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# Maiolica.

BY

C. DRURY E. FORTNUM, F.S.A.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

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SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM  
ART HANDBOOKS.

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MAIOLICA.

BY  
C. DRURY E. FORTNUM, F.S.A.

WITH NUMEROUS WOODCUTS.

NEW EDITION.



*Published for the Committee of Council on Education,*

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No. 4.—MAIOLICA.



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*These Handbooks are reprints of the dissertations prefixed to the large catalogues of the chief divisions of works of art in the Museum at South Kensington; arranged and so far abridged as to bring each into a portable shape. The Lords of the Committee of Council on Education having determined on the publication of them, the editor trusts that they will meet the purpose intended; namely, to be useful, not alone for the collections at South Kensington but for other collections, by enabling the public at a trifling cost to understand something of the history and character of the subjects treated of.*

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W. M.

*August, 1875.*

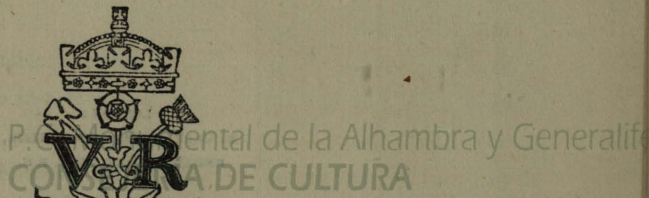
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# MAIOLICA.

BY

C. DRURY E. FORTNUM, F.S.A.

WITH NUMEROUS WOODCUTS.



Donativo del Sr. Cónde de  
Romanones á la Biblioteca  
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LONDON :

P. C. MARRAS, THE ALHAMBRA Y GENERALIFE  
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# MAIOLICA.

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## CHAPTER I.

It is right, first, to explain that in this dissertation we shall make constant use of two or three words borrowed from foreign languages; one is *botega* or *bottega*, implying something between a workshop and an artist's studio, which it would be difficult to express by a single English word: another is *fabrique*, meaning the private establishment of a master potter of that day, the idea of which cannot be so well conveyed by factory, pottery, or studio (itself an imported word), all of which are therein combined and modified.

The history of pottery and its manufacture is a subject of great extent; because from a very early period of human existence, known to us only by the tangible memorials of primitive inhabitants, the potter's art appears to have been practised. At first the vessels were of coarse clay, rude and sun-dried or ill-baked, and occasionally ornamented with concentric and transverse scratches; from which state they gradually developed to the exquisite forms and decoration of the Greek pottery; but it would seem that however universal the production of vessels of baked clay, the art of applying to them a vitreous covering or glaze was an invention which emanated from the east, from India or Egypt, Assyria or Babylon.

On this point Dr. Birch, in the introduction to his erudite work on ancient pottery, says: "The desire of rendering terra-cotta less porous, and of producing vessels capable of retaining liquids, gave rise to the covering of it with a vitreous enamel or glaze. The invention of glass has hitherto been generally attributed to the Phœnicians; but opaque glasses or enamels as old as the eighteenth dynasty, and enamelled objects as early as the fourth, have been found in Egypt. The employment of copper to produce a brilliant blue coloured enamel was very early, both in Babylonia and Assyria; but the use of tin for a white enamel, as recently discovered in the enamelled bricks and vases of Babylonia and Assyria, anticipated, by many centuries, the re-discovery of that process in Europe in the fifteenth century, and shows the early application of metallic oxides. This invention apparently remained for many centuries a secret among the eastern nations only, enamelled terra-cotta and glass forming articles of commercial export from Egypt and Phœnicia to every part of the Mediterranean. Among the Egyptians and Assyrians enamelling was used more frequently than glazing, and their works are consequently a kind of fayence, consisting of a loose frit or body, to which an enamel adheres, after only a slight fusion. After the fall of the Roman empire the art of enamelling terra-cotta disappeared among the Arab and Moorish races, who had retained a traditional knowledge of the process. The application of a transparent vitreous coating or glaze over the entire surface, like the varnish of a picture, is also referable to a high antiquity, and was universally adopted, either to enhance the beauty of single colours or to promote the combination of many. Innumerable fragments and remains of glazed vases, fabricated by the Greeks and Romans, not only prove the early use of glazing, but also exhibit in the present day many of the noblest efforts of the potter's art."

It is true that on the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman pottery a subdued and hardly apparent glazing was applied to the surface of the pieces, but it is so slight as to leave a barely appreciable



effect upon the eye, beyond that which might be produced by a mechanical polish, and so thinly laid on as almost to defy attempts at proving its nature by chemical investigation; it is, however, supposed to have been produced by a dilute aluminous soda glass, without any trace of lead in its composition, the greater portion of which was absorbed into the substance of the piece, thereby increasing its hardness and leaving only a faint polish on the surface of the ware.

In Egypt and the east the use of a distinct glaze (*invetriatura* of the Italians), covering the otherwise more porous substance of the vessel, appears to have been known and to have arrived at great perfection at a very remote period. It was in fact a superior ware, equivalent to the porcelain of our days, and from the technical excellence of some of the smaller pieces has been frequently, but wrongly, so called.

It will perhaps be as well, before entering further into the consideration of the subject, to define and arrange the objects of our attention under general heads.

Pottery (*Fayence, Terraglia*), as distinct from porcelain, is formed of potter's clay mixed with marl of argillaceous and calcareous nature, and sand, variously proportioned, and may be classed under two divisions: Soft (*Fayence à pâte tendre*), and Hard (*Fayence à pâte dure*), according to the nature of the composition or the degree of heat under which it has been fired in the kiln. What is known generally in England as earthenware is soft, while stone ware, queen's ware, &c. are hard. The characteristics of the soft wares are a paste, or body, which may be scratched with a knife or file, and fusibility, generally, at the heat of a porcelain furnace.

These soft wares may be again divided into four subdivisions: unglazed, lustrous, glazed, and enamelled. Among the three first of these subdivisions may be arranged almost all the ancient pottery of Egypt, Greece, Etruria, and Rome; as also the larger portion of that in general use among all nations during mediæval

and modern times. We shall be occupied with the glazed and enamelled wares: the first of which may be again divided into siliceous or glass glazed, and plumbeous or lead glazed.

