

# THE REMARKABLE TOMBSTONES OF MILAN.

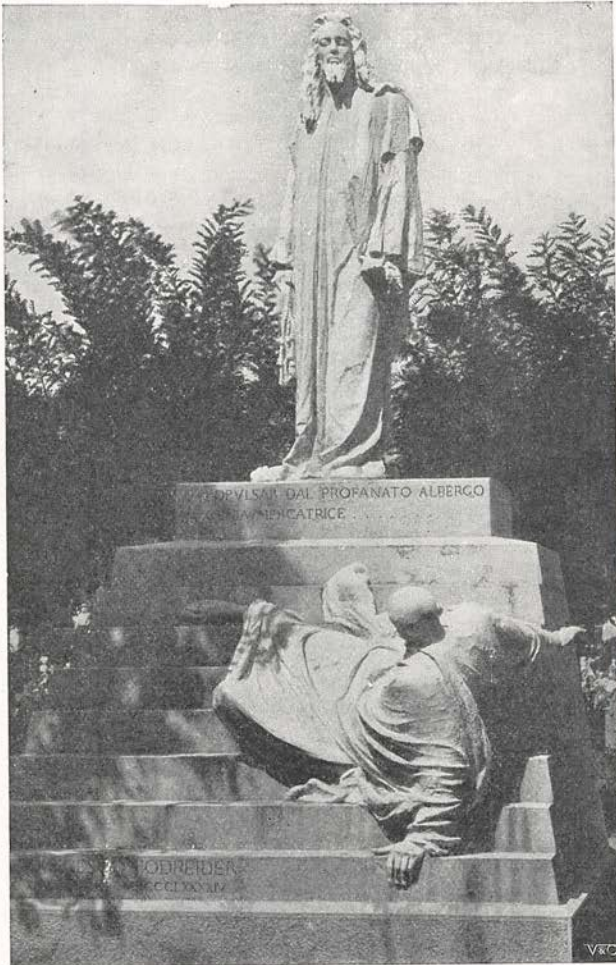
BY S. L. BENSUSAN.

*Photographs by E. Brogi, Milan.*

THERE is little of old Lombardy in Milan; the *cognoscenti* sneer at the town's wonderful cathedral and revile the restorations by night and by day. The clean, bustling streets, served by electric tramways, are deemed inferior to the garbage-strewn waterways of overpraised Venice; the outward seeming of an essentially modern life appears to give offence to all visitors afflicted with culture. On this account I plead guilty to a keen liking for Milan with fear and trembling, conscious of the bad taste, hopeful that it may be excused. The city is clean, bright, and busy, there is sufficient suggestion of Italy to keep away recollections of Paris or Brussels, there is amusement in plenty, the great lakes Como, Lugano, and Maggiore are within short distance, and Switzerland, France, and the Riviera within comparatively easy reach. The season at La Scala suffices all but the very hypercritical lovers of music, the life of the *cafés* is pleasant and popular. The artist

and the lover of fine painting and sculpture are well served, though the art treasures are not concentrated, as in Florence, and outside the Brera there is nothing to compare with

the Uffizzi or the Pitti Palace. Aurelio and Bernardino Luini with Balduccio would make Milan remarkable in any age, even though Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" had found another resting-place. Perhaps Milan has been too busy and too excited in the past few years to dispose of her treasures to the best advantage; perhaps the majority of the visitors are content with the Cathedral, the S. Maria delle Grazie, and the Scala. Certainly one needs industry, perseverance, and ample time to see all the town has to show, to discover some rare Old Master in an obscure church, or a



STATUE REPRESENTING CHRIST CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

