GEORG BRANDES

Michelangelo

HIS LIFE
HIS TIMES
HIS ERA

The first
English translation
of a famed
biography by the
great Danish scholar.
"Excellently translated . . .
a work of rare erudition
and eloquence,
a study in the grand manner,
a tremendous tribute
to a titan!"

VIRGINIA KIRKUS

Translated by Heinz Norden

Michelangelo

BY GEORG BRANDES
Translated by Heinz Norden

Publication in English of this classic of biography is a cultural milestone for the art lover, the historian, and the thoughtful reader. The significance of this long-awaited event has been celebrated in these words by the *Virginia Kirkus Service*, America's most respected pre-publication book reviewer:

"The monumental *Michelangelo* of Denmark's Georg Brandes was published in Europe over forty years ago; now at last we have it on these shores, excellently translated in a somewhat abridged, revised and illustrated edition. It is a work of rare erudition and eloquence, a study in the grand manner, combining the discipline of aesthetics, history and psychology, fully encompassing the *furioso* of the master, yet remaining a cool, clear-eyed, highly controlled commentary. It portrays Michelangelo as a proud, passionate, brute-faced man who worshipped "beauty everlasting"; to him man's body was the pinnacle of being, thus he immortalized it in stone. And when, at rare moments, he loved, he tormented and consumed himself in yearning. The Brandes text covers the Medici circle, Florence and Rome, the relationships with Tommaso and Vittoria, the Julius Tomb, the Sistine Chapel, the meeting with Da Vinci, Michelangelo's old age and Christian

continued on back flap

No. ____________

A

Michelangelo

HIS LIFE · HIS TIMES · HIS ERA

by Georg Brandes

Translated and with a Foreword

by Heinz Norden

With 24 halftone plates

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Translator's Foreword

IN AN AGE when even literary works considered great at the time they are published fall into desuetude within a dozen years, it is not often that a biography retains its freshness and authority for more than a generation. Such a judgment may be passed, however, on Georg Brandes' *Michelangelo: His Life, His Times, His Era,* first published in 1921.

Not that it is, in the original version, free of flaws. In minor respects—quotations, references, and the like—the great Danish scholar nodded at times; and there are many occasions when he lapses into irrelevance and needless discursiveness. It is these

irksome blemishes that have kept the work from being offered in an English version.

They have here, we are confident, been removed, to the end of presenting an account of the great Florentine artist meant to be both readable and reliable, while seeking to rival neither such monumental treatments as Charles de Tolnay's or Henry Thode's, nor some recent romanticized journalistic efforts.

J. A. Symonds' oft-reprinted *Life and Works of Michelangelo Buonarroti* still makes pleasant reading, but is completely out of date, never having been revised since its first appearance in 1893. Herman Grimm's *Life of Michelangelo,* published thirty years earlier, is perhaps more satisfactory; but one can scarcely expect a monograph written a hundred years ago not to have been superseded, in many aspects, by more recent researches. Romain Rolland's *Michelangelo,* dating back to 1914 and available in a good English translation, is of little use to serious students. Erwin Panofsky pointed out its shortcomings forty years ago.

In paring and preparing this text for publication, publisher and translator are deeply indebted to the counsel of Ludwig Goldscheider, author of several noted works about Michelangelo, who has also written the article on Michelangelo in the forthcoming new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica.* His judgment is reflected on almost every page of this English version of Brandes' biography.

While the present version departs in some instances from Brandes' original, it is primarily by emendation. Very little had to be amended. Grounded as perhaps few others in a sweeping view of European art and culture, Brandes saw nothing in isolation, everything in context; and his critical judgments and insights remain as valid and meaningful today as when they were written. In his words the sublime, tortured figure of Michelangelo comes alive as never before nor since.

Georg Brandes was born in Copenhagen and died there in 1927 at the age of eighty-five. As a young man he planned a book on Florentine drawings, but abondoned the project after he had be-

come acquainted with the achievements of Bernard Berenson. He was Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Copenhagen, lecturing mainly on modern literature. He is best known for his *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature,* a work now almost forgotten, which exerted enormous influence in its time. He wrote several biographies—of Julius Caesar, Voltaire and Disraeli—but his book on Michelangelo is beyond doubt his biographical masterpiece.

The present English version is based on the German edition, credited to Ernst Richard Eckert as translator. Brandes, however, spent many years in Germany himself (where he was strongly influenced by Nietzsche) and spoke German fluently. Indeed, his own influence on German culture was perhaps deeper and certainly more extensive than in his native Denmark.

Without any prejudice to Eckert, therefore, it may be confidently assumed that the German edition of his work is as authentic as the Danish, directly reflecting Brandes' thinking and style without any language barrier. It is the translator's hope that none has been erected here.

More than twenty of Michelangelo's several hundred poems are cited in this biography. In a few instances literal prose translations meet the biographer's purpose, but on nineteen occasions it seemed appropriate to attempt to give the English-speaking reader an inkling of Michelangelo as a poet.

Translations of poems are always a parlous undertaking, far more so than in the case of prose. It is difficult enough to render meaning and style. Add meter and rhyme, and the task often becomes all but impossible. Hence the old dictum that translations are like women applies particularly to poetry—the beautiful ones are not faithful, and the faithful not beautiful.

Michelangelo the poet offers problems of his own—the very problems of Michelangelo the man and the artist. In many ways, he remains to this day the most compelling poet Italy ever produced. The polished verse of Petrarca has little to say to us today, but Michelangelo, in the words of his contemporary, Sebastiano

del Piombo, "says things, while others merely speak words."

The question of whether he was a "minor poet," as even Brandes, despite his deep appreciation, seems at times to imply—while others have said so outright—is utterly beside the point. Michelangelo's poetic output may have been uneven—what poet's is not? and he himself was modest about it, going so far as to call it "indigestible rubbish"—but it is in fact marked by the same surging, violent power, the bitter austerity, like bleached bones, of his sculpture and his drawings, and it is as much the man.

We read here that his poems passed from hand to hand, that some were set to music in his lifetime, and that whole academic discourses were held on them. Is it conceivable that this was solely because he was then held in such awe as a divine artist? Burckhardt later held Michelangelo's poetry in low esteem; and the early translators seem to have rendered it as through a romantic haze, mainly on the devout premise that everything a great man does, even in a minor key, is of note.

Rilke thought otherwise; and this affinity to the modern poetic idiom is both highly significant and not yet sufficiently recognized, as in the case of much of his art.

