

THE
OUTLINE
OF ART

EDITED BY
SIR WILLIAM
ORPEN

REVISED BY
HORACE SHEPP

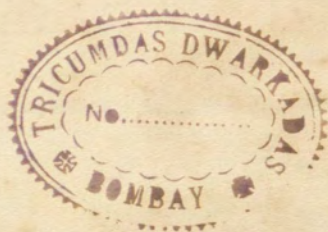


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THE OUTLINE OF ART



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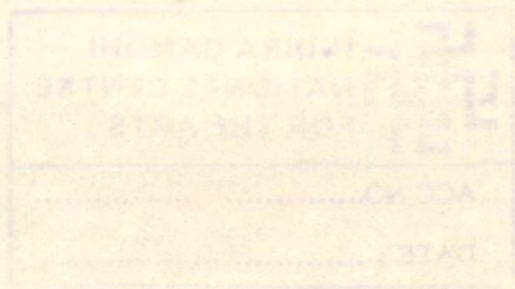
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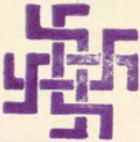


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PREFACE

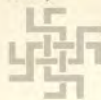
THE word OUTLINE indicates something at once comprehensive and yet free from detail. It came into fame when H. G. Wells, shaken by the disaster of the 1914-18 war, reacted to it by a determination to bring mankind together at least in the understanding of an all-embracing history of the race instead of the ill-balanced national histories which were then available. Wells first, and every creator of an Outline since, believed that its business is to cover the whole ground in one approximately continuous story, and to cover it in comparatively easy fashion so that the uninitiated can follow without being confused. The purpose of an Outline is to enable the reader to see the wood rather than the trees. Afterwards he or she can specialise, differentiate, particularise.

Actually, the specialist vastly learned about some chosen corner of the wide territory, may be rather tantalised by what seems to him sketchy and inadequate treatment of the particular aspect which he knows so thoroughly. We remember how the specialist historians raged at Wells; but that very limitation is the essence of the Outline idea. One moves as in an aeroplane over a continent, flying only low enough to map the outstanding features, whereas the specialist minutely maps one little corner of the ground.

This *Outline of Art* was first published in 1923, the collaboration of one of the greatest painters living at that date, Sir William Orpen, and one of the finest writers upon art, Frank Rutter. A later edition was issued in 1942 after the deaths of both Sir William Orpen and Frank Rutter. This was brought up to date at that time by Bernadette Murphy, a creative writer whose personal friendship with Rutter himself and with many practising artists enabled her to interpret justly many facets of the contemporary movements in painting and sculpture.

After the Second World War it was decided to republish the work in an entirely new edition, resetting the type, changing where necessary the illustrations, and planning a new format, as well as again bringing the text up to date; and this time the task of revision and extension came into my hands. It was made easier, in one respect, precisely because an absolutely new production was planned, with the illustrations each being given the dignity of a separate page, and the text matter altered in any way I felt necessary.

The most drastic change, the one which I deemed most essential, was to bring the book more truly into line with its title by greatly extending its range. The original OUTLINE had really concerned itself only with European painting and sculpture since the beginning of the Renaissance. It was,

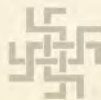


therefore, in accord with the wider spirit of this century, with its enormously broader scope, that I extended the range of this OUTLINE in both time and space—in time, to the earliest manifestations of the arts in the prehistoric cave paintings and bone sculpture ; in space, to cover the art of the world. Let the word OUTLINE justify the temerity of this extension since only by such an extension could that title itself be justified.

The specialists, the archaeologists with their scientific approach, the modern critics and scholars both of art and anthropology had brought a tremendous amount of new material into the field, and of knowledge of its meaning and significance. We had a much more complete picture of the different periods, and a new idea of the links between them since so many gaps had been filled in. Add to this the new interest in and understanding of the arts of primitive peoples still living—the discovery of Negro sculpture, for instance—and the whole conception of art becomes world-wide and stretches through the ages into the dawn of pre-history.

Into that conception the six hundred years of European painting and sculpture must take its place, even though we grant it a place more important to us than any other contribution because of its nearness to all other aspects of our cultural and social life. But it must not have the sole place. The art of China, for instance, stretching unbroken over five thousand years and achieving in its finest periods something akin to absolute perfection, is *sub specie aeternitatis* as important as European, perhaps even more important. In an ideal Outline of Art it would occupy as much or more space. For our ordinary purposes, however, it can safely be put into a perspective which condenses its size and focus and blurs its details compared to those of our European painters, sculptors, and craftsmen.

The problem of adjusting perfectly these relative values I will not pretend to have solved even to my own absolute satisfaction, and one is prepared for the furious onslaught of some specialist, of say Aztec sculpture or Tibetan silk painting, who feels his life interest slighted in a book which gives inordinate space to Whistler or the French Impressionists. Here, indeed, was another source of doubt which arose out of the very genesis of the book. Sir William Orpen and Frank Rutter had certain enthusiasms—Velazquez, Hogarth, Whistler, and others—and, much as I may myself admire these painters, I would admit that they have undue emphasis even in their story confined to European art. But it was the warm essence of the work and of the writing to include this enthusiasm and personal predilection. The *Outline of Art*, even though its purpose was encyclopædic, was not just an encyclopædia : it was a breathingly human book created by a painter and a writer who *cared* for art, and therefore cared for some more than other. They did justice to all, and a little more than justice to some they loved.



PREFACE

One could have cut and toned down their enthusiasms to some general level ; but at the cost of inspiration, losing thus more than we gained in perfection of balance and proportion. I decided to alter as little as possible the original work and certainly not in the direction of curtailing that enthusiasm which is the first wisdom in art appreciation. I decided to add, rather than take away ; and only here and there, where recent scholarship has thrown new light and changed the aspect of once accepted facts and so would have been likely to have altered the opinions of the original writers, have I made any drastic changes.

One further word : although I have added many new chapters to cover such phases as prehistoric, Egyptian, Cretan, Greek and Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Chinese, Indian, primitive, and other forms of art on the one hand, and have extended the modern sections as nearly as possible to our own day, I am aware that there are still parts of the vast story inadequately dealt with. Nor have I attempted to touch upon architecture, which is so closely allied to both painting and sculpture that it may be said to be the condition of their changing existence. Only where the coming of some new style in architecture has absolutely dictated a new movement of painting or sculpture have I introduced it as a generality. For these sins of omission we would again take refuge behind the idea implicit in the word OUTLINE. If this volume serves as a broad general introduction, giving so far as it can in comparatively brief space the continuing story of this fascinating creative activity, it will fulfil its purpose. Thousands of specialised books on art can take up that story where this one lays it down. The outstanding ones are indicated in the bibliography. Movements, periods, individual artists, æsthetic theories, technical methods : in ever widening circles of interest this subject radiates to the bounds of space and time, of nature and the spirit of man. Accept this OUTLINE as a pebble dropped in these wide waters to set in motion the expanding wave of enthusiasm.

HORACE SHIPP



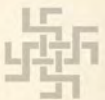
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The Outline of Art

I

THE MAGIC ROOTS

THE ARTS OF PREHISTORIC MAN

§ I

BEAUTY, Truth, Wonder, Love, Religion. The strange, difficult words lie at the roots of this most curious of all the activities of mankind : Art. The creation of things for use we can understand. The fashioning of the material provided by Nature into clothing and shelter, tools and weapons and utensils : this gave rise to necessary practical operations as the developing mind of man began the tremendous task of adapting his environment to the purpose of his living. The simplest of them—that of providing shelter—even the animals, and still more the birds, also did. But Man was not content with mere utility. Amazingly early in his story we find decoration, pattern, being added to pots and weapons and clothes, and later to his shelters. Even his own body became altered with coloured patterns or with pieces of bone-work through ears, nose, or other parts of the living flesh. The important thing to notice about this is that it is materially useless, it serves no biological purpose, neither hunger nor sex. It does not make the shelter more secure or keep the body warmer or safe from harm. Its actual creation means effort, patience, sometimes even pain and discomfort. Its end is a postponed mental pleasure, and that pleasure has to be anticipated while the work is in progress. We may well wonder what inward urge set the feet of this one among all the species of created things along so strange and apparently meaningless a path. A moment's contemplation of this activity of Art and of its beginnings takes us into deep waters, and it teaches us a great deal about the nature of Man.

A few decades ago, when we knew much less about the science of Man (Anthropology), and of the scientific study of the past (Archæology), we tended to think of Art in little water-tight compartments. Egyptian Art ; Greek Art ; Roman Art ; Modern Art, starting in Italy after the Dark Ages : each was a fresh beginning. Nor was any of it related very definitely with the study of mankind as a whole. Now we have placed



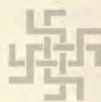
this activity of mankind into a definite place in his development ; we have established the continuity of it, and we have thrown its beginnings much farther back in time. Archæologists digging in the earliest known haunts of men have unearthed from beneath the accumulated dust of centuries the evidence of his quest for beauty or his gratification of his sense of wonder and awe, and his interest in the things about him. Anthropologists have watched these same urges at work in the primitive peoples still alive in the world and least touched by civilisation. By these means we have deduced how the mind of early Man worked. We have established links between this activity of Art and that other closely related one, Religion.

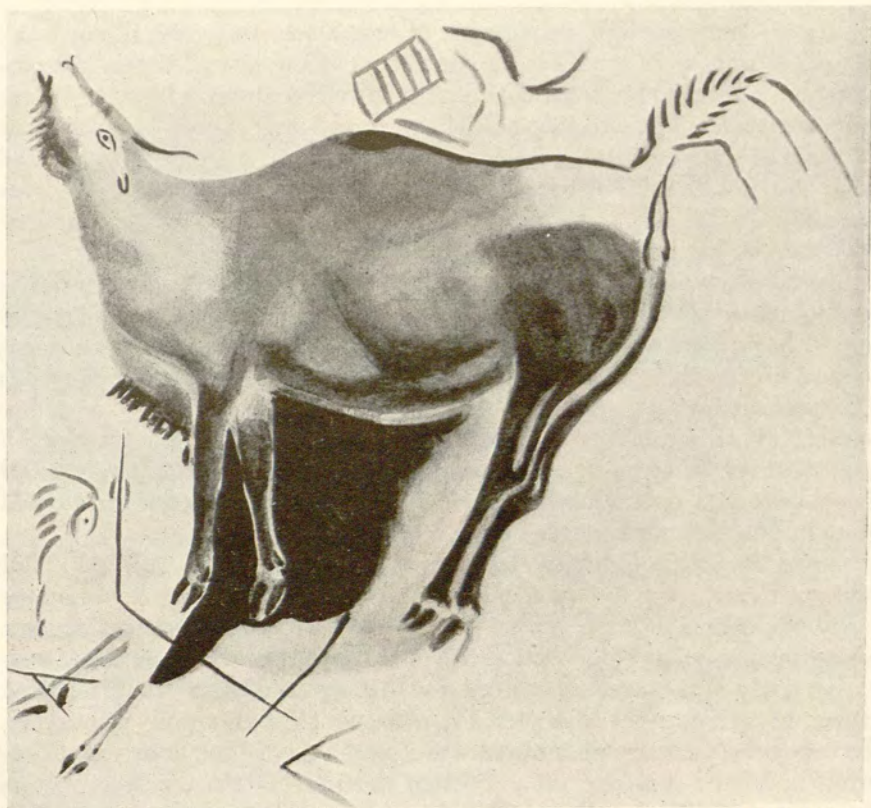
Meantime the archæologists, finding the sites of ancient cities, of tombs and temples, and even of settlements before city or temple existed, deciphering hieroglyphics and interpreting symbols, have opened up for us the way Man lived and worshipped. They have established another kind of link also : that between people and people, period and period. So the bounds of history have been pushed farther back into the mists of the prehistoric ; so the known but once disconnected passages of Man's long story have become fused into an epic. There are still obscure periods to which we have not yet found the clue. But beyond all else there is a feeling of continuous movement, and not the least important means of knowing the history of Man lies in the arts. For art reveals in the most permanent forms the mind and spirit of those whose physical bodies have disappeared with the centuries.

§ 2

The earliest chapter which we possess so far was added to that story in the late nineteenth century by a little Spanish girl. Her father was an anthropologist named Santavola, and he shared the wide, and at that date novel, enthusiasm for searching in the floor accretions of likely caves for fresh evidence of the life of the cave-men. At Altamira, in his own district of Santander in Northern Spain, a huntsman had stumbled on a possible cave, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the fox he was chasing had done so by taking refuge there, and that the huntsman's dog had followed the fox, and the huntsman had followed the dog. Santavola, with an archæologist's zeal, went to the cave to find whether the floor had any of those fragments of weapons, pieces of broken pottery, or other intimations of the occupation by Man in prehistoric times. Suddenly his daughter, going deeper into the cave, pointed to the flattish ceiling of the great cavern and cried :

“ Look, father ; bulls ! ”





W. F. Mansell.

DEER

Altamira Caves, Spain

One of the marvellous animal studies from the walls of the prehistoric cave-dwellings at Altamira, in Northern Spain, painted by artists more than ten thousand years ago. The swiftness of observation and power of expressing the movements of animals have never been better demonstrated in the history of art. They were only proved to be exact when the camera showed the positions of the animals in flight.



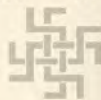
There, surely enough, in pigment of red, black, and grey, filling in an incised outline, were some amazing studies of bison, in a cavern which presumably no man had entered for more than twelve thousand years. As his light flashed from side to side of the vast roof Santavola saw more animals by these primitive artists. Reindeer were there—the reindeer which had gone North with the Polar ice at the end of Europe's last ice age. Wolves were there, wild boars, primitive horses, animal after animal wonderfully drawn on an impressive scale.

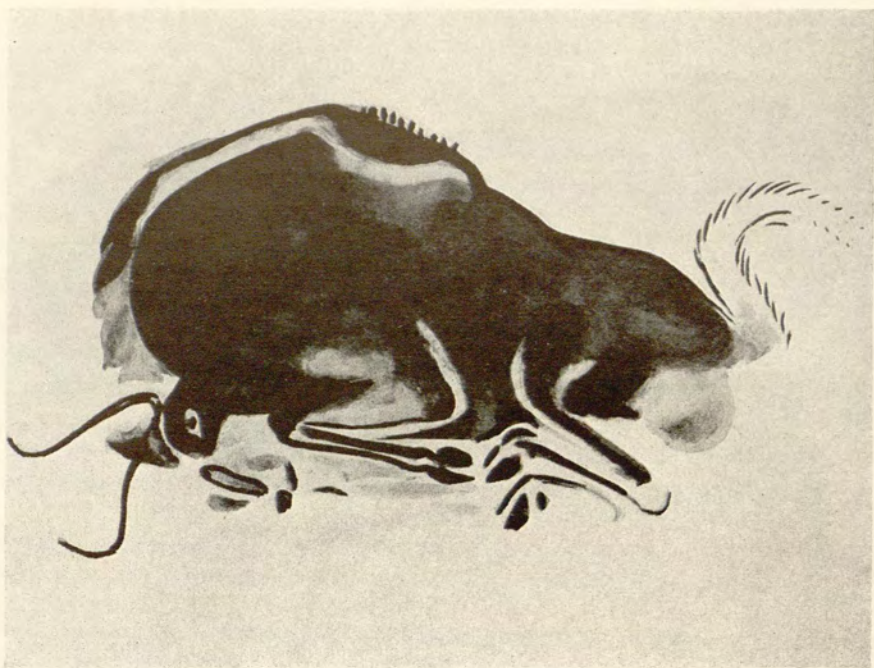
Santavola wrote a paper on the discovery, but the Academy of Anthropologists, led by Prof. Harlet, called scorn on the idea, even accused him of having the paintings done by a modern artist. The chief argument against him was that the paintings were so magnificent in themselves. The animals were wonderfully observed and drawn in most sensitive outline. They must have been done, it was pointed out, in such a cave by men working by artificial light, and painting above their heads as Michael Angelo worked on the barrel vaulting of the Sistine Chapel. It seemed quite impossible, but it proved to be true.

Soon the archæologists were exploring Northern Spain and the Midi district of France for further evidence, and it appeared in rich profusion in many places of Southern Europe right down to the heel of Italy. Everywhere in this wide region was revealed the artistic presence of these men of the early stone age, who lived by hunting and dwelt in fire-heated caves. In caverns of the Midi were found drawings of the woolly rhinoceros, the cave bear, the hairy mammoth, whilst in the clay of the floor were foot-prints and hand-prints of the cave-men themselves. As the investigators pressed their search they found sculpture in clay, and, loveliest of all maybe, delicate carvings on bone. The finds varied in artistic value as works of art inevitably will, but they showed a definite evolution, for—happily for the scientific aspect of the search—these men of 12,000 B.C. airily drew their designs right over previous work.

One of the most remarkable of these early carvings is an engraved stag-horn which was found in a grotto in the Pyrenees. At the front of the fragment we have the hind legs of a galloping stag. This is followed by another stag in full gallop, and this by a doe who turns her head and bellows for her young to follow. The interstitial spaces are filled with the forms of fish. The miraculous thing about this incised drawing is that the position of the legs and feet of the running animals is one which was only revealed as exactly true when the instantaneous camera and the cinema came to our aid ! These cave-men had eyes and memories and hands which saw, retained, and subsequently represented the swiftest movements of animals in flight.

In the cave at Altamira another masterpiece is a bison sketched with





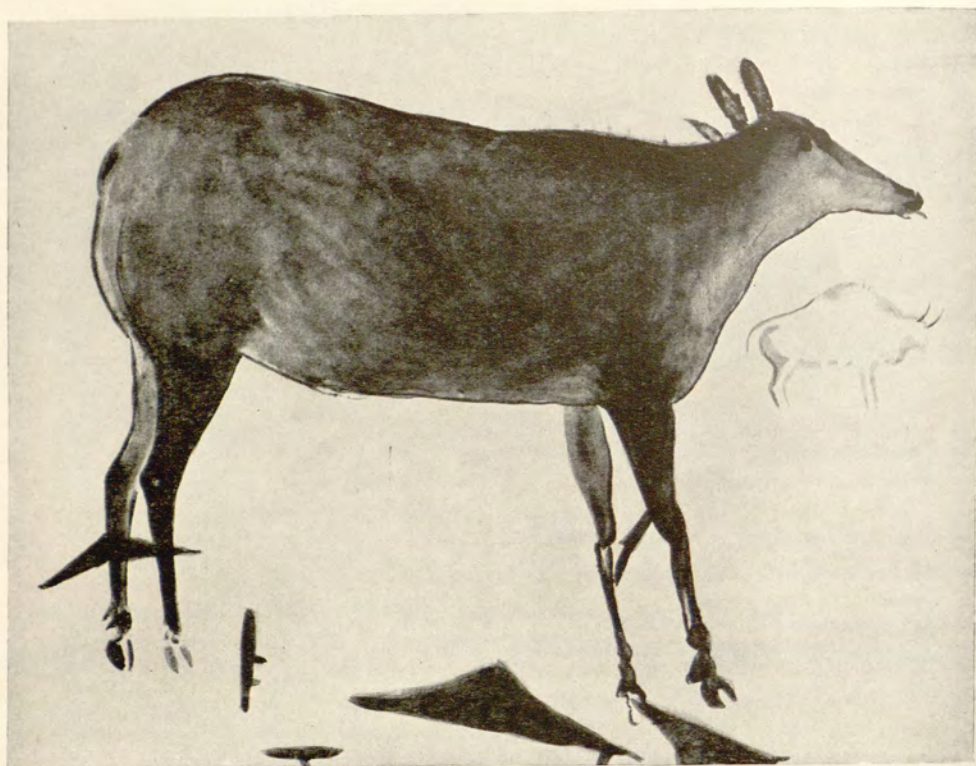
W. F. Mansell.

CHARGING BISON

Altamira Caves, Spain

Another study from the walls of the prehistoric cave-dwellings at Altamira.





W. F. Mansell.

DEER

A further picture from the walls of the Altamira Caves, painted by artists over a hundred centuries ago. As with all this animal art of the period, the modelling wonderfully conveys the solidity and relationship of the forms as the sensitive line conveys life and movement. The purpose of the painting was probably magic : the result was splendid art.



amazing lifelikeness, a theme which is echoed often among these cave-drawings. At Dordogne in Périgord another cave has a mammoth in outline which is truly masterly. All told, we have discovered nearly a hundred different kinds of animal in the caves. In one at Périgord a lamp of sandstone was found with a picture of an ibex incised upon it. The find helps to remind us that these men had to do their work by the light of such lamps containing a wick fed with melted animal fat. Indeed, the artist's whole equipment came from the immediate earth and the animals which the hunters killed. His palette was either a flat stone or the flat bone of shoulder blade or pelvis, his paint-tube the hollow bones with the marrow extracted, his brush the hair of the animals. Animal fat again was the medium in which he mixed the ochres and oxides of the earth, the chalk and the charcoal of his simple colours. Often the outline alone had been carved in the sandstone or limestone of the walls and ceilings of the caves with the burins which were subsequently found among the debris. Colour seems to have come later in the evolution of this cave-man art.

At one place there is a piece of fascinating and indisputable evidence of the vast antiquity of the art, for a representation of a bison and a fish have been drawn in the sand of the cave with the finger-tip, and have been preserved for us by a thin coating of stalactitic ice. The fish, here as elsewhere, is exquisitely drawn, and shows the same exactness of observation and the same power of expression which these artists brought to their animal subjects.

Another amazing discovery was made at a cave at Lascaux in this same Dordogne region as recently as the end of 1940. Two schoolboys were roaming the country with their dog, and again as at Altamira the dog played its part, this time by falling into a deep hole. The lads followed to rescue the dog, and found the entrance of a cave—a wonder cave, for the walls were covered with paintings. They took the news to their classics master at the local school, Monsieur Laval, who had talked to his pupils about the prehistoric paintings in the locality, and he went back with them to the cave with a lamp. He found the cave—two passages meeting in an oval high-roofed chamber which is almost symmetrical. And he found along the walls of both galleries and of the chamber the paintings, as the boys had said: scores of drawings wonderfully preserved, some of them larger in scale than any existing prehistoric pictures (one bull is seventeen feet long), deer with exquisitely drawn antlers, cows and bulls, goats, ponies, bison, a woolly rhinoceros, lions, and certain strangely composite beasts, as well as one man. The colours were black, yellow, brown, and purple, and some of the paintings have engraved outline.

Brilliantly clear, this work looked as though it might have been painted a few years ago, but since it is covered in crystals formed through thousands



upon thousands of years, there can be no doubt of its antiquity. Indeed, the experts who came to examine the Lascaux Cave pronounced that the paintings belonged to a period thousands of years earlier than the Magdalenian work in the Altamira Cave, and so should be assigned to the Aurignacians, the first men known to have painted.

Even so, this work of animal painting stands at the end of a long line of artistic evolution which began with the merest patterning in lines. There is no evidence of men having lived in the Lascaux Cave. It appears to have been used purely for the evocative magic of that remote time, and the symbols are meaningless to us, although archæologists can make fairly trustworthy guesses at their significance.

Analysis of this art of South-Western France and Northern Spain has revealed that there are two distinct "schools." That of the Midi is especially concerned with large-scale representations of single animals, and there are no human beings depicted; but over in Spain the subjects are smaller, are concerned with numbers of animals and men in scenes of action. They are full of movement and humanity. It was probably another period, when the first elements which had inspired this art had given place to something nearer art for art's sake, and when the activities of man had extended.

As we look back on all this wonderful heritage of beauty left to the world by the artists of the stone age, we find in it the clue to their lives. These men were, before all else, huntsmen. Upon their success in the chase depended everything—food, clothing, fuel, light in the darkness of their cavern homes, probably their individual standing in the tribe and before their women. Animals! The whole of their minds must have been centred there; the whole of their senses at the most alert moments were concerned with the beasts. And it is the very essence of art in every age that the main preoccupation of the humanity of that period and place will inevitably be reflected in it. The arts are verily a picture-book of human life, and a clue to the deepest human interests. Little wonder then that this world of eagle-eyed huntsmen and fishers has given us an art of brilliant animal drawing.

The other factor which we must remember is that one of actual magic. We know from the practice of people living to-day that primitive man tries to influence Nature by evocative magic. The miming of death and resurrection brings back the sun after the winter solstice; the rattle of the rain-drum brings the healing rain in time of drought; the enacted fertility rites ensure the growth of the corn. In the days before Man had even settled to agriculture, while he yet was a hunter, it is equally certain that he would use his magic to evoke the things he desperately needed from Nature. The drawn animal on the cave-wall would ensure the coming of the real animal to the waiting huntsman.



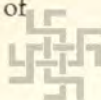
It is noteworthy that the drawings of the animals were not in the parts of the caves nearest the daylight, but, on the contrary, were usually in the darkest inward recesses. At the Cave of La Mouth, for example, the front part had obviously been used as the living-place, for here were all the remains of the cave-men's normal life, a happy hunting-ground for the searching archaeologist. Beyond this a passage-way was discovered leading to a series of pitch-black chambers, and it was in these that a wealth of prehistoric pictures were found. The conclusion cannot but be that these inner chambers were something in the nature of temples, and the activity one of magic and religion.

At one place we have interesting evidence of this practical aspect of prehistoric art: an elephant is painted, and at the place where the heart would be there is a design of a heart—the conventionalised form which we have to-day. It is the oldest piece of conventionalised symbolic shape known in the world. There can be little doubt that its unwonted presence on that painting is part of the killing magic. Possibly, even probably, this art began dim ages before as pure magic, and gradually attained its power and beauty as pure art.

Farther south in Spain it evolves into something more definitely pictorial, concerned with new aspects of human life, and turning to humanity for its themes as the element of magic weakens before the fascination of pure expression. In one cave at Cogul there is a picture probably of an Initiation Ceremony, where women in wonderful flared skirts dance round a naked boy. One other painting in the tiny village of Morella la Vella yields evidence of another grimmer side of humanity, depicting a battle between archers—first record in the world of tribal warfare, and incidentally an indication that bows and arrows date back to more than 10,000 B.C. It is a sprightly and exciting "canvas," full of running, fighting, and most active figures. In the same genre at Baranco de Valltorta we have a realistic "Deer Hunt"; and elsewhere, more humorously, a representation of a "Man gathering Honey" surrounded by the angry bees as he clings to the tree.

So on the walls and ceilings of cave and rock-shelter we have recorded the lives and interests of these remote ancestors; depicted there first, no doubt, for reasons of magic, but slowly winning their way as the expression of sheer interest in things for their own sake. The two motives merge imperceptibly as they did in early Italian art, which began as mystical religion and ended as expression of the joy of the senses in the lovely things of this world. History repeated itself at a new level. In this earliest known art we can relive the lives and interests of the men of the stone age.

Then, as the earth swung over towards the sun and the ice-cap moved from Europe towards the Pole, the great plains of shrub and tundra full of



splendid animals gave place to vast forests of giant trees and the moist heat of jungle. In that atmosphere the hunters must have degenerated, migrated, died out. Anthropologists tell us that those who were left moved to the side of the sea and the great lakes, and on narrow strips of land lived the enervated lives of men who had been conquered by the jungle, depending largely on shell-fish for their food. For more than five thousand years nothing exciting seems to have happened to this human race ; or rather we have not yet discovered in which part of the world the thrill of the adventure of human evolution lay. When we contact our kind again it is at the other end of that vast sea-lake which the ancients thought to be situated in the middle of the earth—the Mediterranean. So we move to the great river basins of the Near East, into the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Nile ; and as we do so we pass out of the prehistoric into the beginnings of history.



THE ARTS OF DEATH

ART IN EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA

§ I

WHEN next we contact the arts of mankind, after a lapse of five or seven thousand years—almost as long as the whole period of subsequent history—his interest has moved from hunting to agriculture. He still hunts and fishes, but these are supplementary aids to livelihood. Sometime in that misty interim, Man had discovered that seed sown in the right place at the right season brought forth a hundredfold. He had settled in those places, surrounded himself with the domesticated animals which gave him yet more food and clothing without the hazards of the hunt. His settlements had taken on more and more permanency : the tents of the nomads had become houses ; the leaders of the tribes, kings ; the witch doctors and wizards, priests ; and those dim chambers behind the prehistoric caves which had been decorated with symbols of magic, had become temples. Most thrilling of all, Man had become intensely conscious of Nature. The cycle of the seasons meant everything to him ; the sun became his god, the great giver of life. There were many other gods, too, almost inevitably linked with Nature and the phenomena of Nature.

It was the great fertile river valleys which provided conditions most propitious to the new way of life. Water, flat land, the marvellous soil renewed by the spring floods : these things spelled life. In the story of that section of mankind to which we belong, two of those centres play the chief part. One is the vast basin of the river Nile ; the other is the twin valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Mesopotamia—a word that means between the two rivers. Of the former we now possess a rich and wonderful knowledge ; and recent excavations and discoveries in Mesopotamia are opening up for us the story of the civilisations which flourished there five or six thousand years ago.

As with the primitive life of pre-history, so with this of Egypt and Sumeria, much of our understanding comes from precious finds which we are justified in calling works of art. It is well to realise, however, that to these early peoples the statues, the paintings, the low reliefs, the vases and statuettes were not pure art made for the pleasure of their beauty alone,



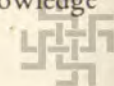
but essentials of magic and religious practices intimately connected with the business of everyday life. Or should we say death? For it was with death, or rather with the defeat of death, that these people were concerned. It was as if they linked their own survival and return with that of the life-giving sun and the life-given wheat. Perhaps, indeed, the idea of resurrection was born of their preoccupation with Nature's own immortal cycles; but whether this were so or not, Man from the beginning of his history is obsessed by the urge for continuance after death, and his arts—the most precious expression of his mind—are consecrated to that passion.

§ 2

The art of Egypt is before all else funerary art. The tomb is its centre. For three thousand years before Christ it yields us a practically unbroken record of the life and history of the Pharaohs, for it was one aspect of the Egyptian passion for endurance that the records of these king-gods should be kept, and so on the walls of their tombs we find their stories depicted in paintings and in low reliefs, while they themselves are immortalised in giant sculptures carved in enduring granite, diorite, or other hard stone. Thousands of statues have come down to us, in stone, in bronze, in terracotta, in wood. Around them the hieroglyphics which we are happily able now to decipher, and a language we are able to understand, tell us the history of the dead men, along with the vast religious texts of the so-called "Book of the Dead."

The story of our penetration of the mystery of ancient Egyptian writing is an interesting one. For many years after archæologists had begun to unearth the treasures of Egypt the myriad hieroglyphics remained tantalisingly beyond our knowledge. Then, in 1799, when Napoleon was attacking Syria by way of Egypt, one of his engineers, Boussard, found a great basalt slab near the Nile town of Rashid or Rosetta. The stone was engraved with writing in three kinds of character; and Napoleon, who had taken with him to Egypt a body of scholars as well as an army, ordered it to be placed in the Institute Nationale which he had just founded in Cairo. More, he caused two lithographers, Citizens Marcel and Gallard, to come from Paris to take impressions of the stone for distribution among the scholars of Europe.

The inscription was in the old picture writing, repeated in the later conventionalised form of this, and again repeated in Greek. Scholars discovered, moreover, that wherever a royal name was mentioned it was placed inside a cartouche, a long oval with flattened top and bottom. From these clues the meaning of the signs, the phonetics even of all the Egyptian early records, were opened up, and the confines of our knowledge



were pushed back thousands of years. The Rosetta stone is now in the British Museum, for its possession was made a subject of the British Treaty after the success of British arms in Egypt in 1802. Actually it proved to be a decree made by the Council of Priests at Memphis in 196 B.C. to commemorate the coronation of Ptolemy V. Our concern, however, is not with this comparatively late event but with the thousands of years of history recorded elsewhere which the stone revealed to us for the first time.

This history divides itself into fairly definite periods, and each yields a magnificent contribution to Egyptian art. There is firstly the long pre-dynastic period when these people in the Nile valley were consolidating, a period lasting approximately from 5000 B.C. to 3000 B.C. As early as 4241 B.C. the Egyptian astronomers had established a calendar of 365 days; and they had an exact knowledge of measurement, encouraged probably by the necessity of re-establishing the boundaries of land inundated by the Nile floods. The worship and dominance of Horus the god who is also accepted as king and served by a great priesthood belongs to this first period, but at approximately 3000 B.C. the office of kingship passes to the Pharaohs. They, too, are divine, but divinity is an attribute of kingship rather than the reverse. The art of Egypt is largely concerned with ensuring the grandeur and the durability of the Pharaohs. In life and in death and in the life to come their state had to be made manifest, and to this end hundreds of thousands of slaves toiled and thousands of scribes and artists worked.

From 3000 B.C. until A.D. 30 there is a continual history divided into four main eras, each grouped around a city where the Pharaoh reigned.

From 3000 to 2000 B.C. the 1st to the 11th Dynasties reigned at Memphis.

From 2000 to 950 B.C. the 12th to the 21st Dynasties reigned at Thebes.

(This period was interrupted by the coming of the Canaanite shepherd kings in 1580 B.C., so that we usually divide it into a First and Second Theban period.)

From 950 to 332 B.C. the 22nd to the 31st Dynasties reigned at Sais.

From 305 B.C. to A.D. 30 the Ptolemies reigned at Alexandria.

This fourth period is not important in the story of Egyptian art; but the Memphite, the two Theban, and the Saite periods yielded an unbroken heritage of works of art: the oldest known architecture, exquisite statuary sculpture and low-reliefs, wall paintings and illuminated papyrus. The arts of Egypt were concerned with durability, and they have endured.

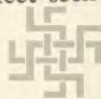


§ 3

In the Memphite era the pyramids were built. They remain among the marvels of the world, these tremendous homes and temples of the dead Pharaohs, with their long corridors leading to inner shrines, their secret chambers where the royal mummy might be hidden from thieves and enemies, their elaborately planned slopes mathematically exact so as to admit the rays of the sun at certain times, their painted and carved walls, and all the pomp and circumstance of death and precautions for resurrection. Cheops of the 4th Dynasty built for his tomb the great pyramid at Gizeh. One hundred thousand men laboured for twenty years at the task, hewing six million tons of stone from quarries fifty miles beyond the Nile, transporting it to the site, erecting it in fifty-ton blocks into the stepped miracle with its elaborate inner structure, and then facing it with slabs of polished granite. The square of its base is almost perfect. How these things were done more than 2800 years B.C., we still do not know.

These vast royal tombs and the lesser but still magnificent ones of the functionaries of court and state, are the rich sources of Egyptian art. Events of the life of the dead man are incised on the walls of the death chamber and the adjoining antechambers, or are sculptured in low relief or painted; a statue of the great one in granite, diorite, or other durable stone, but sometimes in limestone or wood, is an important feature; the coffin case itself has a kind of conventionalised portrait painted on it; and everywhere around are the words of magic power and pictures of the "Book of the Dead," to ensure a safe journey for the soul through the underworld on its way to the Kingdom of Osiris. Every possible means was used to ensure the preservation of the actual body. It was embalmed, anointed with preservative oils and fluids, hidden from robbers, and then surrounded by these magic formulae which would save it from the powers of evil, and evoke the aid of Thoth, the god-advocate, in the Judgment Halls of Souls.

The "Book of the Dead" is really a collection of funerary texts and magic words. It often exists in the form of a long papyrus roll. One of these, the longest papyrus in the world, is in the British Museum and measures one hundred and thirty-three feet long by sixteen and a half inches wide. Along with the hieroglyphic texts are usually fascinating pictures of the magic ceremonies, "The Opening of the Mouth," "The Weighing of the Heart," "The Journey of the Sun God." Amid this elaborate ritual script, the hymns, prayers, and magic litanies, we find scenes from the daily life and work of the deceased set against queer map-like landscapes characteristic of Egyptian painting, which, of course, had not encompassed perspective. The faces of the figures are always in profile and the feet seen



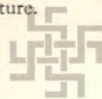


RAMESES II

Turin Museum

Anderson.

A noble example of Egyptian sculpture. Ramses II, who reigned from 1300 B.C. to 1230 B.C., was one of the greatest of the Pharaohs of the 19th Dynasty. Sculpture, as this work proves, was already at the height of its power, combining recognisable portraiture with rhythmic and formal conventions revealed in the beautiful treatment of the drapery and the frontal view, traditional in Egyptian sculpture.



from the side, but the bodies until quite late in Egyptian art are shown from the front. All is presented in flat decoration without tones or light and shade.

The climax of this drama of the after-life was "The Weighing of the Heart" which was regarded as the seat of the emotions, desires, and will, and which had to counterbalance the symbolic feather of truth and righteousness. This scene usually calls up the finest art of the illustrator, for here the whole hierarchy of the gods assemble, Thoth uses the words of power and advocacy, and the dead man waits in fear and adoration beside the great scales.

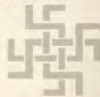
Thus the successful presentation of these funerary texts would make a man victorious on earth and in the other world, ensure him a safe passage through the underworld, allow him to go in and out of his mummified body, *Sahu*, and the statue in the tomb specially made to receive his abstract self, *Ka*. Thus he could eventually scale to the Elysian Fields of Osiris and be prevented from dying the death. Little wonder that an elaborate art of sculpture and picture grew around these adventures of the soul.

§ 4

To the First Theban period belongs the Great Sphinx. It is carved out of a ridge of limestone and is more than sixty feet high and two hundred feet long. This impressiveness by sheer size is itself a feature of Egyptian art. It symbolised power and durability, and naturally used the colossal to achieve its purpose. Not the least important function of this early art—indeed of art of all time—is the impression on the common people of the importance and power of their rulers. Records of great deeds began to be set up in the form of obelisks, four-sided monoliths twenty or thirty feet high expounding the virtues and the powers of the kings.

When in the Second Theban period the great temples were built, it was again an art which impressed by sheer size. Strength, almost crude strength, goes with this. Vast blocks of stone are deposited horizontally, vertically. Floors, pillars, architraves, and roofs are massive. The walls slope outward at the bottom to withstand the immense pressure of the roofs, but—shape of grace—they have a concave outward-sloping moulding at the top which takes away from the mere crude strength.

The temples at Luxor and Karnak are supreme works, that at Karnak, with its great hall of one hundred and thirty-four pillars, some of them seventy feet high (that is as high as the Trajan column in Rome), remaining one of the greatest pieces of ancient art in the world. These temples consisted of: (a) an avenue of sphinxes; (b) a pylon entrance gate; (c) a vast court with colonnaded portico; (d) a double pylon; (e) two obelisks





W. F. Mansell.

FOWLING SCENE

An Egyptian Mural Painting from a Tomb at Thebes
British Museum

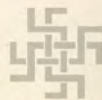
This lively painting from the time of the 18th Dynasty (1600–1450 B.C.) shows how far the art had advanced. The scene from the life of the dead man shows him standing in a canoe, accompanied by his wife and daughter. Papyrus lines the banks, fish swim in the water, the air is full of the birds which he hunts. The figures show the mixture of profile and frontal view typical of Egyptian painting.



THE HEAD OF QUEEN NEFERTITI
Berlin Museum

W. F. Mansell.

This piece of coloured sculpture of the famous Queen of Egypt, who preceded Tutankhamen, in the fourteenth century B.C., is one of the most life-like of extant Egyptian sculptures. Her beauty seems surprisingly modern under the charm of the modelling and colour of this head. A copy is in the British Museum.



and two colossal statues ; (f) the hypostyle hall with the roof supported by columns and the light coming from an opening near the top of the lateral walls, leaving enormous space for decoration by painting or low relief ; (g) the sanctuary of the god ; and beyond this, priests' chambers and sacred groves. All this cried out for the work of the artist, for walls and ceilings and pylons were covered with paintings, conventional decoration, and carvings, whilst statues and carvings of the Pharaohs who were the patrons of the building had their appointed place.

Not the least important part of this Egyptian painting is the decoration by conventionalised natural shapes and ornament, particularly the sacred lotus, and by geometrical forms. These were used to enrich the whole interior space which happened not to be devoted to the pictured myths of the gods and the records of the Pharaohs. Most of the Egyptian motives in decoration have survived down to our own day.

The famous treasure tomb of Tutankhamen belongs to this Second Theban period, for he reigned in Egypt from 1358 B.C. to 1353 B.C., following the lovely Queen Nefertiti, whose painted sculptured head in the Berlin Museum is so modern in its beauty.

The Saite period was in one way an era of decadent art, for the primitive strength had gone, but the artists looked back and tried to revive the glories of the past. There is more elegance but less power ; more complexity, less simple statement. The real decadence sets in with the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. We find such evidence of attempted novelty as that of making the pillars taper downwards.

Out of this long and wonderful story of a people's life we have a vast treasury of art work. Because of their philosophy and the specific ideas behind it this art tends to be somewhat hide-bound and traditional, but since its tradition was in itself so sound, this is an advantage. The use of tremendously hard stone, such as granite, for the sculpture made for a simplicity and an emphasis of essentials highly acceptable to our modern taste. It also made for wonderful preservation, a factor which was helped by the dry climate of the country. Even the wooden grave figures and the children's toys have not perished despite the enormous lapse of time.

The sculpture of the earliest period is compact, sturdy. Short figures, invariably seated, are a recurring theme. "The Scribe" in the Louvre is one of the very best of these. All statues of the great periods are governed by the Egyptian rule which has been called "the law of frontality," that is, the figure exactly confronts the spectator, the middle of the forehead, neck, and body being in a vertical line, with the weight placed evenly on the soles of the feet. The males may be shown walking, but the females are in repose.

In the painting, as we have seen, the frontal law was retained for the



body, but both head and legs were shown from the sides—a queer effect dictated probably by lack of technical prowess, and making for an unrealistic effect. The flat, non-naturalistic painting increased this, but the whole synthesis is a delightful convention which to-day we are able to appreciate and to accept.

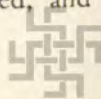
The decoration, next to the sculpture and architecture, was the greatest gift of the Egyptians to art—the use of motives from the vegetation of the Nile, particularly of the lotus and the papyrus, being truly wonderful ; and that of the repeated abstract geometrical figures unsurpassed in the story of decoration.

Throughout it all stands that potent idea of duration. Tombs, temples, statues, low-reliefs, paintings, writings : all is done to last the eternal souls for all time, for in Egypt the arts of death were indeed the arts of life eternal.

§ 5

Until comparatively recently it was accepted that the Egyptian civilisation was practically the sole source of Western culture, but the recent discoveries under the guidance of Sir Leonard Woolley in Mesopotamia have revealed a civilisation as old as that of the Nile. Nothing comparable in quantity to compare with the treasures of Egypt has been found in this rival field, but nevertheless much that is very sensitive and beautiful and illuminating in its revelation of these historic beginnings has come to light. Not the least important aspect of the excavations lies in the fact that they bear upon the Bible story and underline the historical fact of the Flood, for at one level a great band of alluvial clay, eight to ten feet in depth, breaks the story of Man's history written in the deposits of pottery, etc. The most interesting site is that of Abraham's city of Ur ; and we have discovered that it was, by Abraham's time, "no mean city," but a highly sophisticated one. By this approximate date of 2000 B.C., Ur had already a history of more than 1500 years. Little wonder then that these brick-built houses of Abraham's time and city were two-storey affairs with good brick stairs and wooden galleries.

The most interesting art finds at Ur, however, were the oldest ; and again it is an art of death. The royal graves go back at least to 3200 B.C., probably to 3500 B.C., and there are even earlier tombs and the evidence of great temples built to the Moon Goddess who was worshipped by this people. The funeral customs of these divine kings and queens demanded or induced what seems to our modern minds appalling human sacrifice, for down the long ramps to the actual tombs the excavators found serried ranks of dead men and women, exquisitely clothed and jewelled, and





PAPYRUS PAINTING

W. F. Mansell.

British Museum

The climax of the drama of judgment depicted in The Book of the Dead : the Weighing of the Heart. This picture shows Queen Netchemet, accompanied by Her-Hern, the first Priest-King, standing in the Hall of Osiris, praying to the god whilst her heart is being weighed in the balance. The mixture of illustration, writing and symbols decoratively arranged to fill the space on the papyrus is typical of the Book of the Dead.

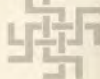
bearing weapons, harps, cups, gaming-boards, and other symbols of service to the dead royalty. Beautiful head-dresses of filigree gold, necklaces of lapis lazuli beads, adorned the women ; wonderful golden helmets designed to imitate human hair are found on the men. Gold and the remains of silver, precious stones, and lapis lazuli abound everywhere in these veritable treasure chambers. Much, inevitably, has been taken by tomb-robbers of the ancient days, and so lost to modern science and art.

The number of followers found in each tomb varies. Sixty-eight persons were buried with one king ; twenty-five with the queen. Six men and sixty-eight women are in another grave. The figures lie on their sides, rank upon rank. After more than five thousand years their lovely ornaments still tell of the taste and the craftsmanship of the Sumerians. The fact that the dainty head-dresses are undisturbed indicates that the actors in this macabre performance were not forced : they probably took their arranged places in the great ceremonial of death, prepared to continue to serve the divinity of their old master in the glory of his future state. Under the merciful unconsciousness of some powerful drug they went to death with him. There is no sign of violence ; the skeletons of animals are still beside the chariots ; bones of dainty hands still lie by the golden cups.

There have been some exquisite finds of head ornaments, some most beautiful harps and lyres, silver models of boats, gold cups and vessels of most fragile design, inlaid gaming-boards and weapons. One of the most important finds was a statuette of a ram caught in a thicket, which is now one of the treasures of the British Museum. Another is the "Standard of Ur" a piece of mosaic depicting Sumerian life in Peace and War. These people were masters of mosaic and inlay. The harps with heads of ram or bull in gold plate over a core of wood, the whole body a conventionalised form of the animal, were beautifully inlaid.

We may still be only at the approximate beginning of our discoveries in these river valleys of Mesopotamia. Vast buildings are being unearthed—mountain temples built platform upon platform of sun-baked dried brick with vast ramps running from one to another, and the shrine itself on the smallest and highest of these. The people of these regions probably migrated from mountain country, and on these plains by the rivers they created anew artificially the hill sanctuaries of the ancient gods. The Tower of Babel of Biblical legend was undoubtedly such a structure.

Great cities and palaces grew around these temples, inhabited by a people fierce and predatory. This Chaldean and later Assyrian civilisation shifted its centre around the twin river valleys again and again as the king warriors from one city vanquished another. At Ur and Erech, at Lagash, Tello, Babylon, Nineveh, the great walls and terraces arose, fell, and the





GUDEA, THE BENEFACTOR

W. F. Mansell.

Louvre, Paris

One of nine statues in dark-green diorite of this Priest-King of Chalde, who reigned about 2500 B.C. The hands are in a religious ceremonial position, the inscription on his knees in cuneiform writing. In one of the statues he is shown with an architectural plan, to symbolise the builder.



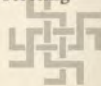


STELE OF NARAM-SIN

Louvre, Paris

W. F. Mansell.

This low-relief commemorates a victory of the great king of Agadé, who ruled in Mesopotamia, 2678-2641 B.C. A wonderful organisation of plastic forms showing the army triumphantly scaling the mountains beyond the Tigris. The king leads his troops, whilst the Sun, Venus and the protecting stars shine in the sky.





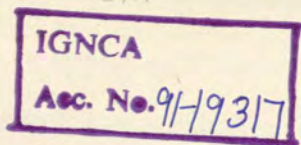
ASSYRIAN ANIMAL SCULPTURE

British Museum.

British Museum

The great buildings of Assyria were decorated with massive animal reliefs : bulls and lions depicted with great understanding of the forms. One curious convention was that of showing five legs, so that the animal looked correct from both side and front.

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KING ASHURBANIPAL HUNTING

British Museum.

British Museum

During the reign of Ashurbanipal, Assyrian art rose to its highest. He established the library at Kouyunjik so invaluable to our knowledge of the Assyrians, and enriched the building with magnificent bas-reliefs of his exploits as warrior and hunter. They are all triumphant presentations of tremendous energy, and the animals especially are excellently portrayed.



sands drifted over them. At one period statues carved in diorite and other works show definite Egyptian influence. At another there are rich and highly ornamented low reliefs, bronzes, and vases. But our knowledge still has gaps, for the deserts of Mesopotamia are but slowly yielding their secrets to the patient archæologists excavating the sites.

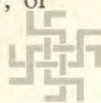
§ 6

After a break of centuries civilisation in this region rises again with the triumph of the Assyrians. From the beginning of the ninth century B.C. to the end of the seventh, the Assyrians were all-powerful. Their buildings are the same as those of the earlier Chaldeans, brick-built in diminishing stages, and by a brilliant use of the brick carrying on the architectural forms of the arch and the cupola. On the earth-filled spaces of the rising platforms palm trees were planted, an ancient Chaldean device which made them mountains of greenery and building and found its climax in the famous hanging gardens of Babylon.

The art of Assyria centred round the vast royal palaces, such as that of King Sargon at Khorsabad. They are fortresses, too, with their high surrounding walls, towers, and few gates stoutly built and guarded. The ornament is often stucco, but the gates were bronze, and on either side were flanked by human-headed winged bulls carved in high relief. Inside such palaces in the grandiose reception halls will be low-reliefs, pictures in tempera or enamelled terra-cotta tiles, vast friezes lauding the exploits of the king, or whole walls covered in cuneiform writing celebrating his greatness.

The reliefs are the most important aspect of this Assyrian art, as the great guardian human-headed bulls are the strangest of its creations. As we see these in the specimens in the Louvre and the British Museum they are tremendously impressive. The bulls are given five legs so that whether they be viewed from the side or from the front they have the appearance of walking. The reliefs, usually in coloured alabaster, were invariably the same so far as subject is concerned right through this Assyrian period. Firstly, strange winged genii protect the king's life; the king himself and his attendants follow; then his expeditions, victories, his prisoners being killed or tortured; his thanksgiving to the gods; and finally, his life in peace, hunting, or in the gardens with his queen. The king is always fierce and irresistible. Even in the scenes in the pleasure gardens the heads of his enemies hang from the trees. Over men and animals he is shown in triumph.