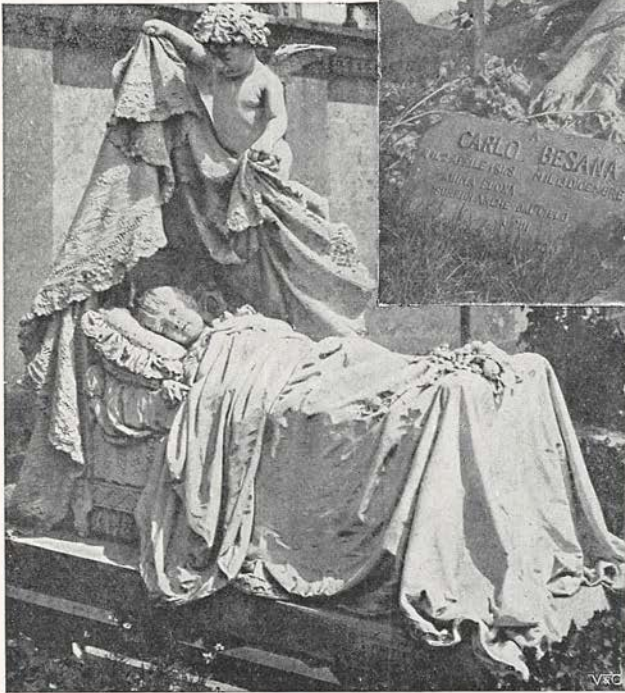
picture gallery hidden away on the upper floor of a public library. Few days' search will fail to yield good results, and in Milan you can walk about without finding half-a-dozen disreputable guides waiting for you in



every great thoroughfare as in Florence and Venice. Electric trams are terribly modern, no doubt, but they take you a long way for a few pence, and sometimes the sight at the journey's end is well worth seeing. The cemetery whose wonderful appearance calls for these lines was seen almost by accident. A few idle hours upon a sunny day, a sudden descent upon the first tram that passed towards the country, a ticket to the terminus, and I found myself wondering whether Italian affection was to be measured by the devotion that made the silent God's acre in the Lombardy plain something for all men to wonder at. It was easy to reach and almost impossible to leave.

I have seen the strange graves by which the Syrian women bewail their dead beyond the garden-girt walls of Damascus, and the simple

Silent, in Delft, the monuments that some of the greatest sculptors have raised in different European cathedrals, the pyramids of the Egyptian kings, the catacombs of Sicily, the cypress cemeteries of Constantinople, the wonders of the Père-la-Chaise. No



MONUMENT TO A LITTLE GIRL.

crosses set in sand that mark the spot where Englishmen fell fighting Dervishes by the banks of old Nile; I have spent hours in the desolate "House of Life" of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in dreary Mile End, admired the beautiful grave of William the



A LANTERN OF HOPE.

place wherein dust returns to dust is more remarkable than this Campo Santo of Milan. Only the Père-la-Chaise excels this Milanese cemetery, and does so by reason of its size and the innumerable statues. From the standpoint of sentiment and deep feeling that has aimed at perpetuating the remembrance of the dead in manner modest yet magnificent, the cemetery at Milan is more remarkable than the Père-la-Chaise. In the latter

the dominant idea is of a nation honouring its noble dead, in the former a city soberly laments the passing of the well-beloved. In Paris the sentiment seems to vary, the great cemetery has thousands of statues and dozens of moods. In Milan, while you count the



statues by the hundreds, the mood does not appear to change.

Light has no small part to play in bringing about the absolutely new sensation experienced by the visitor. Paris cannot boast such a generous sunlight as falls to the lot of Milan; and whether the season be winter or summer, Lombardy rejoices in strong, white light and clear, bright air. Objects dazzling in the sun are well defined even at dawn or sundown; and, moreover, there is a striking contrast between the white marble and the dark cypresses of the cemetery. West and East meet there, for the statuary in its modern phase is quite Western, and the cypress is dear to the Turk, who plants one by the grave of his relative, until nearly every cypress wood in the Turkish Empire is keeping guard over the forgotten dead. The effect of marble and cypress is striking.



TWO STRIKING SCULPTURES.

Light and darkness, art and nature, old time and new, are brought into contrast so effective that the observer is content to forget the few efforts of the sculptor wherein zeal has outrun discretion, and to refrain from noticing that the level of excellence is a variable one.

