one's own perfect wife. So this artist of the Early Renaissance, this disciple of the Early Humanists, had met with a counter-argument that he could not answer ; and since this argument came from Diamante, the painter of elaborately jewelled details, and nothing else, he fumed.

It would be fruitless to relate the quarrel, but it suffices to say that Diamante remained calm, whilst Filippo became both abusive and personal. After a short period of excessive heat, followed by a few quick strides up and down the room to allow the fumes of the argument to evaporate, Fra Filippo turned to his comrade : " Friend, art is long, but life is short, and there is no space to waste in quarrelling ; come, pledge me in a glass of wine."

Diamante filled the glasses, and raising his, said : " To your model, Filippo ! Come, tell me of her."

Filippo crossed over to an easel and uncovered a panel. "'Tis from memory," he said.

The face that he had painted was full of beauty. It was the face of a young maid, win-

some, *spirituelle*, refined, but withal showing an undeveloped, latent trace of passion.

“That is not my dream of the Madonna, Filippo.” Diamante gazed hard at the painting: “And yet I have seen that face painted as the Madonna. Ah! I have it—that tondo which you painted for Leonado Bartolini when we first came to Prato? The face is the same.”

“It is, Diamante. Three years ago, when I first received the commission to paint the frescoes in the choir of the Pieve, here, I had much work on hand. Amongst other pictures, Messer Bartolini, of Florence, had bid me paint a tondo, depicting incidents from the life of Our Lady, and paid me two-and-twenty florins in advance. I painted this picture, all save the face of the Madonna, and that defied my imagination. I made one drawing, it was the face of a statue; I made another, and it was the face of a wanton. Leonado threatened the law if the picture were not delivered early in December, and I was in despair.”

“I remember, Filippo.”

“On Advent Sunday I assisted at the Mass in the convent chapel of Santa Margherita, and amongst the parlour-boarders I saw the face that I had dreamed of, and came home and

finished the picture. This tondo was my first real picture of the Madonna ; all that had gone before depicted statues."

Fra Filippo covered the panel reverently, and stepping to the window, drew back the curtain. "There," he said, "across the Piazza, is the Convent of Santa Margherita, and within its walls sleeps a little nun who will go down through all ages as the true model of Our Lady."

"Then you propose to discard the model, and paint from memory? It is not like you, Filippo."

The Friar chuckled gleefully: "I propose to discard memory, and paint from the model."

"A nun as model! Impossible, Padre!"

"Last week, Diamante, I was appointed chaplain to the Community."

"So you told me."

"This noontime, Diamante, the Abbess gave me a commission for a panel of 'The Madonna of the Girdle.'"

"That is news—welcome news. You will paint Our Lady's Girdle from the relic at the Pieve?"

"Certainly! And I shall paint the Madonna herself from Sister Lucrezia Buti."

"Does the Lady Abbess consent?"

"There was some difficulty at first, for though the Abbess deems this nun sweet and good, she considers her a trifle over-worldly. Finally I suggested that some staid sister should act as duenna, which righted matters."

Diamante rose and inspected the drawing on the panel. "It is a beautiful face," he said, "but it is not the face of the Madonna; it is even unlike the face of one who has a vocation. Filippo, with all this talk of 'sex' and such things, you will be cautious."

"Diamante, whatever my past life may have been, in this matter at least my thoughts are as pure as those of Fra Angelico."

"I have often wondered, Filippo, how it is that you, who are often self-indulgent and somewhat sensual in your pleasures, should have such beautiful ideas, and paint such worthy pictures, whilst I, who practise my religion and strive to obey the rules of our order, should be so lifeless in my work. How is it, for instance, that you should have conceived the idea of Our Lady of Mercy, and painted the *Refugium Peccatorum*, sheltering all the repentant sinners beneath her mantle, whilst I can neither conceive nor execute such a subject?"

"My friend, you are no artist!"

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Anderson Photo.

THE "REFUGIUM PECCATORUM," SHELTERING ALL THE REPENTANT SINNERS.

Berlin Gallery.

"Stay!" he continued, as Diamante commenced to protest. "I love you, my friend, and I own that you are a clever craftsman, wielding your brush skilfully. But you are always calm and collected. You never pour out your soul in your picture."

"You speak in riddles, Filippo."

"Here am I, a butcher's son, with but little inherited refinement; yet when I paint I pour out all that is good in me, all that is noble—and I paint on, never heeding time or weariness, until I am exhausted. You!—you break off when noontime comes, and go to your dinner with the regularity of a sundial."

"It is fitting to do so, if one would preserve one's health."

"Cospito! One's health! When does an artist regard his health? He paints with his soul, and his flesh is forgotten. He has no flesh, no desires, no appetite left. He ceases to be a creature: he becomes a creator. His one desire is to express the thoughts that are in his mind: his only craving is to depict the image which he has conceived."

"But is the artist's life, Filippo, in accordance with this noble ideal?"

"Alas, no! Diamante; for this failing is

also part of the artist's nature—he paints until his soul is weary, and lays down his brushes. His soul is tired out, weary, numb; and then his flesh craves enjoyment, and too often has enjoyment. If I were to be judged by man—say the Vicar-General”—Filippo smiled drily—“he would be deeply shocked at some of my past life; but since I shall be judged by the All-Merciful, He will take my pictures into account.”

“A convenient doctrine, but strange-sounding from the lips of a friar.”

“If God has given me the desire to create and the power to create, and I work worthily to the best of my ability, is He to judge me too severely for the frailties I may commit in the reaction which follows this work?”

“Oh, Filippo! Filippo! These are novel sentiments for a Brother of Mt. Carmel!”

“Shall I tell you how I became a Brother of Mt. Carmel? Have you ever suffered hunger, Diamante?”

“On fast-days, I —”

“Bah! my friend. You call missing your breakfast, hunger! Why, last fast-day you were so faint with hunger that a couple of hours before the noonday meal you had to refresh yourself with a glass of wine, adding a crust of bread,

so that the wine should not hurt you. No! you cannot imagine a little boy of seven living from week to week with a wolf gnawing inside him, and only a bit of dry black bread now and again to ease the pangs. Do you wonder that this little boy thought he had entered heaven when the Brothers of Mt. Carmel took him into the Carmine?"

"Indeed, no!"

"I became a novice when I was fourteen, Diamante; I was a friar at fifteen. All the time I was living in a world of pictures. There was Masolino painting in our chapel; Fra Angelico was painting close by at Fiesole; Lorenzo Monaco gave me lessons in painting. Not only did these artists encourage me, but our brethren also petted me because I could paint. You see, the Dominicans had Fra Angelico in their order, the Camaldolese had Lorenzo Monaco, and the Carmelites desired a painter also."

"I understand all this, Filippo; but why did you become a priest as well as a friar?"

"It was the Prior's doing. He urged me to seek orders, so that the Pope might present me with a sinecure: 'Then you will be free from temporal cares, and enabled to paint solely for the honour of God,' he said."

"A noble thought, truly."

"In theory, yes; in practice, here am I a friar without a vocation, a priest without learning. Why, soon after my ordination I painted a scroll, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, spelling *excelsis* without an *x*. Do you wonder that when I was allowed to leave the Carmine, and spend my life with the painters and scholars at the court of the Medici, I fell into their mode of life, loving pleasure more than religion?"

"Poor Filippo! *amicus meus*," and Diamante threw his arm round his friend's shoulders.

"And yet, Diamante, if Filippo Lippi can arise from the slough in which he has learnt men and women and life, and can sanctify his heart so that he may paint a Madonna who is the perfection of beauty, and yet human, will he have lived in vain?"

Then with a sigh the friar-artist retired to his couch to dream of his ideal.

CHAPTER II

LUCREZIA

IN reconstructing the character of Lucrezia Buti, we have a good foundation to work on—her portrait, for the Pitti tondo of the Madonna and Child undoubtedly contains the portrait of Lucrezia.

In the first place, Lucrezia must have been very sweet and gentle in her disposition—not, perhaps, very intellectual, but intelligent, refined and delightfully piquant: the picture shows us a serious face and yet one that is not in the least sad, and the mouth is ever ready for laughter.

In the second place, we find amongst really nice women those who are naturally fitted for the single life and those who are naturally fitted for matrimony: the former make amiable comrades, admirable nuns, but chilling and disheartening wives; the latter become adored wives and devoted mothers. Lucrezia has the face of one who belonged to the latter category—the face of one who would love once and for all,

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the face of one who would win a man's heart, and hold a man's heart until the end of his life : but I anticipate.

Society in Florence in the middle of the fifteenth century was not unlike English society at the present time. The smart set under Cosimo de' Medici had the morals of our "smart set," together with more culture and learning ; the gay set, to which Filippo Lippi belonged, would have subscribed and contributed to the "Pink 'Un" if they had lived now ; as for the ordinary citizens, we are told by a contemporary scribe that Florence was "abounding with excellent men in every faculty, and full of admirable citizens." To credit Florence of 1456 with the vices of the later Renaissance is contrary to the true spirit of history. In the town of Prato, some ten miles distant, life was probably quieter and order strictly maintained.

There was, however, one marked difference between society in the fifteenth century and society in the twentieth century : unmarried girls could not go out into the world and earn their living as clerks or typists ; unless a girl had relations who would shelter her or arrange her marriage, she had to take refuge in a convent. This does not mean that all lonely orphans were

forced to become nuns, but that they had to become parlour-boarders in a convent, as many maids do now of their own free choice.

Lucrezia and Spinetta Buti, daughters of an honest and excellent silk-merchant of Prato, were left orphans at the respective ages of seventeen and sixteen, and since their half-brother refused to offer them a home or provide a reasonable marriage dowry, they retired to the Convent of Santa Margherita, in the Piazza del Mercatale, as parlour-boarders.

Neither Lucrezia nor Spinetta seem to have been unhappy in the convent life; they had been accustomed to the quiet life of fifteenth-century maidens of the middle class, living in a quiet town, and the life in Santa Margherita would not have been much more quiet; also their half-brother could have been none too kind. At any rate, after a few years' residence they left the freedom of the boarders' parlour and became professed nuns.

Now, the admission of Lucrezia into the boarders' parlour was right enough, but her admission into the order was a sad mistake. One glance at her face shows that those eyes were made to melt with the light of human love, and not with the supernatural light of spiritual ecstasy. One glance

at her face will tell us that Lucrezia had a vocation which is different from the vocation to the religious life—the vocation of marriage.

As I say, Lucrezia appears to have been moderately happy at Santa Margherita, but it must have been a negative kind of happiness. She was neither contented nor discontented; she was not dissatisfied with her lot—only unsatisfied. We find exactly the same feeling of unsatisfaction in those who are bound by an uncongenial marriage; in those who are tied to an uncongenial profession; in girls who are forced to live in quiet country parsonages, when they want to be out in the world, taking their share in the struggle and game of life. When such a state of things exists, these victims of circumstances are apt to take bold and startling steps.

It was possibly this feeling of *ennui* that induced Lucrezia to take the veil: after the aimless life of the boarders' parlour, with its wearisome and monotonous conversation, real active life in the order, with definite occupations from morning till night, would come as a relief. Or, possibly, the kindness of the nuns, and their evident contentment, inspired a desire to share their life in the hope of sharing their content-

ment also. Probably Lucrezia was actuated by a combination of the two motives.

The action of the Abbess, in allowing her to be professed, is, however, quite intelligible ; for the sweet and tractable disposition clearly visible in Lucrezia's portrait must have won the affection of the virtuous and well-born Abbess Bartolommea de' Bovacchiesi. If Lucrezia had lived in our time, when parents test their daughters' vocations by sending them into society before they enter the religious life, the coming tragedy would have been averted. If Lucrezia had lived now, the lack of marriage dowry would not have mattered, for she had the alluring combination of gracefulness, piquancy, and sex which goes straight to the heart of all true men : unfortunately Lucrezia lived in the wrong century.

If one would understand Lucrezia's character, it is interesting to compare her face with that of Mlle. de La Vallière. At first sight the two faces appear equally sweet and equally yielding, and possibly the regular beauty of La Vallière may appear the more attractive ; but after a while the sweet face of the little nun grows on one, for underneath Lucrezia's gentle expression there is an underlying strength of character which is absent from that of the Frenchwoman.

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Both faces are good faces, both faces show an impressionable and hero-worshipping disposition, but there the likeness ends; for La Vallière's face is that of one who sacrificed both conscience and honour to her royal lover, and immediately repented; sacrificed herself again and again repented, and so on until the king became weary of her eternal complaisance and scruples; whereas Lucrezia has the face of one who might sacrifice herself to her lover, but it is also the face of one who if she repented would close her little mouth firmly and carry out her repentance at all costs.

To carry the comparison a step farther: all the world pities La Vallière, since she loved Louis with a perfect self-sacrifice and an utter absence of self-seeking; but there is a certain contempt mingled with this pity, inasmuch as La Vallière could only have loved the king for his attractive person, and not for his vain and selfish mind. If she had loved a man with inverse qualities—the poet François Villon, with his unattractive body and beautiful mind, for instance—the affair would have been a true romance.

And to conclude: if the piquant little Lucrezia were substituted for the insipid La Vallière, and the virile Filippo, with his headstrong nature

and his artist's mind, were substituted for the effete François Villon, the elements of romance would be infinitely greater.

When people live very quiet lives small events assume undue proportions, and Lucrezia was feeling much excited at the prospect of sitting as model. In the first place she was about to remove her habit and robe herself in fine apparel with a royal crown on her head; in the second place she was going to pose to a very great artist, whose personality attracted her strangely.

But stay! If one would win a woman's heart, how would one proceed? Tell her that she is virtuous, amiable, and homely? She would be insulted beyond repair. No! If one would win a woman's heart, tell her that she is attractive and fascinating, tell her that she is winsome and graceful, tell her that she is interesting and distinguished. Then, although one might not actually succeed in winning the woman's love, one would have obtained an individuality in her eyes, a place in her thoughts, a niche in her esteem, that would separate one from the common herd.

It is not to be imagined for a moment that Fra Filippo had been actuated by other than artistic motives when he singled out Lucrezia

as his model for the Perfect Woman; nor had he intended, in all probability, to pay her a compliment. It is not to be assumed that Lucrezia was conscious of the flattery, nor that she realised the place that Filippo was taking in her thoughts. But the fact remains that he had paid her the greatest of all compliments, and that, in her sub-conscious thoughts, he must have ceased to be an artist, and become her artist.

And again, when Filippo had asked the Abbess to summon Lucrezia on the matter of the picture he had showed such evidently sincere admiration, combined with such evidently sincere respect, that the heart of the sweet little nun had glowed with an answering kindliness.

Therefore, on account of all these reasons, Lucrezia was excited at the thought of the sitting.

There was a tap at the door of Lucrezia's cell, and Spinetta entered:

"Is it not kind, Lucrezia mia! The Lady Abbess has sent me to help you robe yourself, and she has relaxed the rule and permitted us to talk. Ah! How I should love to wear this!" and she fingered the rich blue robe longingly.

"Go into the corner, little one, whilst I disrobe."

The proprieties are observed strictly in convents, so Spinetta went into the corner and covered her eyes.

Removing her coarse habit and her undergarment of roughly woven white wool, Lucrezia donned the dainty garments of the finest linen that were necessary for the proper falling of the drapery.

"You may look now, Spinetta; for I want your assistance with this strange garment."

"Oh! Lucrezia, my queen!" and Spinetta threw her arm round her sister's waist. "Was there ever one so lovely?"

"Hush! hush! little one. This is not nun's talk. But come help me on with this," and she held up a long rich garment of deep blue.

There was a struggle, and a laughing face emerged from the gown. Another struggle, accompanied by quick breathing: "The sleeves are over-tight, even for thy little hands, Lucrezia. Ah! there, it is accomplished."

"And now the cloak. 'Tis immense! I shall trip if I am not cautious."

"Here, hold it thus, Lucrezia, with the folds held up in the right hand, so. And this veil of

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embroidered gauze? It should fall so—should it not?” and Spinetta arranged the veil on Lucrezia’s head.

“Not too low over my forehead, little one. Fra Filippo said my forehead was noble.” Filippo, like all Florentines, admired a high forehead.

“Are you excited, Lucrezia?”

“Who would not be somewhat excited?”

“And nervous?”

“Oh no, not nervous! One could not be nervous with Fra Filippo—he is so merry, so kind! But perhaps I am just a trifle anxious. He is indeed a great artist.”

“And now the crown, Lucrezia. Ah, there! Now my sister is a queen indeed,” and she curtsied low before her. “Stay! I am wrong. ’Tis not a queen my sister has become; ’tis a bride: the bridal robe, the bridal veil, the bridal crown—the illusion is complete.”

“Spinetta! Spinetta! for shame! How can you speak like this to one who is already bound in the mystic marriage,” and she held out her hand with its nun’s wedding ring.

“I did not mean it, Lucrezia; you know I did not mean it.”

Lucrezia drew her little sister close to her. “Darling, such things must not be thought by

a nun," she said. "Once, when I first became a novice, I longed to be as other women, with my arms clasped round my little one; and my confessor reproved me gently but very seriously: 'Put such thoughts away from you, my child, if you would be a nun. Thoughts that are but natural in other maidens become acts of disloyalty in a nun.'"

"Forgive me, Lucrezia mia. The occasion excites me. And yet I must say it, though it angers you: you look more like a little bride than like the Madonna."

Lucrezia blushed rosy red, for this was no nun's talk, and distressed her; besides, her heart responded to the idea, which distressed her more.

"I would be alone, Spinetta, for a space," and Lucrezia kissed her sister gently on each cheek. "Summon me when Fra Filippo is ready to commence the picture."

Left alone, Lucrezia paused a moment, and then crossing over to a rough wooden prayer-desk she knelt down and kissed the feet of Him who hung on the crucifix: "Until my life's end," she whispered; and then, "*Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a*" (from every thought that may come between my God and me).

And yet in spite of her prayer, in spite of her resolution, thoughts would come. She saw a little house, sweet and fresh, with newly cut rushes on the floor, and the cool evening breeze wafting the scent of roses through the window. She saw a girl standing by the window, with a tiny, crowing baby in her arms. The girl was hidden by the curtain, just peeping round the side so that she could watch for some one coming without being seen from the road. There is a step, a firm, man's step, crunching the gravel, and—" *Ne nos inducas in tentationem,*" she prayed.

The tears welled up in her eyes. "Oh! I must not cry," she said; "I cannot go down with my eyes all red. Why did Spinetta suggest these thoughts? She does not understand. Spinetta is better than I am; and I? Of course I am happy. It is only a passing fit."

She knelt down, and took up her beads, and this time the thoughts were absent; and as her lips uttered the Paters and Aves her mind followed the life of those at Nazareth, and self was forgotten.

"The fifth joyful mystery," she began, and there was a knock at the door. "Lucrezia, they await you, dear one."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST SITTING

WHEN Lucrezia entered the parlour where the sittings were to take place, Fra Filippo was busily setting out his materials and explaining the mystery of painting to the Lady Abbess and a quiet, grave-faced nun, who were standing beside him. He flashed a smile at Lucrezia, and proceeded :

“ Yes, Abbess, this is a different matter from the painting of the frescoes in the Pieve. Here the plaster to be painted on during the day must be spread evenly each morning ; here the work is more simple.”

“ This ”—and he touched the picture surface—“ is a panel of seasoned wood ; and see ”—he chipped off a tiny corner—“ I have overlaid the wood with a thin coating of gesso.”

“ And this gesso I hear so much about ? ”

“ It is a mixture of the finest marble-dust from the quarries of Carrara, limestone that

has been burnt and slaked, and glue ; but the proportions vary, each artist keeping his proportions a secret. Some gesso will crack and crumble ; mine will last for ever."

"And these pigments ?"

"Some are ground from precious stones, like this glorious blue, others from coloured earths, others from"—he smiled—"but that is a secret of the craft."

"And with what do you mingle these colours ? One who was painting here formerly mingled his pigments with melted wax."

"That would not be wise, in winter," he answered. "See, if I were to melt the wax, mixing my colours on a warm slab, and were then to paint on the cold gesso, the wax would cool and the touch grow rough and heavy. One could not paint with cold wax."

"I understand, Fra Filippo."

"No. I use as my vehicle the white of eggs mingled with the sap of the fig-tree ; and, in order to give lustre to the richer colours, I add a secret substance known only to myself."

"A thousand thanks, Fra Filippo ; but now I leave you to your work, and attend to mine. Sister Spinetta, you will accompany me ; your presence here would disturb the artist." With

a smile for Lucrezia and a whispered word to the elder nun, the Abbess left the apartment.

A large and imposing chair, that was usually reserved for the Bishop and other important dignitaries when they visited the convent, had been placed on a dais, and arranged so that the light shone from a large window on the right and somewhat in front of the chair, the lower portion of the window being covered with a curtain.

Lucrezia was standing shyly in the background, and now, at the friar's request, she ascended the dais and seated herself. He followed her, and bending over her arranged the folds of her cloak into the design which he had roughly sketched on his panel.

Then he stepped back to his easel and regarded the pose, and in an instant something went wrong with Fra Filippo. I cannot say what it was—it might have been the sight of her, whom he had only seen clothed in the plain dress of a convent boarder and the severe habit of a nun, decked out in rich garments and crowned with a shining crown; it might have been that the wonderful sweetness and the *spirituelle* beauty of the maiden came home to him,—but this debonair friar, who had all his life joked with men and laughed with women, never caring a jot what

the world thought of him, felt strangely shy. A warm flush crept over his face, and he lowered his eyes in confusion.

As Fra Filippo lost his confidence, Lucrezia regained hers; her heart, which had been throbbing nervously, beat calmly and regularly, and she asked, "Am I rightly posed, Fra Filippo?"

The friar had to moisten his lips before he could answer: "A moment, Sister; I will mix my pigments first," and he bent over his palette.

This was not lost on the chaperone, who drew such conclusions as would appear natural to an unworldly woman: "Here is this friar, who is a skilled and tried painter, filled with confusion," she thought. "He finds himself face to face with the model for his Madonna, and the sacred nature of his work overwhelms him, and the model becomes to him the image of the reality. Fra Filippo must be, at heart, a very holy man. And here is our little Lucrezia, who was always shy and diffident, filled with dignity; she also has entered into her part, and is treating the painter with the graciousness with which the Madonna would treat one whom she had permitted to paint her portrait." From that moment the nun's chaperonage lost something of its reality.

The friar had mixed his colours: the very

handling of his tools had restored his self-confidence, and he inspected the pose of his model calmly and critically. Lucrezia's hands were holding out a strip of silk that was the present substitute for the girdle which would be painted later, and they trembled slightly with the strain of the position.

"You may lower your hands, Sister, so that they rest on your lap," he said: "the strain would otherwise make your pose too stiff and tense. And your face—just turn it a little more towards the light, for I want the light to strike it exactly as it will strike the finished picture when it is placed behind the High Altar."

"No! No! Not so stern! The Madonna never looked like that. There, that is better. And not so stiff: I am painting a Madonna of flesh and blood, and not a statue."

"May I talk, Fra Filippo; or must I keep quite still and silent?"

"Do both, my child. Keep still with your body, and talk with your lips. When I come to paint those lips, you must keep them as still as two—as two stones," he ended, somewhat lamely.

"But will not she forget her pose if she chatters?" inquired the chaperone.

"Ah! no, Sister. If she begins to lose her

pose, I will talk to her ; you should hear me talk to my models when they forget their pose. I was painting Cosimo de' Medici last summer ; and, what with the heat and the flies, he began to fidget. I rebuked him many times, until at last I lost my patience and exclaimed : ' You base-born son of a barber ! Keep still ! ' "

" The Medici ! " Lucrezia's eyes grew frightened. " But was not he very angry ? "

" He was ! He was furious, and threatened many things, until I raised my hand : ' Say no more,' I said, ' I will forgive you, only sit still in future.' " And the friar gave vent to a rich, bass chuckle of laughter, in which the nuns joined.

" And then ? " queried Lucrezia.

" Ah ! he is a noble man, this Medici—a true philosopher. He came up and placed his hand on my shoulder, and said, ' You painters are not like other men, if you were—I——' He paused and frowned, then he smiled : ' Per Baccho ! ' he said : ' I will sit still in future, lest I should be tempted to punish you for rebuking me for my faults.' "

" Such oaths savour of paganism." The elder nun shook her head and sighed. " They say that the Medici are at heart heathen."

" In this you are wrong, Sister. Cosimo does

but realise the beauty of the world, the joy of living. He believes in the goodness that is beneath human nature."

"We are told to mortify our flesh and keep it in subjection, lest it should obtain the mastery over us," and again the nun shook her head and sighed.

"If you had spent a June at the Medici Villa, as I have, and seen the joyfulness of all! The gardens on the heights of Fiesole, their noble pine and cypress trees, their leafy bowers, all covered with roses and jasmine; the smooth turf sprinkled with flowers, and moistened with the spray wafted from lofty jets of water, which sparkled in the sunshine like fairy fountains of diamonds and rubies and emeralds, all soft-lit and etherea' if you had smelt the mingled scent of the rose and heliotrope and jasmine, with every now and then a waft of the full, sensuous odour of magnolia, to give an accent of richness to the whole—like this," and he dipped his brush into the ultramarine and placed a splash of colour in the fold of the blue robe on the panel.

Lucrezia's lips were parted and her eyes shining: "Go on! do go on!" she begged. Here was a picture of the outer world that went straight to her imagination.

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"In the noble verandah, from which one can look straight down over Florence, there are seated a group of ladies clothed in the thinnest and softest silks, with gaily clad gallants in attendance. They are telling romantic stories and reciting poems; then one fingers a lute and sings"; the friar sung the words very softly in a luscious baritone :

"Oh! come to the woods, love; the nightingale's singing;
The blue-bells in love-chimes the fairies are ringing.
Oh, come to the shade of the sweet forest glade!"

"Fra Filippo! Fra Filippo! Such words! For shame!" The old nun's voice sounded shocked and pained. But since Lucrezia's eyes were begging for more, Fra Filippo waved the nun's protest on one side and, with a soft laugh, proceeded :

"At the side of the terrace, 'neath the pine-trees which had been left to form a frame to the distant landscape, there sit a youth and a maid. He is whispering softly spoken words into her ear, and her face is all aglow. Presently he stoops and putting forth his hand touches hers gently; she, glancing at him shyly, rises; they wander through a cypress path together, and ere they are lost to my sight I see his arm stealing around her waist."

Lucrezia gave a little sobbing sigh that might have been longing or horror, or both mingled; but the nun's voice rang out sharply in reproof.

Fra Filippo laughed gaily: "Oh! Sister, as you pity me, be not so distressed; the youth was Francesco Ficino, and he would be wedded to the maid in a few days' time, on the Feast of the Blessed Baptist."

The nun rose, and, walking over to the artist on the pretence of looking at the picture, whispered: "Is it wise to talk thus, before one so young?"

"It is necessary for the sake of the picture, Sister," he whispered back. "Have patience, and I will explain the reason." Then aloud: "You cannot discern much of the likeness as yet?"

"I see patches of colour like mud——"

"Neutral tint," he corrected.

"I see patches of a lighter colour, and that is all."

"When Leon Alberti began to build the Palace of Rucellai, I saw low walls of marble, with gaps and projections that meant nothing to me. Then Alberti took me into a wooden hut and showed me the plan of the building: this also meant nothing in my eyes. But when he showed me

the drawing of the finished building, I understood. This panel is at present only the foundation of the picture: the finished picture is here," and he tapped his forehead. "But return to your seat, Sister; I cannot paint with one looking on. It makes me feel as though I were a juggler at a fair saying: 'See, this is how it is done.'"

During this interlude, which she suspected had reference to herself, Lucrezia had grown stiff and self-conscious, and lost all expression; so Filippo with a muttered "The pest on all prudes!" set himself to recall the animation into her features. He could not take up the broken trail; so he started anew, and turning round the easel so that it faced the nuns, he said:

"The humour for work is off me. You have broken the thread of my creation, Sister. Fie on you!" and he shook his head sadly. Then turning to the panel: "See here, I will explain the scheme of my composition to you, and you will see the meaning of the patches of light and shade on my panel. Perhaps the ideas will then return to me.

"That blot of grey, with a few touches of darker and lighter pigments upon it, is the face of Sister Lucrezia."

"Oh! I am not like that!" cried the model.

"This streak of light colour is where the light shines on the ridge of her nose."

Lucrezia raised her hand as though to wipe the polish off the offending feature.

"No, no, little Sister," the friar laughed. "The skin is as soft as a peach, and will look so in the finished picture; but the light is always reflected most strongly from the ridge of the nose."

Lucrezia gave a little sigh of relief. "You frightened me," she said.

"Then these patches are where the eyes and the shadows below the eyes will come. This is the shadow beside the nose, and this the shadow beside the cheek. Here is the rich robe, and here the outer cloak.

"This figure kneeling before the throne will be the figure of St. Thomas receiving the holy girdle. Here on Our Lady's right hand I shall paint the Abbess kneeling, with the Patron Saint of your Convent behind her, and St. Gregory in the background. On the other side of the picture I have roughed in St. Augustine, patron of your Order, and the Angel Raphael and Tobias.

"But I must proceed with my painting," and turning the easel, he changed his brushes and began working on the drapery.

"The mood for working has left me," he said; and whispered to himself, "A pest on all prudes!"

"Is painting, then, a thing of moods?" inquired the chaperone. "I thought that patience and perseverance were the secrets of all success."

The friar sniffed contemptuously. "Patience and perseverance, indeed! Who can master his craft without patience and perseverance! But painting a great picture is an inspiration. The idea comes first, and then it becomes alive in the brain, and one paints and paints until one's eyes grow dim and one's hands tremble."

The interest and expression were creeping back into Lucrezia's face now. "An inspiration from Our Lady?" she asked.

"An inspiration—whence it comes I know not. Sometimes I paint for days, with only the power to paint drapery, and even that comes heavy and bunched. When I was young I painted two pictures for Cosimo. 'Twas May, and, the spring being in my blood, do what I would, I could not paint. So Cosimo locked me in a room until the pictures should be finished."

"How cruel!" ejaculated Lucrezia.