For the baffling aspects of Michelangelo's poetry are shared by the sculptures and drawings of his maturity—their fragmentary, half-finished character, their furious striving for expression, rather than impression. He would make four or five successive versions of a poem, but the roughnesses would remain, much as they did in Rembrandt's later etchings, worked over into state after state.

The parallel to the late Michelangelo *Pietàs* is inescapable. The longer he worked on them, the more "unfinished" they grew. His hammer struck whole chunks out of them—and the ruins are more powerful than ever. They shout to us from two right arms, a missing leg, a throat still stuck in the stone.

This paroxysmic quality is conspicuously lacking in many of the English renderings of Michelangelo's poems that have been made—by Wordsworth, Longfellow, Symonds, Newell, Hall and others—most of which, moreover, besides being merely "pretty,"

have become dated, like old dress patterns. This, by the way, is true also of the German translations by Sophie Hasenclever, which Brandes used.

In the case of the sonnets, the translations by Elizabeth Jennings, published in 1961 by the Folio Society, London, perhaps come closest to capturing Michelangelo's harsh elegance; and ten of them are here reproduced in whole or part, by permission (pp. 326–7, 338, 339–40, 344, 352, 353, 371, 374, 375). For most of the remaining poems given, the present translator has prepared new versions (pp. 155, 304–5, 329, 332, 335, 336, 376, 381–2). In one instance (p. 337) a translation by Joseph Tusiani has been used (*The Complete Poems of Michelangelo,* Noonday Press, New York, 1960).

In the chapter on Michelangelo's drawings (pp. 355–380) repeated reference is made to Berenson, the full title being *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters* (Amplified Edition, three volumes, Chicago, 1938; new edition, Milan, 1962), by Bernard Berenson; while there is occasional reference to Frey—*Die Handzeichnungen Michelagniolos Buonarroti* (three volumes, Berlin, 1909–1911), by Karl Frey. One reference is also made to Hill. This is George Francis Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini* (two volumes, London, 1930). The representative selection of illustrations in the present volume is perhaps best supplemented by the more than six hundred reproductions in Ludwig Goldscheider's *Michelangelo Drawings* and *Michelangelo—Paintings, Sculpture, Architecture* (Phaidon Press, 1951 and 1953).

Heinz Norden

London
January, 1963

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London

January, [illegible]

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Prelude

I

W*HOEVER FIRST VISITS ROME*, on a journey to Italy, will see from far off in the Campagna the dome of St. Peter's, rising above the world city like an emblem, soaring aloft—*questa cupola*, fairest on earth, more beautiful than the two without which it could not have been conceived: the domes of the Pantheon in Rome and of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence.

This dome Michelangelo designed, had modeled in wood, when he was past eighty. He never saw it finished—any more than Brunelleschi saw the completion of his Florentine dome, Beethoven heard the Ninth Symphony, or Napoleon beheld the Arc de l'Étoile. It was Giacomo della Porta who built the dome

of St. Peter's. In the course of the centuries it developed more than a hundred cracks, which had to be repaired or covered with sheet iron. They were not Michelangelo's fault.

The majestic sweep of arched lines that stamp this greatest and highest dome in the world we owe to the master himself.

The secret of the singular effect of beauty this edifice exerts rests in its perfect union of form and architecture.

We know that the Roman Capitol in its modern form is, in every essential, Michelangelo's work as well; but for the Age of the Renaissance St. Peter's was what the Capitol was for Antiquity—the place from which Rome was ruled.

Yet the full mastery which Michelangelo unfolded in Rome was primarily that of the painter. Within a single building, the Sistine Chapel, he did the largest and most important work of his life, the ceiling decorations, an everlasting fount of genius, brimming with youthful vigor and mature virility; and again, a generation later, the painting of the Last Judgment, that token of matchless creative skill, coupled with a revulsion of man stronger even than that which found poetic expression in the work of the other great Florentine, in Dante's *Inferno*. More powerfully than in the *Divine Comedy* sorrow and terror here divert interest from the paradisiac. The souls risen from the tomb to enter upon the Kingdom of Heaven—Michelangelo makes them look no less horror-stricken than the sinners hurtling from heaven into the abyss.

We sense it at first glance: the regal heritage of this creator is nobility. His not to woo the heart, nor even less to beguile. His goal is grandeur.

II

Ancient art is fired by a sense of fellowship rather than individuality. We see it most clearly with the Egyptians. But for a

few exceptions, their art is bound to divine worship. It is majestic, without room for the autonomy of the individual—let alone his whims and propensities.

Even in the grandeur of the art of Greece, so utterly does the creator withdraw behind his work that his personality is all but blotted out. When we marvel at the beauty of the Parthenon frieze we are not aware of the personality of Phidias. The work speaks; the artist is silent.

Not so with the art of the Renaissance nor especially with Michelangelo. Throughout his work the stamp of his person is manifest, the pride of his soul, the fierce independence of his mind. Not only is he more individual than any artist of the classic age in Greece; he outdoes all his fellows of the Italian Renaissance.

Like the art of Egypt, that of the Middle Ages was one of ritual, created under hieratic rule. Frozen in Byzantine form or surrendering to the mysteries of inward feeling, it never fails to picture saints, male or female, their thin, slack, shapeless bodies shrouded in long robes. They seem ashamed to have a body, these representations. Like their authors, they know that nature is accursed, the world of the body sinful, and the flesh to be mortified.

From its outset the Renaissance offers a vehement reaction and counterpoise to this approach—but scarcely ever with such power as is Michelangelo's. To him man's body is the pinnacle of being—no sinful clay but the embodiment of beauty, the true and proper object of ideal art.

True, a pagan element is embodied in this reaction against the Christian Middle Ages. In the late Renaissance certain popes—Adrian VI, for example—took umbrage at the unclad youths who teemed on the very ceiling of the Holy Father's private chapel. That sedate Dutchman called the decorations more befitting a bathroom than a place of worship. But the pagan tinge was incidental rather than a deliberate challenge to the Church. It meant merely to break with tradition and, for the rest, was pure enchantment with nature. The most telling proof is that the aged Michelangelo naively went on adding groups—indeed, whole

masses—of nudes to his *Last Judgment,* at a time when the Renaissance was already slipping into the reawakened asceticism and uncreative respectability of the Counter Reformation; and he himself—no doubt mainly under the distracting influence of the devout Vittoria Colonna—was gripped by the rueful piety of the times. Such offense did he give the cardinals and papal officials that they had the nakedness of the saved and damned in his fresco covered over with painted garments.

III

Confronting the art and character of Michelangelo, the modern viewer is commonly struck by three basic aspects.

