

the New Testament, and the Psalter, . . . with five apologetical books in defense of this Psalter, showing that in the Holy Scriptures there is not one syllable that does not contain the greatest of mysteries.

It was Pope Nicholas' intention to found a library in St. Peter's, for the general use of the whole Roman curia, which would have been an admirable thing indeed, if he had been able to carry it out, but death prevented his bringing it to completion. He illumined the Holy Scriptures through innumerable books, which he caused to be translated; and in the same way with the works of the pagans, including certain works upon grammar, of use in learning Latin,—the *Orthography* of Messer Giovanni Tortelle, who was of his Holiness' household and worked upon the library, a worthy book and useful to grammarians; the *Iliad* of Homer; Strabo's *De situ orbis* he caused to be translated by Guerrino, and gave him five hundred florins for each part,—that is to say, Asia, Africa, and Europe; that was in all fifteen hundred florins. Herodotus and Thucydides he had translated by Lorenzo Valla, and rewarded him liberally for his trouble; Xenophon and Diodorus, by Messer Poggio; Polybius, by Nicolo Perotto, whom, when he handed it to him, he gave five hundred brand-new papal ducats in a purse, and said to him that it was not what he deserved, but that in time he would take care to satisfy him.

225. How Cosimo, father of Lorenzo de' Medici, founded a library. (From *Vespasiano*)

When Cosimo had finished the monastery [near Florence] and a good part of the church, he fell to thinking how he should have the place peopled with honest men of letters; and in this way it occurred to him to found a fine library; and one day when I happened to be present in his chamber, he said to me, "In what way would you furnish this library?" I replied that as for buying the books it would be impossible, for they were not to be had. Then he said, "How is it possible then to furnish it?" I told him that it would be necessary to have the books copied. He asked in reply if I would be willing to undertake the task. I answered him, that I was willing. He told me to commence my work and

he would leave everything to me; and as for the money that would be necessary, he would refer the matter to Con Archangel, then prior of the monastery, who would draw bills upon the bank, which should be paid.

The library was commenced at once, for it was his pleasure that it should be done with the utmost possible celerity; and as I did not lack for money, I collected in a short time forty-five writers, and finished two hundred volumes in twenty-two months; in which work we made use of an excellent list, that of the library of Pope Nicholas, which he had given to Cosimo; in the form of a catalogue made out with his own hands . . . and all the other works necessary to a library, of which no one was wanting. And since there were not copies of all these works in Florence, we sent to Milan, to Bologna, and to other places, wherever they might be found. Cosimo lived to see the library wholly completed, and the cataloguing and the arranging of the books; in all of which he took great pleasure, and the work went forward, as was his custom, with great promptness.

III. THE ARTISTS OF THE RENAISSANCE

One of the most instructive and diverting of the sources for the Renaissance period is *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini written by Himself*—in Florence, as he tells us, in the fifty-eighth year of his age (1558). Cellini was the most famous goldsmith of his time, or perhaps of any time; but he worked also in every kind of metal and produced, among other things, one famous piece of sculpture in bronze,—the *Perseus and Medusa*, which still adorns the piazza in Florence, for which it was made, at the order of Duke Cosimo de Medici. Cellini was employed by, and came into close personal relations with, most of the princes of his time in Italy, and also in France, where he lived for some time under

Benvenuto Cellini and his *Life*, written by Himself.

the patronage of Francis I. He came of a good Florentine family, and exhibits in a marked degree most of the characteristic virtues and vices of the age. There is, indeed, hardly a phase of the many-sided life of the Renaissance period which is not illustrated in his autobiography.

Vasari's characterization of Cellini.

Vasari closes his *Life of Cellini* as follows: "Though I might here enlarge on the productions of Benvenuto, who has always showed himself a man of great spirit and vivacity, bold, active, enterprising, and formidable to his enemies, — a man, in short, who knew as well how to speak to princes as to exert himself in his art, — I shall add nothing further, since he has written an account of his life and works, and a treatise on goldsmiths' work, as well as on casting statues and many other subjects, with more art and eloquence than it is possible for me to imitate."