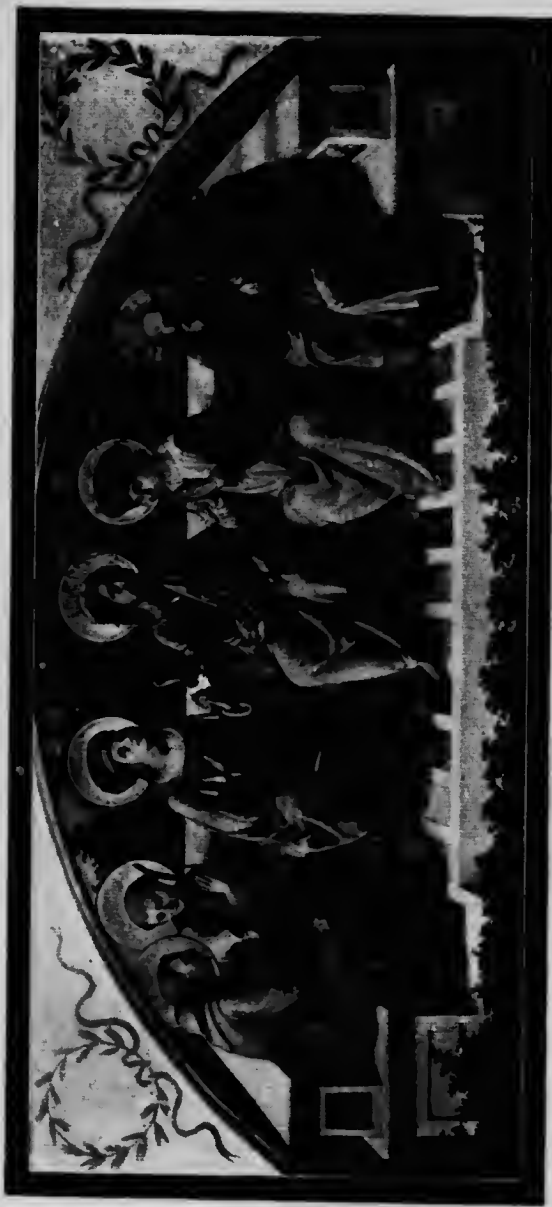
"For two days and two nights I endured this imprisonment, and could not paint a stroke. Out in the gardens the nightingales were calling,

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Messell Photo.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST, WITH SIX OTHER SAINTS.

National Gallery.

and the sounds of sweet songs and merriment came from the streets. At last I could bear it no longer, so I tore my sheets into strips, and making a rope descended from my window."

Lucrezia clapped her hands softly.

"Oh, how I enjoyed myself! I have never enjoyed life so deeply before or since."

"I should think so," whispered Lucrezia.

"After some days Cosimo's steward found me and urged me to return: I refused. Then he threatened me: I still refused. Finally he begged me to resume my work, in the name of the Medici, and I returned. Cosimo was more than kind to me, reproaching himself for the risks I had run in my descent from the window; and saying that now he saw the truth: 'Genius is like the rays of light, not like a beast of burden.'"

"And the pictures?"

"One was a picture of St. John Baptist with six other saints. This came well; the figures were at least human; and the colours! ah, those colours! I caught the pink of the hawthorn, and the colour of the wine."

Lucrezia's face was again full of vivacity. But alas! the interruption had irritated the painter's nerves, and although he changed his brushes,

and attempted to work on the face, he could make no progress. So reluctantly he resumed the heavier brushes, and continued the drapery.

Lippi, who was the most accomplished craftsman of his time, worked on quickly and silently until he had filled in the outlines of the Madonna's drapery with washes of cool even colours, fitted to receive the accents of high lights and shadows later. And as Filippo became immersed in his work—for he was above all an artist—he grew more and more silent.

The chaperone, noting his absorption in the picture, absolved him of his previous levity. "He must be, at heart, a holy man," she thought, "for he is so rapt in worthily depicting the Madonna that he can think of naught else." From thenceforth her chaperonage became chiefly a matter of form.

At last with a sigh he laid down his brushes. "The light is failing, we must cease."

He rose, and stepping on the daïs asked Lucrezia if she was weary.

"Only a little stiff," she said. She tried to rise, but could not. "It is but the cramp," and she made a dainty *moue*. "Also it is cold."

Fra Filippo stepped forward to assist her,

and the touch of her sweet cold hand sent a thrill through every nerve of his body.

Lucrezia stood a few minutes, stamping her foot to regain the circulation. "I feel as though a thousand ants had stung me," she said. "Is posing for a picture always as painful as this?"

"I was selfish," replied the friar. "I should have thought of my model."

"And the next sitting?"

"Ah, the next sitting?" Something of the better part of Filippo told him that the next sitting must not be on the morrow, nor yet for several days. "I will not tire you thus; I will ask the Abbess to permit some other to sit for the drapery, then in a week, or two weeks, when I am prepared to paint the face and hands, I shall need my little model again."

After Lucrezia had left the room, the friar turned to the chaperone. "Sister," he said gravely, "you have spoilt a day's work, when I was painting better than I ever painted before."

The nun was frightened, and rather conscience-stricken: "I do not understand," and she looked down.

"My model was nervous and lacking all expression when I commenced. I talked and told her stories about the gay world outside,

until her face was alive and interested. The whole while I was painting with all my power, giving every atom of my talent, every shred of my genius to the picture. And"—here he brought his clenched fist down on his palm—"every stroke of my brush was going right. Then you, with some silly scruple, tried to stop me: I set my teeth and painted on, with a smile on my face."

The nun bent her head sadly.

"Lastly, you came and whispered some insane warning, destroying my model's expression, and breaking the thread of my thoughts utterly."

"But when she composed herself again?" The nun's voice trembled: "You seemed so busy with your painting."

"Go into your convent-garden and throw a stone at a song-bird in the midst of his trills—that's what you did—and ask him to take up his song again."

"I am so sorry!" Then the nun drew herself up to her full height: "But it was an unwise story to tell a young nun. It might unsettle her thoughts."

"Bah! What did I think of my story or her thoughts? I wanted to inspire her face with animation. And what would it matter if she



Mess. J. P. H. V.

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FELLOW PICTURE TO ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

had thought foolish thoughts for a few days, if I had painted a picture in which a true Madonna, a live Madonna, a real Madonna, had looked down from the gesso and taught men in all ages that Our Lady was a woman who had lived, and not a wooden statue ? ”

“ See here, Sister ! ” and Filippo took up a small sheet of wood, and dipping a brush in burnt-umber, drew a face with great rapidity—a face with long jaws and slanting eyes, just such a face as we see on Greek ikons, or in Byzantine pictures such as “ Our Lady of Perpetual Succour,” known to all Roman Catholics. “ That is the Madonna that painters drew until recent years.”

Then turning the panel over, he drew with a few suggestive strokes, in spite of the waning light, a young face that stood out in its marvellous beauty. “ That is the Madonna I was painting.”

“ Oh, Padre, I am so sorry ! ” Then again she drew herself up, and folding her hands said—her voice had lost its indecision—“ I am only a foolish old woman, and do not understand these things ; but yet I would rather a thousand times that all the pictures which had ever been painted should be placed in a pile in the Piazza and burnt, than that one soul should fall even a little from the paths of perfect righteousness.”

“Sister,” Fra Filippo’s voice was very gentle, and he placed his hand on hers, “I understand and honour you, but we look at things a little differently. Alas! I doubt whether my beautiful picture will ever be painted now.”

From that time the nun entertained the highest possible opinion of Fra Filippo, and strove all she could to further his work.

CHAPTER IV

CONCERNING LOVE AND BACCHUS

IT is difficult to describe Fra Filippo's feelings as he left the convent and crossed the square on his way home. One cannot break into an artist's work without disturbing his equanimity, and the old nun's interruption of Filippo's greatest creative effort had made him both irritable and wretched. On the other hand he carried with him the small panel on which he had drawn the rough sketch of the ideal Madonna, and the perfection of the face filled him with triumphant joy; for this face, executed in order to show the chaperone the enormity of her offence, embodied all that was good in Filippo's work, whilst it lacked the sensual element that usually crept into his pictures of the Middle Period. In addition to these feelings, his mind was full of intangible emotions and unelaborated thoughts. The witchery of Lucrezia had taken firm hold of him, but this he refused to realize; and since

he persisted in regarding Lucrezia as a mere model for his picture, we must respect the delicacy of his reserve, and credit him with the complaint so common to artistic natures, an attack of nerves.

When he entered the parlour he found that Diamante had already ordered supper, and here again his nature, which was cultivated in its appetite, received a shock; for the cold capon which he had carefully selected had been shrivelled to a chip by the keen, dry wind that was blowing down from the snow-covered Apennines, the salad was frost-bitten, the cheese, purchased by Diamante, new and crude, whilst the dish of chestnuts beside the fire contained but the dried-up remains of the original fruit.

Give the cultivated palate of a sybarite but one dish, perfectly cooked, and it is content; give it a profusion of ill-cooked fare, and it rebels indignantly. Fra Filippo deposited his sketch, swore heartily at his comrade as a Philistine, and betook himself to his favourite tavern.

But long before he reached the inn his kinder nature asserted itself, and Filippo hurried back to make his peace with Diamante; and forcing himself to eat of the shrivelled fowl, the noxious cheese and the indigestible nuts, he repaired to

his tavern with a lightened conscience and the firm desire to make a night of it.

"Bacchus! We all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!"

he sang, as he swung open the tavern door, and bowed to the assembled company.

There was a choice collection of guests that night: Messer Penna Billi, a man of some repute, well travelled, and fresh from Rome; Messer Francesco Cantansanti, agent of Giovanni de' Medici; Messer Leon Alberti, architect, philosopher, and writer; several worthy citizens of Prato were present, with a sprinkling of the young bloods of the town; and last, but not least, a wandering student-minstrel, descendant of the old fraternity of the travelling students.

A shout of welcome greeted the most popular of all friars, and empty seats were thrust forward on every side. Avoiding Messer Alberti, whose conversation was apt to prove a trifle tedious, Filippo seated himself beside Medici's agent; but Alberti was not to be denied, and moving over to the same table he called for a fresh bottle.

"Fra Filippo," he commenced, "I have seen the Madonna which you painted for Messer Bartolini, and therein you are greatly to be praised;

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for you have not resorted to the muddy pools and stale cisterns of tradition for your inception, but you have sought the inspiration from the flowing streams and sweet fountains of nature."

"Choke me this man," whispered Fra Filippo to Cantansanti; "he is insufferable."

The agent laughed: "A song, Fra Filippo! Your mellow voice sounded your advance, calling up many pleasant memories."

"Certainly, Cantansanti; but first, Messere——" and he turned to Alberti, "I must wash down your praise, and at the same time moisten my throat." He helped himself bountifully from Alberti's flask.

Filippo's voice was both rich and melodious, and the tavern was silent as it rang forth.

"With ivy wreathing, leaf and berry,
Crowning our heads to worship thee!
Thou hast bidden thy slaves make ready
To spend this night in festivity.
Drink to joy! Drink to love! All drink free!
Quaff the cup! Drink it up! Fill again for me!
Bacchus! We all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!"

The whole of the guests joined in the chorus, and Filippo continued:

"See, my horn has run dry already;
Fill it again to the brim, I pray;

Are all these tables and seats unsteady ?
 Or has my eyesight gone wrong to-day ?
 Do not rise ! Clear your eyes ! Now we see !
 Fill the horn ! Fresh as morn ! Fill again for me ! ”

The student-minstrel had drawn near in evident enjoyment, and as the last line was sung and the chorus of “ Bacchus ! We all must follow thee,” was taken up, he stepped forward and deftly refilled Filippo’s drinking-horn from Alberti’s bottle.

“ Of a truth that allusion to your empty horn and the ‘ Fill again for me ’ was a crafty sentiment,” he said.

A roar of laughter greeted this apt action, and Filippo continued :

“ My head is drooping in swoon or slumber ;
 Is it slumber or wine, I fain would know ?
 My eyes keep closing, I double your number ;
 You also are drunken ? I fear me so !
 Fill the cup ! Drain it up ! Now we see !
 ‘ Pon my soul, a double bowl ! Drink again with me ! ”

Again the minstrel stepped forward, and seizing Fra Filippo’s horn, drained it dry. “ With this confession, and this invitation, I cannot refuse to help you,” he said.

Amidst laughter and shouts and the thumping of drinking-horns, the chorus was taken up.

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“Bacchus! We all must follow thee:
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!”

There was a second's pause, whilst the friar replenished his horn.

“Ah! dear god Bacchus, we will be merry!
Pouring libations—where they serve best.
We drown our cares, our sorrows we bury,
And end our joy with sweet, sound rest.
Drinking's done! End the fun! Dead the zest!
Muddled head! Off to bed! Here's to perfect rest!”

The chorus was shouted out in a perfect frenzy:

“Bacchus! We all must follow thee:
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! O' '!”

“This is indeed finely rendered. Bacchus is no concrete and actual god, but the ideal of good fellowship,” Alberti's voice assumed the authority of a pedagogue. “Sigismondo Malatesta, for whom I have been working recently, has reduced the abstract to the concrete, adorning his new church at Rimini with reliefs of Mars, Venus, and other pagan deities. This blind following of the ancients is——”

“Absurd!” Fra Filippo broke in. “Here, innkeeper, a flask of your best—the twelve-year-old Lachrima Christi!”

“With pleasure,” laughed the minstrel, “and

in order to repay your hospitality I will venture a little Sieneſe ſong of Folgore's, which re-echoes the life of Tuscany. It is dedicated to the twelve months."

"Ah! the fires burn warmly, their red heat ſuffuſing ;
Thick furs are alluring, warm beds are ſeducing.
But there go the girls! Let's ſnowball their curls!"

The applauſe rang out ſoftly but eagerly : none can appreciate artistic realism like the Italians.

"Keen February's with us, the woods are enthralling ;
The challenging ſtag and the boar are both calling.
We riſe with the dawn ; out with hound and with horn."

"The next verſe of March applies to you, Fra Carmelite," ſaid the miniſtrel, as he fingered his viol.

"The March winds are churliſh, but the fiſh are all running ;
Let's net neighbour's brook, with ſilent, quick cunning.
Home to drink by the fire, unchecked by a friar."

You muſt imagine the melody of the viol running on ſo as to ſeparate the verſes, without breaking the ſong.

"O'er the freſh ſword of April, the maiden profeſſes
To ride forth for ſport, yet diſplays new French dreſſes.
German lutes ſound the dance of the fair, ſweet Province.

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Next the tourneys of Maytime win praise from the sweet one ;
Flowers tossed from the balcony meet one and greet one.
Ha ! an orange ! You miss me ! As a penance you kiss me !
Men and maids to the country, ere the heat doth oppress us ;
Where the trees all surround us, and fountains refresh us.
By flower-fringed stream, let love reign supreme."

" Ah ! here," quoth the friar, " the impression
of heat is far more alluring than the suggestion
of blankets."

The minstrel laughed, and continued :

" July calls us homeward ; the town is in season.
Clad in silk, in cool chambers, we banquet in reason,
Avoiding the heat of the sun in the street.

In August we hie where the Apennines lower ;
Riding morning and eve from castle to tower,
We follow the rills as they wind through the hills."

The viol thrummed the interlude.

" September comes round, with its keen sport of hawking ;
To steal near the stork is the acme of stalking.
Match the peregrine's skill 'gainst the heron's keen bill !
Next October brings fowling 'midst marshes and river.
Then homeward we ride, ere the wet makes us shiver ;
And off to the ball, till matin bells call.

Rough Boreas howls round, and the snowflakes are falling ;
Warm fires, choice wines, and sweet maids are calling.
Outside all is grey, inside all is gay.

December comes last, surpassing all others,
With wassail and feasting all men are as brothers.
Greet each pretty miss with a brotherlike kiss."

Then came the last verse, which does not bear translation :

“ E beffe far dei tristi cattivelli,”

Etc., etc., etc.

But this was more than Fra Filippo, who had heard the song before, could stand ; and with the memory of Lucrezia in his thoughts he sternly checked the minstrel.

“ Eh, Messere ? ” the minstrel retorted. “ You gentlemen of the brown habit are not always so particular. Even you, Padre——” But the look in Filippo’s face checked him, and he moved to a distant seat, grumbling as he went.

“ This church, built by the Lord of Rimini ? ” inquired Filippo, in order to break the awkward silence. “ I have heard strange rumours about it.”

Alberti responded eagerly to the question. “ Of a truth, I am in name the architect, but Sigismondo insisted on his ideas being executed. It is no church ! ” He sunk his voice to a whisper : “ It is a temple to Venus, built in honour of his love, Madonna Isotta.”

“ They say his wife, Madonna Ginevra, was both gracious and beautiful.”

“ As beautiful and as sweet as a garden of lilies ; yet Sigismondo was wont to say that

marriage kills love, for with marriage love becomes a matter of duty, whereas without marriage it is a matter of graciousness."

"A novel idea! Is this Madonna Isotta comely?"

"It is a difficult matter to formulate a reply, since no woman would have called her beautiful, and few men; yet all men worship her."

The vision of Lucrezia flashed before him, and Fra Filippo sighed sympathetically.

Alberti's voice flowed on monotonously: "This temple of Sigismondo's was exceeding fair—a Grecian structure of the finest marbles, with pillars of porphyry, and bas-reliefs fashioned by Messer Agostino, and finished with azure and gold. But, of all, the Chapel of St. Girolamo transcends belief; for here you find reliefs of Mars in his war-chariot, and over against it Venus, all unclad, drawn over the waves in her swan-chariot; there between them stands Mercury; and Diana, Saturn, and the other gods are not absent. This chapel was planned by Madonna Isotta herself."

"A strange chapel, surely!" Filippo chuckled with glee.

"We shall kill this newborn art of ours if we are not cautious, for the ancients are be-

coming too great a power in our midst. Cosimo de' Medici is wise, encouraging the poets to write in the language of our country, and both the poets and artists to love the beauties of the country. With him the philosophy of Plato is but a philosophy and hinders not his belief in Christianity. Yet others, such as Sigismondo, seek their inspiration in the ancients; and instead of turning to Nature, the mistress of the ancients, for their wisdom, turn to the transcripts of nature wrought by men of another age, who thought unlike thoughts to ours, and saw with other eyes."

Filippo found his head beginning to nod, and was fast falling into that "perfect rest" of which he had sung, when the next sentence aroused him.

"And therefore, Fra Filippo, when I beheld the fair face of your Madonna, which was painted indeed direct from life, without any copying of the ancients or regard for traditional imagery, my heart rejoiced me."

"It was not bad, Messer, but some tell me it is unlike the Madonna."

"To each one, Fra Filippo, the Madonna exists as he himself——"

But Fra Filippo, who had often listened to

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Alberti's moralising before, could stand no more of it, and, with a hasty excuse, got up and crossed over to the minstrel.

"Friend," he said, "I was over-hasty. The song is but a song, and not to be taken seriously. Bury your enmity and drink a cup with me."

"If good men all showed the charity that you show, Padre, the world would be different. I drink to you!" The minstrel drained his goblet. "And now with your leave I will sing you one of the little songs of the Wandering Students, quaint and pleasant." He tuned his viol:

"There went out in the dawning light
A little rustic maiden;
Her flock so white, her crook so slight,
With fleecy new wool laden.

Small is the flock, and there you'll see
The she-ass and the wether;
This goat's a he, and that's a she,
The bull-calf and the heifer.

She looked upon the greensward, where
A student lay at leisure:
'What do you there, young sir, so fair?
Come, play with me, my treasure!'

"Well sung! Dainty song!" laughed the friar. "Those wandering students of old must have been merry fellows!"

"Of a verity they were, and the true fore-runners of our newborn civilisation," joined in Alberti. "For they sought learning in every city, worshipping learning and nature. To them, Venus was but the name and symbol of love, Flora of the flower-strewn spring, Bacchus of conviviality."

"They were, if tradition is correct," replied Penna Billi, "a wild and dissolute body, frequenting low taverns and mixing with servant-wenches and the like—men with no manners and less morals."

"This may be so, Messere, and for this reason their mission was fruitless, and their learning still-born ; but I maintain——"

"That we call on the minstrel for one more song before I seek my couch," interrupted Fra Filippo.

And thus the evening wore on with song and merriment ; but long before the rest of the company retired, Fra Filippo had left the tavern and returned homeward. For the first time in his life he felt out of harmony with the worship of Bacchus, and thoughts of Sigismondo and Madonna Isotta kept passing through his brain.

"So they hold that marriage kills love," he thought ; "for with marriage love becomes a duty,

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whereas without marriage it is a matter of graciousness."

Truly these words of Sigismondo's suggested many things.

Suppose, for instance, a man who was debarred from marriage met his ideal mate: suppose he dared the taunts of the world, the loss of his income, and took her as his mate—he sternly forbore to formulate these individuals, naming one "Filippo" and the other "Lucrezia"—would not such an action be noble, brave, and manly?

Suppose, he thought, such a union were contrasted with a loveless marriage of convenience: there was young Ambrogio Borghini, for instance, who married a girl he had never seen, simply because she was chosen for him by his parents, and they lived together in respectable boredom. How hateful this was! How contrary to nature! Yet the world approved of this unnatural marriage, whilst it condemned with unsparing contempt the irregular union of two who truly loved each other for the term of their natural life.

Then the tyranny of the ancients, which Leon Battista Alberti had prated of, came over him: he thought of contemporary painters struggling to break away from the tyranny of the Byzantine precedent, which he alone had succeeded in

entirely discarding; he thought of the Lord of Rimini in bondage to the precedent of the ancient Grecians; he thought of himself, tied and bound by the counsel of St. Paul, accepted by him when he was a mere boy.

At last his thoughts took definite form: "This precept of Sigismondo is inefficient," he murmured, "and the argument untenable; for marriage would no more kill true love than the fact that I have florins in my pocket, and have the right to order my dinner, would kill my hunger—therefore the marriage of two who truly love each other is the height of happiness. But since a loveless marriage, planned for wealth or ambition, is basely false to nature, it is beneath contempt."

Finally he concluded: "If I, Filippo Lippi, met one whom I loved above all, and took her as my unlawful wife, the action would be far more noble than this loveless marriage of Ambrogio Borghini, of which the world approves." Yet, so far, the friar had not permitted himself to name Lucrezia as his desired mate.



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CHAPTER V

THE SECOND SITTING

FOUR weeks passed before Lucrezia again sat as a model for the "Madonna della Cintola."

This lengthy period was neither due to the exigencies of Fra Filippo's work nor to the prudence and self-denial of the friar, who was deficient in these virtues; it sprang, rather, from that instinctive sense of chivalry which prompts all true men to act with caution when a young maid is in question.

During the past four weeks Fra Filippo had devoted as much time to the panel as he could spare from the Pieve frescoes, and had moreover executed work of the highest excellence. He had completed the figure of St. Margaret in a most worthy manner, although by some trick of memory he had unknowingly depicted her as an idealised Lucrezia. He had finished the figure of the Lady Abbess, and portions of St. Gregory



Anderson Photo.

Duomo, Prato.

MADONNA OF THE GIRDLER; COMMENCED BY LIPPI, FINISHED BY DIAMANTE.

and the Angel Raphael with the young Tobias. St. Thomas remained a blank, and so did St. Augustine.

And now he felt he could go no farther without the central figure of the Madonna, otherwise he would lose the unity of his composition, making the picture a collection of separate figures rather than a group; for how could he paint St. Thomas gazing upward at Our Lady when there was no Madonna for him to gaze at? Also, he had so far overcome the violence of his emotions, that he felt he might continue the sittings with equanimity.

As he crossed the Piazza the air was mild and balmy, full of the coming spring, and the birds were challenging each other with love-songs in the gardens beside the convent. Even inside the convent the amorous witchery of the sounds and scents of April followed him.

The parlour door opened and Lucrezia stepped forward to greet him: "It is so long since my last sitting, Fra Filippo, that I feared you had found a more worthy model." Her eyes were sparkling, her cheeks tinged with roses, and she appeared altogether adorable.

"You were so nearly frozen last time, Sister, that you desired another sitting to complete the

operation!" Fra Filippo kept a stiff hand on his feelings: "Ha! that would be a pretty fancy. I must turn architect and build a church of ice in the far north; then I shall pose you, freeze you, and place you in a niche to serve as a statue. But now to business!"

The friar uncovered his panel, and turning round his easel, asked: "Are you satisfied with my progress?"

Lucrezia gave a little cry, half admiration, half protest: "Santa Margherita! she lives! She is me! And yet she is not me, but Lucrezia Buti transformed into a saint."

Filippo wrinkled his forehead: "She is Sister I-forget-her-name, transfigured. If she is like you it is a coincidence—I did not mean it. But you approve?" It is a note of the temperament that artists always yearn for lay criticism, although they despise it.

"I approve? What is my approval! I know nothing of art; and yet this must be good because it is both beautiful and true: also it is me," and she gave him a glance from beneath her eyelids that made his heart beat fast. It must not be assumed that Lucrezia was a flirt, only very innocent, very sweet, very human, and as such very dangerous.

The chaperone stepped forward and laid her hand gently on the friar's arm : " Fra Filippo, this is marvellous and altogeth : a miracle. I regret anything that I may have said at our last sitting." She smiled : " To burn this, as I suggested, would be to burn Santa Margherita herself, as well as the Lady Abbess."

" So far the work has gone well, Sister," he said, " but as yet it lacks cohesion, for the group must be centred round the Madonna. Shall I ever paint this Madonna ?" and he looked whimsically at the old nun.

" I will pray that you may, Fra Filippo," she answered simply, " for this picture will do more good than many books."

Fra Filippo settled his easel and commenced to paint, working at Lucrezia's drapery until his model had forgotten about her surroundings. This was not lost on the chaperone, for though she was seated behind the picture she noticed that the brush strokes were not applied sufficiently high on the panel to reach the face, nor did the colours that the artist occasionally took up seem to her suitable for flesh-painting.

There was silence for a time ; then the duenna, who was kind-hearted as well as pious, and ex-

ceedingly sorry for her past interference, made a gallant resolution.

“Fra Filippo is a good man,” she thought, “and will do the maid no harm with his conversation. If he could only be left alone with Lucrezia, he would conjure up the desired expression into her face and achieve the Madonna of this miraculous picture.” So, taking her courage in both hands, she sought the Abbess, and laid the matter before her. The Abbess had already inspected the picture, appreciating the beauty of the figures that were painted at its true value, and she was also sufficiently human to desire the finest picture in Italy as an adornment for the convent chapel: after a few moments’ thought she reluctantly gave her consent to the subterfuge, and bade the chaperone retire to her cell and rest herself.

Joyful at the success of her mission, the aged lady returned to the parlour, and with true Italian tact explained that, since she was tired and unwell—she had a dropsy of long standing—she had the permission of the Lady Abbess to retire and rest herself, and begged Fra Filippo to excuse her.

“I love that dear old sister,” exclaimed Fra Filippo as the door closed behind her. “She has a heart of pure silver.”

Lucrezia's eyes kindled : " She is a saint, Fra Filippo ; not so wise as the Lady Abbess, perhaps, but the kindest person in the whole wide world."

Fra Filippo began to paint the face.

" When I first came here as a parlour-boarder, my father had but lately died," continued Lucrezia, " and I was often sad. Life has been somewhat lonely for me since I lost my father, for he was more to me even than Spinetta ; and no one can take the place of one's parents ? Is it not so ? " She gave a little sigh.

Fra Filippo was painting now as though his life was at stake, and the eyes of the Madonna were growing wonderfully sweet, with a world of feeling in them.

" Well, as I was saying, I was often sad when I first came here, and Sister Margherita was an angel to me. She would always try to find employment for me ; sometimes asking me to gather flowers for the altar, sometimes sending me on little errands with Spinetta, sometimes asking me to do a bit of embroidery or try to illuminate a short manuscript, and always greeting me with her sweet smile and loving ways." She sat silent, musing.

Fra Filippo was working at the mouth, and it was growing very tender. This Madonna was

becoming different from anything he had pictured, and infinitely nobler.

He had painted for ten minutes, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, when the door opened and the Lady Abbess, whose sense of propriety had been somewhat troubling her, came to see how things were going. This was a fateful moment, for the preoccupation of the model, the silence of the friar, and the growing beauty of the picture decided her to abandon the idea of the chaperonage. Also it was fatal to the picture, since it called Lucrezia out of her reverie, and her rapt expression vanished.

Fra Filippo suppressed an exclamation of disgust. Would these pious ladies never cease from troubling him? It was absurd! Preposterous! Nevertheless he succeeded in being polite to the Lady Abbess as she examined and admired his work.

Now, Lucrezia was no fool, and she at once saw through the nature of the visit, which implied an absence of entire confidence in her prudence. The thought angered her somewhat and annoyed her exceedingly, so when the Abbess took her departure neither artist nor model was in a state to carry on the half-completed work successfully.

After the Abbess had left, Fra Filippo looked up with a shrug of the shoulders and an impatient laugh. "They cannot leave us alone for a moment," he said.

Lucrezia's eyes flashed back the answer, "They cannot trust us—well?" Though this was probably far from her true meaning.

Filippo took a turn up and down the chamber, partly to control his irritation, partly to control his feelings towards Lucrezia, and seating himself on the edge of the dais helped himself to a glass of the rough country wine that had been provided for his refreshment.

"Do you remember what St. Augustine says about the good and the wicked, little one—it is read in *Tenebrae*?"

Lucrezia gave a rebellious laugh: "Why, then, are the wicked sent into the world? 'To exercise the good.' That is somewhat like the sentence. 'sometimes think——'" she hesitated.

"That the good are sent into the world to exercise the wicked. Exactly! The very good are admirable—Sister Margherita, for instance—though even these very good are sometimes tiresome. But the special calling of the pious is to exercise the wicked—you and me, for example. My friend, Fra Diamante, has some

tame rabbits. Recently one of the does favoured him with a batch of little ones. Diamante was pleased, but he was also anxious about the moral condition of the little rabbits, and visited them continually: 'Was the doe seeing after her offspring properly? Was she teaching them their catechism and attending to their temporal wants?' This annoyed the doe, who settled the matter by eating the whole of her litter. The moral of this is——" Fra Filippo paused, for he could not see that there was any moral to his parable.

