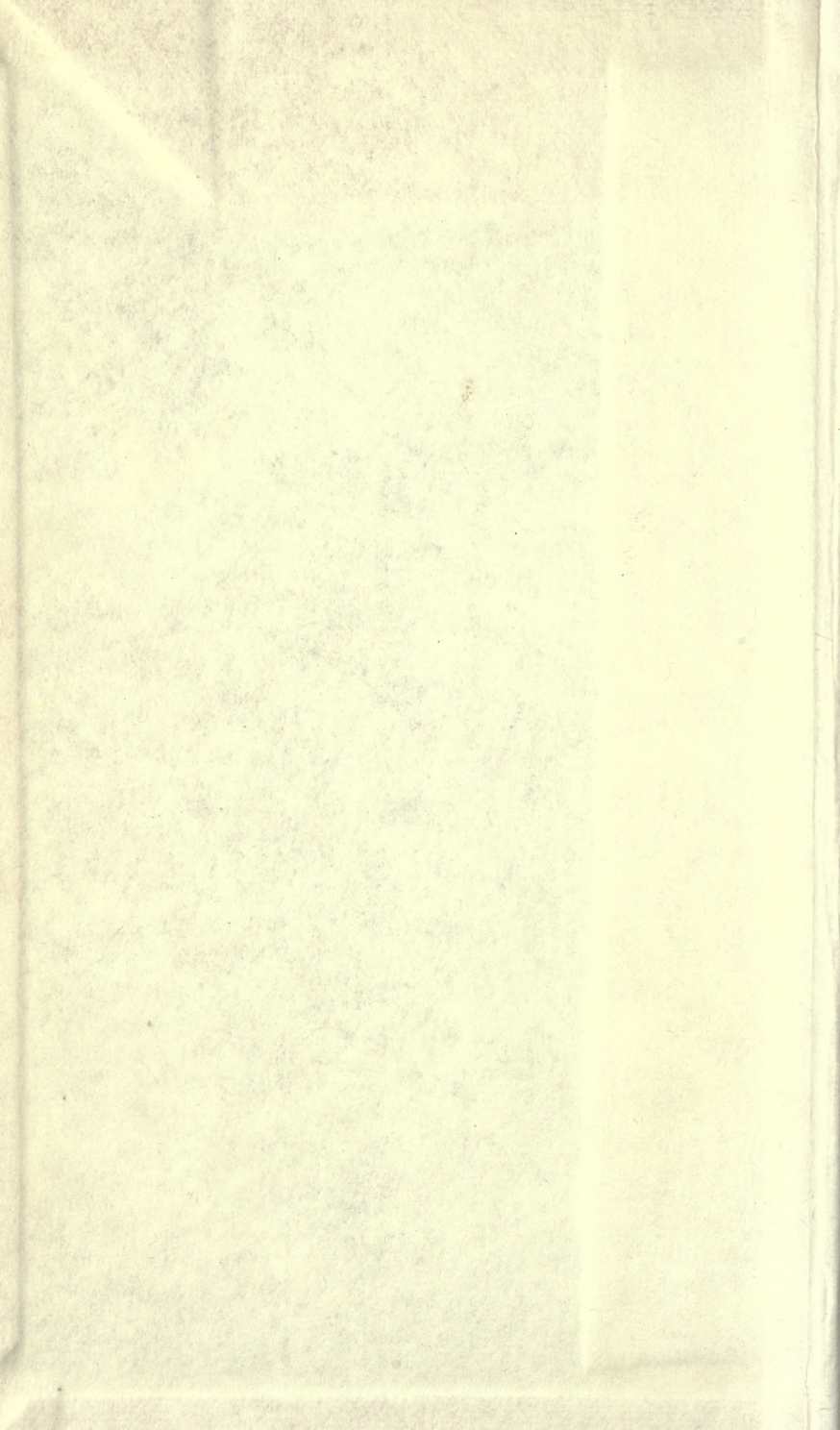
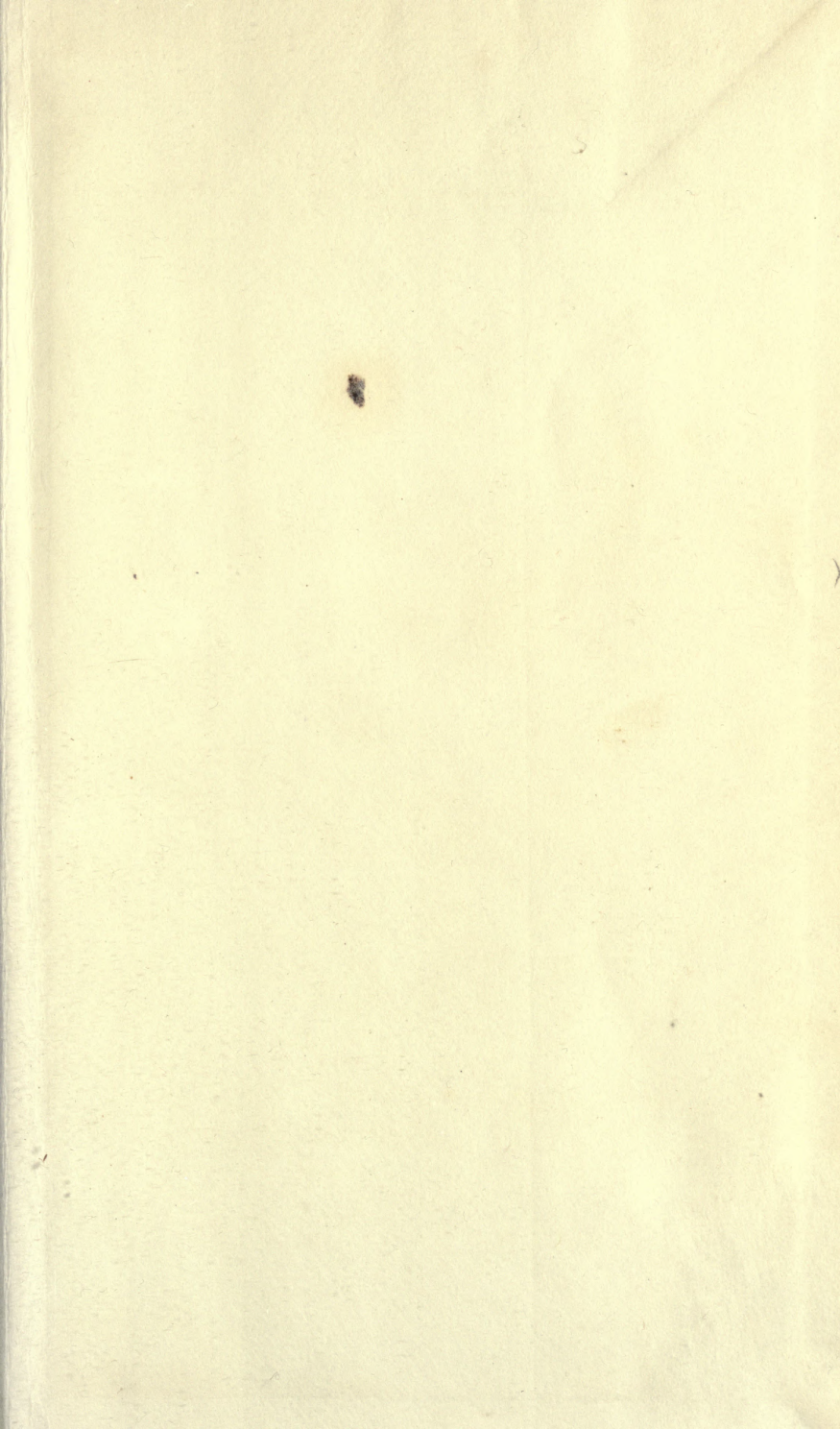


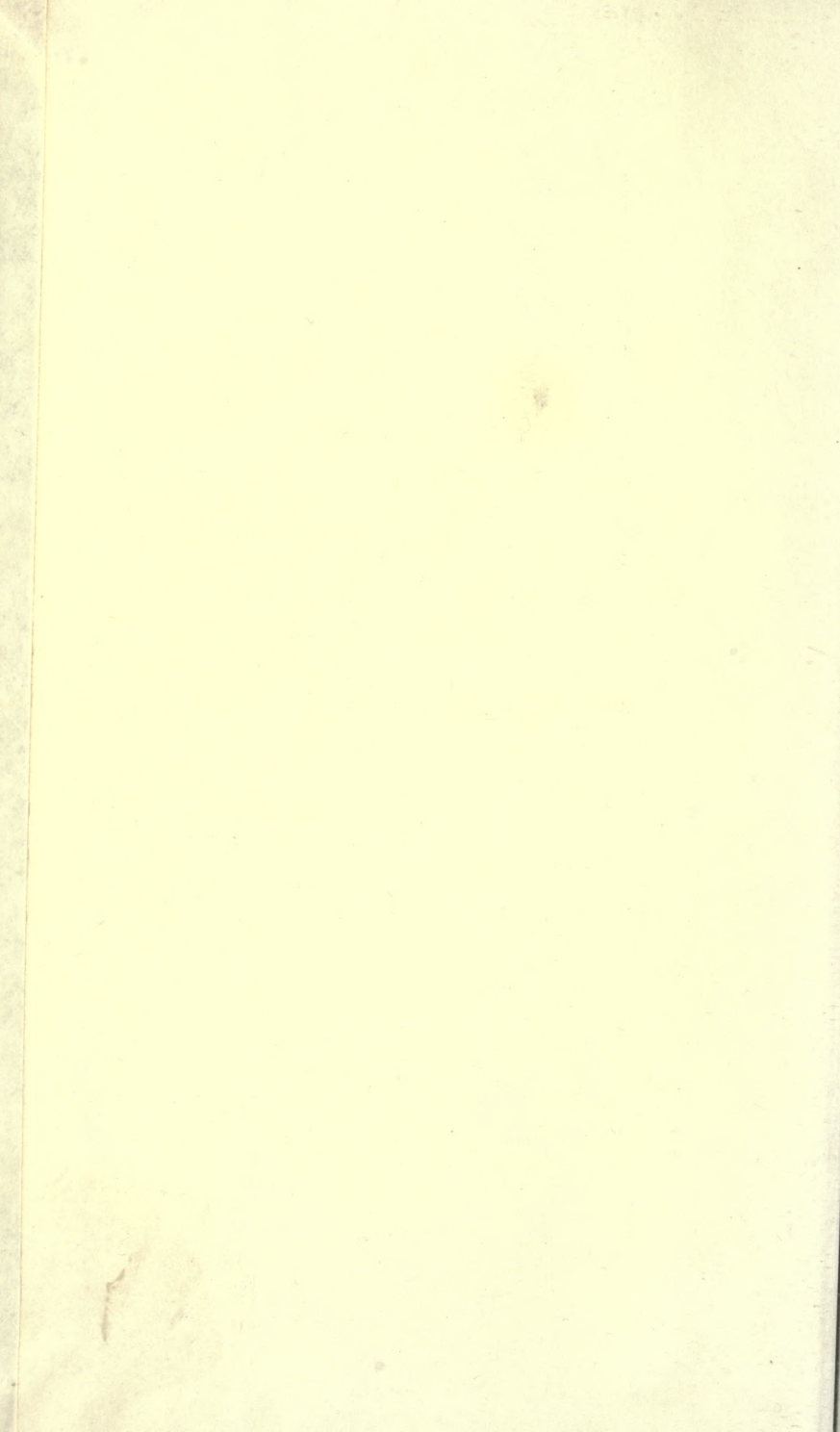
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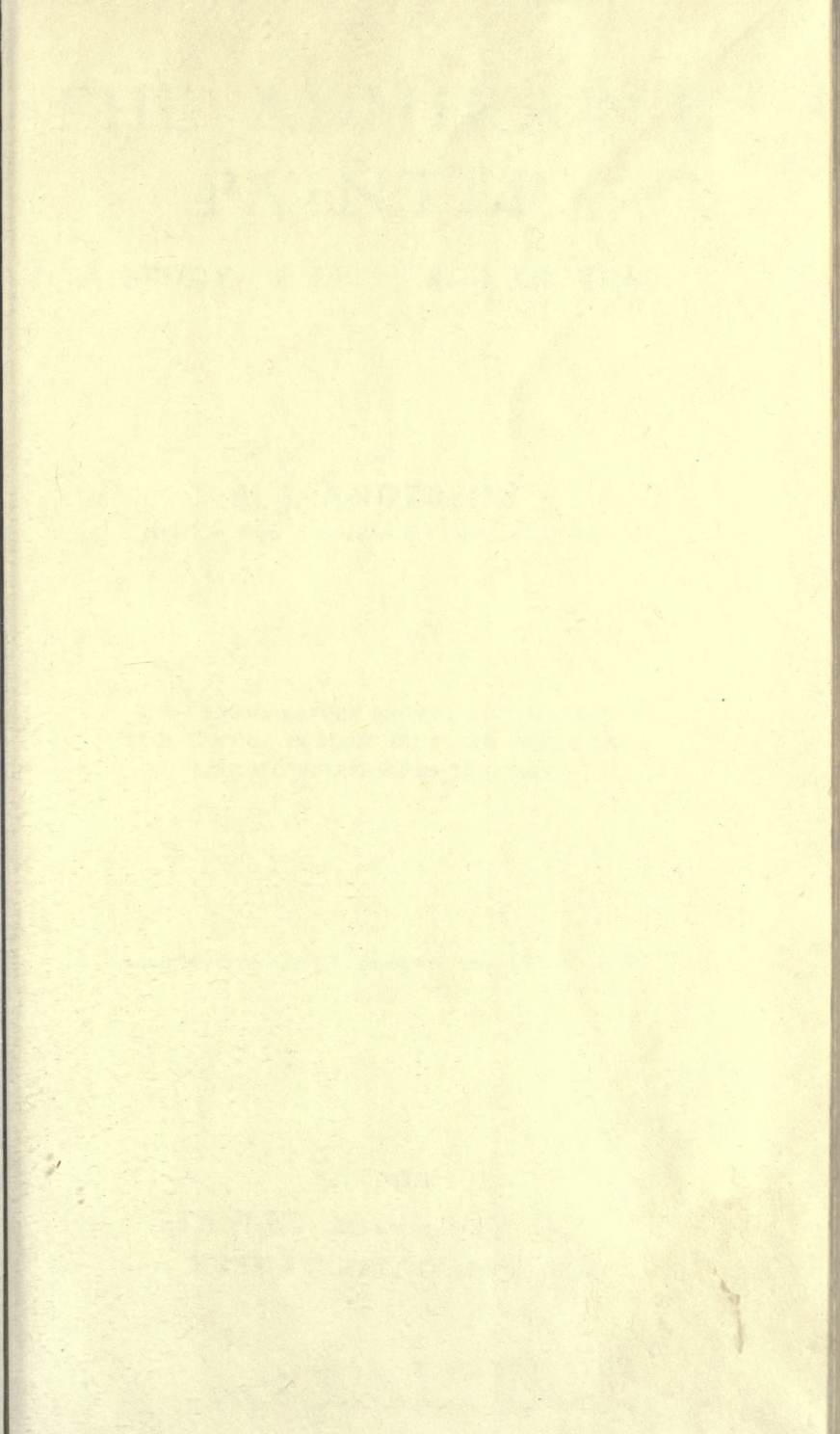


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# THE ADMIRABLE PAINTER

A STUDY OF LEONARDO DA VINCI

BY  
ARTHUR  
ALMES  
A. J. ANDERSON

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI," ETC.

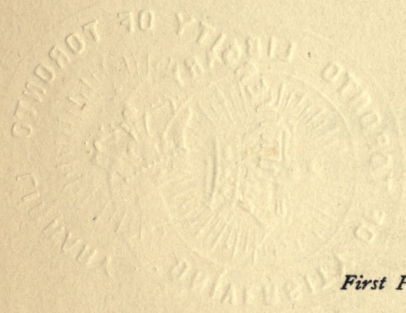
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"Admirable, in truth, was Leonardo, Ser Piero da Vinci's son!"

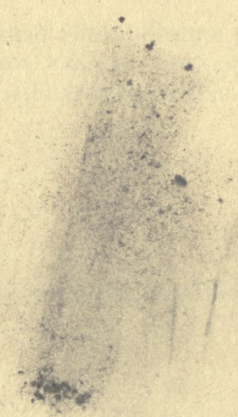
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## PREFACE

SOME months ago I was talking to the wife of one of the most popular landscape painters of our time, who had spent 1912 amongst the Higher Alps.

“All those Swiss pictures,” said she, “are packed away in the cellar !”

I have altered this story so as to hide the painter's identity, but otherwise it is true ; for if an artist is to live, he must sell his pictures ; if he is to sell his pictures, he must paint what the public demands.

Now modern writers on Art, men who are sane enough when speaking of their contemporaries, have an abominable trick of treating the Quattrocento painters as though they had been born “Old Masters”—as though Leonardo and Botticelli had been free to paint what subjects they liked, as though their slightest sketch had won a ready sale, and as though the hardly earned fame of the matured artist had shed its light upon his schoolboy efforts. Let Germany invade England, and who would dream of a London painter receiving a commission ? But let the armies of Rome and Naples have invaded Tuscany, reducing Florence to a state of plague-

stricken famine, and we find our modern critics scratching their heads and wondering why on earth Botticelli had become lazy and Leonardo idle.

This is no exaggeration ! In his monumental history of Leonardo's first period, Dr. Jens Thiis fails to connect the cessation of Leonardo's work upon the San Bernardo altarpiece, commissioned by the Government of Florence, with the Pazzi Conspiracy and the resulting war. In his *Italian Painters* Berenson fails to differentiate between the artistic atmosphere of Milan under Lodovico Sforza and the decadent spirit which resulted from the French occupation. Whilst Müntz and his following, regardless of the fact that Leonardo did not finish a single important picture until after his master's death, attribute Verrocchio's artistic development to his pupil's influence. Surely the time has come for artistic criticism to base its conclusions upon the sound foundation of history !

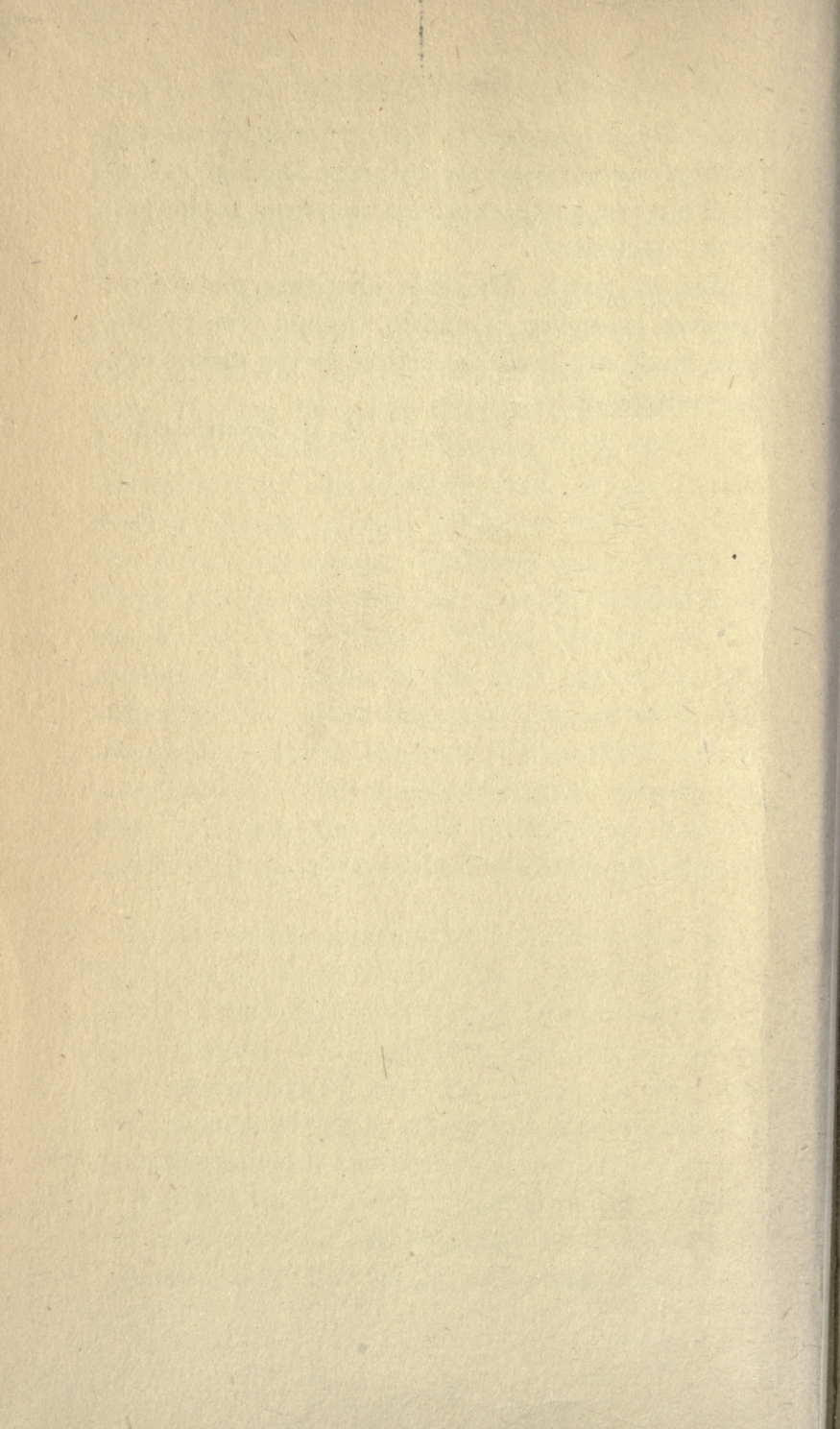
In the present pages I have taken a hint from Leonardo's own writings, and I have held up a mirror to history so that it may reflect real people, real opinions, real doings : across the surface of this mirror there flits the image of the real Leonardo, as we know him from his notebooks, his paintings and his sketches.

But, if I had tried to reconstruct the whole of his strenuous life, the volume would have been too long and too wearisome ; consequently, I

have only attempted to give a series of moving pictures, joined together by some short record of his doings or some short extract from a contemporary document.

Alas, for Art! The ever changing pictures of the ever changing Leonardo, though true to life, have made my book as restless as the flicker of a cinematograph!

A. J. ANDERSON



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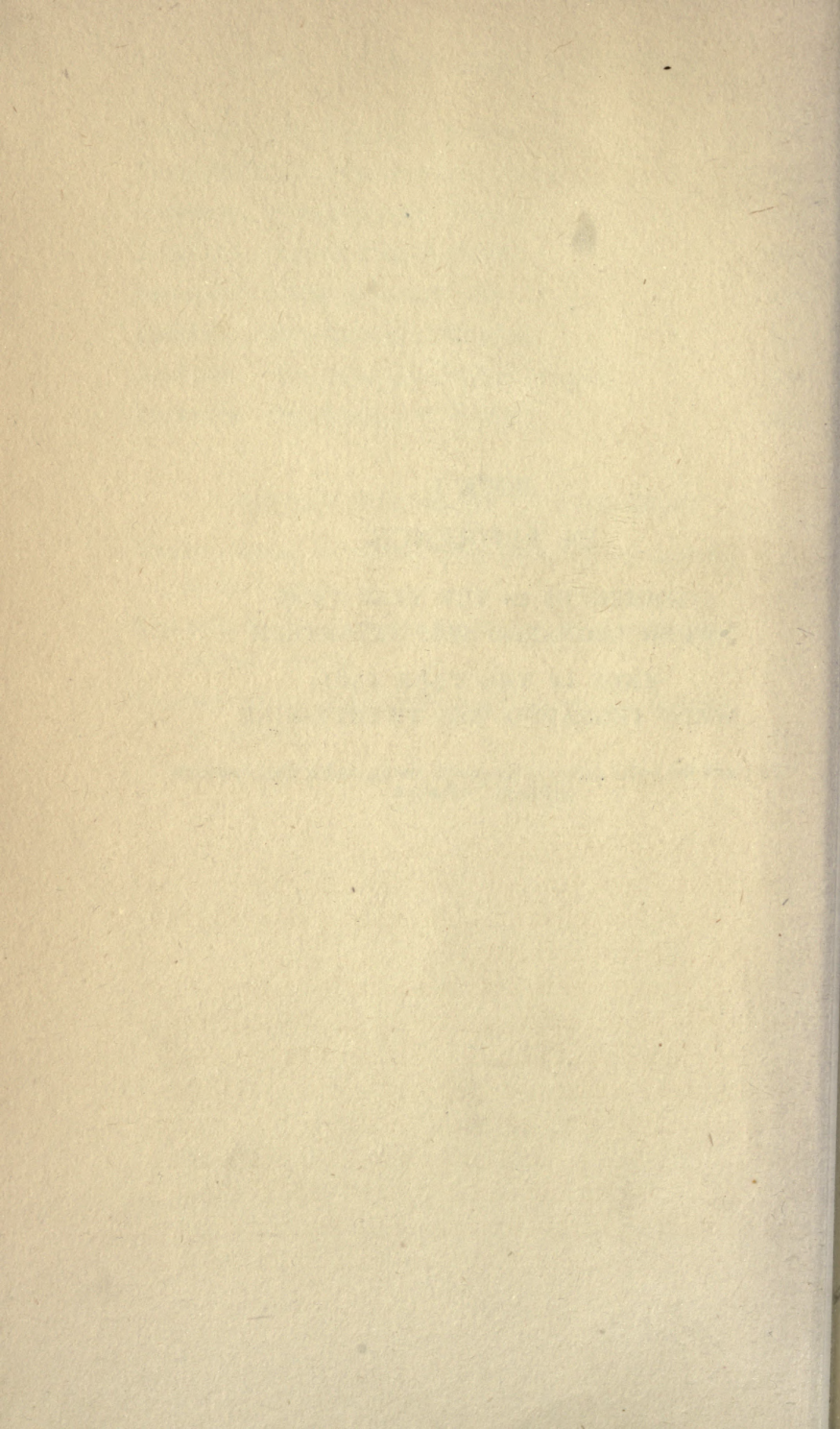
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BOOK I  
IN FLORENCE

COMMENCES IN THE YEAR 1469,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS SEVENTEEN

ENDS IN THE YEAR 1481,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS TWENTY-NINE

“In youth the noble nature is temperate, strong, and loving, courteous  
and loyal.”—DANTE



## PROLOGUE



CATERINA, the beautiful peasant girl from the slopes of the White Mountain, which lies above the town of Vinci and the Valley of the Arno, glanced round the lawyer's office as though it were a cage; then she pressed her baby desperately to her and gazed at young Ser Piero, the notary, wild-eyed.

"You must have him?" said she.

Ser Piero met her eyes without flinching. "If our Leonardo is to be brought up as a gentleman," he said, "it is a necessity."

"You cannot leave him with me for a year—for two years—until he is weaned and can toddle?"

"See here, my Caterina," he answered gently, "you must be wise and prudent: also, you must do what is best for our son! Observe!" he continued. "Next week I bring my wife home from Florence. She is but sixteen, and has been well and religiously brought up. She finds my little son, Leonardo, waiting for her. She takes him as

mine, and loves him as though he were her own. Bene ! ”

“ Madonna ! ” cried the girl.

“ But observe ! ” said Ser Piero. “ If you were to take our child for two years and then bring him to the Casa da Vinci so that he might be adopted : by then my wife might have a son, or perhaps two sons of her own, and she would regard our Leonardo as a bastard and an interloper. No ! you must leave him now ! ”

“ Would to God,” she wailed, “ that I had never met you in the vineyards that are below Monte Albano ! ”

“ We walked among the vines,” he answered ; “ we gathered the fruit ; and this is the vintage. The grapes having been pressed, it behoves us to see that the wine is well and carefully matured.”

“ Us ? ” she cried. “ Madonna mia ! Madonna mia ! This is a cruel world for women ! ”

“ See here, my Caterina ! ” he answered, still speaking gently, but with much firmness. “ I am treating you very well indeed ! ”

“ Heaven ! ” she cried.

“ Have not I adopted our son so that I may bring him up in an honourable profession ? ” he retorted. “ Have not I furnished you with a dowry, and found you a steady husband in Acchatabrigo di Piero del Vacca who has a farm of his own ? Would you, now that the first gust of passion is over, lead an irregular life ? Would you, now that I am beginning to take my father’s place in Florence, have me lose my reputation as a serious man of business ? ”

Caterina clutched at her baby as though she

could never give it up. Then she almost flung it into the arms of the man who had once been her lover and staggered out of his office.

Thus came Leonardo, Ser Piero da Vinci's son ; and whilst his father was pushing his way in Florence and making his reputation as a serious man of business, Leonardo lived in the Casa da Vinci under the care of his grandfather and of his youthful stepmother Albiera Amadori.

Instruction he had none—unless one omits Latin, philosophy and the science of mathematics, and calls the rudiments of writing and arithmetic an instruction. Education he derived from an intercourse with his gently born stepmother, who had no children of her own, from a manly, open-air life among the vine-dressers of Monte Albano, and from an instinctive love of Nature.

So, although he could not solve a simple problem in geometry or translate a line of the classics, and although he failed to acquire those habits of application and perseverance which come through early training, Leonardo learnt to understand the secrets of vine culture and the mysteries of irrigation, he learnt to study the flight of birds and the way of horses and the manner in which the evening mist, creeping up the Valley of the Arno, softens the distance into a silver dreamland. He also learnt to love music, and became skilled in that trick of impromptu verse which was to serve him so well in the future.

When Leonardo was nine, Mona Albiera died.

Four years later, Ser Piero da Vinci, who was atoning for his early indiscretion by an ardent devotion towards the Sacrament of Marriage, took him a second wife in the person of Francesca, the fifteen-year-old daughter of a brother notary, Ser Giovanni Lanfredini.

In the year 1469 Leonardo's grandfather, Ser Antonio da Vinci, having died,

Ser Piero da Vinci, aged forty-two,  
Mona Francesca, his wife, aged nineteen,  
and Leonardo, his son, aged seventeen,  
moved to Florence, and settled down in a house that was situated in the Piazza di S. Firenze and conveniently close to the Palazzo de' Priori, with which august body Ser Piero had much business.



## CHAPTER I

### IN A FLORENTINE WORKSHOP



THE September sun blazed over Florence. Outside, a hot breeze from the south licked up the dust of the streets into whirls and spirals, and powdered a Vallombrosan monk who was entering the Porta alla Croce until the poor fellow was as dry as a lime-kiln. Inside Verrocchio's workshop, the sweat poured down the faces of the

Master and his assistants until they felt like sardines that were stewing in oil.

“The essential of a ball is,” remarked Andrea Verrocchio drily, “that it should be round!” For his assistants were striving to fit one of the metal ribs which should presently go to form the framework of the huge ball that was to top the dome of the cathedral into the polished wooden gauge, and they were meeting with but poor success.

A fine bottega was the bottega of Verrocchio. There was the outer workshop, where castings were rough-filed and metal beaten into shape, or where the marble from Carrara was chipped and flaked into the form of statues; there was the second workshop, where the finer chisellings and carvings were done, where panels of wood were coated with a gesso-surface of lime and glue ready for painting, where the Master himself modelled clay into statues, altarpieces and fountains that were to be cast in bronze or carved in marble; and, lastly, there was the inner workshop, where the beautifully finished surface of the paintings could be kept free from dust, where the finer modelling of wax could be kept safe from grit, and where Andrea put the last touches to the silver-work for which his workshop was so famous. Now the whole of Verrocchio's school, foreman, journeymen and apprentices, was in the outer workshop, intent on the metal rib which was to form part of the framework of the huge palla that was to top the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore.

“Oh! Fool!” cried Verrocchio, for Francesco

di Simone, his foreman, was using violence in his attempt to fit the rib within the gauge. Then he laughed, and continued in quiet ridicule: "Doubtless God might have made a ball square or oval like a lemon or corrugated like a sea-shell, but He has made it round! The substance of a sphere may be of any material you wish, but its accident is its roundness!"

"This rib is barely a thumb-nail's thickness out of truth," grumbled Francesco, "and the error occurs, not where it can be seen from below, but where it curves upwards to take the cross." Nevertheless, he reached out his hand for the file which a prentice held ready.

"Though only the swallows should see it," replied Verrocchio sternly, "no imperfect work leaves my workshop!"

"Besides," broke in a young journeyman, "the addition of even a nail's thickness would make a considerable difference in covering the circumference of so large a sphere."

"Nonsense!" laughed Verrocchio. "Add a nail's thickness to the surface of an orange, or add a nail's thickness to the surface of this palla, and, in either case, you add but some three nails' thickness to the circumference!"

"You mean," asked the journeyman, doubting, "that if one were to move the walls of Florence one braccio's distance outward on every side, one would only add three braccia to the circumference of the city?"

"About three braccia and one-third of a braccio," answered Verrocchio. And, as this 'Tista was a youth of much promise, the Master

sent him for pencil and paper so that he might prove to him by the science of mathematics the truth of the principle. It was Verrocchio's thoroughness, even more than the brilliance of his invention, that made Andrea the finest teacher of his day.

Presently there was a cry from the workmen. After several attempts, so as to make certain that the error was not being over-corrected, the rib had fitted the gauge as closely as a girl fits into the arms of her lover.

"See!" cried Francesco, puffing out his chest and taking the whole credit to himself. "No faulty work leaves our workshop!"

"Not whilst Francesco di Simone is my foreman!" answered the Master, his eyes twinkling.

"I should think not!" replied Francesco complacently.

All the same, Verrocchio knew that he could trust Francesco, just as he could trust any of the craftsmen who worked under him, and that if he had given Francesco the entire responsibility of the work, Francesco would have been more particular than the Master himself. For Verrocchio's way was this: if he himself undertook a task, he would accomplish that task even to the tiniest detail, and the work would be turned out with all the exquisite finish that he had learnt from old Giuliano de' Verrocchi the goldsmith; if, on the other hand, he entrusted a task to one of his workmen, he would trust that task to that man, and the fellow would work for the honour of the bottega. But Andrea Verrocchio's rule had its exceptions, as the following incident will testify.

The workmen sweated over the palla: by Bacchus, how they sweated! The Vallombrosan monk toiled through the dust-dry streets: by Heaven, how he parched! Then, just as Andrea had stooped to examine the rib and assure himself of its perfect adjustment, the monk entered the workshop and laid his hand on Andrea's shoulder.

"Messere," he said, "concerning the altarpiece which you are painting for our convent——?"

"Eh?" murmured the artist, mopping his forehead and striving to recall particulars of the altarpiece referred to.

"The painting of the Baptism, which you were executing for the Convent of San Salvi."

"Ah!" murmured Verrocchio.

"The Prior trusts that the painting is by now completed!"

Without a word Andrea led the way into the inner workshop, and picking out a panel that was wrapped in a linen cloth from a multitude of its fellows, began to unwrap it; then he remembered the law of hospitality, and offered the monk a glass of wine.

Now the wiles of Satan are various: to one he proffers a pretty face, with carmine cheeks and pouting lips; to another he whispers of a hair-shirt: to the sensualist he suggests sensuality; to the rigorist he suggests uncalled-for mortifications until the poor wretch becomes as puffed up and empty as a bladder. There was no reason why the monk should have refused refreshment; there was every reason why he should have accepted the alms of hospitality; but as he passed through the streets he had caught sight of a Friar

sitting at the door of a wine shop, and the glimpse of the mendicant had offended him.

"A cup of cold water," said he.

"Pish!" cried Andrea. "In this heat, water would give you gripes, or cramp of the stomach, or even an ague!"

But the monk was all for water, until Verrocchio, with many protests, had filled him a Venetian glass from the pitcher with which he moistened his clay for modelling.

"Now," said the monk, "the picture!"

"There!" said the artist, standing the panel upon a chest so that the light would catch it at the right angle. The painting was complete, save for the figures of two angels, and these were scarcely even sketched in.

"Messer Andrea," enquired the Vallombrosan coldly, "how long is it since you set our commission on one side?"

"Two years—four years—six years! How can one remember such matters?"

"To me," replied the monk, "such disregard of a commission seems a matter that calls for memory!"

"Listen, Padre," said Verrocchio, "and tell me whether the history of this painting is not a history that one should strive to forget."

The Vallombrosan took a sip of the tepid water, and, folding his hands beneath his scapular, seated himself on the edge of a workman's stool.

"Some years after I had finished my studies with Alesso Baldovinetti," began Verrocchio, "your Prior, who had seen the panel of the Baptism which Alesso had painted upon the

Sacristy cupboard in the Church of the Annunziata, commissioned this altarpiece. But no sooner had I commenced the panel than your pious fathers began to interfere : the Christ must stand so ; the Baptist must stand so ; the dove must descend so ! What did your Prior care about truth to anatomy or truth to nature in comparison with truth to tradition ? Any improvement of mine was said to be an innovation, any innovation was said to savour of heresy ; until, at length, losing heart, I placed the panel on one side."

"The Father Prior made no objection to the picture as it stands ?" asked the monk.

"No !" answered Verrocchio.

"He made no objection to the landscape that is behind the figures ?"

"No, Padre !" answered Verrocchio. "The landscape pleased him."

"Then," said the monk, smiling kindly, "you have only to finish those two angels which you have already begun, send the picture to the convent, and you will receive payment. It is simple !"

Andrea rose, and, going over to a cupboard, rummaged amongst his portfolios. Presently he returned with the study of an angel's head, and set it up against the panel.

"How do you like this ?" he asked.

"It is very beautiful !" answered the monk.

"And yet," cried Andrea, "your Prior objected to the angel's eyes because they were cast down. It was then that I put away my picture !"

The Vallombrosan looked, sighed and hesitated. Perhaps, if he had accepted the wine of hospitality,

he might have tried to pacify the artist and smooth over the matter with the Father Prior : but he had refused the wine ; the water was unpleasantly lukewarm ; and the balance of his mind tilted upwards towards austerity and righteousness.

“ I was wrong ! ” he said. “ Those cast-down eyes show either a consciousness of self or that humility which is consequent on sin : the eyes of an angel should look upwards, seeking to fathom God’s mysteries ! ”

“ If,” suggested Andrea, “ the angel’s eyes were only looking upwards, then the picture would be altogether satisfactory ? ” And he gave a short, dry laugh.

“ Altogether ! ” answered the monk.

“ And you value what I, as a layman, consider but a small matter—namely, those upturned eyes—at a higher value than the beauty of the face which I have drawn ? ”

“ Certainly ! ” answered the monk.

“ Then,” said Andrea, “ your Prior shall have his altarpiece within a few weeks ! ” And, turning to the Vallombrosan, who was preparing to take his departure, he again pressed him to take a glass of wine. But the Father refused, and shortly took his leave.

“ ’Tista ! ” called Verrocchio, almost before the monk had left the bottega. “ Come here ! ”

And when the journeyman had entered the inner workshop the Master asked him : “ Tell me, ’Tista, is it not true that, whether one adds a nail’s thickness to the surface of the palla, or whether one adds a nail’s thickness to the surface



of an orange, one only adds about three nails' thickness to either circumference? "

And 'Tista answered: "It is true, Master!"

Again he asked him: "Is it not true that, whether one adds a pair of upturned eyes to the painting of the Master, or whether one adds a pair of upturned eyes to the painting of the pupil, in either case one adds a pair of upturned eyes to the picture?"

And 'Tista answered that he supposed it was so.

"Then," said Verrocchio, "finish that altarpiece of the Baptism for the Convent of San Salvi!"

The lad blushed as red as an orange with pleasure, for this was the most important work that had been entrusted to him.

"You may use what you can of my studies," said Verrocchio; "but be careful that you make both angels looking upwards!"

And, with a chuckle, Andrea Verrocchio went into the outer workshop to superintend the palla for the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore.

## CHAPTER II

### AN ARTIST'S PROSPECTS



ANDREA VERROCCHIO, sculptor, architect, goldsmith, metal-worker, bell-founder, armourer, clock-maker, modeller in wax or terra-cotta, designer of banners and painter of altar-pieces, looked at Ser Piero da Vinci, and shook his head.

"This Florence of ours," said he, "seems filled with the fathers of boys who draw like Apelles! But I would have you know, Ser Piero, that painters swarm like the fleas on a Neapolitan, and that for one who makes a living, ten starve: take the clever young Sandro Botticelli——"

"You mean him who works for the Pollaiuoli?"

"The same—he who painted that Fortitude for the Signoria—he is leaving the Pollaiuoli in order to set up his own bottega, and I tell you that it will be years before he has a spare florin in his pocket."

"That is mere assumption on your part," replied the lawyer. "On the other hand, Sandro may do very well indeed."

“ Nonsense ! ” cried the painter, with some heat. “ I tell you that there is no money in the craft, and that the craftsman is altogether dependent on the whims of those who order paintings ! ”

“ I am not without some influence,” answered Ser Piero drily, “ the Convent of Santa Annunziata—the Signoria—even the Casa Medici !——”

“ Nor am I without influence,” retorted Verrocchio, “ and yet I can scarcely afford a pair of shoes ! ”

“ With your large business,” suggested Ser Piero, “ if it had not been for the continual drain on your pocket, you would have been very well off indeed ! ”

With a shrug of his shoulders, Verrocchio dismissed those unfortunate private affairs which made him the milch-cow of improvident relations, and returned to the attack. “ If you insist on placing your Leonardo in my bottega,” said he, “ one of two things must happen : either the lad will remain a journeyman, earning, at the most, some two florins a month and his board ; or else he will set up on his own account, in which case he will earn nothing—or less than nothing ! ”

“ Less than nothing ? ” enquired Ser Piero, smiling. “ How can that be ? ”

“ It is very simple ! ” replied the artist. “ He will receive the order for a painting, with a promise that fifty florins will be paid on delivery. He will have to advance thirty florins for the frame and gilding, he will have to advance fifteen florins for his workmen’s wages—that makes forty-five florins in all. Then, when the picture is almost finished, his patron will find some fault with the workman-

ship or composition, and will refuse to pay him a penny. It is as simple as skinning walnuts ! ”

“ But,” urged Ser Piero, “ men like the Pollaiuoli must be making very large fortunes ! ”

“ The Pollaiuoli, indeed ! ” cried Andrea. “ For five florins, Antonio Pollaiuolo would solder a bronze tail on to a statue of San Michele ! I am speaking of the true artist who loves his work ! ” And, without more ado, he plunged into his story of the Baptism, which 'Tista had just completed for the Vallombrosan monks of San Salvi ; and he removed the covering that protected the panel from the dust.

“ Compare, Ser Piero,” said he, glancing first at 'Tista's completed angels, and then at his own sketch of an angel's head, and, growing eloquent, “ Compare, Ser Piero, the finished work with the rejected drawing ! Note the masterly way in which 'Tista's angel is looking up at—God knows what ! Note the fervent manner in which his second angel is gazing at the Baptist's chest ! And yet these good monks of San Salvi are more than content with 'Tista's work, whilst they regard the downcast eyes of my poor angel with pious horror ! ”

“ Poof ! ” ejaculated Ser Piero da Vinci, pouching out his cheeks so that he might expel his breath the more vehemently.

“ Heaven ! ” cried Verrocchio, all of a tingle. “ After this, I shall never touch colours again ! ”

“ Gently, my friend ! ” urged the lawyer. “ Wait until you get your next commission ! ”

The artist took a few quick turns up and down his workshop, then he faced the notary. “ Wait

until I get my next commission, you say ? ” cried he. “ Let me wait until the fig-trees bear olives and monks see reason ! My next commission may be flung into the Arno for all the use that I shall make of it ! ” And, clearing his throat, he spat on the floor.

But Ser Piero was used to dealing with impatient clients who must be treated tactfully ; besides, he knew how to appeal to reason. “ Andrea,” said he, “ it seems to me that both the Christ and the Baptist, in your picture, show much of the harshness which stamped the painting of Alesso Baldovinetti your master—that these figures are more like Pollaiuolo’s work than your own—that they lack the dignity and refinement which you have now acquired. Tell me the truth ! Were not you sick of this picture, before ever you quarrelled with the Prior ? ”

Andrea looked down and frowned, then he looked up at his friend with manifest admiration. “ Piero,” he answered, “ you are a very clever fellow indeed, and what you say is very true : my rendering of the Baptism has long ceased to please me ! ”

“ But,” continued Ser Piero, “ suppose you were to receive a fresh commission, one that you could start anew with all your present skill and mastery to assist you ! Suppose it were a subject that would appeal to you—a Nativity, or perhaps an Annunciation ! Then, believe me, instead of flinging this commission into the Arno, you would throw yourself into the work with the zeal of a boy of twenty.”

Andrea Verrocchio smiled self-consciously, and,

with somewhat the air of a child who has been caught in an indiscretion, he lifted up a heap of drawings and produced a sketch. "There has been some talk," said he, "of an Annunciation for the monks of Monte Oliveto." And he placed the drawing in Ser Piero's hands.

This was the long, low sketch of a garden ; and, within the garden knelt two figures. The angel Gabriel was kneeling as befits the bearer of such a message, his eyes intent on the face of the Madonna. Our Lady was also kneeling, with a humility that was indescribably sweet and gracious. Ser Piero drew a long breath, for there was a direct simplicity about this picture which appealed to all that was best in him.

"You see," said Verrocchio, "that I have made San Gabriello looking up : there can be no heresy in that picture !"

"As you say," answered Ser Piero, "there can be no question of heresy ! San Gabriello is a very good angel indeed !"

For some minutes they kept silence, Ser Piero holding the drawing at arm's length, whilst the painter watched him intently. At last he returned it with a sigh.

"I do not know what you have done to this, Andrea," he said. "It is unlike anything I have seen, and it is very beautiful. Now," said he, "let us consider my Leonardo !"

Andrea rose, and busied himself with bringing a flask of old Chianti and a couple of glasses ; for business is business, and business is best discussed over a glass of wine. He filled the glasses, held his up to the light, cleared his throat, and spoke :

“ The painter’s life is a hard life. The painter has all the disadvantages of the craftsman ; he can be ordered here, he can be ordered there, he can be interfered with at every stroke of his brush ; whilst, on the other hand, he has no certainty of fixed wages or of a regular occupation. You have no son except Leonardo, why do not you train him in your profession so that he may succeed to a business that is worth having ? ”

“ He is altogether ignorant of Latin, and he lacks the application that is essential to the study of the law.”

And Verrocchio asked : “ If, as you say, you have influence with the Medici, why do not you persuade Piero de Medici to find Leonardo a situation in one of his banks ? ”

And Ser Piero answered : “ Leonardo has no talent for business, nor has he that scholarship which would win him favour with Messer Lorenzo.”

And Verrocchio asked : “ If Leonardo has no gift for either business or scholarship, why do not you find him an appointment in the customs ? That seems to be the refuge for all those who have influence, yet lack talent ! ”

“ You are assuming that the boy lacks talent ! ” answered Ser Piero, smiling. And, picking up one of those large portfolios in which lawyers carry legal documents, he took out a handful of drawings.

One glance, and Verrocchio whistled like a street boy.

“ Oh—ho ! ” he cried. “ You should have shown me these, instead of wasting my time over empty discussion ! Florence may be filled with fathers who think that their sons can draw, but——!

Heaven!" he cried. "Look at the certainty of this shoulder, and the indecision of the elbow which is about to move! Look at the firm, bold line of this calf, and the broken line where the muscles of the buttocks strain with walking! That boy cannot only draw; he can observe! He cannot only observe; he can also reason! He cannot only reason, but he can also reduce his reasoning to drawing! Look at this sketch! See how——" And the Master spoke on, with all the enthusiasm that a monk spends on virtue, or a poet on love. And, now, Ser Piero was watching Verrocchio as closely as Verrocchio had watched Ser Piero when he was examining the sketch of the Annunciation. Presently he spoke.

"Well, Andrea," said he, "what do you think of the lad's prospects as a painter?"

"By God!" cried the other. "If you do not send him to my bottega at once, I will spit on you as I pass you in the street! He is the pupil that I have always prayed for!"

"But," objected the lawyer, his eyes twinkling, "you said that there was no money in the craft!"

"And I say so still," replied the artist, nodding with decision, "——at least, in Florence!" Then he refilled the glasses, and became vastly business-like.

"I would have you know," said he, "that Florence is a good city for the young artist; for in Florence the keen air produces quickness in perception and energy in execution, and the competition of so many clever painters excites ambition. I would also have you know that my bottega is the best place in which a youth could



learn his craft ; for in my bottega the cleverest men of Florence meet together, so that they may criticise my latest statue for the Medici or my latest metal-work for the Signoria, and these inspect the work of my pupils, blaming what is bad, praising what is good, and always on the look out for new talent."

"Yes?" answered Ser Piero doubtfully. For although his friend's argument promised training, emulation and encouragement to the young artist, it did not hold out any hope of financial success.

"As I say," continued Andrea, voicing Ser Piero's thoughts, "Florence is the best place in which a young craftsman may obtain perfection, especially in painting, but she is a most cruel mother! For, having trained her artist, she will starve him; and, having starved him, she will forget him."

"This is a pretty reason for me to send my Leonardo to your workshop!" answered Ser Piero, with a sniff.

"If, however," continued Verrocchio, sipping his wine calmly, "one who has obtained sufficient skill and reputation in Florence desires to do more than merely live from day to day, as do the beasts that perish, and desires to become rich, he may leave Florence and seek another market for his skill and for the reputation which has been conferred upon him by our city."

"Ah!" cried Ser Piero.

"Poor Fra Filippo"—and Verrocchio crossed himself, for Fra Filippo Lippi had only been dead a fortnight—"in spite of the unfortunate story of

his marriage, in spite of his own ill-health, is said to have earned a considerable fortune at Prato and Spoleto, and there are larger cities than these."

"Per Bacco!" cried the lawyer. "There is Rome!"

"Which ever hungers after paintings, and which can produce no painters. There is also Milan, which is a very rich city. There is also Venice, whose painters cannot compare with ours." But, in this last statement, it is to be feared that Verrocchio spoke only from the Florentine standpoint.

"There are also," cried Ser Piero, "Hungary, France and Germany!" And the two friends fell to discussing the probabilities of Leonardo's artistic career, its possibilities, and even such day-dreams as passed the realms of possibility.

At length Andrea replenished the glasses, for the wine was old and mellow, and the glasses were but small. "Piero," said he, "they tell me that a pretty girl will grant one a kiss, more through favour than as the reward of actual merit."

"They tell you!" quoth Piero. "And this from the virtuous Andrea! I would have you know, my friend, that in court—whether it be the court of the Mercatanti or the court of Venus—one does not form conclusions from hearsay evidence!"

"Tut! tut!" answered Andrea. "Conclusions without evidence are not admitted; and, as an honourable man, you must know that such evidence as you suggest is forbidden!"

"Alas!" sighed Ser Piero; "I was wrong, very wrong indeed! Bene! They tell you——?"

“Your Leonardo is a fine lad, with some skill in music and much charm of manner.”

“Fie!” cried the lawyer. “What has my Leonardo to do with kissing? I tell you that he is as great a celibate as yourself!”

“We painters,” continued the artist, unabashed, “are mostly of humble origin, with but little instruction and less education; and the scholars and poets—especially the poets—are wont to look down on us, saying that we are no artists because we work with our hands. If your Leonardo acquired some scholarship, and cultivated his gift of music, horsemanship, and other accomplishments, he would hold a very different position to that of most painters.”

“Madonna!” murmured Ser Piero. “I see your meaning! With such accomplishments as you suggest Leonardo would win commissions, where painters of equal merit would be passed over!”

“Also,” answered Verrocchio, “he would win both honour and position!”

## CHAPTER III

### THE PUTTO OF CAREGGI



THE landlord of the Palla d'Oro, on the road to Careggi, claimed that his inn was named after the balls on the Medici shield; though why his sign should consist of but one ball, and why this ball should be golden, I do not know. Anyhow, it was a favourite house of call for the Medici, and there the young Lorenzo was wont to meet his friends from the various villas round Florence, so that they might ride in company to the villa of Careggi.

