


The Birth of Christian Art.

HRISTIAN art began in the catacombs of Rome. In these underground passages the early Christians hid themselves from persecution. Among so many men and women there were a few artists whose energies and talents were strained to represent the different scenes in the life of Jesus Christ. The walls are still covered with these primitive paintings, which, although faulty as paintings, are full of sentiment and religious ardor. The early Christians loved these paintings, for it was under their protection that they worked and prayed in secret and in safety, until the Emperor Constantine proclaimed peace, and allowed them to worship in broad daylight. Constantine made his capital, not in Rome, but in Byzantium, since known as Constantinople, where many artists followed him: and from that time the early paintings were called Byzantine work;—by that title you must understand a sort of painting full of stiffness, which was intended to express majesty. The figures are larger than nature, Jesus Christ is represented with joined eyebrows, parted

hair and a black beard. By the side of these strange figures appeared mosaic compositions, which were made with little cubes of marble, colored and often gilt, and placed so artistically side by side that they look like paintings.

After this period came a long interval of barbarism, when Rome was overrun by Goths and Vandals, and no one thought of art or artists, and in consequence the people became more brutal. During these "Dark Ages" the monasteries alone kept science and art from being entirely forgotten. The monks paid Grecian artists to come and decorate their churches. These monks, on their side, had some idea of painting, although in a small way; it was they who illuminated the ancient missals we now so much admire. These modest monks were the artists who inaugurated the great revival of art, called the "Italian Renaissance," which began in the thirteenth century.

Where did Christian art begin?

What is the meaning of the word catacomb?

What emperor did away with the persecutions of the early Christians?

Where did Constantine make his capital?

What is Byzantine painting like?

What is the meaning of the word mosaic?

Was painting continued regularly after the Byzantine period?

During the Dark Ages who kept up the knowledge of science and art?


What did the monks do in the line of art?

Who were the modest beginners of the Italian Renaissance?

What is the meaning of the word renaissance?

The Fathers of the Italian Renaissance.

CIMABUE AND GIOTTO.

CIMABUE and Giotto are the two early painters known as the fathers of the Renaissance painting. Cimabue belonged to a good family and was born in Florence, in 1240, at a time when an able-bodied man was expected to be a soldier. As a boy he would watch with interest certain Greek artists employed in decorating churches. These men learned to know the bright boy, and they willingly taught him the little they knew. From that time Cimabue determined not to be a soldier, but to become a painter. By degrees he learned this art, and was soon known as a fresco painter. Fresco painting is now out of use. It was done in this way: the picture was carefully composed on a piece of paper, and the artist then painted it upon a wall covered with fresh plaster; painting and plaster dried together, and once dry the composition could not be retouched. Cimabue painted in this manner at Pisa the events of the life of Saint Agnes, and at Assisi the life of Saint Francis, the patron saint of that pretty Italian town. He painted,

besides these compositions, a colossal picture of the Virgin Mother seated on a throne, holding her infant son on her knees. This picture became such a favorite that a crowd of devout people carried it in triumph to the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where it is still admired. Cimabue died at the age of sixty, in 1300.

Giotto (1276-1336) was of humble parentage; he himself was a shepherd boy. Cimabue had the honor of discovering this little fellow when he was drawing, in the sand, the sheep of his flock. He was so struck by his intelligence and talent that he took him to Florence and taught him to become a great artist. The pupil assisted his master in the decoration of the church of Assisi. But "The Presentation" in that church is entirely by Giotto, and is of exceeding beauty.

Giotto was called to Rome and did much work for the Pope, Boniface VIII., which unfortunately has perished. It was during the two years spent in Rome that the painter and Dante, the great Italian poet, became fast friends.

Giotto's best preserved works are to be seen at Padua, in a church called the Arena. Here are frescoes representing "The Last Judgment," "Our Saviour in Glory," "The Presentation," which was a favorite subject with him, and "The Raising of Lazarus;" this last is one of his most successful works.

Great progress had been made in the art of painting since Cimabue admired the Greek decorators; for Giotto had learned all his master could teach and had carried the art much farther. The figures under his brush became more supple, the backgrounds were no longer of plain gold, and he introduced pretty landscapes; all of which was a great step in the right direction.

What men are known as the fathers of the Italian Renaissance?

What can you tell me about Cimabue?

In what year was he born, and when did he die?

What is meant by fresco painting?

What are Cimabue's principal works?

When did Giotto live?

What do you know about him?

What are his principal works?

Whom did Giotto meet in Rome?

Who was Dante?

Where are Giotto's principal works, and what are they?

In what does Giotto's work differ from that of his master?

Religious Painters.