First comes the fact of nudity. With Michelangelo, expression is not limited to the face but extends to the whole body. Each figure, in displaying its peculiar character, is marked by internal tension rather than arrayed against another. Michelangelo's bodies are ever in motion, and the secret of his management of figures lies in the technical term *contrapposto,* i.e., the principle that one part of the body is twisted in the opposite direction from the other (e.g., the legs to the left, chest and arms to the right). Outdoing the Greeks, Michelangelo emphasizes departure from symmetry in the posing of his bodies, the turn of hip and neck, the division of body surface by the arms. Never was nakedness so charged with expression.

The second aspect to give the modern viewer pause is Michelangelo's penchant for grandeur, in the dual meaning of loftiness and heroic stature. He is sublime even in his twenties, in the *Pietà.* During that same decade of his life his fondness of sheer size emerges in his *David.* He shows a preference for superhuman dimension. Even little David, a mere stripling in the presence of Goliath, becomes a giant. On occasion his urge to outdo nature

transcends all bounds, as when he evinced a desire to carve a whole mountain at Carrara into a statue.

Yet this tendency toward outward size is of secondary importance, often imposed by circumstance. In painting a ceiling at almost dizzying height, one can scarcely resort to miniatures. The figures must be visible, larger and larger. In decorating an immense wall surface, there is little choice but to project the figures—especially those near the top—in superhuman dimensions. Not only must they be seen; they must not, by foreshortening, forfeit interest in comparison with those nearer to the eye. That is why Christ and the Virgin Mary, in the *Last Judgment,* are necessarily huge.

This outward size is immaterial. What matters is the inner grandeur of Michelangelo's soul. Nature he may have worshiped, yet he was anything but a realist, anything but a copier of actuality as were the Florentines before him. From his innermost resources he invests all that he represents with the stamp of his incontestable mastery. His slightest sketch has a life of its own, a freedom from the subject, adds an element from Michelangelo's own sweeping spirit to what is pictured. At no time is he merely natural, merely human, but always at once supernatural, superhuman.

We come to the third noteworthy aspect of Michelangelo's creative humanity. His art has pathos, surges with energy. All within it is passion, fettered or unleashed. Even his lyric moods become dramatic.

At the outset his nature breathes harmony and serenity. His *Pietà* is marked not only by clarity and equipoise but by a quiet gravity that rules out any thought of action. Indeed, the little satyr beside his *Bacchus* has an impish aspect.

But even as his creative character develops, violence bursts forth, sometimes mounting to paroxysm and eccentricity. Yet solemn dignity remains his scutcheon, preserved even in the tempests of passion and the broodings of prophecy, ever alive in inward movement and outward gesture.

IV

Michelangelo is a universe. A lifework such as his is unfathomable without his infinitely complex nature with its powers and foibles, his incredibly versatile genius. It defies comprehension, moreover, without a knowledge of the totality of contemporary Italian culture, creative and literary, without the history and art of Tuscany, without humanism, Ghirlandajo, Lorenzo de' Medici, Bertoldo, the Gardens of San Marco.

Yet even the gates of heaven and hell must turn on hinges, and so must the work of the greatest artist. Two sets of historic circumstances, in particular, form the fulcrum buttressing the essential nature of Michelangelo's art. First is his relationship to antiquity—the sculpture of ancient Rome, the world of ideas of the ancient Greeks. Second is his self-assumed relationship to the Bible, especially the Old Testament, which pervaded his imagination, in contrast to Leonardo da Vinci, who could scarcely distill interest from it.

Two primal forces here affect Michelangelo, Greece and Palestine—Greece through the works unearthed from Italy's soil, the Dioscuri, the torso of Hercules, Laocoön, and countless graven stones; Palestine through the story of the creation, the prophets, the figure of Moses, the legend of the deluge, etc., and not least the stories about Mary and Jesus and the passion and death of Christ.

But the New Testament did not attract him powerfully, for the tender and delicate elements in the protagonist of the gospels were foreign to his nature. Even his Madonnas are never mild. They are grave, proud, melancholy, loving but without tenderness, even while playing with the child. Usually they avert their eyes. What Michelangelo fully encompasses about the Madonna is her attitude of controlled grief as she sits with the body of her

son in her lap. His Christ crucified is one who has been wrongly sentenced, who defies his executioners to the last breath. His Christ risen is not a supernatural being who has soared aloft from the tomb in radiance and serenity but a specter of strength who has burst asunder the stone with a jolt of his shoulders. Twice or thrice Michelangelo has gone amiss with the figure of Christ—in the *Rondanini Pietà,* for example. But the image of Jehovah he has fixed for all time.

Antiquity is the profoundest influence on Michelangelo. His *Kneeling Angel* at Bologna completely follows a Greek Nike in attitude. The posture of his *David* harks back to a carved gemstone of the Medici which Donatello had already followed on a medallion in the Palazzo Medici. His *Matthew* is strongly influenced by the statue of Menelaus which had been given the name "Pasquino" in Rome.

The naked youth to the left above the figure of Joel in the Sistine Chapel reproduces a cameo from the Medici collection. The whole attitude of this seated Apollo with lyre—arms, legs, back—is faithfully followed. Michelangelo's upright *Dying Slave* (Louvre) is strongly influenced by the recumbent figure of the Dying Niobid (Munich). Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan,* her attitude echoed in the figure of *Night* on the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, can be traced to an ancient relief of Leda.

V

We know two versions of Michelangelo's youth and development, by Vasari and Condivi. The latter was directly inspired by the aging master who sought to guard his absolute autonomy by gruff demeanor, unwilling to admit he owed anything to any teacher.

When young Michelangelo was thirteen his father, who had fought against an artist's vocation for the boy as long as he could, took him to Domenico Ghirlandajo, at that time the best teacher of painting Florence could boast. Ghirlandajo was just painting the frescoes in the choir of Santa Maria Novella, a task in which he employed not a few apprentices and assistants to help him. It was there, most likely, that Michelangelo learned the rudiments of fresco painting, an art in which he displayed such astonishing skill when it came to the tasks Julius II put to him.

In his old age Michelangelo bemoaned that he had not been apprenticed to a sculptor at the outset; hence his position as a student of Ghirlandajo must have been something more than an experiment quickly abandoned. We know too that he made his bow as a painter with a copy of Martin Schongauer's engraving, *The Temptation of St. Anthony.* We know, further, that during a break in the work he pictured the scaffolding in Santa Maria Novella with all the students on it; and we read that he once corrected a "drawing error" in Master Ghirlandajo's sketchbook.