Certainly the sculptors have had beautiful themes, though few. The love of a husband for a wife or of a wife for a husband, of a parent for a child or a child for a parent, here and there the sad tribute of brother to sister or of friend to friend—these are the sources of inspiration; the mood of mourner or sculptor has done the rest, often with a chaste



and delicate fancy. Faith, hope, and staunch belief in the soul's immortality are so pronounced that the elegies and threnodies woven in marble are often less sad than the tall, dark cypress trees that sway slowly in the breeze of a late afternoon, nodding and whispering one to the other, as though imparting or discussing some secret of the mystery of Life and Death spoken by the wind in its travels from distant lands across the plain. At the same time there is less fulsome eulogy than is usually encountered in cemeteries of the West, and, so far as the marble is concerned, less un-

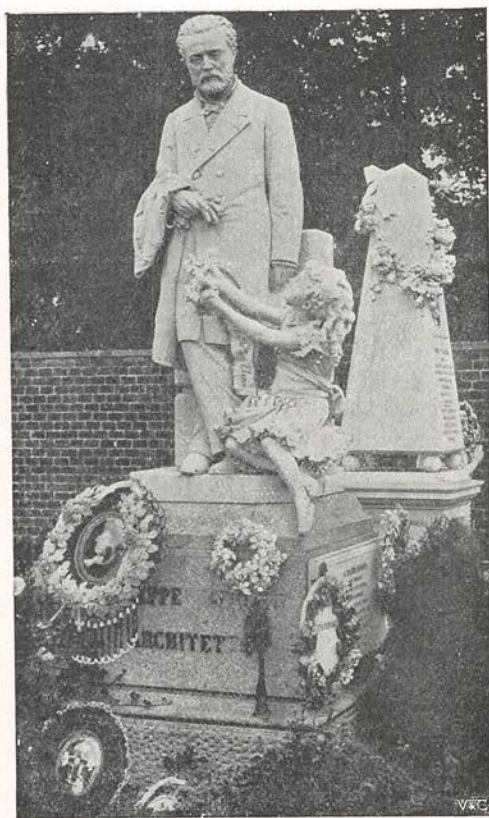
world's finest sculpture, and, as every traveller or student of our own museums must know, tombs and statues in honour of the dead always constituted a great part of an artist's work. Michael Angelo, Donatello, Luca della



A WIDOW'S MONUMENT TO HER HUSBAND.

necessary and unconvincing insistence upon the many virtues of the dead.

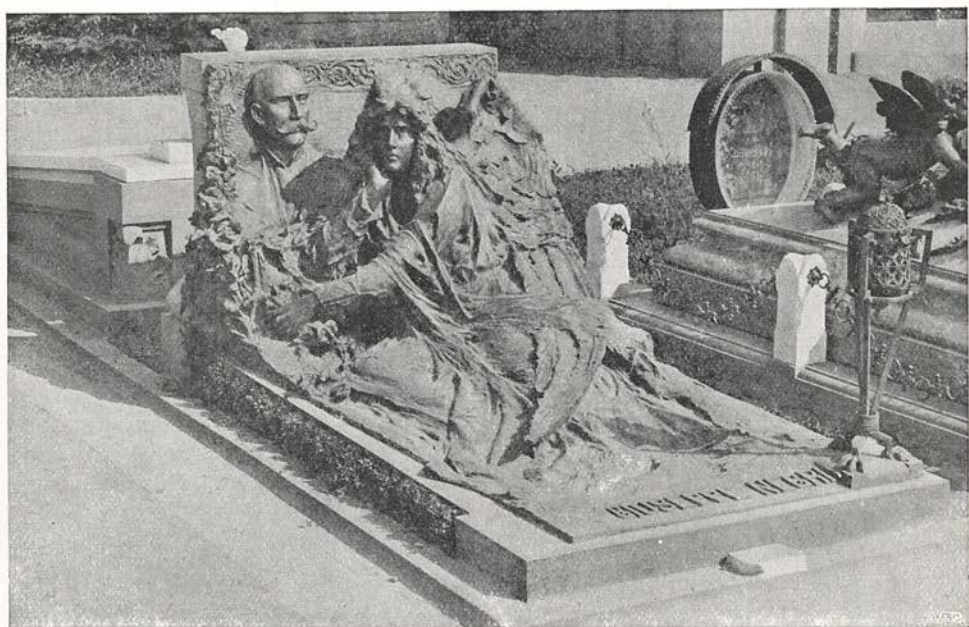
Perhaps the dignity and distinction of the Campo Santo are less to be wondered at upon reflection. Italy has produced some of the



