

CHAPTER XLI

A DADO OF ANGELS

ON the morning of February 1st the clearing of the circular passage was resumed as early as I could get the men to leave their fires. It was soon ascertained that the passage had been lighted by three windows, besides the entrance passing through the completely destroyed west side. The north and south windows were found to be almost exactly orientated and to reach down to about two feet eight inches from the floor. The fresco frieze or dado decorating the wall segments between each pair of windows, or between door and window, consisted of six closely adjoining lunettes; from the hollow of each there rose the head and shoulders of a winged figure nearly life size (Plate iv.). Below the row of lunettes, which were about one and a half feet high, and ranged with their chord or top line nearly four feet above the floor, there ran a broad band of wave lines boldly painted in black, and suggestive of the sea. This filled also the spandrels left between the curving sides of the lunettes. Each of the latter measured two feet two inches at the top, where a thick black line separated this 'dado of angels' from an upper fresco frieze almost completely perished.

Owing to the damage which the enclosing circular wall had suffered, little survived of the lower dado outside the north-east and south-east segments. But the débris accumulated in the latter soon proved to have protected a considerable quantity of fragments of frescoed plaster which had once decorated the higher wall faces. The larger pieces among them were found leaning in closely packed layers against the wall-portion still standing. The