In these subdivisions the foundation is in all cases the same. The mixed clay or "paste" or "body" (varied in composition according to the nature of the glaze to be superimposed) is formed by the hand, or on the wheel, or impressed into moulds; then slowly dried and baked in a furnace or stove, after which, on cooling, it is in a state to receive the glaze. This is prepared by fusing sand or other siliceous material with potash or soda to form a translucent glass, the composition, in the main, of the glaze upon siliceous wares. The addition of a varying but considerable quantity of the oxide of lead, by which it is rendered more easily fusible but still translucent, constitutes the glaze of plumbeous wares: and the further addition of the oxide of tin produces an enamel of an opaque white of great purity, which is the characteristic glazing of stanniferous or tin-glazed wares. In every case the vitreous substance is reduced to the finest powder by mechanical means, being milled with water to the consistency of cream; into this the dry and absorbent baked piece is dipped and withdrawn, leaving a coating of the material of the bath adhering to its surface. A second firing, when quite dry, fuses this coating into a glazed surface on the piece, rendering it lustrous and impermeable to liquids. The two former of these glazes may be variously coloured by the admixture of metallic oxides, as copper for green, iron for yellow, &c.; but they are nevertheless translucent, and show the natural colour of the baked clay beneath.

#### VITREOUS OR GLASS-GLAZED WARES.

The vitreous, silico-alkaline or glass-glazed wares, were of very ancient date and in all probability had their origin in the east, in Egypt, or India, or Phœnicia; indeed the discovery of glass, which has always been attributed to the latter country, would soon direct the potter's attention to a mode of covering his porous vessel of baked earth with a coating of the new material; but the ordinary

baked clay would not take or hold the glaze, which rose in bubbles and scaled off, refusing to adhere to the surface, and it became necessary to form the pieces of a mixed material, consisting of much siliceous sand, some aluminous earth, and probably a small portion of alkali, thus rendering it of a nature approximating to that of the glaze, and to which the latter firmly adhered. In some instances, on the finer examples which may probably have been exposed to a higher temperature in the oven, the glaze and the body of the piece have become so incorporated as to produce a semi-translucent substance, analogous to some artificial porcelains. In its nature this glaze is translucent, and accordingly we find that when ornamented with designs, they are executed directly on the "biscuit" or unglazed surface of the piece, which then receives its vitreous covering through which they are apparent. By means of an oxide of copper the exquisite turquoise blue of ancient Egypt, "scarcely rivalled after thirty centuries of human experience," was produced. The green colour was, perhaps, given by means of another oxide of the same metal; violet by manganese or gold, yellow by silver or perhaps by iron, and the rarer red perhaps by the protoxide of copper. We also find that bricks and vases of similar glazing, brought to its greatest perfection in Egypt, were made by the Babylonians and Assyrians.

Throughout Babylonia the sites of ancient buildings afford fragments of glazed pottery. The glaze of those brought from Borsippa by the abbé Beauchamp, in 1790, was analysed and found to contain neither the oxides of lead nor tin, but to be an alkaline silicate with alumina, coloured by metallic oxides. A more recent analysis of Assyrian examples shows that with a base of silicate of soda or soda glass and oxide of tin the opaque white has been produced, being the earliest recorded example of "enamelled" ware. A small quantity of oxide of lead was also found in the blue glaze on tiles from Babylonia. At Warka, probably the ancient Ur of the Chaldees, Mr. Loftus discovered numerous coffins or sarcophagi, piled one upon another to the height of forty-five feet, of

peculiar form, and made of terra-cotta glazed with a siliceous glaze of bluish-green colour. They are formed somewhat like a shoe, an opening being left at the upper and wider end for the insertion of the body, and closed by an oval lid which, as well as the upper part of the coffin, is ornamented with figures and plants in relief. They are supposed to be of the Sassanian period.

The metallic lustre in decoration was applied, apparently at an early time, to pottery glazed with a siliceous coating, and appears to have established itself in Persia. On specimens from Arabia it is also found, and its use in combination with this glaze may possibly have preceded the manufacture of lusted wares coated with the stanniferous enamel, by the eastern potters of the Balearic islands, Spain, and Sicily.

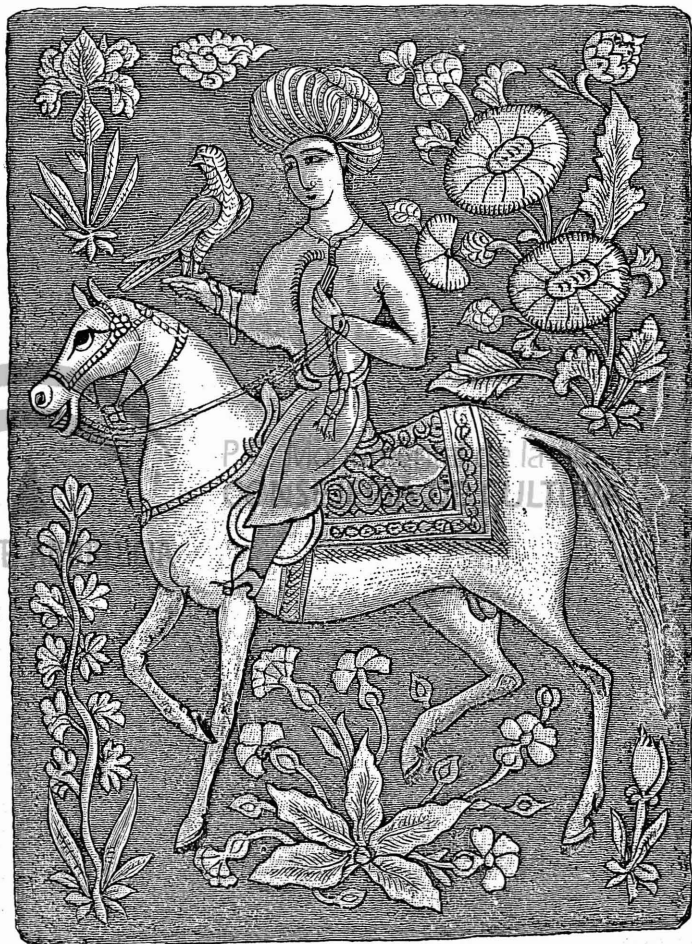
In northern India, at Sind, and in Persia, wares are made at the present day of precisely the same character as the ancient pottery under consideration. Pieces from the former locality, which were exhibited at the International Exhibition of 1871, are composed of a sandy argillaceous frit, ornamented with pattern in cobalt blue beneath a siliceous glaze. Indeed their agreement in technical character with some of the pottery of the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians, and with that produced in Syria and Persia during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, is most remarkable. Persia also now produces inferior wares of the same class, specimens of which, as well as some of those from India, are preserved in the South Kensington museum: the engraving on the opposite page represents a wall tile (no. 623) of the seventeenth century.