226. Cellini and the art-loving pope Clement VII. (Condensed.)

Serious interest in even small works of art.

[Cellini had been engaged to reset some jewels for Pope Clement VII.] Since that was not, however, a work in which I could gain great reputation, the pope was resolved, he said, to employ me in an undertaking of the last importance, in which I should have opportunity of displaying my abilities. "The work I have in mind," he added, "is the button for the pontifical cope, which is made round and in the form of a trencher and as big as a small trencher; in this I would have God the Father represented in half relievo, and in the midst of it I would have the edge of the large diamond set, with many other jewels of the greatest value. Go then and draw a fine design of it." Thereupon he caused all his jewels to be shown me, and I left him, highly pleased with my success.

[Several of Cellini's rivals, hearing of this undertaking, had a number of other designs made, which were submitted to the pope at the same time as his.] It so fell out that all those who had drawn those designs had laid the fine large

and beautiful diamond in the middle of the breast of God the Father. The pope, who was a person of great genius, having noticed this blunder, would proceed no farther in examining their performances. After he had examined about ten, he threw the rest upon the ground and desired me to give him my model, that he might see whether I had committed the same mistake. Thereupon I came forward and opened a little round box, when instantly there seemed to flash from it a luster which dazzled the pope himself, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Benvenuto, had you been my very self, you could not have designed this with greater propriety." Then calling to Trojano, his gentleman of the bedchamber, he ordered him to fetch five hundred ducats.

Whilst they were bringing the money, he examined more minutely the ingenious artifice by which I had placed that fine diamond and God the Father in a proper position. I had laid the diamond exactly in the middle of the work, and over it I represented God the Father sitting in a sort of free, easy attitude, which suited admirably well with the rest of the piece, and did not in the least crowd the diamond; his right hand was lifted up, giving his blessing. Under the diamond I had drawn three little boys, who supported it with their arms raised aloft. Round it was a number of figures of boys placed amongst other glittering jewels. The remainder of God the Father was covered with a cloak which wanted in the wind, from whence issued several figures of boys, with other striking ornaments, most beautiful to behold.

Cellini's full appreciation of his own skill.

[While Cellini was engaged on this work and other orders for the pope, his brother was killed in a street brawl between some soldiers and young gallants, such as occurred almost daily on any provocation, or none.] Meanwhile I exerted my utmost efforts to finish the work in gold which I was employed in by Pope Clement; still thinking day and night of the musketeer that shot my brother. Perceiving that my solicitude and anxious desire of revenge deprived me both of sleep and appetite, which threw me into a lingering disorder, and not caring to have recourse to any treacherous

Tolerance of manslaughter.

or dishonorable means, one evening I prepared to put an end to my disquietude.

Just after sunset, as this musketeer stood at his door with his sword in his hand, when he had done supper, I with great address came close up to him with a long dagger and gave him a violent back-handed stroke which I had aimed at his neck; that instant he turned about, and the blow falling directly upon his left shoulder, broke the whole bone of it; upon which he dropped his sword, quite overcome by the pain, and took to his heels. I pursued and in four steps came up with him, when, raising the dagger over his head which he lowered down, I hit exactly upon his collar bone and the middle of the neck; the weapon penetrated so deep into both that though I made a great effort to recover it again, I found it impossible; for at this same instant there issued out of a neighboring house four soldiers, with their swords drawn, so that I was obliged to draw mine also in my own defense.

[He takes refuge with his protector, Duke Alexander of Medici, in whose palace he stays under cover for eight days. At the end of that time the pope sends for him, the messenger saying that the pope] knew all that had happened, that his Holiness was very much my friend, and desired me to go on with my business without giving myself any uneasiness. When I came into the presence of the pontiff, he frowned on me very much, and with angry looks seemed to reprimand me; but, upon viewing my performance, his countenance grew serene and he praised me highly, telling me that I had done a great deal in a short time; then looking attentively at me, he said, "Now that you have recovered your health, Benvenuto, take care of yourself." I understood his meaning, and told him that I should not neglect his advice.

