

MICHAEL ANGELO.

WHO has ever stood in Florence, and been warmed by her sunlight, refreshed by her fragrant flowers, and ennobled by her divine art, without saying with the poet Rogers, —

“Of all the fairest cities of the earth,
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem
Of purest ray; and what a light broke forth
When it emerged from darkness! Search within,
Without, all is enchantment! 'Tis the Past
Contending with the Present; and in turn
Each has the mastery.”

Pitiful in her struggles for freedom, the very centre of art and learning in the fifteenth century, she has to-day a charm peculiarly her own.

“Other though not many cities have histories as noble, treasures as vast; but no other city has them living, and ever present in her midst, familiar as household words, and touched by every baby's hand and peasant's step, as Florence has.

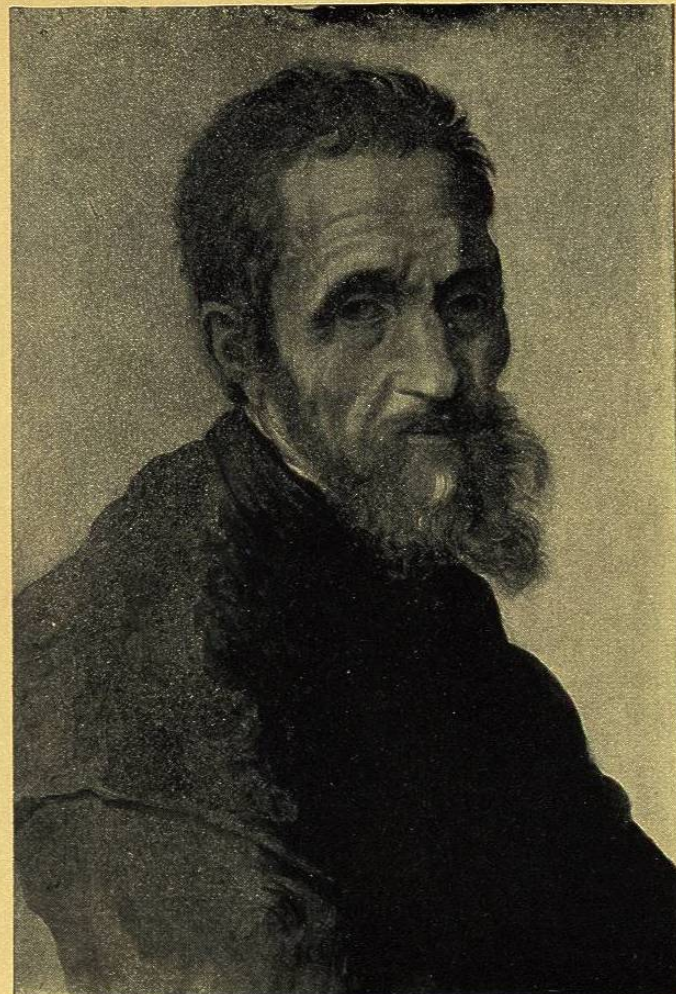
“Every line, every road, every gable, every tower, has some story of the past present in it. Every tocsin that sounds is a chronicle; every bridge that unites the two banks of the river,

unites also the crowds of the living with the heroism of the dead.

"The beauty of the past goes with you at every step in Florence. Buy eggs in the market, and you buy them where Donatello bought those which fell down in a broken heap before the wonder of the crucifix. Pause in a narrow by-street in a crowd, and it shall be that Borgo Allegri, which the people so baptized for love of the old painter and the new-born art. Stray into a great dark church at evening time, where peasants tell their beads in the vast marble silence, and you are where the whole city flocked, weeping, at midnight, to look their last upon the dead face of their Michael Angelo. Buy a knot of March anemones or April arum lilies, and you may bear them with you through the same city ward in which the child Ghirlandaio once played amidst the gold and silver garlands that his father fashioned for the young heads of the Renaissance. Ask for a shoemaker, and you shall find the cobbler sitting with his board in the same old twisting, shadowy street-way where the old man Toscanelli drew his charts that served a fair-haired sailor of Genoa, called Columbus."