We thus see how widely spread, and at how early a period, the use of this most ancient mode of glazing was established and brought to perfection. It was the parent of all those wares now known as Persian, Damascus, Rhodian, or Lindus.

#### PLUMBEOUS, OR LEAD GLAZED WARES.

The silico-plumbeous or lead-glazed wares were for many ages and still are the most common, and, in Europe, the most widely

spread class of pottery: indeed, throughout the northern and western countries lead, in combination with glass, seems to have



been the earliest and until the fifteenth century the only means known of glazing soft pottery.

We have seen that a certain amount of lead has been found

in some of the blue coloured glazes of Babylonia, and (says Dr. Percy) "probably employed as a flux;" if so, this might have been the spring of its general adoption for the purpose of producing a more easily fusible and therefore a more ready and more manageable coating; but in the east it does not seem to have supplanted the more elegant and purer siliceous glaze.

Fragments of Græco-Roman pottery from Tarsus; lamps from the neighbourhood of Naples, and other examples of a highly glazed pottery from various antique sites which have all the appearance of a plumbeous composition, are preserved in many collections, as at the Louvre, Naples, the British museum, &c. The paste of which these examples are formed is to all appearance an ordinary potter's clay, generally of a buff colour, and in no way similar in character to that of the Egyptian or Assyrian wares, glazed with a true glass. The adhesion of the vitreous coating to the surface, and its perfect adaptability to the irregularities of the shaped and moulded pieces, prove its affinity for the paste of which they are made, and indirectly that its composition is not the same as that of the Egyptian or Assyrian glaze.

It is worthy of remark that nearly all these specimens are found in the south of Europe, examples rarely occurring even at Rome; and, indeed, it is not improbable that the use of this glaze had hardly been adopted by the artistic potters before their art, together with all others, had degenerated under the Lower Empire. The superabundance of the precious metals and other rich material, more appreciated by the powerful than the priceless treasures which art had formed from common clay, and which had been the delight of a more refined state of society, led finally to a total neglect of the higher branches of ceramic manufacture.

It is not unlikely that plumbeous glaze may have been introduced by Greek or oriental potters into southern Italy. We learn from the monk Theophilus that the art of decorating fictile

vessels with vitreous colours was practised by the Byzantine Greeks, who would have carried it there. This statement, in all probability, refers to the lead glazed wares and not to the tin enamel, the former of which, as we have seen, was known earlier than his time to the potters of Tarsus, Pompeii, &c., and it is reasonable to believe that the art may have been preserved in Byzantium when lost, or nearly lost, in Italy. Perhaps, in combination with incised ornament the use of this glaze never ceased in that country from the eighth and ninth centuries until the introduction or discovery of the stanniferous enamel in the fifteenth century; and we find that the earliest glazed wares of that country, the *sgraffiati*, the painted, and the *mezza maiolica* wares, are covered with this description of vitreous surface.

In the eleventh century churches built in various places were decorated with discs and "ciotole" of glazed and painted terra-cotta. The researches of the abbé Cochet at Bouteilles have shown that glazed pottery was in use in the north of France in the Anglo-norman period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or perhaps even in earlier time. Examples of glazed and painted tiles of the fourteenth century are preserved in the British museum. As before stated, this glaze is composed of silica with varying proportions of potash or soda and of oxide of lead, by which addition it is rendered more easily fusible but remains transparent.

To obtain a white surface was, however, desirable, the colour of the paste beneath the glaze being generally of a dull red or buff and ill-adapted as a ground for the display of coloured ornamentation. To supply this want, before the invention of the tin enamel, an intervening process was adopted. A white argillaceous earth of the nature of pipeclay was purified and milled with water, and thus applied over the coarser surface of the piece in the same manner as the glaze; again dried, or slightly fixed by fire, it was ready to receive the translucent coat through which the white "slip" or "engobe" became

apparent. It is easy to conceive that by scratching a design or pattern through this white applied surface to the darker clay beneath, before fixing in the fire, a ready mode of decoration presented itself without the use of colour, to be covered with but visible through the glaze; hence the early incised or "sgraffiato" ware, one of the primitive modes of decorating glazed pottery.

Passeri states that pottery works existed from remote periods in the neighbourhood of Pesaro, as proved by remains of furnaces and fragments of Roman time and tiles with the stamp of Theodoric; that during the dark ages the manufacture was neglected, but that it revived after 1300, and that it then became the fashion in that city to adorn the church towers and façades with discs and "bacini" of coloured and glazed earthenware; a practice which had been in use at Pisa and other cities as early as the eleventh century. The origin of this custom has been much discussed; and the reader will find an account of it in the introduction to the detailed catalogue of Maiolica in the South Kensington collection. Occasionally, or rather frequently, circular and square slabs of porphyry and serpentine were used on the same building, concurrently with the glazed earthenware, as on the tower of Sta. Maria Maggiore at Rome; and, indeed, this mode of enrichment attached to the architecture of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries is in accordance with that produced by the enamelled discs and inlaid stones on processional crosses and church plate of the same period.

The only instance, observed by the writer, of the occurrence of these "bacini" of glazed ware in domestic architecture is seen over the windows of the palazzo Fava in Bologna. This style of decoration ceased entirely during the course of the fourteenth century.

Passeri instances the use of glaze on tiles upon a tomb in Bologna, opposite the church of S. Domenico, dated about 1100; and he further states, but we know not upon what authority, that



it was about the year 1300 that the method of covering the clay with a "slip" or "engobe" of white earth, or the coarser earth of Verona, was first adopted. Slightly baked, it was glazed with "marzacotto" (oxide of lead and glass), applied wet and again fired; and this glaze was variously coloured yellow, green, black, and blue, by iron, copper, manganese, and cobalt. A similar method of coating the rough and porous baked clay seems to have been known also at a very early period in the north of Europe, and to have been in use throughout France, Germany, and England.



