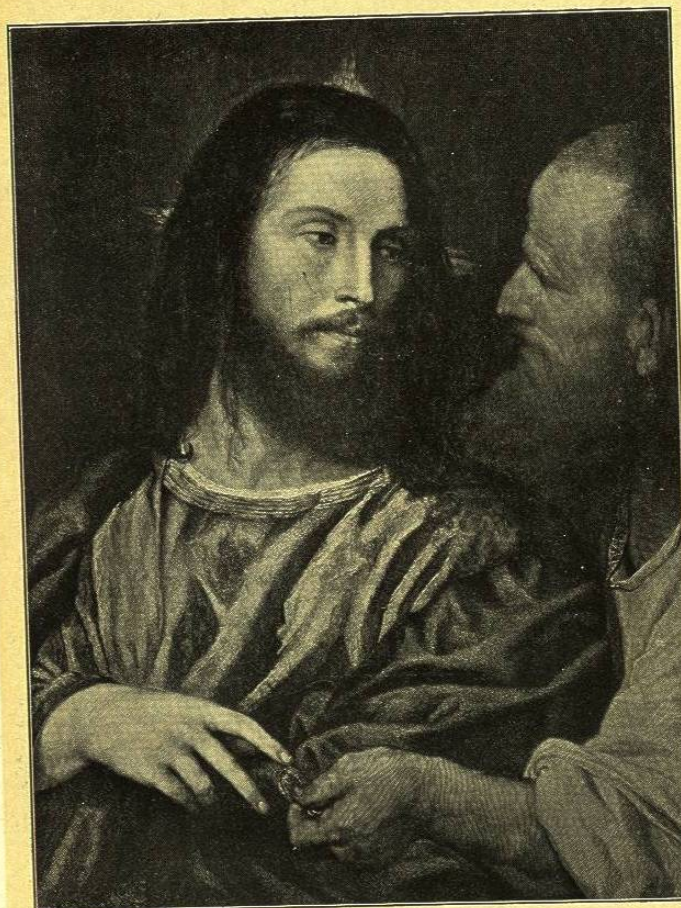


On being asked what impression these works conveyed, these gentlemen declared that they only knew of one master capable of finishing as they thought paintings ought to be finished, and that was Dürer; their impression being that Venetian compositions invariably fell below the promise which they had given at their first commencement.

"To these observations Titian smilingly replied, that if he had thought extreme finish to be the end and aim of art, he too would have fallen into the excesses of Dürer. But, though long experience had taught him to prefer a broad and even track to a narrow and intricate path, yet he would still take occasion to show that the subtlest detail might be compassed without sacrifice of breadth; and so produced the Christ of the Tribute Money."

Crowe and Cavalcaselle say, "Vasari reflects an opinion which holds to this day, that the 'head of Christ is stupendous and miraculous.'" It was considered by all the artists of his time as the most perfect and best handled of any that Titian ever produced; but for us it has qualities of a higher merit than those of mere treatment. Single as the subject is, the thought which it embodies is very subtle.

"Christ turns towards the questioning Pharisee, and confirms with his eye the gesture of his hand, which points to the coin. His face is youthful, its features and short curly beard are finely framed in a profusion of flowing locks. The Pharisee to the right stands in profile before Jesus, holds the



THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

From the painting, Dresden Gallery. Titian.

coin, and asks the question. The contrast is sublime between the majestic calm and elevation and what Inandt calls the 'Godlike beauty' of Christ, and the low cunning and coarse air of the Pharisee; between the delicate chiselling of the features, the soft grave eye and pure-cut mouth of the Saviour, and the sharp aquiline nose or the crafty glance of the crop-haired, malignant Hebrew. . . .

"The form of Christ was never conceived by any of the Venetians of such ideal beauty as this. Nor has Titian ever done better; and it is quite certain that no one, Titian himself included, within the compass of the North Italian schools, reproduced the human shape with more nature and truth, and with greater delicacy of modelling. Amidst the profusion of locks that falls to Christ's shoulders, there are ringlets of which we may count the hairs, and some of these are so light that they seem to float in air, as if ready to wave at the spectator's breath. Nothing can exceed the brightness and sheen or the transparent delicacy of the colors. The drapery is admirable in shade and fold, and we distinguish with ease the loose texture of the bright red tunic, and that of the fine broadcloth which forms the blue mantle. The most perfect easel picture of which Venice ever witnessed the production, this is also the most polished work of Titian."