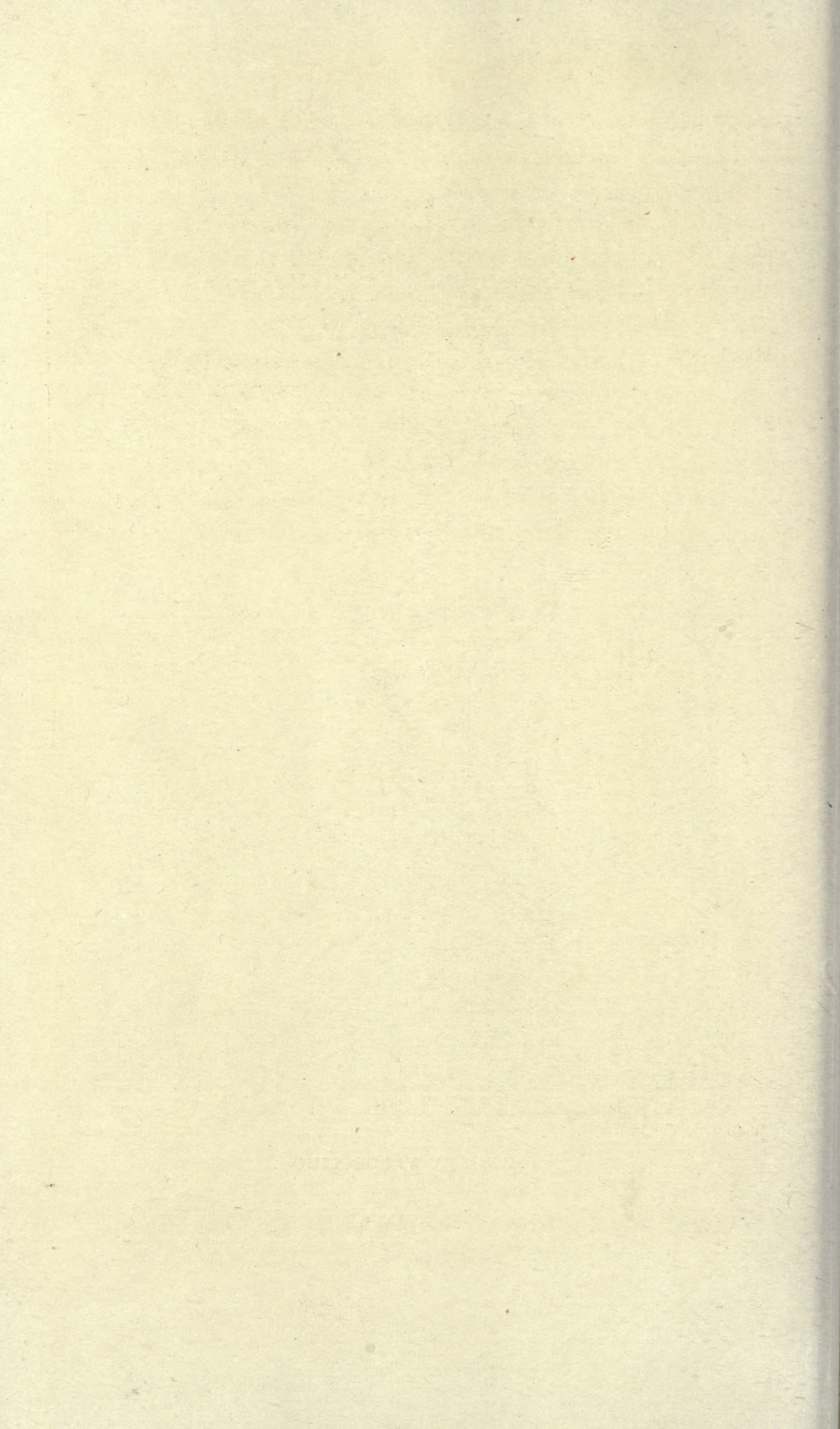
At the window of the inn of the Golden Ball sat Andrea Verrocchio. He was clad in his best coat, shaven to a miracle, and was holding a rolled drawing in his folded hands. If it had not been for a certain merry twinkle in his eye, one might well have taken Messer Andrea for a prosperous parish priest—that is to say, until he had unclosed his firm-set lips and given vent to his



*Lorenzo di Credi*

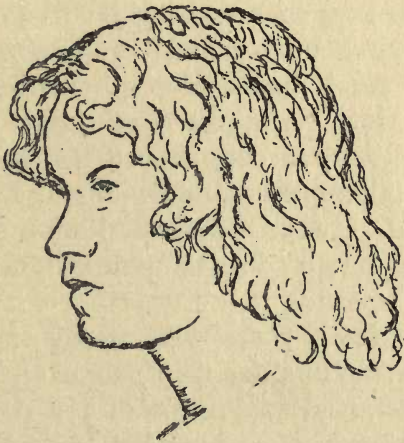
*Alinari photo*

ANDREA VERROCCHIO



opinions on matters ecclesiastical. Outside, his new apprentice, Leonardo da Vinci, was standing beside a couple of horses.

Presently a tall, dark young man, mounted on a fiery Thracian mare, which he managed with the greatest ease and dexterity, cantered up to the Palla d'Oro, gave his horse into the charge of a waiting lackey and shambled into the inn. Whilst he rode one might have compared him to a Grecian statue, or even to the divine Pollux; but, when he had dismounted, one could see that he was over-large, somewhat ungainly, and that he peered before him in an awkward and short-



YOUNG LORENZO DE' MEDICI

LOUVRE.

sighted manner. He entered the inn and turned into the room where Verrocchio was sitting.

“Eh, Andrea,” said he, as the painter moved forward to meet him, “so I have kept you waiting?” And with his voice, harsh though it might be, a certain fascination seemed to come from him and envelop all who were in his presence, until they forgot his ugly features in the charm of the personality which those features concealed.

“I have not been here long, Magnificence,” answered the artist, “and it is possible that I may have arrived before my time.”

“Whether you are before the clock or I am after the clock,” replied Lorenzo de’ Medici, “I am grieved to have kept such a busy man waiting!”

“A Medici keeps me waiting for five minutes,” chuckled Andrea Verrocchio, “and then asks my pardon! A monk would keep me waiting for five years, and then he would find fault with my work!” and Andrea commenced his story of the panel, the Vallombrosan and the angel’s eyes. But, as he talked, Lorenzo possessed himself of the drawing which was in the painter’s hand and commenced to study it.

Upon this sheet there were many sketches of infants, some holding one thing, some another, and all drawn with that suggestion of gay vitality and true childhood which stamped the Master’s touch.

For some minutes the painter rambled on with his story. Then, as the story ended, Lorenzo placed his finger on the figure of an amorino clasping a dolphin, looked up at Verrocchio and laughed joyously. And indeed, of a truth, this figure of a putto, with his laughing eyes and clear-cut wings—poised so justly and lightly that one



feared to move lest he might flutter elsewhere—was a thing of joy and laughter !

“ I am glad you have chosen that, Magnificence,” said Verrocchio with satisfaction ; “ for it is my favourite ! You think that this, my bambino, will please Madonna Clarice ? ”

“ Please Madonna Clarice ? ” re-echoed Lorenzo, eyeing the delightful putto. “ It will make my wife pray day and night for a bambino of her own ! How soon will it be ready ? ”

“ My bambino ? ” answered Verrocchio. “ Say in about nine months.”

“ Per Bacco ! ” laughed Lorenzo. “ You speak as though you were the mother of this infant ! ”

“ So I am, your Excellency ! So I am ! I shall bring him forth with much labour ; and, what is more, I can guarantee that he will be a fine sturdy fellow, and no weakling ! ”

“ By Heaven ! You are a miracle ! First it was a fully formed David, now it is this amorino, next year it will be a gilt ball for the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore ! What a constitution you must have, my Andrea ! ”

“ Pretty good, Excellency ! ” answered the painter with a chuckle. “ Pretty good ! ”

“ Then,” laughed the Medici, “ if your health permits, let us have a flask of wine, so that we may discuss the size of the figure and the design of the fountain in peace and quietness.”

But Verrocchio shook his head. “ If I plan the fountain here,” said he, “ it will be fit only for the parlour of an inn. Besides,” he added, “ the wine at Careggi is better than the vintage of the Palla d’Oro.”

“That is true!” answered the Medici.

As they left the inn Verrocchio spoke of Leonardo, Ser Piero da Vinci’s son; and Lorenzo greeted the lad kindly, telling him that he was fortunate in obtaining instruction from such a master.

Lorenzo saw a tall, good-looking lad with a countrified manner. Leonardo saw a tall, ungainly youth, who was but three years older than himself; yet the easy manners and assured bearing of this same young man made poor Leonardo feel self-conscious and tongue-tied.

“Brutto!” muttered Leonardo, as he swung into his saddle.

## II

They rode on, Lorenzo, Heaven knows how, curbing his Thracian, until that slim lady, with her slim head, arched neck and impetuous temper was content to amble peaceably beside Verrocchio’s dun gelding; whilst Leonardo, as became an apprentice, kept a full six paces in the rear. Presently Verrocchio spoke.

“They tell me,” said he, “that the looks and disposition of an infant are determined at the moment of conception.”

“Which is hardly in accordance with Aristotle!” answered Lorenzo.

“That may be so,” replied the other; “but I know that a sculptor’s first conception of a statue does much to determine the nature of his finished work. If, as I said, I had planned the fountain in the Palla d’Oro it would have been suitable for an inn parlour; if, on the other hand, I conceive my fountain in the open air, amidst the

gardens of Careggi, I conceive an idea that is as light as a bird and as beautiful as my surroundings. Besides, I must realise where my fountain is to be placed ; whether the background will be a hedge of laurel or the walls of the cortile ; whether the figure will be seen from the lawns below or from some window above."

"It is just!" answered the Medici, and they rode on in silence. Presently Lorenzo spoke.

"Andrea," said he, "was there ever a sculptor who fashioned children as you do?"

"Desiderio da Settignano, who taught me when I was in Donatello's workshop, has done some very good children, Magnificence."

"As you say, Desiderio has done some very good children ; but they bear the same relation to yours that a fish-pond bears to the living river!"

"Of course," answered Verrocchio, nodding his head, "it is true that I have more knowledge of anatomy."

"Bah! As for that, Antonio Pollaiuolo has more knowledge of anatomy than you!"

"That is very true indeed!" cried Verrocchio angrily. "Take an armful of bones, add bunches of muscles that are as huge as pumpkins, crown the figure with one fierce grin, and you have a statue by Antonio Pollaiuolo! In a statue by Antonio Pollaiuolo you cannot see the human form by reason of the anatomy!"

"Tread softly, my friend!" replied Lorenzo. "The Pollaiuoli are most skilful craftsmen, and their work has much manliness and virility!"

"Then why do not you employ Antonio to make this fountain, Magnificence?" cried Andrea.

“Andrea!” Heaven! how the Thracian started!—to be curbed back, whilst a gentle hand stroked her neck, and a gentle voice continued: “Have the Medici ever given you reason to say that you are not appreciated?”

In a second Verrocchio’s anger had vanished, and he was smiling, though somewhat shame-faced. “You must forgive me, Excellency!” said he. “I am a very peppery fellow indeed! Yet, who that was phlegmatic could hope to be an artist?”

“And you are an artist!” answered Lorenzo, giving him the title that was at that time coveted by the sculptors. “Who but an artist could have imagined such a poem as your fountain promises?”

Andrea blushed like a girl, smiling all over his face.

“Nor,” said Lorenzo, “am I so ignorant of anatomy that I cannot see the perfect form and proportion of your statues!” And again they rode on in silence.

Presently Lorenzo began stroking the Thracian’s neck, his eyes following the motion of his hand, and he said: “Andrea, I do not think that it is the form and proportion of a statue that make it a work of art, any more than it is form and proportion which convert verse into true poetry; for if it were merely a perfection of form and proportion that make Art divine, then any man who had a clear eye could learn to become a sculptor, and any who had a true ear could master the art of poetry.”

“The gift of observation counts for much!” answered Andrea.

“Aye!” replied Lorenzo. “But a sculptor may observe, and dissect, and model, and yet produce nothing except a lifeless image.”

“That is indeed true, Magnificence!” answered Andrea, thinking of Antonio Pollaiuolo.

“I believe,” continued Lorenzo, “that God gives something of the divine power of creation to the true artist so that he may be able to infuse a little of the spirit of life into his sculpture or poetry. That bambino of yours, even though it is merely a drawing on paper, lives as truly as though it were made of flesh and blood!”

In a smaller mind such praise might have produced vanity; but in Andrea, it made him wish to extend the praise to some one else.

“You noticed my apprentice, the son of Piero da Vinci, the notary?” said he.

“And I wondered that so clever a man as Ser Piero had apprenticed his son to so ill-paid a calling!”

“That is exactly what I told him, until he showed me Leonardo’s drawings. Then——”

“Yes?” said Lorenzo.

“Per Dio!” cried Andrea. “With six strokes of his pencil that boy can put more life into a drawing than I could get in a fortnight!”

“Oh!” murmured Lorenzo. And they rode on silently until they had entered the gates of Careggi.

### III

They rode up the drive, and, dismounting before the entrance of the villa, Lorenzo flung the reins to a groom, whilst he sent a lackey to summon the ladies; then he turned to Leonardo.

“Andrea Verrocchio tells me,” said he kindly,

“that you have chosen the hard path of art, instead of the easier way of business.”

“Yes, Messere!” answered Leonardo, shyly.

“Do you realise,” asked Lorenzo, “that Art is a very hard mistress, and that she will flout you unless you give her the best of your time and the whole of your energy?”

“Yes, Messere!” answered Leonardo, not in the least comprehending his meaning; for draftsmanship had come easily to Leonardo, and, so far, his work had seemed a recreation rather than a labour.

Lorenzo sighed. With a talent that would have made him the greatest poet of the Quattrocento, he had never been able to devote more than spare moments to his poems, and had been forced to leave his verse rough-hewn. “Florence is filled with craftsmen,” said he, “but there are not many who may be called artists!”

“That is true!” answered Leonardo, for he understood this.

“And now I will show you something that will make you proud to work under Messer Andrea,” said Lorenzo, leading the boy through the cortile until they reached a statue which guarded the entrance of the dwelling-rooms. This was a bronze David, two and a half braccia in height, and it stood at the left of the doorway, so that its face looked direct at whoever might enter. We who see the David in the Bargello, standing on a pedestal that is far too low, placed so that we must see it from the wrong angle, can have no idea of its real beauty, of its vigour and pride, of its superb self-confidence.



*Verrocchio*

*Anderson photo*

THE BRONZE DAVID

THE BROWN PAPER



Leonardo drew his breath, as one breathes when one steps from the shelter of a building into the full force of a gale.

At that same moment, there came the sound of girls' voices.

"I tell you, Clarice mia," laughed one, "you must play the art-critic boldly! 'This fountain is too severe and somewhat heavy; that lacks the grace of the Ancients; the other pleases me somewhat, but——'" And the words ended in laughter.

"Do not heed her, Clarice!" cried the second. "You have only to say which you like best, and then look wise!"

"But," said the third miserably, "I know naught of art, and less of architecture!"

"Nonsense!" cried the second. "Trust a woman's taste, and leave art and architecture to the men! If you only say which pleases you, hold your tongue, and let the men do the talking, you will gain a reputation for much knowledge!"

"Per Dio!" whispered Verrocchio, with a chuckle. "That lady has, indeed, much knowledge!" Then three girls, their arms intertwined, came round the corner and into the passage.

She who walked in the middle, a tall, slim matron of scarcely seventeen—her head crowned with a mass of dark copper-coloured hair—was Clarice Orsini, Lorenzo's bride. On either side were the sprightly Nannina de' Medici and Lucrezia de' Donati, the Queen of Lorenzo's late tournament.

"So, Messer Andrea, you have brought the

designs of the fountain ? ” said Madonna Nannina gaily ; for Andrea Verrocchio was a great favourite of the Casa Medici.

“ Yes, Madonna ! ” said he, nodding, and rolling up his drawings more tightly.

“ Quick ! Tell us ! ” cried Madonna Lucrezia. “ Is it a faun, a dolphin, or an amorino ? We are dying of curiosity ! ”

“ That is for Madonna Clarice to decide ! ” he answered, making a great show of holding his roll of paper firmly.

Then Clarice Orsini, like the sweet patrician that she was, held out her hand most graciously ; and Verrocchio, bowing low, presented his roll of drawings.

“ Oh ! ” cried Clarice, her face alight with pleasure, her lips parted, and her eyes fixed on the putto with the dolphin. But her face clouded and she looked up at her husband doubtfully, saying that she knew nothing of art.

“ Nonsense, Clarice mia ! ” said Lorenzo, one eye on Lucrezia de’ Donati. “ If you only say which pleases you, hold your tongue, and let the men do the talking, you will gain a reputation for much knowledge. ” Then he looked at his wife very tenderly, and asked : “ Which is it to be, Clarice ? ”

“ That putto squeezing the dolphin is heavenly ! ” said she. “ Besides, ” she added, “ your mother desired an amorino, your father desired a dolphin, and so all will be pleased ! ”

“ It is enough to trust in your woman’s taste ! ” said he. “ Both Andrea and I think as you do ! ”

So talking, they moved off to choose a site for

the fountain. But Madonna Lucrezia, noticing that Leonardo had been left out of their deliberations, and was standing alone before the statue of David, returned to speak with the boy.

## IV

Now this Lucrezia Donati, the lady in whose honour Lorenzo had held his tournament, to whom he addressed his poetry—and, believe me, Madonna Clarice was far too certain of her husband's affections to care a jot about such a platonic friendship!—this Lucrezia Donati, I say, was like that Piccarda Donati, her ancestress, of whom Dante wrote :

“My sister, who, 'twixt beautiful and good,  
I know not which was more, triumphs rejoicing  
Already in her crown on high Olympus.”

And, like Dante's Piccarda, Lucrezia “smiled a little,” as she addressed Leonardo. For, was not she a true platonist—a fair soul who expressed herself through a fair body? And what is a smile, except an expression of the soul's radiance—“a light shot outwardly from that which shines within?”

“From the way in which you were admiring this David, when I first saw you,” said she, “I gather that you are a student of the craft!”

And he, looking at her rather than at the statue, answered that he was.

“Then,” said she, smiling at him, “I would know your opinion of this masterpiece!”

And he, immensely flattered, answered that the anatomy, pose and vitality of the statue were most marvellous.

“ Ah ! ” said she. “ You, as a sculptor, would understand such points far better than I ! As far as I am concerned, it is the face of His Highness that fascinates me.”

And he, wondering why she should bestow the title of “ Highness ” upon a shepherd boy, answered that the modelling of both face and locks was admirable.

“ I do not think,” said she, with a smile, “ that you quite understand my meaning. For, if you look more closely, you will see that Messer Andrea has played us a trick ! This is no shepherd lad, but a young ruler ! ”

Then, for a moment, Leonardo gave his whole attention to the statue.

“ Notice his smile ! ” said she. “ His Majesty has obtained a complete mastery over himself ; and therefore, like a true nobleman, he is certain of himself and certain of others. He needs no crown and no army ! He has only to speak, and all will obey ! ”

Her earnestness drew the lad like a magnet, and again his eyes sought her face.

“ And, besides,” said she, smiling a little, “ all will love him on account of his joyousness. For, as the divine philosopher says : ‘ It is right for a man to reveal his soul by a well-tempered cheerfulness, smiling moderately with a due restraint. ’ ”

“ Oh ! ” she murmured ; “ if ever I were to live in a kingdom, and not in a republic, God grant me a king like that ! ”

“ Madonna,” cried the lad, carried away by her earnestness, “ your smile is like his ! ”

“After such a compliment!” she laughed, sweeping him a curtsy, and turning to go. Then, as she went, Lucrezia de’ Donati looked back, her eyes full of kindness, and said: “Indeed I must go; for, if I do not help the others to choose a site for the fountain, they will think me lacking in interest!” And Leonardo watched this pretty, gracious platonist—Florentine of the Florentines—cross the cortile.

## V

Left to himself, the lad’s thoughts swung round from Madonna Lucrezia back to the statue; for, whatever Leonardo’s faults might have been then, and whatever failings he might afterwards have developed, he was always an artist to his finger-tips.

Per Bacco! Then this was the secret of the smile on the bronze David, and the smile that he had noticed upon the portrait-busts of high-born ladies that were being finished in the workshop, and upon the lips of the noble platonists who were accustomed to visit Verrocchio’s bottega! It was the philosophic smile of self-mastery, the aristocratic smile of self-confidence—the revelation of a well-tempered soul shining through a well-ordered body.

For a moment, he wondered if Verrocchio himself was conscious of what lay behind the smile, or whether he had modelled King David’s expression from that of some noble Florentine youth amongst his clients, then his thoughts returned to the statue.

As he looked, gradually he, too, drew himself up, raised his eyebrows a little, and smiled self-confidently.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCERNING AN ANGEL'S WINGS



NINE months had elapsed. The just and kindly Piero de' Medici had been gathered to his fathers; and Lorenzo and Giuliano, his sons, reigned in his stead.

As I say, Piero de' Medici lay dead of the gout—awaiting a fitting tomb

by Andrea Verrocchio in this world, and a crown of glory in the next—whilst Lorenzo and his younger brother, Giuliano, had been invited by Tommaso Soderini and the other Priors to act as rulers without office, and as powers behind the ostensible officers of the State.

Verrocchio's bottega was humming with work.

In the outer workshop, Francesco di Simone and his assistants were toiling at the great ball for the cathedral, casting, filing, fashioning, riveting, so that all should combine the maximum of strength with the minimum of weight. Again, another journeyman was rough-hewing a block of red porphyry that was to form a part of Piero de' Medici's sarcophagus.

In the middle workshop, two apprentices were finishing off a clay niche that was modelled after a niche outside the Or. San Michele, so that the Master might solve the amazing problem of fitting both Our Lord and Saint Thomas into a niche that originally had been designed to hold a single figure; whilst a silversmith was hard at work over some small detail for the candelabrum which the Signoria had ordered for the Sala dell' Audienza.

In the inner workshop, Andrea himself was seated at a table upon which were spread many drawings of the palla that was to crown the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore. For this ball of gilt metal could not be fashioned anyhow and clapped on the dome like a piece of gingerbread; but it must be made hollow so that it might allow passage for whoever would enter; it must be made light so that it should not crush the arch of the cupola by its weight; it must be fixed so strongly that it would withstand the west wind which rushed up the Arno, the south wind which rolled down from Monte Oliveto, the east wind which eddied from the heights of Fiesole, and the north wind which whirled across the Apennines.

Leonardo turned from the panel on which he was copying the original cartoon of an Annunciation, that Andrea Verrocchio had drawn for the monks of Monte Oliveto, and addressed the Master.

“But, Master,” said he, speaking with a strange blend of diffidence and certainty, “that angel of yours could never fly!”

“Eh?” grunted Verrocchio, still deep in his designs for the palla.

“In your drawing,” answered the lad, “the spread of the angel’s wings is not sufficient to support the weight of his body.”

The Master swung round in his chair. “Heaven!” cried he. “Do you picture the angels fluttering round Giotto’s Campanile like a flock of pigeons?”

“No!” answered Leonardo, with a shrug of his shoulders; “certainly not! It would be perfectly reasonable to draw an angel without any wings!”

“Then,” snapped Verrocchio, “what do you want! What is wrong with my angel? Speak out! You have my full permission!”

“Master,” said he, “have you ever noticed the ostrich which the Soldan sent to Messer Piero de’ Medici?”

“Yes!” answered Verrocchio, with a nod.

“Then,” said Leonardo seriously, “if ever your angel should move, he would stick out his neck, and extend his wings, and run very quickly!”

“Maladetta!” cried Andrea, holding his sides so that the laughter should not shake them over much. “What—a—critic!” Then he rose and went over to the cartoon that was pinned on the wall behind the easel, nodding his head and chuckling to himself as he examined it.

“Now,” said he, standing back, “show me how you would draw your angel’s wings!”

With a few quick touches of the charcoal-stick which he held in his fingers, Leonardo described wings that were large and strong enough to sup-



port the weight of the body ; but he did not draw them too like the wings of the birds that he had been used to watch in their flight over Monte Albano.

“ Bene ! ” muttered the Master. “ Now show me what other alterations you would like to make in my design ! ”

Again the charcoal moved quickly over the white surface of the small panel, sketching in a perspective that was higher than that of Verrocchio's drawing ; but, when he approached the figure of the kneeling Madonna, which he had already roughed in, he hesitated. “ Master,” said he, “ I shall throw out the wall of the house so that it will form a background to Our Lady ! ” And he drew a faint vertical line where the house should end.

“ Of course,” remarked Verrocchio, “ you will have to re-draw the fall of the drapery to suit your new perspective.”

“ I will commence the studies this afternoon ! ” answered Leonardo, beginning to elaborate the low wall of his garden.

For some minutes the Master watched his pupil, then he seated himself. “ Leonardo,” said he, “ you have begun to practise what I always teach my assistants.”

The pupil was all attention.

“ So far,” continued the Master, “ I have set you to study perspective, or to draw from the model, or to copy my drawings ; but when I give one of my assistants a task I tell him to take my drawing as his theme, and to elaborate the details from his own studies. If an assistant

is to be any good, he must be able to use his own judgment ! ”

“ As ’Tista is painting this Annunciation for the Convent of Monte Oliveto ? ” asked Leonardo.

“ Exactly ! ” answered the Master. Then he bit his lip, casting about in his mind for a simile.

“ If my patrons,” said he, “ order a glass of wine, they do not want Verrocchio’s dregs, mixed with water, and served in Verrocchio’s dirty glass ! ”

“ So,” answered the lad, raising his eyebrows a little and smiling most philosophically, “ you pass on the order to ’Tista ! ”

“ I show ’Tista what is wanted, and he draws the wine in a clean glass. Mind ! ” he added sharply, “ ’Tista’s wine is not so good as the matured wine of Verrocchio, but, at any rate, the glass is clean and the wine is fresh ! ”

“ Besides,” suggested Leonardo, “ as Sandro Botticelli says, he who copies a master’s work imitates his eccentricities and exaggerates his imperfections.”

“ And yet,” corrected Verrocchio, “ every painter must learn from those who go before—otherwise, each one would have to start anew for himself.”

Conscious that he had gleaned this painting of his, partly from his master and partly from a long, low panel of the Wise Men which Sandro Botticelli had shown him a year ago, Leonardo smiled like a true philosopher.

“ But,” concluded the Master, “ since your father desires a small copy of my Annunciation to hang above the table at which he writes, do

not forget that the spirit of this Annunciation lies in the humility with which Our Lady listens to the divine message!" And, stooping over his drawings, Verrocchio busied himself with the diagrams of the palla, whilst Leonardo resumed the work on his panel.

## II

The bottega door swung open, and three youths, magnificent in their dignity, elegance and self-assurance, entered the studio: moreover, each young man was well over six-foot in height, and furnished with shoulders in just proportion.

Of these, Lorenzo de' Medici made up in dignity for what he lacked in gainliness; Cosimo Malatesta, his friend, was more elegant than tongue can describe; whilst Giuliano, his brother, smiled with sufficient urbanity to stock a whole college of cardinals. Please do not think that these youths were poseurs! For, if one takes boys very young, teaching them to reason like Ficino, ride like Bellerophon, sing like Petrarch and rule like Cæsar, one produces some such a result.

As they entered, Leonardo felt his new-found philosophy slipping away from him; but Verrocchio seemed to expand, greeting his visitors easily and joyfully. For Andrea was the faithful friend of the young Medici, painting their tournament banners, planning their festival decorations and even designing their Carnival dresses, as well as giving them the best of his serious Art.

"Welcome, your Graces!" said he.

"Greeting, O divine Phideas!" answered Lorenzo.

“When Olympus visits the studio,” chuckled Andrea, “the sculptor may well be called divine! But, seat yourselves, Excellencies!” said he.

Lorenzo settled down in the only vacant chair; the Malatesta dusted a bench with a lace handkerchief that he carried, and sat down daintily; Giuliano seated himself upon a diagram of the palla which lay at the corner of the table.

“A little bird has whispered to me,” began Lorenzo, “that the Duke of Milan may visit us, arriving late in the autumn or early next spring.”

“The same small bird whispers,” continued Cosimo, “that Galeazzo Maria has grown more lavish and magnificent than ever.”

“He also adds,” concluded Giuliano, “that the Duchess may accompany her husband.”

“And,” said Lorenzo, “we desire the incomparable Andrea to plan us fitting decorations.”

“Oh—ho!” murmured Verrocchio; for this meant a huge undertaking with many pickings, and both his brother, Tommaso, and his sister, Margherita, took care that his pockets were kept empty. “I suppose that nothing is settled, Magnificence?”

“Nothing!” he answered. “Yet it is possible to walk along the route from the Porta San Frediano to the Palazzo de’ Priori and dream dreams.”

“Dream of triumphal arches more glorious than those of the Romans,” suggested Cosimo. “Picture the streets gay with banners and heavy with the scent of roses!”

“November roses?” chuckled the painter.

“Certainly!” replied the other unabashed. “Where Nature fails, Art must step in!”

"Besides," smiled Giuliano, "there must be spectacles, triumphs, pageants, and a thousand other things that only Andrea could conceive!"

Verrocchio leant back in his chair and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "If this visit should come off," said he, "Our Lady of the Flower must wait patiently for her palla. The work of preparing the decorations will be endless!"

"That reminds me," remarked the Malatesta. "Madonna Clarice bids me find out, very tactfully and without offending you, when the putto is likely to be finished. Speaking tactfully, and without offence, when will that putto be finished, Andrea?"

Without a word, Verrocchio led the way into the middle workshop, and, removing a sheet, laid bare the fountain. Save for a finishing touch from the Master's hand, the work was completed. Then there was silence.

Presently Lorenzo roused himself—for it must be realised that these young Florentines worshipped Art with a devotion that we can only dimly imagine, and that this putto of Verrocchio's was a new step forward in the art of sculpture—and he asked the artist if he had anything more to show them.

"Messer Lorenzo has told you of the Vallombrosans and my angel?" said he, turning to Cosimo and Giuliano.

They answered that he had.

"Then I have another story to tell you," said he. "What with my stories of the monks, I shall be a perfect Boccaccio presently!" And he led the way back into the inner studio.

“There!” said he, pointing to his drawing of the Annunciation, “can you detect any heresy in that?”

“Heaven, no!” answered Lorenzo, turning most gravely to his friend. “Observe, my Cosimo, the direction of the angel’s eyes! This work is as orthodox as the ‘Summa’ of Saint Thomas!”

“Aye!” cried Andrea, half-amused and half-angry. “But I am told that Our Lady should not be kneeling! I am told that my rendering is undignified, unscriptural, and that it contains enough heresy to ruin the good name of an Archbishop!”

“When one considers the matter,” murmured Giuliano, who had been well instructed, “the position of Our Lady is not quite scriptural!” But Verrocchio paid no heed to this objection.

“I had planned,” he cried, “an Annunciation that was more human—more sympathetic—than any Annunciation that has ever been painted, and now these pestilent monks of Monte Oliveto object to it because of their absurd tradition. If you had been in my shoes, Magnificence,” said he, facing Lorenzo, “what would you have done?”

“After charging the Prior for the cartoon,” answered the Medici, “I should have refused the commission!”

“Ah!” cried Andrea. “I have done even better!” And, pulling aside the covering from a large panel, he showed the half-finished painting of that Annunciation which now hangs in the Uffizi. “See!” he explained, “I hand over the commission to my assistant ‘Tista, and I say to him: ‘Tista, take anything you like from my

drawing, paint anything you like out of your own head, only take care that these holy Fathers have exactly what they require ! ' It is as simple as eating olives ! "

" You—mean—to—say," asked Lorenzo, his face as red as a pomegranate, " that you will not touch this picture yourself ? "

Verrocchio's frown softened. " I shall paint the landscape," he answered. " 'Tista cannot paint a landscape ! I shall paint it with the soft evening light turning the cypress into dark masses against a pale sky, and touching the distant mountains with fine silver ! "

" But," enquired Giuliano, " will not the Fathers object ? They commissioned a panel from the Master's hand ! "

" Heaven ! No ! The monks will be as pleased with this as the monks of San Salvi were with their Baptism. And, in future, whenever such reverend patrons find fault with my work, I shall hand over the painting to my assistants. I have no time to waste on blind men ! "

" O, Andrea," cried the Malatesta, with a brave attempt to keep down his laughter, " you wise philosopher ! "

" Speaking of philosophers," began the artist ; then he caught sight of Leonardo, and bade him go home to dinner.

### III

" Speaking of philosophers," said Andrea, " what do you think of my pupil's work, Magnificence ? "

The Medici looked at the rough charcoal lines on

the little panel, and shook his head. "I have no painter's training," he answered.

"After you have been suckled on engraved emeralds, cut your teeth on priceless ivories, and bruised your small shins against ancient statues? Come, Magnificence! since every Medici is born with a knowledge of Art, what do you think of Leonardo's drawing?"

"The perspective seems somewhat confused!" replied Lorenzo.

"Oh! That was merely done to show me an improvement, and will be put right presently. However, tell me this! What do you think of his angel's wings?"

The short-sighted eyes of Lorenzo de' Medici peered, first at one drawing, then at the other. "They are better fitted to sustain flight than those in your drawing," he answered; "but, after all, an angel's wings are merely a convention."

"That is exactly what the boy said," replied Andrea. "One might leave them out altogether!"

"Yes?" said Lorenzo, for he could see that Verrocchio was hugging a story.

"On the other hand, if one does put them in, the wings should not make the angel look ridiculous."

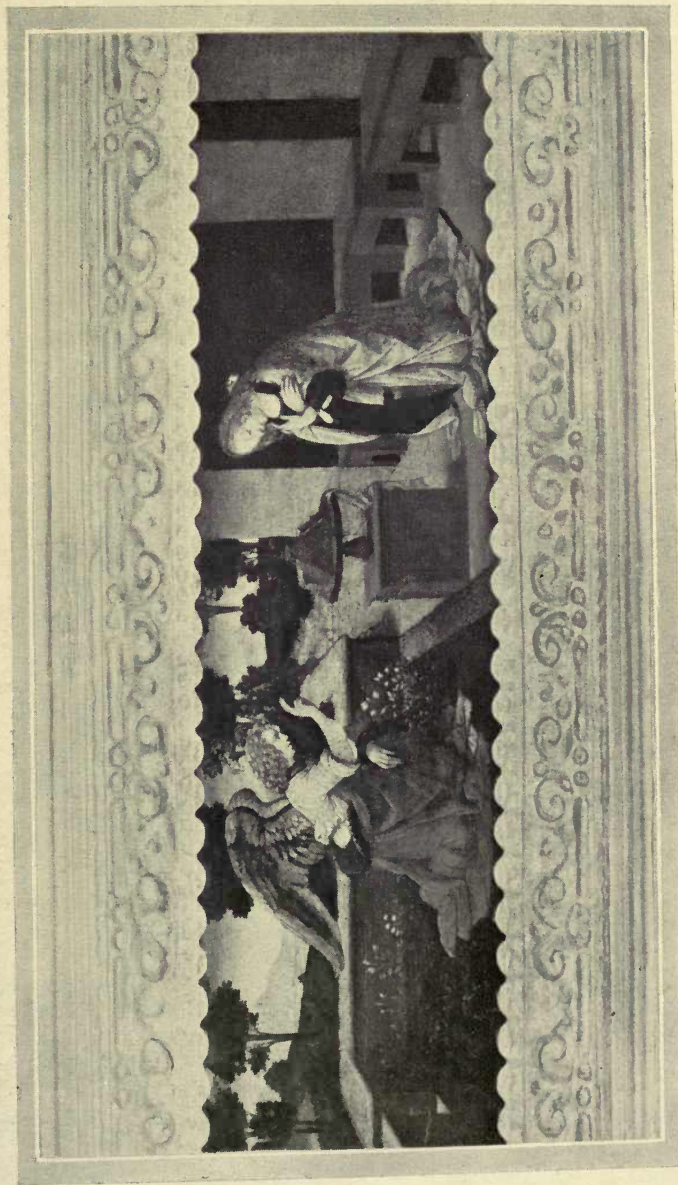
"That is just!" answered Cosimo Malatesta very seriously.

"You have seen an ostrich, Magnificence?" asked Andrea, wheeling round to face his visitors.

"Naturally!" they answered, grave as judges.

"Very well! The boy said to me: 'Master, have you ever noticed the ostrich which the Soldan sent to Messer Piero de' Medici?' And I

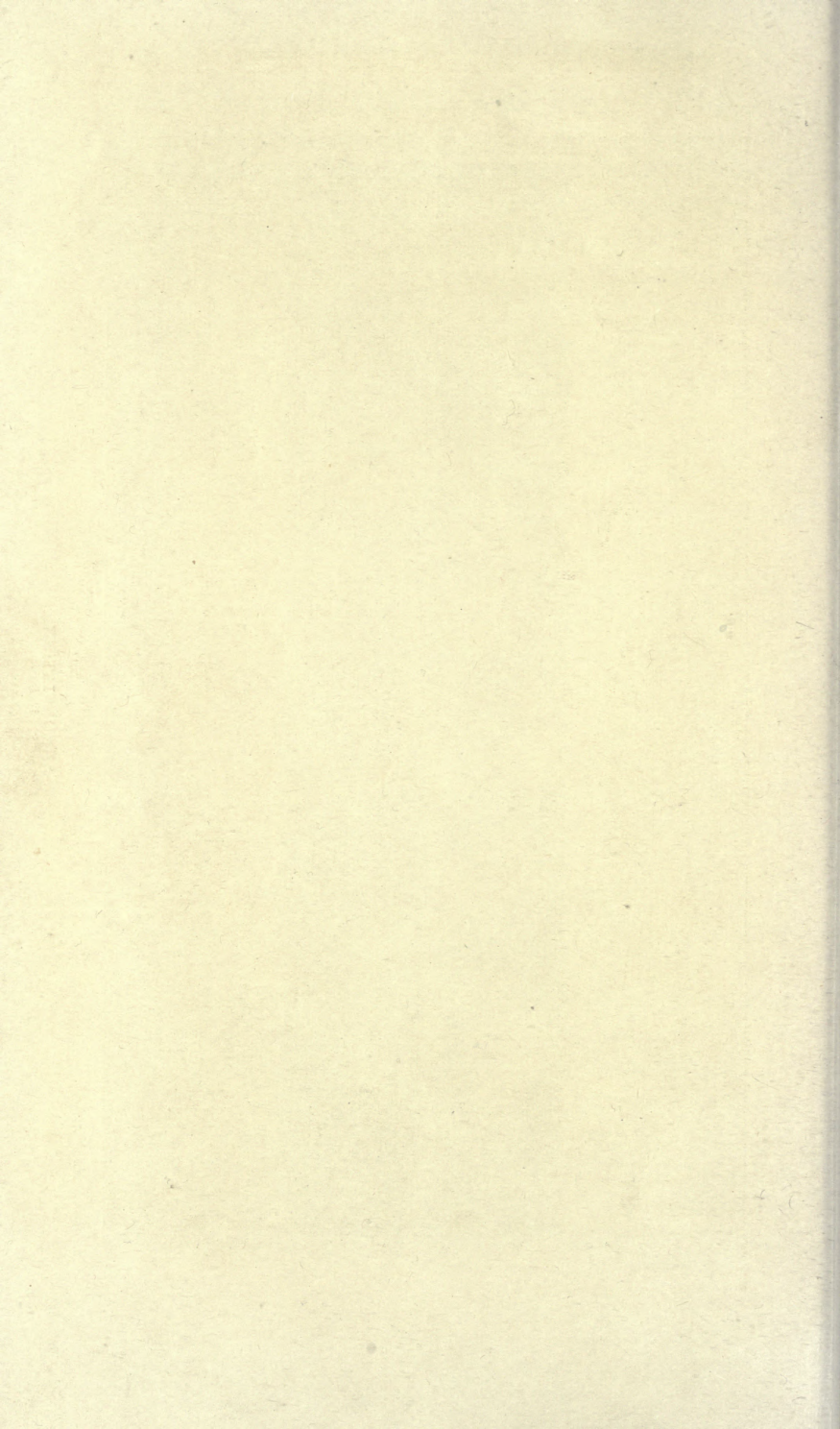




*Leonardo da Vinci*

ANNUNCIATION

*Atinari photo*

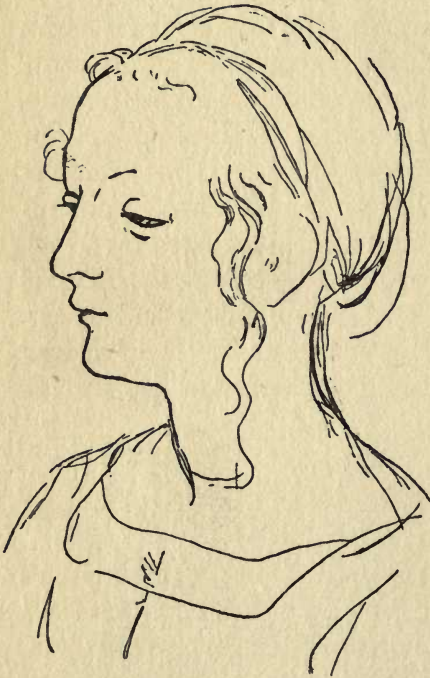


answered: 'Yes!' 'Then,' said he, 'if ever your angel should move, he would stick out his neck, and extend his wings, and run very quickly!'"

And the workmen, who were putting away their tools in the outer workshop, grinned at the noise of their laughter.

## CHAPTER V

### POMPS AND VANITIES



“IF Galeazzo Maria be what they say,” remarked Leonardo, struggling to adjust the wings that were on his sandals more gracefully, “if the Duke be what they say, then he is——” And he bit his lips in an endeavour to make his foot appear as natural as the foot of Verrocchio’s putto.

“Bah!” answered Ser Piero da Vinci with a snort of contempt. “If Saint

Paul himself ruled in Milan, they would accuse him of tyranny, rape and incest!”

“Besides,” added Madonna Francesca gently, “charity thinketh no wrong!”

“If Galeazzo Maria be as they say,” repeated Leonardo, holding out his leg stiffly so that he

might inspect the dainty, fluttering wings, "and I mean no disrespect to my wise father nor to my sweet mother, then it is the case of an ape married to a peacock!"

"Ah!" answered the notary. "There speaks King Solomon!"

"Besides," added Madonna Francesca, gently, "there are worse animals than apes, and less beautiful birds than peacocks!"

With a laugh of pure delight at his sweet step-mother's most charitable argument, Leonardo moved over to a small mirror in order to examine the look of his winged hat, and, picking up his caduceus, stood—the very picture of a graceful Mercury. Then, throwing a cloak round him, he made ready to escort Madonna Francesca da Vinci to a friend's house that overlooked the Porta San Gallo through which the Milanese would enter Florence, whilst Ser Piero set out for the Palazzo de' Priori so that he might take part in the official welcome.

## II

A magnificent personage was Galeazzo Maria, the second Duke of the Sforza line.

Francesco Sforza, the first Duke, had created the House of Sforza: for, starting as a private soldier, he had become one of the greatest generals of his time, and, upon the death of his lord, the last of the Visconti, he had brushed aside the rival claims of the Emperor, the King of Naples and the Duke of Orleans, and, basing his own claims upon his marriage with the Visconti's daughter, had stepped into the Dukedom of Milan. Great soldier undoubtedly he was, and,

save for that decree of the gods which ordains that a follower of Mars should be a votary of Venus, he had been a good man and a wise ruler. Then, from the mingled blood of this amorous soldier and the blood of the terrible Visconti, Galeazzo Maria had been born.

Of peasant origin on his father's side, sensual and heartless to the last degree, lacking any virtue except that of polish, Galeazzo Maria was still a man to be reckoned with ; for his wife was the sister of the Queen of France, and his sister was the wife of the heir to Naples, and he was connected in one way or another with all the ruling families of Italy ; besides, he was Duke of Milan.

So, when Galeazzo Maria whispered of a strengthening of the alliance between Florence and Milan—an alliance that would make Florence safe from the encroachments of Venice, from the ambitions of Rome, and include an alliance with the crafty King of Naples—and when he proposed a state visit of himself and his Duchess, Bona of Savoy, Florence rose worthily to the occasion.

The Medici would act as the private hosts and personal friends of the Ducal party ; the Signoria would attend to the public banqueting and diplomacy ; and Andrea Verrocchio would see that the decorations, the pageants, and the general staging of the city were more glorious than the spectacles of ancient Rome.

As for Galeazzo Maria, the cost of the equipment of his retinue was estimated at over half a million sterling, according to the present value of our money.

## III

The Milanese Court glittered along the road like a golden viper, tossing back the sunshine from polished armour, reflecting it from crimson damask, splitting it into a thousand rays with countless jewels. But, in spite of the flags which danced so gaily in the breeze, and of the branches and garlands that had converted the Porta San Gallo into an Arcadian bower, the towers and battlements of the gateway were manned with troops, the gates themselves remained shut, and Florence looked as though she were prepared to resist an enemy.

Then, as the procession arrived within a hundred yards of the city, the music of the lute and viol burst forth in sweet harmony, and the gates opened sufficient to emit a bevy of fair nymphs headed by the Hours : these bore large baskets of anemones, narcissi and asphodels, and, as they went, they sang :

“ We, the glad and gracious Hours,  
Bid you revel whilst you may ;  
Deck and strew your Tuscan way  
With the carpet of our flowers ! ”

Then, wheeling round, they headed the procession, strewing the road with flowers, and singing :

“ From the plains of fair and rich Milano,  
From the City of a Hundred Towers,  
To the perfumed banks of hill-fed Arno,  
To the country which sweet Flora dowers  
With her cataract of scented flowers !  
Look you revel whilst you may !  
Deck and strew your Tuscan way  
With a carpet of our flowers ! ”

Now the gates of the Porta San Gallo, which had been closed after the nymphs and Hours, swung wide open, disclosing a forest glade that was peopled with woodland beings. Mercury darted forward, caduceus in hand. His winged feet hardly touched the ground until he stood before the procession, a god indeed! And he sang, clear and triumphant :

“Mercury, the Herald, forward fleeting,  
Gives you conduct through the City Gate;  
Bids you welcome, whispering this greeting  
From the gods who rule our Tuscan State—  
Ancient gods, all powerful and great :  
Look you revel whilst you may !  
Deck and strew your Tuscan way  
With a carpet of our flowers !”

As the last words of the Herald's message died away, Pan stood within the gate ; satyrs, nymphs, fauns and dryads surrounded him ; and the chorus rang forth :

“We, the satyrs, nymphs and Hours,  
Bid you revel whilst you may ;  
Deck and strew your Tuscan way  
With the carpet of our flowers !”

Then the Milanese trumpets blared out ; the gods and nymphs of Tuscany scattered ; and the Court of Milan made its triumphal entry through the Porta San Gallo with nothing to attract attention away from its magnificence.

#### IV

“Heaven !” murmured sweet Francesca da Vinci, as Leonardo, slipping away from the others, joined her in the window that overlooked the route. “Did you ever see the like ?”



And well might she say so! For the most lavish display of the Casa Medici or the most magnificent pageant of the Florentine State was no nearer to the Milanese procession than a pearl is like to a ruby, or the scent of the roses approaches the overwhelming perfume of the red jasmine. For a pure Tuscan pageant, like pure Tuscan art, was always marked by a certain magnificent simplicity: money might be spent like water, the finest human skill and craftsmanship might flow like the Arno in flood-time; but there always remained something of that austerity which had distinguished the taste of ancient Greece, which stamped the private lives of the greatest Florentines, and which now remains in the pictures and statues of the Tuscan Quattrocento.

The Milanese trumpets blared out; the gods and nymphs of Tuscany scattered; and the Court of Galeazzo Maria entered the Porta San Gallo. But before the Ducal procession had reached the gate a small band of horsemen which had gone out to meet the travellers detached itself from the main body, and Lorenzo de' Medici, Giuliano, Cosimo Malatesta and others of the Casa Medici galloped towards the Palazzo de' Priori to await their guests. By Bacchus! how the crowd cheered! Then the eyes of Florence were filled with the pomp of Milan.

First came forty trumpeters, their tabards blazoned with the quartered arms of Sforza and Visconti, and stiff as buckram.

Next came two hundred foot-soldiers, their pikes and headpieces polished to a miracle, their tunics

and hosen fit for noblemen : these turned their heads neither to right nor left, only their eyes wandered amorously towards the maidens who graced the windows and loggia.

After these, fifty grooms, clad in cloth of silver, their doublets embroidered with the Sforza-Visconti arms, led fifty great war-horses for the Duke and his suite : the war-horses were saddled in gold brocade, with gilded stirrups and brodered bridles.

After these came a hundred knights, mounted magnificently, fully armed, swaggering audaciously.

Next rode the Duke's councillors, clothed with gold and silver brocade ; and after them came the Duke's chamberlains, forty in number, wearing thick gold chains of office.

Next rode the Della Torre, Tuttavilla, Rossi and other nobles of Milan, San Severini from Naples, and such names as Correggio, Manfredi, Gonzaga, Bentivoglio that were known to all the whole of Italy : these smiled and laughed with one another, keeping no guard over their wanton glances.

Then came the Duke, casting his eyes hither and thither to find some maiden that might please him. He saw Mercury the Messenger, and smiled. He saw Madonna Francesca, and his look grew long and evil ; for Madonna was only twenty-one and she was very beautiful. Madonna shivered, and Leonardo, picking up his cloak, wrapped it round her.

“ Take me home ! ” she whispered ; but Leonardo could not take her through the press

until the suite of the Duchess Bona had passed by.

The last gilded transport waggon had rumbled along the street, the huntsmen and falconers and pipers had almost passed, when Leonardo led Madonna Francesca through the doorway.

A jester hit him over the head with a bladder. "Ha! Brother Flitter-feet!" he cried. "Ha! Father Tit-mouse!"

## V

I do not think that anything actually came of the Duke's glance, for this was Florence and not Milan: besides, I believe that the Duke was so busy feasting and plucking such blossoms as hung within easy reach that he did not think twice about Francesca da Vinci. But, whether it came of the March wind, or of the Duke's glance, or whether it came from that evil glance chilling a soul whose body was already shivering in the east wind, I do not know—anyhow, from that time Madonna sunk into a decline and presently died.

Leonardo, whose good angel Francesca had been, took her death rebelliously. His father's formal religion offended him; the manner in which Galeazzo Maria had given that lascivious look, and had ridden straightway on to the Church of the Annunziata in order to give thanks for his safe journey, had disgusted him; the way in which the sensual Sforza had been fêted with religious spectacles sickened him. Presently he fell into that habit of scoffing at religious ordinances which was so common in the workshops of his craft, and his faith grew weak.

I do not think that he ever scoffed at religion in the abstract, because those who lose their faith do not scoff at an undefined God nor at ill-defined ethics ; but he certainly began to ridicule the customs, practices and ceremonies of religious persons.

“ Ha ! Brother Flitter-feet ! ” he would mutter when he met a sandalled friar. “ Ha ! Father Titmouse ! ” he would murmur when he chanced on a hooded monk.

It is not wholesome to paint religious pictures, whilst one scoffs at the ordinances of religion. Neither does such a state of mind lead to conviction in religious art.

## CHAPTER VI

### ACTION AND REACTION



IF you were to ask me what is the greatest earthly happiness, I should answer: "The greatest earthly happiness lies in the realisation of the ideal."

If you were to enquire concerning the nature of an ideal, I should answer: "The

nature of an ideal depends on the character of the individual, and it may lie anywhere between the day-dream of a lovely face and the Beatific Vision."

If you were to press me further, I should elaborate: "As the natural and acquired character of a man may be material, sensual, æsthetic or spiritual, so the ideal that he has dreamed of and longed for may be a material success, a form of loveliness in woman, a conception of æsthetic beauty, or a state of spiritual well-being."

And, if you were to object to my placing such

opposite ideals on the same equality, I should answer: "Each man has his own ideal—an ideal that we may praise or condemn—but let a man reach his own ideal, and he has reached the nearest approach to earthly happiness that is within his immediate capacity."

From this it is obvious that, since the thrill of happiness comes from the attainment of an ideal, and as an ideal is impossible without imagination, a vivid imagination is essential to great happiness.

## II

True Art is an attempt to express an æsthetic ideal. The nature of the ideal in any particular picture depends upon the nature of the artist ; but, unless the painter leaves the absolute reality that is before him and strives to express the ideal, he is no better than a camera.

A painting may be an attempt to express some ideal in form, rhythm, harmony or colour ; and it is because the nature of men is so different that we find such different ideals as those of Maccaccio, Botticelli, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Monet and Césanne. One's personal taste may incline towards one or other of these painters, it may not incline towards the rest ; but the expression of the æsthetic ideal of any strong man comes within the province of Art, and must be always interesting.

Now, in sculpture the method of expression is simple and straightforward, for, in sculpture, the artist is modelling out of a solid substance, and he must work at form in relief ; consequently, by the time that Donatello carved in Florence, the

Renaissance sculpture was as fully developed as the art of Rodin.

But in painting, which is the application of pigments to a flat surface, the method of expression is a debatable matter—should the painter regard his frame as the frame of a window and paint his subject so as to produce an illusion of real life seen through an open window, or should he treat his canvas as a flat surface which must be adorned with gracefully flowing lines and sympathetic colours blended together in harmony, and which must convey just enough suggestion of reality to pass muster? In other words, should a picture produce the illusion of a window, or should it remain a flat surface decorated with a form of line and colour that would stir the æsthetic senses?

In the year 1474 the active movement of the Renaissance was all towards the expression of beauty as seen through an open window or as reflected in a mirror. Perspective had already been mastered; Pollaiuolo and Verrocchio had already dissected and pieced together the structure of anatomy; and now Verrocchio was deep in that subtle science of aerial perspective which should put the coping-stone upon illusion. Yet, against this forward movement, there were reactionaries like Botticelli, who was ready to forswear anatomy and perspective for the sake of flowing rhythm, or like Paolo Ucello whose private convictions were not totally unlike the convictions of a modern cubist.

## III

There was gathered together in Verrocchio's studio one of the most extraordinary and representative groups of artists that the world has ever seen. Seated in an easy chair, with venerable white beard and dignified bearing, was Paolo Ucello ; beside him stood Leonardo da Vinci, now twenty-two years of age and a full member of the Painters' Guild ; at the cupboard Andrea Verrocchio was preparing a tray of wine, pastries and freshly husked walnuts ; whilst close to the stove, for the evenings still drew in chilly, Sandro Botticelli was preening himself over his first real success in the painting of a Saint Sebastian.

Then old Paolo Ucello—he who had spent fifty years in striving to express the actions of life and fighting by means of their equivalent emotions in plain linear perspective—spoke : “ Donatello was wont to say to me,” he remarked ; “ ‘ Ah ! Paolo,’ he would say, ‘ in your passion for perspective, you are forsaking the substance for the shadow ! ’ But, then, my dear friend, Donatello, was a sculptor, not a painter, and therefore he had but little trouble with perspective.”