At the beginning this art of Assyria was highly conventionalised, and even after the practice of centuries the treatment of the human body, of



muscles, hair, beard, costume, is mannered to an extreme degree although it has become much more pictorial. Towards the end an element of landscape is introduced. The animals are finely observed and rendered, and for all its brutality (the perennial mark of the art of this conquering people) it takes on a certain refinement. From it we learn much of the life at least of the king-warriors and of those immediately surrounding and supporting them. For centuries this people dominated the regions at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean, and when they gave place at last to the early Persian conquerors in the middle of the sixth century, this art of palace building, modified by the particular mentality of the Iranian people, was continued at Persepolis, Susa, and elsewhere. That story belongs, however, rightly to Persian art. The art of Assyria and the fierce life of these fighters of the river valleys of Mesopotamia had already been broken by the coming of the Medes in 625 B.C.



III

INTERLUDE IN CRETE

THE STORY OF THE WALL-PAINTINGS AT KNOSSOS

ONE of the greatest gaps in human art and story was bridged most fascinatingly towards the end of last century when Heinrich Schliemann, the son of a poor German pastor, followed a life-long dream and re-discovered Troy, pursued it farther and found Homer's Mycenæ "abounding in gold" as Homer had sung of it, and so gave the clue to the Homeric legends which sent us yet farther afield eventually to excavate "hundred-citied Crete." Step by step history was driven back into the legendary past until in Crete we have a culture which has links with that of Egypt and Sumeria, but which has a perfect character of its own. When we contact it, between 2000 and 1400 B.C., the civilisation is at a truly wonderful height, luxurious and perhaps febrile.

Schliemann's romantic story belongs more properly to the record of Greek Art. It concerns us at this point chiefly because it is based on his belief that Homer's cities and characters were historic truth and not mere story-telling. His father told him the story of the Iliad, and in childish picture-books he saw illustrations of burning Troy, of Æneas and Agamemnon. Scholarship in those days had turned all this into fable and folklore, but to young Schliemann it was true. When later he was an assistant in a small grocer's shop, a broken-down, tipsy schoolmaster customer came in, and recited hundreds of lines of Homer. The boy determined to learn Greek, and the dream was born in his mind of visiting the scenes of this magic verse. He tramped to Hamburg, decided to go to sea, and was shipwrecked off Holland. So at nineteen we find him penniless in a foreign land, where he stayed for seventeen more years, becoming an efficient merchant—a "self-made man." Then the Crimean War gave him an opportunity to make a fortune, and determinedly he turned back to his dream and devoted himself to archæology. It was in 1868, after an intensive study of the science in Paris and elsewhere, that he first went to Hissarlik near the Dardanelles in Asia Minor, where he was convinced that Troy was to be found. He was working on clues provided by the second-century traveller, Pausanias. The scholarship of his day, if it did not absolutely deny that Troy had ever existed, mocked at his idea of the site. In face of ridicule and a lack of results for three years,



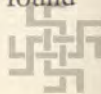
Schliemann persevered, and in 1873 he proved his dream. City below city he unearthed ancient Troy.

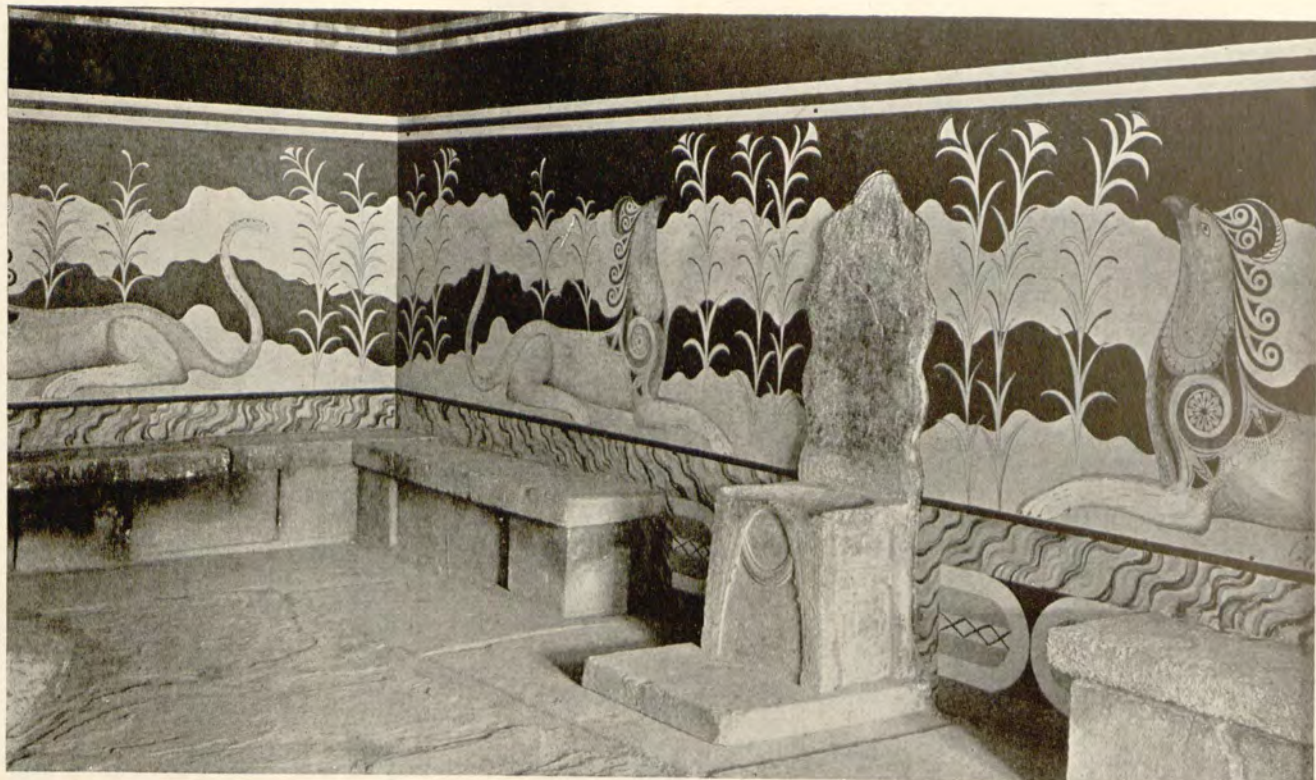
Following his clues the enthusiast turned to Mycenæ, and here, indeed, he found in the tombs of those who were "great before Agamemnon," the piled gold treasures of which Homer spoke.

Not the least part of Schliemann's triumph lay in the fact that he made the world realise that this ancient poetry was concerned with human life, and not merely with grammar and literary expression. The works of art, too, as the excavators and archæologists brought them to light, were revelations of how mankind lived in these legendary times. Schliemann set men asking where the limit was to be set. If Troy were true, what of the earlier legends: Heracles, Theseus, Minos, the Minotaur? The discoveries went on until a vast Ægean civilisation was discovered, with its centre in Crete and its ramifications back into ancient Egypt and over into Mesopotamia.

Sir Arthur Evans and Dr. Halbherr's discoveries in Crete added a new period of art and civilisation to human knowledge. It arose chiefly from the search for writings, for although Homer had mentioned "dire signs" there was not any trace even at Mycenæ of writing. Some stones were found there with a vague suggestion of picture-writing, slightly suggestive of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Evans commenced a search for their source. Following a clue in Crete he found that the village women were wearing these very stones as "milking charms." At Knossos a clay tablet came to light with what looked like an earlier form of the writing, and Knossos was the legendary home of King Minos, the place where Daidalos, the great craftsman-builder, had built the labyrinth for the Minotaur, the "dancing floor" for Ariadne, the king's daughter. To Knossos, so legend said, Theseus had come and won the love of Ariadne, slain the bull-headed Minotaur, and delivered Athens from the yearly tribute of young men and maidens who were sacrificed to the monster.

In 1900 Evans began to excavate, and he unearthed the greatest palace of antiquity. It was three stories high, an enormous complex of buildings—a veritable labyrinth decorated with the double-headed axe, the labrus, from which the name derives. And everywhere was the evidence of the cult of the Bull—wonderful frescoes, low-reliefs, coins, plaques, pottery. The palace was a town in itself. Vast jars held stores of wine, oil, grain; offices were filled with record tablets; treasure coffers lined with lead were buried under the flag-stones. Away to the south were the luxurious living quarters approached by a corridor known now as the "Corridor of the Procession," for along its walls is an enormous fresco of a procession of youths and maidens led by the king in glorious robes with a crown of peacock's feathers. Fragments of such frescoes were found



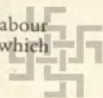


THE PALACE OF KING MINOS

Knossos, Crete

W. F. Mansell.

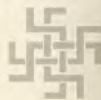
This vast three-storied building, with its modernity and wonders of engineering and the splendour of its wall-decorations, was revealed to us by the labour and architectural research of Sir Arthur Evans. Its discovery gave the clue to the historical truth of much of the Homeric legend, and showed arts which reached back to Egypt and forward to Greece.



everywhere in the palace. Dainty slim-waisted youths—one depicted carrying a silver and gold vase was so beautiful that the workmen who revealed it treated it as an object of veneration; women in low-necked dresses with narrow waists and flowing fluted skirts; acrobats; a boy painted with blue flesh picking crocuses and putting them into a vase; a crowd of men and women watching some spectacle. "*Mais ce sont des Parisiennes*," cried one French scholar at the sight of that 4000-year-old picture; whilst an Italian, as they unearthed the elaborate sanitary arrangements of the palace, called it "absolutely English."

Bull-sport seems to have been the centre of this luxurious life. On the frescoes, carved on the walls, on seals and rings, engraved on gems and as bronze statuettes, these people of Knossos show us bulls and acrobats. The human figures throw somersaults between the horns. Young men and women alike take part in it. Was it religion or sport, or some amazing marriage of the two? Was it the origin of the legend of the youths and maidens taken from ancient Athens as tribute and sacrificed to the bull-monster? Until we are able to decipher the writings of these Ægeans we do not know; perhaps we shall never know. Meantime we will be content with the revelation of the joy in beauty which this Cretan art affords. The "Hall of the Double Axes," its walls painted with colonnades and the head of every column decorated with the labrus; the "Dancing Floor of Ariadne"; the luxury of the women's apartments where were found remains of an enormous number of dainty articles; a sculptor's studio with one great vase in limestone two feet high and more than six feet round, carved to wonderful thinness, and another in the initial stages; the frescoes, the statuettes, the fragments of exquisite pottery—all this told the tale of Knossos.

As the digging continued around the site, period after period took this civilisation back to Neolithic man more than 10,000 B.C. Pottery with kinship to Egyptian is found at levels likely to coincide with the earliest Dynasties of Egypt. As the millenniums pass we find this Cretan civilisation echoed at Melos which became an army centre for the Ægean peoples supplying arrows tipped with volcanic glass (the armoury in the Knossos palace contained bundles of them, duly recorded on tablets lying nearby). Then seals appear marked with the picture-writing and signs which are echoes of Egypt of the Fifth Dynasty, about 3000 B.C. This was probably the period of Cretan imperialism and conquest among the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean and the nearby coast. But Knossos remained unfortified, secure probably in its insularity and safe in its naval supremacy. Now the art begins to be increasingly elaborate and to depict costumes of surprising modernity. Some statuettes found at Palaikastro are in costumes which might almost be English Elizabethan! The pottery





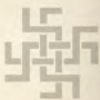
By permission of Captain E. G. Spencer-Churchill.

BRONZE MINOAN ACROBAT

This is the most celebrated of all Cretan Bronzes. It shows the acrobat somersaulting over a galloping bull in the bull-sports which probably gave rise to the myth of the Minotaur. The date is about 1600 B.C. in the period we call Minoan I.

becomes increasingly complex and wonderful. In the last phase we have the palace at Knossos with its faintly decadent "Blue Boy" paintings, its luxury sports, and all the signs of fastidiousness and over-refinement. The pottery sometimes has "trickle-glaze" decoration, dependent upon the accidental trickle of the glaze over the clay and a sign always of advanced and even jaded taste. An ivory carving found in fragments in the palace shows a vaulting man so daintily carved that the veins and nails are shown on the hands and the hair is inset gold wire spirals. Luxury, sport, decadence, gaiety : suddenly, at a date which scholars think we can place about 1400 B.C., it all ceases. The great palace at Knossos went down in sudden terrible catastrophe. Fire and destruction overcame this vast home of thousands of highly civilised people. The Ægean civilisation came to an end with catastrophic suddenness. How ? There is little doubt that down from the coasts of Greece the virile Hellenes sped to the conquest and sack of this tempting prize set in the wine-dark sea. The unfortified palace-city ; the weakened and luxurious people ; the wonderful life went down before the swift invaders. Gold and precious things were carried away, everything breakable was broken, the fires licked the towers and columns, and Knossos after thousands of years of civilisation ceased to be.

But the galleys laden with her treasures sped back to the mainland, and at Mycenæ and Tyreus the story of culture continued, and Greek art had its foundations in the shattered ends of Ægean culture.



IV

THE GOLDEN AGE IN GREECE

GREEK SCULPTURE : THE FIRST CULT IMAGES ; MYRON AND PHIDIAS AND
THE MARBLES OF THE PARTHENON ; THE DECLINE IN ASIA MINOR

§ 1

IN an OUTLINE OF ART it is not our business to deal in any detail with the movements of the peoples in this ancient Mediterranean world. Suffice it to say that they came southward from the Danubian valleys, and westward from Asia into these Grecian lands. The centre of the invaders from the North was at Mycenæ, but they spread far on to cities around the sea, and established colonies on the islands, on to the coast of Asia Minor itself. They had already established themselves firmly for hundreds of years when they challenged and overthrew their Cretan rivals and took back to Mycenæ and nearby Tiryns the treasures of Knossos, and probably many of the craftsmen themselves as spoils of that terrible victory.

When, therefore, Schliemann turned from Troy, again following the records of the second-century traveller, Pausanias, who had declared that at Mycenæ he had seen the great circle where the Homeric heroes were buried, he found at Mycenæ not only the "abundant gold" of the poet's description, but cups and hunting knives and gold plaques, engraved gems and carved ivories which clearly linked up with Cretan art. Near to the "Lion Gate"—the oldest existing sculpture in Greece, a pediment showing a slender column flanked by two lions carved into the massive stone above the architrave—he found the burial circle and five grave-shafts filled with treasure. In one of them alone fifty-six flat golden ox-heads with double axes between the horns were obviously Cretan. There were wall paintings like those subsequently discovered at Knossos ; and down at Tiryns where a great palace was unearthed was found the remains of a fresco of the bull-sport. Elsewhere, at a place near Sparta, some of the most magnificent golden cups were elaborately decorated with bulls and slim-waisted, belted Cretans.

Thus the heroic age came to light as historic fact, and the treasures in the grave-shafts of the heroes revealed its past connections with the pre-historic, legendary world of Theseus and the Minotaur. But by the time of the Homeric age this Mycenæan civilisation was itself in decline ; only the love of beauty worked through the centuries to burgeon anew when the



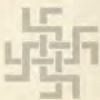
Ægeans, the Dorians, in a fresh invasion from the North, established themselves at Sparta, and the Ionians, an Aryan people, made Athens their city.

The history of classical Greece almost begins anew with the establishment of the Olympiad, traditionally dated 776 B.C. Every four years this great gathering for athletic contests on the plain of Olympia brought together all the tribes of Greece, and for the period of the games all hostilities among them ceased. The importance of this recurring fore-gathering, the worship of the same gods, the cohesion of culture which it fostered, the unity emphasised in spite of the continual inter-tribal and inter-civic warfare, and, most important of all, the interest in the perfect human body, gave a direction to Greek art which carried straight forward to the golden age of Pericles at Athens and the vast beauty of Hellenistic art.

One other element which counted was the type of Greek building. That remained uninfluenced by the Cretan modes. It was more Northern. In its primitive form it was a single room centred on the fire, and in its essence it remained precisely that, even though the building became a temple and the fire became the altar and shrine of god or goddess. The necessity for the smoke to escape through the roof forbade the two- or three-storied structure of the Cretans. The essential simplicity of a single gabled roof, the pedimented front, the surrounding colonnade, was an extension of the primitive architecture, and it gave wonderful opportunity for sculpture as well as an ideally lovely architectural arrangement. The wealth of local stone and marble encouraged both these things.

The course of Greek history inevitably played its part, as social and political history always does in the story of a nation's culture. This is no place to trace the tortuous ramifications of the rather ugly record of treachery and violence which for century after century kept these peoples at war with each other and gave them some sort of unity only when they were dubious allies against the might of Persia. Out of the welter of separate states two were of paramount importance : Athens and Sparta. Sparta was what we now call Totalitarian, demanding the utmost consecration of body and mind to the State and particularly to the military necessity of the State ; Athens, although it too was governed by tyrants, had a constitution of democracy (a very limited democracy, of course, which gave no recognition to the helots who were practically slaves). During the sixth century B.C., the great Athenian lawgiver, Solon, had established at Athens a system which gave a great measure of freedom to the Athenians and kept the power of the successive dictatorial tyrants within bounds.

Three events of the fifth century B.C. stand out. Greatest of all is the Persian war ; out of its triumphant waging and conclusion arose the Athenian empire ; and in the reaction caused by the imperialism of Athens





APHRODITE

Lyons Museum and Acropolis Museum. (Sixth century B.C.)

An archaic Greek statue known as the "Aphrodite of Marseilles" in the Lyons Museum. Fragments were found which are in the Museum at Athens. Greek sculpture started from simple carved wooden cult figures. By the sixth century B.C. they had evolved into slightly more human figures such as this, with the archaic smile, the formal lines of drapery, and even with arms in natural movement which took them away from the figure.

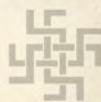




"THE CHARIOTEER OF DELPHI"

Delphi Museum

This magnificent bronze statue from a chariot group is typical of the transition to the human work of the great period. The slight turn of the head, the firmly planted feet, the braced shoulders, give life to the work. It is well to remember that all Greek sculpture was coloured and decorated with jewelled craftwork. The eyes of the charioteer, for instance, had bronze pupils set in ivory.



came the Peloponnesian war when the Spartans overthrew the Athenian power. The successful resistance to Persia is the truly heroic story of Greek record. Twice the Persians were held, in 492 B.C. and in 490 B.C. That phase of the struggle ended with the thrilling victory of Marathon when a handful of Greeks held the narrow strip of seashore against the hosts of the Medes, when the runner raced back the twenty-five miles to Athens with his almost miraculous tidings, "Rejoice, we conquer," and died as he gave the cry. In the uneasy peace of the next ten years the Greeks watched Xerxes of Persia gather his great army for the war of revenge, and in 480 B.C. again Persia was on the warpath. In the interim, Athens, under the leadership of Themistocles, had made herself a sea-power.

"Whoso can hold the sea has command of the situation," he preached, and Athens had reason to be grateful to the gods that she listened. Xerxes crossed the Hellespont on a bridge of boats, and the battle was brought to a head in the Pass of Thermopylæ where the Spartans died to the last man to hold them back. The sacrifice gained Athens six precious days, and when at last the Persians broke through, the Athenians scorched the earth of their beloved city and took to the waiting ships. Houses and temples and shrines were burned, and the Persians wreaked their vengeance on anything left from the holocaust. But the tide of battle turned. Out at the mouth of the Bay of Salamis the Athenian navy routed the armada of Xerxes and broke the might of Persia.

When they returned to Athens the conditions were ideal for just such an age of great art as in fact occurred. They were in triumphant mood. The gods and heroes had to be thanked and commemorated. The city itself had to be rebuilt. And politically Athens knew that a magnificent Athens would keep for her the lead of the allies which she had obtained by the chances of battle and the forewisdom of her sea policy. Themistocles rebuilt her walls, and when Pericles became tyrant of Athens he turned to the rebuilding of the great shrines on the Acropolis. Greek sculpture came to its climax with the master work of Phidias; Greek literature at the Dionysian Festivals with Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes; whilst wall painting, vases, and the crafts flourished as never before. Religion, patriotism, belief in the power of the human mind and body, a sense of freedom and a wonderful site combined to give to fifth-century Athens the perfect conditions for artistic expression.

§ 2

Greek sculpture had already found its direction through the combination of the cult images which the earliest invaders brought from the dark forests of the North with the love of the nude human figure which was a

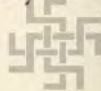


by-product of the athletic games at Olympia and elsewhere. It found its opportunities in the decoration of the pediments and the metope panels of the temples, and in the creation of the figures of the gods and goddesses to whom the buildings were dedicated.

The cult image was at first crude, often little more than a plank of wood vaguely shaped in the form of the human body. The arms were pressed close to the sides, the shoulders barely existed, a slight indication of drapery in rigid folds concealed the rest of the body. By the seventh century B.C. this earliest type began to give place to figures more human but still rigid. The arms, however, show movement, the right hand often holding the drapery; the face has the frozen "archaic" smile; the legs are together under the perpendicular folds of the robe. Greek athleticism freed her sculpture. At the great four-yearly festivals of the Olympiad the magnificently proportioned nude athletes ran, wrestled, threw the discus, the javelin. It became a cult to erect commemorative statues to the winners. These sculptures were not portrait statues; indeed, they were as much Apollo, god of ideal beauty and order, as they were the individual athlete; as much tributes to the ideal perfection of the human form as to some favourite runner or wrestler. But the artists, with these fine models before them, realised that the human form rose to its thrilling perfection when rigidity gave way to co-ordinated movement and symmetry to the miracle of balance.

All human movement demands a continual change of balance, a swift organisation of counterpoise. The ever-changing centre of gravity in athletics and in the dance must always be met by weight or stress skilfully applied. The fascination of the earliest Greek sculpture is the gradual acceptance of this principle of life into art. The early "Apollo" figures enable us to trace this evolution. For instance, that from the temple at Tenæ, which is in the Munich Museum, just breaks free from the column form, but is a figure "standing at attention"; that from Piombino, now in the Louvre, walks forward with both arms bent and hands outstretched, and with the stress on one leg. To Dædalus, the legendary craftsman of ancient Greece, the Hellenes themselves paid the tribute that "he made his statues to walk." It has to be remembered that practically all the Greek sculpture which has come down to us, save the low-reliefs from the buildings, consists of Græco-Roman marble copies of the originals, most of which were bronze castings from clay modellings. They are nevertheless true to the Greek designs.

One of the most precious of the statues from this transitional period is the famous "Charioteer" which was found at Delphi and is in the Museum there. Belonging to the early part of the fifth century B.C., it has a static quality of archaic work, yet in the slight twist of the head, the mastery of





Alinari.

"ATHLETE TYING A FILLET," BY POLYCLEITUS

British Museum

A copy of a fifth-century statue found at Vaison. It is one of the most celebrated of the athletic statues. These were idealised studies of the perfect male type, the muscles organised in formal beauty, the poise of the body a marvel of balance and rhythm.

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Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

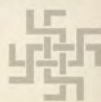


THE "DISCOBOLUS" BY MYRON

Vatican Museum

Anderson.

Myron's contribution to Greek sculpture was largely that of movement. His famous Discus-Thrower, caught at the moment when he is about to hurl the disc, is a wonderful study in balance and the co-ordination of the muscles of the whole body which brings an inevitable rhythm to the work.



the hand gripping the reins, and the balance of the stress on the forward foot, it is essentially a human sculpture, and shows clearly the way the whole art was moving.

§ 3

So the way was prepared for the Golden Age. Two great schools of art arose—the Peloponnesian with its sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia; the Attic with its sanctuary of Athena on the Acropolis. The celebration by sculptures of athletic victories merged into the commemoration of the national victory over the invading Persians; the cult statues found their final glory in grandiose statues to the protecting divinities.

Two outstanding names lead the way to that of Phidias: Polycleitus and Myron, both mid-fifth-century artists from the Peloponnese.

Polycleitus carries to its climax the evolution of the athletic statue. His squarely built nude male figures, with the magnificent muscles generalised into something of a formula, are the perfection of the healthy body in repose. Best known, perhaps, is the "Athlete tying a Fillet" or the beautiful "Spear-bearer" at Naples. The thick-set bodies have the grace of noble proportions, the poise is exquisitely balanced. If the art is still a little academic and too studied, it nevertheless has the compensation of ideal repose. His famous "Amazon" statue at Berlin is the female counterpart to these magnificent masculine types.

Myron carries this art one step further forward. His famous "Discobolus," his equally famous "Marsyas," portray a fleeting moment of swift movement when the whole body in action reveals its athletic rhythm. The time was to come when this quality of action would betray Greek art into a violence which destroyed its beauty, but in the hands of Myron it approaches its peak. The discus thrower in the moment when he draws back to the release of the disc; Marsyas as he reels back from the pipes thrown down by the angry goddess: these are living sculptures. Myron has also left us the noble bust of Pericles which we find in the British Museum.

One other Peloponnesian artist should be mentioned before we turn to Phidias: Pæonius, who is remarkable for the lovely "Victory" of which fragments were discovered at Olympia. This subject of the "Nike," the Victory, brought swift movement to the draped female statues as the celebration of athletic success did to the male. This great winged marble figure of Victory by Pæonius was built on a high pyramidal base which, coloured the blue of the sky, was planned to give the statue the appearance of rushing through the air itself. We must remember that all Greek sculpture was, in fact, painted, or else it was created of differing materials,

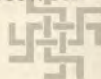


gold, ivory, and bronze, which gave it colour and some verisimilitude of naturalism.

Phidias himself stood to the noble forerunners as Michael Angelo did to such men as Donatello and Ghiberti. Living from 498 B.C. to 432 B.C. he brought the whole art of Greek sculpture to a splendid climax. He had the opportunity, for when he reached the maturity of his powers Athens under Pericles was enjoying her golden age, the temples and shrines of the sanctuary on the Acropolis were being built, and over at Olympia the rival shrine to Zeus came into being. His two most famous works were the Athena which crowned the temple on the Acropolis, and the Zeus at Olympia. Both were giant works in gold and ivory and bronze over an inner core of wood : the Zeus thirty-five feet high, the Athena more than forty. Far out at sea sailors could see the gleaming gold spear-head of the goddess, memorial to the victory at Marathon and symbol of the power and wisdom of Athens. We only know these great statues from records, from their reproduction on coins and gems, and from reduced antique copies. All the flesh was in ivory, the weapons and armour in gold, the sandals and shield of Athena were ornamented in relief. Indeed, the reliefs on the shield were destined to bring the sculptor to grief and ultimate ruin, for when, in the changing politics of the time, the power of Pericles had waned, Phidias as his friend was arrested on a charge of blasphemy for having introduced portraits of himself and of his patron into the shield reliefs, and he died in prison. The statue of Zeus was equally grandiloquent with that of the goddess at Athens. We know it only from coins and from its description in contemporary writings.

Of one other statue by Phidias we do possess a copy in marble. This is the Lemnian Athena, a beautiful idealised human figure which in the grace of the drapery and the sublimity of the face conveys better than by any external attributes the divinity of the maiden goddess.

In the marvellous architectural sculptures of the Parthenon we may have work from the actual chisel of the greatest of Greek masters ; at least we know they were executed from his designs under his supervision. This most perfect of all Greek temples, built from 447 to 438 B.C. by the architects Iktinos and Kallikrates, crowned the Athenian hill sanctuary and lasted for 2000 years almost unspoiled, until in the Turkish-Venetian war of 1687 the building was used as a powder magazine and was blown up—another outrage by war upon the human spirit ! Its decorative sculptures consisted of three vast series : the ninety-two metopes of which we possess magnificent fragments in the “ Elgin Marbles ” and of which forty-one are still *in situ* ; the series on the two pediments ; and the processional frieze. All are carved in high relief in Pentelic marble, and were, of course, originally coloured. The metopes tell the stories of the contests between

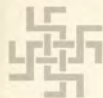




THE BELVEDERE OF THE PARTHENON

Alinari.

Most perfect of all Greek buildings, the Parthenon on the Acropolis at Athens is the most lovely ruin in the world. This perfection is echoed in the smaller structures which surround it, of which the Belvedere overlooking the bay is one of the most exquisite.



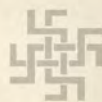


W. F. Mansell

THE PARTHENON FRIEZE (438 B.C.)

British Museum

Part of the so-called "Elgin Marbles" which Lord Elgin brought from the Parthenon ruins for the British Museum, this panel of horsemen is part of the great procession which decorated the frieze. Phidias may himself have worked on these spirited horsemen, and they come down to us as the greatest relief sculpture of all time.



the Greeks and the Amazons, and between Centaurs and Lapiths. Lovely forms of nude youthful warriors, of horses, of the mythological centaurs, of gracefully draped Amazons in attitudes of heroic action carry Greek sculpture to its height. On the pediments were shown the Birth of Athena and the Contest between Athena and Poseidon. The composition of the storied sculpture in these vast triangular spaces is one of the triumphs of Phidias; the treatment touched the whole gamut of the possibilities of decorative architectural sculpture. Fragments like the statues of Demeter and Core, and the group of the Three Moiræ which are in the British Museum confess the exquisite beauty of pose and drapery which enriched this greatest of all pediment reliefs. The frieze depicted the festival procession of the Athenians to bring the veil to Athena which took place every four years. This work gives us a wonderful picture of Greek life and people, the magistrates, the girls who had spun the wool, men and women of the city, artisans, musicians, warriors in chariots, and young knights. Again we have sections of the frieze in the British Museum, that of the cavalcade of knights being among the finest.

With the Parthenon on the Acropolis stood a number of other buildings and temples, and everywhere we find amazing sculpture from the school of Phidias. The Temple of the Wingless Victory; the Erechtheum, with its—alas!—now ruined frieze but its splendid Caryatides supporting the architrave of the porch, yields yet another phase of this art at the height of its power, when charm, elegance, and that unending inventiveness which shows complete mastery of the craft had been added to the perfect knowledge of the human form in action and repose upon which it is based.

The great sanctuary at Olympia must have been as splendid as that upon the Acropolis, but it has suffered far more, although many magnificent fragments have been found there. It was erected approximately at the same time as the Athenian sanctuary, and here again it was the gold and ivory and bronze statue of Zeus from the hand of Phidias which was the crowning achievement. When excavations were undertaken on the site, enormous numbers of treasures were found, revealing how magnificent the sanctuary must have been. The foundations of more than sixty buildings were laid bare, the remains of 130 statues discovered, and as many as 13,000 objects in bronze, and more than 1,000 in terra-cotta. Most of this work, however, is so broken as to add little to the knowledge that we gain from the better preserved specimens from Athens.

§ 4

Across this golden age came the shadow of internecine war. Athens, swollen with pride, took the dire path of imperialism which turned her

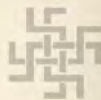


allies into vassal states and made her a tyrant rather than a leader. Sparta led the inevitable rebellion against her, and from 431 to 404 B.C. there followed the devastating conflict of the Peloponnesian war, when all Greece was drawn into conflict. The Athenian empire was destroyed, but Sparta's triumph was short-lived. The Greek world lost its semblance of unity, but came together somewhat in 357 B.C. to combat a common foe when Philip II of Macedon marched on the states to the South. Philip won the war and proceeded to reorganise the Greek world, but was assassinated in 336 B.C., and Alexander his son took over the task. Men learned to call him "the Great" for he conquered not only all Greece but Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and the East as far as the North of India, before he died at Babylon in 323 B.C. Then his generals divided his empire among themselves, but already Greek culture and civilisation had been carried far beyond her borders.

All this, indeed, is chiefly important in that it spelled the spread of Greek art and learning. Alexandria, his city at the delta of the Nile, became the centre of learning in the ancient world, the greatest library of manuscripts being established there. In the new cities which sprang up as centres of the new kingdoms, temples and other great buildings enshrined the localised Greek divinities, and sculptures of these were created for the shrines. These gods of the fourth century B.C. are more human, emotional, passionate, than those of the earlier age. There is often a nervous grace and refinement, but it is paid for by the loss of that sublimity and detachment which marked the former work. The sculptors tended to turn to marble as their medium, and here again there was an influence in that it offered greater subtlety of expression.

Three names stand out from the many of the fourth century B.C. : Scopas of the Peloponnesian school ; Praxiteles of Athens ; and Lysippus, heir of both under the patronage of Alexander himself.

Scopas belongs to the first half of the century. He was born on the island of Paros, stayed for a time in Athens, but formed his style on the Doric example of Polycleitus. His work is remarkable for the expression of tragic grief which he depicts. His noble statue of "Demeter," found at Cnidus and now in the British Museum, is one of the most restrained of the works attributed to him. Other Scopas treasures in the British Museum are the frieze fragments and the statue of "Mausolus" from the great Mausoleum, the memorial sepulchre erected by the widow of King Mausolus of Caria in Asia Minor in 353 B.C. The portrait statue shows the marked movement towards realism and individual likeness which was an increasing tendency of the time. This whole movement was a thrilling by-product of the tomb sculpture and memorial low reliefs which form such a wealth of sculptural Greek art from this time forward.



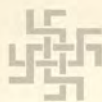


THE THRONE OF VENUS

National Museum, Rome

Anderson.

One of the musician side panels of the Throne of Venus, the front of which shows the goddess rising from the sea attended by her maidens. The art of sculpture is becoming sentimentalised by this period, but still remains simple and dignified.



Of Praxiteles (380-330 B.C.) we are fortunate in possessing some actual work, instead of the Græco-Roman copies which are our usual heritage from the Greeks. The "Hermes with the Infant Dionysus" which Pausanias noted at Olympia was dug up on the spot where he saw it, and there is also a "Head of Venus" in Lord Leconfield's collection. In the work of Praxiteles there is an Attic grace and tenderness which is truly Athenian: slim Apollo figures, dainty Aphrodites, and such works as the "Eros" in the Vatican are conceived in this spirit.

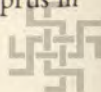
A body of sculpture which we cannot assign to any known masters shows the influence of the two schools as the century proceeds. Two pieces have world fame as the canons of male and female beauty. One is the "Apollo Belvedere" in the Vatican; the other the "Venus of Melos" in the Louvre. Both reveal how far Greek sculpture had moved earthwards from Olympus in its depiction of gods and goddesses as exquisite, elegant human beings. These lovely pieces compare with the earlier cult figures as the Madonnas of Raphael in their earthly sensuous loveliness compare with these of Duccio or Cimabue in Italian art.

The third outstanding artist of the fourth century B.C. was Lysippus who lived in the latter end of it under Alexander the Great. It is said that Alexander would sit to no other sculptor than this creator of the virile male form. Lysippus concentrated on heroic masculine conceptions—slim young athletes, such as the famous "Athlete using a Strigil" at the Vatican, or mature muscular forms like the "Farnese Hercules" at Naples. In the Louvre, and again at Munich, are portrait heads of "Alexander" by Lysippus.

The mention of these few outstanding names and famous works must suffice to represent the wealth of sculpture of this great fourth century. Even though it had passed its ideal peak, there is such quantity of such high standard that most of the best known and best loved statues belong to this period or to the one following the death of Alexander, when Greek culture ruled the world, even though the empire of Greece and the unity of Greece had passed into that decline which ultimately, in 146 B.C., brought the whole country under the control of the virile, world-conquering Romans.

This Hellenistic Age saw the rise of many great cities: Antioch in Syria, Pergamum in Mysia, Alexandria in Egypt, Rhodes. Each state turned its eyes inward and built grandiose structures and splendid monuments out of their inheritance of the cultural glory of Greece. Inevitably it was all somewhat decadent: more vulgar, noisier, less restrained, restless, and with that touch of flamboyance which contact with the Orient had encouraged. Nevertheless great works emerge.

The "Victory of Samothrace," celebrating a naval victory off Cyprus in





Alinari.

THE VENUS OF MELOS

Louvre, Paris

The best known statue in the world, the Venus of Melos probably dates from about the middle of the third century B.C. This sculpture has long been held up as the ideal of womanly beauty, as the almost contemporary Apollo Belvedere is that of the male. Beauty, calmness, strength, purity and power radiate from this divinity in marble.



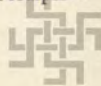


Alinari.

THE WINGED VICTORY OF SAMOTHRACE

Louvre, Paris

A commemorative sculpture set up about 306 B.C. on a promontory of the island of Samothrace, overlooking the scene of the naval victory which it celebrated. The figure stands on the prow of a ship, the drapery pressed against the body by the onward rush. This is the splendid realism of Greek sculpture which has travelled far from the primitive cult statues.



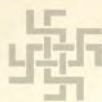


Anactson.

THE LAOCOON

Vatican Museum, Rome

The famous work upon which Lessing wrote his study of poetry and sculpture, shows us the final decline of the grandeur of the art of sculpture in Greece into realism and sensationalism. The choice of subject and its representation by contorted forms and agonised expression is typical of the sculpture of Rhodes and the mainland of Asia Minor towards the end of the history of Greece.



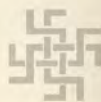
306 B.C., is typical of the best in the era. It carries on the tradition of the Victory figures which had long been a feature of Greek sculpture ; but its magnificent movement, the sense of the wind among the draperies as this splendid figure rushes forward through the air at the prow of the ship, has given the "Victory of Samothrace" undying fame.

It was at Pergamum in Asia Minor that this Hellenistic art found its most spectacular expression. A victory over the Gauls by Attalus was celebrated by a number of votive sculptures on the temple of Athena at Pergamum itself and on the Acropolis at Athens. The well-known statues of the "Dying Gaul" belong to these series. The other outstanding work at Pergamum was the enormous altar to Zeus. Excavated by a German expedition, portions of this vast structure have been re-erected in Berlin. The great frieze gives all the gods, demi-gods, and heroes of Greek mythology under the subject of the contest of the Titans against the Gods of Olympus.

The famous "Laocoon" is another work in this mood of struggle and the utmost effort of the human body and mind. Under the limelight of Lessing's great study this sculpture attracted attention greater, perhaps, than it truly merited. Belonging to the first century B.C., it is yet another step in the direction of naturalism and violence, and to-day we would not give to this tortured depiction of physical and mental agony the high praise which Pliny gave and Lessing echoed.

If from this final flowering of Greek sculpture we have no master-works to compare with those of the preceding ages, we nevertheless have a wealth of minor sculpture. In the private memorial sculpture which commemorated the dead, usually in the form of delightful low reliefs depicting simple acts of ordinary life, we have a type of genre work which has an intimate grace entirely its own. It links, too, with the realism of portraiture which when this art moved over to Rome was to become so important.

For the next step in the story of classical art was the coming of Rome, the sack of Corinth in 146 B.C., and the subsequent history of the Greek artists as the servants of the Romans creating for their luxurious masters innumerable copies of the most famous of the antique sculptures, from which happily we know the exact form of the lost or fragmentary originals.



ROMAN HOLIDAY

ROME TURNS SCULPTURE TO IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA, BUT HAS HER
OWN GENIUS FOR BUILDING, AND PAINTED DECORATION

§ I

IT must never be forgotten that art is intimately bound up with human history, and in that history there has probably never been a more important happening than the conquest of the entire Mediterranean and European world by the Romans during the second and first century B.C. and their domination of that vast territory in the centuries which followed. It was, as H. G. Wells has pointed out, a vast administrative experiment, an experiment which is still in a state of evolution in the democracies and imperialisms of the modern world. It established our system of laws and of authority based upon law; it built up a framework into which the Christian Church was ultimately welded. It needs but little thought to realise how tremendously important the establishment of a world order, law, ethics, and ultimate faith have been in the human story and not least in the history of the arts.

One of the most fascinating aspects of that record is the way that the whole fashion of life and culture was set in the city of Rome itself, centre of that tiny twenty-square-mile state from which the tides of conquest rolled to the Euphrates in the East and to Spain and Britain in the West, inundating all Northern Africa and Southern and Central Europe on their path. City after city throughout this vast region conformed to the original pattern, built its own forum, its theatres and amphitheatres, baths, temples, basilicas, and arenas on the model of the mother city. Private citizens and exiled governors erected on the hillsides of Gloucestershire or the oasis of the Sahara villas which exactly copied the type we unearth from buried Pompeii. Everywhere everything was an extension of Rome and the Roman way of living; every freeman of the whole empire was a citizen of Rome with the right to vote at the town meetings of the capital—if he could get there! Thus at Aquæ Salis (which we call Bath) in Britain, at Arles in Provence in Southern France, at Baleek in Northern Africa, at Pergamum in Asia Minor, at Alexandria in Egypt, there was the same life going on as nearly as possible to that of Rome: the same arrangement of the costly villas of the governing Romans and the natives who were helping them carry out their rule or living amiably under it; the great



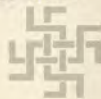
baths which were clubs, social centres, and museums; the theatres and circuses where popular entertainment kept the masses from the more dangerous diversion of possible revolt; the basilicas which were both market places and courts of justice; the temples where the old Roman gods shared their shrines with indigenous deities in an amazingly cosmopolitan tolerance, so that only the deified statue of the Emperor received its pinch of incense; the triumphal arches and columns to commemorate the victories of those same emperors. Under the Roman Empire living was recognised as something of an art in itself, and to its adornment the arts ministered. Statues filled the innumerable arches and niches of the baths, theatres, arenas, basilicas; low reliefs told the story of the triumphs of the Emperors on arch and column; mural paintings adorned the walls of the private houses as well as some of the public buildings; portrait busts commemorated the illustrious dead of the noble and governing families in public places, and in private looked down on the splendid tessellated pavements of the fine villas.

This Roman art, although it must be recognised as a definite thing in itself, derives from two distinct sources. One is the Hellenistic sculpture and painting which had already, as we have seen, found its place widely across the civilised world under Greek conquest. The other was a curious funerary and personal art of the Etruscans, the people of Central Italy who were the first to be conquered by the people of Rome in the third century B.C.

§ 2

Etruscan art had risen to a height of pronounced individuality long before the Romans came. Archæologists are still divided as to the origins of this strange people who settled in Italy, coming from Asia Minor somewhere about the fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C., and in a second wave from ancient Greece about the eleventh. They brought from the East a marvellous art of building, solid, massive masonry, of enormous importance in its use of the vault and the arch. Their cities were surrounded by powerful walls, pierced by great arched gates, such as we can still see at Perugia and at Volterra where the titanic sculptured heads at the corbels and on the keystone are typical Etruscan products. The arch was used at these gates, and also to build bridges, drains, and in the tombs which were so outstanding a feature of this Etruscan culture. From these sources they were taken over by the Romans, whose own gigantic structures were rendered possible by this inheritance from Etruria.

It was again, however, an art of death which had inspired the finest and most characteristic Etruscan work. They created magnificent tombs, adorned the walls with paintings of scenes of daily life, and gave the dead



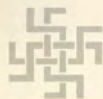


ETRUSCAN SARCOPHAGUS

W. F. Mansell.

British Museum

Modern research has thrown doubts upon the absolute authenticity of this work but undoubtedly it is the type of Etruscan funerary art which had so great an influence on Roman sculpture. The sarcophagus itself has low reliefs on its side panels, and is surmounted by male and female reclining figures, probably portraits of the dead shown in lifelike attitudes.



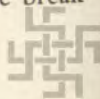
vast sarcophagi often patterned in high relief and with portrait sculptures of their inmates reclining or kneeling on the lids. These Etruscan people seem to have believed that the dead inhabited their tombs for some time, and although they used both burial and cremation they prepared the tombs in the semblance of the houses of the living, which argues a belief in some kind of spiritual body. On the walls and pillars painted low reliefs of household goods were depicted as if the actual objects were in fact hanging there—bags, baskets, pots, utensils, and arms were shown as in the owner's house and lifetime. The walls, like those of the houses, were gay with painted scenes of banquets and dances and with subjects from mythology. On stone benches round the walls, or in the middle of the tomb, sarcophagi contained the bodies or caskets the ashes of the departed, for whom all this was to give a comforting semblance of normal life. Sometimes the bodies were not in coffins at all, but were dressed in their ordinary clothes or armour and seated on the benches or on curious terra-cotta sofas arranged around the tomb. Well may we wonder what strange beliefs inspired all this elaborate organisation of existence in the tomb.

The sculpture of these Etruscan people is remarkable for its amazing realism, especially in the sarcophagal statues. There is an excellent example in the British Museum: the husband and wife in vastly lifelike similitude are lying side by side on the lid in apparently smiling conversation, while the sides of the great coffin are decorated with low reliefs of many figures amid fine patterning. In common with much Etruscan sculpture the very realism gives it a queer sinister feeling. Death masks were often taken and hung around the walls, a custom pursued—perhaps copied from them—by the Romans. Later Etruscan sculpture is sometimes an echo of that of archaic Greek with the frozen smile of the early statues. But by far the most important contribution which the Etruscans made to sculpture is that of their funerary art, with its definitely individual portraiture, for it was this phase which the Romans took over and brought to a high pitch of perfection.

Their wall painting, too, was copied by the Romans. The wall spaces were broken up by painted formal patterns, and often by architectural representation, and in the spaces thus created were delightful designs of dances and banquets, musicians and mummers, and scenes from mythology. Around these were touches of charming pattern. The life of this mysterious people survives for us on these walls and in their tombs, which were themselves fine buildings on occasions although sometimes they were simply carved out of the rocks.

§ 3

The other source of Roman art was, of course, that of the Greeks who had preceded them as masters of the Mediterranean world. At the break





Brogi.

CÆSAR AUGUSTUS

Vatican Museum

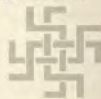
This giant marble statue of Cæsar Augustus, clad in armour decorated with low reliefs and bearing the symbol of office, was part of the propaganda of the Roman Empire and its rulers. Probably the finest of all Roman products in the fine arts, it is an idealised portrait owing much to the Greeks, yet having a peculiarly Roman quality.



up of the Empire of Alexander and its ultimate subjection to Rome with the fall of Corinth in 146 B.C. the conquerors were still far too busy with their task of imperialism to deal much in that culture which had become the real contribution of the Hellenes to world progress. So the tutors, the artists, the whole cultural and domestic life of the new Empire in Italy itself at least, and by fashionable reflection in the distant cities as they were added to the Empire, became the business of the Greeks. They taught the sons of the conquerors, they supplied the innumerable copies of their own great sculpture to decorate the gardens and halls of the villas and the great bath palaces, the arches and niches of the theatres and arenas. Something approaching factories of Greek artists arose to cope with the demand of the wealthy Romans for this Greek sculpture. The old bronzes were faithfully copied in the indigenous marble of Italy, and it is not too much to say that almost all we know of Greek sculpture comes from these Græco-Roman copies made by the conquered Greeks for their Roman masters. In the great days of the first century B.C. when Sulla rebuilt Rome, the craze for opulence in which rulers and private citizens vied with each other and with all who had gone before gave the most wonderful chance to these Greek artist-copyists. One theatre alone was decorated with no less than 3,000 statues.

Rome believed in bigness. As rulers of the Western world they knew that size impressed the populace, and consequently they did everything on a massive scale. A great deal of Roman art has to be seen as State publicity. Having to hand the architectural form of the arch, which, as we have seen, they took from the Etruscans, and having discovered the use of concrete as a building material, they were able to erect enormous edifices which impressed by their sheer size. The Circus Maximus held no less than 300,000 spectators on its galleried seats ; the Baths of Caracalla or those of Diocletian could accommodate 3,000 bathers at once in their spacious rooms and galleries ; a whole town was ultimately built inside the walls of the palace of Diocletian across the Adriatic at Split. When Trajan erected his Victory column in the Forum at Rome it was covered with nearly seven hundred feet of pictorial information concerning his campaign in Dacia ; and the whole story of that campaign adorned it, presented with all possible realism, with 2,500 sculptured low-relief figures. Nowadays Government Departments and the printing press have this task of publicity in hand, but the motive is the same. Roman art, therefore, must be seen in the first instance as the publicity of a totalitarian state and its rulers.

This psychological factor, as much as any actual utilitarian purpose which they possessed, accounts for the truly marvellous buildings, roads, aqueducts, bridges, triumphal arches, columns, and palaces. It yielded many of the sculptures and low reliefs with which the monuments were

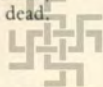




A ROMAN BUTCHER'S SHOP
British Museum

W. F. Mansell.

It is a far step from the idealism of Greece to this intimate and pictorial low relief of a butcher's shop, with the Roman matron as customer, the butcher, and his realistic wares, the block, scales and cleaver. Such plaques were sometimes used as commemorative tablets to the dead.



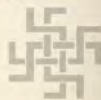
adorned. Of great importance, too, it gave us the excellently designed Roman lettering, telling in words what the sculptures depicted in form. Clear, beautifully proportioned, this lettering has held its foremost position for two thousand years as most perfectly suited to the purpose. As we have it in its perfection on the Trajan column it is indeed a thing of beauty.