In 1511 Titian was called to Padua and Vicenza, where he executed some frescos, principally from the life of St. Anthony, returning to Venice in 1512.

He was now famous, and Pope Leo X. naturally desired to draw him to Rome, where Raphael and Michael Angelo were the admired of all. Cardinal Bembo, the secretary of the pope, and the friend of Raphael, importuned Titian; but the Venetian loved his own state and preferred to serve her, sending, May 31, 1513, the following petition to the Council of Ten.

"I, Titian of Cadore, having studied painting from childhood upwards, and desirous of fame rather than profit, wish to serve the Doge and Signori, rather than his highness the pope and other Signori, who in past days, and even now, have urgently asked to employ me. I am therefore anxious, if it should appear feasible, to paint in the Hall of Council, beginning, if it please their sublimity, with the canvas of the battle on the side towards the Piazza, which is so difficult that no one as yet has had the courage to attempt it."

For this work Titian asked a moderate compensation, and the first vacant brokership for life, all of which the government granted. He moved into a studio in the old palace of the Duke of Milan, at San Samuele on the Grand Canal, where he remained for sixteen years.

It seemed now as though comfort were guaranteed to the hard-working artist. But unfortunately rivalries arose. The Bellinis had worked in this Hall of Council in the Ducal Palace, till they felt the position to be theirs by right. After long discussions, Titian was successful, receiving from the

Fondaco an annuity of one hundred ducats as a broker, and the privilege of exemption from certain taxes, while, on the other hand, he had to paint the Doge's portrait.

Titian was now painting the following works for Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, who had married the handsome and celebrated Lucretia Borgia:—

The "Venus Worship," now in the Museum of Madrid, represents the goddess standing on a marble pedestal, with two nymphs at her feet, while winged cupids pluck the apples sacred to Venus, from the branches of great trees, "climbing boughs like boys, dropping down from them like thrushes, loading baskets, throwing and catching, tumbling, fighting, and dancing."

This picture was a favorite study for artists, and it is said that Domenichino wept when he heard that it had been carried to Spain.

"The Three Ages," now in the collection of Lord Ellesmere, has been frequently copied. A cupid steps on two sleeping children: a beautiful girl sits near her lover, "the holy feeling of youthful innocence and affection charmingly expressed in both:" an old man contemplates two skulls on the ground. "To the children, as to the lovers, the forms appropriate to their age are given; and the whole subject is treated with such harmony of means as to create in its way the impression of absolute perfection."

The "Virgin's Rest, near Bethlehem," now in the National Gallery, shows the mother with the

infant Christ on her lap, taking a bunch of flowers from St. John. The "Noli Me Tangere," also in the National Gallery, represents Christ with Mary Magdalene on her knees before him. "One cannot look without transport on the mysterious calm of this beautiful scene, which Titian has painted with such loving care, yet with such clever freedom. The picture is like a leaf out of Titian's journal, which tells us how he left his house on the canals, and wandered into the country beyond the lagoons, and lingered in the fresh sweet landscape at eventide, and took nature captive on a calm day at summer's end."

While painting these pictures, besides various portraits of the poet Ariosto, Alfonso, and others, Titian was producing what is generally regarded as his masterpiece, "The Assumption of the Virgin," a colossal picture, now in the Academy of Arts at Venice. It was painted for Santa Maria di Frari, and was shown to the public, March 20, 1518, on St. Bernardino's Day, when all the public offices were closed by order of the Senate, and a great crowd thronged the church.

"The gorgeous blue and red of Mary's tunic and mantle stand out brilliant on the silvery ether, vaulted into a dome, supported by countless cherubs. The ministry of the angels about her is varied and eager. One raises the corner of the mantle, some play the tabor, others hold the pipes, or sing in choir, whilst others again are sunk in wonderment, or point at the Virgin's majesty; and



TRANSFIGURATION OF THE MADONNA.
[Fragment.] Painted A.D. 1518, by Titian. Academy, Venice.

the rest fade into the sky behind, as the sound of bells fades sweetly upon the ear of the passing traveller. . . . All but the head and arms of the Eternal is lost in the halo of brightness towards which the Virgin is ascending. He looks down with serene welcome in his face, an angel on one side ready with a crown of leaves; an archangel swathed in drapery, on the other, eagerly asking leave to deposit on the Virgin's brow the golden cincture in his hands."