Florence, Shelley's "Smokeless City," was the ardently loved home of Michael Angelo. He was born March 6, 1475, or, according to some authorities, 1474, the Florentines reckoning time from the incarnation of Christ, instead of his birth.

Lodovico Buonarrotti, the father of Michael An-



MICHELANGELO BUONAROTTI.

Supposed to have been painted by himself. Uffizi, Florence.

gelo, had been appointed governor of Caprese and Chiusi, and had moved from Florence to the Castle of Caprese, where this boy, his second child, was born. The mother, Francesca, was, like her husband, of noble family, and but little more than half his age, being nineteen and he thirty-one.

After two years they returned to Florence, leaving the child at Settignano, three miles from the city, on an estate of the Buonarottis'. He was intrusted to the care of a stone-mason's wife, as nurse. Living among the quarrymen and sculptors of this picturesque region, he began to draw as soon as he could use his hands. He took delight in the work of the masons, and they in turn loved the bright, active child. On the walls of the stone-mason's house he made charcoal sketches, which were doubtless praised by the foster-parents.

Lodovico, who was quite too proud for manual labor, designed that his son should become a dealer in silks and woollens, as probably he would thus amass wealth. With such a project in mind, he was certainly unwise to place the child in the exhilarating air of the mountains, where nature would be almost sure to win him away from the counting-room.

When the boy was old enough he was sent by his father to a grammar school in Florence, kept by Francesco of Urbino, a noted grammarian. He made little progress in his studies, for nearly all of his time was spent in drawing and in visiting the *ateliers* of the different artists of the city. Vasari

says he was beaten by his father and other elders; but the beatings did no good, — indeed, they probably made the quiet, self-poised lad more indifferent to trade and more devoted to art.

Fortunately, in these early years, as has so often happened to men of genius, Michael Angelo found a congenial friend, Francesco Granacci, a talented youth of good family, lovable in nature, and a student in art. He was a pupil of one of the best painters in Italy, Domenico Ghirlandaio. He loaned drawings to Michael Angelo, and made the boy of fourteen more anxious than ever to be an artist.

Lodovico at last saw that a lad so absorbed in art would probably be a failure in silk and wool, and placed him in the studio of Ghirlandaio, with the promise of his receiving six gold florins the first year, eight the second, and ten the third.

Granacci, who was nineteen, and Michael Angelo now worked happily together. The master had undertaken to paint the choir of the Church of Santa Maria Novella, and thus the boys were brought into important work.

One day, when the painters were absent, Michael Angelo drew the scaffolding, with all who worked on it, so perfectly that Ghirlandaio exclaimed, when he saw it: "This youth understands more than I do myself." He also corrected one of the master's drawings, the draped form of a woman. Sixty years afterwards, when this sketch was shown to Michael Angelo, he said, "I almost think that I

knew more art in my youth than I do in my old age."

The young artist now painted his first picture, a plate of Martin Schöngauer's of Germany, representing St. Anthony tormented by devils. One pulls his hair, one his garments, one seizes the book hanging from his girdle, one snatches a stick from his hand, while others pinch, and tease, and roll over him. Claws, scales, horns, and the like, all help to make up these monsters. Michael Angelo went to the fish-market, and carefully studied the eyes and scales of the fish, with their colors, and painted such a picture that it was mistaken for the original.

After a year spent with Ghirlandaio, the master seems to have become envious, and the three-years' contract was mutually broken, through a fortunate opening for Michael Angelo. Cosmo de' Medici, "Pater Patriæ," had collected ancient and modern sculptures and paintings, and these art treasures were enriched by his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, who opened them to students, with prizes for the best work. He founded an academy and placed it under the charge of Bertoldo, the favorite disciple of Donatello.

Lorenzo made himself the idol of the people by his generosity, consideration, and unquestioned ability to lead. He arranged public festivities, and wrote verses to be sung by girls as they danced in the public square, in the month of May. All the young people knew and loved him.