Giorgio Vasari (1512-1574), a painter of some ability himself and an enthusiastic admirer of the great artists of Italy, among whom he considered his friend and contemporary, Michael Angelo, the greatest, wrote a long

series of charming biographies of painters, sculptors, and architects, which forms the chief source for the lives of the Italian artists from Giotto to Titian.

The richest gifts are occasionally seen to be showered, as by celestial influence, upon certain human beings; nay, they sometimes supernaturally and marvelously congregate in a single person,—beauty, grace, and talent being united in such a manner that to whatever the man thus favored may turn himself, his every action is so divine as to leave all other men far behind him. This would seem manifestly to prove that he has been specially endowed by the hand of God himself, and has not obtained his preëminence through human teaching or the powers of man.

This was perceived and acknowledged by all men in the case of Leonardo da Vinci, in whom (to say nothing of his beauty of person, which yet was such that it has never been sufficiently extolled) there was a grace beyond expression, which was manifest without thought or effort in every act and deed, and who had besides so rare a gift of talent and ability that to whatever subject he turned his attention, no matter how difficult, he presently made himself absolute master of it.

In him extraordinary power was combined with remarkable facility, a mind of regal boldness and magnanimous daring. His gifts were such that the celebrity of his name was spread abroad, and he was held in the highest estimation not only in his own time but also, and even to a greater degree, after his death,—nay, he has continued, and will continue, to be held in the highest esteem by all succeeding generations.

Truly remarkable, indeed, and divinely endowed was Leonardo da Vinci. He was the son of Ser Piero da Vinci. He would without doubt have made great progress in learning and knowledge of the sciences had he not been so versatile and changeful. The instability of his character led him to undertake many things which having commenced he afterwards abandoned. In arithmetic, for example, he

227. Remarkable versatility of Leonardo da Vinci. (From Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*.)

made such rapid progress in the short time that he gave his attention to it, that he often confounded the master who was teaching him by the perpetual doubts that he started and by the difficult questions that he proposed.

He also commenced the study of music, and resolved to acquire the art of playing the lute, when, being by nature of an exalted imagination and full of the most graceful vivacity, he sang to the instrument most divinely, improvising at once both the verse and the music.

[Verocchio, an esteemed artist of the period, upon seeing some of the drawings which Leonardo had made, gladly agreed to take him into his shop.] Thither the boy resorted with the utmost readiness, and not only gave his attention to one branch of art but to all those of which design makes a portion. Endowed with such admirable intelligence and being also an excellent geometrician, Leonardo not only worked in sculpture but in architecture; likewise he prepared various designs for ground plans and the construction of entire buildings. He too it was who, while only a youth, first suggested the formation of a canal from Pisa to Florence by means of certain changes to be effected in the river Arno. Leonardo likewise made designs for mills, fulling machines, and other engines which were run by water. But as he had resolved to make painting his profession, he gave the greater part of his time to drawing from nature.

228. Kindly disposition of Raphael. (From Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*.)

Vasari writes thus of Raphael's premature death and of his kindly disposition toward his fellow-artists.

When this noble artist died, well might Painting have departed also, for when he closed his eyes she too was left, as it were, blind. . . . To him of a truth it is that we owe the possession of invention, coloring, and execution, brought alike and together to that perfection for which few could have dared to hope; nor has any man ever aspired to surpass him.

And in addition to the benefits which this great master conferred on art, being as he was its best friend, we have

the further obligation to him of having taught us by his life in what manner we should comport ourselves toward great men, as well as toward those of lesser degree, and even toward the lowest; nay, there was among his many extraordinary gifts one of such value and importance that I can never sufficiently admire it and always think thereof with astonishment.