Andrea Verrocchio turned from his tray at the cupboard and faced the painter, for, like all the Tuscan artists, he dearly loved a wrangle. “ Ah ! ” said he ; “ so we sculptors have but little trouble with perspective ? That is very good hearing, very good hearing indeed ! ”

“ It is also truth ! ” answered Paolo.

“ As you say,” replied Andrea, “ it is the



truth!—In vino veritas! The deeper the draught, the greater the truth! Let us have the truth by all means!" And, bringing the tray of refreshments over to the table, he helped Paolo to a full glass of Chianti.

For a few moments the old painter sipped his wine, pondering over the question in hand; then he looked up at Andrea sharply, and said: "Save when you attempt to carve the backgrounds of your bas-reliefs into the likeness of buildings or landscapes, in which case the lines of your perspective do not appear in any way true, you sculptors have no perspective!"

"Ho!" replied Andrea gravely, but with twinkling eyes. "So we sculptors have no perspective?" For, in a studio warfare, instead of countering an argument sharply, one must lead on the enemy, slowly and with caution, until one has beguiled him into an ambushade wherein he may be exterminated. Therefore Andrea busied himself with pouring out the wine and handing round the pastries and walnuts.

"Master," said Sandro Botticelli, who had learnt something from the old painter in the past, and who always retained a profound respect for his artistic knowledge, "you say that, when a sculptor carves the background of his bas-relief into the likeness of a landscape, the lines of his perspective do not appear true: I do not question your assertion, for I myself have noticed the same falsity, but I should like to know how you account for the apparent lack of truth."

"It is very simple!" answered Paolo. "In a sculptured panel, the figures in the foreground are

modelled with such relief that one can feel the shape of every limb with one's fingers ; the distance also is modelled in relief, and although the relief in the distant landscape may be but slight, yet one has only to put out one's finger in order to feel it ; therefore, since one is conscious that one has only to put out one's hand in order to test the modelling of the foreground figures or the carving of the distant mountains, the perspective in a bas-relief can convey no true sense of distance."

" I confess," owned Andrea, making a strategic retreat so that he might ambush Paolo presently, " that you have proved your first contention, shattering the perspective of the bas-relief beyond repair ! Now I await the proof of your second contention—that there is no perspective in sculpture." But the younger artists were far too much interested in Paolo's theories to notice Andrea's interruption.

" Messer Paolo," broke in Leonardo, " what you say is just ! The lines of perspective in a bas-relief do not seem in any way true, whereas those in a painting may appear to extend a hundred miles beyond the work itself ! "

" Ah ! " answered Paolo Ucello, shaking his head ; " therein lies a danger—and what I hold to be a grievous danger to our craft ! "

" A danger to our craft ? " re-echoed Leonardo, incredulous.

" When my dear friend, Brunellesco, planned a building," said Paolo, punctuating each word with a shake of his finger, " he meant the walls to be solid ; and, where he wanted a window, there he placed a window ! Do you understand ? "

“ Yes ! ” answered Leonardo.

“ Then there comes one of you younger painters, and he paints a fresco on my friend Brunellesco’s wall, and he destroys the solidity of Brunellesco’s wall, piercing that same wall with the illusion of his perspective until one appears to see the country extending a hundred miles beyond.”

“ By God ! ” cried Sandro Botticelli. “ That is the truth ! ”

“ Therefore,” continued Paolo, “ when I painted the effigy of the Cavaliero Giovanni Il Aguzzo ” (this was the nearest he could get to the name of Sir John Hawkwood ! ) “ upon the walls of Santa Maria del Fiore, I was careful to paint my picture so that it should not break the solidity and flatness of the wall’s surface ! ”

“ Ho ! ” chuckled Andrea Verrocchio. “ The difference between the sculptor and the painter is this : the sculptor has no perspective, and the painter should have no perspective ! ” But Sandro, Leonardo and Paolo Ucello were too intent on their subject to heed him.

“ Messer Paolo,” urged Leonardo, his face alive with interest and his hands extended palms upward, “ if, as you say, the science of perspective is not intended to give a feeling of distance and an illusion of reality, what is the use of the science of perspective ? ”

“ Do not you use your perspective in the arrangement of your subject ? ” cried Paolo. Then he checked his vehemence, and asked quietly : “ Do not you realise that the object of perspective is to determine the relative sizes of different objects at different distances—to secure the correct pro-

portions in a foreshortened horse or in a receding building ? ”

“ Yes ! ” replied Leonardo.

“ Then, ” said Paolo, “ I tell you that the present fashion of drawing in a violent perspective, so that the distance may appear to extend a hundred miles beyond the work itself, is to employ the science of perspective for a purpose that was never intended by its Divine Creator ! ” And Paolo ended with a shrug that was a hundred times more eloquent than words.

“ Yet, ” argued Leonardo, who had absorbed Verrocchio’s love of landscape and atmosphere, and who had employed much of the previous autumn in the study of pure landscape, “ to neglect that power of describing distance which perspective gives, is to neglect a great treasure ! ”

“ Tut ! ” chuckled Andrea Verrocchio, meeting his pupil’s glance with a flicker of his eyelid. “ If one wants to see a landscape, one ascends Monte Oliveto, one does not try to peep through the solid walls of a building ! ”

For some minutes there was silence in the studio, the younger men weighing the contention in Paolo’s argument, whilst Verrocchio smiled to himself at the reactionary nature of the old painter’s theories ; then Leonardo, who had been holding up his glass of wine so that the candle-light might flicker through it, set down his glass untasted, and asked a question.

“ Messer Paolo, ” said he, “ what did you mean when you spoke of using perspective in the arrangement of one’s picture ? ”

Paolo hesitated.

Then Sandro spoke. "Dear Master," said he, "there is something in your pictures that I admire, and yet do not understand—I think that it is connected with this arrangement of perspective—will you explain it?"

Again Paolo hesitated; then, looking at Sandro Botticelli very kindly, he answered: "Sandro," said he, "I love you greatly, and I think that you have more of the spirit of true art than any of the younger painters. I am an old man, and I shall not live long, and I shall paint no more pictures!"

"God forbid!" murmured Sandro.

But Paolo, shaking his head, answered: "I must die soon, and it is a pity that my secret should die with me!"

Then Paolo Ucello drew his cloak closely around him, and he said: "Perspective is not, as Leonardo appears to think, merely a means to obtain correct drawing and a distance that seems to go back for miles behind the work itself; for perspective, if it be properly understood, is in itself a source of the emotions. Thus, a perspective that is formed of vertical lines, such as the trunks of an avenue of poplars or the columns of some noble temple, will be found to arouse a feeling of repose that is mingled with awe and devotion; for, as the vertical lines of the trees or pillars point upwards, so will the mind be raised towards Heaven. When, on the other hand, the lines of the perspective run evenly towards the vanishing point, as in the lines of a straight road that runs across the plains of Lombardy, they will produce a sense of monotony that tends towards a dulness and depression of spirits."

Sandro and Leonardo were listening breathlessly ; for Art was young, and any secret that might lead to the progress of Art was precious. Even Verrocchio had dropped his idea of a jest, and was all attention.

“ Given a nobly planned perspective,” continued Paolo, “ and you will have a picture that arouses a sense of dignity and grandeur ; given a perspective that is feeble or haphazard, and, however finely the figures themselves are wrought, the painting will appear but feeble. Therefore, having selected the subject for my picture, I commence by planning a perspective that will aptly suit it : the lines of my perspective are the cords that bind my picture together ; the placing of the vanishing point is the key to the arrangement of the subject.”

“ That is but logic ! ” cried Leonardo.

“ As I have already said,” continued Paolo, “ the perspective lines which run towards the vanishing point are the cords that bind my picture together ; consequently, objects which fall along the lines of perspective produce a feeling of stability and repose. Thus, when I wish to secure a sense of stability in a prancing horse, I balance the rearing animal upon, or along, one of my perspective lines. On the other hand, objects that counter or oppose the lines of the perspective create a sense of unrest or action ; and so, when I wish to depict the emotions of warfare, I make the lines of the soldiers’ spears counter or oppose the lines of my perspective. All this, added to a high and noble vanishing point, has created that strange something in my battle scenes, which Sandro is

unable to understand, and about which he has enquired.

“ I am an old man, easily wearied, and I am too tired to tell you more ; but, from what I have already told you, I think you will understand the emotions that are aroused by high or low vanishing points, by the perspective of lofty mountains and peaceful plains, and I think you will be ready to imagine the emotions that are called up by curved or spiral lines that follow, or run counter to, the natural lines of the perspective. For what is a true artist, if he be not one who can see and imagine all the possibilities of his craft ? But, believe me, there is no sweeter task in this world than the study of perspective ! ” And, with a word of farewell, the old painter, accompanied by Sandro, took his leave.

## IV

No sooner had the door closed behind Paolo Ucello and Sandro Botticelli, than Verrocchio turned to his pupil. “ Well, Leonardo,” said he, “ and what did you think of Paolo’s contention ? ”

“ His idea that the arrangement of a subject should be based upon the perspective,” replied the other, “ seemed to me remarkably logical.”

“ As far as that goes,” answered Verrocchio, “ he was just and reasonable ; but Paolo is an old man, wrapped up in the past ; he has no thought of progress, and has become very old-fashioned.”

“ Wherein is he wrong ? ” enquired the pupil.

“ As you know,” replied the master, “ there is that plane linear perspective, of which alone Paolo dreams ; added to this we are learning of a

second perspective that is caused by the atmosphere, wherein the outlines of distant bodies become indistinguishable and their colours grow faint: of this second perspective Paolo takes no heed."

"That is true!" murmured Leonardo, with a sigh of relief.

"As to his contention that a painting breaks the solidity of the walls of a building," continued the master with a shrug of his shoulders: "does a mirror break the solidity of the wall against which it hangs? And what is a painting but a great mirror in which Nature is most faithfully reflected?"

"That is true!" cried Leonardo.

"Yes!" answered Andrea Verrocchio, shaking his head. "Poor Paolo has become very old-fashioned!"

"All the same," replied Leonardo, "his idea of building up the arrangement of a picture upon its perspective is remarkably logical!"

V

Such were the theories of Paolo Ucello—in practice, if not in actual statement—and, whether we agree with these theories or no, there can be no doubt that Paolo got more genuine pictorial emotion out of plane linear perspective than any painter before or since.

Leonardo, as we shall see, caught hold of the idea of making the perspective of a picture a basis for the composition, and carried this theory to its full logical conclusion. This is the secret of the extraordinary unity of his composition in both

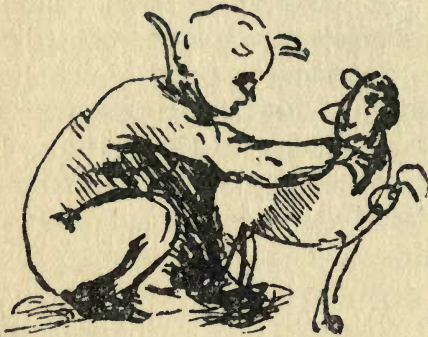


the unfinished Adoration of the Magi, which hangs in the Uffizi and the Last Supper of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

Botticelli, on the other hand, could never bind himself to any formal laws of perspective or anatomy. Rhythm was his ideal, and rhythm he captured ; his instinct seems to have impelled him to decorate a flat surface with a form of line and colour that stirs the æsthetic senses ; and, although he followed Paolo's principle of respecting the integrity of the flat surface upon which he painted, the composition of Botticelli's pictures in his greatest period is as elusive as the pattern of the ripples upon the sea, or the tune of the wind amongst the pine-trees.

## CHAPTER VII

### AS THINGS ARE



LEONARDO was sketching in his studio. A small boy-child, naked as he was born, was scrambling over the floor in chase of a cat; now he caught it, overbalanced, and baby and cat rolled together in a tangle. Then the cat won free, and the pursuit began all over again.

“Annina,” remarked Leonardo, watching the child with eyes that studied every motion, “all things considered, I do not think that I should like to be a cat!”

The child’s mother looked at her baby proudly, and laughed. “Fie, Messere!” said she,—“to be petted by such a baby!”

“Ah! Yes!” answered Leonardo, for the child had caught his quarry, and there was a yell of protest. “Sfacciatella is enjoying great felicity!”

“Patience, Messere! Wait and see! I tell you that these creatures look on little children as though each one was the Most Holy Bambino

Himself! Ah! What did I tell you?" The cat had indeed responded to the baby's advances, and was erecting her tail and holding up one paw with pleasure.

"They say," continued the woman, intent on her baby, "that on the First Night, when all the beasts were welcoming the Infant Gesu, the cat climbed on the roof of the stable so that she might sing her Ave: 'Ma-don-na!' she sang, 'Ma-don-na!' And, ever since then, all the cats in all the whole world have had a great devotion to all that reminds them of the holy Nativity. Why not? Cats are not Jews! Thank God!"

But Leonardo was too busy sketching the baby with the cat to heed what the mother was saying.

"It is a great gift," she chattered on, "to be able to draw things on paper, even though you do not make them live in colour!"

"Like the paintings in the Churches?" he hazarded, looking up, for he had all but finished his sketch.

"Eh? Yes! Like the pictures in the Churches!" she echoed. "If I were to try and draw this and that you would not be able to tell the cat from the baby!" And getting up, she went to look over his shoulder.

"Madonna mia!" she cried. "You have given him no nose!"

Leonardo made a pen-stroke.

"Heaven!" she cried. "What a nose! Ah! my poor precious!" And, catching up the infant in her arms, she hugged him close to her. But the baby wanted his cat, and he let all the world know how he wanted it.

“Come! come! cantankerous one!” she wheedled. “How like a man he is! He must have all he fancies!” And, picking up the long-suffering Sfiacciatella in one arm, whilst she held the baby in the other, she popped the pair of them on an empty sculptor’s modelling-stool, which happened to have been lately scrubbed.

Leonardo smiled. “How can I explain this drawing of mine?” said he. “It is a sketch—a note of the way in which a baby stoops when he is petting a cat—a note of the way in which a cat curves its back and holds up its paw when it is being petted. Having once drawn the exact position of the baby and the cat—it was a very pretty position, and that is why I drew it!—I can draw in your baby’s features, the cat’s head and paw, and all the rest, at any time.”

“Just as my husband jots down ‘*1 pnl. chst. L. d V.*’ when he means one panel of chestnut wood for Leonardo da Vinci,” said she; for this was the wife of a carpenter who prepared panels and carved frames for the artists, and was a very intelligent woman.

“Exactly!” he answered, moving a chair forward so that she might seat herself beside the modelling table on which her baby was doing his best to strangle the unfortunate Sfiacciatella.

## II

This was the autumn of 1479, when the great war with Rome and Naples that resulted from the Pazzi Conspiracy had given the Florentine craftsmen a most undesired holiday, and, consequently, the painters had dismissed such of their assistants

as were dispensable, and were marking time and planning future masterpieces.

Three years before some unknown slanderer had lodged a vile, anonymous accusation against Leonardo with the Signoria ; and, although Leonardo had left the court without a stain on his character, and although there was still perfect friendship between himself and Verrocchio, he had thought it wise to leave Andrea's bottega and set up a small studio of his own.

During the first eighteen months of his new venture it does not appear as though Leonardo had received any commissions, and, with the exception of the wonderful silverpoint drawing of a Condottiere, the idea of which was taken from Verrocchio's silver altar wrought for the Duomo, we can trace no work from his hand. Then, in the January of 1478, the Priors had given him a commission for an altarpiece for the Chapel of San Bernardo in the Signority, and on March 16 had paid him twenty-five florins on account ; but the turmoil of the Pazzi plot had stopped the work before it had been properly commenced, and there seemed no prospect of a renewal of the commission. The assassination of Giuliano de' Medici by the Pazzi conspirators had taken place on April 26, 1478, and now, in the autumn of 1479, Leonardo was without any definite commission.

I do not mean that Leonardo had wasted the past eighteen months—Leonardo da Vinci never wasted his time ! But the planning of fortifications which no general would look at, and the designing of terrible engines of offence—these were mowing-machines with revolving scythes,

and they should have cut down the ranks of the enemy like corn falls in harvest, if only the enemy had promised to stand still for the mowing and had undertaken to leave the driver and horses of Leonardo's chariot unwounded—the planning of these undesired fortresses and unconsidered infernal machines had brought no fame and less money.

In this autumn of 1479 Leonardo was twenty-seven years of age ; he had acquired a marvellous facility and a vital touch with his pencil ; he had cultivated a great feeling after atmosphere and aerial perspective ; he had mastered the rudiments of mathematics and had much taste in music ; but he had never painted any great picture.

### III

“ Let him kick ! ” said Leonardo, as the baby wrestled with poor Sfiacciatella, whilst he himself absorbed every movement of those soft muscles which actuated the plump legs.

“ Let him kick, yourself ! ” scoffed the mother. “ Why, he would be off the table before you could catch him ! ” And she gripped one ankle firmly with her right hand, and supported the fat body with the other.

“ Keep him like that ! ” cried Leonardo ; and, shifting his chair a little, he caught up a fresh sheet of paper and commenced to draw like one possessed. But now he was working at no mere sketch for future reference, like that of the Petting of Sfiacciatella ; for now each strong, purposeful stroke meant something vital, each stroke produced the maximum effect with the minimum of

labour, each stroke was absolutely indispensable. Leonardo was creating !

“ How would you like your bambino to be painted in colour and to hang on the wall of a Church above the Altar ? ” said he, resolved to interest the mother and make her keep her pose.

“ Eh ? ” said she, looking at him. But, although she turned her eyes, his question had produced the desired effect, and she did not shift her position a hair’s breadth.

“ To be painted in colours as the Infant Jesus, ” he answered ; “ to be finely framed in a rich gold frame, and to hang in a Church behind the High Altar ! ”

“ Which Church ? ” she asked.

“ Steady ! ” cried the painter. For the cat was twisting to get away from the baby, and the baby, condemned to a singularly helpless and inefficient position, was struggling to retain the cat. “ Which Church ? ” he repeated. “ San Scopeto, outside the Porta Romana. ”

“ Ah ! The Church of San Donato ! ” she replied giving the Church its proper name. “ That is a fine building ! Have you received the commission ? ” And her face assumed an expression of much anxiety, for it would be a great honour to have her child’s portrait hung in San Donato, and she would be able to take her friends by turn so that she might show them the spectacle.

“ The monks have voted the money, ” he answered, working at the baby’s chubby legs ; “ they have placed the arrangement of the commission in the hands of their notary, and their notary is my father. ”

"Then the matter is as good as settled!" said she, with a smile.

"Patience!" he answered. "In the first place the monks will not sign the contract until the war is over and peace declared, in the second place I am not certain that the contract is worth accepting."

"And what do they offer?" she asked.

"A piece of land in the Val d'Elsa," he answered, "that is said to be worth three hundred florins."

"A very good price!" cried she. "A very good price indeed! It is I, who am wife to the frame-maker of all the greatest painters in Florence, that tell you so!"

"But," said he, smiling, "there are certain conditions."

"Yes?" said she.

"I have to find all the colours and materials."

"That," said she, "is perfectly just!"

"And, if the painting be not completed within thirty months it is to become the property of the Convent, without any compensation for what I have already spent on it."

"That," said she, "will make you work!"

"And," he concluded, his smile broadening, "I must provide a dowry of one hundred and fifty florins for the niece of him who gave the land."

For a moment Madonna was nonplussed, then her practical Tuscan mind rose to the occasion. "That," said she, "is as simple as stoning olives! Marry the girl, and you will have the whole!"

"Ho!" cried Leonardo, shouting with laughter. "So I must marry a girl whom I have not even seen!"



“ Yes ! ” answered she, calmly. “ Girls are such fools that this one will marry you for your handsome face and long limbs ! As for you, all wives are the same when you have been married a fortnight ! ”

This practical woman was now looking down at her baby, the picture of sweet sensibility. So, with quick perception, Leonardo left the drawing of the child and commenced the mother.

For a time he drew in silence, then she asked a question. “ How will you draw your picture ? ” said she. “ Surely you will not draw the Divine Bambino playing with a cat ! ”

“ Do you know Sandro Botticelli ? ” he asked in reply.

“ Of course ! Who does not know Sandro ? ”

“ Well, Sandro Botticelli has commenced to paint a new picture of the Magi, in which there are to be many figures ; and, after talking over this picture, and arguing and disputing together as painters will, I have told Sandro that I will paint the exact same subject in a more truthful manner.”

“ Take my word for it,” said she, with superb disdain, “ you will never excel Sandro if you start painting the Bambino playing with Sfiacciatella ! ”

Leonardo smiled to himself, as he drew her mouth, still set close and firm. “ You remember Sandro’s Magi that he finished two years since ? ” he asked.

“ The one with the portraits of the Medici as the Wise Men ? Naturally ! All Florence went to see that picture ! ”

“ You remember the figures of the Madonna and Child ? ”

She knit her brows and thought. "One cannot remember everything!" said she.

"If you were to look at the picture," said Leonardo, "you would find that the lower part of the Madonna's drapery was both stiff and awkward, and that the Bambino was so small that He is more like a doll than a baby."

"I will visit Santa Maria Novella this afternoon," said she, "and examine that Bambino."

"Bene! In Sandro's new picture he has drawn the upper part of the Madonna sweet and graceful, and the Bambino is larger than the other; but the lower half of the Madonna is still heavy and awkward, and the Bambino is still somewhat small and not very natural."

"Ah!" said she, her face full of intelligence. "So that is why you wish to draw my bambino, a fine, healthy boy!"

"And that is why I am drawing your bambino playing with Sfiacciatella, so that I may study all his motions, find out how he is put together, discover how much of him is muscle and how much fat, and so on. We painters are too fond of drawing some of our figures most carefully from the model and finishing the rest out of our imaginations: we should draw things as they are!"

Madonna Annina nodded her head in approval.

"Therefore," said he, "I have chosen the most graceful young mother I know for my central figure, and I intend to paint her and her baby most truthfully."

"What?" she cried. "You plan to paint me as the Madonna?"

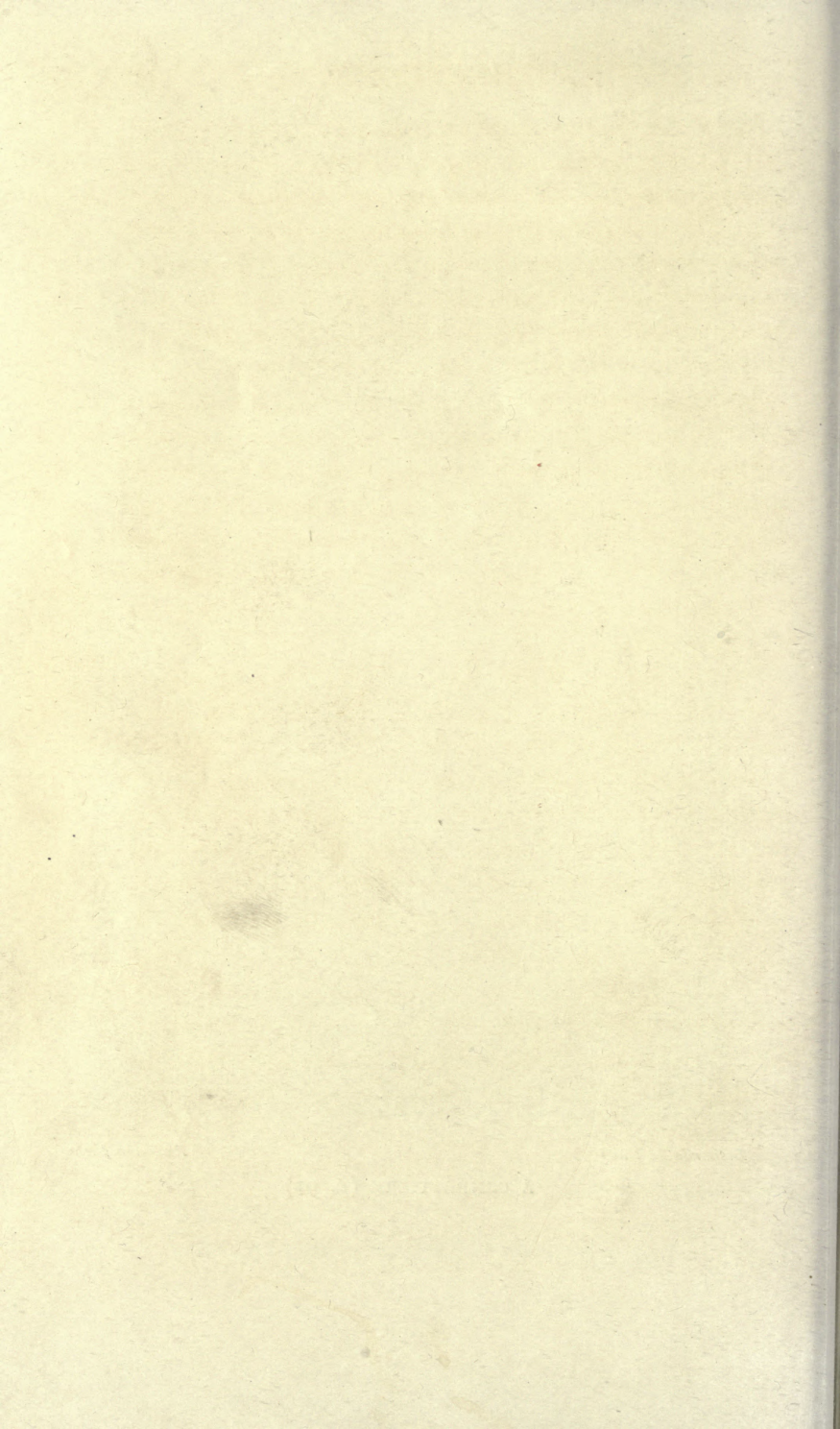
"You are very graceful!" he answered.



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Anderson photo*

A CONDOTTIERE (p. 91)



Then she, knowing Leonardo well, and knowing that he was too much wrapped up in his work to waste himself on the softer emotions, and knowing with the woman's instinct that she was perfectly safe in taking a liberty, cried—laughing to herself all the while—"If you make love to me like this my husband will certainly break your head!" And she drew herself up, stiff as buckram.

And Leonardo, with that genius which God had given him, caught something of Annina's passing stiffness, transferring it to paper so that, when he came to make the graceful and finished study of the mother and child, he should not be tempted into the fault of flaccidity. "It would be amusing to make love to you," said he. "It would also be an experience!"

"Amusing!" cried she. "An experience!" Then they laughed together like two children; and she, chiding him, bade him marry his little heiress with her dower of a hundred and fifty florins: "For," said she, "it is easy to see that one woman is the same to you as another, and that all the women in all the whole of Italy would not satisfy you as much as a chestnut panel!"

## IV

Thus Leonardo created the Lady of the Cat, who should presently blossom forth into the unfinished Madonna that is now hanging in the Uffizi Gallery.

And, during this same period, when the crowds were very full of excitement concerning the war with Naples, Leonardo made many drawings of men disputing, arguing, and shouting—thus form-

ing a foundation upon which he afterwards built up the crowd in the Adoration of the Magi, the fighting men in the Battle of Anghiari, and the Disciples in the Last Supper.

He would catch the essence of some figure, and, with a few pen-strokes, he would create a new individual that was far more vital than most men who are formed of flesh and blood.

He would sketch these figures naked so that he might get right down to the anatomy and describe the muscles that actuated them; and for sheer force—for sheer creation—I do not believe that these sketches of Leonardo's have ever been equalled.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AS THINGS SHOULD BE



**I**N the beginning of the following March, Lorenzo the Magnificent returned from his diplomatic visit to the King of Naples.

On the Feast of the Annunciation,

March 25, 1480, the treasured statue of the Madonna of Impruneta, said to have been carved by Saint Luke, was taken from its resting-place in the Church of Santa Maria dell' Impruneta, carried in solemn procession through the streets of Florence, and brought to the Duomo. There peace was declared, whilst the crowds went wild with joy.

Then the monks of San Scopeto fulfilled their promise, and gave a contract for the painting of the Magi to Leonardo.

#### II

“Sandro,” said Leonardo da Vinci, looking hard at Sandro Botticelli's half-finished painting of the Adoration of the Magi, as it stood on its great

easel in Sandro's bottega, "I am going to sketch part of your picture!"

"Tut! Tut! Tut!" answered the other, laughing. "That is a pretty idea! First you undertake to excel my treatment of the subject, and then you calmly propose to steal my composition! A fine robber of a fellow, indeed!"

"Nonsense, my fat and foolish one!" replied Leonardo, his voice assuming an air of suave politeness. "Listen, and I will explain!"

"Ye gods!" murmured the older painter, casting his eyes upwards. "This fellow would explain that black was white, and expect one to believe it! And," he added, chuckling, "one would believe it!" For, already, Leonardo's persuasive tongue had become notorious amongst the painters of Florence.

"Tell me this," asked Leonardo, "how is it possible for us to compete against each other, unless we have some common basis for our work? Can one compare a rose with a greyhound?"

"Or a thief with an honest man?" chuckled Sandro.

"Ah! There you wrong me most cruelly!" cried Leonardo. "I merely intend to use this sketch as a rough basis for my composition! See! to start with, I will twist your subject round!" And he set up one of those mirrors which painters use to reverse a drawing or examine a finished painting, so that it stood opposite Sandro's easel.

"Bene!" answered the other, good-naturedly. "Only remember the conditions of our competition!"

For the origin of the contest had been this:



Sandro Botticelli, having won great renown through a painting of the Magi, which same picture had contained portraits of the leading members of the House of the Medici and had been hung in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, was resolved to surpass his masterpiece. And Sandro, being unemployed on account of the war, commenced to paint a new version of the Magi; and Sandro, being at this time without definite commission and much inflated with his previous success, had resolved, not only to excel his masterpiece of Santa Maria Novella, but also to surpass every picture that had ever been painted. Per Bacco! This was a dangerous state of mind! For, just as a city that is without walls lies open to an attack of the enemy, so a painter that is without humility lies open to an attack of the evil one! "Show your skill!" the evil one had whispered. "Show that you can surpass Maccaccio in the handling of crowds! Paint more figures in your picture than Maccaccio has ever succeeded in rendering!" So Sandro Botticelli—being, as I have said, idle and puffed-up—proceeded to sketch a vast company of men and horses in the background of his picture.

Then Leonardo da Vinci had entered Sandro's bottega. And Leonardo, being at this time without definite commission and having grown very careless about his religious observances, had lain open to the attack of the very same devil that had tempted Sandro. "You have been studying crowds!" he had whispered. "You understand the principles that actuate and sway a crowd far better than this Sandro! Aye! You could even

read him a lesson in composition ! ” Thereupon a warm, but friendly, argument had ensued—Leonardo pointing out the faults and weakness of Sandro’s arrangement, whilst Sandro had challenged him to do better. “Mind !” Sandro had ended. “We have counted at least fourscore figures of men and horses in my composition ; you must paint a like number !”

## III.

Leonardo stared into the mirror, and, the longer he stared, the less he liked the picture, and the more confused did Sandro’s arrangement become. To start with, the three contending peeps into the distance irritated him, and the perspective that Sandro had used in the sketching of his ruins seemed quite different from the perspective in the rest of the picture.

Then the little devil, who had been tempting the pair of them, left him in order that it might persuade Sandro to add still more figures to his multitude, and Leonardo saw clearly.

First he saw that it was Sandro’s St. Joseph that overpowered and spoilt the symmetry of the grouping, and he resolved to place his St. Joseph in a less obtrusive position. Then he saw that, in order to impress the fact that there were three kings amongst the Magi, Sandro had given the followers of each of these three kings a separate stage-entrance, and he resolved to mend this absurdity. Next he decided that Sandro’s foreground was too scattered, and his foreground figures too many and too small. Finally the Madonna and Child, two of the Magi and one or

two of their followers disentangled themselves from the general confusion, and he resolved to make these the basis of his composition.

"Sandro," said he, "I may make my foreground figures bigger, may not I?"

"As big as mountains," chuckled the other, "provided you draw fourscore figures in all!"

"I am not enraptured with your ruins!" suggested Leonardo.

"Then make better ones!" was the answer.

"I think," said Leonardo, thoughtfully, "I shall place my ruins more at the side of the picture." And straightway he began to draw.



Reversed sketch from Botticelli's "Adoration"

✓ As he drew, he thought ; and, as he thought, Leonardo remembered that the space behind the High Altar of San Donato a Scopeto would be best filled by a square composition. So, making his central group large and imposing, he omitted all the figures in the wings of Sandro's painting. Then, sketching in a couple of trees so that he might fill in the place where St. Joseph had stood, and also do away with the suggestion of ancient ruins, Leonardo felt that the basis of his composition could be carried no further in its present form.

“ Well ? ” said he, standing up and stretching himself.

“ If you intend to crowd fourscore figures into that composition,” answered Sandro, with a chuckle, “ you will be kept busy ! ”

“ Eh ? You will see what you will see ! ” replied Leonardo ; and, without another word, he tucked his drawing under his arm, and betook himself to his own studio.

#### IV

Leonardo was seated at his studio table, with a pile of sketches before him. These were sketches that he had made during the past two years, some simply because the subject had caught his fancy, others with the purpose of working out the study of some particular motion—the position of a man peering from under his hands, for example—of a man gesticulating, of a man looking upward. And, as he turned over these sketches, he selected one here, one there, placing them on one side as studies that might turn out useful in filling the

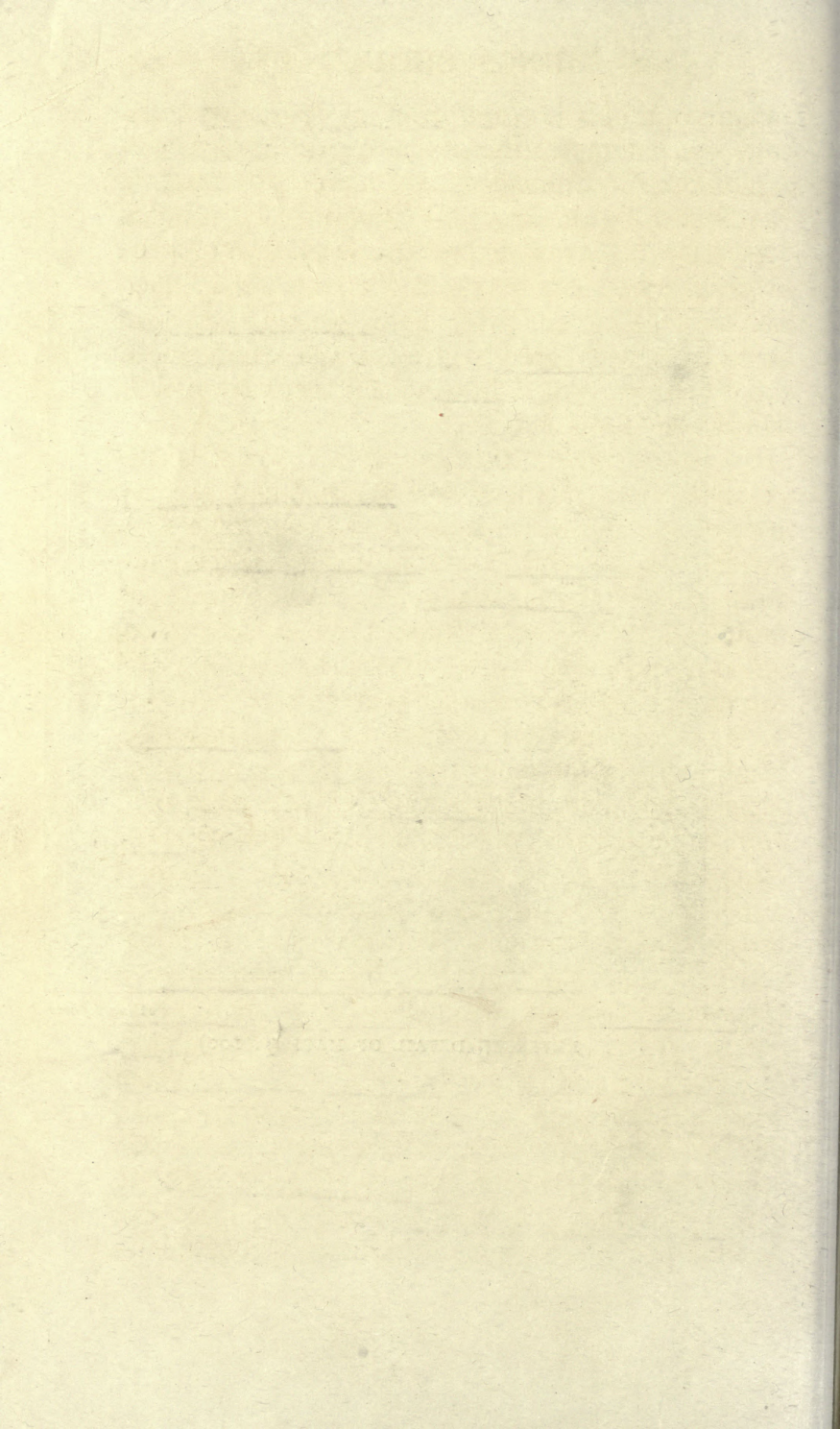
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*Botticelli*

*Alinari photo*

REVERSED DETAIL OF MAGI (p. 100)



foreground of the Adoration of the Magi. To take one example, there was a sketch of young Fieravanti di Domenico, which he had made in the September of 1478: Fieravanti was looking upwards with a rapt expression, and, slight as the drawing was, there was a grip about it that filled Leonardo with delight. Then he took a clean sheet of paper, ruled a large square, and placed it beside the reversed drawing of Sandro Botticelli's Adoration of the Magi.

"It is one thing," he murmured, "to act on the impulse of the moment, and draw things as they are; it is another thing to fill a huge panel with fourscore figures, so that they form one complete and perfect composition!" And his eyes wandered to the large wooden panel, measuring seven-foot-six by seven-foot-six, which the carpenter had prepared for him.

Again his eyes turned to his drawing of Sandro's Magi, and, from thence, back to the panel, and he imagined the composition transferred to the panel; and, picking up a ruler from the table, he drew that diagonal line which all painters that ever were—from those of ancient China and Japan, to those of Quattrocento Tuscany—have instinctively loved: this line was drawn from the top corner that was on Leonardo's left to the bottom corner on his right, and, along it, fell the figures of Our Lady, the Divine Infant and the Wise Man who was kissing the Bambino's feet. It was obvious that these three figures must be kept in their original positions, carrying a feeling of the diagonal across the picture, and, when he had accomplished his scheme of drawing the Madonna

more gracefully and the Bambino like a real baby, the three figures should come quite right.

Yes! The three figures of the Mother, the Child and the adoring Wise Man came altogether admirably; but, how in the name of all that was wonderful could he fit fourscore figures into a diagonal scheme of composition? The task was beyond him—it was beyond any one! He must plan some other scheme of composition!

✓ But, stay! What was it that old Paolo Ucello had said! “Having selected the subject for my picture,” he had said, “I commence by planning a perspective that will aptly suit it: the lines of my perspective are the cords that bind my picture together; the placing of the vanishing point is the key to the arrangement of the subject.”

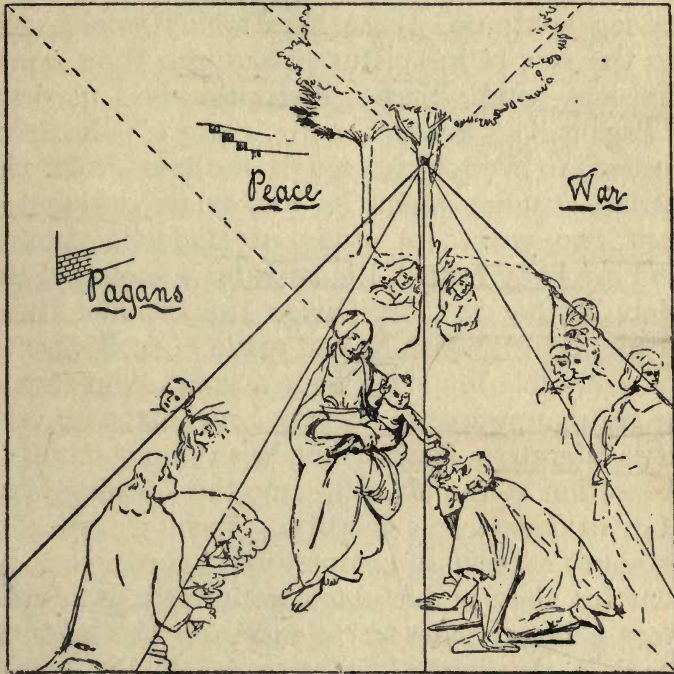
→ Wise old Paolo! The first step in the arrangement of a subject should be the placing of the vanishing point! And, taking the sheet of paper upon which he had already drawn a square, Leonardo divided this square into eight equal divisions so as to aid his measurements.

✓ Where should he place his vanishing point? Not on the vertical line that bisected his picture-square! That would be too central! But, if he were to place his vanishing point upon the first dividing-line that fell to the right of the central line, it would come immediately above the Madonna and her kneeling Wise Man. So Leonardo drew a vertical line, five-eighths from the left of the picture, that should bisect the Madonna and the Magus. Upon this vertical line must fall his vanishing point!

Now, if Leonardo was an artist by instinct, he



was a mathematician by reason ; and, if his first impulse led him to sketch an idea on paper, his second impulse would lead him to reason, calculate, measure and reduce his idea to a mathematical exactitude. Therefore, by now, that first impulse



Composition & plan of Leonardo's version.

which had led him to take the Madonna, Infant and Wise Man, as the heart of his picture, was giving way to a second impulse which made him work out the most extraordinary and scientific plan of composition that the world has ever seen :

From the vanishing point he drew perspective lines that should include an angle of ninety

degrees. Within this angle of ninety degrees, he intended to place his chief subject—that is to say, all those figures which were engaged in active adoration of the Holy Infant. Moreover (and it took some planning!) this chief picture-angle was plotted to include exactly half the picture. Then, having continued those lines which would split up the rest of his picture-space into three equal divisions—and these divisions he marked, “Pagans,” “Peace” and “War!”—he proceeded to sketch in rough outlines from the various studies which he had made during the past two years. A study of Madonna Annina and her baby formed the basis for a sketch of the Holy Mother and her Divine Infant; the study of Fieravanti, which he had made in 1478, formed an admirable foundation for a youth who should be gazing upwards in adoration; whilst, with very little alteration, the kneeling Wise Man of Sandro’s Adoration of the Magi became the kneeling Wise Man of Leonardo’s picture. Then, in order to establish his plan of composition, in order to show that his chief picture-angle contained those who were adoring, in order to mark off this picture-angle in the finished painting, he drew a knight looking away from the Holy Infant and placed him immediately outside the picture-angle to the right, and he roughed in a second head that looked away from the Divine Infant on the left.

Then Leonardo da Vinci, being very weary and almost starving, flung down his pen and went out to the nearest tavern for food and rest.

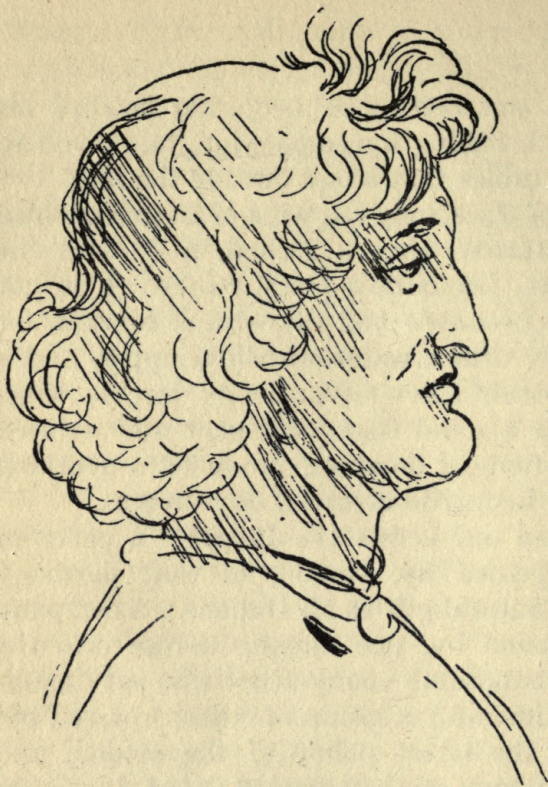
## V

The sun was setting as Leonardo finished his supper, and, calling for some wine, he moved to one of the tables that stood outside the inn.

A glass of the strong red wine of Lastra trickled down his throat, then a second, and, with the second glass, Leonardo's fancy awoke. I do not mean that Leonardo had over-drunk himself, for he had only drunk water with his supper, and a more temperate fellow never lived ; but the wine, reacting on a mind that was spent and wearied with the effort of creation, produced a soothing effect, and Leonardo dreamed day-dreams.

He looked out across the Piazza ; a party of prentices passed by, singing in that harmony which is a natural gift to all Italians ; a company of girls passed by, one flinging a rose into the lap of the handsome young artist who sat dreaming before his inn ; a group of citizens passed by, discussing the latest policy of the Medici, and nodding to him as they passed ; but Leonardo saw nothing of these things.

A picture had unrolled itself before his eyes. In the centre of this picture, he saw a Lady ; she was seated in a modest attitude, her knees were not far apart, as in Sandro's picture, but close together, and her head was bending slightly sideways ; her garments were hanging gracefully, not in the confusion of many folds but only where they would be folded naturally by the action of the arms and knees, or caught in by the girdle, and the contour of the figure was not broken by many lines or interrupted folds : painted in the



LEONARDO DA VINCI.  
Reconstructed from his Sketch-books.  
Windsor.

true proportions of a figure that was not above the normal height, this Lady should stand forth noble and imposing by reason of her light garments seen against the darker background; her face should not be the face of Annina but, rather, the face of Annina with the beauty of many beautiful faces added to it.

Upon this Lady's knee, he saw a baby. This was a real baby, perfect as to its size and proportions, perfect as to the modelling of its limbs; for little children are slender at the joints and plump between the joints, as may be seen in the joints of the arms and shoulders which are slender and have great dimples. This Bambino would be twisting round to receive the present which the Wise Man was offering and to give the fellow its blessing; for his experience of Annina's baby had taught him that, if little children should be depicted in shy, timid attitudes when standing up, they should be represented as twisting themselves about with quick movements when seated.

Then his fancy turned to the group that surrounded the Mother and Bambino; but those who formed this group refused to take very definite shape as to their features, and were chiefly noticeable by their actions. And it came to him that this was as it should be; for none wished to see how this one or that one was composing his features in adoration, but simply to note that each adored—then, such as looked upon the picture would be led by the various actions to gaze with the gazers, and adore with those who adored.

Lastly, he tried to picture the rest of the four-

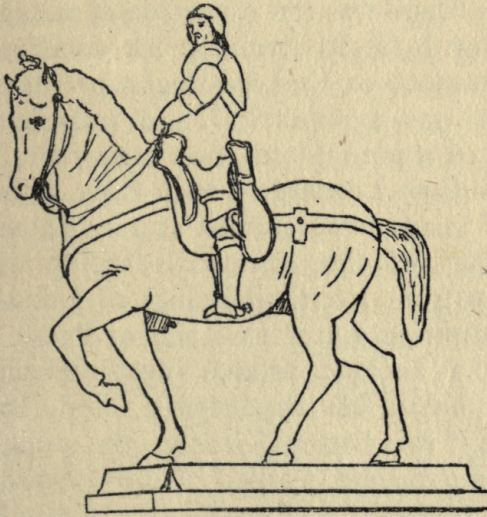
score figures that were to fill the background ; but save for a faint vision of fighting men obscured by the dust of battle, the memory of a skirmish between some Roman and Florentine cavalry which he had once seen on the road to San Miniato, the background remained empty. However, he had often amused himself in watching and taking notes of the attitudes and actions of men as they talked and disputed, or as they laughed, or as they came to blows ; and, since he had noted down these things in his pocket-book, he anticipated but little difficulty in the elaboration of his background.

“ Thank Heaven ! ” he murmured, filling his third and final glass with the wine of Lastra, “ I have taken note of things as they are ! ” And, as he sipped the wine, he pictured these things woven together into one great picture, and united by one great impulse of creation.

Thus Leonardo da Vinci dreamed his dream of things as they should be.

## CHAPTER IX

EXEUNT OMNES !



IF the stalwart Tuscan notary, Ser Piero da Vinci, had never kissed that pretty peasant girl beneath the slopes of Monte Albano, Leonardo would never have painted. Contrariwise,

if the brave Venetian general, Bartolommeo Colleoni, had never left his fortune to Venice with the proviso that a statue should be erected to his memory, Leonardo might have become the greatest painter of the Renaissance. But Colleoni did command a statue, and Verrocchio did obtain the commission to model and cast the same in bronze, and now, in the years 1480, 1481, Andrea Verrocchio was hard at work on one of the greatest equestrian statues of the age.

## II

Verrocchio was hard at work on the Colleoni statue, and Leonardo could not keep away from his bottega. To begin with, there was the technical problem of modelling the huge horse in a clay, cement or plaster that should be sufficiently strong to withstand a journey to Venice, and technical problems always had a special fascination for Leonardo ; then there was the education of seeing the first sculptor in Italy straining his creative power to the utmost so that he might produce something that was symmetrical and inspiring whilst it remained true to nature, and none valued knowledge more than Leonardo ; then there were casts of horses' heads from ancient statues to be studied, drawings of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius from Rome, drawings of Donatello's great equestrian statue that was at Padua, drawings of the antique models upon which Donatello had based his masterpiece, and, as Leonardo wrote, " it is better to imitate the works of antiquity than modern works " ; and, finally, there was the perfectly legitimate excuse that, since Leonardo had planned to paint many strenuous horses in his Adoration of the Magi, he had best take advantage of the present opportunity.

I do not mean that Leonardo neglected his picture : what he actually accomplished shows that he must have spent a vast deal of thought and study upon the foundation of the various figures. Annina lives, only roughed in, it is true, in tones of brown monochrome, and destitute of those beautiful colours which she herself had loved ; but



this is an Annina who is infinitely fairer than the reality. The Bambino, again, unfinished though He be, and waiting for a last study of both legs and body, is a creation. And the foreground group, so dramatic in its action as to approach violence, shows such a vast amount of careful thought and definite preparation that it only needs the softening touch of the actual painting to make it spring into life and unity. What I mean is this :

When Ser Piero da Vinci had first hinted at the order for an Adoration of the Magi from San Scopeto, Leonardo had made an elaborate drawing (now known as the Galichon drawing of the Louvre) in which he had treated the subject in a traditional manner and introduced the ox, ass and other incidentals of the stable ; to this he had gradually added architectural details, until the stable had become enclosed in a palace. Then, finding this scheme quite unsatisfactory, and meeting with Sandro's composition, he had thrown his first scheme to the winds, brought the Madonna and her Bambino out into the open air, and started the subject as I have described it.

The foreground had been laid in with brown—how good it is can easily be seen by covering up the distance!—and this sketchy, unfinished foreground bore every token of strong creative genius. Then Leonardo, drawing a deep breath, started the different groups that were to form the background.

Now, to the ordinary mortal, the background of a picture should be either a faint repetition or continuance of the foreground theme—as was the

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## 116 THE ADMIRABLE PAINTER

case in Sandro Botticelli's Adoration of the Magi—or else it should harmonise with, and be subservient to, the foreground: not so to Leonardo da Vinci! His background should be in contrast to his foreground; his background should, in itself, be a vivid picture of the pagan world, with its passionate life, its triumphs of classical peace, its struggles of violent war; and, by this very contrast, I believe that Leonardo had planned to bring out the full strength of the adoring group which filled his foreground. Believe me it was no crude plan that Leonardo had formed! The intervening atmosphere should blurr the distant objects; the minute details of the far-off figures should be lost, and the figures only suggested; there should be no active competition of the background with the foreground!

But, alas! As Leonardo threw his heart into the pagan background, so his interest in the Christian foreground weakened; the tremendous creative impulse which had inspired the adoring group sickened and died; he planned elaborate architectural drawings of an ancient palace, the ruins of which should adorn his picture; he filled these ruins with active pagan life; he sketched in a beautiful and dignified scheme for the triumph of peace; he commenced the drawing of the struggle of war; then, as I have said, the excitement of Verrocchio's bottega gripped him, and Leonardo laid down his brush.

### III

On June 25, 1481, Leonardo took up his brushes to paint the Convent clock. The Quattrocento

artist saw nothing derogatory in such a task, for he was a craftsman down to the tips of his sensitive fingers, and, by as much as a great artist could excel a common journeyman in the painting of an altarpiece, by so much could he excel him in the painting of a clock. In fact, if the truth were told, Leonardo was delighted to get away from the tangled skein of the Magi and devote himself to an honest, straightforward job.

One ounce of azure for the clock-face was served out to him by the steward of San Scopeto, and, since he saw fit to gild the hands and figures upon a sound foundation, one ounce of yellow : gold that is laid on blue shows every scratch and every abrasion ; but, if the gold be laid on a foundation of yellow, the gilding will look well for centuries. He was to receive a load of firewood and one lira, six soldi for the work, not a fortune one might say ; but, when a picture is hanging fire and money is going out for paint as well as for food, every penny counts.

Leonardo had finished the clock, and was trudging back to Florence, when he met Sandro Botticelli. The change of work and fresh air had made him feel in better spirits than he had felt for many days, and he greeted Sandro cheerfully.

“ Oh! Sandro ! ” he called. “ How go their Excellencies ? ”

“ What Excellencies ? ” asked Sandro, drawing nearer.