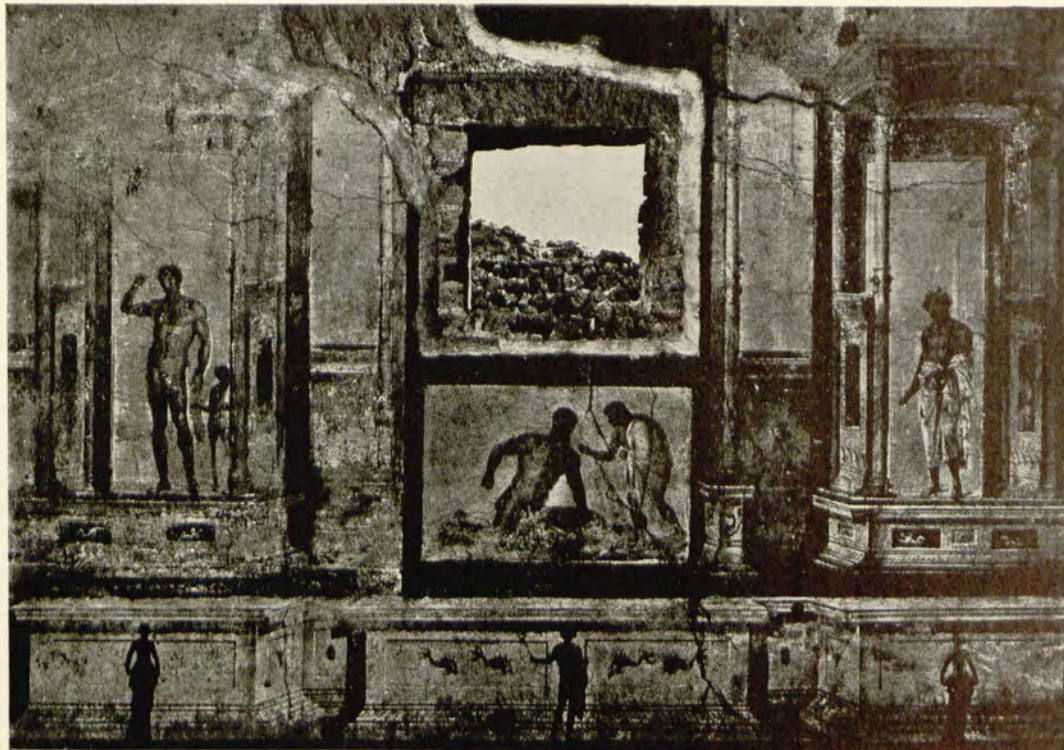
The second phase of Roman art which demanded attention was that of portraiture. This again owes its enormous debt to the Etruscans. In every Roman villa portrait busts of the illustrious dead members of the family decorated the central open hall. Masks in wax taken from the dead gave the basis for these, and the sculptors worked ultimately in bronze and marble or terra-cotta. It was a highly individualised art, and has left for us a magnificent number of Roman portraits. One phase of it was that of the statues of the Emperors for temples or public places. Something of the idealism of the old Greek athletic statues and those of the divinities of Greece was linked with the grandiose feeling of the Roman rulers, and in such a piece as that of the Emperor Augustus at the Vatican—probably the finest extant Roman statue—we have a work of real grandeur. A further aspect of this official portrait sculpture, and a distinctive Roman contribution, was that of the equestrian statue, such as the one of Marcus Aurelius in the piazza of the Capitol. It was a rare thing, but later was to exercise its influence on the great Italians when they came to execute equestrian statuary.

Of all this sculpture, however, the most remarkable was the portrait busts with their definite realism and search for lifelikeness. Those of some of the Emperors, such as the Nero of the Louvre, the Vitellius at Vienna, or the Caracalla at Naples, reveal personality, and are far removed from the remote idealism of Greek work. They link with the private memorial art, and make of this vast Roman Period a breathing and intimate reality, for it was not only emperors and patricians who were thus immortalised. Works such as the high relief of a shoemaker, with his last in low relief as decoration on the frame, remind us that this idea of memorial sculpture was very widespread in the Roman world.

§ 4

With the Romans the art of mural painting, which they had inherited from the Hellenist period of the Greeks and also from the Etruscans, reached a perfection of its own. We have to remember again that the governing-class Roman had made life into an affair of comfort and luxury, and that his villa was a thing of convenience and beauty such as had never been known in the private world before his time. Built around two courtyards, a semi-public and a private one, the Atrium and the Peristyle, these mansions had whole series of apartments for every purpose of civilised living, and

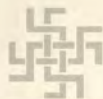




WALL FRESKO FROM POMPEII

Anderson.

An art which the Romans inherited from the tomb painting of the Etruscans and from the luxurious house decoration of the Hellenistic Greeks came to perfection in the villas of the patricians. At first only architectural detail was imitated : panels, pilasters, cornices and the like. Then these became the surroundings for highly realistic scenes as though they opened to views of the distant country ; and finally the panels were decorated with figures.

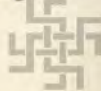


were decorated in magnificent style. Inlaid mosaic pavements of coloured marbles, noble Corinthian pillars at the doorways, and fine columns around the intimate Peristyle were a basis for this splendour. Mingled with this actual architecture was the painted imitation columns, pillars, and panelling of the walls. These were painted with remarkable realism. It was all an art of illusion, often brilliantly ingenious, an art which had its echo in Italy at the height of the Renaissance when artists painted the walls out of existence and substituted pictured architecture and vistas into the country beyond or into the sky above.

At the beginning, during the second century B.C. there were no actual pictures in the Roman murals, the painting being confined to the imitation of columns, pillars, and cornices and the ingraining of panels to imitate rich marbles. The second period—the first century B.C.—continued this system with yet greater realism, and the panels between the painted pilasters are decorated with “open-air” landscapes with small distant figures, as though one were looking through an aperture into the open countryside. The third style finds the figures given principle importance, while scrolls, patterns, wreathes, floral decoration with birds and other small creatures intermingled justifies the title of Ornate usually given to this period. It was during this time that Nero built his Golden House in the heart of Rome, and made of it a treasure palace of Greek art. Here the “Laocoon” was found, as well as other important Greek sculptures. The Colosseum was later built on the site of a lake in the gardens; for Vespasian, the emperor who followed Nero, believed in appeasing the gods and the populace rather than in private luxury, and refused to live in the Golden House.

With or without encouragement by the emperors, however, this love of luxury was now ingrained in Roman life, and the art of this Ornate Period degenerated into mere fancifulness in the Intricate Period which followed.

We are fortunate in having had the actual houses of the patrician Romans preserved under the lava of Pompeii and Herculaneum. These cities, with their wonderful position by the seashore, were favourite resorts of the wealthy Romans, and the houses were indeed luxurious and tell us much of the manner of that decadent life of the first century A.D. Some of the wall paintings show a great sense of decoration and pattern for its own sake; and, if some are frankly lascivious, many are charming and breathe the joy of the Romans in the open-air, and in the flowers and creatures. It reveals that in this Roman civilisation there existed that element we may note in our own day, the love of the rural as a luxury superimposed on an intensely urban civilisation. All this Roman painting has a certain joy in technique; and if the art of perspective was not yet reduced to the science to which the Renaissance men brought it, there was an extraordinary rightness





Alinari.

WALL FRESCO FROM POMPEII

The sudden overwhelming with the ashes and lava from Vesuvius in A.D. 79 of the luxury towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum preserved for us the consummate, if decadent, art of the period. Realistic and naturalistic, it shows a feeling for mass and perspective which was only equalled when the artists of the Renaissance rediscovered these qualities and made them scientific.



in this painted representation of architecture, landscape, and figures, and a vital sense of decoration in the embellishing ornament.

Despite all its magnificence and its public and private luxury this vast Roman experiment in living was destined to pass away. Its splendid buildings, bridges, and aqueducts are still to be found in all those parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia where once the Imperial eagles of Rome ruled. Its statues, and more importantly, the copies of the greater Greek statues made during those Roman centuries, are the treasures of the museums of the world. The remains of the villas, with their pavements and the fragments of their murals, are places of pilgrimage, whether at unearthed Pompeii or in the remote countryside of England where once fine Roman towns flourished. But the Empire disrupted, the flood-tide of civilisation ebbed, and it was the Christian Church which kept the channels open. It is to Christianity, therefore, that we look for the continuation of the story of art.



VI

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

THE ART OF BYZANTIUM AND ITS CUL-DE-SAC IN RUSSIAN CHURCH PAINTING

THE story of art is inevitably blended with the wider history of mankind. It shares its changes and is dependent upon its conflicting political groupings and upon its economic structure as well as upon that deeper and more subtle spiritual urge which persists through all vicissitudes of this material life. So when this heritage of classic art from Greece and beyond was all but squandered by the Romans, the miraculous rise of Christianity in the midst of the tolerant polytheism of the cosmopolitan Empire proved to be even more miraculously the salvation of art and even of civilisation. One writes "more miraculously" because the new religion at first was in every way opposed to art. It was a Semite faith, though Paul early enough widened its boundaries to include the Gentiles ; but its Semitic origin carried with it the distrust of the graven and pictorial image "or likeness of any thing in the heavens above or the earth beneath." It added to this a hatred of the lasciviousness and sensuous luxury which marked much of the later Roman painting and decoration such as that at Pompeii. As a forbidden religion, or at least one intermittently forbidden, it had no places of worship, meetings being held in the houses of the faithful or in some secret place. Actually it was this very aspect of being forbidden which turned the Christians towards art—art not for its own sake or as gratification of the senses, but as a binding factor, a series of secret signs among themselves. Christianity became literally an underground movement. Its intrinsic doctrine of the resurrection, upon which so much depended, caused the Christians to bury their dead rather than to cremate them after the Roman fashion. For this purpose the many underground passages in Rome from which the stones of the city had been quarried, the Catacombs, were chosen. On shelves cut into the walls the dead, sometimes martyred, Christians were encoffined. It was an obvious next step that in times of violent persecution the Christians should use these vast galleries as hiding-places, and anyway as places where they could meet for their forbidden worship. The

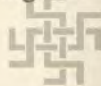


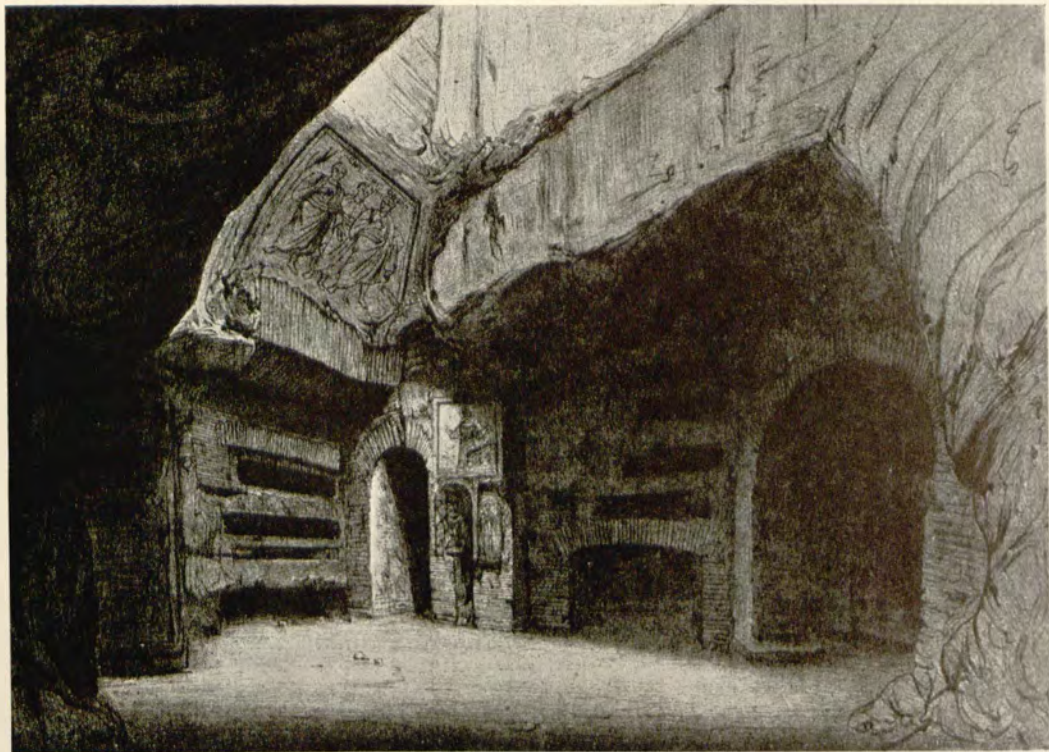
Catacombs of Rome became not only cemeteries for the Christian dead but a series of chapels for the living.

As the faith spread to all classes there would equally inevitably be among the converts journeymen whose normal business in the world was precisely that gay decoration, mixture of painted architecture and naturalistic pictures, which was current in the fashionable Roman world. There would be also wealthy adherents used to such decoration of their surroundings. So the catacomb chapels and altars began to be decorated with something akin to the house-paintings of the Roman world, the same painted pilasters and festoons between panels devoted to pictures. It was much cruder, as one would expect under such conditions, but the elements were there.

There was, however, that important difference of purpose. This earliest Christian art was there to convey a message, and often to convey it in a language which had a double meaning. The message was the hope of the new faith, the language had perforce often to be that of pagan Roman symbols. Thus Orpheus or Apollo might be depicted, but the figure stood for Christ. Moses striking the Rock for water symbolised the Baptism; a figure with two lions was Daniel in the lion's den with its double significance of the resurrection and of deliverance during time of persecution; so, too, was Jonah. The Christian painting was essentially symbolic; was, moreover, not an end in itself but a means. If, therefore, it apparently used the light and shade impressionist technique which marked the highly cultivated art of painting under the Romans, a technique which gave form by the use of thrown shadows, if it used the decorative qualities of floral and architectural forms usual in the decoration of the noble houses of Rome, it was not for these things that the spectator looked. And these things, lacking importance, tended to be less technically well done. It was the meaning that mattered, not the method. Art under Christianity became a secret shorthand.

Under the impact of the virile peoples from the North upon an Empire which had lost its early virility, Rome began to fail; but this once despised and often persecuted religion moved from strength to strength. One happening destined to have great importance for art was that the unwieldiness of the vast Empire necessitated the establishment of a new capital more in contact with the Eastern section than Rome could possibly be. It was founded at the beginning of the fourth century by the Emperor Constantine at Byzantium, and from the beginning rivalled Rome itself. Its vast amphitheatre could seat a hundred thousand spectators; its palaces and temples were built in the spectacular Eastern fashion and, most important of all, Constantine established the final legal right of Christianity and immediately began an era of church building greater than anything the



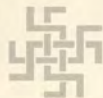


THE CATACOMBS, ROME

The Crypt of St. Cecilia

Anderson

In these miles of galleries excavated in the soft stone of the hills around Rome, and used by the early Christians as burial-places, hiding-places, and chapels for worship, art was reborn. It echoed the mural painting of Rome, but was inevitably cruder. Its importance lay in the use of symbols and conventional attitudes, which had significance to the persecuted Christians, but no necessary realism of appearance.



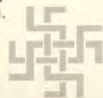


MOSAIC : " THE GOOD SHEPHERD "

Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

Anderson.

In this fifth-century work there is an attempt in the difficult medium of mosaic to imitate the light and shade and perspective of the wall-paintings of pagan Rome. The Sacred Figure and the animals are shown in movement, and the cast shadows are carefully followed.

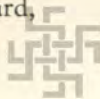


world had ever known before. Constantinople, as the new capital was called, was a monument to the glory of the Christian Cæsar of the East. Soon Theodosius was to make Christianity the official religion of the Empire ; and the Church, rapidly growing rich under the bequests and gifts of the now wealthy adherents to the faith, took full advantage of its new position and prestige.

The type of building which came into being at Constantinople was itself something new, borrowing on the one hand from the magnificent engineering genius of Rome, and on the other from its Eastern neighbours with their complicated system of dome structure. S. Sophia, the greatest church of the city, was a miracle of strange device. The first building disastrously collapsed in an earthquake, but the second remains to-day one of the most impressive pieces of architecture in the world, a soaring creation of dome above dome supported by arches springing from the piers.

For the interior decoration these people also turned to the East to improve upon a Roman technique. The Romans had for centuries decorated their pavements and to a lesser extent their walls with small pieces of coloured marbles set together as we set a jig-saw puzzle to create a formal pattern and less often a picture. This art of mosaic enlisted from the East the brilliant effect of little cubes of coloured glass and also of gilded glass. In the vast spaces of the new basilicas, amid light coming from thousands of candles to pinpoint the eternal twilight with flecks of living gold, the pictures thus built up of myriad pieces of brilliant material are among the most impressive art creations of the world. The backgrounds of lapis lazuli blue or of sombre gold form a perfect foil to the monumental and majestic figures. These mosaics took over the symbolic simplicity of the catacomb painting, but they were soon fulfilling a new purpose : to tell of the power and grandeur of the Church and of the Emperors. Christianity, which had sent thousands of its sons and daughters to death in the arena or on the crosses of Roman penal law rather than offer worship to the Emperor, found itself the greatest exponent of this grandiloquent art which scarcely stopped short of the ancient ascription of divinity to Cæsar. The religion which began by praising poverty and humility triumphed as one which flaunted riches and power. Byzantine art was entirely removed from the spiritual sources of Christianity and from those mystical sacred figures which had kept faith alive in the Catacombs.

Whatever loss of spiritual or moral value there was, however, it had raised itself to a supreme height as pure art. It had built around itself its own monumental convention. The impressive figures were always depicted standing straight in front of the spectator. There was no action nor gesture ; no drama. The drapery was arranged in formal folds which gave an added simplicity and grandeur. The eyes stared straight forward,

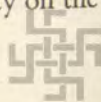


large and piercing under heavy brows. All this arose partly from the fact that the method of mosaic permitted no subtlety, but equally because this art, as we have seen, was intended to impress the people, and these factors were impressive ones.

One other form of Christian art had arisen : the illustrations to the manuscripts which were being made by the scribes in the first monasteries, in the great book production centre at Alexandria, and elsewhere. This was different from the Byzantine in that its motive was to tell or illustrate the sacred stories either from scriptures or from the growing Christian legend, and for this purpose it had to have a certain dramatic element, to depict action, and to show some humanity. These book illustrations were usually enclosed in small rectangles and inserted among the text. They were, of course, miniature and tended to depend upon comparatively simple outlines to achieve their aim. Thus they were entirely different from the old Roman painting, and were, in their way, as much an innovation as the mosaics in the basilicas. Sometimes there was a slight intermingling of the elements—a mosaic would be built up in the style of the Roman wall-paintings or the best of the catacomb paintings, as, for instance, the magnificent one showing Jesus the Good Shepherd in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna. Here the effect is gained by representing shadows and reflected lights ; even the lambs are each given their respective shadow. On the whole, however, the lines of the art of mosaic tended more and more to follow the Byzantine method. The central figure would be depicted on a much larger scale than any subsidiary one. Size has always been a psychological factor in propagandist art such as this became, as we have seen in our own time with the giant photographs, paintings, sculptures, and photo-montant glorifying Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin, and Stalin.

The earliest mosaics we have are those in certain fourth-century churches in Rome itself, but in these it is still an art linked with the catacomb paintings. We see this in the vault in S. Constanza, a mausoleum built for the daughters of Constantine, where the decoration is in almost purely catacomb style ; the nave of S. Maria Maggiore, which attempts to apply the narrative technique of the books to the depiction of incidents from the lives of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and Jesus ; and the apse of S. Pudenziana, where an enthroned Christ figure is flanked by groups of half- and quarter-length sacred personages while a vast jewelled cross gleams from the heaven above. All this early Roman work looks backward, save in its use of the mosaic technique. It was at Byzantium itself and at Ravenna that the new art came into its own.

Ravenna to-day yields the greatest thrills of Byzantine mosaic art. Save for the few splendid churches, this now almost abandoned city on the

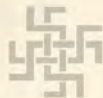




Anderson.

CHURCH OF ST. VITALE, RAVENNA

One of the most perfect examples of Byzantine Mosaic in the world, in the church, built in 526, by the Emperor Justinian. On the walls are shown the Emperor and his Empress Theodora, bringing gifts to the church. She is richly jewelled, haloed to indicate her sanctity, and attended by the ladies of her court. Naturalism has been sacrificed to the frontal attitude, the staring eyes, the stiff folds of drapery which came to be typical of Byzantine art.

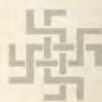


Adriatic has nothing of the glory which for two hundred years during the fifth and sixth centuries made it magnificent. It came into primary importance when the Emperor Honorius made it the imperial headquarters in 403, and from that time onward retained its importance as the link between Rome and Constantinople. As such it inherited the art methods of both East and West.

Four of its splendid churches deserve especial mention in this matter of Byzantine art. One is the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the sister of the Emperor Honorius. Here among others we have the early mosaic of Jesus the Good Shepherd, previously mentioned, executed in the Roman tradition of light and shade. It belongs to the middle of the fifth century. At the church of S. Giovanni in Fonte we have further frescoes showing the transition to the Byzantine. A Baptism (in which the Jordan is personified in Roman fashion by a presentation of the River God) is still in the Roman tradition, but around this are a series of saints in gold and white on a dark ground with the purely static and decorative quality of the Byzantine. They, too, are fifth-century work. A more definite demonstration of the transition can be seen at the great church of S. Apollinare Nuovo, where in separate rows executed at different periods one can see work in the narrative style of the manuscripts, others in the decorative Roman style, and, dating from fifty years later, a series of martyrs and of virgins of definitely Byzantine type.

A fourth church in Ravenna yields some of the most perfect pure Byzantine mosaics in the world. This is S. Vitale, built in 526, an octagonal church which served as a model to Charlemagne when he erected the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle. The erection of this church was part of the vast building schemes under the Emperor Justinian, that strange Roman genius who ruined the Empire by his grandiloquent schemes of building but must be accredited with his splendid work in codifying that Roman law which remains the basis of so much that is good law in the world to-day. If Justinian served Roman law, there was one matter in which he made it serve him, and that was in changing it to support his marriage to Theodora, the courtesan and dancing girl whom he made his Empress. Here on the walls of S. Vitale we see them still in two of the greatest of all Byzantine mosaics. Attended by the ladies of her court, the Empress, weighted down with jewels and haloed to show her somewhat belated saintliness, brings a gift to the church, as her husband does in the companion work. The whole church, indeed the whole city of Ravenna, is rich in this strange Eastern art, but nowhere can we find anything more remarkable than these two pieces.

This static art fought a losing battle with the more lively narrative pictures of the manuscripts. It had its own triumphs. It established certain





By courtesy of the Duke of Devonshire.

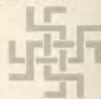
ILLUMINATED PAGE FROM THE BENEDICTIONAL OF ST. ÆTHELDRED

One other line of development of art was through the illustrations in the great devotional manuscripts. This splendid specimen belonging to about 960 shows a page from one of the great English Manuscripts, where the subject of the Three Marys at the Tomb is shown—a spirited narrative treatment with a noble decorative setting.

conventions—the stiff folds of the drapery, the large eyes which became the symbol of holiness, the long tapering fingers, the plain backgrounds of gold which was the symbolic colour of heaven. When, five hundred years or more later, Italian painting slowly emerged, it was at first to this art of Byzantium that it turned, and all the early painters accepted the conventions of the mosaics as a basis for their art. Whether we look at such a piece as the great Cimabue altar-piece in the National Gallery, or the earlier Margaritone, or to the wall-paintings such as the noble St. Paul on the walls of Canterbury, that influence is there, modified in the case of the Canterbury St. Paul by the more lively narrative pictures from the manuscripts. In the minor arts of the Church : enamels, embroidery, the first carvings, its influence remains. There is a famous Limoges enamel at Cluny which shows us the figure of Christ in perfect Byzantine manner, symbolic, remote, inhuman, with the carefully arranged folds of the drapery, the long slender fingers raised in the symbol of blessing, the large eyes staring straight out of the picture. Only when Giotto and his contemporaries began to decorate the basilicas of that most human saint, Francis, did this, by then archaic, method lose ground.

There remained, however, one curious cul-de-sac wherein Byzantianism persisted : the Greek Orthodox Church. The story of the gradual break between the Eastern Church centred at Constantinople and the Western one at Rome is a long and complicated one. Not the least cause of the quarrel was this very subject of images in the Church. Paradoxically it was the Eastern Emperors, initiators of this great art, who attempted in the eighth century to suppress it as idolatrous, and the Popes at Rome who defended it. Emperor Leo III ordered the removal of all images ; Popes Gregory II and III refused. An armada set out from Constantinople, but the Italians fought for their images, and won ; the Pope, endowed with new power, excommunicated the Emperor, and although there were vicissitudes in the struggle, the images in the West, at least, were saved. In the East the precious creations of three hundred years were in most instances destroyed as a result of this quarrel ; and then, because of their human popularity, the edict was unheeded and the images crept back again. But the break between the two Churches widened, the struggle for power between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarchs and Emperors of the East, intensified. There were doctrinal questions, but chiefly it was a matter of power politics, and eventually the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church were two diverse arms of Christendom. The Greek Church ultimately came to a compromise on the subject of the church images, forbidding statues, but permitting sacred pictures, “ icons,” as a concession to the popular demand.

Away to the North of Constantinople stretched the vast lands of what





ENAMEL : CHRIST IN MAJESTY

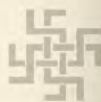
Cluny Museum

The Byzantine style dominated the early art of the Church and is shown perfectly in the enamel made at Limoges and now in the Cluny Museum, Paris. The stiff attitude, the exaggerated folds of the draperies, the long figures raised in symbolic gesture of blessing : these details were repeated in all the arts and crafts of the church.



we now know as Russia, and it was in 955 that Olga, the widow of its warlike ruler who had himself fought against Byzantium, came to the city and accepted Christianity for herself and her people. It was one of those mass conversions which was assumed to have added to the numbers of the Church without necessarily adding to the godliness or morality of the world. From that remote time until the Bolshevik revolution in 1918 the Greek Orthodox Church was the official Church of this vast territory. First S. Sophia Olga at Kiev was built in the Byzantine manner, and then throughout the whole domain churches were built in this style, with clusters of onion-shaped domes and soaring roof lines. They grew more and more fantastic in shape ; and within, their walls and altars were decorated with barbaric splendour, often with sheets of pure gold. Russia for centuries kept herself apart from the stream of European life. Not until Peter the Great broke the spell did she have any real contact with her neighbours. Within her borders life centred round its Church. The priests wielded material and spiritual power ; the monasteries pursued their strange ingrowing culture. In no country did life remain static for so long a period.

Art also ossified. The curious type which we have seen come into being in Byzantium went on and on in the Russian Church and the Russian home. Enamelled, inlaid, or painted, on metal or on wood, large and small, the art of the icon persisted. If we see an icon of, say, the eighteenth century it is almost exactly the same as one from the fifteenth. Schools of icon makers arose at Moscow, at Kiev, at Novgorod, and elsewhere. They created an unvaried style which charms by its truth to itself and its rigid conventions. The best icons were probably made in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but the family likeness of these simply told story pictures or pictures of saints makes it difficult for any but the expert to tell at first glance to what period they belong. To us they look like Italian paintings of the very earliest period before the men of the Renaissance conquered anatomy, perspective, and the other factors of representational painting. The colours run to vivid reds, golds, blues, and greens ; the draperies have the naïve folds of Byzantine work, any architecture defies all the rules of perspective, and the scale of the various figures is large or small in the one picture depending upon their importance. So until Russia moved into the orbit of Western culture she retained for us this art which elsewhere yielded to the growing spirit of man. That spirit caused men to discover anew the joys of the senses, to believe in the mind and body, to turn their eyes to the earth ; and as they did so the golden heaven of Byzantium faded into the light of common but marvellous day.



VII

ISLAM CHALLENGES THE CROSS

MEDIEVAL MOHAMMEDAN ART

§ I

EARLY in the seventh century an event happened which was destined to have far-reaching results on European life and culture. Again it originated in the Near East and again it was the rise of a new religion. A certain young Arab, Mohammed, moved by that genius for monotheistic religion which always seems to have been a characteristic of the Semite peoples, began an intensive campaign against the idolatry of his race. His native city of Mecca was a famous place of pilgrimage where every year thousands came to kiss the black stone in the wall of the Ka'bah temple, and little notice was taken when first this youthful camel driver, who had become the husband of the rich widow whose camels he tended, preached his new faith of the worship of Allah, the One God. But it was an insistent cult, derived partly from the ideas of the Jewish colonies in Arabia, partly from the Christians of the Eastern world who were under the influence of Eastern heresies. In an atmosphere just ready for this advance in the conception of God, the new religion rapidly gained adherents. Mohammed declared that he had received his inspiration from the angel Gabriel, and was given to some sort of trance condition during which his doctrines and ethics were revealed to him. The people demanded miracles, and the prophet declared that the faith itself and its revelation were sufficient miracle. Persecuted in Arabia, the disciples of the faith found refuge in Abyssinia for a time, then scattered again.

In the year 622, under the threat of more violent persecution, Mohammed fled from Mecca to Medina where a fairly large Jewish population gave him the hope of toleration ; but this hope proved ill-founded, for the Jews tended rather to exploit the Mohammedans. Faced by the threat of poverty the prophet began a series of raids on the caravan route to Mecca as it passed near Medina. He preached a holy war against unbelievers, justified the breaking of age-old tribal customs, such as that of tribal peace during certain seasons of the year, by claiming direct command and inspiration from heaven, and attracted an increasing number of followers by the loot which his raids brought. When trained soldiery were sent



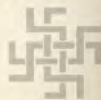
against the Mohammedans they found themselves defeated by a fanaticism which promised paradise to all who fell in battle fighting for Allah. As with Christianity here was a faith which scorned death itself, which indeed welcomed death. At a great battle at Badr the armies of Mohammed triumphed against an enormously superior number, and from that time onward success begat success. Flushed with these triumphs the prophet began to send letters to the most powerful kings of the Middle East demanding mass acceptance of Islam (the word meant "surrender"). To Persia and to Byzantium and to Coptic Egypt the epistles went. If the demand were refused, the armies of the faithful followed, and wherever they went their fanaticism triumphed. In 630 Mohammed returned to Mecca and made it his holy city, and there he died two years afterwards.

But Islam went on. There were internal dissensions about the succession, but they did not interfere with the policy of conquest. Eastward into Persia and Northern India, southward into Africa, northward into Turkey, westward along the African coast, across the straits of Gibraltar into Spain, the Mohammedans went, carrying their faith by the sword right to the Pyrenees. The holy places of the Christian religion in Jerusalem and at Bethlehem fell into their hands. Alexandria, the greatest centre of culture and book-learning in the mediæval world, was overrun, and record has it that for six months they fed the fires of the baths there with the priceless treasures of the great library. They destroyed much, but they created something as well.

For hundreds of years they held sway alongside Christianity, and the cultural as well as the political and religious life of Europe was enormously affected by them. Science gained immeasurably, for they were deeply interested in learning, and at such vast centres as Baghdad and at Cordova in Spain they established magnificent colleges where mathematics, geometry, medicine, alchemy, astronomy, and other branches of learning flourished. They brought the East into touch with the West, established tolerant relationships as the centuries passed with Christian scholars, so that we read of Hroswitha, the ninth-century nun-dramatist from Gandersheim in Saxony, going down to Cordova to contact the scholars there.

§ 2

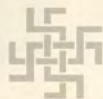
The art of Islam inevitably had its own characteristics. One important aspect of it was that Mohammed, in his fear of idolatry which was really the germ from which the faith sprung, adopted the Jewish ban upon the depiction of human and animal forms. Mohammedan art was thus driven back upon pure ornament, and its greatest contribution to the art of the world has been the arabesque, the interlacing, unending line which covered





INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE, CORDOVA

The spread of Islam established splendid buildings in the Islamic style as far westward as Cordova, Seville and other cities of Spain. Chief of these were the mosques, those vast holy places with forests of pillars linked by horseshoe arches. Cordova in the ninth century became the greatest centre of learning in all Europe, and the beauty of the Mosque remains a monument, though Islam has receded.

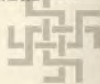


the whole surface with intricate abstract design. The Arab mind was not itself creative æsthetically. They were essentially a nomad people, tent-dwellers living far from cities. If they had arts they were rather crafts of weaving and of basket-work, and both of these had their effect on design. The art of the book was cultivated too, for Islam was, even more than Christianity, a book religion, the teaching of Mohammed being gathered into the Koran, most sacred of all sacred literature. Rugs and hangings and books, therefore, embodied their ideals of beauty, and a type of decoration for the surfaces of buildings arose which had much in common with these crafts.

When, after the years of conquest, the Mohammedans settled in the territories they had overrun, they superimposed on the cities their mosques and palaces with vast shadowed forecourts and fascinating fountains and water gardens dear to the heart of a desert people. In almost every instance, however, they accepted something of the spirit of the local culture, adapting it to their immediate needs. The mosques were often simply Byzantine or Coptic churches. The Mohammedans were not perturbed by the earlier associations. Where there were mosaics or frescoes they covered them with a coat of paint or limewash in accordance with their abhorrence of the idolatrous figure worship of which they accused the Christians. Then they hollowed out the *Mihrab*, a niche in the wall of the building, so that the faithful could look towards Mecca at the hour of prayer. Often it became necessary to erect a tower from which the muezzin could call them to prayer. The faith needed no more than this.

With the passing of the centuries all this became elaborated, but the essence remained. Spacious courts and vast halls, broken by forests of columns and low arches, where the adherents could gather with their prayer rugs; towering minarets; forecourts with fountains and shadowed arcades. The architecture of the East dominated: the horseshoe arch and the pointed arch with a double curve, fretted walls which allowed the free passage of air yet gave shadow, outer walls of comparatively poor material faced with stucco or with elaborately decorated tiles. The ceilings and the interiors of domes and arches were sometimes broken by a curious honeycomb of stalactites in plaster. Decoration crept over every surface.

From the East, from Persia, and the whole Mesopotamian area came the lovely tiles with which the surfaces were covered. Texts from the Koran, written in the conventionalised forms of the beautiful Arab script, were interwoven with the arabesques. Woodwork was inlaid with similar devices, and thin strips of metal were nailed on to the wood in the same style. It was an art of brilliant if specious surfaces. As one sees it to-day the wonder is that so much has lasted through the centuries. The marvellous beauty of such buildings as the Alhambra at Granada, the Alcazar-or





THE ALHAMBRA, GRANADA

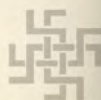
Perhaps the most typically Islamic building bequeathed by the modern invasion of Europe is the Alhambra at Granada, in Spain, with its tiled walls, decorated with ceramics in the true style, the honeycomb roofing, the fountains in the lovely courts.



Palace there, the great Mosque at Cordova, remain breath-taking in their fragile loveliness.

The linear ornament building up into the most intricate abstract geometrical design, the perforated stone-work and plaster-work, the brilliant use of polygonal forms, the unending arabesques based maybe on floral or leaf forms but so conventionalised that their representational aspect is entirely lost, the stylised inscriptions : these things are the essence of this Islamic art.

It penetrated Europe, as we have seen, by way of Spain, but was stopped at the Pyrenees. It was all too exotic to have any lasting influence on European art generally. During the years when it was at its most potent, moreover, Christendom regarded the Moslems as deadly enemies, and would not have been likely to admit that any good thing could come from the hated paynims against whom unending war was waged. It was science, therefore, and not art which owes the debt to Islam. Perhaps there was some slight influence of the arabesque, and of abstract geometrical ornament, but on the whole this art receded again to the Near East whence it sprang, yielding lovely fruit in the carpets and book art of Persia particularly, but leaving the European tradition practically unaffected in the hands of the Christian Church.



VIII

THE BIRTH OF MODERN PAINTING

THE ART OF THE FLORENTINE MASTERS, FROM GIOTTO AND
ANGELICO TO LIPPI AND BOTTICELLI

§ 1

SOMETIMES a legend, even a doubtful legend, conveys truth as great as that of authentic history. Right at the start of the record of European painting, in the late thirteenth century, there is a story of Giotto, the Italian shepherd boy whose work was destined to revolutionise art. It is that he was drawing pictures of his father's sheep on a slate, when Cimabue, the great artist of the time, happened to be passing by. Struck by the boy's talent, he obtained permission from his father and took the lad with him to Florence as his apprentice. When Cimabue among others was commissioned to decorate the church at Assisi, he entrusted his apprentice with painting the scenes from the life of St. Francis which were to adorn the walls of the upper church. In these frescoes the young Giotto proved himself, in the words of Ruskin, "a daring naturalist in defiance of tradition, idealism, and formalism." Besides his work at Assisi, Giotto also worked at Rome, and important frescoes by him, notably "The Bewailing of St. Francis" and "Herod's Birthday Feast," are in S. Croce at Florence, but the greatest and most famous of all his undertakings is the series of frescoes which he painted in the Chapel of the Arena at Padua. The date of this enterprise can be fixed with some certainty because it is known that in 1306 Dante was Giotto's guest at Padua, and the poet is said to have assisted the painter in his choice of subjects. Petrarch was also the friend of Giotto.

It is interesting to compare Cimabue's "Madonna and Child" and his pupil's "The Bewailing of St. Francis," both reproduced here. To be fair to the elder artist, we must remember what came before. We have only to look at the altar-piece by Margaritone (1216-93) in the National Gallery to see the oppressive type of Byzantine art, destitute of any feeling for beauty or truth to Nature. From whom Cimabue received his training we know not—there was no famous painter before him—but we do know that he was held in high esteem by his contemporaries. The "Madonna"





"MADONNA AND CHILD ENTHRONED," BY CIMABUE (1240-1302) W. F. Mansell.
National Gallery, London

In Cimabue is seen the first sign of the softening of the Byzantine stiffness, shown in the expression on the face of the Virgin in this picture, and also in the more lifelike treatment of the Child. The gilt background, however, is still artificial, and we do not feel that the Virgin is really sitting on the formal throne. Note also the want of proportion between the Virgin and the angels who are supposed to surround her.

he painted for S. Maria Novella aroused such enthusiasm that it was carried to the church preceded by trumpeters and followed by a procession of Florentines. But whatever the advance made by Cimabue, Giotto advanced still further.

§ 2

If we study Cimabue's "Madonna" at the National Gallery we find that his figures, though not entirely lifeless as the heavily gilded Byzantine figures, are wooden, formal, and conventional, while Giotto's figures have individuality and human feeling, and his groups have a new realism and dramatic vigour. Giotto had a more extended range of colour than Cimabue; he showed a preference for gayer and lighter schemes, and he gave a more careful imitation of Nature than existed in the works of his predecessors. When we hail Giotto as a daring naturalist, we must think of him in relation to the artists who preceded him, and not to those later painters who gradually learnt to give accurate and complete expression to the truths of Nature. Yet his Paduan frescoes show, as it has been well said, "the highest powers of the Italian mind and hand at the beginning of the fourteenth century." Although a shepherd in his youth, it is strange that his drawings of sheep do not appear correct to modern eyes.

As will be seen from his "The Bewailing of St. Francis," his backgrounds, though in a sense true to Nature, are not realistic. His buildings and his trees are far too small, being drawn neither in true perspective nor in correct proportion to the human figures. His hills are bare and jagged cliffs, his trees have only a dozen leaves for foliage; but it was an innovation for fields, trees, and animals to appear at all, and no imperfections in their rendering can rob the painter of the glory of having extended the subject-matter of his art. Giotto was the first Gothic painter to depict action, to substitute the dramatic human life for the eternal repose of the divine. To his contemporaries his realism must have seemed amazing, and we can understand Boccaccio, after looking at earlier Byzantine paintings, writing enthusiastically in the *Decamerone* :

Giotto was such a genius that there was nothing in Nature which he could not have represented in such a manner that it not only resembled, but seemed to be, the thing itself.

Giotto was not only a painter: he was also an architect. When he returned to Florence in 1334 the city honoured him and itself by appointing him Master of the Works of the Cathedral. Two great architectural works were planned and begun by him at Florence, the West Front of the Cathedral and its detached Campanile or bell-tower. The latter exists to this day as a monument of his genius, although its author did not live to see its completion. But its lower courses were completed from Giotto's design, and



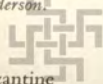


"THE BEWAILING OF ST. FRANCIS," BY GIOTTO (c. 1266-1337)

Santa Croce, Florence

St. Francis, the great apostle of humanity, influenced the Italian artists who brought back humanity to painting after the long period of Byzantine artificiality that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.

Anderson



he was able with his own hand to carve the first course of its sculptured ornaments, illustrating arts and industries, before he died on January 8, 1337.

Giotto was the first of the great Florentine painters. Among his immediate successors was Andrea Orcagna, whose famous "The Coronation of the Virgin" is in the National Gallery. Orcagna was painter, sculptor, architect, and poet. More of a dreamer than his shrewd practical predecessor, Orcagna did not so much develop the realistic side of Giotto as refine and intensify his psychology. He carried on the Giottesque tradition of truth and simplicity, but drama and action appealed to him less powerfully than the expression of emotion and deep religious feeling. In his masterpieces we are arrested not by any movement, but by the variety and intensity of the feelings expressed in the figures.

"In the work of Orcagna," Ruskin writes, "an intense solemnity and energy in the sublimest groups of his figures, fading away as he touches inferior subjects, indicates that his home was among the archangels, and his rank among the first of the sons of men."

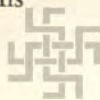
This religious intensity led to a greater formality than is found in Giotto and to a curious suggestion of a return to Byzantine lack of humanity.

§ 3

While Giotto was laying the foundations of the art of Florence, another school of painting arose in the quiet hill city of Siena. Its founder, Duccio di Buoninsegna (1260-c. 1320), is said to have been so much influenced by the Byzantine style that he has been called "the last of the great artists of antiquity," as opposed to Giotto, the "father of modern painting." It is not easy to understand this comment if one looks at Duccio's pictures, one of which—"Christ Healing the Blind"—we reproduce. In spite of their colour and their gilding the figures are human and life-like, and the picture reflects human emotion entirely in accord with the spirit of St. Francis. There is so much sweetness and grace in the paintings of Duccio and his fellows that they have been called the first lyric painters of modern art.

Among his younger contemporaries the most gifted was Simone Martini (c. 1283-1344), whose work has the pensive devoutness that marks Siennese painting and a gay decorative charm. There is a picture by him at Oxford, and another in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, but perhaps his greatest achievement is the series of frescoes at Avignon. These were once attributed to Giotto, but are now recognised to have been the work of Simone Martini and his school.

Among other early Siennese artists the brothers Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti are noted for the dramatic vigour and liveliness of their work. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, on one occasion at least, did a new thing in art. His





"CHRIST HEALING THE BLIND," BY DUCCIO (1260-c. 1320)

National Gallery, London

Duccio is often called "the last of the Byzantine artists," and if we look at his "Transfiguration" in the National Gallery we may agree. On the other hand this "Christ Healing the Blind" reveals him as dramatic and human in the new style of Giotto.



Copyright.

"HEADS OF FOUR NUNS," BY AMBROGIO LORENZETTI

National Gallery, London

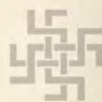
"To paint what one saw," that was a new ideal in art in the fourteenth century. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, who dared to show the view of Siena from the window of the Civic Palace which he was decorating, here makes a study of four nuns in the same vein of tender humanism.





"ST. FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA," BY SASSETTA ^{Copyright.} (1392-1450)
National Gallery, London

One of the recent acquisitions of the National Gallery is a series of six panels by Sassetta depicting incidents in the life of St. Francis. The drama of each situation as well as the reverent study of nature gives this artist an important place in the forward movement.



city of Siena had commissioned him to paint an allegory, "The Result of Good Government," for the great room of the Civic Palace, and he graciously went to the window and depicted an idealised version of the lively city from that view. To paint what one saw : it might have started a movement of modernism, but Siena was a deeply mystical city and her painting remained strangely conservative. The sky was still being painted the symbolic gold of heaven, the attitudes of the figures were still ritualistic rather than dramatic, long after the progressive Florentines had found their way into something like naturalism.

One Siennese artist of the fifteenth century, however, shows a mind of particular originality and charm. Sassetta (1392-1450) has a humanity and a clear-cut sense of pattern all his own. He made an altar-piece for the Franciscans at Bolgo San Sepolcro, with a series of panels on the life of the saint, which illustrate his highly individual genius. Some of these have now been bought by the National Gallery, and are among the treasures there.

§ 4

In the Florentine painting of the fifteenth century, the impulse towards naturalism, first given by Giotto, branched out in two opposite directions. One was psychic, the other physical. The expression of intense and strong emotion, together with action and movement, was the aim of one school ; another strove after realistic probability and correctness of representation. This second school, pushed on by its love of truth, attacked and vanquished one by one various problems of technique. The approach to a closer representation of the appearance of realities involved three main inquiries : (1) the study of perspective, linear and aerial ; (2) the study of anatomy, of nude bodies in repose and action ; and (3) the detailed truth of facts in objects animate and inanimate.

The most considerable figure in Florence after Orcagna was the Dominican monk Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, known as Fra Angelico (1387-1455), who belonged essentially to the psychic or spiritual school, and only approached the physical in his loving observation of Nature. Here he was an innovator, for his eye dwells on gentle aspects, and in his landscape backgrounds he introduces pleasing forms of mountains and verdant meadows multi-coloured with the budding flowers of spring. Indeed, all his painting is flower-like, but this delicate naturalism does not determine its character. It is the soulful quality of his work which gives it supreme distinction. The unworldliness of his art is explained partly by his cloistered existence and the fact that he lived until his fiftieth year in the little hill towns of Cortona and Fiesole. He led a holy and retired life, and, like St. Francis, was a little brother to the poor.



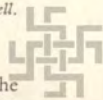


"THE ANNUNCIATION," BY FRA ANGELICO (1387-1455)

St. Mark's, Florence

W. F. Mansell.

The note of sweetness and simplicity introduced into art by Giotto is developed with appealing charm by Fra Angelico. Note the perfect realism of the columns and the flowered background; also the religious devotion expressed in the thoughtful countenances of the Virgin and the angel.



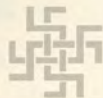


"THE ANNUNCIATION," BY FRA FILIPPO LIPPI (1406-69)

W. F. Mansell.

National Gallery, London

An example of Lippi's decorative power, enlivened by accurate Nature study. It will be noticed, however, on comparing this work with Angelico's rendering of the same subject, that Lippi, notwithstanding his increased technical dexterity, is less spiritual in his treatment and fails to express the devotional piety found in the work of his master.



If Fra Angelico had his excellencies, he also had his limitations. His angels are so beautiful that, as Vasari wrote, "they appear to be truly beings of Paradise." But his devils inspire us with no terror; they are too harmless and self-evidently ashamed of their profession to be anything but ludicrous.

"His pictures of martyrdom," says Muther, "create the impression of boys disguised as martyrs and executioners; and his bearded men, weeping like women, are equally incredible. But when he does not leave his proper sphere, and the problem is to portray tender feelings, a great and silent joy of the heart, a holy ecstasy or tender sadness, his pictures have the effect of the silent prayer of a child."

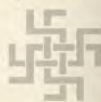
His frescoes in San Marco at Florence remain the most enchanting visions of the heavenly world, a world he decked with bright joyful colours culled from the flower gardens of earth. Alongside these we should consider those in the St. Nicolas Chapel of the Vatican, Rome, where he shows himself a master of the new realism. Some idea of Fra Angelico's careful and tender art may be gathered from his "Annunciation," which we reproduce.

§ 5

In the expression of feeling, the most famous follower of Fra Angelico was Fra Filippo Lippi (1406-69), but if unable to attain the ethereal spirituality of Angelico his art was full of humanity and delicacy. His Madonnas belong to Florence rather than to heaven and reveal the painter's fine feeling for feminine beauty more obviously than his piety. He was a genial painter, and in his comfortable satisfaction with the things of this life he shared with Angelico a love of flowers. "No one draws such lilies or such daisies as Lippi," wrote Ruskin. "Botticelli beat him afterwards in roses, but never in lilies."

Lippi's geniality is very evident in his "Annunciation," which we reproduce. The figures are human, the scene is homely, characteristics generally suggestive of the Dutch painters of a much later generation.

Fra Angelico and Fra Lippi stand for the imaginative development that followed the death of Giotto. In the other direction, the first great advance in the rendering of physical nature is found in the painting of Paolo Uccello (1397-1475). This artist was far more interested in the technical problems of fore-shortening and perspective than in anything else. Uccello represents the scientific spirit in the art of the Florence of Cosmo de' Medici, where not only artists, but mathematicians, anatomists, and great scholars were congregated. Among his achievements must be reckoned the commencement of profane painting by his invention of the battle picture, a subject in which he had no predecessor and no successor till a century later.





Alinari.

"PORTRAIT OF JOHN HAWKWOOD," BY PAOLO UCCELLO (1397-1475)

Cathedral, Florence

This equestrian portrait, in addition to its artistic merit, shown in the lifelike painting of the horse, is interesting as representing a famous English mercenary soldier, the son of an Essex tanner, who first went to the Continent with the English army that fought at Crécy.



His early battle piece, the "Sant' Egidio,"¹ amuses us by the rocking-horse appearance of the horses. In his absorption with technique, Uccello was indifferent then to realistic accuracy. Truths of colour did not interest him—he painted horses red. The third dimension in space, which Giotto could only suggest experimentally and symbolically, was conquered by Uccello, who clearly separated the planes in which his figures move and have their being. Roses, oranges, and hedges were drawn with botanical precision, and no pains were spared to draw branches and even leaves in correct perspective. The splendid realism to which Uccello ultimately attained is best represented by the intensely alive animal and its rider in the picture we reproduce. Uccello's equestrian portrait of the English mercenary John Hawkwood is a milestone in the history of art.

In that golden age of the Medici this business of art flourished. It is well to remember that it was a business, even in the narrow sense—a matter of workshops, of craftsmanship, of masters and apprentices, of intrigues for Church and aristocratic commissions and of legal agreements. One by one the technical problems of convincing representation, which were now the main preoccupation, were overcome. Two artists in particular made noteworthy contributions: Masaccio and Piero della Francesca.

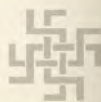
Masaccio (1401–28), though he died when he was but twenty-seven, became the model for the men of his time. He added to Uccello's discoveries in perspective the important one that objects in the distance not only look smaller, but are less distinct because of the veil of air between. In a famous series of painting which he did in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence he almost abolished the use of line, working in masses and getting his forms by a marvellous use of light and shade. So great were his innovations that practically all the artists of his time studied these works and learned from this young genius.

Piero della Francesca (1416–92) was another power in the art of the time. He was hailed as "monarch of the science of painting," and as we look at such a masterpiece as his noble "Nativity" in the National Gallery we realise how right the title is. He seems to have taken all that went before and to have added to it his own sense of the open air which surrounds his sculptural figures.

§ 6

Romantic mysticism, which budded with Fra Angelico, passed by Lippi to flower with all sweetness and beauty in the art of his pupil, Alessandro Filipepi, famed as Botticelli. Sandro Botticelli was born in

¹ Though commonly known by this title, Uccello's masterpiece at the National Gallery is now held to represent the Rout of San Romano, 1432.





"THE NATIVITY," BY PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA (1416-92)

Copyright.

National Gallery, London

Piero della Francesca was one of the artists who learned from the youthful genius of Masaccio to give his figures the solidity of three dimensional form and that feeling of being surrounded by air which carried Florentine art yet further forward. His lovely "Nativity" is a magnificent example of his almost sculptural art.