This was the power accorded to him by heaven, of bringing all who approached his presence into harmony, an effect inconceivably surprising in our calling, and contrary to the nature of our artists. Yet all, I do not say of the inferior grades only, but even those who lay claim to be great personages (and of this humor our art produces immense numbers) became as of one mind, once they began to labor in the society of Raphael, continuing in such unity and concord that all harsh feelings and evil dispositions became subdued and disappeared at the sight of him; every vile and base thought departing from the mind before his influence.

Such harmony prevailed at no other time than his own. And this happened because all were surpassed by him in friendly courtesy as well as in art; all confessed the influence of his sweet and gracious nature, which was so replete with excellence and so perfect in all the charities, that not only was he honored by men but even by the very animals, who would constantly follow his steps and always loved him.

Several of Michael Angelo's greatest works were undertaken at the order of Pope Julius II (d. 1512), who had the highest appreciation of his genius. But the independence of the artist and the irascible temper of the pontiff occasioned numerous quarrels between them, which invariably resulted in fresh favors from the pope. After one of these reconciliations, which took place in Bologna, Julius had ordered a bronze statue of himself to be placed over one of the city gates.

229. Michael Angelo and the popes. His character and ideals. (From Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*.)

Relations
of Michael
Angelo
with Pope
Julius II.

The statue was finished in the clay model before Pope Julius left Bologna for Rome, and his Holiness went to see it, but, the right hand being raised in an attitude of much dignity, and the pontiff not knowing what was to be placed in the left, inquired whether he were anathematizing the people or giving them his benediction; Michael Angelo replied that he was admonishing the Bolognese to behave themselves discreetly, and asked his Holiness to decide whether it were not well to put a book in the left hand. "Put a sword into it," replied Pope Julius, "for of letters I know but little." The pontiff left a thousand crowns in the bank of Messer Antonmaria da Lignano for the purpose of completing the figure, and after Michael Angelo had labored at it for sixteen months it was placed over the door of San Petronio.

The Bentivogli destroy the statue of the pope.

The work was eventually destroyed by the Bentivogli,¹ and the bronze was sold to the Duke Alfonzo of Ferrara, who made a piece of artillery, called the Julia, of the fragments; the head only was preserved, and this is now in the Duke's Guardaroba.

The pope's impatience to see the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel completed.

[The pope was very anxious to see the decoration of the Sistine Chapel completed, and constantly inquired when it would be finished.] On one occasion, therefore, Michael Angelo replied, "It will be finished when I shall have done all that I believe is required to satisfy Art." "And we command," rejoined the pontiff, "that you satisfy our wish to have it done quickly," adding that if it were not at once completed, he would have Michael Angelo thrown headlong from the scaffolding. Hearing this, our artist, who feared the fury of the pope, and with good cause, without taking time to add what was wanting, took down the remainder of the scaffolding, to the great satisfaction of the whole city, on All Saints' day, when Pope Julius went into that chapel to sing mass. But Michael Angelo had much desired to

¹ The chief family of Bologna, who practically ruled the town, although it was nominally a republic and lay within the papal dominions.

retouch some portions of the work *a secco*,¹ as had been done by the older masters who had painted the stories on the walls. He would also have gladly added a little ultramarine to the draperies and gilded other parts, to the end that the whole might have a richer and more striking effect.

The pope, too, hearing that these things were still wanting, and finding that all who beheld the chapel praised it highly, would now fain have had the additions made; but as Michael Angelo thought reconstructing the scaffold too long an affair, the pictures remained as they were, although the pope, who often saw Michael Angelo, would sometimes say, "Let the chapel be enriched with bright colors and gold; it looks poor." When Michael Angelo would reply familiarly, "Holy Father, the men of those days did not adorn themselves with gold; those who are painted here less than any, for they were none too rich; besides which they were holy men, and must have despised riches and ornaments."