“ Their Highnesses, Gaspare, Melchiorre and Baldassare, of course ! ”

“ A pest on those Wise Men ! ” laughed Sandro, slipping his arm into that of Leonardo, and turning

to walk with him. "Until you spoke of those abominable Kings, I had forgotten all about my picture!" Then Sandro, half in jest and half in earnest, for he was a religious fellow, apologised for his abuse of the Magi, explaining that it was the retinue and not the Kings whom he abominated. "For," said he, "those unruly followers have twisted my brain into such a knot that I shall never see straight again!"

"You say," answered Leonardo, with some excitement, "that you had forgotten all about your picture! What do you mean?"

"That it is wrapped up in a linen sheet and stored away in a corner of my bottega! There it remains until Arno flows backwards and the sea washes the walls of Florence! Now I am busy painting a fresco of Saint Augustine for the Ognissanti: he is a nice, simple fellow, who is sitting alone in his cell without any followers to worry me!"

"You have given up the Adoration of the Magi!" exclaimed Leonardo, hardly believing his ears.

"I have given up the Adoration of the Magi!" answered Sandro. "It is better to alter one's mind than to commit an assassination! Those followers were simply smothering each other in the crowd! Seriously, my Leonardo, we had made a great mistake when we imagined that it was possible to pack so many figures into one picture without ruining the whole!"

"And I," replied Leonardo, "have come to much the same conclusion. But tell me, Sandro mine, the reason why many figures spoil a composition!"

“It seems to me,” said Sandro, “that too many figures produce a confusion. Instead of sweeping onward gracefully, like the flow and swirl of some mighty river, the lines in a crowded picture must toss to and fro as a whirlpool tosses with the change of tide. Besides, in a crowded picture, the eye wanders from this to that until the subject itself is lost in the multitude of its figures. What is your opinion, Leonardo?”

“Like you,” he answered, “I have learnt how historical pictures, whether sacred or profane, ought not to be crowded and confused by many figures. Also, besides this, I have found that the painting of many figures wearies the imagination, and that, by the time I have arranged and drawn the groups which form the background, I have lost all interest in the Madonna, the Bambino and the Wise Men.”

“Ah!” said Sandro, drawing in his breath deeply, “I am finding much comfort in the painting of Saint Augustine!”

“And I,” said Leonardo, “have been finding much comfort in the painting of a convent clock!”

IV

Leonardo was back in his studio. The group of the Wise Men and their followers was mocking him from his panel. Yes, Sandro was right! The lines in this crowded picture were restless, tossing to and fro as a whirlpool tosses with the change of tide! And, without remembering more of what Sandro Botticelli had said, his eyes wandered from figure to figure until they rested on the group of fighting men in the background. Then Leo-

Botticelli  
Adorn

Leo

nardo instinctively drew a trifle nearer to the panel.

That little battle, just beginning to take form and shape itself, was very good—very good indeed! There was a dash and swing about these few half-drawn horsemen, a flow and a swirl as Sandro would have had it, that made this tiny group seem worth all the whole of the rest of the picture put together!

What did those men in the foreground—aye! many of them strong, active men too!—want with their prayers and religious ecstasies, when there was this fighting so close at hand? Would he, Leonardo da Vinci, spend his time in worship when there was man's work stirring? Sandro might—or that gentle, kindly, young Filippino Lippi—but himself, or that fine fellow Verrocchio? He looked again at the adoring group in the foreground, a slight shudder passed through him and he felt something that was akin to repulsion; again his eyes passed on to the small battle scene.

Ha! This was man's work! Small as it was, sketchy, unfinished, this was the work of one who had mastered horses, who could ride with the best, who could fight if needs be! He glanced at the foreground, and a distaste that almost amounted to a loathing took hold of him; he looked at the battle-scene, and he longed, with every atom of his being, that he might paint out the foreground and paint in a mighty group of fighting men and struggling horses.

I tell you that this is true! Unbacked by personal religious fervour, the great creative impulse which had inspired the group of the Magi was



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Alinari photo*

ADORATION OF THE MAGI (p. 115)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



dead, and, as long as Leonardo lived, he never again attempted the slightest sketch of an Adoration of the Magi; but the impulse which had inspired the tiny group of fighting men lived, and when, after some two-and-twenty years, Leonardo started an historical painting which should be his supreme masterpiece, the subject he selected was the theme of the fighting men from the background of the Magi.

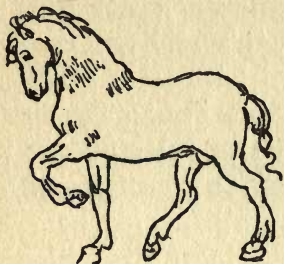
## V

Leonardo turned his back on the panel with a sigh. Even though he had possessed the will to begin a large battle-scene, on the chance of finding a customer, the preliminary work in such an undertaking would involve many studies, the hire of spirited horses and men that could manage them would cost much money, and Ser Piero's increasing family had made him less generous than of old. Then, as artists will, Leonardo started thumbing the pages of his sketch-book so that he might see if the studies which he had made in Verrocchio's bottega would lend themselves to the composition of a battle.

Ah! here were some sketches of a fighting stallion, with his mouth fiercely open, his lips drawn back until his terrible teeth were exposed, and his ears laid back at full danger-signal. He had carried this same theme on through a snarling lion, to the terrifying grimace of a furious man; and the similarity of the three expressions was an object lesson in the brutality of the passions.

But, what was this? He had almost forgotten the masterly little sketch which he had made from the same horse, and at the same time that Verroc-

chio was making his final studies for the Colleoni statue. He remembered that Verrocchio had



drawn his horse with the two legs on the near side stepping forward together, whereas he, using his eyes sharply, had seen that the near hindleg was showing the horse onward, whilst his near foreleg was raised in stepping forward. At the time

he had imagined that his young eyes were serving him better than Verrocchio's ; but, now, he began to wonder whether he had not a finer gift of perception, and he began to wonder—aye ! had not he been trained as a sculptor, even better than as a painter ? He put down the drawing, picked up his cap, and hurried towards Verrocchio's bottega.

As Leonardo entered the workshop someone was saying : “ —And so, Andrea, Lodovico Sforza is determined to find a sculptor who will make him a mounted statue of his father, the Duke Francesco, that will throw even your horse into the shade ! ”

## VI

It was late in September when the Monks of San Scopeto sent Leonardo a cask of wine as a reminder that he must be getting on with his picture ; but there was no Leonardo at the studio to receive the barrel in person—there was seldom any Leonardo at his studio in those days !

“ What will you do without us all, Leonardo mine ? ” asked Verrocchio lightly.

Leonardo da Vinci looked up from the tub at

which he was washing, and spluttered; for the day had been hot, and the clay with which he had been modelling some details of a horse had insisted on spreading itself from his hands to his face, and even to his hair.

“Eh? What will you do without us all?” echoed Sandro Botticelli. “With the great Botticelli gone to Rome, and the great Ghirlandajo gone to Rome, and the greatest Verrocchio busy making his fortune in Venice, you will be the only artist left in Florence!”

But Leonardo was too busy getting the soap-suds out of his eyes to answer.

“You forget Pollaiuolo!” suggested Lorenzo da Credi, laughing.

“What? That hawk-nosed cockerel?” sneered Verrocchio.

“Ah!” chimed in Sandro, who had no cause to love the Pollaiuoli. “Those two brothers do not count! It is Leonardo who will soak in all the orders, like a rag soaks up the dew! And, now that he is a master-sculptor, as well as a master-painter, there will be no withstanding him!”

“I shall be in Milan!” answered Leonardo, scrubbing his face with a towel.

“Eh? What?” cried Sandro, for, as yet, he had heard nothing of Leonardo’s intentions.

“I shall be in Milan,” repeated Leonardo, “casting the great statue of Francesco Sforza.”

Sandro Botticelli whistled.

“To-day,” remarked Francesco di Simone, “Leonardo modelled the hindleg of a horse—very badly! To-morrow he will cast this huge statue for Il Moro!” For Francesco had helped

to train Leonardo when he was an apprentice, and he felt that it was his duty to keep Leonardo in his place.

"How, in the name of all the gods," enquired Sandro—and he had some difficulty in keeping the laughter out of his voice—"do you intend to secure this commission? All the sculptors in Italy will be after it!"

"I shall leave that to Verrocchio," said Leonardo. "At the present moment, if there is anyone in Italy who can pull the strings, it is he!"

"The donkey said to the ass," remarked Verrocchio, "'How on earth do you propose to pull that huge barrel up the hill?'" "Oh!" replied the ass, "I shall leave that to my master!"

"Andrea Verrocchio," replied Leonardo, picking up a large silver lute that was fashioned in the shape of a horse's head and touching the strings, "if you do not get me at least a chance of this order I shall make Francesco di Simone very drunk when he is setting out for Venice, and he will drive the waggon which contains your clay horse into the Mugnone, and that will be the end of it!"

"Make me drunk, indeed?" cried Francesco; but Leonardo had already begun his song:

"Twas Piero Vinci's son, who took the plaster  
And modelled craftily each mighty leg  
Of Sforza's Horse: showing himself the master  
Of bone and tendon, sinew, muscle . . ."

The words died on his lips, for a huge figure, clad in a long scarlet cloak, was peering through the bottega door.

“Magnificence!” cried Verrocchio, moving forward quickly.

But Lorenzo de’ Medici bade him seat himself and not interrupt the song. “For,” said he, “I have slipped away to enjoy myself in my friend Verrocchio’s bottega, and I have caught the sound of some new and deep-toned lute, and I want to hear more of it!”

## VII

Some forty minutes later Andrea Verrocchio and Lorenzo de’ Medici were closeted together in the artist’s inner studio. The sound of music and singing was still coming from the outer workshop, and, to this accompaniment, Verrocchio had been unfolding the story of Leonardo’s ambitions. “And, Magnificence,” he ended, “it is but a small thing that I ask! For, at one word from you, Duke Lodovico would give Leonardo a commission for this statue!”

“And,” replied Lorenzo, “at one word from you, I will give a letter to Lodovico Sforza! Tell me this, Andrea, if your clay horse of the Colleoni were broken during its transit to Venice, would you entrust Leonardo with the making of a new model?”

“He has marvellous talent,” began Verrocchio; but Lorenzo checked him.

“I asked you a plain question!” said he.

“And I will give you a plain answer, Magnificence!” replied the other. “No!”

“I hear from one about Leonardo’s marvellous talent,” remarked Lorenzo; “I hear from another about Leonardo’s marvellous talent; his father

speaks to me about his marvellous talent. Tell me this, Andrea, what has Leonardo done ? ”

For some moments Verrocchio hummed and hesitated, then he said desperately : “ He is painting a marvellous Adoration of the Magi for San Scopeto ! ”

“ Ah ! ” replied Lorenzo. “ I had a letter from the Prior of San Scopeto, only an hour ago, asking me to bring pressure so that Leonardo might be induced to complete this masterpiece. Three years ago I myself arranged that Leonardo should receive a commission to paint an altarpiece for the Chapel of San Bernardo ; but, although he received twenty-five florins on account, I have never heard that he even commenced the cartoon ! ”

“ He is but young, Magnificence ! ” said Andrea.

“ Bah ! He must be thirty ! ”

“ But nine-and-twenty, Magnificence ! ”

“ And, at nine-and-twenty, what had you done, Andrea ? ”

“ I had completed the David and the Lavabo in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo for your father,” replied Verrocchio, smiling, “ and I had received the commission for my Saint Thomas from the Mercatanti.”

“ At Leonardo’s age,” said Lorenzo, “ I was fighting against the Pazzi for my fortune, and against the Pope for my life ! ”

In silence Verrocchio went over to a table, in silence he returned to place some drawings in Lorenzo’s hand. Il Magnifico examined these drawings, peering into them keenly.

“ This is all very well,” said he—“ very well indeed ! He can draw a horse, and, doubtless, he

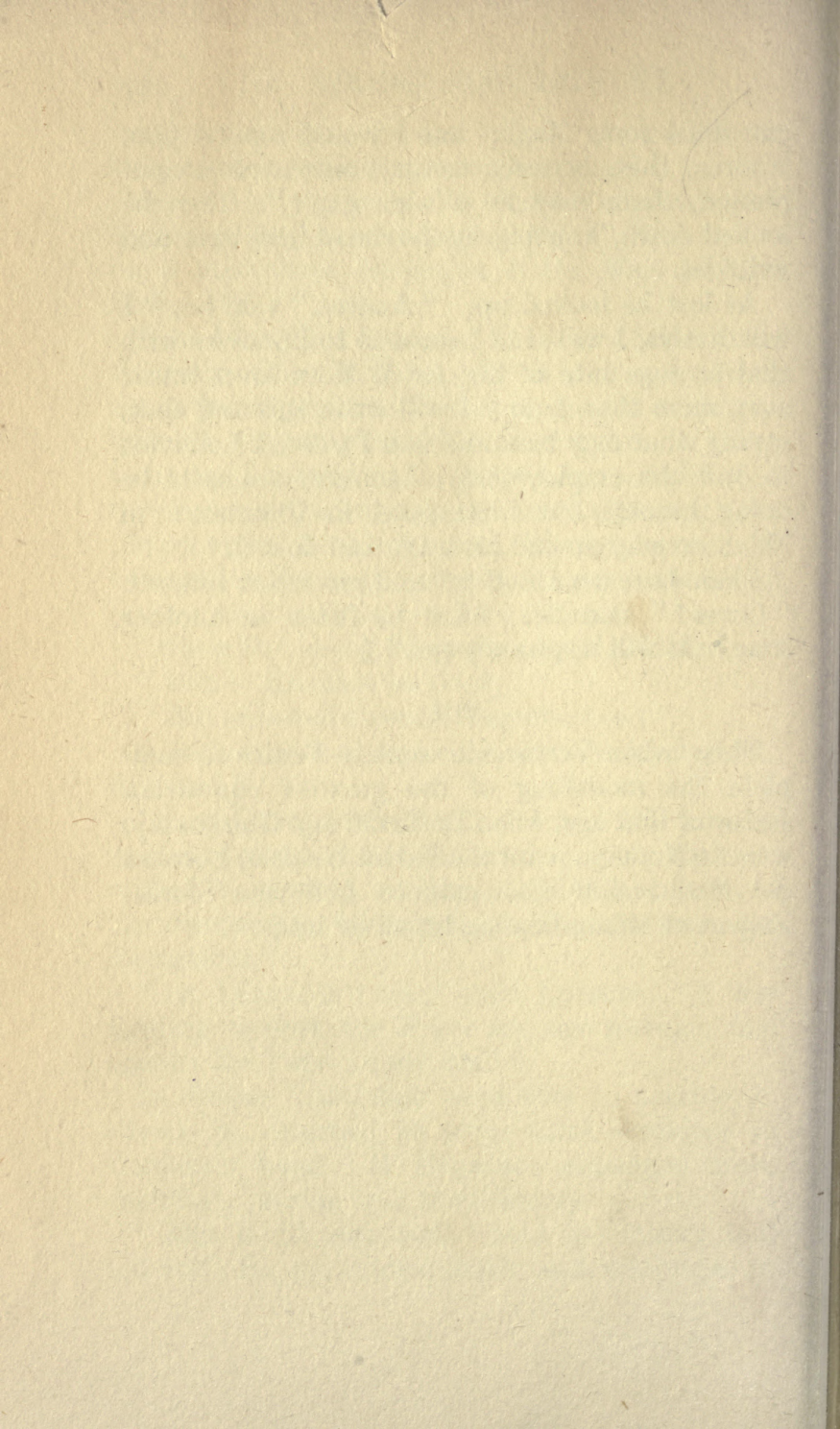
can draw some Magi ; but I would remind you, Andrea, that, between commencement and completion, there may lie a wide gap !” Then he looked down, knitting his forehead into lines and wrinkles.

At last he looked up. “ Andrea,” said he, “ I will do this, I will send Leonardo to Lodovico with that strange lute of his, for Il Moro loves music even more than I do ; I will write this and that, saying what may be said ; and I will ask Lodovico to find him employment. Leonardo seems to be doing himself but little good in Florence : in Milan he may amend his ways and do well !”

Then Lorenzo stood up and stretched himself. “ Come !” said he. “ Let us listen to another song ! It will inspire my pen !”

## VIII

Then, when Verrocchio went to Venice to complete the modelling of the greatest equestrian statue of that age, when Botticelli and Ghirlandajo went to Rome to paint the Sistine frescoes, Lorenzo de’ Medici sent Leonardo to Lodovico Sforza, Regent of Milan, bearing his silver lute.





BOOK II  
IN MILAN

COMMENCES IN THE YEAR 1482,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS THIRTY

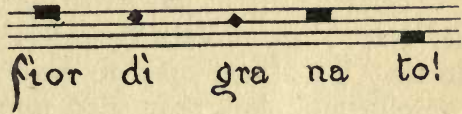
ENDS IN THE YEAR 1500,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS FORTY-EIGHT

“ Such was I, Leonardo the Florentine, at the Court of the  
most Illustrious Prince Signor Lodovico ”

If the loves and intrigues of Lodovico Il Moro should appear to be treated at too great a length, have patience! It is impossible to understand Leonardo's life and artistic development without this elaboration.—A. J. A.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SILVER LUTE



“ FIOR di limone ! ”

The gentlemen were pelting Madonna Cecilia with flower-songs ; and she, half-consenting, half-forbidding, was glorious in her beauty.

“ Fior di limone !

The lemon is gold ! Yet, 'tis never so fair—

Yes ! golden it is, but yet never so rare

As the shimmer that gleams in Cecilia's hair ! ”

(Then came the refrain, or “ cock's walk ”) :

“ Fair is Madonna ! E'en Flora confesses

Her gold shows like dross 'gainst Cecilia's tresses ! ”

Galeazzo di San Severino, young, noble, gallant, debonair, fingered his lute as though he were caressing it, and, looking at Madonna with lazy admiration, made his instrument repeat the refrain. Then Count Lodovico Bergamini, who was more deeply in love with Madonna Cecilia

than either wisdom or loyalty to his master strictly permitted, took up the song :

“ Fior di granato !

Pomegranate, crimson ! Not so crimson the pips,  
Not so crimson the fruit, nor the juice that one sips,  
As the crimson which glows on Cecilia's lips !

“ So crimson those lips, that Pomona is mute :

For those lips are far richer than aught of her fruit ! ”

“ Enough of the flower-songs ! ” cried Cecilia, her voice shaking with laughter. “ For, not only do they lay a lady open to very rich and flowery compliments, but they also tempt a gentleman into the making of very trivial rhymes ! ‘ Pips,’ and ‘ lips,’ indeed ! I am ashamed of you, Count Lodovico ! ”

The Count sighed, for he was very much in love.

“ Try once again, Lodovico ! ” suggested Galeazzo, intent on mischief. “ Fior di arancio would make a good opening—think of the sweetness, the perfume, the suggestion of the orange blossom ! ”

But Madonna would not hear of any more flower-songs. A stornello a fiore meant compliments ; flower compliments were apt to be of an intimate nature ; and Madonna, although she might be the mistress of Lodovico Sforza, was more loyal to her lover than many wives are to their husbands. Also, Cecilia Gallerani was of noble birth, she held a recognised position at the Court of Milan, and she was excessively careful of such of her reputation as remained.

“ I would hear something a little better than a stornello ! ” said she.

“ If Sappho herself were to take the lyre ? ” suggested Count Lodovico.

But Madonna was in no mood to listen to the Count's suggestions any more than she had been to listen to his love-songs. She did not wish to sing ; she was weary of the same themes, set to the same tunes, and twisted a little until they had a superficial appearance of novelty. Then she caught sight of Leonardo da Vinci standing on the outskirts of the group, and called him to her.

“ It is whispered,” said she, “ that my clever painter has some skill as an improvisator ! ”

Leonardo stammered a reply, looking very handsome in his confusion.

“ Come, Signore ! ” said she. “ Sing me one of your Tuscan *rispetti* ! As a theme, sing of my portrait which you are now painting ! ”

“ But, Madonna,” he answered, “ I am without a lute ! ”

Lutes were thrust forward ; the Count Lodovico offered his, so did a dozen others.

“ The Duke told me,” remarked Galeazzo, “ that Messere had a silver lute of his own devising, and that this lute was strangely fashioned and strangely deep in tone.”

Madonna would hear it ! Leonardo must send for his instrument ! What ? Lorenzo de' Medici had approved of the lute, and bidden him show it to the Duke ? Heaven ! and the Duke had forgotten to mention the matter to Madonna Cecilia or to any of his friends ! That comes of these tiresome political troubles with Venice ! Had he made it himself ? Could he work in silver as well as paint ? Did he understand the making of

musical instruments? Bene! They would reserve their judgments until they had heard him play!

The lute was brought. Someone handed him a chair. Leonardo sat down and tuned his instrument.

Bacchus! what a tone! deep and resonant as a kettle-drum! And what a strange instrument, like a horse's head! Heaven! It was a horse's head, but so craftily fashioned that it had all the grace of a musical instrument!

Leonardo ran his fingers over the strings, partly in order to show off the tone of his lute, partly in order to collect his thoughts; and, picking up the thread of some Tuscan melody, he wove it into a plaintive minor key with a long-drawn cadence at the end of each line:

"I strive to catch the soul that I see lying  
Behind the radiance of Madonna's eyes;  
I spread the paint, but, as it is a-drying,  
The vital spark of loveliness all flies;  
For God, Who made Madonna's soul, denying  
To me creator's power, the spirit dies.  
So, as I paint, my work with His comparing,  
My paint lies dead, and I am left despairing."

"But that is not true!" cried Madonna Cecilia. "If ever a portrait lived, it is that which you are painting!"

"Alas, Madonna!" he answered. "I have but sung what I feel!"

"Then I will not have you feel it!" she cried. "That portrait is me—or a part of me—and when my Lord sees it——" And she stopped, biting her lip impatiently.

Then the servants brought out wines and syrups

and sweetmeats ; the guests split into groups, some examining Leonardo's silver lute and testing its tone, others enquiring about Madonna's portrait and begging that they might see the picture, others again discussing the prospects of the war with Venice.

## II

It was the autumn of 1479, more than two-and-a-half years before, that Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Bari, and uncle of Gian Galeazzo the young Duke of Milan, had forcibly assumed the guardianship of his nephew's person and the regency of the State. Ambitious and unscrupulous was he in politics, sensuous and self-indulgent in private life, and yet he was not without his redeeming qualities; for Lodovico was capable of loyalty in love and friendship, he was capable of intense thoughtfulness in the exercise of hospitality, he was undoubtedly a man of culture, and, deep down below the crust of worldliness and sensuality, he had a natural love of religion that was only awaiting the fire of trouble to spring into active existence. Believe me, there were worse rulers in the Quattrocento than Lodovico Sforza, whom men nicknamed " Il Moro ! "

In the early days of his regency there had been an entanglement between Il Moro and some lady who is nameless, and she had presented Lodovico with a daughter, Bianca ; then he had met Madonna Cecilia Gallerani, had fallen hopelessly in love with her, and, if it had not been for the exigencies of the State, would have married her.

As for the public relations of Lodovico and Cecilia, public opinion in Florence would never

have permitted such an open scandal ; but Milan was not Florence, and some regarded the liaison as though it were a morganatic marriage, whilst others shrugged their shoulders and said nothing. As for their private relations, there is no doubt that Lodovico treated Madonna with perfect devotion and fidelity, and there is every reason to believe that he hoped to legalise their union when he should succeed to the Dukedom of Milan.

## III

“ So you are dissatisfied with the progress of my portrait ? ” Madonna Cecilia had detached Leonardo from the group of gallants, and was leading him towards the marble fountain that was the pride of her palace in Milan. The path passed between orange trees, and the fountain was already sparkling white in the distance.

“ God forbid that I should be satisfied ! ” he answered.

“ God forbid ? ” said she, astonished.

“ When a painter is satisfied with his work,” he answered sententiously, “ there is no more hope of his progress.” Then his eyes sought Madonna’s loveliness, and he became somewhat confused and awkward. “ I have painted you at rest,” said he, “ and you are always in motion ; I have painted you silent, and you are always talking ! ”

“ Oh ! ” she cried, with a gurgle of laughter. “ You have failed to paint me the restless, chattering girl that I am ? ”

“ Madonna,” he answered, “ I have expressed myself clumsily, and you have further twisted my



meaning. What I meant to say was that I have failed to paint your soul ! ”

“ So you have already sung ! ”

“ What I mean is this,” he explained, “ your spirit is by nature vivacious ; your expression changes like the sea at sunrise ; your smiles come and go like the shadows which chase each other across the valley ; a thought comes into your mind and immediately it finds expression. How can I paint all this any more than I can paint the flicker of light on the poplars ? ”

“ That,” said she, “ is very prettily put ! ”

“ The most that I can do,” said Leonardo, with a sigh, “ is to paint you listening, but even so my paint lies like dead stuff ! For, when you listen to what someone is saying, your eyes sparkle, your eyebrows are raised a little or a dimple shows, you nod your head or shrug your shoulders expressively.”

Madonna walked some little way in silence. She was inclined to like Leonardo, and she liked the evident sincerity of his compliments which were spoken as the truth and not as flattery ; but experience had taught her that men were not to be trusted, that passion is apt to come up with the speed of a tempest, and she had no intention of being drawn into a flirtation with this handsome young painter.

“ Maestro,” said she presently, “ this is your first commission since you came to Milan ? ”

“ Yes, Madonna ! ” he answered.

“ And, if men admire my portrait, you intend to paint others ? ”

He hesitated : “ I do not know, Madonna ! That was not my plan ! ”

“What was your plan, Maestro? Perchance I can help you!”

“First,” he said, “tell me if this trouble with the Lord di San Severino and Venice is likely to breed war!”

## IV

They had reached the Garden of the Fountain. Mulberry trees, Il Moro's favourites, surrounded them; a marble Pan leered at them from the bushes; the patter of falling water sounded like ten million rain-drops. Madonna seated herself on a marble bench and motioned Leonardo to sit beside her.

“Know you aught of the Count of Imola?” she asked.

“Florence has good cause to know the Count of Imola!” he answered.

“Bene! Count Girolamo Riario, nephew of His Holiness and Lord of Imola and Forli, has a greedy eye! Ferrara is a fief of the Holy See, and therefore Ferrara should belong to my Lord Riario: very well! Ruberto San Severino having stirred up Venice against Milan, and Venice having a grievance against Ferrara concerning the salt tax, Count Riario takes occasion to make an alliance with Venice. Venice is to occupy the eastern part of Lombardy, Venice and Riario are to divide Ferrara, Rome is to assist. This, at least, is what my Lord Lodovico tells me; and he fears that the whole of Italy will be ablaze.”

Leonardo sighed.

“Now,” said Madonna, “tell me of your plan, and how this war will affect your purpose!”

“Have you heard of the equestrian statue, in

memory of the great Colleoni, which the State of Venice is about to erect ? ”

Madonna was not altogether ignorant of art ! Venice was not a thousand miles from Milan, nor was it in the land of the barbarians ! Besides, the Duke Lodovico himself was planning a statue in memory of his father, and he was interested in the matter.

“ It was my master, Andrea Verrocchio, who modelled this statue,” said Leonardo ; “ and it is Andrea Verrocchio who has gone to Venice so that he may cast the great horse in his own furnace ! ”

Madonna opened her pretty eyes to their widest ; for, not only did Verrocchio’s horse promise to be one of the wonders of Italy, but the casting of such a huge bronze had filled men with amazement. “ So you have learnt more than the painting of pretty women and the fashioning of silver lutes ! ” said she.

“ I helped Verrocchio in the study of his horse,” he answered, “ and, when I heard that the Duke planned to erect a similar statue in memory of the Duke Francesco, I came to Milan in the hope of obtaining the commission.”

“ Oh ! ” cried she, regarding Leonardo with a new respect.

“ It is no easy thing,” said he, “ to persuade the Duke that Verrocchio’s pupil should be equal to Verrocchio, nor to show him that a man of thirty should be capable of so great an undertaking. And, now, this war will give His Excellency much else to think of ! ”

Madonna bit her lip, planning after the manner of a woman how she might act as an Inspiration,

a Guardian Angel, and Providence all at the same time.

“ We must interest Lodovico in your work ! ” said she.

“ Your portrait cannot fail to interest him ! ” he answered ruefully.

“ We must make him think twice about you ! ” said she.

“ He will think once when he sees your portrait,” said he, with a smile ; “ he will think a second time when he orders my imprisonment ! ”

“ Can you do aught else except make great statues and paint pictures ? ” she asked.

“ I have some knowledge of water,” he answered, “ and can plan canals, design fountains and effect the irrigation of fields and vineyards.”\*

“ And, besides——? ”

The enthusiasm of this sweet lady was beginning to inspire Leonardo ; his depression was passing, and the scientific day-dreams of Florence were returning. “ I know something of architecture ! ” he answered.

“ But Lodovico is filled with thoughts of war ! Know you aught of building defences ? ”

“ Ah ! ” he answered dreamily, “ if a general should but trust himself to me he would have no need of defences ! ” And, gradually, with a far-away look in his eyes, he unfolded his schemes : portable bridges for an army of pursuit, solid bridges for a siege-train ; the trenches of a fortress drained of their water, the walls wrecked and tottering ; secret passages should undermine a

\* This conversation is taken from the draft of Leonardo's letter to Il Moro, which letter is quoted at some length in the following chapter.

city's walls, cannon should belch forth their showers of death like hail ; catapults, mangonels and trabocchi should hurl their supplementary aid ; armoured waggons, carrying guns, should break through the enemy and open a passage for infantry to follow ; and, against Venice or Genoa, ships which could resist the fire of the heaviest cannon should scatter the Doge's navy !

Cecilia's eyes grew huge and wondering ; the marble Pan grinned from the thicket !

“ You can really do all this ? ” she asked.

“ Yes ! And much more ! ” he answered modestly.

“ O——h ! ” she whispered.

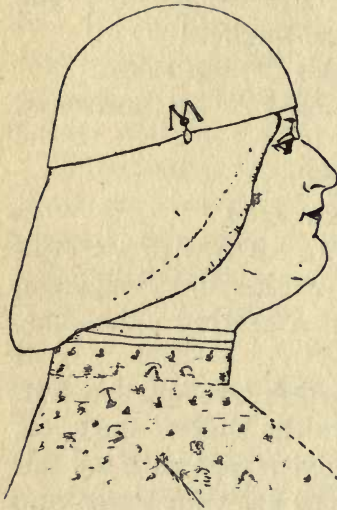
“ If only the Duke will hear me ! ”

And this brought Cecilia to earth with a crash ! The man might be a wonder-worker and a magician, but he could not even gain a hearing unless she, Cecilia Gallerani, intervened !

She caught hold of Leonardo's arm and shook it. “ Write all this in a letter to the Duke,” she cried, “ and bring it to me ! Lodovico sups with me this evening, and I will see that he has your letter, and reads it, and talks of it ! Go home and write at once ! And—and,” she cried, as she hurried him forward, “ don't forget to end with the Sforza statue ! ”

## CHAPTER XI

### IL MORO



**L**ODOVICUS MAURUS SFORZA, Duke of Bari and Regent of Milan, rocked to and fro in his chair, holding his sides in an agony of laughter. "Per Dio!" he sobbed. "This fellow will be the death of me!" But Madonna Cecilia looked grave at the miscarriage of her plan. "What has amused you?" she asked.

"This fellow, Leonardo," he sobbed, "begins his letter thus: 'Having, most Illustrious Lord, seen and considered the experiments of all those who pass as masters in the art of inventing instruments of war'—that in itself is no small claim for a man of thirty who has never seen a battle!—'and finding that their inventions differ in no way from those in common use, I am emboldened, without prejudice to anyone'—except, of course, my own military engineers!—'to solicit an oppor-

tunity of acquainting your Excellency with certain of my secrets.' Heaven! Did you ever hear the like?"

"It sounds to me," answered Cecilia, nodding her head wisely, "like the bold claim of a brilliant man!"

"He shows his brilliancy, littlest one," said he, putting out his hand to touch hers, "by sending his letter through your hand! Otherwise—listen! He professes to make the best possible bridges, pontoons, scaling ladders, and to cut off the water from a besieged city—let that pass! Then he writes: '3. If by reason of the elevation or the strength of its position a place cannot be bombarded, I can demolish every fortress if its foundations have not been set on stone.' Of a truth, Joshua was a fool in comparison with your Tuscan!"

Cecilia sighed despondently, for her plot had indeed miscarried; and Il Moro, stroking her hand, continued quickly:

"He can make light cannon which hurl small stones like hail, 'and of which the smoke causes great terror to the enemy, so that they suffer heavy loss and confusion.'—This is Jove striking from his thunder-cloud!—He can make armoured waggons, carrying artillery, cannon and mortars that are both ornamental and useful, 'and different from those in common use.'—I do not doubt him!—He can construct catapults and other obsolete weapons, ships of war which can resist the fire of the heaviest cannon 'and powders or vapours.'—It would console one greatly, if one was certain that one's ship could not be destroyed by a

vapour!—That seems to be all he can do in time of war!”

Madonna sighed most bitterly, for, read as Il Moro was reading it, Leonardo's letter did indeed sound ridiculous.

“In time of peace,” continued Lodovico, relentlessly, “he can give me complete satisfaction in the construction of public and private buildings, and in conducting water from one place to another; he can execute sculpture in marble, bronze or clay; also in painting he can do as much as anyone else, whoever he may be.”

“That, at least, is true!” cried Cecilia.

“‘Moreover,’” read Lodovico, but now a touch of contempt had crept into his voice, “‘I would undertake the commission of the bronze horse, which shall endue with immortal glory and eternal honour the auspicious memory of your father and of the illustrious house of Sforza.’”

Told in Leonardo's persuasive voice, backed by his evident conviction, these schemes had seemed inspired; but no sooner were they read aloud by a man of the world than they sounded like mere boasting. “He did not seem a braggart!” sighed Cecilia.

“He is no braggart,” replied Il Moro, “for he asks me to lend him my park so that he may put his inventions to the test. But I will tell you of something which happened when I was with Ferrante of Naples.”

Cecilia filled her lover's glass with some of that white wine, rather sweet and new, which was his favourite drink at supper; and, sipping it, he told his story.



A certain scientific Benedictine of Calabria had come to King Ferrante with an invention: this was an invention by means of which the strongest walls of an enemy's fortress could be split and shattered as though they were glass, and the Monk was supported by a letter from his Abbot. So the King, unwilling to miss such a chance, had pointed out the strong walls of an old fortress above Naples and had bidden the Monk to show his skill.

The Father had commenced by drilling a number of holes in the stonework, these he had plugged with wooden plugs in which grooves had been previously cut, then he had kept on pouring water into the holes. As the wooden plugs had swelled with the moisture, so the walls had split on every side.

“ ‘ That is a very clever invention of yours,’ the King had said, ‘ a very clever invention indeed ! Provided only that I can get the consent and assistance of my enemies, I shall be able to destroy the walls of their strongest citadels ! ’ ”

“ That,” concluded the Duke, “ shows the difference between the theories of a clever man and the practical knowledge of one who has had experience in war ! ”

“ But the horse ? ” suggested Cecilia.

“ The monument that I require,” answered Il Moro, “ should be the crowning achievement of some great sculptor ! ”

“ This one was the favourite pupil of Verrocchio, the Tuscan ! ”

“ A clever sculptor, doubtless ! ”

“ It is Verrocchio who has modelled, and is casting, the Colleoni horse of Venice ! ”

“ Oh-ho ! ” murmured the Duke, raising his eyebrows.

“ And, whatever may be his skill as a sculptor, Leonardo is certainly unequalled as a painter ! ”

The Duke of Bari knit his brows in thought. “ Lorenzo de’ Medici sent me a letter by the hand of this Leonardo,” said he ; “ but, if I remember right, although Lorenzo said many things in beautiful language, he told me nothing ! ”

“ Oh, incredulous one ! ” cried Cecilia, her face aglow. “ You must see before you will believe ! ” And, catching hold of Lodovico’s hand, she led him into the next apartment.

## II

Two candelabra stood before an easel, one on either side, and upon the easel was Leonardo’s portrait of Cecilia.

Lodovico gave one long look at the still, thoughtful face in the painting, then he looked into Cecilia’s eyes. Clearly the painter had done well in attempting no more than it were possible to accomplish, and Il Moro was conscious of a sudden belief in Leonardo’s powers.

“ You wish me to commission the Horse ? ” said he, speaking softly.

“ Yes ! ” she whispered.

“ You always have your way ? ” said he, and his arm crept round her waist.

“ Yes ! ” she whispered, looking up at him.

“ Well,” said he, “ let this Leonardo try his hand ! At the worst, he can but fail ! ”

## III

The sun had set : there was a sound of music and laughter in the air ; citizens passed by discussing the war with Venice ; a squadron of lances entered the city ; small green frogs clamoured in the aloes. Then, gradually, the songs and talking died away, and the tree-frogs continued their concert in peace.

The moon shifted overhead ; the shadows moved in the gardens ; now and again there would come the tramp of soldiers relieving guard ; a physician hurried by to attend a dying noble ; a yawning midwife shambled towards a lighted cottage where one awaited her ; a convent bell summoned the nuns to praise God.

The sky lightened in tone ; a fresh breeze sprang up to temper the stagnant air ; birds began to chirp in the bushes. Then a golden tint crept into the East, and the edge of the sun peeped above the horizon.

Within a small cottage, close outside the Porta Vercellina, sat Leonardo da Vinci. The table before which he was seated was piled with studies for the Colleoni horse, designs of strange and ornamental cannon, sketches of armoured chariots fitted with revolving scythes, plans of bridges, fortresses and waterwheels ; but these he had shoved on one side and was intent on the sketch of Madonna Cecilia Gallerani which lay before him.

This sketch throbbed with life. A dawning smile was suggested by a couple of unfinished lines ; these lines were broken off, and the completion of the smile was left to the imagination of the

beholders. There was a sparkle in the eyes ; only four touches of the pen had been used in the task, yet those eyes were the very eyes of Cecilia Gallerani. Three—four—five thin lines described shoulders that might shrug expressively. The mouth was inviting, vital, mobile. Through both eyes and mouth one felt that the real Cecilia showed herself. It is true that the sketch gave her silent and listening ; but, then, she was indeed listening ! Her eyes were full of understanding ; her cheeks were beginning to smile in comprehension, and her mouth was ready to answer !

Leonardo closed his eyes and recalled the finished painting. Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master, poorer is the painting which does not excel the sketch ! And yet, in this painting of Madonna Cecilia, just when the illusion of reality should have approached reality, and the illusion of life should have simulated life, life died away and the portrait fell as dead as the embroidered Saint of some pious nun ! Let him consider what was wrong !

He had escaped that danger of an over-elaborated theme and an over-filled panel which had wrecked the Adoration of the Magi, for the portrait of Madonna Cecilia had been simple to the verge of austerity. There had been no fault with the drawing and shading ; for these he had compared with the reflection of Madonna in a mirror, and he had satisfied himself that the strength of his highlights, the richness of his shadows and the illusion of depth in the background had given a sense of relief and solidity which made the painting surpass the mirrored reflection. Yet there was life in the

mirror ! There was life in the sketch ! But there was no life in the painting !

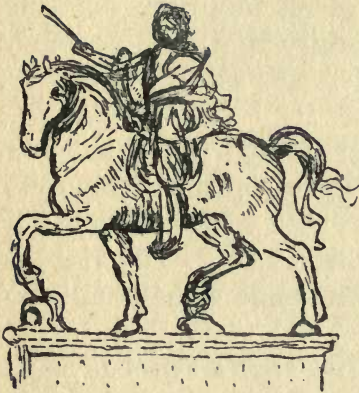
Could it be that something was wrong with the paint itself or with the varnish ? That opened a new and interesting field of investigation, and he must experiment ! Anyhow, as his paintings were going now, each picture filled him with a new and keener sense of disillusionment ! An apt description—the truer the illusion the greater the disillusion ! He was sick of his failure in painting, and he longed most ardently that Il Moro might give him some work of a less elusive and more scientific nature.

A ray of sunlight crept through the closed window, and Leonardo, flinging open the shutters, drank in long breaths of the fresh morning air. Ho ! This put new life into a man ! This brushed away the cobwebs ! This made a man sane and sensible !

He returned to his table, took a sheet of paper and a pen, and threw himself into the solution of a problem in mathematics. "To convert a triangle (which is not a right-angle triangle) into a square."

## CHAPTER XII

### A FAILURE



SEVEN years had elapsed since Leonardo had finished the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, had laid down his brushes in disgust, and had taken up his modelling tools so that he might commence the great Horse of the Sforza. This was to be a huge horse ; and Leonardo, whose conceptions were always inclined to overrun his capabilities, had resolved that the statue should be immense.

As to his other ambitions, Il Moro had given him the chance of competing for the new cupola that was to crown the Cathedral, and Leonardo had sent in two models which had failed to please the Consiglio della Fabbrica del Duomo ; but the Duke had refused to employ him as a military engineer, rightly arguing that a little practical experience in the field of war is worth many folios of theory. During the seven years that had passed since the painting of Cecilia's portrait, Leonardo

had spent much time on the designing and modelling of the Sforza statue; as for the rest, he had worked hard at the science of mathematics, anatomy and botany, he had pursued investigations into such divers subjects as geology, astronomy and aeronautics, and he had just commenced a book "Concerning the Human Figure"; but I think that his painting had been almost altogether neglected, I fancy that his modelling had been a half-hearted attempt to carry out such equine lore as he had learnt from the school of Verrocchio, and I believe that he had aimed at little more than an enlarged adaptation of the Colleoni statue—at least that is the impression that one derives from his sketches. In short, Leonardo was fast drifting into a dilettante and needed something to wake his genius into its full activity.

## II

It was a May morning in the year 1489 when Duke Lodovico, sad-faced and weary, took himself to the Palace of Madonna Cecilia Gallerani.

Three months before, the young Duke, Gian Galeazzo, had been married to Isabella, daughter of Ferrante, King of Naples; and this sweet-faced princess of the House of Aragon was already stirring up a mint of trouble in Milan. In theory Gian Galeazzo was the reigning Duke and Isabella his Duchess; but the young Duke, who had the mind of a drunken stable-boy and the face of a sulky neurotic, was no more fitted to steer his country through troubled waters than he was to design the Sforza monument—as a matter of fact Gian Galeazzo had a pretty taste in horseflesh, whereas

his knowledge of statecraft was excelled by the meanest sculptor that ever tramped the plains of Lombardy. Now, thanks to the influence of Isabella, backed up by Naples, Gian Galeazzo was growing restive, sullen and self-assertive ; whilst the easy-going society of Milan was inclined to dress its windows, polish up its armorial quarterings, fête its high-born Duchess, and look somewhat askance at Madonna Cecilia Gallerani.

Il Moro entered the Palazzo del Verme.

“ Fair morning sunshine gilds the brow  
Of Eastern hills. Another day  
Is spread before me ; so I bow  
My supplicating knee, and pray.”

Cecilia was decking a statue of Our Lady with blossoms, and, as her nimble fingers arranged the flowers, she sang. For, let an irregular life be persisted in—let the motive power of that life be a love which is untinged with avarice and self-seeking—and a woman, although the Sacraments must be perforce forbidden her, will evolve a system of ethics and religion that will keep the hope of God’s eventual pardon alive in her heart.

“ In this thy own sweet month of May,  
Madonna, hear thy daughter’s prayer !  
Thou, whom the seraph hosts obey,  
Queen of the . . .”

Cecilia started, and held out her hands in welcome to her lover.

“ Whence comes my Lord’s disconsolate air ? ” said she, catching his hands in hers.

“ From a sleepless night ! ” he answered, looking down at her.

“ And whence this sleeplessness ? ” she asked

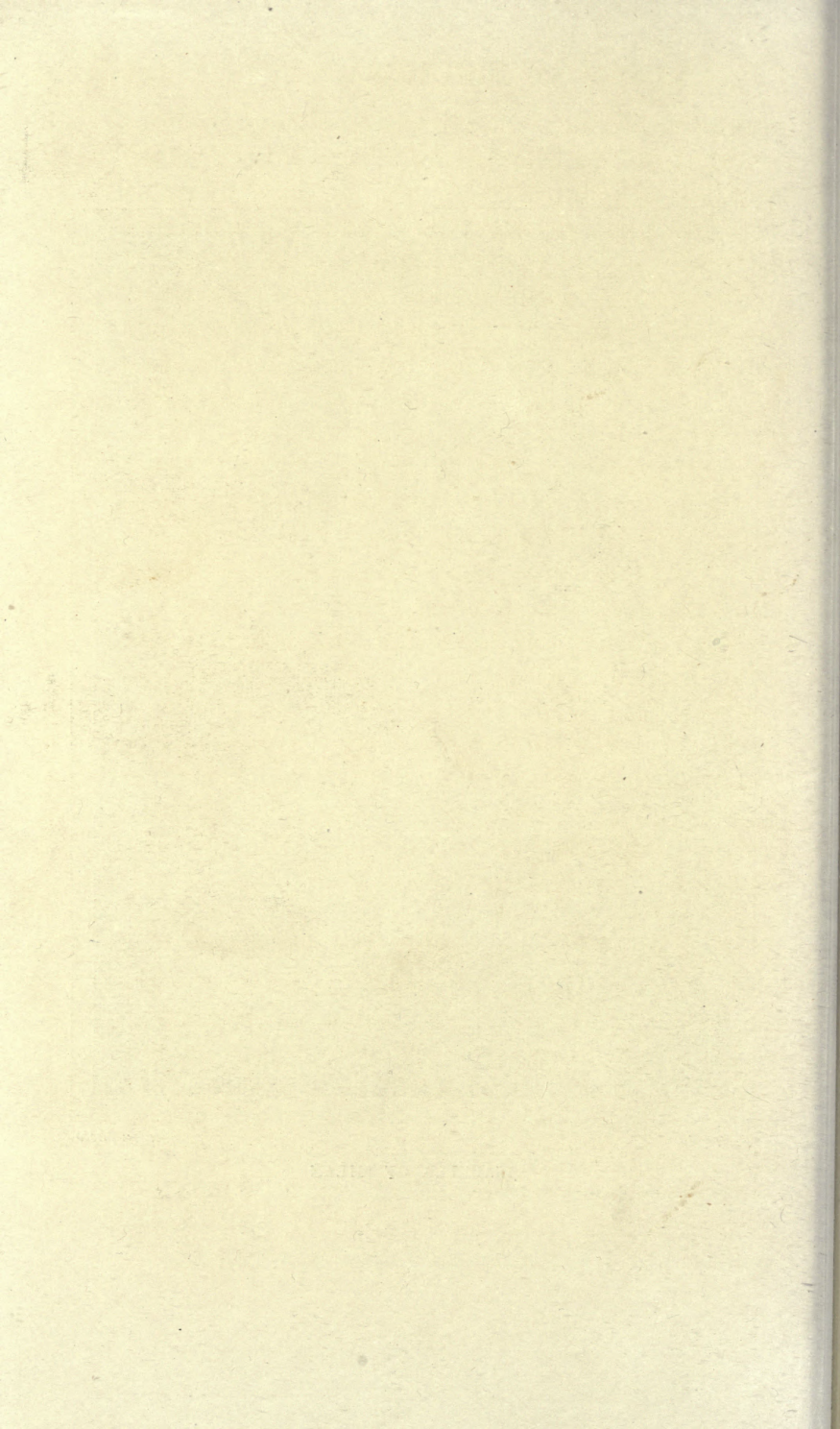




*Boltraffio*

*Anderson photo*

ISABELLA OF MILAN



anxiously, for she knew that Il Moro's regular and temperate life prevented aught save great troubles from worrying him.

He put his arm round her and led her outside into the garden, where a light repast of newly baked bread and early fruits had been prepared for them. The bees hummed amongst the mulberry blossoms ; the water pattered into the pool that was round the fountain ; the marble Pan smiled cruelly.

For a time Lodovico sat biting his lip, whilst Cecilia made a pretence with some Alpine strawberries ; then the Moro spoke.

" Cecilia," said he, " you have sharp eyes and a quick wit, and these you have always used in my interest ! Have you noticed a subtle change that is creeping into our Court ? "

" I have noticed," she answered, and her eyes sparkled angrily, " that my Lord is ceasing to be the standard by which all men set their opinions ! "

" I was not referring to that," he replied, " for, by itself, that is but a passing matter : I was referring to something which affects both you and me ! "

" I know what you mean ! " she cried. " I know that the Duchess Isabella has taken to pass me without notice, and that others are beginning to follow her example ! But, save that it reflects a slight upon my Lord, this rudeness leaves me indifferent ! " Then her anger blazed out : " How dare they ! " she cried. " I am a lady of Milan—as nobly born as any that grace your Court—and my only fault is that you have chosen me for your love ! "

“No! No!” she cried, as he would have soothed her. “I must speak, or this will kill me! In this Court of Milan, where kisses seem to be given for the asking, and all else for the wooing, there are two who have been constant to each other in thought and deed, you and I, Lodovico! And yet these others, who are as amorous and fitful as a summer’s breeze, pretend to look down on Cecilia Gallerani!”

Her mood changed; her tears were kept back with difficulty. “It is not for myself I mind,” said she, “—at least, not the best part of me!—but—but—that people should dare to slight you like this!—And—and—Lodovico——”

Then she allowed Lodovico II Moro to place his arm round her and to draw her close to him and comfort her.

### III

The morning was growing hot. The shadows of the mulberry trees had shortened a full braccia. Cecilia’s eyes were heavy with weeping, but her lips were set together firmly.

“There is no help for it, beloved,” said she; “you must do as I say!”

“Would to God,” he answered, “I had treated Gian Galeazzo differently!”

“But, how could you?” said she. “If you had allowed that poor, weak fool to rule the State, Milan would have been but a fief of Venice by now!”

“If I had been a foolish saint,” he answered, “I should have trusted in Providence and have allowed the Duke to play havoc with the Duchy; if I had been a wise saint I should have persuaded

him to enter a monastery ; but if I had been a wise man who was no saint I should have seated Gian Galeazzo in the ducal chair, and I should have insisted that he attended to all the affairs of State himself : then, after he had held the reins of office for a month, he would have so sickened of the task that all the Isabellas in the world could not have dragged him back ! ”

A wintery smile crept into Cecilia’s face, a mirthless laugh into her voice. “ Knowing Lodovico as I know him,” said she, “ I should like to see Il Moro taking a second place—even for a month ! ”

“ Well,” he answered with a shrug, “ as long as there is the chance of Isabella of Aragon, Duchess of Milan, having an heir to the Duchy I do not see much ultimate chance of aught else ! ”

“ You must do as I say ! ” retorted Cecilia. “ This alliance with the House of Aragon has put an end to all possibility of our marriage ; and, if we remain as we are, there will be two parties in the State, the party of the Duchess Isabella and the party of Il Moro, and the greatest nobles of Milan will gradually be drawn towards that party which has the lawful succession ! No, Lodovico ! There is no help for it ! You must marry ; and it is I who love you that tell you this ! ”

“ My God ! ” he muttered, leaning forward and burying his face in his hands. Then he looked up at her. “ Cecilia,” he said, “ I would do much for Milan, and, as you have often told me, I would do more for my ambition ; but, with such a love as yours, you are bidding me do a violence to my nature that is beyond the bounds of my strength ! ”

“ Lodovico,” she answered, “ God knows how

sweet our love has been, and our one son He has taken from us so that this sacrifice should not be beyond the bounds of our strength. For the sake of Milan, you must marry ! ”

But Il Moro shook his head.

“ Listen ! ” said she. “ If you marry a young wife—a child who merely exchanges her dolls for her babies—she will not be too hard on us ! ”

He stared at her in amazement.

“ You know what I mean ! ” she cried. “ We are not young lovers in the first whirlwind of passion, and, if we were only free to see each other and talk together, that would suffice ! And the rest we must sacrifice for the sake of Milan ! ”

For some minutes Il Moro sat brooding. The idea of taking an unsophisticated girl as his Duchess and the mother of his children, whilst Cecilia remained the friend of his heart and the confidant of his thoughts, was an inspiration, and the proposition did not look as impossible as it had at first appeared. Besides, although he gave Cecilia credit for absolute sincerity, Lodovico was sufficiently a man of the world to refrain from taking the prospect of platonic love too seriously. He was roused by the sound of Cecilia’s voice.

“ If the brilliant Duke of Bari,” said she, “ were to wed the daughter of some illustrious house, who would look twice at poor Gian Galeazzo and his bride ? ”

A smile came into Il Moro’s eyes ; his mouth grew sarcastic. “ Isabella herself,” said he, “ has told me of the very child ! She is a daughter of the Duke of Ferrara who has lived for many years with her grandfather, King Ferrante. Isabella

says that this Beatrice is a girl of the highest spirit, a merry child who is crazy after hunting and adventure, and the best companion she ever had ; but, believe me, Isabella did not suggest her as the possible Duchess of Bari ! ” and Il Moro chuckled grimly. “ If this Beatrice be a true Este,” he added, “ Heaven pity the Duchess Isabella ! ”

“ And, her age ? ” Now that her proposition had taken a definite form, Cecilia began to find the suggested marriage less attractive.

“ Fourteen, or thereabouts ! A very suitable age ! ”

Cecilia felt a positive sense of repulsion towards this girl. “ Concerning Leonardo da Vinci,” said she : “ Leonardo tells me that you are not in love with his model of the Sforza Horse ! ”

Lodovico glanced at her whimsically. “ He has the most persuasive tongue in Lombardy ! ” he answered.

