exist, and whether we admire or dislike Michael Angelo's representation of the awful scene, it remains one of the most extraordinary pages in the history of art.

Standing before it the unprejudiced artist must feel that, compared with this painting, the greatest works of some of the world's most famous painters are feeble and jejune. There is a sublimity even in the horror of the figures of the condemned as they fall through the lurid skies, lighted by the fires of the fathomless pit.

When he had at length completed this great labour, Michael Angelo threw himself with his accustomed ardour into preparing architectural drawings, plans, and designs for public buildings and private palaces in Rome, the most important of the latter being the Farnese Palace, which the Farnese Pope, Paul III., commissioned him to undertake. This palace is the most magnificent in a city of palaces. Within and without it has no rival. He was still superintending the decoration of this palace in 1544 when he was suddenly struck down by a dangerous illness, which was followed by attacks of gout and stone, from which he suffered until the close of his life.

Michael Angelo disliked being taken care of, or even looked after, and it was only when he was too ill to help himself that he allowed others to attend him. With the exception of his devoted body-servant and helper, both in his house and studio, Urbino, he could not tolerate servants about him.

After *The Last Judgement*, Michael Angelo did little in the way of painting, although there are some very much darkened frescoes by him representing *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* and *The Conversion of St. Paul*, in the Pauline Chapel of the Vatican. Even in Vasari's time these

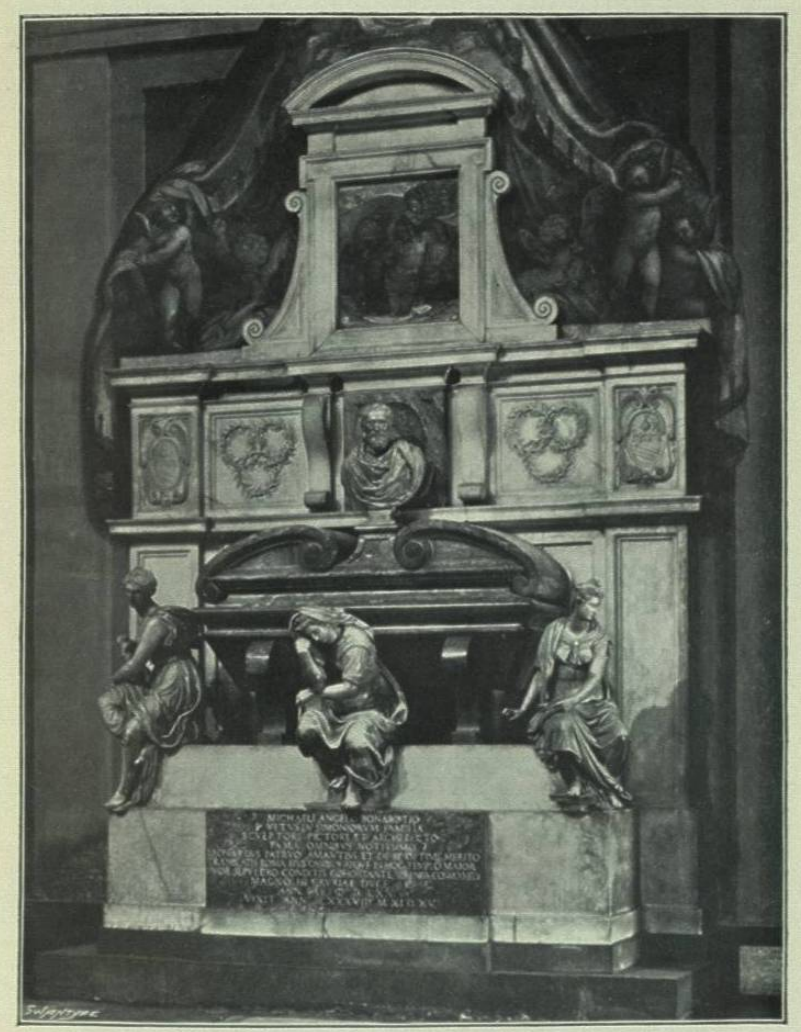
frescoes were much damaged, so much had they suffered both from damp, candle smoke and incense. Old, broken down in health, and almost broken-hearted was the great artist in 1547, the year in which his friend Vittoria Colonna died, and these last frescoes show too clearly that he was approaching the end of his long pilgrimage through life.

