GREAT SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

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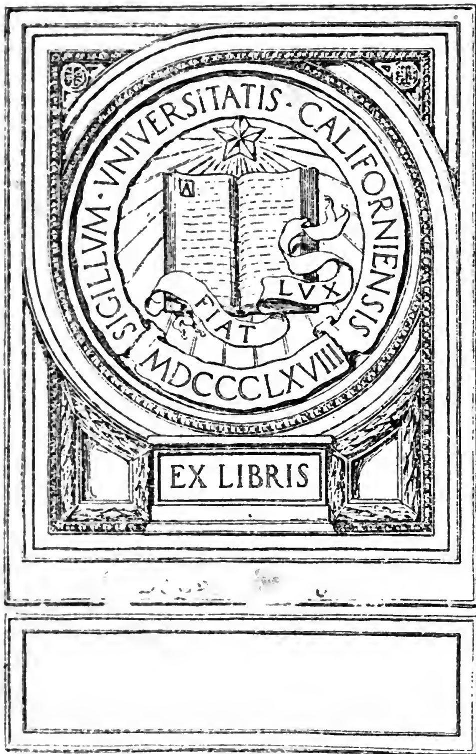
BY WINIFRED TURNER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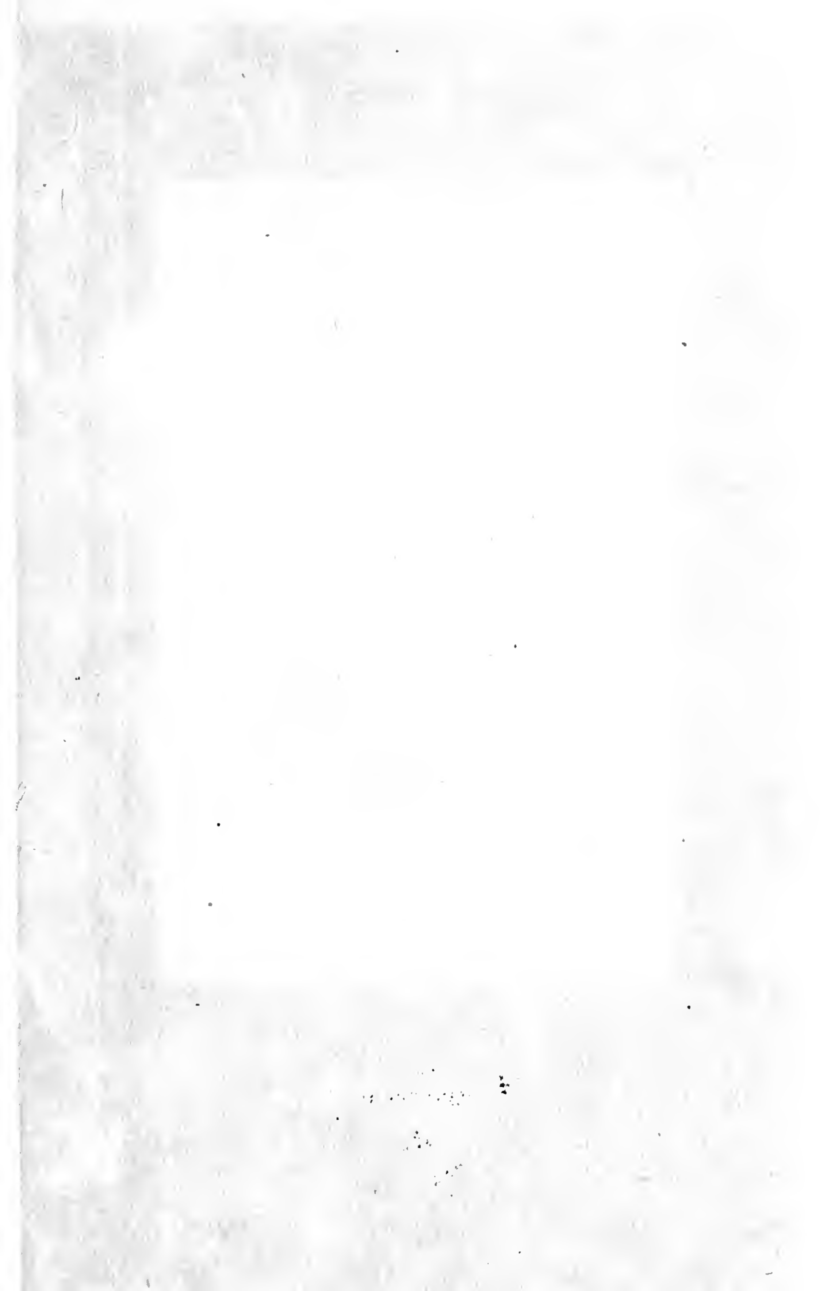

Great Schools of Painting

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National Gallery *Mansell*

COURTYARD OF A DUTCH HOUSE
Van de Hooch

Great Schools of Painting:
A First Book of European Art

by

Winifred Turner
B.A., LOND.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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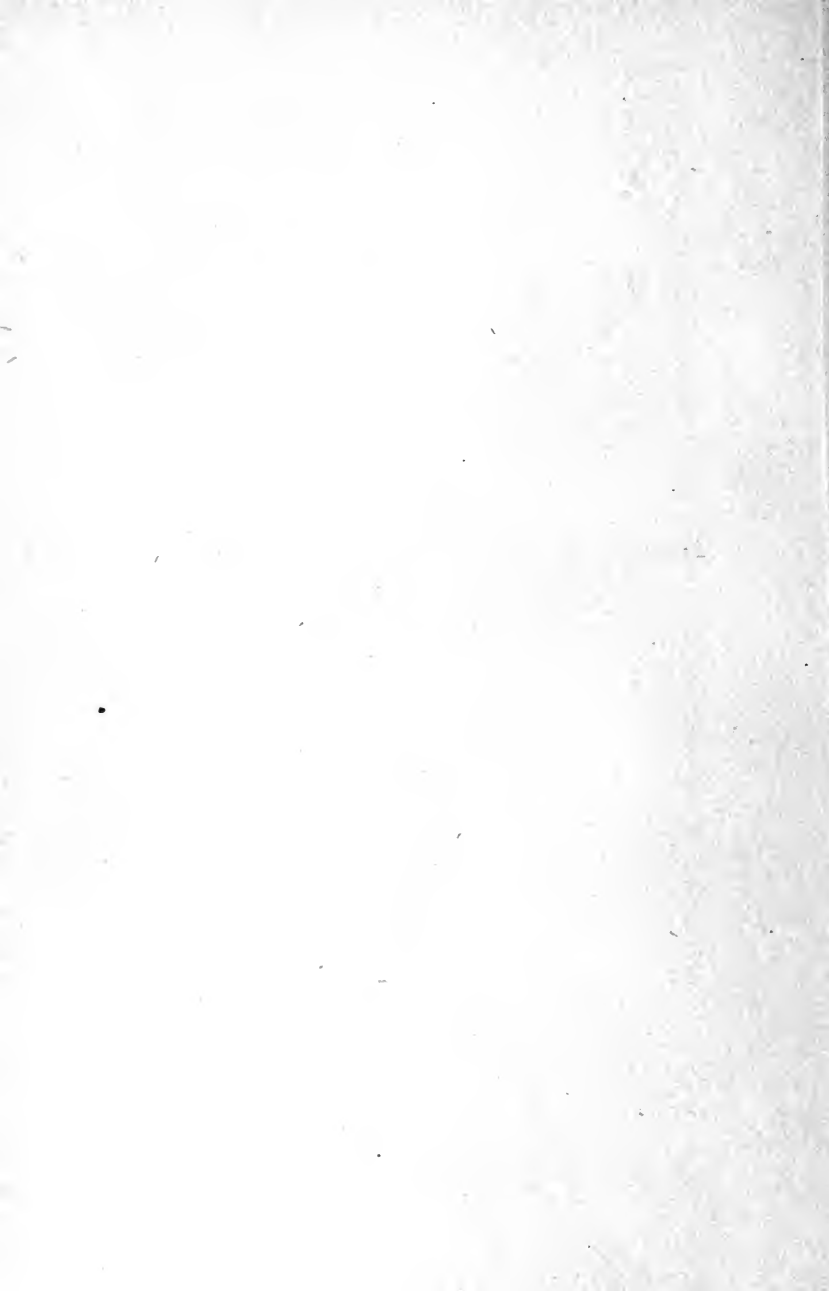
To

THE PUPILS OF WARE GRAMMAR SCHOOL,

PAST, PRESENT, AND TO COME



PREFACE

The difficulty that has beset me throughout the writing of this book is the obvious one of selection from a field so vast and so eternally alluring. This has applied both to matter and to illustration. I have felt that every choice and every allocation of space must be open to many criticisms.

My purpose is essentially practical, and this fact has guided my decisions. The book is an attempt to help children, and perhaps others, over the initial difficulties of art which is not of their own day. It is addressed to a stage of development at which the picture, as an illustration, makes an appeal which the picture as a work of technical skill cannot.

Hence I have made no attempt to hold the balance fairly between painters who had remarkable lives and those who had not, or between pictures which portray interesting legends and those which are great feats of technique. At the same time I have sought to indicate certain great phases in the history of art, and have therefore chosen works typical of important classes, even at the expense of due

representation of individual masters. My endeavour has been to open up as many vistas of interest as possible.

These are my grounds for much that could be justly condemned from other points of view, and if, for example, I have sinned against Titian and Rubens it is in an attempt to suit the peculiar needs and the varying ages of those for whom I hope as readers.

My thanks are due to two friends who read my manuscript, and gave me helpful criticisms.

W T.

August 1914.

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GREAT SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

CHAPTER I

EARLY PAINTING IN ITALY—BYZANTIUM—HOW THE FRANCISCANS AND DOMINICANS INFLUENCED ART—THE TWO THREADS

WHERE did the practice of painting begin? Nobody knows. Specimens have been found in Pompeii, in Greece, in Egypt, in buildings of the dim ages before Greek or Egyptian flourished, in the caves of the earliest men, and paintings older than any yet discovered may still come to light. No one can answer the question, but many could answer another: When and where did painters first make works that you know well and care about? A very large number would say it was in the thirteenth century after Christ and beside the river Arno in Italy. For to that time belongs a story of one Cimabue, to whom many of us look back as the starting-point of all that long series of paintings which makes life happier to-day. He was not the first painter in Italy, but for many who care about pictures now, he and his pupils are the first to count.

The reason is understood if we go to the little landing at the top of the main stairs in the National Gallery and look at the works that were produced before him. There hangs an altarpiece by Margaritone of Arezzo, a frightful composition on a hard gold background. The Virgin Mary with her Child sits in the middle ; she is stiff and hideous, with claw-like fingers and staring eyes. Round her are little pictures illustrating the lives of the saints, in which the figures are like caricatures, having no light and shade, and no perspective, so that the whole is like a series of scenes rather badly cut out of cardboard. Some other pictures of much the same kind hang near, and directly above Margaritone's is a large painting of the Virgin and Child labelled as the work of Cimabue. All have the same defects of stiffness, sometimes of positive ugliness, unnatural drawing, and hard outlines. Cimabue's Virgin, which forms the first illustration in this chapter, is not so repulsive as some of the others. She is stiff and hard, her flesh is of a greenish hue, her fingers long and pale, and the Child on her knee is no baby, but a small man, solemn of face and very ill-proportioned. Still, the Mother bends towards her Child, and is a shade less unnatural than in Margaritone's picture. That is all that we feel inclined to say for her, but things were different in Florence nearly seven hundred years ago. Then a painting by Cimabue, very like this

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MADONNA AND CHILD
Cimabue

one, was taken through the streets in procession with banners and music to be set up in the church of Santa Maria Novella as a new and precious treasure of the city, and thereafter the streets through which they had borne it were called the Joyous Quarter.

This triumph is one of the few things we know about Cimabue. He has been the subject of great discussions among scholars, some of whom deny that he was a person of any importance, even if he ever lived at all, and say that most of his works really belong to a certain Duccio of the neighbouring city of Siena. However, the account of him that used to be believed is interesting. It is to be found in the "Lives of the Painters," written by Giorgio Vasari about the year 1550. If we may believe him, Cimabue was born in Florence in 1240, when Henry III was reigning in England. He had a studio in which he taught pupils, and his fellow-citizens were so proud of him that when the King of Anjou visited Florence he was taken to the studio to see Cimabue's work.

When we look at this picture in our National Gallery the fame of the painter seems a little startling, and hundreds of people must have asked themselves how others could be interested in anything so ugly and so badly done. The truth is that so many of us pay our first visit to a collection of old pictures expecting quite the wrong sort of thing. We expect

beauty and think we do not see it, and so we are disappointed all for want of a warning and an explanation. If you want to enjoy early pictures go to them for the first time with these ideas in mind: (1) Old pictures are not in the least like modern pictures. (2) You go to the National Gallery to get a wholly different sort of pleasure from that which you have when you visit a gallery of modern pictures. (3) You will not see things which are first and foremost beautiful, but things which are curious and interesting and full of historical meaning. This last point is so important that I will repeat it another way: Early pictures contain records of history, and cannot be properly enjoyed until we see this and try to read the record. The five pictures in this chapter, for example, can be looked upon as a page of history in which certain great facts are written. Those who remember these points save themselves disappointment, and generally find that, after a time, they are not so sure as they once were about the precise point where beauty comes to an end; that, in fact, their idea of beauty has been like a little grass-plot and is widening out into a great meadow.

Some of the finest beauty in the world was born in that valley of the Arno, among the ugly paintings of Cimabue's time. Why it grew in just the way it did, why they are ugly in just that style, why the Virgin in our picture is so stiff and her Child like a

wooden doll, why the picture has this subject at all—all these points are bound up with no less than the history of the Roman Empire, of the city of Constantinople, and of the Roman Catholic Church.

Take this picture of Cimabue's once more, for it illustrates all the points I want to emphasise. First, if you compare it with the works of Duccio of Siena which hang on the opposite wall, especially with his picture of the Virgin and Child with angels, you will see a certain likeness in the positions of the figures, the long, thin hands, and the arrangement of drapery. This likeness comes from the fact that all the art of Italy was at first much under the influence of the great city of Byzantium. The Emperor Constantine, who lived about A.D. 300, changed its name to Constantinople, and gathered artists and men of learning to his Court there, so that it became a great art centre. In the year A.D. 395 the Roman Empire, which had been growing weaker and weaker, was divided into two parts, the Eastern and the Western Empires, Rome becoming the capital of the western division and Constantinople of the eastern. From about A.D. 800 to 1100, the art of Constantinople flourished exceedingly, and is generally called "Byzantine," from the old name of the city. Most of the artists were not painters, but mosaic workers, who adorned the walls and floors of buildings with scenes and figures wrought in tiny fragments of stone. We can

still see examples of this kind of work in the church of Santa Maria at Constantinople and in Italy at Ravenna. These mosaics were often very beautiful in their own way, full of a reserved, unearthly dignity; but they were, of course, stiffer and more limited in design and subject than paintings, and this had a bad effect on the paintings which were made at the same time. One can get a very good idea of the style of the mosaics from a Byzantine picture painted in 1680 and called *St. Cosmas and St. Damian*, which hangs on the landing opposite Cimabue's Virgin. Although painted so late, it still keeps the stiff attitudes, the curious drawing of the feet, and the many small folds in the drapery which are to be seen in Byzantine mosaics.

Byzantine works of art were soon taken to the Western Empire, whither some of the artists travelled by degrees. Thus Byzantine pictures became popular, and having once grown accustomed to their stiff dignity, people did not like any marked changes, and thus painters went on repeating the particular style they had learnt from the Byzantine workers instead of teaching themselves by the study of nature. Unfortunately for them, the people of one nation or period never really succeed in imitating the art of another, so they did their copying less and less well, and yet were hindered from striking out on lines of their own by this tradition of copying Byzantine

work and by the fact that the patrons of art wanted nothing different.

In the second place, the subject of Cimabue's picture is one that is repeated over and over again in any great gallery. You will see innumerable versions of the Virgin and Child, or, as it is more often called, the Madonna and Child, Madonna being Italian for " my lady." Then there are the Crucifixion, the Visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem, and a few other subjects, so that some people, used to all the variety of a modern gallery, find the collection dull. But this monotony is really interesting, for the reason is to be found in history. All painted for the Church at that time. Painting was cherished in the monasteries along with so many other forms of learning and refinement, and a large proportion of the painters were employed by monks or by rich men who wanted to make a gift to some church or religious order. Naturally the subjects were almost always taken from the Bible or from the lives of the great saints. It has been said that the men of that day did not want pictures because they were beautiful, but only as a help to them in worship, and this, of course, made them as content with a small range of subjects as they were with constant repetition of the Byzantine style. This is the kind of feeling which leads to the growth of " artistic conventions," that is, customary ways of showing certain things

and people, which may be kept up through hundreds of years.

Thirdly, any one can see that the picture is not well drawn. It looks very hard and flat, and the arrangement of the angels one above the other is ridiculous to our eyes. The reason is plain enough, for Cimabue and his fellows were learning the rules of their art with loving toil, but we have behind us the experience gained by thousands of painters. To ridicule the drawing of the earliest pictures is mere want of common sense; they deserve the highest respect.

> "Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
> For daring so much before they well did it."[1]

The colouring is often very bright and clear, but sometimes it has become disfigured by fading or by injury to the surface in the long course of years. The strange green colour of the flesh, too, is the artists' misfortune rather than their fault. Most painters thought that they could get the best colour and light and shade on flesh by putting a green ground under the surface tints, but they did not realise that in course of time the surface would be worn thin and the green would show through.

Of these painters whom Byzantium influenced perhaps the greatest was Duccio, in whose work

[1] "Old Pictures in Florence," by Browning.

appears most of what was beautiful in the Byzantine style. There are several works by him in the National Gallery, all placed together on the landing opposite to Cimabue's Virgin. In them you will see the same unnatural attitudes, greenish flesh, and gold backgrounds, and will notice that the drapery of some of the figures has its folds picked out with gold.

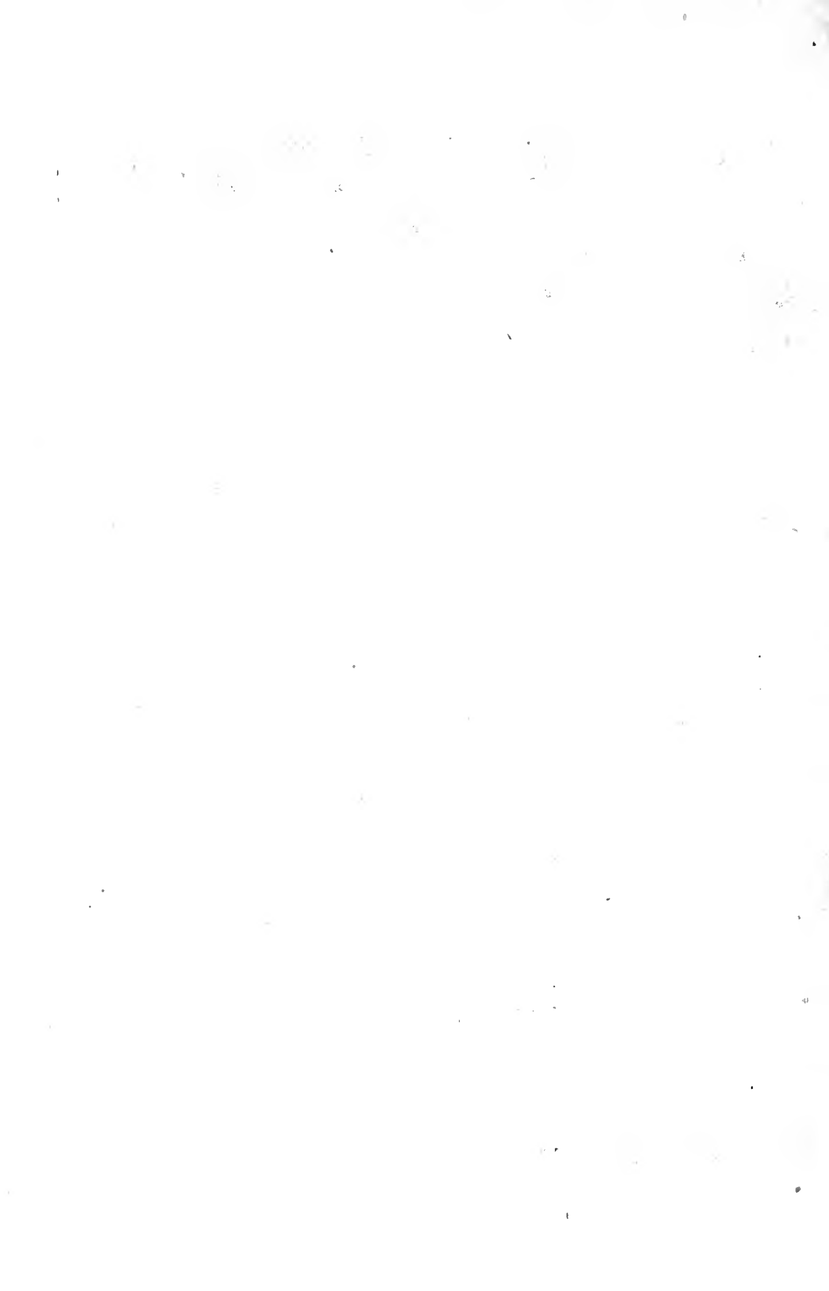
How long people would have been content with such work and how far painting would have become more and more lifeless it is difficult to say. Happily, while Cimabue was still alive a famous man was growing up, who was to bring about one of the greatest changes that ever befell the art of Italy. In Vasari's "Lives of the Painters" we read how Cimabue was one day walking in the fields round a village near Florence when he saw a child watching sheep and drawing one of them on a rock with a pointed stone. When Cimabue asked his name he said he was the son of a man called Bondone, who lived close at hand. Then the painter went to Bondone and offered to take the child away and make him his pupil, and Bondone consented. Thus Cimabue took into his studio in Florence one who was to accomplish work far greater than his own. The boy became known to fame as Giotto, who changed the whole style of Italian painting. We have not a single work of his in England, but in the National Gallery is a fragment of a larger picture showing the heads of two Apostles

which used to be called Giotto's and is now known to be by one of his pupils. It is interesting because it shows the gap between Giotto and the men who produced works like Cimabue's, for these two old men make us feel that they might really have lived. You see the difference better still in Giotto's two pictures given in this book. Look at the *Entombment of Christ* and you cannot fail to be struck with the change. The people are no longer unearthly beings like Cimabue's Virgin; they have become real. The disciples and holy women are gathered about the body of their Lord, which the Virgin supports on her knees. Mary Magdalene sits at the feet, Mary of Bethany holds the hands, two other women crouch on the ground. St. John, throwing back his arms with a passionate gesture, bends to look at the face; we feel that he utters heart-broken words. Behind Mary Magdalene stand Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, in the quieter grief of men whom long life has already schooled to sorrow; opposite is a little group of mourners. One and all are intensely absorbed in the seeming disappointment of all their hopes. We can imagine the sobs, the broken phrases of grief; so it may really have happened.

How did Giotto get people to accept his changed pictures, how did he even come to wish to make them? Once more the answer is in history: Giotto was a man with the skill to carry out what history

Fresco at Padua *Alinari*

ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST
Giotto

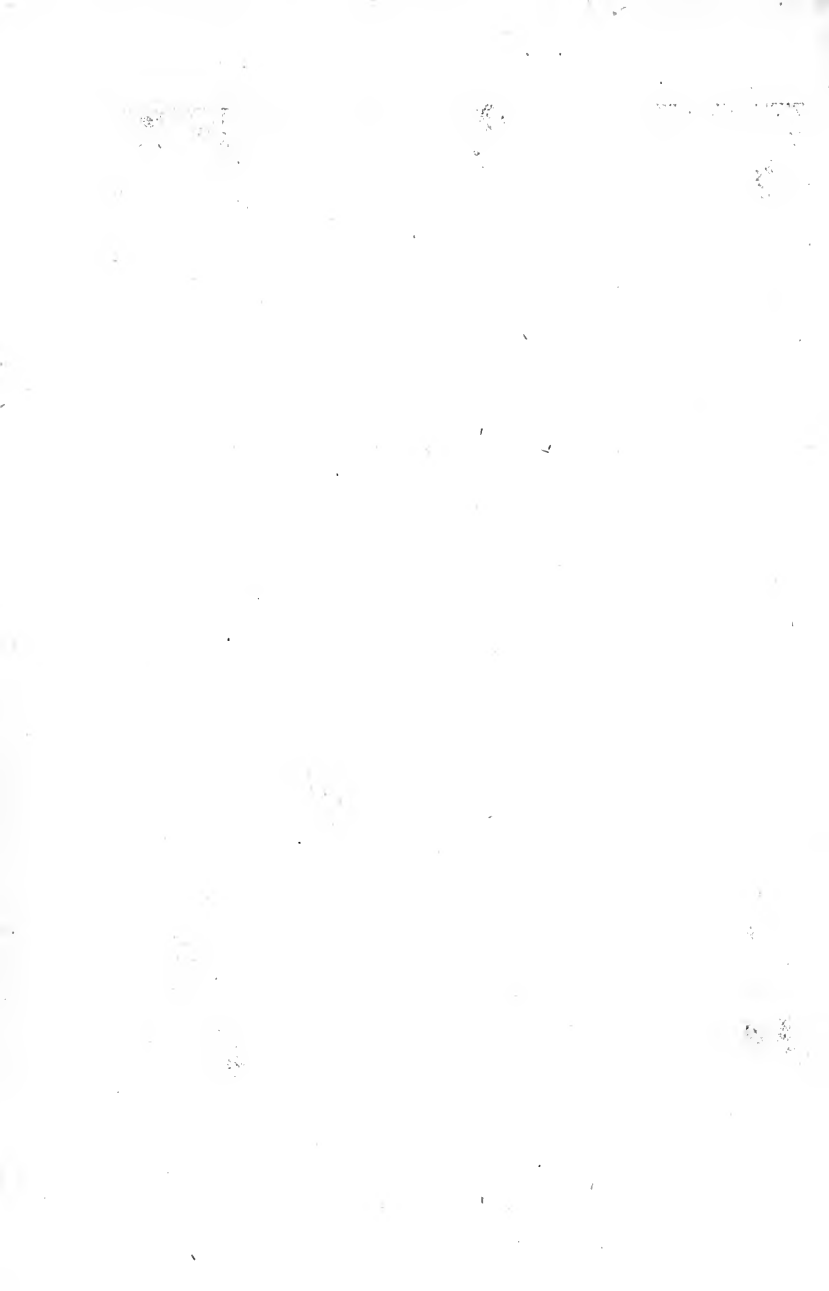


made necessary for art at that time. What history it was we can see from the title of his other picture reproduced here, *St. Francis preaching to the Birds.* The pictures of Duccio and others recall to us the fame and power once held by the great city of Constantinople, Giotto's record for us the appearance of a great man in Italy. The monk in the picture is Saint Francis of Assisi, who was born at that town in 1181, and whose father was a tailor. His real name was Giovanni Bernadone, and he was known as one of the handsomest, merriest, kindest, and most pleasure-loving of the young townsmen. When he was about twenty-two he suddenly underwent a great change in his manner of living and all his inclinations, and made known his resolve to devote his whole life to religious teaching and the care of the poor. Now the natural thing to do at that time would have been to enter one of the orders of monks, but none of those then existing would have satisfied Giovanni, for he did not consider that they gave enough devotion and teaching to the wretched and unlearned. So, renouncing all property and taking the name Francesco, or Francis, he went alone to a task that every one else had been afraid to attempt. Outside the walls of every city there lived the lepers, for leprosy was common enough in Italy in those days. They were driven out as soon as their disease was known and herded together in little huts about

the walls in such suffering, filth, and despair as it is difficult for most of us even to imagine. They had neither friends nor doctors, for all feared to go near them; but Francis remembered only that they were forsaken, and went to dwell with them by the walls of Assisi. His sublime courage was rewarded by the coming of a few followers, and soon there were enough of these for Francis to form an order of friars who should do all that the existing orders neglected. Their name means "brothers," and such they desired to be to all who needed them; therefore, instead of living in monasteries, they went about from place to place preaching and caring for the poor, the sick, and the wicked. They took a few vows, promising to live virtuously, to give up all other ties and occupations, and especially to become absolutely poor, holding no private property of their own at all. In his great desire to renounce everything for the glory of God, Francis called poverty his bride, and resolved to carry out literally the directions of Christ to the disciples that they should not have two coats, money, or food on their travels. Therefore, the friars wore brown gowns, sandals, and for girdle a piece of cord, and depended for their food and lodging upon charity. Such was the beginning of the great Franciscan order which exists at the present day. The friars became extremely popular with the poor, who heard Francis eagerly. He was extra-

Fresco at Assisi *Anderson*

ST. FRANCIS PREACHING TO THE BIRDS
Giotto



ordinarily gentle and courteous, wonderfully enduring of hardship and ill-health, and extremely brave.

This picture of St. Francis and the birds reminds us of the fact that he taught the duty of kindness to animals. There is a collection of stories about him called the "Flowers of St. Francis," in which we read that he was travelling on the road with his followers when they noticed many birds gathered in a field. "Ye shall wait for me here upon the way," said Francis, "and I will go and preach unto my little sisters, the birds." So he entered the field, and the birds on the ground did not fear even when the hem of his gown touched them, and those that were in the trees flew down to gather about his feet. Then he preached to them that their songs should always glorify God, who bestowed on them food, and raiment of soft feathers, and trees wherein to build their nests. And the birds listened, lingering about him till he gave them his blessing and dismissed them with the sign of the cross. Then Francis "rejoiced with them and was glad and marvelled much at so great a company of birds, and their beautiful diversity, and their good heed and great friendliness, for the which cause he devoutly praised their Creator in them." [1] Such was the saint whom Italian painters loved to show at the foot of the Virgin's throne or of the cross.

[1] "Little Flowers of St. Francis." Temple Classics.

It is necessary to say something about him because his life influenced art very deeply. There is a great law which explains much that would be puzzling in early pictures, and, once understood, opens the way to much enjoyment that would otherwise be cut off from us. I will give it first in the words of Sir Martin Conway: "The art of any day is what it is because the national and local life of the day is what it is." "It expresses the tone of a society."[1] In other words, it is fruitless to expect the pictures of the present day to be like those of past time or the pictures of the past to give us the same sort of pleasure that comes from those of to-day, because the events and the people of each age are different and cause the works of art to be different.

Now I wish to apply that to the life of St. Francis. Before his time comparatively little had been done for the poor and unlearned. The great need of the day was preaching that all could understand. This the Franciscans supplied; they gave simple teaching to those in need of it. Presently they built churches of their own, and these churches came to be decorated. The people who used them did not want pictures in the style of Cimabues' altarpiece. Every one knew what that picture stood for, but it was not like a picture of a real scene or real people; it was more a symbol than a picture. This was the kind of work

[1] "Early Tuscan Art," by Sir Martin Conway.

that was prevalent along with lack of simple teaching and with neglect of the ignorant. When the Franciscan churches were built, however, the people who filled them wanted something to match the teaching they received—real illustrations of the life of Christ, and of the doings, adventures, and martyrdoms of the saints, especially of their beloved St. Francis. And they got such pictures, for a man was at hand to respond to the changed "national and local life of the day." This was Giotto, Cimabue's shepherd-boy pupil, who was born about one hundred years after Francis himself and died in 1337. Though he was brought up in Florence, his most famous works are at Assisi, the native town of St. Francis. There a great church was erected to the memory of the saint, and Giotto was employed to decorate it with scenes from his life. So we see in frescoes, *i.e.* paintings on the plaster of the walls, the adventures and sufferings and miracles of Francis. There are also several imaginary scenes illustrating the virtues which the Franciscans promised to practise, of which the best-known represents Christ giving to St. Francis Poverty as a bride.

To our eyes, accustomed to modern drawing, there is still something at first sight stiff and strange about these frescoes, but we can at least feel that they are attempts to show real scenes and real people. In the picture of St. Francis and the birds Giotto

has also a landscape as background instead of the gold we see in so many early works. This greater reality appears very strongly in the *Entombment of Christ,* one of a long series which Giotto painted in the Arena Chapel at Padua. This chapel was built by a wealthy citizen, and was so named because it was on the site of an old Roman arena where shows and games were once held. The builder wished to decorate it, and summoned the best workmen to paint the walls with scenes from the lives of Christ and of the Virgin Mary. It contains some of Giotto's most important frescoes, including this one of the Entombment. Besides the reality and vigour of the picture, it is interesting to notice that Giotto drew drapery in broad masses instead of in a number of little folds such as one may see in many of the pictures influenced by Byzantine art. He also makes the movements and attitudes of the body very expressive, as we see in almost all the figures in this scene, where the attitudes of Joseph and Nicodemus seem to express mournful resignation and those of St. John and the women violent, heart-piercing sorrow. We see it, too, in the grief-stricken angels who dart and turn in the air above the body like startled birds.

Besides his work at Assisi and Padua, Giotto gave much to beautify his native Florence. To us it would have seemed a strange world in which he and

his fellow painters lived. People who care at all about Italian art come to feel that Florence is a second native land to them, they get to know the names of its great galleries and churches as well as those of the London streets, and to think of it as a place for the calm enjoyment of beautiful things. But the old Florence of Giotto was not calm; it was a city of alarms and rebellions, fierce hatreds among its great families, and sudden disputes after which the losers were banished. Italy was not a united nation under one king, but the great cities were independent, some being republics, like Florence, and some being ruled over by great nobles. The quarrels among the citizens were chiefly due to the fact that most of Italy at that time was divided into two famous parties, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. It is very difficult to explain shortly what these names stood for, because the matters in dispute changed so much from time to time. On the whole, however, the Guelph party was made up of the middle class traders, who supported the power of the Pope, while the Ghibelline side included most of the great nobles. These preferred the authority of the Emperor, who then ruled a great part of Europe. So in Florence the great families of noble descent were for the most part Ghibellines, and others, great chiefly through their wealth, were Guelphs. The narrow streets of the city ran between strong palaces, each with its own

fortified tower. As the sons of a family married they continued to dwell in their father's house or in others adjoining it, so that in time there would be a whole group of families living together about their own tower and quarrelling fiercely with their neighbours. Sometimes the Guelph families would be in power, and then they would banish all the Ghibellines, and presently it would be the turn of the Ghibellines to banish all the Guelphs.

The wonderful thing about the Florentines was that, while they hated and banished and slew one another, they all loved Florence, and were agreed in the wish to make her beautiful. About the period of Giotto's life they found that they were being left behind in the matter of beautiful buildings by their neighbours of Pisa and Siena, and this was so painful to their pride that they bestowed as much energy on the building work they undertook as on their quarrels. So we have the strange spectacle of architects, sculptors, and painters producing the very finest work amidst strife and change and bloodshed, and in that work Giotto had a large share.

In one of the squares of the city stood the cathedral, or Duomo, and the Baptistery, where all the children of Florence were christened. Both were adorned with costly marbles and with sculpture, and Giotto was bidden to set up a campanile, or bell-tower, between them. When the foundations were laid in 1334

the citizens made it the occasion of a solemn procession and great rejoicings; but, unhappily, Giotto did not live to complete it. The outside is adorned with beautiful marbles and with carvings which were planned and perhaps in part carried out by Giotto, for he was a sculptor as well as an architect and painter. Longfellow, in a sonnet on the tower, calls it "the lily of Florence blossoming in stone," and speaks of the common belief that Giotto intended to complete it by a spire. Browning, in his "Old Pictures in Florence," describing the view over the city, says:

> "And of all I saw and all I praised,
> The most to praise and the best to see,
> Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised."

Then he goes on to picture how its spire might be completed and soar into the air,

> "Completing Florence, as Florence Italy."

Not far off was the old Palazzo Vecchio, where the heads of the republic met, and from which rose the bell-tower containing the "cow," a great bell rung to call the citizens to arms against outsiders or one another. But a building still more interesting for Giotto's sake is the Bargello, the palace of the podesta, one of the chief magistrates. There a painting by Giotto was found on the wall, which had been afterwards covered by whitewash. It shows Giotto's beloved friend Dante, the poet who was

banished for life from Florence during one of the endless quarrels. Just in front of him is another face, which is supposed to be that of Corso Donati, a violent and haughty noble who led the other party. How it all came about, and what happened to Dante afterwards is beautifully told in Mrs. Oliphant's "Makers of Florence," and in Rossetti's poem, "Dante at Verona."

There was one great building in Florence which Giotto adorned with pictures from the life of St. Francis. This was the church of Santa Croce, a great Franciscan church with a side-chapel called after the Bardi family, on the walls of which Giotto painted his pictures of St. Francis. By his and other hands Florence grew in beauty, and the names of her buildings, such as the Bargello, Santa Croce, and the Baptistery are known throughout the world wherever art is loved. There were others also, but they become important later in the history of her paintings.