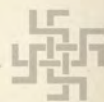


"THE MAGNIFICAT," BY BOTTICELLI (1444-1510)

W. F. Mansell.

In the Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Of all the fifteenth-century Italian painters whose names are famous in history, none surpassed Alessandro Botticelli in the creation of works of sheer beauty. The Madonna of "The Magnificat" is generally regarded as the supreme masterpiece among his many paintings of the Madonna, both for its decorative charm and intense spirituality of expression.

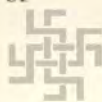


Florence about 1447, and was first apprenticed to a goldsmith. To the end of his life he was a jeweller in colours, but owes little beside the name of Botticelli, by which we know him, to his goldsmith master, whom he soon left, to devote himself thenceforth entirely to painting. The thing that differentiates the art of Botticelli from that of all his predecessors is the intensely personal, even egotistical note that he strikes in all his work. The exquisite, delicate melancholy which pervades the expression, both of Christian saints and Pagan gods, in all his pictures, is his own, not theirs, as though he were sorry for them for being saints and gods, and so, by their very nature, deprived of all those ecstasies alike of faith and of doubt, of conviction and speculation, which are the compensating privileges of human imperfection.

It is this personal quality which makes Botticelli so essentially "modern," and beloved of our time. It is interesting to remember that he remained almost in obscurity and was regarded as a minor painter until about sixty years ago.

The Italy of Botticelli was not the Italy of Fra Angelico. Beauty was no longer the handmaid of religion. The Church was no longer the only patron of art, nor were church walls the only outlet for artists. Cosimo de' Medici and Lorenzo the Magnificent did not worry their painters with theological restrictions; it was beauty that they wanted. It was not till his master Lippi left Florence in 1467 to undertake a commission at Spoleto, that Botticelli began to develop his own individuality. Pictures before that date, as "The Adoration of the Magi" in the National Gallery, reflect the art of Lippi. But as soon as the young painter was left alone in Florence he mixed with other artists like the brothers Pollaiuoli, who had greater knowledge of anatomy than Lippi, and his art made rapid progress. On another page is shown one of the most beautiful of these early works, "Judith with the Head of Holophernes." Muscular action is finely expressed in the swinging stride of the maid who follows bearing the head of the slain tyrant, while the heroine herself is depicted with all the fresh girlish charm of one of the young Florentine maids who frequented the artist's studio. In the distance the great army of invasion is seen retreating in confusion through a spacious landscape.

Botticelli's chief patron in Florence was not Lorenzo the Magnificent, but a distant kinsman of the Duke with the same name. For the villa at Castello, belonging to this younger Lorenzo de' Medici, Botticelli painted a number of pictures, among them, about 1477, the famous "Primavera." No more beautiful allegory of the coming of Spring has ever been painted than this picture, of which we give a reproduction. In the centre Venus, the Goddess of Love, awaits Spring's coming, with Cupid hovering over her. On her right are the Three Graces, with Mercury, the Messenger of





“THE MOURNING FOR CHRIST,” BY BOTTICELLI

Photo : Hanfstaengl.

In this picture we have an extreme example of the tragic element introduced into Botticelli's last works due to his meditation on the gloomy preaching of Savonarola. There is a strained affectation in the poses of the Apostles which suggests that this picture was finished by pupils after Botticelli's death, but the tense feeling expressed in the central group is entirely in the master's last manner, though only the sweet face of the Magdalene, who is tenderly lifting the feet of Christ, remains to remind us of the earlier Botticelli, whose sole aim was the expression of beauty.

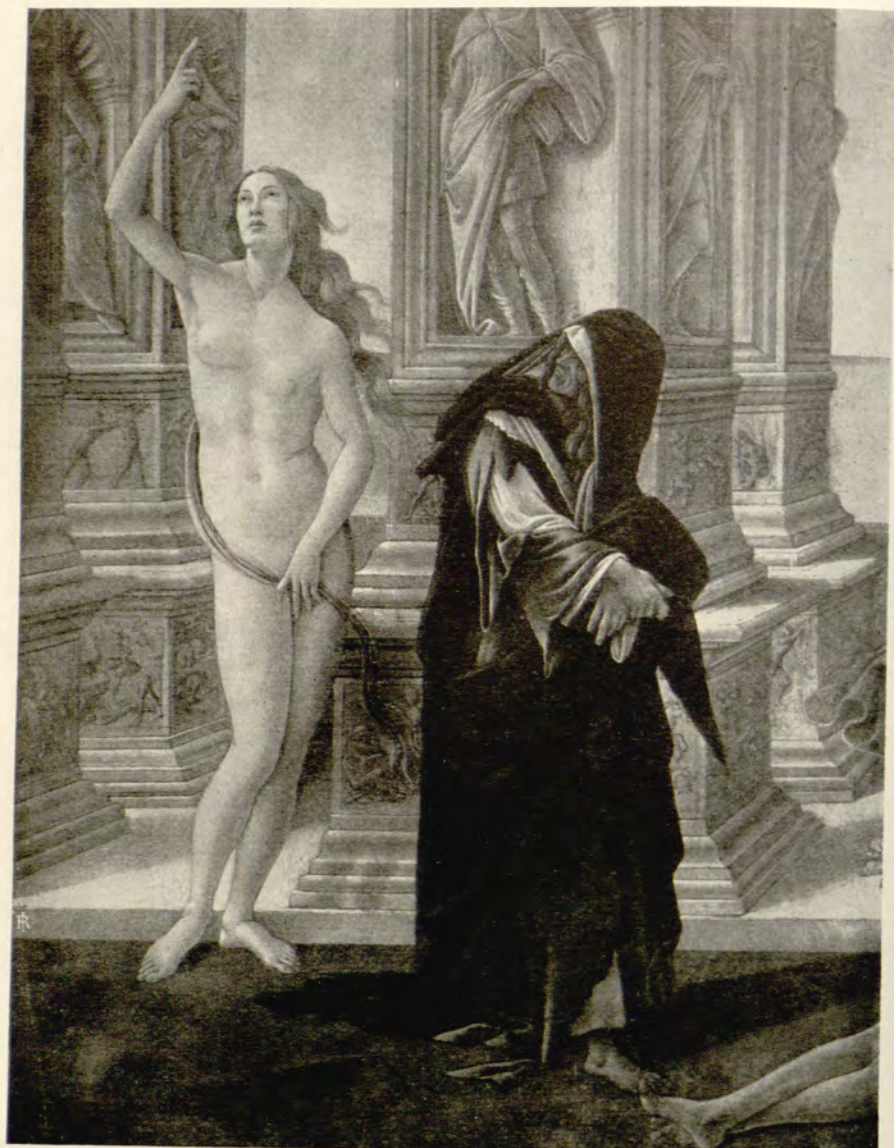




"SPRING," BY BOTTICELLI

Anderson.

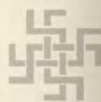
In this exquisite allegory of the coming of Spring the vernal season is personified by a brightly garbed maiden, who is being gently pushed forward by Flora, the goddess of flowers, and Zephyr, the west wind ; preceding her as a herald (on the extreme left) is Mercury, the messenger of the gods. In the centre Venus, goddess of Love, welcomes Spring's coming, while hovering over her head, Cupid aims his arrow at the Three Graces.



"THE CALUMNY OF APELLES" (DETAIL), BY BOTTICELLI

Anderson.

This striking presentment of Calumny, typified by a black-cowled hag, retreating defeated from the pure presence of the naked Truth, is at once a brilliant re-creation of a lost picture by the famous Greek artist Apelles, who flourished in the fifth century B.C., and is also an expression of Botticelli's indignation against those who calumniated the great preacher Savonarola, even after his martyrdom. It represents the culmination of the painter's devotion to Greek art and the beginning of his submission to the teaching of this fanatical friar.





"JUDITH WITH THE HEAD OF HOLOPHERNES," BY BOTTICELLI

Anderson.

Judith, the saviour of her country, is seen here after leaving the tent of Holofernes. The sword is still in her hand, and behind her strides the maidservant bearing the head of the tyrant whom Judith has slain. In the landscape background the discomfited army of Holofernes is shown retreating in confusion across a spacious landscape. This comparatively early work shows the graciousness of Botticelli's conception of womanhood and his power of rendering human beings and landscape with convincing truth.

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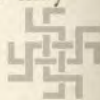
Indira Gandhi National
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the Gods; on her left gaily-decked Spring advances, gently pushed forward by Flora, the goddess of flowers, and by Zephyr, who personifies the mild west wind. Where'er she treads the flowers spring to life. Beautiful as an interpretation of old Greek legends, which make a human story out of all the phenomena of Nature, this picture is also an expression of the revived pagan delight in physical form which was typical of fifteenth-century Florence.

The fame of this and other pictures by Botticelli spread to Rome, whither in 1481 he was summoned by the Pope to assist in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, where three great frescoes, the "History of Moses," "Destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," and "Temptation of Christ," remain to this day as a monument of his skill, his energy, and his sense of drama and beauty. After two years in Rome, Botticelli returned to Florence, where, in 1483, he painted the most exquisite of all his Madonnas, "The Magnificat." But the happy days of the painter were drawing to an end. After the death of Lorenzo in 1492 and the accession of his worthless son Piero, Florence was agitated by political troubles; and to that city, tired of pleasure and weary of knowledge, came Girolamo Savonarola, the great reformer priest.

When the Medici were expelled from Florence, the young Lorenzo went with them, and Botticelli lost his best patron. During these tumultuous years Botticelli devoted much of his time to executing a wonder-series of illustrations to Dante, the originals of which are still preserved in the Vatican Library and the Berlin Museum. These drawings reveal not only an intimate knowledge of the great poet, but also a profound sympathy with the feelings of the poet. Savonarola preached and Botticelli listened, though happily he did not follow the example of some of his contemporaries, and burn his earlier pictures of pagan subjects. His brother Simone, who lived with him in these later years, was a fanatical disciple of Savonarola, but Sandro himself does not appear to have been wholly converted till the great preacher in turn became the victim of the fury of a fickle populace.

In the same year (1498) in which Savonarola was burned at the stake in the Piazza della Signoria, Botticelli painted his great picture, "The Calumny of Apelles." This work, which we reproduce, had a double purpose. Nominally it was an attempt to reproduce a famous lost picture, "Calumny," by the ancient Greek painter Apelles, from the description of it given by the Greek writer Lucian. But we can have little doubt that the inward and spiritual meaning of this picture, which shows black-robed Calumny (or according to another interpretation, Remorse) slinking from the radiant presence of the naked Truth, was directed against the culminators of the martyred friar. Among all Botticelli's pictures this painting is distinguished by its exquisite finish and richness of detail, and we may





"THE MYSTIC NATIVITY," BY BOTTICELLI

National Gallery.

National Gallery, London

One of the last pictures painted by the artist, this typical work reveals the mystical effect of the teaching of Savonarola on the mind of the artist. It is essentially other-worldly, and bears a superscription which indicates that it was painted in 1500 when the painter expected the end of the world. The rhythmic grouping of the figures is one of his individual contributions to art.



regard it as the last great expression of his powers both as a classic and a humanist. Distressed both by the disturbed state of his native city and by the tragic end of Savonarola, Botticelli fretted himself into melancholia during his last years. The few religious pictures of this period which remain—many of them probably finished by pupils after the master's death—contain a strange exaggeration of gesture and facial expression, and an almost theatrical vehemence of action, which are entirely foreign to the poetical fantasies of his earlier manner. As an example of the high-strung emotions of his last years, "The Mourning of Christ" may be compared in these pages with the serene tranquillity of Botticelli's early- and middle-period work. The happiest painting of his last period is the little "Nativity" in the National Gallery.



IX

THE GLORY OF GOTHIC

CHURCH ART AND CRAFT IN NORTHERN EUROPE

§ I

WHILE Italy blossomed into the wonders of her early art, and before the Flemish made their invention of oil painting, the spirit of man emerging from the Dark Ages was finding its own expression elsewhere. In Northern France, Flanders, and England, particularly during the thirteenth century, arose the wonder of Gothic art. It was primarily an art of building. Architecture, however, is not only an art in itself, but the occasion of art. Down in Italy the building of the great churches had been followed by the decoration of the wall spaces with the frescoes of the early masters. These, painted directly into the wet plaster, became part of the actual walls, and proved the most indestructible of all known paintings.

In Northern Europe things worked differently. The darker skies caused men to build not to exclude the light, but to take advantage of all possible window space. The new method of building—the Gothic—was altogether less heavy than the earlier Romanesque, when the church or abbey had to be almost as much fortress as place of worship. It was a tremendous advance in the technique of building. The weight was taken by transverse arches and slim piers, the thrust of the roof countered by light supporting buttresses. It enabled men to build higher, vaster, more daringly, and to have enormous window spaces. This new type of building was a thrill and an excitement; and, in a world dominated by the Church resurgent, it had wonderful results.

Along the valley of the Seine and throughout England a wave of cathedral building gave mankind a heritage of beauty as great as anything that had been known on earth. Under King Louis the Ninth (Saint Louis) in the cities of France it became a passion that spread from town to town. Everybody—priest and citizen, lordly bishop and humble workman—played a part in that ecstatic obsession. Entire townships gave themselves over to it, mobilising all their wealth and labour to build better than their neighbours. We hear of whole populations thronging to drag the trolleys of stone to the sites, singing as they worked, and pouring out their treasures



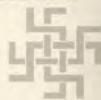
to support the communal effort. Chartres, Amiens, Notre-Dame, Reims, Bourges, Bayeux : simultaneously the vast edifices arose. And in England, under the patronage of Henry the Third, surely if not quite so excitedly, Canterbury, Winchester, Lincoln, St. Albans, Wells, and our other lovely cathedrals came into being. It must be remembered that in those early centuries the cultural link between the two countries through both Church and Court was very strong.

Magnificent art though this architecture proved to be, we are here concerned with its by-product in craftsmanship and painting. For the decoration of these churches, linking up with the work in the monasteries, yielded at least three important contributions to art : sculpture, stained glass, and illuminated manuscripts. There were other crafts : precious metal-work for the altar ornaments ; embroidery for altar-cloths and curtains and vestments ; tapestries ; fine woodwork, ivory carving. All were the servants of the Church, and touched the arts of sculpture and painting at a score of points.

There was, for instance, at Narbonne in France an exquisitely painted silk altar-cloth. It was presented by Charles the Fifth, whom they called Charles the Wise for his love of art and literature which made him put into his rare and lovely books the words : " This book belongs to me, Charles." The Narbonne altar-cloth happens to have been preserved for us, and in its dramatic story-telling pictured in the formally created spaces, as well as in the profile portraits of Charles and his Queen, it links the resplendent craftsmanship of the time with painting proper.

The stained-glass windows are, perhaps, nearer to the art of mosaic than that of painting, but they were among the greatest treasures of this age of beauty. The craft of mixing various metallic oxides into the glass goes back to beginnings in about the tenth century and we probably owe it to those men on Murano near Venice where glass-making has been an art for a thousand years. Who first thought of putting shapes of this coloured glass together between binding strips of lead to make a picture, we do not know. We trace it to a church at Mans near Chartres, but others may have preceded that. What we do know is that the Gothic builders, giving more and more space to the windows, created dreams of loveliness through which the sun streamed till the whole interior was full of jewelled light. Louis built Sainte Chapelle in Paris, and the walls almost disappeared into the many-coloured glass ; Chartres Cathedral told whole ranges of Bible story in its windows ; Canterbury and York led the cathedral churches of England. In the thirteenth century this art of stained glass reached its height ; and the windows from that period, such as the famous Seven Sisters at York, remain as monuments of its triumph.

It is well to remember, too, that in the thirteenth and fourteenth





Giraudon.

“OCTOBER,” BY POL DE LIMBOURG

Musée Condé, Chantilly

One of the illuminated pages from “Les Très Riches Heures,” created for the Duc de Berry by Pol Limbourg and his brothers. This is one of the loveliest manuscript books in the world. From such works the art of landscape painter was really born. The various chateaux of the patron formed the backgrounds.



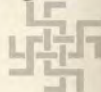
centuries not only the stained-glass windows but the walls of English churches, large and small, were covered with pictures of Biblical and saintly story as a means of conveying these to a people entirely illiterate. The pictures were, alas, not incorporated into the wet plaster at the time of building as those in Italy were, but painted in tempera on it, and so were the more easily destroyed. Nevertheless, of recent years, owing largely to the zeal and patience of Professor Tristram and his predecessor, C. E. Keyser, we have rescued hundreds of these paintings from beneath the whitewash which obliterated them at the time of the Reformation, when thousands of altar paintings on wooden panels perished in the mistaken zeal of the iconoclasts.

At Winchester we have some particularly lovely stories of the Passion dating from the early thirteenth century, whilst at Chichester an exquisite Madonna and Child, rose-pink, yellow, red and green and silver against a background of lapis lazuli, is even earlier, for it was painted when Italy still awaited the coming of Giotto. Both Winchester and St. Albans were leading art centres of Western Europe in the middle of that century, for Henry the Third of England rivalled King Louis in æsthetic and religious enthusiasm. When Henry saw Sainte Chapelle he wished he might bring it away in a cart.

§ 2

It was the work of the illuminators, however, which was destined to yield the most important contribution to art. Every great church had its Scriptorium, where the patient monks worked at service books for the choirs, at scriptures, at lives of saints, and ultimately at those lovely Books of Hours for their patrons. On the vellum of these books the blues and crimsons and greens of the window-glass glowed anew against backgrounds of pure gold. Lovely studies of plants twined in and out of the initials and down the margins; strange beasts curved among the lettering; here and there a portrait filled a space; elsewhere an incident was depicted by way of illustration and decoration.

England had already a long tradition of illumination. The "Lindisfarne Gospels" date from the eighth century, and the marvellous "Benedictional of St. Æthelwold" from the tenth. If the Norman conquest interfered at all with this art it was not for long, for the ultimate cultural result of the invasion was to bind the two countries already strongly linked in the internationalism of the Catholic Church. So under Henry the Third we get the important school at St. Albans under Matthew Paris (1200-59), whose fame alike as artist and historian reverberated across Europe. An interesting fact about much of this early English illumination is that it was in pen and water-colour—a delicate precursor of the triumph of English





THE CUP-BEARER

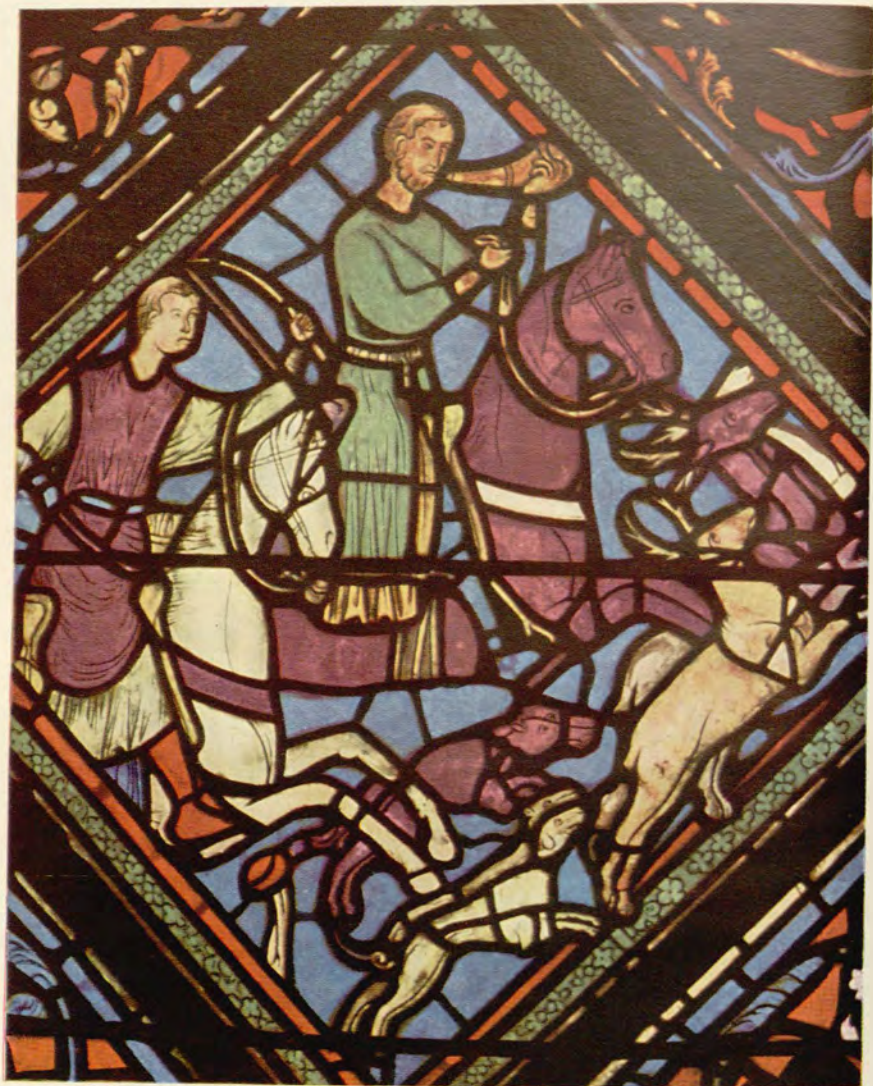
Fresco from the mural paintings at the Palace of Minos, Knossos.

The discovery of the lost civilization of Crete by Sir Arthur Evans, so thrillingly described in his book, *The Palace of Minos*, is one of the romances of archaeology. Beside architecture and magnificent ceramics, the walls of the vast palace were decorated with processions, records of the bull sports, and other aspects of the highly civilized life of the Cretans of Homeric days.

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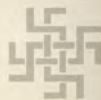


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STAINED GLASS

Chartres Cathedral

In the thirteenth century when pictorial art was being reborn in Europe, the sculpture, stained glass and embroideries of the ecclesiastical crafts shared its task of telling the illiterate people the sacred story. The supremely lovely glass of Chartres, belonging to this early period, has never been surpassed. This hunting scene has not only marvellous beauty of colour (especially the blues of the background) but is a triumph of design and the filling of the space. Such colouring and designing played a great part in the renaissance of art in Europe.



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THE CHICHESTER ROUNDEL

Bishop's Palace, Chichester

A mural painting of the thirteenth century which reveals the charm and grace of the English Gothic painters in those days. Henry III of England rivalled Louis IX of France in his encouragement of the arts in the churches, and the great days of Gothic rewarded his royal patronage.

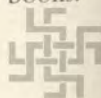
water-colour nearly a thousand years later. Also it tended to a surprising freedom of form, the subjects straying over the margin rather than staying within rigid rectangular bounds as most of the continental work did.

In the beautiful "Queen Mary's Psalter" and in the "Gorleston Psalter" we find sacred art intermingled delightfully with secular, and often humorous subjects—a sermon of a cat to some ducks and a rabbit's funeral in the East Anglian book, for example. Elsewhere the scriptoria began to produce "Bestiaries" with strange animal forms illustrating the dubious natural history of the texts. Everywhere there were signs that laymen were among the illuminators, and this art of manuscript gradually emerges from the monasteries and the church and overflows under the patronage of the courts and the aristocracy.

Then, in the middle of the century, the peak honours passed over to the French side of the Channel. There had long been a fine school of illuminators at Paris. But it is well, before we consider this definitely French contribution, to note the exquisite "Wilton Diptych" which is one of the treasures of early painting in the National Gallery. Whether it was French work or English does not greatly concern us: the two schools were inextricably interwoven. Sufficient that it is a piece of unrivalled grace and lovely detail. It brings the fourteenth century to a close on a note of beauty unequalled anywhere.

In France this art of the manuscript rose to its height under the patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy and of Berry. The intrigues, the struggles for mastery between these men, was one side—an ugly side—of affairs. The other was their marvellous appreciation of the artists they gathered about them: Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose at the Burgundian court; André Beauneveu, the Limbourgs, and later, Jean Fouquet at that of the Dukes of Berry.

Two supreme masterpieces of the illuminator's art came out of that patronage. One was the precious "Très Riches Heures" at Chantilly, painted between 1412 and 1416 by Pol de Limbourg and his two brothers; the other is the "Hours of Etienne Chevalier" by Jean Fouquet. The story of the first is that the Duke of Berry was shown the "Book of Hours of Turin" by its owner, the Duke of Bavaria. It was the work of the Van Eycks, and forthwith he asked Pol de Limbourg to emulate the work. The fashion and style of these Books of Hours had been started nearly a hundred years before when French artists had made the "Breviary de Belleville." It opened with a pictured calendar of the months, and the illustrations of these and their respective activities sent the artists to Nature and gave us a wonderful series of pictures of contemporary life and conditions. Landscape art owes an enormous debt to those beautiful books.



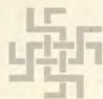


THE WILTON DIPTYCH

National Gallery, London

National Gallery.

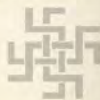
This altar-piece, made towards the end of the fourteenth century for King Richard II, shows Richard being presented to the Virgin by St. John Baptist and Saints Edmond and Edward, the patron saints of England. The Virgin is surrounded by angels wearing the king's badge, a white hart, on their shoulders. It is one of the most delicate of all paintings of the period.



Ruskin said of Pol de Limbourg that he was the first artist to set the sun in the sky, and anyway his scenes of springtime and harvest, of summer sunshine and winter snow, of birds and beasts, of men at their work and their play, carried art brilliantly forward. The "Très Riches Heures" is not only a milestone in this French-Flemish borderland painting, but in the whole story of art.

With the fifteenth century comes another masterpiece of this miniature art, the "Livre d'Etienne Chevalier," created for the great secretary of state at the Burgundian court by Jean Fouquet (1415-85). Fouquet is the first truly great name in French painting, and in this book (slightly more archaic in feeling than the work of Pol de Limbourg, although it belongs to a later date) we have sacred history in "modern dress"—the dress of early-fifteenth-century Burgundy. Fouquet has also left us some fine portraits which were not miniatures: the "Man with a Glass of Wine" in the Louvre is almost certainly his; the portraits of Etienne Chevalier and of Charles the Seventh and his lovely favourite, Agnes Sorel, certainly are.

Thus gradually this art of the miniature and of the illuminated book moved out of the church into the courts as patronage came from the powerful Dukes and their ministers. In the churches, meantime, painting was not confined to the manuscripts but found golden opportunities in the altar-pieces painted on wooden panels. How many of these we have lost we cannot tell, for wood burns, breaks, or can be broken, and in the ages of war and destruction which have intervened almost everything has been lost to us. But a few of these altar-pieces which adorned the great churches and eased the overcharged consciences of their lordly donors have revealed to us the high quality of that lost beauty. Great names of artists mingle with provoking anonymity. The Master of Moulins whose "Virgin in Glory" glowed like a rainbow in the cathedral of that city, and whose "Nativity" at Autun is a dream of grace; the unknown painter of that "Pieta" from Villeneuve near Avignon in Provence; Charonton from the same district; Nicholas Froment, who, under the patronage of King René painted a charming triptych of "The Burning Bush" with the Virgin and Child among the flaming leaves—these and many others circling round the churches and courts of France and England stand at the beginnings of art in Western Europe. It was fundamentally church art, symbolic, mystical, and yet ever reaching out towards the ordinary life of the senses and of Nature, preparing the way for much which was to follow, and withal yielding in its own way treasures which must inevitably be taken note of in this story of the art of Europe. Across its beauty swept the Hundred Years' War and the Black Death, that terrible plague which killed off one-fourth of the population of Europe and came near to throwing civilisation





"THE MAN WITH A GLASS OF WINE," BY JEAN FOUQUET (1415-85)

Louvre, Paris

Portraiture begins when the patrons of the artists have their pictures set in the corner of altar-pieces as the kneeling donors, or in their service books. Fouquet, who made the exquisite "Livre d'Etienne Chevalier" as an illuminated book, also left us this fine portrait of an unknown man.



back into new dark ages. When the world struggled back, the light of the Renaissance was beating too strongly from the South, the Reformation was flooding Central and Western Europe, the discovery of printing was leading art along new channels, and this glory of Gothic was already a part of history.



X

THE INVENTION OF OIL-PAINTING

THE ART OF THE VAN EYCKS, MEMLINC, AND THE EARLY
FLEMISH MASTERS

§ I

IN the whole history of painting there are no more remarkable figures than the two brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck. Never before or since has Art made so mighty a stride in the space of one generation. We get some idea of what they achieved if we compare any King or Queen in a pack of playing cards with a modern photograph of a living monarch.

Just as Molière's "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" was astounded to find he had been talking prose all his life without knowing it, so some readers may be surprised to learn that they are perfectly familiar with mediæval Gothic art, for examples of it may be found in every pack of playing cards, in which the court cards are survivals of mediæval Gothic portraiture.

To obtain the best possible insight into the birth of Gothic art one ought to visit the Cathedral of Brunswick. Here we may see what are probably the best-preserved examples of mediæval wall-paintings. In the choir is a series of pictures, painted about the beginning of the thirteenth century, and one of the best of these represents "Herod's Birthday Feast." It is perfectly childish, of course, but it is childish in a totally different way from that in which the pictures of Giotto and Angelico are childish. Neither the Italian nor the Brunswick pictures show any sense of perspective or give any real effect of space and distance; but the treatment of the figures greatly differs. In the Italian paintings there is still a faint trace of Greek draughtsmanship distorted by Byzantine dogma, but the Brunswick paintings show quite a new conception of the human body which has nothing to do with Greece or Rome; it is *pure Gothic*. In these Brunswick paintings the people pictured look like nothing so much as a row of court cards. Herod himself looks as much like a real human being as the King of Hearts looks like H.M. King George VI.

Now we are in a position to appreciate the art of the brothers Van Eyck. To realise the advance they made we must not compare their figures with the portraits of to-day or modern photographs, but with the Queen of Spades and the Jack of Diamonds. And we must remember that little over



a hundred years separates the style of court-card portraiture from the realistic forms of Hubert's mighty figures surmounting "The Adoration of the Lamb" and Jan van Eyck's "The Man with the Pink." Think of the court cards when you look at the illustrations of these paintings.

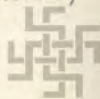
It is a great misfortune that we know so little about the lives of these amazing men. Many interesting details about the early Italian artists have been preserved to us because Giorgio Vasari, himself an early sixteenth-century Florentine painter, wrote the lives of the preceding and contemporary Italian artists with a fullness and vivacity which make his accounts still fascinating and readable. But there was no biographer of the early Flemish artists, and the few meagre facts we know about them have slowly been unearthed by patient scholarship toiling amid the archives of the cities in which these artists lived.

Therefore it is by the pictures which remain, rather than by any written record, that we must endeavour to reconstruct the flowering of art in Flanders and Northern Europe. But if we do study those works, then it is positively electrifying to behold the mysterious and rapid quickening of the artistic spirit in Flanders.

Of what came between the paintings of Brunswick Cathedral and the art of the Van Eycks, little is known and nothing certain. The very names of the painters of some undoubtedly early pictures are unknown, and all we can say with certainty is that from about the end of the fourteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth century a group of painters flourished on the lower Rhine and became known as the School of Cologne. Several of its members are merely legendary, but the "Bimburg Chronicle" of 1380 contains an authoritative entry: "In this time there was a painter in Cologne of the name of Wilhelm; he was considered the best master in all German Land; he paints every man, of whatever form, as if he were alive." This master has been identified as William of Herle (or Cologne), who died about 1378, and though he evidently impressed his contemporaries by his pioneer realism, the work of his school is esteemed in our own time for its spiritual calm and peaceful purity. "St. Veronica" in the National Gallery is probably painted by William of Cologne or by one of his pupils.

Now Hubert van Eyck was born about 1365 near Maestricht, which is no great distance from Cologne. Most probably he studied in the Rhineland capital before he migrated to Flanders and, with his brother Jan, settled in Ghent. The increasing commercial prosperity of Bruges and Ghent attracted artists from the banks of the Rhine, and the School of Cologne declined as the Early Flemish School arose.

Since the time of Vasari, the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck have generally received credit for having discovered oil as a medium for painting. Before their time artists had mixed their colours either with water (frescoes)



or with yolk of egg (tempera paintings), and though modern scholarship is inclined to doubt whether the Van Eycks were actually the first to make use of oil, they were beyond question the pioneers of the new medium.

Tradition says that Jan, having one day "devoted the utmost pains" in finishing a picture with great care, varnished it and as usual put it in the sun to dry. But the heat was excessive and split the wooden panel which he had painted. Grieving at the destruction of his handiwork, Jan "determined to find a means whereby he should be spared such an annoyance in the future." After various experiments he discovered that linseed oil and oil of nuts dried more quickly than any which he had tried, and that colours mixed with these oils were more brilliant, proof against water, and blended far better than the tempera. Thus was oil-painting invented.

"The Adoration of the Lamb" at Ghent, executed by the two brothers, is not only the earliest monument of the art of oil-painting but it is the most splendid masterpiece produced by any Northern artist before the seventeenth century. Not till Rubens was born, some 200 years later, did Flanders produce the equal of the Van Eycks, and from this fact alone we may deduce the extraordinary mastery of their art.

"The Adoration of the Lamb," an elaborate polyptych, is not one picture but a whole collection of pictures. Originally it consisted of the long central panel showing "The Adoration of the Lamb" and above this three panels of "The Virgin," "God the Father," and "St. John" (all shown in our illustration); on the left of the "Lamb" panel—which measures $7\frac{1}{4}$ feet long by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high—were two panels of "The Just Judges" and "Christ's Warriors," and these were balanced by panels showing "The Holy Hermits" and "The Holy Pilgrims" on the right. On the upper tier the three central figures were flanked by two double-panelled shutters, the painted subjects on one side being "Angels Singing," "Angels Making Music," and, at the extreme ends, "Adam" and "Eve"; on the reverse of the shutters are "St. John the Baptist," "St. John the Evangelist," "Jodoc Vydt"—the donor of the altar-piece—and "Wife of Jodoc Vydt."

The complete altar-piece therefore consisted of twelve panels, four painted on both sides, making sixteen pictures in all. The whole painted surface of this composite picture, or polyptych, amounts to over a thousand feet.

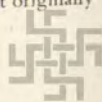
The whole altar-piece was undoubtedly planned and begun by Hubert, who certainly painted the three tremendous central figures and the panel of "Angels Making Music." After Hubert's death in 1426 Jan van Eyck completed the altar-piece, and probably did not adhere altogether strictly to his brother's original designs. The difference between the work of the two brothers is one not so much of skill as of temperament. Hubert





"THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB," BY HUBERT AND JAN VAN EYCK

This gigantic altar-piece—the painted surface of which extends to over 1,000 square feet—has in many respects never been surpassed. Originally it consisted of the centre panel, from which the whole takes its name, surmounted by three panels : the Virgin Mary, God the Father, and St. John. These three figures are certainly the work of Hubert. This portion, now at Ghent, is shown above ; but originally the polyptych was completed on either side by two tiers of two panels each.



possessed a solemn spirituality and serious thoughtfulness which was not shared by his more worldly younger brother.

Jan van Eyck, born about 1385, is a more popular and no less eminent figure than his elder brother. He lived on in Ghent and Bruges till 1441 and his works are comparatively numerous, whereas few paintings by Hubert are extant. Shortly before completing the Ghent altar-piece, Jan entered the service of Philip of Burgundy, for whom he undertook several diplomatic missions. In this way he saw Portugal and other foreign countries, and his later paintings betray his affectionate remembrance of the country he had seen in southern climes. Jan was essentially a realist, with his keen gaze ever fixed on the beautiful earth and on human beings rather than on religious doctrines. His real bent is shown in many of his panels for "The Adoration of the Lamb." In the panel of "The Annunciation" his delight in the still-life, in the wash-basin and other furniture of the room, in the street view seen through the window, reveals him to be the true father of genre painting. His portraits of Jodoc Vydt and his wife, shown without flattery as a dull but prosperous Flemish burgher and his wife, prove him to be the father of modern portraiture. Both these qualities, his capacity for realistic portraiture and his infinite exactitude in rendering the detail of an interior, are magnificently displayed in our illustration, "Jan Arnolfini and his Wife," one of the most precious things in the National Gallery.

While Hubert belongs to the austere company of monumental or architectural painters, Jan is a pioneer of domestic painting and one of the first producers of what we now know as a "picture." In this development Jan van Eyck was, doubtless unconsciously, meeting the demand of his time and place.

In Northern churches and cathedrals, which need more light than the Southern, the place occupied by wall-paintings was gradually given over to stained-glass windows, which are marked features in the Gothic architecture of Northern Europe. Wall-paintings, which still led the way in Italy, became secondary in Flanders to the decorative panels introduced into wooden screen-work. This much accomplished, it was a short step to meet the demands of a prosperous commercial community by (metaphorically) detaching a panel from its ecclesiastical frame and adapting its subject and style to a private dwelling-house.

Thus, while Italy remains the home of the religious picture, Flanders and the Netherlands become more and more the home of secular art. Though he painted other religious subjects beside "The Adoration of the Lamb" and the miniature "Altar-piece" which the Emperor Charles V. took with him on his travels, the most famous of the other paintings by Jan van Eyck are portraits. In his portraiture he is uncompromising in his



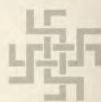


W. F. Mansell

"JAN ARNOLFINI AND HIS WIFE," BY JAN VAN EYCK (c. 1385-1441)

National Gallery, London

This well-known picture, a favourite with all visitors to the National Gallery, is a splendid example both of Jan van Eyck's truthful and unflattering portraiture and also of his delight in rendering with scrupulous fidelity all the details of an interior. The reflection in the round mirror is itself a miniature within a picture.





W. F. Mansell.

"CHRIST'S WARRIORS," BY HUBERT
AND JAN VAN EYCK
Ghent Cathedral



W. F. Mansell.

"THE JUST JUDGES," BY HUBERT
AND JAN VAN EYCK
Ghent Cathedral





Bruckmann.

"THE MAN WITH THE PINKS," BY JAN VAN EYCK

Berlin Museum

Painted about 500 years ago by one of the first artists to use oil-paint, this picture astounds us to-day by its lifelike realism, by its unswerving fidelity to every little detail that can help to give the character of a man and set his living presence before us. Note how the brocade collar of the tunic, showing above the fur collar of the coat, seems to be ornamented with the alternating letters Y and C. It is hoped these may one day afford a clue to the identity of the sitter, who is at present unknown. The bell which, with a cross, hangs by a twisted chain from his neck, suggests that St. Anthony was the patron saint of the person represented.



endeavour to state the whole truth ; such details as warts and wrinkles, furrows and stubbly beards, he renders with passionate delight and exactitude. A splendid example of Jan's rugged realism may be seen in our illustration from the portrait, in the Berlin Museum, known as "The Man with the Pinks." Precisely drawn, true to every wart and wrinkle, the face is so full of life and character that we almost listen for speech to come from the slightly parted lips. Who this man was has never been discovered, but from his costume and the handsome ring on his finger we may deduce that he was a person of position.

§ 2

If little is known about the Van Eycks, still less is known concerning their successors. Patient research among municipal records in Flanders, however, has greatly increased our knowledge during recent years. Twenty years ago the very name of the painter of a fine altar-piece in the Abbey of Flemalle, near Liège, was uncertain ; he was alluded to vaguely as "The Master of Flemalle." To-day it has been established that he was a painter of Tournai, called Robert Campin, who was born about 1375 and lived till 1444. There are two good examples of his art in the National Gallery, and he is important, not only for his own work, but as being the master of Roger van der Weyden.

Among religious painters Roger van der Weyden (c. 1400-64), who was born at Tournai and settled in Brussels, had a considerable influence. Beside the calm solemnity of Hubert van Eyck, his pictures appear exaggerated in their dramatic intensity and fervour. He was essentially a tragic artist, dwelling on the sufferings of the Saviour and peopling his pictures with wailing figures, whose emaciated faces stream with tears, whose hands are convulsively clutched in agony or outstretched to heaven. In 1450 he visited Rome and is thought to have had some influence on painting in Ferrara and Padua, and there he in turn may have imbibed something of a new spirit, for towards the end of his life his sentiment became more gentle and refined. Van der Weyden is seen at his best in "The Bewailing of the Body of Christ" in the Berlin Gallery, and in this picture his affinity with the school of Van Eyck is shown in the delicate and gently detailed landscape background.

Roger's fellow-pupil Jacques Daret, who died in 1466, is softer and more conciliatory in his religious themes, and his paintings are peculiarly sweet both in colour and temper.

The tragic painting of Van der Weyden was continued by Hugo van der Goes (c. 1435-82) of Ghent and Bruges, who is reputed to have begun life as a wild pleasure-lover. Suddenly he withdrew to a monastery near



Brussels, and conscious-stricken at his own dissipation he henceforward devoted his talent to sacred subjects, usually accentuating the sorrows of Christ, but always avoiding the wailing and excessive gesticulation which marked the pictures of Van der Weyden. His art is deeper and more quiet, but is certainly not less expressive. The altar-piece with "The Adoration of Jesus" which, under the orders of Portinari, agent for the Medici in Bruges, he painted for Santa Maria Nuova in Florence, is generally accepted as the supreme masterpiece of Hugo van der Goes. We see the continuation of the Van Eyck tradition in the glimpse of landscape, in which light-green branches are boldly contrasted with the deep-blue sky, in the naturalism of the fire-red lily in the foreground, and in the realism of the rough, weather-beaten shepherds who on one side balance the sturdy figure of St. Joseph, who stands praying, on the other. When this picture arrived in Florence, it created a great sensation, and it has been thought that many famous Italian artists, among them Piero di Cosimo, Ghirlandaio, Piero Pollaiuolo, were influenced to the extent of changing their style after they had seen this masterpiece by Hugo van der Goes.

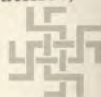
§ 3

The first great figure in Flemish painting who appears to owe little to either of the Van Eycks is Hans Memlinc (c. 1430-94), who probably studied at Cologne before he settled in Bruges about 1467. His paintings in the Hospital of St. John at Bruges are world-famous, and round them has been woven a pretty legend.

Young Memlinc, the story goes, while fighting as a soldier of Charles the Bold, was desperately wounded and dragged himself to the Hospital of St. John at Bruges, where he was kindly received and his wounds tended. When cured, out of gratitude and for no fee, he painted the pictures still to be seen in the Hospital.

Unfortunately, historical research has demolished the legend and reveals Memlinc as no soldier of fortune but as a prosperous citizen and house-owner in Bruges. Yet the legend well accords with the character of Memlinc's paintings, which have been likened to "the visions of a sick man in convalescence."

Just as the name of Michael Angelo is indissolubly linked to the Sistine Chapel in Rome, so is that of Memlinc to the Hospital of St. John at Bruges. But while we are awed by the heroic figures and magnitude of the Italian's paintings at Rome, in Bruges we are fascinated and bewitched by the bijou qualities of the Fleming's art. Memlinc's large triptych in the Hospital, "The Virgin and Child Enthroned," with panels on either side of "St. John the Baptist" and of "St. John the Evangelist at Patmos,"





Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Gallery

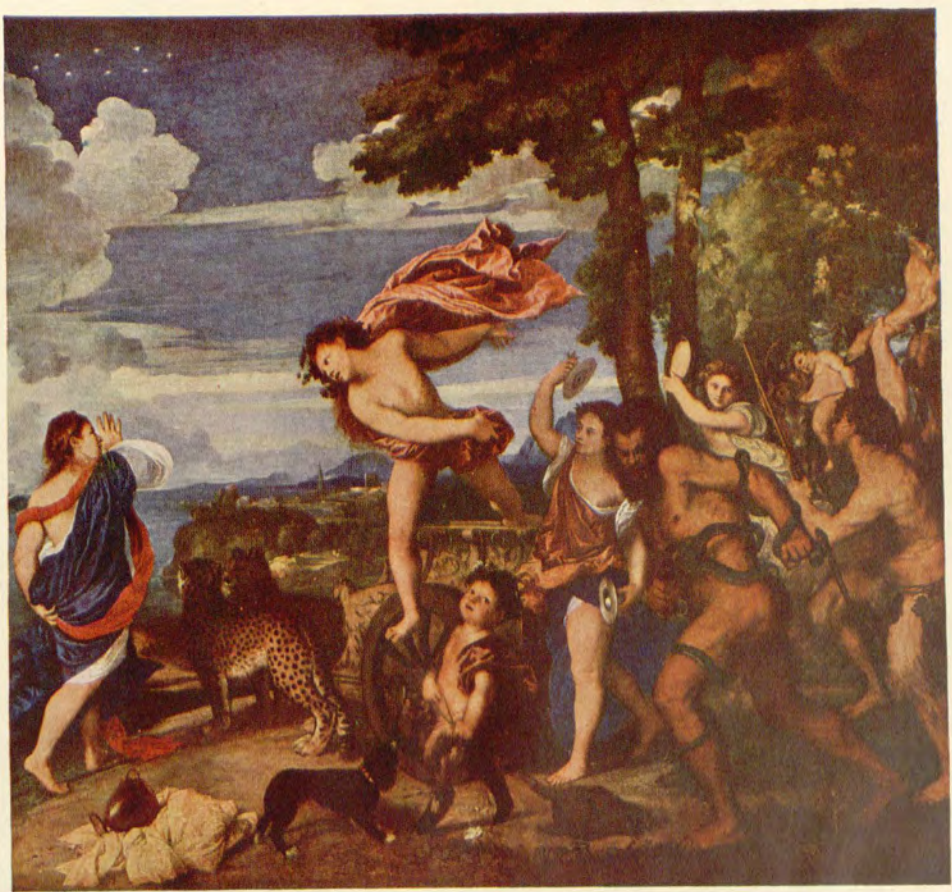
"THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS," BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

National Gallery, London

It was Leonardo's destiny that so few of his great projects were ever finished, but in "The Virgin of the Rocks" we have his work at its most sublime. There is a quality of eternity rather than of time in this conception of Mary bringing the infant St. John to be blessed by the Christ Child. Leonardo, as usual, foregoes the sensuous appeal of colour for the intellectual force of pure design and noble draughtsmanship.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

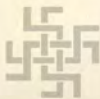


Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Gallery.

"BACCHUS AND ARIADNE," BY TITIAN

National Gallery, London

Brilliant colour, dramatic action, an involved rhythm of line which winds through the whole design, Titian's technical qualities are already mature in this picture painted as early as 1514. It is a *tour de force* of figure painting as well as a splendid landscape. The constellation in the sky is the golden crown which Bacchus presented to his bride.



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"THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA," BY MEMLINC (c. 1430-84)
Hospital of St. John, Bruges

This illustration, about half the size of the original painting, illustrates the final episode in the story of St. Ursula. Accompanied by a maiden and one of the Pope's Suite, the Saint stands undismayed before the General of the Huns and, refusing to deny her faith, calmly awaits death by the arrow which an archer is ready to let fly. It is characteristic of Memlinc's gentleness and delicacy of feeling that he has preferred suggesting the Saint's martyrdom to painting the Saint's death with the grim realism which we find in the works of other Flemish masters.



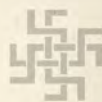
Bruckmann.

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|---|------------------------------------|
| (1) ST. URSULA ARRIVING AT COLOGNE | (2) THE PILGRIMS ARRIVING AT BASLE |
| (3) THE POPE AND PILGRIMS EMBARK AT BASLE | (4) THE MARTYRDOM OF THE PILGRIMS |

"THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA," BY MEMLINC

Hospital of St. John, Bruges

Memling's "Shrine of St. Ursula," is one of the art wonders of the world. It is an oblong gabled casket, the sides of which are adorned with six miniatures illustrating the legend of St. Ursula.



is not the work that takes our breath away : rather is it the " Shrine of St. Ursula," a wonderfully painted casket—made to hold relics of the saint. Though only 3 feet long and less than 3 feet high, this casket is covered with eight panel paintings, and six medallions on the roof slopes. Five of the scenes illustrating the story of St. Ursula are reproduced, and the beauty of their workmanship is manifest.

Looking at these poetical pictures of a romantic story, it seems ungracious to recall that the legend of St. Ursula, according to modern science, rests on no surer foundation than the discovery in mediæval times of an old Roman burial-ground. From these unknown remains, it is now said, the tale of Ursula and her 11,000 virgins was constructed. Many versions of the legend are in existence ; but none nearer than five or six centuries to the date when the events were supposed to have happened. This is the version followed by Memlinc.

Ursula, daughter of a King of Brittany or Cornwall, either to delay marriage with a pagan prince, or alternately to escape the persecution of the Emperor Maximian, was enjoined to go on a pilgrimage and make 11,000 virgins her companions. The company sailed up the Rhine via Cologne to Basle, and thence went by foot to Rome, where they were received by the Pope with every honour and attention. Returning, they sailed up the Rhine from Basle, with papal benedictions, but on arriving at Cologne they were slaughtered by the Huns. After the martyrdom, their relics were piously collected and buried.

That is the story, and it will be noted that Memlinc, to show how absolutely the Pope was in sympathy with St. Ursula, actually makes him embark with her at the start of the return journey. Incidentally these miniature paintings show that Memlinc knew Cologne well, for in all the scenes which take place in the city he has effectively introduced the cathedral and other of its principal buildings.

The spirituality of Memlinc's portraiture, his power to paint the soul as well as the surface, is beautifully exemplified in " The Duke of Cleves," reproduced from the picture at the National Gallery. His romanticism, a new note which Memlinc definitely contributed to painting, is bewitchingly exhaled from his " Betrothal of St. Catherine " and the " Legend of St. Ursula," both of which are touching in their simplicity, their girlish freshness, and miniature daintiness.

Already the city, so wealthy in the days of the Van Eycks, had become in the time of Memlinc *Bruges-la-Morte*. Something of its sad poetic solitude pervades his pictures. The great house of the Medici had collapsed, the rich merchants had gone elsewhere, and the next great Flemish painter, Quinten Massys (1466-1530), was domiciled in Antwerp.



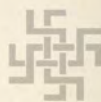


W. F. Mansell.

"THE DUKE OF CLEVES," BY MEMLINC

National Gallery, London

The grace and spirituality of this picture admirably illustrate the portraiture of Memlinc who, it has been said, "saw not only with his eyes but with his soul."