FRA ANGELICO, FILIPPINO LIPPI, MASACCIO, AND
BOTICELLI.

FRA ANGELICO'S (1387-1455) paintings delight all people; they are within the reach of the intelligence of those who know nothing about painting, and they please artists. Here we leave entirely behind us Byzantine art; all stiffness is banished, and we find in Fra Angelico's painting grace, poetry, and religious enthusiasm, which together form a very harmonious combination. He usually made use of the fresco method of painting, but he also painted on wood or canvas, with vegetable colors; oil painting did not begin until a little later.

At twenty the young artist entered the Dominican convent, where the hours of recreation were employed in illuminating manuscripts. Ten years later he was sent to Fiesole, a village which overlooks the city of Florence. Here he was allowed to paint as much as he liked, and he liked to paint all day long. Here he composed "The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin," painted on a wood panel which is now in the Louvre Gallery in Paris. The figures of the angels bear the type of loveliness which Fra Angelico saw in his visions.

The brotherhood of Fiesole having removed to

the convent of San Marco in Florence, Fra Angelico accompanied them, and it is there that most of his works are to be admired. There are to be seen "The Blessed Virgin with the Infant Saviour," and a "Crucifixion," with Saint Dominic kneeling at the foot of the cross; this figure is supposed to be a portrait of the artist himself.

Fra Angelico spent the last ten years of his life in Rome, painting for the Pope; while there, the archbishopric of Florence was offered to him, but his humility prevented him from accepting so important a post. He died in Rome aged sixty-eight years.

There were two painters by the name of Lippi, uncle (1412-1469) and nephew (1460-1505). In order to understand the works signed Lippi, we must put aside our modern ideas of beauty. These artists studied drawing and anatomy from living models, and painted, with great simplicity, nature as they understood it, making another stride in art; but their painting is lacking in charm, especially that of the older man. His best work was painted at the age of twenty-six; it is in the church of Santo Spirito, in Florence, and represents the Blessed Virgin erect on the first step of her throne, between two angels; the influence of Fra Angelico is here felt, but usually Lippi's painting shows a less ethereal spirit.

Lippi the nephew was of a more pleasing nature, always gay and happy. He painted in Florence in

the Brancacci chapel side by side with Masaccio, who was then the greatest painter living. "The Deliverance of Saint Peter from Prison" is his best fresco; here the figure of the sleeping guard is drawn with a masterly hand. In the Florence Museum, called the Uffizi, there are several of his compositions, among others "The Adoration of the Magi."

Masaccio (1402-1429) lived to be only twenty-seven years old, but during that short time he made his name immortal. He never became as popular as Giotto, for he was shy and many persons thought him proud. His great work was the decoration of the Brancacci chapel. He painted there five compositions. In the fresco of "The Tribute Money" Masaccio gave a truly grand pose to Our Saviour and placed the scene in a charming landscape. The fresco representing "Saint Peter Baptizing" is among the most celebrated of his works and is still an object of constant study for young artists.

Boticelli's (1446-1510) talent is more sympathetic; his Madonnas show great tenderness and the draperies are arranged with grace. The infant Jesus is often represented with a look of terror on His face, as if foreseeing his life of sorrow.

Boticelli painted some frescoes in the Sixtine chapel, in the Vatican at Rome, which would perhaps look better if they were not seen so near the

marvellous frescoes by Michael Angelo in the same chapel.

What painters lived in the first half of the fifteenth century?

When did Fra Angelico live?

Tell all you know of his life.

Did he always paint frescoes?

Where is Fiesole?

Where are Fra Angelico's most celebrated paintings?

How many painters were called Lippi?

When did they live?

Did they paint in the style of Fra Angelico?

Where are their best works?

When did Masaccio live?

Did he live to be an old man?

Where did he paint?

Are his frescoes still to be seen in the Brancacci chapel, and what do they represent?

When did Boticelli live?

Are his paintings as much wanting in charm as those of Lippi?

Precursors of the Great Masters.

PERUGINO, FRA BARTOLOMEO, ANDREA DEL SARTO,
AND CORREGGIO.

BEFORE speaking of the great geniuses of the Italian Renaissance, we still have four celebrated artists to study. These are Perugino, Fra Bartolomeo, Andrea del Sarto, and Correggio.

Pietro Perugino (1446-1524) was one of a large family. His parents found it difficult to educate the children, but as Pietro showed some disposition for drawing, he was encouraged. As soon as he could, he went to Florence, where he studied a great deal; but his life was a hard one, for he was very poor and quite unknown. But at last his talent was remarked; he was called to Rome by Sixtus IV. and there he painted frescoes in the Sistine chapel. One of his graceful compositions of those days is the Infant Christ lying on the ground adored by his Mother and two angels; it is the altar-piece in the Albani Villa near Rome.