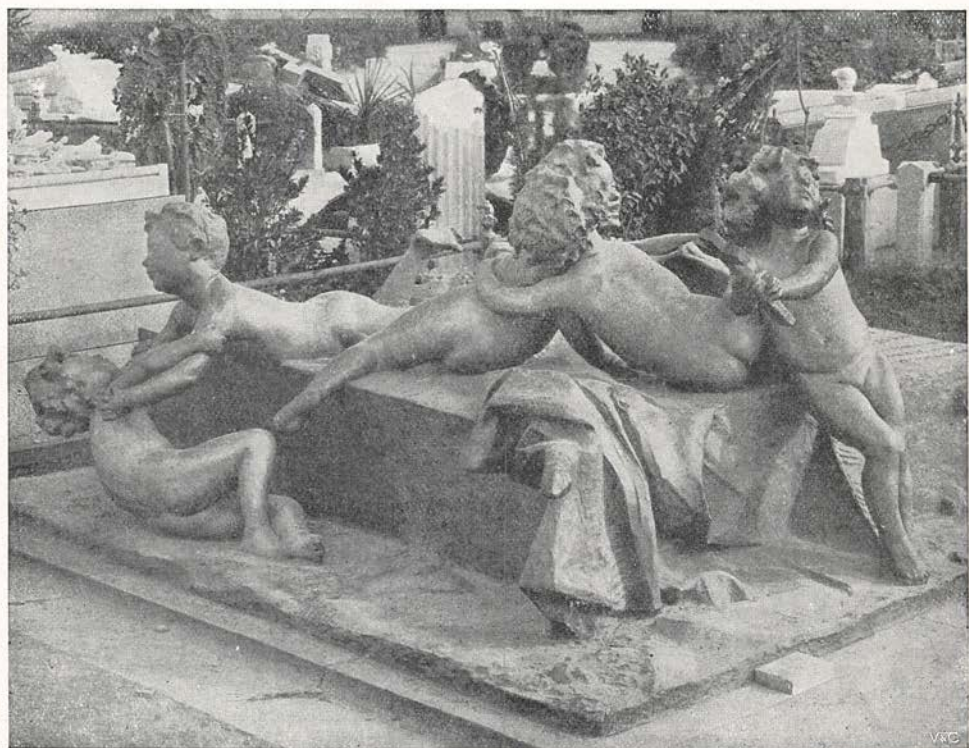
MONUMENT TO THE ARCHITECT, MENGONI.

Robbia, Balduccio, Pisanello, and Canova all did great work of the kind. Some can be seen in Milan. A magnificent shrine by Balduccio is in the church of S. Eustorgius, and the same sculptor created the famous tomb of Azzo Visconti. Close to Milan in the Certosa is the renowned tomb of Lorenzo Acciaoli, while Rome, Florence, and Venice hold the monuments of Canova, who may almost be considered to have belonged to the nineteenth century. In the old days, when few men laboured at the arts, and, being under patronage, had nothing to win and much to lose by hasty work, monuments and elaborate tombs were works over which great sculptors spent patient years. Nowadays we have fewer patrons and no artists content to sit at their feet, so the memory of the departed must be less elaborately pre-





GIUSEPPE NEGRI'S TOMB.



THE CASTIGLIONI TOMB.