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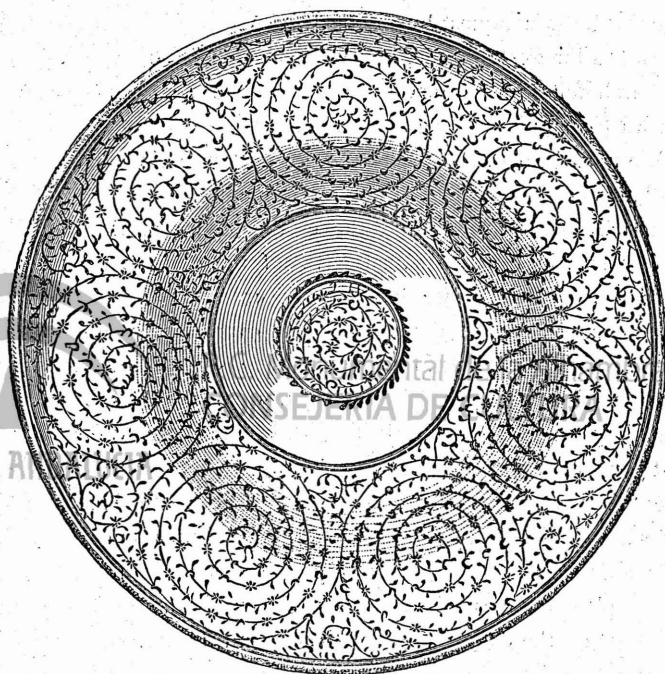
## CHAPTER II.

### ENAMELLED OR STANNIFEROUS GLAZED WARES.

It was found that by the addition of a certain portion of the oxide of tin to the composition of glass and oxide of lead the character of the glaze entirely alters. Instead of being translucent it becomes, on fusion, an opaque and beautifully white enamel, the intervening process of covering the surface of the clay with a stratum of white earth before glazing being unnecessary. It, moreover, was found to afford a better ground for the application of coloured ornament. The process of application was the same as for the "slip;" after immersion in the enamel bath, and subsequent drying, the painting is applied upon the absorbent surface; the piece being then subjected to the fire which, at one application, fixes the colours and liquifies the glaze. This "enamelled" pottery (*émaillée*) is by far the more important group of the glazed wares, being susceptible of decoration by the lustre pigments, as well as by painting in colours of great delicacy; and it comprises the Hispano-moresque, the real Maiolica, and the perfected earthenware of Italy and other countries.

It is true that the first trace of the application of oxide of tin to produce a white opaque glazed surface is to be met with upon Babylonian or Assyrian bricks, but we are disposed to think that it was then merely used as a pigment to produce a white colour, and not as an application to pottery for the production of a white opaque glaze capable of receiving coloured enrichment by painting in other pigments. A corroboration of this opinion would seem to exist in the fact that throughout Asia Minor, Syria, Persia, and

Egypt, a purely stanniferous glaze on pottery has never been generally adopted, or taken the place of that simple and beautiful siliceous coating, so dexterously applied and with such richness of effect upon the Persian and Damascus earthenware. Engraved is an example of an early Damascus plate (no. 6590), at South



Kensington. Perhaps isolated and lying dormant in remote localities for centuries, its use may have been learned by the Arabs, for its next appearance is upon fragments of tiling apparently of their manufacture or fashioned under their influence. How the knowledge of this enamel travelled, when and where it was first used, and to what extent applied, is still doubtful. We meet with an occasional fragment generally upon mural decoration of uncertain date on various Arab sites, till at length it

becomes palpably appreciable in the Moorish potteries of Spain and of the Balearic islands. The baron J. Ch. Davillier, in his excellent work on pottery, states that he has not been able to discover any piece which could reasonably be ascribed to a date anterior to the fourteenth century, some two hundred years after the expulsion of the Saracens from Spain. In Valencia, however, anterior to its conquest by Jayme I. of Arragon in 1239, potteries had been long established, and were of such importance that that monarch felt himself bound to protect the Moorish potters of Xativa (San Filippo) by a special edict.

We must bear in mind that there were two periods of Mahomedan sway in Spain, the first on the expulsion of the Gothic monarchy by the Arabs and the establishment of the Caliphate at Cordova, in the eighth century. Of the ceramic productions of this early period we have no accurate knowledge, but we should expect to find them of similar character to the siliceous glazed wares prevalent in the east. The second period is after an interval of five centuries, in 1235, when the Moors founded the kingdom of Granada, having driven out the Arabs. Then first appear the wares usually known as Hispano-moresque, like the fine vase (engraved) no. 8968, at South Kensington; for we find the tiles of the Alhambra dating about 1300, the Alhambra vase about 1320, and continuous abundant examples of tin glazed wares of Moorish origin, until the period of the conquest of the country by Ferdinand and Isabella; after which the pottery becomes more purely Spanish and speedily declines.

Mr. Marryat remarks, in reference to the second or Moorish period, that the art of the new invaders had the same origin as the old, but as we have no specimens known to have been of the earlier or Arabian period we cannot accept this verdict as conclusive. Moreover, some confusion has arisen in classing together the glass glazed or siliceous pottery, with or without metallic lustre, and the Moresque wares produced in Spain, which are so

distinctly characteristic as being enamelled with the oxide of tin.



We particularly refer to those somewhat rare examples of early siliceous pottery, like the deep Rhodian plate next engraved, some

enriched with metallic lustre, others without, the designs upon all of which are eminently Arabian or Saracenic, unreadable mock Arabic inscriptions occurring (as in the textile fabrics of the same period) among the ornaments; as in the thirteenth century vase in the woodcut, p. 17. Such are the tiles of early date from various



place; in Persia and Arabia. Similar wares, of which there are specimens at South Kensington, are supposed to have been made by oriental potters in Sicily but it is difficult to say at what time. That island was conquered by the Saracens in 827. Again, there is another variety of pottery of Moresque character and ornamentation with vermicular pattern in copper lustre on a seemingly stanniferous glaze, which is ascribed to Moorish potters

who went to Sicily and established works at Calata Girone in the fourteenth century.