"The moral of this is," laughed Lucrezia, "that Fra Diamante represents the Lady Abbess, you the big rabbit, I the little rabbits; and if the Abbess worries you any more the consequences will be serious."

Fra Filippo felt that the situation was growing beyond his control, and after gulping down his wine and resuming his brushes, started a serious conversation.

"There is a certain acquaintance of mine, Messer Alberti of Florence, a clever architect, but somewhat earnest and wearisome, whom I met recently. This Alberti tells me that the Lord of Rimini has decorated his new church with reliefs of the ancient gods."

"How scandalous! Is he a heathen?"

"No, only an unbeliever; one with a little learning, and no mental balance."

"I have but little learning, and my father has often said that we women lacked the sense of proportion, yet I should not adorn a church with carvings of the heathen deities."

"It is true that women lack the sense of proportion, but this is more than counterbalanced by the sense of fitness and propriety: I might almost say that their sense of propriety is overwhelming—the Lady Abbess, for example."

Lucrezia laughed.

"This Lord of Rimini, however," continued the friar, "lacks both balance and the sense of fitness: it is absurd to place the gods of the ancients in a Christian church."

"It is ridiculous to place the heathen gods anywhere."

"I do not think so." Filippo knit his brows.

"The heathen gods, as they were understood by the educated, were but the embodiments of the senses, moods, and phases of nature, and, as such, admirable."

"I do not understand," said Lucrezia. She was greatly interested, for this conversation was opening a new world to her, far different from

the little world which centred itself round the celebration of the Lady Abbess's coming feast, and such convent tittle-tattle.

"If God created nature there is much in nature that is good."

"But the supernatural life?"

"This is the sacrificing of the lawful pleasures of the senses and instincts as an offering to God."

"Oh, do explain!"

"I am thirsty, and I drink; I am hungry, and I eat; I am happy, and I sing: this is nature's law, and good. But if I indulge the impulses of nature to excess, and drink till I am drunk or eat till I am surfeited, it is an abuse of nature's law, and is bad: this was the religion of the men of old."

"And Christianity——?"

"Owns all this, and adds 'you must sometimes sacrifice lawful pleasures in order to obtain a mastery over the flesh.' Take marriage, for instance: marriage was created by God, and is very good; the religious sacrifices marriage, just as the layman sacrifices fish on Friday, in order to conquer his flesh and make a sacrifice to God."

Lucrezia sighed: it was only a tiny sigh, but Filippo heard it, and hastened to shift his ground.

"These pagans worshipped nature, and the

temperate gratification of the natural instincts ; but the nobler amongst them abhorred excess. Bacchus was the god of wine, and a good god too." Filippo replenished his glass. "Silenus was the example of over-indulgence—fat, old, unclad, and an object of contempt. If I were to decorate a tavern I should paint Bacchus bright, young, and happy, and Silenus coarse and drunken."

"Then you would paint these deities, Fra Filippo, as well as the Madonna and Saints?"

"Alas, no! I am too old to seek new subjects, and shall continue to paint religious pictures; but if I ever have a pupil who is a true artist and not a machine like Diamante, I shall teach him to paint the gods of nature in a worthy manner."

"How? This is most interesting!"

"I should teach him to paint Venus as she was imagined by the more noble amongst the ancients. The Venus of the Greeks was a very noble goddess; she might have been the love a man bore towards his wife, a lover towards his betrothed, or even the love which Plato pictured as pure friendship—the love that might exist between Fra Filippo and Sister Lucrezia."

It is thus that a man talks to a maid, clothing his higher ideals in fitting language: he is quite

in earnest, for the maid rouses his better self; but, alas! the maiden takes his theorising as a disclosure of his habitual standard.

“Might exist? 'Tis easy to say that it might exist, but friendship is so rare.” Lucrezia was looking earnestly at the friar; she had not over many friends, and here was a friendship of most surprising sweetness.

“Lucrezia, I would serve you before all others.”

“Then you, Fra Filippo, picture Venus as the true friendship between man and maid?” She laughed happily.

For the second time Fra Filippo found that he had trodden on dangerous ground, and hastened to shift his foot-hold. “I am wasting my time,” he said. “We must progress with the picture.”

He painted hard for a time, working more at the actual features than at the expression. His sweet little platonic friend had not the same pathetic expression as the maid who regretted the loss of her father.

“Paganism, in itself, was not bad,” he remarked: “it was but the expression of the natural feelings. There is a story that when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Our Lady, Mercury was listening hard by; and as soon as the

message was announced and Mary had acquiesced, Mercury fled and told the older gods."

"And what did the old gods do?"

"Some hid in the stars, some in Germany, some in Austria: they knew their reign was ended."

"Poor old gods!"

"Yes, I sometimes think we have banished them too utterly. There is much in the love of Nature. Picture the ancients peopling their world with sweet spirits: each tree had its little nymph, who saw that the sap ran free, and that the tree put forth the best of fresh green leaves; each stream had its naiad, who fed the troutlings, and threw the spray over the ferns that fringed the banks."

"How delightful! I like the idea."

"This little tree is wretched and half nourished, because its nymph is lazy; that is fine and healthy, because its nymph is industrious. This stream holds but half-starved fish, because its naiad spends her time flirting with the fauns and satyrs; that stream holds the plumpest of all toothsome trout, since its naiad churns up the water at the falls into a spume that holds the flies, and shelters the feeding fish."

"I love to listen, Fra Filippo."

"I sometimes think the religious are too hard

on nature ; that they regard the overcoming of nature as too much of a virtue, and the following of nature as almost a vice. Some day a new order will be founded to meet the needs of ordinary humanity. But the light is failing, and I must cease." He gathered his traps together and made ready to go.

Lucrezia stepped forward impulsively and took his hand : " Fra Filippo," she said, " I have never, never, never been so happy as I have been when you were talking. It is all so fresh and interesting." She paused a moment, looking down ; then she looked up quickly : " I may always think of you as my dearest friend, may I not ? "

He kissed her gently on the forehead, as a father might kiss his daughter, and departed.

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRD SITTING

THERE is a quaint, monkish story concerning a pious bishop and certain malicious devils. His lordship, having lost his way when night was descending, took refuge in a cave which was the resting-place of those local demons who tempted the mortal inhabitants of the vicinity. As dusk darkened, the devils came in by ones and twos, eager to narrate the success which followed the day's endeavours; each had something to tell, and the list included many grievous sins; finally a demon came forward proudly, and related that he had incited the aforesaid pious bishop to place his hand, in a friendly way, on the shoulder of his middle-aged housekeeper: this demon was awarded the first prize for his day's work. The bishop took timely warning, and pensioned off the woman.

This story of the pious bishop, in spite of its improbable nature and monkish origin, contains

much wisdom ; for, save in the case of the most debased, serious crimes are seldom premeditated, and no one can deny that the abduction of a nun is sacrilege of the blackest character : a harmless familiarity may commence a downfall, as surely as the ten-inch drop of a snow-wreath may start an avalanche.

The kiss which Fra Filippo bestowed on Lucrezia was but the sealing of a friendship, and therefore, in itself, as harmless as the touch which the bishop laid on the shoulder of his housekeeper, although it was infinitely more dangerous. The name of the devil who tempted both was most likely " Plato."

Dante had sung of Beatrice, Petrarch of Laura, and now Filippo Lippi was painting Lucrezia : it is a beautiful ideal, this dream of pure human friendship, which inspires the poet or artist to immortalise the face he worships, since it contains the essence of chivalry.

And yet this ideal of Filippo's was even nobler than that of a poet, for there was nothing which could disclose his feelings to others ; and this, which would be the finest picture of the greatest living artist, would conceal the identity of Lucrezia under the guise of the Madonna.

It was evening, and the April breezes carried

the sound of laughing voices. A group of men returning from their work were singing a part-song in pleasant harmony. There was a touch of freshness in the air which made the sharp, clean smell of the wood-smoke doubly inviting.

Then there were Filippo's thoughts, glorious thoughts of the friendship of a man and maid which should prove the noblest that could be. He had experienced no true female friendship before, except that of his ailing nieces, which hardly counted; and this sweet, new friendship was made doubly sweet by the knowledge that Lucrezia too lacked a friend.

He saw the forked pathway of love extended before him—the broader way which attracted the many and the narrow way of the ideal: the broader way was in itself beautiful, perfumed with the heady scents of the roses and magnolia and jasmine, the road whose wayfarers sought beauty in order to obey the natural instinct of creation; the narrow way led amongst the healthy pine-trees, with just a whiff (he smelt the breeze) of the wood-smoke from the hut of charcoal burners to give the touch of humanity. This was the way of the ideal, the way of Dante—could not even a priest follow the narrow path of friendship?

The lowest standard of all was the way of the loveless marriage, in which the woman sold herself for position or money; next came the path of Sigismondo and Madonna Isotta: then there was the rose-strewn path of a love marriage; and highest, infinitely highest, was the pine-scented track of pure friendship set forth by Messer Plato and expounded by Cosimo de' Medici.

That evening Filippo was very quiet, whilst Diamante talked on about the frescoes and the trouble that the plasterer had given him that morning, and the cost of the gold leaf, and such-like commonplaces. Diamante thought he was tired, but in reality Filippo was meditating on the path of friendship.

The next morning found him hard at work on his picture. The air was cold and the birds chilled and songless; but what mattered it since his heart was glowing with friendship? He had touched the hand of his little friend and experienced a strange thrill of emotion. But what did this signify?—it was only the material side of his nature, and this he was subduing by transferring the subject to his panel.

Filippo had, perhaps, tasted some of the baser pleasures of life in the past; he had, perhaps, flitted from flower to flower; but these were as

dross and wormwood when compared to his present feelings. "The smell of the onion," he thought, "is base when compared to the smell of the rose; but this is the sweet fresh scent of the wholesome pine-wood."

"Fra Filippo," whispered Lucrezia, "you are strangely silent this morning."

"Little friend," he laughed, "I think the more."

Lucrezia gave a happy sigh. "Friendship is very sweet," she said.

"Lucrezia, little one, I have often found a priest's life very solitary. Mind" (the prerogative of friendship is surely to unburden the most private thoughts), "I never took the tonsure with the idea of spending myself in the service of God."

"Then why did you take it, Fra Filippo?"

"It was my Prior's scheme, and a noble scheme too. He wanted to win me a sinecure and free me from temporal cares, in order that I might become a second Fra Angelico."

"I understand," she said.

"I have consoled myself with a cup of wine, in the fellowship of comrades; I have consoled myself with less desirable pursuits; I have consoled myself above all with my art—and yet

I have often felt my heart empty : I have felt alone in the world."

"And I too, Fra Filippo."

"And now this sweet friendship of ours, Lucrezia mia, has come to fill the emptiness. I can picture my life in future, Lucrezia ; sometimes painting you, sometimes seeing you, sometimes talking with you a little. Life has become very happy."

The sun gleamed out, and a blackbird began its love-song in the garden.

Fra Filippo continued painting ; the eyes of the Madonna were changing with each brush-stroke, as a new and tender light crept into them—it was wonderful how soft and winsome this Platonic affection was making the model's eyes.

"I must not see you very often," she whispered. "This friendship of ours is so sweet and sacred that none must guess it. The others would not understand." Lucrezia's world had now contracted into her friend and herself ; all save these two were classed together as "the others."

"I have often talked with Cosimo de' Medici on the subject of Plato's doctrines." The painter gave a dry, short laugh : "I never dreamt that I should become a convert."

Lucrezia drew her brows together, and thought a moment. "I do not understand the teachings of Plato," she said. "All that I understand is that I have found a friend."

"Plato teaches that marriage is good." The door opened and the Abbess entered silently. "Yes, marriage is good for the many," he continued, "but to some a higher, nobler, purer way is given——"

"What a beautiful expression of the higher life, Fra Filippo!" exclaimed the Abbess; she thought he spoke of celibacy, not of friendship.

The friar started and almost dropped his brushes. "Ha! I never heard you enter, Abbess," he said.

She examined the picture with approval, and remarked on the rapid progress.

"Yes; in one—perhaps two more sittings I shall have completed the face." The friar gave a sigh.

"Then Sister Lucrezia will be free, and another can take her place, Fra Filippo?"

"Yes, perhaps!" Fra Filippo had not bargained for this; he was living in to-day, without thinking of the morrow. "I cannot tell for certain, Abbess; art cannot be forced, and on some days work progresses but slowly."

The Abbess spoke a kind word to Lucrezia, and left them, with an easy conscience.

Lucrezia was untroubled. Instead of disturbing her on this visit, the Abbess had only appeared and vanished again without interfering with her little world of two. But Filippo was unmanned at the prospect of losing his model, and instinctively charged his brush with the intention of painting out part of the face and throwing the work back. Yet when he tried to carry out this purpose, his heart failed him; he was too much an artist to undo his Madonna—it would seem like murder.

“There will be two sittings more, Lucrezia, perhaps three, and then—don’t you realise?”

“We will be beginning the ideal life of which you spoke: sometimes seeing each other, sometimes talking together a little, and often—very often—thinking of each other. Is it not so, Fra Filippo?”

The friar laid down his brushes, and paced the room. “Somehow, I want more of you than this, little friend: if only we could meet and talk together whilst I was painting!”

“I have heard that Dante saw Beatrice but seldom, seldom talking with her.”

“Bah! Dante! He was an icicle!” He

laughed harshly at himself. "I fear I am but a poor disciple of Plato; however, one will learn."

He resumed his work and painted for a time; but now the spell was broken, and instead of adding life to the face he found that he was painting out the expression.

The blackbird was still singing in the garden, yet somehow the song had changed and seemed to have lost its sweetness.

"Little one," he said sadly, "I must stop my work for to-day: I am out of gear, and am damaging the picture."

"I am sorry, Fra Filippo. This talk with you has made me very happy."

"Perhaps, after all, it is best that these meetings should cease. I am not sure that the path of Dante and Beatrice is not the safer one." This was his better self.

"Oh, Filippo!" The name slipped out, and Lucrezia blushed crimson.

"Also," he continued, as he crushed back his feelings, "if I were to give up my chaplaincy, and leave Prato, I should always think of my little friend as she is now, and not in her nun's habit. I dread to see you again clothed as a nun."

Her eyes were wet, and she was sobbing.

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"I must go. Good-bye, little one." He stooped to kiss her on the forehead, half meaning that it should seal their final parting.

He stooped to kiss her forehead, but she, all unthinking, instinctively raised her lips to meet his.

His brain swam, a great wave seemed to surge over him, and he caught her in his arms.

Alas! Platonic affection, when there is both propinquity and opportunity, is no safe doctrine.

CHAPTER VII

ACROSS THE RUBICON

IT was the first of May, and an Italian May-day in the fifteenth century was near perfection. Two wayfarers rested beside a stream.

The man, clad in the ordinary dress of a scholar, carried a cloak which could easily be wound round the lower part of his face so as to form an effectual disguise; the girl had laid a riding-mask on her knee. There were two strong Tuscan mules browsing hard by, whose aspect told that they had travelled both far and fast, and the wetness of whose legs added that they had forded the river.

The girl laughed a little, not over-joyously, and pointed to the stream. "We have crossed the Rubicon," she said. "There must be no looking back."

The man caught her to him. "Little one," he kissed her gently, "what is past is past; also what has been done cannot be undone."

"You will be good to me, Filippo?"

"Darling, I love you alone, and whilst I live there shall be no other."

She nestled up to him.

"It has been my fault," he said

"It has been the fault of Messer Pláto." Women are always ready to make excuses for the men who love them.

"Bah! It has been my fault, for I am a man, and I know both the weakness and strength of human nature. I loved you, and my passing belief in Plato's love was but a subterfuge to deceive myself."

"Yes! It was your fault, for you made me love you." There was no sadness, only love, in her face now. "Filippo, how I love you!"

There was an interlude, with the birds as orchestra.

"Filippo, how strong you are—your arms hurt me; and yet I love you for your strength, and your manliness, and—and—oh! I love you just because I do."

"Thank the gods we have crossed the Rubicon and there can be no turning back; it would kill me if I lost you now, little one."

The stream ran by, piling itself on a boulder near their feet, and parting to swirl on either

side before it churned itself into froth and foam. In the pool above a crowd of troutlings jumped out of the water in their attempts to escape from their voracious grandfather.

"Do you think God is very angry with us, Filippo?"

The stream ran on, and in the distance a corn-crake began rasping monotonously.

"Do you think God is very angry with us, Filippo?" she repeated. "Is there not something in the Holy Gospels about 'Much shall be forgiven her, for she loved much'? How I love you, Filippo!"

"After all, sweetheart, God created nature, and nature is very strong; men may try to bind human nature with laws and vows and regulations, but—can they?"

"I grew to love you, Filippo, meaning no harm, thinking no harm."

"After all," the friar was building up his arguments, "this is better than a loveless marriage, contracted for riches or ambition." Filippo's conscience, which had been troubling him severely—for though he had done many things to be regretted, he had done nothing one hundredth part so bad as this—began to grow a little easier.

"You think so, in reality, Filippo; you are

not saying this only to comfort me?" Her eyes were sparkling and her breath came fast.

"Take first the marriage of those who love truly, and are married with the blessings of the Church: this is the perfect marriage."

Lucrezia sighed.

"Take next the marriage of those who are distasteful to each other, and yet the man weds the maid because she is of noble family, and she weds him because he has made very many florins by usury. The Archbishop celebrates the nuptials, and all the friends exclaim: 'How admirable!'"

"Oh, Filippo! This second is of a truth the devil's marriage."

"It is, little one; for the twain, having no true affection for each other, will seek consolation elsewhere. There was a pause.

"Lucrezia, little one, two who loved each other, as very few have loved, were bound by foolish vows which they had taken before they knew what life and love meant: they tore these vows into shreds, and fled together."

"You and I, Filippo." Lucrezia laughed softly.

"Yes, beloved. You have sacrificed your friends and fame, I have incurred grave risk;

and this we have done that we may live and love together till we are separated by death. This is indeed more worthy than the marriage of those who wed for riches or ambition."

Womanlike, Lucrezia jumped to the outcome of this argument: "You are my husband, Filippo!"

The friar paused a moment: a song-bird broke into melody in the woods behind. "I am your husband by the law of nature, sweetheart; and I vow that I will be true and loyal to you, loving no other, whilst we two live."

Lucrezia gave a glad little sigh.

Thus do those who break the law argue, until they justify themselves in their own eyes and form a false conscience; the humanist teaching of the Renaissance made such a course of theorising both natural and plausible, and the lax state of morals which ruled the latter part of the art revival may not unreasonably be assumed to have arisen from similar methods of self-deception.

It is unlikely that Fra Filippo entirely succeeded in believing his new theory; but it is more than likely that Lucrezia calmed her conscience for a time.

There was a pause: "Oh, Filippo, why did not God let us meet when we were free to wed?"

There was a catch in her voice. "It is very cruel," she whispered.

Fra Filippo felt that this threatened melancholy must be checked: "If we had met when I was free to wed, before I became a friar, that would be thirty-five years ago, and you twelve years unborn! But we must ride on, sweetheart, if we would reach St. Alessandro ere nightfall."

Fra Filippo helped Lucrezia to mount, and they rode onward.

They progressed some distance in silence, Lucrezia's face rapt in thought, then she asked demurely: "Filippo, was this learned Plato a very practical person?"

"He was very learned, sweetheart, and very wise; but I fear me that he founded his philosophy more on dreams of human nature than on human nature itself."

"I think so too," she said.

"After all, Plato was not altogether in fault; Messer Giovanni, who styled himself 'the Florentine,' had something to do in the matter."

"How came this, Filippo?"

"When I was young I read some of his novelinos: he pictured how a young gentle of Florence fell in love with a nun, young and graceful like

you, Lucrezia ; and, becoming a friar, he was appointed chaplain to the convent, and a sincere friendship after the method of Plato ensued ; he told her many beautiful stories, which Messer Giovanni recounts."

" You believed this tale possible ? You who a moment ago claimed a knowledge of the strength and weakness of human nature ?" She made a disdainful little *moue*.

" Lucrezia, I have had but little to do with good and virtuous women, and I have regarded them as something supernatural."

" Filippo, I have grown very wise, and I too have learnt something about the strength and weakness of human nature. A good woman, as God made her, is very virtuous and very pure ; and yet, unless she has a cold and cautious disposition, she must not trust herself to walk on slippery places. This doctrine of Plato's is a very slippery foothold, is it not, Filippo ?"

" So I now believe."

" You, also, are not a safe friend after the manner of Plato. From what you tell me, Messer Cosimo de' Medici may be able to indulge in this strange friendship, but Messer Filippo Lippi is too strong and hot-headed a man to be trusted."

The friar shook his head.

"I have also learnt this wisdom, Filippo: no maid should permit herself to think too earnestly about a man, unless she is to wed him."

She drew her mule close beside his, and catching his hand whispered: "My husband! My dear husband!"

Again they rode onward, for nearly a league, without speaking. Again Lucrezia broke the silence: "Dear one, what have you planned for our future?"

"A year ago, happening to have some money paid me, I bought a house in Prato near the Gorellina: it is a nice house, but at present lacks a tenant."

"Oh, Filippo! We could not live in Prato, it would be too terrible."

"Listen, dearest! If an aged lady took this house, only venturing out when veiled, who is to know the secret?"

Lucrezia gave a cry of dismay: "You would leave me, Filippo!"

"Visiting you when it was dusk, or calling from time to time as your landlord."

"Oh, Filippo! Think of me, with no one to speak to, nothing to do through all the day; and you plan that I should live thus, from day

to day, from month to month. I shall be so lonely."

The friar had not considered this aspect of the case: "Could we not find some woman to live with you, little one?"

Lucrezia gave a scornful laugh: "You would trust this woman not to find out our secret; and having discovered our secret, not to babble it? Sometimes, Filippo, you are not very wise."

"I had not foreseen this."

Lucrezia pondered a moment: "Could not we leave Prato, and live where none knew us?"

"Alas, Lucrezia, it is impossible. I am a fool where money is concerned; I have but thirty florins in my pouch, enough to pay for our present needs—nothing more. Also I owe much."

"Then how can we live, Filippo?"

"Ah! I am earning a large income; I shall be paid twelve hundred golden florins for the Pieve frescoes alone, and I have many other commissions on hand."

Lucrezia was amazed. "It is a fortune!" she gasped. Twelve hundred florins was probably equal to four or five thousand pounds at the present time.

"There are many expenses," he said, "and money vanishes. I think I must have a hole in my purse."

"Of a truth, you need a wife to care for you."

"Then, of a truth, I have won what I needed." The friar gave a short laugh, then grew very serious: "Sweetheart, I long to leave Tuscany as much as you do; but at present I am deeply involved, and there is much to be earned in Prato."

Lucrezia sighed: "I wish it were otherwise."

"Some day, little one, when we can lay by a few lira, we will go where we are unknown and can face the world as man and wife. Then I will make a new reputation as Filippo Gaddi, or Filippo di Bonaventura; but we must have sufficient laid by to keep us whilst I make this new reputation."

The mules were growing weary, and the path was rough. "It is to-morrow, always to-morrow, with men. In the meantime I shall be very lonesome." Lucrezia's lip trembled, and, in spite of all she could do, the tears came into her eyes, welled over, and trickled down her face; then she gave a sob.

The friar was thinking; with all his might; finally he saw a way: "Is Spinetta happy?" he asked.

"Why, Filippo?"

"Would she leave the convent and keep you company?"

"Filippo! Do not tempt me!"

"Let us be reasonable. Is she happy?"

"Not unhappy."

"Will she be happy when it is discovered that you have left the convent?"

"I left a letter under her breviary, so that she will find it when she says her office, telling her that I was departing and would write to her about it later."

"I did not mean that, little one—though of course she will miss you; but how will she feel when the nuns begin to talk of you, and how will they regard her?"

"Filippo! I had not thought of this! The nuns will be kind to her, but, oh, so shocked. She will be wretched."

"Then if she comes to keep you company, Lucrezia, it need only be for a time. In a year, or perhaps two years, we can leave Prato and live together; then, if Spinetta desires the religious life, I will pay her dowry, as her brother-

in-law, Messer Filippo Gaddi, and she can enter another convent."

"I feel it is wrong; and yet, Filippo, I shall be so sad without her."

"She will be returning to the world only to do an act of mercy, then she can resume her habit."

"But she may have temptations?"

"Bah! Diamante may discover our secret, and she may meet Diamante."

"Fra Diamante?" The tears were clearing away, and a wintry smile crept out.

"Well, she will not fall in love with that lobster. I love Diamante, but he is a crayfish in his temperament. If Venus came down to him, as Jove visited the lady of his affections, in a shower of gold, he would gather up the florins: one portion he would spend in masses for the soul of Venus, the rest he would deposit with the Medici on usury."

The cloud was passing, and Lucrezia gave a gurgle of enjoyment.

"Once when Diamante had saved a few crowns"—it is to be feared that Filippo was drawing on his imagination—"ready to deposit in the Medici's bank, and hidden them in a little pot in his bedchamber, I found them. I re-

moved them, and, placing a quittance from the bank of Lippi in their stead, I spent the money on a choice supper—mullet, quail, a young peacock, and wine to match."

The cloud ' the Rubicon had blown over, and Lucrezia was happy at last. "What did Fra Diamante say?" she asked.

"He devoured the supper with huge enjoyment, found the quittance, and made me refund the principal with one crown for usury. He is a capable man of business, is Diamante."

"Then why do you not trust him to manage your affairs, Filippo?"

"When a spendthrift, like I am, trusts a capable man of business to manage his affairs, the business man grows fat, and the spendthrift very lean."

"Am I to believe this story, foolish one?"

"There were mullet in the story. Would you believe any story that relates to fish?"

"Also, Prato is over far from the sea to buy red mullet, is it not, Filippo?"

The friar drew near her and pinched her ear. "You are too clever, little one; you will find out all my secrets," he laughed.

"I would have believed the story if it had not been for the mullet; I have kept house for

my father. You will keep no secrets from me, my husband ? ”

Filippo's brow wrinkled. “ Of the past, some,” he said. “ In the future, none.”

They crossed some rising ground and St. Alessandro stood before them, nestling under the Apennines. The mules, smelling the stable, mended their pace into an amble. “ My spirit cries for supper,” quoth the friar.

“ And my body craves to be removed from this son of a donkey,” laughed Lucrezia. “ I am very tired, and very stiff ; also, if you will not think me indelicate, Filippo, the saddle has become somewhat painful. I have not ridden for many years.”

“ See, Lucrezia, how our shadows are stretching forward to get their supper ! ”

“ Yours may be, greedy one ; mine is stretching forward to get some rest.”

Presently they rode into the courtyard of the inn ; it was an important inn, since it lay on the highway between Florence and Venice, and a day's journey from the City of Lilies. Fra Filippo helped Lucrezia to dismount, and, since she was almost too stiff to walk, he assisted her to enter the inn. A jovial laugh greeted him : “ Ha, Fra Filippo ! ” Then

there was silence and the sound of suppressed laughter.

The friar swore under his breath. St. Alessandro was so small in size, and remote from Prato, that he had forgotten its easy access to Florence.

He left Lucrezia in the inn, and returned to stable his mules. A hand was laid on his arm :

“The lady you are escorting, Fra Filippo ?”

Ten thousand devils! It was Bartolommeo Serragli, the Medici's Neapolitan agent.

“It is my niece, Messer Serragli,” growled the friar.

“She has grown wondrous young and comely since I saw her last.”

“It is the youngest, who has been long at Pisa.” The friar saw his error—for explanation is usually equivalent to self-accusation—and hastened to cover his slip. “She is the image of my poor sister,” he said.

“I can see the family likeness, Fra Filippo.” Serragli's eyes danced and his mouth twitched.

The friar hurried to stable his mules and reassure Lucrezia that her identity had not been discovered ; then he returned to the agent and ordered a bottle of the best wine that the inn

afforded, in the hope of inducing him to keep silence.

His hospitality had the desired effect; for if Serragli ever told of the adventure, we know that he must have kept silence for at least two years, until the scandal was common property.

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CHAPTER VIII

ST. ALESSANDRO

ROMANCE has always delighted to sing of the loves of young things, and to ridicule the union of May and September. History tells another tale, for some of the most beautiful love-stories of real life have included a man of mature age and a maid who has just reached true womanhood.

Sweet seventeen is but advanced childhood ; twenty-two is womanhood, when childish things have been put away and real life commenced. In the same way though fifty is often premature old age in the modern decadent, fifty is the prime of life when the man is healthy and vigorous. A man of fifty, with the possibility of twenty or thirty years of life before him, is not wedding the nurse of his second childhood, nor is the maid plotting to become an old man's darling, with the prospect of a speedy and well-endowed widowhood before her.

In practical, unromantic real life one would

desire that a maid of twenty-two should find a mate of twenty-seven, so that the twain might face life together and grow old in company ; but in true romance the man who has seen life and gained experience, and who is yet in the full strength of his manhood, is the ideal lover, since he has the wisdom to appreciate the girl—as a connoisseur appreciates a glass of rare wine or a collector a choice object of art ; and the woman of twenty-two is the ideal loved one, since she has sloughed the skin of sentimental altruism, and can appreciate the interesting and intellectual qualities of the man at their true value.

Modern novelists have begun to realise this, although they are apt to sour and batter their middle-aged heroes too unmercifully before they provide them with consolation of wedlock, robbing them of self-confidence : Messer de Savelli and the Gentleman of France had passed through so many mortifications that they both trailed their tails weakly as they wooed their sweethearts. Now, a maid likes the man to plume his pinions, cock his tail, and come on gaily ; a dragged person is but a poor object when he goes a-courting.

This debonair friar, with his varied knowledge of life, in those days when life was life ; with his intimate experience of cultured society, before



Deomo, Prato.

LUCREZIA IS THOUGHT TO HAVE POSED AS MODEL FOR THE DANCING FIGURE.

Anderson Photo.



culture degenerated into a pedantic and fanciful following of the ancients; with his dare-devil nature (since what could have been more reckless than the abduction of a nun under the very eyes of his ecclesiastical employers?); with his artistic temperament and love of beauty refining the whole,—this debonair friar, I say, was the ideal hero of romance. And as for Lucrezia, she was no chit of a girl, but a grown woman old enough to appreciate the qualities of her lover. Anyhow, this illegal honeymoon was the second happiest time of Lucrezia's life; the happiest time came later—for though stolen flowers may be sweet, roses which have been grafted and tended in one's own garden are infinitely sweeter.