Tradition relates that Quinten Massys, the "smith of Antwerp," became a painter only because his sweetheart would not marry a smith. The swinging brushwork and broad handling which he substituted for the small detailed touches of the earlier painters well accord with the vigour demanded by the work of a smithy. His handling of colour is also new, for instead of placing unbroken blues, reds, yellows, etc., in immediate juxtaposition, he marshals his hues into a uniform colour-scheme. Disliking smallness in all things, he painted figures almost life-size; and when the size of his picture forbade the full-length, he contented himself with half figures rather than reduce his scale to miniature proportions. "The Banker and his Wife" at the Louvre is a fine example of this innovation.

With the death of Quinten Massys in 1530 the first period of Flemish painting comes to an end. The next generation of Flemings either practised their art in Italy or, like Jan Gossart, called Mabuse (c. 1472-1535), imported Italian fashions in painting.

Mabuse, who took his name from the town of Maubeuge, where he was born about 1472, was a Fleming before he naturalised his art. This we may see by studying the magnificent example of his first manner at the National Gallery. "The Adoration of the Magi" was painted by Mabuse before he visited Italy. In the architectural background we get a hint of the influence of Roger van der Weyden; the thirty figures in their rather pompous costumes are stolid and almost stony in comparison with the grace of his later works.

Some ten years later Mabuse visited Italy in the train of the Duke of Burgundy, and in Florence came under the influence of Leonardo da Vinci. That his first contact with the new naturalism did not have altogether happy results we know by the commonplace realism of his "Adam and Eve" at Hampton Court. Soon, however, the warm air of Italy won him to gentleness, and in his Italianised works it is as a portrait-painter that Mabuse excels. Of his many portraits in Great Britain, the most beautiful is the portrait of "Margaret Tudor," the elder sister of Henry VIII, which now hangs in the Scottish National Gallery at Edinburgh.

After the death of Mabuse in 1533, until the time of Rubens more than one hundred and fifty years later, the art of Flanders was carried on by lesser men, with the exception of Peter Brueghel. Hieronymus Bosch, that painter of nightmare subjects, tortured martyrdoms, and grotesque types, was already dead. Lucas de Heere (1534-84), a capable portrait painter, though born in Ghent had worked chiefly in France and England. A more successful portrait painter, Antonio Moro (1519-78), better known as Sir Anthony More, also began his career in Ghent but found more





"THE BANKER AND HIS WIFE," BY QUINTEN MASSYS (1466-1530)

Alinari.

The Louvre, Paris

This delightfully intimate portrait of a fifteenth-century banker and his wife is deservedly the most popular of Massys' paintings. It is full of charming human touches, and there is no hint of the miser in the expression of the man who is counting and weighing his money. He is just getting on with a necessary piece of business, and both he and his wife, who has turned from her illuminated book—to see if he will be much longer—seem to tell us they will be glad when the day's work is over and nothing is to be done except enjoy their own domestic happiness.

Note how the reflection in the little mirror on the table shows us that these people are facing a window, through which comes the light which illumines them and all the details of the office.



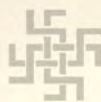
"MARGARET TUDOR," BY MABUSE (c. 1472-1535)

Annan & Sons.

Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh

"A rogue in porcelain"—George Meredith's famous phrase—might fittingly be applied to the subject of this portrait, an English Royal Beauty, the elder daughter of Henry VII. Though she looks so demure the painter has allowed the eyes to betray the real character of this self-willed princess.

If we compare the polished softness of this portrait with Mabuse's earlier work, "The Adoration of the Kings," we learn the extent to which this Flemish painter altered his style after he had visited Italy and had become acquainted with the work of Leonardo da Vinci and his contemporaries.





"THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS," BY MABUSE

W. F. Mansell.

National Gallery, London

In this remarkable picture we see one of the last masterpieces of pure Flemish art before it became influenced and changed by Italian painting. The words "Roi Jaspas," inscribed on the lid of the chalice offered to the Virgin, reveal the identity of the kneeling king. Behind him stands Melchior with his gift, a monstrance in his right hand, while on our left is the swarthy figure of Balthasar holding before him a gold reliquary. In the original at the National Gallery the signature of the artist "IENNINE GOS . . ." may be deciphered on the torque of the turbaned attendant and also on Balthasar's turban.



"THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS," BY BRUEGHEL (c. 1525-61) *National Gallery.*

National Gallery, London

Brueghel conceives his subject in terms of Flemish realism. The costumes and environment are those of his own time and place, the faces are peasant types of his own district. There is none of the idealism of Italian art, nor the mysticism of earlier periods.

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appreciation of his art in Spain and England. His portraiture shows remarkable power of conveying character and personality.

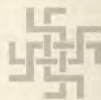
The most important of the immediate predecessors of Rubens were two families of artists, the Pourbus and the Brueghels.

Peter Pourbus (1510-84), a Bruges painter of portraits and religious subjects, had a son, Frans Pourbus (1545-81), who settled in Antwerp. He in turn had a still more famous son, Frans Pourbus the Younger (1570-1622), who painted portraits not only in Antwerp but also at the court of Henri IV at Paris. Young Pourbus, seven years older than Rubens, was one of his few contemporaries in Antwerp who not only never worked for Rubens but may have had some influence on his early style.

The founder of the Brueghel family was Peter Brueghel (*c.* 1525-69), and it is his work rather than that of either of his sons—"Hell" Brueghel (1564-1628), or "Velvet" Brueghel (the nicknames reveal their typical subjects)—which can claim greatness. A characteristic example of "Hell" Brueghel's work, "An Incantation Scene," may be seen in the Dyce Collection at South Kensington. Jan, the other son, became an assistant to Rubens. The father's work gives us a new note in its time. Studies of peasant life seen with the liveliest imagination and humanity, and set in landscapes of amazing breadth and beauty which reveal the artist's love of Nature. The famous "Four Seasons" at Vienna; the "Fall of Icarus" where a ploughman gets on with his daily task not heeding the catastrophe to the flyer at the sun; the "Numbering at Bethlehem," but really charmingly at a typical Flemish village: such works brought landscape into a prominence which presaged the future of art.

It is well to recall that an even earlier Flemish artist, Joachim Patinir (1485-1524), had anticipated this note by painting pictures which made the landscape more important than the small-scale figures which moved in it. He has been called "The Father of Landscape Painting," and although his paternity might be disputed he gave it a new importance, and obviously loved it for its own sake, preparing the way for Peter Brueghel and for the whole grand procession of landscape artists who were destined to follow.

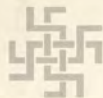
The "Four Seasons" are truly magnificent landscapes, full of light and air, reaching back in spirit to the art of the manuscript books from which landscape, in Northern Europe especially, so certainly derived, and forward to the pure art of painting Nature for its own sake. In them we look down through the trees from the hills to the plains below, see whole villages with all their people at their normal tasks, watch many aspects of the contemporary scene. Indeed it is always with Brueghel this love of the life of his day which charms us. Whether he is painting a classical subject such as "Icarus," a sacred one such as the "Adoration of the Kings," or a landscape, what we really have is the common life of his generation. There is invariably





"THE BIRD-TRAP," BY PETER BRUEGHEL

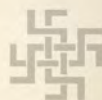
A typical work by the great Flemish master. The incidents of ordinary daily life are shown, set in wide landscape, whereof every detail is shown with loving fidelity. "The Bird-Trap" landscape, originally painted by Peter Brueghel the elder was brilliantly copied several times by his son.



humour of a satirical kind. He never shirks the brutality of life, or that of the faces of his contemporaries. When he depicts the Holy Family it is surrounded by a group of compelling individualities : they are almost every one ugly, yet we know that they are real people.

His son Jan, "Velvet" Brueghel, became one of the exuberant still-life painters of the period, and when he became an assistant to Rubens he embellished that great man's canvases with literally thousands of studies of fruit and flowers. It is quantitative painting, and flies in the face of our modern asceticism in taste. Its charm is the love which these artists had for the appearance of things in themselves (for Brueghel was part of a whole movement of Netherlandish painting which worked in the same way). Not only fruit and flowers, but butterflies, snails, bees, flies, caterpillars, adorned their canvases. Even a portrait would be surrounded by garlands of minutely depicted flowers and fruits. There was little selectivity, only profusion, and a love of painting things for their own sake.

Meantime a certain Antonello, a native of Messina in Sicily, had seen these works by the Northern masters, and journeyed to Flanders to learn their technique of painting with an oil medium. Full of his secret he went to Venice, where the strong sea air was fatal to the old fresco method. And so the glory of Venetian art was the offspring of this power from the North.



XI

THE WONDER OF THE RENAISSANCE

THE ART OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, MICHAEL ANGELO, AND RAPHAEL

§ I

“OCCASIONALLY,” says the Italian historian Vasari, “Heaven bestows upon a single individual beauty, grace, and ability, so that, whatever he does, every action is so divine that he distances all other men, and clearly displays how his genius is the gift of God and not an acquirement of human art. Men saw this in Leonardo da Vinci, whose personal beauty and grace cannot be exaggerated, whose abilities were so extraordinary that he could readily solve every difficulty that presented itself.”

His charming conversation won all hearts, we are told ; with his right hand he could twist a horse-shoe as if it were made of lead, yet to the strength of a giant and the courage of a lion he added the gentleness of a dove. He was a lover of all animals, “whom he tamed with kindness and patience” ; and like other great spirits whose souls are filled with poetry, he could not endure to see a caged bird. Often as he passed the place where birds were sold in Florence, Leonardo would stop, buy the birds, and restore them to liberty.

A painter and sculptor, the perfection of whose work outstripped that of all his predecessors, a scientist and inventor whose theories and discoveries were centuries ahead of his time, a practical engineer who could construct with equal ease and success an instrument of war or a monument of peace, an accomplished musician and composer, a deviser of masques and ballets, an experimental chemist, a skilful dissector, and author of the earliest standard book on Anatomy—is it surprising that this man should have been the wonder of his own and of all succeeding ages ?

Genius is wayward, and as a boy Leonardo—who was born in 1452—was a source of anxiety to his father, Ser Piero da Vinci, a man of good family who, like his father and grandfather, was a notary of Florence. At school, his masters said, he was capricious and fickle : “he began to learn many things and then gave them up” ; but it was observed that however many other things took his fancy from time to time, the boy never neglected drawing and modelling. His father took these drawings to his friend the





"THE LAST SUPPER," BY LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519)

W. F. Mansell.

Sta. Maria delle Grazie, Milan

"Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me." This is the moment the artist has dramatically re-created. Judas (third on the Saviour's right) is guiltily withdrawing the hand extended to the dish, while behind his isolated figure Peter passionately consults the beloved disciple John. On the other side, beyond beckoning Thomas and the amazed James the Great, is the beautiful figure of Philip, whose gesture eloquently speaks to us, "Lord, Thou knowest I am not he!"

Leonardo's masterpiece has so stamped itself on the imagination of the world that we can no longer visualise the scene in any other fashion.

artist, Andrea del Verrocchio, who, amazed at the talent they displayed, gladly consented to have Leonardo as his pupil.

One day his master received a commission from the friars of Vallombroso to paint a picture of "St. John Baptizing Christ," and having much work on hand Verrocchio asked Leonardo to help him finish the picture by painting one of the angels. When Leonardo had done this his angel surpassed all the other figures in beauty, so that his master was filled with admiration, yet also with despair that a mere boy should know more and paint better than he could himself. Chagrined, the older artist admitted his defeat; he is said never to have touched a brush again, but to have devoted the rest of his life to sculpture.

From that moment the reputation of Leonardo was made, and the nobles and princes of Italy sought his services. In 1493 he was invited to Milan by the Duke Ludovico Sforza, who was captivated alike by the genius of the artist and the charm of his personality. While at Milan Leonardo painted his famous "Last Supper" for the Dominicans of Sta. Maria delle Grazie, choosing the moment when the Apostles are anxious to discover who would betray their Master.

Despite his marvellous facility, Leonardo was not a quick worker, and his procrastination in finishing this picture alarmed the Prior, who besought the Duke to reprimand the artist for "mooning about" instead of getting on with the work. When the Duke spoke to Leonardo the latter gently explained how necessary it was for artists to think things out before they began to paint. "Two heads remain to be done," he said. "I feel unable to conceive the beauty of the celestial grace that must have been incarnate in Our Lord. The other head which causes me thought is that of Judas. I do not think I can express the face of a man who could resolve to betray his Master, after having received so many benefits.

"But to save time," added Leonardo, "I will in this case seek no further, but for want of a better idea I will put in the head of the Prior."

The Duke laughed heartily and told the Prior to let Leonardo finish the work in peace.

More famous even than his "Last Supper," and happily in a far better state of preservation to-day, is Leonardo's portrait of "Mona Lisa," third wife of Francesco del Giocondo, a Florentine official. For centuries this portrait with the lustrous eyes and mysterious smile has been regarded as the supreme expression in art of the eternal enigma of womanhood. By a freak of fate the man who commissioned this portrait never had it, for it was still in the possession of the artist—by whom it was considered unfinished—when Leonardo left Italy for France on the invitation of King Francis. The King of France had met Leonardo at Milan, and had long wished to tempt him to his own Court. After innumerable disappointments



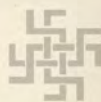


W. F. Mansell.

“MONA LISA” (OR “LA JOCONDE”), BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

The Louvre, Paris

The most famous painting in the world, this portrait has for centuries been considered the supreme embodiment of the eternal enigma of womanhood. Mona Lisa was the third wife of Francesco del Giocondo, a Florentine official, and Vasari relates that Leonardo hired musicians to sing and play while he painted her in order to preserve the intent expression of her face.



in Italy, Leonardo in his old age sought refuge from Italian envy and ingratitude with the French King. Francis received him with every kindness and honour, and when the old man fell sick he frequently visited him.

One day the aged artist was seized with a paroxysm, and the kindly monarch, endeavouring to alleviate the pain, took his head into his arms. "Leonardo's divine spirit, then recognising that he could not enjoy a greater honour, expired in the king's arms." So Leonardo died, as Vasari relates, in 1519.

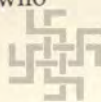
§ 2

There is no one person in whom the spirit of the Renaissance—that is to say, the rebirth of ancient art and learning—is so completely summed up and expressed as in Leonardo da Vinci. Yet "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian," by the brothers Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo again shows something quite modern in its feeling and expression. These two Florentines were contemporaries of Leonardo. Antonio (1432–98) was of humble origin. His father, who, as his surname shows, was a poulterer, apprenticed the boy to a goldsmith, with whom he soon made a reputation as the most skilful workman in the shop. In time he was able to open a shop of his own, and his reliefs and wax models were much admired by sculptors as well as by his patrons. Meanwhile his younger brother Piero, eleven years his junior, had been apprenticed to a painter, and in early middle age Antonio thought he would like to become a painter also. He had educated himself, learning all he could of anatomy and perspective, and found no difficulty in the drawing, but the colouring was so different from anything he had done before that at first he despaired of success; but firm in his resolve he put himself under his younger brother, and in a few months became an excellent painter.

Of all works painted by the two brothers the most famous is "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian," now in the National Gallery.

The many-sidedness, so characteristic of the artists of the Renaissance, which we have already found in Leonardo and Antonio Pollaiuolo, also distinguishes one of the most interesting of their contemporaries. Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–94), who also was originally a goldsmith, owes his very name to a freak of fashion. He was the first to invent and make fashionable the head ornament worn by Florentine girls. Hence he became known as Ghirlandaio (the maker of garlands), not only because he was the original inventor but also, we hear, because his were of such exceeding beauty that every girl wanted a garland from his shop.

Discontented with his trade, which gave comparatively small scope to his genius for design, Domenico began painting portraits of the people who





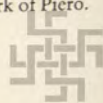
W. F. Mansell.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. SEBASTIAN," BY ANTONIO AND PIERO POLLAIUOLO
(1432-1498 and 1443-1496)

National Gallery, London

Antonio Pollaiuolo was a pioneer of Naturalism. For four centuries the figures of the stooping cross-bowmen in the foreground of this picture have aroused admiration by their extraordinary realism and sense of tension.

The grouping of the figures forms a pyramid, of which the Saint is the apex, and the lines of the arrows contribute to the symmetry of the composition. The landscape background is the work of Piero.



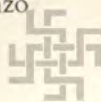
came to his shop. These were so lifelike and so beautifully painted, that the fame of the artist soon spread, and he was inundated with orders for portraits, altar-pieces, and decorations for the palaces of noblemen. Pope Sixtus IV heard about him and sent to Florence, inviting him to come to Rome and join the band of famous artists who were already at work on what is now known as the Sistine Chapel.

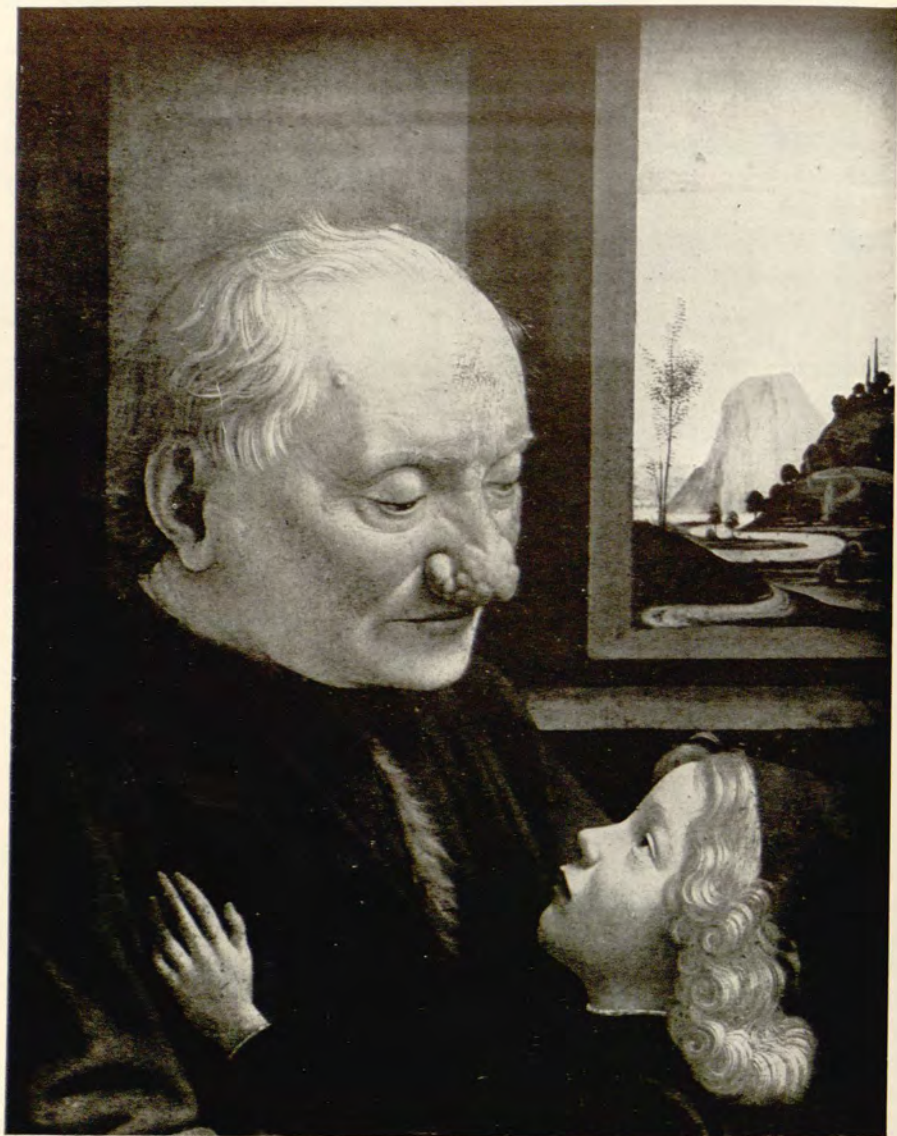
His great work, "The Call of SS. Peter and Andrew," in the Sistine Chapel is a splendid example of the boldness of composition which he contributed to art; but his small painting at the Louvre, "Portrait of an Old Man and his Grandchild," has a far wider celebrity. We present it not only as a specimen of Ghirlandaio's decorative arrangement and intimate feeling, but as an outstanding masterpiece of Christian art, Christian because the painter has here sought and found that beauty of *character* which was utterly beyond the range of the pagan artists who found beauty in *proportions*.

When we remember that Ghirlandaio began painting late, and was carried off by a fever at the comparatively early age of forty-four, we are astounded at the quantity and quality of the work he left behind. He was a man of immense energy and hated to be interrupted in his work. Once when his brother David bothered him on some domestic matter, he replied: "Leave me to work while you make provision, because now that I have begun to master my art I feel sorry that I am not employed to paint the entire circuit of the walls of Florence."

§ 3

Nine people out of ten if asked to name the greatest artist who ever lived, would reply, Michael Angelo Buonarrotti, who was born in 1475 at Castel Caprese, a small town near Florence, of which his father was chief magistrate. The babe was put out to nurse with the wife of a marble-worker, and in later days the great sculptor jokingly attributed his vocation to his foster-mother's milk. His father had other ideas for him, and used a stick freely to impress on the lad the advantages of a commercial career, but Michael Angelo was obstinate and intractable. At last the father gave way, and when the son was thirteen he apprenticed him to Ghirlandaio for three years. Long before his apprenticeship was out, the boy had shown a preference for sculpture. His talent in modelling was brought to the notice of Lorenzo de' Medici, who nominated him for the famous "Garden School" of sculpture which he had founded under the direction of Donatello's chief assistant, Bartoldo. The ruler of Florence, pleased with the progress of his protégé, took him into his household, and made him an allowance of 500 ducats a month. This lasted till 1492, when Lorenzo



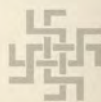


W. F. Mansell.

"AN OLD MAN AND HIS GRANDCHILD," BY D. GHIRLANDAIO (1449-1494)

The Louvre, Paris

One of the world's great masterpieces, this picture teaches us that true beauty resides in expression more than in regularity of features. The homely countenance of this good old man, despite his deformed nose, is transfigured by his expression of benevolence and affection. Note the perfect balance in the placing of the heads and the way in which the child's hand provides the patch of light needed in one corner to set off properly the view through a window which occupies the other.



died, and the youth had to make his own way in the world. Meanwhile a new influence came into his life.

In 1490, when Michael Angelo was a boy of fifteen, Savonarola had begun to preach his impassioned sermons in Florence. The whole city trembled at the terrible voice, which hurled thunderbolts at the Pope himself. All Florence was like a revival meeting; people rushed about the street weeping and shouting, wealthy citizens became monks, high officials abdicated their positions.

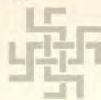
Michael Angelo for the first time in his life was afraid, afraid of the unknown horrors predicted for Florence. He was miserable under the degenerate Piero de' Medici, a stupid tyrant who wasted his time and his talent by commanding him to model a statue in snow! One night a poet friend of the sculptor dreamt that the dead Lorenzo appeared to him and bade him warn Piero that soon he would be driven from his house, never to return. He told the Prince, who laughed and had him well cudgelled; he told Michael Angelo, who believed and fled to Venice.

That was in October 1494. A month later Piero fled in his turn, and Florence, with the support of Savonarola, was declared a republic, owning no king but Jesus Christ.

Michael Angelo soon got over his superstitious terrors. That winter he spent at Bologna in learned circles, and forgetting Savonarola, he read Dante and Petrarch; he was absorbed by the beauty of Nature and the dignity of the antique world. At the very time when his contemporaries at Florence were fanatically indulging in a religious revival, Michael Angelo seemed to assert his paganism by carving a "Sleeping Cupid" so full of Greek feeling that it was sold in Rome to the Cardinal San Giorgio as an antique by a Greek sculptor. When he discovered he had been cheated, the deceived collector was so delighted to think a living Italian could rival the dead Greeks that he sent for the young sculptor and took him under his protection. In 1496, while the Florentines were heaping pagan pictures, ornaments, and books on Savonarola's "Bonfire of Vanities," when his own brother, the monk Leonardo, was being prosecuted for his faith in the Friar, Michael Angelo in Rome seemed anxious to prove himself a pagan of pagans, producing a "Bacchus," an "Adonis," and the lovely "Cupid" which is now at South Kensington.

On May 23, 1498, the fickle populace of Florence turned against its idol. Savonarola was burnt to death at the stake. Still Michael Angelo appeared to take no notice. No mention of Savonarola or his martyrdom can be found in any of the sculptor's letters.

But in his own art he made his own comment. From 1498 to 1501 he worked feverishly, perhaps remorsefully, on a marble group the like of which had never before been seen: a Virgin whose haunting face is

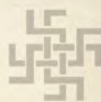




"CUPID," BY MICHAEL ANGELO (1475-1564)

W. F. Mansell.

This exquisite marble statue, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, is an early work of the artist. It was executed in Rome when Michael Angelo was a young man of twenty-two, and reveals a perfection of form which hitherto his contemporaries had thought could only be realised in an antique.



impressed with a "sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self," across whose knees is lying a Christ of such serene physical beauty and perfection that we say, "He is not dead but sleepeth."

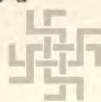
This was Michael Angelo's confession to his Maker, the supreme "Pieta" at St. Peter's, Rome : a work of which the exquisite beauty is only equalled by its ineffable sadness. Botticelli, too, was more moved by the end of Savonarola than ever he had been by his preaching. But Botticelli was then an old man : Michael Angelo had but just turned twenty-three and was only on the threshold of his career. Already his pagan days were over. Melancholy claimed him for her own, and never after let him go. In five years he had established his reputation as the greatest sculptor in the world, but then, as now, glory is not necessarily remunerative. His family believed he was making a fortune ; and too proud to acknowledge his true poverty-stricken condition, he starved himself to give alms to his kindred. His own father pestered and abused him worst of all ; his whole family bled him white, and then denounced him as being mean.

In 1501 he returned to Florence to make the famous statue of "David," which was to commemorate the deliverance of the city from her enemies. But no happiness awaited him in his native town. He was foolishly pitted against Leonardo da Vinci, and his envy and jealousy excited by tittle-tattlers. The two great men of the time, who ought to have been understanding friends and comrades, were forced into enmity. Michael Angelo grew morose and suspicious. One day as he was walking through the streets of Florence he saw Leonardo discussing a passage in Dante with a group of citizens. Meaning nothing but kindness, Leonardo hailed his rival and said to his friends, "Michael Angelo here will explain the verses of which you speak."

But the embittered sculptor scented an insult in the innocent remark and passionately retorted : "Explain them yourself, you who made the model of a bronze horse and who, incapable of casting it, left it unfinished—to your shame, be it said !"

This allusion to his equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza, never finished, wounded Leonardo to the quick. Conscious of his fatal tendency to procrastinate, he reddened as Michael Angelo turned his back on him and strode away.

Unhappy in Florence, Michael Angelo was not sorry when in 1505 Pope Julius II called him back to Rome. Later he was to regret still more bitterly that he ever went. Julius desired a colossal mausoleum to be built for his remains, and the sculptor entered into the project with enthusiasm. He spent eight months in the Carrara quarries selecting his marbles, and in December returned to Rome, where the blocks began to arrive. But a



rival artist, Bramante, hinted to the Pope that it was unlucky to build your tomb in your own lifetime. The Pope hastily dropped the idea of the mausoleum, closed his door to Michael Angelo, who was left not only unpaid for his work and time, but in debt for the marbles he had obtained. The sculptor was driven out of the Vatican by a groom, and quivering with indignation the humiliated genius at once left Rome for Florence.

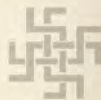
But no sooner was he in Florence than the Pope wanted him back at Rome. Eventually he got him back, and perhaps the eccentric, inconstant Pope meant kindly ; but he reduced Michael Angelo to despair by demanding that the greatest sculptor in the world should spend his time painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Again the architect Bramante was the evil genius ; he had prompted the command, believing the sculptor would fail ignominiously. What was meant for his dishonour became his greatest glory.

Michael Angelo never wanted to do the work. Already his young rival Raphael had commenced painting the " Stanze " of the Vatican with unparalleled success. The sculptor pleaded that this ceiling should be given to Raphael, but the Pope insisted and his will was law. On March 10, 1508, the distracted artist wrote : " To-day I, Michael Angelo, sculptor, began the painting of the chapel." The next year, on January 27, 1509, he wrote again : " This is not my profession. . . . I am uselessly wasting my time." To-day the whole world thinks otherwise.

Of all the palaces of art which Europe contains, there is not one more wonderful within, or with a meaner exterior, than the Sistine Chapel. The long barn-like structure, lit by twelve round-headed windows, was built over what was once the Library by Sixtus IV. His aim was to ornament the chapel with scenes from the world's history pointing to the coming of Christ. All the greatest artists of the preceding generation, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Piero di Cosimo, and Perugino had been called upon to assist in the work, and after the death of Sixtus the completion of the Chapel occupied his nephew Count Giuliano Rovere, who succeeded him as Julius II.

Most artists who had received a papal commission of this magnitude began their work with an army of assistants. Bramante, with a show of giving his enemy every assistance, brought some experienced fresco-painters from Florence and erected a scaffolding whereby they might get at the ceiling. Furious and suspicious of everything and everybody, Michael Angelo began by declaring Bramante's scaffolding to be useless and by raising another. Next he got rid of his assistants. One morning he got there early, destroyed everything they had done, locked himself in, and refused to admit the Florentines.

During the next four years, working feverishly and in secret, the sculptor





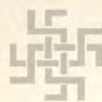
"DELPHIC SYBIL," BY MICHAEL ANGELO

Anderson.

Sistine Chapel, Vatican

The description of Michael Angelo as "a sculptor who painted" is aptly illustrated by this noble picture. The introduction of a pagan priestess into a Christian church may seem surprising, but at the time of the Renaissance ecclesiastics revered these Sibyls because one of them had prophesied: "A Child shall be born whose advent will bring peace to the world."

This was believed to be an inspired foretelling of the coming of Christ. Accordingly the Delphic Sybil and her sisters could properly be included among these paintings, all of which point to the preparation of the world, from its earliest moments, for the revelation of Christianity.

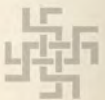




"HEAD OF ADAM," BY MICHAEL ANGELO

Sistine Chapel, Vatican

This detail from the panel devoted to "The Creation of Man" on the great ceiling reveals Michael Angelo at his most sublime. All the knowledge and genius of a sculptor goes into the painting, and also the tenderly tragic feeling, the foreboding, which in this artist's mind inevitably went with the creation of mankind.



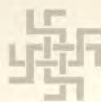
accomplished the mightiest series of paintings in the world. He had endless troubles and difficulties. The work was new to him, and he had to learn its technique as he went along. Hardly had he finished painting one panel, "The Deluge," when the surface became mouldy and he had to do it all over again. All this time his relatives badgered him for money; the Pope, irritated at his secrecy and seeming slowness, threatened to have him thrown from the top of his scaffolding, and at last, worn out, but still not content with his creations, Michael Angelo, after lying for four years on his back to paint this ceiling, once more stood erect and allowed the scaffolding to be taken down on All Saints' Day 1512.

His worst enemies were amazed at the greatness and magnitude of his achievement. Raphael, great enough himself to fear no rival, was the first to praise it, thanking God aloud that he had been born in the same century. No photographs can do justice to what Raphael and his contemporaries then saw. In default of the original, we can but show a single figure and one detail, and let the imagination do the rest.

Michael Angelo divided the great oblong space of the ceiling into nine principal sections, or rather three groups of three scenes each. The first group, illustrating "The Creation of the World," consisted of (1) "God Dividing Light from Darkness," (2) "God Creating the Luminaries," and (3) "God Blessing the Earth." The second group, illustrating "The Fall of Man," showed (4) "The Creation of Adam," (5) "The Creation of Eve," and (6) "The Temptation and Fall." The last three, illustrating the uselessness of sacrifice under the old dispensation, represented (7) "The Sacrifice of Noah," (8) "The Deluge," and (9) "The Drunkenness of Noah." These nine panels were knit together by a connecting framework in which were placed single figures of Prophets, Sibyls, and other decorative figures, lunettes and triangles, so that the whole appeared as an elaborate architectural roof ornamented with reliefs and sculptured figures among which nine great pictures had been inserted.

The work was completed, but Michael Angelo at thirty-seven was an old man. His health was shattered. Working for months on end with his head thrown back had strained his neck and brought on painful swellings of the glands; his sight was injured to such an extent that for long afterwards he could not read a book or letter unless he held it above his head. Then, when the old Pope, satisfied at last, might have rewarded the heroic artist, Julius died and was succeeded by Leo X, who had work for Raphael, but none for Michael Angelo.

The harassed sculptor went back to Florence, where he set to work on another masterpiece of sculpture, the "Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici," with its beautiful recumbent figures of "Night" and "Morning," "Dawn" and "Twilight." Worse troubles were in store for him. Disgusted with



all things, including himself, he threw himself into the revolution which convulsed Florence in 1527. Though no engineer like Leonardo, the republican revolutionaries put him in charge of the fortifications of the city. Distrustful of everybody, Michael Angelo feared that Malatesta Baglione, the general of the Florentine troops, might betray the city to the troops of the new Pope (Clement VII); his warning unheeded by the authorities, he feared the hostility of the powerful commander, and giving way to an attack of nerves he fled to Venice for his life. There he was safe and might have gone to France, but an appeal to his honour brought him back to Florence. Once more he took his place in the fighting line, and six months later Malatesta Baglione, as he foresaw, betrayed the city to the Emperor.

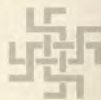
Irony of fate ! The life of the wretched sculptor was spared in order that he might work again for the glory of those tyrants, the Medici, against whom he had fought. In 1534, another Pope, Paul III, called him to Rome to enter on a new project. Again the sculptor was asked to paint, to cover the immense wall at the entrance to the Sistine Chapel with a fresco representing "The Last Judgment." He began the work when he was sixty-one, and again shutting himself up, accomplished the task in a little over five years. It was no work for an old man of nearly seventy, and the following year the sculptor had to turn from painting to architecture ; by command of the Pope he designed the mighty Dome which to all the world to-day is the sign and symbol of the Eternal City.

Vasari, who visited the old man when he was eighty-eight, gives a wonderful picture of Michael Angelo's last years. He lived like a poor man, ate hardly anything but a little bread and drank but a little wine. Unable to sleep, he would get up at night to work with his chisel, and made himself a paper helmet in which a candle was fixed, so that he might have light to work without embarrassing his hands.

On February 12, 1564, he spent the whole day on his feet working at a "Pieta." Two days afterwards he was seized with fever, but with his usual obstinacy refused to see a doctor or to go to bed. On the 17th he consented to be put to bed, and, fully conscious, dictated his will, bequeathing "his soul to God and his body to the earth." About five o'clock on the following afternoon, surrounded by his faithful servant and a few friends, the worn-out genius breathed his last and found that rest which had never been granted him in life.

§ 4

Happy the painter who has no history ! Life, so cruel to Michael Angelo, had nothing but kindness for his young contemporary, Raphael Sanzio. Born at Urbino in 1483, his way was smoothed for him from the

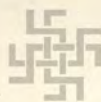




"THE MADONNA OF SAN SISTO," BY RAPHAEL (1483-1520)
Dresden

Anderson.

The Sistine Madonna is justly the most famous and most favoured of all Raphael's Madonnas ; for, though others may rival it in formal beauty, in no other does he reach the same height of spiritual expression. The Christ-child, so solemnly yet naturally gazing at the infinite, the slender, majestic, yet entirely human mother, are figures which, once we have seen them, haunt our memory for ever.



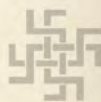


W. F. Mansell.

"THE ANSIDEI MADONNA," BY RAPHAEL

National Gallery, London

This famous altar-piece, originally painted for the Ansidei family of Perugia, shows the Virgin and Child in the centre, with St. John the Baptist on one side and St. Nicolas of Bari on the other. In the eighteenth century the picture was purchased from the Church of S. Fiorenzo—where it had hung since 1506—by Lord Robert Spencer, who presented it to the third Duke of Marlborough. It was bought from the Marlborough collection at Blenheim for the National Gallery in 1885, at a cost of £70,000.





Anderson.

"THE TRANSFIGURATION," BY RAPHAEL

This picture at the Vatican, Raphael's last masterpiece, shows the transfiguration of Christ, floating over the Mount in clear air, between Moses and Elijah. Prostrate on the earth are Peter, James, and John, in varied attitudes. In the foreground an excited group gathers round the boy possessed of devils.

At the lying-in-state of Raphael, which followed the great artist's death, this picture—which he had painted for the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici—was placed at the head of the corpse in the Hall wherein Raphael had last worked.



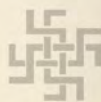


Anderson.

"POPE JULIUS II," BY RAPHAEL

Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Giuliano da Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II, was a nephew of Cardinal Francesco di Savona, who became Sixtus IV and began the erection of the world-famed chapel in the Vatican which bears his name. By his enlightened patronage of contemporary art, Julius II has secured an undying fame, which eclipses any reputation he once enjoyed for theological wisdom or political sagacity.





W. F. Mansell.

"VIRGIN ADORING THE INFANT CHRIST" (ALBANI ALTAR-PIECE),
BY PERUGINO (1446-1523)

This central panel of the famous altar-piece in the Villa Albani, Rome, is the most exquisite of all Perugino's numerous paintings. It exhibits in equal perfection the sweet gracefulness of his feminine types and the aerial perspective which gives a sense of infinite distance to his tender landscape backgrounds.



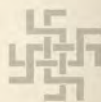
moment (1504) that he left the workshop of his master Perugino to begin an independent career. Perugino himself (1446-1523) was a typical painter of that lovely Umbrian countryside, where the Tiber winds down from the Apennines. Art in this region, away from the brilliance of Florence and Rome, was more quietly religious in its feeling, and had the especial quality that the artists loved Nature and invariably introduced exquisite local scenery as their background.

Raphael began as one of the Umbrian painters, but his genius carried him far beyond them. Beautiful as an angel in person, sweet in disposition, charming in manner and conversation, Raphael was a favourite everywhere. After perfecting his art by study in Florence, he was invited to Rome in 1508 to undertake the decoration of the Stanze in the Vatican. These paintings at once established his reputation, and in 1511 he was appointed Chief Architect of St. Peter's, Surveyor and Guardian of the Ancient Monuments of Rome, and overwhelmed with commissions for mighty projects of painting which his gentle courtesy had not the determination to refuse.

He walked through Rome, in those years of his glory, amid a throng of assistants and admirers. Thus meeting him once, grim old Michael Angelo growled out, "You look like a General at the head of an army."

Laughing and quite unspoilt, Raphael wittily retorted: "And you, sir, like an executioner on the way to the scaffold."

As a portrait-painter his "Balthasar Castiglione" at the Louvre, as a painter of altar-pieces his "Sistine Madonna" at Dresden and the "Ansidei Madonna" in the National Gallery, have made Raphael familiar to all and loved by all. In 1520 he was working on his great "Transfiguration" in the Vatican, when a fever struck him down. On March 27 he laid down the brush that he was never to hold again, and on Good Friday, April 6, his birthday, he died as the sun went down, amid the tears of those who mourned not only the artist but the man. He had lived only thirty-seven years, but from that day to this not for one moment has the lustre of his name been dimmed.



XII

SCULPTURE OF THE RENAISSANCE

THE ART OF THE GOTHIC CATHEDRALS AND OF THE RENAISSANCE

§ I

THROUGHOUT the whole story of the art of the early world—in Egypt and Assyria, in Greece and Rome—the art of sculpture had stood pre-eminent. It may well be that there was a corresponding practice of painting and that we have lost these more perishable treasures; but the sculpture which has come down to us, especially that from Greece, is among the few perfect creations of the human mind. With the Romans, as we have seen, this art degenerated. During the centuries which followed the fall of Rome it entirely ceased. All the knowledge, all the secrets, all understanding of this sublime art were lost. For six, seven, eight hundred years they remained unknown. If we happen to have any attempt at stone-carving in those centuries, even late in them, it is as crude as the work of any savage people. The marvel is that so much knowledge of beauty could so utterly pass from the earth and “leave not a wrack behind.”

When European mankind began again to think in terms of carved stone, it was with the most simple axe-cut patterning and then with such primitive attempts at the representation of human figures as we find on the church of St. Benoit on the Loire. There and elsewhere, round about the year 1000 or earlier, heavy disproportionate figures, scarcely recognisable as humans, were hewn clumsily as part of the pillar itself. We were beginning again at the absolute beginning of sculpture.

It was with the coming of Gothic architecture and that amazing resurgence of spiritual and mental life along the valley of the Seine, that the first wave of the new beauty broke. One of the causes of that Gothic revival was the vogue for relics. Alas! we must recognise that these multitudinous pieces of the true cross, these finger bones of saints and miracle-working remains of martyrs, were a profitable business alike to the church and to the community gathered around its walls. The Crusades stimulated it. The Holy Land yielded a vast harvest of relics, before which the faithful worshipped. At St. Denis near Paris, for example, there were the remains of no less than three martyrs, and so dense was the crowd of pilgrims to the shrine during the twelfth century that the great Abbot

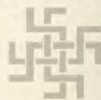


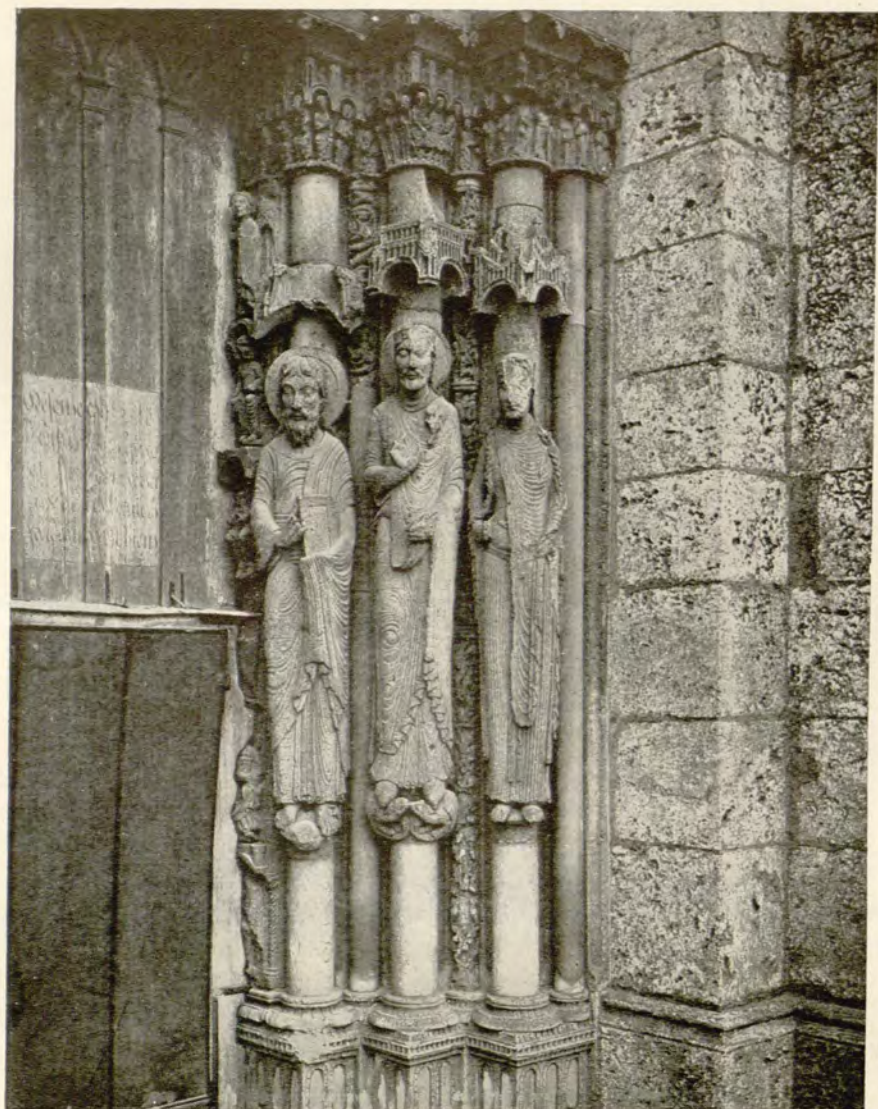
Suger records having seen worshippers crushed to death there. Our own day which shows equal mob-madness for glimpses of film-stars cannot lightly condemn such strange enthusiasms. Out of this relic worship at least came the vast churches and the beauty of Gothic. Under those soaring vaults whole populations could gather for prayer and praise.

It was around these churches with their vast façades, their deeply recessed porches, their innumerable niches, that the art of sculpture was reborn. On the West Front of Chartres Cathedral alone were carved more than seven hundred figures. In the North and South Porches hundreds more. This effect was repeated at practically every cathedral, and created an army of statues quite apart from the decoration of piers, the carving of corbels, pulpits, fonts, screens, and so forth.

As in ancient Greece they evolved from the pillars themselves. At first the human form is planned as a decoration of the stone pillar : there are no shoulders, the arms are solid with the bodies, the long perpendicular folds of the drapery fall to the feet, the braided hair of the women echoes the perpendicular theme. All the skill of the artists was expended on an exquisite decorative effect and on the delicate heads and faces. But gradually the stone became endowed with life as craftsmanship improved. The figures became more and more human. They were no longer carved pillars, but definite statues in the niches between the pillars. The Gothic artists began a search for realism and individuality which was essentially different from the Greek idealisation. The Apostles on the South Porch at Chartres, for instance, and the corresponding Prophets on the North Porch were realised characters. Every figure became no longer symmetrical but a balanced whole, often with one leg taking the weight and the other relaxed, so that we have the whole fascinating rhythm of the stresses and counterpoise of the human body.

Bible story begins to be enacted dramatically between these individualised creations. Such is the charming representation of "The Visitation" at Reims. This was part of the wave of Mariolatry which swept through Christendom during these years. It would be difficult to say exactly what gave rise to that sudden love of the Virgin and worship of woman. It is closely linked with the rise of chivalry and the poetry of the Troubadours, and its effect upon this art of Gothic sculpture was enormous. The lovely "Gilded Virgin" at Amiens, her body leaning slightly backwards and sideways to take the weight of the Child she holds so lovingly on her arm, may be cited as typical of thousands of statues of the Virgin which filled the shrines of the great churches, or was repeated in delicate ivory carvings where the pose beautifully fitted the curve of the tusk. Along with these, but rarer, was the figure of Christ. Again at Amiens there is a supreme example. So the art flourished until there was scarcely a cathedral in





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SCULPTURE, CHARTRES CATHEDRAL

"The Bible of Chartres" Ruskin called it, for the whole scriptural story found its place in the magnificent portals and niches of the Cathedral, and in its stained glass. These statues, slightly elongated and with the drapery arranged in rhythmic folds, became a perfect part of the building.





"MUSICIANS," BY LUCA DELLA ROBBIA (1399-1482)

Copyright.

Cathedral Museum, Florence

Donatello and Luca della Robbia created for the choir gallery of the Cathedral at Florence a series of delightful panels of singing boys and children playing instruments and dancing. Their rhythm gives the very soul of the music which they illustrate. The flow of drapery and the movement of youthful forms make wonderful compositions in these masterly low reliefs.

Northern France or in England or across into the Rhineland but had its own particular treasure of sculpture as well as hundreds of lesser figures, each one a noble work of art.

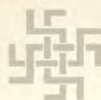
Not the least fascinating phase of this Gothic art is that which arose when the anonymous craftsmen had slighter tasks to perform—a head on a corbel, a support under a miserere seat, a newel post, a gargoyle—and allowed their humour and fecund imagination play. The satirical, the grotesque, the highly personal, animals strayed from the bestiaries, flowers and plants and every kind of ornament: everything was made for the sheer joy of creating and the expression of minds which were finding the world full of a number of things.

So between sublimity and simple workman's fun this great art of Gothic sculpture flourished for a century or two. Its exponents were anonymous as they laboured for the love of God and of their work. Probably they held themselves of no more account than any other of the craftsmen who were making these great buildings, but they left us a heritage of beauty in stone, and brought back to the minds of men this sublime art of sculpture.

§ 2

Nevertheless the impulse of the Gothic spent itself, and with it this art might have slackened and failed had it not been that down in Italy it came into contact with the spirit of the Renaissance and became magnificently renewed. There in the South, events conspired to turn men's minds back towards the achievements of Greece and Rome. In 1204 the sack of Constantinople in the Crusade released a number of ancient manuscripts. This proved one element in the revival. The discovery in the very soil of Italy of the Roman copies of the original Greek statues was another. The growing abstract passion for knowledge was both cause and effect. Italian political organisation was, in some ways, akin to that of ancient Greece, for it became largely one of independent city states under more or less benevolent tyrants. These cities were tremendously self-conscious; and the passion for fine building which in the North gave us French and English Gothic, was echoed here in a style of building more suited to the climate and light, and increasingly given over to the reviving classical influence.

It was at Pisa that sculpture awakened. The nearness of the Carrara marble mines may have stimulated it there, but early in the thirteenth century we have Niccolo of Pisa (1205-78), architect and scientist and ardent enthusiast for the Graeco-Roman discoveries. Pisa was a town of political importance and prosperity. Its wealth attracted the vendors of Greek and Roman antiques. Niccolo studied these classical marbles, and eventually abandoned his architectural practice to devote himself wholly



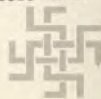
to sculpture. He broke away from Byzantinism, founded a new school, and proved to his fellow-craftsmen the advantage of a study from Nature and the antique. The pulpit at Pisa, half-Gothic, half-classical, and wonderful in its storied panels, reveals alike the fertility of Niccolo's mind and its conflict. He was followed by his son, Giovanni, and his pupil, Andrea Pisano ; and Orcagno felt his influence.

Andrea (1270-1348) carried the idea to Florence, that rising city whose enlightenment encouraged any new thing in those teeming years. He made the first doors for the Baptistery, illustrating the life of John the Baptist there. Then, seventy years after, the Merchant Guild of Florence, as a thank-offering for the deliverance of the city from the plague, invited the artists of Italy to compete for the other two doors.