Vasari's life of Giotto shows us what manner of man he was. Vasari's stories are much distrusted now, but they are interesting, and even if they did not actually happen they probably indicate the characters of the men about whom they are told. We read of Giotto that he was shrewd, amusing, and rather sharp-tongued. When a boy he painted a fly on the nose of a figure at which his master Cimabue was working, and it was so natural

that when he returned he made several attempts to brush it away. When Giotto's fame spread through Italy the Pope thought of employing him, and sent a messenger to ask for a specimen of his work. Giotto took a red pencil and a sheet of paper, steadied his elbow against his side, and with one turn of his hand produced a perfect circle, which he handed to the messenger. The Pope was so much impressed by this that he employed him, and "as round as Giotto's O" became a proverb. Another of Giotto's employers was King Robert of Naples, who was on very friendly terms with the painter. One very hot day he said to him, "Giotto, if I were you I would leave off painting for a while," and in answer received the home-thrust, "So I should, certainly, if I were you."[1] Ruskin thus describes his character as we see it in his work: "His love of beauty was entirely without weakness; his love of truth untinged with severity; his industry constant without impatience; . . . his temper serene yet playful; . . . and his faith firm without superstition."[2]

The Latin inscription on Giotto's tomb begins with the words, "I am he through whom dead painting revived again." It lived again and could never pass back to the stiff figures of Cimabue or to the glaring gold backgrounds of Margaritone. On the

[1] "Lives of the Painters," by Vasari.
[2] "Giotto and his Works in Padua," by Ruskin.

contrary, it was to grow more and more in truth to nature and also to lose by degrees the religious feeling and reverence that we see in Giotto's work. But that final stage was a long way off, and meanwhile history was at work to give the world pictures and a painter of another type. The next two pictures in this book are by a man like Giotto, and yet in some points very different; even more devout and earnest in religion, but not with the same desire to set forth the sacred stories vividly and naturally. This was Fra Angelico, a monk of Fiesole, near Florence.

If you look at the *Coronation of the Virgin* you will see, kneeling foremost in the lower part of the picture, two monks. To your right is St. Francis in his brown gown with a cord for girdle, and opposite to him is a monk in black and white garments with a star upon his forehead. This is St. Dominic, who founded the great Dominican order of friars about 1214. He was a Spaniard, but passed some years of his life in the South of France, trying to convert a body of people called the Albigenses, who were denying certain doctrines of the Church of Rome. Various followers joined him in this attempt, and he formed them into an order which was called the Holy Preaching, and later they became known as the Black Friars, from their dress, which was a black gown over a white under-robe. They took more vows as regards fasting, penances, and keeping

Fresco at Florence *Anderson*

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN
Fra Angelico

silence than the Franciscans, and paid more attention to learning, writing religious books, and instructing people in the doctrines of the Church. Later on they became rivals of the Franciscans, but this feeling had not arisen in the time of Angelico, who puts Francis and Dominic together in his pictures. The Dominicans were, of course, great preachers, and in later times great persecutors of heretics, many of them becoming heads of the Inquisition in Spain. They loved to call themselves "Dogs of the Lord," a title made by a pun on their name "Dominicani," which by a slight change will become "Domini canes," the Latin for "dogs of the Lord." Like the Franciscans, they had a great church in Florence. This was Santa Maria Novella, which is especially famous for one of its small chapels, called the Spanish Chapel, containing famous paintings by Taddeo Gaddi, one of Giotto's pupils.

Artists whom the Dominicans influenced naturally painted pictures which should remind people of the great doctrines which the Church taught them, and their main concern was not whether such a scene had actually ever happened, or even whether it could have happened in the way shown in their pictures. So Angelico painted the two pictures given here, one of the *Coronation of the Virgin,* and one of the holy dead in Paradise, things which neither he nor any one else had ever seen, but which repre-

sented ideas all knew quite well—the holiness of the Virgin, and the joy promised to the righteous. In the same way he painted a Crucifixion, with Dominic, Francis, and other great men of the Christian Church kneeling at the foot of the cross, not in the least hindered by the knowledge that they were not born till long afterwards. He did not want to show the actors in that great scene and their feelings in a vivid manner so much as to show religious men of different characters and periods all alike dwelling upon it in thought. If we compare the picture with Giotto's *Entombment* we see the two different ways of looking at things more clearly. Here no one is present who might not really have been there; the scene is full of grief and lamentation, just as it must have actually been; no one has the air of looking on at the event without taking part in it. Giotto's picture touched the hearts of the beholders by bringing home to them the anguish of that moment; Fra Angelico's reminded them of the duty of all men to the crucified Christ. Of course, we cannot say these things about every picture of the two painters, but as a general rule their work differs in this way.

Fra Angelico's real name was Guido, and he was born at the little village of Vicchio, near Florence. When still a lad he went to the city with his brother, Benedetto, and entered the studio of some artist.

We do not know who it was, or what kind of work the brothers did there—only that a few years later they climbed the hill just beyond the wells to the Dominican monastery of Fiesole and asked to be received into the brotherhood. Guido took the name of Fra Giovanni, or Brother John, and as time went on he earned the titles of "Beato," the "blessed," and "Angelico," the "angelic" one. Henceforth all his life was passed in Dominican monasteries. It was a life saintly and beautiful in the extreme, just such a life as his work would lead us to guess. Ruskin says of him: "Envy, lust, contention, discourtesy, are to him as though they were not."[1] Vasari's life of him is very well known. This is part of a famous passage on his character: "Fra Giovanni was a simple and most holy man in his habits. He avoided all worldly intrigue, living in purity and holiness, and was as benign to the poor as I believe Heaven must now be to him. He was always busy with his painting, but would never do any but holy subjects. . . . He might have become rich, but took no pains to be, for he used to say that true riches consist in being contented with little. . . . He could have obtained high rank in his order and in the world, but did not esteem it. . . . He would often say that whoever practised art

[1] "Modern Painters," vol. v., chapter on Wouvermans and Angelico.

needed a quiet life and freedom from care, and that he who occupies himself with the things of Christ ought always to be with Christ. He was never seen in anger among the friars. . . . To those who wished works of him he would gently say that they must first obtain the consent of the Prior, and after that he would not fail. . . . He never retouched or repaired any of his pictures, always leaving them in the condition in which they were first seen, believing, so he said, that this was the will of God. Some say that Fra Giovanni never took up his brushes without first making a prayer. He never made a crucifix when the tears did not course down his cheeks, while the goodness of his sincere and great soul in religion may be seen in the faces and attitudes of his figures." [1]

Unfortunately, we have only two pictures of his in the National Gallery, and these not the most famous. One is a long, narrow picture showing Christ surrounded by a multitude of the redeemed. The figures are all very small, but in many of the faces there is the intense purity and joy which he could represent as no one else could. His chief works are in the monastery of San Marco in Florence, a new home presented to the Dominicans by the great noble Cosimo dei Medici. Here he decorated the bare walls with fresco paintings for the joy of his brethren.

[1] "Lives of the Painters," by Vasari.

There is one in the dining-room, one over the entrance to the guest-chamber, one in most of the cells. They show us St. Dominic and other famous members of the order, and scenes such as the Crucifixion and the Coronation of the Virgin. They are full of the grace and sweetness which we see in the figures of Christ and His Mother in the picture given in this chapter.

The scene from Paradise given in this chapter is part of a much larger picture painted for one of the churches of Florence, and now in the gallery called the Academy. It is called *The Last Judgment*; Christ, as Judge, is seated in the middle; the wicked are being carried away by demons on one side; the good are being welcomed to heaven on the other. A group in which we may see monks, a nun, a soldier, and ordinary citizens, kneels in ecstasy to look upward towards Christ, and then angels lead them away one by one with joyful greetings to join in a dance on the flower-covered grass, or to float out of sight into the dazzling brightness that pours from the gates of the heavenly city. Many observers have pointed out how well Fra Angelico has succeeded in making us feel the beauty of heaven, and how he fails to represent the fate of the wicked with anything like the same force. He was always comparatively unsuccessful in painting the evil, the ugly, and the violent, nor did he strive to imitate

reality closely as Giotto did. Nevertheless, he could not help learning something from the changes that were going on around him, and his power to draw human figures improved as his life went on, while he also used landscape backgrounds as Giotto had done. Some people, no doubt, know him best by his famous angels which so often appear on Christmas cards. They are really only ornaments on the frame of a picture of the Virgin and Child which he painted for the Flax Workers' Society of Florence, and though they are gracious and joyful, it is a pity that they should be taken by any one as the chief works of the painter.

There were other artists who looked on their work from the Dominican point of view, but many of them were, unlike Fra Angelico, natives of Siena or Pisa. Siena was a rich and flourishing city that sought to rival Florence in its art. There the influence of the old Byzantine style lasted longer than in Florence, and with it the fashion of treating pictures as things meant to express men's ideas, and not to show vividly how events really happened. The artists cared much, also, for beautiful details; as, for example, beautiful colouring, and careful painting of gorgeous robes delicately embroidered. I have spoken of Duccio as the first great painter of Siena. In the National Gallery you may also see pictures by a certain Ugolino da Siena, hanging near Duccio's,

Academy, Florence *Anderson*

PARADISE
Fra Angelico

and an example of the Sienese style in a painting done a good deal later by Matteo di Giovanni. It is called *St. Thomas receiving the Girdle of the Virgin*, or *The Assumption of the Virgin*, and shows the Sienese artists' love of beautiful details, as well as giving examples of their defects in the ugly attitude of St. Thomas and the badly proportioned figure of the Virgin. Dominican painters frequently introduce St. Peter Martyr and St. Thomas Aquinas into their works. These men were members of whom the whole order was proud. Peter Martyr was a famous preacher who was murdered on a journey, and St. Thomas Aquinas was a learned writer who opposed the Mohammedan philosopher Averroes. There is a very interesting account of some of the early pictures that deal with him in Sir Martin Conway's " Early Tuscan Art."

The art of Siena did not last and flourish like that of Florence, which developed more and more the reality and naturalness which we saw beginning in Giotto. We might regard Duccio as the last great painter in an old style, whereas Giotto was the forerunner of changes. Like Duccio, he had followers, of whom the best known are Orcagna and Taddeo Gaddi, who painted a *Coronation of the Virgin* which hangs next to the Cimabue in the National Gallery. These and other Florentine painters went on to study the representation of form and move-

ment, and to make all sorts of experiments which the Sienese did not. This difference helps us to remember what is meant by the expression "schools of painting." Sir Martin Conway says that art depends for its character upon "the national and local life," and the different groups of work that arise from the differences of local life are shown by this word "school." Thus we talk of the Schools of Florence, Siena, or Venice, and in the National Gallery you will find the rooms labelled the "Tuscan School" (*i.e.* Florentine), the "Umbrian School," etc. Sometimes we think of the effect of the "national life," and talk about the Italian, Dutch, and Spanish schools.

Such, then, is the history that is recorded in this set of pictures. There is the Virgin of Cimabue, whose ugliness is interesting because it has a meaning, and records the fame and influence of the great Constantinople. Then come the two pictures of Giotto, so much more real and natural, reminding us of the life of St. Francis and of his wish to teach the ignorant in simple ways. Last, there is the work of Fra Angelico, recalling the Dominicans, whose influence encouraged men to represent in painting the great doctrines of the church.

The subjects, nearly all religious, remind us that it was for the Church most artists worked, and that the narrow range of subjects in collections of old

pictures need not surprise us. But in the difference between the work of Giotto and that of Fra Angelico there is a hint of two different aims that a painter may set before himself—the endeavour to show things just as they are, and the endeavour to express the dreams and the beliefs of the human soul. Henceforth these two aims, which some call realism and idealism, mix and wind together in Italian art. It is as if you took two threads of different colours and twisted them into one string. In some men we see that idealism was the stronger; they have much of the spirit of Fra Angelico, of whom Sir Martin Conway says that "he was a painter who devoted his life to depicting visions of a heaven upon earth" [1]; in others realism grows till it leaves little place for religion; in some few of the greatest the two aims are justly balanced.

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The following are very useful cheap series:

Gowan's Art Books. Published at 6*d*. each.
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Very interesting and well illustrated; by well-known authorities.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE RENAISSANCE BROUGHT NEW SUBJECTS AND NEW AIMS

FRA ANGELICO died in 1455, and no great artist henceforth gave the world work like his. He had lived at a critical time in the history of Florence, of art, and of the world. He himself stood aside, little touched by surrounding struggles and changes in the world of flesh and the world of spirit; but there were others who met the changes and set them down in paint or sculptured stone.

The first illustration in this chapter shows a picture by an artist only ten years younger than Fra Angelico. It is now in the National Gallery, but it was painted in Florence by a certain Paolo Uccello, who recorded an event of his own day. The picture is still labelled *The Battle of St. Egidio,* but many now consider that it represents the fight of San Romano between Florence and Siena. The man in front, wearing a curious turban-like head-dress, is Niccolo da Tolentino, leader of the Florentines, who is directing the attack on the Sienese. Beyond is his fair-haired helmet-bearer, in whom

National Gallery *Mansell*

BATTLE OF ST. EGIDIO

Paolo Uccello

Ruskin says we may note how a gentleman shows himself in battle. He rides strangely calm amidst the tumult; his bearing is steadfast, untroubled by anxiety, haste, or hatred. A wounded knight lies unheeded among the horse-hoofs. The picture shows us the lofty plumes, the great lances, the elaborate bridles of the warriors of that time; but it is more interesting still that behind the fighting men is a hedge covered with pink and white roses, and at the sides orange-trees laden with ripe fruit, and farther back still a curious landscape of ploughed fields and paths sloping up-hill. It gives us a little glimpse into the disturbed world in which Giotto and Duccio and the gentle Fra Angelico lived. The Guelph and Ghibelline quarrel made strife outside the walls as well as within; Florence attacked other cities round about, and they attacked Florence and one another, and this picture records an event in the long history of fights and feuds.

The "national and local life of the day" was once more affecting art, as the founding of the Franciscan order had affected Giotto. I said we might imagine Florentine art as a cord in which there were two great twining threads that may be called realism and idealism. It appears, from this picture, that the shares of the two threads in the pattern were altering. The thread of realism was coming to be more important than the thread of

idealism. In Giotto's work it had been very thin and small compared with its great sister-thread of religious feeling; something, then, must have been happening in the life of the time to strengthen it.

Fra Angelico's work belongs in its whole style to that period of history which is called the Middle Ages; all the pictures in this chapter, on the other hand, belong to the time of the Renaissance. This was a great change in men's ideas about learning and art and religion; a change so great, so many-sided, so far-reaching, that it would be impossible to describe it shortly. But the names of some of its many sides help us to understand what it meant for painting. You will hear the expressions "Humanism" and "Revival of Learning" used to describe two of the changes that the Renaissance brought about. In the work of Giotto we can see a change from the solemn, unearthly figures of the older pictures. The much greater naturalness of his figures comes from a feeling that was gradually growing up that the things around people in the every-day world were worth love and study, and that there was nothing wrong in enjoying them for their own sake. This is the feeling I described as realism. Humanism means the growing love of the human body and of all the affairs of man, which began to show itself in art about the same time. People had begun to care about drawing such things as

birds, flowers, landscapes, because they were beginning to feel that these had a beauty and importance as well as the saints and angels of the Byzantine pictures. Similarly, they now began to take pains about the study of the human figure and the correct drawing of it, also about the painting of portraits and pictures of the deeds of men in their own time, because they were coming to feel that, not religion only, but all the other concerns of man's life were of value. The result was pictures like this of Uccello and others that I must describe later.

There was another side to the Renaissance, that which is called the Revival of Learning, which helped on this effect greatly; but it came to its height a little later, and is seen best in other pictures than Uccello's.

The Battle of St. Egidio is not particularly beautiful, but it is one of the most important pictures in the gallery, for the way it is drawn, as well as the subject, teaches us a piece of history. We see realism appearing very strongly in it. There is a considerable background of hills on which are ploughed fields with figures of horsemen here and there. The width of the fields is carefully lessened as they go into the distance, and the men and horses are very much smaller than those in front of the picture, so as to look as if they really were farther off. In short, Uccello had evidently a good idea of what

we call perspective. We see it best of all in the figure of the wounded knight on the ground, who is drawn from behind, and made to look rather like a frog. Uccello was evidently so anxious to draw this difficult view correctly that he went too far, and left this ludicrous little knight to illustrate for ever how the early artists had to learn their trade.

Vasari's account of Uccello is amusing, as he evidently thought him a maniac about perspective, and laments the waste of time thus: "In cases where the artist gives too much time to perspective, he becomes solitary, strange, melancholy, and poor. This was the fate of Paolo Uccello. . . . By wasting his time on these matters he remained more poor than famous throughout the course of his life. . . . He always delighted to paint animals, and took the utmost pains to do so well. His house was full of painted representations of birds, cats, dogs . . . as he was too poor to have the living creatures themselves. His favourite animals were birds, and from this circumstance he derived his name, Paolo Uccello (Paul the Bird). He was the first among the old painters who won a name for doing landscapes well."[1] Then there are other stories about Uccello's great friend, the sculptor Donatello, who warned him that he was giving too much attention to perspective. On one occasion Uccello was asked to

[1] "Lives of the Painters," by Vasari.

paint a picture over the door of a church in the market-place, and resolved that it should display all his powers. So he put up a hoarding round it, and would not show it even to Donatello till it was finished. "One morning, when Donatello happened to be in the market-place buying fruit, he saw Paolo uncovering his work, and went up courteously to greet him. Paolo . . . asked him what he thought of the picture. After Donatello had made a good inspection of it he said, 'Ah, Paolo, now that you ought to be covering it up, you uncover it.' This criticism made Paolo very sad . . . and, being thoroughly discouraged, he would not venture out, but shut himself up in his house, devoting himself to perspective . . . He died in the eighty-third year of his age . . . leaving a daughter who could design, and a wife who used to say that Paolo would remain the night long in the scriptorium to find out the terms of perspective, and that when she called him to come to rest, he replied, 'Oh what a sweet thing this perspective is!'"[1]

His friend Donatello was a much greater artist, and, though he was a sculptor, his work had great influence on painters, and cannot be passed over without mention. All that loving toil which Uccello gave to perspective Donatello bestowed on the study and representation of the human body. So in the

[1] "Lives of the Painters," by Vasari.

great series of his works we see realism and humanism developed in a manner that astonishes us when we remember that he was living at the same time as Fra Angelico. He put truth and reality, exact copying of his models, even before beauty. Perhaps the statue that is best known to most people is his St. George, which he made for the outside of a church in Florence and which has now been moved to the National Museum in the Bargello. He did not, like Giotto, do both painting and sculpture, and there is nothing of his to see in the National Gallery; but we have to remember that every carefully drawn figure in the work of other men of his time, every faithful attempt to draw the body properly, owes something to his great influence.

We can only fully understand the works of men like Donatello and others whose lives overlapped his by knowing something of that other side of the Renaissance of which I spoke—the Revival of Learning. This may be shortly described as a renewal of knowledge of the writings, buildings, and works of art of the ancient Greeks and Romans. During the Middle Ages, that is, up till about 1400, the Greek sculpture had been forgotten, the plays and poems and histories of great Greek writers had ceased to be much read, though in the fourteenth century (1300–1400) the great novelist, Boccaccio, and the great poet Petrarch, began to realise the true beauty

of the Greek writings they already knew. In Greece itself, in the city of Constantinople that was once Byzantium, these things were better remembered, and thence they gradually came back into the west of Europe. Of course, no one can state a precise year when any great movement of this kind begins or ends, but we do know that in 1453 something happened which greatly strengthened and spread the new study of the old languages and the old art. In that year the Turks from Asia Minor came down upon Constantinople and took it. They were Mohammedans, and hence persecutors of the Christian Greeks, so a great number of the scholars of Constantinople were scattered in flight and carried their learning into Italy. There the well-educated people in every city were beginning once more to feel interest in the learning of past times, and were, therefore, ready to give strange scholars a welcome. They had the means to do it, for they were rapidly growing rich. Great nobles spent much on collecting ancient works of art, such as were found here and there in Italy and Greece, and at the same time they began to spend their money in having new ones made to adorn the splendid palaces they built.

All this was most important for painting and sculpture. The rich were filled with an ever-growing love for beautiful things, and the artists were supplied with a whole new set of subjects to paint and models

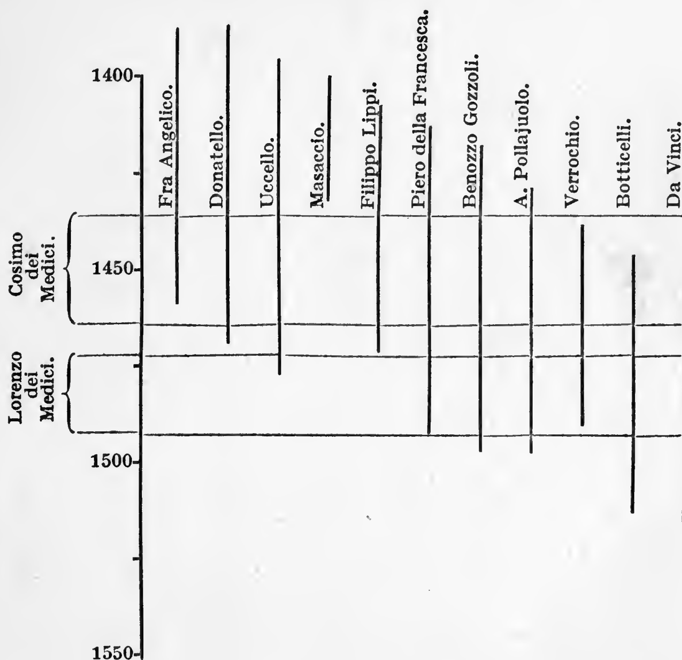
to study. You can imagine how eagerly the painters seized on the Greek stories of gods and heroes as subjects for their pictures, and how the sculptors burnt to create something worthy of comparison with the ancient statues that moved them to joy.

Such were the reasons which made Uccello want to paint a rose hedge and ploughed fields behind his fighting men, to spend so much labour on drawing the fallen knight, and to deal with an event of his own day. The same great changes made Donatello take the human body as the greatest and worthiest object of his study, and bestow on it the same care as Fra Angelico had done upon the redeemed in Paradise. The Renaissance had come and strengthened the thread of realism till it made the greater part of the cord.

We are helped to understand this wonderful period, and the years that succeeded it, by looking at a table like that on the following page, in which we see the number of great men who lived about the same time, the lines representing the length of their lives.

It is interesting to notice that Donatello was actually as old as Fra Angelico, and yet his work is of so different a type. At the side of the table are two brackets, one marked " Cosimo dei Medici," and the other " Lorenzo dei Medici," and part of the life of each artist given comes into the period covered by Cosimo's bracket. Cosimo was a great prince, and

he had no lack of genius to adorn his Court. The name of Medici is bound up with Florentine art for ever, and pictures of the time lose much of their



interest unless we know something of Cosimo and of Lorenzo.

Out of the miseries and quarrels of the Guelphs and Ghibellines there had risen into power the great trading class of the city. The wondrous Florentines were fighters, artists, poets, and, strange to say, great

merchants and bankers also. As far back as 1266 each of the chief trades had formed its own guild, or company, which had its special banner, strict rules, as to the standard which all the members' work must satisfy, and courts in which cases were tried and those selling inferior goods were punished. The Guild of Cloth-workers was the oldest and most powerful, and perhaps next came the Guild of Bankers. Members of these guilds rose to great power, and heaped up wealth with which they beautified the city of their love. Among them all the family of the Medici came to greatest honour. They were flourishing bankers who dealt with the money of kings, our Edward III and Edward IV among the number, and spent their gains like princes for the glory of Florence.

Cosimo had ups and downs of fortune, for he was once banished; but in 1434 he returned, and from that time till his death he was practically king in the city, though he only once or twice held a public office. To him kings sent their embassies, and all men called him head of the republic, and as such obeyed him. A man in this position could do much for art and learning, and Cosimo did it. It was he who joined with other great citizens in founding the Church of San Lorenzo; he founded also the famous Uffizi picture-gallery, and in his time the Pitti Palace, which is now also a famous gallery, was built. Cosimo made a collection

of ancient sculpture, and employed Donatello to copy and restore it. At the same time he was the friend of Fra Angelico, and thus forms a link between the man who was full of the spirit of Renaissance and the man whom it passed by unheeded as he drew his angels on the convent walls. It was Cosimo, too, who gave the Dominicans their new home at San Marco.

Some of the names on this table are of less importance than others, but all belong to men who are interesting as showing the tendencies I have mentioned in some form or other. You will notice the very short life of Masaccio, of whose works we have no example in England; but we must not, therefore, forget that he left frescoes in Rome and in Florence in which he illustrated the stories of the Bible with a skill as great as Giotto's and a greater mastery over his art.

Antonio Pollajuolo was one of the followers of Donatello. If you look at his great *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* in the National Gallery, you will see that he was much interested in drawing the human body, and you will also see a landscape behind the figures in which the perspective is a great improvement on poor Uccello's.

Piero della Francesca has two charming pictures in the National Gallery, though both are much damaged. One is a *Baptism of Christ* and the other

a *Nativity.* Perhaps in the fine, upright forms of the angels in these pictures Piero used ideas gained from studying Cosimo's collection of sculpture.

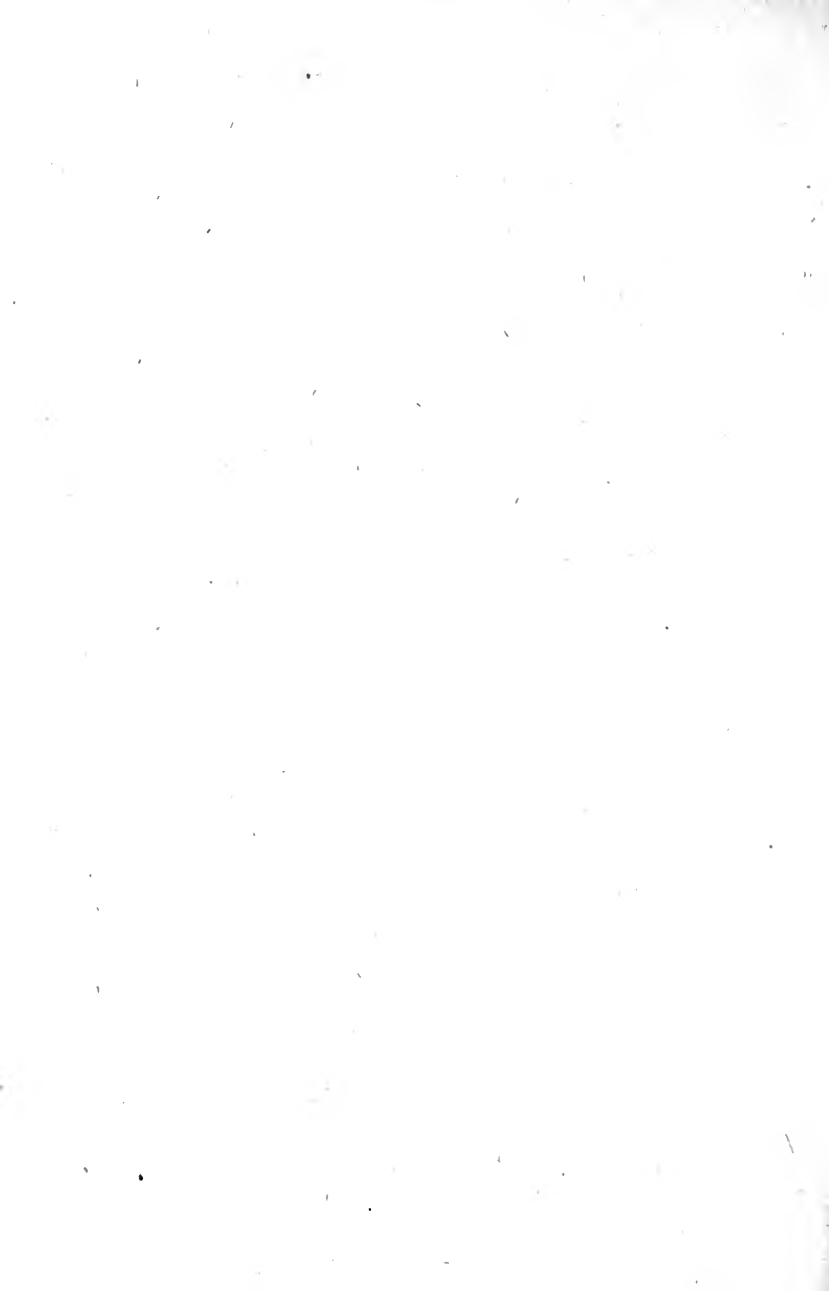
Benozzo Gozzoli was a pupil of Fra Angelico, but we have only to look at his picture in the National Gallery to see how much he belonged to the Renaissance time. The picture is a most amusing scene, showing Paris carrying away Helen of Troy from her husband's house in Sparta. Helen, who appears perfectly calm, is riding on the shoulders of Paris, who wears the Florentine dress, as do his young companions and the ladies of Helen's household, who are seen in the background. Gozzoli's attempt to draw the sea with ships on it is nearly as amusing as Uccello's fallen knight. This picture is painted on wood, and is supposed to have once been the lid of a box.

Other pictures worth noticing are *The Virgin adoring the Infant Christ, Tobias and the Angel,* and *The Death of Procris.* The first two were painted in the workshop of Verrochio, who was more famous as a sculptor than a painter, and the third is by Piero di Cosimo, the eccentric man of whom we read in George Eliot's "Romola."

The works of Fra Filippo Lippi and his son, Filippino Lippi, remind us that the thread of idealism and religious feeling had not disappeared altogether. They both have works in the National Gallery, the

National Gallery *Mansell*

THE ANNUNCIATION
Filippo Lippi



best known being Fra Filippo's *Annunciation*, which forms the second illustration in this chapter.

Next I come to a more famous man, the painter of the *Mars and Venus* which forms the next illustration in this chapter. He was born in Florence in 1444, and his name was Alessandro Filipepi; but for some curious reason he was called Botticelli, after his brother, who was named Botticello, or "little cask." Alessandro's father was a tanner, and apprenticed him to a goldsmith; but he gave his family great anxiety by his idleness until they discovered that the work for which he was really fitted was painting. It was the custom to send boys into the studio of some well-known artist to work as apprentices for about twelve years before they took their places as independent painters. Botticelli's father sent him to Prato, a town not far from Florence, to work under Filippo Lippi, who was decorating the cathedral there. From this master he, perhaps, learnt to draw the sad and gentle type of face we see in his pictures of the Virgin. When he came back to Florence he met with other artists who taught him more than he yet knew of the drawing of the human figure.

The whole of Botticelli's life is filled by commissions to paint pictures for great persons such as the Medici. The great Cosimo died in 1464, and was succeeded by an invalid son, who, nevertheless, was

as much of a monarch in Florence as his father had been. When he died the citizens requested that his young son, Lorenzo, then only twenty-one, should take the position of head of the republic in his father's place. Lorenzo was a brilliant, energetic, pleasure-loving young man, who lived in such splendour and spent so much on the encouragement of art and learning that he was named Lorenzo the Magnificent. He had been educated by men who were enthusiastic for the new learning, and was himself a poet and filled his Court with scholars and artists of all kinds. His younger brother, Giuliano, was a leader of fashion and gaiety in Florence, much beloved among the younger citizens for his good looks, his kindly nature, his skill in music, poetry, and the tournament.

Among Florentine ladies the most beautiful was Simonetta da Vespucci, wife of a young noble. In the society that surrounded Lorenzo and Giuliano Simonetta reigned like a queen; poets made verses in her honour, artists painted her, men of learning praised her wit, and she was, moreover, so sweet-tempered that no other ladies were jealous of her. Among the foremost to do her honour was Giuliano. In 1475 he held a great tournament in her honour, in which he wore her colours and carried off the prize.

Now Botticelli's picture of *Mars and Venus* is, perhaps, something much more interesting, for it is,

say some, a record of all these things. It was painted to illustrate one of Lorenzo's poems about Mars and Venus, and at the same time to do honour to the gallant, fashionable Giuliano and the beautiful, witty Simonetta. Mars is really Giuliano, sleeping amidst his armour and dreaming of the glory he has won in the tournament, and Venus, in her strange robes of white and gold, is Simonetta, whom he beholds in his dream. Her face has a peculiar beauty; it is still, and even cold; she seems to be regarding the sleeping warrior with calm consideration rather than affection. Little fauns, drawn from Greek stories, play about them, and behind Giuliano's head are some pomegranates, one of the symbols of the Medici family, and wasps, which were part of the Vespucci coat of arms.

Of course, many people may not see Simonetta's beauty at all; at any rate, not till they have seen her many times. They may even dislike her, for Botticelli's pictures are among those which one may like or dislike strongly, but to which it is rare to feel simply indifferent. If we like the picture at all, however, and begin to ask ourselves why we like it, some very important facts come to light. The colour is somewhat pale and cold; Giuliano has puny, badly drawn legs, and Simonetta's beauty is of a strange, unfamiliar kind. But look at the waves of her draperies, the droop of her hair, the graceful

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curves of the gold embroideries on her dress, the way her figure balances that of her lover in the design without any appearance of stiffness—it is these things that make the beauty of the picture, the graceful lines and curves in it, and the arrangement of the figures. The skill with which Botticelli has filled up the long, narrow space at his disposal is very remarkable. We do not look at one part of the picture and then at another, feeling that they might as well be on different canvases, but see it as a united whole, our eye following continuous lines of the two figures and the long lance. The skill to make the beholder feel this in looking at a picture is what people mean when they talk about a "genius for composition." Botticelli had it in a very high degree, and we can best understand what it means by looking back to some of the early pictures where it is not attempted. Take Margaritone's altarpiece in the vestibule, for example. It makes no impression on us of being a pleasant, graceful object, apart from its meaning; the painter has just crowded a number of little scenes together in one frame, and we spell them out one by one like bits of a puzzle. Another picture in which we see the quality of pleasant composition is *The Annunciation* by Fra Filippo Lippi. No point in pictures is more interesting to notice than this. If we try to make a selection of pictures that would be especially pleasing to live with and

National Gallery *Mansell*

MARS AND VENUS
Botticelli

to see continually, I think most people will find that they have chosen those which, in addition to an interesting subject, have this quality of making us feel that we are looking at something simple and united and complete. This gives us a feeling of peace and satisfaction which is not to be got from the sight of crowds of figures and many incidents shown in a small space, however interesting these may be in themselves. Fra Filippo's picture and Botticelli's give us the pleasure to be got from good composition, and it is interesting to compare them with a series of long, narrow pictures called *The Story of Griselda* by Pinturicchio. The story is very interesting, and we read it from the picture much as we might from a book; but we do not want to set the book up open to look at when we are not reading, nor do we want to set up these pictures where they meet our glance when we have not time to spell out the story from them. How different is the *Mars and Venus*, before which we not only think of the revival of learning, of Simonetta and Giuliano, but can enjoy the sight of the most graceful, flowing lines and curves! After studying this picture carefully we see why Botticelli has been called an "artist of line"; that is, one who relies upon grace in his drawings rather than on any brilliant colour or skilful arrangement of light and shade. Other very famous pictures of his in which we can see this are *The Birth of Venus*,

and *Spring*, both in Florence and often reproduced. It is said that the lady who stands in the middle of the Spring picture represents Simonetta, and that in the man gathering fruit on the extreme left we see Giuliano. This picture illustrates a poem by Lorenzo.

In 1480 Botticelli went to Rome and worked for the Pope in decorating the famous Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. He returned to Florence with large earnings, but Vasari says that he spent it recklessly and wasted his time over unprofitable pieces of work. He had a workshop in Florence, where he took pupils on whom he liked to play practical jokes. Once, when a boy called Biagio had finished a Madonna and was bringing a purchaser to see it, his master fixed red paper hoods on the heads of all the angels. Poor Biagio was horrified when he arrived with the customer, but the latter was in the joke and pretended to see nothing unusual. While Biagio was gone away with him to get the money for the picture, Botticelli took off the hoods, and when the simple-minded apprentice came back and said what he had seen every one united to persuade him that he had been dreaming.

The next illustration in this chapter shows one of Botticelli's later pictures, which is in the National Gallery. It is, perhaps, the last picture he ever painted. The subject is *The Nativity*, or birth of Christ. The Virgin and St. Joseph with the Child are seen in the stable, while angels rejoice over the Saviour's birth.

National Gallery *Mansell*

THE NATIVITY

Botticelli

It is a picture that is not beautiful, perhaps, but is extremely interesting, for it is a record of Botticelli's life.

In 1490 a great change took place in Florence owing to the preaching of a famous friar, Girolamo Savonarola. He was a Dominican, and was Prior of the Convent of San Marco, where Fra Angelico spent so much of his life. About 1490 he began to preach in the Church of St. Mark against the too great luxury of life in the city, against the people's forgetfulness of religion, the selfishness and cruelty which he saw about him. For the Renaissance had an evil as well as a good side, and some of the courtiers of the Medici behaved as though they were in reality living before Christian times, caring for nothing but the new learning and their own enjoyment. The preaching of Savonarola, however, impressed great numbers with a sense of evil, and his followers undertook to live simple and religious lives, giving up vanity and pagan habits. So Savonarola instituted great "bonfires of vanities" in the public squares, and into these people cast their needless luxuries and even drawings, pictures, and other works of art, turning themselves to a sober way of life that made their enemies give them the title of Piagnoni, or weepers. Botticelli became one of the most ardent of Savonarola's disciples, and refused to paint any more pictures on pagan subjects. Indeed, Vasari says that he would not paint at all, and would have been in

great want but for the help of Lorenzo the Magnificent. This is an exaggeration, however, for he did paint some pictures, including this, his last, which is dated 1500, and also illustrated the works of Dante.