Titian was at once declared to be the foremost painter in Venice, and was, indeed, the idol of the people.

He now painted the "Annunciation" for the Cathedral of Treviso, and executed several frescos. Meantime, the Venetian Government threatened that unless he went forward with the work in the Ducal Palace it should be finished by others at his expense. Pressed on every hand for pictures, he still neglected the Palace, and painted the brilliant "Bacchanal," now at Madrid, for Duke Alfonso.

Ariadne reposes on the ground, insensible from wine, while a company of Menads sport about her as Theseus sails away in the distance. The most beautiful Menad, with white muslin tunic and ruby-red bodice and skirt, has the exquisite face and form of Violante, with a violet or pansy on her breast. The painter was now over forty, and still seemed to bear Violante on his heart.

Ariadne, daughter of Minos, King of Crete,

according to the legend, fell in love with Theseus, when he came to Crete to kill the Minotaur, and gave him a thread by means of which he found his way out of the labyrinth. In gratitude he offered her his hand. She fled with him, and he deserted her on the Island of Naxos, where Bacchus found her and married her. On the "Bacchanal" a couplet shows its motive, —

"Who drinks not over and over again,
Knows not what drinking is,"

Alfonso d'Este was delighted with this gay picture. Although Lucretia Borgia, whom he never loved, had been dead but a few months, he had married a girl in humble station, Laura Dianti, whom he loved tenderly, and who kept his fickle heart true till his death. She must have been a person of gentle and lovely nature, for the duke became kinder to everybody, and more devoted to art, literature, and the refining influences of life.

It is believed that the famous picture in the Louvre called "Titian and his Mistress" represents Laura and Alfonso. "The girl stands behind a table or slab of stone, dressing her hair, whilst a man in the gloom behind her holds, with his left hand, a round mirror, the reflection of which he catches with a square mirror in his right. Into the second of these the girl gently bends her head to look, eagerly watched by her lover, as she twists a long skein of wavy golden hair. Over the white and finely plaited linen that loosely covers her

bosom, a short green bodice is carelessly thrown, and a skirt of the same stuff is gathered to the waist by a sash of similar color. The left side of the girl's head is already dressed; she is finishing the right side, and a delightful archness and simplicity beam in the eyes as they turn to catch the semblance in the mirror. The coal-black eye and brow contrast with the ruddy hair; the chiselled nose projects in delicate line from a face of rounded, yet pure contour; and the lips, of a cherry redness, which Titian alone makes natural, are cut with surprising fineness. The light is concentrated with unusual force upon the face and bust of the girl, whilst the form and features of the man are lost in darkness. We pass with surprising rapidity from the most delicate silvery gradations of sunlit flesh and drapery, to the mysterious depths of an almost unfathomable gloom, and we stand before a modelled balance of light and shade that recalls Da Vinci, entranced by a chord of tonic harmony, as sweet and as thrilling as was ever struck by any artist of the Venetian school."

Tired with his constant labor, Titian journeyed to Conegliano, at the foot of the Venetian Alps, and painted, at his leisure, a series of frescos on the front of the Scuola di Santa Maria Nuova, in return for which he received the gift of a house, where he rested ever after, when on his way to Cadore.

In 1522 the great altar-piece of the "Resurrec-

tion" was finished for Brescia, and placed on the high altar of St. Nazaro e Celso, where it long remained an object of study by artists. Titian thought the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, in this picture, the best thing he had ever done.

Seven years had now passed since he had received the commission to paint the Hall of the Great Council. His property was to be taken from him, and, alarmed at the prospect, he worked vigorously for several weeks on the "Battle of Cadore" or the other great painting, "The Humiliation of the Emperor Barbarossa by Pope Alexander III."