A young painter, Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), himself a Florentine, returned from Rimini where he was working, to compete. Brunelleschi, the architect of the cathedral dome, and Jacobo della Quercia from Sienna were among the competitors. The judges decided that the exhibits of Ghiberti and Brunelleschi were equally good. The original bronze panels by both artists, illustrating "The Sacrifice of Isaac," are in the National Museum, Florence. Brunelleschi withdrew, and in 1403 Ghiberti received the commission. Those gates became his life-work. He began them when he was twenty-five and he was seventy-four when he finished. The first gate represented scenes from the Old Testament and was set up in 1424 ; the second, still more wonderful, took longer. While Ghiberti was working at the first, Brunelleschi reduced the laws of perspective to a science ; and into the Old Testament subjects for the second gate Ghiberti introduced this newly acquired knowledge. Some panels contain as many as a hundred figures, which, said the artist, "I modelled upon different planes, so that those nearest the eye might appear larger, and those more remote smaller in proportion." The second gate was set up in 1452, and three years later Ghiberti died. After his death, Michael Angelo—never easy to please—viewed his work, and pronounced them "fit to be the gates of Paradise."

Among Ghiberti's other famous works was that which came when the Florentine Guilds turned to the competitive fashion of erecting statues to their respective patron saints in the niches of the Or San Michele. The Silk Workers first put their statue, and soon the other guilds were vying for the work of sculptors. Ghiberti made three of these—the St. Matthew, St. John Baptist, and St. Stephen. It meant new opportunities in the art ; for whereas the panels of the gates, or that other fine work of his, the bas-reliefs for the shrine of San Zenobia, were pictorial and comparatively small in scale, these life-size figures in the round were in the grand manner which was to lead straight on to the marvels of Michael Angelo.

One other of the men who created the statues for Or San Michele was

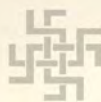




"DAVID," BY MICHAEL ANGELO

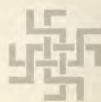
Florence

The life and art of Michael Angelo has already been considered in an earlier chapter. His sculpture was the climax of that art at the time of the Renaissance ; and the vast "David," carved from a block of marble which had long been lying idle, is one of his masterpieces. All the perfection of proportion and idealism of Greek work is linked in it with the sense of human effort which was characteristic of the Renaissance.



that friend of Brunelleschi, Donatello (1386-1466). He had studied the antique with Brunelleschi at Rome and then returned to Florence. His is one of the greatest names in the history of sculpture. He brought to great perfection the art of carving in low relief, and his many busts and statues have a vigour, humanity, and dramatic power which he was the first to introduce into sculpture. His relief "The Charge to St. Peter," in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, is almost an anticipation of the impressionism of Rodin in its suggestion of atmosphere and distance. Of his early period the bronze "David" at the Bargello, Florence, is considered the finest example. The first nude statue thought out independently of its architectural surroundings, since Roman times, it is beautiful both in its proportions and in its simple realism. Human and in a sense gay, it struck a new note. The supreme masterpiece of his later years is the famous equestrian statue at Padua of the Condottiere Gattamelata. Majestic in its repose, yet pulsating with life, this work is one of the two great equestrian statues of the world, the other being the Colleoni Monument at Venice, begun about forty years later by Donatello's pupil Verrocchio, and completed by the Venetian sculptor Alessandro Leopardi. One charming work of Donatello's is the famous "Singing Boys" panels. Both he and Luca della Robbia (1399-1482) made these lovely Cantoria for the choir gallery of the cathedral at Florence, and succeeded in snaring the very soul of music in the stone. Luca della Robbia is otherwise chiefly noteworthy for the delightful enamelled terra-cotta work which bears his name.

All this fifteenth-century sculpture, moving towards a perfection which was able to challenge the work of the Greeks, was, however, but the prelude to the sublimity of Michael Angelo. Apart from him it had already turned from strength to sweetness in the work of della Robbia; and after him there is practically nothing to record save the able playfulness of Cellini, and the comparatively empty technicality of Giovanni da Bologna. These sixteenth-century men were the decline from the height; but that height was the sublimest achieved in human art.



XIII

THE ROAD TO VENICE

THE ART OF MANTEGNA, FRANCA, CORREGGIO, BELLINI,
AND GIORGIONE

§ 1

IT takes nine tailors to make a man. So runs the familiar saying, but one tailor of Padua in the fifteenth century sufficed to found a school of painting which has won immortal fame. In all the history of art no stranger figure exists than that of Francesco Squarcione, tailor and embroiderer of Padua. He had little to do with painting or painters till he was past forty, and yet this man was the master of 137 pupils and the "Father" of the glorious schools of Venice, Parma, Bologna, Lombardy, and Ferrara.

Here let us pause to explain that while the succession of painters known as the Florentine School were perfecting their art, as related in the last chapter, groups of artists had already begun to collect in other Italian cities. So far back as 1375, twelve years before the birth of Fra Angelico, a Florentine painter named Justus had settled in Padua; and when Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452, Padua was already famous as an art centre.

But to return to our tailor. To the University of Padua came, at one time or another, all the learned men of Italy. Nothing was heard in the streets but talk of ancient lore and the beauty of ancient art. The astute tailor soon found that a fragment of sculpture or a stone with a Greek inscription brought him more and better customers than the display of the latest fashions. Gradually the tailoring and embroidering became a side-line in his complicated business, and the shop of Squarcione gained much fame as a storehouse of antique treasures of art. Artists came to him asking to be allowed to draw his fine old statues.

Squarcione had a keen eye to the main chance, and the power to discover and use the talents of others. Whether he himself ever painted is doubtful, but in 1441, when he was a man of forty-seven, he managed to qualify himself for admission to the Guild of Painters at Padua. His business instinct would not allow him to let slip a ready-made opportunity. When students sought to study his unrivalled collection of antique models, they found themselves bound as apprentices to Squarcione; and henceforward—on the strength of *their* work—Squarcione blossomed into the proprietor of a flourishing art business.



In 1443 he was given the contract to decorate with paintings the Chapel of the Eremitani at Padua, and this contract he fulfilled for the most part by the hand of a boy of twelve, whom two years earlier Squarcione had adopted as his son and pupil. This boy was a nameless orphan, who acquired undying fame as Andrea Mantegna. He was only ten years old when, as the "son of Squarcione," he was admitted a member of the Padua Guild of Painters, and from this fact alone we can guess his extraordinary precocity. At the age of twelve Mantegna was employed on important paintings for the Chapel of the Eremitani, and it was the reputation of the pupil, rather than that of the master, which brought students in shoals to Padua.

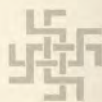
Another great piece of good luck which befell Squarcione was the arrival in Padua of the Venetian painter, Jacopo Bellini (c. 1400-71), whom the wily contractor inveigled into his business, and there is little room for doubt that Bellini was for many years the actual teacher of painting in the school of the Paduan contractor. Mantegna got his drawing from observing the Greek statues among Squarcione's antiques, but he learnt colouring from Bellini, who was his true master. But so precocious was the genius of Mantegna that at seventeen he had already formed his style and brought his natural talents to mature perfection. At this age he painted an altarpiece for St. Sophia at Padua, a picture which, as the sixteenth-century critic Vasari wrote, "might well be the production of a skilled veteran and not of a mere boy."

Success begets success, and at an early age Mantegna was able to set up for himself. Squarcione became still more furious when Mantegna married the daughter of Jacopo Bellini, who had now broken away from the firm and become a rival. Henceforward the old contractor blamed Mantegna's works as much as he had previously praised them, "saying they were bad, because he had imitated marble, a thing impossible in painting, since stones always possess a certain harshness and never have that softness peculiar to flesh and natural objects."

It is true that Mantegna's sense of form was severe and his figures often remind us of marble statues, but the envious carping of his old master in no wise injured his reputation. His fame spread throughout Italy, and Pope Innocent VIII invited him to Rome, where he was employed on painting the walls of the Belvedere. The payments for this work were not so regular as the painter thought they should have been, and one day he ventured to drop a hint to the Pope, who had come to look at Mantegna's paintings of the Virtues.

"What is that figure?" asked the Pontiff.

"One much honoured here, your Holiness," said the artist pointedly; "it is Prudence."





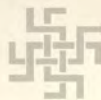
"PARNASSUS," BY MANTEGNA (1431-1506)

W. E. Mansell.

The Louvre, Paris

The paganism of this picture illustrates the change that came over Italian art in the fifteenth century owing to that revival of interest in the achievements of Ancient Greece and Rome which is known as the Renaissance.

Andrea Mantegna, who was devoted to Greek ideals, here pictures an imaginary scene on Mount Parnassus, the legendary home of the Nine Muses, personifications of the Fine Arts. On the mountain top stand Venus and Apollo, with Cupid trumpeting their praise, while around them the Muses dance. In the corner stands Mercury, the Messenger of the Gods, with Pegasus, the winged horse, waiting to bear inspiration from these divinities to the poets and artists of the earth. Note how the pyramidal design, helped by the horse's wing, gives dignity to the scene.



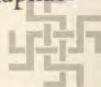
"You should associate Patience with her," replied the Pope, who understood the allusion, and later when the work was completed we are told Mantegna was "richly rewarded."

After painting in various Italian cities, Mantegna returned to Mantua, where he built himself a handsome house, and there, in 1506, he died at the age of seventy-five. The peculiar qualities of his art, his austere draughtsmanship and compact design may be seen in many works in England, notably in "The Triumph of Julius Cæsar" at Hampton Court, and in his "Madonna and Child" and "Triumph of Scipio" in the National Gallery; but the most perfect example of Mantegna's art is his great picture "Parnassus," in the Louvre at Paris. Here, as the illustration shows, Mantegna is able to express all his love of Greek art in picturing the home of the Nine Muses, who dance in homage round Venus and Apollo, while Mercury, the Messenger of the Gods, awaits with Pegasus, the winged horse, to bear inspiration from this mythological heaven to the artists and poets of the earth.

§ 2

To enumerate all the artists who were influenced by Mantegna and the School of Squarcione would be to give a list of a hundred names, and to attempt a task beyond the scope of this OUTLINE; but brief mention must be made of one whose life, and particularly whose death, is of unusual and romantic interest. Francesco Francia (1450-1517) was a goldsmith of Bologna who achieved great fame as an engraver of medallion portraits long before the example of Mantegna inspired him to become a painter also. Francia was one of the first artists to make prints from an engraved plate, and served literature by designing the famous italic type for the press of Aldus Manutius. As a painter, Francia began with portraits and proceeded to altar-pieces, in which he displayed a remarkable psychological insight. Both in ancient times and in modern his lunette of the Dead Christ in the lap of the Virgin has been regarded as a most beautiful work, poignant in the intensity of its expression. This half-moon-shaped picture is the upper part of a famous altar-piece originally painted for the Church of St. Frediano at Lucca, and is now in the National Gallery, London. The main picture below shows the Madonna and Child, with the following saints (from left to right): St. Sebastian, St. Paul, St. Anne, St. Lawrence, and St. Benedict, while in front of the throne is the figure of the young St. John the Baptist; and the wan, expressive face of the young Virgin seems to suggest that she is already forewarned of the tragedy commemorated by the picture above.

Francia was at the height of his reputation in Bologna when the young Raphael was working in Rome. The two artists never met, for Raphael



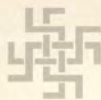


W. F. Mansell.

"THE FREDIANO ALTAR-PIECE," BY FRANCIA (c. 1450-1517)

National Gallery, London

This altar-piece was commissioned by the Buonvisi Family for its chapel of St. Anne, in the Church of St. Frediano, Lucca. Francia managed to put his own wonderful feeling into the work, and the upper portion, a *Pieta* showing the Virgin and two angels weeping over the dead body of Christ, is of such tragic intensity that the most hardened sceptic can hardly gaze upon it unmoved.



was too busy to leave the Vatican and Francia was too old to travel. But they heard much of one another, and Francia, as the elder, offered to help his junior in any way he could. He had never seen a picture by Raphael, and longed to view some work by the young man of whom everybody was talking. At last the opportunity came. Raphael was commissioned to paint a panel of "St. Cecilia" for a Bolognese chapel, St. Giovanni in Monte; and when he had finished the painting he sent it to Francia at Bologna with a courteous letter begging the older artist to "correct any errors found in it," and then set it up on the altar for which it was intended.

When Francia drew the masterpiece from its case and viewed it in a good light, he was filled with amazement and with chagrin, so Vasari says, at his presumption in offering to help so great a genius:

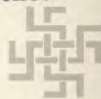
"Francia, half dead at the overwhelming power and beauty of the picture, which he had to compare with his own works lying around, though thoroughly discouraged, took it to St. Giovanni in Monte, to the chapel where it was to be. Returning home he took to his bed in an agony, feeling that art could offer him no more, and died, some suppose of grief and melancholy, due to his contemplation of the living picture of Raphael."

That is the story told by Vasari, and though it may seem incredible to us that any artist should be so fatally affected by seeing the work of another, the fact that so strange a cause of death was related in good faith reveals to us how seriously art was taken in Italy in 1518.

§ 3

To appreciate all that Squarcione's school at Padua did for Italian art, we must trace its influence into the second and third generation. In addition to the sons of Bellini—to whom we shall return—who were the real founders of Venetian painting, the old contractor had among his pupils Cosimo Tura (1420-95), who founded the School of Ferrara. Tura had a pupil named Bianci, who founded a school in Modena, and there had a pupil greater than any of his predecessors, Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio, from the place of his birth. Of the life of this great man singularly little is known, and apart from his art it does not seem to have been in any way eventful. Vasari tells us that Correggio "was of a very timid disposition and, at a great personal inconvenience, worked continually for the family which depended on him. In art he was very melancholy, enduring its labours, but he never allowed difficulties to deter him, as we see in the great tribune of the Duomo of Parma."

It is with Parma that the name of Correggio is always associated, for his greatest works were executed there between 1518 and 1530, and the Cathedral of Parma is the monument of his genius. In its marvellous





W. F. Mansell.

"THE EDUCATION OF CUPID," BY CORREGGIO (1494-1534)

National Gallery, London

"The soft beauty of his flesh tints and the grace of his finish," which won the admiration of this artist's contemporaries, still charm us to-day.

In this lovely allegory Correggio shows us Mercury—the patron deity in Greek mythology of schools and colleges—teaching Cupid to spell out love, while Venus, the incarnation of feminine charm, looks on approvingly.



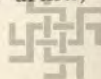
complexity and rich invention, his "Assumption of the Virgin" there has no rival in the world. If his fluent and sure drawing was derived from Mantegna, his mastery of light and shade from Leonardo da Vinci, and his tremendous forms and designs borrowed from the storehouse of Michael Angelo, yet his marvellous colouring is entirely his own, and it is as a colourist, above all, that Correggio is supreme.

"It is considered certain," wrote Vasari, "that there never was a better colourist, nor any artist who imparted more loveliness or relief to his things, so great was the soft beauty of his flesh tints and the grace of his finish." Nearly 400 years have passed since these lines were written, but no connoisseur of to-day would change a word in this appreciation. The work of Correggio appeals to every human being who is susceptible to the indefinable quality of charm. Whether his subject be frankly pagan, as in "The Education of Cupid" at the National Gallery, or avowedly religious, as in his "St. Catherine" at Hampton Court, it is on the satisfaction of the eye, and through the eye of all the senses, that Correggio relies.

In Mr. Samuel Courtauld's collection there is a sensitive self-portrait of this great colourist. "He was content with little," says Vasari, "and lived as a good Christian should." A modern critic, Mr. Berenson, has pronounced Correggio's paintings to be "hymns to the charm of femininity the like of which have never been known before or since in Christian Europe," yet from all accounts this artist's private life was singularly free from amours. Correggio was a model husband and father, and the only thing said against him by his Italian biographer is that he "was anxious to save, like everyone who is burdened with a family, and he thus became excessively miserly." This closeness is said to have brought about his premature death. "Payment of 60 crowns being made to him at Parma in farthings, which he wished to take to Correggio for his affairs, he set out with this burden on foot. Becoming overheated by the warmth of the sun, he took some water to refresh himself, and caught a severe fever, which terminated his life in the fortieth year of his age."

§ 4

Soon after the death in 1470 of Jacopo Bellini, there arrived in Venice a young Sicilian painter who, without being himself a great master, nevertheless changed the whole course of Italian painting. This was Antonello da Messina (1430-79), who, having seen at Naples in his youth a Flemish picture painted in oils, was so fascinated by the advantages of the new medium, that he went to Flanders and stayed there for some six years till he had thoroughly mastered the new process of painting. Then he returned to Italy, where he generously communicated his secrets to other artists,





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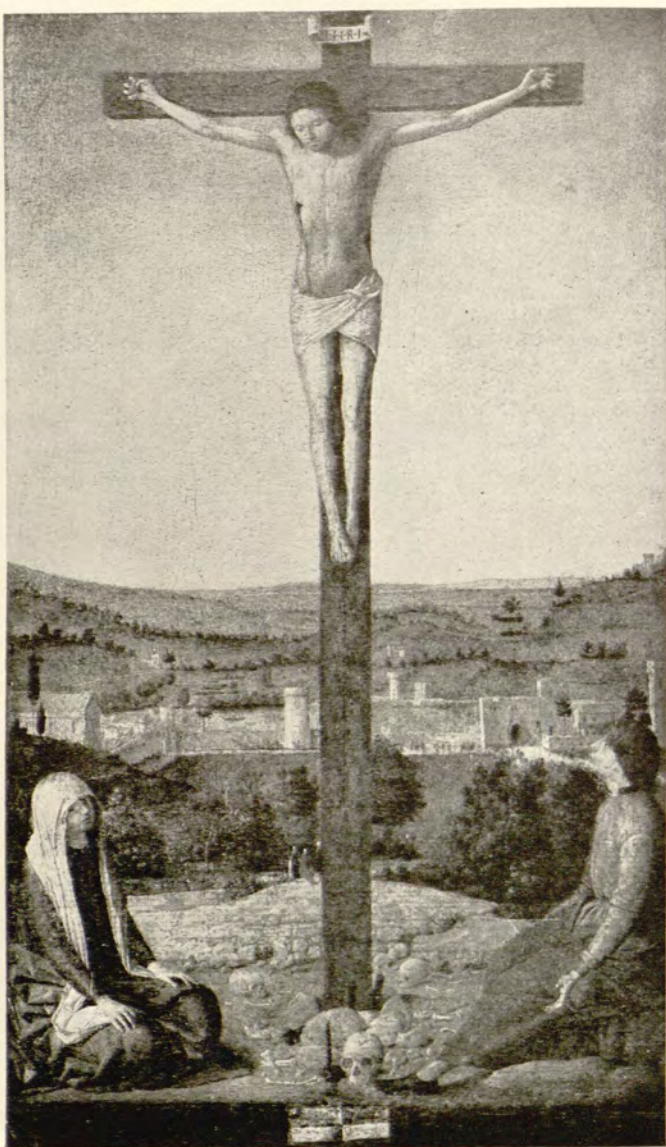
W. F. Mansell.

"ST. CATHERINE," BY CORREGGIO

Hampton Court

All the saints have their symbols, and St. Catherine of Siena is often represented with a book to denote her devotional nature. Correggio, whose art is always sweetly human rather than deeply spiritual, shows us the humanity rather than the saintliness of his subject. She might be a modern beauty immersed in a novel. As an exponent of feminine beauty Correggio ranks among the supreme artists of the world.



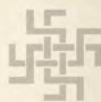


W. F. Mansell.

"THE CRUCIFIXION," BY ANTONELLO DA MESSINA (1430-79)

National Gallery, London

This Sicilian artist, who went to Flanders for his training, was the first to introduce into Italy the Flemish method of painting in *oils*. We can see the influence of Flemish painting in his rather homely types, but the beautiful landscape with a city in the mid-distance is entirely Italian.



and so popularised in Italy the Flemish method of oil-painting. Antonello was a skilful painter, both of figures and landscape, as his "Crucifixion," from the picture in the National Gallery, proves; but unfortunately he died at the age of forty-nine, just when he had received commissions for a number of important paintings, and so we can only judge of his talent by the few small pictures and portraits which have survived.

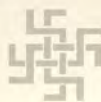
Others reaped where Antonello had sown. Already Venetian painters had shown a certain independence in their art. In this maritime port, where sails were more plentiful than trees, pictures had long been painted on canvas, for wood that warps and plaster that scales and falls were ill-suited to resist the damp that came from the canals. Van Eyck's method of oil-painting, introduced by Antonello, was soon found to be more damp-proof than the old method (*tempera*) of mixing pigments with yolk-of-egg, besides being lighter in weight and richer in colour.

Among the first to take advantage of the new method were the two sons of Bellini, who had soon followed their father to Venice, after his separation from Squarcione. Gentile, the elder, named after Gentile da Fabriano (Jacopo's first master), was born about 1429; his brother Giovanni was a year or two younger. Both these sons far surpassed their father, and the younger outstripped the elder, but throughout their lives there was no jealousy between them.

"Although the brothers lived apart," says Vasari, "they bore such a respect for each other and for their father, that each one declared himself to be inferior to the other, thus seeking modestly to surpass the other no less in goodness and courtesy than in the excellence of art."

We are told that "the first works of Giovanni were some portraits which gave great satisfaction, especially that of the Doge Loredano." This last is the sumptuous painting, reproduced here, now hanging in the National Gallery; and from this noble portrait of the Head of the Venetian Republic may be obtained a just idea of Giovanni's power of characterisation and of the splendour of his colour when he was still at the outset of his great career. Impressed by the beauty of his portraits and of numerous altar-pieces which he painted for churches in Venetian territory, the nobles of the city desired this great painter, together with his brother Gentile, "to decorate the hall of the great council with paintings descriptive of the magnificence and greatness of their marvellous city." So, beginning with the brothers Bellini, and afterwards continued by painters of equal eminence, there came into being that unrivalled series of mural paintings in public buildings which makes Venice to-day the most wonderful art-city in the world.

Of all the altar-pieces painted by Giovanni Bellini, the most exquisite is the illustration "The Doge Barberigo kneeling before the Infant Christ," a painting formerly in the Church of San Pietro at Murano, but now in the





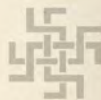
W. F. Mansell.

"THE DOGE LEONARDO LOREDANO," BY GIOVANNI BELLINI (1428-1516)

National Gallery, London

All the pomp, prosperity, and splendour of the maritime State of Venice is summed up in this sumptuous portrait of her Chief Magistrate.

"Bellini," said Ruskin, "is the only artist who appears to me to have united, in equal and magnificent measures, justness of drawing, nobleness of colouring, and perfect manliness of treatment."



Accademia, Venice. This Madonna is one of the loveliest in all Italian art, serene, majestic, pensive, but altogether human and lovable.

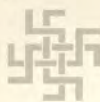
Softness and gentleness always distinguish the work of Giovanni Bellini from that of his brother Gentile, who inclined more to the severity of his brother-in-law Mantegna. Good examples of Gentile Bellini may be seen in the National Gallery, among them being an "Adoration of the Magi" and his portrait of "The Sultan Mohammed II." The last has an interesting history. Although paintings are prohibited by Mohammedan laws, this Sultan saw some portraits by Giovanni Bellini in the possession of the Venetian Ambassador, and, filled with amazement and admiration, he earnestly desired to see the man who could create such marvels. The Venetian Senate, however, was disinclined to let Giovanni leave the city, but allowed his brother Gentile to go in his stead. Gentile arrived at Constantinople, where he "was received graciously and highly favoured," and after painting a number of portraits, including one of the Sultan and one (by request) of himself, the Grand Turk was "convinced that the artist had been assisted by some divine spirit." He wished to reward the artist richly, and "asked him to name any favour which he desired, and it would immediately be granted."

Tactful and courteous, yet conscious that if he unduly prolonged his stay in Turkey he might excite envy and dangerous religious animosity, Gentile replied that he "asked for nothing but a letter of recommendation to the senate and government of his native Venice." Though loath to let him go, the Sultan was as good as his word. The letter was written "in the warmest possible terms, after which he was dismissed with noble gifts and the honour of knighthood."

So Gentile Bellini returned in honour to Venice, where he lived till he was nearly eighty, when "he passed to the other life," says Vasari, "and was honourably buried by his brother in Santi Giovanni e Paolo in the year 1507." His brother Giovanni survived him by some ten years and continued, fine old patriarch that he was, painting portraits till almost the end of his days. "At length," says our historian, "when Giovanni had attained to the age of ninety years, he passed from the troubles of this life, leaving an everlasting name by the works which he produced in his native Venice and elsewhere. He was buried in the same church where he had previously laid his brother Gentile."

§ 5

Justly famous by right of his own paintings, Giovanni is also renowned as the master of some of the greatest painters Venice ever saw, chief among his pupils being Giorgione and Titian. The first was born at Castelfranco in 1470, and was christened Giorgio, but "from his stature and the greatness



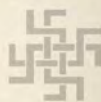


National Gallery.

"SULTAN MOHAMMED II," BY GENTILE BELLINI

National Gallery, London

The famous portrait of the Sultan of Turkey painted by the artist when he went to Constantinople in the place of his brother Giovanni. The Renaissance compromise with the Mohammedan style is a triumph of adaptation. Such portraits earned for Gentile the favour of the Sultan, and enabled the artist to ask the favour of permission to return to Venice.





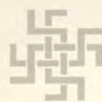
Anderson.

"THE MADONNA ENTHRONED, WITH SS. LIBERALE AND FRANCIS,"
BY GIORGIONE (1477-1510)

Castelfranco, Italy

This, according to Ruskin, is "one of the two most perfect pictures in existence; alone in the world as an imaginative representation of Christianity, with a monk and a soldier on either side."

Giorgione was only twenty-seven years of age when he painted this picture, which proves how early his astounding genius developed.



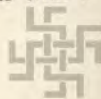
of his mind he was afterwards known as Giorgione," that is to say, "Great George." Though of peasant origin, contemporaries say he was "well bred and polished all his life." He was of a loving disposition and exceedingly fond of the lute, "playing and singing divinely," and this love of music became the new note which Giorgione definitely contributed to art, for not only did he frequently introduce music as a subject in his pictures (e.g. "The Concert" at Dresden, and the man playing a mandolin in "The Golden Age" at the National Gallery, and the "Fête Champêtre" or Musical Party in the Louvre), but all his pictures, as Walter Pater wrote, "constantly aspire to the condition of music." By this it is meant that everything in a Giorgione is subordinated to beauty, and that his first concern is to create *melody* of line and *harmony* of colour.

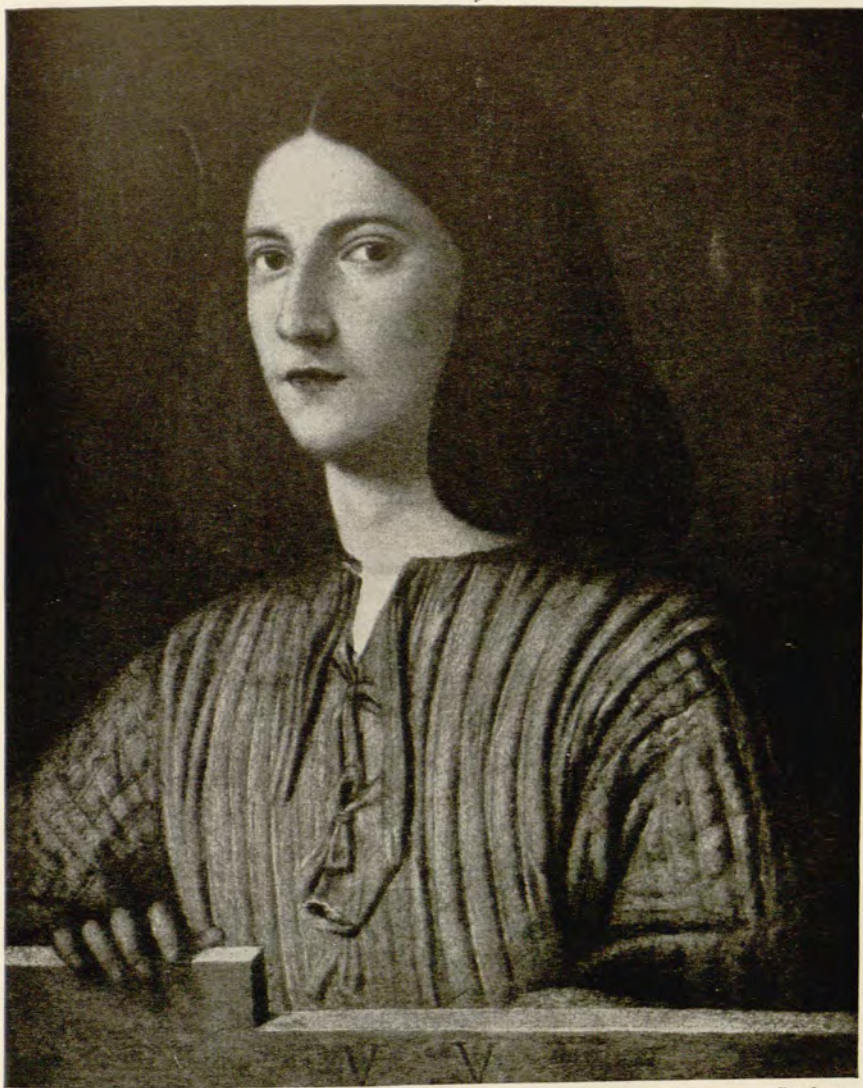
The gentle nature of the artist, who found grace and loveliness in all men and all things, can be traced in every work of his that has survived the storms of time. In his great altar-piece, "Madonna Enthroned, with St. Liberale and St. Francis," for his native hill-town of Castelfranco, painted before he was thirty, Giorgione charms us alike by the rhythm and balance of the whole composition and by the loveliness of his types. The sweet simplicity of young womanhood in the Virgin, the naturalness of the Child, the knightliness of the soldier-saint Liberale, the welcoming gesture of the nature-loving Saint who could preach to birds and fishes and call them his brethren—all these things are manifest in the illustration of this beautiful picture.

It is a great misfortune that so many of Giorgione's paintings have been lost or destroyed in the course of centuries. Barely a score are known for certain to exist to-day, but among them are some of the most splendid portraits in the world. One of the finest examples of his power in portraiture is the "Unknown Man" in the Querini-Stampalia Collection at Venice. Another, his "Young Man" in the Berlin Gallery, is presented here.

Vasari tells us that Giorgione "did a picture of Christ bearing the Cross and a Jew dragging him along, which after a time was placed in the Church of St. Rocco, and now works miracles, as we see, through the devotion of the multitudes who visit it." We can form some idea of what the exceeding beauty of this painting must have been from the unforgettable head of "Christ Bearing the Cross," which still exists in the private collection of Mrs. Gardner, of Boston, U.S.A.

But, alas ! not a fragment has survived of the famous picture which Giorgione painted to prove the superiority of painting to sculpture. While Verrocchio was in Venice engaged upon the bronze horse of his splendid Colleone Monument, his admirers argued that sculpture, which presented so many aspects of a figure, was superior to painting. Giorgione maintained that a painting could show at a single glance all the aspects that a





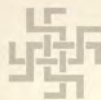
Bruckmann.

"PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN," BY GIORGIONE

Berlin Gallery

Here, according to the great Italian art critic Morelli, "we have one of those rare portraits such as only Giorgione, and occasionally Titian, were capable of producing, highly suggestive, and exercising over the spectator an irresistible fascination."

Note the mysterious "VV" on the parapet. These letters are found in other portraits by Giorgione, and Dr. G. C. Williamson has suggested that they probably indicate the artist's signature, since Giorgione's name was spelt as "Zorzon" or "Zorzi" da Castelfranco by contemporary writers, and in old MSS. the capital Z is frequently made like a V.



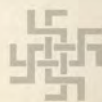


Anderson.

"CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS," BY GIORGIONE

Gardner Collection, Boston

The most beautiful conception of Christ in art, this painting (now in an American collection) is either a study for, or a fragment of, a lost picture by Giorgione. Formerly the picture hung in a church in Venice, where, according to the sixteenth-century historian Vasari, its haunting loveliness worked miracles of faith among the multitudes who came to see it.





"ADRASTUS AND HYPsipYLE," BY GIORGIONE

Anderson.

Giovanelli Palace, Venice

Nominally an illustration of the Greek legend how King Adrastus found Queen Hypsipyle disguised as a nurse (after she had been driven out of Lemnos by a conspiracy), this picture is famous as the first expression in art of a stormy landscape. It is a supreme example of Giorgione's skill in pattern building : note how beautifully the broken columns, almost in the centre of the foreground, balance not only the figure of the Queen, but also the tall buildings beyond the bridge.

man can present, while sculpture can only do so if one walks about it, and thus he proved his contention :

“ He painted a nude figure turning its shoulders ; at its feet was a limpid fount of water, the reflection from which showed the front. On one side was a burnished corselet, which had been taken off and gave a side view, because the shining metal reflected everything. On the other side was a mirror showing the other side of the figure.”

The scarcity of Giorgione's work is partly explained by the fact that he died young. In 1510 he was deeply in love with a Venetian lady, who caught the plague, but “ Giorgione, being ignorant of this, associated with her as usual, took the infection, and died soon after at the age of thirty-four, to the infinite grief of his friends, who loved him for his talents, and to the damage of the world which lost him.”



XIV

THE SPLENDOUR OF VENICE

THE ART OF TITIAN, TINTORETTO, LOTTO, MORONI, AND
PAUL VERONESE

§ I

WE never think of Titian as a young man; to all of us he is the Grand Old Man of Italian art, and there is something patriarchal in his figure. He was, indeed, very old when he died. Some would make out that he lived to be ninety-nine, but there is considerable doubt whether he was really as old as he pretended to be. The National Gallery catalogue queries 1477 as the year of Titian's birth, but few modern historians consider this to be accurate. The date 1477 is only given by the artist in a begging letter to King Philip of Spain, when it was to Titian's advantage to make himself out to be older than he was, because he was trying to squeeze money out of a rather tight-fisted monarch on the score of his great age.

Vasari and other contemporary writers give 1489 as the date of birth, but probably the nearest approach to the truth is given in a letter (dated December 8, 1567) from the Spanish Consul in Venice (Thomas de Cornoca), which fixes the year of Titian's birth as 1482. This would make Titian to have been ninety-four when he died.

Whether Titian lived to be ninety-four or, as Sir Herbert Cook thinks, only eighty-nine, is a small matter compared to the greater fact that he was born in the hill-town of Cadore on a spur of the Alps, and spent his boyhood amid solemn pine-woods and Alpine solitudes. Breathing the keen mountain air, he grew up a young Hercules, deep-chested, his features "sun-browned as if cast in bronze," his eyes clear, with an eagle glance bred of Alpine distances.

So the young Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) came to Venice, a hardy mountaineer among the children of the plain, and all his art bears the impress of his origin. What we call the idealism of Titian is not the result of æsthetic reflection, but, as Muther has pointed out, "the natural point of view of a man who wandered upon the heights of life, never knew trivial care, nor even experienced sickness; and therefore saw the world healthy and beautiful, in gleaming and majestic splendour."



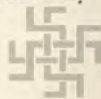
By the early death of Giorgione in 1510, Titian was left without a rival in his own generation, and six years later (1516), when Bellini died, Titian was elected to succeed him as the official painter of Venice. Thenceforward his career was a royal progress. "All princes, learned men, and distinguished persons who came to Venice visited Titian," says Vasari, for "not only in his art was he great, but he was a nobleman in person." He lived in a splendid palace, where he received Royalty, and was able to give his beautiful daughter and his two sons every conceivable luxury, for Titian, says Vasari, "gained a fair amount of wealth, his labours having always been well paid."

Of the dramatic quality in Titian's art we have a splendid instance at the National Gallery in the "Bacchus and Ariadne," which, painted about 1520, is also a famous example of Venetian colour. Nobody before had ever given so dramatic and impassioned a rendering of Bacchus, the God of Wine, leaping from his chariot to console and cherish Ariadne, the beautiful maiden forsaken by her false lover Theseus. There is not only action in the drawing, in the spirited rendering of movement, but there is life also in the colour; the amber, ruby, and sapphire of the flowing draperies sparkle, quiver, and radiate.

Whence came these qualities so new to Venetian painting? They came from the great painter's memories of his birth-place, his boyhood's home beside the River Piave roaring down from storm-capped heights, from memories of the wind that swept through the tree-tops and rattled the rafters of the house. Familiar from childhood with the awe-inspiring, dramatic elements of Nature, Titian expressed her majesty and drama in his art.

Amid the wealth of pictorial beauty left by Titian it is difficult indeed to say which is his supreme masterpiece. According to Vasari, Titian's "Assumption of the Virgin" was held by his fellow-citizens to be "the best modern painting," and though it is no longer modern but an "old master," we cannot conceive a more impressive rendering of the subject than this picture, in which we almost hear the wind caused by the soaring ascent of the Virgin, her garments grandly swelling in the breeze by which the encircling cherubs waft her upwards.

Yet to this great painting of his mature years (1541) at least one of his earlier pictures is equal in beauty. To the transitional period in Titian's life, while the direct influence of Giorgione yet lingered, belongs the picture in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, known as "Sacred and Profane Love." But the title is only a makeshift. Nobody knows the true meaning of this picture of two lovely women, one lightly draped, the other in the full splendour of Venetian dress, seated on either side of a well in the midst of a smiling landscape. There is a tradition that the one represents "Heavenly





By courtesy of the Vienna Museum.

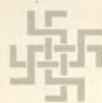
"JOHANN FRIEDRICH, ELECTOR OF SAXONY," BY TITIAN (c. 1482-1576)

Vienna Museum

Out of the most simple elements and with a subject which has little immediate attraction Titian builds this portrait, depending on the monumentality of his design to convey the personality of his sitter. Its absolute simplicity forces us to look at the perfect drawing of the face and hands.

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Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

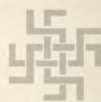


Anderson.

"SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE" (DETAIL), BY TITIAN

Borghese Gallery, Rome

According to tradition, this figure is supposed to typify "Earthly Love," and the one opposite "Heavenly Love"; but since in the picture these two women are seated on either side of a well, others have interpreted them as Grace and Truth.





"SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE" (DETAIL), BY TITIAN

Anderson.

Borghese Gallery, Rome

Various conjectures have been made as to the meaning of these figures, but the world is content to accept them as supreme examples of Titian's conception of feminine beauty.





"THE MAGDALEN," BY TITIAN

Pitti Gallery, Florence

Anderson.

"This picture most beautiful, moves all who behold it to compassion," writes Vasari, a contemporary of Titian. "The eyes are fixed on Heaven, their redness and the tears still within them giving evidence of her sorrow for the sins of her past life."

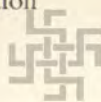
Love," the other "Earthly Love," but on the other hand a passage in Vasari about another painting by Titian, now lost, gives countenance to the theory that these figures are personifications of Grace and Beauty, or more probably Grace and Truth. A third theory is that the picture illustrates a passage in some lost poem.

Titian's ideal of womanhood is seen not only in this picture but in a number of exquisite portraits and figure paintings. According to Vasari, he painted mostly from his own imagination, and only used female models in case of necessity. Titian's types have little in common with the small, brown, black-eyed maidens we usually associate with Venice. They are nearer akin to the fair-haired Lombard women or the Dianas and Junos of his Alpine home. Further, it is the proud majesty of the mature woman that Titian paints. His beautiful "Flora," in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, does not suggest springtime but, as Muther has well said, "high summer in its rich, mature splendour." Never old, but never very young, Titian's "mighty women" seem to "beam in an eternal, powerful beauty."

The same mature majesty characterises "The Magdalen," to which Titian's contemporary Vasari pays the following eloquent tribute: "Her hair falls about her neck and shoulders, her head is raised, and the eyes are fixed on Heaven, their redness and the tears still within them giving evidence of her sorrow for the sins of her past life. This picture, which is most beautiful, moves all who behold it to compassion."

"He touched nothing that he did not adorn." So it might be written of Titian, who ennobled all his sitters with something of his own majesty. The supreme example of his powers in this direction is the magnificent "Equestrian Portrait of Charles V," now in the Prado at Madrid. In 1530, when the Emperor Charles V was in Bologna, Titian, by the intervention of his friend the poet Pierro Aretino, was invited to that city and commissioned to paint His Catholic Majesty in full armour. Vasari tells us the Emperor was so delighted with this portrait that he gave the artist a thousand gold crowns, declaring that he would never have his portrait done by any other painter; and he kept his imperial word, frequently employing Titian thereafter and always paying him a thousand crowns for each portrait.

Never was money better spent. This Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Spain still fires our imagination, thanks to Titian. The historical truth about Charles V is that he was a pale, scrofulous, emaciated man, a prey to melancholy, full of hesitations and superstitious fears; so world-weary that in the end he abdicated from his imperial position, and shut himself up in a monastery where, with morbid satisfaction, surrounded by coffins and ticking clocks, he constantly rehearsed his own funeral. Titian shows us nothing of this. His wonderful imagination





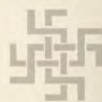
"CHARLES V," BY TITIAN

Anderson.

Prado, Madrid

"The personification of the coldness of a great general in battle, and of Destiny itself approaching, silent and unavoidable": this is what the genius of Titian has made of this portrait. Charles V was both King of Spain and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

Titian has seized on one great moment in this monarch's life and pictured him riding at daybreak over the plain of Augsburg just before the battle in which his troops were victorious.





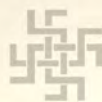
Anderson

"THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN," BY TITIAN

Church of the Frari, Venice

Titian's dramatic imagination, rich and powerful both in portraiture and in allegorical decorations for palaces, is here seen applied with equal genius and deep feeling to the rendering of a religious subject.

This picture, formerly in the Academy, Venice, but now restored to its original position in the Church of the Frari at Venice, was thought by Titian's contemporaries to be "the best modern painting."



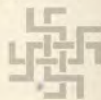
fastens on one great moment in the Emperor's life, the day when he was the victor at Augsburg. A Black Knight in steel armour, riding over the battlefield at daybreak, the Emperor in this painting becomes "the personification of the coldness of a great general in battle, and of Destiny itself approaching, silent and unavoidable." Charles is here Napoleonic—but Napoleon had no Titian to immortalise his grandeur. Who would not pay a thousand crowns to be so transfigured for posterity?

Still painting in his ninetieth year with unabated vigour, still able as a nonagenarian to play the host with undiminished magnificence to King Henry III of France, this grand old patriarch finally went down in 1576, like some battered but indomitable man-of-war, with his colours still proudly flying. Even then it was not of old age that he died; he was a victim to the same pestilence which, sixty-six years earlier, had carried off his young fellow-pupil Giorgione. All Venice went into mourning when the greatest of her sons passed away, and the Senate set aside the decree that excluded victims of the plague from burial within church walls, so that Titian might be laid to rest in the Church of the Frari, within sight of his own picture of "The Assumption."

§ 2

The glowing mantle of Titian fell on the shoulders of Jacopo Robusti, nicknamed Tintoretto (the "Little Dyer") from the calling of his father, Battista Robusti, who was a dyer, in Italian *tintore*. Tintoretto was born at Venice in 1518 and, having shown his precocious genius by covering the walls of his father's house with drawings and sketches, he was apprenticed as a pupil to Titian. Despite his prodigious capacity, for already the skill and speed of his workmanship were astonishing, he was not a satisfactory pupil. After some time Titian dismissed him, according to one account because he was jealous of his pupil, according to another because Tintoretto "would in no wise give obedience to commands." From all we know of Tintoretto's proud, wilful character the latter reason seems probable.

Left to himself, Tintoretto set up his own workshop, in which he nailed up the legend "The Design of Michael Angelo and the Colouring of Titian." Not only did he live up to his motto as regards his drawing and colour, but to these he added his own supreme understanding of light and shade; and thus he was able to surpass Titian in the keenness of his literal yet romantic observation, and to outdo even Michael Angelo himself in the furious speed and energy of his execution. Amazing stories are told of Tintoretto's activity. "This artist," remarks his contemporary, Vasari, "always contrives by the most singular proceedings in the world to be constantly employed, seeing that when the good offices of his friends and



other methods have failed to procure him any work of which there is question, he will nevertheless manage to obtain it, either by accepting it at a very low price, by doing it as a gift, or even by seizing on it by force."

An instance of this kind occurred when the Brotherhood of San Rocco decided to have the ceiling of their refectory painted with decorations. The four leading painters of Venice—Zuccherò, Salviati, Veronese, and Tintoretto—were summoned to San Rocco and invited to submit designs for the project. It was announced that the commission would be given to the artist who produced the best design. "But while the other artists were giving themselves with all diligence to the preparation of their designs, Tintoretto made an exact measurement of the space for which the picture was required, and taking a large canvas, he painted it without saying a word to anyone and, with his usual celerity, put it up in the place destined to receive it.

"One morning, therefore, when the Brotherhood had assembled to see the designs and to determine the matter, they found that Tintoretto had entirely completed the work, nay, that he had fixed it in its place."

Naturally the three other artists were furious, and the head of the Brotherhood angrily inquired why Tintoretto had taken it on himself to complete the work when he had only been asked to submit a design in an open competition.

"This is my method of preparing designs," answered Tintoretto; "I do not know how to make them in any other manner. All designs and models for a work should be executed in this fashion, to the end that the persons interested may see what it is intended to offer them, and may not be deceived.

"If you do not think it proper to pay for the work and remunerate me for my pains, then," the artist proudly added, "I will make you a present of it."

Thus, as Vasari relates, Tintoretto, "though not without opposition, contrived so to manage matters that the picture still retains its place."

Though he painted numerous portraits and altar-pieces, Tintoretto was essentially a decorative painter, and his mightiest achievements are on the walls and ceilings of the palaces and public buildings of Venice. His "Paradiso" in the Ducal Palace is the largest painting in the world, eighty-four feet wide by thirty-four feet high, and of this stupendous achievement and of most of his other great works no photograph can give any adequate idea. For this reason no attempt to reproduce them is made here. But fortunately the picture which is universally acknowledged to be Tintoretto's masterpiece is not on the same colossal scale. "The Miracle of St. Mark" is one of four large pictures painted by Tintoretto for the School of San Marco in Venice. It represents the Evangelist—who was the Patron Saint



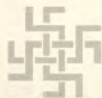


"THE MIRACLE OF ST. MARK," BY TINTORETTO (1518-94)

Anderson.

Academy, Venice

Tintoretto, the most famous pupil of Titian, illustrates in his dramatic picture the legend of how St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice, rescued a Christian slave from Pagan torturers.



of Venice—appearing in the air and “delivering a man who was his votary from grievous torments, which an executioner is seen to be preparing for him: the irons which the tormentors are endeavouring to apply break short in their hands, and cannot be turned against that devout man.”

The dramatic element in Titian's work is seen heightened and intensified in many of Tintoretto's paintings, but nowhere is it more splendidly manifest than in this impressive imagining of a supernatural event. Again we seem to hear the rush of air caused by the downward sweep of the Saint, from whom a celestial light irradiates. This great picture is not only an illustration of a saintly legend; it had a symbolical meaning of great importance to Tintoretto's contemporaries. At this time political relations between Venice and Rome were strained. The Patriarch and Senate of Venice flattered themselves they were better Christians than the Romans, and were delighted to see in Tintoretto's masterpiece a picture in which they saw the Popes as the executioners of the Church, which is to be saved only by the fortunate interference of the Republic of St. Mark.

When Tintoretto died in 1594 there were no more great religious painters in Italy. Unlike Titian, who “had never received from Heaven aught but favour and felicity,” and so throughout a long life looked out with ever joyous eyes, Tintoretto, notwithstanding his professional prosperity, was overshadowed by a spiritual gloom which finds expression in his mighty pictures. The works of his manhood and maturity show little of that serene joy in existence which glows from the canvases of Titian; but in the fitful lighting of their sombre depths, in a constantly recurring hint of tragedy, they reveal a consciousness of stormy days to come, of perils for Church and State, which entitle us to see in Tintoretto a harbinger of the Reformation and the wars of religion.

§ 3

Working side by side first with Titian, afterwards with Tintoretto, was Paolo Cagliari, who, from Verona, the city of his birth, was known as Paul Veronese (1528–88). The whole splendour of Venice is revealed in his paintings, and his decorations in the Ducal Palace give immortality to the pageantry which characterised the Italy of his time.

When the Venetian Senate gave a festival in honour of King Henry III of France, the monarch was received (so history tells us) by two hundred of the fairest damsels in the city, dressed in white and covered with pearls and diamonds, “so that the King thought he had suddenly entered a realm of goddesses and fairies.”

This is the realm we enter through a canvas by Veronese, whether his subject be professedly historical, as in “The Family of Darius before





"THE MARRIAGE AT CANA," BY PAUL VERONESE (1528-88)

Alinari.

Dresden Gallery

The luxurious pomp of a Venetian banquet is shown in this sixteenth-century painting, which is far removed from the simple piety of the earlier Italian masters. Veronese, whose opulent sense of colour and splendid design made him one of the great decorative painters of his day, was rebuked by the Inquisition for his worldly rendering of sacred subjects.

Alexander" in the National Gallery, or professedly religious, as in "The Marriage at Cana" at Dresden. We have only to look at this painting with all its worldly pomp and ostentatious luxury to see how far art has travelled from the simple piety of the earlier Primitive Masters.

The monasteries were the chief employers of Veronese, as the eminent critic Berenson has pointed out: "His cheerfulness, and his frank and joyous worldliness—the qualities, in short, which we find in his huge pictures of feasts—seem to have been particularly welcome to those who were expected to make their meat and drink of the very opposite qualities. This is no small comment on the times; and shows how thorough had been the permeation of the spirit of the Renaissance when even the religious orders gave up their pretence to asceticism and piety."

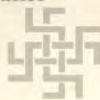
A time came, however, when Veronese went too far even for the depraved ecclesiastics of his day. When he painted "The Last Supper"—now in the Louvre—in the style of "The Marriage at Cana," with the same glitter of crystal, silver, and jewels, the same sheen of silks and satins, the same multitude of serving men and attendants, the stricter clerics were scandalised. Information was laid against the painter, and on July 18, 1573, Paul Veronese was summoned before the tribunal of the Inquisition.