Although he later stubbornly insisted that sculpture alone was his *metier,* the lively youth did not leave Ghirlandajo's "school of painting" of his own accord, to become a sculptor. The occasion was a query from Lorenzo de' Medici who was seeking students for a "school of sculpture" he desired to establish in his garden near San Marco. Ghirlandajo chose Michelangelo, who was only thirteen, and his friend Granacci, who was six years older and had almost finished his apprenticeship.

Ghirlandajo may have concluded that a young man with such endowments was not fitted for copying the designs of others. He may have been a little out of sorts with the lad, though one can scarcely put any stock in the envy Michelangelo ascribes to him and, indeed, sensed on every side. In any event, in getting him admitted to instruction in sculpture his good master at the same time opened the doors of the house of Medici to him.

Ten years before, Lorenzo il Magnifico had refurnished the Casino Mediceo in the garden near San Marco, intending it as a

dower seat for his wife, Madonna Clarice. She, however, predeceased him. Since 1488 it had been a villa full of statuary, and it was here that Michelangelo, by his own testimony, received his first and crucial impressions of ancient art. Here stood the works Lorenzo had inherited from his grandfather Cosimo, or had bought, or had received as presents.

Custodian of this collection of sculpture and head of the school was Bertoldo di Giovanni. He was seventy years old when Michelangelo was apprenticed to him and died less than two years later. Lorenzo closely followed the development of the school. He complained that the great sculptors of Florence had passed away, leaving no successors who were their peers.

VI

From the moment Michelangelo first beheld the sculpture collection of the Medici he never again set foot in a painter's studio. The ancient statues held him completely enthralled—those in the garden of San Marco as well as the collection Cosimo had created in the Palazzo Medici. Strolling as a boy through the arbors of San Marco, he looked up at the work of the ancients and felt the urge within him to work in marble. Masons helped him, showed him how to go about it. The good-natured artisans who were building walls and executing the ornamentation of the newly furnished library gave him a chunk of marble and chisels and hammer. He made his first try, the head of a faun.

There is a building in Florence whose threshold none should cross without a sense of awe, the fair yet modest palazzo which the great architect Michelozzo erected for Cosimo. Then the Palazzo Medici, it is now called Riccardi.

At the foot of this house is a broad encircling stone bench. Above it rise three well-proportioned stories. The first consists

of large-sized rough-hewn stone with round-arched gateways. The second is of gray-brown masonry with graceful divided windows, also round-arched. Above a cornice come the windows of the uppermost story, like the second. The beautiful overhanging roof cornice rests on corbels.

This is hallowed ground. It was in this house that modern civilization awakened to life. Here was the center of the town which in all the world then was richest in talent, liveliest in spirit. An inscription over the gate to the courtyard said the house was dedicated to the rebirth of science. Here the boy Michelangelo, maintained by the lord of the house with five florins a month, sat at the table of Lorenzo il Magnifico, and since no etiquette was observed and whoever came first could seat himself beside Lorenzo, Michelangelo quite often managed to preempt this place beside his lord.

Here the youthful genius with the joyless childhood was initiated to the fellowship of the greatest men of the age, listening to scholars and poets of the rank of Marsilio Ficino and Angelo Poliziano. Here he witnessed the most instructive conversation then conducted anywhere. Here the elite of Florence's power and polish were foregathered.

In this house Lorenzo himself showed and explained to the boy his art treasures, his engraved stones and coins. Small wonder the boy could not but look down upon what the painters of Florence had done before his time. There was no way in which the naive and archaic could appeal to him and his contemporaries. He sought perfection and found it first in the antique marbles of the Casino Mediceo and, later, in Rome, in statues like the Pasquino and the torso of Hercules, still later in the Laocoön (dug up in 1506). They filled him with profound awe. They unloosed within him a creative fever that strove for mastery in the representation of the human body with its power, its wealth of tension and conflict, in the representation of life itself, its vigorous, hopeless struggles, its tragic exaltation.

At a later time Roman art and Roman literature began to be held in low esteem, compared to their Greek counterparts. But to Michelangelo this art of Rome *was* Greek, blending with the impressions of Platonic ideas and the Platonic spirit he received from the humanists. And indeed, it was wholly of the essence of Greece.

Decisive for Michelangelo, though he may not have been aware of it, was the immense sense of spiritual liberation this experience conferred upon him, together with a lofty faith in the ideals of Plato: delight in nature, so long damned as heretical, passionate love of the human body, its cunning structure, the marvelous play of its muscles, the hidden structure of its bones; of the whole body as an expression of sorrow and joy, of anger and torment, of power for action and revulsion from environment, of self-awareness, of gratification, of triumph no less than of withdrawal from the world toward inward vision.

VII

Thus equipped with antiquity's weapons of defense and offense, Michelangelo comes face to face with the Old Testament. His finest works arise at the juncture, the crossroads, where Greece cuts across Palestine within his frame of reference. Julius II had marked out the twelve Apostles for the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo replied that as a ceiling decoration these twelve would be *una povera cosa,* a poor thing. Then do as you please! said the Pope. Michelangelo cast out the Christian element.

The intellectual inventory of the time equated pagan sibyls with Hebrew prophets. Michelangelo's indubitable coldness toward woman as a sexual creature vanished whenever she showed herself inspired, touched by divine grace, as the sibyls then were pictured.

And in the nature of things, the figure of the prophet was dear and familiar to Michelangelo; for there was something prophetic within him too—not merely overall in that he was far in advance of the creative trends of his times so that for several centuries all imitated his style, exaggerated his mannerisms, and vainly strove to see with his eyes; but immediately, on a small scale as well. Repeatedly during his nervous crises he had premonitions of things to come.

The pathos that dwelt within his soul was prophetic. To that degree he was akin to some of the major figures of the Old Testament. Agreed, his mind on that account belonged no less to the Italian Renaissance at its peak—pagan, Graeco-Roman. He decorated the Sistine Chapel with swarms of nude youths, fair and vigorous, as though fresh from a palaestra or Greek gymnasion.

To Michelangelo the story of the deluge too is merely a pretext for displaying hordes of nude men and women in violent motion, struggling for survival. In this fashion he forever blends biblical subject matter with a Greek sense of form.

As for prophets and sibyls and indeed the whole substance of Genesis, he had from childhood marveled at Ghiberti's gilt bronze doors in the Baptismal Chapel of Florence; and many a theme from them stuck in his mind. The reliefs on the north portal, less widely esteemed, likewise lodged in his memory. Ghiberti's St. John, lost in deep unworldly brooding, almost gives an inkling of Michelangelo's own Jeremiah.