Duke Alfonso was urging the overworked master for a new picture, the "Bacchus and Ariadne," now in the National Gallery of England: a picture five feet nine inches by six feet three inches. The scene is taken from the classic poem of Catullus, when Ariadne, near the shore of Naxos, flees from the presence of Bacchus, whose chariot is drawn by leopards. He was the son of Jupiter by Semele, whose death being caused by Juno, the god of the vintage was reared by nymphs in Thrace. He taught men the cultivation of the vine and the art of wine-making.

Concerning this picture, Crowe and Cavalcaselle say, "Centuries have robbed the canvas of its freshness, and restorers have done their best to remove its brightest surfaces; yet no one who looks at it even now can fail to acknowledge the magic of its enchantment. Rich harmony of drapery

tints and soft modelling, depth of shade and warm flesh, all combine to produce a highly colored glow; yet in the midst of this glow the form of Ariadne seems incomparably fair. Nature was never reproduced more kindly or with greater exuberance than it is in every part of this picture. What subtlety there is in the concentration of light on Ariadne, which alone gives a focus to the composition. What splendor in the contrasts of color, what wealth and diversity of scale in air and vegetation; how infinite is the space, how varied yet mellow the gradations of light and shade.

"There is not a single composition by Titian up to this time in which the scene and the *dramatis personæ* are more completely in unison; and, looking at these groves and cliffs and seas, or prying into the rich vegetation of the foreground, we are startled beyond measure to think that they were worked out piecemeal, that the figures were put in first and the landscape last. Nor is it without curiosity that we inquire where Titian got that landscape, where he studied that foreground; and we are forced to conclude that he forsook the workshop on the Grand Canal, where there certainly was no vegetation, even in the sixteenth century, and went to Ferrara, and there reproduced with 'botanical fidelity' the iris, the wild rose and columbine, which so exquisitely adorn the very edge of the ground on which the Satyrs tread." This picture has been copied by Rubens, Poussin, and other noted artists.

About this time the "Flora" of the Uffizi was painted, a beautiful woman with the Violante face. "She is not yet dressed, but her hair is looped up with a silken cord so as to shape the most charming puffs above the ears, falling in short and plaited waves to the bosom, leaving bare the whole of the face, the neck, and throat. No one here holds the mirrors, yet the head is bent and the eyes are turned as if some one stood by to catch the glance, and stretch a hand for the flowers; for whilst with her left Flora strives by an intricate and momentary play of the fingers, to keep fast the muslin that falls from her shoulder and the damask that slips from her form, with the other she presents a handful of roses, jessamines, and violets to an unseen lover. The white dress, though muslin-fine and gathered into minute folds, is beyond measure graceful in fall, and contrasts in texture as well as harmonizes in color with the stiffer and more cornered stuff of the rose-tinged cloth which shows such fine damask reflexes on the left arm."

At this time, also, Titian painted one of his most exquisite creations, the "Sleeping Venus," now at Darmstadt, a graceful nude figure asleep on a red couch strewn with roses, her arm under her head. The face is delicate, innocent, pensive, and refined—still the face of Violante,—one of the most beautiful, it seems to me, which an artist has ever put upon canvas. There are several replicas in England and elsewhere. The figure is not more

perfect, perhaps, than the Venus of the Uffizi, painted later for the Duke of Urbino, or the Venus of Madrid; but the face is one which I have always felt an especial pleasure in possessing.

Taine says of Titian, "He was endowed with that unique gift of producing Venuses who are real women, and colossi who are real men, a talent for imitating objects closely enough to win us with the illusion and of so profoundly transforming objects as to enkindle reverie. He has at once shown in the same nude beauty a courtesan, a patrician's mistress, a listless and voluptuous fisherman's daughter, and a powerful ideal figure, the masculine force of a sea-goddess, and the undulating forms of a queen of the empyrean. . . ."

"The infinite diversities of nature, with all her inequalities, are open to him; the strongest contrasts are within his range; each of his works is as rich as it is novel. The spectator finds in him, as in Rubens, a complete image of the world around him, a history, a psychology, in an epitomized form."

The Venus Anadyomene, now in Lord Ellesmere's collection, rising new-born but full-grown from the sea, wringing her long hair, has the features of a new model, not Violante, but the same which Titian used in his famous Magdalen. This represents a woman of about twenty-five, "with finely rounded limbs and well-modelled figure, handsome face, and streaming golden hair, and the white splendor of the entire form thrown