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ And the most scatterbrained imagination ! ” he added.

“ But, how ? ” she asked.

“ At one time he speaks of the Horse sympathetically ! ”

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ At another time he talks of mathematics as though he were a professor ! ”

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ Again, he tells me some traveller’s tales of Syria as though he had been there, or talks of the rocks as though he had made the earth ! ”

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ And, at the present moment, he is planning

to fly on great wings as though he were a flitter-mouse ! ”

“ But, the Horse ? ” she asked.

“ It is a poor beast,” he answered, “ with clumsy legs and a weak back. It is stepping forward like the Colleoni charger ; but, for fear that the clay should give and the legs sag, Leonardo has supported the raised foreleg with the model of an ancient vase and the raised hindleg with an awkward stone. When one has mentioned that it is very big indeed, one has said all that may be said in its favour.”

“ He has been a loyal friend to me ! ” sighed Cecilia.

“ Then I will treat him with patience ! ” answered Lodovico.

His eyes were looking into her eyes, and his hand was touching hers. “ Do you think that I could love any but you, my loved one ? ” he whispered.

Her eyes met his, and Leonardo was forgotten.

#### IV

In the July following, Piero Almanni, Lorenzo de' Medici's agent in Milan, wrote to His Magnificence :

“ . . . Signor Lodovico is anxious to raise a noble memorial to his father, and has already commissioned Leonardo da Vinci to prepare a model for a great bronze horse with a figure of the Duke Francesco in armour. But, since His Excellency is anxious to erect something that is superlatively fine, he desires me to write and



beseech you to send him another master ; for, although he has entrusted the commission to Leonardo, he does not feel satisfied that he is equal to the task."

This does not mean that Il Moro had lost patience with da Vinci, only that he had lost confidence in his capacity to carry the Sforza Horse to a satisfactory conclusion and that he was anxious to have a second string to his bow.

As to Leonardo himself, this failure seems to have acted as a buffet that roused his fighting spirit into full activity. He wrote to Piattino Piatti and other of the poets asking for an epigram that might be engraved on the base of the statue ; and, after making up his mind to recommence the statue from the beginning in the coming spring, he devoted himself to a study of the horse from nature, working at the anatomy, working at the outward form, and, above all, working at the horse in motion.

As to the design, was not there an ancient bronze horse at Pavia which approached absolute perfection ?

"It is better," said Leonardo, "to imitate the works of antiquity than to imitate modern works !"

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE COMING OF BEATRICE



FOR more than a year the marriage of Lodovico with Beatrice d'Este hung fire. The ceremony had been fixed for the May of 1490; it had been put off; the bride was too young! The stars were not propitious! The State apartments in the Castello Sforzesco were not ready! When one cannot bring oneself to part from the

faithful mistress of one's affections in order to marry a chit of a girl, excuses come thick as olives. But in the summer of 1490, when it had become clear that the Duchess Isabella was not to be without offspring, Lodovico felt that he could postpone his wedding no longer, and, after he had taken a passionate farewell of Cecilia Gallerani, he despatched an envoy to Ferrara with directions to fix an early date in the January following. So much for matters of State!

As to Leonardo's affairs, in the summer of 1490 Francesco Martini had gone to Pavia in order to give advice concerning the new cupola of the Cathedral, and with him had gone "Magistro Leonardo, the Florentine." Martini had returned to Milan, but Leonardo had stayed on so that he might study the bronze equestrian statue of Regisole, which was said to represent Odoacer, King of the Goths; then the great University of Pavia, throbbing with the new life of ancient learning and modern thought, had caught him, and he had stopped on during the summer and through the autumn until duty had recalled him to Milan.

Until now, Leonardo had never been popular with the philosophers, scholars and men of science, for he lacked that training in first principles which *litterati* of all times have considered an essential: his Latin was elementary, his mathematics were rudimentary, and his conceptions of science were sufficiently unorthodox and revolutionary to shock any professor who ever mounted a professor's chair. But at Pavia he met the great Alvise Marliani (him who was said to rival Aristotle in philosophy, Hippocrates in medicine and Ptolemy in astronomy), and Marliani discovered that Leonardo had obtained a very sound grounding in practical anatomy from Andrea Verrocchio, to which grounding he added a power of drawing the most delicate details of a dissection in a way that made the grave signori of Pavia open their eyes in wonder. So Leonardo was welcomed, not only as a draftsman who could illustrate the most minute details of an anatomical study, but also as

a scientific anatomist who cared nothing for the censure of Church or for the public sentiment against the cutting up of the dead. This gained him a place in the regard of such brilliant men as Count Teseo de' Albonesi, Ambrogio da Rosarte and many others whom I cannot now remember ; and Leonardo spent the happiest months of his life in the furthering of a new science, in the study of the ancient manuscripts which enriched the College library, and in the enjoyment of the social life of the University common-room.

Then, when the winter approached, Leonardo da Vinci was recalled to Milan so that he might assist in the decoration of those State apartments which were being prepared for the reception of the bridal couple.

## II

It was past the middle of January of 1491, and the great Sforza Castle of Milan was buzzing like a hive at swarming ; for Lodovico Il Moro, Duke of Bari, had espoused his bride with much pomp in the Ducal Chapel at Pavia on Tuesday ; this was Wednesday, and Milan was to welcome the happy couple on Sunday.

“ Behold ! Milano is the new Athene !  
Where Moro holds his Court of——

What does he hold a Court of ?—Pretty women ?—Cackling fools ?—Merry jesters ?—What ?—Oh ! ye Muses and Mouses and little red devils, give me an inspiration that is equal to my needs ! ”

Bernardo Bellincioni, the Court Poet, was certainly a little drunk. His eyes roved round the huge Sala della Palla ; they were caught and wor-

ried by the forest of scaffolding-poles which obscured the distant walls, they followed the same poles upwards until they reached the roof. "These strange trees bear the most noble fruit!" he muttered, and, thrumming his lute, he struck some gallant chords. Then he caught sight of Leonardo, who was moving from craftsman to craftsman—advising, admonishing and encouraging—and he shouted to him.

"Come down, my little Tuscan!" he shouted, "and I will sing to you the songs of Tuscany!"

But Leonardo answered that he was busy, and bade the poet depart in peace.

"Then stay where you are," shouted Bernardo, "and listen to the Rime of the Loves of Il Moro!"

"Go away!" shouted Leonardo.

"Come down!" cried Bernardo. "The sun's on the fall, and the light's on the fail, and I have no friend in all this wide land of Lombardy!"

So, partly because the light was really failing, and partly because the workmen were commencing to laugh at his friend Bellincioni, Leonardo began to descend from the scaffolding.

"Now, listen," said Bernardo, "and I will sing you a sonnet before your foot reaches ground!"

"Behold! Milano is the new Athene!  
 Where Moro holds his Court of ancient learning,  
 Attracting all the Artists—nota bene!—  
 As bees for flower-sweet honey all are yearning,  
 So every painter being keen to glean, he  
 Swarms to Il Moro's blossom, ardent burning  
 With passion for the ducats—even dreamy  
 Tuscan Apelles, thither, careless turning!  
 Rejoice, Milano! that you now are holding  
 The great da Vinci safe within your walls—

The finest artist of them all enfolding !  
 Behold his lines so freely, finely flowing !  
 Did even ancient painter match his tints ?  
 With Leonardo's colours Milan's cheeks are glowing !”

Then, breaking off with a cackle, Bellincioni made for the door, chanting as he went :

“Leonardo ! Ave Vinci !  
 Ave locus natalis !  
 Ave——”

But Leonardo had caught him up, and, imprisoning his arm, gave him a shake.

“You have been dining !” said he.

“Off pulse and water,” answered the other ;  
 “only methinks the water had passed through the vine and had been pressed out by the pretty brown feet of some peasant girl !”

“And you, a great poet—before these common artisans !”

With a smile upon his thin face Bernardo was regarding him whimsically. “I know a little winky-maid,” said he, “who is prettier than the twinkle of golden ducats !” Then his eyes clouded : “Leonardo,” said he, “when one's lungs ring hollow, and one's brain is dry, and one's imagination is as empty as the barns in April, there is wisdom in that precept—‘Let me drink, for to-morrow I die !’ Besides, has not the nonsense which I sang to you given me an idea which I shall be able to turn into proper verse presently ?”

“Poor Bernardo !” sighed da Vinci. “Is that lung of yours no better ?”

“Bah ! I do nothing but cough like a Tartar and spit like a filthy Frenchman ! It is a loathy disease to die of !”

“Poor Bernardo!” murmured Leonardo.

But Bellincioni’s mood had changed. “I know a little winky-maid,” said he, “who would make the very poem of a picture! She has nut-brown skin, and nut-brown hair, and eyes that turn one sick with longing! You could paint her all in browns and reds and golds and serve her up as a bit of gilded gingerbread!—Eh, Leonardo,” he rattled on, “do you remember that picture of la bella Gallerani that you were painting when first I met you? How runs the poem that I wrote?”

“Che lei vedrà,” he hummed, “così ben che sia tardo,  
Vederla viva, dirà: basti ad noi  
Comprender or quel che è natura et arte!”

Those were gay days, my Leonardo! And now I am a loathy consumptive, while poor Cecilia has her nose out of joint!

“Eh?” cried he. “What have we now?” And Bernardo Bellincioni rubbed his eyes, whilst Leonardo stared in amazement.

The bridegroom of yesterday, whose bride was still at Pavia, had entered the Sala della Palla.

Leonardo moved forward to welcome His Excellency and point out how well the work was progressing; but Bellincioni button-holed Ambrogio da Rosarte the astrologer, who formed one of Il Moro’s escort, and subjected him to a vigorous cross-examination.

### III

Evening had come, and Bellincioni was supping with his comrade, Leonardo. A fire of cypress logs was burning on the hearth, the remains of an

excellent supper was lying on the table, and a flask of the generous red wine of Tuscany stood at Bernardo's elbow.

"By Bacchus!" said he. "This is the strangest wedding that has ever reached my ears! Here is our Moro, who has spent his life in upsetting everything from the peace of kingdoms to the virtue of women, brought to heel like a little white dog of Bologna!"

"What do you mean?" asked Leonardo, wondering if the wine was still ringing in Bernardo's ears.

"I mean what I say!" replied the poet. "This duckling of the d'Estes has tamed our Moor! She whispers, 'Come here, little Moro!' and up comes the Duke, wagging his tail like a lap-dog. She cries, 'Hie you there, sir!' and off he goes to Milan like a greyhound: it is marvellous!"

"Impossible!" murmured Leonardo. For Lodovico, in spite of his suave and gentle manner, was regarded as a man of iron.

"Impossible?" scoffed Bernardo. "Is anything impossible when a maiden pulls the strings?—I have this from Ambrogio's own lips! Our little Duchess sent her husband packing before ever the nightingales sang in Pavia!"

"That," replied the painter, "is no great matter!"

"You vegetable!" screamed the poet. "You cold-blooded tunny-fish!"

"Besides," urged the painter, "Lodovico is no longer a fiery lad, and he loves Madonna Cecilia."

"Tut!" laughed the other. "I have my fill



of orange blossom, is that any reason why I should not long to sniff the honeysuckle ? ”

“ But, we all know that Lodovico loves Madonna Cecilia very deeply, that the parting from her had wrung his heart, and that his present marriage is but an affair of State ! ”

Bernardo was eyeing Leonardo strangely. He filled his glass from the flagon of Chianti that was beside him, and eyed him again. “ You are a queer fellow,” said he, “ and very reticent ! Tell me this, my Leonardo, have you ever loved a woman ? ”

“ As you say,” replied the painter, “ I am a queer fellow, and very reticent ! If I had loved a woman I should keep the matter to myself.”

“ Pout ! Tell me this ! Have you ever kissed warm lips, and encircled a yielding waist, and kissed and kissed until the world swam round you ? ”

“ I will tell you this,” replied da Vinci, “ we painters of Florence are very busy men indeed ! Verrocchio, my master, had no time to waste on love ; Sandro Botticelli, my comrade, has no time to waste on love ; and I also am a painter of Florence ! ”

Again Bernardo inspected his friend with an inquisitive wonder. Regarding Leonardo as a man, fine, full of life and energy, it seemed impossible to imagine that he had never loved ; or more, regarding him as an artist whose love of beauty almost approached the sensuous, his austerity would appear incredible. But, whether Leonardo had loved, or whether he had not loved, his firm-set mouth could keep his secret. “ You

old mouse-trap!" murmured Bernardo. "Mice go in, but naught comes out!"

Bernardo Bellincioni drank down his glass of wine, crossed his legs, and settled himself comfortably. "Listen, old addlepate," said he, "and I will tell you a tale that will make you wonder! Aye! compared with our Lodovico, Dante is a visionary and Petrarch but a dreamer!

"The bridal party reached Pavia by water, tired as dogs, cold as lizards and cross as hedge-hogs. The Duke met them at the landing-place, accompanied by the magnificent San Severini and all the Nobles of Milan. The Duchess of Ferrara stumbled out of the barge, gave her hand to Lodovico, murmured a welcome, kissed him on the cheek, and stumbled on. The Cardinal Sigismondo d'Este stumbled out of the barge, proffered his ring for a kiss, embraced Lodovico, and stumbled on. Isabella d'Este—she who has just married the Marquis of Mantua—stumbled out of the barge, kissed Lodovico on the lips, murmured a clever nothing and stumbled on. Then came Beatrice!

"Ambrogio says that this one has great dark eyes, and red, red lips, and the chin of a little devil, and the most impudent nose in all Italy. And, when the Duke would have kissed her on the mouth, she laughed up at him and offered her cheek. She did not try to walk and stumble on like the others! She stood still, and she said: 'Lodovico, I am frozen stiff as a statue, put me on my horse!' And, when he had put her on her horse and all were ready, she said: 'Lodovico, I am as cold as an icicle and you are as fat as butter

—so that makes us even!—I'll race you to the Castle!' And off they went, laughing like children."

Leonardo gasped!

"Ah!" cried Bernardo. "This one is no child of a Florentine banker whose fathers sold pills! This one has no need to stand on her dignity! This one's fathers ruled Ferrara when the Aragons shovelled dung in Spain!" And Bellincioni inflated his poor lungs proudly; for the Milanese took their new Duchess into their affections with an incredible rapidity.

"Well," continued the poet, "our Beatrice arrived on Sunday, and by Tuesday she and Il Moro were as thick as two thieves. Ambrogio says that she is as plump as a little rabbit, as sweet as a spray of honeysuckle, as daring as a street boy, as saucy as a buttercup and that Il Moro is simply crazy over her.

"Then, on Tuesday, just before the Nuptial Mass, Il Moro came to Ambrogio, and he said: 'To-night I sleep in the chambers of Messer Galeazzo di San Severino, and to-morrow I ride on to Milan so that I may make ready for my bride. Frame some excuses for me!'

"And Ambrogio stammered, dumbfounded.

"And Il Moro said: 'May God deal hardly with me, if I do not treat this child tenderly! Find me some excuse for my continence that I may offer to her parents, Ambrogio!'

"But Ambrogio could answer nothing.

"Then Il Moro lost his temper, and he cried: 'Heaven! If you cannot twist the stars a little you are no follower of Almansor!'

"So Ambrogio, seeing light, answered: 'Ex-

cellency, I have cast the Planets, and I find that the Houses of Mars and Venus are not in an auspicious conjunction. I warn you to rest content with the public espousal and Blessing of the Church, and to postpone the full completion of your union until a more favourable season.'

"And Lodovico said: 'State your opinion in writing, Ambrogio, so that I may show it to the envoy of the Duke of Ferrara. I would not have His Excellency imagine that I am leaving a loophole for the dissolution of my marriage!'

"And Ambrogio answered that this should be done.

"Then, as Lodovico was leaving the apartment, Ambrogio enquired when it would be fitting for him to find the Heavenly Bodies auspicious. And my Lord, smiling a little sadly, answered: 'That, my friend, depends upon the wishes of Venus!'

"Therefore Lodovico Il Moro is now in Milan, whilst his Duchess remains at Pavia!

"Tell me, my Leonardo, have the days of romance and chivalry vanished?"

In silence Leonardo charged their glasses; in silence they drank to Lodovico Il Moro, Duke of Bari.

#### IV

The Street of the Armourers was lined with effigies of knights on horseback; the walls and balconies were draped with red and blue; the doorways and pillars were dressed with wreaths of ivy. Overhead the bells were pealing like things demented.

Beside the Porta Ticinese, Lodovico Il Moro was chatting to Gian Galeazzo, Duke of Milan. The

Moro was gorgeous in gold brocade ; Gian Galeazzo was flushed and slobbering like a foolish schoolboy ; the Nobles of Milan looked from one to the other, and drew their own conclusions.

Isabella of Milan had ridden forth to meet her cousin at the Church of San Eustorgio without the walls ; now they appeared, chatting merrily, the Duchess of Ferrara and the rest of her company riding behind.

Lodovico spurred forth to meet his bride ; he dismounted and kissed her on the lips ; he kissed Isabella on the cheek, and, mounting, rode between them.

The sound of a hundred trumpets blared forth ; great guns belched out their thunder ; the marshals formed the procession.

The Duke and Duchess of Milan were, of necessity, given the precedence ; the Duke and Duchess of Bari came next in precedence ; Beatrice was biting her lip, for no Este ever cared to take the second place.

Gian Galeazzo was shuffling in his saddle like a nervous groom ; Isabella looked proud and arrogant, as she always looked when conscious of her foolish husband. It was Lodovico Il Moro who looked the Duke, and Beatrice was bowing with the ease of one born to the throne. " Moro ! Moro ! " cried the crowd.

Then Beatrice's cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled like stars, and she flashed smiles to right and left, whilst Lodovico watched her proudly.

" Moro ! Moro ! " thundered the crowd. For men had compared Gian Galeazzo with Il Moro, and Milan had drawn her conclusion.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WITHOUT RIVAL



WOULD that space served to tell of all the doings which marked the coming of Beatrice to Milan, of the wedding presents and the grand reception and the state ball in the Sala della Palla, of the magnificent tournament in which all the knights of Upper Italy took part, of the Scythian dresses that Leonardo designed for the followers of Galeazzo di San Severino, of the prowess with which the same Messer Galeazzo overthrew all who met him. Per Dio! He was a perfect knight was Il Gran San Severino!

Modern writers sneer at the "toy tournaments" of the Renaissance, and, because Galeazzo di San Severino chose to wear a white silk tunic and white plumes in his cap and white shoes on his feet, and because he would write the choicest sonnets and bear himself with an elegance that is past belief they dub him "a carpet knight." I will tell you that Messer Galeazzo fought the greatest knights

of Spain and Germany, and overthrew them ; and he went to the Court of France, where he unhorsed the flower of the French chivalry and was decorated by King Charles with the Order of Saint Michael ; and, afterwards, when Il Moro lost his kingdom and was deserted by his courtiers, Galeazzo di San Severino clung to him with absolute devotion and loyalty. Was a Knight the worse because he did not spit like a Swiss nor drink like an Englishman ?

## II

For some weeks the strange relations between Lodovico and his espoused bride continued, Beatrice enjoying herself like a merry, thoughtless child, whilst Lodovico turned his eyes towards his old love ; for, under the date of February 11, we have a letter from Messer Galeazzo describing a day which he spent in hunting and fishing and romping with Beatrice at Cussago :

“ I have cut my boots to pieces,” he ends, “ and torn my clothes, and played the fool into the bargain, and these are the rewards one gains in the service of ladies. However, I will have patience, since it is all for the sake of my Duchess, whom I never mean to fail in life or death ! ”

And, a few days later, we find a letter from the Ferrarese envoy to his master, the Duke of Ferrara, saying that Cecilia Gallerani was living in the Castle, that he had seen Lodovico returning from her apartments, that he had taxed Lodovico and that Il Moro had been perfectly open with him.

Then a rumour reached Beatrice—perhaps Messer

Galeazzo, who had lately espoused Lodovico's natural daughter, the little Bianca Sforza, warned her ; perhaps her own cousin, Pollissena d'Este, who had come with her as lady-in-waiting, spoke of a wife's obligations and of the danger which she ran through their unfulfilment—anyhow, she learnt that her husband's old mistress was living in the Castle and that Lodovico had been to see her ; nay, more, it was whispered that Cecilia would shortly become a mother.

A crisis came—Lodovico presented his bride with a golden vest which was not unlike one that the dressmaker was fashioning for Cecilia, and her anger flared out : she would not bear a rival ! She would not share her husband's affection with another ! Unless she could stand alone in her husband's love she would stand outside his love altogether, accepting no courtesy, no present ! And she flung the vest on the ground. Oh, yes ! She knew that she had behaved like a selfish child ; but now she was ready to accept the responsibilities of womanhood, and Lodovico must make his choice !

As Beatrice stood before him, her cheeks crimson, her eyes flashing, and her pretty chin as firm as a rock, Lodovico made his choice ; for, on February 26, we find Lodovico writing to Beatrice's sister, Isabella d'Este : “ I am going to Vigevano with my wife on Monday, and intend to make extensive preparations for fresh hunting parties.” And thither they went, accompanied by only a few courtiers and Galeazzo di San Severino.

“ My wife has become so clever at hawking,” writes Lodovico, “ that she quite outdoes me at



this her favourite sport.—She has not let a single day pass without mounting her horse.” And a fortnight later Beatrice herself wrote to Isabella, telling her of this same sport, and ending : “ I say all this in order that you may know how well and happy I am, and how kind and affectionate my husband is.”

## III

Of all Lodovico's estates Vigevano was the most sympathetic.

*Item* : an old town, with a Roman Forum which Lodovico had restored in perfect taste.

*Item* : an ancient castle which the great Bramante had converted into a fairy palace, and, below which, the Valley of the Ticino stretched its loveliness.

*Item* : a huge park that was filled with deer and chamois and hares for hunting, and with wolves and boars for the grand chase.

*Item* : a model farm that was the pride of Lodovico's soul—but, of this, more presently.

*Item* : and now there was a girl who filled Lodovico's house with laughter, his heart with love, ay ! and his arms with her sweet young self. No wonder that the Duke of Bari was in a pleasant temper !

The Ducal party had netted the Ticino in the morning—and only those who have taken part in the netting of a river, when each haul may capture the biggest fish of the day, and when no fish is captured until he is safely on the bank, can appreciate the sport !—they had dined hungrily ; and now Lodovico, Beatrice, Galeazzo and another

gentleman were riding out to inspect the great model farm of La Pecorara. The Duke and Duchess were riding together ; the two gentlemen were keeping discreetly in the rear ; Beatrice was speaking :

“ Lodovico,” said she of a sudden, “ is this to last ? ”

“ What do you mean ? ” he answered, looking at her sideways, and smiling to himself. “ What is to last ? ”

“ If you are too stupid to understand,” said she, “ I am not stupid enough to explain ! ” and she gave him a look that set his heart a-beating. For, unless the Milanese historians and Giacomo Trotti the Ferrarese envoy and Beatrice herself had all conspired together to lie, Beatrice had fallen head over ears in love with her middle-aged husband.

“ Do you ask,” said he, teasing her, “ whether this time of hunting and frolic is to last ! Alas ! my Duchess, life cannot be one entire festa ! ”

“ Oh ! Pumpkin-head ! ” said she.

“ Seriously,” he replied, “ this holiday will be a time that we shall remember, and the next a time that we shall long for ! We must return to Milan so that we may talk with dull councillors, laugh with tedious ambassadors and entertain punctilious noblemen.”

“ And Madonna Cecilia Gallerani ? ” said she.

Puff ! The sun had vanished, and a cold wind was blowing from the Alps ! “ Madonna has returned to her own palace ! ” he answered stiffly. “ As I have already informed you, I shall see no more of Madonna Cecilia Gallerani ! ”

To most the Duke’s tone would have sounded

final and the subject would have been closed ; but Beatrice looked down her nose and sniffed. " I untie a bow," said she, " I mean to untie that bow, and the bow is untied ! Bene ! But next day my mood changes ; I desire to retie that bow, I finger the ribbon, and the bow is retied ! See, Lodovico ! If I had meant that the bow should never be retied I should have taken my scissors and cut the ribbon, then that bow could never have been retied ! Thank Heaven we Estes were not born fools ! "

Il Moro looked at Beatrice and laughed. With the possible exception of Messer Galeazzo, no one else would have dared to lecture him like this. " Madonna might enter a convent," he remarked.

But Beatrice shook her head vigorously, for the suggestion did not appeal to her.

Again Il Moro looked at her : her eyelashes hid her eyes, and there was a most wicked dimple beside her mouth.

" It is even possible," said he, reflectively, " that I might arrange her marriage. Count Lodovico Bergamini has worshipped her long and faithfully."

" That would be most wise ! " said she.

" Of course," he began, " the marriage must wait until——"

" I know what I know ! " she interrupted. " Let us canter on ! This Madonna Gallerani wearies me ! "

## IV

The farm of La Pecorara was one of the sights of Italy. Situated in a wide meadow of over six

thousand acres, watered by numerous streams, enriched with vineyards and mulberry groves, La Pecorara seemed a veritable Paradise: nor was the practical side of the undertaking neglected!

The great establishment was under the control of a governor and captains, Messer Galeazzo being responsible for the stud-farm; the labourers, dairymen and grooms, together with their wives and families, lived in well-ordered barracks; everything was weighed, checked and entered. The milk from the huge herds was weighed, the cream was weighed, the butter was weighed, the large Milan cheeses were weighed, the very fodder for the cattle was weighed: all was entered, added and averaged in a way that would excite the admiration of a modern scientist.

But suites of model dairies become monotonous; even the finest cattle grow wearisome when the herds number fourteen thousand; the prodding of the fattest swine is apt to pall. So when Messer Galeazzo proposed that they should leave the stables until another day and betake themselves to the paddocks where the mares and colts were running, Beatrice welcomed the suggestion with enthusiasm.

Picture the sight of squadrons of finely bred horses at play, showing off, as horses will, before visitors. These were not by their dozens, as we see them in a modern stud-farm, but by their hundreds—wheeling, charging, rearing and meeting in mock battle. Every now and again some favourite mare would scent Messer Galeazzo and come up, half-nervous at the presence of the others, so that she might win a petting.

Then, in the paddock where the famous stud of Sicilians was grazing, they found an artist hard at work sketching. Galeazzo left the others so that he might ride forward and speak with the stranger, and, as he drew near, the artist rose to welcome him with a self-possessed and easy politeness.

“What a handsome man!” murmured Beatrice, turning to her husband. “Who is he?” And, indeed, this tall artist, with his open face, flowing beard and air of distinction, was a man to attract notice. Also, his clothes were such as a gentleman should wear in the country.

“That,” answered Il Moro, “is the man who will presently paint your portrait; and, if he will show us his sketch-book, you will see something that is worth seeing.”

Whilst Lodovico and Beatrice were talking together Galeazzo was turning over the pages of the stranger’s sketch-book. “So the trot is not of the nature of the free horse?” he was saying. “I thought you would find that you were in the wrong!”

“Heaven, yes!” laughed the other. “The free horse seems to walk, canter, gallop, rear, plunge—in short, he will do everything except trot! Those horses I studied at Pavia were but base-born slaves compared with these! I can never be sufficiently thankful for your advice to study here, Messer Galeazzo.”

“And you have finished those studies of my big Sicilian?”

“I have sketched him from every point! I have measured him in every leg—from in front,

from behind, at rest or extended—as the people here measure their milk and cheese.”

Then Lodovico rode up, presented his bride and possessed himself of Leonardo's sketches.

“ Look here ! ” cried Lodovico Il Moro.

Beatrice looked over her husband's shoulder and she saw a sketch of wheeling horses. The drawing was soft with the suggestion of March dust which had been kicked up from the dry pasture by the many hoofs, and, through the dust, came the feeling of living, active motion.

“ Oh ! ” murmured Beatrice, her lips parted, and her breath coming quickly. For, say what one will, no artist has ever excelled Leonardo's sketch of the Horses of La Pecorara which is now at Windsor.

v

“ Well,” remarked Lodovico as they were riding home, “ when shall my Leonardo begin your portrait ? ”

Beatrice hesitated a moment. “ Is this one Leonardo da Vinci, the Florentine ? ” she asked.

“ Yes ! ” he answered.

“ And did not he paint the portrait of Madonna Gallerani, the portrait of which men talk ? ”

“ Yes ! ” he answered.

“ And would you have my portrait painted by the same artist, so that men might compare this with that ?—Whilst I live,” she cried, “ Leonardo shall never paint my portrait ! ”

And Lodovico was wise enough to hold his tongue.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS



IF we would understand the inspiration of Leonardo's first great picture we must unravel the politics of Milan.

A duke held his duchy under the suzerainty of an overlord, and although his succession might be hereditary, his rule a practical despotism, his power greater than Pope or Emperor, yet he re-

ceived his investiture as ruler from his overlord : thus each Duke of Ferrara received his investiture from the Pope of Rome, and each Duke of Milan was supposed to receive his investiture from the Austrian ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

When the last of the House of Visconti had died, the great Francesco Sforza, general and son-in-law of the last Visconti, had brushed aside all other claimants and assumed the Dukedom of Milan. So strong a man was he that he never troubled to

obtain investiture from the Emperor. He died, leaving some twenty children, legitimate and otherwise ; and, of these children, Galeazzo Maria and Lodovico Il Moro demand our notice.

Galeazzo Maria succeeded his father to the dukedom, and proved himself such a vicious tyrant that it is impossible to regret his assassination. He left eleven children, of whom Gian Galeazzo was the eldest in the legitimate line, and little Gian Galeazzo succeeded to the throne.

In 1476 Gian Galeazzo, aged seven, ascended the ducal throne.

In 1479, three years after his brother's death, Lodovico Il Moro, backed up by his friend the King of Naples, entered Milan and assumed the regency during his nephew's minority. As we have already seen, Il Moro was a strong, restless, ambitious man, and he ruled the State wisely and well, steering it through tempestuous times until Milan became one of the first powers in Europe.

In the years 1491-1493, with which we are now dealing, Gian Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, had shown himself to be both weak and dissolute : he had married Isabella of Aragon, who had borne him one son, Francesco. Lodovico had married Beatrice d'Este ; and whereas Gian Galeazzo spent his days in hunting and drinking in his estate near Pavia, Lodovico was to all intents and purposes the acting duke.

And please note this, although the House of Sforza had reigned as Dukes of Milan for three generations, not one of them had ever troubled to seek lawful investiture from the Emperor !



## II

However much Isabella of Aragon might have disapproved of Lodovico's intimacy with Cecilia Gallerani, however much she must have resented his assumption of that authority which should have belonged to her husband, there is no doubt that his marriage with her favourite cousin was altering her tone towards him. For had not II. Moro sent Cecilia Gallerani packing, and was not his treatment of Beatrice turning out all that could be desired? Besides, the birth of her own son had given Isabella a new and strong position as mother of the heir-apparent. So when, in the beginning of April, Lodovico and Beatrice left Vigevano for the Sforza Castle at Milan, Isabella was prepared to give them a hearty welcome.

Did I say that Isabella was prepared with a hearty welcome? Nay! rather was she prepared to receive her cousin with tears of joy; for the Castle was in the throes of preparation for the State reception of a most important French embassy, and the ducal apartments were in confusion.

"Oh, Beatrice!" she cried. "M. d'Aubigny is to have my apartments, even my pretty boudoir, and M. de Visque is to have the apartments of yourself and Lodovico, and we have nowhere to hang our dresses!"

"What fun!" laughed Beatrice. "Let's enjoy ourselves!" And, just as children enjoy the commotion of a house-cleaning, so these two princesses (Beatrice was fifteen and Isabella but twenty) set themselves to turn the discomfort into a picnic.

Then Milan opened her eyes : the two Duchesses had been seen in the market ; they were disguised as Neapolitan peasant girls, with flattened towels on their heads and huge marketing baskets on their arms ; the market women had jeered at them as such people will jeer at strangers, and Madonna Beatrice had talked back—Heaven ! how she had talked !—even the fish-wives had been unable to match her nimble tongue ! They had almost come to blows, and their Excellencies had gone home all muddy and bedraggled.

Ha ! So their own little Duchess had resolved to be prepared for any future mischance and was practising the art of self-defence like the ladies of ancient Rome : she was learning to wrestle and even to spar ; she had been practising with her cousin and had knocked down my Lady of Milan ! And the City laughed.

What was this ? Madonna's brother, Don Alfonzo d'Este, had shown himself as wild-spirited as his sister ! For he and Messer Galeazzo had disguised themselves as two burglars and had broken into the house of no less a person than Signor Girolamo Tuttavilla, Lodovico's favourite minister, at midnight ; and, after blindfolding this grave gentleman, they had mounted him upon a donkey and led him prisoner to the Castello Sforzesco. There Beatrice had unbound him, and teased him and had bidden him own himself her captive and pledge her in the wine of Asti.

How Milan loved its young Duchess ! And, since Lodovico had the wisdom to keep himself apart from this horse-play, whilst he laughed with

the best, the heart of Milan warmed towards Il Moro.

Thus the spring passed, and the summer saw Isabella and Beatrice still inseparable. Did they plan a party or plot a masque, it was Beatrice who was the moving spirit ! Did they visit the nursery, it was Beatrice who had the small Francesco in her arms, saying that this one child was enough for her ! Certainly, during the first year of Beatrice's marriage, there is no record of anything except love between Isabella and Beatrice and of good-fellowship between the Duke and Duchess of Milan and Lodovico Il Moro.

### III

When did the coolness between the two families begin ?

Myself, I suspect that so soon as the first pleasure of Beatrice's companionship wore off, Isabella began to smart under the overwhelming personality of the younger woman ; I suspect that she of Aragon fought hard to hold her own in the popular fancy, and forced herself into a levity that was contrary to her Spanish blood ; but I doubt whether Isabella would have acknowledged a jealousy of her favourite cousin, even to herself.

Besides, Gian Galeazzo's lack of popularity in the Duchy, his lack of kindness and consideration to herself, became more and more obvious, and Isabella's letters show that she felt this bitterly.

The first open rift came with the advent of Beatrice's first-born. For when, on Sunday, January 25, 1493, Beatrice gave birth to a son, Ercole, joy-bells were rung, processions were

formed, prisoners were released and the City went wild with joy. And, although Il Moro protested that these festivities were meant to include Isabella's daughter who was born a few days later, Isabella knew that there had been no such rejoicing to welcome the birth of Francesco, heir to Milan.

In February the two cousins returned thanks for their safe conduct through the pains and perils of childbirth; then Isabella withdrew to her castle at Pavia, where she had none but her husband and ladies for companions, and from whence she evolved a most bitter letter to her father, King Ferrante :

“It is Lodovico who administers the State, treats of war and peace, confirms the laws, grants privileges, imposes taxes, raises money, hears petitions. Everything is in his power, while we are left without friends or money, and are reduced to live as private persons. . . . His wife has lately borne him a son who everyone prophesies will soon be called Count of Pavia.”

This is a serious indictment against Il Moro, and it would be a more serious indictment if existing accounts of the ducal household did not prove that the Duchess Isabella kept as lavish a Court as that of any existing sovereign.

#### IV

When did Lodovico Il Moro first plot to depose his nephew from the throne so that he might reign in his stead ?

He might have dreamed of the succession for many years, but there is no record of any actual plotting before the May of 1493, and the actual temptation might have come to him like this :

In the spring of 1493 Gian Galeazzo was growing more troublesome and unreasonable every day, whilst Isabella, as his agents told him, was striving to stir up trouble with Naples. The Duke of Orleans was laying claim to Milan from France ; the House of Aragon was threatening trouble from the South ; it was certainly desirable for the sake of Milan herself that the decadent Gian Galeazzo should be deposed and that Lodovico should reign as actual Duke—who could deny this ?

On the other hand, Isabella of Aragon had married Gian Galeazzo as heir to the throne of his fathers, and Lodovico must have felt the injustice of deposing Isabella and her son from their rightful positions ; but Isabella was becoming very troublesome, and Ercole promised to grow up a fine and healthy child, and why should Lodovico spend his life in building up a secure throne for Isabella's son ? Who can fail to invent excuses for a desired ambition ?

Lastly, Lodovico's temptation took a practical shape : the Dukes of the House of Sforza had never sought lawful investiture ; they were only dukes by a popular election which had never been confirmed by the Emperor, and the Emperor had a perfect right to ignore Gian Galeazzo and invest Lodovico Il Moro with the Dukedom of Milan.

April had come, and Beatrice was sitting in her

favourite room in the Villa Nova busy over a letter, whilst Il Moro lounged beside the open window.

“MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MADAMA MINE, AND DEAREST MOTHER,” she wrote. “Your Highness must forgive my delay in writing to you. The reason was that every day I have been hoping the painter would bring me the portrait of Ercole, which my husband and I now send to you by post. And, I assure you, he is much bigger than this picture makes him appear, for it is already more than a week since it was painted. But I do not send the measure of his height because people here tell me if I measure him he will not grow! Or else I certainly would let you have it. And my Lord and I, both of us, commend ourselves to your Highness, and I kiss your hand, my dearest mother.

“Your obedient servant and child,

“BEATRICE SFORZA DA ESTE,

“With *my own* hand.”

Then she looked up, and spoke. “Lodovico,” said she, “I wonder if it is true that Ercole would stop growing if I measured him?”

“They say that a watched pot never boils!” he answered.

“Perhaps it would be like King David numbering Israel,” she hazarded, and started writing the address:

“To the most illustrious Lady my dearest Mother, Signora Duchessa di Ferrara.”

Lodovico watched her pen going evenly across

the paper ; he watched her sand the writing ; he drew a deep breath that was almost a sigh. " Beatrice," said he, " Ercole must grow a fine, lusty fellow if he is to rule Milan ! "

" Bah ! " she answered, " I thought you had forgotten those day-dreams ! "

" Alas ! " he replied. " The more I ponder my day-dreams, the more I see that they do but foreshadow necessity. "

" But," she cried, " consider the injustice to poor Isabella and my little Francesco ! "

" When necessity drives," he answered, and shook his head.

For some minutes Beatrice sat toying with her letter, then she looked up. " Lodovico," she said, " if Gian Galeazzo were the only person to be considered I should understand the wisdom, even the justice, of your assuming the Dukedom of Milan. But there are the claims of Isabella and her son to be considered, and these seem overwhelming ! " And she broke off, biting her lip.

" With Isabella stirring up the King of Naples against me," he answered quietly, " what chance has her son of succeeding to the Dukedom ? "

" Why ! Every chance ! " she cried. " That is the very reason why she is appealing to King Ferrante—that he may turn you out of Milan, and seat her husband on the throne ! "

" Bah ! " he laughed. " Tell me this : Who is it that claims Milan ? And who is the strongest man, if I were removed ? "

Beatrice whistled low and clear. " Louis of Orleans ! " said she, nodding her head. For the Duke of Orleans laid claim to Milan through his

mother's descent from the Visconti, and Louis was a dashing fellow.

"Tell me this," said Lodovico, "when the eagles are gathered over the carcass—France from the North, Venice from the East, Naples from the South—who would step through and seat himself upon our throne?"

"Louis!" she answered.

"Louis of Orleans," said he, "scoffs at the Sforza as upstarts and usurpers! He hates me like poison! I tell you that, within six weeks of his accession, Gian Galeazzo would be rotting in the dungeons, Isabella and Francesco would be flying to Naples, Beatrice and Ercole would be hiding in Ferrara, whilst I should be a wanderer!"

Beatrice sighed, for, although she had no liking for Il Moro's scheme, she could suggest no alternative.

"What I do," continued Lodovico, "I must do now. I shall send an envoy to the Emperor, or, rather, since the Emperor is old and failing, I shall send my envoy to his son, Maximilian, who is the strongest prince that the Hapsburgs have ever borne; I shall tell him of the state of our politics; I shall point out that the House of Sforza has never been invested with the Dukedom, and I shall beg him to appoint me as reigning Duke!"

Beatrice took a handful of the sand that was on her table, and she let it trickle through her fingers slowly, and she said: "So you will send your envoy to the best and strongest Prince in Christendom, and you will say: 'Sire, I have brought up my nephew, Gian Galeazzo, as Duke of Milan; I



have married him, as Duke of Milan, to a princess of the House of Aragon, and they have a healthy son. But,' you will say, 'since I have never troubled to petition for his lawful investure, I beg you to take the Duchy from him and give it to me!'"

Il Moro shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "I have already told you," said he, "that I shall point out the full political situation!"

"And Maximilian will make the obvious reply," said she. "'If Gian Galeazzo be as you tell me,' he will answer, 'I shall pass over him, and I shall make his son, Francesco, Duke of Milan, with you as regent—such an investure would satisfy Ferrante and please France.'"

"Heaven!" cried Lodovico. "Trust a woman to scent trouble! Trust a woman to pick holes!—I tell you I will not act as regent to Francesco! If I were to act as regent to Isabella's son she would make my life worse than Purgatory! I will not do it!"

"Then," said Beatrice, calmly, "you are determined to go on with your plan?"

And he answered: "Yes!"

And she said: "Nothing that I can say will turn you?"

And he answered: "Nothing!"

"Then," said she, "if I cannot turn you, I will join you! And if God should punish you, He shall also punish me!" And again she fell to playing with the sand, letting it trickle through her fingers so that it formed ridges and hillocks in the sand-box, whilst Lodovico stood looking out of the window. Presently Beatrice spoke:

“ See here ! ” said she. “ If Isabella were a wise and patient woman she would say : ‘ My husband is too weak and vicious to keep Milan against Louis of Orleans ; my son is too feeble to keep Milan ; let Lodovico take it and do his best for us ! ’ If I were Isabella, that is what I should say ! ”

Then the absurdity of her last statement struck her and she gave a little laugh. “ La ! la ! la ! ” she cried. “ If I were Isabella I should never rest until I had bundled you out of Milan and made myself Francesco’s regent ! But that is neither here nor there ! Let us be reasonable ! ”

“ Let us be reasonable ! ” he muttered.

“ If Isabella were reasonable,” said she, “ Isabella would realise that I care for her and Francesco as though she were my own sister, and that you would be kind to her if she would let you : that would make provision for Francesco’s childhood.”

“ Yes ! ” he said, turning round and facing her.

“ Bene !—You and I are dead ! Ercole is Duke of Milan ! As foster-brother of Duke Ercole and head of the House of Sforza, Francesco would be the equal of any uncrowned prince in Europe, whilst he would be spared all the worry and responsibility that goes with rulership ! ”

“ Heaven ! ” he exclaimed. “ You mean that this should stand as a family arrangement ? ”

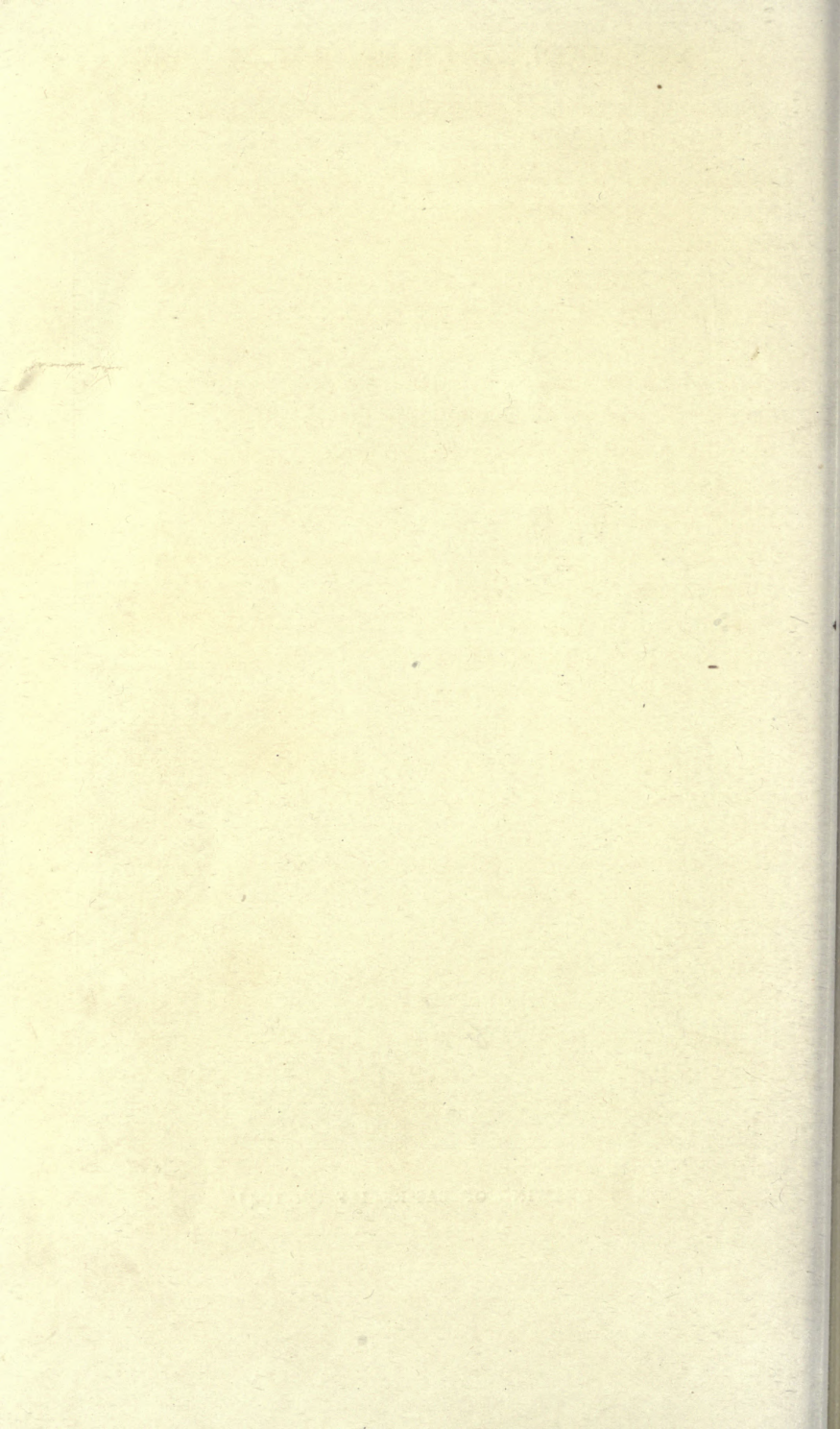
“ I mean,” she answered, “ that this should be presented to Maximilian as a family arrangement to which Isabella has refused her consent—a family arrangement to which she would have consented if she had not been so implacable—a family



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Mansell photo*

DRAWING OF BAS-RELIEF (*p.* 194)



arrangement which we wish our Suzerain Lord to approve and ratify ! ”

It was Il Moro's quick perception, combined with his great knowledge of human weakness, that had made him the first diplomatist in contemporary politics ; now he looked at his wife and smiled. “ Hearing,” said he, “ leads to questioning ; seeing, to belief ! If Maximilian were to hear our argument he would begin to question, he would proceed to reason, he might end with doubt ; but if he could only see you and Isabella together, as you used to be before this quarrel—— ! ”

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ Thank God,” said he, “ we have a painter who can make his pictures live ! ”

“ Yes ? ” said she.

“ If I were to send Maximilian a present of a Holy Family—I mean a picture of the Madonna and Saint Anne with their respective sons.—If it were whispered to Maximilian that these were portraits of yourself and Isabella.—Seeing leads to belief ! ”

“ Of course you mean a picture of the Madonna and her cousin Saint Elizabeth ! ”\* she suggested.

“ Of course ! ” he answered impatiently. “ What does the title matter so long as the portraits live ? ”

For a moment Beatrice sat biting the end of her pen, then she asked : “ Who is the artist that shall paint this picture ? ”

“ Leonardo da Vinci ! ” said he.

\* Of course, Leonardo's various cartoons and paintings of the two Holy Women, playing with the Divine Infant and Saint John, are in reality the Madonna and Saint Elizabeth ; but, since the wisdom of Critics and Curators has named these pictures “ Madonna with Saint Anne,” I have been compelled to perpetuate the error.—A.J.A.

“And I have already said,” she answered, “that whilst I live Leonardo da Vinci shall never paint my portrait !” And, taking a fresh sheet of paper, Beatrice commenced a letter to her sister.

But Lodovico chuckled to himself as he looked out of the window ; for, after all, Maximilian had never seen Beatrice, and, even if the portrait were not very like her—to see is to believe !

## VI

We may picture the next scene as enacted in Leonardo’s studio, with Lodovico Il Moro examining the sketch which is at the heading of this chapter.

“I do not know how you have managed to obtain this drawing,” he remarked ; “but, whether it be through an effort of memory or whether it be through careful observation, it is a most excellent likeness of the Duchess Isabella. Now let me see the commencement of your picture !”

In answer, Leonardo removed the damp cloth which covered a clay bas-relief and showed the rough modelling of a Madonna seated upon the knee of a Saint Anne. “Behold ! Excellency,” said he.

“Heaven !” cried the Duke. “I ordered a painting that might be sent across the Alps into Germany, and this fellow starts making me a basso-rilievo that will weigh fully a ton !” Then, as he studied the roughly modelled figures, his expression changed to one of admiration ; he compared the sketch with the face of Saint Anne in the bas-relief, and, turning to the artist, asked : “How, in the name of Venus, have you captured

this smile ? ” For although the expression in the sketch was undoubtedly one of sweetness, the face was not smiling.

“ Excellency,” replied Leonardo, “ you told me that this was to be a memorial of the friendship which has existed between Madonna Beatrice and Madonna Isabella, therefore have I made them smiling.”

“ That,” laughed the Duke, “ may be very interesting, but it is no answer to my question. How did you create the smile that is in the basso-rilievo ? ”

“ Excellency,” answered the artist, “ as my friend Sandro Botticelli once pointed out to me, a smile is an expression that comes and goes, changing all the while ; for if a smile be fixed it becomes a grin.”

“ That is true ! ” replied Il Moro.

“ Again, in painting, wherein a certain definite expression is caught and set upon a panel, a smile is apt to become fixed and artificial—at least, so I have always found it ! ”

“ That also sounds true ! ” replied Il Moro patiently.

“ At last, when I had tried painting this way and that way until I was almost in despair, I bethought myself of the more plastic method of modelling. For, in modelling, the clay changes with each touch, and an expression can be coaxed out of the material as though it were living matter.”

“ Ah ! ” murmured Duke Lodovico.

“ So I took some clay and I began to model this basso-rilievo ; and, as my fingers modelled the

face of the Duchess Isabella, her features began to smile ; and, when her features had commenced to smile—that is to say, when the expression was but dawning with the promise of the smile that was to come—I ceased my work. And that is all, Excellency ! ”

For some minutes the Duke looked at the bas-relief longingly, then he shook his head. “ I will say nothing of the difficulty of carrying such a piece of sculpture across the mountains,” said he, “ for that might be accomplished ; but how long would the modelling and carving of such work occupy, Leonardo ? ”

“ There is the modelling of the clay, Excellency,” he answered, “ there is the finding of a suitable piece of marble, and the pointing of the marble, and the carving of the marble, and the finishing of the whole : it must take me many months ! ”

“ But,” cried Lodovico, “ my gift must be despatched without delay, else it will be too late ! No ! You must paint me a picture, rising early and working late, and toiling as though your very life depended on your quickness ! ”

So, because it occurred to neither the Duke nor Leonardo that the bas-relief might be taken as a model, and a panel painted from the same, Leonardo commenced the composition of the Virgin of the Rocks which is now in the Louvre. The seated figure of the Madonna is a very poor portrait of Beatrice d’Este, because Beatrice would never allow Leonardo to paint her portrait ; but if we compare the kneeling figure in the painting with Boltraffio’s portrait of the Duchess of Milan we will find that Leonardo’s Saint



Anne bears a most striking likeness to Isabella of Aragon.

This is the origin of Leonardo da Vinci's Virgin of the Rocks, as I take it.

It was no crude picture of Lodovico and Gian Galeazzo sailing in the ship of State, like the frontispiece which Il Moro placed in the Sforza History ; it bore no obvious statement of Il Moro's beneficent protection as did the same : for, here, Lodovico was dealing with a refined and clever individual, and not with the general public ; and although, as Richer reminds us, " Lodovico always made art subservient to his political aims," yet he was not the man to descend to crude statement when refined suggestion would answer his purpose, nor to indulge in the obvious when a hint would serve.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ACADEMIA LEONARDI VINCI



FROM the time when Leonardo had painted Cecilia Gallerani on his first arrival in Milan, to the time when he commenced the theme of Beatrice and Isabella which was to be sent to the great Maximilian—that is to say, during a full ten years—Leonardo had not painted a single picture. But, quite unlike most of those who have laid down their brush for a decade, Leonardo was able to resume his painting with all his old skill, and with a new and conscious sense of certainty.

For, during these ten years, of which we have such slender record, Leonardo da Vinci had been always working, always investigating, always arriving at conclusions ; and, not only had many of these investigations searched into some subject that was essential to art, such as the study of the

human figure, anatomy, motion, atmosphere, perspective ; but also whenever Leonardo had wished to note down the result of some investigation, dip would go his pen into the ink, and the most perfectly drawn illustration would follow. Aye ! I tell you that Leonardo the anatomist could never help being Leonardo the artist, and that there is more æsthetic joy in the drawing of a dissection of the muscles of the neck by Leonardo da Vinci than there is in a whole line-full of modern exhibition pictures by Royal Academicians.