Exactly what happened then is not clearly known: while escaping banishment or severer punishment, the artist was sternly rebuked for his worldly treatment of religious subjects; and though the reprimand appears to have had little permanent effect on his paintings, it is significant to note that his "Adoration of the Magi" in the National Gallery, which is dated 1573, is both in conception and in execution far more simple and respectful than are the majority of Veronese's pictures of sacred subjects.

The most beautiful picture by Veronese in the National Gallery, and one of the most haunting of all his works, is "St. Helena's Vision of the Cross," which is as reposeful as a piece of antique Greek sculpture and a superbly decorative example of the artist's skill as a maker of patterns. The curious will note in this work how cunningly the painter has arranged the figure to secure decorative balance and rhythm, how the right leg continuing the line of the forearm repeats the diagonal of the cross, while the sharp horizontal of the cherub's wing repeats the line of the window sill. In these devices we recognise the hand of a master-craftsman.

§ 4

A greater than Veronese remains to be mentioned, a painter who was not only a consummate craftsman but also a profound thinker. This was Lorenzo Lotto (1480–1556) who, unlike his great contemporaries, was Venetian born. All the others—save Tintoretto, greatly his junior—came



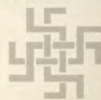


W. F. Mansell.

"ST. HELENA'S VISION OF THE CROSS," BY PAUL VERONESE

National Gallery, London

Reposeful as a piece of antique Greek sculpture, this beautiful painting is also an illuminating example of the artist's skill in pattern-making. Note how the very angle of the Cross, seen by the Saint in her vision, is so arranged as to repeat the lines of her forearm and skirt, thus securing a symmetry which completes the rhythm and decorative aspect of the whole picture.



from the mainland : Giorgione from Castelfranco, Titian from Cadore and Cagliari from Verona.

Few painters have lived so intense a life in the spirit as Lotto ; none has written so plainly as he his soul-history in his works. A true son of Venice, his youthful mind turned to Byzantium rather than to Rome for instruction and inspiration. To him Giorgione and Titian appeared as foreign intruders ; their worldliness shocked him, a follower of Savonarola. Lotto began by putting the Madonna back on a Byzantine throne in the apse of the church from which the painters of the Renaissance had taken her. Ploughing his lonely furrow at Venice he had his doubts, and in 1508 he journeyed south to see what Rome and Raphael had to teach him. What he saw there roused his reforming zeal, as it had that of Savonarola. Four years later (1512) he fled from metropolitan sinfulness and took refuge in the provincial tranquillity of Bergamo.

Here he possessed his soul in peace, and as though touched by the spirit of St. Francis he became reconciled to Nature. No longer is the Madonna enthroned in church, but placed in the open country, where all existing things seem to praise the Creator in their beauty. Lotto became a pantheist and his message is the gospel of love. With his Venetian predecessors and contemporaries the Virgin is either soulful and humble, or aristocratic and proud ; Lotto paints her richly adorned, but imbues her countenance with a beneficent and tenderly maternal expression.

In portraiture Lotto is supreme even in a great epoch. When we look at his portrait in the National Gallery of "The Protonotary Apostolic Juliano," noting through the window the wide and boundless landscape traversed by a river which winds its way to the distant sea, noting also the exquisite Flemish-like painting of the still-life accessories, as well as the grave penetrating characterisation of the man, we cannot agree with Muther that Lotto regards his sitters "unconcerned with their decorative appearance" ; but we do heartily agree that Lotto shows us people "in their hours of introspection."

Why is it that Lotto, as a portrait-painter, strikes chords which, as Muther says, "are echoed in no other Italian work" ? The explanation is this : "Only those whom he loved and honoured were invited into his studio, and this circumstance alone differentiates his portraits from those of Raphael or Titian."

Though never such a great figure in his day as Giorgione, Titian, or Tintoretto, Lotto was not without influence on his contemporaries. One who felt it and gained by it greatly was a painter who came from Brescia to Venice, Giambattista Moroni (c. 1520-78). His "Portrait of a Tailor" is full of human sympathy and almost perfect in craftsmanship. It is deservedly one of the most popular portraits in the National Gallery, and



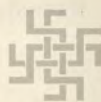


W. F. Mansell.

"THE PROTONOTARY APOSTOLIC JULIANO," BY LORENZO LOTTO (1480-1556)

National Gallery, London

"He looks out from his canvas as if begging for sympathy." So a modern American critic has written of this noble and dignified portrait by the most spiritual of all the great Venetian masters of the sixteenth century. Lotto was remarkable for his pious conservatism, and would undertake the portraiture of no person unless he respected his character.



many of us feel almost equally drawn to Moroni's other great portrait at the National Gallery, "An Italian Nobleman." Together they prove that, like Lotto, Moroni could extend his sympathies to sitters irrespective of their rank or position in life.

It is not easy to over-estimate the abundant excellence of portraiture in sixteenth-century Venice. Just as the wealth and power of her merchant-citizens were the source of the success of the republican State of Venice, so the luxury they were able to afford drew to the island-city of the Adriatic all the artistic talent born on the neighbouring mainland. Of the multitude of artists who during this century were adorning the public buildings and private palaces of Venice, only a few of the most celebrated can here be enumerated. Cima came from Conegliano to Venice in 1492, and worked there till 1516 or later, carrying on in his Madonna the tradition of Giovanni Bellini. Vincenzo di Biagio, known as Catena, was born at Treviso about 1470 and died at Venice in 1531. He was greatly influenced by Giorgione, to whom was once ascribed the beautiful painting "A Warrior adoring the Infant Christ," which the National Gallery catalogue now gives definitely to Catena. Sebastiano del Piombo (c. 1485-1547), who about 1510 left Venice for Rome, where he was influenced by Raphael and Michael Angelo, has a special interest for us because his picture "The Raising of Lazarus" was the beginning of the National Gallery collection. It is still "Number 1." Palma Vecchio (1480-1528) was born near Bergamo, but came to Venice while still a student. Influenced first by Bellini and Giorgione, afterwards by Titian and Lotto, he very nearly reached the first rank, as his "Venus and Cupid," now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, amply proves. He is called Vecchio (= Old) to distinguish him from a later painter Palma Giovine (1544-1628) or Young Palma.

Jacopo da Ponte (1510-92), called Bassano from his birthplace, is also splendidly represented in the National Gallery by "The Good Samaritan," a painting which used to belong to Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is a magnificent example of vigour and muscular action.

In the art, as in the State of Venice, the spark of life lingered long.

This eighteenth-century Venetian Art certainly has its own charm. Canaletto (1697-1768) is one of the finest of painters of city scenes, depicted for the sake of showing the whole layout of the buildings in their setting. He worked in Venice, Rome, and for a good period in England, where he painted some of the very finest views of eighteenth-century London, such as that of the City from Richmond House. His sweeping views painstakingly present every building, the gracious life of the time, and withal the beauty of the sunlit ambient air.

Longhi (1702-85) and Guardi (1712-93) both painted the colourful life and the Venetian scene of their day. Their genre subjects are often



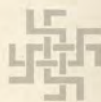


W. F. Mansell.

"THE TAILOR," BY GIAMBATTISTA MORONI (c. 1520-1578)

National Gallery, London

"A man's a man for a' that." Heralding the birth of democracy in art and the coming of a time when artists, no longer employed by nobles, could find nobility in the features of working-men, this picture is one of the world's great portraits and a splendid example of Venetian colour before its decadence.



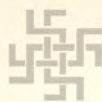


W. F. Mansell.

"ITALIAN NOBLEMAN," BY GIAMBATTISTA MORONI

National Gallery, London

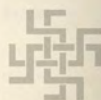
All things to all men, Moroni, the most accomplished disciple of Lorenzo Lotto, could depict an Italian nobleman with the same sympathetic skill and dignity that have made his "Portrait of a Tailor" one of the world-masterpieces of portraiture.



very charming, and tell us much of the costume and life of the period and its love of carnival.

Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), painting in the tradition of Veronese, earned for himself the proud title "the last of the Old Masters." He was, indeed, the last of the great decorators, with an excellent sense of light and shade set in dramatic contrast and a courageous use of colour—delighting in pale blues and yellows which may have been derived from the newly fashionable love of chinese fabrics of his time. Fine examples of his work are on the ceilings of the Royal Palace at Madrid and in the Bishop's palace at Wurzburg, but the delightful little "Deposition" in our National Gallery will indicate the sensitive quality of his work on a smaller scale.

All this, however, was really a brilliant afterglow. With Tintoretto the last word of Italy had really been spoken, and when he died in 1594 it was left for the artists of other lands to take up the tale of European painting.



XV

THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION

THE ART OF ALBERT DURER AND OF HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER

§ 1

SO far we have been following mainly the development of art in Italy, but that country had no monopoly of painting and sculpture during the Middle Ages. It was shown in the Tenth Chapter of this OUTLINE how a band of painters flourished on the banks of the Rhine during the fourteenth century.

Ever since the time of the Van Eycks paintings had been produced by natives of most of the great countries of Europe—even in England, where Odo the Goldsmith was employed by King Henry III to execute wall-paintings for the Palace of Westminster—but either because their work was not powerful enough to capture the imagination of Europe or, quite as probably, because they had no historians and biographers to trumpet their praises, the early artists of England, France, and Germany never acquired the fame won by their brethren of Italy and Flanders. With few exceptions their names, and in many cases their works, have been entirely lost.

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

When all has been said, however, the fact remains that Italy was the centre of the world for mediæval Europe, and to it came all who were desirous of learning, culture, and advancement. In those times the painter born elsewhere made his way to Italy as naturally and inevitably as the artist of to-day makes his pilgrimage to Paris; and in Italy the stranger artist was treated, not as a foreigner, but as a provincial. Looking at the political divisions of Europe to-day, we are apt to forget that in the Middle Ages the Christian nations of Europe were considered to be one family. Just as the Pope of Rome was the religious Head of all Christendom, so in theory, if not in practice, its secular Head was the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The capital of the Empire, again in theory, was Rome, though in practice the Emperor was usually not very safe outside his own kingdom in Germany.



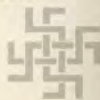
When the Italian historian Vasari describes the great German artist Albert Durer as a "Fleming," he is making the same sort of mistake that a Londoner might make when he was uncertain whether a west-countryman came from Devon or Cornwall; and just as some Londoners are so narrow-minded that they cannot imagine any pre-eminent greatness outside the Metropolis, so Vasari in a patronising way wrote of Durer:

Had this man, so nobly endowed by Nature, so assiduous and possessed of so many talents, been a native of Tuscany instead of Flanders, had he been able to study the treasures of Rome and Florence as we have done, he would have excelled us all, as he is now the best and most esteemed among his own countrymen.

If Vasari thought this talented man had much to learn from Italy, there were Italian artists who thought they had something to learn from Durer. Giovanni Bellini, whose art has been described in Chapter XIII, greatly admired Durer's painting, and found his rendering of hair so marvellous that he thought the artist must have a special brush for the purpose. So when Durer visited Venice and in his polite way offered to do anything in his power for Venetian artists, Bellini begged to be given the brush with which he painted hairs. Durer picked up a handful of his brushes and told Bellini to choose any one he wished. "I mean the brush with which you draw several hairs with one stroke," the Venetian explained. Durer smiled and replied, "I use no other than these, and to prove it you may watch me." Then, taking up one of the same brushes, he drew "some very long wavy tresses, such as women generally wear." Bellini looked on wonderingly, and afterwards confessed that had he not seen it nothing would have convinced him that such painting was possible.

Who was this Durer? Strangely enough, the artist who most fully revealed the spirit of awakening Germany was of Hungarian descent. His father, Albert Durer the Elder—whose portrait by his son hangs in the National Gallery, London—was born in Hungary. After travelling in the Netherlands for some time, he finally settled in Nuremberg, where his son was born on May 21, 1471. Albert the Younger had everything to foster the development of his gifts, his father was a goldsmith, and his grandfather also; hence their removal to Nuremberg, a city which was in constant communication with Venice and had already begun to rival it in the arts and crafts of jewellery and metalwork. It is worth noticing that young Albert's godfather was the bookseller and expert printer, Anton Koberger, and through him his godson probably became familiar with fine prints and engravings from his earliest years.

The father intended the son to succeed him in his craft, but as the latter tells us in his memoirs, "I was more inclined to painting, and this I confessed to my father. My father was not pleased," he adds with characteristic





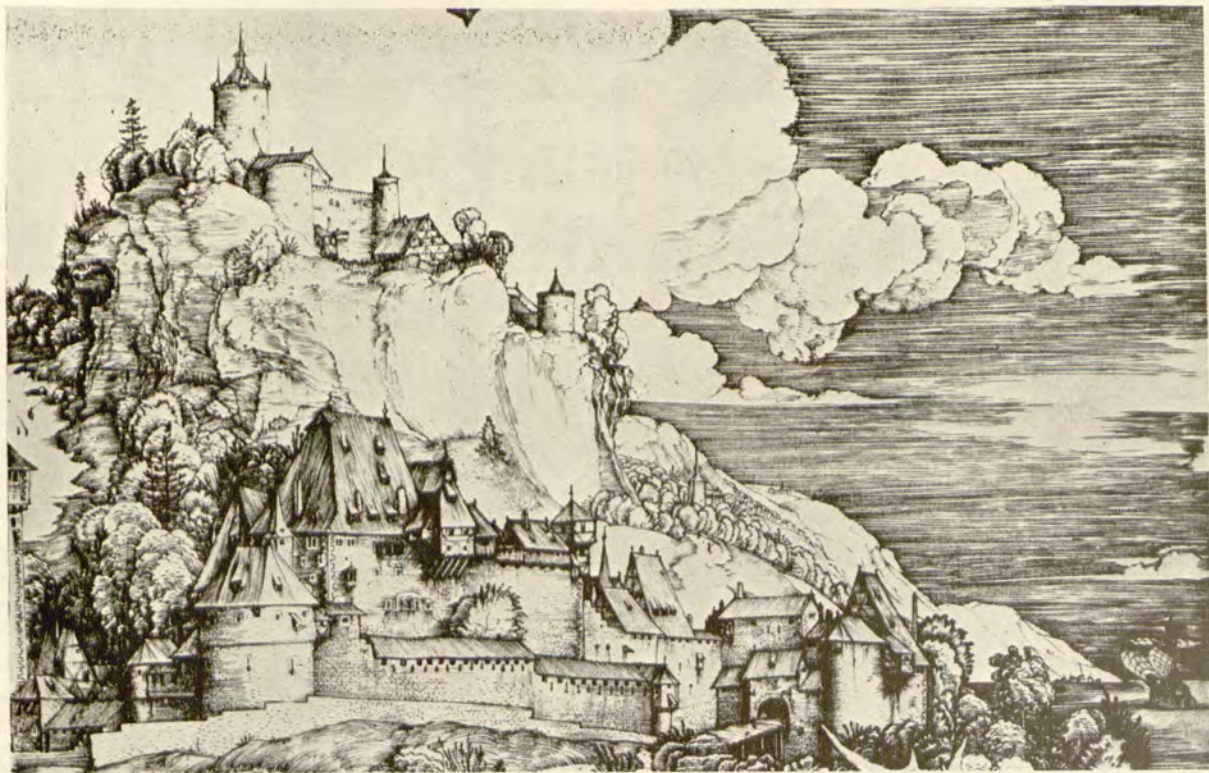
Anderson.

"PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER WHEN YOUNG," BY ALBERT DURER (1471-1528)

Prado, Madrid

Painted when the artist was only twenty-seven, this beautiful portrait of himself shows the mature precision of a master in every detail. Note the wonderful painting of the long wavy tresses, a feat which caused the Venetian artist Bellini to believe Durer had a special brush for painting hair.

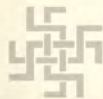




W. F. Mansell.

LANDSCAPE DETAIL (FROM "THE RAPE OF AMYONE"), BY ALBERT DURER

Durer's love of Nature which found expression in his delicate yet vigorous drawing of trees, shrubs and clouds, is seen in this landscape.



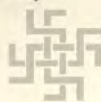
simplicity. Nevertheless young Durer got his way, and in 1486 was apprenticed to Michael Wohlgemut, a local artist then at the zenith of his fame. Wohlgemut had a large art school, which was the most important in Nuremberg, and here young Durer learnt to paint and also, possibly, to practise wood-engraving. But such a master had little to teach so brilliant a pupil, and after three years Durer the Elder wisely took his son away and sent him abroad for four years. Young Albert travelled in the south of Germany and probably paid his first visit to Venice during this period.

Returning to Nuremberg in 1494, Albert Durer—as we shall henceforth call him—married almost immediately Agnes Frei, daughter of a respected citizen. The young artist already had some reputation : in 1497 he painted the portrait of his father, and in the following year the splendid portrait of himself which we reproduce. This comparatively early work, now at Madrid, shows all the characteristics of his later portraits ; it has a simple dignity almost amounting to austerity, remarkable penetration into character, and in execution it shows perfect mastery of drawing and colouring.

In 1498 Albert Durer published a series of wood-engravings illustrating the Apocalypse, which greatly increased his reputation, for in these he was able to show not only the perfection of his drawing and design, but also the extraordinary power of his imagination. No design in this series is more famous than “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”

And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat thereon had a bow : and there was given unto him a crown : and he came forth conquering and to conquer. . . . And another horse came forth, a red horse : and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another : and there was given to him a great sword. . . . And I saw, and behold a black horse ; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice saying, A measure of wheat for a penny . . . and behold a pale horse ; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death.

These are the verses from Revelation (vi. 2–8) which Durer set himself to illustrate ; and since it was executed in a period just previous to the Reformation, some critics have argued that its inner meaning is an attack on the Papacy. It is improbable, however, that Durer was at this time in any way actuated by religious bias ; the series as a whole certainly attacks corruption, both lay and ecclesiastical, but in this woodcut it is more likely that Durer confined himself strictly to his text. The Holy Roman Empire was in a chronic state of war, and Durer must have seen enough of fighting in his youth and early manhood to know who and what were the grim companions of conquest. The meaning of this magnificent rushing design is clear ; it reveals Durer's view of War, war which sweeps mercilessly





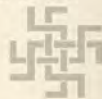
W. F. Mansell.

“ THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE ”

From a Wood-Engraving by Albert Durer

The four riders are Conquest, aiming afar with his arrow : War, with a drawn sword : Famine : and Death. Note the original conception of the third rider, whose rich costume and well-nourished body betray Durer's opinion of the War-Profitier who fattens himself on the famine of others.

The most wonderful work of art ever inspired by the Book of Revelation (vi. 2-8), this magnificent design displays Durer's inventiveness as a decorative craftsman and the power and originality of his imagination. In our own day it has a peculiar fascination as revealing an Old Master's view of war.



on, sparing neither man nor woman, priest nor layman, and inevitably accompanied by Famine, Pestilence, and Death. The most subtle touch of satire is the third rider with the balances. In portraying Famine as this sleek, well-nourished, handsomely clothed man, Durer seems to hint that he is not ignorant of the existence of the War-Profiteer. The emaciated horse and its rider by his side tell their own tale.

It was by his engravings still more than by his paintings that Durer became famous, for the prints spread throughout Europe and created a great sensation. But though invited to become a citizen of Venice or Antwerp by these municipalities, Durer remained loyal to his native city. He continued to reside in Nuremberg. After his father's death in 1502 his responsibilities increased, for now in addition to his own family Albert had to look after his mother and his younger brother Hans.

When commissions for portraits and altar-pieces were not forthcoming, Durer's wife used to hawk at fairs and gatherings her husband's prints illustrating episodes in the life of the Holy Family, and these wood and copper engravings not only brought in ready money by satisfying a popular demand, but they were the foundation of the artist's reputation as an engraver. The success of these separate prints was immediate, and soon after the publication of the Apocalypse prints, Durer set to work on other sets of engravings, one of which was to illustrate the Passion of Our Lord and another the Life of the Virgin.

At the instigation and by the kindness of his friend, Wilibald Pirckheimer, who lent him the money for the journey, Durer in 1506 paid a visit to Venice, where he was commissioned by the German merchants to paint a panel for their chapel. At first the painters of Venice were inclined to regard Albert Durer as a mere engraver who did not understand how to use colour, but the completion of this panel soon silenced hostile criticism and the work proved to be a veritable triumph for the painter.

In a letter to his friend Pirckheimer, Durer relates how the Doge and the Patriarch of Venice came to see his picture, and still more interesting is his account of how the veteran Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini praised the picture in public and further proved his admiration for the work of the Northern painter. Bellini, Durer wrote, "wanted to have something of mine, and himself came and asked me to paint him something and he would pay well for it. All men tell me what an upright man he is, so that I am really friendly with him. He is very old, but is still the best painter of them all." It was at this time that the incident about the paint-brush already narrated occurred.

Altogether this visit to Venice was a success. It definitely established Durer's reputation as a painter, his small panels sold well, and later he went to Bologna, where he received a great ovation; but even the flattery of a



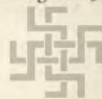


"THE GREAT FORTUNE," BY ALBERT DURER

W. F. Mansell

No work has roused more controversy than this famous design, in which Dürer imaginatively shows "Fortune" or "Nemesis" with bridles in her left hand to curb the "mad designs" of the proud.

If we are unable to admire the "goddess," we can all see the beauty of the landscape beneath, and viewed from a distance or reversed the rhythmical disposition of the black and white in this engraving makes it stand out as a fascinating pattern.



Bolognese who declared he could "die happy" now he had seen Durer did not turn the artist's head, and he returned to Nuremberg the same modest, conscientious artist he had always been.

The succeeding years were very fertile in paintings, his principal productions being the "Crucifixion," now at Dresden, the "Adam" and "Eve," in which he tried to give his ideal of beauty of form, and the important altar-piece which he painted for the Frankfort merchant Jacob Heiler.

But the artist still found that painting did not bring him in so much profit as engraving, and after he had completed his great "Adoration of the Trinity" in 1511 he gave most of his time to engraving, continuing the first "Passion" series and the "Life of the Virgin." It was after the death of his mother in 1514 that he produced his famous print "Melancholia," a composition full of curious symbolism in which a seated female figure is shown brooding on the tragedies of existence.

Equally famous and still more difficult wholly to understand is the copper engraving known as "The Great Fortune" or "Nemesis." It is supposed that this engraving was suggested by a passage in Poliziano's Latin poem, which may be thus translated :

There is a goddess who, aloft in the empty air, advances girdled about with a cloud. . . . She it is who crushes extravagant hopes, who threatens the proud, to whom is given to beat down the haughty spirit and the haughty step, and to confound over-great possessions. Her the men of old called Nemesis. . . . In her hand she bears bridles and a chalice, and smiles for ever with an awful smile, and stands resisting mad designs.

No work has aroused more controversy than this design ; some have regarded it as a splendid rendering of the physical attributes of mature womanhood, but others have pronounced the ugliness of the figure to be "perfectly repulsive," while others again have found it hard to reconcile the extreme realism of the woman's form with the fanciful imagination shown in her environment.

But however many opinions there may be as to the success of this engraving as an *illustration*, there is only one view about its merit as a *decoration*. T. Sturge Moore, himself an expert and gifted engraver, has well emphasised this point by reminding the readers of his book on Durer "that it is an engraving and not a woman that we are discussing : and that this engraving is extremely beautiful in arabesque and black and white pattern, rich, rhythmical, and harmonious." If the experiment be made of turning the print upside down, so that attention is no longer concentrated on its meaning as an illustration, its extraordinary ingenuity and interest as a *pattern* will at once become apparent.



In 1518 Durer again resumed his activity as a painter : in that year he was summoned by the Emperor Maximilian to Augsburg, where he was employed in painting portraits of the emperor and of many of his nobles. In 1521 he visited the Netherlands and received much attention in Brussels and Antwerp ; though he drew and painted several portraits during his travels, he took up engraving again when he returned to Nuremberg. The series he then began is known as the " Second Passion " ; this set he did not live to complete. He died in 1528. Two years earlier he painted his celebrated " Four Apostles," which have a peculiar interest not only as Durer's last effort in picture-making, but also as an indication of the artist's attitude towards the Reformation.

It was in 1517 that Martin Luther sounded the tocsin for the Reformation by nailing his ninety-five theses on the nature of papal indulgences to the great door of the Church of Wittenberg. It was in the following year that Durer received kindness and attention from his imperial patron, the Catholic prince Maximilian I. The artist was in a difficult position, but though he took no definite side in the great controversy which ensued, his sympathy with the Reformers is shown in this picture by the fact that each of the four Apostles is holding and studying a Bible. It is significant to note that this painting was not a commission, but was painted by Durer to please himself and for presentation to the city of his birth. Here is the letter which accompanied the gift to the Council of Nuremberg :

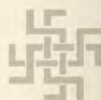
Prudent, honourable, wise, dear Masters, I have been intending, for a long time past, to show my respect for your Wisdoms by the presentation of some humble picture of mine as a remembrance, but I have been prevented from so doing by the imperfection and insignificance of my works, for I felt that with such I could not stand well before your Wisdoms. Now, however, that I have just painted a panel upon which I have bestowed more trouble than on any other painting, I considered none more worthy to keep it as a remembrance than your Wisdoms.

Therefore, I present it to your Wisdoms with the humble and urgent prayer that you will favourably and graciously receive it, and will be and continue, as I have ever found you, my kind and dear Masters.

Thus shall I be diligent to serve your Wisdoms in all humility.

Possibly it was a remembrance of this picture in particular which prompted Luther, in his consolatory letter to the artist's friend Pirkheimer, to pen this memorable epitaph on Albert Durer :

It is well for a pious man to mourn the best of men, but you should call him happy, for Christ illuminated him and called him away in a good hour from the tempests and, possibly, yet more stormy times : so that he, who was worthy only to see the best, might not be compelled to see the worst.



§ 2

After Durer's death many carried on the tradition he had bequeathed to his country as an engraver—the prints of Aldegraver, Beham, and other followers are still treasured by collectors—but none of them won great fame in painting. Matthias Grünewald (c. 1483–1530), Durer's contemporary, is by far the most important of the lesser men, his fame resting on a few authentic pictures which show the imaginative mind and fine craftsmanship. Chief of these is the famous St. Anthony altar-piece at Colmar in Alsace. Grünewald had a pupil Lucas Cranach (1472–1553), who was much esteemed by his fellow-citizens of Wittenberg and was appointed Court Painter to the Protestant prince Frederick of Saxony; but we have only to look at the doll-faced "Portrait of a Young Lady" by him in the National Gallery to see how far Cranach's art fell below that of Durer.

Only one other painter of German origin beside Durer has so far succeeded in capturing the world's attention, namely, Hans Holbein the Younger, who when Durer died in 1528 was a young man of thirty-one, painting in England. No more than twenty-six years separate the birth of Holbein from that of Durer, yet within the space of that one generation so great had been the revolution in men's minds that the two artists seem to belong to different ages. Holbein grew up during the greatest Wonder-Time in the world's history. We who have benefited by and taken for granted the astounding discoveries made during what is known as the Epoch of Maximilian (1493–1519), which approximates to the opening of the reign of our Henry VIII, find it difficult to realise the crash of old ideas and the bombardment of new ones which filled the world during this epoch :

That time [as Lord Bryce has told us]—a time of change and movement in every part of human life, a time when printing had become common, and books were no longer confined to the clergy, when drilled troops were replacing the feudal militia, when the use of gunpowder was changing the face of war—was especially marked by one event to which the history of the world offers no parallel before or since, the discovery of America. . . . The feeling of mysterious awe with which men had regarded the firm plain of the earth and her encircling ocean ever since the days of Homer vanished when astronomers and geographers taught them that she was an insignificant globe which, so far from being the centre of the universe, was itself swept round in the motion of one of the least of its countless system.

Nothing but an appreciation of these historical facts can teach us rightly to comprehend the essential difference between the art of the two great German masters : for as the "feeling of mysterious awe" with which all



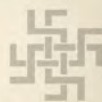


Braun.

"JACOB MEYER," BY HOLBEIN (1497-1543)

Basle

Holbein's superlative merit as a draughtsman is seen in this early portrait study of one of his first patrons, the Burgomaster of Basle. Note the union of delicacy and strength in the drawing of this head. As a master of line Holbein in his own style has never been surpassed.





Braun.

"PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN," BY HOLBEIN

Windsor Castle

The Holbein drawings at Windsor are famous both in art and history, and it is largely through them that we are able to visualise so clearly the appearance and character of Henry VIII and his circle. This young woman was possibly one of Jane Seymour's maids-of-honour.

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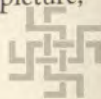
Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

his work, whether painted or engraved, is impregnated, makes Albert Durer the last and supreme expression of mediævalism, so an inner consciousness of man's insignificance and a frank recognition of material facts makes Holbein the first exponent in art of Modern Science.

The great Hans Holbein was the son of an artist of the same name, Hans Holbein the Elder, a poor and struggling painter of religious pictures in the flourishing city of Augsburg. Here Hans Holbein the Younger was born in 1497. There was never any doubt as to his calling, for he belonged to a family of painters. Not only his father, but his uncle and his brother were painters also. His father, who was chiefly influenced by the Flemish painter Roger van der Weyden (see Chapter X), had little to teach the son, and when he was seventeen or eighteen young Hans left his father's house in company with his elder brother Ambrosius, and began a foreign tour which eventually ended at Basle. Owing to the lack of any exact records and the constant confusion of the two Holbeins, father and son, the details of Holbein's early life are still a matter of conjecture and controversy. Some hold that the elder Holbein with his family moved from Augsburg to Lucerne about 1514, but the one thing certain is that young Holbein was at Basle in 1515, where he at once found work as a designer with the printer and publisher Frobenius. Through Frobenius he came to know Erasmus, who had recently left France and now graced Basle with his universal fame as a scholar; and soon the young artist found plenty of employment both as a book-illustrator and portraitist. One of the earliest and most loyal of his patrons was the Basle merchant Jacob Meyer, whose portrait and especially the splendid sketch for the same foreshadowed the future greatness of the artist as a portrait-painter. About 1516 or 1517 Holbein the Younger was in Lucerne, where he decorated a house, and it is conjectured that about this time he also travelled in Italy; but there is no sure proof, and we can only guess at his movements till he reappears at Basle in 1519. Though but twenty-two, he is now a man and a master. In 1520 he became a citizen of Basle—a necessity if he wished to practise painting in that city—and about the same time he married a widow with two children.

He was a master, but a master of another order to Durer. Holbein was a purely professional painter, anxious to do a day's work and do it as well as he possibly could; but he did not attempt to show how life should be lived or to penetrate its mysteries: he was content to paint what he saw, paint it truly and splendidly, but like the wise child of a sophisticated age he refrained from a futile endeavour to dig beneath the surface. Holbein can show you the character of a man, as in his portrait of Jacob Meyer; but Durer would have tried to read his soul.

In 1521 he painted his masterly, though to many unattractive picture,



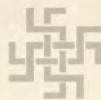


"PORTRAIT OF GEORGE GISZE," BY HOLBEIN

Berlin

There is no more popular element in any picture than the minute rendering of details which betokens a painter's industry and capacity.

This splendidly ornate portrait, in which the accessories are rendered with scrupulous care and brilliance, was a deliberate "show-piece" painted by the artist when he desired to obtain the patronage of "The Merchants of the Steelyard," the title of a Corporation of wealthy German merchants who settled and traded in London during the reign of Henry VIII.

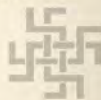


"The Dead Man," horribly realistic some would say, yet in truth it is not morbid. For this outstretched corpse is painted with the calm detachment of a student of anatomy; it is a manifestation of the sceptical, inquiring, but unmoved gaze of Science confronted with a Fact. In 1522 he painted "Two Saints" and a "Madonna," in the following year a "Portrait of Erasmus," in 1526 a "Venus" and a gay lady styled "Lais Corinthiaca," and in 1529 he painted a great "Madonna" for his friend Jacob Meyer.

The careful reader will have observed that no paintings are given above for the years 1523 to 1525, and indeed these were bad years for all painters. When Giulio de' Medici was elected Pope as Clement VII in 1523, he found, as a historian has said, "the world in confusion, a great movement going on in Germany, a great war just begun between the three most powerful Christian monarchs—a war to which he himself was pledged." Thinking the French would win, he sided with them. Two months after he had signed the treaty of alliance, Francis I of France was defeated and taken prisoner at Pavia, and the Emperor's troops—thousands of Protestants among them—headed for Rome. All the diplomatic wiles of the Pontiff were unavailing, and in May 1527 a horrified world beheld Christian troops, Germans, Spaniards, and Italians, engaged in the sack of Rome.

Basle, then a city of the Empire, though not exposed to the full force of the currents of war, was not untouched by these events, and Holbein, like a shrewd man of the world, began to look out for a shelter from the storm that was convulsing Europe. His native Germany was out of the question, for there paintings already in existence were being destroyed by zealots desirous of "purifying" Protestant churches. During this time of waiting, when commissions for pictures were scarce, Holbein began that series of wood-engravings which have done as much as any of his paintings to make his name illustrious.

No works of Holbein have held a more lasting place in the popular imagination than his little woodcuts illustrating "The Dance of Death." As remote in its origin as the "morality" play, this picturing of the fact that all living beings must die was probably in its beginning a monkish device to compel those who could not read to realise their inevitable fate. This lesson was driven home by the universality with which the theme was expounded. In the older prints of this subject the highest and lowest in the land were shown each dancing with a dead partner of the same rank and calling, a king dancing with a dead king, a bishop dancing with a dead bishop, a merchant with a dead merchant, a labourer with a dead labourer. Whoever you were you could not escape death, that was always dancing at your heels. This was the age-old theme to which Holbein gave new life, and if his version of the Dance of Death has eclipsed all other versions it is because Holbein was the first to present Death as an abstraction, common





*Moratur Sacrilus magnus. JOSUE. XX.
Et episcopatu in eius accipiet alter. Psal. 108*

THE POPE



*Stulte, hac nocte repellent animam tuam, &
quæ parasti, cuius erunt. LUCÆ. XII*

THE MISER

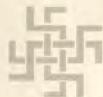


*In sudore vultus tui visceris pane tuo.
GEN. III.*

THE HUSBANDMAN

FROM HOLBEIN'S "DANCE OF DEATH"

Like the old morality play *Everyman*, this ancient picture-sequence was intended to drive home the inescapable truth that "in the midst of life we are in death." With a pictorial pageantry unapproached in any previous or later rendering of the subject, Holbein here shows us Death dogging the footsteps of the Pope (and Cardinal), the Miser, and the Husbandman.



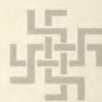


W. F. Mansell.

"ROBERT CHESEMAN, THE KING'S FALCONER," BY HOLBEIN

The Hague

By this simple and dignified portrait, both lifelike and decorative, of the King's Falconer, Holbein paved the way for his restoration to Court favour, after the execution of his first English patron, Sir Thomas More.



to all prints in the series, and because no other treatment of the theme has excelled his in the pictorial elements of design. Each of these prints is itself a perfect little picture—see how beautiful is the landscape with the setting sun in “The Husbandman.” As for its value as preaching, Holbein’s series serves a double purpose, emphasising by the skeleton that accompanies all alike, Pope, Cardinal, Miser, Husbandman, and what not, the equality as well as the universality of death. Holbein’s message is not only that “all flesh is grass”; but also that under their skin “the colonel’s lady and Judith O’Grady” are very much alike.

In 1526 Holbein found the haven for which he had been looking in England, an isle remote from the European storm-centre. It is probable that he had become known through Erasmus to Sir Thomas More, and so was invited to come; his painting of “The Household of Sir Thomas More” was one of the earliest and most important paintings executed by Holbein during his first stay in England. In 1528 he returned to Basle for three years, and having dispatched thence his gorgeous portrait of “George Gisze, Merchant of the Steelyard” to show what he *could* do in portraiture, he returned to England in 1531.

This handsome and exceedingly ornate portrait of a young merchant in his counting-house was a deliberate show-piece which had exactly the effect the painter intended. In troublous and uncertain times princes and great nobles were unreliable patrons; at any moment they might be dethroned, killed, or executed. Like a prudent man Holbein wished to establish a connection with a steadier, yet equally rich stratum of society, namely, the great merchants. Therefore he cleverly set his cap at the wealthy German merchants settled in London, and showed them in this portrait that he could make a merchant look as splendid and imposing as any king or nobleman. He delivered his sample, and human vanity did the rest. The German “Merchants of the Steelyard,” as this Corporation was styled, flocked to his studio in London. Three years later his first English patron, Sir Thomas More, was sent to the scaffold by Henry VIII because he declined to declare the nullity of that royal reprobate’s first marriage with Catherine of Aragon.

To have been the friend of More was at this time no commendation to the favour of the Court; nevertheless, Holbein was not the man to miss any opportunity of “getting on” for want of a little tact and diplomacy. Firmly based on the support of the German merchants, he tried another method of approach. Very soon we find him painting his splendid portrait of “Robert Cheseman, the King’s Falconer,” painting first the minor and then the greater courtiers, till at last, in 1536, he achieved what no doubt had been his aim from the first, and was appointed Court Painter to King Henry VIII.



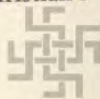
Never did that sovereign do a wiser or a better thing for himself than when he made Holbein his painter. Not only did the artist present that king to posterity in a manner that mitigates our judgment of his cruelties, but he has made the whole history of that period live for us, as no previous period in English history lives, by his series of portraits and portrait drawings of the English Court. Ford Madox Hueffer has pointedly observed :

How comparatively cold we are left by the name, say, of Edward III, a great king surrounded by great men in a stirring period. No visual image comes to the mind's eye : at most we see, imaginatively, coins and the seals that depend from charters.

Hueffer truly argues that Henry VIII and his men would be just as lifeless without Holbein, and the way he has made them live in our imagination is a tribute not only to Holbein but also to the preserving power of art.

While preparing the way for his advancement in England, Holbein did not neglect the connection he already had on the Continent, and three years before his appointment as Court Painter he sought to widen and enhance his foreign custom by painting another show-piece. "The Ambassadors" was painted as deliberately to force an entry into diplomatic circles as the "George Gisze" had been to secure him the custom of the men of commerce. This remarkable group of Jean de Dinteville, Lord of Polisy, on the left, wearing the French Order of S. Michel, and of Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur, in doctor's cap and gown, on the right, fascinates all beholders by the brilliance with which the accessories are painted—the globe, the turkey rug, the tiling, the mandoline, the astronomical instruments, and in the foreground the anamorphosis (or distorted representation) of a human skull. Many keen imaginations have set their wits to work to find an inner meaning to this curiously elongated death's-head, but the most plausible explanation is found in the fact that Holbein's own name means "skull" in his native language, and this device may consequently be regarded as a fanciful way of putting his seal or cipher on his work. Another interpretation is that here, as in other portraits by Holbein, the skull is introduced to reinforce the lesson of the "Dance of Death," that to this all must come. Whatever the painter's original idea may have been, his work is a complete success ; he painted it to create a sensation, and it has created a sensation for centuries. It may be added that this elongated skull completes the design, by paralleling the line from the one ambassador's hand (holding the dagger) to the head of the other ambassador.

After the death of Jane Seymour, when Europe was searched for marriageable princesses to console the royal widower, Holbein in February 1538 was sent to Brussels to paint his matchless portrait of King Christian's





"THE AMBASSADORS," BY HOLBEIN

National Gallery, London

W. F. Mansell.

This famous picture of the Ambassadors Jean de Dinteville and the Bishop of Lavaur is another of Holbein's show-pieces, designed to maintain his Continental reputation and to attract the custom of foreign diplomats. The curiously distorted representation of a human skull in the foreground is an important element in the quadrilateral design and also a rebus on the name of the artist, "Holbein" meaning "skull."

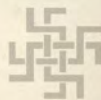


W. F. Mansell.

THE "DUCHESS OF MILAN," BY HOLBEIN

National Gallery, London

The grace and sweetness of meditative maidenhood is revealed with matchless beauty in this painting, which is a portrait of a Princess of Denmark (afterwards Duchess of Lorraine).



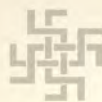


"HENRY VIII," BY HOLBEIN

Anderson.

Corsini Palace, Rome

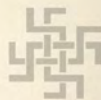
As the Court Painter to Henry VIII, Holbein painted many portraits of his royal patron, as well as of the famous people of his court. Many of them, by using the decorative opportunity of the highly ornamented costume of the period, made beautiful a subject which almost defied treatment. Holbein's genius in showing the subtlety of character expressed itself even with his royal and irascible sitter, for we see at once the intelligence and the sensuality in this face.



daughter "Christina of Denmark," who, fortunately for herself, escaped Henry VIII. One of Holbein's last works, this is by many accounted his greatest. Here he has painted no show-piece, but set forth with divine simplicity the grace and dignity of meditative girlhood.

From Brussels Holbein went to Burgundy, where he painted other portraits; and in December of the same year he returned to London. Almost exactly five years later he caught the plague. In November 1543 Holbein died in London, a victim to the same disease that had already killed Giorgione in his youth and was destined, thirty-three years later, to carry off Titian in his old age.

Just as Durer and Holbein had no great forerunners, so they had no great successors, and Europe had to wait thirty-four years before another great master of art was born, outside Italy, in the person of Peter Paul Rubens.



XVI

THE PRIDE OF FLANDERS

THE ART OF RUBENS, VAN DYCK, AND THE FLEMISH
PORTRAIT-PAINTERS

§ I

PAINTER, courtier, scholar, and diplomatist, Peter Paul Rubens is one of the most picturesque figures in European history. In origin he belonged to the upper middle class, for though his grandfather had been only a tanner of Antwerp, his father John Rubens had taken his degree at an Italian university and subsequently attained considerable civic importance in Antwerp. At that time Flanders was under Spanish rule, and trouble with the authorities over political and religious matters drove the Protestant John Rubens and his family into exile at Cologne. There he became the intimate counsellor of William the Silent, and unfortunately, too intimate with his patron's wife, the Princess of Orange. Their love affair was discovered and John Rubens was thrown into prison, from which he was only released after the Prince had divorced his wife. He did not long survive his imprisonment, and died at Cologne in 1587.

All this had its influence on young Peter Paul, who was born at Siegen, Westphalia, in 1577, one year after the death of Titian. Political complications had already driven his father from Antwerp, and so the boy spent his early childhood in exile. He was only ten years old when his father died, and then his mother returned to Antwerp, taking her three children with her, Blandina the eldest, a young woman of twenty-three; Philippe, a boy of thirteen; and Peter Paul, the youngest. By a curious coincidence, just as only one year separated the birth of Peter Paul Rubens from the death of Titian, so again one year divided the death of John Rubens from that of Paul Veronese (1588), whose art his son was destined to develop and glorify.

After her daughter's marriage in 1590, the widow Rubens was able to say in a letter that both her sons were earning their living—so we know that their schooldays in Antwerp were short: Philippe obtained a place in the office of a town councillor of Brussels, while Peter Paul was Page of Honour to the Princess Margaret de Ligne-Aremberg. This gave the future diplomatist his first experience of court life; but it was a short one, for already he felt art to be his true vocation, and in 1591 the lad of fourteen

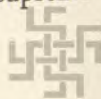


was allowed to begin his training as a painter in the studio of his cousin Tobias Verhaeght.

Rubens remained little more than six months with his cousin, who was a landscape artist. His next teacher, Adam van Noort, was a figure-painter, but it is unlikely he learnt much from this morose and often drunken boor. In 1596 he found a more congenial master in Otto Vaenius (1558–1629), who was a gentleman, a scholar, and a man of the world, though as a painter he was even duller and stiffer than his own master, the Venetian Zuccherò (c. 1543–1616), well known in England by his numerous portraits of Queen Elizabeth. One thing that Vaenius did was to fire his pupil with enthusiasm for Italian art, and two years after he had come of age and had been admitted a member of the Guild of St. Luke, Peter Paul Rubens arrived in Venice. Here the admirable copies he made of paintings by Titian and Veronese attracted the attention of Vincenzo I, Duke of Mantua, into whose service Rubens almost immediately entered. With the Duke he was at Florence for the marriage of Marie de' Medici to Henri IV (by proxy), and in 1603—after he had visited Rome, Padua, and other Italian cities—Rubens was sent by Vincenzo I on a mission with presents of horses and pictures to Philip III of Spain.

Though not then entrusted with any work for the Spanish monarch, Rubens painted several pictures for his prime minister the Duke of Lerma before he returned to Italy. After working for his patron at Mantua, Rome, and Genoa, Rubens in 1608 was recalled to Antwerp by news of his mother's serious illness. Too late to see her alive when he reached his native city, the grief-stricken painter remained for several months in strict seclusion, whence he was drawn by the rulers of Flanders, the Stadt-holders Albert and Isabella, who, conscious of his growing reputation, persuaded Rubens to leave the Mantuan service and become their Court Painter. In accepting this position Rubens was permitted to live at Antwerp instead of with the Court at Brussels.

His brother Philippe had already married the daughter of his chief, the Secretary of Antwerp, and it was probably at their house that Rubens saw his sister-in-law's niece Isabella, daughter of John Brant, whom he married in 1609. The following year the artist designed a palatial residence in the Italian style, and had it built on the thoroughfare now known as the *Rue de Rubens*: there he took his young and beautiful wife, and there he settled down to found the School of Antwerp. The ensuing ten or twelve years were the most tranquil and probably the happiest in the life of Rubens. An example of Rubens' first manner is the portrait of "Rubens and his First Wife," painted when he was about thirty-two and his newly married wife Isabella Brant little over eighteen. During this period he executed the works on which his fame most securely rests, notably his supreme





"RUBENS AND HIS FIRST WIFE," BY RUBENS (1577-1640)

Hanfstaengl.

Pinakothek, Munich

This portrait group of Rubens with his first wife Isabella Brant is a fine example of his early style of portraiture. Note the precision of drawing and wealth of detail which formed the foundation for the artist's later and more dashing style.



masterpiece, "The Descent from the Cross," in Antwerp Cathedral. This work, executed in 1612, marks the beginning of Rubens' second manner, just as his "Elevation of the Cross," also in Antwerp and painted in 1609-10, concludes his first or Italian manner.

The late R. A. M. Stevenson, a most penetrating critic, has pointed out how much more original and softer is the later picture :

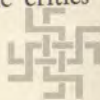
It started the Antwerp School, and beyond its ideal scarce any contemporary advanced. The forms are less muscular, the gestures less exaggerated, the transitions suaver, the light and shade less contrasted than in the first period, but the pigment is still solid, and the colours are treated as large, unfused blocks of decorative effect.

The growth of Rubens was gradual, but the extraordinary number of his collaborators makes the tracing of that growth a task of infinite difficulty. Apart from other contemporary evidence, the letters of Rubens himself show the number of artists he employed to work from his designs. The truth is he established a picture-factory at Antwerp, and not only engaged assistants to help him carry out gigantic decorations for churches and palaces, but also farmed out commissions for easel-pictures, landscapes, and portraits. In addition to "Velvet" Brueghel, his collaborators and pupils at one time or another included Snyder (1579-1657), Jordaens (1593-1678), Cornelius de Vos (1585-1651), Antony Van Dyck (1599-1641), David Teniers (1610-90), Jan Fyt (1609-61), and a score of others. A good example of the "team-work" accomplished in the Rubens studio is "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary." In this picture, now in the Irish National Gallery at Dublin, the figures are by Rubens, the landscape by "Velvet" Brueghel, the architecture by Van Delen, and the accessories by Jan van Kessel. Yet all is so controlled by the master-hand that to any but an expert the whole appears to be the work of one man.

A story is told that the Dean of Malines Cathedral was furious when, having ordered a "Last Supper" from Rubens, a young man named Justus van Egmont came down to begin the work. Later on

the great man appeared with his fine calm presence and the urbane manner that was a bulwark against offence or misappreciation. As Rubens corrected the work, enlivened the colour or the action of the figures, and swept the whole composition with his unerring brushwork towards a beautiful unity of effect, the churchman acknowledged the wisdom of the master, and admitted that the money of the chapter had been safely invested.

Even the beautiful portrait of "Susanne Fourment," known as the "Chapeau de Poil," a canvas of 1620, which shows Rubens' second manner merging into his third—in which the pigment is less solid and the fusion of colour more subtle—even this work has been thought by some critics



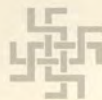


Bullos.

"THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS," BY RUBENS

Antwerp Cathedral

Though temperamentally unfitted to be a religious painter, Rubens, by his splendid colour, flowing design, and naturalness of presentation, gives so fine a rendering of this awesome subject that it is counted to be his supreme masterpiece.





T. & R. Annan & Sons.

"CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF MARTHA AND MARY," BY RUBENS

Irish National Gallery, Dublin

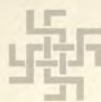
This picture is an example of the co-operative painting carried on by Rubens when he established his "picture-factory" at Antwerp. The landscape is by Brueghel, the architecture by Van Delen, the accessories by Jan van Kessel, and the figures by Rubens, who put the finishing touches which give unity to the whole.



W. F. Mansell.

"LE CHAPEAU DE POIL," BY RUBENS
National Gallery, London

This smiling lady in the beaver hat (chapeau de poil) is Susanne Fourment, whose sister Helen became the second wife of the artist. Of the many portraits of women painted by Rubens this is the most famous, and it is a splendid example of his powers at their prime.

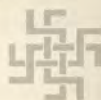


to be not altogether the work of Rubens. The late R. A. M. Stevenson considered that "the comparatively rude folds of the dress and the trivial details of the feather" betrayed another hand at work.

The fame of the Flemish master had spread all over Europe, and in January 1622 Rubens was summoned to Paris by the Queen-Mother, Marie de' Medici, who wished him to decorate her favourite Luxembourg Palace. The great series of wall-paintings, which were the result of this commission, are now one of the glories of the Louvre. These pictures were designed to emphasise the greatness of the Medicis and the splendour resulting from the marriage of Marie de' Medici to King Henri IV of France. How cleverly Rubens fulfilled his double rôle of courtier and decorator may be seen by our illustration of one of the most notable pictures in this series, "Henri IV Receiving the Portrait of Marie de' Medici." Here, in a wonderful blending of fable with reality, the artist idealises the King as monarch and lover, and turns a marriage dictated by reasons of state into a romantic love-match in which Cupid and all the deities of Olympus are deeply concerned.