On one of these festive occasions, when the triumphal procession of Paulus Æmilius was being represented, Granacci found an opportunity of winning Lorenzo's favor, and thereby gained access to the art treasures. At once he thought of his friend, and Michael Angelo was soon studying the marbles and pictures of the great Medici.

The boy of fifteen quickly made friends with the stone-masons, and, getting from them a piece of marble, began to copy the antique masque of a faun. However, his work was not like the original, but the mouth was open so that the teeth were visible. When Lorenzo came among the pupils he observed the masque and praised it, but said to the boy, "You have made your faun so old, and yet you have left him all his teeth; you should have known that at such an advanced age there are generally some wanting."

At once Michael Angelo broke out a tooth, filling the gum as though it had dropped out. When Lorenzo came again he was delighted, and told the boy to send for his father. Lodovico came reluctantly, for he was not yet reconciled to the choice of "art and poverty" which his son had made.

Lorenzo received him cordially and asked his occupation. "I have never followed any business," was the reply; "but I live upon the small income of the possessions left me by my ancestors. These I endeavor to keep in order, and, so far as I can, to improve them."

"Well," said Lorenzo, "look around you; and,

if I can do anything for you, only apply to me. Whatever is in my power shall be done."

Lodovico received a vacant post in the custom-house, and Michael Angelo was taken into the Medici palace and treated as a son. For three years he lived in this regal home, meeting all the great and learned men of Italy: Politian, the poet and philosopher; Ficino, the head of the Platonic Academy; Pico della Mirandola, the prince and scholar, and many others.

Who can estimate such influence over a youth? Who can measure the good that Lorenzo de' Medici was doing for the world unwittingly? To develop a grand man from a boy, is more than to carve a statue from the marble.

Michael Angelo was now of middle height, with dark hair, small gray eyes, and of delicate appearance, but he became robust as he grew older.

Politian was the tutor of the two Medici youths, Giovanni and Giulio, who afterwards became Leo X. and Clement VII. He encouraged Michael Angelo, when eighteen, to make a marble bas-relief of the battle of Hercules with the Centaurs. This is still preserved in the Buonarotti family, as the sculptor would never part with it. The head of the faun is in the Uffizi gallery.

Michael Angelo now executed a Madonna in bronze, and copied the wonderful frescos of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine (usually called the Carmine Chapel),

the same which inspired Fra Angelico, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto. "The importance of these frescos arises from the fact that they hold the same place in the history of art during the fifteenth century as the works of Giotto, in the Arena Chapel at Padua, hold during the fourteenth. Each series forms an epoch in painting, from which may be dated one of those great and sudden onward steps which have in various ages and countries marked the development of art. The history of Italian painting is divided into three distinct and well-defined periods, by the Arena and Brancacci Chapels, and the frescos of Michael Angelo and Raphael in the Vatican."

While Michael Angelo was copying these paintings of Masaccio, he took no holidays, and gave the hours of night to his labors. Ambition made work a delight. He studied anatomy like a devotee. Dead bodies were conveyed from the hospital to a cell in the convent of Santo Spirito, the artist rewarding the prior by a crucifix almost as large as life, which he carved from wood.

The youth could but know his superiority to others, and was not always wise enough to conceal his contempt for mediocrity, or for the young men who played at life. One of his fellow-students, Torrigiani, grew so angry at him, probably from some slighting remark, that he struck him with his fist, disfiguring his face for life. Michael Angelo is said to have merely replied to this brutal assault, "You will be remembered only as the man who

broke my nose." Torrigiani was at once banished, and died miserably in the Spanish Inquisition.

In April, 1492, Lorenzo the Magnificent died, in the very prime of his life. Michael Angelo was so overcome that for a long time he was unable to collect his thoughts for work. The self-reliant young man, cold outwardly, had a warm and generous heart.

He went home to the Buonarotti mansion, opened a studio, purchased a piece of marble and made a Hercules four feet in height. It stood for many years in the Strozzi Palace in Florence, was sold to France, and is now lost.