In a roundabout way his mind was also conditioned by the sight of Giovanni Pisano's pulpit in the Church of Sant' Andrea in Pistoja near Florence. Here pointed arches rise above the columns and, as in the Sistine Chapel, Pisano has crowded the arches with figures that threaten to burst the confined space assigned to them. On the capitals of the columns, moreover, grave, rapt figures stand or crouch, passionately absorbed in some vision, like so many of Michelangelo's prophets and sibyls. Here too their loneliness is underlined by near-by figures or rather heads of

children, to whom they pay no attention. Here too sibyls are already to be found.

Even in the Sistine Chapel itself the finest painters of the fifteenth century had represented carefully and pedantically painted stories from the Old and New Testaments in a row of frescoes winding like a belt about the hall. By ecclesiastic doctrine the main figures were Moses, Christ and St. Peter. And the themes embraced mankind's salvation from sin.

Michelangelo, on the other hand, painted prehistory—how the world was created and how sin came into the world. Here, as in all ecclesiastic spectacles then performed, Creation, the Fall of Man and the Story of Noah formed a trilogy.

When Michelangelo was in Bologna a second time, from February to April 1507, to finish the bronze statue of Julius II, his eyes came to rest every day, as they had ten years before on his first sojourn, on the figures by Jacopo della Quercia on the main doors of the Church of San Petronio, above which his statue was to be mounted. The columns showed soulful depictions from Genesis and the relief figures in the doors themselves prophets from the Old Testament.

VIII

All this is mentioned only for the sake of completeness, to show that precursors had paved the way for Michelangelo. In his case it means very little. Despite certain borrowings from the ancients and from his immediate predecessors, he was an authentic genius, matched in the history of art only by Leonardo and Rembrandt.

More important than his creation of prophets and sibyls is the fact that he created the Creator. No man before Michelangelo had been able to represent the creative power. He could do it because it was his own.

The tremendous creative power that boiled within him found its critical expression, was laid down most strongly, in the four or five versions of the figure of the Creator which have since stood as exemplary for all time, perhaps especially because Raphael at once appropriated the type.

In the course of the centuries the Supreme Being had been often represented in sculpture and painting. The gods of Egypt sat enthroned, frozen in granite or basalt. Buddha was seated on crossed legs, aloof, dispassionate, immobile. The Olympian Zeus of Phidias in quiet sovereignty sceptered a world he had taken over rather than created.

To Italian art of the fifteenth century the figure of God the Father was still an archetype handed down from the Gothic age, a kind of high priest or prime prophet with long, curling hair and beard. His robe fell down to his feet. His expression was sublime but without inner life or animation.

Within Michelangelo the creative urge was at white heat. It burst forth like a torrent, smashing dams and washing all tradition away. His inventive genius, compounded of imagination and calculation, created a throng of three hundred and forty-three human figures on the ten thousand square feet of the Sistine ceiling.

Facing this blank ceiling Michelangelo, who had approached the task with such reluctance, felt altogether incapable of populating these surfaces, of inspiring them with life, of opening them up creatively; and he shaped no God who, the Creation behind him, now rests on the laurels of complacency, but God as world creator, world architect, demiurge.

His God is the Creator, God as the stupendous artist who shapes the universe. In cosmic infinity that knows no bounds, in the primeval dawn of time a mighty God figure is manifested, his countenance turned upward, his hands, raised high above his head, sundering and shaping. He brings order to the primal chaos and light and darkness are divided.

This first achievement, the point of departure, is followed by

the soaring flight of the great and splendid God figure, gliding through the ether, surrounded by little angels hiding in the folds of his robe—God irresistibly commanding with outstretched hands, creating, creating, creating . . . calling forth sun and moon from the infinity of possibilities, setting them and the stars their orbits.

The impression of his flight and of the infinity of space represented in the picture is further enhanced because the figure, scarcely beheld, has already flown on and is now seen from behind as it continues its flight through space with a surging, melodic *allegro furioso.* The beholder is constrained to follow the continuing flight even as he all but loses sight of the figure, soaring on in a passionately executed curve.

A calmer mood informs the great painting where the Lord, slowly drifting above the earth, sunders land from water, the while the rich juices of life seem to drip from his hallowing hands, filling air, earth and sea, conjuring forth plants to grow and enlivening the atmosphere with birds, the ocean with fish, the land with his flora and fauna.

The pinnacle of inspiration is reached when Jehovah, borne up by angels, male and female—Michelangelo, as nearly always, gives them no wings—has lowered himself to the edge of earth and with the index finger of his outstretched arm touches the tip of Adam's outstretched index finger. With this fleeting touch Adam, magnificently built in his nudity, is awakened to life.

What concerned Michelangelo was to show man, created in God's image, as the younger, mirroring the older of whose essence he is made—youthful power, as yet unawakened, contrasted with fully matured power in its awesome grandeur.

Not quite so new and astonishing is the figure of God in the smaller painting of the creation of Eve—the Magus, etched with age, his cloak falling about him in many folds, bringing forth woman from man's side. Yet on the painting of Man's Fall the figure of Eve is overwhelming in its beauty, as she reaches out for

the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge—here a fig rather than an apple. No other woman of Michelangelo's is so straightforward and at once so utterly beautiful in the richness of maturity.

We have seen how Michelangelo was seized by the challenge to represent the creative power he knew within himself as inventive genius.

Michelangelo himself named antiquity as his only taskmistress. Yet we have seen that he did not owe the themes of his main works—*David, Moses,* the Sistine frescoes—to Greek mythology. In the great work he planned but never executed, the tomb of Pope Julius II, he wanted to employ symbols from the triumphal arches of the Roman emperors to glorify a militant but Catholic prince of the church. His great painting of the *Last Judgment* superimposes on the medieval image of resurrection as judgment the reawakening or rebirth of paganism, the representation of the nude human form in all its twists and turns, in every shade of rise and fall. For what we call inventive genius consists precisely in the combining of concepts hitherto separate—and inventiveness is one of the marks of genius. It is an activity of the mind, not mechanical but rather in the main unconscious, inspired, independent of resolutions and systematic procedures.

Audacity, daring is another sign of genius. Who possessed this quality in stronger measure than Michelangelo when he, who heretofore had dealt almost entirely with sculpture, first stretched out on his scaffold beneath the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? His whole body ached from the cramped position. Paint dripped into his eyes. Yet he set out to fill those ten thousand square feet without being able to judge, from his dizzying height, what effect the painting would have on the beholder below.