Endowed by nature with a splendid presence, tactful in disposition and charming in manners, Rubens was a man to win the confidence of any Court. After the death of the Archduke Albert in 1621, his widow the Regent Isabella took Rubens into her inner counsels and employed him in semi-official visits to foreign courts. The great object of the rulers of Flanders was to keep England and Holland friendly with Spain and apart from France. One of the first missions which Rubens received was to secure a renewal of the treaty between Holland and Flanders, a task which took him to The Hague in 1623. It was at this time that he was ennobled by the King of Spain.

When visiting Paris the painter had made the acquaintance of the Duke of Buckingham, the virtual ruler of England under Charles I, and this nobleman had been greatly taken by the talents of the Fleming both as artist and diplomatist. It was Buckingham himself who suggested that Rubens should be sent to Spain in the summer of 1628 to ascertain the real feelings of Philip IV in the war which Buckingham planned against France through hatred of Richelieu, who had separated him from Anne of Austria. Rubens arrived at Madrid in the course of the summer, bringing with him eight pictures as a present to Philip; but the assassination of Buckingham on September 2, 1628, changed the political aspect of affairs and enabled Rubens to give his whole attention to art. An important event in the history of painting was the meeting in Spain of Rubens, now fifty-two, with Velazquez, then a man of thirty; the two became great friends, and we shall see, in the chapter on Spanish painting, that the younger man was considerably influenced by his elder.





Alinari.

"HENRI IV RECEIVING PORTRAIT OF MARIE DE' MEDICI," BY RUBENS

The Louvre, Paris

In this splendid decoration Rubens idealises a marriage made for reasons of state, and presents it as a romantic love-match in which Cupid and all the deities of Olympus are deeply concerned.



W. F. Mansell,

"THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE," BY RUBENS
National Gallery, London

When visiting England as Ambassador for Philip IV, Rubens presented this picture to Charles I, as a hint of the advantages to be derived if England made peace with Spain. It shows the Goddess of Wisdom pushing back War while Peace receives Wealth and Happiness and their smiling offspring.

Politically the great result of the Fleming's stay in Spain was that Philip IV consented to Rubens going as his official representative to King Charles I of England. The artist-diplomat arrived in London on May 25, 1629, and not only arranged the terms of peace between England and Spain but gave a new direction to English painting. Charles commissioned him to paint the ceiling which may still be seen in the Banqueting Saloon in Whitehall, now the United Services Museum, and many of his pictures were bought by the Royal Family and nobility of England.

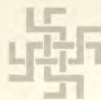
The tact of the courtier, as well as the splendid powers of the painter, may be seen in our illustration of a famous Rubens at the National Gallery, "The Blessings of Peace," which shows Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom, pushing back War, while Peace receives Wealth and Happiness and their smiling children. This picture was presented to the English king by Rubens soon after his arrival in London as a delicate hint of the advantages to be derived from concluding peace with Spain.

It is said that while he was painting this picture in London an English courtier asked Rubens, "Does the Ambassador of his Catholic Majesty amuse himself with painting?" "No," replied Rubens, "I amuse myself sometimes with being an ambassador."

On February 21, 1630, Charles I knighted the painter, and soon afterwards Sir Peter Paul Rubens returned to the Continent and again settled in Antwerp. Isabella Brant had been dead about four years, and in December Rubens married Helen Fourment, whom he must have known from childhood. She was one of the seven daughters of Daniel Fourment, a widower, who had married the sister of Rubens's first wife. Helen was only sixteen when she married.

The last seven years of his life were devoted by Rubens to domestic happiness and his art rather than to politics, which he practically abandoned after 1633. He had a fine country estate near Malines, the Château de Steen, of which we may see a picture in the National Gallery, and there for the most part he lived quietly, happy with his girl-wife and only troubled by attacks of gout. During these last years Rubens produced a quantity of fine pictures; in one year (1638), for example, he despatched a cargo of 112 pictures by himself and his pupils to the King of Spain. The rapidity of the master's execution is well illustrated by a story that, having received a repeat order from Philip (*after* he had received the 112 pictures!), and being pressed by the monarch's brother Ferdinand to deliver the new pictures as quickly as possible, Rubens said he would do them all with his own hand "to gain time!"

Among these new pictures, sent off in February 1639, were "The Judgement of Paris" and "The Three Graces," both now at the Prado, and generally held to be the finest as well as the latest of the painter's many





“THE RAINBOW LANDSCAPE,” BY RUBENS

Wallace Collection, London

W. F. Mansell

This picture shows Rubens' attitude towards Nature, which he approached without awe and with the friendly arrogance of a strong man who respects strength.

pictures of these subjects. But still the King of Spain wanted more pictures by Rubens. Further commissions arrived, and in May 1640 the great master died in harness, working almost to the last on four large canvases.

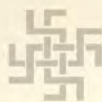
Excelling in every branch of painting, and prolific in production, Rubens is a master of whose art only a brief summary can be given. A final word, however, must be said on the landscapes which form a conspicuous feature among his later works, and of which we possess so splendid an example in "The Rainbow Landscape" in the Wallace Collection. The healthy and contented sense of physical well-being, which radiates from every landscape by Rubens, has been well expressed in a criticism of this picture by Muther: "The struggle of the elements is past, everything glitters with moisture, and the trees rejoice like fat children who have just had their breakfast."

It has been said that there are landscapes which soothe and calm our spirits, and landscapes which exhilarate. Those by Rubens come under the latter category. He was no mystic in his attitude towards Nature; he approached her without awe, with the friendly arrogance of a strong man who respects strength. Most of his landscapes were painted in the neighbourhood of his country seat, and in them we may trace not only the painter's love of the beauty in Nature, but something also of the land-owner's pride in a handsome and well-ordered estate.

The heir of the great Venetians in his painted decorations, Rubens was a pioneer in all other directions. His portraits were the inspiration of Van Dyck and the English painters of the eighteenth century, his landscapes were the prelude to Hobbema and the "natural painters" of England and Holland; while in pictures like "Le Jardin d'Amour" and "The Dance of Villagers" he invented a new style of pastoral with small figures which Watteau and other later artists delightfully exploited.

§ 2

Of all the many followers of Rubens, the two most famous were Van Dyck and Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678), another exuberant Fleming, who though greatly influenced by Rubens was never actually his pupil. The "Riches of Autumn" in the Wallace Collection is a fine example of the bacchanalian opulence of Jordaens. The fruit, vegetables, and most of the foliage in this picture are painted by Frans Snyder (1579-1657), a noted painter of "still-life" who frequently collaborated with Rubens and other painters. The skill of Jordaens as a portrait-painter may be seen in his "Baron Waha de Linter of Namur" in the National Gallery, but though a capable and skilful painter of whatever was before him, Jordaens had no imagination and added little of his own to the art of Rubens.



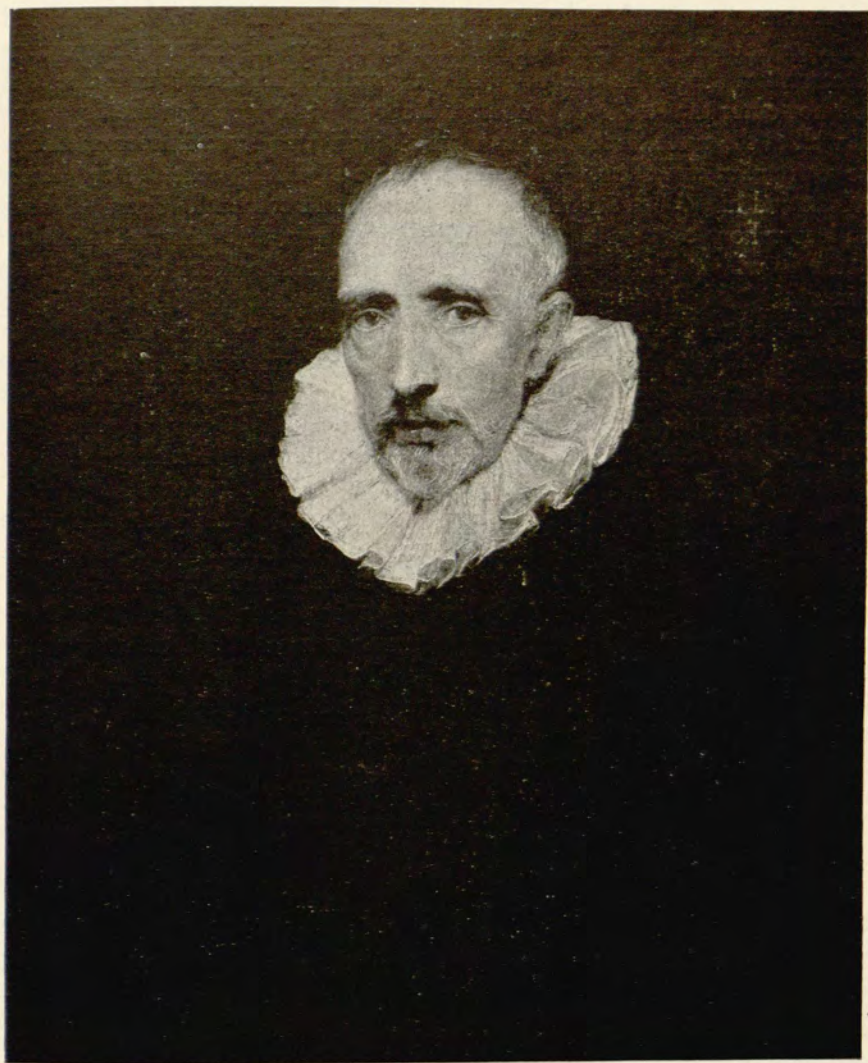


W. F. Mansell.

"THE RICHES OF AUTUMN," BY JORDAENS (1593-1678)

Wallace Collection, London

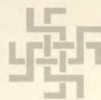
This bacchanalian scene is a typical specimen of the exuberant art of Jordaens. The fruit and vegetables are painted by Snyders.



"CORNELIUS VAN DER GEEST," BY VAN DYCK (1599-1641) *W. F. Mansell.*

National Gallery, London

How Van Dyck penetrated below externals to the mind and spirit of his sitter may be seen in this wonderful rendering of a man's thought and character.



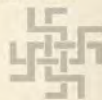
Antony Van Dyck, who was born at Antwerp in 1599, was supposed to have entered the studio of Rubens as a boy of thirteen, but recent research has shown he was originally a pupil of Hendrick van Balen and did not enter the studio of Rubens till about 1618. He was the favourite as well as the most famous of his master's pupils, and yet temperamentally he was miles apart from Rubens. Where Rubens made all his sitters robust and lusty, Van Dyck made his refined and spiritual. From Rubens he learnt how to use his tools, but as soon as he had mastered them he obtained widely different results. The English Ambassador at The Hague persuaded Van Dyck to visit England in 1620 when he was only just of age, but at that time he made only a short stay, and after his return to Antwerp Rubens urged him to visit Italy. It was good advice. The dreamy, poetic-looking youth, whose charming painting of himself at this time we may see in the National Portrait Gallery, London, was spiritually nearer akin to the Italian than to the Flemish painters. What he learnt from them, especially from Titian, may be seen in "The Artist as a Shepherd" in the Wallace Collection, painted about 1625-26, and from the still more splendid portraits in the National Gallery of the Marchese and Marchesa Cattaneo, both painted during the artist's second stay in Genoa.

Strengthened and polished by his knowledge of Italian art, Van Dyck returned to Antwerp, there to paint among many other fine things two of his outstanding achievements in portraiture, the paintings of Philippe Le Roy and his wife which now hang in the Wallace Collection. These portraits of the Governor of the Netherlands and his wife were painted in 1630 and 1631, when the artist was little over thirty years of age, and in the following year the young painter was invited by Charles I to visit England, where he became Sir Antony Van Dyck, Principal Painter in Ordinary to His Majesty.

His great equestrian portrait "Charles I on Horseback," which we reproduce, passed through several hands before it found a permanent home in the National Gallery. When King Charles's art collection was sold by the Puritans in 1649, this picture passed into the collection of the Elector of Bavaria. Afterwards it was purchased at Munich by the great Duke of Marlborough, from whose descendant it was bought in 1885 for the National Gallery, the price given for this and Raphael's "Ansidei Madonna" being £87,500.

After he had established himself in England, Van Dyck slightly altered his manner, creating a style of portraiture which was slavishly followed by his successors, Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller.

To speak of the elegance of Van Dyck's portraits is to repeat a commonplace, but what the casual observer is apt to overlook is that this elegance penetrates below externals to the mind and spirit of the sitter. Of his

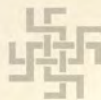




"CHARLES I," BY VAN DYCK

National Gallery, London

Nobody can withhold sympathy from this knightly figure, in which the artist portrays all the virtues of the royal martyr and none of his faults. After the execution of Charles I this picture was sold by the Puritans and passed into the possession of the Elector of Bavaria, from whom it was purchased and brought back to England by the great Duke of Marlborough.



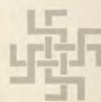


"MARCHESA CATTANEO," BY VAN DYCK

W. F. Mansell.

National Gallery, London

The influence of Titian can be seen in this portrait of a Genoese noblewoman painted during Van Dyck's second visit to Genoa after he had been studying the Venetian painters.





W. F. Mansell.

"LORDS JOHN AND BERNARD STUART," BY VAN DYCK

The most beautiful portrait group Van Dyck painted in England : shows the refinement of the artist's portraiture and his capacity as a psychologist.



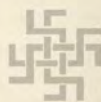


W. F. Mansell.

"PHILIPPE LE ROY," BY VAN DYCK

Wallace Collection, London

This portrait of the Governor of the Netherlands was executed in Antwerp when the painter was a little over thirty years of age.



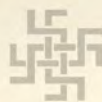


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"NELL GWYNN," BY LELY (?)

National Portrait Gallery, London

Doubts have been thrown upon the actual subject of this popular picture, and upon Lely's painting of it, but even were it a studio work, it is typical of his style of depicting court ladies of his day. Lely was Van Dyck's successor and tried to follow his delicate and graceful style, but without his master's innate sensitiveness he produced only an echo. Nevertheless, his series of "Beauties" at Hampton Court, or the "Admirals" at Greenwich, show his power and a robustness of his own.

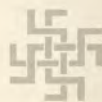


powers in both directions an exquisite example is the portrait group of "Lords John and Bernard Stuart," one of the most beautiful pictures he ever painted in England, and a work which proves Van Dyck to have been not only a supremely fluent master of the brush, but also a profound and penetrating psychologist.

Had he lived longer no one can say what other masterpieces he might have achieved : but unfortunately, with all his other great qualities as a painter, Van Dyck lacked the health and strength of his master Rubens. How good-looking he was in his youth, we can see by the National Portrait Gallery picture, but this refined, almost girlish face suggests delicacy and weakness. Weak in a way, he was ; though not spoiled by success, he could not stand the social whirl and dissipation on which a Rubens could thrive. Very superstitious, he was a victim to quacks and spent much time and money in endeavouring to discover the philosopher's stone. It is said that his failure to find this precious fable of the alchemists preyed on his mind and contributed to his collapse in 1641, when, though no more than forty-two, his frail body was worn out with gout and excesses. On the death of Rubens in 1640, Van Dyck went over to Antwerp. It was his last journey, and soon after his return to London he joined his great compatriot among the ranks of the illustrious dead.

Van Dyck established a style in portraiture which succeeding generations of painters have endeavoured to imitate ; but none has surpassed, few have approached him, and when we look among his predecessors we have to go back to Botticelli before we find another poet-painter who with equal, though different, exquisiteness mirrored not merely the bodies but the very souls of humanity.

After Van Dyck's death, numerous imitators, both British and Flemish, endeavoured to copy his style of portraiture, but the next great impetus art was to receive after Rubens came, not from England nor from Flanders, but from Spain. It is to the country of Velazquez and Murillo, therefore, that we must next turn our attention. Meantime the divine inflatus of art swept across Spain and Holland and was gathering new strength in England and France.



XVII

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW IN SPAIN

THE ART OF EL GRECO, VELAZQUEZ, AND MURILLO

§ 1

WHEN one thinks of Spain and art, the name of Velazquez jumps into the mind at once. Indeed, to many people, his is the only name in Spanish painting of outstanding importance. Looking back over the whole history of art in Spain, Velazquez's figure overshadows that of everyone who went before him and of all who have come after him. In a sense, he is the only great painter that country has produced. He interpreted the life of his time in terms that appeal universally, and no art has had more influence than his on modern painters.

How art came to Spain must now briefly be related. Until the fifteenth century there was little painting in Spain, and then, owing to her political connection with the Netherlands, the influence was markedly Flemish. It will be remembered that Jan van Eyck (see Chapter X) visited Spain in 1428, and the brilliant reception he received there induced other Flemish artists to visit the peninsula. Later, when Naples and the Sicilies came under the dominion of the Spanish crown, Italian art set the fashion to Spanish painters and particularly, as we might expect, the art of Naples. The Neapolitan School owed its origin to Michael Angelo Amerigi, called Caravaggio (1569-1609) from his birthplace near Milan. Undaunted by the great achievements of the Italian painters who immediately preceded him, Caravaggio sought to form an independent style of his own based on a bold imitation of Nature. While he was working in Venice and Rome, this astute student of Nature saw his contemporaries falling into decadence because they were artists imitating art. The seventeenth-century painters of Rome, Florence, and Venice degenerated into mere copyists of Titian, Tintoretto, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. Caravaggio saw their error, and perceiving that art based on art leads to decadence, he gave his whole attention to Nature and so became a pioneer of realism. By choice he elected to paint scenes taken from the ordinary life of his day, and "The Card Cheaters" is an admirable example of the novelty both of his subject and of his treatment. The novelty in his treatment chiefly consisted of the use Caravaggio made of light and shade (technically-

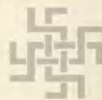
known as *chiaroscuro*) to enforce the dramatic intensity of his pictures. He exaggerated his shadows, which were far too black to be scrupulously faithful to Nature, but by the emphasis he thus gave to his lights he produced original and arresting effects which undoubtedly had a powerful influence on the two greatest painters of the next generation. How widespread was his authority is proved by the extent to which he prepared the way for both Velazquez and Rembrandt.

After working in Milan, Venice, and Rome, Caravaggio settled in Naples, where among those influenced by his realism was the Spanish painter Josef Ribera (1588-1656). "The Dead Christ" in the National Gallery, London, is an example of Ribera's stern naturalism.

Through Ribera the influence of Caravaggio penetrated to Spain, but already that country had had its art sense profoundly stirred by a foreign artist who not merely visited Spain, as other artists had done, but made it his home. This was Domenico Theotocopuli, who from having been born at Candia, Crete, was universally called El Greco, that is to say "The Greek." El Greco (1545-1614), as we shall call him, went to Venice as a young man of twenty-five and worked there for a time under Titian, or Tintoretto. About 1575 he migrated to Spain and settled at Toledo, where he became affected by the great religious fervour which was then agitating the peninsula.

Art is the mirror of life, and a great part of the fascination of old pictures is that in them are reflected the great upheavals of history. We have seen how Florentine art was affected by the preaching first of St. Francis of Assisi and afterwards of Savonarola; in Chapter XV it was shown how the Reformation influenced the last painting of Albert Durer and the whole outlook of Holbein. Now the most formidable antagonists that the Lutheran Reformers had to face, alike in action and in thought, were the Spaniards. The movement of the counter-Reformation originated and flourished in Spain. As the Spaniards in the Middle Ages had battled against the Moors till they won their land for Christianity, so they fought against the paganism of the Roman Church during the sixteenth century and strove with equal determination later against the Reformers, whom they regarded as heretics. The herald of this last battle was Ignatius Loyola, and he and his creation, the Order of the Jesuits, proved to be the most dangerous and powerful adversary of Protestantism.

El Greco's picture "Christ driving the Traders from the Temple," in the National Gallery, may be regarded as symbolising the purification of the Church by Loyola, but it is by his treatment infinitely more than by his choice of subject that El Greco expresses that vein of "convulsed mysticism" which was the peculiar attribute of Spanish Catholicism. El Greco as he grew older seemed to take delight in distorting natural





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"THE CARD CHEATERS," BY CARAVAGGIO (1569-1609)

Dresden

Life shrewdly seen and truly rendered furnishes the artist with themes as fascinating as any provided by history or legend. This Neapolitan painter, by giving dramatic intensity to scenes taken from the ordinary life of his day, became the founder of Naturalism in art, and his pictures are human documents of never-failing interest.



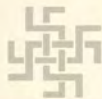


"THE BURIAL OF COUNT ORGAZ" (DETAIL), BY EL GRECO. (1545-1614)

San Tomé, Toledo

Anderson.

Reality and unreality intermingled in this picture (which shows a Spanish Count about to be buried in the presence of the members of a knightly order) reveal the heightened imagination of a painter whose art reflects the terrors of the Inquisition.



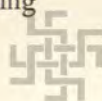
forms. There is something savage, brutal even, in his art, and his deep earnestness gives grandeur to terrible things. The generally acknowledged masterpiece and most characteristic work by El Greco is his picture in the church of San Tomé in Toledo, in which the members of a knightly order solemnly attend the funeral of Count Orgaz. The corpse is lowered into the ground by two saints, while Christ, Mary, martyrs, and angels hover in the air, and this "abrupt union of actual with transcendental"—as Muther puts it—together with the uncanny, slightly exaggerated forms found in parts of the picture, confess a touch of hysteria.

By a curious coincidence the tercentenary of El Greco was celebrated in 1914, at a moment when the whole of Europe was again in a turmoil and minds were full of hatred and thoughts of violence. To a generation excited by war and rumours of war the suppressed violence in El Greco's pictures was irresistibly attractive. Some very advanced critics and ultra-progressive painters found in his neurotic temperament their ideal Old Master. El Greco was reputed to have held that colour was of far more importance than form or drawing, and if this belief was once regarded as "a curious anticipation of modern ideas," these "modern ideas" are themselves now out of date, drawing and design being now generally accepted as the foundation of all good art. El Greco's pictures are far from being formless. Historically and psychologically the paintings of El Greco are of the highest interest; but they are a dangerous model for the art student.

Another foreign artist who, if he did not succeed in expressing the spirit of the time, nevertheless influenced Spanish painting considerably was Sir Anthony More, who, as mentioned in Chapter X, visited Spain, and during his stay there, about 1551-52, set a style of portraiture which served as a model for Coello (1515-90) and other Spanish court-painters.

§ 2

These, then, were the principal influences alive in Spanish art when Diego de Silva y Velazquez was born at Seville in 1599. His family was not of Sevillian or even of Spanish origin, for his grandfather Diego Rodriguez de Silva came from Oporto, the home of the Silva family. The name which he made world-famous he took from his mother, Gernima Velazquez, who belonged to an old Seville family. His father Juan de Silva raised no objections when his son desired to study art, and when he was thirteen or fourteen Velazquez was placed in the studio of Francisco de Herrera (1576-1654), who showed something of the fanaticism of El Greco in the flashing eyes and majestic gestures of the saints in his religious pictures. Herrera is said to have been bad-tempered, and after enduring



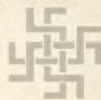
his roughness for about a year Velazquez changed masters and entered the studio of Francisco Pacheco (1571-1654). There he remained five years, and though his master had no great originality or power, he was probably a good teacher, for he was himself a careful draughtsman, a scholar, and the author of a book on painting. Presumably there was also another attraction, for on April 23, 1618, Velazquez married Pacheco's daughter, Juana de Miranda. Henceforward Pacheco did everything he could to advance the interests of his son-in-law.

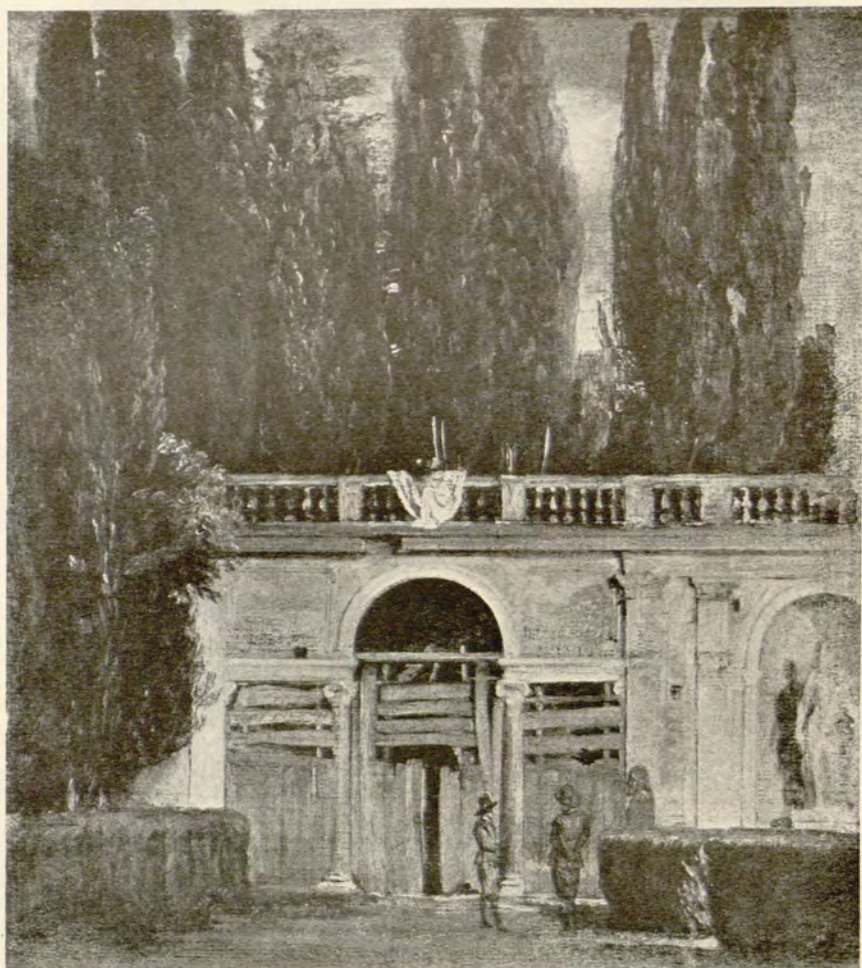
Within three years occurred the opportunity of a lifetime. Philip III died on March 31, 1621, and the young king, Philip IV, dismissed the Duke of Lerma and made Count Olivarez his prime minister. Now Olivarez, a son of the Governor of Seville, had lived in that city till 1615 and had made himself popular there as a patron of painters and poets. Several of his old protégés at Seville united to praise to the new minister the extraordinary talent of their young fellow-townsmen. Velazquez went to Madrid and, after some vexatious delays, in 1623 Olivarez persuaded the young king to give Velazquez a sitting. He conquered at his first brush-stroke. The equestrian portrait he painted is now lost, but it pleased Philip so much that forthwith the painter of twenty-four was appointed Court Painter to a king of eighteen.

From the beginning Philip treated Velazquez in the most friendly manner. The king is said by a contemporary to have come to his studio "almost every day," by "those secret passages, hung with pictures, which led from the king's rooms to every part of the old Alcazar." The monotony of the stiff routine of the Court was broken in the autumn of 1628 by the arrival of Rubens, who, as stated in the last chapter, came to Madrid on a diplomatic mission, and for nine months was constantly with the king and Velazquez. According to Pacheco and others, Rubens thought highly of Velazquez, and delighted in his society, while his views of the king appears in a letter Rubens wrote to a friend :

He evidently takes quite a special pleasure in painting, and, in my opinion, this prince is endowed with the finest qualities. I already know him from personal intercourse, as I have a room in the palace, so that he almost daily visits me.

Philip IV appears to have been genuinely interested in painting, a result probably of his intimacy with Velazquez, and after Rubens' visit, and undoubtedly on his advice, the King permitted Velazquez to go to Italy with the great soldier and statesman Spinola, who was to be the Spanish governor of Milan and commander-in-chief in Italy. Velazquez arrived at Milan in the early autumn of 1629 and soon went to Venice, where he made a special study of the work of Tintoretto, who died, it will be remembered, five years before Velazquez was born. From Venice he went





Anderson.

"VIEW IN THE GARDEN OF THE VILLA MEDICI, ROME," BY VELAZQUEZ
(1599-1660)

Prado, Madrid

Painted during his first visit to Rome in 1630, this sketch from Nature shows how Velázquez anticipated the open-air landscape painting of the nineteenth century.

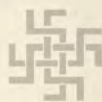


"PHILIP IV AS A SPORTSMAN," BY VELAZQUEZ

Prado, Madrid

Bullos.

With unalterable patience and ever-fresh inspiration, Velázquez painted his King from youth to age. This portrait is an example of the artist's middle period and should be compared with his later "Æsop" to show the painter's progress.



to Rome—missing Florence—and after some months there passed on to Naples, where he met Ribera, and returned to Madrid early in 1631. At Naples he painted Philip's sister, Mary of Hungary, and this portrait he brought back with him together with his painting "The Forge of Vulcan."

It is customary to divide the art of Velazquez into three periods, of which the first ends with this visit to Italy. Most critics agree that the finest and most typical painting of his first period is the bacchanalian scene known as "The Topers." In the strongly laid shadows of this painting we see the influence of Caravaggio, and while we admire the virile rendering of form and the well-balanced grouping of the figures, yet we feel that the scene, as R. A. M. Stevenson, the cousin of "R. L. S.," wrote in his classic book on Velazquez, "was never beheld as a whole vision in the mind's eye." The painter's complete mastery of his art was yet to come.

The time between his return to Madrid and his departure in 1649 for a second visit to Italy was the happiest period in the life both of Velazquez and of Philip. Daily the artist advanced in the mastery of his art and in the esteem of his sovereign. R. A. M. Stevenson has pointed out that :

Like Rembrandt, who never ceased to paint his own portrait, Velazquez studied one model, from youth to age, with unalterable patience and an ever-fresh inspiration. He could look at the king's well-known head with a renewed interest, as he went deeper into the mystery of eyesight, and became better informed as to the effects of real light.

Owing to fires and other accidents many of these portraits of Philip have been lost, but twenty-six exist to this day : and they are all different. If we follow the development of the painter's art in these portraits of Philip IV—and nearly a dozen are in England—we shall see the slow transformation of a face, through a hard realism of feature and detail, to the soft, atmospheric impressionism of the final portraits. The bust portrait of "Philip IV : Old" in the National Gallery, London, is a superb example of the painter's last manner and of the way in which he could steep a whole canvas equally in a soft envelope of light.

What this continual painting of the same model did for Velazquez we can see from the portraits : it helped him to realise what every painter in the end must realise if he intends to excel, that it is not the subject but the treatment that makes the masterpiece. Velazquez found his fundamental inspiration, not in the novelty of a new subject, but in the ceaseless pursuit of seeing better and painting better something he had already seen. It is by the ultimate perfection of his rendering of the normal vision of man that Velazquez holds his supreme place among the very greatest masters of art. Other painters have expressed character, ideas, and beauty more poignantly, but nobody before or since has expressed *vision* so splendidly.



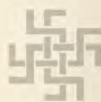
What this constant intercourse with a great artist did for Philip IV we can only imagine, but R. A. M. Stevenson again comes to our rescue by picturing in words how lonely is the lot of a king, and particularly in this period of a king of Spain :

To be a king of Spain, to preside at religious executions, to have a wife whom no man, even to save her life, might touch on pain of death, was to be a creature sorely in need of private liberty, and the solace of confidential intercourse. Philip IV seems to have been naturally kind, genial, and affable, and to have divided his leisure between the hunting-field and Velazquez's studio. The two, artist and king, grew old together, with like interests in horses, dogs, and paintings ; thawing when alone into that easy familiarity between master and old servant, freezing instantly in public into the stiff positions that their parts in life required. Painter to the king, when he was scarce twenty-five years old, Velazquez escaped most of the dangers and humiliations of professional portrait-painting, without losing its useful discipline of the eye, its rigorous test of the ever-present and exacting model.

It was when Velazquez was about forty that he was called upon to execute what proved to be one of the two supreme achievements of his art. Olivarez had presented the King with a new palace, Buen Retiro, on the heights above the Prado, and the Court Painters, with Velazquez at their head, were commanded to set about its decoration. For the decoration of this palace Velazquez produced his great historical picture " The Surrender of Breda " which is not only superb as a decoration but as moving in its sentiment as any picture artist ever painted.

The surrender of Breda, a fortified town twenty miles south-east of Dordrecht, was an incident in the memorable, and at first apparently hopeless, struggle which, beginning in 1568, lasted for eighty years and ended in the haughty Spaniards being compelled to recognise the independence of the Dutch Republic. The capture of Breda was one of the last triumphs of Spanish arms before the tide turned against them. This was the subject Velazquez chose for his contribution towards the decoration of Buen Retiro. Notwithstanding the armed crowd and multitude of uniforms, the noble bearing of the principal figures is the first thing that arrests attention. The gestures of Spinola, the Spanish Commander, and of Justin, chief representative of the defeated Dutchmen and bearer of the key to the city, are poignant in expression, and what moves us most of all is the incomparable humanity of the scene. There is no arrogance in the Spanish conqueror, who lays his hand consolingly, almost affectionately, on the shoulder of Justin ; in the Dutchman there is all the tragedy of defeat, but he is still dignified and does not cringe to the victor. It is an ennobling presentment of a historic scene.

While admitting that " The Surrender of Breda " challenges the greatest



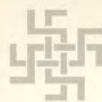


"THE SURRENDER OF BRED," BY VELAZQUEZ

Anderson.

Prado, Madrid

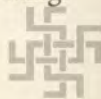
Incomparable in its humanity is this decorative commemoration of one of the last triumphs of Spanish arms in the Dutch war of independence. Spinola, the Spanish conqueror, lays his hand almost affectionately on the shoulders of Justin the Dutchman, who sadly, but with respectful dignity, delivers up the key of the surrendered city.



masters on their own ground, rivalling the highest achievements of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese both in its dignity as illustration and in its beauty as decoration, yet R. A. M. Stevenson has affirmed that "it is not the complete expression of the Velazquez eyesight." In a sense it is not ; it has not the amazing actuality of some of the painter's later works, but it may be questioned whether it is desirable that it should have this quality. This painting, we must remember, was first and foremost a decoration painted to adorn a certain wall in a given apartment, and the experience of centuries has shown that ultra-realism does not produce the most effective forms of decoration, which need a certain deliberate convention to emphasise their beauty as patterns. In "The Surrender of Breda" Velazquez gives us the greatest amount of realism compatible with the success of the picture as a decoration : it fulfils its purpose to perfection, and no higher praise than this can be given.

Just about the time of this painting, Velazquez was introduced to a new sitter, the king's little son Balthasar Carlos. Of the many portraits he made of this prince none is more delightful than the one which shows him on horseback. This quaint and rather pathetic little figure on his prancing steed, with the whole of Spain seemingly summed up and expressed in the landscape behind him, is the most adorable picture ever painted of a small boy. For all his pomp and importance (emphasised by the marshal's baton in his hand), the stern, set face—so like his father's—makes us feel sorry for him. He is very human ; we feel that he is a lonely child, and somehow the painter with prophetic insight seems to suggest that he has not long to live. Poor little Balthasar Carlos, born in 1629, did not live to be twenty. In 1646 he caught a cold at Saragossa and died. Thereafter Velazquez had no royal prince to paint, and Philip IV had to lavish all his domestic affection on a little princess, the Infanta Maria Teresa, who had been born in 1638. Soon after her arrival troubles came thick upon Spain. Olivarez mismanaged matters badly and was disgraced in 1643 ; and the same year those lances of Spain, hitherto invincible, which we see in "The Surrender of Breda," themselves suffered the agony of defeat and were utterly crumpled up and crushed at Rocroi by the great French commander Condé. Domestic griefs accompanied these public misfortunes, for two years before he lost his son, Philip lost his wife, the Queen Isabella.

In 1649 Velazquez again visited Italy, no longer the follower of an all-conquering army but the agent of a monarch whose power was waning. He landed at Genoa on January 2, and passing through Milan made for Venice, where he purchased several pictures for the King. This, indeed, was the principal object of his journey. From Venice he went to Rome, where he painted the splendid portrait of Innocent X which now hangs

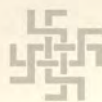




Anderson.

"EQUESTRIAN PORTRAIT OF DON BALTHASAR CARLOS," BY VELAZQUEZ
Prado, Madrid

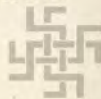
This quaint and rather pathetic little figure of King Philip's only son is one of the most adorable child portraits ever painted. Note how, with all its apparent naturalness, the artist has fitted horse and rider into a triangular pattern repeated in the landscape in the distance.



in the Doria Palace, Rome, and met several artists of note—among them being Salvator Rosa (1615–73), the Neapolitan painter of brigands and wild scenery, and Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), the polished Frenchman, who in his classical subjects carried on the tradition of the great Renaissance and in his landscapes was a real pioneer.

In the summer of 1651 Velazquez returned to Madrid, where still further honours awaited him. He was made Marshal of the Palace, and as Philip IV had married again during his absence—married his own niece Mariana of Austria, a girl of fourteen—the new Marshal was kept busy organising festivities and tournaments for the amusement of the young Queen. By this second wife Philip had the Princess Margaret, born 1651, who is the central figure in the world-famous “Las Meninas.” This picture—in English “The Maids of Honour”—marks the culmination of the third period of Velazquez and is the supreme achievement of his life.

Here, indeed, we have “the complete expression of the Velazquez eyesight,” and great and glorious as “The Surrender of Breda” is, we are bound to confess that R. A. M. Stevenson was right in maintaining that this historical picture is not—like “The Maids of Honour”—“an absolutely unique thing in the history of art.” Like so many of the greatest pictures in the world, “The Maids of Honour” originated in a spontaneous and unpremeditated flash of intense vision. The story generally accepted is that Velazquez was painting the king, who sat in the spot from which the spectator is supposed to see the picture of “Las Meninas.” During a moment’s rest the “Infanta” came in with her attendants, and the king was struck with the group which fell together before his eyes. Near him he saw the princess, her maids of honour Maria Sarmiento and Isabel de Velasco (who is offering her water), her dog, and her dwarfs Mari Barbola and Nicolasito Pertusato; a little farther on the left, Velazquez, who had stepped back to look at his picture; farther back on the right, a duenna and courtier talking; while at the distant end of the gallery the king saw his queen and himself reflected in a mirror, and through the open door, Don Joseph Nieto drawing back a curtain. The canvas shown in the picture would naturally be, as Stevenson maintains, the one on which Velazquez was painting the king’s portrait. Some, however, will have it to be the very canvas of “Las Meninas,” which Velazquez was painting from a reflection in a mirror placed near to where the king had been sitting. R. A. M. Stevenson has justly pointed out that the perspective in the picture hardly seems to agree with this view, but rather makes Velazquez to have been working on the king’s right hand. It is not a matter of importance, and the story of the conception of the picture may easily have got mixed in the telling. It is just possible that Velazquez was painting, or was about to paint, a portrait of the Infanta only, when the idea of the large picture



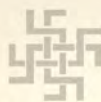


Anderson.

"THE MAIDS OF HONOUR," BY VELAZQUEZ

Prado, Madrid

"An absolutely unique thing in the history of art." This intimate picture of the Spanish royal family is unparalleled for its brilliant actuality and its sense of light, space, and air. In no other painting in the world is the third dimension so perfectly expressed.



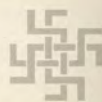


"ÆSOP," BY VELAZQUEZ

W. F. Mansell

Prado, Madrid

This incomparably real portrayal of a ragged philosopher is a superb example of the last manner of Velazquez, when a soft atmospheric impressionism has replaced the harder realism of his earlier paintings.



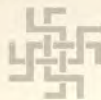
suddenly occurred to him or to the king. The canvas of "Las Meninas" is made of separate pieces sewn together, and one of these just contains the Infanta, with room for accessories or a subordinate figure. However it originated, the picture was immediately recognised as a brilliant triumph, and tradition says the Red Cross of Santiago on the painter's breast was painted there by the king's own hand, as a promise of the honour that was to be conferred on him afterwards.

It is hard to conceive of a more beautiful piece of painting than this—so free and yet firm and so revealing. When one stands before this canvas one is not concerned with any consideration of who it was painted by; it fills the mind and suffices. Like all of the great artists, Velazquez takes something out of life and sets it free. The men and women in his finest pictures are released from what someone has called "mankind's little daily cage"; and we are startled at the representation. In this portrait group we have life stated so intensely that the ordinary life around us seems almost unreal.

The same intense and startling impression of life is given us by the paintings of single figures executed by Velazquez during his last years. If we compare the shabby but dignified philosopher "Æsop"—a fine example of his late style—with "Philip IV as a Sportsman," which is admittedly one of the best full-lengths of his middle period, we shall begin to realise how far Velazquez travelled during the intervening years, not merely in the rendering of form but in the painting of light and air.

In 1659 Cardinal Mazarin sealed the reconciliation between France and Spain by arranging a marriage between the young Louis XIV and Maria Teresa of Spain. The meeting of the two Courts on the frontier and the organising of the imposing ceremonies required, burdened the Marshal of the Palace with a multiplicity of work and anxiety. The wedding took place on June 7, but it was the last function Velazquez was able to perform. At sixty years of age the strain was too much for him, and a few weeks after he had returned to Madrid he collapsed and died on August 6, 1660.

In a sense it may be said that the most surprising adventures of Velazquez occurred after his death. By birth a hidalgo (i.e. a member of the lesser nobility), Velazquez was buried like a grandee. The entire Court attended his funeral, and knights of all orders took part in the ceremonies. But after the generation that knew the man had passed away, the glory of the painter was strangely and unaccountably forgotten. For two hundred years, during which picture-lovers flocked to Italy and Italian artists became daily more famous, the name of Velazquez was seldom mentioned. Then, about fifty years ago, the sympathy of two or three great artists, notably Whistler in England and Manet in France, broke the spell of silence, and supported by a galaxy of writers, among whom was R. A. M. Stevenson

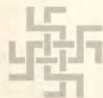




"VENUS AND CUPID," BY VELAZQUEZ

W. F. Mansell.

This superb example of the last manner of Velázquez, unique among all his great works for its refined and natural rendering of a classical subject, was for many years in an English private collection. In 1906 it was exhibited at Messrs. Agnew's gallery and was on the eve of being sold to America, when the National Art Collections Fund by indefatigable exertions raised the sum of £45,000, and in the New Year of 1907 secured the picture for the National Gallery, London.



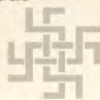
—from whose great book *The Art of Velazquez* we have freely quoted—these enthusiasts made the light of Velazquez to shine before all men, so that to-day he is and evermore will be a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of Art.

§ 3

Contemporary with Velazquez, but influenced in his style of painting not so much by him as by Caravaggio, was the monastic painter Francisco Zurbaran (1598–1662), who, though born in the province of Estremadura, came to Seville when he was only sixteen and is generally regarded as a member of the School of Seville. He is chiefly famous for his religious pictures, and particularly for his monastic visions, among which “The Apotheosis of St. Thomas” in the Museum of Seville ranks as his masterpiece. His monks in white sheets often appear to be carved owing to the effect of high relief obtained by strong contrasts of light and shade, and the feeling of austerity and grandeur they display makes the paintings of Zurbaran illuminating documents of monastic life in Spain during the seventeenth century.

Among the immediate pupils of Velazquez were Juan Battista del Mazo (1600–67), who, in 1634, became his son-in-law and imitated his portraiture so cleverly that some of his paintings were at one time confounded with those by his master; and one who became still more famous, Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617–82). Also born at Seville, Murillo passed through a whole gamut of influences before he developed a distinct style of his own. When he was twenty-four he came to Madrid for a couple of years, and when he returned he did not forget the lessons of Velazquez. From this period date those popular pictures of beggar-boys and low-life subjects which were the first to bring him fame. “The Melon-Eaters” is a fine example of this side of Murillo’s art. It charms the layman by its warm and graceful sympathy with life; it delights the artist by the skill and taste shown in the painting of the accessories. The rind of the melon, the bloom of the grapes, the wicker of the woven baskets, all are depicted not only with great beauty of colour but with rare fidelity to the textures of the different objects.

Later in life Murillo altered his methods and employed a softer and more suave style, in which outlines are lost in the delicate fusion of graduated colours. The mysterious vaporous effect thus obtained was a variant of Correggio’s famous “smoky” style (see Chapter XIII), but has been distinguished from his by being technically described as *vaporoso*. Among the multitude of Murillo’s religious paintings in this style the most famous is “The Immaculate Conception,” which the French Government acquired in 1852 for the sum of £23,440. The change in the type of religious



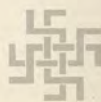


Bruckmann.

"THE MELON-EATERS," BY MURILLO (1617-82)

Munich

Taken from life, this picture is an example of the painter's early style, and gives pleasure both by its warm humanity and by the realistic painting of the still-life accessories.



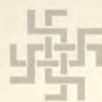


W. F. Mansell.

"ST. JOHN AND THE LAMB," BY MURILLO

National Gallery, London

Murillo was inspired by John the Baptist's words, quoted by the Apostle John :
"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."



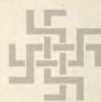


"THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION," BY MURILLO

Alinari.

The Louvre, Paris

Innocence and sweetness characterise this ideal of the Virgin, whose upward gaze seems to indicate not longing, so much as naïve astonishment. Compared with El Greco's burial scene (page 262) this painting indicates a great change in the type of religious presentation.



presentation is marked if we compare this painting with the frenzy of El Greco or the dramatic action displayed in a Titian or a Tintoretto. The storm and strife of the Reformation and counter-Reformation is passing away, and the enervation of the once combative Spain finds expression in a soft serenity that dreams of an ideal world. Not tragedy nor power, but innocence and sweetness characterise this vision of Mary, whose eyes, as a modern critic has pointed out, are not filled with inspiration and longing, but "astonished as those of a child gazing upon the splendour of the candles of a Christmas-tree."

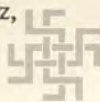
Murillo was very famous in his lifetime, and the sweet sentimentality of his paintings appealed so strongly to the eighteenth and nineteenth century that for nearly two hundred years after his death he was considered the foremost of Spanish painters. To-day at least three Spanish painters, Velazquez, Goya, and El Greco, are rated more highly. Señor A. de Beruete y Moret, the learned director of the Prado Museum at Madrid, has stated that

The art of Murillo is of less interest than formerly, owing to present-day preferences, which seek spirituality in art, a force, and even a restlessness which we do not find in the work of this artist. . . . His conceptions are beautiful, but superficial. There is in them no more skilful groundwork, dramatic impulse, nor exaltation than appears at first sight. To comprehend and enjoy them it is not necessary to think ; their contemplation leaves the beholder tranquil, they do not possess the power to distract, they have no warmth, nor that distinction which makes a work unique.

Historically the art of Murillo must be regarded as a sign of the decadence of Spain, and it was not till a century later that the country gave birth to another great artist ; then the agony of the Wars of Succession found expression through the grim, satirical powers of Goya, whose work will be considered when we come to the art of the Napoleonic period.

It is interesting that in our day this work of Goya, and in particular his bitter realistic series of paintings showing the horrors of war as it came to his country, and the work of El Greco with its intense religious feeling and its deliberate distortions have become more popular than any other Spanish painting. The experiences of our time have given us a greater understanding of the things Goya had to say ; and the non-naturalistic method of working of the great Cretan master, who became Spanish only because of his long residence in the country, is now easily understood and entirely acceptable to us.

Strangely in all Spanish art there is a sense of the tortured and the hysterical. It may be something in the nature of the people which makes the sufferings of the saints and of common humanity so close to their feelings. Save with Murillo it is unhappy painting. Even Velazquez,



man of the world, favourite of fortune and great courtier though he was, seems to have about him an atmosphere slightly unhealthy.

The political power and prosperity of Spain rose to its zenith between the reigns of Philip II and Philip IV, and flowered in the paintings of El Greco and Velazquez. But as the power of Spain weakened and her prosperity dwindled, so also did the glory of her art begin to wane. It is not without significance that all the great painters of Spain, Murillo included, were born before 1648, the year in which the humbled Spanish empire was compelled to recognise the independence of the Netherlands by the Peace of Münster. Immediately after Velazquez we must look for the great masters of the seventeenth century, not in decaying Spain, but in Holland, victorious and independent, the country of Hals and Rembrandt.



XVIII

HOW ART ROSE WITH THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

THE WORK OF FRANS HALS AND REMBRANDT

§ 1

SHORTLY before the Spanish army began its seven months' siege of Haarlem in the winter of 1572-3, a burgher of that city named Pieter Hals made his escape with his wife and family, and found shelter in Antwerp. Well for the world that he did so, for had he taken part in the heroic defence of his native city he might have been killed in the general butchery that followed when the Spaniards at last took the town; and then one of the world's greatest painters would never have been born.

Of the life of his son comparatively little is known, but it is tolerably certain that Frans Hals was born at Antwerp in 1580, that is to say, about five years after El Greco's arrival in Spain. Exactly when the Hals family returned to Haarlem is not known, but since the younger son, Dirk Hals (1591-1656), is reputed to have been born in Haarlem, it may be conjectured that the Hals family returned some time between 1590 and 1600. By the latter date Frans Hals was certainly working in Haarlem, and there he remained all his life.

The police records of Haarlem show that on February 20, 1616, Frans Hals was summoned for maltreating his wife (Anneke Hermans), was severely reprimanded, and dismissed on the undertaking that he would eschew drunken company and reform. On this one fact, which is indisputable, gossip has built up a legend that Hals was a man of imperfect morals and a continuous and habitual drunkard. But, as Gerald S. Davies has pointed out, drunkenness is not only a moral but a physical matter, and it is physically impossible that a confirmed inebriate should have had a hand steady enough to paint the pictures Hals painted when he was sixty and older.

We must admit an ugly passage in the painter's life—though, as a Scottish critic once observed, we do not know what provocation Hals' wife gave him!—and we must conclude that his first marriage was miserable. The poor woman died soon after the police-court case—though not, it would seem, as the result of her husband's misconduct—and a year later Hals married again. His second wife became the mother of many children,