Besides, there was always the Horse ! And although, in strict confidence,—and I would not have the art-critics get wind of my suspicions for worlds—although, I say in strict confidence, I have suspicions of Leonardo's skill as a sculptor (if he had been as skilful as some say he would certainly have aroused Il Moro's enthusiasm in the Sforza statue !), he was constantly drawing the horse—walking, trotting or ramping, in anatomy or surrounded by life and atmosphere—and these drawings were a constant exercise in artistic skill. Examine the half-tone reproduction of one of these sketches which illustrates Chapter XIX and you will see how much these drawings meant.

## II

Il Moro looked at the half-finished painting of the Virgin of the Rocks long and earnestly, then a smile curved his lips.

“ At any rate, my friend,” said he, “ there can be no mistake about that subject ! ”

Leonardo shook his head. “ No ! Excellency,” he replied. “ When malicious tongues hint that

there are dissensions between your Duchess and the Duchess of Milan, there is your answer! Seeing is believing!" And he fell to stroking his beard.

Lodovico turned his eyes from the picture and studied the artist curiously, for he had given the order for this picture with great caution, saying that it was to be a memorial of the great love which had always existed between his wife and Isabella, and he had said nothing about gossip or malicious tongues, nor had he hinted that this picture was intended to form an object lesson. But, look as he would, he could see naught but honesty in Leonardo's expression.

"It is a very convincing picture!" said he, and again his eyes sought out Leonardo's expression.

"What is art without conviction?" replied the painter. "I myself have marvelled at the great love which Madonna Beatrice has towards her nephew!"

"I did not know," answered Il Moro, smiling, "that you were so well acquainted with the Duchess of Bari!" For Lodovico had been forced to explain the reason why Beatrice had refused to sit for her portrait.

"It happened like this, Excellency," explained Leonardo; "I had completed the bathing-place for the Duchess Isabella in her new pavilion, and, about the hour of noon, I strolled through the gardens so that I might see whether the workmen had finished off their task to my satisfaction. As your Excellency will remember, last July was the hottest month that we have had for many years; the bees were humming amid the flowers,



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Alinari photo*

VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS (p. 202)

*fulda -  
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the crickets were singing in the thickets ; but, save for these restless ones, the gardens seemed empty. Then, as I approached the pavilion, I heard voices, and, peeping through the door, I saw the two Duchesses, with the little Count Francesco, stooping beside the bath. The Duchess Isabella was stooping to examine the fittings of the bath ; the Count Francesco was stooping to examine his reflection in the water, whilst Madonna Beatrice was stooping so that she might put her arm round Francesco and keep him safe from overbalancing. Presently Madonna Isabella looked up, and, seeing the others, said : ‘ Ah ! Beatrice, wait until your own bambino comes, and then poor Francesco will be forgotten ! ’ But Madonna Beatrice replied : ‘ Though I should have a dozen of my own, this one will always be my first and dearest ! Won’t you, Francesco ? ’ And she squeezed him to herself very closely indeed. What I am painting is only based on what I saw, Excellency ! ”

“ Yes ! ” replied Lodovico somewhat sententiously. “ This is only as things should be ! ”

Then they fell to discussing the painting, Leonardo pointing out the links of the chain of union.

Beatrice was embracing Francesco in protection.

Francesco was holding out his clasped hands towards Ercole.

Ercole was blessing Francesco.

Isabella had her arm round Ercole, whilst she pointed to her own son.

Beatrice held her hand in blessing above that of Isabella.

It was indeed a wonderful scheme, not so much on account of its completeness as it was for the extraordinary way in which Leonardo had succeeded in describing his chain of union without making his figures appear either unnatural or self-conscious. It was true that Isabella was drawn somewhat over-small, and, as Il Moro pointed out, more like an angel than a Saint Anne; but Leonardo replied that Madonna Isabella was not only smaller than Madonna Beatrice in her person and features, but also in her personality and power of will.

“If you desire that Madonna Isabella be changed into an angel, Excellency,” said Leonardo, “it is easy to add a pair of wings!”

“Ah! No!” answered Lodovico, with a smile. “I desire peace on earth, not glory in heaven!” And, although a pair of wings was added later, neither Leonardo nor Il Moro can be held responsible.

Then, with hearty praise of the painting and an admonition to press forward with the work, Il Moro took his leave.

### III

Of all the finished paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, this picture of the Virgin of the Rocks alone possesses the highest quality of sweetness: every touch is perfectly right, perfectly harmonious and perfectly spontaneous. We get a suggestion of this sweetness in Leonardo's roughest sketch, a fulfilment of it in many of his finished drawings: we see a similar sweetness in a refined gentlewoman whose actions are absolutely natural, or in a sweetly running engine, the speed of which is



without fuss and knocking ; such sweetness is due to an absence of effort. In Leonardo's later works the sweetness has either developed into a sugary affectation as in the Madonna with the Lamb, or else its energy has been transformed into the force of action as in the Battle of Anghiari ; but here, in this picture, it is perfection.

The cause is a simple one ! Leonardo's first impulse was towards creation, his second impulse was towards reason ; his first impulse would come with its instinctive certainty of what was right and a sketch would result, his second impulse would follow and reason take the stage ; when reason took the stage the sketch would be altered, the curves would be made more symmetrical, the composition more geometrical, and the action of each figure would be reasoned out ; consequently, although the finished picture would form a well-considered theme which Leonardo could afterwards reason out in his treatise on painting, the original inspiration and spontaneity would have been lost. But here, in this picture, Il Moro's hurry kept the painter's first great creative impulse working at its full power, without pause or hesitation, until the painting was completed.

Take the Virgin of the Rocks as a devotional picture, pure and simple, and it is not above criticism. But take it as a Sforza group that has been treated in the form of a Holy Family in order to show the love and unity which existed between the two branches, and what fault can be found ? None ! It is as good and wholesome as a little piece of bread ! It is clean right through, in feeling, in workmanship, in inspiration ! It is the

true Leonardo, as he might have been if his early life had not unsettled him, as he might have been if his restless spirit had not carried him ever onwards and tossed him to and fro like the waves of the sea at Piombino.

## IV

As might be expected, the Virgin of the Rocks caused a sensation amongst the artists of Milan. Here was a painter whom they had regarded as a serious man, part sculptor, part scientific engineer, throwing off a lyric masterpiece! They felt as we should feel, if some writer who had won his spurs through serious books on science, anatomy, engineering and the theory of decoration should suddenly dash off one of the most brilliant and finished novels of our generation. I doubt whether that fine old painter, Vincenzo Foppa, quite appreciated Leonardo's picture; I fancy that the great architect, Bramante, who had worked side by side with Leonardo in the decoration of the Sforza palaces, nodded his head in encouragement of the younger man; I am certain that the master of devotional painting, Borgognone, welcomed the Virgin of the Rocks with enthusiasm. But it was the younger generation of Milanese artists who went over to Leonardo.

Now, in the history of all Western Art, progress has always spelt novelty—whether the progress be a movement towards the smooth finish of the Victorians or a throw back to primitive methods as in the present day, Europeans are as keen after novelty as were the Athenians of Saint Paul. Well, in the year 1493 the Renaissance, having

already created form, movement and character in the art of painting, was stretching forward towards charm, sweetness and an appeal to the emotions ; and here, in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*, was the last word on charm, and, what was more, Leonardo's work still carried with it the Tuscan virility.

Ambrogio da Predis, pupil of old Vincenzo Foppa, and the strongest of the younger school, came over to Leonardo and begged his leave, direction and assistance in the painting of a new version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* for the Convent of San Francesco ; young Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, he who afterwards accompanied Leonardo to Rome, became his devoted follower ; the youthful Luini used to drift over from Borgognone's bottega so that he might see and hear what was going on under Leonardo's roof.

For I fancy that Ambrogio da Predis was now painting his version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*—the one that now hangs in our National Gallery—in Leonardo's studio, partly so that he might get a last impression of the original before it was despatched to Maximilian, partly so that he might have the benefit of Leonardo's advice and studies ; and, as Ambrogio painted, I fancy that Leonardo looked on and theorised ; for no sooner had the original painting left the studio than that original impulse which had led to its creation gave place to Leonardo's second impulse of reason, and Leonardo da Vinci would theorise on the arrangement, modelling and atmosphere of the composition, whilst Ambrogio drank in his lectures with thirsty ears.

I do not believe that Leonardo had yet obtained any influence outside his following of the younger painters and his circle of immediate friends, nor do I believe that the Court took much notice of him. But it must have been about this time that Leonardo took that interlaced work which had always fascinated him and engraved a circle of interlaced work with the words "*ACADEMIA LEONARDI VIN.*" in the centre as the badge of his own small following. He also seems to have designed a pattern of linked tracery for his friend Niccolò Correggio, which Niccolò styled the "fantasis dei vinci" and passed on to Isabella and Beatrice d'Este as an embroidery design for their Court robes.

## v

It was early in the spring of 1494, nearly two years after he had commenced the Virgin of the Rocks, that Leonardo was in Florence.

Thank God! this was only a flying visit to assist in a commission that was considering the plans for the great Council Hall of the Signoria. Yes! Thank God! that this was only a flying visit; for Lorenzo de' Medici was dead, and his son was banished, and Florence had come under the sway of that strange Dominican, Fra Girolamo, who seemed half-prophet, half-politician and altogether fanatic.

"Every preacher pretends to divine:  
Florence has got one, who draws it so fine  
That many a Tuscan's forsworn his wine!"

His friend Jacopo had brought this skit from Ferrara, and, now that he was back in Florence,

he found that it was no exaggeration ; for every one seemed ridden by a strange, restless fervour, and most of his old friends were either dead or psalm-singers.

Only the day before he had attended a stormy meeting of the commission that had been far different from the orderly meetings of the Medician days ; all had been possessed with a spirit of suspicion and argument, and that ill-mannered young psalm-singer, Michelangelo, had treated him with but scant respect. Then he had gone to visit his old comrade Sandro Botticelli at the small farm upon Monte Oliveto that he had just purchased : Sandro had seemed strange and visionary, whilst his brother, Simone, had been little better than a religious madman. Well, here he was, standing beside Simone in the Cathedral ; for he had been compelled to promise that he would attend the preaching of Fra Girolamo in order to keep Simone quiet.

The organ struck a note. A boy's voice rang out :

“Dies irae, dies illa.”

What, in the name of wonder, were these Piagnoni doing with a requiem prose in Christmastide ? But hark ! a full choir of a hundred white-robed Dominicans was taking up the hymn :

“Day of vengeance ! On that day  
Shall the world in ashes lie,  
Saint and Sibyl prophesy !  
See the terror ! Feel the trembling !  
All before the Judge assembling :  
No excusing ! No dissembling !”

But Leonardo, never in keen sympathy with re-

ligious exercises, least of all with the emotional and irrational exercises of the Piagnoni, shrugged his shoulders and allowed his thoughts to pass on elsewhere.

Ha! There was old Paolo's fresco of Sir John Hawkwood, close by the door! That was a good horse of Paolo's, quite as good as Verrocchio's horse, even though it might not be as truthful as his own Sforza statue—assuming that the Sforza statue should ever be finished!

How he had congratulated himself some fourteen months ago when Il Moro had brought about the marriage between his niece, Bianca Maria Sforza, and the Emperor Maximilian, and had ordered that the clay model of his horse should be erected in front of the Castello in honour of the occasion! How carefully had he finished the horse, how carefully had he carted it through the streets and set it up before the Castello, whilst all Milan rang with its praise! But there it stood in bare clay, open to the wind and tempest, and he could see no great prospect of ever having it cast in bronze.

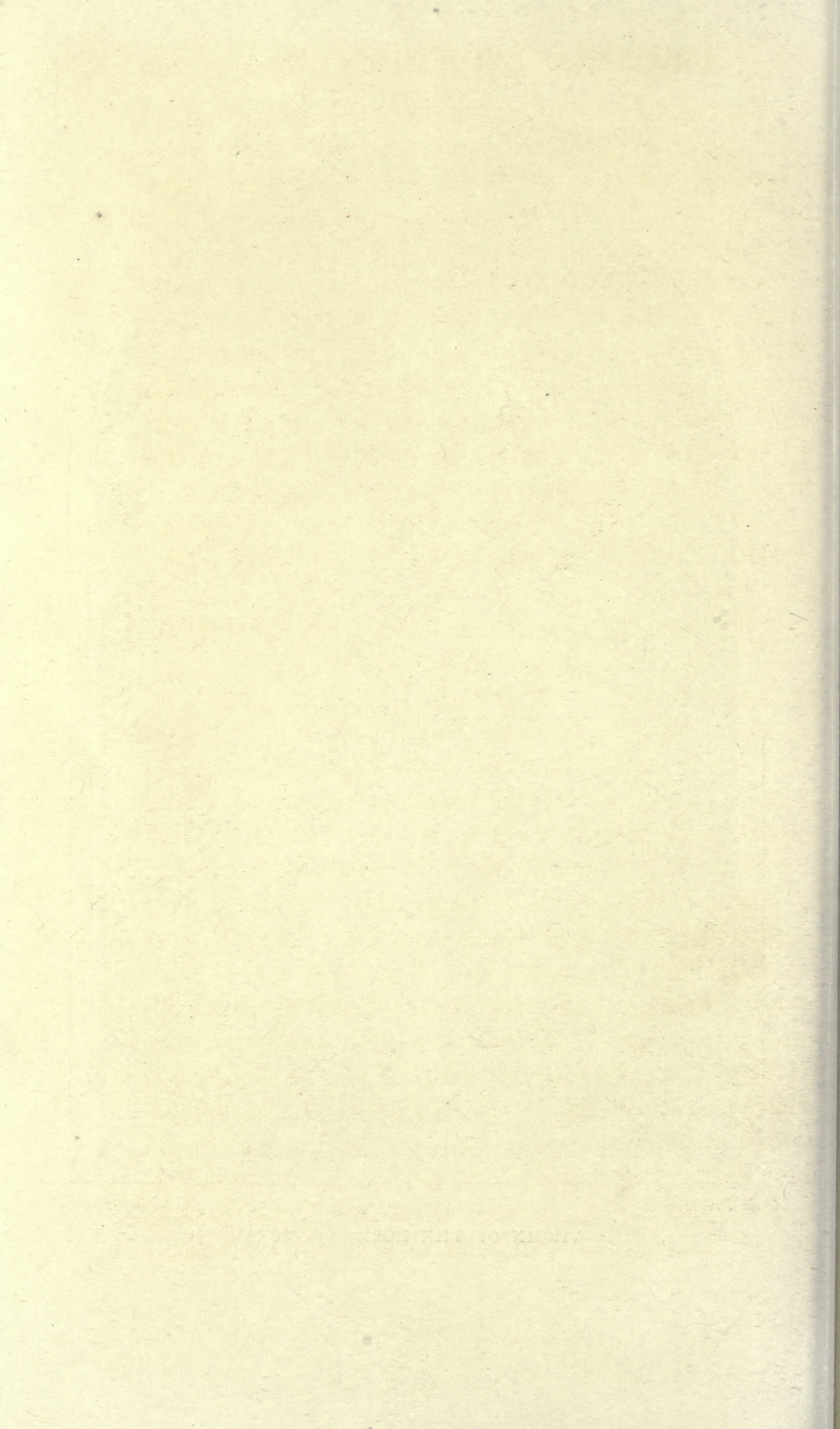
At first Il Moro had encouraged him about the casting, bidding him make estimates of the weight of metal that would be required; then that poor drunkard, Gian Galeazzo, had died of fever and over-indulgence, and Il Moro had been crowned Duke with all the cares of a dangerous political outlook upon his shoulders. With the passage of the French army through his territories on its way to invade Naples, how could he blame Il Moro if he was too busy to be worried about the statue? He had promised to give Leonardo the commission



*da Predis*

*Anderson photo*

VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS (*p.* 205)





to decorate the Castle some day ; he had promised to order the casting of the horse some day ; that “ day of vengeance,” about which the friars were singing, would come some day ! In the meantime he was sick to death of inaction !

A Friar, clad in the white habit and long black cloak of the Dominican, was ascending the pulpit. What a terrible face he had, with his retreating brow, and his eagle’s nose, and his tremendous chin, and his eyes that burned like embers ! If ever he had seen a fanatic, this Savonarola was the man ! Ha ! He was going to commence :

“ Ecce adducam aqua diluvii super terram ! Behold, I will bring the waters of a deluge upon the earth ! ”

His voice sounded like a clap of thunder bursting within the church ; his words seemed to strike every one with a stormy panic. Even in Leonardo a cold shiver ran through all his bones, and his hair seemed to lift from his scalp. There was terror on every side, women weeping and men sobbing audibly.

“ Behold, the floods have descended,” he cried, “ the scourge has fallen, and the prophecies are fulfilled ! Behold, it is the Lord who is leading on these armies ! ”

Then, as the Friar thundered forth his sermon—claiming that his prophecies were reaching their fulfilment—declaring that he was the very mouth-piece of God—Leonardo could bear it all no longer ; and, edging his passage through the crowd, commenced to make his way to the door.

But stay ! The Friar’s thunders had ceased, and he was speaking most persuasively.

“Then the Blessed Madonna herself answered me, and she addressed me in the vernacular with such propriety and elegance of speech that I was astonished.

“‘This is the answer which you must give to my beloved people,’ she said. ‘It is true that they are sinners and that by their wickedness they have deserved all manner of evils, especially by reason of so many who will not believe what for some years past you have predicted: and this notwithstanding my Son has granted so many signs as to leave them without excuse. For although faith is a gift . . .’”

But Leonardo had heard his fill of this, and the arrogant self-sufficiency of the preacher had disgusted him. “*Frati Santi* spells Pharisees!” he murmured, and pressed onward quickly.

## VI

That night Leonardo sat alone in his chamber. The events of the day—the events of the days before—the restlessness and strife in Florence—all made him long for peace more than he had ever desired it. How he longed to be back in Milan, with regular work and the restfulness of his own studio—to withdraw so far apart that words should not reach him nor in any way disturb him.

It was then, I believe,—it must have been some time near then—that he took his pen and wrote that letter to Lodovico of which fragments still remain.

“My Lord,” he began, “knowing the mind of your Excellency to be occupied, (I venture) to remind your Lordship of my small matters and

the arts put to silence." Then he went on to remind Lodovico that, although he would say nothing of the horse because he knew the times, yet his salary was in arrears and his expenses unpaid. He did not know where to bestow his work, and all his time was taken up with gaining a living.

"You remember the commission to paint the Camerini," he ended, ". . . I conveyed to your Lordship only requesting . . ."

If only he could be back in Milan, with definite work and the peace of his own studio!

## CHAPTER XVII

### IN DISGRACE



THE spring of 1496 was drawing towards summer; but, although June had come, there was still enough of May freshness in the air to temper the heat in a large bottega that lay outside the Porta Vercellina, close to the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie. It was a fine studio, was this, a studio which would delight the heart of any modern painter!

The near end of the atelier, which formed the studio proper, was hung with artists' pictures—that is to say, pictures painted by artists for artists—there was a study in an atmospheric silver-grey by Vincenzo Foppa, so delicate in its high-keyed rendering of values that its effect was almost that of a monochrome; there was a devotional picture by Borgognone, soft, harmonious and restful; there were studies by Ambrogio da Predis which were infinitely better than his edition of the Virgin of the Rocks; and, lastly, there were landscape

studies, figure sketches and drawings of every conceivable subject in heaven and earth by Leonardo himself.

The floor was of polished wood, upon which were scattered a few rugs from the East ; the numerous chests and tables were covered with plates and medallions of choice Majolica, with coloured busts in the glaze of the della Robbia, with soft-stone statues by Verrocchio, with portrait busts in terra-cotta by Leonardo, and, last but not least, with a small wax model of the Sforza Horse. Possibly the noise of hammering, mingled with the smell of freshly tanned leather and warming varnish, which came from behind the curtain at the far end of the bottega, might have been a drawback ; but, then, the true craftsman likes these things as truly as the Londoner delights in the scents and sounds of Fleet Street.

## II

Messer Galeazzo di San Severino stretched himself in his easy-chair and looked lazily at Ambrogio da Predis, who was putting the last touches to a portrait of Galeazzo's espoused bride, the sweet Bianca Sforza.

" My friend," said he, " your pathway has fallen in a pleasant land ! "

" As you say, Excellency," replied Ambrogio, touching a high-light into a pearl at the end of Bianca's necklace, " my path is a pleasant one ; but I would have you know that I am a most useful traveller ! "

" How is that ? " enquired Galeazzo, for he liked the courtly young artist sufficiently well to

take a liberty with him. "It seems to me that you use Leonardo's bottega as though it were your own, whilst you take your pick of such of his orders as he is too busy to execute."

"Ha!" laughed Ambrogio, "that is easy to say! But I ask you this: now that Leonardo is so busy at the Castello, who else is there to help him in his work, to finish his odd jobs, to cuff his apprentices and to drink his wine? That reminds me, Excellency, I can offer you some excellent wine of Tuscany!" And, in answer to his call, a slim, pretty boy, dressed in rose-coloured silk even to his shoes, and with curling locks falling on his shoulders, brought in a tray. With an indescribable air of affectation he handed the wine to Messer Galeazzo, placed the tray on a table, and retired.

"I have also to cuff that one's head!" chuckled Ambrogio. "But I must choose my time during Leonardo's absence!"

The nobleman watched the retreating lad with a sniff of disgust; then, turning to da Predis and sinking his voice so that it would not reach the workmen beyond the curtain, asked: "Can I trust you to hold your tongue, Ambrogio?"

"Yes, Excellency!" he answered.

Galeazzo di San Severino leant forward so that he was close to the artist, and spoke softly but with great emphasis. "Tell Leonardo from me," said he, "that, if he intends to finish that portrait of Madonna Lucrezia Crivelli, he must finish it in his own bottega; but that I strongly advise him to spill a pot of paint over it, and refuse to go on with the commission!"

Ambrogio nodded his head, but wisely said nothing.

For some moments Galeazzo played with the lace on his cuff, then he looked up, and asked quietly: "Ambrogio, have you heard a whisper?"

Da Predis gave an apologetic shrug. "Who could help hearing a whisper, Excellency?" said he. "The Duke directs his artist to leave off painting the vaulting of the Camerini in order to paint the portrait of this lady. The Duke is constantly present whilst the portrait is being painted. One is not altogether without reason, thank God!" And, taking up his palette, he began to paint the high-light upon another pearl.

Messer Galeazzo watched him paint until his tiny task was accomplished, then he said: "Tell Leonardo to stop this portrait, for, if he continues the work, he will be running into danger himself, and he will be leading others into danger!"

"Running into danger himself?" repeated Ambrogio. "How will Leonardo be running into danger, Excellency?"

"You know his portrait of Madonna Cecilia?" asked Galeazzo.

"I do!" replied the artist.

"Bene! The Duchess has never quite forgiven Leonardo for that portrait, and if she should find him painting this other——!"

"Ah!" cried Ambrogio. "Who would wish to anger our Duchess? Besides, Excellency, sweet as our Duchess is, I do not think that she would be a pleasant person to anger! But you said that this portrait might lead others into danger: if

the question would not be an indiscretion, how could that be ? ”

“ Ambrogio,” answered the nobleman sadly, “ if you wished to awake a lady’s interest, could you find a better opening than a suggestion that you should have her portrait painted ? And, if you wished to catch her fancy, and at the same time feast your eyes on her beauty, could you devise a better way than to be present during the painting of her portrait ? ”

“ Ah ! ” murmured Ambrogio.

“ I am going to speak to you,” continued Galeazzo, “ partly because I have already hinted at so much, partly because I wish you to use your full influence with Leonardo ; but I trust you to see that what I say goes no further.”

“ You may trust me, Excellency ! ” murmured the artist, and, with a fine tact, he commenced to touch up another pearl.

Messer Galeazzo di San Severino knit his brows ; then, catching sight of a bowl of roses, he leant forward, and, taking up one of the blossoms, began to toy with its petals. “ A man,” said he, “ has wedded a maiden in the first sweetness of her womanhood ; he has conquered her for his delight, and she, opening her arms, has given him all her freshness and all her love.—Yes !—Then, when the first freshness of that blossom is past and the petals are a little faded through the man’s own handling, he lays it on one side so that he may pluck a fresher blossom ! ”

Galeazzo had been playing with the flower as he talked, now he flung it on the table. “ I will tell you this, Ambrogio,” said he ; “ Madonna



Beatrice was but a half-opened bud when Il Moro gathered her—sweet and wilful, and, it may be, a little thorny—and she has unfolded her petals to him with a love that is far beyond the nature of most women; if, now that she has lost the bloom of her girlhood, Il Moro should forsake her in order that he may pluck a sweetheart from amongst the maids of honour, it would be a kindness if he would end the matter and pass his dagger through her.”

Again Galeazzo leant forward in his chair, and, although his voice was hardly above a whisper, he spoke with an intense earnestness. “I do not blame the Duke,” said he, “for the flashing eyes of this Lucrezia have struck him with madness. But my Duchess is no common woman that can be loved and then neglected—and she is with child—and if Lodovico deserts her now, it will certainly kill her!”

“Excellency,” began Ambrogio; but the door was flung open and Leonardo came in, agitated.

“Ambrogio!” cried he. Then he caught sight of Galeazzo, and, hesitating, came forward uncertainly.

There was a dead silence in the bottega, for both Galeazzo and da Predis were intent on Leonardo’s face, whilst Leonardo was looking from one to other. Then Messer Galeazzo, realising that the hammering behind the curtain had stopped, strode over quickly and sent the workmen packing.

### III

“Now, my friend,” said Galeazzo, after he had poured out a glass of Chianti and made Leonardo

drink it down, "what has happened? Mind, I know what has been going on in the Castello, and you need have no hesitation!"

Thus Leonardo unfolded his story. He had been hard at work on Madonna Lucrezia's portrait. The Duke had come in, chatted awhile with Madonna and left them. Presently the door had opened and the Duchess Beatrice had entered. She had given a start as though of surprise; then her anger had blazed out. What was Lucrezia doing, wasting her time with men who were employed about the Castle when she ought to have been in attendance? Did not she realise that such a neglect of her duties was insolence?

Ha! What was this? She had persuaded this artist to neglect his work in order to paint her portrait? "To your room, Madonna!" she had cried. "To your room! and I will speak with you later!" And the poor Madonna Lucrezia, as pale and shaking as though she had been stricken with an ague, had hurried from the Camera, almost running in her terror.

Then the Duchess had turned on him, and she had rated him upon the dishonesty of neglecting the work for which he was paid—upon the impudence of daring to intrigue with one of her ladies under her very eyes—without giving him a chance to defend himself. "Maestro," she had ended, "understand that you are dismissed from your work in disgrace, and that I forbid you to enter this Castle upon any pretence whatever!" "But, the Duke——" he stammered. "I will explain to the Duke!" she had answered, and swept out of the room, leaving him speechless.

## IV

It was in the beginning of June, 1496, that Leonardo left off painting in the Castello on account of a certain "scandal"; it must have been before July 11 that Il Moro bade Leonardo resume his work on the Sforza Horse and set him to paint the Last Supper upon the walls of his favourite Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie; so we are forced to assume that there was no disgrace attached to Leonardo's dismissal, and that, although Lodovico endorsed his wife's action, yet he made immediate and generous amends to the artist. For we learn, from Leonardo's own lips, that the salary which he received from the Duke for these two works was the enormous income of 2000 ducats a year, which sum was equal to nearly £4000 according to our present spending value. Besides this, Leonardo tells us that he was in receipt of almost daily presents from the Duke.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE LAST SUPPER



EIGHTEEN or nineteen years ago, when Florence was filled with heated arguments over the movements in the war with Naples, Leonardo had made many sketches of the "attitudes and actions of men as they talk and dispute." In these studies, one group—that which heads the sixteenth chapter of this book—had come home to the young artist as a suggestion for the Last Supper.

In this group there were five men at a table. Of the two figures towards the right of the sketch, one was a study for the Magi, and the other merely served to suggest that there were yet other persons at the board. But the three figures on the left of the picture had bound themselves into a separate group that argued out the topic in hand, one with the other, as folk will at table. And this idea of

splitting up the twelve Disciples of the Last Supper into separate groups—each group complete in itself, each group forming a part of the whole—had struck Leonardo as so good a method of treating what was an essentially difficult composition, that he had jotted down a sketch of Judas, with his face buried in his hands, upon the same sheet of paper. Then he had added the drawing of Our Lord, which stands at the head of this chapter.

It is a noteworthy fact that the early Florentine years—years which seem so barren of actual result—were in reality the seed-time of Leonardo's life. Some of those germs of subjects, which he jotted down in his sketch-books, sprang up into early activity; but, the soil not having as yet sufficient nutriment, the growth checked and the vitality died before the picture had reached completion, and, when once an idea of Leonardo's had started its vigorous growth, checked, and lost vitality, it was dead and done for.

But there were other of Leonardo's early ideas, which lay dormant in his mind, or hidden between the pages of his sketch-book, that were only waiting for the coming of seasonable times to start their vigorous growth: the charm of the Florentine smile was one of these ideas, the fighting men was another, but, chief of them all was the idea of the Last Supper.

The idea of the Magi had put forth its growth and was as dead as a frost-struck blossom; but the germ of the Last Supper, which had been sown in the sketch of the argument, lay as full of life and energy as a seed in spring-time. Aye! and what was more, this idea of the Last Supper had

been active for some years past ! It had shown itself in tentative sketches, sketches in which the exact moment, the exact episode, of the Divine Drama had not been fully determined ; but, now that the appointed time had come, the trial sketches were swept aside, the jottings of various actions which were written in his notebooks were forgotten, and, going straight back to the first germ of the arguing group in his Florentine sketch-book, Leonardo recommenced the original inspiration with all its original freshness.

I think that it may have happened like this.

## II

Leonardo was sitting in his studio, turning over his sketches, and striving to form some clear idea of a scheme that would endow each of the thirteen figures with a personal life and characteristic action.

Here was a sketch of Judas placed on the near side of the table, opposite his Lord ; and Judas was rising from his seat so that he might perform that great act of fellowship which should crown his treachery, and dip his hand in the dish. It was a dramatic moment so far as Judas was concerned ; and, if the subject had been that of Christ and the traitor alone, the theme would have inspired magnificent treatment. But the theme was that of the supper with the twelve Disciples, and how could he treat the remaining eleven ?

Here was a drawing of the eleven faithful Disciples beside the Master, discussing the betrayal with an absorbing earnestness, whilst the traitor

was sitting in the old conventional position, alone, and upon the wrong side of the table. There was much that was fine in the expression and pose of the Disciples ; and yet, with Judas so obviously the false Disciple, seated alone by himself——! And Leonardo placed this drawing on one side.

So much is practically certain.

Then, I think, some discussion upon some case of treachery must have arisen—possibly Galeazzo di San Severino and Gaspare Visconti had spoken of the betrayal of their beloved Duchess by her trusted maid of honour, Lucrezia Crivelli—and Leonardo had noticed how earnest and eager the conversation had become and how eloquent the accompanying gestures.

And, as his friends had talked, and he had watched, the memory of that sketch in his Florentine sketch-book had come back to him, and he had thought : “ Even as the falling of a stone into a pool is shown by its splash ; even as the discharge of a cannon is discerned by its smoke, so the reality of a betrayal is best expressed by the gestures of indignation which it excites. ”

But, however the knowledge came to him, Leonardo learnt that the treatment of the Last Supper lay, not in the actions of him who betrayed, not in the actions of Him Who was betrayed, but in the effect which the statement of the treachery produced upon those who were true. The Christ had just said : “ Verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me ” ; and the Disciples, turning one to another, as men will at table, were questioning with a terrible earnestness who it was that should prove the traitor.

*moment depicted*

## III

Leonardo was sitting alone in his studio, with the first Florentine sketch beside him and a sheet of paper before him, planning the arrangement of the Disciples for his Last Supper. And, as he planned, his mind swung back to his original idea : the Disciples should be ranged in groups of three, two groups on either side of the Christ. Yes !

*NS* This breaking up of the twelve into groups of three would destroy the feeling of stiffness and formalism that had ruined the efforts of so many painters ; and, yet, the different groups could be bound together by their common topic of intense interest, by an interchange of glances and gestures that would weave the different parts into one complete whole. The Christ, Who was the cause of all the talk, the glances, the gestures, should form the centre of the groups—~~isolated~~ by His position, and yet the source of all. ~~Yes !~~

But still, as Leonardo thought, making rapid sketches all the while, he did not feel satisfied. He longed for some constructive plan that would bind his figures together in a scientific manner, and, what is more, he longed for some plan that would enable him to strike the balance of the various groups, and the various figures that composed each group, with a scientific accuracy that would admit of no mistake. Then, suddenly, the words of old Paolo Ucello came back to him :  
 \*C "Having selected the subject of my picture, I commence by planning a perspective that will aptly suit it : the lines of my perspective are the cords that bind my picture together ; the placing

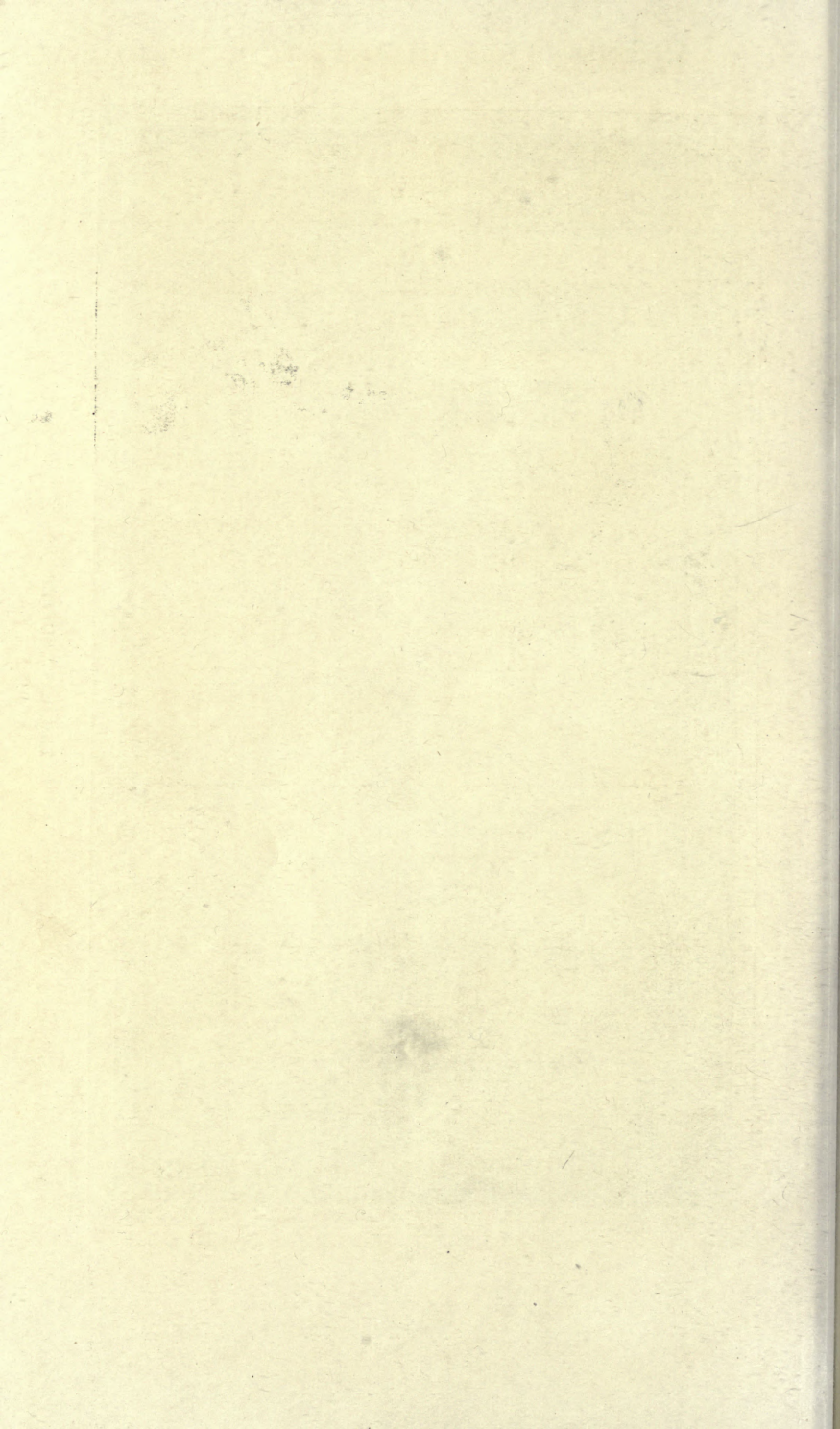




*Anderson photo*

THE LAST SUPPER

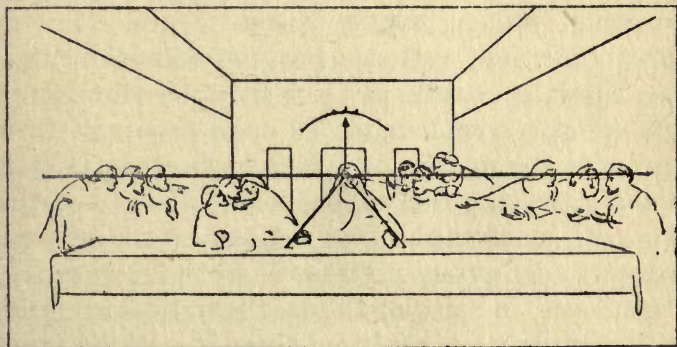
*Leonardo da Vinci*



of the vanishing point is the key to the arrangement of the subject." And Leonardo knew that he had found what he sought for.

The wall of his Upper Chamber should continue the walls of the Refectory of Santa Maria della Grazie, that was simple. This would enable him to create an obvious vanishing point that must be felt, if not actually noticed, by all who saw the painting. He would paint windows in the end of his Upper Chamber, windows that showed a fair landscape and a clear sky; the vanishing point would fall in the middle of the central window; and, upon this vanishing point—this key to the composition—he would paint the head of the Divine Master. Yes!

Then followed the actual arrangement of the picture—the most scientific arrangement of the figures, the most scientific balancing of the figures, that artist has ever struck! See for yourself!



Leonardo drew the Saviour's head in front of the vanishing point. He made a triangle, of which the vanishing point formed the vertex, and our

Lord's hands the base. Then, just as a merchant of precious stones places his scales upon a support so that he may be enabled to weigh out his jewels, Leonardo balanced a line upon the apex of his triangle—that is to say upon his vanishing point—and balanced his various groups, one against the other.

It is impossible to show the wonderful delicacy and refinement of Leonardo's arrangement in the rough sketch which I have given. But, if one takes a large photograph of the original picture, and, following the lines of the rafters until one discovers the exact vanishing point, places a thin, straight wire upon this vanishing point, one can see the manner in which Leonardo has mingled art with science.

Swing the balance to and fro, and see how the groups on one side balance those upon the other. Swing the balance ten degrees in one direction, and one has the composition of the group which contains Judas; swing it ten degrees in the other direction, and one has the arrangement of the Disciples' hands as they sit upon Our Lord's left. Swing the balance to each group in turn, and note the manner in which each group is composed upon the line of balance; and, since this line radiates from the Divine Head, so the arrangement of each group radiates from the Saviour.

And yet, in spite of the mathematical accuracy of Leonardo's composition, there is nothing crude or obvious!—In fact, until now, I do not believe that Leonardo's secret has been discovered. The Saviour's head is bending a little to one side of the exact centre; His left arm, thanks to the

bending body, falls a little outside the triangle ; the Disciples' hands are a little above or a little below the actual line of composition ; and group is blended with group by look and action.

I have spoken of the vitality of much of Leonardo's work, and I have termed such work "creation." If one were to take anything that was mechanical or artificial and dissect it, one would meet with disappointment and disillusionment ; but, if one examines the minute construction of a living organism, such as the human body, one is filled with a new sense of admiration. It is because this Last Supper of Leonardo's is a true creation, having within itself its own laws of being and its own vitality, that it will bear dissection. Aye ! Given the skill of Leonardo's pencil, and a detailed dissection of the Last Supper would prove as delightful as one of the Master's own drawings of anatomy.

Thus, by applying the same principles that old Paolo Ucello had once applied, Leonardo obtained that "certainty" in his composition which his soul had desired ; for, said he, "there is no certainty where one can neither apply any of the mathematical sciences nor any of those which are based upon the mathematical sciences." He excelled Ucello in his application ; but, then, as he himself remarks : "Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master !"

## IV

It must have been towards the end of June, or in the beginning of July, that Leonardo commenced his actual preparations upon the Refectory

wall of the Dominican Priory of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

Now the ordinary method of painting upon a wall is that of fresco. The portion of the wall that has to be painted is plastered over, and, whilst the fresh plaster is still damp, the paint is laid on so that it may sink in and become an integral part of the plaster. Consequently, a cartoon of the subject is first drawn, the wall is mapped out, and a small portion is plastered and painted each day. Once painted, the only way in which an alteration can be made is either by chipping away a part of the plaster and laying it afresh, in which case the wall is apt to set patchy, or else by touching up the dry picture a secco, in which case the alteration is apt to flake off.

But painting upon drying plaster was foreign to Leonardo's deliberate habit of working; he would not—nay, he could not—plan out his subject into portions and paint one portion each day; he must paint a little here, a little there, as the spirit moved him. So Leonardo set himself to prepare the surface of the wall in a novel method of his own so that he might paint in oils.

First of all, since the situation of the Convent was low, he coated the original plaster with mastic, pitch and other waterproof materials, and melted them into the plaster with a hot iron; next, in order to secure a good surface into which the paint might bite, he overlaid the waterproof priming with a thin coating of white lead mingled with potter's-earth.

Alas for Leonardo's ingenuity! For, although the potter's-earth took in the paint as sweetly as

he had anticipated, yet, as the years passed and the oil dried up, the potter's-earth lost its nutriment and dried up too; it cracked, flaked off, and the picture of the Last Supper perished. The painting seems to have lasted some thirty years; but, within sixty years of its first painting, Vasari found Leonardo's picture in such a bad condition that he could distinguish "nothing more than a confused blur."

The picture of the Last Supper, as we see it now, is overlaid with the paint of the restorers and re-restorers. And yet, tortured as it has been, this picture of Leonardo's is infinitely finer than any of the copies that came from the brushes of his pupils; for the copies have captured naught of the spirit of Leonardo, whereas this has a little of the Master left.

## V

During the whole of the summer of 1496 Leonardo worked at fever-heat, now toiling at the Horse, now slaving at the picture.

Sometimes he would paint from sunrise until dusk, never laying down his brush even to eat or drink. Then there would come the mental reaction, and he would let two, three, or four days pass without touching the picture, remaining before it for an hour or two hours of the day, but only that he might take counsel with himself by contemplating and examining and judging the figures.

At other times he would devote himself, with an almost equal energy, to the Sforza statue; yet, whilst he worked at the clay, his heart was still

*worked on  
Sforza statue at  
same time  
as Last Supper*

with the picture. "I have seen him," writes Matteo Bandello, "as the caprice or whim took him, at midday, when the sun was in Leo, set out from the Corte Vecchia, where he was at work on the clay model of the colossal horse, and go straight to Le Grazie, and, mounting the scaffolding, take up his brush and give one or two touches to one of the figures, and then abruptly go away again."

But, as the autumn came on with its shortening days, Leonardo had time for rest and recreation. With his growing fame, his studio became the fashion amongst the poets and musicians and artists of the Court; with his large income, increased by almost daily gifts from the Duke, he could afford to entertain; and, as we learn from Leonardo's treatise on painting, his studio became a meeting-place for the most brilliant of those who know.

The noble and courtly Gaspare Visconti, poet, and friend of both Duke and Duchess, would be present; the most elegant Calmeta, Beatrice's private secretary, would attend; Galeazzo di San Severino would be there; Serafino of Aquila, dumpy and ugly as a carpet-bag in person, but so seraphic in his gifts of song and poetry that all the ladies of the Court were a-quarrel over him, would slip away from the Castello and betake him to Leonardo's studio: all these had become Leonardo's close and intimate friends. Then, also, there were his old friends to share his prosperity—Jacopo of Ferrara, whom he loved like a brother, and Lorenzo of Pavia, the master of organs, with whom he could discuss the science of sound, and many others. With such a fellowship the



evenings would pass in music, in the interchange of impromptu verses, in more serious poetry or grave discussion.

In those days, so he tells us, he had neither cares nor anxieties. He could dress as he pleased, he could do as he pleased ; he had money to help a friend, to train an apprentice, to save for a rainy day ; he had books and leisure.

“ Such was I,” he writes, “ Leonardo the Florentine, at the Court of the most illustrious Prince, Signor Lodovico.”

## VI

It was the end of the December of 1496.

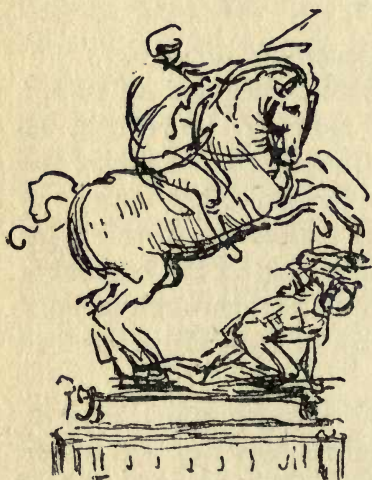
Leonardo had stopped his work for an hour's rest ; and now, ere he resumed his brush, he passed into the Convent Chapel where Bianca, the bride of Galeazzo di San Severino, lay buried : it was in August that Messer Galeazzo had taken his young wife to his own home, and in the beginning of September she had nursed him through a slight fever, and towards the end of November she had died.

Leonardo entered the Chapel quietly, and, looking, saw that the Duchess Beatrice was kneeling beside Bianca's grave. Then he stole out of the Chapel ; for all Milan knew, that not only had Beatrice lost her dearest friend through the death of Bianca, but that she had also lost the fidelity of her husband—“ which thing,” we are told, “ caused Beatrice the most bitter anguish, but could not alter her love for him.”

## CHAPTER XIX

### TWO FAILURES

“Ora il Moro fa la danza,  
Viva Marco e 'l re di Franza!”



IT was the Maunday Thursday of the year 1500, and Leonardo was awaiting the return of his friends, Fra Luca Pacioli, the mathematician, and Lorenzo di Pavia, master of organs, so that he might begin his dinner. For Leonardo, having accompanied his friends to Holy Mass

in the Doges' Church of S. Giovanni e Paolo, had returned to his lodgings as soon as the Mass itself was over, and had left them to remain for Vespers and the stripping of the Altars.

“Ora il Moro fa la danza,  
Viva Marco e 'l re di Franza!”

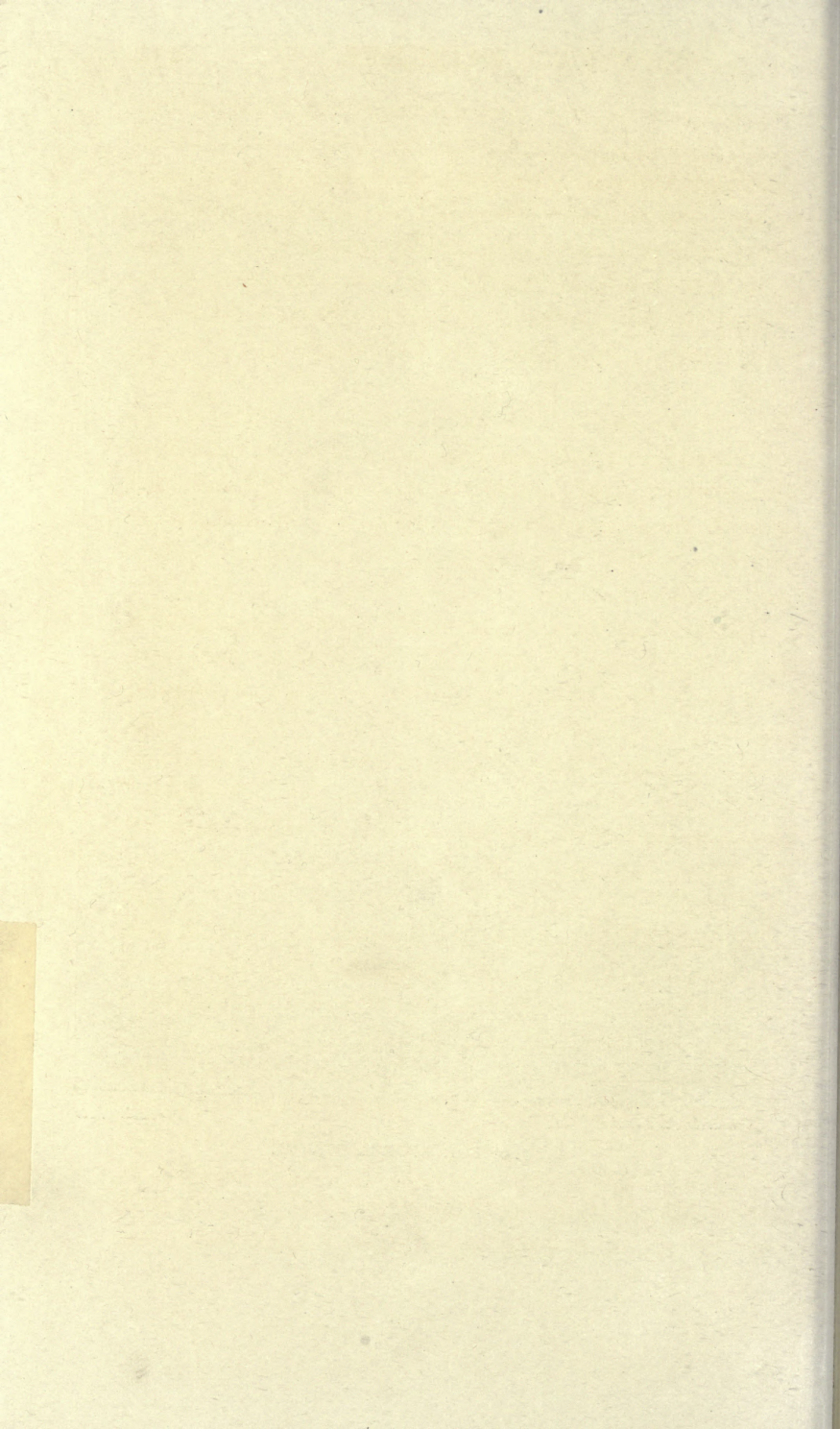
Ha! Another of those pestilent Venetian boatmen was singing the same senseless doggerel!



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Mansell photo*

STUDY FOR SFORZA STATUE



For, what was the sense of singing this song of the flight of Il Moro, when Il Moro was back again in Milan, welcomed as though he were a god from heaven, whilst the French had scuttled like the vermin that they were? He supposed that the boatmen, carried away by some excitement, were singing whatever had come into their heads, like brute beasts that have no understanding.

## II

“Ora il Moro fa la danza!” What a heartless song to sing over a broken man! for Il Moro had been a broken man ever since his treachery to Beatrice had been cut short by her death. Let him recall events:

Madonna Beatrice had been praying in Santa Maria delle Grazie when he, Leonardo, had last seen her. She had remained so long, now praying for Bianca's soul, now mourning over her husband's madness for Lucrezia Crivelli, that her ladies had scarcely been able to get her away; then she had driven home to the Castello, and she had been confined of a son, and she had died in childbirth.

Lodovico was said to have left the death chamber like one dazed. Certainly, he had taken no more pleasure in life and no more delight in power. Lucrezia Crivelli had been pensioned, and he saw her no more; his falcons had been given away, and his sport forsaken: ay! in place of all this, he had visited Beatrice's grave daily, and spent each Tuesday at the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie where she lay buried. His one aim had been repentance before God; his

one instinct had been to seek the forgiveness and love of those whom Beatrice had loved ; his one longing had been that, if it were ever possible for a living man to see the dead, God would permit him to see Beatrice and speak with her once more.

During that year which had followed the death of Madonna Beatrice, he, Leonardo, had worked harder than ever mortal man had worked ; he had completed the painting of the Last Supper, he had painted the portraits of Lodovico and Beatrice upon the opposite wall of the Refectory, he had finished the modelling of the gigantic Horse of the Sforza so that it was ready for the casting, and, as though this were not enough, he had put the last touches to a book on the Picture and Human Movement for the Duke Lodovico. Then there had been a cessation of his artistic work. It was true that he had assisted in the decoration of the Castello ; but, save for this, his artistic work had ceased with the completion of the Last Supper.

Why had he neglected his painting and his sculpture ? And Leonardo, who was conscious of a tendency to neglect those special talents for artistic work with which Providence had endowed him, so that he might go off into scientific speculation, commenced to examine his conscience.

In the first place, he had been daunted by the tremendous difficulty of casting the huge Sforza Horse in bronze ; for he had calculated that his statue would require some forty-five tons of metal, and he had set his heart on casting the horse itself in one solid piece. He had commenced his preparations for the casting more than two

years ago ; then he had hesitated, and, to tell the truth, the Duke had not urged him forward.

Next, his writings on human motion had led him on to the study of the movements of water and the science of hydraulics, and from this he had been led into the study of motion and weight ; and, in these studies, his appointment as ducal engineer of canals and irrigation had encouraged him.

Then the French had invaded Milan ; the Duke had fled to the Emperor Maximilian in the hope of obtaining aid, and he himself had sent his savings to Florence, and wandered on to Venice.

## III

“Ora il Moro fa la danza,  
Viva Marco e 'l re di Franza !”

A pest on these gondolieri ! What did they mean by singing this vile song now that Il Moro had turned out the French and regained Milan ? They had not sung like this when news came that Galeazzo di San Severino had routed the French and captured the Chevalier Bayard himself ! Well, Il Moro was back in Italy, and he, Leonardo, would soon rejoin him, and enter into the service of the Arts with his whole heart.