It was Kant who defined genius. It is that, he said, which in the course of events makes history. If he is right none more deserves the title than Michelangelo.

IX

Genius did not make Michelangelo happy. He was melancholy by nature, somber in mood. He kept people at arm's length, to the best of his ability. Read his confession in one of the late poems: looking back he finds not a single day he could have called his own. All of them he spent in the restless whirl of human passions, to none of which he was a stranger. Everything torments him, first of all the ephemeral character of all life, the general lot of all that is mortal; and then his own mind, his worst tyrant. When he recites the history of his works, it is an unending sequence of obstacles and persecutions.

To posterity it would seem he was endowed with everything. Born a genius of the first water in the town which then was more receptive to art than any other, he lived in a land where the mighty put to him one challenge after another, giving the fullest scope to his talents. He appears at the dawn of antiquity's rebirth, is drawn to the house of Medici, becomes the favorite of one Renaissance pope after another. And yet!

And yet! His was a lonely nature. He neither craved fellowship nor was suited to it. In his *Conversations* with Francisco de Hollanda he is made to say that all eminent men are eccentrics. "Lonely as a hangman," Raphael cried on one occasion—he himself was never seen but with a great retinue of disciples.

Michelangelo was able to create only in solitude. He needed neither counsel nor aid. He tolerated no spectators; hence the scenes with Julius II. And just as he insisted he had never had a teacher, so he never trained a single disciple. He locked away his designs from those who sought to learn from him. His plans miscarried because he tolerated no collaborators about him, only menials.

Michelangelo was not a man endowed with the social graces. In his relationships with people, as in his art, he was *terribile.* Leo X was referring to the difficulties in dealing with him when he said: *Non si può praticar con lui,* there's no getting along with him.

He was the fondest of sons, the most worrisome of brothers—a family man, a true Italian, given to nepotism, like Napoleon after him. But what rancors he maintained with the eminent men of his time! His hatred of the Medici is the height of ingratitude. He loathed Leonardo whose great talents aroused his rivalry. When Leonardo had the misfortune to fail on his first attempt to cast a statue, Michelangelo scored him as a bungler—and soon afterward fate played him the same trick. He loathed Raphael, child of grace and fortune, seeing in him only one who had misappropriated his creative heritage, who had learned all he knew from him.

No, he was not a gracious man; but he was touched with divinity. Homely and proud, he was also timid and shy. He was indifferent to applause, brimful only with his creative power. It was one of the torments of his life that this manner manifested itself only by fits and starts, leaving year-long intervals that were almost barren, during which he dressed blocks of marble or sought diversion by writing verse in the manner of Petrarca.

X

Michelangelo himself maintained that love and beauty were the dominant powers in his life. He constantly wrote poems on the all-embracing power of love. In his old age he wrote: "A thousand times love has forced me under its yoke and exhausted me. Even now that my hair is white, it beckons to me with worthless

promises." The love he meant was not precisely exalted. He confessed innocently: "A fair countenance is my sole joy." His erotic fantasy was easily aroused. The fact that he burned all his youthful poems hints that they may have held testimony to a sensual life of which the old man desired no witness.

Woman as a sexual creature he viewed only as the object of a violent but fleeting flare-up. He complained bitterly about women in his poems.

For the rest his nature concealed an aversion to women. He had been brought up in the church and feared to be drawn into the abyss of sensuality which murdered the soul, as he put it. In his poems an unending struggle rages between sacred and profane love. He speaks slightingly of the love of woman—it was unseemly for a virile spirit. The professions of love in his poems and letters were addressed solely to young men. This too was a source of temptation which at times almost certainly brought him censure, as betrayed in his overwrought verses. They vent an intellectual and creative theory of sensuality: the beauty that enthralled him was, in a sense, a spark struck from the Creator's incandescence.

Among the young men he courted were some of little account and character, like Febo di Poggio; and others of distinction, like Tommaso de' Cavalieri, to whom he remained linked in enduring friendship. The liaisons with Tommaso de' Cavalieri and Vittoria Colonna took form at the same time, as he was nearing his sixtieth year. Both influenced Michelangelo's work in their way. We owe them two groups of works, one of value, the other almost worthless.

With Cavalieri it was Michelangelo who took the initiative. He harbored boundless admiration for the young man, looked up to him, subordinated himself completely. In his verses he speaks of love that tears the entrails from his body. The young Roman replied in tones of courtesy and respect.

With Vittoria Colonna the situation was reversed. It was the

high-born lady who sought the acquaintance of the papal court artist. Aristocratic, highly regarded as a poet, no longer young,* she craved lofty discourse with the master. Tempting the recluse from his lair, she made good friends with him. In 1540, when Michelangelo presented Vittoria Colonna with his first drawing for her, a *Christ on the Cross,* she was almost fifty and he was sixty-five. Love there was none, on either side.

Yet her influence on Michelangelo was baleful. She became the vehicle of the shift in intellectual climate that was sweeping Italy, the Counter Reformation, a form of religious reaction that ultimately engulfed even Michelangelo. Her high estate and repute, the loftiness of her mind attracted him. They wrote each other contrived intellectual verses, without a trace of passion, but pervaded by a quiet warmth. She was intent upon the salvation of his soul and in the presence of the fine and learned lady the great artist who had remained a lover of art and beauty despite Savonarola, winced and rued his worldly cult of beauty. Her personal love of Christ was a phenomenon he had never encountered before.

Under her influence he wrote his last poems, purely religious in content. The drawings dedicated to Cavalieri still deal with themes from Greek mythology, presented with consummate mastery—Tityus devoured by the vulture, the fall of Phaëthon, the Bacchanal of Children—but those for Vittoria are little more than Sunday school pictures, testimony of belated, naive devoutness.**

But Michelangelo, always, by the way, a good Catholic, never became a truly Christian artist. His last great work, *The Last Judgment,* bears witness to the hatred and contempt for man of a tormented mind.

We may think less harshly of Vittoria when we bear in mind

* Her date of birth is not known for certain. It is sometimes given as 1490 and sometimes as 1492.

** *Christ on the Cross,* now in the British Museum, and a *Pietà,* now in the Fogg Art Museum; both drawings are probably originals, but they are not of the highest quality and therefore some critics regard them as copies. A third drawing, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria,* is lost and known only from old engravings.

that it was under the impact of Catholic reaction to Luther and Calvin that Michelangelo undertook the construction of St. Peter's —not for pay but purely to redeem his soul. Its crowning dome, the culmination of his life work, soars about the heart city of antiquity, of the Church, of art, proclaiming his glory *urbi et orbi,* to city and world. We sense that all turns out well—even the meddling of a Vittoria—for him who is beloved of the God of light and art.