It is not improbable that the existence in Spain of tin ores in



considerable abundance may have accidentally led to the discovery or to the adoption of the stanniferous enamel, obtained by an admixture of the oxide of that metal with glass and oxide of lead. We have no positive proof of its use on pottery at an earlier date in any other country, since the period of the Babylonian bricks

May there not be some truth in the story of the Majorcan dishes built into the Pisan towers, and that the single specimen of "Persian" ware found by the writer on the church of Sta. Cecilia in that city, which in all probability was placed there early in the twelfth century, may be one of the dishes brought home by the Pisans, at a time anterior to the use of the tin enamel in Majorca?

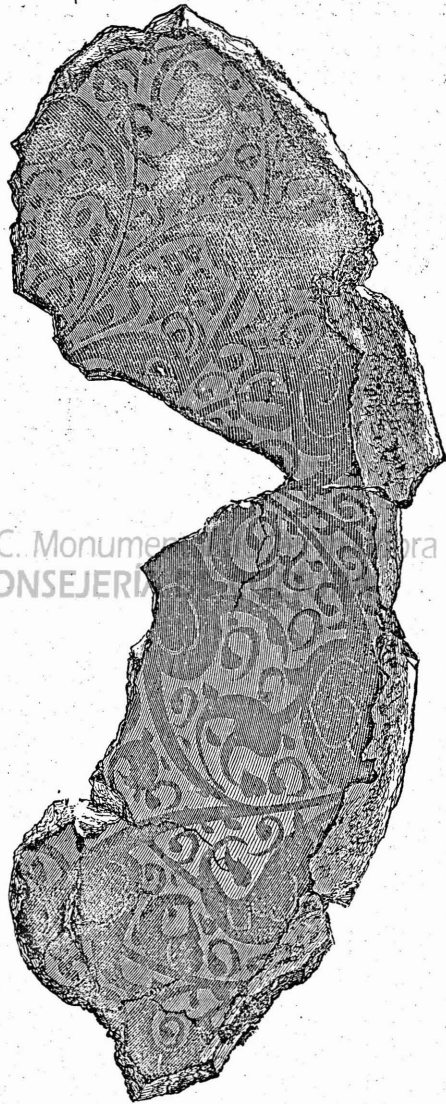
There is generally a foundation for fabulous stories, and it is not unlikely that some few of those trophies were so applied; the more so as the taste for such architectural decoration prevailed at that period. At the same time there can be no doubt that many of the bacini adorning churches in various parts of Italy, including Pisa, were of native Italian manufacture, as would seem probable from their compositions and designs. Engravings of these, and of the fragment of oriental ware above alluded to, are published in the *Archæologia*, vol. xlii. We are indebted to the council of the Society of antiquaries for permission (see next page) to use the latter block.

The earliest traces of the use of stanniferous enamel glaze in Europe, known to us, is always in connection with a decoration, produced by the reduction of certain metallic salts in the reverberatory furnace, leaving a thin film upon the surface, which gives that beautiful and rich effect known as *reflet métallique*, *nacré*, *cangiante*, *rubino*, *reverberato*, &c., and in England as lusted ware. In Italy the use of a metallic lustre was apparently known and practised previous to the introduction of the tin enamel, for we have abundant examples of early "mezza-maiolica" from the potteries of Pesaro or Gubbio, glazed only with the oxide of lead and glass, and which are brilliantly lusted with the metallic colours. None of these can, however, be referred to an earlier date than the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Of whom, then, did the Italian potters learn this art? We have no answer to the question in any historical record, and we are forced to infer that the name by which this lusted ware was known at the time and in the country of its production, reflected that of



the place from which it was derived. Accordingly we find that the coarser lead glazed lusted ware was known as "mezza-maiolica," while that more nearly resembling its original, by the use of the tin enamel, was known as "maiolica." That the Moorish potters of Majorca conveyed this knowledge, and that the Italians named their ware after that of the island, would seem a reasonable conclusion. M. Jacquemart, however, thinks it equally probable that although the Majorcan wares were well known in Italy, this art may really have been communicated by Persian potters, or their pupils, coming to the eastern ports of Italy; and that the style of decoration on the early Italian lusted wares is more Persian than Moresque. This would also in some measure explain why the lustrous colours were used at some potteries anterior to the adop-



tion of the stanniferous enamel. The woodcut represents a bowl at South Kensington, no. 503, possibly of this manufacture, and of great rarity. In date it is somewhat late ; about 1490.



The general term "Maiolica," also spelt "Majolica," has long been and is still erroneously applied to all varieties of glazed earthenware of Italian origin. We have seen that it was not so originally but that the term was restricted to the lusted wares, which resemble in that respect those of the island from which they had long been imported into Italy. It is a curious fact, proving their estimation in that country, that nearly all the specimens of Hispano-moresque pottery which adorn our cabinets and enrich our museums have been procured in Italy ; comparatively few pieces having been found in Spain.

Scaliger states in reference to the Italian pottery as comparable with the porcelain of China, that the former derived its name from Majorca, of which the wares are most excellent. Fabio Ferrari also, in his work upon the origin of the Italian language, states his belief "that the use of majolica, as well as the name, came from Majorca, which the ancient Tuscan writers called Maiolica." Thus Dante writes :—"Tra l'isola di Cipri e Maiolica ;" showing the

then mode of spelling the name of the island, and it would seem but natural to distinguish an imitation of its produce as "à la Maiolica."

The "mezza-maiolica" was the coarser ware, formed of potter's earth, covered with a white "slip" upon which the subject was painted; then glazed with the common "marza-cotto" or lead glaze, over which the lustre pigments were applied. The "maiolica," on the other hand, was the tin enamelled ware similarly lustred. As before stated, these terms were originally used with reference only to the lustred wares, but towards the middle of the sixteenth century they seem to have been generally applied to the glazed earthenware of Italy. We think with M. Jacquemart, M. Darcel, Mr. J. C. Robinson, and others, that the word *maiolica* should be again restricted to the lustred wares, although in Italy and elsewhere it is habitually used to designate all the numerous varieties of glazed earthenware, with the exception of the more common "terraglia" and in distinction from porcelain.

The Germans ascribe the discovery of the tin enamel glazing to a potter of Schelestadt, in Alsace, whose name is unknown but who died in the year 1283; and in the convent of St. Paul at Leipzic is a frieze of large glazed tiles, with heads in relief, the date of which is stated to be 1207. The potters' art is said to have developed itself in that country at an earlier period than in Italy; rilievo architectural decorations, monuments with figures in high relief, and other works of great artistic merit having been executed in 1230 at Breslau, where there is a monument to Henry IV. of Silesia who died in 1290, an important work in this material. Later, at Nuremberg, the elder Veit Hirschvögel was born in 1441, and by him the use of the tin glaze was known. Specimens ascribed to his hand and dating from 1470 are preserved in museums. At Strehla a pulpit of glazed terra-cotta is of the date 1565, and at Saltzburg is the wonderful chimney-piece of the fifteenth century, still in its original position in the Schloss.