Savonarola had been put to death two years before, Lorenzo had died earlier still, the rest of the Medici had been driven out of Florence for a time; it was a sad and troubled world in which Botticelli was spending his last days, and he has summed it all up in this mysterious picture.

It is divided into three parts. In the middle is the scene of the birth of Christ, in which the Virgin kneels beneath a rough shed, to which angels direct the shepherds on one side and the three kings on the other. On the roof of the shed kneel three more angels singing "Glory to God in the highest," and every angel bears a branch of olive, the sign of peace. In the sky above the shed is a circle of dancing angels, clothed in red, green, and white, and carrying olive-branches. These recall by their lightness and grace the days when Botticelli painted nymphs and goddesses from the old stories. But the lower part of the picture is the most mysterious and interesting of all. Little winged and horned demons are trying to creep into crannies of the rocks to hide their foulness from the angels and the Christ. In front three angels embrace three human beings also crowned with olive. At the top is a curious Greek inscription

telling us that Botticelli painted the picture in 1500 "during the troubles of Italy," "when Satan shall be loosed on the earth for three years and a half. After which the devil shall be enchained, and we shall see him trodden underfoot, as in this picture." If we want to describe the meaning of the whole, shortly, we may call it the triumph of good over evil. The angels and holy men greet one another with passionate joy, singing, dancing, bearing the olive as sign of peace attained and sorrows past; evil, grown small and hideous, cowers away to find some refuge in the darkness of the rock. Some say that the three figures whom the angels embrace are Savonarola and the two monks who were put to death with him; others that they represent the souls of the righteous welcomed by their guardian angels in Paradise. Others have spent much time and argument trying to make out the meaning of the strange words about the devil being enchained, but no one will ever know what they mean for certain. The only sure point is that, in his last painting, Botticelli recorded his belief that good is greater than evil. We do not know what happened to him after 1500. Vasari says he was poor and crippled, walking on two crutches, and in 1510 he died.

The greatest of his pictures are in Italy, but we are fortunate in having the *Mars and Venus* and *The Nativity*, for they show us very finely how art is the

product of " the national and local life of the day," for one is the record of Lorenzo's Court and the other of that great friar who bade men put away their vanities. The Renaissance was so many-sided that it affected different minds in an endless variety of ways. Botticelli was not moved to realism in the drawing of the human body like Antonio Pollajuolo and Donatello ; he was stirred by the beauty of the ancient stories. At the same time he was very deeply religious, and therefore he contributes to the strengthening of the idealistic thread in the pattern of art.

There is a round picture of *The Virgin and Child with Angels* and another of *The Adoration of the Magi* in the National Gallery, which are examples of the rather sad beauty of Botticelli's Virgins. It is a beauty that some may not see at all, because they will feel doubts as to whether people like that ever really lived. Perhaps not, but they have lived in dreams of Botticelli and others before and since, and there will always be some people who will like them much better than if they were as familiar and life-like as photographs. The art critic, Bernhard Berenson, says of Botticelli's figures that they are " never pretty," " scarcely ever charming," " rarely correct in drawing . . . ill-favoured," and that, all the same, Sandro Botticelli is " irresistible." [1] A great many people will violently

[1] "Florentine Painters of the Renaissance," by Bernhard Berenson.

disagree with him, and a great many more will disagree at first and come to agree later. Those who disagree may at least be interested to notice that Botticelli's pictures are what is called very individual; that is to say, well marked off from the work of others. His angels are not like those of any one else; you may not admire them, but you cannot help getting to recognise them. It is very interesting to try to guess the painter of a picture by looking at the picture itself. Great experts can, of course, do so with quite unimportant artists, but there are some for whose works every one can do it to some extent, and Botticelli is one of them, and Leonardo da Vinci another. To realise this makes us cease to mind the repetition of the same subject in old pictures, for if you begin to notice the different ways in which different men represent the same scene there is always something to prevent its being dull.

The fifth picture in this chapter was painted while Botticelli was still alive, and is the work of Leonardo da Vinci, one of the most extraordinary men who ever lived. He was a native of the little town of Vinci, after which he was called; but he travelled restlessly from place to place, entering the service of now one and now another great noble. He studied a great variety of subjects, and succeeded with them all. He was a painter, and wrote a book on that subject; but he was also a poet, sculptor,

architect, engineer, anatomist, mathematician, philosopher, musical composer, and player upon the lyre. Besides all this he was very handsome, so cheerful that no one could remain sad in his company, and so strong that he could bend horse-shoes and door-knockers in his fingers. He loved horses, and also birds, which he bought in cages on purpose to set them free. He had a tame lizard, which he once adorned with false wings, horns, and a beard.

This amazing man was apprenticed by his father to Andrea Verrochio, the sculptor, and Vasari tells an unlikely story that he painted an angel in one of Verrochio's pictures which was so much more beautiful than the rest that Verrochio gave up painting in despair. Like many more of Vasari's unlikely stories, it is interesting because it shows that Leonardo's fellow workers had a remarkably high opinion of him at an early age.

In Verrochio's workshop Leonardo met Botticelli and Perugino, who was to be of importance a little later, and he soon began to work for Lorenzo the Magnificent. In 1482 Lorenzo sent him to Milan to the Court of Ludovico Sforza, who ruled over the city with the title of Duke, and wanted an artist to make a bronze statue of his father on horseback. Leonardo sent a curious letter to the Duke, giving a list of the various things he could do. These relate not to art, but chiefly to warfare. He undertakes to make

light, movable bridges, to cut off water from trenches, to make scaling-ladders, to destroy fortresses, to cast cannon which throw stones like hail and cause terror to the enemy by their smoke. He also claims to understand the digging of underground passages and the building of armour-plated wagons to break the ranks of the enemy in battle, and of ships which will resist fire in sea-fights. He adds that his cannon, etc., will be made in ornamental shapes, unlike those in common use. At the end he adds: "In time of peace I believe I can give you as complete satisfaction as any one in the construction of buildings, both public and private, and in conducting water from one place to another. . . . I can, further, execute sculpture in marble, bronze, or clay; also in painting I can do as much as any one else, whoever he may be."[1] This catalogue naturally made a great impression on Ludovico Sforza, and he employed Leonardo in the making of the statue and in a variety of other tasks until they quarrelled in 1499 and Leonardo left Milan.

He left behind him one of the most famous pictures in the world, *The Last Supper*, painted on the wall of the convent of Santa Maria de Grazie. We know to some extent what it was like because copies of it were made in early times, but the picture itself is so much damaged that its beauty is almost gone.

[1] Quoted in "Leonardo da Vinci," by E. MacCurdy.

This was partly due to Leonardo's love of experiments, for he tried to paint on the plaster of the wall with oil-paints, which were not suitable. The wall, moreover, was damp, so that by 1536, when Vasari saw the picture, he calls it a tarnished patch of colours. Its misfortunes were not yet over, for the monks were so extraordinarily stupid as to have a door cut in the lower part of it, and finally the French soldiers during the wars of Napoleon used the room as a stable, and, it is said, threw bricks at the picture.

While at Milan Leonardo wrote his book on painting, and a great quantity of other writings and notes on many subjects, many of which have come down to us. It was very difficult to collect and publish them, for Leonardo did not even write like other people, but had a private writing of his own which went from right to left and was very difficult to read. One of his remarks shows his interest in the revival of learning: "It is better to imitate the works of antiquity than modern works." Another memorable sentence from his papers is, "The artist must be solitary to be himself;" and he kept his own rule, for he went from city to city, unmarried, lonely, and restless in body and mind. He was continually seeking to increase his knowledge. "The more one knows, the more one loves," was one of his sayings. This restless interest in a multitude of subjects is, perhaps, the reason why we have so little of his work.

He spent a very long time over any picture he undertook, working at it with a conscientiousness that was never satisfied; but the result was that circumstances often prevented his finishing what he began.

In a novel by a writer called Bandello we have a description of how he worked at *The Last Supper*. "He was wont," says Bandello, "as I myself have seen, to mount the scaffolding early in the morning and work until the approach of night, and in the interest of painting he forgot both meat and drink. Then came two, three, or even four days when he did not stir a hand, but spent an hour or two in contemplating his work, examining and criticising his figures. I have seen him, too, at noon . . . leave his statue . . . and go straight to Santa Maria de Grazie, mount the scaffolding, seize a brush, add two or three touches to a single figure, and return forthwith."[1] Sometimes his work at art suffered from a great ardour for something else. In a letter about him written to the Duchess Isabella of Mantua we read: "His mathematical studies have so estranged him from painting that he cannot endure to use a brush," and "he is entirely wrapped up in geometry." It is interesting, at the present day, to know that he had dreams of enabling men to fly, and that for this purpose he studied the flight of birds and wrote in triumphant language of his expected success. But

[1] Quoted in "Leonardo da Vinci," by G. Gronau.

this came to nothing, like so many schemes of his great and restless spirit.

He spent some time at Rome, where he studied anatomy, and better methods of coining money, and also wrote a book about geometry. From time to time he paid visits to Florence, and during one of these he painted another of the world's most famous pictures, the *Mona Lisa* of the Louvre in Paris. This was the portrait of Lisa, wife of Francesco del Giocondo, which took Leonardo four years to paint and was not then finished according to his fastidious taste.

Everybody knows this picture, partly because of its romantic adventures. Leonardo took it with him to France, where his restless wanderings at last came to an end in the service of King Francis I, he who met our Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. It remained among the treasures of the Kings of France, and once it nearly came to England, for when the Duke of Buckingham was sent to bring back the Princess Henrietta Maria, who was to marry Charles I, he asked this picture as a gift from the King. Strange to say, the request was nearly granted; but the protests of the Court were so strong that the King had to give way and keep it in France. It remained in the Louvre till 1911, when one morning it was found to have mysteriously disappeared. No amount of search, of inquiry, of punishment of those responsible

for its care, availed to find it and the world gave it up for lost. Then, two years later, it was discovered in the possession of an Italian workman who had stolen it from the Louvre and now betrayed himself by trying to sell it in Italy. So it was rescued from him and restored to its place of honour in Paris. No picture in the world is more interesting. Vasari has a long and famous description of the beautiful colour of the face, the life-like eyes, the delicate throat, where one can almost see the motion of breathing. All this has faded; we see now a darkened, mysterious portrait of a woman whom we may or may not think beautiful, about whose curious half-smile there have been a thousand guesses. There she sits, an eternal puzzle, for nearly everybody has a different feeling about her, according to his or her own peculiar character, what we call each man's personality. Some things—for example, the laws of mathematics and of science—admit of no discussion; they are alike for every one, whatever his personality may be. But *Mona Lisa* is among the things which no one can explain, the things which are therefore everlastingly interesting.

In 1519 Leonardo died at Amboise, near Paris. Perhaps no artist whose fame and influence are so great ever left so little actual work behind him. We in England have one oil-painting, a number of drawings at Windsor and in the British Museum, and

one drawing in the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House. The *Madonna of the Rocks* is almost exactly like a picture in the Louvre in Paris, and there have been many arguments as to which was painted first. For most of us the question is not very important; what is more so is the fact that they both show the great quailties which have given Leonardo his place in the world of painters. The Virgin kneels between the child Christ and St. John the Baptist, around whom she throws her mantle as though presenting him to her Son, and behind Christ kneels an angel. They are seen against a background of rocks full of deep shadows and far-off glimpses of light. The light falls full on the heads of the Virgin and the angel, revealing the new and wonderful type of beauty that Leonardo invented and bound up with his name for ever. The angel is, perhaps, more beautiful than the Madonna. Leonardo repeated this head in many drawings, and once seen it is never forgotten. It was the invention of this type, copied again and again by others, that gave Leonardo his importance to the world of art. There was another reason which appears if we compare his picture with Botticelli's *Venus*. There the colour is all bright and clear, the outlines hard, and the grace of the whole due to its flowing lines. In *The Madonna of the Rocks* we think much more of the great masses of shadow and the vivid patches of light into which the whole is divided.

National Gallery *Mansell*

MADONNA OF THE ROCKS
Leonardo da Vinci

" Lines " is the word that comes to us naturally when we want to describe the beauty of the one, " masses " when our thoughts go to the other. Leonardo had done something new in painting, suggested a new style that was to be all-important later.

No one who can enjoy *The Madonna of the Rocks* should be ignorant of Leonardo's drawing in the Diploma Gallery. At the top of an endless flight of stairs, and oddly united with a number of pictures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is a damaged pencil-drawing of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin, her daughter, St. John the Baptist, and Christ. It may well represent the life and personality of Leonardo. At first the beholder may exclaim, " Why should any one admire this rubbed, creased, faded sketch ? " just as he may ask why all generations reverence this man whose restless mind wove great, impossible schemes, while his restless body roved from place to place, this man who left so little accomplished amid so many great attempts. But the dim, smiling faces of the Virgin and St. Anne give the answer. Theirs is a serene beauty, pure without being cold, heavenly yet tender, and for the gift of this to earth men will not forget Leonardo.

We have his portrait drawn by himself in his old age at Amboise. It is the face of an old man looking more than his sixty-seven years, with long hair and a flowing beard. It is deeply marked and wrinkled,

and the lines of his mouth are somewhat bitter, as though he, too, realised how little he had been able to accomplish of all his thousand desires.

With him a period begins and a period ends; he is a link, and before going on to those who come after it is as well to look back and see how far we have travelled from the days of Fra Angelico and Giotto.

The two great twining threads were at last evenly united in him. He was a realist, but not, like Donatello, a realist even at the cost of beauty. That he, too, could show deep feeling for religion *The Last Supper* stands to witness. In him appears the view of the best of those who came after him. He did not feel, as we may guess Fra Angelico would have done, that in seeking to know more exactly the secrets of all created things, and, above all, of the human body, he was forgetting the worship of God. Rather, he believed that he was truly reverent in bestowing all efforts of body and mind on that which God had made. In Rome he cut up and examined some human bodies, and there were some who reproached him. An entry in his papers defends him, coming strangely from an age when bloodshed was so familiar a thing: "And thou, O man, who through this work of mine learnest to understand the marvellous works of nature, if thou believest it to be a crime to dissect the human body, consider how infinitely more

wicked it is to take the life of a man, and if his outer form appears to be wonderfully made, consider that it is like nothing in comparison with the soul that dwells in this body, for this, whatever it may be, is a thing of God. Let it, therefore, dwell in His work according to His will and good pleasure, and do not let your anger and your wickedness destroy a life, for verily he who does not value life does not deserve to possess it." [1]

Leonardo could not paint like Fra Angelico; neither can we to-day. Fra Angelico could not have painted like Leonardo, nor like a modern artist, not only because he had not the knowledge and experience, but because his work was the product of a different time, a time that can never come back. Neither we nor Leonardo could paint Fra Angelico's *Paradise*, because we live after the great Renaissance, when mankind turned to the study of the world about them, of their own bodies and of their daily deeds; but the *Paradise* has not, therefore, ceased to be beautiful.

Sir Martin Conway has said this very finely.[2] "Like the earth, humanity demands a change of crops. It cannot for long continue to produce the same kind of growth. . . . Each day has its own possibilities, just as to every individual in the world some things are possible which are possible to no

[1] Quoted in "Leonardo da Vinci," by Rosenberg.
[2] "Early Tuscan Art," by Sir Martin Conway.

one else. Ideals succeed one another." "But if we cannot hope, or indeed do not desire, to imitate the works of the past, we can still enjoy them with a keen delight. This is the one great value of old works of art to those who live later. . . . They could only be made when they were made; no one can imitate them now, or ever hereafter."[1] An early Italian painter could not exist in the twentieth century. His, and all other pictures, are what they are because the life of the time was what it was.

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The reference-books and the works on the National Gallery given after Chapter I deal with the subjects of the succeeding chapters also, and are not repeated in every list.

Florentine Painters of the Renaissance. By Bernhard Berenson.

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[1] "Early Tuscan Art," by Sir Martin Conway.

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The Thoughts of Leonardo da Vinci. Arranged and rendered into English by Edward McCurdy. Very interesting selections.

CHAPTER III

PICTURES AS STORY-BOOKS—SHAPE AND MATERIAL—" ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS "—GREAT SUBJECTS

In the Catalogue of the National Gallery there is a short description of each picture, with notes of anything remarkable about it, and of how it came to be in the gallery. Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* and his picture of *St. John the Baptist and other Saints* which forms the first illustration in this chapter both have this note: "On wood, in tempera, a lunette, 26 in. h. by 59½ in. w." If you run through the rest of the Italian pictures you will find their height and width given, and, in a very large number of cases, this remark, "in tempera." The modern way of painting in oils was not general till between 1450 and 1500, and before this time it was the custom to use tempera, or distemper, which was colour mixed with some sticky substance, such as egg or very thin gum. To make it thinner all sorts of curious things were added, such as wine, beer, vinegar, milk, or the juice squeezed out of fig-tree shoots. Sometimes the picture was made on linen or canvas, and sometimes on a carefully prepared piece of wood which was called a panel.

You can sometimes see traces of the splitting of those wood panels.

Here and there you will find a picture described as fresco, for example, two small fragments by Spinello Aretino in the vestibule, and if you look through a list of the works of any of the great Italian artists you will see that a great number of those in Italy are so described. Frescoes were paintings on the plaster of walls, and got their name, which means "fresh," because they had to be done on the wet plaster before it dried. A new piece was prepared every day just large enough for the artist to finish off before night, and if he made a mistake the piece had to be cut out and new plaster put in. The painting became very durable, as the plaster dried hard like stone; but the work was difficult because it was so important to avoid mistakes, and because only certain colours which would not be affected by the lime in the plaster could be used. Indeed Michelangelo, being once offended with a rival painter, Sebastiano del Piombo, who painted in oil, said rudely, "To paint in oil is an art fit only for women and easy and lazy persons like Fra Sebastiano." The painter had to know exactly what he meant to do, and therefore prepared large drawings for the fresco, which were called cartoons. A full-sized cartoon of the piece that was to be finished in the day was put on the wet wall, the lines

were pricked, and red or black powder sprinkled over the holes, so that it went through and marked the outline on the plaster. This was done for oil paintings also, and there is a little picture by Raphael, called *The Vision of a Knight,* which has its cartoon, all pin-pricked along the lines, hanging up beside it. Of course there are few fresco paintings in galleries, because it is difficult and dangerous, though not impossible, to take away pieces of the wall and move them. Most of the pictures in public collections, therefore, are what are called easel-pictures, intended to be hung up on walls or shown on easels.

The end of the note on Lippi's two pictures is, "a lunette." This refers to their shape, which is long and narrow and arched at the top because they were meant to fill the space above a window or to go above the middle part of a much larger picture, probably a great altarpiece in some church. Large church pictures were often divided into many parts, each showing a separate scene and each with its own frame, which was a great improvement on the method of Margaritone of Arezzo and others, who used to draw a number of little scenes all in one frame. The commonest arrangement may be seen in the first illustration to Chapter IV, where you see a picture divided into three parts. This is called a triptych, the two smaller parts being named wings and the large one the central panel. Very often the wings

were made to fold over the central panel like doors, and then extra pictures could be painted on the other side of them.

The lunette which forms the first illustration to this chapter is called *St. John the Baptist and Six Saints*. In the middle sits the Baptist, whom we know by his hairy garment and by the cross he carries. At his right hand sits St. Cosmas and on his left St. Damian. These two were brothers, and their story says that they dwelt in Asia Minor, and were doctors, who tended the sick without payment and never refused their help, even to animals. The heathen of that land sought to put them to death for being Christians, and first threw them into the sea, but an angel brought them safe to land again and then they were beheaded. They are always painted together, wearing red caps, which were the mark of a doctor in Florence, and one or both carrying a little box of medicines. Next to St. Cosmas is St. Laurence. He has a gridiron beside him, in memory of the manner in which he was put to death. He was a young Spaniard who was martyred for his Christianity in Rome by being roasted to death on a gridiron. Beside him sits St. Francis in his brown gown with the cord girdle and with curious marks on his hands and feet, shown by touches of gold paint. These are the famous "stigmata" of St. Francis, so called from a Greek word meaning

"marks." It is said of him that, after many years of preaching and of meditation on the life of Christ, he was once in prayer on Monte Alverno, when he beheld a vision of Christ on the cross, and there appeared on his hands and feet and side mysterious marks corresponding to the five wounds of Christ, and these lasted till his death. The other saint next to St. Damian is St. Anthony, who passed many years as a hermit in the desert, suffering great temptations. He is shown in pictures as an old, bent man with a rough stick to lean upon. Last comes St. Peter Martyr, in whose head a sort of chopper is fixed. He was a Dominican monk who was murdered with an axe as he was travelling from Como to Milan. He had been a fierce persecutor of heretics and it was by order of two noblemen whom he had imprisoned that he was slain. But, though he was not beloved in his life-time, the Dominicans became very proud of him after his death, and you will find two pictures of it in the National Gallery.

This picture, and all the rest in this chapter, might be called not only pictures, but parts of a great storybook from which the beholder can read if only he knows the language. As the centuries have passed we have grown to think of pictures more and more as things which please our eyes by their beauty. But in earlier times they had another object also. They had to do the work of books for thousands of the

National Gallery *Mansell*

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND OTHER SAINTS
Filippo Lippi

unlearned. The painter "spoke to men who could not read, for whom there were no printed pages, but whose hearts received his teaching through the eye. Thus painting was not what it is now, a decoration of existence, but a potent and efficient agent in the education of the race."[1] The pictures painted in the Netherlands and Germany and Italy four or five hundred years ago are full of objects and of figures of people which are without meaning to us. But in learning the signs of the saints in Filippo Lippi's picture you have taken one step towards the possession of a key to pictures considered as story-books; you have begun, in fact, to know something of Christian mythology. This expression seems a strange one, because we are so accustomed to hearing "mythology" used for the stories of the heathen religions. However, it only means stories and is a convenient name for all those tales which were gradually added to what is related in the Bible or what is positively known to have befallen great men like St. Francis who lived after Bible times. There are many such; some are evidently false, in others the exact degree of truth cannot be discovered, but they are never to be despised on that account. If they did not actually happen they show us the character of the man about whom they were invented, and the sort of people who believed in him and made up

[1] "Fors Clavigera," by Ruskin.

the story; and so they have a truth of the spirit, as opposed to a truth of the letter, which makes them well worth knowing.

Not only the human figures, but a great many of the small objects in pictures have a meaning of their own. Take Fra Filippo's *Annunciation*, for example. The dove which floats down in rays of light towards Mary represents the Holy Spirit. The lilies growing in a stone vase and carried by the angel represent purity and holiness; therefore, they are often placed beside the Virgin, and are given also to St. Dominic and St. Francis. Then on the end of the low parapet before the angel we can see three feathers held together by a ring. This was the private crest of Cosimo dei Medici, and a sign that the picture was painted for him. Little historical references of this sort are not uncommon in pictures, for example, the pomegranates in Botticelli's *Mars and Venus*.

The use of an object to represent some event or some quality is called symbolism. Among the symbols often repeated in sacred pictures are fishes, banners, crowns, palm-branches, skulls, lambs. The fish is the very oldest of Christian symbols, for it was used among the early Christians as a secret sign in times of persecution. The choice results from the fact that the letters of the Greek word for fish give the initials of the chief titles of Christ—Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Saviour. It is not much used with

this meaning in pictures, but it survives in a curious form called the *vesica piscis* in Latin and in English the fish-bladder. This is an oval ring of light, shaped something like a fish without head or tail, which you sometimes see round the figure of Christ and of the Madonna. Later it was called a "mandorla," or almond, from its shape. There is one in Crivelli's picture called *Beato Ferretti* in the National Gallery. Banners represent victory, and are, therefore, placed in the hand of the risen Christ, as in Fra Angelico's *Triumph of Christ,* and in those of warrior saints, such as St. George. Crowns are used to mark royal saints, or as a sign of honour and victory, and palm-branches are, like banners, a sign of victory, especially of victory over the fear of death in martyrdom. Skulls stand for penitence and self-denial, and are drawn beside hermits in the wilderness and repentant sinners like Mary Magdalene. The lamb is a symbol of innocence, and also of Christ as Redeemer. It is the special sign of St. Agnes.

Colours, too, had meanings of their own. White represented purity; red, love, ardour, or royalty; and green, hope. Knowing this, we can see why Botticelli clothed his dancing angels in *The Nativity* in red, green, and white. The robes of the Virgin and of Christ are generally red and blue because these colours represented love and truth. Black stood for humility and mourning, and therefore the

Dominicans wore it united with white, the sign of purity.

There is no subject which we find more often than "Madonna and Child with Saints," and it seemed to become more and more a favourite with painters as time went on. To be able to recognise all the saints who are grouped at the feet of Mary would be no light task, there are so many of them, but a few are so important that it is easy to get to know them. They might be divided into three main groups.

(1) Great Teachers of the Church, Apostles, Bishops, Hermits

First among these come the four Evangelists, and the Apostles. In connection with these there grew up what are called artistic conventions, that is, customary ways of showing certain things and people, which were copied by one artist after another. For instance, St. Peter and St. Paul are imagined as old, bearded men, whereas St. John is often represented as being much younger. It is in this way that the accepted manner of painting Christ as a bearded man with fine features and long,brown hair was established. The signs of the four Evangelists are very well known. St. Matthew is accompanied by an angel, St. Mark by a winged lion, St. Luke by an ox, and St. John by an eagle. St. Peter carries two keys in memory of

the words of Christ, " I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and St. Paul has a sword, partly in memory of his martyrdom by beheading, and partly to represent his warfare against dangers and difficulties. St. Andrew often has a cross of peculiar shape representing that on which he is said to have been put to death. It is this cross of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, that goes from corner to corner of the Union Jack in the form of white stripes.

Next to the Evangelists and Apostles come the early Fathers of the Church. They were writers on religion and philosophy who lived in the first four or five hundred years after Christ and have left us many books in Latin and Greek. Those who appear the most often in art are the four Latin Fathers, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome.

St. Ambrose is the patron saint of Milan, where he was Bishop. He, therefore, appears in pictures with the robes and mitre or pointed headdress of a bishop, and sometimes a bee-hive is placed beside him because of a curious legend that when he was a baby a swarm of bees once settled on his mouth but did him no harm. He also carries a scourge with three knots in it. The knots represent the Trinity, and the scourge the victory of Ambrose over those with whom he disputed on the doctrines of the Church.

St. Augustine also wears the bishop's mitre and

robes, for he was Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. He also carries a book or a pen.

St. Gregory is interesting to the English because he was the Pope who sent the first missionaries to England in A.D. 597. We can recognise him by his Pope's tiara, a sort of crown in three stages, and also by his long staff, on which there are two crosses one above the other.

Last comes St. Jerome, whom we see more often than the other Fathers. He was born in A.D. 342, in Dalmatia, which borders the Adriatic Sea, and was brought up as a lawyer; but when a little over thirty he was converted to Christianity and travelled to Palestine, that he might pass some time amidst the scenes of the life of Christ. He went into the desert on the borders of Arabia, and there spent four years dwelling in a cave, inflicting all sorts of hardships on himself and studying Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in all of which he became deeply learned. While there he one day met with a lion which had run a thorn into its foot and was in great pain. Jerome had the courage to draw out the thorn, and the lion was so grateful that it remained with him, becoming as tame as a dog and living in friendly fashion with a partridge that Jerome had also tamed. So when the time came for him to leave the desert he took his strange friends with him and went back to his monastery near Bethlehem. His return caused the

Venice *Anderson*

RETURN OF ST. JEROME
Carpaccio

commotion you can see in Carpaccio's picture reproduced in this chapter, for the monks all rushed to the nearest place of safety until Jerome at last persuaded them that the beast was harmless.

The rest of Jerome's life was spent in writing and teaching. He had a great library, and is said to have spent fifty years making a translation of the Bible into Latin. As for the lion, it lived with him like a watch-dog, and ate nothing but grass and hay. St. Jerome gave it the task of taking care of the ass which went to and fro to the woods every day to carry home the monks' fire-wood. But one day the lion was asleep and the ass set out alone and met with some wicked merchants, who stole it. When the monks found their ass was gone they said Jerome's lion had eaten it, and, as a punishment, they would not give him his usual supply of food. The poor lion was so distressed at his carelessness that he went to the wood and carried home the faggots himself, and spent all his spare time searching for his lost friend. At last one day the merchants came by the monastery, and, walking in front of their string of camels, was the stolen ass. The lion caught sight of it, and rushed out, roaring so terribly that the merchants fled and he drove the ass and the camels into the monastery court-yard. Thus his character was cleared, and he lived in high favour until Jerome died, after which he could not be comforted, but pined away and died also.

St. Jerome appears in pictures of two quite different kinds. In some you see him reading and writing after his return to his monastery. There is a very famous one, called *St. Jerome in his Study*, in the National Gallery, where you see him, with his lion and partridge, dressed in the red robes of a cardinal with the broad cardinal's hat lying on the floor. This is an artistic convention, for St. Jerome never was a cardinal; but, as the other three Latin Fathers were Bishops and a Pope, the painters seemed to think that Jerome too must be given some high office. In Bellini's picture in the next chapter you see St. Jerome dressed as a monk reading from his translation of the Bible. Sometimes he carries a model of a church in token of his great labours in support of Christianity. Other pictures record the first portion of his life, when he was a hermit in the desert. In these he is a ragged, grey-bearded old man, lean and haggard, dressed in rags, and often holding a stone, with which he is about to strike himself. There are pictures of this kind in the National Gallery, one by Cima de Conegliano, and a Virgin and Child by Filippino Lippi, in which Jerome and St. Dominic kneel at the Virgin's feet.

The early part of Jerome's life reminds us of that of St. Anthony, who appears in Filippo Lippi's *St. John the Baptist and Saints.* He was a hermit in the deserts of Egypt, where he was greatly tor-

mented by demons, who continually displayed to him visions of the pleasures of the world he had left behind, especially all those comforts and luxuries for the body which he had given up. But Anthony resisted them, and became the teacher of other hermits far and near until he died at a great age. In pictures he is shown as a very old man, who walks with a stick, and often carries a bell in sign of his struggles with the demons, for it was believed that all evil spirits stood greatly in fear of a consecrated bell. There is at his feet a black pig, the meaning of which has puzzled people, but it probably stands for the vice of gluttony and all kinds of bodily self-indulgence to which Anthony was tempted in the desert. There is a very interesting picture of St. Anthony by Pisanello in the National Gallery.

Among the great Bishops of the Church often painted in Italian pictures is one who has three balls lying at his feet or in his hand. He is St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, and especially of school-boys, of travellers, merchants, poor labourers, and sailors, of all the weak and all the poor. He was Bishop of the town of Myra; but, as he is the patron saint of Bari in Italy, he is often called St. Nicholas of Bari. He was born in a city of Asia Minor, and early became a priest; but when his parents died he was left heir to great wealth. Now there was in

that city a nobleman who had become very poor—so poor that his three daughters had not enough to eat, neither could they marry, because their father was ashamed that they had no dowries. When Nicholas heard this he resolved to help them; so he tied up a sum of money in a bag and went to the nobleman's house one night in the darkness. But he did not know how to give the money without showing himself, for he was very modest and did not wish to be thanked. Then, as he stood pondering, the moon came out and he saw an open window through which he dropped the money and ran away. So this was a dowry for the eldest daughter. Twice again St. Nicholas came and threw in by the window dowries for the second and third daughters also. But the third time the nobleman was watching and caught him by the skirt of his robe, crying, "O Nicholas, servant of God! Why seek to hide thyself?" But Nicholas made him promise to tell no man. Many other kind deeds were done by Nicholas, but the three balls in memory of the three bags of money have become his symbol.

(2) Young Warrior Saints and Martyrs

Among these St. George is the most familiar to English people. He is shown with St. Anthony in Pisanello's picture and in a great many more of the Gallery, and is easy to recognise because he wears

armour and generally has the dead dragon at his feet. There is one little picture by Tintoretto in which he is attacking the dragon, while the princess who was to have been devoured by it is running away in the distance.[1] The legend tells that St. George, after he had slain the dragon and restored the princess to her father, travelled into Palestine. The Emperor Diocletian, a great persecutor of the Christians, was then reigning, and on the doors of temples and in all public places there were proclamations against them. St. George, fired with indignation, tore one down and trampled on it, for which the Romans seized him and put him to death with many tortures. It was in the reign of Richard I that he began to be looked upon as the patron saint of England, and in 1222 his feast was ordered to be kept as a holiday throughout England.

St. Sebastian was a young officer in the Roman army, and lived, like St. George, in the days of the persecuting Emperor Diocletian, with whom he was in high favour. He was secretly a Christian for some time, but at last the Emperor discovered it and ordered him to be tied to a tree and shot at with arrows. This was done, and the executioners went away, leaving him, as they thought, dead; but when some of the Christians came to bury his body they found that he still lived, and carried him to a safe hiding-

[1] See p. 143.

place, where at length he recovered. Then all his friends urged him to flee from Rome, but Sebastian refused, and going to the doors of the palace, he stood before the Emperor and begged the lives of his fellow Christians who were daily doomed to death. Then the Emperor asked, in great anger and astonishment, "Art not thou Sebastian?" and when he knew it he ordered him to be carried away and beaten to death with clubs, and so it was done to him.

It is easy to see why the painters of the Renaissance were particularly fond of this story. Sebastian was young and a warrior, therefore pictures of him stripped and bound to a tree as a mark for the soldiers' arrows gave them a magnificent opportunity for drawing a fine human body, and there were equal attractions in the figures of the archers pulling at their weapons. It was this, no doubt, that pleased Pollajuolo, and made so many artists place St. Sebastian among the saints round the Madonna's throne. There is another reason, for St. Sebastian came to be regarded as a special protector against the plague. Perhaps there lingered in the minds of the people of Italy a dim, confused recollection of the archer-god Apollo, young and beautiful like St. Sebastian and shooting out arrows of destroying pestilence. Sometimes St. Sebastian carries an arrow, but more often several have pierced him.

St. Laurence is among the saints in the picture

of John the Baptist. He is known by the gridiron and the palm of martyrdom, and is young, like Sebastian, but a priest, and not a soldier.

(3) Holy Women

The stories of these are innumerable and beautiful, and it is impossible to give more than a few of the most important.

St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, is represented in a few pictures holding her daughter upon her knees. Leonardo da Vinci drew this subject twice: once in the cartoon at Burlington House, and once in a picture kept in the Louvre in Paris. There is one example in the National Gallery by Girolamo dai Libri.

Perhaps no two women are more often introduced into pictures than the two St. Catherines—Catherine of Alexandria and Catherine of Siena. St. Catherine of Alexandria is standing behind St. Peter in Bellini's picture, which is one of the illustrations to Chapter IV; she has the palm-branch and part of a broken wheel. The story says that King Costis of Alexandria had a daughter Catherine, who was the wonder of all men for her beauty and her learning. Her father gave her a tower in his palace wherein were all kinds of books and mathematical instruments, and called together the wisest masters that might be found to teach her; but she soon excelled them all in her learning, especially in her knowledge

of the works of Plato and Aristotle. In due time King Costis died, and Catherine ruled in his stead; but, when her nobles came to urge her to take a husband, she resisted. While they were urging her she had a dream in which she beheld the Virgin and Christ, and resolved to devote herself to following Him rather than any earthly bridegroom. So she was baptized as a Christian, and kept her vow to remain unmarried and give herself up to learning and to good works.

Soon after it befell that Maxentius, Emperor of Rome, came to Alexandria and ordered all men, under pain of terrible tortures, to worship the heathen gods. Then Catherine met him on the steps of her palace, and reasoned with him on the truth of Christianity and the worthlessness of the idols. Maxentius had nothing to say in reply, so he sent for fifty of the most learned philosophers and promised them great rewards if they would overcome the princess in argument. At first they were angry at being called together for anything that seemed to them so easy; but when Catherine appeared she had so much learning and so ready a wit that one after another they were worsted in the argument and converted to Christianity. Maxentius was more enraged than ever, and ordered the philosophers to be burnt to death; but for Catherine he had four wheels made, all set with sharp teeth, and between these he said he would tear the Princess into a thousand pieces.

But, as soon as she was tied to the wheels, fire came down from heaven and burnt them, and the pieces flew here and there and killed the executioners. So Maxentius had Catherine carried outside the city and there beheaded, and angels carried her body to Mount Sinai and laid it in a marble tomb; but the Emperor was slain in battle, and the birds of the air devoured him. Catherine came to be regarded as the patron saint of unmarried women, and of colleges and learned societies. She often wears a crown as a Princess, she leans on a wheel or has the fragments lying at her feet, and she carries the palm and sometimes the sword of her martyrdom. Raphael has painted a famous picture of her which is in the National Gallery, and she appears often in groups of saints, but the commonest kind of picture of her is that called a *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine.* In these the Infant Christ sets a ring on her finger in sign that she has devoted her life to His service, rejecting all earthly marriage. You may see it in a picture by the Flemish painter, Memling, in the National Gallery, and he painted a much more beautiful one, which is now in Bruges, and for which Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote a sonnet beginning:

> "Mystery: Catherine the bride of Christ.
> She kneels, and on her hand the holy Child
> Now sets the ring. Her life is hushed and mild
> Laid in God's knowledge—ever, unenticed
> From God, and in the end thus fitly priced."

The painter Borgognone painted it, too, in a picture in the National Gallery in which the Child has two rings, one of which He gives to St. Catherine of Alexandria and the other to St. Catherine of Siena.