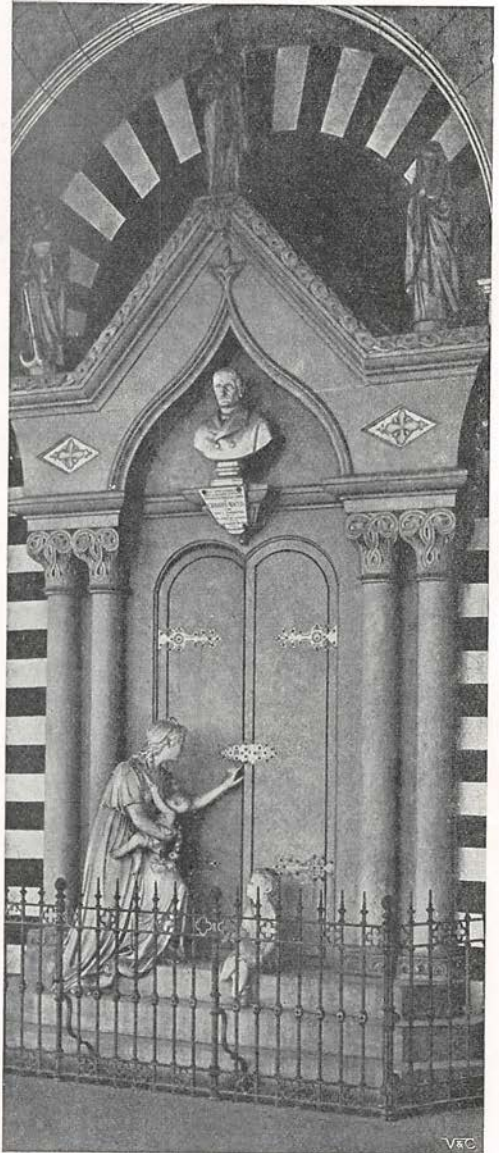


MONUMENT TO THE SCULPTOR, TANTARDINI: HIS OWN LAST WORK.

served. None the less, many of the monuments are of high artistic worth, and will endure through generations, unless the Campo Santo shares the fate of the Père-la-Chaise and becomes the scene of civil strife. The fight in the famous cemetery of Paris in the days of the Commune might yet find some counterpart in Milan, for one day, when I was looking over the town from the summit of the Cathedral, an Italian gentleman told me that in the terrible salt riots of a year or two ago the soldiers occupied the flat roof immediately beneath us, and never left the strange quarters until their comrades below had killed or dispersed the rioters. If the Cathedral is not free from liability to be the scene of fighting, no cemetery can hope to be; but Time, unaided by War, will spend many years in the task of destroying the memory of the sleepers in the Campo Santo of Milan.

Perhaps the sentiment that inspired the efforts of mourners would avail in times of strife to keep the Campo Santo free from

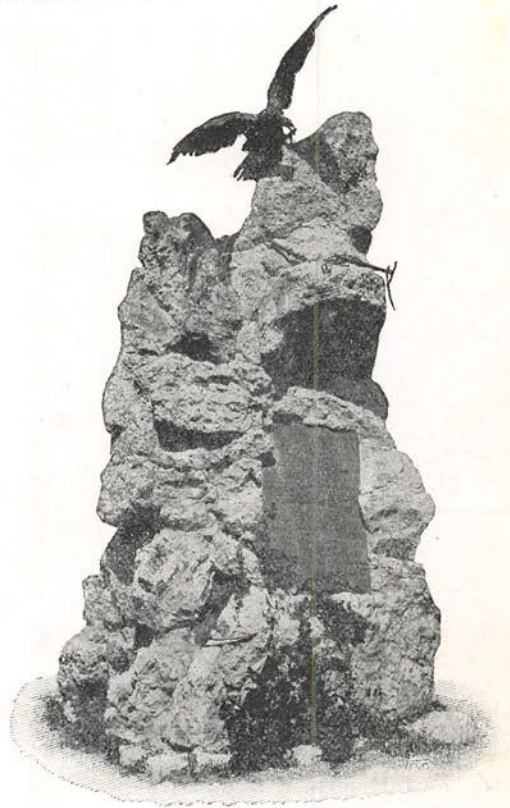
strife, for it is pleasantly noticeable that affection did not consider the last tribute paid when the marble stood in its place and the trees were planted. On Sunday afternoons the friends and relatives of many of the dead devote their short holiday to the honour of the departed. You see visitors by the score, some coming on foot from the country, or by the trams from the town; others arriving in carriages heavily blazoned with the arms of some family that made history in days when Italy was the hub of



THE MACCIA FAMILY TOMB



the universe. They come with fresh flowers and memorial wreaths, some the elaborate work of cunning city artificers, others the simple tribute that the fields have yielded. Faded flowers are taken away, fresh ones replace them; a few prayers are said with the abandonment to devotion that belongs so essentially to Southern Europe; and then one sees the mourners promenading quietly through the grounds and over the well-kept paths, listening to the birds, that know they may sing in safety in the Campo Santo. Italy is not a great country for song birds, they are destroyed for food all too often; but they know that the "sportsman" is not abroad among the tombs, and they testify their gratitude in a manner that removes not a little of the reproach of melancholy from the place. The casual visitor feels a keen sympathy with these people of high hope and simple faith, who are full of a love and reverence that defies death; he manages to observe all that goes on around him without appearing too curious, to explore the recesses of the place without showing that he has no special object in his search, and he goes away filled with a respect for the people and a renewed consciousness that Italy is still one of the world's most fascinating countries.



GIUSEPPE POGGI.



THE CASATI FAMILY TOMB.