[In 1546, San Gallo, who was in charge of the building operations at St. Peter's in Rome, having died, Pope Paul III asked Michael Angelo to undertake the office.] The master at first replied that he would not, architecture not being his vocation; but when entreaties were found useless, the pope commanded him to accept the trust, and to his infinite regret he was compelled to obey. He did not approve of San Gallo's plan. He would often publicly declare that San Gallo had left the building without lights, and had heaped too many ranges of columns one above the other on the outside; adding that, with its innumerable projections, pinnacles, and divisions of members, it was more like a work of the Teutons than of the good antique manner, or of the cheerful and beautiful modern style.² He furthermore affirmed that fifty years of time, with more than three

Michael Angelo required by the pope to carry on the work of St. Peter's.

¹ That is, after the damp plaster upon which the paint had been originally laid *al fresco* had dried.

² That is, that it resembled the Gothic rather than the Classical or Renaissance style.

hundred thousand crowns in the cost, might very well be spared, while the work might be completed with increased majesty, grandeur, and lightness, to say nothing of better design, greater beauty, and superior convenience.

Prolonged building of St. Peter's a source of corruption.

He made a model also, to prove the truth of his words, and this was of the form wherein we now see the work to have been carried on; it cost twenty-five crowns and was finished in a fortnight, that of San Gallo having exceeded four thousand and having occupied several years in making. From this and other circumstances, it was indeed easy to see that the church had become an object of traffic and a means of gain rather than a building to be completed, being considered by those who undertook the work as a kind of bargain to be turned to the best account.

Such a state of things could not fail to displease so upright a man as Michael Angelo, and as the pope had made him superintendent against his will, he determined to be rid of them all. He therefore one day told them openly that he knew well that they had done and were doing all they could by means of their friends to prevent him from entering on this office, but that if he were to undertake the charge he would not suffer one of them to remain about the building.

Michael Angelo's dissatisfaction with his work.

Michael Angelo worked for his amusement almost every day at a group of four figures, but he broke up the block at last, either because it was found to have numerous veins, was excessively hard, and often caused the chisel to strike fire, or because the judgment of the artist was so severe that he could never content himself with anything that he ever did. There is proof of this in the fact that few of his works undertaken in his manhood were ever entirely completed, those entirely finished being the productions of his youth. . . . Michael Angelo himself would often remark that if he were really permitted to satisfy himself in the works to be produced, he should give little or nothing to public view.

And the reason for this is obvious. He had advanced to such an extent of knowledge in art that the very slightest error could not exist in any figure without his immediate

discovery thereof; but having found such after the work had been given to view, he would never attempt to correct it, and would commence some other production, believing that a like failure would not happen again. This then was, as he often declared, the reason why the number of pictures and statues finished by his hand was so small. . . .

His powers of imagination were such that he was frequently compelled to abandon his purpose because he could not express by the hand those grand and sublime ideas which he had conceived in his mind, — nay, he has spoiled and destroyed many works for this cause. I know, for example, that a short time before his death he burned a large number of his designs, sketches, and cartoons, that none might see the labors he had gone through and the trials to which he had subjected his spirit in his resolve not to fall short of perfection. I have myself secured some drawings by his hand which were found in Florence and which are now in my book of designs; and these, although they give evidence of his great genius, yet prove also that the hammer of Vulcan was necessary to bring Minerva from the head of Jupiter.

Vignero, another friend of Michael Angelo's, thus describes the impetuous way in which he worked, even in his later years.

I may add that I have seen Michael Angelo, although then sixty years old and not in robust health, strike more chips from the hardest marble in a quarter of an hour than would be carried off by three young stonemasons in three or four times as long, — a thing incredible to him who has not seen it. He would approach the marble with such impetuosity, not to say fury, that I have often thought the whole work must be dashed to pieces. At one blow he would strike off pieces of three or four inches; yet with such exactitude was each stroke given that a mere atom more would sometimes have spoiled the whole work.

230. Michael Angelo's fiery impetuosity.

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