This St. Catherine was a Dominican nun who did almost as marvellous a work as St. Francis, who lived just before her. She was beloved for her extraordinary goodness, her peace-making among her followers, and her practical wisdom. It was she who persuaded the Pope Gregory XI to come back and live in Rome instead of at Avignon, and both he and his successor sought her advice and help. Her real deeds were more wonderful than the miracles told in the legends of her namesake. In pictures she wears the black and white Dominican dress and carries a lily.

The story of St. Catherine of Siena is true history; the next picture in this chapter is taken from the wild and wonderful legend of St. Ursula. At Bruges to this day every one goes to see the Shrine of St. Ursula in the Hospital of St. John. It is covered on the outside with pictures from St. Ursula's life, which were painted by Hans Memling, who lived between 1400 and 1500. Ursula was the daughter of a King of Brittany. She was beautiful and gifted, and grew up to be a very learned woman. She knew all that had happened in the world's history from the time of Adam; she knew the names of every plant on earth

Bruges *Neurdein*

DEATH OF ST. URSULA
Hans Memling

and every star in heaven; and, as her mother died when she was still a baby, she early became her father's helper in affairs of State. In due time her fame spread to Britain, and the heathen King of that land sent to ask her in marriage for his son, Prince Conon. Now Ursula's father feared to offend his powerful neighbour, but still did not wish to give his daughter to a heathen, and was therefore greatly troubled. So he asked Ursula what should be done, and her wisdom saw a way to avoid the marriage, or, if that might not be, to win many to Christianity. So she agreed to accept Prince Conon, but only on condition that he would become a Christian, would supply her with 11,000 attendant maidens, and would wait three years while they all made a pilgrimage to Rome and to shrines of the saints. The ambassadors set out to return to Britain with her decision, and the night after their departure Ursula had a dream in which she saw an angel bringing her the palm of victory through martyrdom. He foretold to her that she should set out on the desired journey, but that it should end in her death. She was in no wise turned from her purpose, and not long after the eleven thousand maidens and Conon himself arrived from Britain. They were all gathered in a green meadow where Ursula gave them teaching in the faith and had them baptized. Then she embarked with her maidens, and the wonderful voyage began.

In Memling's pictures we see them travelling very tightly packed into open boats which they managed by themselves without the help of sailors. It is not very surprising that, in order to reach Rome, they went to the north and came to Cologne, where it was revealed to Ursula in a vision that she should suffer martyrdom there on her return. Thence they went up the Rhine and took the difficult journey over the Alps, and arrived safely in Rome, to find that Prince Conon also had come by another way and reached the city on the same day. The Pope received Ursula and Conon with great honour, and was so moved by Ursula's zeal and wisdom that he, too, against all persuasions, determined to join in their pilgrimage. The band, reinforced by Prince Conon, the Pope, and many clergy set forth again and once more came to Cologne. But this time the city was being besieged by the Huns, a fierce heathen people who dreaded the thought of the surrounding country being converted to Christianity. They lay in wait for Ursula's company, and, as the pilgrims landed, they fell upon them and every one, maidens, Pope, Prince, and clergy, were slain—all but Ursula. Her beauty and dignity made so much impression that no one touched her, and at last the King of the Huns offered to spare her life if she would marry him, but when she indignantly refused and defied him he fell into a rage and pierced her heart with an arrow, as you

may see in Memling's picture. This is a very interesting example of the habit of placing old stories among the scenes of the painter's own time, for in the background is a picture of Cologne Cathedral that was being built while Memling lived, and St. Ursula wears the dress of a Flemish lady of the same period. She came to be looked upon as the patron saint of school-girls and teachers; she wears a crown and carries an arrow, and sometimes beneath her cloak are gathered some of the maidens who suffered death with her.

St. Barbara's story differs from that of St. Catherine and St. Ursula, for she was shut up by her father in a strong tower lest she should marry. But even here she heard tidings of the preaching of a new and wonderful religion, and sent for a hermit who came to explain it to her. Thus she was converted to Christianity, and when another room was being built in her tower which was to have had two windows, she ordered them to make three, as symbols of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Through this her father discovered her conversion, and was so angry that he beheaded her in the midst of a great thunder-storm, during which the lightning struck him dead. St. Barbara became the patron saint of armourers and gunsmiths, and a protectress from lightning, gunpowder, and sudden death. There is a suit of armour in the tower sent to Henry VIII in 1509, as a present

from the Emperor Maximilian, on which her history is engraved, along with that of St. George. Her sign is the tower which is sometimes seen behind her, and which she sometimes carries in her hand. She is also the only woman saint who sometimes holds the sacramental cup. In other pictures she has the sword and palm of martyrdom, and wears a crown.

Among other holy women represented in pictures you will find one who carries a sort of hand-organ, a curious little instrument with rows of pipes. This is Saint Cecilia, the patroness of music, who first adapted it to use in worship. She was a noble Roman lady, the child of Christian parents, and resolved to employ her great gift of music for the glory of God. She therefore wrote hymns to which even the angels listened gladly; but, though she played upon all known instruments, she found none that could rightly express the full beauty of the music she felt within her soul. Therefore she invented the organ, and consecrated it to the worship of God. Cecilia was married to a noble Roman named Valerian, whom she converted to Christianity; but he was put to death by a cruel governor of Rome because he refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Then the governor commanded Cecilia also to sacrifice, and when she refused he had her flung into a bath of boiling water, and, since the water had no power to scald her, he ordered her to be beheaded. In pictures she carries the palm and

her organ, and is sometimes crowned with red and white roses, symbols of love and innocence.

In Bellini's *Madonna and Child* in the next chapter there is another saint who carries a covered jar. This is Mary Magdalene, with the precious ointment with which she anointed the feet of Christ. Her hair is loose, and in most pictures it is made very long and beautiful, as you may see in Giotto's picture in the first chapter. We are told nothing about her death in the Bible, and legends say that she died a hermit in the deserts of Egypt; so it is strange that she should carry the palm here, we do not see it in other pictures of her.

Last, I give one of the many stories concerning the cross of Christ, because it is the subject of a famous picture which you may see in the National Gallery, called the *Vision of St. Helena*, by Paolo Veronese, one of the last great painters of Italy. St. Helena was the mother of Constantine, a Roman Emperor, who lived between A.D. 300 and 400. After she was converted to Christianity she resolved to make all search for the true cross, which had disappeared, and about which many stories were told. This resolve was the result of a dream in which she saw a vision of the cross and learnt where to look for it. She led an expedition to Jerusalem, which was still, as in the time of our Lord, under the rule of the Romans. There she sought the place of the Crucifixion, but

found that a temple to the goddess Venus had been set up on the spot. However, Helena compelled the wise men of the Jews to destroy the temple and dig up all the soil of the place. At last they found three crosses, and, not knowing which was the cross of Christ, they laid them in turn on the body of a man who was being borne to his burial. The third raised him to life, and the Empress, knowing this was the one she sought, carried half of it to her son in Rome, and left the other half in Jerusalem. Thus the woman saint who bears a cross in art is St. Helena.

These are a few of the characters from the great gallery of art which sets forth story after story in the only form in which they could then be read by the multitude. The painter's choice depended on many things, and sometimes records points of history. For example, St. Cosmas and St. Damian appear in many Florentine pictures because they were patrons of the Medici family. St. Laurence, too, was a favourite, for was not Lorenzo the Magnificent his namesake? Then we expect to find pictures of St. Mark among those painted at Venice, for he was the patron of that city. Again, if rich people ordered pictures to be painted for a church or monastery it was natural that they should choose to have it include their own patron saint after whom they were named—a Barbara would order a picture containing St. Barbara, a John one with St. John, and so on.

Having learnt to read as much as possible out of the great book of stories, it is a further help towards getting pleasure out of them if we realise what caused some of the conventions and peculiarities which give the pictures of the past something strange, at times something ludicrous, to unaccustomed eyes. There are two great reasons : (1) lack of knowledge, (2) differences of taste.

(1) I can best explain what I mean by lack of knowledge by referring to Fra Filippo Lippi's picture of the Annunciation. The scene takes place in a garden just outside such a palace as the Florentines were familiar with in their own city. You can see the same thing better still in a picture by Carlo Crivelli, where we are shown a piece of a Florentine street, and the side has been taken out of the Virgin's house so that we may see her at prayer in her Florentine bedroom within. We know now that the Virgin could not have lived in such a house in such a street as that in Crivelli's picture, and a modern painter would have tried to find out the sort of surroundings in which she might have lived. The men of the fifteenth century, however, had no means of doing so ; it was neither common nor easy to travel in Palestine, nor did they feel that longing for exact correctness which a greater degree of education, and especially the study of science, have given to us. This is not to be regretted ; on the contrary, we gain from it. As we

walk about the galleries we get many a charming glimpse of Italian and Flemish cities which the painters have inserted as backgrounds without any thought of fitness. It is the same with landscapes; for instance, in the picture by Perugino in Chapter IV there is a charming Italian background. If the painter had tried to give us a landscape like those of Palestine he would not have done it well, and we should have lost what we have got. And here notice a very remarkable fact. These incorrect pictures produced in the past are better as regards certain subjects than those more correct ones produced in the present. By this I mean that no modern painting of the Madonna and Child, of the Annunciation, or any other great religious subject pleases so much or so permanently as the old ones. They may be better painted, more truthful as regards scenery, costumes, etc., and yet there is something wanting. No doubt we feel this partly from habit, because we are more used to seeing these subjects treated in the old style, since they are not so often painted now; but there is also something much deeper. At the back of it lies what Sir Martin Conway points out: "Each day has its own possibilities."[1] Our day for painting these things and for making our pictures into great story-books is past, and all our greater knowledge, our longer practice in skill, cannot restore the power to

[1] See p. 67.

us. We no longer paint for the Church as a religious duty; we no longer see, like Fra Angelico, the great themes of religion as the one thing worth setting down; we live after the Renaissance, and all that has happened since. Here I have given the feeling of a large number of people; but this is a point where there is room for two opinions, and accordingly you find a few examples of sacred pictures being painted to-day; but it is interesting to find out which side you take, and whether your opinion lasts as you get to know more about pictures.

The conventions due to a lack of knowledge are more striking still in the matter of costume. If you look at the picture of *Tobias and the Angel* in this chapter you will see Tobias wearing an elegant costume of the time of Cosimo dei Medici, though he is supposed to have lived about 500 B.C. Then, in the picture of *Alexander and the Family of Darius* in Chapter IV we see a scene that happened in 330 B.C.; but the ladies are dressed in the Venetian fashions of the sixteenth century. Here, too, we are the gainers, for we get much interesting information and much rich pattern and colour from the faithful copying of the dress the painters saw about them.

(2) Nothing was commoner than to introduce the portraits of actually living people among characters from the Bible, or even into the midst of Bible scenes. These people were most often "donors";

that is, those who presented the picture to some church or monastery. Take up any catalogue, and you will see such titles as "The Virgin with Saints and Donor," or "The Donor presented to the Virgin by Saint so-and-so." In a picture by Hans Memling he has painted his own face looking through a window at the visit of the Wise Men to the Infant Christ, and Fra Filippo Lippi goes a step further, for in a picture of the Coronation of the Virgin in Heaven he paints his own head and shoulders in one corner with a little label above him, "Hic perfecit opus" (This man produced the work). Now things of this kind strike us of to-day as rather ridiculous and rather irreverent; but the painters and donors were neither conceited nor profane—on the contrary, they merely wished to show their faith and reverence. Another point in which they departed from modern taste was in drawing figures of God the Father as an old, grey-bearded man. An example of this is to be seen in the National Gallery, in Pesellino's very solemn and reverent picture called *The Trinity*, and in this book in Murillo's *Holy Family*. In Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* God the Father is represented by a hand which sends down the Dove from the sky. These differences in taste are very interesting; they run through literature, and indeed through the whole of life. In the famous old morality play of "Every-man" God the Father is made to appear on the

stage and speak, but with no intention of irreverence. People's taste in the choice of subjects for their pictures and the manner of treating them underwent gradual changes. The early artists, especially in the north of Europe, frequently give us most horrible scenes of martyrdoms and tortures which no one would paint now and certainly none would want to hang up in a church or a house. It is difficult to see why they did not mind being reminded of the courage of the saints in such a very realistic fashion. One has to remember that the whole of life was more horrible, bloodshed and torture, filth and ugliness, were more in evidence and perhaps gave the beholder a less painful shock than at present. Besides, pictures were the story-books of the day, and the whole of a story, ugly or not, had to be told if it was to make an impression.

I will close this chapter with two great stories of which you will find many repetitions in pictures. First, there is the tale of Tobias and the Angel, which you may read in the Apocrypha, and which is the subject of the fourth picture in this chapter.

When the Jews were all carried away from their own land and lived as exiles in Nineveh, there was among them a certain Tobit, who was famous for his kindness to his poor countrymen. But after some years he was smitten with blindness and fell himself into poverty. Therefore he sent his son Tobias to

a distant city to ask for the return of a sum of money which he had once lent to a fellow countrymen there. Tobias prepared for the journey and just before his departure he found a young man who was going to the same city, and who offered to travel with him. Tobias accepted his company and was guided better than he knew, for what he thought an earthly comrade was in reality the archangel Raphael sent to protect him. Now on the day of their departure Tobit went up to the top of his house and prayed in deep distress of spirit that he might be healed of his blindness, and that his son might return safely to him. And in the same hour there was a woman in an upper chamber in the city to which Tobias was sent, praying likewise for deliverance. Her name was Sarah, the daughter of one of the exiled Jews, and she was kept under a spell by the demon Asmodeus. Seven times her parents had given her in marriage, and seven times the demon had mysteriously slain her husband on the evening of the marriage-day, so that at last no one else dared to seek her in marriage. Now, though neither Tobit nor Sarah knew of the other, they were about to be delivered by the same means.

Tobias and the angel journeyed safely till they reached the river Tigris, where they sat down to rest and bathe their feet in the water. Suddenly Tobias was alarmed by a great fish which swam towards them;

National Gallery *Mansell*

TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL
School of Verrocchio

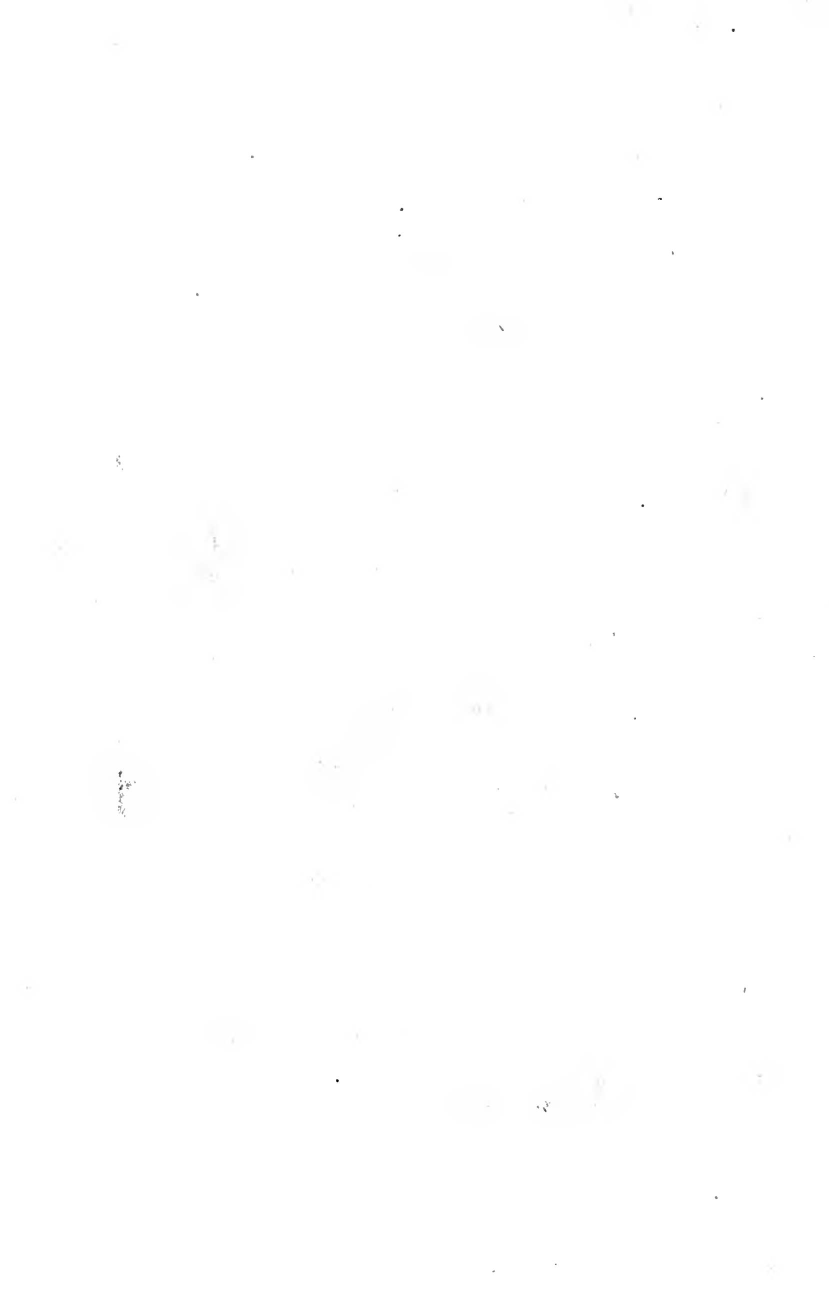
but the angel encouraged him and told him to catch the fish and carry it with him, as it was a powerful charm. So they went on from the river and reached the city whither they were journeying. There Tobias received his father's money, and in talk he heard the strange story of Sarah. Then the angel urged him to go and ask her in marriage, promising to reveal a way by which he might deliver her. Sarah and her parents at first refused their consent, being loth that another life should be imperilled; but at last Tobias prevailed, and the marriage was celebrated. Then, when evening approached and the time of the demon's coming drew near, Tobias and Sarah lit a fire, on which they burnt the heart and liver of the magic fish, and knelt together to pray for deliverance. And, as the smoke rose from the burning fish, the demon was driven away into the deserts of Egypt, and the spell upon Sarah was broken for ever. So they held a feast and spent some days in rejoicing, and then Tobias hastened home with his wife and his father's money. And when they drew near the house the angel said to Tobias, "Let us haste before and prepare the house." So they hurried on and Tobias's dog followed them. Now Anna, the mother of Tobias, had begun to fear that her son was dead and watched the road every day, praying for his return. So she saw them afar off and ran to meet her son and kissed him, saying,

"Seeing I have seen thee, my son, from henceforth I am content to die." Then Tobit came from the house stumbling in his blindness, but Tobias put some of the magic fish on his eyes and he received sight, and went to meet his daughter-in-law at the gates of Nineveh. And they held a feast for seven days. When the feast was ended, Tobit bade his son reward the angel, and Tobias said, "O father, it is no harm to me to give him half of those things which I have brought"; and Tobit said, "It is due unto him." But when they bade him take it he revealed his name to them, and they fell on their faces at his feet. But he bade them fear not, and when they lifted up their eyes he was gone.

Last comes the story of St. Christopher, painted by Hans Memling, who did the shrine of St. Ursula at Bruges. In other pictures you will see him a man of great size holding a rough pole and carrying a little child on his shoulder. His name was at first Offero, "the bearer." He was a native of the land of Canaan, and was a giant, a man terrible to look upon, and of great strength and fierceness. He was ambitious to serve the strongest prince in the whole world, but, after finding that each master he tried feared some other stronger than himself, he withdrew into the desert, where he met a hermit who converted him to Christianity. After his conversion the hermit suggested various kinds of work he might do; but he

Bruges *Medici Society*

ST. CHRISTOPHER
Hans Memling



thought them all beyond his powers, for he had nothing but his great bodily strength to offer to God, so he sought some task in which that would serve him. There was in that land a deep, swift river with no bridge; so there Offero betook himself, built a hut on the banks, tore up a palm-tree for a staff, and devoted himself to carrying travellers over the stream. When he had been doing this useful work for some time, he was called out on a stormy night by a little boy, who asked to be taken over to the other side. Offero took him up and set out; but, behold! the water of the river began to swell by little and little, and the boy weighed heavy like lead. And the farther he went in the more the water increased, and the boy pressed heavier and heavier upon his shoulder, yet at last with great difficulty he got to the other side. Then, setting down the child, he said, "If I had carried the whole world on my shoulder it would not have weighed heavier than thou." And to his surprise the boy answered, "Marvel not, for thou hast borne the world and Him who created it." And he vanished, leaving Offero in the knowledge that he had carried Christ. Then he planted his staff in the earth to mark that spot, and it immediately took root and became a palm-tree bearing a cluster of dates, and Offero took courage to preach to the heathen. So he travelled to a certain city where Christians were attacked and persecuted, and gave

them encouragement. And when he was led before the king and the king said, "Who art thou?" he answered, "Formerly I was called Offero the bearer, but now my name is Christopher, for I have borne Christ." Then the king commanded that he should be taken forth and beheaded, and Christopher died bravely, making a last prayer that all who looked on him should be saved from tempest, earthquake, and fire. Therefore it was believed that whosoever looked on his image was safe for that day from those three dangers, and received courage moreover to struggle against the weariness of labour and all the evils of life. Silver images as well as pictures of him became very popular. The Knight's yeoman in the Prologue to Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" wore

> "A Christopher on his breast of silver sheen."

Included in this picture is St. Benedict, who founded the great Benedictine order of monks, and died A.D. 543. On the other side is St. Giles, a Benedictine hermit, who was wounded in protecting a hunted deer from its pursuers.

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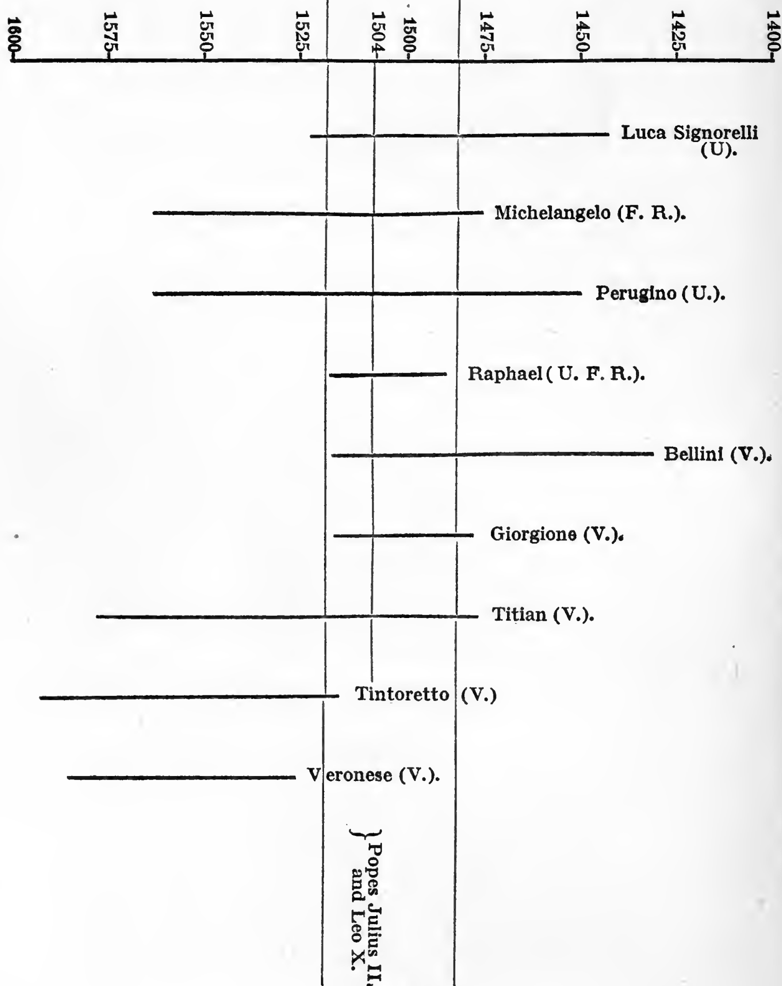


The forty years
1480—1520.
1600
1575
1550
1525
1504
1500
1475
1450
1425
1400
Luca Signorelli (U).
Michelangelo (F. R.).
Perugino (U.).
Raphael (U. F. R.).
Bellini (V.).
Giorgione (V.).
Titian (V.).
Tintoretto (V.)
Veronese (V.).
Popes Julius II. and Leo X.

CHAPTER IV

HOW VENICE AND UMBRIA TOOK RANK BESIDE FLORENCE—A WONDERFUL FORTY YEARS—PICTURES AS DECORATIONS—THE END OF ITALIAN ART

THE table that faces this chapter shows the names of men who lived at the same time as Leonardo da Vinci and of those who followed him. There are three lines across it. One is at 1480, and another at 1520, so that the space between stands for forty years. Another is at the year 1504, but what happened then does not matter just now. In England things were just settling down after the Wars of the Roses, and eleven years before the forty came to an end, Henry VIII began his stirring reign. In Italy that forty years was a wonderful time; look how it is crossed by the names of at least seven great men, and remember there were many others, only they were not artists. Then the rule of the great Lorenzo and the preaching of Savonarola came into the first part of it, and the last is covered by the times of Julius II and Leo X, two Popes who did as much for art in Rome as Lorenzo had done in Florence.

A goodly number of the most famous pictures in the world were painted at that time. Now hear what Ruskin, the great art critic, says of it: "In that forty years all the deadly catastrophe took place." I am not going to explain the "deadly catastrophe"; some people would not choose that name for what happened. It is a saying to put away in the back of your mind, till from knowing pictures better, you come to see what he meant and whether you agree with him. Anyhow, every one is agreed that in those forty years some great changes came about in art.

The pictures in the National Gallery are arranged according to the native district of the painter, and the rooms are labelled Tuscan School, Umbrian School, Venetian School, and so on. It would be interesting to see the pictures arranged according to the time when they were painted, and that is what has been done in this table. Against some of the names I have marked F for Florence; there are only two of these. Five have V for Venice, and three have U, which stands for Umbria, the district which lay to the north of Rome, on lower ground than Florence. Two have also R for Rome, because a great many of their important works are to be found there. If we rearranged the National Gallery according to date we should not have to separate the work of the Venetians much, for the great men there came rather later than those of Florence, all except wonderful

old John Bellini, who lived to be ninety, and painted well to the last.

I can pick out two pairs from these names which it is convenient to take together, first Perugino and Raphael, and then Signorelli and Michelangelo.

Perugino was the first great painter of Umbria and was called after the town of Perugia, his native place. He painted the triptych which makes the first illustration to this chapter. When you go into the large room of Umbrian pictures you notice it at once because of its deep and beautiful colouring and a look like sunshine there is in it. The Virgin's robe is a deep, wonderful blue, like Alpine gentians, and there are other blues in the iris that grows beside her and in the sky above. She looks also as if there were air around her, which we cannot say for most of the earlier pictures. On the right wing we see Tobias and the Angel, on the left the warrior-archangel, Michael. Notice the dainty little piece of landscape at the back and the curious way the figures hold their heads on one side, a trick you see again and again in Perugino's paintings. But the picture shows not only Perugino's particular characteristics but also those which mark off the school of Umbria from that of Florence.

In Florence, more and more interest in the scientific side of painting and drawing was being felt, but the feeling reached Umbria later. If you compare Peru-

gino's picture with Pollajuolo's *St. Sebastian,* in which the realistic thread shows so strongly, you feel that you have returned to an earlier time, to something nearer to the work of Fra Angelico, in which the idealistic thread is more evident than the realistic thread.

Perugino's real name was Pietro Vanucci. Vasari says he was poor and quarrelsome, and in Charles Reade's "Cloister and the Hearth" there is a story of his unsuccessful youth. But success came to him later, and with it a wonderful pupil, Raphael of Urbino.

The other painter who was as old as Perugino was Luca Signorelli. He was very different in his effect upon others, for he was keenly interested in the study of the human body, and in this was a forerunner of Michelangelo. In the National Gallery there is his picture, *The Adoration of the Shepherds.* He was a relation of Vasari, who gives a charming account of how the "worthy old man so gracious and refined" visited the family when he was a child of eight, and persuaded his father to let him indulge his taste for drawing, adding, "Work, little kinsman, work."

Raphael was born just inside the eventful forty years, that is, in 1483, and he died at the end of it in 1520. His native place was the little town of Urbino, which had a reigning duke and duchess whose court was something like that of Lorenzo the Magnificent, for all artists, scholars, and men of letters were

National Gallery *Mansell*

MADONNA ADORING THE INFANT CHRIST

Perugino

welcomed there and the duke had a famous library which attracted them from all parts of Italy. In the town lived a certain Giovanni Santi and his wife Magia. Giovanni's ancestors kept a corn and oil shop, but he was a poet and an artist of no small power and became court painter and poet to the duke. There is still what strikes us as an ugly wooden little Madonna and Child in the National Gallery, but it is interesting because it is the work of Giovanni, and he was Raphael's father. Giovanni died when Raphael was only eleven years old, but the uncle who became his guardian took him to be a pupil of Timoteo Viti, the only painter of any note in Urbino. At the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford there is a little pencil drawing on bluish paper—a portrait of Raphael, made by his master. It is the head of a boy about fifteen, with long hair under a round cap and a rather girlish face, very charming in its union of liveliness and gentleness, a charm which Raphael kept all through his short life.

In the National Gallery we can see his first picture, painted while he was still with Timoteo Viti. It is specially interesting because we have the pencil sketch which he made for it. The sketch hangs under the picture, covered with a little roller blind to keep it from fading, and the lines are all pricked out with a pin, so that Raphael evidently used it to mark out the finished picture. It is called *The*

Vision of a Knight. He is asleep under a tree and sees in a dream two women, Pleasure with a myrtle branch, and Duty with a book and a sword, each calling on him to follow her through his life.

When Raphael was about sixteen he went to Perugia to become a pupil of Perugino, and the first few pictures he painted are exactly like his master's in style. The figures have the same gentle look, the same small heads bent on one side, which gives them a rather weak appearance, especially if they are men. Perhaps he realised that he was not learning all that was to be found elsewhere, for he began to have a great desire to go to Florence. He went for help to the family of the Duke of Urbino, who loved him for his father's sake and his own. The duke's sister gave him a letter to the chief magistrate in Florence saying, "Since the father was a most excellent man and very dear to me, and the son is a modest and gentle youth, I am sincerely attached to him and wish him to go on to perfection." [1] So at twenty-one Raphael went up to Florence and was struck with amazement and humility before the works of Donatello and Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci and a certain Michelangelo. There they must have met, Leonardo in middle life and full fame, Michelangelo at thirty-one aspiring to be his rival, and the young Raphael, all three among the greatest of mankind.

[1] Quoted in "Raphael," by Julia Cartwright.

So you see why the year 1504 deserves a dotted line across the table.

In Florence, Raphael toiled at anatomy, shook off some of the weaknesses of Perugino's style, and painted some of his most famous works. Among these are the two we have in the National Gallery. *The Ansidei Madonna* was painted for the chapel of the Ansidei family in a church in Perugia, but in 1764 the Duke of Marlborough bought it and afterwards sold it to the nation for £70,000. Its fresh and brilliant colour are very remarkable, and we see this feature also in the *St. Catherine of Alexandria* hanging near it.

In 1508 an opportunity came to him to go and work in Rome for the Pope Julius II. This was probably through the influence of Bramante the architect, who was a native of Urbino and was employed by the Pope to rebuild the great church of St. Peter. Julius was a very able Pope whose life seems more fitted for a warlike prince than for the head of the Church, being full of politics and fighting. However, he cared a great deal for art and employed all the best-known painters of his day. In 1508 he was just about to take up his abode in a new set of rooms in the great palace of the Vatican, because, as he said, he was sick of being always plagued with reminders of the last Pope. So he sent for every artist he could get hold of to decorate his new rooms,

and among them Raphael received an order to do some frescoes on the walls of his library. He had never attempted fresco painting before, but he succeeded very well, so well that the Pope is said to have instantly dismissed all the other painters he had engaged. Raphael probably had this injustice of the Pope's to thank for some of the jealousy of him that grew up in his later years. For Rome was not like Florence. Those who worked at the court of Julius were drawn into all sorts of squabbles and jealousies and trickeries; that Raphael came out of it as well as he did is to his credit. He must have been what we call an adaptable person, and, as Vasari remarks, "he always showed himself sweet and pleasant with every person and in all circumstances."[1] Thus he contrived not to quarrel with the imperious old Pope, a thing which we can imagine was not too easy when we look at the portrait of him in the National Gallery, where Raphael has left a record of his cruel and resolute face.

Henceforth Raphael's life was full of work which grew constantly in quantity and variety. The Pope gave him more and more to do, and he had besides a great number of pupils. Vasari says that he took vast pains with them, teaching them with as much affection as if they had been his own sons, and they all lived together in such harmony as had never

[1] "Lives of the Painters," by Vasari.

been seen elsewhere. When Raphael went to the Pope's court he was generally conducted by a self-appointed bodyguard of fifty of his pupils. One day the procession was met by Michelangelo, a man whom greatness made lonely and disappointment had made bitter. "You go about like a general at the head of an army," sneered the sculptor. "And you like an executioner on the way to the scaffold," said Raphael. It is almost the only sharp speech recorded of him.

Unfortunately the Popes urged him to do so many things, and other people pressed him so much for portraits, sacred pictures, and frescoes to adorn their houses, that he had work beyond any man's powers and had to hurry some of it and to leave a great deal more to his pupils. When Bramante died he had to become an architect and take over the superintendence of the work of St. Peter's. When a play was to be acted Raphael was expected to paint the scenery; when a relation of the Pope was married he had to design a medal to commemorate the event; he was called upon to design tapestry, to decorate country houses and even bath-rooms. Pope Leo X had a tame elephant, and when it died Raphael was ordered to paint a picture of it. But he had no energies left to bestow on elephants, so he superintended a pupil who painted a life-sized picture of it on a wall in the Vatican. It was then signed with Raphael's

name and the motto, "What nature destroyed, Raphael of Urbino restored with his art."

It was in this, the busiest period of his life, just after he had been appointed to superintend the work at St. Peter's, that Raphael painted the *Madonna di San Sisto*, which forms the second illustration in this chapter. It was painted for the church of a convent in the town of Piacenza. The church was named San Sisto after Pope Sixtus IV, who was canonised after his death; hence the name Sistine Madonna. The Virgin with her Child in her arms walks the clouds, lifted into highest dignity yet not grown cold. All lack of grace, all faulty drawing, all those things which we have to grow used to and to see beyond in the early pictures have gone from her and left perfection, she needs no explanation to the most ignorant person. At her feet kneel the aged Pope Sixtus IV, who has laid aside his triple crown in humility and is gazing up at the floating vision above him. On the other side is St. Barbara, but she has forgotten the Virgin, she turns to look out of the picture with an elegant gesture as if Raphael had planned to show her off to us. Giotto's saints never did so.

This was what Raphael could do at thirty-three when he had learnt of Perugino, of Leonardo, and of Michelangelo, taking something from each, as his way was, and bringing all together to make his work more perfect. To call it the greatest picture in the

Dresden *Mansell*

MADONNA DI SAN SISTO
Raphael

world is silly, there is no greatest picture in the world because all men are not agreed as to what makes a great picture; but it is likely that no other has given pleasure to greater numbers of people. And yet St. Barbara is forgetful of the Virgin, mindful of herself.

In 1515 the Pope ordered Raphael to undertake a survey of all the ancient buildings and monuments in Rome, so as to draw up an orderly account of them with sketches. This was not Julius II, who died in 1513, but Leo X, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and, as one would guess, a great lover of pictures, of architecture, and of learning. Raphael now added to all his other work explorations of every corner of the city. A certain Celio Calcagnini, who saw him at this work, wrote to a friend about him, relating with astonishment that he was still modest and still eager to learn, being never so pleased as when his opinion was disputed and any one would discuss a point with him.

Yet he had his enemies. His rival was Michelangelo, from whom he had learnt much, and the jealousy between them darkens both their lives. Raphael admired him whole-heartedly, saying that he counted himself lucky to have lived in the days of Michelangelo; the latter admitted and praised Raphael's genius. But their followers stooped to every sort of scandal and mischief-making. The sordid business comes into the story of Raphael's last picture.

A certain Sebastiano del Piombo, Michelangelo's pupil, had painted a picture, *The Raising of Lazarus*, for Cardinal dei Medici—a picture which is now in the National Gallery, and which is described under the title of "the great picture at Angerstein's" in Lamb's Essay on the "Productions of Modern Art." Gossip said that Michaelangelo helped with the picture, and at any rate it was done with a great show of secrecy, and a pretence of fearing that Raphael might steal the ideas if he saw it unfinished. At the same time the Cardinal ordered another picture of Raphael, and he, being human, was goaded into sparing no effort to surpass *The Raising of Lazarus*. He chose the Transfiguration and let no pupil give him any help in the work. The picture is an example of two events shown on one canvas; at the foot of the mountain is the lunatic boy being brought to the disciples to be healed, and above is the scene of Our Lord's Transfiguration. When the upper part only was finished, Raphael fell ill with fever. He was exhausted with an amount of work such as falls to the lot of few men, and it was plain that he was dying. As soon as he realised it he made a will leaving his money to his relations and servants, and his unfinished works to two of his pupils, and then he died on his birthday, April 6th, 1520, being only thirty-seven. His body lay in state next day with the unfinished *Transfiguration* beside it, and in

the evening all Rome conducted it to its grave in the Pantheon. A great scholar wrote to his friend, the Duchess Isabella of Mantua, "Here we talk of nothing but the death of this great man who has ended his first life. . . . His second life, that immortal fame which fears neither death nor time, will endure for ever."[1] His friend Castiglione, who returned to Rome three months after, wrote home to his mother, "I am well in health, but can hardly believe that I am in Rome, now that my poor Raphael is no longer here. May God keep that blessed soul!"[2]

Perhaps no man's work has given joy to a wider range of people: he was great, but his thoughts were not so far removed from other men's that they found it difficult to understand him. It was far otherwise with Michelangelo. There is a great French writer on literature, Hippolyte Taine, who once said that four men in this world were so much greater than the rest that they seemed to belong to another race, and these were Shakespeare, Dante, Beethoven, and Michelangelo. There are two poets and one musician, and last a man who was sculptor, painter, architect, and poet. His long life begins before the wondrous forty years and stretches far beyond them, and the effects of his work spread further still.