Above St. Alessandro the beech-trees were breaking into juicy foliage, and stood out bravely against their background of dark pines and dingy cork-trees. In the lowlands, beneath, the soil was carpeted with the fresh green of the crops which had been planted between the rows of vines and olives. It was an ideal place in which to spend a honeymoon.

Yet, can we call this first month of the loves of Filippo and Lucrezia a honeymoon? Hardly, for their union was no marriage. It was no Christian marriage, since it was impossible for

those who were debarred from the married state by their vows of celibacy, and the laws of the Church, to contract a Christian marriage; and yet this union bore two of the marks which stamp a true marriage—love after the law of nature, and fidelity.

This month at St. Alessandro passed very happily. The man was the most interesting and stimulating of lovers, and the girl unfolded herself, day by day, growing into the sweetest of all things, the girl-matron. And yet, just as the fresh leaves of the beech stood out against the sombre pines and sad cork-trees, so there was always something behind this burst of happiness which robbed it of its perfect gladness.

Every kiss, every caress, especially in Lucrezia's case, carried the flavour of forbidden fruit; whereas, if this had been a real marriage, these endearments should have carried a sacramental blessing. Then the meeting with the Medici's agent and his evident amusement were not conducive to self-respect, also several other contre-temps happened.

If a curate should yield to the temptation of past memories, and venture to attend the Cottenham races disguised in mufti, he would most probably meet his bishop as he left the race-

course. If a staid married man should so far forget himself as to ask a pretty girl to dine with him at Prince's, he would find his wife seated at the next table with some unimpeachable friend. This is Fate, and should never be disregarded by those who take their pleasures under the rose.

Fra Filippo, since he was a man of the world, should not have forgotten this. If he had indulged in a respectable holiday at St. Alessandro, he would have met no one that he knew; but as he was engaged in a pursuit which he desired to keep secret, he was bound to meet undesired acquaintances. One who had studied the rules of the game would have avoided Europe, Asia, and Africa; he would even have shirked America, lest he should hap on some precursor of Messer Christopher Columbus: the only safe abode would have been the South Pole, which had not, at that time, become fashionable.

Thus, when Fra Filippo told Lucrezia to make haste, since severe hunger assailed him, and informed her that he would await her in the common dining-parlour, he was engaged in a matter of risk.

"Fra Filippo! This is a welcome meeting."

Filippo started, recognising the accents of Messer Leon Battista Alberti.

Now, of all the Florentines that Fra Filippo would have gladly avoided, Messer Alberti was at once the least desired and the least avoidable, for the simple reason that he was essentially an earnest person. In the Renaissance we find two elements—the creative element, which was original and progressive, and the formalist element, which desired to reconstruct the art, architecture, learning, and life of the ancient Greeks. This latter element, which strove to reduce its teachings to rules, canons, and dogmas, eventually killed the Renaissance.

This Alberti would have made a skilful officer of health—ruling that the tan-yards should be situated on the north side of the town, so that the gentle southern breezes should waft their objectionable odours away from the inhabitants, whilst the northerly gales drove their stench into space; but his pedantic conversation was trying, and his personality was unsympathetic to the original genius of the artist-friar—also Fra Filippo must have recognised the danger of meeting this estimable creature.

Filippo returned the greeting of the architect with effusion, and tried to excuse himself for a moment's absence, so that he might warn Lucrezia; but Alberti buttonholed him, and poured

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Anderson Photo.

Duomo, Prato.

DETAIL FROM THE FOREGOING PICTURE.



the following talk into his unwilling ears : " After working at this half-pagan, half-Christian temple for the Lord of Rimini, I am returning to Florence with a noble scheme in my brain."

" I shall be pleased to hear of this presently," said the friar, " but I must leave you for a moment."

It was no good ; nothing save personal violence would release Alberti's hold.

" A Christian church that is half an ancient temple, like that of Sigismondo's, is but a foolish effort ; since the mingling of two elements, like the mingling of land and water, only produces mud."

" Excuse me," expostulated the friar, " I must leave you for a moment."

Alberti's clasp grew even tighter :

" Let the churchmen build churches ; but why should not we, who revere the ancients, construct a temple in their memory ? "

" Exactly—but I must go."

" I propose to erect a temple, after the plan of the ancient Greeks, on some worthy site in Florence, Messer Cosimo de' Medici providing money to defray the cost."

" Excellent—but I will return presently." Filippo longed to strike Leon Battista Alberti,

but he dare not risk the assault, since Alberti might discover his secret and become an active enemy: also, knowing the way of women who will "be ready in a minute," Filippo decided to trust in Providence.

"There is nothing in which we ought to employ more thought, care, and diligence than in laying out and adorning a temple; because—not to mention that a temple well built and handsomely adorned is the greatest and noblest ornament a city can have—it is, moreover, the habitation of the gods: and if we adorn and beautify the house where a king or any great man is to dwell, with all the art we are masters of, what ought we to do to those of the immortal gods?"

Unfortunately Lucrezia's appetite was as sharp-set as that of Filippo, and, besides, she was desirous of pleasing him with her quickness, and, also, she had no "back hair" to arrange. The door was flung open and Lucrezia entered rapidly: "See, my husband, how quickly——" There was a dead silence.

"This is my youngest niece," began Filippo, but the architect interrupted him.

"I know your nieces personally, Fra Filippo; also the lady termed you her husband."

Filippo waved his hands helplessly, whilst

Lucrezia looked down in most miserable confusion.

"I will speak my thoughts, since speech is the method which nature has provided for the communication of one's opinions to another." Alberti beamed on the artist whose paintings he admired, and the sweet face of the girl which was essentially admirable. "Also, my thoughts may not appear objectionable."

"Let us know your surmisings, Alberti, since you have guessed our secret."

"I gather that you have broken through the decrees of the moderns, and carried off this lady even as Paris abducted Helen, which was a poetic incident of human nature."

Lucrezia looked up, laughing in spite of her confusion.

Filippo hoped for the best—hoped against hope.

"Although I myself have written a book for those who live in lawful wedlock, surrounded by the offspring of their marriage, after the manner of many of the ancients (and for this book I need make no excuse, since marriage is one of nature's methods), I cannot but admire those who seek less conventional proceedings."

Lucrezia, in spite of her confusion, could not

withhold a little trill of laughter: this expression of opinion was so original.

“Laugh not, fair lady.” Alberti beamed on her benignly. “If I were younger I should strike down Fra Filippo and bear you off, even as the Romans stole the wives of the Sabines.” The friar, knowing Alberti, smiled broadly. “Women always have loved to yield themselves as the spoil of the victors.”

“Since you have discovered our secret, Messer Alberti, you may regard this lady as Madonna Isotta di Lippi”—he looked at him with amusement,—“and since we have a toothsome meal ready you may see fit to share our repast. What do you say to a boar’s head, captured from a young boar of the Apennines flavoured by grubbing after truffles?”

“Admirable!”

“And after this a stew of larks?”

“The ancients loved the flavour of song-birds. A stew of nightingales’ tongues, for instance, was their——”

“Rubbish!” The friar waxed warm. “There is no meat in a nightingale’s tongue, nor would it be pleasant eating. I would as soon dine off the strings of a lyre, which also furnishes sweet sounds.”

"But this is contained in ancient records!"

The friar laughed: "I have read a recipe of old—'Take a swan, and after preparing it place a pheasant in the cavity; within this enclose an ortolan, inside this a lark, inside this an olive, and inside the olive encase an anchovy: cooking the whole, discard the envelopes and eat the anchovy.'"

Alberti gave a sigh of great longing. His appetite, like the rest of him, was purely antiquarian.

"Diamante and I once tried this dish, for a whim: the anchovy was bitter through the flavouring of the olive, and ill-cooked. The envelopes, which we had the prudence to retain, were excellent."

"In the convent, we——" began Lucrezia, and paused in horror at her disclosure.

"Ah!" Alberti gazed with psychological interest. "This adds a new element to the romance. I shall entreat Cosimo to appoint you twain as the ministers in our new temple. You have indeed grasped the truth of the old doctrines."

"Alberti, you have the soul of a hedgehog!" Filippo was half entertained, half angry. "Have you no respect for this lady's feelings?"

Lucrezia touched Filippo's hand, in protest : " I am sure Messer Alberti has the greatest respect for my feelings, Filippo ; also he means me kindly." She gave him a smile which sealed her capture of his archæological heart.

" You are right, sweet lady, I mean kindly."

A flash of inspiration came to her, and she followed up the advantage : " You will say nothing about this chance meeting, Messer Alberti ? "

" I had purposed a lecture on the incident, as exemplifying the truth of the ancient traditions of unmatrimonial affection, suppressing the names and styling you Fra Filipipi and Sister Lucella, as a perfect disguise to your identity ; but since you desire it, I will forget all about this incident."

" Thank you, Messere, from my heart."

Having finished their repast, Lucrezia rose to leave the room, and Filippo followed her.

" Did you ever meet with such a thick-head ? " laughed the friar as they entered their private rooms. " He would disguise his own identity under the name of ' Leo Alberto,' and rest contented."

" He means well, also I have subdued the lion Alberti. Is not your wife clever, Filippo ? "

Filippo received this challenge in a becoming manner.

"Get me a stick of charcoal from the serving-maid, little one; I want to express my feelings, and have no materials with me."

Lucrezia ran joyfully, for this was indeed the speech of a no-longer-young husband to a young and sympathetic wife.

Filippo laughed as she returned, and fetching a dish containing preserves of cherries from the sideboard, he dragged the round-topped marble table near his seat.

"See!" He drew Alberti in a few deft strokes, covering him with hedgehog's bristles. "This is the man with the soul of a porcupine; and here I describe the future state of the earnest, well-meaning, and tactless man." He dipped his finger in the red juice and drew a quantity of pits with devils tending the damned: Alberti had the largest pit, and the most energetic devils.

Lucrezia bubbled over with appreciation.

Filippo was goaded into artistic enthusiasm. "See here," he rubbed out the sketch, and worked the whole into a picture: "Observe, I work the whole into a temple after Alberti." He worked the drawing into the image of a heathen temple; with a statue of Venus, draped in order to spare

42 The Romance of Fra Filippo Lippi

Lucrezia's modesty, in the background, and Messer Alberti clad in a cope of hedgehog's quills in the foreground.

Lucrezia bent over his shoulder, and as the picture took shape, describing the ridiculous pose of Alberti, whilst it admirably filled the tondo, she kissed the friar's bald head: "You are no man, you are a miracle," she laughed.

"Sigismondo of Milan is a fine soldier, but no thinker; Alberti, having induced him to build a church that is half a pagan temple, now hopes to induce Cosimo to build a pagan temple that is quite a temple."

"Is the man a pagan?"

"Indeed, no! He is a most estimable character, tedious beyond all bearing, but altogether estimable. He is a most moral man, a worthy citizen, and delights to pose as a philosopher. The absurd part of the matter is that he rebukes others for blindly following the ancients, whilst he himself is a slave to antiquity; but then, the faults we blame most in others are usually our own pet sins."

"You mean?"

"If you want to find out a man's chief fault, ask him what vice he dislikes most in his neighbour."

" You dislike most, Filippo ? "

" You know too much of my faults already, little one. And you : what fault do you dislike most in another ? "

She stooped and kissed Filippo's ear, quickly, nearly deafening him : " That ! " she said.

" Heartless one ! " he cried ; then wiping out the sketch with a sweep of his hand : " There goes my masterpiece. "

CHAPTER IX

THE RETURN TO PRATO

THE happy time at St. Alessandro was ended ; for even thirty florins melted away before the friar's idea of economy, which included such items as young cock partridges (the hens were out of season), quails, truffles stewed in the wine of Burgundy, and similar trifles ; and he was forced to return to Prato and earn more money.

He had left Lucrezia a league outside the town, and had ridden forward to make an ostensible return and present himself to Diamante ; now he was free to slip away in order to see that his sweetheart had found all comfortable in her new home.

Alas ! Could anything be more disheartening ! The house was a huge wilderness for a single person ; the furniture, which Fra Filippo had taken over from his late tenant in place of rent, was mean in quality and meagre in quantity, and, moreover, the outgoers had been shiftless

and dirty in their habits. It is true that Filippo had seen Lucrezia's wallet packed with a sufficiency of dainty provisions, but, like a man, he had forgotten to have the house cleaned before the return.

To steal into an empty house, with the terror of meeting some old acquaintance haunting her, was not a pleasant home-coming for Lucrezia; to find the house both musty and depressing added to this wretchedness; above all, she was feeling very tired and very lonely. Consequently it took all the tact that the friar was master of to kiss away the tears, and restore some degree of cheerfulness.

"Filippo," she whispered presently, "I am not enamoured of this house."

Fra Filippo shrugged his shoulders in sympathy: "See here, little one," he emptied fifteen golden florins on the table. "We have been paid something on account, Diamante and I, for the Pieve frescoes; this is your share, and will serve to buy new furniture. Also I have bought you something to brighten your apartment"; he unrolled a strip of finely woven silk, worked with entwined pomegranates on a yellow ground.

"Oh, you men! You bring me this finery,

and—look here!" She uncovered her wrist, showing two angry red bites: "I have killed the miscreant, but I suspect he has many brothers left."

"We will burn this furniture, and buy new with the fifteen florins."

"You man of all men!" she laughed. "This fifteen florins is good money, but it must provide me with my simple wants, and also furnish capons, and such-like, for my man when he favours me with his company; it must also buy new furniture for this house, and I think," she glanced at him roguishly, "it should suffice to hang these walls with choice tapestry. Should the bed be gilt, Filippo, and the chairs of inlaid olive-wood?"

"Fifteen florins will do much," he protested.

"When heaven only knows how soon a second fifteen florins will replenish them."

"I have much work on hand." He thought a moment: "I might demand something on account for the picture at the convent."

"Filippo!"

He looked her straight in the face: "You are right, Lucrezia, I can never finish this picture after what has happened. I must set Diamante to work on it."

"Dear one," Lucrezia looked at the friar proudly, "I love you because you are such a man; I love you much for this," she took up the silk and stroked it gently against her chin; "but I love you most for your resolve about the picture."

The friar leant forward, and slipping his arm round her, pulled her on to his knee. Lucrezia buried her face in his neck: "This house is so dismal, Filippo, and I am so desolate," she whispered. "I fear to go out. I fear to stand by the window. I feel that all the world is my enemy now, and that every one is ready to blame me." He felt something warm and wet trickle down his neck.

"Lucrezia, dear one," he drew her close to him, for he had never loved her so well and truly before, "you must have Spinetta."

"Filippo, you could not do without me, could you? I think I must have Spinetta, else I shall go mad."

Filippo carried a sad heart that night, and as for poor lonely little Lucrezia——!

Next morning Fra Filippo rose betimes, and after drinking a draught of red wine to promote the circulation of his blood, went out muttering that he desired to take the air. He crossed the

Piazza, and glancing round to make certain that no one was following him, turned his steps towards his house near the Gorellina.

The house already bore traces of a woman's touch: the length of silk had been draped over one of the windows so as to form a window curtain, and a sweet face peeped out from behind it. The door was flung open, then checked, and the figure slipped behind it cautiously.

"If I had been seen!" she said, and slamming the door, Lucrezia flung her arms round Filippo's neck.

Weariness and sleeplessness had painted dark shadows beneath Lucrezia's eyes; but the application of much cold water had removed the redness, leaving them altogether attractive.

"Read this, sweetheart," said the friar after the greeting was over. "I may not be able to speak with Spinetta, so I have written this to slip into her hand."

Lucrezia took the parchment, and read it very carefully with a puzzled expression. Then she read it again, and laughed almost merrily: "See here, Filippo, if I had not known your writing for the past three weeks, I could never have deciphered this letter, and even now nearly every second word is spelt wrong."

Filippo shook his head. "If I had lived in ancient Egypt, and could have written my letters in picture-writing, I might have become a scholar ; but to depict one's thoughts in these foolish little signs that every one makes is but a poor method of expression."

"Oh, most ignorant, ignorant one!" she cried ; "I will write to Spinetta, for I have no compunctions left."

She took the friar's parchment, and running to her table for a pen, wrote : "Spinetta, you must have guessed my feelings towards Fra Filippo, the artist. I have eloped with him, and am living here until we have saved enough money to enable us to seek another city, where we are unknown. If you love me, bear me company for a time, else I shall surely go mad. I am quite alone and am in hiding. The house is at the corner of the Via delle Tre Gore, and you will know it by the yellow silk window-curtain, figured with pomegranates. If you still love me, come! LUCREZIA."

The friar regarded the letter with admiration. "This will surely settle the matter," he said.

"I am doing wrong, but I don't care. No, Filippo!" she said, as the friar began to protest. "If you had lain awake, alone in this house, as

I have done, you would know that all is wrong ; but I cannot leave you."

"Sweetheart——"

"No, no, Filippo! You will talk me over to-morrow, and I shall believe you. You may talk me over over to-morrow, and I shall be glad to believe you. But to-day I know that all is wrong."

Fra Filippo rose to go: "I will go now and see the Lady Abbess; I may catch Spinetta as she comes from mass."

Lucrezia nodded her head, but never rose to kiss her lover good-bye. He, on his part, felt humbled, and went towards the door without saluting his sweetheart: then he paused and feeling in his pocket brought out a little parcel: "Little one, here are ten more florins towards the furniture; five I have taken from the provision money—Diamante does not mind what he eats as long as there is plenty; five I have taken from my private purse, resolving to frequent my tavern less."

Lucrezia sprang forward: "Filippo, forgive me! You know I love you more than myself, more than anything."

Fra Filippo found the Abbess overcome with grief at the loss of Sister Lucrezia, and she greeted

him coldly ; for though she never imagined that he had abducted the nun, she felt that the stories which he had told, and which Sister Margherita had since confessed, might have unsettled the maiden's mind. Consequently, when he suggested that Fra Diamante should finish the picture and officiate at the altar in his place, on the plea that he himself was overwhelmed with work, the Abbess received his suggestions readily. As he was going out he chanced to meet Spinetta in the passage, and delivered Lucrezia's note.

Spinetta had guessed something of the truth, and the mingled regrets and censure which she overheard whenever the name of Lucrezia was mentioned, during recreation time, had goaded her almost to madness ; for she loved and respected her elder sister exceedingly. So when she met Fra Filippo in the passage she greeted him with an uplifting of her eyebrows. The friar answered her challenge with an almost imperceptible nod, and slipped Lucrezia's note into her hand as he passed her.

Later on, when she was free to retire to her cell, Spinetta read the note and thought her hardest : " Which of all the nuns was the sweetest and kindest ? Lucrezia. Which of all the nuns was the most gentle in her judgment of others ?

Lucrezia. And now Lucrezia was in trouble, and very lonely. Truly her place was with Lucrezia." Then a thousand memories of home, when Lucrezia kept house for their father, came into her mind: she thought of how she had sought Lucrezia in her troubles, and joys; and above all she thought of the way in which Lucrezia had sunk her own grief in order to comfort her when their father had breathed his last.

She knew that her sister had committed a grievous sin; but if Lucrezia had erred she had erred, and it was Spinetta's place to stand by her now that she was in sorrow. Spinetta did not dislike Fra Filippo, and she loved her sister very tenderly—also the ties of blood are very strong, until one grows world-worn and callous.

During the seven months which followed, life in the house near the Gorellina was not unhappy. Spinetta possessed a fund of buoyant spirits; and although the fact that she had both condoned Lucrezia's sin, and also absented herself from the convent without leave, occasioned a few pangs of conscience, these matters did not press on her very heavily. Then the many picnics in which they indulged were pleasant, and even the daily shopping, in which they disguised themselves as middle-aged matrons, became, through Spinetta's

tact, a perpetual round of adventure. They dare not make the acquaintance of any of their neighbours, but the frequent visits of Fra Filippo kept them in touch with the world, and the ample fund of news, reminiscences, and gossip which was supplied by the "Glad Friar" furnished many a merry aftertalk.

It was early in January, when the Padre had ventured a morning call, that Lucrezia drew Fra Filippo aside: "Filippo," she said softly, "I have something to tell you: can't you guess?"

The friar racked his brains: "No, sweet one."

"Something we desire most."

"The recognition of our marriage, but that is impossible!"

"No! no!" She stamped her foot. "Oh, Filippo! can't you guess?" She hid her face in her hands.

Filippo held her at arms' length, and taking her wrists drew her hands away from her face.

"Is it?" he asked.

She bent her head, blushing scarlet: "It is," she whispered.

He drew her to him: "God grant it may be a boy."

She nestled up to him: "Filippo, I know that

all is wrong between us, and yet it seems as though God had set the seal on our love."

Fra Filippo left in a whirl of excitement, and meeting Spinetta in the hall kissed her on the cheek (he had always kissed her on the hand before, after the manner of a brother-in-law—now he kissed her as a brother should, on the face): "Spinetta, you alone of us have the right to pray; pray that the babe may be a boy, and that he may have the gift of painting."

Spinetta laughed, and seeking Lucrezia presently, she said: "Lucrezia, this sweetheart of yours is a very true lover."

Fra Filippo returned home and sketched the design of one of his masterpieces which is now hung in the Uffizzi Gallery. In the tondo the Madonna was a real woman and the real mother of a baby; but here the babe was also real. Unfortunately Lucrezia's health would not permit her to sit for the Madonna, and although Our Lady's face has something of Lucrezia in it, it has more of the model's expression—that is to say, it is more like Spinetta.

From this time, also, Filippo began to visit his house in the Gorellina too frequently, and the gossips began to talk about the friar and his mysterious tenants.

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Anderson Photo.

Uffizi, Florence.

'OUR LADY'S FACE IS MORE LIKE SPINETTA.'



Filippo's boldness in concealing the missing nuns within a stone's throw of both the Pieve and Santa Margherita prevented any one from guessing their identity, but still there was talk.

CHAPTER X

THE AFTERMATH

LUCREZIA had been happy for eleven months—that is to say, she had been as happy as a naturally good woman living in sin could expect to be. No doubt she had bitter times of sincere remorse when Filippo had perforce been absent from her ; no doubt she had miserable longings after her lost purity ; but since she was a plucky little woman she kept these repinings to herself, and cheered up her heart and regained her spirit when her lover was with her.

In her present state of mind, it was better to have loved and lost both temporal honour and eternal salvation than never to have loved at all. Besides, had she not the comfort of Filippo's intense affection, and unswerving, buoyant loyalty when he was with her, and the consolation of her unborn babe when she was alone, to say nothing of Spinetta's company ?

Probably the brightest part of her life was the pictured advent of her little one; for Lucrezia lived before the times of Mrs. Grundy, who condones sin as long as it is kept decently private, but ho'ds up her hands in holy horror when it is made manifest. In the Quattrocento, the birth of a babe made a liaison comparatively respectable, and many of the most noble families have the mark of the bar sinister.

Therefore Lucrezia comforted herself with the thought that nature had blessed her otherwise unhallowed union, and looked forward to the coming of her babe.

Lucrezia's spiritual trouble began at the Easter of 1457, and it originated in this wise. She had not been to confession since the previous Easter, and unless she sought the Sacrament now she would cease to be a member of the Catholic Church; so she plucked up courage and, without mentioning the matter to Filippo, sought the confessional of an aged and gentle priest who was attached to the parish church of the Pieve.

She entered the confessional, and kneeling before the grating, commenced: "I confess to Almighty God—especially do I accuse myself that since my last confession, which was a year ago——" and the whole of the sad story came out.

"So you were a nun, my child, and the man a friar?"

"Yes, Father."

"And you are expecting a little one?"

"Yes, Father."

"Of course your sin does not lie in this, which is but the natural result of your sin; nevertheless the advent of your little one will complicate matters. You have no relations who would undertake the care of your babe?"

"No, Father."

"I will lay the matter before the Bishop; even though your repentance is sincere, and you promise to follow what I ask, I have not the power to give you absolution without my Bishop's consent."

Lucrezia gave a reply which ended in a sob; it is not encouraging to be told that one is "reserved case."

"You see, my poor child, if this had been an ordinary case, and both you and your lover lay people, I could have given you absolution, provided you were resolved either to leave or wed the man. But it is sacrilege for a nun to break her vows of chastity, for these vows are made to Almighty God, and it is a double sacrilege when the man is bound by similar vows. No ordinary

priest has authority to deal with such a case ; it is reserved for the Bishop."

Lucrezia was crying bitterly.

" Since it would be cruel to hold out false hopes, I will tell you what to expect. You will have to promise to leave this man once and for all, and, as soon as may be, return to your convent."

" Oh ! God help me ! I love this man more than my life."

" More than your Saviour, my child ? "

She was crying now as a man cries, with painful sobs that shook every atom of her.

" My poor child ! " If Lucrezia could have seen through the grating of the confessional, she would have seen that the priest's eyes were full of pain.

" I think, my child, you will have to leave this lover of yours at once and go to the Hospital of the Holy Innocents at Florence until your babe is born : and when the babe is born and weaned you must leave him with the sisters, and return to your convent."

" Oh, Father ! I cannot."

" It is the will of the good God that this sin should cease, and if you love Him more than lover or babe you will follow His will." The old priest's voice was tender. " And now, my child,

I have done all that I can do ; it rests with you to act ; for it is you who will have to take the step : nevertheless if you decide to do what is right, I can promise that you will find the Bishop very gentle. I will see the Bishop to-morrow, and if you return to the confessional in the evening I will tell you his decision. In the meantime pray to God for strength, and to Our Lady for help ; and I too will pray for you with all my heart. God help you, little one." And then in an access of Christlike sympathy he added : " And say a little prayer for me."

We do not know what struggles took place in Lucrezia's heart that night ; but in the morning, when Filippo came to see her at early dawn, she threw her arms around his neck and pressed her worn face against his : " Filippo, I can never leave thee, my heart's beloved."

He wondered at her fervour. He did not know that it was, for a time, the sacrifice of a soul : he did not know that nature had conquered grace, and that Lucrezia had resolved to remain in her sin.

Some two months had elapsed since Easter, and the warmth of April had changed into the heat of the Italian summer. These had been long and weary months for Lucrezia, for the old,

false happiness had left her, and she wavered now between compunction and the reaction of a somewhat sad joy when Filippo was with her. Two pathetic lines grew at the corners of her mouth, and although she tried to bear up bravely, the tears would often come into her eyes when she was alone. The joyous little folk-songs that she had been wont to sing to herself ceased, and their place was taken by cradle-songs and such-like.

It is true that Filippo had given up his tavern almost entirely, spending as much of the evening as he could take, without exciting Diamante's curiosity, in the company of his sweetheart. This was the hour of Lucrezia's happiness, for they would plan the future after the little one had been born, and draw pictures of the time when they had saved enough money to leave Prato and journey to Southern Italy where Filippo was unknown : there they could live together openly, and spend long happy days in each other's company.

On this particular evening Lucrezia was downhearted, since in a few days Fra Filippo must leave her to take up some work in Florence that Giovanni de' Medici had commissioned ; and it was a wistful smile that greeted the friar as he entered the house.

He placed his hand under Lucrezia's chin and raised her face to the light: "You look weary, little one; there is a hollow here," and he kissed her cheek. "There are dark lines below these," and he kissed her eyes.

"I am not looking forward to your absence, my lover." She was trying to be brave: "Is it not strange? even Spinetta cannot take your place entirely."

"I have had a little plan in my mind for some days. How would you like to accompany me, Lucrezia? You and Spinetta?"

"Oh, Filippo, you cannot mean it?" Her eyes were shining with expectation.

"There is a tiny villa I know of on the road from Florence to Fiesole, lying under the heights of Fiesole. It stands back from the road on a steep grass slope, amidst a grove of olive-trees."

She clapped her hands with delight.

"There the air of Fiesole, which is neither so dull as the air of Prato, nor so keen as that of Arezzo, will bring the colour back into your cheeks. I can live in the studio I have still in Florence, and visit you as soon as dusk unfolds its mantle, and we will wander in the dusk together."

"Oh, Filippo! It will be paradise!"

"I will take this panel of the Madonna I am working at," he waved his hand towards the picture he was painting as a gift to the Medici: "I will keep it at the villa, and finish the painting of Spinetta's face on feast-days."

"I am glad, for I love that picture."

"I have learnt the true secret of art from you, dear one. Before I loved you I painted as I lived; seizing on each incident and dwelling on it and elaborating it and enjoying it with no thought for the morrow."

"Yes?"

"But now, dear, life has become one great whole. What are the pleasures of the wine-cup, if they take me away from you, and drain away the money that will set us free? Therefore I am painting this picture in a new method, not troubling about the elaboration and finish, but striving after a perfect and harmonious whole."

Lucrezia looked at him, marvelling.

"I have loved, little one, and it has changed my life." He stooped and kissed her: "I must depart to plan for our journey."

It was the eve of St. John Baptist, and Fra Filippo rode up the path towards Fiesole, leading two spare mules. Along the left bank of the

rippling Mugnone, past the Villa Palmieri, where Boccaccio had pictured his narrators in the Decameron, then turning up a narrow path through an olive-grove, he reached a cottage covered with scarlet roses.

A smiling woman ran out to greet him, for the fresh air and change of scene had brought the roses back into Lucrezia's cheeks and lessened her broodings. "So early, Filippo!" she cried.

"There will be gay doings in Florence to-night, sweetheart, and you and Spinetta must come. We will have some food now, and start when night falls. See, I am prepared." He pointed to the scholar's dress in which he had attired himself, and the light cloak with which to muffle the lower part of his face.

The road down to Florence was bathed in moonlight, with the shadows of the trees falling across it in masses of empty blackness, and the air was full of the odour of roses mingled with the tender scents of the night; beyond, the lights of Florence twinkled like ten thousand stars.

As Filippo and his companions passed through the streets of Florence, they joined a merry throng of folks, all clothed in holiday attire, all hurrying forward over the smooth stone pavement. "Forwards!"

Down what is now known as the Via Cavour they crowded, halting before the palace of the Medici.

The gates swung back and out trooped many pages in the Medici livery, each bearing a huge wax torch, and these were followed by singing boys as fair and saucy as Filippo's angels; a bevy of maidens crowned with roses and touching lutes came after; and then amidst cries of "*Palle! Palle!*" Giovanni de' Medici, accompanied by his nephew Lorenzo, a boy of some eight summers, joined the procession.