Yes ! Now he could devote himself to painting and sculpture with his whole heart ! For, just before Il Moro had fled, he had given him a fine vineyard and dwelling-house close to the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, and this, together with the £2000 which he had saved, would enable him to paint without anxiety for the future ; and he could take up his brush for the very love of the

work itself, and he could proceed with his studies in the blending of light and shade, in the rendering of atmosphere, and in the portrayal of human emotions.

The portrayal of human emotions? Ah! this reminded him! And going to a side-table, he took up a large drawing and unrolled it. This was a cartoon in black chalk, and it represented the Madonna sitting upon the lap of Saint Anne, whilst she held out her Divine Bambino so that He might bless the little Saint John.

Some seven years ago, the Duke Lodovico had bidden him paint a picture of the Duchess Beatrice and the Duchess Isabella in the guise of a Holy Family, so that he might send the same to King Maximilian. And Leonardo, desiring to depict the Duchess Isabella with a smile on her face, and despairing of obtaining this smile in a painting, had modelled a bas-relief so that he might coax the plastic clay into the semblance of a smile. But, partly because of the difficulty of sending a large marble sculpture across the Alps, and partly because of the delay which the carving would entail, the Duke had bidden him place it on one side and proceed with the painting; and there it had lain, half finished, ever since. Then, when he was turning over his work, in preparation for his flight to Venice, Leonardo had found this half-finished sculpture; and, struck with the beauty of the smile, he had made a careful drawing in chalk.

Madonna! Was there ever such a smile? Verrocchio and several others had won a smile in sculpture; Sandro had drawn the suggestion of



a smile in his *Flora of the Primavera* ; but, until now, no artist had succeeded in drawing so living a smile as this. It was true that the smile had been modelled in clay, and that this was only a drawing of the modelling ; but it would be quite possible to model a smiling face in wax, and work from that.

For some moments Leonardo examined the cartoon through half-closed eyes. Yes ! given a woman with a naturally sweet expression, and this drawing as a guide, it should be quite possible to paint a smile whilst working from the living model ! And this should be his first quest so soon as he could return to Milan !

But stay ! There was the model of his *Sforza Horse* calling for completion ; and, although the French archers had made his horse into a target for their arrows, he was told that the damage was only superficial and could be easily repaired.

## IV

Now, Verrocchio's great *Horse of the Colleoni* had been safely conveyed to Venice ; and, although the artist himself had died before he could cast the statue in bronze, the Venetian *Leopardo* had carried out the work and the statue had been set up in front of the Church of *S. Giovanni e Paolo*. It had been the first thing that Leonardo had sought after his arrival in Venice, and, only that morning, he had been lost in admiration of Verrocchio's masterpiece, as he came out from *Mass*. So, with the thought of resuming his work upon the *Sforza Horse*, his mind passed on to the *Horse of Verrocchio*.

The truth ! even though it should humiliate him. The truth ! even though it should mortify his self-respect. Compared with the majestic dignity of the Colleoni Statue, his horse had been a showy, ramping stallion of the riding-school, and it was wonderful that Il Moro had tolerated it !

Stay ! When he came to think of the matter, Lodovico Il Moro had never seemed enthusiastic over his work ! he had never pressed him forward when he had hesitated about the casting ! Whereas, in his other tasks for the Duke, if there had been a slight delay as there was in the finishing of the Last Supper, he had received a curt note bidding him press forward.

It could not have been the cost of the metal that he had needed for the casting which had cooled Duke Lodovico, for the Duke was not accustomed to stint money in the fulfilment of his plans, and the Duke had taken gold and jewels to the value of at least a hundred statues with him in his flight into Germany. It could not have been a doubt of his ability to cast so huge a statue, for, although he himself had suffered from hesitation, he had kept a bold face and all Milan had believed in his capability. It must have been that Il Moro's good taste had disapproved of the flamboyant nature of his design ; and, now that he, Leonardo, had seen the majesty of Verrocchio's conception, he realised the spectacular nature of his own model.

Very well ! It had always been his precept, that obstacles could not bend him, and that every obstacle yielded to effort : he would commence his statue over again from the very beginning,

and it should be as fine and dignified as that of his master, Andrea Verrocchio. If his toil of the past sixteen years had been wasted and his great work a failure, the French archers had given him a just excuse to begin all over again !

The song of a passing boatman came in through the window :

“Ora il Moro fa la danza,  
Viva Marco e 'l re di Franza !”

## V

The door burst open, and Lorenzo of the Organs and Fra Luca came in, breathless.

“Have you heard the news ? ” cried Fra Luca. “Have you heard of our disaster—our terrible disaster ? The French have returned in force !—Milan is captured—and Il Moro is taken !” And, whilst Fra Luca poured out his tale of disaster after disaster, Leonardo, from sheer force of habit, began to scribble in his notebook.

“The Saletta above——” he wrote.

“Bramante’s buildings——”

“The Castellino a prisoner——”

“Visconti in prison—his son dead.”

“Gian della Rosa’s revenues seized.”

“Bergonzio deprived of his fortune.”

“The Duke has lost State, fortune and liberty, and not one of his works had been completed.”

Then, as his pen stopped, Leonardo realised that his own greatest work would never be completed, and that this too must be written down a failure.



BOOK III

UBIQUE

COMMENCES IN THE YEAR 1500,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS FORTY-EIGHT

ENDS IN THE YEAR 1519,  
WHEN LEONARDO WAS SIXTY-SEVEN

“While I thought I was learning how to live, I have been learning how  
to die.”—LEONARDO DA VINCI



## CHAPTER XX

### A MIRROR TO NATURE



IT was on April the twenty-fourth, in the year 1500, that a small company of horsemen breasted the last rise of the Bologna road, before the way descends into the valley of Arno, and Florence lay shimmering below them.

This party consisted of but five riders: there was the Maestro Leonardo of Florence, in a rich yet plain riding-dress, his long beard and curling locks combed until each hair shone like silk; there was Fra Luca Pacioli, with his friar's habit tucked up, and a sturdy mule between his knees—these two were riding together: then, a little way behind, came Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, a Milanese painter who acted as Leonardo's assistant, and Andrea Salai, half servant, half protégé, and wholly fop; and, lastly, there rode a Genoese lackey of Fra Luca's.

As the party topped the rise, the distant bell in Giotto's tower was sounding its midday reminder

of the Incarnation, and the riders, pausing, uncovered their heads.

*Fra Luca* : " O Queen of Heaven, be joyful ! alleluia ! "

*Leonardo* : " For He Whom thou didst earn to bear, alleluia ! "

*Fra Luca* : " Hath now risen from His prison, alleluia ! "

*Leonardo* : " Pray for us to God : alleluia ! "

Then, as all the convent bells of Florence joined in, *Fra Luca* finished this Antiphon, which, during Eastertide, takes the place of Angelus.

" My friend," remarked *Fra Luca*, turning to the other, " for one that has no faith, you pray with a good memory and with a fine sense of devotion ! "

" Who says that I have no faith ? " enquired *Leonardo*, with a smile.

" Your own conversation," replied the Friar, " your aspersions on the teaching of the Church, your contempt towards the religious ! "

" Nevertheless," answered *Leonardo* quietly, " I believe what I believe ! "

" And that ? "

" I believe what I know, and I know what experience has taught me ! "

" Which belief," replied *Fra Luca* sadly, " is the belief of the unbeliever. "

" That is not so ! " cried *Leonardo*. " You picture your God, and accept all Nature as His handiwork ; I look at the handiwork, and deduce the Creator. "

" I would hear you state your argument ! " replied *Fra Luca*, the mathematician.



They were now riding towards the city, and they rode in silence, whilst Leonardo formulated his chain of argument. Presently he turned to his companion, and spoke. "My friend," said he, "by experience, I mean the experience of a rational man: Experience has taught me that Nature is constrained by the order of her own law that lives and moves within her, which law she never breaks: Reason shows me that there is no result in Nature without a cause."

"That," answered the Friar, "is a first principle which all may accept!"

"Bene!" continued Leonardo. "I have accepted the principle that there is no result in Nature without a cause; next I find that Nature is full of infinite causes which were never set forth in experience."

"Yes!" replied Fra Luca, hiding a smile; for he could see that Leonardo's reason was but leading him into the well-trod path of centuries.

"Bene! Since experience has taught me that there are infinite causes for which I cannot account—and since experience has taught me that these causes, working together in harmony, produce results that are harmonious—I am, of necessity, forced to assume some Prime Mover, some First Cause, from Whom these causes spring."

"Yes!" replied Fra Luca. "That is just!"

"Who could have studied the creation of a child, without marvelling at the beauty, the simplicity, the directness of its formation? Who could have studied the organism of a man—wherein the articulation of the bones obeys the nerve, and the nerve the muscle, and the muscle

the tendon, and the tendon that common sense which is the seat of the soul—without marvelling at its perfection ? ”

Fra Luca bent his head.

“ The grass grows in the fields, the leaves upon the trees—every year these are renewed in great part—and the First Mover, with superne reason, constrains these effects to issue from their causes in the briefest possible way ! Who could observe all these things without believing in the justice, the wisdom, of the First Mover ? ”

Then Fra Luca spoke. “ I will not argue, my friend,” said he, “ for if I were to argue that you were reasoning backwards from effect to cause, you would reply that you must reason from what you know to what you are compelled to assume. But I will tell you this : I believe in One Who is the Creator of Reason, and find Him reasonable in all His Works ; whilst you believe in your reason, and create your own god out of your own reason ! Of a truth,” he added sadly, “ the scientist may reduce the Creator to terms of science, the logician to terms of logic ; but all the reasoning of all the philosophers is not worth the faith of one poor goatherd of the Apennines ! ”

And, with a sigh from Leonardo, they rode on towards Florence.

## II

This, I believe, is the problem which haunted Leonardo during his second Florentine period, the problem which found its solution in the wonderful portrait of Madonna Lisa Giocondo.

If the First Cause be both the theme and

artificer of Nature, the mind of the painter should be the mirror that reflects the handiwork of the First Cause. "If poetry treats of moral philosophy," he writes, "painting has to do with natural philosophy; if one describes the working of the mind, the other considers what the mind effects by movement of the body; a figure is not worthy of praise unless its action serves to express the passion of the soul."

He had almost conquered the technical problem of light and shade and of the reflection of colour into the shadows; and now he threw over this order and that order, the promised portrait for Isabella d'Este and the promised Madonna for the Servites, in order that he might devote his whole power to the painting of a soul—a soul that should reveal its inner workings through the outward expression of the features.

Modern writers have tried to weave an absurd romance round Leonardo and Madonna Lisa, a romance which has no shred of support from the pages of history or from the leaves of Leonardo's notebooks, a romance which is contrary to the whole tenor of Leonardo's disposition! Is not the romance of the first attempt to paint a soul sufficient without a veneer of foolish sentimentality? Aye! and what is more, if the artist had loved his model—even in a platonic manner—would he have taken "the precaution of keeping some one constantly near her to sing or play on instruments, or jest and otherwise amuse her, to the end that she might continue cheerful?"

## III

Let us first picture a scene in the bottega of that eldritch painter, Piero di Cosimo. Piero is present, and his brilliant pupil Andrea del Sarto, and to them enters the dignified person of Leonardo da Vinci in his favourite dress of rose-coloured silk.

They fell to discussing the portrait of a knight in armour that Piero was painting, and Piero begged da Vinci to advise him on certain difficulties that he was experiencing with the shadows which fell beneath the chin. "I have tried this and that," said he, "until I risk ruining the surface of my picture!"

For a moment Leonardo looked at the portrait with half-closed eyes, then he turned to Piero and laughed. "It is easy to see," he answered, "that the cavaliero was never wearing his armour when you painted his face!"

"Heaven!" replied Piero. "That is true! Messere complained that his armour was too hot for comfort, so he wore his doublet whilst I was painting him, and sent a soldier to stew in his armour afterwards."

"Also," remarked Leonardo, "messere was wearing a doublet of a sober hue."

"Madonna mia!" cried Piero. "How do you know all this? The armour is very well painted indeed! As for the rest, how did you discover it?"

In answer, Leonardo picked up a piece of some dark material that was hanging on a chair, and held it beneath his chin so that it reflected its dull rays of light into the shadows; then he picked

up a bright metal dish and placed it in a similar position. And, laughing, he seated himself.

“Speak!” cried Piero. “Tell me this: why did not I think of the reflection myself? Don’t sit there grinning like a monkey!”

“Because, O most courteous friend,” laughed Leonardo, “we artists are accustomed to paint with our eyes rather than with our intellects!”

“Hum!” grunted the other.

“In your picture of the Death of Procris,” continued da Vinci, “you studied the sunlight and distance in God’s open air; you remembered what you had seen, you painted what you had seen, and therefore your picture was a living picture of sunshine and atmosphere. But you never thought to reason why the sunshine was this colour, the shadows that colour! did you, Piero?”

“No!” grunted the other.

“We paint an effect without searching out the cause; the cause alters, and we, not having connected cause with effect, fail to notice the change in effect! This is what has happened in the painting of your cavaliero!”

“Speak in plain Tuscan!” cried Piero. “How can I understand this pumpkin-headed jargon?”

“Bene! We all recognise that the colour of the object illuminated partakes of the colour of the light which illuminates it—for example, the colour of a face in the sunshine partakes of the yellow of the sun, the colour of a face in the fire-light partakes of the red of the fire—very well! But we are apt to forget that the shadows in a studio are illuminated by the light which is re-

LEONARDO  
DA VINCI

afce  
1914

flected from surrounding objects, and that the colour in the shadows partakes of the reflected colour which illuminates it! Is that plain Tuscan?"

"Yes!" cried Piero.

“See!” and Leonardo raised his red-sleeved cloak so that its redness was reflected upon his chin. “See!” and he replaced his sleeve with the piece of dark material. “See!” and the shining metal threw its reflection into the shadows that were below his chin. “Is that clear?” he asked.

“Clear, even to my dull intellect, O philosopher!” answered Piero.

“We painters,” concluded Leonardo, “have realised the importance of dissection and anatomy in the drawing of the human figure; for he who would draw the human body correctly must know where to look for, and where to find, the muscles and tendons which actuate that same body. In the same way, he who would paint colour correctly must dissect the various sources of illumination so that he may know what colours he should search for in the shadows. He who is ignorant of anatomy will fail to detect the swelling of the more delicate muscles in his model; he who neglects the study of reflected light, will fail to discern the more delicate colours that are reflected into his shadows.”

#### IV

Whilst Leonardo had been talking, young Andrea del Sarto had been listening with all his ears; now he asked a favour:

“Master,” he begged, “tell me something more! Tell me something that I may always remember!”

He looked at the boy kindly, for Leonardo had a special love towards all that was young or

helpless, and, casting about in his mind for a subject, he recalled what he had just said concerning anatomy.

“ You have heard,” said he, “ that it is essential to study anatomy, if you would rightly depict the human body ? ”

“ Yes, Master ! ” answered the lad breathlessly.

“ You have been taught that it is the human soul which imparts life to the human body ? ”

“ Yes, Master ! for I am a Christian, and no heretic ! ”

“ Bene ! Yet where dwells this soul ? Not throughout the whole body, as some would teach ! For, if the soul dwelt in every portion of the body, then the eye would register its function of perception upon its surface ; the ear would echo with the sound of a voice resounding in the arched recesses of its rock-like bone ; and the soul, dwelling in these two places, would perceive and hear !

“ But no ! my Andrea : the eye transmits the images of things seen through its optic nerve to the senses ; the ear transmits the sound that is heard through a passage to some place where all the senses meet ; and, in this common centre of the senses—to which all the senses lead, and from which all actions spring—there dwells the judgment ; and in this, the seat of the judgment, there dwells the soul !

“ The nerves with their muscles serve the tendons, even as soldiers serve their leaders, and the tendons serve the common sense as the leaders serve their captain, and this common sense serves



the soul as the captain serves his lord. Do you understand, my Andrea ? ”

“ I think so, Master ! ” answered the boy. “ But, if you would give me some example, I should be more certain of my comprehension. ”

“ Bene ! A face that is both good and sweet smiles at you. Your eye transmits the image of this smiling face, through the optic nerve, to your soul. Your soul, perceiving that the smiling face is both good and pleasant, looks out through its window of the eyes, and, actuating the muscles of its mouth and face in harmony with its glance, smiles back. ”

“ Ah ! ” murmured young Andrea del Sarto. “ Now indeed I know that I understand ! ”

“ Therefore, ” replied Leonardo, “ take this lesson to heart : in painting the actions of a figure, you must search deep, and you must discover the emotions of the soul which moves the body and inspires its actions. For I would have you realise, my Andrea, that no figure is worthy of praise unless its action serves to express the passion of its soul. And I would have you realise, my Andrea, that the figure is most worthy of praise, which, by its action, best expresses the passion that animates it. ”

“ Oh, Master, ” cried the boy, “ men speak truly when they call you a philosopher ! ”

## V

Save for a brief interlude, when he filled the post of military engineer under Cesare Borgia,

Leonardo da Vinci devoted the next four years to the study and the painting of the soul.\*

“It is well for a man to reveal his soul by a well-tempered cheerfulness, smiling moderately with a due restraint!” Perhaps it was the memory of the bas-relief which he had wrought for Lodovico Il Moro that haunted him; perhaps it was the sight of Verrocchio’s David that recalled the past; perhaps it was the recollection of his talk with Madonna Lucrezia Donati in the garden of the Medici that awoke old ideals; perhaps it was the mingling of all these causes that inspired him; but, at any rate, Leonardo resolved to paint the soul as revealed through a smile.

He had commenced a cartoon of a smiling Madonna with Saint Anne which had excited the wonder and admiration of all Florence; he had placed this on one side, just as a youth discards his outgrown clothes; then he had found a woman whose face was the reflex of her soul, and he had set out to paint her portrait with a strange, masterful, mathematical precision that was the true expression of his own character.

Sphinx-like? No! Inscrutable? No!

The portrait of Madonna Lisa shows the fully developed soul of a mature woman looking out through her eyes and revealing itself in her mouth “like colour behind glass.” Sphinx-like? Bah!

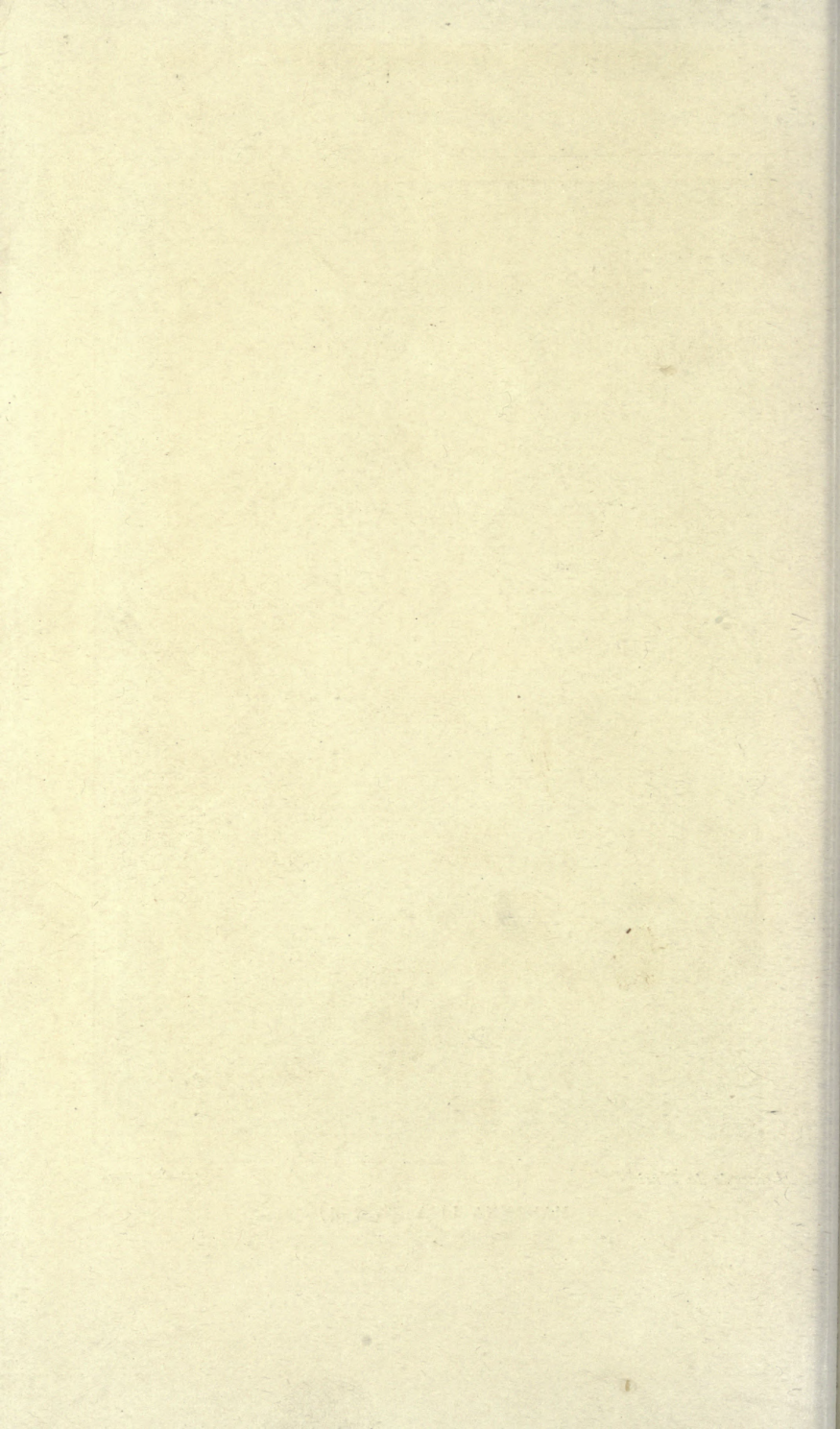
\* When the contemporary letters of Fra Pietro da Nuvolaria state that Leonardo “is entirely devoted to Geometry,” and that “his mathematical studies have so estranged him from painting that he cannot bear to use a brush,” we must remember that Leonardo used the terms Geometry and Mathematics in their widest sense, and that his notebooks include all that is spoken of in this chapter under the two headings.



*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Alinari photo*

MADONNA LISA (p. 254)



The real mystery of Madonna Lisa Giocondo lies in the fact that there is the soul of the real woman looking out through those eyes with a full intelligence !

## VI

The brilliance of the day was passing ; shadows were losing their intensity, high-lights their sparkle, light and shade were blending together with the softness of smoke, and the face of the model had acquired a subtle charm.

A harmony of lute and viol sounded within the garden of Francesco del Giocondo, and a boy's voice sang most sweetly :

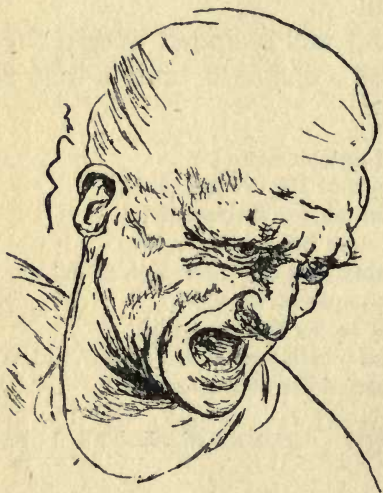
“ My Lady comes, and peace celestial,  
Calm as the radiance of the evening skies,  
Sheds brightness on our world terrestrial.  
My Lady looks, and from her shining eyes  
Gleams forth her soul, and out there doth defile,  
Joyful as light, a glimpse of Paradise.  
My Lady speaks, and on her lips the while,  
Like glorious colour 'neath translucent glass,  
There lies the image of her soul—a smile.”

“ Are you succeeding ? ” asked Madonna Lisa softly.

“ Of a truth,” answered Leonardo, “ I am painting your soul ! ”

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE BATTLE OF ANGHIARI



THE portrait of Madonna Lisa had been finished, as far as Leonardo could bring himself to finish it, in all its perfection. The eyes had a clarity that betrayed the life beneath, the lashes which fringed the eyes, the brows which roofed them, were true in every

turn, the rose-tints of the lips, the carnation of the cheeks throbbed with life, the pulse beat in the throat, and the smile glowed with a sweetness that seemed divine. If the Louvre painting be the real Mona Lisa, and not a brilliant forgery, then Vasari, who described the picture, is a charlatan, and Raphael, who sketched the same, but a clumsy blunderer.

In the January of 1504, as I say, the portrait of Madonna Lisa was finished, and Francesco

Filarete, the chief herald of the Signory, Sandro Botticelli, Cosimo Roselli, Piero di Cosimo, Giuliano da San Gallo and Leonardo da Vinci—all of whom had taken part in the commission to decide the site of Michelangelo's gigantic statue of David—were gathered together in the bottega of Filippino Lippi.

For a while the statue of David was discussed, and its various merits weighed and balanced; then Leonardo spoke.

“I am looking forward,” said he, “to the time when Michelangelo shall commence his cartoon for the Council Chamber of the Signoria, for then we shall see what the man is really made of!”

“But,” urged Messer Filarete, “since you have already seen an example of his work in this statue of David, why do you require a further proof of his skill?”

“As practising myself the art of sculpture no less than that of painting,” replied da Vinci, “and doing both the one and the other in the same degree, it seems to me that without suspicion of unfairness I may venture to give an opinion as to which of the two is more intellectual, and of the greater difficulty and perfection.”

“That would be most interesting!” remarked Botticelli the painter.

“In the first place,” continued da Vinci, “sculpture is dependent on certain lights, namely, those from above, while a picture carries with it everywhere its own light and shade. Again, the sculpture cannot render the difference in the varying natures of the colours of objects, whilst painting does not fail in this respect. Again,

the lines of perspective in sculpture do not seem in any way true, whilst those in a painting may appear to extend a hundred miles beyond the work itself. Again, the effects of aerial perspective are outside the scope of the sculptor's work; they can neither represent transparent bodies nor luminous bodies nor angles of reflection nor shining bodies nor mists nor an infinite number of things which I refrain from mentioning lest they should prove wearisome."

"But," argued Francesco Filarete, "you forget that a sculptor must be endowed with a master's mind and a master's hand, since the slightest mistake would be fatal!"

"If you will pardon me, Messere," answered Leonardo courteously, "it is a poor line of argument to urge that the fact of a mistake being irremediable makes the work more noble. Indeed, I should say that it would be more difficult to correct the mind of the master who makes such mistakes than the work which he has spoiled. Besides, the sculptor may work in clay or wax, which would allow him to correct any error with the greatest ease, and when his model is complete it is easy to cast it in bronze."

"I was speaking of marble!" objected Messer Filarete.

"Bene! Then first make your model in clay, and let it harden. Next take a box that is sufficiently large to hold your block of marble, making this box with a movable bottom so that the whole of it can be lifted up, leaving the bottom beneath the marble, and place your clay model within your box. Next make some pegs of white



wood so that they fit exactly into holes in the case, and drive a peg in at each hole until it touches the figure at a different spot ; stain such parts of the pegs as project out of the case, numbering each peg and each hole so that you may fit them together at your ease. Lastly take the clay model out of the case and place the block of marble in it, and chisel away at the block of marble until each peg fits in its hole up to the stained mark which you have made ; then take your cutting tools and finish off your statue."

Whilst Leonardo had been laying down the law, as the only practical sculptor present, a small but energetic man had entered the bottega ; gradually, whilst Leonardo had talked, this man's indignation had grown, now it burst its bonds.

"Of all the absurd, mechanical devices that I have met with," he cried, "this plan of Leonardo da Vinci's is the most impracticable ! Per Bacco ! He would kill the life of his statue before he had commenced it !"

## II

Is it possible to imagine a stronger contrast than that which existed between Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarotti ? The one was tall, graceful, stately, and magnificently clad in a rose-coloured tunic which hung to his knees ; the other was small, with an ugly broken nose and clothes that would have disgraced a beggar.

A strange contradiction was this same Michelangelo, the contradiction of oil and vinegar : a clean soul living in an unwashed body, a pious mind expressing itself through a rough and bitter

tongue, a generous hand that was penurious to the last degree, and a refined imagination that would suffer its owner to sleep with three filthy workmen rather than run to the expense of a chamber that suited his purse and position—but, then, Buonarotti slept in his clothes, boots and all!

Leonardo turned to face his interrupter. “My device of rough-hewing my marble statue by means of a pegged modelling-case is neither absurd nor impracticable,” he answered; “for I myself have often used it!”

“Then you hold,” sneered the other, “that the secret of sculpture lies in the modelling of a lump of clay—in the pressing and squeezing—in the adding of a little here and a little there—in the scraping and wetting and smoothing? For, as you describe your work, the marble statue is but the facsimile of your clay model!”

“And your idea?” enquired Leonardo suavely.

“That the statue lies within the block of stone, and that the figure is unveiled by the force of taking away!”

Leonardo smiled. “That is very simple!” said he. “You say to your pupil: ‘The statue lies within this block of marble! hew away until you have unveiled it!’ Of a truth, your marble bill for the blocks upon which your pupils cut their teeth must be a wonder of the world!”

“Heaven!” cried Michelangelo. “One does not teach pupils like that!”

“Then how does one teach?”

“One makes a model in wax—it must be the full size of the statue! One makes the fellow

sketch the principal aspect of the model upon the block of stone. One lays the model in a pan of water so that the principal aspect is upwards, facing the eye. One——”

“What is the principal aspect?” enquired Messer Filarete of San Gallo softly.

“The aspect of the statue which will be seen when the finished statue has been placed in its position,” answered the other.

“Well, as I was saying,” continued Michelangelo, “the wax model is lying in its pan of water, just as the finished statue will stand in its niche. Then one lifts the model a little, until the higher parts break through the surface of the water and are exposed; and one makes the pupil hew at the marble until he has unveiled that. Then one raises the model a little higher, until more of the stone breaks through the water; and one makes the pupil hew at the marble until he has unveiled that. Then one raises the model a little higher—and so on until the pupil has hewn out the principal aspect of the statue. With this to start him, he can complete the work at his leisure.”

“I do not see,” remarked Leonardo thoughtfully, “that there is any essential difference between your method of the pan of water and my method of the pegged modelling-case; for both are mechanical aids to the rough-hewing of the statue.”

“The pan of water,” explained Michelangelo, “is only for the pupil; the master should carve by his eye alone!”

“After all,” answered da Vinci, “what is your marble statue except a copy of your wax model?”

Whether the model be in wax or clay is immaterial; whether the marble be carved with the help of scientific instruments, or with the aid of a pan of water, or whether it be carved entirely by the eye and hand is immaterial! The original creation—the heart and soul of the statue—lies in the wax or clay model!”

“That is not so!” cried Michelangelo. “I tell you it is not so! The model is but the idea, the sketch, the study of the anatomy! It is but tentative, a trial, an experiment! The statue itself is within the block of marble, waiting to be unveiled! One hews! One chips! The statue begins to show herself! As she shows herself, one forgets about the model—half the time one has forgotten the model! The figure grows; she takes form; and, as she takes form, life enters into her! One creates as one works, the brain and the chisel working in unison!”

“But,” protested Leonardo, “you said that your statue was lying within the block of marble, waiting to be unveiled!”

“So she was!” cried Michelangelo angrily. “The mere removal of the surface gives being to her figure, which ever grows as the stone is hewn away!” And, without a word to any one, the sculptor stumped out of the bottega.

Leonardo watched the retiring form of Michelangelo regretfully, then he turned to the others. “That is a remarkable fellow!” said he; “a very clever fellow indeed! And there is much truth in what he has said! But, alas! he is unreasonable. The moment that I commence to reason with him, he retires in anger!”

“As you say,” remarked Sandro Botticelli, with a chuckle, “to reason with Michelangelo is like stroking a hedgehog! But he is a genius! Heaven! to see him work!”

“I have never seen him work!” replied Leonardo curiously.

“He starts with his full-sized model, wrought with the greatest care and anatomical rightness—this is, as he says, but his preliminary study. He draws the front-view contour of this model, fitting it to his block of marble with perfect accuracy—often to the very edge of the block of marble with not a nail’s breadth to spare. He commences to chisel the outer part of his subject as though he were carving it in half-relief. Then, as he works, a sort of frenzy takes him; huge chips of marble fly like hail-stones; he shifts his mallet from his right hand to his left, for he is left-handed, so that he may work with a greater frenzy; a cataract of marble pours down as though six men were hewing; he forgets his model, and creates. He believes as he has said! He behaves as though he were tearing off the outer husk of marble that envelopes and conceals his figure!”

Leonardo sighed. His thoughts turned inwards and he contemplated his own work: how often had he felt that same intense impulse of creation when he had made his sketches and worked at the studies of some painting, only to lose the intensity of the creative impulse in the careful elaboration of the painting itself.

“There is much to be said for his method!” remarked Leonardo, sighing.

## III

It must have been about this time that there occurred an incident which is recorded by the "Anonimo Fiorentino":

"Leonardo," he begins, "was a man of fair presence, well-proportioned, gracefully endowed and of fine aspect. He wore a tunic of rose colour which fell to his knees . . . and down the middle of his breast there flowed a beard that was beautifully curled and well arranged."

Now, like all Florentines of taste, both Leonardo and Michelangelo were students of Dante. And, as Leonardo was walking with a friend near S. Trinita, where a company of honest folk were gathered and talk was going on about some passage from Dante, these fellows called to Leonardo and begged him to explain his meaning.

It so happened that just at this moment Michelangelo went by, and Leonardo catching sight of him, and being unable to interpret the passage himself, called back: "There goes Michelangelo; he will interpret the verses you require!"

Whereupon Michelangelo, who thought that he spoke in this way to make fun of him, replied in anger: "Explain them yourself, you who made the model of a horse to cast in bronze, and could not cast it, and to your shame left it in the lurch!" And, with these words, he turned his back and went his way.

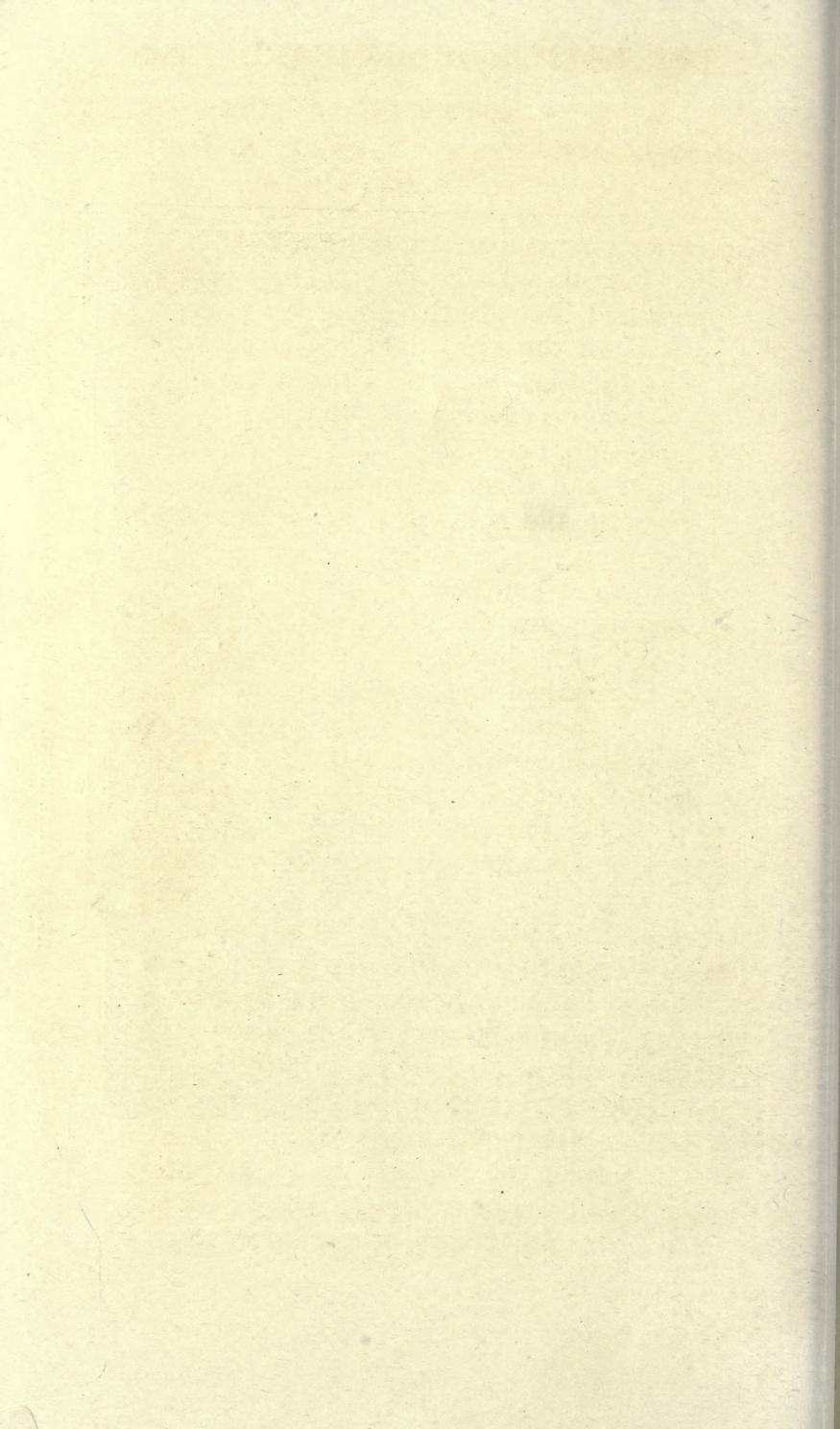
"Leonardo remained standing there," concludes the "Anonimo," "red in the face for the reproach cast at him; and Michelangelo, not satisfied, but wanting to sting him to the quick,



*Alinari photo*

RUBENS' DRAWING OF LEONARDO'S CARTOON (p. 265)

*Rubens*





added : " And those Milanese capons believed in your ability to do it ! "

## IV

Before the commission had met to decide the site of Michelangelo's David, both Leonardo and Michelangelo had been allotted the task of decorating the walls of the great Sala del Consiglio in the Palace of the Signoria. Each had been given his choice of a subject from the military annals of the Republic, and Leonardo had chosen an engagement that had taken place during the war between Florence and Milan as a theme that was suited to his mind.

This engagement had been little more than an affair of advance guards for possession of the bridge of Anghiari, during which skirmish the bridge had been taken and retaken by desperate charges ; but Leonardo saw that the bridge would give him an ostensible object for the contest, whilst the very slightness of the subject would enable him to carry out his precept, " historical pictures ought not to be crowded and confused by many figures."

On October the 24th, 1503, Leonardo had been given a key of the Sala del Papa at Santa Maria Novella so that he might be enabled to prepare a full-sized cartoon in comfort ; in the January of 1504 he was already at work on the drawing ; and, during the following twelve months, he succeeded in accomplishing the tremendous task.

In the beginning of March, 1505, Leonardo commenced his work upon the actual walls of the Council Chamber and actually succeeded in paint-

ing the foreground group of fighting men and struggling horses ; then he found himself in trouble. For, having discovered a receipt of Pliny's, Leonardo set himself to prepare the surface of the wall after the ancient manner ; and the plaster, which had dried through the influence of a charcoal fire in the Sala del Pape, refused to dry in the larger Council Chamber : the lower portion of the wall dried well enough, but the plaster upon the upper part of the chamber refused to set. How Leonardo overcame his difficulties, whether he overcame his difficulties, we cannot tell ; all we know is this—when Leonardo was called to Milan in the May of 1506, he left the foreground group finished—when Doni wrote in 1549, the group of horses and men “ appeared miraculous ”—when Vasari painted his frescoes upon the Council Chamber walls some twenty years later Leonardo's picture disappeared.

As to the cartoon, which Leonardo left at the Hospital of Santa Maria Novella, that too has vanished ; but drawings of the foreground group still remain, the most virile of which is that of Rubens.

## V

Let me sing the dirge of the Art of Leonardo da Vinci ! For this unfinished painting of the Battle of Anghiari was his last attempt at a great picture.

He had begun his first great picture at Florence, to end with an unfinished group of fighting men and struggling horses. He began his last great picture at Florence, to begin and end with almost the selfsame group of fighting men and struggling horses.

Compare the drawing in the Adoration of the Magi with the drawing in the Battle of Anghiari, and note the difference in the drawing of both man and horse ; for, during the five-and-twenty years which had elapsed between the seed-time and the harvest Leonardo had worked at the anatomy and actions of both man and horse until he had obtained a complete mastery. And, not only had Leonardo mastered the structure and movements of charger and soldier, but he had also mastered the outward expression of the passion of the soul, as the drawing of the fighting man which heads this chapter will testify.

Read Leonardo's own account of the way in which to represent a battle—an account which must have formed the basis of Anghiari—and note his extraordinary grasp of atmosphere, of aerial perspective, of motion. Note the keenness of his observation.

And if you make horses galloping away from the throng make little clouds of dust as far distant one from another as is the space between the strides made by the horse, and that cloud which is further away from the horse should be the least visible, for it should be high and spread out and thin, while that which is nearer should be more conspicuous and smaller and more compact.

Note, above all, the psychology of a battle :

Make the conquerors running, with their hair and other light things streaming in the wind, and with brows bent down. . . .

Make the beaten and conquered pallid, with

brows raised and knit together, and let the skin above the brows be all full of pain ; at the side of the nose show the furrows going in an arch from the nostrils and ending where the eye begins, and show the dilation of the nostrils which is the cause of these lines ; and let the lips be arched displaying the upper row of teeth. . . .

Show some one using his hand as a shield for his terrified eyes, turning the palm of it towards the enemy, and having the other resting on the ground to support the weight of his body. . . .

Show others in the death agony, grinding their teeth and rolling their eyes, with clenched fists grinding against their bodies, and with legs distorted. . . .

Then you might show one, disarmed and struck down by the enemy, turning on him with teeth and nails to take fierce and inhuman vengeance. . . .

And the squadrons of the reserves should be seen standing full of hope but cautious, with eyebrows raised, and shading their eyes with their hands, peering into the thick, heavy mist in readiness for the commands of their captain. . . .

But see that you make no level spot of ground that is not trampled over with blood.

Truly, if genius be an infinite capacity for taking pains, then Leonardo is the supreme genius !

But is genius the "infinite capacity for taking pains" ? I do not think so ! For, although fruitful genius must have an infinite capacity for taking pains, the capacity for taking pains may become at once the death-drug and grave of genius—taking pains must be a means to an end,

it must never be allowed to become an end in itself. Let me illustrate :

Michelangelo had an infinite capacity for taking pains, as those anatomical models for the limbs of his sculptured David still bear witness ; but as soon as Michelangelo had commenced the actual work of creation, the creative impulse had overwhelmed him, sweeping all other considerations aside, until the work of creation had been accomplished.

Leonardo, on the other hand, would commence with a true and overpowering impulse of creation ; but, as his picture passed from sketch to painting, his scientific and philosophic mind would become involved in a painstaking elaboration of technical and psychological details, until the original impulse grew mazed and done for.

## VI

It was in the May of 1506 that de Chaumont, Governor of Milan and Minister of King Louis of France, had requested that Leonardo should be allowed to do a certain work for him at Milan, and the Signoria had granted da Vinci a three months' leave of absence. Now, in October, the Signoria were demanding his return : " For," wrote Piero Soderini the Gonfaloniere, " Leonardo has not behaved properly to the Republic, having received a considerable sum of money and made but a small beginning in a great work which he is under contract to do."

Leonardo was sitting in his apartment in the Castello, with the demand of the Signoria before him. The French wanted to keep him in Milan

until the coming of their King, the Florentines desired him to return to his contracted work ; but what did he himself desire to do ? Should he return to Florence and attempt to finish the Battle of Anghiari ?

He recalled his old longing to paint a picture of fighting men and struggling horses that had possessed him since the days of the Adoration of the Magi ; he recalled the craving for an expression of his idea, which had come to him and carried him right through the drawing of the immense cartoon ; he recalled the intense eagerness with which he had experimented with the revival of an ancient plaster which promised to give him a surface that should be fine to paint on and permanent as stone.

Then his plaster had failed, and many suggestions of improvements had come into his mind to worry him, and, gradually, after he had succeeded in rendering his foreground group, his intense desire of expressing the subject as a whole had given place to the painstaking elaboration of technical and psychological detail.

Should he go back to Florence and attempt to finish this Battle of Anghiari ? A thousand times, No !

He would manage to repay the money that had been advanced on account of the painting, somehow ; then he would devote himself to the further study of hydraulics, anatomy and the many other sciences that demanded his attention.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE DEATH-DRUG OF GENIUS



IN the October of 1506, as I have already said, the Signoria urged Leonardo to return to his work at Florence.

In January, 1507, in response to letters from King Louis and the Florentine ambassador, the Signoria allowed Leonardo to remain in Milan until the King should arrive.

In May, Louis entered Milan and appointed "notre chier et bien amé Léonard da Vinci, nostre paintre et ingénieur ordinaire."

In September Leonardo was forced to return to Florence in order to establish his claim to a property that had been left him under his uncle's will, and, during the six months' visit which the delays of the law entailed, he busied himself with collecting and revising notes on various subjects, "hoping afterwards to arrange them in their proper places." He also commenced two small pictures of the Madonna for the King.

In the spring of 1508 Leonardo returned to Milan and took up his work as painter and engineer in ordinary to King Louis XII.

## II

In his "Northern Italian Painters," Berenson has written: "If Leonardo was not the better for Milan, it may be maintained that neither was Milan better for Leonardo," which statement shows the unreliability of a method in art-criticism that is not founded on contemporary history. For Leonardo's greatest pictures—the Virgin of the Rocks, the Last Supper, and the cartoon of the Madonna and Saint Anne—are all part and parcel of his development under "that subtle sensualist, Lodovico Il Moro"; whereas the artistic diabetes, which marks Leonardo's second Milanese period, must be ascribed, not to the influence of Milan, but to the influence of Milan's French conquerors: the French character, in spite of all its scientific accuracy of thought, is inimicable to austerity in Art.

Scientific accuracy of thought—it was that which endeared Leonardo to King Louis! Here was a man who could solve any problem, from the regulation of the flow of water that should supply a canal to the designing of a meat-jack; from the anatomical structure of the human body to the making of an automatic lion which should open its mouth in order to roar out a welcome to the victor of Agnadello! There seemed to be nothing that was too great or too small for the talents of Leonardo!

Then, as to Art: the painting of the Last

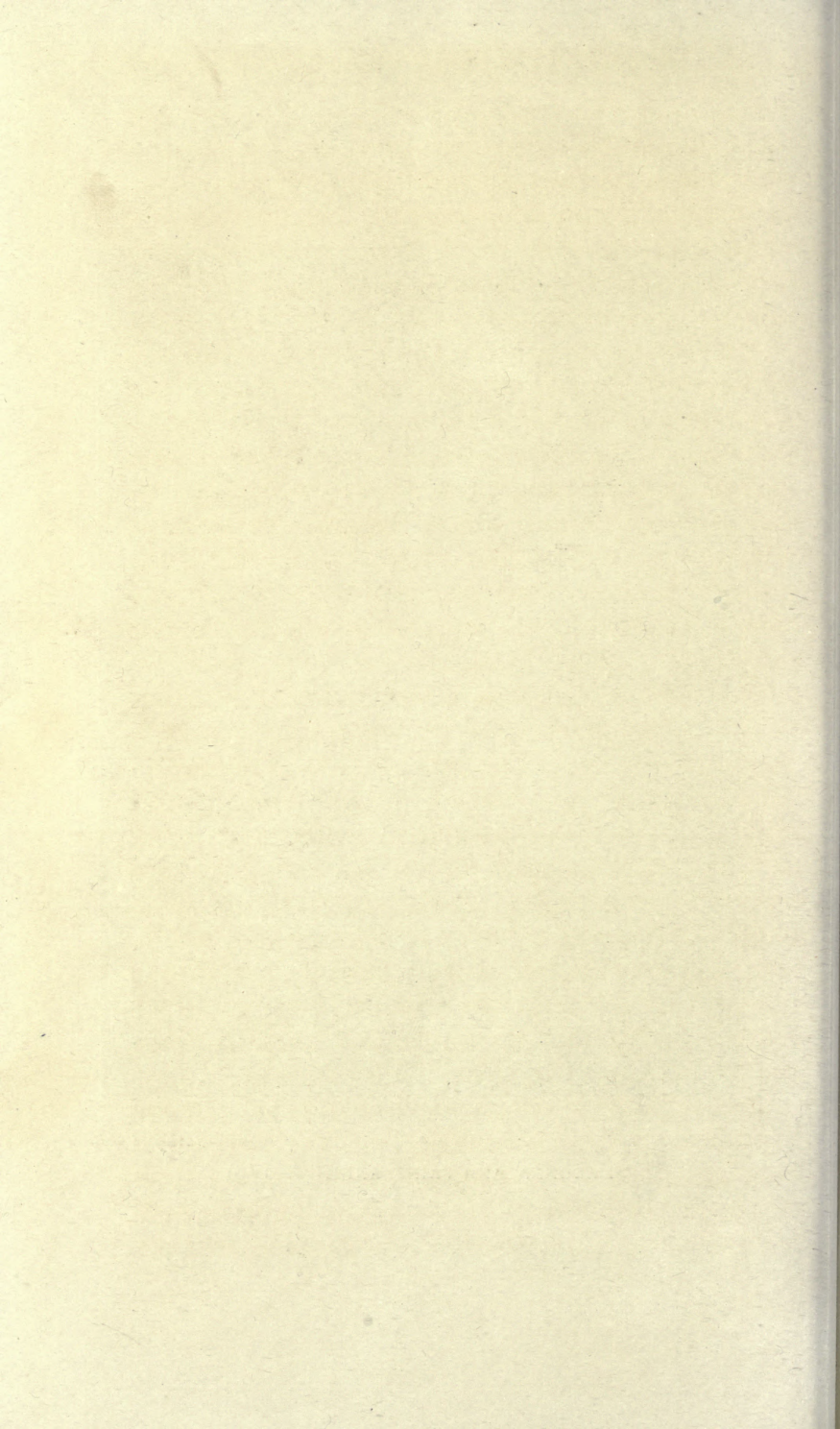




*Leonardo da Vinci*

*Alinari photo*

MADONNA AND SAINT ANNE (p. 275)



Supper was still fresh and uninjured, at once the most famous painting of its kind and an example of the most perfect illusion that had so far been accomplished ; such of us as doubt the rightness of illusion in Art may question those very qualities which the French must have admired, but, to the Court of King Louis, an interior which seemed to carry on the Refectory walls and visualise those that supped, until the Master and His Disciples appeared to be seated in the Refectory itself, must have seemed " a thing miraculous, making things intangible appear tangible, presenting in relief things which are flat, in distance things near at hand." Why ! even the very tablecloth had a tactile value that rendered every thread, every fold, as though it might be touched—at least, so Vasari tells us.

The French character is inimicable to austerity in Art ; but, in spite of its tragic dignity, there was no austerity in the Last Supper. The Master had said that one of His Disciples should betray Him, and the Disciples were showing their detestation of the treachery by the most eloquent and descriptive gestures : there was none of that technical reserve, none of that mental reserve, which have made the works of a Sargent or Botticelli caviare to the public ; in fact, experience has taught me that no one is too uncultured or sentimental to admire Leonardo's Last Supper.

If the Last Supper must have appealed to the Frenchmen's love of drama, the portraits of Il Moro's two mistresses must have appealed to their love of finished beauty. Here was a man who could paint the beautiful beautifully, who could visualise

sweetness in the sweetest manner, who could portray a finished woman of society in the most finished way : after the lack of daintiness in most of the Flemish work with which they were acquainted, after the lack of prettiness in features and colouring which distinguished the Florentine school, Leonardo's portraits must have been a revelation.

And, lastly, Leonardo had brought the portrait of Madonna Lisa Giocondo with him from Florence; and, if one overlooks the psychological quality of this study, there is left a certain piquancy that has always excited the Gallic imagination. To the psychologist, Madonna Lisa's body is the husk that contains her soul ; but, to the realist who does not trouble about the immaterial, here is a woman whose eyes are speaking, whose lips are smiling with a subtle meaning, and what she thinks, what she means, is left to pique the imagination.

To King Louis, unused to the intense culture of the Italian Renaissance, the brilliantly endowed Leonardo, whose keen sense of perception could discern Nature as though his mind were a mirror, whose progressive tastes could assimilate, develop and intensify all that was attractive in contemporary Art, whose quick intellect could reflect all that was most fascinating in contemporary philosophy, must have appeared as he afterwards appeared to Louis' successor, Francis I. To quote the French King's words : " He did not believe that any other man had come into the world who had attained so great knowledge as Leonardo, and that not only as a sculptor, painter and architect, for beyond that he was a profound philosopher."

To Leonardo the adulation of the French must have been as sweet and heady as a draught from the stills of the Jesuati. For, as an artist, Leonardo had been regarded as an equal of Bellini and Perugino ; as a sculptor, he had been vastly inferior to Michelangelo ; as an anatomist, he was but an assistant of Antonio della Torre ; as a philosopher I do not fancy that any of the greater Italians has regarded Leonardo as worthy of serious attention. Now this was all ended, and he was sung of as “*Léonard qui a grâces supernes.*”

### III

For some twelve months after the completion of the lawsuit, Leonardo seems to have devoted himself to the task of completing the Martesana canal and regulating the waterways of Lombardy ; then he appears to have resumed his painting.