There are two pictures by him in the National

[1] Quoted in "Raphael," by Julia Cartwright.
[2] *Ibid.*

Gallery: one is an *Entombment of Christ*, which is very little finished, and the other is a *Madonna and Child*, also unfinished, which forms the third illustration in this chapter. Here we can see on the left how the painter first put in his figures with green to give them the right colour afterwards. The Madonna is taking from her Child the books of the prophets wherein His sufferings are foretold, while the two angels on the right are reading some other such prophecy with looks of gentle pity. These two angels are the most beautiful part of the picture in the grace of their attitude and the wonderful shapeliness of their limbs. Rossetti has written a sonnet for it in which the mother says to her Child:

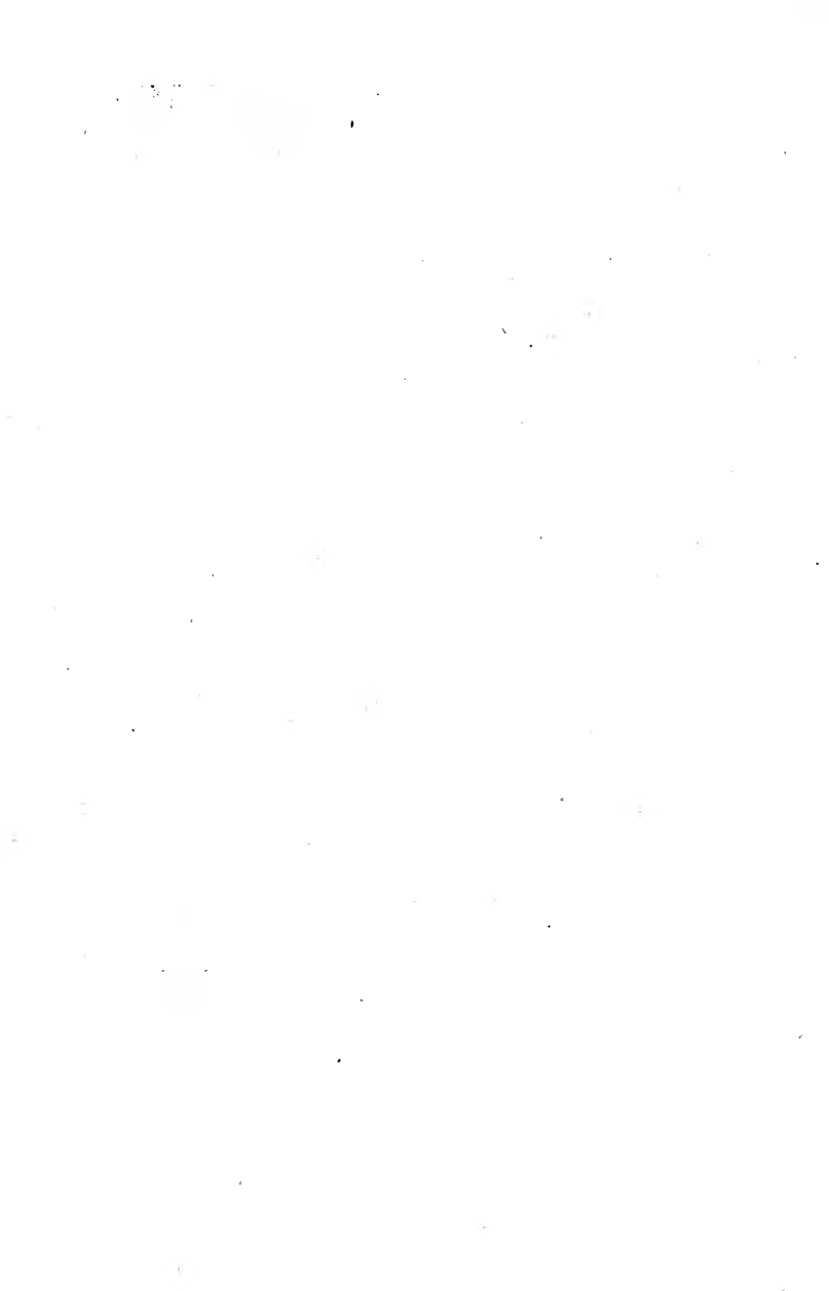
> "Turn not the prophet's page, O Son;
> He knew all that Thou hast to suffer, and hath writ;
> Not yet Thine hour of knowledge."

Now there is one very remarkable point about this picture. Consider what it contains, and you will see that there is absolutely nothing but human bodies with their drapery,—no bit of landscape, no flowers, animals, ornaments, rich stuffs, or lovely colour. Michelangelo has chosen one thing, and one only, through which to express the beauty of the world, and thus it was with him all his life.

That life was long and sad, and we know a great deal about it not only from Vasari, who loved him

National Gallery *Mansell*

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ANGELS
Michelangelo



greatly, but from his own letters to his friends and his poems. In 1475 he was born at the little town of Caprese near Florence, and his full name was Michelangelo Buonarroti. As he grew up he began to show a great love for drawing, neglecting other things for it, so as to earn many a beating from his father and elder brother. At last, however, they saw that he was really best fitted to be an artist, so they sent him as a pupil to the painter Ghirlandajo in Florence. Some of Ghirlandajo's pupils were allowed to go and draw the famous Medici collection of ancient statues, which were kept in a lovely garden beside the river, and there Michelangelo spent most of his time. Vasari tells how one day he begged a piece of waste marble and carved a head out of it. Lorenzo the Magnificent came down to the garden while he was polishing his work and was so much struck by it that he decided to have the boy to live in the palace and study sculpture. So then began the only really peaceful and happy time of his disturbed life. He lived like one of Lorenzo's children, had his own room in the palace, and dined daily with all the scholars and poets and artists who gathered to that court. He must have listened to the most interesting talk then to be heard in Europe, perhaps in the world.

A famous accident befell him during that time. Among his fellow-pupils was a certain Pietro

Torrigiano. The boys used to go to a church called the Church of the Carmine to sketch from the frescoes on the walls, and on these expeditions Michelangelo developed a tiresome habit of teasing the others. One day he became so annoying that Torrigiano lost his temper and struck him on the nose so violently that it was broken, and he had to be carried home unconscious. Both were severely punished, for Lorenzo was so angry that he dismissed Torrigiano from his household, and Michelangelo's nose was spoilt for the rest of his days, as we may see in his portraits. It was this Torrigiano who designed the metal work round the tomb of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey.

These happy years at Lorenzo's palace came to an end in 1496, when Michelangelo went to Rome, and henceforth, to his sorrow, worked for popes and cardinals. While he was there he made a little statue of a kneeling *Cupid* which you may see in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington. He returned to Florence for a time, but in 1505 he was in Rome again and signed a contract to make sculpture for a magnificent tomb which Julius II was preparing for himself. That tomb was not finished for forty years, and we know from his letters all that Michelangelo suffered over it. First the Pope sent him to the marble quarries of Carrara to procure stone for the purposes of the tomb. Here he wasted months in all sorts of

difficulties and hardships, and when he at last got quantities of the stone back to Rome, the Pope did not pay his expenses and would not see him. But Michelangelo was no mild and tactful Raphael. He went home, made arrangements for the sale of his house, mounted his horse, and rode off towards Florence, leaving the Pope a message that if he wanted him in future he must look for him elsewhere than in Rome. Messengers from Julius were soon on his track, and a year later the two were reconciled and the work went on—but with interruptions.

The most interesting came in 1508, when Julius suddenly made up his mind to decorate the Sistine Chapel with fresco paintings on the ceiling. Therefore he commanded Michelangelo to leave off his work at the tomb and set about painting the chapel. In that very year the young Raphael had come to Rome, and Michelangelo suggested that he would be a more suitable person to undertake the frescoes, since his own particular work was sculpture; but Julius would not listen to him. Michelangelo in his wrath got the idea that Raphael had planned this to disgrace him by bringing him into work he could not do, and long years after he says in one of his letters, " All the disagreements that arose between Pope Julius and myself were due to the jealousy of Bramante and Raphael da Urbino. Yet Raphael was

quite right to be jealous of me, for all he knew of art he learnt from me." [1]

The work on the chapel roof began in 1508 and lasted four years. Scaffolding was set up, and on this Michelangelo lay on his back painting the wet plaster above him. He worked with tremendous energy, and describes in an amusing little poem how his whole body had become distorted by continual working in the most uncomfortable positions. Various painters were engaged to help him, but he could never get on well with his work-people, and they were not of much use to him. And yet, on November 1st, 1509, so much was finished that the flat, middle part of the ceiling was uncovered, the Pope came to mass in the chapel, and the people of Rome flocked to see what had been done. This is what they saw. Nine great pictures set forth the opening chapters of Genesis, the tale of man's creation and swift-coming sin. In one Eve rises at the word of God from the side of the sleeping Adam. In another the tree of knowledge stands in the midst; about it twines the serpent from which Eve and her husband are receiving the deadly fruit; on the other side of the picture they turn away from Eden, shrinking before the fiery sword of the angel. In a third, most wonderful of all, Adam raises himself from the ground, like one awaken-

[1] "Michelangelo: a record of his Life as told in his own Letters," by R. W. Carden.

ing out of deep sleep, and raises his hand towards God the Father, who floats towards him to touch it with outstretched finger and bestow a spirit upon the beautiful body. There is nothing, wherever we turn, but the human form shown in a size and power more than earthly, sometimes full of grace and dignity, sometimes of violence and overwhelming strength. The spaces between the pictures are filled with figures of young men, beautiful giants in every possible posture. Why should Michelangelo have sought all that was most difficult to draw? If it was to show his power, he succeeded, and all Rome applauded him. But his task was not ended; later he grouped sibyls and prophets about the slopes of the ceiling, till in 1512, he left no less than 363 mighty forms.

Long after, at the end of his life, he painted in the same chapel a picture of the Last Judgment, where he once again showed his wonderful powers in groups of twisting and falling bodies. Other work he did at Florence, where he made tombs for two descendants of Lorenzo dei Medici and adorned them with famous statues of Night, Day, Dawn, and Twilight, which he expressed, as he did all his thoughts, in the form of men and women, strong and mighty. No one else did work like this, and so no one else has had such varying effects upon the different minds of men. In England you can see his pictures at the National

Gallery, his *Cupid* at South Kensington, and a little carving of the Madonna and Child at Burlington House; but before you know what precise effect he is to have on your own mind, and what his share was in the great forty years, you must have studied the work he did in Rome.

No account of Michelangelo is complete without some samples from his letters, in which his great yet dreary life is revealed as though he were a man of yesterday. He was an excellent son, brother, and uncle. His family were poor, and always wanting to be helped in some way or other, and he toiled incessantly to be able to give them money, to set them up in business, and manage their affairs generally. They were not particularly grateful, and not at all energetic in helping themselves, while Michelangelo was irritable, quick-tempered, and bitter from many disappointments that had befallen him in his work. He wrote chiefly to his father and brothers and later on to his nephew, Lionardo. One of his earliest letters from Rome has an interesting reference to Savonarola, whom, like Botticelli, he greatly admired. His two brothers were in the cloth trade, and there is a long series of letters in which he promises them help. Early in his career of working for Pope Julius he writes: " Directly I reach Florence I intend, with God's help, to set you up in business, either by yourselves or in partnership; wherefore, be of good courage,

and rely upon what I have told you as being a certainty.[1] But the Pope was a bad paymaster, and next year Michelangelo wrote home: "I have received no money from the Pope for the last thirteen months; but I expect to have some without fail within the next month and a half. . . . Should he not give me any, I shall be obliged to borrow in order to return to you, for I have not a farthing. There is one good thing about it, I cannot be robbed." His younger brother Giovan-Simone was idle and troublesome. Michelangelo seems to have made many efforts to help him, but the younger man at last roused his temper, and what that could be we see clearly from the letter he wrote: "Now of a surety," he says, "I know thou art no brother of mine, else thou wouldst not have threatened my father—indeed, thou art no more than a beast, and as a beast I will treat thee. . . . If I hear the least complaint of thy conduct I will come to Florence, post-haste. . . . If I do come I will show thee something to make thee weep hot tears. . . . Where words fail me I will make up with deeds. . . . I am ready to wipe away ten thousand men such as thou art, whenever necessary." Yet the man who could write like this was at the same time deeply affectionate, and so unselfishly faithful to his kith and kin that he

[1] All quotations from the letters are taken from "Michelangelo: a Record of His Life as Told in His Own Letters," by R. W. Carden.

soon after makes further proposals to help Giovan-Simone.

The letters show us his own manner of life in Rome. He shared a house with his workmen and apprentices, and, though so generous to others, would never spend enough money on his own comfort. He took boys as apprentices, undertaking to teach them to draw if they did his housework in return, and we hear much of the shortcomings and annoying ways of these youths. When once, against his will, he engaged a woman-servant, it was no better, for she took her wages one day and left him without notice the next. He cared little about food and sleep, often working all night with a candle stuck in a paper cap which he wore.

In his later years his most interesting letters are to his nephew Lionardo. Like all the rest, they mingle strong affection and irritable temper. For example, he writes one day: "Ye have been living on me for the past forty years, and I have never received from you even so much as a good word." Immediately after, however, he wrote to his brother: "I have been thinking of late that I would invest sums of money in a wool merchant's business for Lionardi, if he behaves himself." Lionardo's writing was a very sore point. "I cannot think where thou hast learnt to write," Michelangelo tells him; and one letter begins, "As I was quite unable to decipher

thy last letter, I put it into the fire ; therefore I cannot reply to thee in any way. . . . If there is anything to tell me thou must find some one else who knows how to write, for I have other matters to attend to besides racking my brains over thy letters." They had endless correspondence about Lionardo's choice of a wife, and when it was satisfactorily settled, Michelangelo sent his new niece a string of fine pearls, and she made him eight new shirts.

Michelangelo's life was a long one. Those who lived at the same time tell of his great strength, and of how he would dash at the marble and strike off huge flakes, using his left hand as readily as his right. In spite of several illnesses and the discomfort in which he persisted in living, his hardy frame out-lasted ninety years. We have several portraits of him—a lean, bearded man with a face deeply lined and a nose which Torrigiano's fist had flattened at the bridge. He is said to have represented himself as Joseph of Arimathæa supporting the body of Christ in a sculptured group which was his last work, and some think that Jeremiah on the roof of the Sistine Chapel is his own portrait.

His sorrows were many as old age drew on. He had always had few friends. One was Vasari, and another Urbino, his pupil and servant, who lived with him five-and-twenty years. At eighty he had to suffer the loss of Urbino, of whom he wrote to

Vasari, "You know that Urbino is dead. . . . While he lived he kept me alive, and in dying he has taught me how to die, not unwillingly, but welcoming death." Another more famous friend had died eight years earlier. This was the great lady Vittoria Colonna, whose friendship he gained when they were both old. She was able to understand him and his work, and the few years of their friendship must have been happier than any time he had known since his youth in the palace of Lorenzo. His affection for Lionardo lasted to the end. "Come," he says in one of his letters, "for I am old, and would dearly like to see thee again before I die." Then, a little while after, he is characteristically annoyed at a hint that he needs looking after, and writes: "Do not trouble about my affairs, for I know how to look after myself if necessary, and am not a child." In 1564 he died. He had been sculptor, painter, and poet, he had directed the fortification of Florence, he had been an architect, and designed the dome of St. Peter's.

Among all he left there is nothing more interesting than his sonnets. They were chiefly written in old age, and were addressed to Vittoria Colonna, to Urbino, and other friends, or expressed his thoughts on approaching death and on the comfort his Christianity gave him when art was beyond his powers. The first lines of one of them sum up his thoughts as we can guess them:

> "Freed from a burden sore and grievous band,
> Dear Lord, and from this wearying world untied,
> Like a frail bark I turn me to thy side,
> As from a fierce storm to a tranquil land." [1]

I have spoken much of his life and little of his work, because that is so great, so vast for ordinary people to understand, that some of the most learned and thoughtful minds have had quite contradictory feelings towards it. It belongs to the most interesting class of things in this world, the things which may be seen in a different way by each human spirit, and therefore each has to make up his own mind about it. But let no one think it can be done except in the course of years.

We come now to the left side of the table, to the men of Venice who worked towards the end of the forty years and to those who came beyond it. There were no more great Florentines after Michelangelo. Andrea del Sarto won great fame and the nickname of the Faultless Painter. Browning's poem about him deals with the story that his devotion to a silly and selfish, but beautiful wife prevented his gaining all the glory he might have had. There is a beautiful portrait by him in the National Gallery.

Luini was a native of Northern Italy and one of the closest imitators of the beautiful type of face drawn by Leonardo da Vinci. But it was the painters of

[1] "Sonnets of Michelangelo," translated by J. A. Symonds.

Venice who went forward to discover new forms of the beautiful and to give them to the world.

The fourth illustration in this chapter shows one of Giovanni Bellini's pictures. He was born in 1428, and lived to be ninety, and painted to the end, learning new ways and perfecting his powers all the time. Venice, his native city, has been described as the richest, most comfortable, best governed, and securest City-state in the world. The Venetians were rich and prosperous, and "made an excuse of every event of importance, such as the visit of a prince, a victory, or the conclusion of a treaty for a pageant of extraordinary splendour."[1] There were no fights of Guelphs and Ghibellines, as in other Italian cities; the Venetians were peaceable at home and respected elsewhere. Their wharves were full of beautiful and curious things from the East, for they were great sea-traders, and their city was a gate through which Europe received the rare and precious goods of Asia. "A Venetian child of noble family could not be baptized without about 150 god-parents, to each of whom the father made a present; nor could a rich Venetian be buried without a procession of about 500 persons" and the expenditure of several hundred pounds. The city was a republic, and the Doge or chief magistrate made thirty-six state processions during the year to various churches, and "on fourteen of these occasions he was

[1] "Giovanni Bellini," by R. E. Fry.

accompanied by the whole of the nobles dressed in their state robes."[1]

Such was the world into which Giovanni Bellini was born, a world full of variety and luxury, a world given to value wealth and its display rather too highly, not given to trouble over-much about learning, new or old, philosophy or poetry. The men of such a city would be prone to like pictures which reflected their own well-ordered, luxurious life by rich colouring and gorgeous detail. When they drew the Madonna and Child they no longer placed them full in front of the picture with a little slip of landscape for a background. No, their Madonna was a great lady. What they did, instead, may be seen in Bellini's picture in this chapter. It is an altarpiece, painted for one of the churches of Venice, and shows all the chief features of the Venetian art.

(1) The Virgin sits on a lofty throne against a background of marble wall, with the Child standing upon her knees. At her right hand are St. Catherine and St. Peter, on the left St. Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome. A little angel with a violin sits on the steps of the throne. All the figures are natural in their attitudes, calm and happy; the Madonna is not absorbed in the foreknowledge of her coming sorrow, but is a gracious queen, stately, yet kind and approachable. So the Venetians were accustomed to

[1] "Giovanni Bellini," by R. E. Fry.

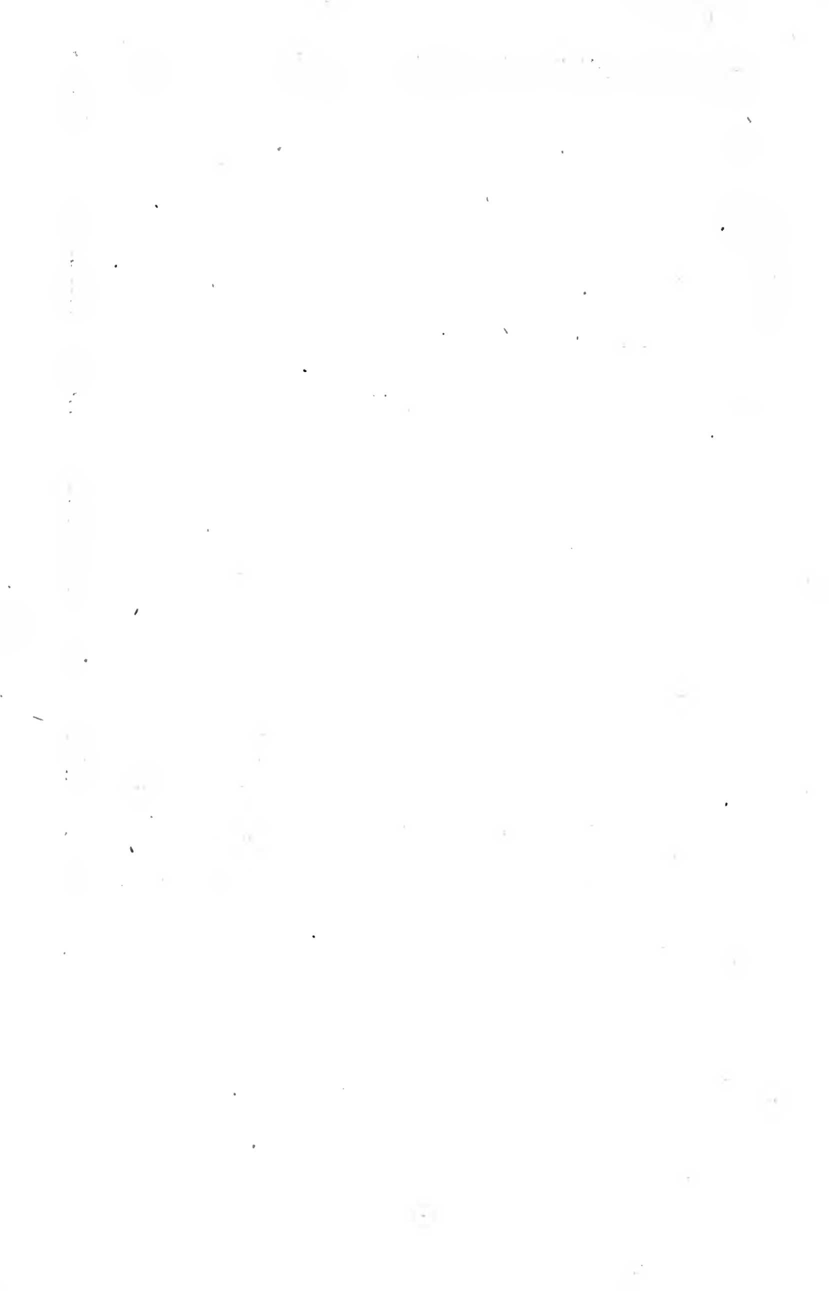
paint her, enthroned and surrounded with those rich things which they loved to have about themselves. Venice was a city of pomps and ceremonies, and "the national and local life of the day" produced pictures that were full of all that is rich and stately. Sometimes, as here, the result was charming; but later, as you will see, the subject and all else was forgotten in the new wish to give a rich and gorgeous effect.

(2) In the second place, there are the composition and the shading of the picture to notice. Think of the comparison I made between Botticelli's pictures and Leonardo da Vinci's—for the first you want to use the word "lines," for the second "mass." If you look at this altarpiece you see that it must go into the class in describing which "mass" is the more natural word. In it you can see an example of a new thing which was the particular gift of the Venetians to art. This is generally called the study of chiaroscuro, which is only another name for light and shade. Along with this, in pictures, goes what is sometimes called "atmosphere"; that is, a quality in the painting which makes us feel that the figures have air around and behind them, and that there is real depth in the picture. It has been said of Bellini's work that we can in imagination "feel right round each figure and behind it into the free space of air by which it is surrounded." [1] I said we could already

[1] "Giovanni Bellini," by R. E. Fry.

Venice *Anderson*

MADONNA AND SAINTS
Bellini



feel this in Perugino's pictures, we can in Raphael's also, and now the Venetians began to strive after this effect, and succeeded better than any before them.

(3) One other thing you cannot see from this reproduction, and that is the beauty of the colour. As you stand in the Venetian room and look about, your eye will catch great patches of deep colour and heavy shadow contrasted. This is not like the thin bright colours in the early paintings, nor like the glowing light in those of Perugino and Raphael.

We are very lucky in having no less than ten of Bellini's pictures in the National Gallery. They were painted at different periods of his long life, and we can see how he gradually learnt those powers which are most important in Venetian art. In the pictures of his youth there is a good deal of the hardness and the ugly drawing of the body, which belong to early work; but he lived to display himself, and to see others display, the great changes which made Venetian art what it was.

One of Bellini's best-known pictures in the National Gallery is the portrait of the *Doge Leonardo Loredano.* That he painted portraits is one of the signs of the time. The Venetians, proud and fond of display, liked to see themselves painted. Ruskin says, "No Venetian painter ever worked with any aim beyond

that of delighting the eye," [1] and this comes out in their portraits, for rich dress, pleasant arrangement of light and shade and pose, were even more considered than strictly truthful likeness. The people, especially the women, are of a strikingly different type from those in the Florentine pictures, heavier and more commanding.

In many pictures it is noticeable that the Madonna no longer occupies the centre of the picture but is placed at one end. This arrangement became more and more usual among the Venetians, as well as the custom of having themselves, and sometimes their whole families, painted at the feet of the Madonna amid the surroundings of their daily life. The time was to come when the Venetians thought of pictures of sacred subjects only as an opportunity for displaying a pleasing arrangement of colour. They became decorations pure and simple, and not story-books. A few, however—for example, Carpaccio—painted great stories, and Bellini still cared intensely for his subject, and above all for religious subjects. The Revival of Learning had not nearly so great an influence upon Venice as upon Florence; it was rather that other side of the Renaissance that we call humanism—the love of all the outer circumstances and activities of man's life, the sense of the

[1] "Modern Painters," vol. v., chapter on "The Wings of the Lion."

world's beauty—that appealed to them. Bellini showed no desire to paint the stories of ancient Greece, as we see in the incident of his quarrel with the Duchess Isabella of Mantua. This lady, who was very wealthy and a great lover of books and pictures, wished Bellini to paint a picture from Greek mythology, but he refused, saying he could not succeed with such a subject. She then ordered a Nativity, but sent a great many directions, and wished a figure of John the Baptist as a grown man to be included in the picture. Bellini objected to this so much that, after great delay, he painted her a Madonna and Child, but she refused to have it at first, and only gave way because the picture was very beautiful and Bellini wrote her a very humble letter.

His life was uneventful. He had no struggles to get himself honour and recognition, for his father was employed by the Government of Venice, and Giovanni and his elder brother Gentile succeeded to the same security of position in which they worked side by side. In 1479 he was made keeper of the paintings in the great hall of the Ducal Palace and he painted portraits of the doges. First among the Venetians he made careful studies of natural things, such as the sky of sunrise in *The Agony in the Garden* in the National Gallery.

When Bellini was dead, other men went on to devote their whole powers to chiaroscuro, to gorgeous colour,

to producing pictures which should form noble decorations for the stately chambers of their palaces. Two of them were his pupils ; one was Giorgione, whose life was but short and of whose work we have only one example in our National Gallery; yet his is a name to be remembered. The other was Titian. He, Tintoretto, and Veronese are the three great men in whom the art of Venice and of Italy showed its last splendour and died out.

We have four pictures by Titian in the National Gallery. Perhaps the best known is *Bacchus and Ariadne*. You may read a description of it in Charles Lamb's essay on the Productions of Modern Art. Then there are *The Holy Family with St. Catherine* and the *Holy Family with a Shepherd*, in which the Madonna and St. Catherine look like handsome Venetian ladies, with nothing in particular to remind us of their sorrows. There are some portraits also; for these Titian rose to great fame, and was once even sent for to Augsburg to paint the Emperor Charles V.

His life was longer even than Bellini's or Michelangelo's, for he lived to be ninety-nine, and then died of plague, leaving a last picture unfinished. Like Bellini, he was employed by the Venetian Government, and received a fixed salary, part of his work being to paint portraits of the doges who held office during his life-time. As one turns over a book of reproductions of his works one is astonished at the

multitude of great canvases full of figures. There are altarpieces, scenes from Greek mythology which gave opportunities for painting the human body, and many portraits. Those of two persons are particularly interesting. One is the Emperor Charles V, nephew of Catherine of Aragon, whose divorce from Henry VIII he opposed. Titian painted him once on horseback, and once in his old age sitting in an arm-chair. The other is his son, Philip II of Spain, who married Mary, Queen of England.

In 1546 Titian went to Rome, at the invitation of Paul III, the same Pope who made Michelangelo paint *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. He was then seventy years old, and very famous. The Pope received him with great honour, and sat to him for his portrait. The writer Vasari was commanded to show him all the interesting sights of the city. He saw the ancient statues, and he saw the work of Michelangelo. Perhaps they met. If so, they must have had strange and memorable talk. Michelangelo had chosen one instrument, the human body, and through it had recorded what he felt of the greatness and power, the mystery and sorrow of this world; Titian was recording the infinite variations of light and shade and colour in man, and man's works and nature. "It is a pity that people in Venice do not begin by learning to draw well," said Michelangelo to Vasari; "this man could have done any-

thing if he had owed as much to art as to nature." Not many people would agree that Titian did not know how to draw; it was merely that he did not draw in the style of Michelangelo. The difference in their point of view is brought home by a picture by Titian in the Wallace Collection. It is called *Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the Sea-monster.* Her white body fastened with chains to a rock makes a patch of brightness against a dense shadow. We feel that it was this contrast that the painter cares for more even than the beautiful shape of the limbs. That was the new state of mind that was to show itself first and foremost in Venice.

After Titian, came Tintoretto to carry on the work. He was born in 1518, and was at first a pupil of Titian. They quarrelled, however, almost at once, and Tintoretto had no further teaching, but strove to make his own fame. He certainly had no mock humility, if there is any truth in the story about him that he put a board up outside his studio advertising, "Michelangelo's design and Titian's colouring." Yet he was justified in being ambitious, for in 1548 he painted four pictures on the walls of the Scuola da san Marco, and his fame was made. Like Titian and Bellini, he painted for the Venetian State; but, unlike Titian, he was careless about pay, and once even lowered the price they proposed to give him for a picture. The reproductions of his work give one

the same feeling that I spoke of in connection with Titian—there is a wonderful mass of great pictures. Among the best known are the four he painted on the history of St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice, and a great picture called *Paradise*, which he painted when over seventy, in the Ducal Palace, and which is said to be the largest ever painted on canvas.

In the National Gallery you can see his picture, *St. George and the Dragon*, full of deep shadows like Titian's *Perseus* in the Wallace Collection; but it is difficult to judge what his work was really like except at Venice, where he painted a great number of pictures in the Ducal Palace. He became prosperous and much beloved, for he was kindly and witty, and so indifferent about money that his wife was accustomed to give him a sum wrapped up in a handkerchief when he went out and demand an account of it when he returned. He had a daughter whom he used to dress as a boy in her childhood, and take to help him in his studio and to learn painting. She grew up to be a good portrait-painter, but unhappily she died when still quite young.

Some of Tintoretto's sayings have been recorded, and there is one so remarkable that we might take it as a sort of motto of the Venetian School. "The first glance at a picture is the crucial one." What did he mean? Evidently that what we should expect of a picture is that it should be a pleasing

object that charms the beholder by its forms and colours at once, not a thing that needs close examination to be enjoyed, though, of course, such examination may increase the enjoyment. In his eyes, it is clear, pictures were not to be regarded as story-books.

So we come to the last great Venetian, Paolo Veronese, whose real name was Caliari, but who was called Veronese after Verona, his birthplace. He was, first and foremost, a painter of pageants. His Madonnas were indeed "enthroned," sitting upon lofty seats with marble columns and gorgeous curtains for a background, and when he painted the Annunciation he showed it taking place in a grand Venetian palace with a marble floor and pillars. The marriage at Cana resembles a great court banquet in a magnificent hall, and even the supper at Emmaus takes place in a fine marble porch with the whole of a very large family looking on. But if Veronese does not give us very convincing pictures of these events, he does show us the pomp of life in Venice, and what people of his day wore, and what they looked like in a most interesting fashion. There are seven pictures by Veronese in the National Gallery, and of these two are famous; one claims love and one admiration.

The first shows one woman asleep upon a window-seat, dreaming of the True Cross, which angels carry

National Gallery *Hanfstaengl*

FAMILY OF DARIUS BEFORE ALEXANDER
Paolo Veronese

in the air above her. This is St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, who afterwards sought the Cross in Jerusalem.

The second is called *The Family of Darius at the Feet of Alexander*. Darius has been defeated in battle and his mother, his wife, and his daughters have fallen into Alexander's hands. They kneel before him to entreat his pity, and have first mistakenly addressed the young Hephæstion, Alexander's friend. So the real Alexander points to him, explaining that he is indeed "another Alexander," and regards the captives with a gracious countenance. They are, in reality, the ladies of the Pisani family wearing their very best to make a fine picture, and they succeed. That is the end; after Veronese Venetian art died out.

Meanwhile the city of Parma produced a great painter. This was Correggio, born in 1594. His pictures are famous, like those of Venice, for lovely colour, and still more for the study of chiaroscuro. He loved to paint brilliant light surrounded by deep shadows, as Leonardo did in *The Madonna of the Rocks*. There are several of his works in the National Gallery; *The Education of Cupid* is very well known for its beautiful painting of the body and its glowing light. Correggio painted a great many religious pictures which have been very popular and are often reproduced.

Tintoretto and Veronese lived outside the forty years and carried on the great changes that took place in them. Men had come to paint the human body with no more feebleness or grotesqueness, but with ease and power; they had become aware of what the colour of the world meant for art, of all the possibilities of the air, of the shadows, and the sunlight, and they had got the skill of hand to show it, and the whole-hearted wish to do so. The forty years had seen some great new ideas and new powers gained; the Spanish painter Velasquez said he found in Venetian art "the true test of the good and beautiful."

Titian and Tintoretto are always ranked among the very greatest of painters. When you have studied their works you may come to consider the question, "By whom are they the most beloved?" and from the answer go on to the question, "Why?" and thence to consideration of that view of Ruskin that so strangely contradicts Velasquez, the idea of the "deadly catastrophe." It may, then, be asked whether there was such a thing, and if so what was its nature.

I end this chapter with some sayings on certain artists and their works, leaving those who read to guess to whom and to what they apply.

"They are always in dramatic attitudes and always appealing to the public for praise . . . while the

Venetian walks and rests with the simplicity of a wild animal." [1]

> "Son seul plaisir . . .
> Fut d'être grand comme Dieu et d'effrayer comme Lui." [2]

"Art was employed for the display of religion. . . . Religious facts were used for the display of art." [3]

"He no longer expected it [art] to tell him stories or to teach him the Catechism." [4]

"The truth which is sought for display may be just as harmful as the truth that is spoken in malice." [5]

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[1] "Michelangelo and Tintoret," by Ruskin.
[2] Auguste Barbier.
[3] "Modern Painters."
[4] "Venetian Painters of the Renaissance," by B. Berenson.
[5] J. Ruskin.

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CHAPTER V

PAINTING IN THE NORTH OF EUROPE—ITS RISE: VAN EYCK, DÜRER, HOLBEIN

WHILE the men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were producing the most famous pictures of the world in Italy other artists were at work on the north of the Alps, about whom most people know less, yet whose work has its own great glory. Cut off at first from knowledge of Italian art, they came to the foremost rank along certain lines of their own and made discoveries which changed the whole process of painting.

We can get a very good idea of what was happening from Charles Reade's novel, "The Cloister and the Hearth." Here we read about a festival held in Holland by the Duke of Burgundy, at which prizes were offered for fine writing on parchment, for illuminated manuscripts, and for paintings. From the account of the proceedings it seems that the paintings were not so much large pictures as little illustrations in books, ornamentations on shrines, and such things.

In the same book there is a wealthy old lady,

Margaret van Eyck, who befriends poor artists and remembers with pride that her two famous brothers, Hubert and Jan, painted works that made the northern lands worthy to take a place beside Italy.

Early northern art had been largely confined to tiny-scale ornaments and miniatures on parchment done by illuminators, of whom Margaret rudely says that they " spend time and soul and colour on great letters and little beetles, omitting such small fry as saints and heroes, their actions and passions."

Later in the story the hero goes to Italy and is overjoyed at the grand scale of the Italian works, their power, lofty imagination, and decorative beauty, but is able to add: " I would have you know that, in the mixing of certain colours and in the preparation of your oil, you Italians are far behind us Flemings."

Flanders and Germany and Northern France were a little later than Italy in producing their great masters, and their early art has never been so popular as that of the south. Indeed, up to the nineteenth century few did it real justice, and it will always cost rather more trouble to understand.