"Forwards!"

I searched the sward beneath, the tree above,
To find a garland worthy of my love!

Then all broke into a beautiful dance-song of "The Search of the Flowers." Each verse of seven lines described how the lover sought the violet and wisteria to match his sweetheart's eyes, or lilies to equal the fairness of her complexion, and finally triumphed in matching both the whiteness of her skin and the colour of her cheeks with the roses. Each stanza ended with the recurring couplet:

I searched the sward beneath, the trees above,
To find a garland worthy of my love!

“Forwards!”

Along the banks of the Arno, where the illuminations on the far side glistened in glittering splendour, and were reflected in twining paths of gold from the surface of the water, across the Ponte Vecchio.

And as they went they danced. All difference of rank vanished: the Medici danced now with a noble dame, now with a girl from the workshop; now with a prentice lad, now with a member of the council. Once Giovanni took Spinetta's hand and danced gaily forwards with her.

They paused beneath a balcony, and a choir of girls and men broke into a gay *Rispetti*, whilst those outside were hushed.

Again the song of the roses broke forth:

I searched the sward beneath, the trees above,
To find a garland worthy of my love!

and forward the procession moved, dancing its way.

Very tired, very happy, Lucrezia rested outside a wine-shop, she and Spinetta sipping orange-water and eating sugared cakes, whilst Filippo refreshed himself with more robust liquid. And then the girls retired to a chamber in the neighbouring inn, which Filippo had engaged, and the

artist betook himself to the pallet in his workshop.

Probably Lucrezia was both over-tired and over-excited—anyway she slept but little. The thoughts of one who lies awake are apt to be introspective; and if the thinker lies as still as a mouse for fear of disturbing her fellow, these thoughts become an absolute torture. Therefore Lucrezia welcomed the dawn, and, slipping out of her bed, dressed herself silently with the view of hearing Mass on St. John Baptist's day.

She entered the Church of Sanctissima Annunziata, for that was the most handy to her lodgings, and, wondering at the wealth of decorations—"It might be the feast of Easter," she thought—seated herself on a stool hard by the altar.

Presently an acolyte followed by a priest in a white cope came forth from the sacristy, and at the same instant a man clad in festa-dress and a maiden all in white, with a veil of white lace covering her head in the place of the customary black mantilla, approached the altar, and with them some dozen others garbed as prosperous artisans.

"It is a wedding," thought Lucrezia, "on the feast of St. John!" She followed the service

with interest, for she had been a choir nun and understood Latin.

“Bless, O Lord, this ring which we bless in Thy name, that she who shall wear it, keeping true faith unto her husband, may abide in Thy peace and will, and ever live in mutual charity.” Something caught her by the throat, and she had to bite her lips lest she should swoon.

The rest of the service, the Mass for the bride and bridegroom, passed as men walking in a fog, vaguely and indistinctly, until the concluding blessing: “May the God of Abraham—be with you—fulfil His blessing upon you; that you may see your children’s children—and may afterwards have everlasting life—by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Then she realised what she had never realised before—the consequences of her liaison.

Here were she and Filippo living in wilful sin, cut off from grace, and unless they repented there could only be one future for them after death.

Then, there was the babe. Could she or her lover bring it up as a Christian? Unless they repented this would be clearly impossible. “That you may see your children’s children, and may afterwards have everlasting life.” The words

rang in her ears, and she altered them to suit the case: "That you may see your son a pagan, and may afterwards have everlasting damnation."

"And this is my love," she thought. "I am walking hand-in-hand with my lover along the broad, downward path, each helping the other in the descent, and our little one . . ."

She knelt very humbly before the Blessed Sacrament, and her thoughts shaped themselves to the one logical conclusion. Her nature was both simple and direct, and all the superficial and specious arguments about truth to nature and the joy of life which she had listened to left her mind like the morning mist when the breeze springs up. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out!" How obvious! What else was possible? Then one whole-hearted act of contrition, one perfect act of self-abnegation, swept away her sins, leaving her soul white and pure in the sight of God.

She took out a small illuminated picture from her prayer-book and pencilled a note to Fra Filippo on the back, asking him to meet her at Angelus, in the wood behind her cottage; and going round by his workshop slipped it under the door.

And now she had that strange numb calm that

one has when one kneels beside the bedside of one's nearest, and knows that death is certain and only a question of hours—the same numb calm that enables a murderer to breakfast on the morning of his execution. Filippo had to be faced, and her resolution broken to him ; but she knew that although he might feel it keenly, his kind heart and sincere love would yield to it ; also she knew that he would cause her no more pain than he could help.

Besides, although their relations must cease at once—in fact had ceased already—they would still be able to see each other ; for she did not propose to return to her convent until the babe had been born and weaned. She resolutely shut her eyes to the final parting, knowing full well that it would need all her strength to face the present.

Yet in spite of the numbness that had seized her heart, she had a feeling of peace that had been absent from it for many weary months.

CHAPTER XI

THE RESOLUTION

FILIPPO had tried to slip his arm round Lucrezia's waist as they came under the shadows of the trees, but she, after disengaging herself, kept him at a distance. She still, however, held hold of his hand, pressing it until she almost hurt him. Her heart was beating fast, and she had bitten her lip until it bled, in her effort to keep back the tears. The olive-trees cast sad masses of formless shadow under the moonlight.

"Filippo, if you could live the past over again, would you lead me away from the convent and bring me to this: neither a nun, nor a maid, nor a wife?"

"If I could undo the past——"

"We must undo it, Filippo!"

"Impossible! We have called the tune and we must dance the dance. We have ordered the dinner and we may as well eat it, since we must pay the reckoning."

"Filippo, I must return to the convent."

"And leave me, little one!" There was a catch in the friar's voice: "I shall die if you leave me."

One last effort, the little drop of blood that trickled down her chin bore witness of the struggle, and Lucrezia broke down: "Filippo, listen, dear one." Her words were punctuated with sobs: "The good God has spoken to me, and this sin must cease."

Instinctively she threw her arms around her lover; and, whatever his past may have been, it stands to Filippo's everlasting credit that although he returned her embrace, his arms went around her shoulders, not her waist; his lips sought her forehead, not her mouth.

"Filippo, can I trust you?"

He squeezed her tightly.

"And can I trust myself?" she whispered.

"Tell me all, sweetheart."

"It came to me to-day, beloved." She was nestling in his arms now as confidently as a child nestles up to its mother. "If it were but we two—although this is a dreadful sin, it only concerns our own salvation: there is, however, another to consider. Filippo, when the baby comes, could you bring him up as a Christian? I could not."

The friar shook his head : she could see the motion against the moonlit sky.

There was a silence, and then the friar spoke :
" You intend to return to the convent now ? "

" Ah, no ! Filippo : I could not rob you of your babe. See here, dear one, if I were to remain in your company until our babe is born and weaned, so that I might leave it with you to console you when I returned to the convent, could I trust you ? "

The friar bent his head humbly : again Lucrezia could see the motion against the moonlight.
" God help me ! You can. "

She smoothed his face, and her hand came away wet. " Leave me now, " he whispered.
" I am unmanned. "

She left him, and glancing back saw that he had thrown himself on the ground and buried his face in his hands. She had no heart to meet her sister, so slipping past Spinetta she bolted herself in her apartment.

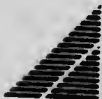
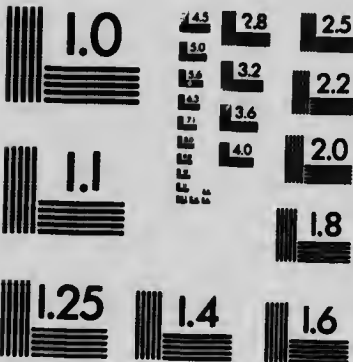
It may have been an hour later, perhaps less, but it had seemed to Lucrezia to measure half a lifetime, when the friar knocked at the cottage-door and Spinetta admitted him.

His face looked years older, and yet it had a certain something which it had lacked before.



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"Call Lucrezia," he said. "I must speak with her now, also I desire you to be present."

"Lucrezia," he began as she seated herself, "I have made my resolve, and I must tell it lest I should be tempted to change to-morrow." He turned to her sister: "Spinetta, you know that your sister and I have been living in sin?"

"Of course; but what could I do, save make the best of a sad business?"

"Of late it has been hell to me. I have seen the woman I love grow sad and pensive; I have met her in the street and have been forced to pass her unnoticed; I have turned to watch her, seeing her cringe and look to the right and left, lest some one should recognise her; also what would be a glory to a wife has become a shame to her.

"And, Spinetta," he continued, "what has been a hell to me has been a purgatory to Lucrezia and she has come out holy and purified. She will leave me and return to her vocation, but not yet; for she will live in our house at Prato until she can leave me our babe, strong and healthy, to comfort me. God never made a nobler woman."

"Thank God!" cried Spinetta, but Lucrezia was dumb and motionless.

"Spinetta, I leave your sister in your charge. It would be wise if you returned to Prato to-morrow, and I will join you ere the babe is born. It would be wise also if I met her only in your presence hereafter ; for I am weak and love her much. I must remain here and work, but I will rejoin you before the end of August. These five-and-twenty florins will serve you until then—it is all I have by me. I will send a trusty man and two stout mules to-morrow."

He caught Lucrezia to him, and kissing her once passionately on the mouth, strode out into the night.

In spite of her intense pain at the thought of parting from her lover, the following three weeks passed not unhappily with Lucrezia, for her mind was at rest with regard to her repentance, and her fingers were busy with the making of many small and dainty garments.

But it was otherwise with Fra Filippo.

In the first place the heat in Florence was almost unbearable ; in the second place he had given most of his ready money to Spinetta, and was exceedingly pressed for lack of funds ; in the third place he was both anxious about his loved one, and sad with regard to the future.

The picture which he was painting for Giovanni de' Medici to present to the King of Naples was much affected by the friar's state of mind, and hung fire; the frame for the picture had cost him full thirty florins, since the Medici was particular about the thickness and quality of the gilding, and he had received but fourteen in advance: moreover, the landlord of his studio was clamouring loudly for the rent.

It is true that he might easily have raised money by means of a mortgage on his house in the Gorellina, but he never entertained this idea seriously—whatever happened, Lucrezia must have a roof above her head; so he fought on.

So on the twentieth day of July he sat down, and, wiping the sweat from his brow, penned a laborious letter to Messer de' Medici stating the hardships of the case. After telling his patron that the lack of funds was keeping the work at a standstill, he asked him to instruct his agent to advance him a small amount, in consideration of which (please mark this) he would reduce the hundred florins, which had been arranged as the price of the picture, to sixty florins. He promised to finish the picture within a month, and ended this pathetic letter

with : " Answer me at once, I implore, as I am dying here and wish to depart."

The advance must have been made, and we may be sure that the mercantile mind of the Florentine banker rejoiced at the thought of obtaining a hundred-florin picture for sixty florins. Cosimo de' Medici would not have treated the artist thus, but Filippo knew his man in the person of Giovanni.

But though the advance was made, the picture refused to come. Imagine the poor painter in the sweltering heat of July, with his landlord dunning him daily for the rent which he was unable to discharge, and the state of his sweetheart causing him indescribable torment since he could not be with her.

To add to the artist's nerve troubles, Francesco Cantansanti, Giovanni's agent, sat in his studio, constantly urging him on to his work, as though pictures could be turned out like broadcloth.

The twentieth of August came and the picture was still unfinished. Fra Filippo was in perfect torture about Lucrezia. A week's feverish work, and the picture was completed, packed, dispatched to Giovanni ; he had painted Filippo never knew, and we shall never know, for it has vanished. It may have been of exceptional

merit, for a man's best work is sometimes done under distressing circumstances. Filippo also finished the Madonna he had been painting as a gift for Giovanni de' Medici, and sent it to him with a sneer in his heart; and shaking the dust of Florence off his feet, left his landlord to seize his goods in place of rent. One may be sure that this burgher landlord made a good bargain, else he would have pursued the friar farther.

All this is solid truth—there are the letters to prove it. For a rich banker like the Medici to take advantage of an artist's lack of ready money in order to bleed him, is a sidelight that seems to have been overlooked: certainly, if Fra Filippo had not been accustomed to be ground down by his rich patrons he would never have dared to pen such an epistle. If all were known, one would probably find that the improvident artist had been fleeced right and left by his wealthy patrons: it has almost always been the practice of the respected merchant to take advantage of the impecuniosity of the artist, the creator and the inventor, to obtain something that is worth a fortune for a mere song. The artist-creator goes down to posterity as a thriftless ne'er-do-weel, the merchant has a

statue erected in his memory; such is life—anyhow, we find Cantansanti moralising to Giovanni after Filippo's goods had been distained: "You see now to what dangers this man exposes himself."

There was a thunder-storm among the Apennines, the air was still and to the last degree oppressive. Fra Filippo urged on his stumbling mule, for he had reached the outskirts of Prato and was in a torture of excitement. He rode to his house in the Via delle Tre Gore, and, regardless of his habit, regardless of gossip, threw himself off his mule and ran to the door; for a thin, insistent cry greeted him.

Spinetta opened the door as he approached: "Is it well?" he cried.

"It is well with her," she answered, embracing him; her voice sank to a whisper: "It is well with your son," she added.

He tried to push past her, but she detained him: "The babe is full ten days old; but, still, calm yourself before you see her."

A neighbour from across the way peeped from behind her window-curtain. Here was the secret of this mysterious house: and the girl, undisguised by cloak or wrapper, was Spinetta

Buti, whom she had known in the past. You may be sure this set the gossips gossiping.

Spinetta led Filippo into the parlour, and poured out a measure of wine to refresh and calm him, and brought a towel to wipe off the dust and grime: "You may see her now," she said, and pushed him through the doorway.

Lucrezia had the proud gleam of motherhood in her eyes, and her face was adorned with that indescribable vitality, delicacy, and freshness which is the gift of all young mothers. All lines and care-marks had vanished.

"Your son, Filippo!"

She uncovered the tender pink lump of humanity that lay in her arm, and, laughing softly and gladly: "May I present you to Messer Filippino Lippi, Filippo; he is already christened."

Filippo stooped over the baby; he had ceased to cry, and stared at him with solemn eyes.

"See, he knows his father," she said.

Filippo was speechless; there are times when silence means so much more than speech.

Presently Lucrezia drew Filippo's head close to hers. "I have been shriven, dear one," she whispered. "Of course the absolution was given on the strength of our resolution, but I may trust the father of my babe."

He was stroking Lucrezia's hair gently, and feasting his eyes on little Filippino when Spinetta entered: "The priest from the Pieve has called; will you see him, Filippo?" Her eyes challenged him.

Fra Filippo groaned—it was bringing him to earth with a vengeance: "I will be scourged first."

He met Spinetta's eyes angrily, but a soft white hand touched his, and a very gentle voice pleaded: "See him, for my sake"; so he went.

This priest was the one whose confessional Lucrezia had visited the previous Easter; he was old and feeble, also he had seen much trouble and acquired much of the virtue of charity: "I know all, though of course I did not know the name of the man until now; it would be absurd to pretend that I do not know the great painter by sight."

Fra Filippo muttered ing, awkwardly.

"It is the time for plain speaking, Padre, and I am a very old man, so you must listen with patience. No," he smiled as the friar knit his brows, "I am not your judge—only your friend, and the friend of the poor girl in there"

"If I had been a great artist, and much sought after like you, Fra Filippo, God only knows

what might have happened to me ; but I am only a simple old priest, who has had no temptations of this nature."

The friar's brows relaxed.

"I have the greatest respect for the brave woman who has repented so nobly, Fra Filippo ; I have a deep respect for the man who has not hindered her repentance ; I have the deepest respect for the man," he laid his hand on the friar's arm, "who suggested that he should henceforth meet the woman in the presence of Sister Spinetta."

"It was but honest !"

"It was but honest, Padre : and yet how many of us are so honest ?"

The friar looked down in confusion.

"You have a hard task before you, Fra Filippo, and you will need all the grace you can obtain to fulfil it worthily. It is true that Sister Lucrezia is strong now in the fervour of her repentance ; but," he looked at the friar keenly, "she may have her moments of weakness, especially as she loves you deeply."

Fra Filippo sighed. "God help me !" he said.

"Yes, God help you, Padre ! Without this help you and she run a great risk. It is easy

enough to plan that you will only see her in the presence of her sister—and yet it is not easy to make such a resolve, which must win you merit ; but suppose Sister Spinetta should be out when you call, and—— I need not enlarge on the subject. You see my point ? ”

The friar bent his head.

“ You and she are only human, Padre. You as well as she need supernatural help.”

“ You mean—— ? ”

“ You, as well as she, need the sacraments.”

“ Impossible ! How could I receive absolution until she has returned to the cloister ? ”

The priest seated himself : “ This is a most difficult case, and I am no learned theologian ; but I have prayed much about it, and this seems to me to be the outcome of my prayers.”

“ You mean Lucrezia’s repentance ? ”

“ No, no, no ! I mean your course of action.”

He became very earnest : “ As I have told you, I am no moral theologian—only a simple parish priest and your friend ; my conclusion may be quite wrong. Bah ! I am no use—only a stupid old man ; you should go to the Bishop.”

“ I would rather have your advice.”

“ It will be but foolish advice, since my heart often runs away with my head. It seems to me

that it is only reasonable to allow the mother to remain with the babe until it is weaned: and yet——” He was very fearful lest he should give wrong counsel.

“And yet?”

“Bah! There is no ‘and yet’; because I am only talking to you as a friend. But I am sure of this: if you sometimes see each other—I am inclined to think that you ought not to meet again——”

The friar’s look of distress melted the old priest’s heart: “Well, well! Padre, I must not be too hard: if you sometimes meet each other it must be only in the presence of Sister Spinetta. If Sister Spinetta happens to be absent when you call,” he became very emphatic, “you must run away immediately. You see?”

“Yes, that is just!”

“If you would live thus, it is absolutely necessary that you have the grace of the sacraments.”

Fra Filippo nodded his assent: he knew his own weakness.

“It is just possible that the Bishop may grant me special faculties to deal with this matter, if you desire to place yourself right with Almighty God. You are in earnest, Padre?”

"I cannot say, Messere. I seem to have but little love for religion left."

"That is but natural! Living as you have been living for the past year, you might easily have lost your faith entirely. Think of the joy which your repentance would bring to Sister Lucrezia!"

"I must think over the matter. I will see you again to-morrow."

The priest made his farewell and departed; but that evening the neighbour who had seen the first arrival of the friar was busy, and the names of Fra Filippo and Spinetta were whispered together. However, scandal may run many times round a town before some one makes it his duty to inform the ecclesiastical authority of the affair.

CHAPTER XII

THE ACCUSATION

MORE than three years and nine months had passed since the little Filippino had enriched the world with his presence, and on May 8, 1461, Messer Ignotus of Prato was much annoyed. Although the personal feeling of this unknown person is quite unimportant, its effect on the art of Fra Filippo and on the lives of both Filippo and Lucrezia are of supreme importance. But I anticipate.

As soon as her baby was between fifteen and sixteen months old, and could be left safely with its father, Lucrezia had carried out her resolution and returned to the convent, Spinetta accompanying her. The agony of parting from her lover was long past; for since the tragedy in the olive-grove below Fiesole, Filippo had visited her but seldom, and then only in the presence of Spinetta. The human pain of this separation had been more than counterbalanced by the spiritual joy of seeing her beloved make his peace

with God and return to his duties as chaplain of the convent. Nay, more than this: there seems to have been a complete, sincere, and lasting reformation in the life of the friar; for he, who had been so slack in his spiritual duties formerly, said his Mass and performed his priestly duties daily. From this time a nobleness, dignity, and spirituality crept into his paintings, and from this time we never find Fra Filippo in debt or legal difficulties. Moreover when Lucrezia returned to the convent she had the daily joy of kneeling in her stall whilst the man, whose soul she had saved, humbly said the Mass.

This sounds rather as though the two had become saints in their self-abnegation, but a moment's thought will show that it was not so. What could Lucrezia, or any other naturally good woman do, when the gravity of the sin was realised, except break off the connection and return to the convent? What could any honest man do, when he realised that he had beguiled an innocent maid, except strive to make her path of repentance easy for her? It is possible that Fra Filippo's repentance was chiefly due to his love for Lucrezia, and I fancy he often glanced up to catch one glimpse of her face as he left the chapel. But who are we that we should judge

motives, and it is probable that Fra Filippo's motives were not unpleasing to Almighty God. Some day we shall be astonished to find how many men have been saved through the influence of a true love for a good woman—but to return to Lucrezia.

A spotless year of probation under the kind rule of the new Abbess, Jacopa de' Bovacchiesi, who had succeeded her sister, and who had known and loved Lucrezia in the past, had been followed by a solemn renewal of the vows of chastity and obedience to the rules of St. Augustine: Lucrezia was once again a fully professed nun.

What the pain of parting from the little Filippino had been can only be imagined by one who is herself a mother. From a man's point of view, it would have been far easier for Lucrezia to have followed the original counsel and left the tiny babe. But she would have none of this; she refused to leave the babe as an unknown foundling in a House of Mercy; she remained bravely on until she could leave the child in the care of its father. Then when her little one was old enough to toddle to her with its arms held out, to call her, to hold up its face in search of kisses, she left it in order to serve her God.

Well, as I said, on May 8, 1461, Messer Ignotus

of Prato was feeling much annoyed. The feud between this unknown gentleman and Ser Piero d'Antonio di Ser Vannozzo, procurator of the Convent of Santa Margherita, was of long standing; but, the night before, Ser Piero had clinched a heated argument by informing Messer Ignotus that he had the tongue of a viper and the soul of a cat, which had angered him past endurance.

So, after drinking half a bottle of wine, Messer Ignotus took his parchment and pen to formulate an anonymous accusation against the said Ser Piero di Vannozzo: "To you, the guardians of the night and monasteries of the city of Florence," he began, carefully disguising his handwriting, and proceeded to indite a grave charge against Ser Piero's morals: "And if you wish to find him, you will find him each day in the convent." He stopped to read his charge over carefully. It did not sound convincing, for one expects to find the man who does the shopping and outside business of the nuns "each day in the convent" to receive orders; nor did the foregoing sentence, "this is known to many persons in Prato," ring quite true.

But stay: there was the chaplain of the same convent who had erred, with a son to prove his sin. This was much more sure as evidence than

the vague "many persons in Prato," so he continued his accusation: "You will find him each day in the convent, together with another man named Fra Filippo; and the latter excuses himself by stating that he is the chaplain, while the former says that he is the procurator. And the said Fra Filippo has had a male child by one named——" What on earth was the girl's name?

He thought a moment; then going to the foot of the stairs, shouted to his wife: "Who was the girl you saw embracing Fra Filippo, ten days after his son was born?"

"Spinetta Buti," came the answer.

"Spinetta what?"

"Spinetta Buti, dear," she repeated.

The complete answer was still unintelligible, but that did not matter, since there would only be one Spinetta in the convent; so troubling nothing he returned to his parchment: "——a male child by one named Spinetta. And he has this same child in his house, who is growing up and is called Filippino."

Again he read through his calumny: "Ah! that will convince them; there is the boy to prove my charge against Fra Filippo, so they will also believe my other accusation."

He finished and sealed his accusation; finished

his bottle and part of a second ; and going out under the cover of the dusk, slipped the document into a box placed at the doorway of the Pieve. It may be read by any one, who troubles to look it up, in Florentine archives now.

These anonymous accusations, or *tamburazione*, were somewhat similar to those of Venice, and went before a bench of nine staid and married magistrates, whose duties included the overlooking of religious institutions. The tribunal was originally instituted to enable the poor to bring forward any public scandals without fear of after-consequences ; but the secret accusations were too often used (as all anonymous charges are) as vehicles of personal spite. It is an easy thing to accuse an enemy anonymously : also, although the charge might not be proved, some of the mud must stick, and some other damaging facts might come to light.

It was several days before the *tamburazione* bore fruit. Fra Filippo and Fra Diamante had finished their dinner, and after romping with the small Filippino, were inciting him to draw their portraits on the back of a panel.

Filippino was holding the stick of charcoal firmly, and had just achieved a portrait that was a delightful caricature of Fra Diamante, when

there was a knock at the door, and an official handed in a document from the *Ufficiali di Novizie e Monasterii* citing Fra Filippo to appear before the tribunal.

Fra Filippo read the document—he could not guess its import. Again he read it through and, after wetting his lips, courteously thanked the official. As soon as the door was closed he handed the parchment to Diamante. Fra Diamante read it once, twice, thrice, and, after venting his feelings in a soft low whistle, caught up the little Filippino and carried him off to the old Tuscan nurse whom Filippo had engaged to care for him.

“My Filippo,” quoth Diamante, when he had returned and hung a cloth over the keyhole to guard against eavesdroppers: “this is a grave matter.”

“It is,” said Filippo: he had told Diamante all, or nearly all, when he brought Filippino to their house in the Piazza del Mercatale.

“And you propose?”

“To tell the truth, guarding only Lucrezia’s name: she has repented and been absolved, they cannot demand that.”

Fra Diamante looked at his friend and marvelled. The man who could bluster and

forgive by turns, the man who could be obstinate to the last degree when confronted with torture, and irresolute when met with calm, gentle strength, was gone. The man who stood before him was magnificent in his new-found virtue.

"I shall tell the truth, concealing only Lucrezia's name," he repeated.

Fra Diamante was silent: he saw a man who was as far above him in strength and determination of purpose as he was in mastery of art.

The *Ufficiali di Notte e Monasterii* were seated. Fra Filippo and the subordinates were standing. The charge was read.

"I swear by the Mass and my hope of salvation that this charge, as it stands, is false. Remove your officials—hear the case *in camera*—and I will tell you all."

"The mother of this Filippino?" asked the senior magistrate when they were alone.

"Was a nun."

"Her name?"

"I cannot tell her name, for she has repented and has been restored to her order."

"Can you tell me if she belonged to the order of St. Augustine?"

Fra Filippo paused a moment: "Yes, she belonged to the Augustinians."

"In Prato?"

Again he paused: "Yes, at Santa Margherita."

The President of the Council was an old man, mellow and kindly: "May I ask," he said, "if this scandal has ceased, and you and the nun have both repented? This question is non-official."

"It has ceased, and we have repented," answered the friar.

They conferred for some five minutes whispering softly together. Then the President turned to Fra Filippo: "The accusation has been recorded, therefore the judgment must be recorded; also the Abbess of Santa Margherita must be notified about our judgment."

The friar bent his head.

"Speaking outside our office, we have heard many good things of Fra Filippo during recent months; also we respect and believe the honesty of his evidence. But nevertheless the accusation has been recorded, and a fitting judgment must be recorded. Alas! this is not a confessional, where mercy transcends justice."

The friar stood before them: his face was pale but firm.

"We remove Fra Filippo Lippi from his post as chaplain of the Convent of Santa Margherita, and we forbid him again to enter the convent."

"It is just!" whispered Fra Filippo: his lips were very dry.

"And now, Fra Filippo," continued the President, "we ask a personal favour of you. Can you recommend a successor? This question shows our confidence in you."

"Fra Diamante."

"He is to be trusted?"

"He is good: also he is as cold-blooded as a lobster."

A wave of laughter passed over the magisterial bench. "We wish our judgment could have been otherwise," said the President, "but——"

"It is just," said the friar.

"It is just," added the President, "and, alas! justice cannot always be tempered with mercy."

Fra Filippo left the council chamber, and instinctively turned towards his house. As he crossed the Piazza a little child fell on the stone pavement, and lay close to him crying bitterly, but Filippo did not heed it. A pretty, fair-haired girl, who had heard some whispers concerning the gay life of the friar, glanced up at him saucily, but he did not see her. Fra Dia-

mante was watching for him at the window, and came to open the door with questions on his lips. "I am suspended," muttered the friar, and passed on.

Then Filippino ran towards him, and he caught the child in his arm and hugged it to him. Some electric thrill of sympathy ran from father to son, and Filippino kissed Filippo's burning eyes and smoothed his head. "I shall never see her again, bambino," Filippo whispered, and at last he broke down.

Some years ago, when Filippo got into trouble—and his troubles were not infrequent—he would fuss and fume a little, and go and tell it all to Lalage of the baby eyes and dainty chin. Now he hugged the little Filippino in his arms.

Sweet Lucrezia! wise Lucrezia! to leave him a pledge of her love, old enough to comfort him, before she returned to the convent.

Now, if a man has a past, a somewhat wild and wayward past, and he turns over a new leaf, he is exceedingly sensitive about that past. Within twenty-four hours the finding of the tribunal was known to all Prato, and within forty-eight hours a variegated account of the reason of the finding was common property. Also many weird and highly coloured stories

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Anderson Photo.

Academy, Florence.

"LALAGE OF THE BABY EYES."

of Fra Filippo's earlier life were passed from mouth to ear.

Consequently when Fra Filippo walked forth he was met with averted head by some, a knowing smile by others, and again certain of the fair ones gave him a glimpse of pearly teeth and a flash of enticing eyes: then, as now, many of the Prato girls were consummate flirts—almost all were pretty.

Fra Filippo went through this with a stiff lip, ignoring snubs, blind to allurements. Yet, day by day the shame and debasement bit deeper and deeper into his soul. This was his purgatory.

At first his only comfort was the little Filippino. Later, when the misery of his daily life had blunted the pang of his permanent separation from Lucrezia, he found consolation in the sympathy of Diamante.

All the while the authorities at the Pieve were clamouring for a continuation of the frescoes: the moral character of an artist does not matter to his patrons, otherwise they must employ the most pious monks to paint saints and the worst worldlings to depict devils. But Filippo could not paint, his hand had lost its cunning: at least there are no pictures extant of this period.

He sought Florence, where people were broader

and less gossipy ; but even there his super-sensitive state of mind saw allusions to the scandal in harmless nods and kindly smiles ; so he returned to Prato to seek comfort in the endearments of baby Filippino.

Lucrezia ! Lucrezia ! How his heart yearned after Lucrezia. If she were by him, what would he care about the snubs and laughter of the world. He had never understood before how the graceful, tender girl had wound herself round his heart. If he could only catch a glimpse of her as he was leaving the altar of Santa Margherita ; but Santa Margherita was closed against him.