Although urged to return to Florence by his friends Vasari and Benvenuto Cellini, and invited to do so by the then reigning Duke, Cosimo I., the old man lingered on in Rome. He appears to have had no wish in these last years to return to his once-beloved Florence. Possibly this was from a bitter feeling at the state of serfdom into which Florence had fallen. In 1535 Buonarroti had been appointed Architect, Sculptor, and Painter to the Apostolic See by a Papal Brief. To this post an annual pension of twelve thousand two hundred golden écus was attached, and the run—if one may use such a term in such a connection—of the Palace of the Vatican. When Antonio da San Gallo, the former architect to the Pope, died in 1546, Paul III., by another brief dated the 1st of January, 1547, vested the office of Architect-in-Chief of the new St. Peter's—then rising from its foundations—in Michael Angelo, with power to alter or vary the designs of the building. This office was renewed after Paul's death by Julius III. in January, 1552.

There is an interesting letter from Buonarroti to his nephew Lorenzo, written in July, 1547, during the first year of his office as Chief Architect to the Pope, in which he asks him to send the measurements of the cupola of the cathedral at Florence. Vasari writes that Michael Angelo once said that although one might imitate that structure one "could not do better." When planning the

dome of St. Peter's, Buonarroti had in his mind both that of the Pantheon and the one in Florence. Of two models, however, he kept closer to that at Florence, but his own was far greater and grander in design than either of the two others. The cupola of St. Peter's resembles the one on the cathedral at Florence in more ways than one, and it is the only other dome with a double lining within.

As has already been said, Michael Angelo's letters are not generally of a pleasing character. They could never be placed amongst the amenities of literature, since they consist principally of complaints at his treatment by the world, of ill-humour with himself, and against those with whom his work brought him into contact. An exception must be made, however, for one letter written by him to Vasari after the death of his devoted old servant, Urbino, whom he had tenderly nursed throughout his last illness; it does honour to the heart of that mighty and profound artist. Urbino had been in Michael Angelo's service since 1530, and, as we have seen, he also assisted his master in his artistic work, as well as attending to his few personal wants, for a more frugal man, short of an actual anchorite, never lived. In this letter Michael Angelo writes that his servant's death has taught him how to die, "not with regret but with pleasure. I have kept him," he continues, "seven and twenty years, and always found him sure and faithful. I had made him rich, and now that I had counted on his being a prop to my old age he is taken from me, and I have no other hope left but to meet him again in Paradise, where God, through the very blessed death he made, has shown that he has gone. What he felt more bitter than death was



Alinari photo] *[Santa Croce, Florence*

MICHAEL ANGELO'S TOMB

DESIGNED BY VASARI

to leave me in this deceitful world, and in the midst of so many anxieties. The best of me is gone with him, and there is nothing left to me here but infinite misery."