On entering a room of early northern pictures at any of the great galleries one is immediately struck by the small size of the paintings and their abundance of detail. They are brightly coloured, like the early Italians, but more smooth and finished and well preserved. Often they are decidedly ugly, and we

have to remind ourselves that we must expect old pictures to be interesting rather than beautiful. The reasons are all rooted deep in the climate and history of those countries and in the character of the people.

We have to take account of two great schools of painting: (*a*) the German School, and (*b*) the School of the Netherlands, sometimes called the Flemish School, which comprises the work done in Holland and Belgium. Some of the characteristics which I have said arecommon to all northern paintings were brought out more strongly by one and some by the other.

The reasons that led to the small size of the pictures are common to all lands in our latitude. Here and there in the north we find remains of fresco painting on walls, as in Italy, but such work is very rare. This is partly because of the climate and partly because of the style of architecture. In a warm, dry atmosphere like that of Southern Italy it is possible to paint on walls of buildings, even under open cloisters, without any danger of the pictures being destroyed by weather; but even in Northern Italy this does not succeed so well, and beyond the Alps it is impossible. In the second place, the churches of the north have not much wall-space. There are so many arches and columns, so many huge windows in a great German or Flemish cathedral that one would not easily find room for the great series of frescoes with which Giotto

adorned the church of St. Francis at Assisi. Therefore, much energy was devoted to decorating banners, chests, manuscripts, ornamental vessels of metal, and other comparatively small things, while little pictures on wood or canvas took the place of wall-fresco.

This appears clearly in the work of the German School, which took its rise in the valley of the Rhine. We do not know the names of many of the early artists, but perhaps the most important is a certain Meister Wilhelm, who painted Madonnas and whose works show very clearly what was happening in the life of the people at that time. There were then in Germany a band of religious reformers called the Mystics. They laid great stress in their teaching on the private and personal side of religion rather than on acts of public worship; their writings deal with the joy to be found by each soul in private prayer and praise and meditation upon God. Their teachings had so wide an influence that the building of Cologne Cathedral, which had been going on for a century, was almost abandoned, and instead we find Meister Wilhelm and others painting small pictures, suitable to hang in chapels and private rooms. People wanted something that would represent their joy in their own private thoughts and prayers at home, and just as, in Italy, Giotto arose to give his countrymen what they wanted, so Meister Wilhelm's art was ruled by the needs of the German Mystics. His

pictures are just as unnatural in many ways as the earliest Italian paintings, but the figures are much more gentle and human. It has been said that in Meister Wilhelm's work the Virgin is not a Queen, but an amiable friend.

It is the background of many of the early German pictures which makes them specially interesting. There is not so often the hard, brilliant gold, against which the early Italians set their figures, but charming natural backgrounds, especially in what are sometimes called "paradise pictures." These show the Virgin and Child, attended by maiden saints, sitting in garden scenes where all is joy and security. The flowers may not be very exactly imitated, but a love of their beauty is apparent, and a new desire to paint little, every-day objects. It was this desire which grew by degrees and led finally to that wealth of detail which I mentioned as noticeable in northern pictures; but it was artists of the Flemish School who did the best work in this direction.

The very men who did most to develop this aspect of painting were also the first to teach their countrymen the secret of beautiful finish and enduring colour. These were the two brothers, Hubert and Jan van Eyck, whose work is so unlike most of what had been done before that some writers have spoken as though they invented painting in the Netherlands. Hubert was born in Maaseyck in Holland, about 1366,

and Jan a good deal later, and their sister, Margaret, is said to have been a very good artist, but none of her works remain. They spent most of their lives at Ghent, and Jan, at least, entered the service of the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, who at that time ruled the Netherlands and was an important figure in European history. He was called "my lord's painter and varlet," and was once sent to Spain to paint the portrait of a Spanish princess whom the Duke wished to marry.

Hubert painted a great altarpiece in Ghent, called *The Adoration of the Lamb.* It showed the saints and martyrs of all time adoring Christ in the form of a lamb, and the scene is set in the midst of a very beautiful landscape.

As to Jan, we have one of his finest pictures in England. This is *The Portrait of Jan Arnolfini and his Wife* in the National Gallery. It is the picture of a plain couple standing side by side in a room of their house. The man looks ill, his expression is gloomy, and he is disfigured by a ridiculously large hat. His wife is an insipid little woman, swaddled in a heavy cloth dress. Yet this picture makes the most wonderful impression of reality. These two people really lived and had such a room as that; they are just the plain, ordinary people of whom the world is full. And it is easy to feel that the painter is showing us a room he has actually seen—the

National Gallery *Mansell*

JAN ARNOLFINI AND HIS WIFE

Van Eyck

Turkey rug on the polished floor, the little dog, the orange on the window-sill, the clogs, and, last but not least, the mirror. This mirror is a marvel of delicate painting, for it is surrounded by a series of tiny yet perfect scenes from the life of Christ. The whole is as bright and fresh as if painted yesterday, and we might use the picture as a little summary of nearly all the special points that give northern art its greatness.

(1) It is full of realism. Not only the ordinary objects of every-day life, but the people who live it are put before us with great exactness. This is the great mark and glory of Flemish art which Jan van Eyck first developed. To understand it we have to remember the national and local life of the day. The Flemings have been called the most practical race in the world. They were great traders; many of them grew very rich. A Queen of France once complained that the wives of the ordinary citizens in Flanders were as magnificent in dress and bearing as herself. In the reign of Edward III we hear of Flanders as a great wool-market, and the cities of Bruges and Ghent and Antwerp were among the wealthiest in Europe. The citizens, like the rich, show-loving Venetians in Italy, were much interested in their daily life and their wealth, and not much given to lofty imaginings. Thus it is easy to see why the pictures of Van Eyck and his followers could not be

like those painted for the Mystics of Germany. You can see in the National Gallery several pictures—for example, those of Peter de Hooch, who lived rather later—in which Dutch homes and the furniture of every-day life are beautifully rendered.

Ordinary things and ordinary people engaged the attention of the artists more and more even when they were still painting religious pictures. Some may feel inclined to say, "What a pity!" but it is not a pity, it is their strength and glory. For men like Jan van Eyck showed the life around them with a faithful endeavour after truth and an ungrudging labour that makes their work noble and interesting. If the characters in their sacred scenes are faithful portraits of the men and women about them it does not follow that their reverence and their zeal for religion were fading, but only that they were expressing them in a new way. There is room in the world for the spirit of early Flanders, as well as for that of Italy.

(2) It is a portrait work. The facts I have just mentioned about realism in this and other Flemish pictures help us to understand why we notice so many portraits in walking through the rooms marked "School of the Netherlands" in a big gallery. The models are not beautiful, for the Northern races are actually less comely than the people of the South. Moreover, the painters who came to draw them had not always at hand the remnants of Greek and Roman

art—statues, and carvings which represent the human form almost perfectly. In Italy, on the other hand, artists had inherited traditions about beauty and examples of past art which came down to them in an unbroken line from the workers of Greece and Rome. Yet the early Flemings excelled at portraits, because of their love of real life rather than of the things of the imagination, and because of their extreme truthfulness. They never flatter people; they painted hundreds of ugly men and women like the Arnolfini couple. A really good portrait is not merely an exact copy of the sitter's features; it shows us something of his character. This the Flemish portraits do to perfection; we feel that the people in them all really lived and are being presented to us just as they were, with no sort of touching up. The painters were not, like the Venetians, seeking to secure that their portraits should be decorative objects.

(3) The picture is brilliantly coloured and very well preserved. The van Eycks were the first to bring oil-painting to perfection. Other people had used oil, but had never learnt to prepare it and mix the colours so as to get the best effect. Hubert and Jan bestowed great pains upon the preparation of oil and colours. In "The Cloister and the Hearth," Margaret van Eyck describes how Jan did nothing blindly, nothing in a hurry. "He trusted no hireling to grind his colours; he did it himself. Jan van

Eyck was never in a hurry, and that is why the world will not forget him in a hurry." They also gave their attention to varnish. This is needed to preserve paintings in a damp climate, and the Van Eycks invented a kind which would do this without darkening the colours when put over them.

These, then, are the features that may be expected in paintings north of the Alps: great realism and abundant detail, fine colour, and the frequent occurrence of portraits. There is one other thing, also, that we may see in Hubert's altarpiece at Ghent, although it does not appear in the Arnolfini picture. That is a love of landscape and a careful painting of all natural things.

There were many considerations which helped the men who followed van Eyck to keep up the high standard of execution which he had set them. One of them was the famous guild system of the Netherlands. At that period the members of each trade in a town, masters and men alike, were united into a society called a guild, and no one could carry on his trade unless he joined the proper guild. The members of the guild had to be apprenticed to a master in their craft when young, and after being with him for a varying number of years, generally five, they spent three or four years more in travelling from place to place, working at their trade meanwhile and seeking wider knowledge. They were then

expected to return to their own town, and were admitted into their guild as full members or masters of their craft. Henceforth the guild saw to it that they did their work well; if bad tools or materials were found in their possession, these were taken away and they were fined for using them. Fines were also inflicted when complaints were made against any one for careless work. Each man had to show his new tools to the officers of the guild, who stamped them with a guild mark; his raw materials and the prices he asked for his labour had also to be approved by them. He was further expected to share any special good luck with his guild. For instance, if a shoemaker had the chance of buying a great deal of good leather cheaply, he told his comrades and let them have a share of the bargain. On the other hand, the guild helped its members to get a good price and to protect themselves from dishonest customers; it also looked after their widows and orphans, provided for the burial of those who died poor, and had a special chapel where services were held and prayers offered for all the brethren. Moreover, a good deal of feasting was connected with the guild. They held festivals and gave banquets to distinguished men. The painter Albrecht Dürer gives an interesting account of how the painters' guild in Antwerp entertained him and his wife and maid-servant when they visited the city. They invited him to supper in a beautifully

furnished guild-hall, presented him with a gift of good wine, and, after making merry all the evening, they conducted him home with lanterns.

The guild system was of the greatest service to artists. They were not tempted to compete with one another for a living because they knew all hasty and bad work would be punished and that the guild would always keep them from absolute want. Thus they had leisure to think, time to spend on making their work so thorough, so careful, so full of fine detail that we have to study it long and carefully before we see all its beauty. These little pictures took months, sometimes years, to paint, but they were worth the time expended on them. Under the strict discipline of the guild no one could well think lightly of his work; if he had within him the makings of a great artist, the guild gave him time and security to use his genius. So the pictures that follow Van Eyck's work are resplendent with the fruits of good workmanship, and bear the marks, too, of the wealth of that great commercial Flanders. Nowhere perhaps are jewels and rich stuffs painted as in these pictures. Velvet and figured curtains, and jewelled crowns, and rich embroideries meet us everywhere. We might say of all the early Flemish painting what Rossetti says at the end of his sonnet on the Marriage of St. Catherine:

> "Wheresoe'er thou look, the light is starred in gems and the
> gold burns."

The Van Eycks had many followers, all of whom carried on the same sort of work, developing landscape painting, copying all the objects of real life minutely, and bestowing much skill on portraiture. Out of all these two or three interest us specially, because they have works in the National Gallery.

One is Gerard David, who painted a picture called *A Canon and his Patron Saints.* Two of these saints wear magnificent church robes, one of marvellous red velvet bordered with gold and worked figures, and the other adorned with a curious pattern which we notice again in many Flemish pictures. Behind the figures is a group of very beautiful trees and a wide landscape.

There is a picture of the *Madonna and St. George* in the National Gallery which is the work of Hans Memling of Bruges. This picture shows a great many of the points that are remarkable in the Arnolfini picture. There are the ugly models. St. George may be an accurate likeness of some friend of Memling's, but he is not beautiful. Compare him with Donatello's statue, and you realise it keenly. There is also the exquisite painting of the Madonna's rich robe and of the curtain behind her on which we see the same pattern as on the robe in Gerard David's picture. Lastly, there is the smooth and delicate finish which Flemish painters had attained even before Van Eyck, and which the guilds helped them to maintain.

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Then there is Mabuse, whose glorious picture of *The Adoration of the Kings* was bought in 1911 from the owners of Castle Howard in Yorkshire and is therefore called "the Castle Howard Mabuse." The painter has delighted in rendering the rich dress of the kings and their jewels, and in painting the broken stones of the pavement, the sprouting thistle, the little dog, and the bird with the closest imitation of nature. And the whole thing glows as fresh and bright as if painted yesterday instead of four hundred years ago.

This is one of the pictures which are sometimes called Adorations, which is shortened from Adoration of the Magi, and such pictures show the three wise men of the East bringing their gifts to Christ in the stable. Magi simply means wise men, and, as it is said that they were also kings, a picture of this sort is sometimes called an "Adoration of the Three Kings." Their names are not given in the Bible, but stories say that they were Balthasar, Gaspar and Melchior. Balthasar is black, for it is said that he came from a kingdom in Africa. Gaspar came from Europe, and Melchior from Asia, and thus all three divisions of the known world were represented at the birth of Christ.

Legends of the kings tell us that they were descended from the prophet Balaam, and that they were all watching in different places for the fulfilment of

National Gallery *Mansell*

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS
Mabuse

Balaam's prophecy: " There shall come a star out of Jacob " (Num. xxiv. 17). At last, in their different abodes they saw a great star and set off to follow it until at last they met where three roads joined, and went together to Bethlehem. Many years after, when they died, their bodies were taken to Cologne and laid in the cathedral, and to this day in Cologne you will see an old street called Three Kings Street, and at the beginning of it a queer little sign-post on which are figures of the three kings.

The stable in Mabuse's picture is a stone building falling into ruins, with broken pavement and a bird perching on its rent wall. It is a background that is very common in pictures of the Adoration because it had a symbolical meaning. By this ruined, bird-haunted stable the early painters meant us to understand the heathen religions that had gone before the birth of Christ. In the book of Revelation they found the text, " Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become . . . a cage of every unclean and hateful bird " (Rev. xviii. 2), and Babylon they took to mean the religions of Greece and Rome. Therefore they showed these religions—things which they felt were of no more use to humanity—by the crumbling stable amidst the ruin of which a new hope was given to the world.

A fourth of the Van Eycks' followers is Roger van de Weyden, who is remarkable because his fame, and

along with it knowledge of the work and methods of the Van Eycks, spread all over his own country, into Italy, and above all into Germany, where it greatly influenced the course of art. Roger worked principally at the towns of Tournay and Brussels, but we have three of his pictures in the National Gallery. Two are heads of the Virgin and of Christ, in which he returns to the old-fashioned gold background.

During his life-time an invention was made which was to unite the artists of different countries so that the various schools should be no longer isolated. This was the invention of engraving, which, some say, Roger himself practised. However that may be, he had only been dead six years when Albrecht Dürer was born—a man whose engravings were destined to become famous wherever people cared about art. Unhappily, there is only one specimen of his work at the National Gallery, but there is a collection of his drawings and engravings at the British Museum, and some of his engravings are reproduced so often that every one should know them.

Dürer was a native of Nuremberg, born there in 1470 amidst wealth, prosperity, and stirring life, for Nuremberg was a great trading city. Probably poor Dürer did not feel much of this in his own home, for he was the third son in a family of eighteen children, whose father was a goldsmith. We know a great deal about his life, as he had a habit of keeping

diaries and of writing long letters to his friends when he went from home. He also wrote notes, dates, and explanations on many of his drawings, so that we could almost put together a history of his life from his own words. Thus his character, the joys and sorrows of his life, appear clearly before us, like those of a well-known friend, and help us to understand his work. There is a little portrait at Vienna on which he wrote: "This I have drawn from myself from the looking-glass in the year 1484, when I was still a child." So even at fourteen he had begun to produce portraits. In another place we find, "Especially my father had a pleasure in me because I was diligent in trying to learn, and when I had learnt reading and writing my father took me from school and taught me the goldsmith's work."

Later on the boy decided that there was something which he could do even better than "the goldsmith's work," and his father consented to apprentice him to a painter of Nuremberg. "In time God gave me industry that I learnt well," he tells us, and adds that he had much to suffer from his fellow apprentices. When his three years' apprenticeship was over he went for four years' travelling, but unhappily he has left no record of this part of his life. Then we find in his papers: "When I came back, Hans Frey treated with my father and gave me his daughter Jungfrau Agnes." So he married, joined his guild as a

master craftsman, and settled down to life in Nuremberg.

It was at this time that he began to make a series of wood-cut pictures. This means that Dürer drew the design on wood, experienced workmen then carved it, and a number of copies were printed from the block. Dürer was not the first artist to work at wood engravings, but he was by far the best who had yet done so, and his wood-cuts became extremely popular. They must have speedily come to the notice of the reigning Emperor Maximilian, who was a great patron of all art work, for he employed Dürer in later years and allowed him to draw his portrait. It is told of this Emperor that one day, when a noble of his Court objected to doing some service for Dürer, he replied, "Out of seven plough-boys I can, if I please, make seven lords; but out of seven lords I cannot make one Dürer." This anecdote, by the way, is told about several famous painters and their sovereigns.

In 1505, the same year that Michelangelo undertook the tomb of Julius II, Dürer set out on a journey to Venice, where he hoped to learn much from the great Italian masters. So he set out on horseback with his luggage strapped behind him. He was loaded with commissions from rich friends in Nuremberg to buy them feathers, jewels, pictures, and books that could be better obtained in Venice than in Germany. It

was to one of these, a certain Willibald Pirkheimer, that he wrote a series of amusing letters about his life in Venice. Some of the artists seem to have been jealous of him, but from the best he met with an eager welcome. "They abuse my works," he writes, "and say that they are not according to ancient art, and, therefore, not good. But Giovanni Bellini has praised me highly, and wishes to have something of my painting. He is very old, but yet he is the best painter of them all." Evidently he met with more appreciation from the fair-minded among the Italian painters than he had been wont to get at home, for he says, "Oh, how I shall freeze after this sunshine! Here I am a gentleman; at home I am only a parasite."

The letters are full of jokes and chaff. In one place Dürer pretends to be jealous because some one has told him that Pirkheimer is handsome, and says he has grown a grey hair from fretting over it. In another he draws a caricature of one of Pirkheimer's servants; in a third he relates his attempt to take dancing lessons, which he gave up in disgust. In them we discover the lighter side of a mind which was essentially serious, often deeply sad. At Nuremberg there is a famous portrait of Dürer painted by himself which exactly corresponds with the idea we might form of his character from his works. The eyes are intensely earnest and penetrating, but not stern; indeed, he seems to have been one who was honourable,

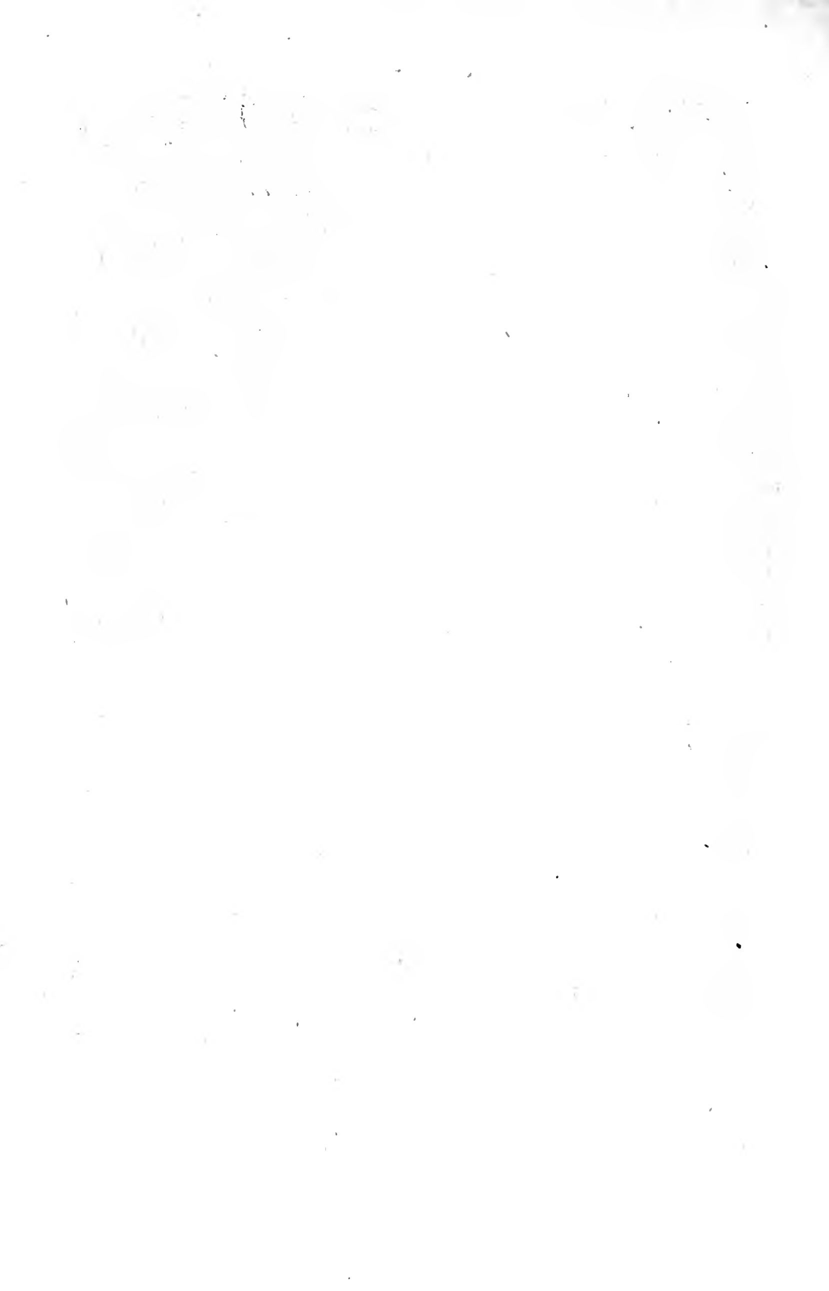
gentle, and kindly, a soul that gained and kept many devoted friends.

To say anything about more than a few of his works is quite impossible. He was a painter truly, the one work of his in the National Gallery happens to be a painting of his father—but he is better known by his engravings than by his paintings. He did many series of wood-cuts to illustrate such subjects as the Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, the Life of the Virgin, and the Passion of Christ, and also many single pictures of which it was said that they "amazed all who saw them." Among these are the following: *The Knight, Death, and the Devil, Melancolia, St. Eustace, St. Jerome,* and *St. Anthony.* They are not wood-cuts, but fine engravings taken from copper plates.

It is, perhaps, in *The Knight* that we can best see the great and strange power of this wonderful man. A knight completely armed in mail rides against a background of dark rocks on which gnarled bushes find a scanty foot-hold. At his right hand Death rides upon a worn and drooping horse, turning his ghastly countenance upon the knight and holding up an hour-glass in which the sand has already half run through. Behind follows the Devil, in form like some beast of unearthly foulness, stretching out a clawed hand. On the ground are a skull and the lizard that haunts solitary places, while the rocks

British Museum *Mansell*

KNIGHT, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL
Dürer



give only a glimpse of a distant sunny hill crowned by the towers of a city. But the knight cares for none of these things. His face is marked by furrows of toil and endurance, but is calm and resolute, his eyes gaze forward in thought, his lean frame shows the strength of vigorous manhood. The strong horse arches its neck and steps proudly beneath him, and the dog follows close at his master's heel. So he rides, sober and steadfast, not unaware of the forms that hover about him, but unheeding. None can fully explain this picture. Some call it "The Christian Knight," and think that the rider represents the bold warrior of Christ following after duty, undismayed by the powers of evil that pursue him, and by death that awaits him, perhaps because he has seen the distant vision of victory represented by that city set on a hill beyond the rocks and darkness of the path he must follow. Others, again, have said that the knight is a man set upon evil, from which he will not be turned even by the thought of death and the destruction that awaits his soul. Lastly, some have called the picture "The Knight of the Reformation." In 1513, when it was drawn, the minds of men were turning to the reform of the Church, and all that movement was springing up which found expression a little later in the doctrines of Martin Luther and the cutting off of half Europe from the Church of Rome. Now all we know of Dürer shows

that he was by nature reverent, thoughtful, and sincerely religious. He came to have the fullest sympathy with the reforms of Luther; but a gentle, sensitive nature such as his could not fail to be deeply moved and saddened during the unrest and confusion that had to be borne before the Reformation was finally accomplished. Perhaps feelings such as these are among the many things he sought to express in the picture of the knight. There is certainly ample room for each spectator to make his own guesses as to its meaning, and each may learn from it the great features of Dürer's work.

First, it is never easy to understand. Come to Dürer to guess and wonder, never to be easily pleased. Sometimes his pictures are not beautiful, and never do they please simply by appealing to our sense of beauty. They call on us to use our intellect as well; when we look at them we have generally to try to solve a mystery. And it is a solemn mystery, moreover. If I wanted to find one word to express the feeling that Dürer's art arouses I think I should choose "awe."

Secondly, you can see here what is sometimes called "the German love of the grotesque." You remember that in Dürer's letter to Pirkheimer he says that his works were blamed because they were not "according to ancient art." Now the Italian paintings of that time were, on the whole, "according to ancient

art"; that is, the painters had much the same sort of ideas about the beautiful as the artists of Greece and Rome. You will not find in their pictures such figures as those of Death and the Devil, which are far too full of a weird, unearthly horror. The Italians would paint a man pierced with scores of arrows or having his head cut off, but would not often invent demons in the form of terrible beasts. They seldom represented evil by visible shapes. The German mind, on the contrary, seems to have been fertile of devils; you will find many in Dürer's engravings. There is a famous wood-cut showing angels at strife in the air with dragons of loathsome ugliness. In another Christ is rescuing souls from hell, a deep cavern whence horned and snouted creatures thrust out their leering faces. Raphael said regretfully of Dürer: "Of a truth, this man could have surpassed us all if he had had the masterpieces of art continually before his eyes, as we have." But many of us feel that we cannot share this regret. The eccentricities which displeased Raphael were only one expression of a mind sufficiently beyond its fellows in greatness and originality to give us pictures of such mysterious meaning as *The Knight*, or the strange *Melancolia*, in which a winged woman sits sadly brooding among all the scientific instruments of that day. Perhaps, too, if Dürer had been so anxious to follow the rules of ancient art we should not have had the third great

feature to be noticed in *The Knight.* This is the wonderfully delicate drawing that appears most strikingly in the little walled city of the background. In the famous engraving *St. Anthony* there is another of these towns which slopes from a moat to the summit of a hill with its pointed roofs grouped close together like the city of some fairy-tale. Every one who can admire *The Knight* should know the *Melancolia* and *St. Anthony,* and also *St. Eustace* and *St. Jerome in his Study.* It is interesting to see how differently the German Dürer and the Venetian Catena represented St. Jerome's study.

The closing years of Dürer's life are very interesting, largely because he went on a famous journey into the Netherlands, of which he kept the most minute journal. This journal is very amusing reading, for he gives full details of his manner of travelling, his expenses, whom he met in the Flemish cities, whose portraits he drew, who gave him presents, and who asked him to dinner. Here are some examples: "On Shrove Tuesday the goldsmiths invited me and my wife to dinner. There were many distinguished people assembled, and we had an extremely costly meal, and they did me exceeding much honour." "Tomasin's brother Gerhard has given me four Brabant ells of the best black satin, and he has given me a large box of candied citron." "On St. Martin's day in Antwerp my wife had her purse cut; there

were two florins in it." "I lost six stiver at play." "I made two florins by art." "I have taken the portraits of Bernhardt Secher and his wife." Then we come to a graver passage which shows us Dürer's thoughts about the Reformation: "On the Friday before Whitsuntide, in the year 1521, the report reached me at Antwerp that Martin Luther had been treacherously taken prisoner; whether he lives still, or whether his enemies have murdered him, I know not. O God, is Luther dead? Who will henceforth explain to us so clearly the Holy Gospel?" In the year 1521 he returned to Nuremberg, where the remaining years of his life were passed. He engraved portraits of the great scholar Erasmus, the reformer Melanchthon, his learned friend Willibald Pirkheimer, and other prominent men in Nuremberg. In 1528 he died. "I grieve for Germany," said his friend, Philip Melanchthon, "deprived of such a man and such an artist."[1] He left work such as no German artist had done before, work that summed up the careful execution, the realism, the love of portraiture that I have said belonged especially to northern art. But he added his own power of expressing the wonder and solemn mystery of human life.

Only one other man succeeded him who has attained to equal fame, and his reputation is of quite another sort. This is Hans Holbein the younger, who

[1] Quotations from "Dürer," by Lina Eckenstein.

is particularly interesting to English people because he has left us a series of portraits of the Court of Henry VIII, and because we have in the National Gallery two of his most famous pictures, *The Ambassadors*, and *Christina, Duchess of Milan.* Besides this there is a large collection of his drawings in the possession of the King at Windsor, and others in the British Museum.

He belongs to the same period as Dürer, though he was about twenty years younger, for he was born in Augsburg in 1497. Like Dürer, he was apprenticed to his father, a painter; but there the resemblance ceases. Holbein did not settle down in his native city when his apprentice days were over, but went to Basle in 1519, and all the rest of his life was spent either in Basle or in England. The Reformation was well on foot in Basle by this time, and one of its effects was to throw painting into disrepute, as the preaching of Savonarola did in Florence in Botticelli's time. Now Holbein was not, like Dürer, intensely stirred by the Reformation; he was much more interested in finding a sure market for his work, especially as he was now married and had several children. Therefore he left Basle for England. His reputation preceded him, for in Basle he had painted a portrait of Erasmus, who sent it as a present to his friend Sir Thomas More. Holbein, therefore, found one patron prepared to receive him enthusiastically, and was asked to stay at More's house and to paint

portraits of his host's family. It is said that Sir Thomas asked him who had advised him to come to England, and, as Holbein could not remember, he rapidly sketched a face which More recognised as that of the Earl of Arundel, who had visited Basle some time before.

Soon after this Holbein became known to the King, and in 1538 there are notes in the accounts of Henry's household expenses which show that he was receiving a quarterly salary, so he must have been appointed court painter. He painted or drew Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, the baby Prince who was afterwards Edward VI, and all the distinguished persons of the Court.

Outside the Court he had many friends and patrons among the merchants of the Steelyard, a colony of Germans settled in London. They lived together in their own group of houses, which was called the Steelyard, and had its own guild-hall and wine-shop, making, as it were, a little bit of Germany in the heart of England. Holbein settled near the Steelyard and painted many portraits of his fellow countrymen. The most famous is that of Georg Gisze, which shows us one of the younger merchants sitting in his office with his ledgers, pens, ink, and letters around him. Amidst such patrons as these the artist's life passed in somewhat uneventful prosperity until 1543, when he died of plague.

The greater part of his work is made up of portraits, but he painted one of the best known sacred pictures in the world. This is the *Meyer Madonna*, painted in Basle and now in Darmstadt. It was painted for Jacob Meyer, the Burgomaster or Mayor of Basle, and shows him with his family kneeling at the feet of the Madonna. This is almost the only work of Holbein's which has puzzled people. Out of the likeness between the Christ-child and Meyer's baby son a great many stories have been manufactured—as, for example, that the child in Mary's arms is not the infant Christ, but the soul of the little son of Meyer, who had lately died. But these explanations are probably mere fancies.

Holbein's portraits of Erasmus and Sir Thomas More and Henry VIII are extremely famous; you will find them as illustrations in many history books.

In the National Gallery we have a very interesting portrait of Christina Sforza, Duchess of Milan. This lady had been married at the age of eleven, and was a widow of fifteen when Henry VIII was seeking a fourth wife soon after the death of Jane Seymour. A marriage with Christina seemed to please him, so Holbein, "a man very excellent in taking phisanymies," was sent to Brussels to paint her portrait. Here we see her, simple in dress and bearing, not beautiful, but dignified and very attractive. Hutton, the English Envoy to Brussels, wrote home descrip-

CHRISTINA,
DUCHESS
OF MILAN
Holbein

National Gallery *Mansell*

tions of her. She was soft-spoken and gentle, and evidently had pretty dimples, for he says, "When she chanceth to smile, there appeareth two pits in her cheek and one in her chin, the which becometh her excellently well."[1] In spite of her gentleness she is said to have refused Henry on the ground that she had only one head and did not care to risk it. But it was probably political reasons rather than Christina's own feelings that brought the plan to nothing, and we gain her portrait out of the negotiations.

Besides the *Duchess of Milan* the National Gallery contains *The Ambassadors.* This is a portrait of Jean de Dinteville the French Ambassador to London, and his friend George de Selve. They are standing by a table on which are books, globes and musical and mathematical instruments, which are intended to show the subjects in which they were interested. A curious object floats near the floor in front of them, but by looking at it from the right, close to the picture, we can see that it is a skull drawn in a distorted fashion. Some say that this was a fanciful signature of Holbein's name, since a skull might be described as a "hollow bone" and this in German is expressed by two words rather like Holbein in sound.

In portraits like those of Georg Gisze and the Ambassadors we see the northern love of detail and

[1] Quoted in "Holbein," by A. B. Chamberlain.

the power to paint it exquisitely well; in the queer fancy of the skull we see some of that love for the grotesque that appears so strongly in Dürer; in the *Duchess of Milan* we see where lay Holbein's own peculiar strength. He never puzzles us, like Dürer, but he makes us feel that we are seeing pictures of very real men and women. Dürer calls upon us to think and wonder; before Holbein's work we feel that he is showing us very truthfully the people who were about him. Sometimes he adds details, as when he paints Georg Gisze's office; sometimes he merely sets the man or woman before us without comment, and the effect is very powerful. He perfected on a great scale that work of portraiture which Jan van Eyck began. Henceforth German art fell into a time of decay, and the work went on in Flanders.

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CHAPTER VI

LATER MASTERS OF THE NETHERLANDS—HOW THE NORTH JOINED HANDS WITH VENICE—DAILY LIFE AND LANDSCAPES

After the death of Holbein there came a long gap in the succession of great painters in the north of Europe. Then in the hundred years from 1600 to 1700, the time of the Civil War, and the Commonwealth, and the Restoration in England, there appeared another famous group of artists.

If you look round the collection of early Flemish pictures in the National Gallery and then go into the rooms marked "Dutch School," and "Flemish School," you cannot help being struck at once by the change in subjects and in style. The same sort of change in the style of the pictures has come about that may be seen when we compare the pictures of Florence with those of Venice. The little canvases full of detail that the Van Eycks painted are replaced by big pictures, and the artists are evidently more interested in arrangements of their light and shadow. If we take Ruskin's saying that the fifteenth century was the age of drawing and the sixteenth the

age of painting, it seems that the seventeenth is to be an age of painting too.

The change of subject is more interesting still. In the early work one can recognise those two threads, the idealistic and the realistic, which I spoke of in Italian art; but by the time we reach these later painters the idealistic thread has dwindled away till we can neglect it altogether. The realistic thread that remains divides into three important strands. In the works of the Van Eycks and their followers I said there were tendencies towards portrait-painting, towards realism, and towards landscape. The landscapes were still principally backgrounds for sacred scenes, as in Hubert van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb*; the realism was largely shown in exquisite painting of every-day objects appearing in those scenes, and the taste for portraiture came out quite as much in the faithful copying of commonplace models in a *Nativity* or a *Marriage of St. Catherine* as in pictures that were portraits pure and simple. Now these three features in the painting came by degrees to be things done *for their own sake*, instead of as parts of religious pictures, and when once that happened we find the three great strands of which I spoke. They are:

(1) Portraiture.

(2) Landscape painting.

(3) Genre. This was the outcome of realism

practised for its own sake. Genre pictures are those which deal with trifling incidents and common scenes of daily life. From bestowing great care on painting the jewels, stuffs, furniture, and rooms of their own day as parts of sacred pictures it was not a very long step to painting them alone for their own beauty. So in the Netherlands we get the greatest school of genre painters that has ever been known.

The first great man of the new period was Peter Paul Rubens, born at Antwerp in 1577. I include no work of his here because the greatest are not in England, and because I do not think they include any of the most beloved pictures of the world. Nevertheless, he was a very great man, and it is well to remember that Ruskin, who disapproved of much of his work, once said, "I believe the world may see another Titian and another Raphael before it sees another Rubens." [1]

He spent his youth in Antwerp, where you may see many of his greatest pictures now.

His father died when he was still a child, but his mother gave him a good education, so that he grew up with a thorough knowledge of Latin, and of English, Spanish, Italian, and other modern languages. At the age of twenty-three he went to Italy, and it only needs a glance at his work to see which painters he studied. It was colour that he loved, as a country-

[1] "Modern Painters," vol. i., chapter "Of Truth of Colour."

man of Van Eyck could scarcely fail to do, and at Venice he found pictures that rejoiced his heart. So he entered the service of the Duke of Mantua, and spent a contented eight years in Italy copying and studying Titian, and Tintoretto, and Veronese. Then he returned to Antwerp and became Painter in Ordinary to Albrecht, Archduke of Austria, who was at that time ruler of the Netherlands. He had as unbroken good fortune as Raphael; indeed, one might call him a Raphael who had no Michelangelo. From his own pictures we get to know his handsome, jolly face, with its fair beard and satisfied smile, his fine clothes, and his general air of prosperity. He had a fine town house in Antwerp and a castle in the county near Mechlin, and there were more pupils begging for admission to his workshop than he knew what to do with. Nevertheless, he employed a great many, for orders poured in upon him; in fact, he had a sort of picture-factory. He made sketches from which his pupils painted complete pictures, and he then went over them and improved them himself.