Piero de' Medici succeeded to his father Lorenzo, who is said to have remarked that "he had three sons: the first good, the second clever, the third a fool. The good one was Giuliano, thirteen years old at the death of his father; the clever one was Giovanni, seventeen years old, but a cardinal already by favor of the pope, whose son had married a daughter of Lorenzo's; and the fool was Piero."

In January, 1494, an unusual storm occurred in Florence, and the snow lay from four to six feet deep. Piero, with childish enthusiasm, sent for Michael Angelo and bade him form a statue of snow in the courtyard of the palace. The Medici was so pleased with the result that he brought the artist to sit at his own table, and to live in the same rooms assigned to him by Lorenzo his father.

Piero is said, however, to have valued equally with the sculptor a Spaniard who served in his stables, because he could outrun a horse at full gallop.

Piero was proud, without the virtues of his father, and soon alienated the affections of the Florentines. Savonarola, the Dominican monk of San Marco, was preaching against the luxuries and vices of the age. So popular was he, says Burlamacchi, that "the people got up in the middle of the night to get places for the sermon, and came to the door of the cathedral, waiting outside till it should be opened, making no account of any inconvenience, neither of the cold, nor the mud, nor of standing in winter with their feet on the marble; and among them were young and old, women and children, of every sort, who came with such jubilee and rejoicing that it was bewildering to hear them, going to the sermon as to a wedding.

"Then the silence was great in the church, each one going to his place; and he who could read, with a taper in his hand, read the service and other prayers. And though many thousand people were thus collected together, no sound was to be heard, not even a 'hush,' until the arrival of the children who sang hymns with so much sweetness that heaven seemed to have opened. Thus they waited three or four hours till the *padre* entered the pulpit, and the attention of so great a mass of people, all with eyes and ears intent upon the preacher, was wonderful; they listened so that when the

sermon reached its end it seemed to them that it had scarcely begun."

Piero's weakness and Savonarola's power soon bore fruit. Michael Angelo foresaw the fall of the Medici, and, unwilling to fight for a ruler whom he could not respect, fled to Venice. But his scanty supply of money was soon exhausted, and he returned to Bologna, on his way back to Florence.

At Bologna, the law required that every foreigner entering the gates should have a seal of red wax on his thumb, showing permission. This Michael Angelo and his friends neglected to obtain, and were at once arrested and fined. They would have been imprisoned save that Aldovrandi, a member of the council, and of a distinguished family, set them free, and invited the sculptor to his own house, where he remained for a year. Together they read Dante and Petrarch, and the magistrate soon became ardently attached to the bright youth of nineteen.

In the Church of San Petronio are the bones of St. Domenico in a marble coffin; on the sarcophagus two kneeling figures were to be placed by Nicolo Pisano, a contemporary of Cimabue. One was unfinished in its drapery, and the other, a kneeling angel holding a candelabrum, was not even begun. At Aldovrandi's request Michael Angelo completed this work. So exasperated were the artists of Bologna at his skill that he felt obliged to leave their city, and return to Florence. What a pitiful exhibition of human weakness!

Meantime Piero had fled from Florence. Charles VIII. of France had made a triumphal entrance into the city, and Savonarola had become lawgiver. "Jesus Christ is the King of Florence," was written over the gates of the Palazzo Vecchio, hymns were sung in the streets instead of ballads, the sacrament was received daily, and worldly books, even Petrarch and Virgil, and sensuous works of art, were burned on a huge pile. "Even Fra Bartolomeo was so carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment as to bring his life-academy studies to be consumed on this pyre, forgetful that, in the absence of such studies, he could never have risen above low mediocrity. Lorenzo di Credi, another and devoted follower of Savonarola, did the same."