Florence

I

THE HISTORIAN IS OFTEN FRUSTRATED, indeed overwhelmed by his insight. Everything is interwoven—the man, the place, the country; art, state and society; war and politics; politics and intellectual life; intellectual life, architecture and painting. All is indivisible. Yet unless he is to drown in the morass of facts he must divide. Even the peerless does not stand alone. To comprehend him requires a grasp of ten thousand premises.

Like every other eminent mind, the genius of Michelangelo has progenitors. It cannot be understood without a close study of Florence. Its swift unfolding was possible only because the Medici clan had gathered about it the entire intellectual life of

Florence, all its monuments of the past. Michelangelo might have become another, lesser man, or reached his greatness later, had not a genius like Lorenzo de' Medici sponsored the boy.

Not since the great age of Athens had a town left so epoch-making an impress on the history of art as did Florence.

II

Florence was never the capital of Italy, any more than Athens was ever the capital of ancient Greece. (Not to put too fine a point on it, for a bare six years, from 1865 to 1870, Florence *was* the capital, but that was in modern times, in a century when the city's repute and vitality could scarcely compare with its past glory.) Moreover it lacked the conditions for ever becoming the fountain-head of a great country. It was located neither on the sea nor even on a navigable river.

The time of its greatness falls neither into the Roman Empire nor the modern Kingdom of Savoy. It extends roughly from 1250 to 1530.

As in all such cases the inherent vitality of the people of Florence was first manifested in shifting internal struggles. The parties of the aristocracy hated and exterminated one another and involved the commoners in their feuds. From 1215 onward deadly enmity prevailed between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, the papal and imperial parties. The bloodiest of civil wars immediately preceded Florence's time of greatness.

As early as the twelfth century there was a *Signoria* and a large council. Later the city was governed by a *Podestà,* elected for six months or a full year. Each quarter had its own militia company headed by a standard-bearer (*Gonfaloniere*), with overall leadership vested in a Captain of the People (*Capitano del Populo*). To him was entrusted the people's banner, originally show-

ing two fields, white and red. Lilies were later added, first white on red, then red on white.

In 1258 the leaders of the Ghibelline party, in league with Manfred, son of Emperor Frederic II, tried to overthrow the constitution. The effort miscarried and the Ghibelline partisans fled to Siena. When Manfred's troops subsequently carried the day, the leading Guelphs had to emigrate to Lucca and Bologna; but a bare six years later Manfred fell at Benevento and in 1267 the Ghibellines and Germans left the city.

III

The people put their political and military house in order as well as they could. The year 1250 saw the establishment of the guilds which in the course of time were to play so important a role in the city's artistic embellishment. The original seven guilds embraced judges and notaries, merchants, wool weavers, money changers, silk spinners, physicians and apothecaries, and tanners. Gradually fourteen smaller guilds were added to these seven great ones.

Following the devastating effect of that bloody massacre, the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, on the influence of the House of Anjou, the power of the bourgeoisie grew. The guilds were now headed by *Priori*, and members of the nobility had to apply for membership if they wanted to qualify for public office. A *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia* or Standard-Bearer of Justice was appointed to command the militia of several thousand which marched behind a banner showing a red cross on a white ground.

Priori as well as *Gonfalonieri* were elected, but as the Medici waxed in power, the elections became mere show. Nominations were made by a body composed of friends of the city's real overlord. One provision making it easier for him to reserve the plums

for his followers was the debarment from all public office of citizens who had been officially reprimanded for some offense or other. There was still another way of circumventing the law, tolling the great bell to summon the citizens to a council meeting where they would be challenged to approve changes in the constitution (*balia*). Since care was taken to encircle the square with armed men, the vote was always a foregone conclusion.

It will be seen that even before the time of the great families republican Florence did not enjoy an ideal state of liberty. Its belated maunderings over freedom lost were largely self-deception and affectation.

The name of Medici emerges early. As early as 1291 an Ardingo de' Medici was *Prior* and soon afterward *Gonfaloniere.* In 1378 Salvestro de' Medici sought to weaken the forces of reaction but met with small success. Some aristocrats foiled the effort by inciting the ignorant and unlettered mob to do their dirty work by means of a bloody uprising.

The Albizzi family then seized the helm and all power lay in the hands of the well-born. Yet in the course of time Salvestro de' Medici did succeed in making his family popular among the people. He greatly increased his revenues during the riots by renting the stalls on the Ponte Vecchio which then as now gave the bridge its unique character.

IV

Unlike its rival cities Pisa, Lucca and Siena, Florence had no port. Yet through its commerce and industriousness it far outdid them. The great guilds formed a financial aristocracy while most of the old families grew impoverished. At an early date the wool weavers controlled the foreign markets, as did the money changers the foreign banks. Then there were the silk spinners and merchants, likewise dealing in imported goods.

In the seventy years before 1330 the Order of the Humiliati, summoned from Lombardy, instructed the Florentine wool guild in the manufacture of woolens. The Arno was lined with workshops, dyeplants and warehouses, where the monks had drained and prepared the ground. Homespun soon gave way to the finer woolens, once imported from the Levant. The wool itself came from France, Flanders, England, Scotland. As early as 1280 the Florentines were in touch with several hundred monasteries abroad from whom they bought their wool.

Associated with the woolen guild was that of the merchants. Since the domestic cloth output was inadequate, French and Flemish fabric was imported in bulk, dyed, processed and cut in Florence, and then reexported. In 1338 the number of workshops (*botteghe*) of the wool guild was given as two hundred, with an annual income of 1,200,000 gold florins from seventy to eighty thousand bolts of cloth. Among the owners of shops such names are listed as Acciaiuoli, Alberti, Albizzi, Bardi, Buonacorsi, Capponi, Corsini, Peruzzi, etc.—names that crop up again and again in the course of the centuries and survive in Florence even today.

Next to cloth-making silk-spinning was extremely lucrative. The *arte della seta* (Guild of Silk) is often bracketed with the *arte della lana* (Guild of Wool). Crimson-colored silk was especially sought after.

It was the trade of money-changing, however, that was to assume the greatest importance for Florence's prosperity. As early as the thirteenth century Florentine bankers were at the court of Henry III in London, and they were by then managing the financial affairs of the papal court. Beyond the borders of Italy the names Tuscan and Lombard were early synonyms for banker.