Fra Filippo endured this mental torture for nearly four months, growing thinner and more worn as the time passed, and then an old commission to value the paintings which Benedetto Bonfigli had just completed for the Signoria of Perugia called him away.

The promised change into a city where none knew of his misfortunes, the prospect of work that he must do, and could do, combined to put new life into him, and he resolved to pass the first night of his journey at the Medici Palace, which he had avoided for many months.

Here he realised for the first time the change

that had been wrought in him. His friends crowded round him as of old; but the racy stories, the merry jests which they looked for were dead: a man with a sad mouth and worn eyes took the place of the old Filippo. First the youths who had been attracted by his reputation for wit and joyousness slipped away; then those who had known him less intimately in the past found that they had engagements elsewhere, until finally he was left with only a few of his real friends round him: even these longed for the evening to be ended.

Then, when his friends had mostly melted away, Alberti came; and partly because he was a generous man who saw what was happening, partly because he had met Filippo and Lucrezia at St. Alessandro, he slipped his arm into Filippo's and drew him aside into the courtyard.

They paced to and fro in the coolness of the evening, until Filippo felt Alberti's arm tighten. "I know much, tell me more?" he asked.

So they walked to and fro in the coolness of the courtyard, and, beginning with the bare statement of facts, Filippo gradually unfolded his tale; for whenever Filippo touched on his feelings of shame and humiliation, the increased pressure of Alberti's arm told him, more than

words could, that Alberti understood: also Alberti had known Lucrezia.

It was growing dusk when Alberti left him, bidding him await his return. This meeting with Alberti conjured up a vivid picture of Lucrezia and their love-time at St. Alessandro; and Filippo allowed his fancy to lead him where it would, instinctively avoiding all that had been wrong and dwelling on the sweet face, rippling laugh, and dainty ways of Lucrezia. How he had misjudged Alberti in the past, calling him a hedgehog! Lucrezia had understood him better.

After some fifteen minutes Alberti came back, almost running in his excitement, and catching his arm hurried him through the hall and up the stairway, until they reached the highest landing; he opened a door and forced Filippo through it.

Filippo stood a moment, looking into the dusk until he saw a man who was old and feeble coming towards him, and recognised the cameo features of Cosimo de' Medici.

Now, Cosimo was a man of tact, so instead of muttering, "My poor Filippo," as some might have done, he greeted him warmly and bade him seat himself. Then, after lighting a lamp,

he went to a panel decorated with a finely drawn and highly imaginative map of some unexplored country, slid it back and produced a flask and two Venetian glasses: "Drink this, you need it." He filled one of the goblets, and as soon as Filippo had drained his glass he refilled it and poured a small measure into his own goblet. "Come, tell me all!"

Cosimo de' Medici was a sympathetic man and an admirable listener, now drawing Filippo out with a leading question, now laughing heartily at his application of the platonic theory. When the story was ended, Cosimo laid his hand on the friar's shoulder: "I must leave you to rest here and finish the flagon—the wine will not hurt you."

"Of a truth not," exclaimed Filippo: "this vintage is priceless."

"I will send Alberti to you. There is another flask to be found where this came from: Alberti loves a cup of wine, in spite of all his philosophy. And, Filippo, I charge you to see me on your return from Perugia."

CHAPTER XIII

THE BRIEF

ON September 4th, Filippo had completed his valuation of Bonfigli's paintings at Perugia, signing his decision, and immediately set out on his return journey to Florence. There had been something in Cosimo de' Medici's tone when he charged the friar to see him as soon as he had completed his business at Perugia which incited obedience.

He knew that his great earthly happiness was passed, and that he could never hope to see Lucrezia again; she had become to him what a wife is to her widower, a constant memory. But a man, who is a man, does not sit down and mourn—he works. So Filippo hoped for work: sometimes he hoped that the Medici would give him a commission which would take him away from Tuscany; sometimes, when the memory of Lucrezia was particularly strong, he dreamed of being restored to his priestly work, and pictured himself as rector of some small parish. But

the former day-dream predominated ; the ordinary male who has suffered from ecclesiastical discipline is apt to feel a trifle rebellious towards the Church.

Change of scene is the best of all mental remedies, and the change of scene combined with intercourse with men who were ignorant of the tattle of Prato had put new life into Filippo ; so he made his return journey quickly, reaching Florence early in the afternoon of the eighth day. He retired to his chamber for a few minutes to remove the dust of the road, and sought Cosimo, finding him in his private rooms in the Palazzo Priori.

In the past, Cosimo de' Medici had varied his acts of thoughtful kindness for his friends with plots for the increase of his power and plans for the financial ruin of his enemies ; now he turned to religion as his work and Plato as his recreation. Outside these, his two impulses were friendship and patriotism. So he met his friend Filippo with genuine pleasure, noting with satisfaction the improvement in his appearance. He bade the friar refresh himself, and left him to his own devices.

Filippo had ministered to his personal needs and was leaning back lazily, when the door

opened and Cosimo looked in: "Come," he said: "I have something to show you."

He followed Cosimo through several rooms, until he found himself in a narrow closet furnished with a single bench. Above the bench there was a small panel of pierced carving, somewhat like modern fret-saw work.

"Mount the bench and look!" commanded the Father of his People.

Filippo obeyed, smiling to himself, for he knew Cosimo's love for theatrical displays and dramatic situations. He saw the magnificent Hall of Audience below him: at one end there was a figure seated on a throne and surrounded by a crowd of ecclesiastics and richly attired laymen.

"His Holiness?"

"Yes," assented Cosimo: "His Holiness is an old man who has undertaken the enterprise of a young one; he is now endeavouring to induce us to take part in some mad scheme for a new crusade. But I want you to study the group because it may have some personal interest for you, besides suggesting a possible picture. Presently I shall approach Pius and crave a brief that is without precedent. Mark well, and form a mental picture of the proceedings."

The door closed, and Filippo was alone. He felt disappointed, since this was the evident reason why Cosimo had bid him call on his return from Perugia. But still, he was absolutely absorbed in the sight beneath ; for the very essence of art is to work for others, whether the picture is to be executed on commission or painted as a free gift to the nation : the essence of art is to convey one's impressions to others ; and though art may include pecuniary benefit, no great work of art has been attained for the entirely selfish motive of painting to please oneself.

The scene was magnificent : the scarlet dress of the citizens and a couple of Cardinals mingled with the purple of the Bishops and the sober black of the Priests ; there was a touch of brown from the habits of his order, and his Holiness clothed in white formed a centre for the groups. But the abominable foreshortening of the figures worried Filippo, and in spite of his versatile talent, it did not occur to him to paint a bird's-eye picture after the manner of some of the modern impressionists ; so he tried to reconstruct the figures as seen from below.

Long before he had assimilated the details of his subject, Cosimo de' Medici entered the Hall of Audience. He was astonished at the

way this frail, bent figure predominated over the others. Citizens, Cardinals, and Priests were merged into masses; two figures were left—Cosimo and Pope Pius.

He saw Cosimo stoop as though to kiss the cross on the Pope's shoe; he saw His Holiness hold out his ring to be kissed in place of his foot; he saw Cosimo stand before the Pontiff, drawing himself upright. Pius waved his Court aside, and the two were left alone.

They talked for a time; at the end His Holiness laughed heartily, glancing up towards the spy-hole. Filippo sprang back, forgetting for the moment that although he could see, he could not be seen. When next he looked, the Pope's secretary was kneeling before His Holiness. He knelt on his left knee, supporting a writing-board and parchment on his right knee, and was evidently transcribing from dictation. He finished writing, and after handing up the document for the Papal signature, sealed it and was about to place it in his portfolio, when the Medici whispered something to the Pope, and His Holiness, holding out his hand for the parchment, rolled it up and placed it beside him on the throne. Then Cosimo, after a few more words with His Holiness, kissed his ring and retired.

Filippo was committing the subject to memory when Cosimo returned. How he wished that the Master had placed him on the floor so that he might have seen the subject in perspective, instead of showing him the subject as a cat on the tiles views a procession.

"You have witnessed an important interview, Filippo," laughed the Medici: "His Holiness has signed a momentous Brief, since I believe it is absolutely without precedent: it is historical."

"It is difficult to see the subject, when one is perched like a bird on a tree," sighed the friar.

"His Holiness desires to give you a private audience to-morrow," continued Cosimo: "He is much interested in my version of your story, and devises something for your advancement. It may be the picturing of this ceremony on the walls of his chapel; it may be appointment as titular Canon in Rome: I am not in the complete confidence of Pope Pius."

"The last is unlikely. I am in ill-favour with the authorities at Prato."

"If you are in disgrace with the subordinates, go to the head: this is safe counsel."

Filippo shrugged his shoulders: "I hope it is a commission to paint a picture; my course as an ecclesiastic is rightly ended."

"The Pope has forbidden you to shave your tonsure, which looks as though he planned some new work for you as a churchman." Filippo's tonsure was covered with a full ten-days' growth.

"That sounds absurd!"

"Who knows the Papal mind?" If Filippo could have seen Cosimo's eyes in the half-light, he would have noticed that they twinkled. "Perhaps His Holiness may command you to be tonsured by his own barber in token that you are restored to your former status."

"Body of Bacchus!" sneered the friar, "I am not a child."

"Believe me," answered Cosimo: "His Holiness means you kindly, and I mean you kindly. I cannot tell you more."

If Filippo had been a Frenchman, or a Southern Italian, he would have kissed Cosimo. But since he was a Tuscan he merely clasped his hand.

"Filippo, you have journeyed much, and suffered much: I have ordered you a meal in my private room. There are two here from whom you may choose your companion—Alessandro degli Alessandri, and Alberti."

Alessandro of Fiesole, the head of a noble house, was an old and dear friend of Filippo's;

Alberti had often wearied him: "I should prefer Alberti," replied the friar.

"Even I sometimes find Alberti tedious," suggested Cosimo.

"He has been true and loyal," replied Filippo.

"I respect your choice," said the Medici; "but I shall prescribe Alessandro."

"As you will." Yet, in spite of his resignation, the friar's face expressed pleasure.

They had much to talk of; and, commencing with recent doings, Filippo and Alessandro gradually drifted into reminiscences, so it was late before the friar sought his couch.

Fra Filippo slept soundly, and the sun had fully risen before he woke. Probably he would have slept longer if Cosimo himself had not called him: "Remember you have an audience with His Holiness, and he desires to see you at nine."

"At nine," echoed the friar sleepily, and turned himself for another nap.

Cosimo laughed, and would have shaken him, if a lackey had not appeared bringing a breakfast of bread, grapes, and Chianti.

"I rise at daybreak when I am at Fiesole, in order to prune my fruit-trees and tend my garden," laughed Cosimo: "and you——?"

Filippo roused himself with an effort, and munched some of the grapes. . . . "I am awake at last, and I shall meet His Holiness at nine."

Again the door opened and the lackey re-entered, carrying a sheet of the choicest scarlet cloth of San Martino, woven from selected English wool. He placed it where the friar's brown habit had lain over-night.

Filippo fairly gasped. "These mysteries are too much for me," he muttered.

"His Holiness——" began Cosimo.

"Would rake up the scandal and mock me as a gallant," broke in the friar.

The Medici looked at him whimsically: "Perchance he wishes to greet you as a layman, and see you clothed in your habit and restored to the full dignity of your vocation in his presence."

Filippo filled a goblet and drank it right off quickly: "I like not these puzzles, they confuse me."

"His Holiness has bid you clothe yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and, as I said before, he means you kindly. Remember your audience is in my private library. I shall see you afterwards."

It must be confessed that the friar's burly form filled the suit admirably; it must be con-

fessed that his figure, crowned with a well-formed head and an intelligent face, formed a noble whole ; it must be confessed that as he strode forth to keep his appointment he looked every inch a man ; it must be confessed that as he entered the Papal presence, His Holiness muttered, "Of a truth I have acted rightly."

Filippo knelt to kiss the ring which was held out to him, and standing erect waited for the Pope to address him.

If Cosimo was, at this time, one of the kindest men in Italy, Pius the Second was another. He was not only kindly, but virtuous, learned, a profound student of human nature and exceedingly charitable. He had known Filippo for many years, and loved him ; for though one may respect a man for his virtues, one loves a man in spite of his faults.

"Cosimo has told me of your lapse, Fra Filippo, and of the scandal that has ensued : I purpose to right matters. But first I must hear the exact version from you."

Filippo told his story, concealing nothing. He even told how he and Lucrezia had pledged life-long vows of faithfulness.

Then His Holiness took up the thread : "Who are the ministers of marriage, Padre ?"

"The contracting parties, the man and the woman."

"In order to contract a valid marriage?"

"The couple must be free to wed, they must vow life-long constancy to each other, and they must dwell together."

"'They must be free to wed'; what do you mean by this, Fra Filippo?"

"That each must be in a state of life that allows them to contract marriage."

"Excellent, but non-committal," laughed Pope Pius: "You might as well define your Bishop as 'one who has the power and right to perform the episcopal functions.' I want something more definite, Fra Filippo. For example: what are the bars to marriage which can never be annulled?"

Filippo thought a moment: "The Divine prohibitions, which forbid a man and woman to marry whilst either has a spouse living, and which forbid those of certain near-kinship to contract marriage."

"A friar and a nun?" asked the Pontiff.

Filippo had grown very pale; he was beginning to see light: "Their vows forbid them."

"The Church, which instituted these vows of celibacy, could release them from their vows?"

"Of a truth," assented the friar.

"Your sin has been exceedingly grievous," continued Pope Pius gravely: "it has been double sacrilege, and the fact that you are also a priest makes your sin still more serious. But you have repented, and the world has meted out a most bitter punishment. I judge that you have borne this punishment humbly and bravely. I desire to free you from the results of your sin: moreover we will that the gossip and scandal shall cease."

He drew out a roll of parchment and handed it to the friar: "Read this!"

The words seemed to dance before Filippo's eyes, and he had to open and shut his eyes several times before he could focus the writing. It was a brief dispensing Fra Filippo from the obligation of his orders, releasing the twain from their monastic vows, and acknowledging Filippo Lippi and Lucrezia as lawful man and wife.

"Understand," said His Holiness, "this Brief is retrospective—your son is fully legitimate."

Filippo knelt down to kiss the Pope's shoe, and this time Pius did not prevent him; for such an act of mercy almost demanded an act of homage to the power that gave it.

"What I have loosed on earth is loosed in heaven, and what I have bound on earth is

bound in heaven. As soon as you have fetched the girl from her convent and taken her home as your spouse, a bond will have been forged that even I could not break."

Filippo rose. And then the man in Pope Pius overcame the dignity of his office, and he embraced Filippo: "God bless you!" he ejaculated. "Paint henceforth for the love and glory of God. He has been very merciful towards you "

Filippo could find no words.

"Away, my friend," urged the Pontiff. "You have yet to wrest your sweetheart from the charge of the Lady Abbess."

And Pope Pius chuckled.

CHAPTER XIV

LUCREZIA'S CHOICE

COSIMO was waiting on the landing, and stepped forward eagerly to greet Filippo as he left the Papal presence. "It is well?" he cried.

"It is well!" The artist waved his Brief. "How can I ever thank you?"

"You are my friend, Filippo. But there is one who needs you. Away! My own swift mule is saddled for you."

He laughed as he saw the artist running down the stairs like a youth.

"Filippo! Filippo! You cannot go to her like that." And clapping his hands for a lackey, he bade him fetch the barber.

He led Filippo to a mirror, and the pair laughed till they were helpless. A richly clad gallant, crowned with a crop of half-inch stubble surrounded with a ring of well-grown hair, is an object for merriment.

"It is not fashionable, but it is at least original,"

observed the Medici, when the barber had done his task: for the centre of Filippo's scalp was thick and black, whereas the outer ring was somewhat thin and somewhat grey. Also a close "French crop" was unusual in the Quattrocento.

Filippo smiled, and, embracing Cosimo, went nimbly down the stairway.

"True love is a strange thing," murmured the Medici. "I wish I had tasted it." For though he had a son, it is improbable that he had ever tasted the sweetness of love.

Filippo threw himself into the saddle, tossing a coin to the groom. Away he galloped, taking the rough track on the left-hand side of the river instead of the high road—it was shorter. He was a layman now, freed from the vows of his immaturity—free to love his love, to toil for his love, to fight for his love. He spurred onwards like a cavalier, not like a friar: the poor mule was never entirely serviceable again. Through Castello he clattered, past Sesto: here a pain seized him, and he nearly fainted. A ruptured man of fifty-five cannot ride like a boy of twenty without suffering consequences; but the ardent soul kept the poor maltreated body going, and he still spurred on. He forded the

river above Calenzano, and urged forward until he lurched out of his saddle before the convent of Santa Margherita, leaving the mule in a froth of lather.

The portress opened the grille in answer to his insistent knocking, and peered forth. At first she did not recognise the man in his lay garments: then she saw it was Filippo.

"You are forbidden entrance!" she said, and made as though to close the shutter behind the grating.

Filippo muttered something below his breath. Although it had eased him to dismount, his pain was still considerable and his nerve-strings were drawn to their highest tension.

"Read this!" He thrust the Papal Brief between the bars of the grille. The portress glanced through it and shuddered: "I must consult the Lady Abbess," she protested; "I dare not act without her sanction."

"Then hasten! hasten!" It was hard to be urged forward by the Pontiff and then to be checked by a woman, and he shook the grating violently.

"We will have the convent falling about our ears," muttered the nun; and forgetting her dignity, she fairly took to her heels and ran.

Filippo waited as patiently as he could, but the delay seemed interminable: to add to his discomfort, some of the passers-by stopped and looked on inquisitively.

At last the Lady Abbess herself appeared, and, glancing at his face to make certain, passed him out the Brief.

"I do not know His Holiness's signature, and I cannot admit you without further confirmation: this thing is too impossible."

"Dare you fly in the face of His Holiness?"

The Abbess set her jaw firmly: "I dare fly in the face of this document; but I dare not admit you without further authority."

Filippo stamped his foot: "You believe it is a forgery?" He was growing very angry, and already the crowd was swelling.

"I require that the Papal signature should be verified, otherwise I dare not admit you."

Some one in the crowd, who had caught the bent of the conversation, laughed.

Filippo remembered the chuckle of Pope Pius, and laughed too. Even in his anger and impatience, the situation had a comic side.

So Filippo was forced to curb his impatience and go; for he had no wish to make a spectacle of himself and the Lady Abbess, like a

Pontius Pilate and Judas show during the Carnival.

He thought of seeking the old priest who had absolved himself and Lucrezia, but the arguments of a simple priest would hardly remove the convictions of a Lady Abbeſs. Then an inspiration seized him, and he sought the chief magistrate of "The Guardians of the Night"—the one who had felt himself unable to temper justice with mercy.

He was fortunate enough to find the magistrate at home, and also in a good temper, for he had just finished a most satisfactory dinner. He welcomed Filippo, and after pouring out a glass of wine for him, perused the Brief carefully.

"I have to congratulate you, Messer Lippi," he laughed. "I will call two other of my comrades who live hard by, and we will compare the signature with that on a rescript in our archives. His Holiness has taken a kind step, and moreover a wise step; for such a wise and kindly action tends to confirm our faith in this age of disbelief; but I fear me he has shocked these holy women."

"It seems so," assented Filippo.

"His Holiness may grant a dispensation, but it rests with you to accept it, Messer Lippi."

"I have accepted it."

"But the lady must accept it also."

"She will accept it"; and Filippo threw back his head.

"Who can tell what scruples, whims, and fancies may sway a woman's mind?" protested the magistrate, thinking of his own spouse.

But Filippo was thinking of Lucrezia: "This one will accept it," he asserted.

Then the magistrate, realising Filippo's anxiety, roused himself; and fetching two of his comrades, carried them off in haste to verify the signature.

He bade Filippo wait at the entrance of the Pieve until he had seen the Abbess of Santa Margherita: "If I have closed the convent door to you," he smiled, "I can surely open it." But it took many and strong words to convince the Abbess and persuade her to admit Filippo.

It was the same little portress who opened the door, with her eyes downcast and her head averted; but it was the Lady Abbess who met him at the entrance of the cloisters and led him into the empty community room.

"I should have thought," she commenced, "that after what has passed you would have sought the shelter of the Carmine and left Sister Lucrezia to perfect her repentance here."

Filippo answered nothing.

"I cannot deny the Brief of His Holiness, yet——" The ruse was eloquent, for the dispensation seemed to uproot the very foundations of her ideals respecting the religious life; but even a Lady Abbess cannot be openly shocked at the action of the Sovereign Pontiff: "I will send Sister Lucrezia to you; she must judge," she concluded.

It is probable that the Abbess exhorted Lucrezia to take the hard path of self-sacrifice, for many minutes passed before they entered the room.

There was no hesitation about Lucrezia. She turned to the Lady Abbess: "I gave up Filippo for the love of God; shall I reject God's gift when He restores him to me?" and she went to Filippo and threw her arms round him.

"I am like St. Thomas," murmured the Lady Abbess, and she kissed Lucrezia on either cheek, holding out her hand to Filippo.

Lucrezia's way seems the right method of accepting a dispensation.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOME-COMING

MESSER FILIPPO LIPPI and his wife Lucrezia left the convent of Santa Margherita.

Lucrezia was still clothed in her habit, with Filippo's ample cloak thrown round her; for although the Abbess had hunted out various garments, the gifts of the faithful to be distributed amongst the poor, there was nothing quite sound enough to serve. Some of the children's clothes were admirable, but those of the adults were over well-worn.

At parting the Abbess had completely discarded her aspect of shocked resignation, and had bidden Lucrezia come and see her frequently.

They had walked some twenty yards when Lucrezia dropped her husband's arm, exclaiming: "How selfish my happiness has made me! I have forgotten poor Spinetta;" and she ran back to say good-bye to her sister.

Filippo waited, leaning against the wall of

a wine-shop. The savoury smell of cooking reached his nostrils, and he realized that although he might be mentally content he was physically famished.

A small boy came and gazed at him with evident admiration. Filippo remembered the same urchin mocking him when he was in disgrace. Clearly a fine suit of scarlet cloth makes a vast difference, commanding much respect, as Cosimo often remarked.

At length Lucrezia returned, and Filippo stepped to meet her. Her eyes suggested that the leave-taking had not been painless, but at the sight of her lover gladness came into her face and she looked radiantly happy: also, she was one of those exceptional women who can shed some tears without becoming unattractive.

The cloak had become slightly disarranged, showing a strip of white habit, which Filippo pointed out to her; for the sight of a gay gallant eloping with an Augustinian nun in broad daylight would have created a fresh scandal. Lucrezia hurriedly righted her garments, blushing and laughing.

"Where are you taking me, Filippo?"

"To our old home."

"Eh?"

"It was sentiment; but, save the shop on the ground floor, I could never bear to let the house."

She squeezed his arm; and I think that this little proof of Filippo's love was the crowning point to Lucrezia's joy. For though women despise sentimentality in a man, they love honest sentiment, which is quite a different thing.

The door had hardly closed before Lucrezia was in Filippo's arms, clinging to him convulsively. They were silent, for no words could meet the case.

"Filippo," she whispered, "some would say that our lives should be one of penance, but I think God means them to be one glad happiness."

She felt him tremble; his hand clutched hers, and she heard a rapid intaking of his breath which sounded suspiciously like a sob. She had seen him break down once before, and dreaded a repetition. So she loosed herself from him, only to throw her arms round his neck and kiss him passionately on the lips. Then she nestled up to him with a sigh of perfect contentment.

Now, what Lucrezia said and did, as she nestled in Filippo's arms, is only known to Almighty God who created nature, and the angel who records such doings in amazement.

If Filippo had been himself it is probable that Lucrezia would have been more reserved.

But Filippo had been through much that day, and— Well, believe me, a husband treasures up such an incident in his heart, even as a mediæval knight would cherish the love-token of his mistress, and it inspires much loyalty. A husband who has a mate like Lucrezia will never seek consolation elsewhere.

But this contentment was not lasting, for something was tugging hard at Lucrezia's heart-strings: "My baby!" she pleaded.

Even in the midst of his fevered ride Filippo had foreseen the question. He had foreseen that there must be a pang when Filippino ran to him, ignoring the mother whom he had forgotten.

"Presently, little one. I have had but a mouthful of grapes and some sups of wine this morning. When we have dined, I will bring our son to you."

This acted as a stimulant to rouse the housewifely part of Lucrezia's nature. The babe was set on one side, not because he was overlooked, but because Lucrezia had disciplined herself in the hard school of voluntary self-abnegation.

"I must prepare your dinner for you, Filippo," she said: "this is very sweet." Then: "God is very good to me."

They were still standing in the passage, and

Filippo, slipping his arm round her waist, led her towards the dining-room: "I fear you will find our house neglected. Our marriage was a surprise."

They opened the door and started back in wonder. The table was spread with snowy linen, decked with a banquet that passed belief. A cold peacock, larded, with its neck and tail blazing with gorgeous plumage, was at one end of the board; a boar's head, grinning horribly over the lemon which distended its jaws, complete even to its burnt-sugar whiskers, was at the other. Dishes of ortolans, anchovies, salads, and the like bridged the intervening spaces; a wealth of flowers and a choice selection of pastries, sweetmeats, and fruits showed that Lucrezia had not been forgotten. The whole was flanked with a huge flask of Venetian glass, closed with a golden stopper, and filled with Falernian of a vintage which was worth a Pope's ransom.

Lucrezia swung the flask and filled a goblet with the wine. She took a tiny sip, handing the glass to Filippo, with the place, where her lips had touched, next him. He remembered her action as long as he lived, and was wont to say that if all wives were as gracious as his, all husbands would remain lovers.

"Run upstairs and remove your habit," laughed Filippo: "I will not sit down with a little crop-haired nun." But as soon as she had left him, I grieve to state that he foraged amongst the anchovies, olives, and ortolans to stay his hunger, for such is the way of men.

"Filippo! Filippo!" Lucrezia's excited voice travelled down the staircase.

He mounted the stairway, suffering much pain in his ascent; but he had the courage to suppress a groan; for he would not dash Lucrezia's happiness on their wedding day.

Opposite the door of their sleeping-chamber stood a large marriage chest, richly gilt, and decorated with paintings. In the centre of the panel there was a triumphal car drawn by two unicorns of quaint design, and on this stood the figure of chastity: a bevy of maidens surrounded the chariot, and a pathetic little Cupid was bound to the rear of the vehicle. Next came a figure of love, riding in state and drawn by four white horses, those that walked with the car were very joyous, and the two cars formed one symbolical procession. But a third car was meeting these, and on it stood death. Filippo smiled to himself, for the allegory seemed to fit his case.

If "in the midst of life we are in death" is

true, it is equally true that the greatest happiness is snatched out of surrounding mental or physical troubles. Joys coming in the midst of a pleasant life are but tame, and Filippo's injury only served to accentuate his happiness and throw it into perspective.

Lucrezia had raised the lid, and was looking round for Filippo with flushed cheeks. "See!" she cried; for a woman who ceases to interest herself in her dress has ceased to be a woman, and within the coffer lay a complete trousseau.

On the top of the clothes there rested a book entitled "Trattato della Famiglia," and taking it up she showed her husband an inscription on the fly-leaf, stating that since Messer Cosimo de' Medici had furnished the marriage feast, Leon Battista Alberti begged to contribute to the marriage coffer.

Filippo's pain seemed to vanish in Lucrezia's evident pleasure, and whilst Lucrezia donned the most becoming dress, without bidding Filippo cover his eyes as she had bidden Spinetta, Filippo sat on their bed and turned over the pages of Alberti's book.

"It is complete," he chuckled: "Alberti even instructs you on the choosing of a fitting wet-nurse."

"He is premature," laughed Lucrezia. "But you have no heart, Filippo; you must not ridicule Messer Alberti." Then a fascinating little throb of compunction came over her, and going to her husband she bent down her face to be kissed: "I think you are all heart, Filippo!"

"They say that marriage kills love," chuckled the artist. "You are only doing this through a sense of duty." But Lucrezia soon convinced him of his error.

She continued her robing, and Filippo continued to read extracts from Alberti's masterpiece, until he was forced to stop and chide his wife for her heartless conduct in laughing at her benefactor.

"How this man is wasted as a bachelor," rejoined Lucrezia: "he would direct the servants, and oversee the cooking; and—and—I think he would even suckle the babies; and——" But her laughter made her speechless.

"Oh, Filippo!" she cried, as she regained her breath: "what a dolt of a husband I have! Can you even tell me which tooth our baby cut first?" And then she hurried with her toilet, for the mention of her baby aroused an intense longing for the little Filippino.

They were a well-matched couple as they walked down the stairway, the burly form of

the artist setting forth the graceful figure of Lucrezia to its best advantage. There was nothing of the nun left in her appearance, save a pretty trick of folding her hands before her, since she had covered her short locks with a peaked head-gear which had a falling veil behind.

They sat side by side, and the dinner took time. There was so much to talk of; and when a couple keep on holding hands like children, a meal becomes protracted. It is also sad to relate that the banquet was wasted on Filippo, for he thought much more of the girl beside him than of the food before him: once he found himself eating boar's head and ortolans together, which would surely have broken the heart of the Medici's cook had he known it.

The solid portion of the dinner was finished, and, having filled his glass, Filippo leant back intending to feast his eyes on his sweetheart, as she busied herself with the fruits and dainties as she used to do when they had dined at St. Alessandro: but instead she laid her hand on his arm: "My baby!" she pleaded.

He shook himself, and walked towards the door. "Does aught ail you, Filippo?" She noted that he halted in his stride, and her voice was anxious.

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Hausstängel Photo.

Berlin Gallery.

"THE BERLIN MADONNA" IS PAINTED IN THE CLASSICAL STYLE.

"I am stiff through rapid riding," he answered, and left the room.

He passed down the Via Santa Margherita, finding the mule still hitched to a post near the convent door—he had completely forgotten it—so he climbed into the saddle and ambled across the Piazza del Mercatale.

It was fortunate that Diamante had returned to his painting in the Pieve. Filippo was in no state to enter into lengthy reasoning; and when the little Filippino was brought out in answer to his summons, he placed the child before him, riding off without a word of explanation.