Michael Angelo, though an ardent admirer of Savonarola, and an attendant upon his preaching, seems not to have lost his good judgment, or to have considered the making of a sleeping Cupid a sin. When the beautiful work was completed, at the suggestion of a friend, it was buried in the ground for a season, to give it the appearance of an antique, and then sold to Cardinal San Giorgio for two hundred ducats, though Michael Angelo received but thirty as his share. Soon after, the cardinal ascertained how he had been imposed upon, and invited the artist to Rome, with the hope that the hundred and seventy ducats could be obtained from the dishonest agent who effected the sale. Vasari states that many persons believed that the agent, and not Michael Angelo, buried the statue

for gain, which seems probable from all we know of the artist's upright character.

Michael Angelo went to the Eternal City in June, 1496. He was still young, only twenty-one. "The idea," says Hermann Grimm, in his scholarly life of the artist, "that the young Michael Angelo, full of the bustle of the fanatically excited Florence, was led by his fate to Rome, and trod for the first time that soil where the most corrupt doings were, nevertheless, lost sight of in the calm grandeur of the past, has something in it that awakens thought. It was the first step in his actual life. He had before been led hither and thither by men and by his own indistinct views; now, thrown upon his own resources, he takes a new start for his future, and what he now produces begins the series of his masterly works."

Michael Angelo's first efforts in Rome were for a noble and cultivated man, Jacopo Galli: a Cupid, now lost, and a Bacchus, nearly as large as life, which Shelley declared "a revolting misunderstanding of the spirit and the idea of Bacchus." Perhaps the artist did not put much heart into the statue of the intoxicated youth. His next work, however, the Pietà, executed for Cardinal St. Denis, the French ambassador at Rome, who desired to leave some monument of himself in the great city, made Michael Angelo famous. Sonnets were written to the Pietà, the Virgin Mary holding the dead Christ.

Of this work Grimm says: "The position of

the body, resting on the knees of the woman; the folds of her dress, which is gathered together by a band across the bosom; the inclination of the head, as she bends over her son in a manner inconsolable and yet sublime, or his, as it rests in her arms dead, exhausted, and with mild features, — we feel every touch was for the first time created by Michael Angelo, and that that in which he imitated others in this group, was only common property, which he used because its use was customary. . . .

“Our deepest sympathy is awakened by the sight of Christ, — the two legs, with weary feet, hanging down sideways from the mother’s knee; the falling arm; the failing, sunken body; the head drooping backwards, — the attitude of the whole human form lying there, as if by death he had again become a child whom the mother had taken in her arms; at the same time, in the countenance there is a wonderful blending of the old customary Byzantine type, — the longish features and parted beard, and the noblest elements of the national Jewish expression. None before Michael Angelo would have thought of this; the oftener the work is contemplated, the more touching does its beauty become, — everywhere the purest nature, in harmony both in spirit and exterior.

“Whatever previously to this work had been produced by sculptors in Italy passes into shadow, and assumes the appearance of attempts in which there is something lacking, whether in idea or in execution; here, both are provided for. The artist,

the work, and the circumstances of the time, combine together; and the result is something that deserves to be called perfect. Michael Angelo numbered four and twenty years when he had finished his Pietà. He was the first master in Italy, the first in the world from henceforth, says Condivi; indeed, they go so far as to maintain, he says further, that Michael Angelo surpassed the ancient masters.”

How could Michael Angelo have carved this work at twenty-four? His knowledge of anatomy was surprising. He had become imbued with great and noble thoughts from Savonarola’s preaching, and from his ardent reading of Dante and Petrarch; he was eager for fame, and he believed in his own power. And, besides all this, he was in love with art. When a friend said to him, years afterwards, “’Tis a pity that you have not married, that you might have left children to inherit the fruit of these honorable toils,” he replied, “I have only too much of a wife in my art, and she has given me trouble enough. As to my children, they are the works that I shall leave; and if they are not worth much, they will at least live for some time. Woe to Lorenzo Ghiberti if he had not made the gates of San Giovanni; for his children and grandchildren have sold or squandered all that he left; but the gates are still in their place. These are so beautiful that they are worthy of being the gates of Paradise.”

The Pietà is now in St. Peter’s. When some per-