On his return to Florence he opened a school of painting, and there young Raphael studied. Perugino is always known as the "Master of Raphael," although his talent is great enough to give him an independent position; his painting is a little wanting in inspiration and too smooth, but in those

days it was quite original. Many of his compositions are to be seen in his native town of Perugia, for there he decorated a building known as the "Cambio." He painted when in Perugia "The Marriage of the Blessed Virgin," now at Caen in France, and the triptych of the National Gallery in London, which is a very beautiful specimen of his talent. He worked to the very last and died of the plague in 1524.

Bartolomeo (1474-1517) in his youth was an enthusiastic admirer and follower of Savonarola, at one time the religious reformer of Florence; he shut himself up with the leader at the time that the convent of San Marco sustained a siege. After Savonarola's death the young painter entered the Dominican order under the name of Fra Bartolomeo. He soon became the head of a school of painting at San Marco; here he painted his well-known pictures. It is in the Florence galleries called the "Uffizi" and the "Pitti" that most of his works are to be seen. Among these the most celebrated are "The Marriage of Saint Catharine," and "The Blessed Virgin on her Throne" where she holds the infant Christ, who leans forward toward Saint John, and where two charming little angels sit at the foot of the throne.

Fra Bartolomeo's compositions are well arranged and most sympathetically painted, the figures are firmly drawn, and the draperies fall naturally and gracefully.

Andrea del Sarto (1487-1530) belonged to a family where often the daily bread was not plentiful; but happily for him, he was born with the talent which was soon to make him celebrated.

While still very young, he was employed in Florence, by the brotherhood of the Servi, to paint three frescoes; eleven years later he painted again in the same cloisters, and it is interesting to see there the difference between the two styles of painting. After finishing these frescoes, he painted many pictures, which are in public galleries; some of them were taken to France, where the king, Francis I., was so much pleased with them that he sent for the artist and wished to keep him always at his court; but as Andrea's pretty wife remained in Florence, he preferred to leave France. On his return to Florence he painted his masterpiece, a fresco over the entrance door of the "Church of the Annunziata," known all over the world as "The Madonna del Sacco." His painting is full of charm; the Madonnas all have sweet faces, and the Infant Jesus is most living; the color is rich and soft at the same time. Andrea del Sarto, like Perugino, died of the plague.

Antonio Allegri (1494-1534) was born in a little town in the north of Italy, called Correggio; his birth-place gave him the name by which he is known. He belonged to a good family; his father educated him well and encouraged his artistic taste.

He lived in his native town and probably never saw Florence or Rome, and it was at Correggio that he died at the age of forty.

Had he known the great artists of his day, he would doubtless have learned to draw more perfectly. As a draughtsman he is not above criticism; very inferior in that respect to Raphael, for instance. But, on the other hand, his color is far more beautiful and truer to life than that of Raphael. And, though his place in the world of art is lower than that of the great masters, yet no artist ever equalled him in the yearning tenderness of expression and in the charm of his religious compositions. "The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin," in the Parma Library, and "The Marriage of Saint Catherine," in the Louvre, are sufficient proofs of his superiority in this respect. Correggio frescoed two of the churches of Parma, an immense work, which would fill an ordinary lifetime; as he died young, he must have been a great worker endowed with immense facility.

Who are the four painters spoken about in this chapter?

Where did Perugino live?

What can you tell me about his life?

What did he paint?

Did he always live in Perugia?

Whose master was he?

When did Fra Bartolomeo live?

What do you know about him?

What are the names of the two galleries in Florence?

What are Bartolomeo's best known compositions?

When was Andrea del Sarto born, and when did he die?

Did he always remain in Italy?

What are his most celebrated works?

When did Correggio live?

Was he also a Florentine artist?

Why was he not as great a painter as Raphael?

Where are his most celebrated pictures, and what are they?

The Greatest Masters of the Renaissance.

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519) was born in the Castle of Vinci. Nature was very kind to him, endowing him with beauty, strength, and extraordinary aptitude for art and science. A few years of study placed him at the head of the remarkable artists then living. He went to Milan, where he established an academy of fine arts, which was to rival the one in Florence. There he was kept very busy, for he was not only a painter, but a sculptor, an architect, and a remarkable engineer.

His most celebrated painting is a fresco representing "The Last Supper" painted in the refectory of the Dominican convent of Milan, of which unfortunately but little remains; even in its present state, the head of Christ is the most touching representation of Our Lord which exists.

In the Louvre there is a Madonna in the midst of rocks, and a repetition of the same work in the National Gallery. The face is very peculiar, and the mouth has a look about it which is noticeable