He tried to tell the child about his mother, with but scanty success, for the boy was enraptured by the mule, and Filippo opened the door of his house with a sinking heart.

But here the unexpected happened. It may have been some shreds of memory in the small brain, it may have been the personality of the gentle woman who held out her arms to him so ardently, who held him so comfortably, who kissed him so tenderly—anyhow, from that moment Filippino loved his mother above all things. He loved her when he made his will, leaving her the house where he was born; he loved her until she died; and the most worthy of Filippino's

Madonnas suggest the idealized, etherealized Lucrezia who formed the central figure in his father's last masterpiece at Spoleto.

There was no happier family than these three.

"God is very good!" smiled Lucrezia.

realized
in his
three.

CHAPTER XVI

A WIFE'S VERDICT

THE afternoon had almost passed, and the evening was stealing over Prato, when Messer Lippi sought out Fra Diamante in their house in the Piazza del Mercatale. His friend greeted him warmly, questioning him about his lay apparel.

"I will explain matters presently," said Filippo. "I adopted this colour scheme on the advice of the Sovereign Pontiff."

"And the child?" inquired the friar.

"I have engaged a new nurse for him on the recommendation of His Holiness," replied Filippo.

"But his Tuscan nurse was so capable and devoted."

"The nurse recommended by His Holiness is also Tuscan; she is also more capable and more devoted; she is also younger and more comely."

"Pish!" said Diamante.

"Come and see," invited Filippo: "the affair has the highest ecclesiastical sanction."

They crossed the Piazza together, Diamante asking many questions and Filippo answering with enigmas, since it is sometimes pleasant to puzzle a friend.

It was a pretty sight that met them as they entered the room: the child was cuddling up to his mother, as he had never nestled up to any one else, and she on her part was telling him stories of the middle-world: he did not understand much, except that her voice pleased him.

The two stopped on the threshold, for they had entered silently and the dusk had fallen. These were quaint stories that Lucrezia was telling: how, "Once upon a time," some of the angels had refused to side either with Michael or Lucifer, and were therefore condemned to dance amongst the flowers and play with pine-needles, instead of being allowed to share the intellectual bliss of heaven. The doings and tricks and playings of these middle-folk were most entertaining.

These stories enraptured the two artists, just as they fascinated the child when he grew a little older, but they bore no results: afterwards

they exercised much influence on the works of Filippo's pupil Sandro Botticelli, as his pictures testify.

Presently Lucrezia rose and lit a lamp, for the dusk was merging into darkness; and as the light fell upon Lucrezia's face Diamante recognised her from her husband's pictures, and his clasp tightened on Filippo's arm.

"You have abducted her again," he whispered.

"At the Pope's bidding," and Filippo laughed with huge enjoyment. He led Diamante into the circle of the lamp-light and the presence of the startled Lucrezia

"This is Fra Diamante," he explained. "He knows nothing; show him the Papal Brief."

Lucrezia produced the parchment, somewhat defiantly, and handed it to her husband, who passed it on to Diamante.

He read it through and returned it to Filippo. "Pope Pius has used his keys to much purpose," he remarked. Then he turned to Lucrezia, for he was sometimes possessed with tact:

"I told your husband that your face was not the face of one who had a vocation towards the religious life."

"Yes!" said Lucrezia, with her brows contracted.

"I made him confess that yours was the face of his ideal wife," continued the friar.

"Yes!" answered Lucrezia, more gently.

"The Brief of His Holiness states, *ex cathedra*, that your vocation was to be the wife of Filippo."

The husband clapped him on the back, whilst the wife held out her hand graciously: thenceforward the three were close friends.

"It is not so high a vocation as the religious life," said Lucrezia humbly.

"Of a truth," quoth Diamante: "ye who shall compare the excellence of St. Peter with that of the Angel Raphael?"

There was a silence: then, like all craftsmen, whether they wield a brush or a pen, Filippo and Diamante turned to their work as the most important subject for discussion.

Diamante was loud in his complaints about the plasterers who were preparing the surface for the Pieve frescoes, each morning spreading the small portion of plaster that would be painted on during the day so that the damp plaster might suck in the paint until it formed a permanent portion of the wall surface. For not only did he consider the plaster of inferior quality, but also the workmen were so dilatory that the morning was partly spent before he could commence painting.

"It needs your husband to manage these plasterers," he wailed to Lucrezia. "I may scold and threaten, without avail; Filippo simply laughs at them until they fear him more than death. Antonio is late: 'Did your wife keep you at home to scrub the floors this morning, or was it to tend the baby whilst she went gossiping?' Carlo is late: he asks Carlo whether it was his latest sweetheart who had beguiled him, naming the girl. Filippo seems to know the private history of each man, so that he can touch him on the tender spot."

"Filippo generally has his way," she assented.

"Even with His Holiness," suggested Diamante.

They laughed, and Filippo began to tell Diamante the result of his journey to Perugia. He described the wonderful paintings of Piero della Francesca at Arezzo. He described his method of mixing his pigments with oil, instead of albumen and fig-tree sap. He told how he had tarried several days, studying the majesty of Francesca's figures and the marvellous accuracy of his perspective drawing. "He is a great artist," concluded Filippo, "and I have learnt something."

Again, he was enthusiastic in his praise of Bonfigli's paintings at Perugia, pointing out how he had a quaint dignity of style which was

somewhat similar to that of the Flemings, and quite unlike the wooden handling of the earlier Italians. Again he ended: "I have learnt something."

During this discourse Diamante yawned several times; but Lucrezia, who had absorbed the atmosphere of the studio in her former sojourn with Filippo, was deeply interested.

"Who is like Filippo?" she cried. "At an age when he might well be a grandfather, he is mastering new ideas and planning new methods."

"Why trouble?" protested Diamante. "His work is good as it stands, and earns good money."

Lucrezia laughed, and her husband joined with her.

"I think," she explained to Diamante, "that Filippo puts other men's work through a sieve, sifting out all that is good and rejecting all that is bad. He takes this mass of material and kneads it into a new and real style of his own. Filippo!" she turned to her husband: "I think you are the greatest artist that has ever been, or ever will be."

Possibly Lucrezia was right, but Filippo remembered the admonition of Pope Pius. "I lack spirituality in my painting. Perhaps I may gain it through my wife."

Lucrezia's face glowed with happiness, and, remembering the Pope's words which Filippo had repeated to her, she caught the little Filippino very closely to her. "Baby," she whispered, "the Brief is retrospective. You are Filippino Lippi, the son of Filippo Lippi and Lucrezia, his wife."

Her cup was full. "God is very good to me," she thought.

Diamante rose to go, Filippo accompanied him to the street door, bearing the little Filippino on his shoulder. The husband handed the child to the friar so that he might carry him across to his nurse.

"At first I feared that I had lost my friend," said Diamante, wringing Filippo's hand. "Now I find I have gained two."

Diamante had left, Filippo and Lucrezia were retiring to rest. As they walked up the staircase Filippo's arm was round Lucrezia's waist. When they reached the landing Lucrezia stopped and held her lips towards Filippo's. "God is very good to us," she reiterated.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

WHEN people are happy and contented they may do excellent work, but they leave no other record. Hence we know practically nothing about Filippo's private life after the Holy See had sanctioned his marriage.

As I have said before, Filippo was earning a large income; now, thanks to the prudence of Lucrezia, he found that it was possible to live in positive luxury, with a wealth of spending florins in his pocket, and yet accumulate a considerable sum that would maintain him in his old age.

Now and then Filippo would visit his tavern, and, sad to say, Lucrezia encouraged him. He would return early, bored to death; and, flinging himself back in the most comfortable chair, would feast his eyes on Lucrezia's beauty, as one who has been forced to inhale patchouli revels in the scent of lavender. His life was very humdrum, very peaceful, absurdly happy. If one has a perfect chef who serves simple fare, dashed

with a sauce piquant, in a masterly manner, one does not seek smart restaurants ; and so, after his day's work was done, Filippo rested in the sweetness of Lucrezia's presence. Lucrezia dominated every atom of Filippo's mind and held every shred of his being.

Lucrezia was not pious, as most count piety : her neighbours on either side went to week-day Mass far more frequently. But then the neighbours' husbands sometimes found their early morning's roll stale, their early morning's draught of wine flat and sour, and their early morning's wives unsympathetic ; whereas, even in the chilly darkness of winter, Filippo woke to find a wife who had anticipated every want, who sympathised with every word, and who was a thousand times more fascinating than any mistress. God created Lucrezia as the perfect wife, else why would His Vicar have granted such an unprecedented dispensation : He has never exactly repeated His model.

On the other hand, Lucrezia was good. She had the wholesomeness of the pine-trees which catch the clear air and breathe it out in stimulating fragrance. So without knowing it Filippo drank in life-giving draughts of spirituality, as his paintings testify.

The old Filippo who had painted the highly artistic and highly refined and highly sensuous "Coronation of the Virgin," which is now in the Academy at Florence, was gone, and a new Filippo took his place. The new Filippo retained all the artistry of his earlier works, adding a reserved, restrained element of spirituality which has never been surpassed: this was clearly due to the influence of Lucrezia.

I own that Vasari's account of Fra Angelico mixing his pigments with prayers appeals to me as much as it appeals to the school-miss who reads the extract in her guide-book. I own that I love his mystical conception of saints and angels dancing, hand in hand, round a celestial mulberry-bush. I confess that I like the Dominican's quaint plan of filling heaven with those of his own order, whilst he peoples hell with Franciscans. But when I seek true dignity in religious themes I turn to Filippo's "Funeral of St. Stephen" in the Duomo at Prato. When I seek true majesty in sacred art I turn to Filippo's last painting inside the apse of the Cathedral of Spoleto. The former was one of the most reserved and stately pictures ever painted; the latter was as spiritual and inspired as any picture of Fra Angelico, and infinitely more artistic.

Cosimo de' Medici had singled out Filippo Lippi as a genius. Lucrezia detected her husband's power, and if a man's paintings reflect anything of a man's aspirations, succeeded in transforming him into something which almost approached a saint.

The art of Filippo Lippi was transparently honest and his pictures seem to record his spiritual progress. The Coronation in the Academy is artistic to the last degree, but it is entirely materialistic. If we banish all religious feeling and regard it merely as a work of art, we find it eminently satisfactory; but if we view it as an interpretation of a heavenly theme, we find nothing except the portraits of fascinating girls with whom Filippo had probably flirted. The "Madonna della Misericordia" seems to record a temporary aspiration after higher things.

But when we come to Filippo's last picture at Spoleto we find an intensely artistic and spiritual picture, evidently painted by one who had an entire belief in the subject which he was depicting. Therefore one is almost forced to conclude that Filippo had attained a highly spiritual standard of life before he entered on his final pictures.

The frescoes in the Pieve were not finished without an effort—in fact, that admirable prelate,

Carlo de' Medici, had to employ all his influence to force Filippo to resume his work. In this we cannot but sympathise with the artist, for the Pieve frescoes were so intimately connected with his fall and its consequent sufferings that it must have been a severe wrench to take up his brushes and complete them.

The marriage of Filippo and Lucrezia had been sanctioned some four years when a daughter was born. She was named Alessandra, and Filippo would whisper to his wife that she was called after the St. Alessandro of their first love-time ; but Lucrezia knew that she was in reality named after the Alessandri of Fiesole.

Also at this time Filippo had a pupil who must have been a continual source of joy to him, a youth of some twenty summers, Sandro Botticelli. Sandro acquired something of his master's refinement of colouring, something of his skill in the use of a clearly cut outline. He lacked Filippo's force and conviction, he never acquired his power of drawing ; but he showed a dainty feeling after design and an idealism that Filippo lacked.

Sandro would absorb Filippo's stories of the Grecian myths, and draw pictures which filled his master with admiration ; and in these we find traces of Lucrezia's influence, for as she

inspired the boy with a goodness which, in spite of the sensual influence of the Renaissance, made him live a life untarnished with a taint of sin or a breath of scandal, so she inspired him with an artistic purity which enabled him to paint a Venus which was every bit a Venus and which might have been hung in a Christian church without offence.

The little Filippino also showed artistic talent. He never painted with his father's force and virility, but he evolved a certain sophisticated, classical style which has made him aptly described as the "Precursor of Raphael."

But it is a noteworthy fact, which puts the crowning touch to my story, that of the half-dozen artists who remained clean and untainted by the Renaissance, the two who must have come under Lucrezia's influence, Sandro Botticelli and Filippino Lippi, are the cleanest.

Cosimo de' Medici died in 1464, to Filippo's sorrow. Almost his last act was to forward the artist a commission to decorate the Cathedral at Spoleto.

It was three years before Filippo commenced his last great work. The birth of Alessandra, as well as the execution of certain local commissions, made it difficult for him to leave Prato,

and his bodily ailment and physical suffering made Lucrezia use all her influence to persuade her husband to postpone the work. But art will not be denied, and the sense of a noble inspiration, combined with the preadmonition of his approaching death, roused Filippo to make one last effort.

He had achieved his last great masterpiece, the dignity and spiritual nobility of which are marvellous. The stretching and straining, which was necessary in order to paint a difficult subject on the awkward surface of the half-cupola of the Spoleto apse, had intensified Filippo's old complaint, and he was stretching up to complete his last fresco when he felt a stabbing pain within him.

They lowered him to the ground, and one of the priests administered the Last Sacraments, whilst Sandro ran for Lucrezia.

She took his head on her knee.

He glanced upwards at her through his failing eyes. "Sweetheart!" he whispered, and lay still.

Some souls may be saved through severity: the soul of Filippo was saved by love.

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Anderson Photo.

Duomo, Spoleto.

"FILIPPINO SHOWS US HIS FATHER AS HE LAST REMEMBERED HIM."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN MEMORIAM

THUS Filippo Lippi died—the greatest and most versatile painter of his age.

There is a pious custom amongst Roman Catholics, by which those who lived in the world, attaching themselves to some religious order as tertiaries, are buried in the habit of their order.

So they clothed Filippo in the habit of his order, and entered his death in the books of the Carmine, and buried him with great honour in the Cathedral of Spoleto.

Some years after, Lorenzo the Magnificent bid Filippino carve a monument above his body ; and Filippino shows us his father as he last remembered him : a clever man, a strong man, and one who conquered his flesh through much suffering. The monument is there to this day.

APPENDIX A

FACTS AND DEDUCTIONS: AN APPEAL

I HAVE finished my tale of the love of Filippo Lippi for Lucrezia. I have tried to reconstruct the story as it most probably happened. I have accepted such facts as are established by documentary evidence as incontrovertible, such statements as originated in gossip and heresy as uncertain, and such deductions as have been made by other commentators as of only equal value to my own.

I have placed all this before you, asking you to weigh the evidence in the balance which you have learnt from your experience of human nature, taking the portraits of Fra Filippo and Lucrezia Buti into account, and giving some attention to the friar's pictures as probable records of his spiritual state of mind.

I also submit to your consideration the probable condition of morals in the city of Florence and the adjoining town of Prato during the middle of the fifteenth century, the

probable disposition and status of Fra Filippo, and the probable feelings of the nun Lucrezia Buti, since all this bears on my case.

I confess that I entered on my story with the intention of showing the inconsistent waywardness of the artistic temperament, writing: "He dipped into the pleasures and vices of the world, wearing his religious habit; he abducted a nun, still wearing his religious habit; from some strange scruple of conscience he refused to avail himself of the Papal dispensation to marry this nun, preferring to live in open sin with her, still wearing his religious habit." But a study of the subject has forced me to change my mind, and in striving to clear the moral character of a great artist from what I consider to be a base slander, and the fair fame of a sweet woman from a heartless aspersion, I place my case before you—asking you, as "just men and true," to give your verdict on the evidence.

Now, although there are thousands of people who have written about Fra Filippo, including Marion Crawford, Mrs. Beeton, and Robert Browning, there are only five who have written anything of value.

Vasari includes the "Glad Friar" in his work on the most eminent artists of his age;

and although this excellent man, who lived nearly a century later than Filippo, made several obvious mistakes, his narrative is the one on which all subsequent accounts are based.

Gaye, who discovered several documents which throw light on the subject.

Milanesi, who discovered many more documents bearing on the life of Fra Filippo; but whom one can only trust when he gives chapter and verse for his statements.¹

Berenson, who pointed out that the friar must have learnt his art from one of the late Giottesque painters, probably Don Lorenzo Monaco, and not from Masaccio as Vasari asserts.

Mr. Edward C. Strutt, who has studied all that has been written on the subject most carefully, and who gives a correct record of the accumulated documentary evidence (with the exception of one error in a date), an admirable critique of Fra Filippo's paintings, and some deductions which I believe to be mistaken. I may be an optimist, but possibly Mr. Strutt takes an unduly pessimistic view

¹ Mr. Horne sums up Milanesi admirably in his monumental work on Botticelli: "Here, as elsewhere, that distinguished archæological investigator did not think it always necessary to clearly distinguish between statements founded upon documentary evidence and statements which were merely conjectural" (p. 8).

of human nature, and draws deductions which are contrary to experience.

The rest of the thousand writers are mostly mere journalists who have skimmed through a few books in order to make attractive and remunerative copy. To take one instance: Professor Richard Muther, of the University of Breslau, has written a book on Art which has been recently translated into English. Writing of Filippino Lippi, he states: "It is a piquant coincidence that this son of the jolly monk [?] and the former nun, the son of the light-hearted sensual period which made a harem of the convent, was called to become a painter of rigid Dominicanism." I simply quote this as an example of the rubbish that is turned out by the cart-load: I could condone the coarseness of it, if the statement did not contain such a palpable error—Fra Angelico, or "Fiesole," as the Professor delights to call him, had no influence on Filippino.

When I break a lance with Mr. Strutt, as I intend to do presently, I shall tilt against an honest English gentleman who is also a scholar.

If any one who wishes to test facts or form new theories will look up the following, he will have read all that is of real importance.

Vasari: "Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori, con nuove annotazioni e commenti di G. Milanese." Firenze: Sansoni, 1878-85.

Gaye: "Carteggio inedito degli artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, e XVI." Firenze: Giuseppe Molini, 1839.

Milanese: "Fra Filippo Lippi," in *L'Art*, December 30, 1877, and January 6 and 13, 1878. "Nuovi documenti per la storia dell' Arte Toscana." Firenze: G. Dotti, 1901.

Berenson: "Florentine Painters of the Renaissance." New York and London: Putnam, 1900.

Strutt: "Fra Filippo Lippi." London: Bell, 1901.

Now, as to the actual facts which are clear from documentary evidence:—

Fra Filippo Lippi was a professed friar as the records show. He was also an ordained priest who did actual clerical work.

He abducted a nun of Santa Margherita in Prato, named Lucrezia Buti, as Vasari asserts; and they had a son Filippino.¹

¹ Some critics have rashly asserted, on the strength of the *tamburazione*, that Spinetta was Filippino's mother; but Filippino's will, leaving certain property to his mother, disproves this. Cellini also refers to a friend of his, called "Francesco, son of Filippo (i.e. Filippino), and grandson of that most excellent painter, Fra Lippo Lippi."

Lucrezia left him and her child to return to the convent, and renewed her solemn vows in December, 1459.

The *tamburazione* was lodged in May 8, 1461, and Filippo was deprived of his post as chaplain of Santa Margherita.

Now we come to two controversial questions: Did Pope Pius II. grant a Brief marrying the couple, and did they avail themselves of this Brief? We know that Lucrezia returned to Filippo and a daughter was born to them in 1465.

Vasari, who wrote an account of the matter some hundred years later on, an account bristling with proved inaccuracies, says: "The death of Fra Filippo caused much regret to many among his friends, more particularly to Cosimo de' Medici and Pope Eugenius IV. The latter had offered in his lifetime to give him a dispensation, that he might make Lucrezia di Francesco Buti his legitimate wife; but Fra Filippo, desiring to retain his power of living after his own fashion, and of indulging his love of pleasure as might seem good to him, did not care to accept that offer."

Well, both Cosimo and Eugenius died some years before Filippo, and it must have been

Pius II. who granted the Brief, so we can only accept the rest with reserve.

Milanesi, who is probably the greatest authority on the subject, and the discoverer of many original documents, wrote in *L'Art*, 1878, Tome i. p. 7: ". . . Cosimo de' Medici, his great friend, defended his case before the Pope . . . and, in order to end all scandal, the permission to retain Lucrezia as his lawful wife was granted him. He released the couple from their monastic vows and gave Fra Filippo the dispensation which his ordination rendered necessary." He proceeds to argue that Filippo gave up valuable ecclesiastical emoluments in order to avail himself of the dispensation.

Then we come to Mr. Strutt, who acknowledges the dispensation, acknowledges that Lucrezia was restored to Filippo, acknowledges "that he continued to live in good harmony with Lucrezia, by whom he had a daughter, Alessandra, in 1465, and that he never deserted her, as some writers have erroneously stated." But he concludes that we have no documents or records to show that Filippo ever availed himself of the Papal permission to marry Lucrezia, and seems inclined to accept Vasari's statement and assume that Filippo "never

went through the ceremony of marriage at all."

Mr. Strutt's arguments simply hand him over as a victim to my pen, but I confess I should like to know upon what authority Milanesi assumes the Brief. Possibly he accepts Vasari's statement,¹ as I do, deeming him incapable of inventing the episode. This seems a strange course of reasoning, but I ask you if it is not sound. When Vasari tacks on to Filippo the old story of an artist being captured by outlaws, and released when he gave an exhibition of his skill, one simply smiles: it is the common game of all old historians, and possibly some one had been stuffing the simple Vasari. If he had stated that "Filippo was wont to say that he liked a friend with a well-blown nose," I should conclude that Vasari or one of his comrades had been studying his Horace. But when I come to such a startling statement as: the Pope "had offered in his lifetime to give him a dispensation, that he might make Lucrezia di Francesco Buti his legitimate wife," I am bound to accept it, for the simple reason that I cannot imagine Vasari or any of his gossips inventing it.

I am told that this Brief is theologically

¹ See Appendix B. .

possible, but without precedent, and I cannot imagine any one in the Plato-classical age formulating such a pretty bit of moral theology and attaching it to Fra Filippo.

Granted that the Brief was given, did Filippo and Lucrezia avail themselves of it? I think, with Milanese, that they did; and I add this argument that I cannot imagine that Cosimo obtained, and Pius granted, a Brief which was without precedent and that Filippo refused to avail himself of it without forfeiting their friendship; nor can I imagine that he continued to live in wilful irregularity, and yet attained a high standard of spirituality in his paintings, and died in good repute with his order.

But I cannot help laughing a little at Mr. Strutt; for instead of inquiring about the moral theology of a Catholic marriage, he worries himself hunting for imaginary marriage lines. The Papal Brief would make the presence of a priest to tie the knot and write up the register, and the presence of a choir to breathe "O'er Eden" over the wedded couple, quite superfluous: for the essence of marriage lies in the plighting of life-long vows of constancy combined with a sojourning together. Eve was the legitimate Mrs. Adam.

Such are the most important facts which are established beyond all question ; but before I proceed to draw what I consider the obvious deductions, I must refer to the social morals which prevailed in Florence in 1456, and consider the position and character of the friar.

FLORENTINE MORALS IN 1456

History proclaims the peaceful, prosperous state of Florence in the mid-Quattrocento ; for Guicciardini asserts that the government was the wisest and happiest the city ever had ; Bisticci adds that the city was full of excellent citizens ; and Varchi tells us that "their mode of life is simple and frugal, but incredibly clean and neat," and that "the artisans and handicraftsmen live even better than the citizens themselves." Then, as now, the Tuscans were a strong, direct race, giving only knights, doctors, and prebendaries the title of *Messere*, monks the title of *Don*, and friars that of *Padre* ; but this trick of speech could hardly apply to the cosmopolitan circle of the Medici. Florence was evidently a prosperous, orderly city, very unlike Milan or Rimini.

It would be a vital mistake to picture the private morals of the citizens, as some do, from

such wild books as the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini,¹ who lived some three-quarters of a century later; and the current novellinos probably reflect the general tone better than any other writings.

These novellinos are sometimes coarse, direct, and outspoken, just as Shakespeare and other writers came to their point in language which could hardly be published now; but in spite of this there is a wholesome underlying tone in most of them. To summarize a typical story by

¹ Mr. Strutt excuses the depravity with which he credits Fra Filippo by assuming that he was "naturally drawn into the vortex of the Quattrocento *bel vivere*, with all its loveliness and all its immorality."

He then assumes that Cellini's autobiography contains "a vivid portrayal of artist life" (personally I am not altogether disposed to trust the word-painting of one who asserts that in 1535, when recovering from an attack of Roman fever, he threw off from his stomach a hideous worm, "hairy, spotted with green, black, and scarlet," and that later in his disreputable life he was crowned with a visible halo); and he adds: "It is, therefore, not surprising that Giovanni de' Medici, writing to Bartolommeo Serragli on May 27, 1456, should say that Fra Filippo's adventure had excited mirth rather than condemnation," "et così dello errore, etc."

If Mr. Strutt had taken care to verify his dates he would have found that the Medici's letter, written to his Neapolitan agent, was dated 1458, not 1456, and that the context refers to the picture Filippo was painting for the King of Naples. It is reasonable to assume that the passage: "And so we laughed a good deal at the error of Fra Filippo," refers to some mistake that the friar had made about the picture—"excited mirth rather than condemnation," is a gloss that reflects much credit on Mr. Strutt's power of imagination.

Anton-Francesco Doni: A young court gallant leads a beautiful and virtuous girl astray, under the promise of marriage, with base designs in his heart. The mother discovers the state of the case, and finding that "the tongue of scandal soon became busy with their good name," goes to the Medici. Although the girl is of humble origin, the Medici lays a trap for the gallant, bestows a dowry of 500 crowns and a ring on the girl, and makes them wed each other, then and there (there was no priest present): "And had you forgotten that there was such a governor as Alexander de' Medici alive? And that there was yet justice in the land?"

From all this I have concluded that it was an impossibility for Fra Filippo to abduct the nun openly, continue his clerical duties, and enjoy the patronage of ecclesiastics and laymen. If he had acted as I have pictured him, the bold choice of a hiding-place for Lucrezia under the very eyes of the authorities would be a master-stroke of policy. I am confirmed in my conclusion by the fact that the moment the scandal was disclosed by the anonymous accusation, Filippo was deprived of his chaplaincy and forbidden the convent.

THE POSITION AND CHARACTER OF FRA FILIPPO

Lippi was a butcher's son: so was Cardinal Wolsey. But Filippo was brought up from childhood in an order which had sufficient refinement to employ the greatest artists to decorate the community chapels and cloisters, and he spent his early manhood as a house-friend of the Medici. He was intimate with such men as Cosimo, Alessandro degli Alessandri, and other eminent persons, and must have been in the closest touch with all the refinements of the age. To picture him as a coarse, illiterate man is clearly incongruous.

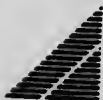
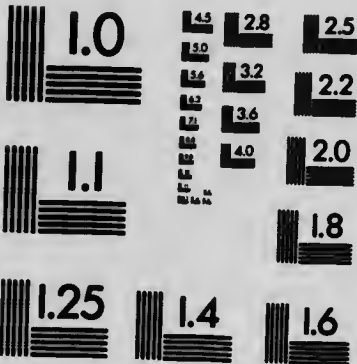
Possibly many of the recent writers have been led astray by a supposed portrait of the artist in the "Coronation" of the Florence Academy. A coarse kneeling figure has the ill-fortune to be placed closed to a scroll bearing the letters: "IS PERFECIT OPUS," and it has been assumed that this is the friar's portrait.¹ But I must point out that this unlovely figure is a man of at least sixty-five, whereas Filippo was only between

¹ There is just a possibility that this figure may have been added after Fra Filippo's death, by Diamante or some other painter. If this be so, the painter has given a memory sketch of the Spoleto relief, leaving out all the power, cleverness, and kindness which marked the friar's face.



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thirty and thirty-five when the painting was completed; besides, this figure is clothed in a black habit and not in the brown of the Carmelites. No, there is no authentic portrait of Filippo extant except that on his monument, and to try to identify the traditional portraits in the Prato frescoes is pure guess-work.

Again, writers are fond of describing Fra Filippo as a struggling, poverty-stricken friar, which is positively absurd. Vasari tells us that he maintained himself honourably by his work from the time he left the friary; and a single picture of his fetched from seventy to a hundred golden florins, which was probably equal in spending value to something like £300 at the present time; and since he and his assistants had more commissions than they could execute, we must conclude that Filippo's income was at least equal to that of a modern R.A.

It is true that he was sometimes in money difficulties, as the records show; but can we blame him for that? Is it not often part and parcel of the artistic nature to be improvident? And have not a large number of the greatest painters, actors, and authors suffered from the same trouble? The merchant's object is to make and save money, and his private as well as

his office accounts are second nature to him. The artist's object is to paint pictures, and as long as he has enough in his pocket to pay for his dinner, or buy an object of art that pleases him, he seldom troubles himself about money matters: in fact, when an artist becomes mercenary he usually loses power, and few great artists, actors, or poets have died rich. Nevertheless Filippo certainly died owning house property in Prato, and we have no record that he was in difficulties during the last years of his life.

With the exception of the abduction of Lucrezia there was only one serious charge brought against Filippo, the forgery of a quittance, and I am not inclined to take this too seriously. As Agnolo Firenzuola of Florence writes some forty years later about another Vicar-General, "Now the Vicar, as belonging to the order of priesthood, was by no means overwhelmed with affection towards the friars," it may be possible that there was a good deal of prejudice in the Vicar's persecution of Fra Filippo—it may even be possible that the account I have placed in the friar's mouth is more or less correct.

But when we come to Filippo's private life, we find a letter written in the beginning of his artistic career to Pietro de' Medici, from which

we learn that Filippo had undertaken the care of six unmarried nieces, infirm and helpless, and that the little they had on earth came from him ; and we find him humbling himself to beg for a little corn and wine on credit, so that if his work called him away he might leave them provided for. I wonder how many men of thirty-three would burden themselves with such a charge ? Only the kindest and most generous.