At that time, also, Hans Kraut, of Villengen in Swabia, produced good works, but it is probable that many of these larger examples are covered with an admirably manipulated green or brown glaze which is produced without the admixture of tin.

In Italy history has always awarded the honour of its discovery to Luca della Robbia, whose first great work was executed in 1438; and however recent observation may lead to the assumption that its use was known in the Italian potteries before his time, there can be no doubt that his was not merely an application of a well-known process to a new purpose, but that he really did invent an enamel of peculiar whiteness and excellence, better adapted to his purpose and of somewhat different composition from that in use at any of the potteries of his time.



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### CHAPTER III.

WE have already seen that in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries native wares were produced in various places, some of which still exist in the towers and façades of churches, and of a palace at Bologna. These are lead glazed, rudely painted or with single colours, and in some instances "sgraffiato" proving that the use of a white "slip," or "engobe" was known in Italy at that period, as affirmed by Passeri, who further asserts that in 1300 the art assumed a more decorative character, under the then lords of Pesaro, the Malatestas. Having thus attained an even opaque white surface the development of its artistic decoration steadily advanced. The colours used were yellow, green, blue, and black, to which we may add a dull brownish red, noticed on some of the Pisan "bacini." Passeri states that the reflection of the sun's rays from the concave surfaces of these "bacini" at Pesaro was most brilliant, and hence it has been wrongly inferred that they were enriched with metallic lustre. We believe that this effect may arise from iridescence on the surface of the soft lead glaze, easily decomposed by the action of the atmosphere in the neighbourhood of the sea.

Pieces exist, of considerable merit, which may be ascribed to an earlier period than that on which we find the earliest date. A votive plaque preserved in the museum of the hôtel Clugy, at Paris, has the sacred monogram surrounded by the legend *Nicolads · de · Ragnolis · ad · honorem · dei · et · Sancti · Michaelis · fecit · fieri · ano · 1475*. We have always considered this plaque as of Faenza, but it would seem that MM. Jacquemart

and Darcel are disposed to ascribe it to Caffaggiolo. The next example, two years later in sequence of date, is in the possession of Mr. Cook; it represents the Virgin seated on a throne in an architectural framing, and holding the Child; it has all the characteristics of a Tuscan origin and the glaze appears to be stanniferous. We next have the Faenza plate in the Correr museum at Venice, dated 1482, followed by the plaque ascribed to Forlì, 1489, and one of Faenza, 1491. Other pieces, dated 1486 and 1487, are in other collections. But we have no record or dated example of Italian pottery, coated with the stanniferous enamel, previous to the first important production by Luca della Robbia in 1438.

M. Jâcquémart is of opinion that the use of the tin enamel was known on pottery in Italy previous to its application to sculpture by that artist, and in this opinion Mr. Robinson agrees; yet it is remarkable that no record of such knowledge has descended to us. No enamelled product of the early fabriques of Faenza or Caffaggiolo bears an earlier date, nor of that of Pesaro where decoration by means of the lustre pigments is believed to have preceded their application on enamelled wares; whereas the use of the tin enamel by Luca on flat painted surfaces is proved by the *tondo* on the church of Or San Michele, the lunette over a door at the Opera del Duomo, and the tiles on the tomb of Benozzo Federighi, bishop of Fiesole, now in the church of S. Francesco de Paolo below Bellosguardo, as Florentine evidences; and the twelve circular discs, on which are painted allegorical figures of the twelve months, are also to be referred to at South Kensington.

Mr. J. C. Robinson, in his catalogue of Italian sculpture, has given a notice of the life and works of Luca della Robbia and his family, and a description of the specimens ascribed to them and possessed by the museum at South Kensington; the majority of these rank as works of sculpture; but among the rest are the *tondi*, here mentioned, a wood-cut from one of which we introduce. They

are, in fact, circular plaques of enamelled pottery painted on the plain surface with allegorical representations of the months, in all probability by the hand of Luca della Robbia himself. We



quote Mr. Robinson's description of them from page 59 of that catalogue:—

“Nos. 7632–7643. Luca della Robbia. A series of twelve circular medallions, in enamelled terra-cotta, painted in *chiar'oscuro*, with impersonations of the twelve months. Diameter of each, 1 foot 10½ inches. Vasari tells us that ‘Luca sought to invent a method of painting figures and historical representations on flat surfaces of terra-cotta, which, being executed in vitrified enamels, would secure them an endless duration; of this he made an

experiment on a medallion, which is above the tabernacle of the four saints on the exterior of Or San Michele, on the plane surface of which he delineated the instruments and emblems of the builder's arts, accompanied with beautiful ornaments. For the bishop of Fiesole, in the church of San Brancazio, he also made a marble tomb on which are the recumbent effigy of the bishop and three other half-length figures besides, and in the pilasters of that work he *painted*, on the flat, certain festoons and clusters of fruit and foliage so skilfully and naturally, that, were they even *painted in oil on panel*, they could not be more beautifully or forcibly rendered.' We have here a record of the fact that Luca, simultaneously with his enamelled terra-cotta sculptures, also practised *painting* in the same vehicle on the flat, or, in other words, the art of majolica painting. The monumental works before mentioned are now extant to attest the truth of this account.