His works were large and striking, like himself; I suppose among pictures they resemble the sound of drums or trumpets in music, and it is not surprising to find in one of his letters, "I confess myself to be by a natural instinct better fitted to execute works of the largest size." So he followed his "natural instinct," and painted a great series of pictures

illustrating the life of Marie de Medicis, Queen of Henry IV of France, which you may see in the Louvre in Paris, and a great *Raising of the Cross*, and a *Descent from the Cross*, which are in Antwerp Cathedral. They are all full of big, imposing people and rich colour.

Rubens did other things besides painting. Good breeding, scholarship, tact, and popularity in society brought him to the notice of the Archduke as one who would succeed in political embassies. Therefore he was sent abroad several times, and there is a story that he said of himself, "The painter, Rubens, amuses himself with being Ambassador." One of his journeys was to Spain, where he met the painter Velasquez in Madrid; and the other, which is particularly interesting to us, was to England. He had been present at the marriage of Charles I to Henrietta Maria in Paris in 1625, and had reason to remember it, for he stood on a scaffolding which gave way and he narrowly escaped being killed. Now he was welcomed at the English Court with high honour, and Charles knighted him and gave him directions to paint the ceiling of the Banqueting-hall in Whitehall, which is now the United Services Museum. Charles, however, chose the subject and one feels sorry for Rubens, for it was nothing less than the glorification of James I, who seems to us a most unpromising subject. However, Rubens accepted it cheerfully enough, and the pictures are there to this day.

It is unfortunate that Charles did not sit to Rubens for his own portrait instead, for Rubens excelled in portraits. He painted himself and his two wives, Isabella Brant and Helena Fourment, several times. Indeed, Helena Fourment was the model for a great number of his figures of women. His best known picture in the National Gallery is a portrait of her sister, wearing a wide felt hat. By some strange mistake it used to be called *Chapeau de Paille* (Straw Hat) under which name it is best known.

Rubens's prosperity lasted to the end of his life. His days were industrious and orderly. He got up early and painted while some one read aloud to him from the great Latin authors. Then he spent some time in his picture-gallery with the beautiful things he had collected in Italy, and, after painting again till late afternoon, he went out on horseback. At sixty-three he died, leaving behind him thousands of pictures, including portraits, some landscapes, one of which is in the National Gallery, some genre, historical pictures, sacred pictures, allegories—he had tried everything.

Pupils had poured out from his studio, but only one equals him in fame. This was Anthony van Dyck, painter to the Court of Charles I. The first illustration in this chapter explains the kind of work he did. It was painted in 1635, and is now in the

gallery at Turin. On the left is the eldest of the children, who was afterwards Charles II, and was not quite five years old. In the middle is Mary, who married the Prince of Orange and was the mother of William III, and on the left is the baby who became James II. There is a charming collie beside Charles. Nearly all Van Dyck's work is the same. He shows us people of high rank, in costly court dress, with beautiful dogs or riding on fine horses. Look at the Princess Mary's hands. They are rather plump, with long, delicately pointed fingers. If you turn over a book of Van Dyck's portraits you will find this hand attached to the most widely different bodies. Van Dyck painted it on himself, on Queen Henrietta, Archbishop Laud, the Earl of Stafford, and a whole tribe of young noblemen and court ladies, until the repetition becomes ludicrous.

The Court of Charles I is displayed to us by Van Dyck as that of Henry VIII is displayed by Holbein. Charles I appears on horseback in the National Gallery. This picture was sold, with the King's other possessions, after his death, and found its way to Munich in Germany, but was brought back to England by the Duke of Marlborough in the reign of Anne. In various galleries abroad there are well-known portraits of Charles and Henrietta; you will find reproductions of them in most illustrated history books.

Van Dyck was a courtier all his life. It had no

Turin *Anderson*

THE CHILDREN OF CHARLES I
Van Dyck

particularly striking incidents and is chiefly interesting because of the famous people with whom he came into contact. He was born in 1599, and, after spending some time with other masters he went to the studio of Rubens, who took much interest in him. Knowing what Italy had been to him in his own youth, he decided that Van Dyck must go there too. So Van Dyck set out, having just painted a portrait of himself and Rubens together as a parting gift for his master, and Rubens made him a present of the finest horse in his stable.

In Italy he went to Rome, where he did not find much to interest him, apparently, for he soon went on to Venice, and finally settled down for some years at Genoa, where he painted portraits of various distinguished people. A sketch-book he used during his travels is still kept at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. One of the most interesting things in it is the sketch of a famous woman-painter. Her name was Sofonisba Anguissola, and she was then, in 1624, ninety-six years old. So she had lived in the time of Michelangelo and Bellini and all the great Venetians, and her memory was still clear and her interest in pictures still strong though she had become quite blind. She told Van Dyck many interesting things about her long life, and he said of her that he had learnt more from a blind woman than from many a seeing man.

In 1631 Charles I invited Van Dyck to come to England. There he was made Painter in Ordinary to the King, and the rest of his life was a round of court gaieties and of work on portraits of court celebrities. He must have met all the great actors in the history of the Civil War, and it seems a pity that he could not leave us portraits of Milton and Hampden and Pym and Cromwell. He had a town house near Blackfriars, and a country-house at Eltham, a pension of £200 a year, and a knighthood. He died, perhaps fortunately, in 1641, just when the war was beginning.

His work was not confined to portrait-painting. There are a whole host of his works on other subjects —many Madonnas, Lamentations over Christ, Crucifixions. They are all beautifully painted; you will find no more ill-drawn bodies, or dull colouring, or bad perspective, or want of light and shade. But if you notice reproductions in shop windows and in people's private houses, for one copy of a sacred picture by Van Dyck you will see dozens of those by Botticelli, Raphael, and Perugino. Rubens, too, painted plenty of sacred pictures, and of them also you will see few reproductions. As usual, to find the reason one has to think about "the national and local life of the day." The Reformation had passed over the north of Europe; the Protestant churches were not adorned with pictures as the Roman Catholic churches had been; there was

no longer any particular connection between the painter's work and religion. Indeed, a large proportion of those people who were most in earnest about their religion would not have approved of pictures of sacred subjects at all. The painters did not mind painting Madonnas and scenes from the life of Christ, or the Old Testament, but they thought about them much as they would about any other subject, just considering what possibilities there were of making a fine, showy picture. Ruskin wrote a sentence that sums up this position. He pictures Rubens telling a customer that "Daniel in the lions' den is indeed an available subject, but duller than a lion-hunt."[1] Moreover, the picture-book time of painting had gone by; it was no longer an instrument for teaching people their religion. So when Van Dyck paints a Madonna and Saints we feel it is merely a picture of handsome women and children, but no more. Of course this does not mean that all the Flemish painters had ceased to believe in, or to care about their religion, it only means that the great law about "national and local life" was working and that, where painting was concerned, their chief interests turned to other things. Like the Venetians, they had begun to be greatly interested in chiaroscuro, and the best of them, like the men of Van Eyck's

[1] "Modern Painters," by Ruskin, vol. v., chapter on Rubens and Cuyp.

time, developed a love of showing very truthfully the ordinary things and scenes among which their lives passed. It is not surprising, then, that the three great strands of which I spoke should flourish.

Franz Hals is one of the greatest masters in portraiture. In the Wallace Collection and in the window of every second picture-shop you will see his *Laughing Cavalier*, a half-length of a man in a showy uniform. He is not laughing, but just beginning a smile, and very much aware of the impression made by his dashing appearance. Hals painted many of his kind, singly and in groups; the best collection is at Harlem, where Hals was born and where he did nearly all his work.

The next two illustrations in this chapter are from the work of a man who touched all the three great branches to some extent, but was most famous as a portrait-painter. Yet he was utterly unlike Van Dyck, utterly unlike Hals; in fact, he was unlike everybody, a man who stood by himself. From the time of the Venetians onwards we have been considering pictures in which chiaroscuro and colour tend to be more important than drawing. Now we come to a man who carried this tendency to its extreme limit—Rembrandt, born in 1606, two years before John Milton. There are seventeen pictures by him in the National Gallery, so it is easy to see what was his particular gift to art—you can see it from the

Syndics of the Cloth Hall reproduced in this chapter. He gave the arrangement of light and shade first place in his consideration. It has been said of him that, as he looked at the world, he thought of what he saw neither as solid forms nor as collections of lines, but as patches of light and shade. Therefore, the faces of his portraits stand out against a mysterious background of deep shadow which sometimes seems almost to swallow them up. His chief works were portraits, and we know himself, his wife, his son, and his parents as we know the family of no other painter.

Rembrandt's father was a miller, who owned a water-mill at Leyden in Holland. The mill stood on one of the many mouths of the Rhine, and from this Rembrandt got the name of Van Rijn—of the Rhine. He went to the University of Leyden for a time, and then became a pupil to a well-known painter. He was remarkable all his life for unceasing labour, in which he seemed to forget alike joys and sorrows. It was written of him that "he never ceased to work in the house of his parents while light lasted," and that "if the greatest monarch on earth had visited him while working, he would have sent him away or asked him to come again at another time." [1] The collection of rare and beautiful things was a mania with him, and he spent large sums upon curious

[1] Filippo Baldinucci, quoted by A. Bréal.

garments, weapons, furniture, and jewels. When he was young he liked to paint himself and his friends in strange foreign dresses, but by degrees he lost this fancy and turned his attention more and more to the study of strong lights standing out against deep shadows. When nearly thirty he married Saskia van Uylenborch, with whom he passed seven years in great happiness and prosperity. He had now become the most famous of Dutch portrait-painters, and could scarcely keep up with the orders that were showered upon him. He lived in Amsterdam, where he had many pupils, whom he made to work very hard, putting each in a separate cell that they might have less temptation to idle together.

About this time a remarkable class of portrait was coming into fashion. This was the portrait group such as you see in the *Syndics of the Cloth Hall.* Holland was full of companies of merchants, guilds, corporations, and other assemblies whose members loved to be painted together. In particular each city had its military guard, a band of volunteers who tried to do honour to their town by their efficiency and the brilliance of their uniform. Their meeting halls were called Doelen, and were frequently adorned with large portrait groups to the purchase of which each member gave a subscription. Through one of these "Doelen" pictures, as they were called, Rembrandt made his name, and through another he lost it.

The first was *The Anatomy Lesson*, painted in 1632 by order of Professor Tulp, a famous doctor, who wished to give it to the company of surgeons to which he belonged for their lecture-hall. Rembrandt showed him dissecting the arm of a dead body and explaining it to seven students. Each person in the picture is clearly displayed, Tulp, of course, in the most prominent position, and the portraits are so wonderful that we quite forget to feel that there is anything horrible in the subject. The picture had a vast success, which gave Rembrandt his position as the foremost painter of his day. Then it was that he made his happy marriage with Saskia and entered on the most prosperous years of his life.

During these years he became more and more interested in chiaroscuro. Look at his two pictures reproduced in this chapter, and you will see how his style changed. The *Old Woman* was painted in 1634 and *The Syndics* not till 1664. It was in 1641 that he received an order from the Civic Guard of Amsterdam to paint a big Doelen picture of the officers. They were fine gentlemen, proud of their physique and their showy uniform, and pleased with the prospect of displaying both on the walls of their club-house. But Rembrandt cared nothing for all that. He took the opportunity to produce a great study of bright lights among contrasting shadows, the picture which is now called *The Night Watch.*

The officers were angry; in particular those who appeared as dim forms in the background were very angry, for had they not paid their hundred florins as much as the captain and lieutenant who had good places in front? As many of them were quite unrecognisable, they were reduced to having a shield with their names on it painted in at the top of the picture. This quarrel gave Rembrandt a reputation for being difficult and eccentric, and his fortunes went down from that time.

Two years after this Saskia died, leaving Rembrandt with one child a year old. This was the son Titus whose portrait he painted so often. It was soon evident how much Saskia had done for her husband, for when she was gone he hopelessly mismanaged his money affairs so that he fell deeply in debt, and was at last turned out of his house in Amsterdam. But no misfortunes prevented his working. At an inn, in lodgings, amidst the utmost failure and anxiety, he produced some of his finest portraits, though he had long ceased to be fashionable and his place was taken by one of his pupils whose very name is almost forgotten to-day. He painted his own aged and worn face, his son Titus, and once in a momentary return of good fortune he was commissioned to paint the heads of a company of cloth-merchants. A last sorrow befell him in the death of his son Titus, and in 1669 he himself died in great poverty, leaving, it

Amsterdam *Mansell*

SYNDICS OF THE CLOTH HALL

Rembrandt

is said, "nothing but his clothes of wool and linen and his working instruments."

The Syndics of the Cloth Hall was one of his latest works and a good example of his peculiarities. "He was content to paint five men dressed in black with flat, white collars and broad-brimmed hats, and a servant. With these simple materials Rembrandt produced a picture that the world has agreed to regard as his masterpiece."[1] The Syndics could not have complained as the Civic Guard did, for each face makes the impression of being a faithful portrait; but the picture owes its beauty to the vivid light on the faces contrasted with the deep surrounding shade.

You can see how much he had extended his love for this style of treatment since he painted the *Old Woman* twenty years earlier. We do not know anything about this lady except that she was eighty-three, a fact that is noted on the picture. I say we do not know anything about her; but that is wrong, for the picture tells a great deal—so much that it may be doubted whether she herself was altogether pleased with it. Rembrandt loved to paint the aged; his own mother was one of his favourite models. In the National Gallery there is another *Old Woman* seated in an arm-chair, as gentle and touching in her weakness as the first is hard and severe. You may see also two portraits of himself,

[1] "Rembrandt," by Lewis Hind.

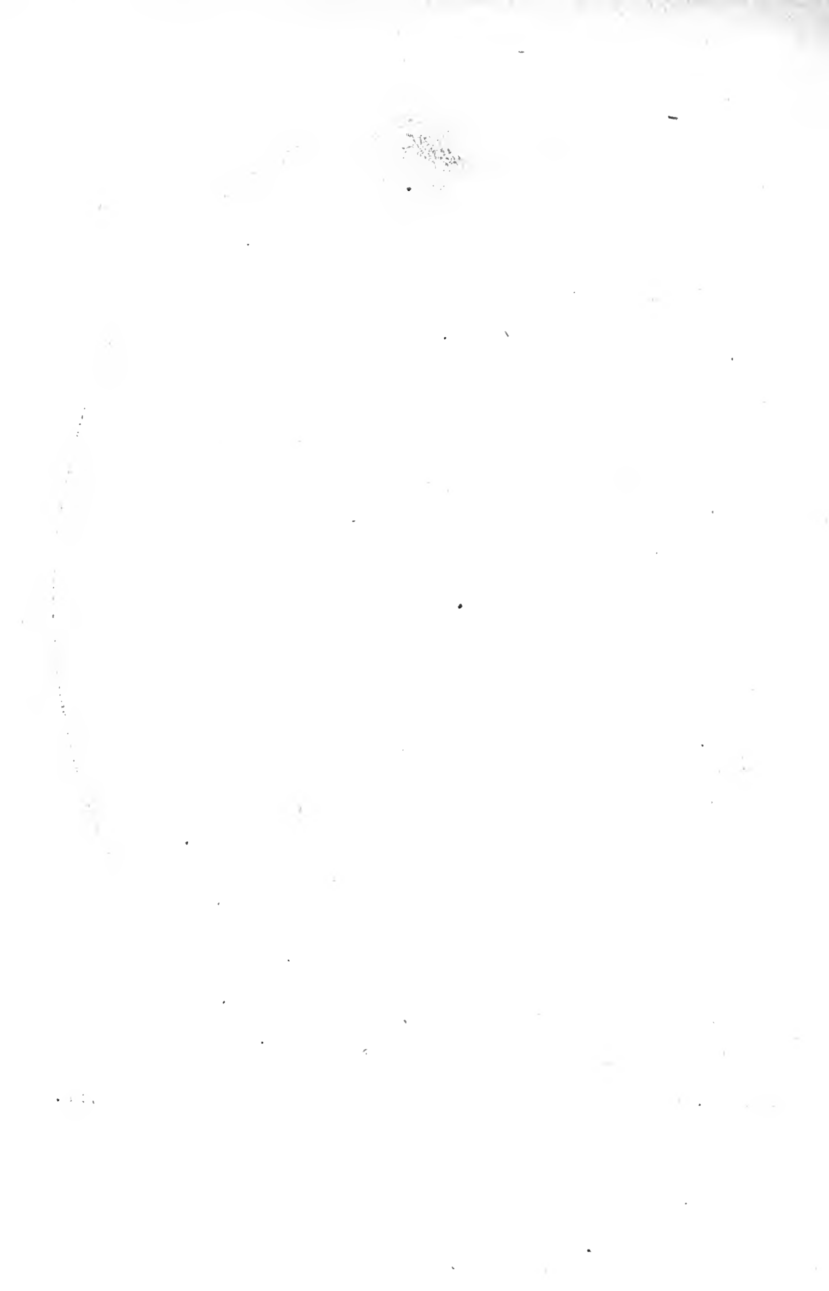
one in youth and good fortune, and one painted late in life when he was worn with sorrows. In his latest years also he painted *The Jewish Rabbi*, which hangs near them, one of the most pathetic pictures in the world.

Rembrandt is in one respect like Michelangelo, for each chose one instrument with which to express all that was in his heart. Michelangelo's was the human body, and he belonged to the fifteenth century, to the men who drew rather than painted. Rembrandt's was light and shadow, and he belongs to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to the men who painted rather than drew. Like Michelangelo, too, his works belong to that most interesting class of things which appear quite differently to different minds. Leighton called him "the supreme painter who revealed to the world the poetry of twilight and all the magic mystery of gloom." Ruskin said, "I cannot feel it . . . glorious . . . to be distinguished, as Rembrandt was . . . chiefly by the liveliness of his darkness and the dulness of his light."[1] There are some to whom, when they look on the *Jewish Rabbi*, it is as though they heard all the suffering of Israel uttered in a single phrase, and Lewis Hind says Rembrandt's subjects are "all that man has felt and suffered, parting and sorrow and the awakening of joy."[1] To one mind well qualified to judge

[1] "Rembrandt," by Lewis Hind.

National Gallery *Mansell*

OLD WOMAN
Rembrandt



his chiaroscuro seems a means of vanity, of showing off his powers; to another it seems a means by which he conveys great thoughts about the mysteries of life. Time and study will show every one by degrees on which side he is.

Rembrandt painted some scenes from the Bible, of which the best known is *Supper at Emmaus* in the Louvre at Paris. I speak about it because Veronese painted the same subject, and Bellini, and Velasquez, and a late Italian painter called Carravaggio, whose work you may see in the National Gallery. Nothing could be more interesting than to compare these five pictures and see which can best convey the feeling of those two disciples when they saw the bread broken and knew with Whom they had journeyed.

I said Rembrandt united the three great branches of northern art. His landscapes and his genre work are to be seen chiefly in his etchings, of which he did a great number. Etchings are pictures made by scratching the design through a coating of wax on a metal plate. Then acids are poured over the plate. It is protected by the wax except where the scratches come. There marks are made by the acid on the plate and it can be used to print the design. In some of his etchings Rembrandt treated genre subjects, and he was followed by a whole group of genre painters. They carried on the custom of using small canvases and a great deal of careful detail which had been

given up by the portrait-painters. Among the most famous are Pieter de Hooch, Van Ostade, David Teniers, Gerard Dou, Gabriel Metzu, Nicholas Maes, and there were hosts of others.

The frontispiece of this book shows a very charming example of genre by de Hooch. We know very little about this painter except that he was born in 1630 and lived at Amsterdam. He painted a long series of courtyards and clean, bare, orderly sitting-rooms, inhabited by peaceable people, and quite beautiful because of their reality and the charming effects of the light which streams into them. This courtyard and porch make one feel that one has been there, it is so easy to picture the quiet side-street into which the mistress is looking out, the supper ready on the table, and the worthy, sedate husband who will soon come in from his shop in the town.

If you want to learn more of the life of that time from the National Gallery, Gabriel Metzu has provided two pictures of the average sitting-room, Gerard Dou a poulterer's shop, and Nicholas Maes a little incident in the kitchen where the mistress discovers her servant asleep in the midst of her work.

All this is charming genre, but there is also a whole mass showing life which is lower in every sense of the word. If you turn over a big catalogue of the works of late Dutch artists you see such titles as the

following: Drunken Peasants at an Inn, Skittle Players, Village Barber drawing a Tooth, Brawl after Card-playing, Pig-killing at Night, A Village Inn with Four Drunken Persons, Killing an Ox. So it goes on for page after page, till one does not know at which to wonder most, the industry of the painters or the nastiness of their taste. Thus the great Dutch School came to a lingering end in a dreary waste of the ugly and the coarse.

There remains the numerous band of landscape painters. The Dutch painted landscape entirely for its own sake, for the most part setting down just what they saw about them. Therefore, as you might expect, theirs are quite unlike the Italian landscapes. Look at the little backgrounds in Italian pictures. They are gay and sunny, the sky is blue, often a deep blue such as we in England have rarely seen. Rather dark, tapering trees, such as olive or cypress, rise on bare hills on whose sides strangely shaped rock-masses crop out here and there, and the sunshine lies hot over everything. To us it is a strange world. But when we turn to the Dutch landscape we are to some extent at home. The painter lived all his life among great flat stretches, where the canals and ditches wound like ribbons, visible afar off and breathing grey mist that veiled the distance. There were gaunt, wind-twisted trees, with here and there a windmill to break the flat expanse, and from the rivers rose

many masts of ships. But, dwarfing all these, was the arch of the sky. No hills shut it out, no thick forests veiled men's eyes to its sweep. There was no dazzling brightness, but it was full of clouds rolling before the wind or brooding heavily like a grey roof. It was always vast, and never long the same, as hard to forget as the wide, grey sea that hammered on the dykes. So it came about that Dutchmen painted the sky and the water.

All this appears in the last picture in this chapter, *The Mill*, by Ruysdael. There is the sea, the low, flat coast, the windmill, and a wide, spreading piece of the sky with its great cloud-shapes. A better-known picture is Hobbema's *Avenue* in the National Gallery. It is beautiful, and yet there seems plenty of reason why it should not be. There is a road running between rows of lanky trees that look as if they were always being tortured by a high wind, there are ditches by the side of the road, some flat fields, and a village with a church spire in the distance. But the sky is blue, with white clouds, and there is a great sense of space in the picture.

Ruysdael and Hobbema are the best known among the landscape painters. We do not know much about either except that Hobbema was Ruysdael's only important pupil, that neither was popular in his own day, and that they lived in comparative poverty. Jacob Ruysdael was one of a family of

Amsterdam *Mansell*

THE MILL
Ruysdael

painters, and lived at Amsterdam. He often painted dashing, rocky streams, and it has been suggested that some time in his life he visited Norway.

Albert Cuyp and Paul Potter painted cattle, and about the same time there appeared a whole crop of "still life" pictures—dead game, flowers, fruit, fish, vegetables—which would have moved Margaret van Eyck to repeat her remark about illuminators.

All these men died before 1700, except Hobbema, who lived till 1709. Therefore, all the great pictures of which we think when we refer to the "School of the Netherlands" were painted by the time of William III. It is interesting to notice that the three great branches of that time are still great branches to-day. In most modern exhibitions you will find great numbers of portraits, of landscapes, and of genre pictures and comparatively few of sacred subjects, or scenes from history, or from Greek and Roman mythology.

Lewis Hind speaks of Rembrandt as one of "the great triumvirate," or group of three: Titian, Rembrandt, and Velasquez the Spaniard, the painters whom he most admires.[1] This recalls a certain difficulty which ordinary people sometimes feel over the works of the later artists. None of these men give us awkward, ill-shaped bodies or strange, unfamiliar faces to get accustomed to before we can

[1] "Rembrandt," by Lewis Hind.

enjoy the other points in their pictures; the world in general had too much experience by their day for that. But when men had their skill in easy command it was natural that they should play with it and try experiments and seek new methods of obtaining beautiful results. This led to less interest in what was painted and greater interest in how it was painted. The story-book side of pictures was more and more lost. Now it is natural to care a good deal for the story-book side of pictures, hence some find it difficult to understand the delight of others in "the great triumvirate." To men like these the expression "a painters' painter" is sometimes applied. It is just a way of saying that they have skill which painters can see and enjoy in a way that the untrained person cannot. Therefore, it is well to remember that one's indifference to a picture may be only the result of lack of training. Fortunately, the power to admire grows wonderfully, and in scores of cases one comes to say "I enjoy it" though one may never be able to say why. You may feel that people like Botticelli's Madonnas never lived; when you look at Rembrandt's portrait of an old woman you know that this shrewd dame really talked and thought and ruled her household sternly in the Amsterdam of 300 years ago. For mysterious reasons some will like one kind of picture and some the other; it is worth a little trouble, a little

understanding of what to allow for in each, in order to like both.

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CHAPTER VII

SPAIN—THE COURT AND THE CHURCH—REALISM AND RELIGION

RAPHAEL died in 1520. More than a hundred years later the Spaniard Velasquez visited Italy and went to see Raphael's works. He gave this astonishing verdict, "I like it not at all." Good judges had worshipped Raphael for a century, and here was a foreigner of thirty calmly rejecting him. It was just because of a new point of view which had begun to appear in Venice and had grown stronger in the Netherlands and was to reach its full strength in Velasquez. That view was, "It is worthier to paint perfectly what the eye sees than the vision that the aspiring heart conceives."[1] Velasquez did not imagine lofty scenes such as *The Creation of Adam* or *The Transfiguration*; he went through life, setting down with a certain awful truth and impartiality just what he saw.

His full name was the stately Diego Rodriguez da Silva y Velasquez; according to the Spanish custom by which a man took both his father's and his mother's name, he was called "of Silva and Velasquez." Like

[1] "Days with Velasquez," by Lewis Hind.

so many other artists, he did not grow famous by his father's surname of da Silva. Rembrandt was known by his Christian name, Botticelli by a nickname, and Velasquez by the surname of his mother's family. He went to the grammar-school of Seville, where he learnt Latin and philosophy, but covered his books with drawings. At thirteen he was sent to the studio of the painter Herrera to begin his training in art. Herrera was a celebrated painter, but a man given to violent rages and to thrashing his pupils, and in less than a year the boy left him and went to Pacheco, his only other teacher.

Pacheco's house was a delightful place. He won no particular reputation as a painter, and it is not likely that he taught Velasquez much; but he was a scholar and author, had a library of his own, and was continually visited by all the most cultured men of Seville. He was also kindly and gentle-mannered, and he did not take very long to discover that his pupil was a genius. A good deal of our information about Velasquez comes from the "Art of Painting," a book written by Pacheco. In it we read: "After five years' education and instruction, I gave him my daughter in marriage, incited thereto by his virtues, his modesty, his fine qualities, and also by the hope with which his happy disposition and great talent inspired me." [1] Thus, at nineteen, Velasquez was started on the career

[1] Quoted in "Velasquez," by Auguste Bréal.

of success which he pursued to the end. He stands, with Raphael and Rubens, among the most successful great men of the world.

Four years after his marriage Velasquez determined to go to Madrid. The young King Philip IV had just succeeded to the throne, and his chief adviser was Count Olivares, a native of Seville. Counting on their townsman's influence, Pacheco and Velasquez both went to Madrid. Olivares received them kindly, and when Velasquez had painted a portrait of one of the court officials he showed it to the King and persuaded him to sit for his own portrait. It was Velasquez's great opportunity, and he seized it magnificently. He painted the king on horseback, and the result was such that Philip ordered it to be publicly exhibited. Velasquez's fortune was made, for at twenty-four he found himself appointed court painter with a fixed salary, a house in the city, and a studio in the palace itself. That was all. His whole life was settled. He went twice to Italy, he enjoyed various positions of honour at Court and the confidential friendship of the King. At sixty-one he died.

We have several portraits of him. One is in the Capitoline Museum at Rome. The features are regular, the hair and moustache dark, and the eyes keen and frank. It makes a strong impression of high-breeding and refinement. Then there is a dark, blurred face with bushy hair that looks like a wig, in

the Valencia gallery, and, more interesting than these, two portraits among the figures of large pictures. The first is in *The Surrender of Breda,* and much resembles the Capitoline portrait; the other is a full-length, showing the painter's tall, slight figure in the background of *The Maids of Honour.*

The details we know about his private life are rather scanty, for very few of his letters have been kept. He seems to have had two daughters, one of whom died in babyhood. This loss, the difficulties he had to get due payment of his salary, and a short period when he fell under the displeasure of the King, are the only disasters to him of which we are aware. We should expect this good fortune to come out somehow in his pictures. I do not think it fanciful to feel that Raphael's joyous works are those of a happy man. He makes us think of the Madonna's joys; Botticelli, who was often himself unhappy, reminds us of her sorrows. But with Velasquez there is nothing of this sort. Self-effacing and aloof, if there were unrecorded joys and agonies in his life, he did not express them in painting. "From his pictures we gather not the faintest idea of what he felt, what he thought, what he believed. One thing we know absolutely—that he saw as keenly and searchingly as any painter who has ever lived." [1]

As to what this strange man chose to paint we might

[1] "Rembrandt," by Lewis Hind.

let these two pictures sum it up for us—a King and a Court. But even a great court painter has times before he reaches Court, and Velasquez knew what drudgery meant as much as Raphael, for Pacheco taught him that good drawing meant a life-long struggle. Therefore he toiled with an iron conscientiousness all through his early years at copying ordinary objects with perfect truth. It is said that he painted no portraits in his early years; one writer retorts that he did, " but they are portraits of plates, of eggs, of pestles and mortars, of glasses and jugs, of poultry and game lying on kitchen tables." [1] Over these he began his unflinching efforts after truth, ceaselessly taking as his point of view, " it is worthier to paint perfectly what the eye sees than the vision that the aspiring heart conceives."

Pictures of this kind are called in Spanish " bodegones," and we have several by Velasquez in England. The most interesting is in the National Gallery, and is called *Christ in the House of Martha.* It is a double picture, like Raphael's *Transfiguration.* In a little square in the top right-hand corner we see Mary sitting before Christ, to whom Martha is making her complaint. In the rest of the picture we see Martha in the kitchen scolding her sulky-looking maid, who is pounding something in a pestle and mortar at a table on which are eggs, fish, and onions. Two more are

[1] Auguste Bréal in " Velasquez."

at Apsley House, and are interesting because of their history. When the brother of Napoleon, who had been made King of Spain, was driven out of the country after the English victory of Vittoria in 1813, his travelling carriage fell into the hands of the Duke of Wellington. Concealed in it were several pictures cut out of their frames and rolled up for safety. One of these turned out to be *The Water-carrier*, an early picture by Velasquez, and another his *Two Young Men at a Meal.*

Such was Velasquez's preparation for his great work of portrait-painting. After he reached Court he had one model that dwarfed all the rest. This was the King, Philip IV, a strange, repellent being who is said never to have shown anger and to have laughed in public only three times in his life. His reign was a time of bitter disaster and loss for Spain; but he was good to painters and authors, and had a real affection for Velasquez. A special arm-chair was kept for him in the studio, to which he came and went by a secret passage from his own rooms in the palace. Velasquez painted his dull, pale face repeatedly for thirty-seven years. He painted him on foot and on horseback, at prayer, in armour, in ordinary dress, in youth, middle life, and advancing age. He painted also the King's first and second wives, his children, his sister, his brother, his ministers, his dogs, horses, and jesters.

What sort of place was the Court to live in? It was the most ceremonious, stiff, rule-bound place imaginable. There were very strict customs about rank. Therefore in the court account-books we find Velasquez, the man of genius, the gentleman by birth and breeding mentioned among the dwarfs, jesters, and barbers. At a great state bull-fight, when he was forty-one, and at the height of his fame, he was given a seat by the court barbers. His salary was always owing, and he had constantly to petition for its payment. Officials swarmed in the palace, and Velasquez held various posts which brought him in a little more money, but must have taken his time and strength from painting. In regard to the strict rules of the Court a ridiculous story was told about Philip III, father of Philip IV. It was said that he died from the too great heat of a pan of charcoal because the right official to take it away was not at hand, and it would have been a shocking thing for any one else to touch it. The truth which made any one think of this nonsense must have been bad enough. The Queen Isabella of Bourbon was rebuked by her lady-in-waiting for speaking too politely to the wife of a tradesman, and her successor Mariana of Austria for laughing too heartily at the jokes of the court dwarf. The costume of the Queens was as uncomfortable as the conduct expected of them. We have several portraits of Mariana of

National Gallery *Mansell*

PHILIP IV OF SPAIN
Velasquez

Austria and her daughter. They wear crinolines of startling size, surmounted by the tightest of bodices, and carry handkerchiefs as big as towels. Their hair is made to stick out prodigiously with plaits and ringlets, and their faces are disfigured by hard spots of rouge high on each cheek-bone. When Louis XIV, who married Philip's elder daughter, saw his bride he thought her beautiful, but was "appalled by her costume."

It was the King whom Velasquez painted most. The portrait of him which is here reproduced was painted when he was about fifty; close to it hangs another—a full-length done when he was between twenty and thirty. In both he wears the flat, plain linen collar called a "golilla," which he invented himself as a change from ruffs. His face and expression have altered surprisingly little.

Next to the King Velasquez most often painted the royal children. In the Louvre and at Vienna are pictures of the Infanta Margarita before she took to the hideous court attire, and scattered over Europe are many portraits of the Prince Balthasar Carlos, the beloved eldest son of Philip IV, heir to a great Empire, who died at sixteen. Velasquez recorded all the stages in his short life. Like his father, he was growing up with a passionate love of riding and of hunting. At Madrid there is a picture of him on his famous black pony, which is often reproduced. The thing which catches most people's

attention first in this picture is the horse. It has a ridiculous, tub-like body and thin legs; there never could be a horse like it. That horse reminds us of one of the most curious things about this extraordinary man. He seems to have loved dogs and horses, and to have been able to paint them in as masterly a style as human beings—so long as they were at rest; but his attempts to paint horses in motion, in attitudes in which he could not keep them fixed, are ludicrous. This, and his choice of subjects, have led to the statement that he had no imagination. Perhaps this made it easier for him to bear the withering atmosphere of Philip's Court, even to live in it contentedly, as far as we can guess.

Once in his life Velasquez touches English history; twice he broke loose from the Court, and saw a freer life. In 1623 Charles I, then Prince of Wales, and his friend, Buckingham, went to the Court at Madrid to see the Infanta Maria, sister of the King, who had been suggested as a wife for him. Velasquez was appointed to the King's service a few weeks after the Prince's arrival, and, before he left, made a sketch of him, which, unhappily, has disappeared.

Five years after his appointment as court painter Rubens visited Madrid on political business from the Court of the Netherlands. Since Philip considered it a natural and proper arrangement that Velasquez should witness bull-fights alongside the court barbers,

he was rather shocked when he heard of Rubens' profession, and protested against an Ambassador "of such an inferior position." However, he was persuaded that he might receive the painter without misgivings, and Rubens came to Madrid. He stayed nine months, and was provided with a studio in the palace, where he copied some of the most famous of the King's pictures. Velasquez was told to entertain him and show him all he might wish to see. It must have been a wonderful nine months to the young Velasquez. Rubens was fifty-one, cultured, successful, acquainted with many courts and countries, at the height of his fame, and very kind-hearted. Velasquez took him to see the pictures at the palace of the Escorial outside Madrid, and they went for sketching expeditions into the mountains. He must have looked on with amazement while Rubens dashed off pictures—portraits of the royal family and copies of the King's Titians. He himself worked so much more slowly, was so much more placid and reserved. Rubens liked him, expressing, as Pacheco says, "a very favourable opinion of his works and of his modesty." No record of their talk on those sketching expeditions has been kept, but it is not hard to imagine what the gay, voluble Fleming poured into his friend's willing ears. He must have talked of Italy, of Venice, of Titian, of life unhampered by court etiquette; out of his hearty good-nature he must

have striven to send Velasquez whither he had sent Van Dyck.

This talk must have made Velasquez petition the King for leave of absence, for the next year, 1629, he set out for Italy, with letters of introduction from his friend Olivares and orders to buy pictures for the King. So he went to Rome, and we know what he said of Raphael; but he went also to Venice. The Italian Boschini wrote an amusing set of verses on artists where Velasquez's views are described thus —he is supposed to be talking to an Italian painter :

> "The master stiffly bowed his figure tall,
> And said, 'For Raphael, to speak the truth—
> I always was plain-spoken from my youth—
> I cannot say I like his works at all.'
>
> "'Well,' said the other, 'if you can run down
> So great a man, I really cannot see
> What you can find to like in Italy;
> To him we all agree to give the crown.'
>
> "Diego answered thus : 'I saw in Venice
> The true test of the good and beautiful;
> First, in my judgment, ever stands that school
> And Titian first of all Italian men is.'" [1]

Twenty years later he visited Italy again, and painted one of his most famous pictures, the portrait of Pope Innocent X. We wonder if the Pope liked it. Velasquez, with his deadly truthfulness, found himself before an ugly, cunning old man, and recorded

[1] Quoted in Stirling-Maxwell's "Life of Velasquez."

the fact without reserve. As a piece of practice, he painted Juan Pareja, his Moorish slave who used to grind his colours, and the picture created a vast sensation in Rome.