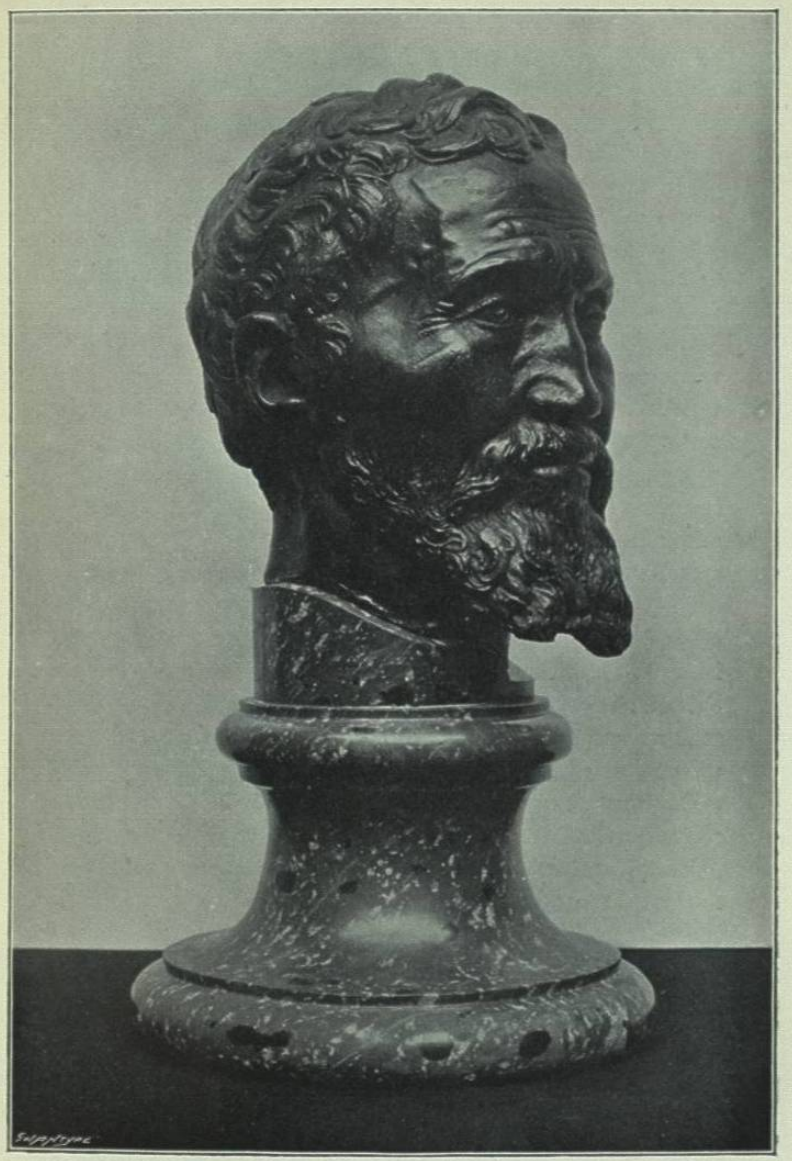
Michael Angelo's great, unhappy, but, taken all in all, glorious and splendidly prolific life, came to an end in his eighty-ninth year. He had fallen ill on the 12th of February, 1564, but had struggled bravely against pain and weakness, and only a few days before his death had attempted to mount his horse. He was well cared for during these last days by a few devoted friends. After three days of mortal weakness his spirit passed away about five o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th of February. His last look on earth may have possibly been turned towards the great dome then rising above Rome, the noblest architectural creation which the genius of any man has accomplished.

According to his own wish, the body of Michael Angelo was taken from Rome to Florence, where he was buried in the Church of Santa Croce, as it was known by his friends that he wished his remains to be placed in that church, an appropriate spot, for he had added to its beauty both by his paintings and his sculpture. His tomb was designed by Vasari, and above the sarcophagus in which the body of the master lies, his bust was placed, in such a position that its eyes are turned to the western door of the church through which Brunelleschi's cathedral can be seen, that building beloved by Buonarroti above all others.

We owe the fullest account of Michael Angelo's outward man to his friend and pupil Condivi. "Michael Angelo," he wrote during his master's lifetime, "is of a good complexion, more muscular and bony than fat or

fleshy in his person: healthy above all things, as well by reason of natural constitution as of the exercise he takes. Nevertheless he was a weakly child, and has suffered two illnesses in manhood. His countenance always showed a good and wholesome colour. Of stature he is as follows; height middling; broad in the shoulders; the rest of the body slender in proportion. The shape of his face is oval, the space above the eyes being one-sixth higher than a semicircle; consequently the temples project beyond the ears, and the ears beyond the cheeks, and those beyond the rest; so that the skull in relation to the whole head must be called large. The forehead, seen in front, is square; the nose is a little flattened, not by nature, but because, when he was a boy, Torrigiano de' Torrigiani, a brutal and insolent fellow, smashed in the cartilage with his fist. The nose, however, being what it is, bears a proper proportion to the forehead and the rest of the face. The lips are thin, but the lower is slightly thicker than the upper; so that, seen in profile, it projects a little. The chin is well in harmony with the features I have described. The forehead, in a side view, almost hangs over the nose; and this looks hardly less than broken, were it not for a trifling protuberance in the middle. The eyebrows are not thick with hair; the eyes may even be called small, of a colour like horn, but speckled and stained with spots of bluish yellow. The ears in good proportion; hair of the head black, as also the beard, except that both are now grizzled by old age; the beard double-forked, about five inches long and not very bushy, as may be observed in his portrait."