From all genuine accounts of Fra Filippo, and I include Vasari's as well as authentic letters and records, I conclude that the Filippo of my opening chapter was an impulsive and virile man ; a great artist wrapped up in his work ; a self-indulgent man who had a keen eye for female beauty and a dainty palate ; a man who had become lax in the practice of his religion, but still retained a belief in Almighty God. But beneath this I find a man who was loyal to his relations, loyal to his friends, and loved by all. Believe me, I would rather trust such a one, in spite of his initial fault and fall, to do the straight thing in the end, than I would trust one of the respectable and calculating psalm-singers. A man who is truly good and charitable may be trusted above all things, but I should rather trust Fra Filippo than the self-advertising " professed Christian."

LUCREZIA BUTI

I have tried to describe in the text Lucrezia's probable state of mind when she first met Fra Filippo; but Mr. Strutt's view of the matter makes it necessary for me to add something further.

Mr. Strutt commences with the "frantic beating of wings against the bars of the monastic cage, then rebellious despair, followed by the gradual bowing of the proud young spirit and the breaking of the poor young heart." Next he continues: "When Fra Filippo entered her monotonous existence, Lucrezia had perhaps sunk into that state of listless resignation which follows the frenzy of despair; but it is not likely that, at the age of twenty-three, she should have completely abandoned all hope of some day re-acquiring her liberty. And in the solitude of her cell, away from the scrutinising glances of the older nuns, she must often have indulged in 'a good cry' with her younger sister Spinetta at the thought of the fair world from which they were both for ever exiled."

As Mr. Strutt ever stayed in hum-drum Prato—Prato is not Florence—and pictured the fascinations of the social life from which they "were

both for ever exiled" ? Personally I would as soon be banished to the monotony of East Dereham ; but I am digressing.

I happen to know many Catholics, I have met many real nuns who are quite unlike the nuns of fiction, and I have listened to the alarmingly frank descriptions of convent life given by irresponsible schoolgirls to whom nothing is above comment, so perhaps when I give the following as a typical case I may be credited with a knowledge of my subject.

One of my oldest friends has a daughter of twenty who has just entered an old-established order to test her vocation. This girl has been a chum of mine from her childhood, and since she made up her mind to become a nun I have seen her grow, from a somewhat dogmatic, impatient and dictatorial girl, into a firm, sweet-tempered, and dainty little lady. I sometimes took her out to a theatre or to lunch at the Cecil before she left for her convent. I never had a merrier or more appreciative companion : I understand that a happy, contented disposition, combined with goodness, is the mark of a true vocation.

My friend took his daughter up to the convent himself. They found an excellent lunch laid for them in a private room ; and as soon as they had

finished, a particularly sweet-faced nun who turned out to be the novice-mistress, came in to see them, and told him all about the life of the novices, asking many questions about the girl's talents and pursuits. Presently she left and called the Mother Provincial.

The head of this order, my friend tells me, was a dear old lady who talked to him of mutual friends and things that were passing in the world. "Now I should like to show you round, that you may see exactly what Cecily's life will be," she continued, and took my friend through the cloisters where the nuns walk when it rains, showing him the nuns' chapel, where they can see the altar without being seen from the body of the church, and the comfortable refectory, with its long tables spread with snowy linen, the community-room, with its piano, where the nuns spend their recreation time, and the chapter room.

When they returned to the parlour, the Provincial asked whether my friend remembered Sister So-and-so, whom he had met at another house of the order, and said that she would send her to talk with him whilst she showed Cecily her cell. They went off, and as they went down the passage he saw the autocrat over some three

hundred nuns slip her arm round the girl's shoulder: "I wanted to show you your cell, so that you might describe it to your father." The cell seemed very comfortable.

He had to catch his train, and Cecily was sent to open the door for him so that they might say good-bye alone; but as they passed he saw two of the nuns waiting in a side room so that they might comfort their little sister when her father was gone.

This is a true account of conventual life in an order whose rules and regulations date back much farther than 1456. It is a true account,¹

¹ By the kindness of my little friend and the generosity of her mother I am allowed to give some extracts from Cecily's first letter after she went to the convent. I do not know how it will strike others, but to me the wholesome, natural tone of the letter is a perfect revelation. Mind, the girl is very affectionate and felt leaving home with all the intensity of twenty, but she evidently wrote this breezy, slangy letter so as not to depress her parents.

"MY OWN BELOVED PEOPLE,

"I am sure that you would rather have one decent-sized letter than a lot of little scraps. I am feeling a very queer mixture of 'Pisgah's Heights' and funkiness. I am most awfully happy, but horribly self-conscious. [Brave little girl! she says nothing about the periods of homesickness.] It is a tiny bit like being at school, except that instead of being left to myself at all, everybody seems to be doing everything to help me. Last night, for instance, as we were going to choir for night prayers, I felt a hand slipped into mine, and there was Sister Mary C——, who had run up to guide me in the semi-darkness.

because I don't want my critics to jump on me, as I am jumping on Mr. Strutt.

I could wish that this dainty, merry little maid could have remained in the world, if it had been possible to find her a husband that was even half good enough ; for I have learnt more of the goodness of womanhood from her than I have from any one. But I cannot help sympathising with her father, who has willingly surrendered his daughter, for he feels that she might have contracted an unhappy marriage ; whereas she has been welcomed by a community of sweet women as their youngest sister, and has begun that life on earth which will last

For mother's benefit I will inform you that our breakfast consists of as much bread-and-butter as you can eat, and tea or coffee. We have dinner at one, tea at 3.15, and supper at 6.15. Of course it is all very plain (I mean plates, mugs, etc.), but the exquisite cleanliness of it! . . . Father K——'s niece is one of the prettiest nuns in the noviceship. She is simply sweet. She has taught me how to tidy my cell and make my bed this morning, and also came to escort me to breakfast. Our mistress is a porter and has been ever so kind to me. Our letters from the convents are slit as a matter of course, but are never read unless our mistress thinks there is bad news in them. We have two recreations a day—half an hour after dinner, and from 7.45 to 9 in the evening."

I do not like to quote the rest, it is too private ; but the letter ends : " With love and crowds of kisses to . . . and . . . and millions' worth of love to my own Mother and Dad,

" Ever your so loving daughter,
" CECILY."

through all eternity. Also I admire that father, for Cecily was all the world to him.

This clears the air, knocking the "beating against the monastic bars" into matchwood. But the fact remains that out of one hundred who try to become nuns, fifty find that they have no vocation, and return to the world before they are professed. Lucrezia, to all appearances became a nun without having a true vocation, and the wifely-maternal instincts were strong in her: she was probably not unhappy, only unsatisfied.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT

"The psychological moment, therefore, was most favourable for the realisation of Fra Filippo's plans," continues Mr. Strutt; but I will not quote more of Mr. Strutt, verbatim.

It is enough to say that he accuses Fra Filippo of scheming to abduct Lucrezia, without any justification; he terms him an "unscrupulous Don Juan," without a shred of evidence to prove that the friar ever had a mistress or child before this; he sneers at the idea of Lucrezia falling in love with Filippo—as though true love between a man of fifty and a girl of twenty-three were

unknown—and supposes that she eloped with the friar in order to return to the world—the doleful Prato world from which she would be ostracised, *ipso facto*!

Fra Filippo was no sly schemer, no heartless brute, to plan the ruin of an innocent girl. He was a kind-hearted joyous man, and such do not act as Mr. Strutt imagines. We have no right to doubt the sincere and passionate love that each bore towards the other; and experience teaches that such usually allow themselves to drift into love until the psychological moment when the emotions overmaster them; the Platonic idea is only a suggestion, but Plato was much in evidence at this period.

A STRANGE BY-ISSUE

Spinetta joined her sister, and, ignoring the unpleasant suggestion of Mr. Strutt, that the friar was on the same terms with both sisters (except to meet it with the obvious answer—that if this had been the case, the Holy See could never have granted the dispensation for the marriage of Filippo and Lucrezia), we come to a strange affair.

Soon after Lucrezia and Spinetta left the

convent it seems that three other nuns left it also. Where they went or what happened to them I cannot presume to imagine. Mr. Strutt seems to assume that they joined Filippo, and that this connoisseur of female beauty set up a harem of five crop-haired nuns. He is wholehearted in his imagination, is Mr. Strutt, so when he paints Fra Filippo as a "licentious friar," he makes him a very whale of a glutton. Love might be blind to the cropped locks of one; but five of them!

LUCREZIA'S REPENTANCE

Not content with stripping Filippo of every shred of decency, Mr. Strutt proceeds to rob Lucrezia of maternal instincts and natural affections; making her return to the order because she preferred "the peaceful if somewhat monotonous retirement of her convent cell" to "the continual privations and hardships which she had to endure in consequence of the friar's incorrigibly thriftless conduct, which gave rise to endless difficulties and persecutions on the part of enraged creditors." He draws this remarkable conclusion on the sole fact that in August, 1457, Filippo's Florentine studio was

seized for rent, whilst he ignores the fact that the friar owned at least two houses and continued his studio in Prato, where he was working.

Why deprive poor Lucrezia of the virtue of true repentance? The chronological table of events shows that Filippino was probably born in the summer of 1457, and that Lucrezia returned to the convent about fifteen months after. My idea that Lucrezia repented some time before she returned to her community, and only waited until her boy was old enough to be left in order to return to the convent, is strengthened by the fact that Lucrezia had no second child until she came back permanently to her husband.

THE PAPAL BRIEF

According to Roman Catholic belief, marriage is a sacrament, and like all sacraments has its lawful ministers. Just as the minister of Orders is a Bishop, of Penance a Priest, of Baptism in extreme cases an ordinary layman, so the ministers of matrimony are the man and woman, and the marriage is achieved by the plighting of a lifelong troth and dwelling together.

The Church can, however, put certain restrictions on marriage for the sake of public welfare,

besides those contained in the Bible ; and with a show of logic argues that she can dispense these restrictions, if necessary. Thus the Church forbids the marriage of first-cousins, and a dispensation from Rome must be obtained before the marriage can take place.

Before the Council of Trent, I believe that what are known as "clandestine" marriages, without priest or witnesses, were not uncommon. As long as the union was contracted with the intention that it should be lifelong, such a marriage would be binding in the eye of the Church.

In the case of Filippo and Lucrezia, the Papal Brief was retrospective, and by simply accepting it and returning to each other they were at once lawful man and wife without further ceremony.

I can find no shred of evidence against Filippo's moral character after his marriage, nor can I find any trace of money difficulties. I do not believe any critic takes Vasari's statement that Filippo "was poisoned by certain persons related to the object of his love" seriously. It is difficult to believe that Lucrezia's careless brother waited thirteen years and poisoned Filippo at Spoleto, after the marriage had been legalised some eight years.

Several years after Filippo's death Lorenzo de'

Medici demanded Filippo's remains in order to give them stately burial in Santa Maria del Fiore, in Florence. Vasari tells us that the Spoletines replied: "That they were poorly provided with ornaments, and could boast of but few excellent men; they consequently begged permission as a favour to retain the remains of Fra Filippo, that they might honour themselves therewith." Lorenzo consented, and commissioned Filippino to carve a monument to contain the remains of his father.

Filippo's death was worthily recorded in the books of his order, and his memory lives even now in the Carmine at Florence. A brother of Mt. Carmel who was showing me round the cloisters, where the small Filippo used to play, pointed to the figure of a fat, jolly old friar, remarking: "The little Filippo must have enjoyed that."

My attacks on Mr. Strutt refer solely to a few pages of deductions which he draws on the romance of Filippo Lippi, and not to his clever art-criticisms—though I hold even a higher opinion of Fra Filippo's paintings than Mr. Strutt does—nor do I question the accuracy of the facts and quotations which I have mostly verified.

If any one wishes to study the facts and learn of the art of the "Glad Friar," I recommend him to search "Fra Filippo Lippi," by Edward C. Strutt, published by George Bell & Sons, London, 1901.

In addition I tend my gratitude to Mr. J. A. Symonds¹ for his "Renaissance in Italy," from which I have adapted the drinking-song, and for his "Wine, Women, and Song," from which I have stolen the song of the little maid and the student.

I must plead guilty to a new picturing of Messer Leon Battista Alberti, and throw the blame on Mr. E. Hutton: his delicious "Sigismondo Maletesta" has led me astray, and I have elaborated Alberti's character in a way that is coarser than Mr. Hutton's dainty suggestions. Nevertheless, the description of the temple is taken from Alberti's own book on architecture, Book VII. chap. iii., and—well, I cannot help feeling that Filippo must have felt Alberti somewhat of a bore; I am afraid I should.

¹ I must register my thanks to the literary executor and also the publishers of the late Mr. J. A. Symonds—Messrs Chatto & Windus, and Messrs. Smith Elder & Co.—for their kind permission to adapt or use the songs in chapter iv. The first two songs are free renderings of the originals, which I first heard of from Mr. Symonds's books; the last one is taken verbatim from "Wine, Women, and Songs." When Mr. Symonds translates the Tuscan into Modern English, I cannot hope to equal him.—A. J. A.

APPENDIX B

VASARI'S ACCOUNT OF THE ROMANCE

ONE feels that it is desirable to give Vasari's version of Filippo's romance ; because his errors are continually cropping up, even in modern books, whose writers ought to know better.

The first to tell the story of Fra Filippo and Lucrezia was the artist and art-critic Vasari, in his "Life of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects," published in 1550, nearly a hundred years after the event. I take the translation of Messrs. Blashfield and Hopkins :

"Having received a commission from the nuns of St. Margherita to paint a picture for the high altar of their church, he one day chanced to see the daughter of Francesco Buti, a citizen of Florence, who had been sent to the convent either as a novice or boarder. Fra Filippo, having given a glance at Lucrezia, for such was the name of the girl, who was exceedingly beautiful

and graceful, so persuaded the nuns that he prevailed on them to permit him to make a likeness of her, for the figure of the Virgin in the work he was executing for them. The result of this was that the painter fell violently in love with Lucrezia, and at length found means to influence her in such a manner that he led her away from the nuns; and on a certain day, when she had gone forth to do honour to the Cintola of Our Lady, a venerated relic preserved at Prato and exhibited on that occasion, he bore her from their keeping. By this event the nuns were deeply disgraced, and the father of Lucrezia was so deeply afflicted thereat that he never recovered his cheerfulness, and made every effort to regain his child. But Lucrezia, whether retained by fear or some other cause, would not return, but remained with Filippo, to whom she bore a son, called Filippo. . . . The death of Fra Filippo caused much regret to many among his friends, more particularly to Cosimo de' Medici and Pope Eugenius IV. The latter had offered in his lifetime to give him a dispensation, that he might make Lucrezia di Francesco Buti his legitimate wife, but Fra Filippo desiring to retain the power of living after his own fashion, and of indulging his love of pleasure as might

seem good to him, did not care to accept that offer."

Such is Vasari's story; and though recently discovered documents show that many of his facts are wrong, it is necessary to quote it at length, as most of the versions are based on this narrative. For instance, as I have stated :

Lucrezia was a professed nun.

Francesco Buti died six years before the abduction.

Lucrezia returned to the convent as soon as she could leave her babe.

On receiving the Papal dispensation releasing them from their vows and recognising them as married, she rejoined Filippo.

Pius II. and not Eugenius IV. granted the dispensation.

Now, there is nothing in Vasari's version that shows either a desire to blacken Filippo's character or a wish to pervert facts; it simply appears to be a collection of common and inaccurate gossip. Nor can we blame the writer in this matter. He had undertaken a huge and most difficult task in his "Lives of the chief Artists, etc.," and there was but little to fall back on save common tradition when he wrote the biographies of those who died many years before.

It is easy to picture him approaching a group of men: "Ha! here comes that bore Vasari," laughs one: "let's stuff him with a chestnut." So he proceeds to serve up the oldest and most popular of stories, in which some artistic person is captured by outlaws and released on giving an exhibition of his skill; in this case he paints the outlaws as Moorish pirates, who release Filippo when he draws the chief's portrait.

Then Vasari addresses another group: "Can you tell me anything about Fra Filippo?" One relates the story of Lucrezia's abduction; his friend intervenes: "You forgot to say that His Holiness granted them a dispensation of marriage." "Cospitto!" replies the first. "Do you think this Glad Friar would have submitted to the monotony of marriage?"

Two staid merchants are next approached: "Can you tell me any particulars of Fra Filippo?" The first merchant shakes his head: "A sad fellow, given over to pleasure; earning much and yet always in difficulties." "Yes, indeed," adds the second; "they say that he abducted the daughter of a worthy silk-merchant of Prato! How this poor father must have suffered." So Vasari goes to his room, and with this gossip, aided by his knowledge of the

friar's paintings, completes another chapter of his book.

Of course this is only a theory, but it bears the stamp of inherent probability; and this theory is strengthened by the fact that Vasari's account of Filippino Lippi, who was born some fifty years after his father, is extremely accurate.

The value of Vasari's story, from a critical standpoint, is this: when he relates a common chestnut or a common-place platitude he must be received with caution; but when he states a fact like the Papal dispensation, which is quite contrary to ordinary Catholic ideas, and yet theologically possible, we are almost bound to believe it, for we cannot imagine either Vasari or his gossips inventing the matter.

APPENDIX C

THE ART OF FRA FILIPP

IN art there are many things to consider ; and all things considered, I am inclined to place Filippo Lippi on a pedestal and re-echo Lucrezia's words :

“ ‘Who is like Filippo ?’ she cried. ‘At an age when he might well be a grandfather, he is mastering new ideas and planning new methods.

“ ‘I think,’ she explained to Diamante, ‘that Filippo puts other men’s work through a sieve, sifting out all that is good and rejecting all that is bad. He takes this mass of material and kneads it into a new and real style of his own: Filippo !’ she turned to her husband : ‘I think you are the greatest artist that has ever been, or ever will be.’ ”

Considering those who painted before him, considering that he probably learnt from Don Lorenzo Monaco, Fra Filippo’s art is marvellous. Examine Masaccio’s frescoes in the Carmine at Florence, which are probably the best paintings

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Hausängl Photo.

Berlin Gallery.

ONE OF THE FINEST OF FRA FILIPPO'S EARLIER AND MORE
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that had been so far achieved, and taking train to Prato compare them with Filippo's work in the Pieve : judge for yourself.

Examine the pre-Lippi paintings in the magnificent collection of the Florentine Academy, Fra Angelico's included, and compare them with those of Fra Filippo. Our friar took a step forward in pictorial art which was nothing short of epoch-making.

Art might have flown onwards through Bellini of Venice or the Fleming, Van Eyck ; but I doubt whether the great wave of the Italian Renaissance would ever have surged forward if Filippo Lippi had never been born.

Technical skill in drawing and colouring is a great thing, and Filippo's technique is of the best ; composition is a great thing, and Filippo had the art which conceals art ; swing and emphasis are not wanting in his paintings. But there is one gift that outweighs all others—the power of carrying conviction, and this was part and parcel of Fra Filippo.

This power of carrying conviction, which is essential in painting, writing, acting, or music, is difficult to define. Perhaps it means that the artist conceives an idea, and places it before the onlooker in such a way that (for the moment)

he lives in the little world that the artist has created, without in any way committing himself to the artist's personal opinion.

Raphael's Madonnas, with their statuesque beauty, and the artificial twisting of the composition and the insincere posing of the figures, do not—save in one or two noble exceptions—carry conviction; but Filippo's are convincing in their evident sincerity.

Without in any way consenting to Filippo's interpretation of the Madonna, we find the real mother of a real babe, painted in the simplest manner, and (for the moment) we see her with the artist's eyes.

I cannot imagine a devout Roman Catholic saying his prayers before a Lippi Madonna of the middle period, as he would before one by Fra Angelico; for these pictures are neither spiritual nor inspiring—they are just the outcome of a beautiful mind with a careless soul beyond it: and yet there is something very sweet about these same Madonnas, something very womanly.

But, on the other hand, there is nothing lowering or degrading about Filippo's work; there is none of the insipid sugariness of the later Renaissance; nothing of the pretty, sentimental foolishness which stamps nearly all Madonnas of modern

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A coronary, Florence.

“ THE CORONATION IS A SOULLESS PICTURE.”

Anderson Photo.



art, and enervates the souls of those who study them.

From a purely artistic standpoint, we see Filippo starting under the influence of Monaco, and tainted with the spirit of the later miniaturists. He seems also to have absorbed something of Fra Angelico's art, especially his richness of colouring, until, "blending his colours with most perfect harmony," he achieved the rich, luscious "St. John Baptist and Saints" now in the second room of the National Gallery. In his first period we find his pictures distinctly spiritual in character, but gradually developing a certain artistic sensuousness.

In the second period of which the "Coronation," now in the Academy at Florence, is the chief masterpiece, we note a great advance in technical skill and in colour refinement, whilst we mark a growing lack of spiritual idealism. This "Coronation" is a wonderful picture; for whilst the colouring is reserved and refined, the picture is almost sensual in its sense of richness. It is a soulless picture, which might have been painted by a pagan for pagans, but nevertheless it is magnificent. In this period, however, he must have had some yearnings after higher things, which produced the "Madonna della

Misericordia" at Berlin, and the precious panels of "Our Lady" and "The Angel Gabriel" at the Florentine Academy.

Fra Filippo's third period, which produced the Pitti and Uffizi Madonnas and the Prato frescoes, shows his artistic triumph. In the two former pictures the friar had absolutely no precedent, and created two new precedents which have had an overwhelming influence on art. I do not think I am going too far when I say that the Pitti tondo is the foundation on which most wholesome realistic art has been built up. The face of this Madonna is quiet and calm; it conveys all that I have put into Fra Diamante's mouth in the first chapter of my story; but it lives.

In the Uffizi Madonna¹ we find the source from which Botticelli derived much of his art.

¹ Some critics seem to consider that this is an early Botticelli; but everything seems to point to the fact that it is a Lippi. In the first place, the Madonna was evidently painted from the same model as the Madonna in the tondo, or from her sister. In the second place, the face is not in the least like any of Botticelli's Madonnas. In the third place, the picture has certain qualities that are lacking in Botticelli's work, and lacks a certain quality that Botticelli was master of.

Lippi, unlike Raphael and Correggio, had no stereotyped academic style; he treated each of his greater pictures as the inspiration seized him. Botticelli must have often seen this picture, and it is only reasonable to assume that it formed the inspiration for much of his work.

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Anderson Photo.

Pitti, Florence.

"THE PITTI TONDO IS THE FOUNDATION OF WHOLESOME REALISTIC ART."



Anderson Photo.

Uffizi, Florence.

" THE ORIGIN OF A DELIGHTFUL LINE OF DECORATIVE ART "



It is doubtful whether a reproduction can do any justice to this picture, or give any idea of the wonderful relief that Filippo has secured. The Madonna is seated at an open window, and the landscape appears to be on quite a different plane, giving a masterly suggestion of realism: and yet in one sense the picture is purely conventional. As a work of art the picture is inspired: as a work of religious art it is quite uninspired.

This Ufizzi Madonna gives us a glimpse into Fra Filippo's mind at this period. His religious feelings must have been dead: for he paints a Madonna which is a skit on all the Madonnas that had been painted before; he makes her beautiful, decorative, refined, and soulless¹; he adds a baby that will be playing marbles at the street corners in a few years' time, and he gives the key to his essay in the regular urchin of an angel in the corner of the picture. He blends the whole of this into a masterly piece of artwork by his composition; he secures intense refinement by III.5 restrained colouring; he tops it with the cleverest trick-work illusion of per-

¹ When Mr. J. A. Symonds writes of this picture: "He was too apt to paint the portraits of his peasant-loves for Virgins," I cannot but feel that this scholarly writer has been overmastered by some temporary religious prejudice.

spective that has ever been painted. Well, a man who is no humbug cannot expect to paint pictures full of religious feeling, whilst he living in unhallowed union with an abducted nun. Whatever faults may be brought against Fra Filippo, none can accuse him of hypocrisy. I can detect the origin of a delightful line of decorative art in this picture, which was straight-way elaborated by Botticelli, and is now to be found in the illustrations of Mr. Rackham and the paintings of Mr. Crane.

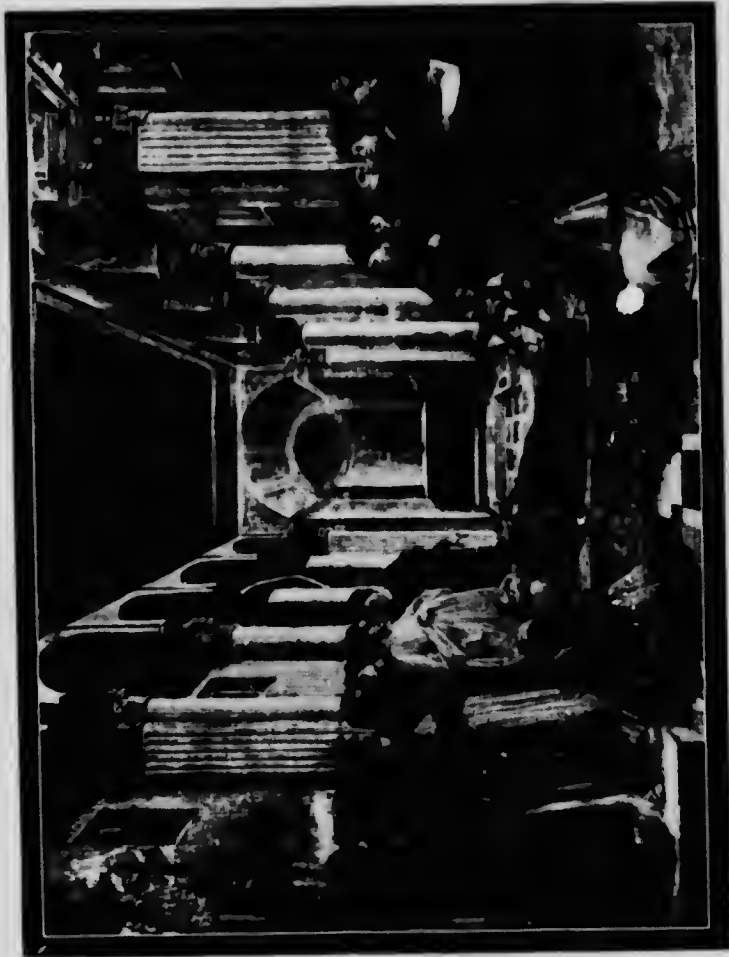
In the Prato frescoes there is much of Fra Diamante's work. I am inclined to think that Diamante painted the mourning women at the bier of St. Stephen, and that Fra Filippo left them in order to emphasise the dignity of the magnificent group behind: possibly he painted them himself with the same set purpose. But it is difficult to imagine better grouping and perspective for fresco work, which does not in the least break the flat surface of the Pieve walls.

Imagine a mid-Victorian engineer who invented a steam-engine which could hold its own with the latest express locomotive, and a paddle-wheel steamer that could race a turbine liner! This is Filippo Lippi. As a lady once remarked

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FUNERAL OF ST. STEPHEN.

Anderson Photo.



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Duomo, Spoleto.

" HIS LAST SPOLETO FRESCO SHOWS GREAT SPIRITUALITY."



to me, in the Accademia, "He is at least a hundred years in advance of his contemporaries."

His art was a constant progress, learning all that was possible from the art of others, and yet ever going to nature for its inspiration.

His painting was the outward expression of his convictions; and the fact that his earlier-middle period shows the soul of a pagan, his next period sheer, clever indifferentism, his next period a restrained dignity, his last Spoleto fresco great spirituality—all this serves to confirm the truth of my story.

If Fra Filippo had lived later, with Titian, Velasquez, and Rembrandt before him—But what is the good of talking about the might-have-beens?

APPENDIX D

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES

- 1406 (about). Filippo, son of Tommaso di Lippo, born at Florence.
- 1414 (about). Filippo taken into the Carmelite Friary.
- 1421, June 8. Filippo professed as a friar.
1433. Lucrezia, daughter of Francesco Buti, born at Prato.
- 1450-1. Filippo accused of forging receipt, and tortured.
1451. Lucrezia enters Convent of Santa Margherita as boarder.
1452. Filippo commences the Pieve frescoes at Prato.
- 1453-4. Lucrezia and her younger sister Spinetta professed nuns.
- 1455, May 19. Vicar-General of Sant' Antonio deprives Filippo of the cure of San Quirico in Legnaja. Filippo appeals to Rome and secures appointment of Bishop of Fiesole and Ugolino Giugni to investigate charges. Vicar-General succeeds in stopping appeal.
- 145- (?). Filippo buys a house in Piazza del Mercatale, Prato.
- 1455, July 15. Papal Bull deprives Filippo of spiritual charge of San Quirico, but not of the revenue.
- 1455, May 4. He buys a second house in Gorellina, Prato.
- 1456 (early in year). Filippo appointed chaplain to Convent of Santa Margherita. Shortly after Abbess orders a picture.
- 1456, May 1. Filippo abducts Lucrezia; Spinetta follows shortly.

- 1456 (end of year). Abbess of Santa Margherita dies.
- 1457, July 20. Filippo writes to Giovanni de' Medici promising to finish picture for King of Naples by Aug. 20, as he desired to leave Florence and return home to Prato.
- 1457, Aug. 31. Picture finished, Filippo returns to Prato.
- 1457 (probably between Aug. 20 and 31). Filippino born.
- 1458, December. Lucrezia and Spinetta return to convent.
- 1459, December. They solemnly renew their vows.
- 1461, May 8. Anonymous accusation concerning scandal, and Filippo is deprived of chaplaincy and forbidden to enter convent.
- 1461, Sept. 14. Filippo visits Perugia to value Bonfigli's pictures.
1461. The Medici approaches Pope Pius II. and obtains a Brief dispensing Filippo from his orders, releasing him and Lucrezia from their monastic vows, and recognising them as a married couple.
1465. Alessandra born to Filippo and Lucrezia.
- 1467-9. Paints the frescoes at Spoleto.
- 1469, Oct. 9. Filippo dies at Spoleto.
1488. Lorenzo the Magnificent erects a monument to Filippo at Spoleto, which is executed by Filippino.

NOTE.—I have taken the liberty of assuming that the Pope was in Florence in September, 1461, and that the Brief recognising the marriage of the couple was then given.

Since I have evolved the stay at St. Alessandro from my imagination, I have also evolved the description of the scenery.

I have tried to be accurate, and I believe the above to be as correct as any chronological table in history. If one could only record facts for which there is existing documentary evidence, the surviving skeleton would be deadly dull.

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