In 1651 Velasquez was back in Spain, which he never left again. The second picture in this chapter was painted about 1656. It is often called by its Spanish name, *Las Meninas,* and shows a scene in the royal palace. The little Princess Margarita, Philip's youngest daughter, stands in the middle of a large room with her two maids of honour. One is kneeling to give her a glass of water on a tray, and both seem to be persuading her to be good, perhaps to stand still to be painted. Other people are in the room, and every one is a portrait of some member of the Court whose name we know. In front is a sleepy mastiff wrinkling up his forehead as sleepy dogs do, and beside him are two little dwarfs. Behind them all, looking on, is Velasquez himself, standing, palate in hand, before a great canvas, and somewhere out of sight are Philip and Queen Mariana, for they appear in the mirror over the little Princess's head.

Painters love this picture for the skill with which it is painted. In Monsieur Bréal's book about Velasquez he describes how astonishing it is to look into the picture and see the apparently meaningless dabs of colour which from a little distance shape themselves into living figures surrounded with air

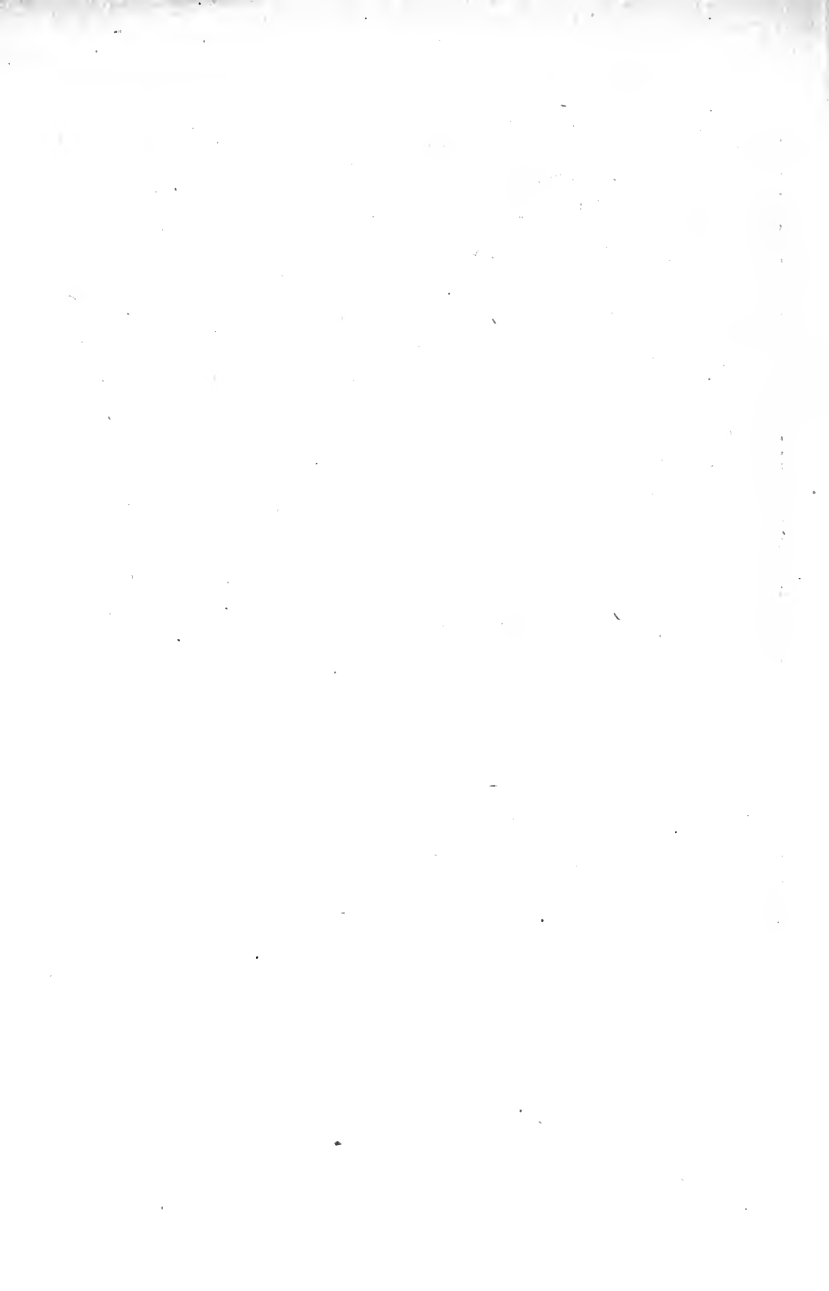
and light. There are two ways by which painters strive to secure reality. One is by very careful copying of all the detail in the objects before them. That is what Velasquez did in his early "bodegones." Another way is by leaving out detail as much as possible, not painting all the artist knows to be there, but showing by the simplest means how objects look in a certain light and a certain position. This is what Velasquez had come to do when he painted *The Maids of Honour.* He did it also in *The Spanish Admiral*, which is in the National Gallery. The writer Palomino, in his book on artists, says: "He did it with pencils and brushes which had extreme long handles, which he sometimes made use of to paint at a greater distance, and with more boldness, so that near hand one does not know what to make of it, but afar off it is a masterpiece." [1] Velasquez has therefore been called the first of the impressionists, or men who work in this second style. M. de Beruete, in a beautiful book on his work, says he had "an heroic simplicity," and is "the most modern of all the old masters."

Why did such a man not grow tired of painting "the eternal portraits of his monotonous King"? Because, as one writer puts it, "the light of day plays upon the just and the unjust, upon the so-called

[1] "An Account of the Lives and Works of the most Eminent Spanish Artists," by Palomino.

Madrid *Anderson*

THE MAIDS OF HONOUR
Velasquez



beautiful and the so-called ugly,"[1] and even more than the Venetians he cared for the light and air and colour of the world and the best way to reproduce them. Therefore he cared little what he painted, since everything offered him problems of light and shade and drawing. So he presented his subjects to the beholder, keeping back himself and what he felt about them in impenetrable reserve. We picture him against a background of the great palace rooms, a stately gentleman in rich garb, serene, courteous, upright, tampering not with truth, but setting down just what he saw.

One thing he saw was the company of poor little dwarfs and idiots who were kept about the palace as jesters and court fools. He painted a long series of them. To us the act seems irreverent and brutal, and one feels, in looking at these pictures, that he did it without sorrow or disgust, or anything but interest in new objects he had found to paint. Yet we hear of no cruelty in him, but of much that is gentle and kindly. His Moorish slave, Juan de Parga, sat up at night secretly teaching himself to draw until he had become a fair artist. When Velasquez discovered it he was very kind to him, gave him his freedom, and received him as a pupil. Juan refused to leave him, though free, and after his death remained in the service of his daughter, Francesca, wife of the painter

[1] "Velasquez," by A. Bréal.

Mazo. Velasquez helped and advised the young Murillo, and when his patron, Olivares, fell into disgrace he risked the King's displeasure and broke court etiquette by going to see him.

In 1659 it seems to have dawned on Philip that his painter deserved some special mark of honour, and he got him admitted to the Order of the Knights of Santiago, but not without difficulty, as the heads of the Order regarded professional painting as a disqualification.

For the last ten years of his life Velasquez held the post of Grand Marshal, among the innumerable duties of which was the arrangement of all great court ceremonies. The time came for the marriage of the King's eldest daughter, Maria Theresa, to Louis XIV of France, and Velasquez had to prepare for a great ceremony on a little river-island on the borders of France and Spain. It was the last task of his life, and he seems to have done it extremely well. The accounts tell how all admired his good looks and stately manners, his court suit of black, braided with silver, and adorned with a massive gold chain and the red cross of the Order of Santiago. He came home, as he says in a letter to a friend, " tired with travelling by night and working by day," and a week or two later he fell ill of a fever from which the King's own physicians could not save him. He made a will and " delivered up his soul to God, who had created it

to be the admiration of the world."[1] Eight days later his wife was buried beside him.

He left the palace full of those works of his in which he had set forth his belief that it is worthiest to paint perfectly what the eye sees. His fate was strange. Raphael was admired, imitated, praised as the chief of painters until our own day, but Velasquez was just forgotten. Then, in the nineteenth century, he was rediscovered by certain enthusiastic writers, and, once known to artists, he came to be regarded as their great teacher and example. "What we are all attempting to do with great labour, Velasquez does at once," wrote Sir Joshua Reynolds in his diary.

The last picture in this book is by the only other painter of Spain whose fame approaches anywhere near that of Velasquez. It is Murillo, the painter of religious pictures and of genre. He was younger than Velasquez, and had greater struggles in youth. He was the son of poor parents, who both died when he was a child. He seems to have had little teaching, and when a young man of about twenty he was living in Seville with his sister and making but little from his art. One of his efforts was making pictures to sell in the market in Seville. There was a great demand for religious pictures on saga-cloth, a sort of coarse canvas that could be bought cheaply. Un-

[1] "Velasquez," by A. de Beruete.

fortunately, the pictures sold cheaply too, and Murillo did not grow richer. If he dreamed of great things he might do, there seemed no prospect of ever having the money to do them.

While he was leading this life a friend of his, who had been absent from Seville, returned. It was the soldier-painter Moya, who had fought in the Netherlands and found opportunity to study the paintings there. He had crossed to England and made the acquaintance of Van Dyck, who showed him kindness and let him make sketches from his own works. Moya related his adventures to Murillo, and showed him the sketches. Murillo seems to have resolved that he would make one great effort for travel and learning. So he bought as much saga-cloth as he could afford, cut it into squares, painted a picture on each, and sold the whole lot to a ship-owner who was going to sail to the Spanish possessions in South America. Then he found a home for his sister, and disappeared from Seville. Three years later he returned and began to paint in a new and marvellously improved style, which moved the wonder of all his townsfolk.

We know now how he spent those three years, though he refused to satisfy the curious in Seville. He went straight to Madrid and sought out his fellow townsman, Velasquez. The great man beheld a sunburnt, black-haired youth, with very shabby clothes and no letters of introduction, but full of a zeal that

had conquered poverty and got him to Madrid. So he looked at his work and encouraged him, and finally took him to live in his own house and began to teach him. Toward the end of the three years he had made great progress. Then Velasquez, mindful of his own youth and Rubens' visit, said that he must at all costs go to Italy. But, strange to say, Murillo refused. Velasquez offered to provide the money, and no doubt urged him strongly, but the young man was obstinate. Perhaps he thought of his sister in Seville; at any rate, he knew he could now earn money there and desired to set about it. So he left Madrid and never saw Velasquez again. Indeed, except when he once went to Cadiz to paint a picture, he seems never to have left his beloved city again.

His works can be divided into two distinct classes, genre and religious pictures. The genre must have been learnt in his saga-cloth days. It consists of pictures of little beggar-boys of the market place, playing, talking. There are examples in the National Gallery and the Dulwich Gallery, and at many other places in Europe.

The religious pictures are a much larger class. Murillo's first success in them was when he had a commission to paint a series for the Franciscan monks of the city. They wanted eleven large pictures, but had not much money to spend. None of the best-known painters would have accepted their price, and

they were rather unwillingly obliged to give the work to the unknown Murillo. He had his chance, as Velasquez had, and, like Velasquez, he took it. The eleven pictures were the admiration of the town, and his name was made. He began to prosper; pupils and orders for pictures came to him rapidly; he married and settled down in Seville.

The most interesting event in his later life was the founding of an academy of arts for poor students in Seville. Murillo and Herrera, the son of Velasquez's bad-tempered master, and twenty others formed a governing body. The governors subscribed to the school, but the students only paid what they could afford. The rules were simple, for they were only required to make a declaration of their religious faith, to promise to keep from swearing, and, oddly enough, from talking about anything not connected with the work of the school. The last rule, I suppose, was intended to prevent idling, but it must have restricted the pleasures of student life. It was thus that Murillo repaid to the needy all Velasquez had once done for him.

He was sixty-four when he was asked to paint a *Marriage of St. Catherine* for a church in Cadiz. He went to superintend the setting up of the picture, and, while climbing on the scaffolding, he slipped and injured himself severely. He was brought back to Seville, and for the remaining few days of his life

he had himself carried daily to the church of Santa Cruz that he might pray before his favourite picture, a *Descent from the Cross* by Pedro Campaña. He died at the beginning of April 1682, and his city buried him next day with great honour, fulfilling his own wishes by making his grave in Santa Cruz, beneath his beloved picture and by writing upon it "Vive Moriturus" (Live as one about to die).

Thus there are two Spanish painters who surpass all the rest in fame; surpass them so much that many people could not add another name to theirs. Yet there were, of course, others, as you may see in the National Gallery. There was El Greco. Then there was Ribera, who is sometimes called Spagnoletto. He lived at Naples, where Velasquez visited him, and his pictures are often fierce and gloomy in subject.

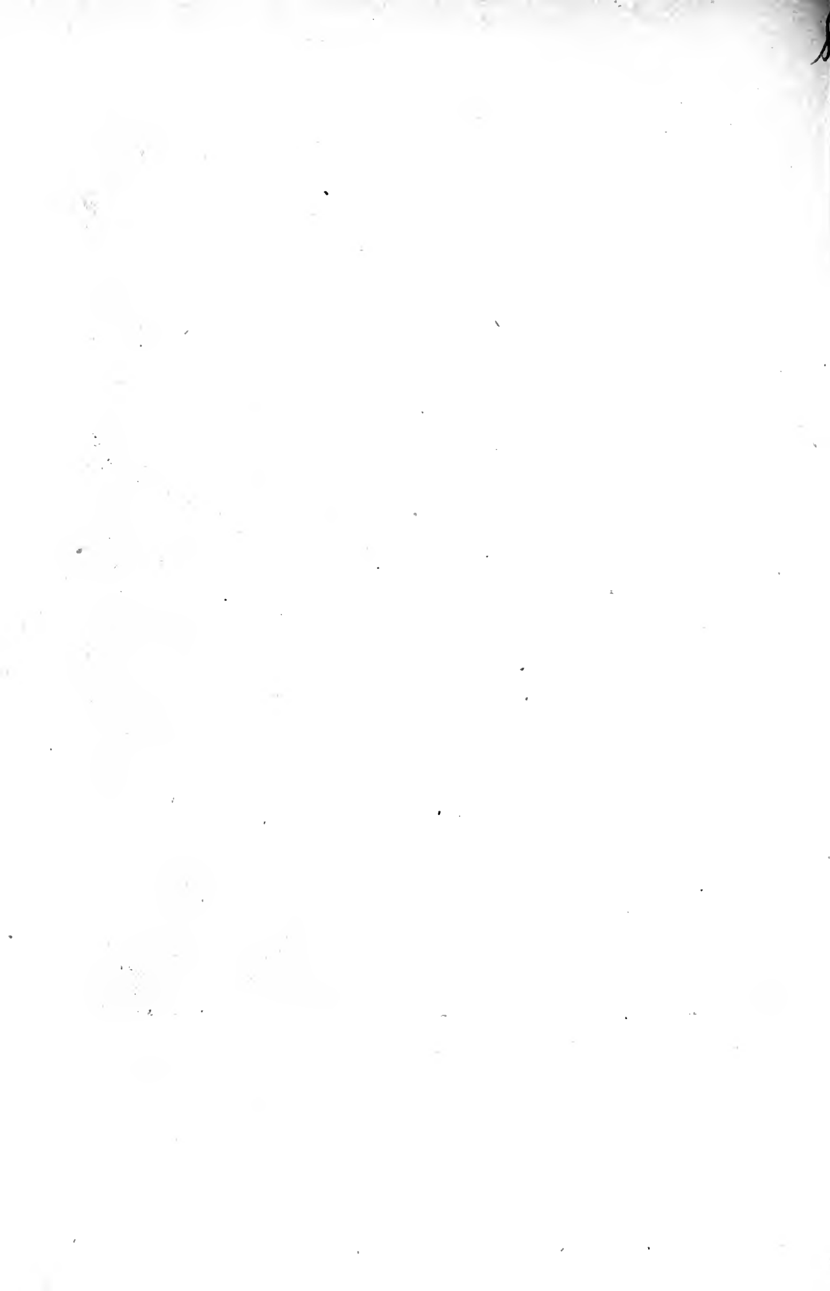
The painter Zurbaran, who lived at the same time as Velasquez and Murillo, has left us the *Franciscan Monk in Prayer*, a gloomy and passionate figure. But while we must not forget that there were these men, and Herrera and Pacheco, and a good many others whom I have not mentioned, the fact remains that there are two painters who surpass the rest, and that the work of these two is entirely different. Yet they lived at the same time. What curious point in the "national and local life of the day" caused this difference? There were two great influences upon the art of Spain. One was the Court, where

painting was appreciated and encouraged. The other was the Church, which encouraged art too, but laid very strict rules upon it. And beneath them both, as in every country and in every age, was the everyday life of ordinary poor people. That underlying life both the great men painted, Velasquez in the "bodegones" and Murillo in the pictures of beggar-boys. But in the rest of their work Velasquez reveals to us the Court and Murillo the Church.

The Church had a stronger and more enduring effect on art in Spain than in Italy. There was nothing in Spain like the Revival of Learning which had such a profound effect upon Italy; the Renaissance, in all its forms, penetrated there more slowly. Therefore the range of subjects in Spanish pictures is much smaller. There are the two threads of realism and idealism to be seen in Spanish art as in Italian art, but up to the end of Murillo's life-time, at least, the idealistic thread had an equal share with the realistic thread in the pattern. The religion of the Spanish was very ardent; in some minds it became savage and gloomy. The Church tyrannised over the people, and they yielded to its tyranny. The best-known example of this is, of course, the Inquisition, a body of clergy whose special work was the stamping out of heresy. Part of its duty was the superintendence of art. It appointed inspectors to see that no one painted pictures of a kind it had forbidden. Pacheco

Louvre, Paris *Alinari*

THE HOLY FAMILY
Murillo



was one of these inspectors for a time, and in his book, the " Art of Painting," we learn how strict were the rules which the Church forced on artists. Pictures illustrating the mythology of Greece and Rome were discouraged, and there were the most precise directions about the manner of representing the Virgin Mary. She was to be young, with grave eyes, rosy cheeks, streaming hair, and her feet always concealed by the folds of her robe. Many pictures of her were based on a verse in the book of Revelation, " Behold a woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet and on her head twelve stars"; and Pacheco adds that in these she is to be robed in blue and white, and girded with a cord like St. Francis, that her eyes are to be raised to heaven, that the moon is to be a crescent and the stars to form her a crown. Murillo painted no less than twenty pictures of this kind, and they were very popular in Seville.

The last illustration in this book shows some of the most remarkable points about the work of Murillo. There is a very soft but glowing light in the picture. God the Father looks down from the heavens upon the Virgin with her Child. Before them kneels St. Elizabeth with St. John. Murillo seems to have taken pleasure in painting St. John as a child. There are several pictures of him clothed in a little hairy garment, carrying a cross, and accompanied by a lamb. One is in the National Gallery. They have

the round faces and dark hair you may see in this *Holy Family*, and the Madonna in all Murillo's pictures is different from the Madonna in those of Florence or the Netherlands.

Nothing is more interesting than a comparison of the subjects chosen for sacred pictures in different countries. Murillo naturally painted the saints of his native land. The patrons of Seville were St. Justa and St. Rufina, daughters of a potter who were put to death for their Christianity. He painted them holding between them a model of the beautiful Giralda Tower of Seville, once the tower of a mosque, which they were supposed to have protected during a terrible thunder-storm. He painted also pictures of St. Thomas, of Villanueva, a Bishop of Seville. Thus he glorified the saints of his native Spain.

More than a hundred and thirty years after his death Napoleon conquered Spain, and his general, Marshal Soult, was distinguished by the persistence with which he carried off pictures. All of the great series of eleven from the Franciscan monastery that were not too stiff to roll up he carried away, and of another from the cathedral he used to say that it had saved two people's lives, for he had threatened to shoot two obstinate monks had they not saved their lives by giving it up just in time.

Soult sought for Murillos industriously; he did

not think of Velasquez. Murillo has always been popular. Ruskin says of him that he was one of the feeblest among those painters who are accounted great, yet he was known and admired during that long period when Velasquez was forgotten.

In this book I have touched upon three great schools, or groups of schools, the Schools of Italy, the Schools of Germany and the Netherlands, and lastly the Spanish School, each marked off from the others, and each having subdivisions of its own. The range and variety are infinite, and every human soul may look upon the whole and decide the question of greatest and least for itself. "The art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas."[1] We may hold that in mind, remembering always that what does not suggest the greatest ideas to our own minds may do so to another now, and may yet do so to us also in the future.

"We acknowledge genius in a painter when . . . he presents to us a view of life or of nature which we may never have seen but which we are convinced . . . is true . . . and it is only because of the dimness or narrowness or worldliness of our outlook that we do not perceive it also."[2] For the answer to

[1] "Modern Painters," by Ruskin, vol. i., chapter on "Definition of Greatness in Art."

[2] "Rembrandt," by Lewis Hind.

the prayer "Lighten our darkness" comes to different men through different channels, and through the work of the great masters in art it has come and is coming still.

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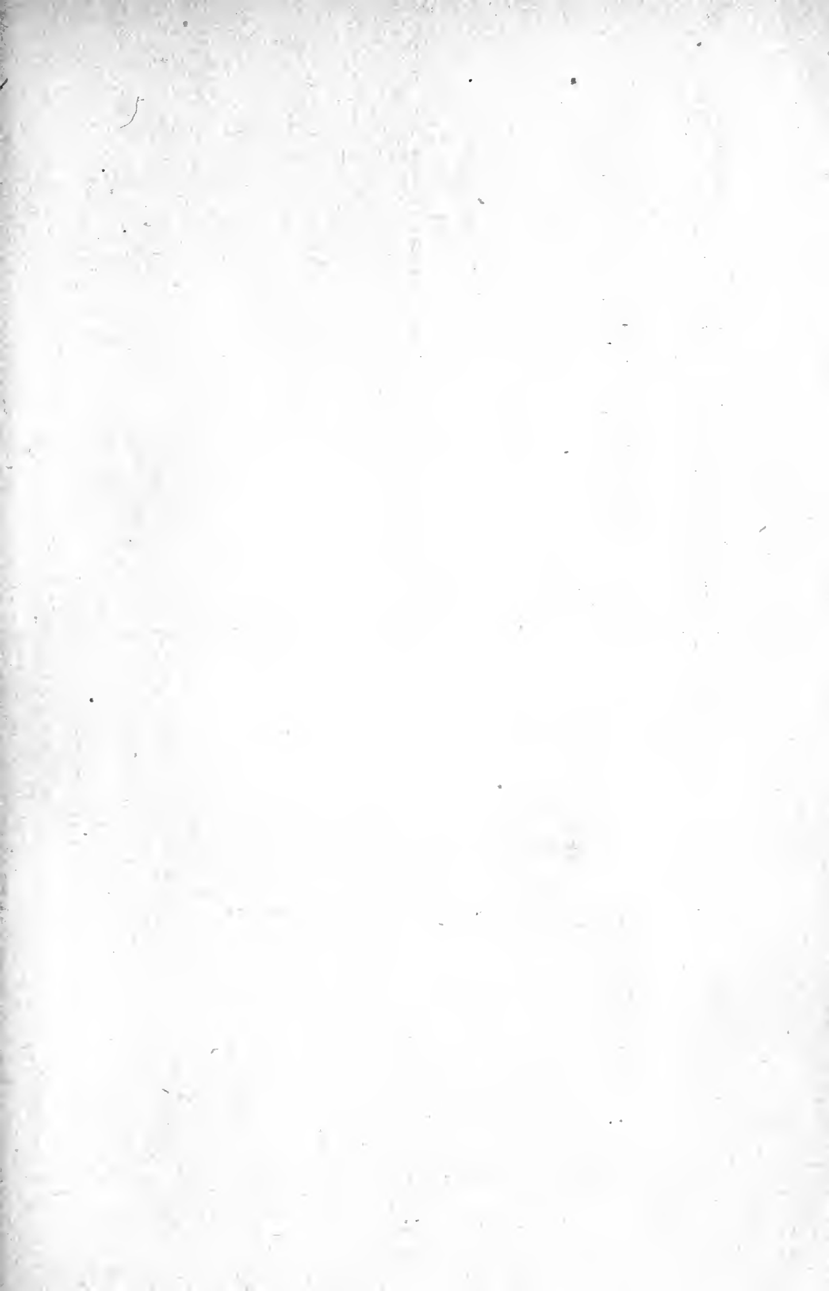


CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

	ITALIAN ART.	ART OF OTHER LANDS.	EVENTS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.	EVENTS IN ENGLISH HISTORY.
1200–		chiefly represented by illuminations in manuscripts, and the decoration of small objects.	5th, 6th and 7th Crusades.	
	Nicolo Pisano (Sculptor)		St. Francis, and St. Dominic	Magna Carta, 1215 Coming of the Friars
	Cimabue			
1250–				
	Giotto			Barons' war against Henry III
	Duccio		Dante	
1300–	Taddeo Gaddi			
	Orcagna	Painting miniations decoration		
	Spinello Aretino		Hundred Years' War begins [Crecy 1346] Black Death	Wycliffe Chaucer
1350–				
		Jan van Eyck		
	Donatello	Meister Wilhelm		
	Fra Angelico			
1400–	Uccello	Van der Weyden		
	Masaccio Fra Filippo Lippi Giovanni Bellini		Florence Learning	Battle of Agincourt
			Joan of Arc	
	Botticelli	Hans Memling		

Date	Italian artists	Northern artists	European events	English events
1450–1500	Leonardo da Vinci Filippino Lippi Michelangelo Giorgione and Titian Carpaccio Raphael Correggio	Mabuse Quentin Matsys Albrecht Dürer Gerard David Hans Holbein	Medici in Revival of: Constantinople taken by Turks, 1453 Invention of printing America found, 1492 Savonarola	Wars of the Roses
1500–1600	Tintoretto Paolo Veronese Italian art	Peter Paul Rubens Franz Hals Van Dyck and Velasquez	Death of Maximilian Election of Charles V Luther, Reformation Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 1572 Revolt of Netherlands against Spain	Reformation in England Defeat of Armada, 1588 Shakespeare
1600–1700	Decline of	Rembrandt Teniers Murillo Ruysdael De Hooch	Thirty Years' War	Civil War Milton Restoration William and Mary

Note.—The names of the artists are inserted against the date of their birth.

GLOSSARY OF ART TERMS

Adoration of the Magi. A picture of the visit of the Wise Men of the East to the Infant Christ.

Agnus Dei. A figure of a lamb bearing a cross or flag. Used in pictures as an emblem of Christ, *e.g.* in Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb.*

Alto-relievo. Italian. See *High Relief.*

Assumption of the Virgin. A picture of the Virgin carried up to heaven among angels.

Bas-relief. A carving in which the figures do not project far from the background, *e.g.* the frieze of the Parthenon, the doors of the Baptistery at Florence.

Basso-relievo. Italian. See *Bas-relief.*

Cartoon. A first drawing from which a finished picture is to be made.

Cenacolo. Lit. "evening meal," a picture of the Last Supper.

Chiaroscuro. The arrangement of light and dark parts in a work of art.

Cinquecento. Lit. 500, abbreviation for 1500, *i.e.* the sixteenth century.

Composition. (1) The arrangement of the different figures and objects in a picture. (2) The art of arranging the different parts of a picture to make a pleasing whole.

Coronation of the Virgin. A picture representing Christ or God the Father placing a crown upon the Virgin's head.

Distemper. See *Tempera.*

Donors. The persons who present a picture to a church or monastery; their portraits are often included in the picture, or placed on the wings of triptychs.

Easel-picture. A painting on wood or canvas which is made apart from the wall on which it is to hang.

Engravings. Pictures printed from carved plates of wood, copper, steel, or stone. Albrecht Dürer made many famous engravings.

Entombment. A picture of the burial of Christ.

Etchings. Pictures printed from copper or steel plates. These are covered with wax, which is scratched away with fine tools to give the design. Acid is then poured on and eats marks on the plate wherever the wax is scratched away.

Fresco. Lit. fresh; a painting on wet plaster, later used for any sort of painting on plaster.

High relief. A carving in which the figures project far from the background, *e.g.* the fight of the Lapithae and Centaurs from the Parthenon.

Impasto. The thickness of the layer of paint used on a picture. Rembrandt's are examples of the use of a thick, and Botticelli's of thin, impasto.

Lunette. The semi-circular space above a window; sometimes a picture of similar shape put over the top of a large altarpiece.

Madonna. Lit. "my lady." The Virgin Mary, or a picture of the Virgin.

Mandorla. Lit. "almond"; an oblong ring of light painted round the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Its shape was originally intended to represent a fish, the ancient symbol of Christ.

Nativity. A picture of the birth of Christ in the stable.

Pietà. A picture or sculptured group of the body of Christ mourned over by the Virgin and saints or angels.

Predella. The base of an altarpiece adorned with several smaller paintings.

Quattrocento. Lit. 400, abbreviation for 1400, *i.e.* the fifteenth century.

Symbolism. The custom of representing persons, things, and events by certain objects, *e.g.* victory by a banner, Christ by a lamb, etc.

Tempera. Colour mixed with egg or gum ; used before the introduction of oil-painting.

Terra-cotta. Clay used for the making of busts and small pieces of statuary, which are baked so that the material becomes red.

Triptych. Lit. a threefold thing. A picture divided into three compartments, the outer ones called wings, and sometimes made to close on hinges over the central part.

Vesica Piscis. See *Mandorla.*

Wings. See *Triptych.*

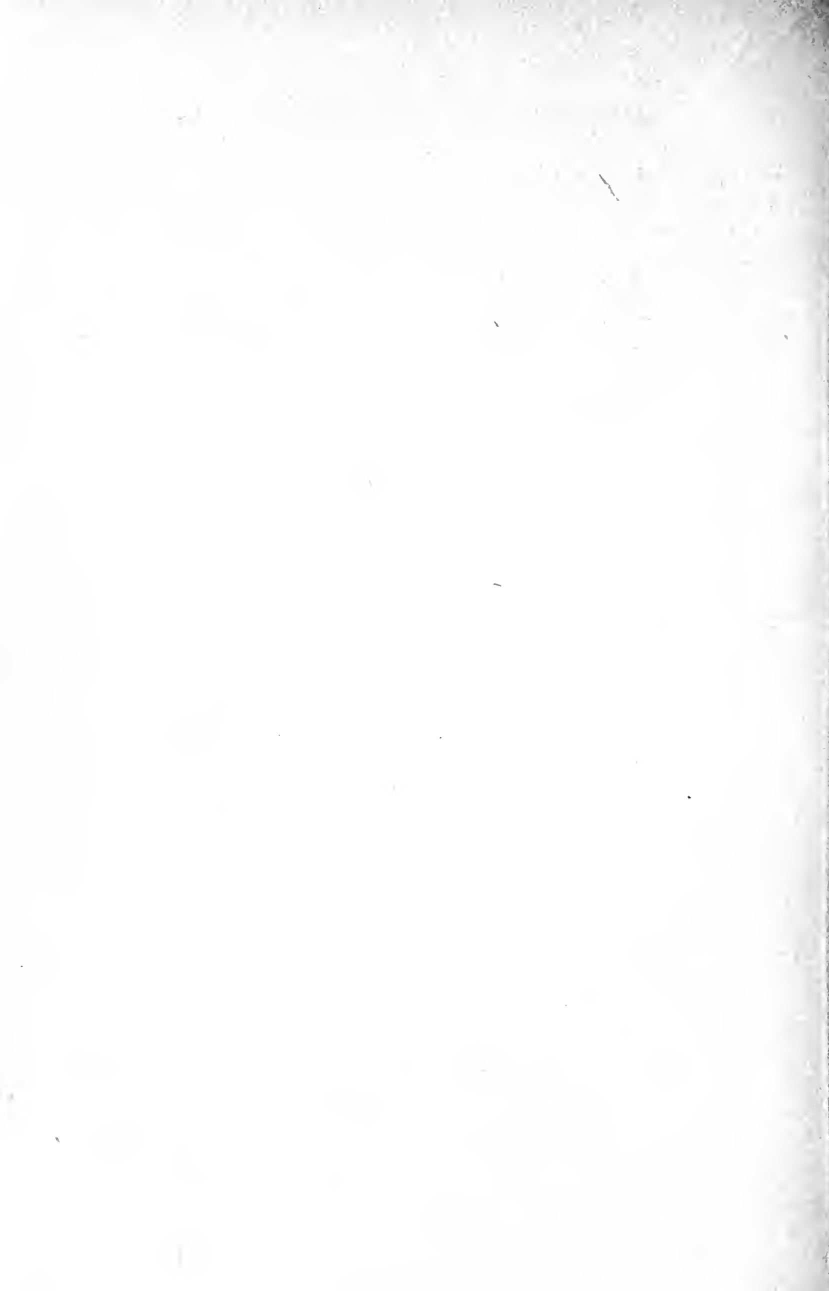
Wood-cuts. Pictures printed from wooden blocks on which the design is carved. Albrecht Dürer made famous wood-cuts.

ARTISTS KNOWN BY MORE THAN ONE NAME

The most general name is given first, and that by which they may often be found in catalogues is printed in italics.

Botticelli. Alessandro di Mariano *Filipepi.*
Corregio. Antonio *Allegri.*
Duccio. Duccio di Buoninsegna.
El Greco. Domenico *Theotocopoulos.*
Fra Angelico. Giovanni da Fiesole (also Il Beato Angelico).
Giorgione. Giorgio *Barbarelli.*
Mabuse. Jan *Gossart* de Mabuse.
Matteo di Giovanni. Matteo da Siena.
Memling. Hans *Memlinc.*
Michelangelo. Michelangelo (or Michael Angelo) *Buonarroti* de Simoni.

Perugino. Pietro *Vannucci.*
Raphael. Raffaello *Sanzio*, or *Santi.*
Rembrandt. Rembrandt *Harmensz van Ryn* (or Rijn).
Ribera. Il *Spagnoletto.*
Tintoretto. Jacopo *Robusti.*
Titian. *Tiziano* Vecellio.
Veronese. Paolo *Caliari.*



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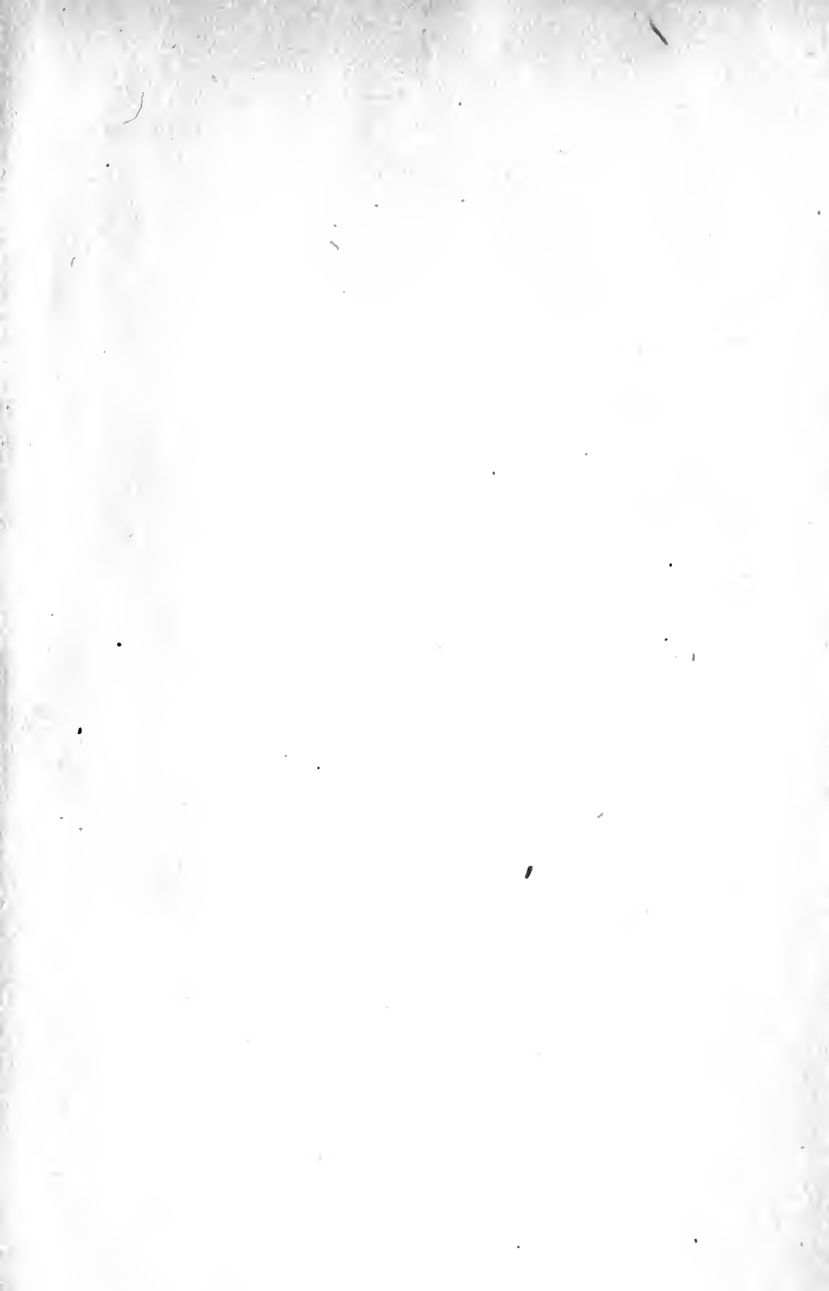

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