No portrait of Michael Angelo appears to have been painted until he was well stricken in years; at any rate,



[*Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

BRONZE BUST OF MICHAEL ANGELO

none has come down to us. If we can imagine him before his nose was crushed he must have been good-looking, but at all times his was a strikingly intellectual face, with its great frontal ridge above the eyes, "the bar," as Tennyson has called it, "the bar of Michael Angelo," giving distinction to the stern profile as we know it from medals, and the bust in Florence taken long after Torrigiano's brutal sign-manual had marred his face, and age and trouble and sickness had left their defacing marks upon it.

It is a face which produces a feeling of sadness upon those who study its features, for it bears, stamped upon it, the signs of a life of disappointment and ceaseless troubles, many real, but many, alas! imaginary: for this intensely gifted artist, this creator of sublime forms, was constitutionally nervous and apt to fall into sudden panics and alarms, in which a curiously feminine side of his temperament showed itself.

Both Vasari and Filippino Lippi saw the body of Michael Angelo at Florence when the coffin was opened on its arrival from Rome, and to them the master seemed to be resting in an earthly sleep and not in that of death. The coffin was again opened in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the body appeared still intact: again a third time it was opened—in 1857—when nothing remained but some bones of the skull, a few gray hairs, some laurel leaves, and a little heap of brown dust.

No visitor in Florence who cares for art and its followers should omit to visit the Casa Buonarroti in the old Via Ghibellini. This house belonged to the Buonarroti family, and in it Michael Angelo lived during his visits to Florence in his later days. It is now a museum, and

was bequeathed to the city by a descendant of one of the sculptor's brothers. The little room which is said to have been Michael Angelo's study is the least modernized in the building, and here are kept a few personal relics of the great man, his writing table, his sword, and the crutch-handled walking stick with a wide, jagged ferule, that he used when old and almost blind. In another room is some of his earliest work in sculpture. Here is the bas-relief of the *Madonna and Child*, so reminiscent in style of Donatello; the relief in marble of a combat between Centaurs and Lapithae, or as it was originally called *The Rape of Deianira*, a subject suggested to Buonarroti by Poliziano in the golden days of the sculptor's youth, and of which Vasari wrote that it was a work which did not seem the creation of a youth, "but from an accomplished past master." Here, too, are some models for the statue of the great *David*, and an interesting and apparently faithful and lifelike bronze bust of Michael Angelo by Ricciarelli, more generally known by the name of Daniele da Volterra: there is also a portrait of him in oils by his pupil, Marcello Venusti.

In another room are many sketches and designs for buildings by the master, and one of the façade of San Lorenzo, which we have seen was never carried out—highly interesting if one could be sure that it is genuine.

Alinari photo [*Casa Buonarroti, Florence*

MADONNA AND CHILD

MARBLE BAS-RELIEF

Alinari photo] [*Casa Buonarroti, Florence*

COMBAT BETWEEN CENTAURS AND LAPITHAE

MARBLE BAS-RELIEF

CHAPTER IV

MICHAEL ANGELO AS SCULPTOR

IN the letters written by Michael Angelo to his father and brother between the years 1497 and 1512, and in those addressed to Pope Clement VII. between 1524 and 1526, it will be found that he regarded himself as a sculptor first, although knowing his worth in the sister branches of painting and architecture. This description of "sculptor" also appears on the contracts made by him in matters relating to both building and painting. Thus, for instance, when he reluctantly yielded to the wish of Pope Julius that he should paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he wrote to the Pontiff on the 10th of May, 1508: "I, Michael Angelo, Sculptor, have received 500 ducats on account for paintings in the Sistine Chapel, on which I have commenced to work this day." Again, when offering to execute a monument in Florence to the memory of Dante, he wrote as follows to Pope Leo X.: "I, Michael Angelo, Sculptor, also implore your Holiness that I may have your permission to make a tomb of the divine poet." In his poems Michael Angelo refers again and again to his position in life as being that of a sculptor, and in one of them he says:

"Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto
Che un sol marmo in se non circumscriva."