Long ago the young Leonardo had drawn the study of the Lady of the Cat, which forms the frontispiece to this volume. Then, working under Il Moro, he had made a bas-relief of the Madonna and Saint Anne, in which composition the Mother and Child had been seated upon Saint Anne's lap, and had drawn a cartoon of this piece of sculpture. Lastly, upon his return to Florence, he had drawn a cartoon for the Servite Brothers, in which he had combined the two ideas—seating Our Lady upon Saint Anne's lap and placing the Holy Child upon the ground with a lamb as His playmate. Now he commenced a painting from this cartoon.

This panel seems to have been Leonardo's last word in the science of Art, his first great whisper of the artificiality that should presently ruin the

sincerity of the Italian Renaissance. The composition was planned to show a supreme mastery in the combination of triangle and curve—the triangular arrangement of the figures to give stability, the flowing curves to add grace—the pose of the figures should display a knowledge of the poise of the human body with its action of lever and counter-lever which no other artist could hope to equal ; and the whole should be crowned with a magnificent display of the most gracious human sweetness that had ever delighted the eyes of men. An infinite capacity for taking pains may overwhelm the fire of Art ; the adulations of a superne popularity may drug the true impulse of genius with a more deadly drug than opium.

In the first sketch of the Lady with the Cat there is a straightforward sincerity that goes right home ; in the first cartoon of the Madonna seated upon the lap of Saint Anne the sincerity survives the arrangement ; but in this last panel of the Madonna and Saint Anne, executed under French patronage, the treatment has become so artificial that all sincerity is lost. The composition is too luscious, and it is bound together, not only by a bond of motion, but also by a bond of glances in which even the lamb takes part. One longs for some touch of harshness to kill the sweetness, some note of discord to break the faultless harmony.

If Leonardo had but treated this composition in a decorative fashion, after the manner of Botticelli, it is possible that the impression of artificiality would never have occurred and that the feeling of insincerity would never have arisen ; but, no ! Leonardo was true to his artistic theories—“ bodies

should appear in relief," "bodies should not be surrounded by lines," and "a picture should seem a natural thing seen in a mirror"—and we seem to see a group of real persons reflected in a mirror. So unnaturally faultless is the arrangement of this group, so unnaturally graceful is the flow of limbs and drapery, so unnaturally sweet is the expression of the smiles, that we feel we are in the reflected presence of a group of actors, arranged and posing for a tableau vivant ; and we long for some movement to break the tension of their smiles.

## IV

Did Leonardo himself paint the youthful Saint John Baptist of the Louvre? There is a study for the Baptist's hand, sketched upon one of Leonardo's manuscripts of this period ; there is a mention of a picture of Saint John the Baptist as a youth, which was shown to the Cardinal of Aragon when he visited the artist some eighteen months before his death ; but there is no direct evidence to show that this was the picture which Leonardo painted, and conjecture is never satisfactory.

"In the portrait of Mona Lisa," writes Dr. Jens Thiis, "we delight in that wonderful sweetness that is inseparable from the most perfect maturity ; but one step further, and over-ripeness supervenes, and the sweetness acquires a nauseating after-taste. Leonardo's numerous imitators, his 'school,' readily took this step. In a picture such as John the Baptist in the Louvre, which is closely connected with the ageing Leonardo, but can scarcely have been painted by his own hand,

the over-ripeness has already set in, and a tainted flavour accompanies the charm." On the other hand, Leonardo had already passed beyond the bounds of that sweetness which is inseparable from full maturity, as the group of the Madonna with Saint Anne testify; the Baptist's face is but a further development of Saint Anne; and who except Leonardo could have painted that wonderful uplifted hand, with its perfect modelling, exquisite softness and firm virility?

But let the matter drop! For this rendering of the Baptist, half man, half woman, and wholly sensual, is one of the most hateful pictures that has ever sprung from a decadent art; and it is a hateful thing to watch the decadence of such a mind as Leonardo's and the decay of such a genius as his.

## v

The life at Milan flowed on, Leonardo now deep in some question of hydraulics, now in some question of anatomy, always busy; and, since the French demanded of his art, Leonardo established a bottega through which many of the rising artists passed, and from which there came that great output of work which is known as "of the school of Leonardo." Sometimes these paintings were derived from studies and sketches that were taken out of the Master's portfolio; sometimes they sprang from the Master's suggestions; sometimes they were but superficial copies of the Master's style, in which all that was good and great was lost.

Luini came under Leonardo's influence; da Sesto must have worked in his bottega; the fine



taste of Il Sodoma drew nothing but ill from da Vinci. For the reign of prettiness had set in, and, swinging onward by its own natural momentum of development, prettiness produced a greater prettiness, and the workshops of Milan became factories of sugared sweetness.

So on, with no profit and no interest, until 1513, when, the French having lost Milan and Giovanni de' Medici having been elected to the Papal Chair, Leonardo set forth for Rome.

“ I set out from Milan for Rome on the 24 day of September, with Giovanni Francesco de' Melzi Salai Lorenzo and Il Fanfoia.”

## CHAPTER XXIII

### IN FEVERED HEAT



ON September 24th, 1513, Leonardo, accompanied by a small following, set out for Rome. In Florence he met Giuliano de' Medici, the head of his

house, and brother of the Pope, and travelled onwards under his protection. In Rome he was given rooms in the Belvedere, and seems to have remained two years within the precincts of the Vatican.

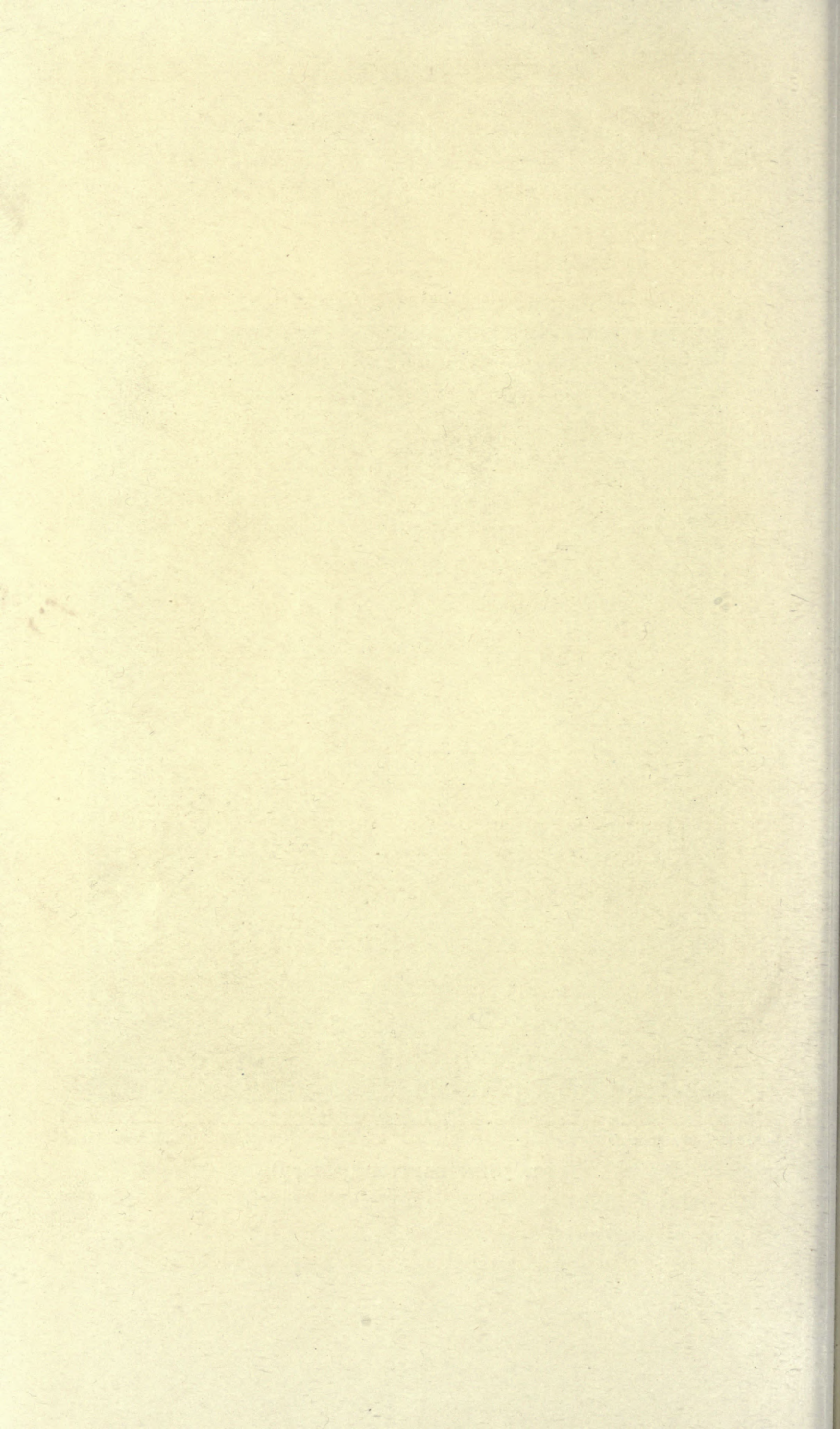
Vasari speaks of a Leda that he painted, but it is doubtful whether this picture ever saw maturity; Vasari tells us of the portrait of some lady that he painted for the Medici, but this has disappeared; Vasari records the making of balloon-like statuettes, inflated bladders and mechanical toys, and, with "these follies," includes mirrors and optical instruments and experiments in the compounding of "varnishes to preserve the work when executed"; and he ends with one paragraph which rings so true that it is worth quoting :



*School of Leonardo*

*Alinari photo*

ST. JOHN BAPTIST (p. 277)



“ It is related that Leonardo, having received a commission for a certain picture from Pope Leo, immediately began to distil oils and herbs for the varnish. Whereupon the Pontiff remarked: ‘Alas, this man will surely do nothing at all, for he thinks about finishing his picture before he begins it!’ ”

Alas ! Leonardo’s old creative faculty was dead, his power of concentration was gone, and he had fallen into the habit of rushing off after any quest that took his fancy with a fevered earnestness. Vasari writes as though Leonardo wasted his time “over fooleries” : he may have wasted his time, but his notebooks show that he wasted his Roman years over such serious pursuits as :

Anatomy, for which impiety he was denounced to Pope Leo,  
Acoustics,  
Optics,  
Geology in the Campagna,  
Improvements in coining at the Papal Mint,  
Engineering at Civita Vecchia,  
Finishing a treatise on Geometry.

Idleness was never a vice of Leonardo’s ; his temptation lay in an omnivorous appetite for work !

During the year 1515, in which King Louis XII died, there was war between France and Milan, and Leonardo seems to have followed the operations.

In the January of 1516 the new King, Francis I, having signed a concordat with Pope Leo, returned to France, taking with him Leonardo da Vinci as

his "premier peintre et ingénieur et architecte du Roy, mechasnischien d'estat," at a salary of over £1000 a year, present value.

## II

There was a noble Milanese youth, of the great family of the Melzi, who had followed Leonardo to Rome and now accompanied him to France.

The Melzi had been both the friends and patrons of da Vinci during his last Milanese period, and young Francesco had become his pupil. The Cardinal of Aragon tells us that Leonardo gave a very good training to this "Milanese pupil, who works extremely well"; but Francesco never rose beyond the status of an amateur in Art, and his sole consequence lies in the fact that he was with his master until the end and gave Vasari a true account of Leonardo's last hours.

It is true that Vasari, with all that ingenuity for which he is so justly famous, has managed to muddle Francesco Melzi's story; but contemporary records, coupled with some knowledge of Italian metaphor, enable us to unravel Vasari's tangle.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN THE ARMS OF THE KING



THE evening sun was throwing the shadows of the Hôtel de Cloux further and further along the garden paths. The herdsmen were calling the cattle in the meadows. Far away, the royal château of

Amboise caught a last flicker of sunshine, and winked it back across the river.

Within his bedroom Leonardo lay with closed eyes, and Francesco de' Melzi who was sitting beside the bed watched anxiously, wondering if this could be the end.

Then the bell of the neighbouring chapel sounded, the bells from Amboise answering it back, and Leonardo, bestirring himself a little, whispered: "O Queen of Heaven, be joyful! alleluia!"

And Francesco, responding, answered: "For He Whom thou didst earn to bear, alleluia!"

"Hath now risen from His prison; alleluia!"

"Pray for us to God: alleluia!"

Then Leonardo smiled softly to himself, and he whispered: "I will tell you this, Francesco, all the reasoning of all the philosophers is not worth the faith of one poor goatherd of the Apennines!" And again he closed his eyes.

## II

Ever since those early days in Florence, when the young da Vinci had turned in disgust from those who lived contrary to the religion which they professed, Leonardo had been a rationalist rather than a believer, a man of ethical goodness rather than of Christian virtue; but, in spite of that natural tendency which had made Leonardo the slave of his artistic theories at the cost of his creative impulse, the bondman of his scientific discoveries at the cost of his belief in a revealed Creator, he had been a man of a single and unselfish heart, and such are not forsaken at the last.

"As a well-spent day brings happy sleep," he wrote, "so life well used brings happy death." And again: "While I thought I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die!"

"Finally," Vasari tells us, "Leonardo lay sick for many months, and, finding himself near death, wrought diligently to make himself acquainted with the Catholic doctrine, and with the good and holy paths of the Christian religion." And, as Fra Luca had once warned him, he found that the revelations of God, the Creator of Reason, were



full of reason ; that the logic of an Aquinas was but the logic of philosophy, founded upon the premises of the Divine Word, and argued out with a rightness and lucidity that banished doubt ; and that the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount included, and surpassed, all the ethics of his own imagining.

## III

King Francis, who “ was accustomed to visit him frequently and affectionately,” had paid his last visit ; and Leonardo, having caused himself to be raised in his bed, had told him of his malady and the different circumstances connected with it, “ lamenting, besides, that he had not laboured in his art as he ought to have done.” And King Francis had gone on to hold his Court at S. Germain-en-Laye, when Leonardo found himself summoned to meet a Higher King.

He confessed with great patience and many tears, and, although he could not support himself on his feet, yet, being sustained in the arms of his servants and friends, he devoutly received the Holy Sacrament while thus out of bed.

He was then seized with a violent paroxysm, the forerunner of death ; Francesco raised and supported his head ; and Leonardo was received into the arms of his Lord and King.

## IV

Long ago, Leonardo had written of the dead who are taken to be buried : “ The simple folk will carry a great number of lights to light up the journeys of those who have wholly lost the power of sight ! O human folly ! O madness of mankind ! ”

Now, by the direction of his own Last Will and Testament, Masses were said for the repose of his soul, and sixty poor persons followed him to the grave with lighted candles.

## V

There is a letter from Francesco de' Melzi, addressed to Leonardo's brothers in Florence :

“ I think,” he writes, “ that you have already been informed of the death of Maestro Leonardo, your brother, and to me the best of fathers. I can never tell you how much sorrow this has caused me. It is a loss that, as long as I live, I can never cease to feel ; and this is only natural, for he daily showed me the warmest and most devoted affection. All men must lament the death of such a man. May God Almighty give him eternal peace ! He left this life on the second of May well prepared with all the Sacraments of our holy Mother the Church.”

May God Almighty give him eternal peace !

## CONCLUSION

I HAVE tried to be impartial in my reconstruction of Leonardo's life, basing all my conclusions upon the sound foundation of contemporary history, and now I find myself face to face with the master question which must be the sum of all my conclusions. What was the importance of Leonardo da Vinci in the development of the Arts and Sciences of his period: was he a mover in the Renaissance, or was he a product of his age?

Of course, if one were to accept Vasari's statement that the genius of Leonardo was outstanding from his boyhood, one would notice a similarity between his sketches and the works of Verrocchio, Botticelli, Filippino, and other of his early contemporaries, and one would be compelled to acknowledge the reality of Leonardo's influence.

On the other hand, if one were to argue from history, one might argue that, with the exception of the tiny Annunciation in the Louvre and the lost portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, Leonardo never succeeded in completing a single commission or in finishing a single picture until he had reached the age of forty—that successful and famous artists like Verrocchio, Botticelli and the rest are not influenced by the half-finished work of the un-

successful—that Leonardo must have been a product rather than an instigator.

But could not the same argument be urged with regard to Verrocchio, Botticelli and almost every great artist? Is not the early work chiefly the result of environment? and must we not look to the later work, when the artist has won mastery over materials and mastery over self, for the display of self-expression? I think so! And I think that the full merit of such a work as Leonardo's half-finished Adoration of the Magi lies in the fact that it is half finished! The partially developed talent of Leonardo attempted self-expression; it became conscious of its incompleteness, and laid down the brush. A lesser man would have been content to finish the picture to the best of his ability, and so obtain payment.

## II

The movement of the Renaissance, in the time of Leonardo, was towards the illusion of reality and towards the refinement of charm. The development of Botticelli was contrary to the general movement, and consequently Botticelli died neglected; but Michelangelo, working on his own lines, carried realism to its full possibility, whilst the independent Giorgione excelled in charm. Leonardo, also working on his own lines, caught up the threads of illusion and charm, and wove them into his own pattern: the Virgin of the Rocks shows the perfection of charm, the Last Supper must have been the height of illusion, whilst the Virgin and Saint Anne give us the remains of an illusion and

charm that have been blended and carried to the furthest limit.

But was the mature Leonardo a great factor in the onward movement of the Renaissance? I do not think so! It is true that his later manner influenced the younger artists of Milan, ruining the school in the process; it is true that his Florentine visit produced some influence on both Raphael and del Sarto; but I think that this strange man, one part artist, three parts scientist, moving from city to city like a restless spirit, and carrying all his portable pictures with him to France, could have exercised no great influence, and that the movement towards illusion and charm would have swept onward in the same course if Leonardo had never existed.

### III

“Great though he was as a painter,” writes Mr. Berenson, “he was no less renowned as a sculptor and architect, musician and improviser, and that all artistic occupations whatsoever were in his career but moments snatched from the pursuit of theoretical and practical knowledge. It would seem as though there were scarcely a field of modern science but he either foresaw it in vision, or clearly anticipated it, scarcely a realm of fruitful speculation of which he was not a freeman.”

Steady, Mr. Berenson! What do we know about our painter's other artistic occupations except that he designed a model for the cupola of Milan Cathedral, only to be rejected; that he designed the Sforza Statue, never to be completed;

that he is said to have played and sung before Il Moro ?

What do we know about his scientific attainments, except that he was immersed in the scientific and philosophic studies of his age ? His notebooks contain "visions" and anticipations that have been verified by modern science, but so do all mediæval writings from the time of Roger Bacon onwards, and it would need a deeper knowledge of the researches of the Quattrocento scientists than any one man could hope to attain in order to determine what was the result of Leonardo's personal investigation. To take one instance, who knows enough of the researches of the famous anatomists of Pavia, Florence and Rome to tell us whether Leonardo did more than take part in and note down some of their investigations, to be illustrated by his perfect draftsmanship ?

Of contemporary philosophy and psychology I do know something, enough to say that Leonardo's many notes contain little that might not have been written by any of the many students of Dante, let alone the more serious students of Aristotle and Aquinas. Where he does hold an opinion that is contrary to the common view—as in the remarkable theory on the location of the soul, which I have given in Chapter XX—he is invariably wrong: it is very easy to locate the soul in "that Common Sense wherein all the senses meet," but what and where is that Common Sense ?

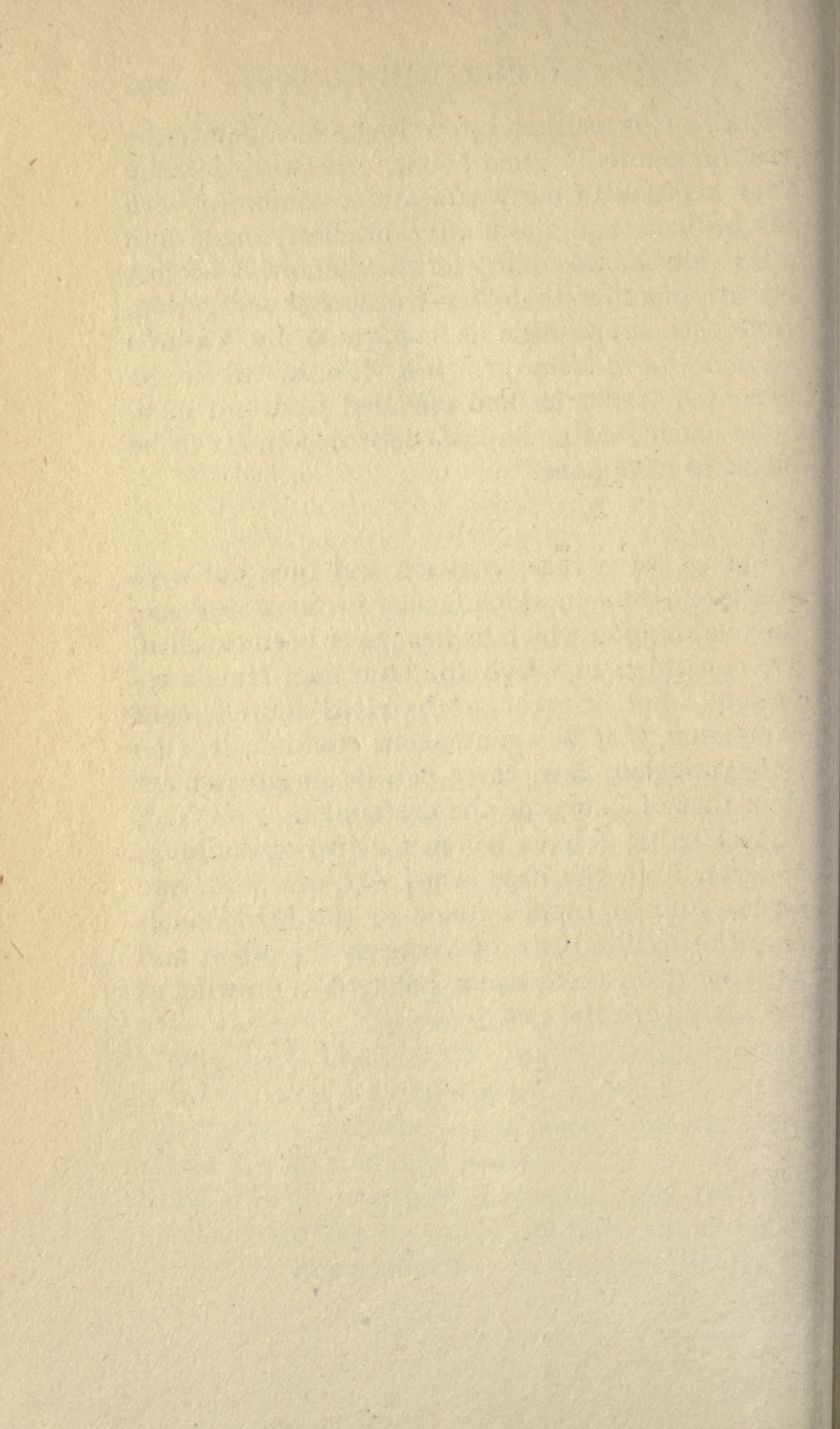
As a water-engineer Leonardo was certainly clever, otherwise he would not have secured such important engagements ; as an investigator of

flight he is more than interesting ; as a painter he was undoubtedly great ; but, otherwise, I fancy that his lack of early education, combined with his brilliant and speculative intellect, made him apt to forsake the reality for the shadow, to neglect his art in order to follow fruitless investigation. And this supposition is confirmed by Vasari's account of Leonardo's last illness, when he lamented " that he had offended God and man, in so much that he had not laboured in art as he ought to have done."

## IV

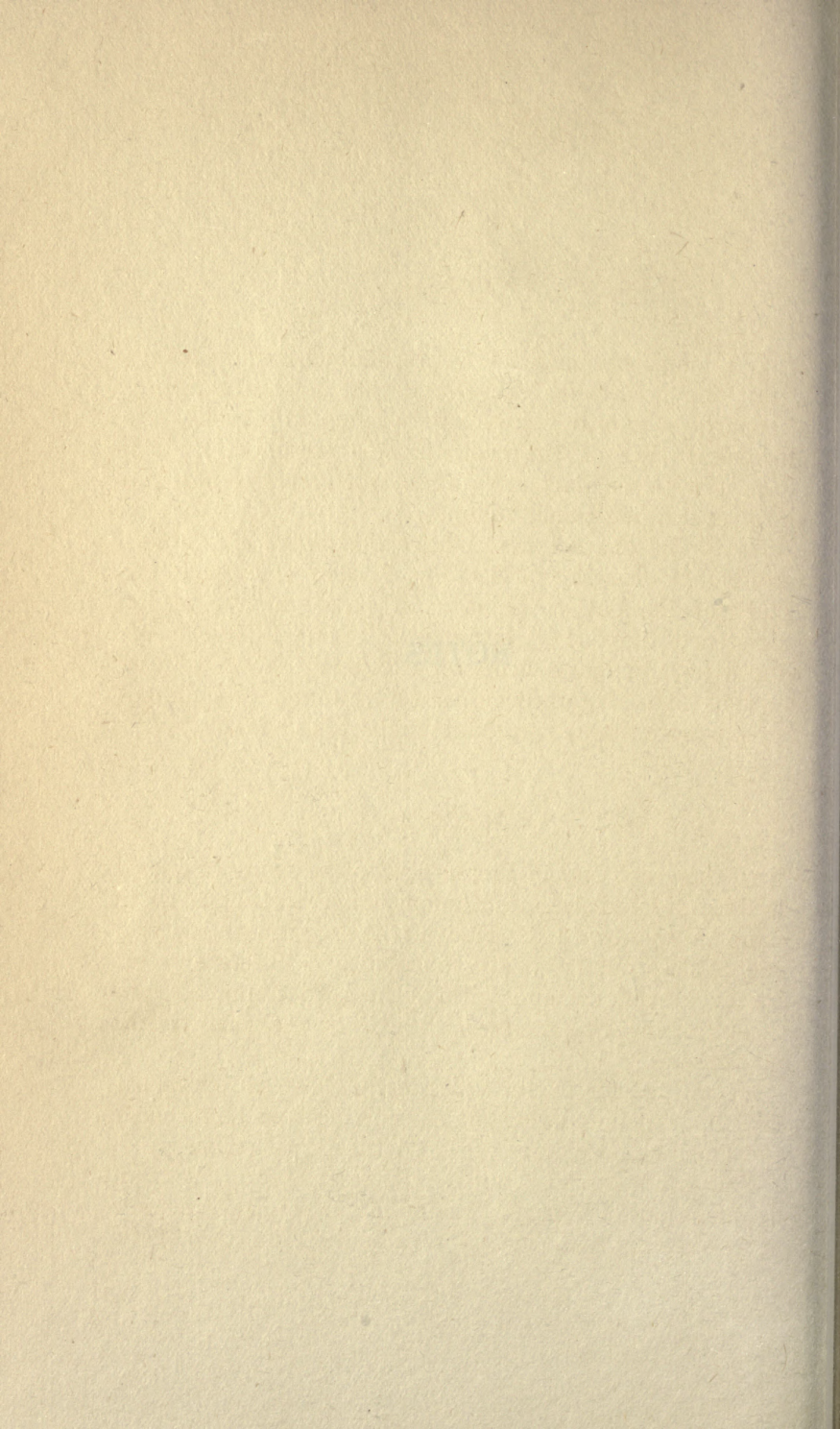
Let us leave these matters and turn our eyes on the one thing in which Leonardo reigns supreme, the one thing in which he has never been excelled, the one thing in which the true man stands revealed ! For, if great art be vivid and eloquent expression, if it be spontaneous creation, if it be self-expression, then there can be no greater art than that of Leonardo the draftsman.

As I write, I have before me two examples of creation from the days when Art was fresh and virile—Filippo Lippi's tondo of the Madonna is one, Botticelli's Birth of Venus is the other, and between them there hangs Leonardo's drawing of the Lady with the Cat.





NOTES



## NOTES

TO our common relief, there cannot be many notes ; for practically everything that I have put into Leonardo's mouth comes out of his notebooks, the historical part of the book is self-contained, and, if once I were to start annotation, the result would run into several additional volumes.

As to the characters: I have christened Dr. Thiis's *Alunno di Andrea*, " 'Tista " ; I have christened the Lady of the Cat " Annina " ; I have—forgive me !—christened the Cat " Sfacciatella " ; but I have introduced no imaginary character except the Cosimo Malatesta of " His Magnificence," nor have I made any character say more than he reasonably might have said.

## BOOK I

INTO the great City of Florence, into the swing of one of the best-ordered and most famous of her workshops, there came an unknown lad. He was the illegitimate son of a middle-class notary, badly educated and illiterate as his notebooks tell us, and with nothing to commend him except an engaging manner, a ready wit and some youthful sketches.

He worked for twelve years in this bottega, sketching divinely, but blundering the few commissions he received and finishing no picture of the slightest importance.

This is not Vasari ; but it is history, and all that can be wrung out of history. Taking into account the beauty of his sketches and the beginning of the Adoration of the

Magi, weighing in that talent which led to his after-success, I have made the best that can possibly be made out of Leonardo's early career : to make more would be absurd ! To talk of Leonardo influencing the great Verrocchio is nonsense ; to write of Il Magnifico failing to appreciate Leonardo's talents is merely to credit the Medici with sound good sense.

*The Altarpiece for the Chapel of San Bernardo.*

In spite of the universal opinion to the contrary, Dr. Thiis insists that this picture is identical with the half-finished Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizi.

The one contention that he can bring forward in support of his claim is a negative argument, taken from the journal of the Donato monks, by which he strives to prove that the Magi could not have been painted for San Donato a Scopeto. " An entry appears," says he, " under June 25, 1481, of an outlay of 4 lire 10 soldi for an ounce of blue (*azzurro*) and of 4 lire for an ounce of yellow (*giallolino*) for the painter Leonardo da Vinci. But where in the Adoration of the Magi, which is executed entirely in monochrome ground-colouring in bitumen tones, is there any blue or yellow ? Are we justified in simply supposing that Leonardo procured colours at the monks' expense and did not use them for their picture ? Judging from the notes of disbursements, he still continued to work at the picture for at least three months after this. Is it possible that even then he had had no use for the monks' expensive blue and yellow pigments ? "

How is it that Dr. Thiis overlooks the fact that Leonardo was paid for the painting of the convent clock just a month after the colours had been supplied ? Does not he realise that blue for the painting of the face, yellow as a priming for the gilding, are the very colours which Leonardo would have needed ?

On the other hand, the history of 1479 supplies a reason why the San Bernardo Altarpiece died a natural death :

- Jan. 10. Signoria order the Altarpiece for their Chapel.  
 March 16. Signoria pay Leonardo 25 florins on account.  
 April 26. Pazzi Conspiracy, and murder of Giuliano.  
 May 4. Montesecco inculpates Pope Sixtus.  
 June 1. Florence placed under an Interdict.  
 July 11. Roman and Neapolitan invasion of Tuscany.

It is a great pity that most writers on artistic subjects forget to look at history !

*The Adoration of the Magi.*

(A) Dr. Thiis reproduces a dozen pictures of the Adoration of the Magi in his search after the source of Leonardo's inspiration ; but, although he does include one of Botticelli's paintings, he fails to discover that Botticelli which is the very fellow of Leonardo's unfinished picture. This oversight is the more remarkable, since the learned Doctor devotes a whole chapter to the counting and consideration of the number of figures in Leonardo's picture, and to the comparison of this with other crowded compositions :

Leonardo's Magi contains, altogether, 77 figures.

Masaccio's Carmine fresco	„	40	„
Raphael's School of Athens	„	48	„
Raphael's Disputata	„	66	„

If Dr. Thiis had only looked out Botticelli's unfinished Magi, Uffizi, No. 3436, a painting which Horne has shown, from internal evidence, to have been executed about the same time as Leonardo's Magi, he would have found that Sandro's composition was far more overcrowded than that of Leonardo : even from a photograph of the painting, my inferior sight can detect that :

Botticelli's Magi contains over 92 persons and 35 animals.  
 Leonardo's Magi „ only 60 „ „ 17 „

And Botticelli's picture is less than half the size of Leonardo's. Alas! for Leonardo's reputation! It was Botticelli that beat the record!

Whether the two artists painted in friendly emulation is a matter of conjecture: they painted at the same time; they both overcrowded shamefully; they both left their work unfinished. "Youth should learn," writes da Vinci, "how historical pictures ought not to be crowded and confused by many figures."

As to which artist influenced which: Sandro's composition is an obvious development of his Laina theme, to be carried to its right conclusion a few years later in the Hermitage Adoration; whilst Leonardo's composition is evidently founded on a reversal of the central group in Sandro's picture, and then developed on absolutely original lines.

(B) How did I stumble upon the composition of Leonardo's Magi?

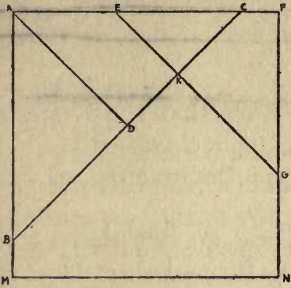
I think it was a rebound from Dr. Thiis's unusual diagram of circles and things which sent my mind back to my early love of Paolo Ucello and his sophisticated Perspective-composition; then I tried for Leonardo's vanishing point, and the rest followed.

The diagram of composition in the text is self-evident, self-explaining; but the reason why Leonardo adopted this particular angle of composition forms an interesting speculation.

I fancy that by this time Leonardo's mathematical tendencies had reached the puzzle-solving stage, and that he must have started with the idea of planning a "subject-angle" which should include exactly half his picture, having its vertex as the vanishing point. His natural good taste would have made him place the vanishing point a little towards one side of the centre of the picture; then his inability to square any irregular triangle would have made him work in rectangular isosceles triangles, which are halves of squares and easy to measure. Anyhow, the fact that his "composition-angle" includes

exactly half his picture could not have come by chance, it must have come by design.

The result of his composition is a pretty plan, pretty as a problem from Euclid :



The three triangles BDA, ADC, EFG, are all equal. Since the triangle ADC equals the triangle EFG, the part EKC being common to the two triangles, the remainder ADKE, which contains "War," is equal to the remainder CFGK, which contains "Peace."

## BOOK II

DURING his Milanese period, that is between the age of thirty and the age of forty-eight, Leonardo may be said to have made up for the poverty of his early instruction and to have completed his education ; he studied Latin, learnt how to convert a triangle into a square, and, towards the end of this period, reached the multiplication of roots. "Learnt from Magister Luca," he writes, "the multiplication of roots." Since Fra Luca Pacioli did not come to Milan until the year 1496, when Leonardo was forty-four, his progress must have been distinguished more for its perseverance than for its rapidity.

Leonardo's artistic progress, during this period, seems to have been equally leisurely. For, in 1489, when da Vinci had been working at the Sforza Horse for six years, we find Il Moro writing to Lorenzo de' Medici that he "did not feel satisfied that Leonardo was equal to the task," and begging that another master should be sent. And, with the exception of the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani and the Virgin of the Rocks, he does not appear to have painted any pictures until he commenced the Last Supper.

With the painting of the Last Supper came Fame ; and,

in 1498, we find Isabella d'Este borrowing Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani so that she might compare it with some fine portraits by Giovanni Bellini which she had just seen. But I doubt whether the Sforza Horse was ever a great success.

*The Virgin of the Rocks.*

(1) There is documentary evidence that the National Gallery version of the *Vierge aux Rochers* was painted by da Predis and Leonardo, for the Community of San Francesco, not later than 1494.

(2) There is a consensus of critical opinion that Leonardo painted the Louvre *Vierge aux Rochers* shortly before the commencement of the National Gallery copy—that is, before 1493-4.

(3) There are statements by both Vasari and the Anonimo that Lodovico Sforza caused Leonardo to paint an Altarpiece which he sent as a present to Maximilian. It is true that Vasari calls this picture a *Nativity of Christ*, but, as he could never have seen the picture, the exact title is immaterial.

(4) Since all Leonardo's pictures that remained in Italy received special notice from his biographers, and since the *Vierge aux Rochers* received no notice, it may be assumed that this picture had left Italy.

(5) It is reasonable to assume that the *Vierge aux Rochers* was the picture that was painted for Maximilian, and that it was painted about 1493.

If this be so, we can fit the picture into a niche in history which explains both the reason for its painting and the reason for the uncommon treatment of the subject. In support of my view, I have inserted Boltraffio's portrait of Isabella of Aragon so that it may be compared with Leonardo's sketch as well as with his finished picture.

*The Painter of the Last Supper.*

Since so much that is sentimental has been written



about the painting of this picture, it is necessary to review Leonardo's religious position at this period.

He was no noisy atheist: he spoke not against the sacred books, "for they are the supreme truth"; but he left the Scriptures severely and absolutely alone. For he himself believed only in what experience had taught him, and in the logical reasoning that he had founded on experience.

His study of Nature had shown him the absolute harmony and perfection of her laws; and, since reason necessitated the assumption of a Prime Mover of supreme wisdom, and, since, without this Prime Mover, the structure of his philosophy would fall to the ground, he called Him by the philosophical term of "la neciessità." "O marvellous Necessity, thou with supreme reason constrainest all effects to be the direct result of their causes."

In short, he believed what his observation and his consequent reasoning had taught him; as to the rest, "I leave it to the wisdom of the friars, those fathers of the people who by inspiration know all mysteries."

(As Dr. Thiis wisely remarks: "Leonardo's writings prove Vasari to have been correct when, in his biography, he states with a little sigh that 'the painter of the Last Supper had in his heart arrived at so heretical a view that he belonged to no religion at all, and in short considered it more dignified to be a philosopher than to be a Christian.'")

After this statement it is somewhat amusing to find Dr. Thiis writing of Leonardo's chalk study for the Last Supper: "It seems to have resulted from a peculiarly gentle frame of mind, as though after reading of the evangelist's account of the Saviour's farewell supper. The story overwhelmed him, and he thought more about the Saviour's sorrow and his broken-hearted disciples than about the work of art. He may have wept as he drew."

Please consider the psychological position: a particularly reasonable and well-balanced man, who had lost all faith in Christianity and had suffered continual irritation from the dogmas and assumptions of Christians, was

painting an essentially Christian theme for an Order which he detested—"Fрати Santi spells Pharisees!"—It is surely best to recognise that Leonardo strove to express the effect which the revelation of Judas's treachery had upon the rest of the Disciples, and to leave the psychological state of Leonardo's mind unelaborated.

### BOOK III

THE outlook of an Italian rationalist of the Quattrocento was so entirely different from the outlook of a modern German or English materialist that it is necessary to give a brief statement of the psychology of the Renaissance.

#### *Structure of the Renaissance Psychology.*

The modern Englishman thinks of his body as himself, and of his soul as something immortal that is usually forgotten during the week and sometimes remembered on Sunday. As Kipling's artist remarks: "The truly healthy man doesn't know he has a soul."

The Italian of the Quattrocento thought of himself as a soul, and of his body as something that his soul had modelled and actuated for the purposes of expression. As Leonardo says: "The soul desires to dwell in the body because without the members of that body it can neither act nor feel."

All the psychology, from the time of Dante to the time of Leonardo, was founded on the teachings of Aristotle, as adapted by Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen. To strip it of its phraseology and reduce it to a simple personal equation:

I am a soul, with three faculties:

My first faculty is the vegetative faculty, or vital principle, which formed my body and renews my tissues; this faculty is common to all living organisms, from plant to man:

My second faculty is the sentient faculty, or power of feeling, and this faculty I share with the animal world:

My third faculty is the rational faculty, or power of reasoning, and this is peculiar to man and spirit.

Since my power of reasoning is affected by my health, and my health is affected by mental trouble, my vitality and reason are parts of one and the same soul ; since my intellect can compare one sensation with another, the pleasure derived from hearing music with the pleasure derived from seeing pictures, the pleasure derived from taste with the pleasure derived from smell, my senses and reason are parts of one and the same soul. As Dante says, " these powers are so entwined that the one is the foundation of the other," vitality of feeling, feeling of intellect.

All this was no mere philosophy, but the practical working theory of the educated Italiân—he thought of himself as a soul ; he treated himself and others as though each were a body vitalised by a soul. When Beatrice was ill—" Signor Lodovico does not leave his wife's bedside by day or night. He is always with her, and thinks of nothing but how he can best please and amuse her." This was done to keep Beatrice's soul bright and cheerful so that it might be the better fitted to exercise its vegetative faculties and restore health.

It was the same outlook that created the strange dual character so common in the Renaissance : a man might order his conduct by reason, and indulge in the most perfect platonic friendships ; the same man might be overcome by his passions, " bewitched by Venus," and, for the time, intellectually irresponsible ; again, he might regain his balance, be sorry for his fault, and return to his high ideals. After all, there was nothing strange in the lapse and recovery of Pico of Mirandola. Save for the wretched nine months, when Il Moro was enslaved by his passion for Lucrezia Crivelli, he was a model husband and a model widower. And, whilst Leonardo's early bringing up and subsequent environment produced an absolute belief in the philosophy of the soul, there is no reason to assume that this belief carried him further than

the philosophy of Aristotle—which brings us to the subject of Leonardo's ethics.

*Ethics of Leonardo da Vinci.*

Between a man's code of ethics and their practical application there may be a wide gulf, and we can glean little about Leonardo's moral life save that his ideals were lofty. But his ethics were those ethics which spring from reason, and not from Christianity.

Reason must be built upon a solid foundation, he argued; therefore, since "experience is never at fault," he built up his reasoning upon things experienced: "The truth of things is the chief food of all finer intellects," and falsehood is "utterly vile."

To him the soul was the vital principle; "the soul desires to dwell in the body because without the members of the body it can neither act nor feel." Therefore, he argued, "strive to preserve your health": "eating contrary to the inclinations is injurious to the health," "wine is good, but water is preferable at table"; "keep clear of the physicians."

"Whoso curbs not lustful desires puts himself on a level with the beasts"; but "intellectual passion drives out sensuality." "It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end."

"To speak well of a worthless man is like speaking ill of a good man." "Reprove a friend in secret and praise him before others." "Whoso injures others regards not himself."

"Lie not about the past"; "truth alone is the daughter of time." "Call not that riches which may be lost; virtue is our true wealth, and the true reward of its possessor." "Nothing is so much to be feared as a bad reputation; and this bad reputation is caused by vices."

Wasari tells us that Leonardo "considered it more dignified to be a philosopher than to be a Christian," and all of Leonardo's writings bear out this statement; for, although his ethics were fine, they might have been the

ethics of some ancient pagan philosopher. And I would have you remember this : if reason be the highest faculty that God has created, then all just reasoning must come from God, and the ethics of a just pagan should not prove contrary to the ethics of the revelation of Christianity.)

*Leonardo's Death.*

If Vasari be right when he tells us that Leonardo lived as a philosopher rather than as a Christian, he is certainly right when he tells us that Leonardo died a Christian ; for Melzi's letter states that his master died, " fortified with all the Sacraments of Holy Mother Church," whilst Leonardo's will provided that thirty Masses should be said for the repose of his soul, and that sixty poor persons should follow him, with lighted candles, to the grave.

But there is a strange ending to Vasari's account of Leonardo's death which needs elucidation. After giving the account of Leonardo's reception of the Viaticum, which I have quoted in Chapter XXIV, Vasari concludes :

" He was then seized with a violent paroxysm, the forerunner of death, when the King, rising and supporting his head to give him such assistance and do him such favour as he could in the hope of alleviating his sufferings, the spirit of Leonardo, which was most divine, conscious that he could attain no greater honour, departed in the arms of the monarch, being at that time in the seventy-fifth year of his age."

Fortunately, documents which show that King Francis was with his Court at S. Germain-en-Laye at the time of Leonardo's death prove Vasari to have erred.

Now I do not believe that Vasari meant to lie—I do not believe that Vasari ever meant to lie!—but that Providence, which had created Vasari, had endowed him with the finest imagination in all the whole of Italy : let a man have whispered " Rats ! " and Vasari would have supplied the Pied Piper. Also, one may justly

assume that Vasari heard the story of Leonardo's death from that "handsome and amiable old Milanese gentleman, Francesco da Melzi."

Turn to Politian's account of Lorenzo's reception of the Viaticum, and you will find a contemporary precedent for the language I am going to put in Melzi's mouth. The priest was bringing Holy Communion to the dying Il Magnifico, when Lorenzo struggled out of bed, and, falling on his knees, cried: "I will not suffer that my Lord and God should come thus to me!"

Let us assume that Melzi had told Vasari of the King Francis' kindness and affection towards Leonardo, and had gone on to tell him of Leonardo's reception of the Last Sacraments, he might well have ended: "He devoutly received the Holy Sacrament while thus out of bed. He was then seized with a violent paroxysm, we raised and supported his head, and Leonardo was received into the arms of his Lord and King." This would have been quite enough for Vasari!

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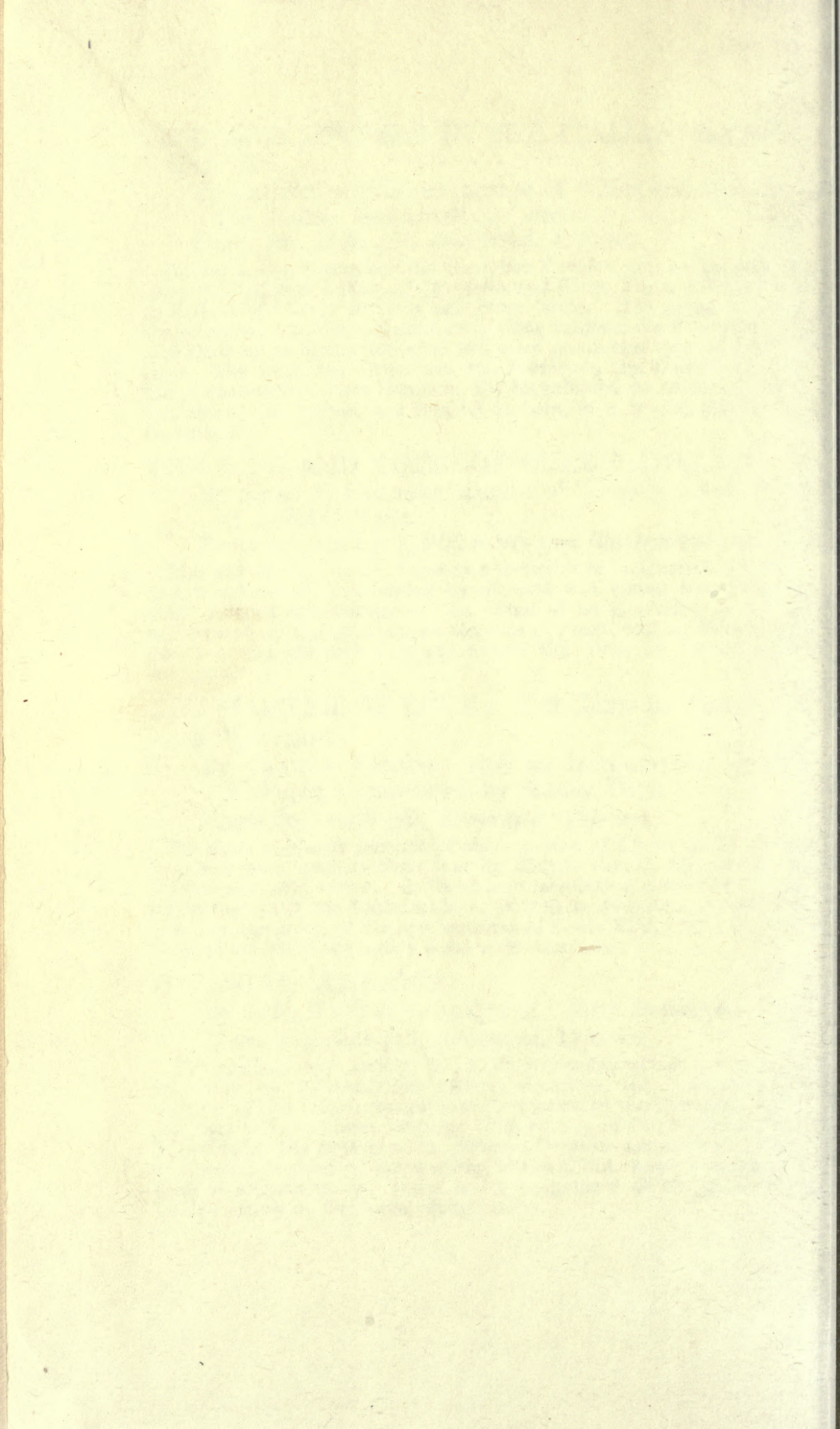
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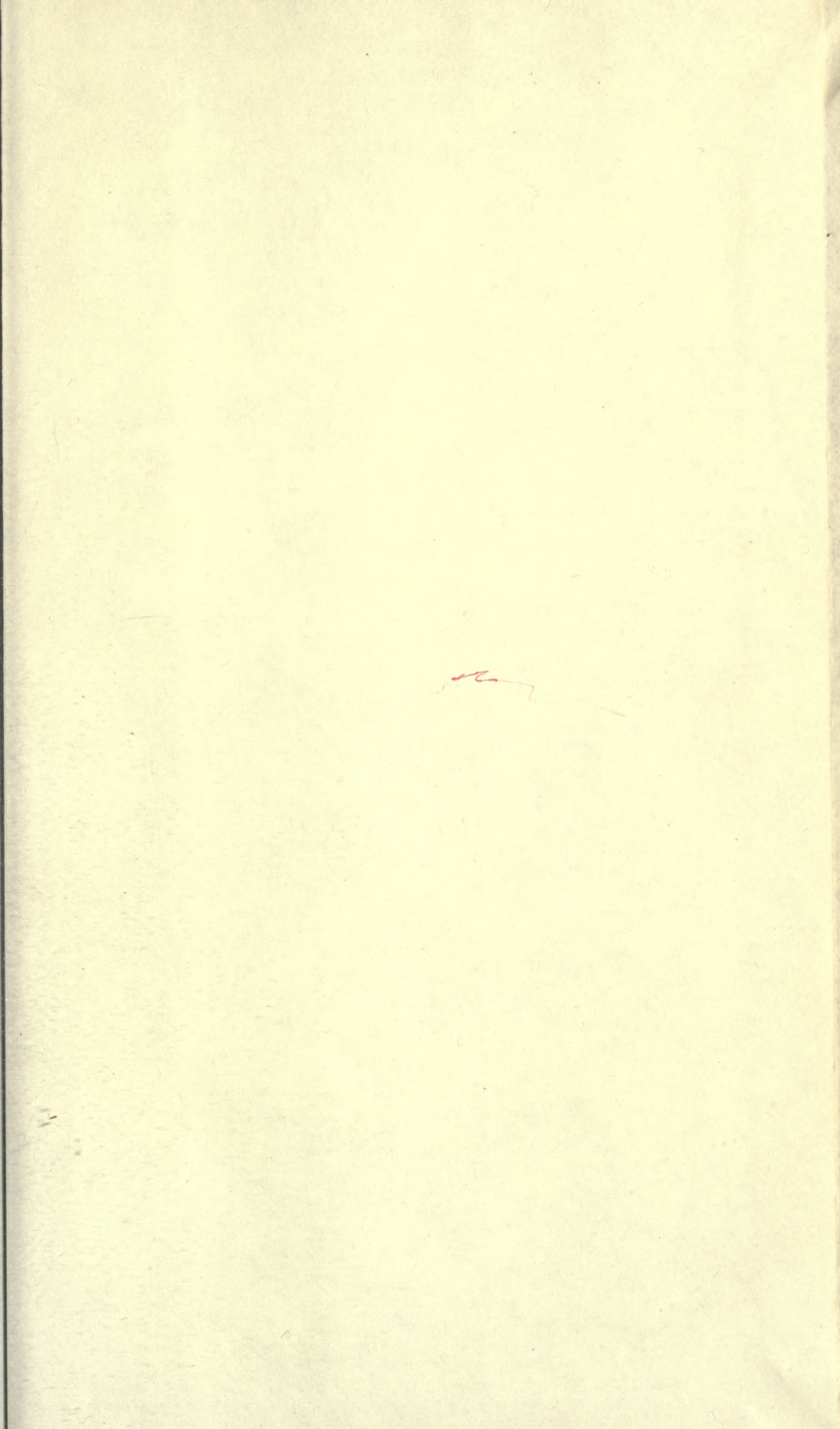
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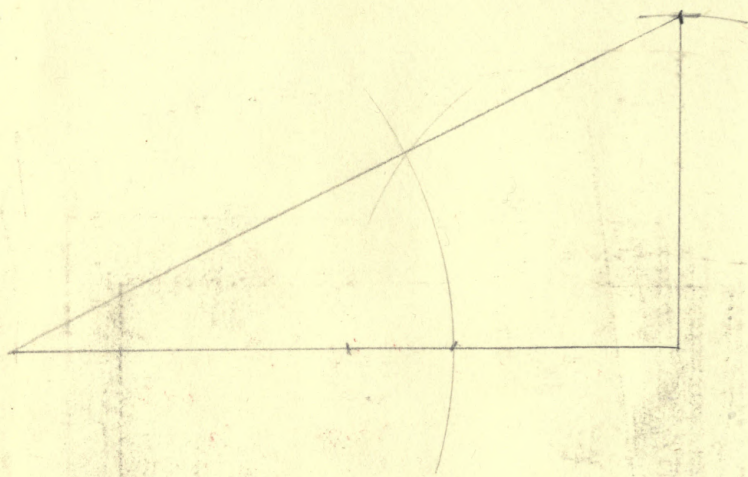
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