"From a careful and repeated study of the above-named works on the spot, and likewise from the internal evidence of the technical qualities of the vehicle, terra-cotta, enamel pigments, &c., the writer has now to add to the list of Luca's productions, in this especially interesting branch, the present series of medallions, doubtless united originally in a grand decorative work. Each roundel is a massive disc of terra-cotta, of a single piece, evidently prepared to be built into a wall (or vaulted ceiling) of some edifice. Round the margin of each is a decorated moulding, in relief, of a characteristic Della Robbia type. The surface within the narrow border is flat or plane, and the designs are painted in two or three grisaille tints on a blue ground, of the usual quiet sober tint affected in all the backgrounds and plane surfaces of the relievo subjects. These consist of single figures of *contadini* or husbandmen, impersonating the agricultural operations of the Florentine country, characteristic of each month of the year; and although invested with a certain artistic charm of expression, the various figures, each of which exhibits a different individual character, may be taken as life portraits of the sturdy Tuscan peasants of



the day. A band or *fascia* forming an inner border round each subject, is ingeniously and fancifully divided into two unequal halves, one being of a lighter tint than the general ground of the composition, and the other half darker, thus indicating the night and the day; the mean duration of each for every month, being accurately computed, set off on the band accordingly, and noted in written characters on the upper or daylight part, whilst the name of the month is written in large capital letters at the bottom in white, on the dark ground of the nocturnal portion. The sun pouring down a cone of yellow rays, accompanied by the sign of the zodiac proper to each month, is also seen on the left of the upper part of each margin, and the moon on the lower half opposite to him." The author gives further proof that these medallions are the work of Luca della Robbia, believing the fact to be as certain as anything not absolutely authenticated can be.

Luca della Robbia was born about the year 1400, and his name must ever be associated with the discovery or adaptation on a large scale, and improvement in composition, of stanniferous enamel. That the nature of this enamel is different from what was used upon other pottery of the time may be seen by a comparison of the two surfaces. The greater degree of opacity and solidity in the former is a marked variation from that in general use; so with the surface of his painted tiles. Perhaps the earlier productions of the Caffaggiolo furnaces approach the nearest to it. There is no piece, seemingly, of the production of a Florentine or Tuscan pottery with a date before 1477, and this example would appear to be tin-glazed. With that exception, the first pieces surfaced with the stanniferous enamel are ascribed to the Caffaggiolo pottery and are dated 1507 and 1509, some seventy years subsequent to its first recorded use by Luca della Robbia; and we have no specimens which can with any probability be ascribed to a period within a quarter of a century of its habitual application by him. We cannot, therefore, find the slightest evidence to dis-

prove the assertion of Vasari and others that Luca was the discoverer, for Italy, of this important improvement in the glazing of earthenware vessels. It is not, however, unreasonable to suppose that its composition may have been communicated to him by one of the Moorish potters from Spain, and that, acting upon this communication, he made a series of experiments resulting in the perfection to which he attained, and which result was guarded as a family secret by two succeeding generations.

A modification of this composition, perhaps also learnt from Hispano-moorish potters, became gradually known and adopted at various fabriques, spreading throughout the potteries of Italy, France, &c. We are inclined to M. Jacquemart's opinion that it first came into use at Caffaggiolo, the fabrique established under the influence of the Medici family, but cannot consent to his suggestion that Luca learnt there the composition of the enamel. We agree with Mr. Robinson in giving the precedence, or at any rate an equality in point of age, to Faenza, and in ascribing to that place certain figures and groups in alto-rilievo, bearing inscriptions in Gothic letters, the modelling and design of which are more characteristic of the north of the Apennines than of the Tuscan valley.

Andrea della Robbia, to whom his uncle's mantle descended, also painted occasionally on plane surfaces, as may be seen on tiles which cover the flat surface of a "*lavabo*" in the sacristy of the church of Sta. Maria Novella, in Florence. We would merely further note the fact that in 1520 the art was in decadence under the hand of Giovanni the son of Andrea, Luca's nephew, and that during the first quarter of that century various imitators produced inferior works in the same style, copying the models of the Della Robbia and the works of some other sculptors. By Giovanni's brother Girolamo it was introduced into France, where the château de Madrid was decorated by him under the patronage of Francis the first.

In Italy, Agostino di Antonio di Duccio, said to be a pupil of

Luca, worked at Perugia in 1459-61, where he executed enamelled bas-reliefs on the façade of the church of S. Bernardino, and in S. Domenico. Pier Paolo di Agapito da Sassoferrato is said to have erected an altar in this manner in the church of the Cappuccini in Arceria, in the diocese of Sinigaglia, in the year 1513. He was also a painter. An able modeller as well as artist potter Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, of Gubbio, also appears to have executed works in the manner of the Della Robbia. The practice of enamelling large works modelled in terra-cotta would seem to have gone out of repute before the end of the first half of the sixteenth century; not perhaps so much from the secret of the glaze being known only, as we are told, to the descendants of the Della Robbia family, as from the want of demand for works in that material.

From the increased use of decorative tiles and the encouragement afforded to the production of artistic pottery, furnaces and boteghe had been established in various parts of northern and central Italy, particularly in Romagna, in Tuscany, and in the lordship of Urbino, where the manufacture was patronized at an early time by the ruling family, as also by the Sforza at Pesaro. Here the first use of the metallic lustre would appear to have been developed; but we have even less historical evidence of the date of its earliest introduction than in the case of the tin enamel. Before that great improvement was adopted by any of the potteries in Italy, the pearly, the golden, and the ruby lustre colours were produced at Pesaro, and perhaps at Gubbio where it subsequently attained its greatest perfection. Pesaro being a coast town of the Adriatic, and one where furnaces had long existed, would form a ready asylum for oriental workmen fleeing from persecution in their own country. It is reasonable to suppose that from them the use of these metallic pigments was acquired, and accordingly we find early pieces presumably of this fabrique, the decorative "motif" on which is eastern to a marked degree. Painted wares had been produced anterior to the use of the metallic pigments,

and among them specimens are occasionally found betraying Persian influence in their design.

The outlines on the "mezza maiolica" of this period were traced in manganese black or zaffre blue, with which last the shadings are also indicated; the flesh is left white. A certain rigidity but truthfulness is observable in the design, crude and



wanting in relief, but precise and free from timidity. A moresque border frequently surrounds a coat-of-arms, portrait busts in profile of contemporary princes, or that of a saint or heathen goddess; or the sacred monogram; or, again (betrothal gifts) a heart with joined hands, as in the woodcut; or portraits of ladies with a ribbon or banderole, on which the name is inscribed with a complimentary adjective as "bella," "diva," and the like; such are the principal subjects of these early *bacili*.

The admirable "madreperla" lustre of these pieces, changing

in colour and effect with every angle at which the light is reflected from their brilliant surface, is the leading characteristic and special beauty of this class of wares, which must have been in great request and produced in considerable quantity. Pesaro and Diruta lay claim to their production, and each fabrique has its champions.



We are inclined to ascribe the earlier and more important productions to Pesaro, and are disposed to consider the Diruta fabrique as a subsequent and less important source of supply in respect to the quality of the wares. These *bacili* are nearly all of the same size and form; large heavy dishes of flesh-coloured clay with deep sunk centres and a projecting circular "giretto" behind, forming a foot or base; this is invariably pierced with two lateral holes

for the purpose of introducing a cord by which to suspend them to the wall, thus proving that they were looked upon more as decorative pieces (*piatti di pompa*) than for general use upon the table; the back is covered by a coarse yellow glaze, the front having a surface whitened by slip and painted as above-mentioned. The rim is sometimes ornamented in compartments (*a quartiere*), or with chequered, "chevroné" or imbricated patterns, or conventional flowers. Engraved (p. 31) is a fine plateau of early date: no. 4078 at South Kensington.

The larger pieces of the period made at various places have a certain general resemblance in the clumsy fashion, the dry archaic style of drawing executed in blue outline, and in the diaper patterns of the border. Glazed wares of polychrome and subject decoration were no doubt produced before the introduction of the lustre colours and, judging from examples which have come down to us, the forms seem to have been partially derived from Persian, Hispano-moresque, and other oriental originals; deep dishes with angular sides and narrow rims; others with a wide border or side sloping at a gradual angle from the small circular centre. The gothic element is, however, traceable on some early pieces of north Italian origin.

A more careful investigation of the records of Italian families, and the archives of the many towns at which potteries formerly existed, might throw considerable light on the history and establishment of the various fabriques and the marks and characteristics of their productions; but at present we can only form an approximate opinion by comparison of the examples existing in collections with signed examples by the same hand. We agree in believing with Passeri that the potteries of Pesaro were of very early date, probably anterior to Gubbio, and think that full weight should be given to his statement that the use of the lustre pigments was introduced from the former to the latter fabrique, where it attained to unsurpassed excellence under the able management and improvement of M<sup>o</sup>. Giorgio but whether the furnaces of Faenza and

Forli were of earlier or subsequent establishment to that of Pesaro is still a matter of conjecture, and of Caffaggiolo and others we have no record. Of the antiquity of these last there can be no doubt. But although producing at the latter end of the fifteenth



and early in the sixteenth centuries some of the most exquisite examples of artistic decoration and of the perfection of manufacture in this class of ceramics, we are unable to find a single proof of the use of the lustrous metallic tints, or a single example of pottery so enriched, which can with probability be ascribed to

the Faenza furnaces. The same remark applies to other potteries on the northern side of the Apennines.

The Piedmontese and Lombard cities do not appear to have encouraged the potter's art to an equal extent in the 15th and 16th centuries, neither can we learn of any excellence attained in Venice till the establishment of Durantine and Pesarese artists at that city in the middle of the latter period. Possibly, the fine dish (engraved p. 33) may be of that manufacture: the costumes have a Venetian character. Perhaps commerce did for the Queen of the Adriatic by the importation of Rhodian, Damascus, and other eastern wares, what native industry supplied to the pomp and luxury of the hill cities of Umbria; for it must be borne in mind that the finer sorts of enamelled or glazed pottery, decorated by artistic hands, were only attainable by the richer class of purchasers; more modest wares or wooden trenchers, and ancestral copper vessels, contenting the middle class. The northern duchies, Ferrara, Rimini, and Ravenna, also encouraged the art, but to a smaller extent than that of Urbino. It would seem that the use of the white stanniferous enamel did not become general in Italy until some years after the death of Luca della Robbia, in 1481; and was not adopted by the potters of Umbria before the end of the fifteenth century.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE history of the development, perfection, and decline of the ceramic art of the renaissance in Italy is so intimately connected with and centred round that of the dukedom of Urbino, that in tracing its progress we must also briefly call to memory the fortunes and the failures of that noble house.

In 1443 what had been but an unimportant mountain fief was erected into a duchy, and the house of Montefeltro ruled a fair territory in the person of the infamous Oddantonio, the first duke of Urbino. On his violent death in 1444 Federigo, his illegitimate brother, succeeded to the dukedom. Of enlightened mind, as well as of martial capacity, he developed the native capabilities of the country and gathered about him at the court of Urbino the science and learning of the period. He built a noble castellated palace at Urbino, for the embellishment of which he invited the leading artists of the day. A patron of all art, and a great collector, he encouraged the manufacture of the maiolica wares which flourished under his reign. On his death in 1482 his son Guidobaldo I. continued his father's patronage to the ceramic artists of the duchy, although much occupied in the Italian wars consequent on the French invasion by Charles VIII. Passeri states that fine maiolica (by which he means that covered with the tin enamel) was introduced into Pesaro in 1500; and there is some reason to believe that the new process came from Tuscany. It differed materially in composition and manufacture from the "mezza majolica" wares to which it was very superior, and was known as "Por-

cellana," a name applied at that period in Italy to the choicer description of enamelled earthenware. Passeri also states that in the inventory of the ducal palaces a large quantity of painted "majolica" vases were included under this name. The superior whiteness of the enamel, more nearly approaching to that of oriental porcelain, was probably the reason for its adoption; but we must not confound the term as used in this sense with its technical meaning in reference to a decorative design known as "a porcellana."

The introduction of the new enamel, which afforded a better ground for painting, did not cause the use of the bright metallic colours and prismatic glaze to be relinquished at those potteries where it had become established, but it appears to have stimulated a development in the artistic productions of other places, the wares of which before that period were less attractive. The botega of Maestro Giorgio at Gubbio seems to have been at this time the great centre of the process of embellishment with the golden and ruby metallic lustres; and, indeed, we have little or no knowledge of artistic pottery produced at that fabrique which is not so enriched. From some technicality in the process of the manufacture, some local advantage, or some secret in the composition, almost a monopoly of its use was established at Gubbio, for we have the evidence of well-known examples that from the end of the first to the commencement of the last quarter of the 15th century many pieces painted by the artists of Pesaro, Urbino, and Castel Durante, were sent there to receive the additional enrichment of the lustre colours. Pieces may be seen in collections signed in blue by the artist Francesco Xanto and others which have been subsequently lusted at Gubbio, and again signed in the metallic pigment by the "maestro" of that botega. At Diruta also its use appears to have been extensive though not to so exclusive a degree nor on wares of such high character as at Gubbio, neither are we enabled by