These bankers, however, were ready prey to the greed of royalty which was fond of fleecing them. In 1277 King Philip of France extorted 120,000 gold florins from the Florentine money-changers, using as a pretext an ordinance against usury which his council had decreed. A real disaster was the bankruptcy proclaimed by Edward III of England by decree of May 6, 1339. The

firms of the Bardi and Peruzzi had granted him huge loans, to the tune of 1,355,000 gold florins, a "king's ransom" indeed, as the historian Villani, who lost his whole fortune in the process, put it. Bonifazio Peruzzi hastened to London to save what he could, but he died there the following year, apparently of grief.

Failures, impoverishment and famine followed. The city was ravaged by bands of marauding mercenaries and, in 1347 and 1348, by the Black Death which forms the background for Boccaccio's Decameron.

V

Yet by the beginning of the fifteenth century trade and commerce were once again flourishing. The Visconti of Milan had threatened Florence and invaded Tuscany, but in 1402 Gian Galeozzo Visconti's death rid Florence of Milan's rivalry. The other great competitor was Pisa; but in 1406 that city, after heroic resistance, succumbed to Florentine arms. Its fall removed the last obstacle to Florentine shipping. Branches were established in London and Bruges, in Avignon, Nîmes, Narbonne, Carcassonne and Marseilles, in Venice, Capua and Palermo. Tuscan traders settled on Majorca and in Tunis, on Rhodes and Cyprus, in Asia Minor, the Crimea, Armenia, even deep in North China.

Caution and calculation were the foundation of the city's power. It is not certain that the Florentines actually invented the bank draft but in any event, they knew how to use it. The due date was dependent on distance. For Pisa and Venice it was five days, for Genoa fifteen, for Naples twenty, for England seventy-five, for Spain ninety.

In 1422 there were seventy-two bankers' offices on the *Mercato nuovo* and it was calculated that two million gold florins were in circulation.

Enemies and sometimes even friends were always fond of describing the people of Florence as an avaricious, ungrateful and capricious tribe of merchants and craftsmen. Yet the city's community spirit was in proportion to its wealth. A decree of 1294, while of disputed authenticity, doubtless expresses the spirit of the times. It enjoins the architect Arnolfo to prepare the model of a cathedral "of such splendor that the human mind shall be able to contrive nothing greater or finer, since it befits a people of noble blood to order their affairs in such manner that their nobility and lofty sentiments shall be evident in their works." In 1296 legacies to the cathedral were made obligatory.

In 1334 Giotto was appointed chief architect of the city walls and other community structures, especially the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral, and four years later funds were appropriated to "carry to completion in a finer style the work so auspiciously begun." It was the will of the *Signoria* that public works should proceed in appropriate and exemplary fashion, "and this can be insured only by putting an experienced and renowned man in charge, and to this end none in the world can excel Messer Giotto di Bondone of Florence, the painter, whom the city of his birth receives in love and will honor as the great artist he is."

This was done two years before Giotto's death. His memory is honored by a monument in the Duomo on which he had worked.

The people of Florence themselves, unlike the man in the street today, were creatively endowed. They knew how to appreciate things with the senses rather than through the intellect. Like the people of ancient Greece, they had eyes to see. They thought in visual rather than intellectual terms, aided by highly developed powers of the imagination.

Their imagination ran to sculpture and painting, and love of imagery was their religion. They doted on parades, cavalcades, triumphal arches, tournaments, ecclesiastic spectacles, processions, festive garb for man and horse, moving tableaux.

The marvelous artists of the *quattrocento* sprang for the most part from humble origins—peasants, craftsmen, masons. Paolo

Ucello was the son of a barber, Filippo Lippi's father was a butcher, the brothers Pollaiuolo came from a family of poultry dealers. They leave school at the age of seven to nine, barely able to read and write. They become apprentices in a *bottegha*. Then, for six years, they learn to draw, to distinguish colors and mix pigments, to paint and carve. From *discepoli* they grow into *ragazzi* and ultimately *maestri*. But they are always regarded as craftsmen. *Arte* means craft rather than art.

VI

Most of the streets were paved with large stone tiles which had superseded the former cobblestones. The new type of paving supposedly began between 1250 and 1300. Stone from the hills near San Giorgio was used or from other near-by places like the quarries at Fiesole and Golfolina. In 1351 the Piazza della Signoria was paved. It was emphasized that paving the square before the seat of government was a matter of prestige for the whole city.

About this time Giotto's disciple, Taddeo Gaddi, gave Or San Michele its present aspect. The structure was oratory below, grain loft above. In 1339 that same master had given the Ponte Vecchio its present form.

The guilds were deeply involved in the erection of Or San Michele. The woolen guild ran the work on Santa Maria del Fiore, beside the cathedral building commission proper, the *Opera del Duomo*.* Occasionally it was necessary to divert funds (for example, those earmarked for the bell-tower, the *campanile*) to the defense of the city or the repair of the walls. But work went on steadfastly. In 1360 the long dormant work of rearing the walls of Santa Maria del Fiore was resumed and in 1364 the vaulting was begun.

* *Opera* is the office, *operai* are the authorities in charge of it.

A generation later the first steps were taken to erect the dome and sacristy; but the undertaking did not get fully under way for another twenty-five years. In 1418 a contest was held for models of the dome. A commission composed of four highly placed citizens (*officiales cupolae*) was instituted, and in April 1420 Filippo Brunelleschi, Lorenzo Ghiberti and Battista d'Antonio were given the office of *proveditore,* supervisors of the edifice.

In Rome Brunelleschi had gained an appreciation for the plain and harmonious forms of ancient architecture, in contrast to the less uniform and more arbitrary character of Italian Gothic. The greatest work of the times, the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, represented a compromise between mechanical limitations and the newly awakened sense of beauty, grandeur and spaciousness.

The lantern crowning the dome, begun after a model by Brunelleschi, was not completed until 1461, fifteen years after the death of its creator.

VII

The imposing work was carried out under the rule of the Albizzi, a family of Florence's nobility. After Maso degli Albizzi's death, Niccolò da Uzzano, a shrewd and reasonable man (whose head Donatello has rendered unforgettably for posterity), stepped up to head the ruling party.

It was then that the house of Medici began to work its way upward. Giovanni dei Bicci, its founder, was a financier with a talent for turning to his profit every chance then presenting itself for the accumulation of a fortune. Most of the great financial transactions at the Council of Constance (1414–1418) passed through his hands, insofar as they concerned Italy, and this is said to have earned him huge sums. Then too, he and others drew great profit from Florence's acquisition of Livorno.

An open-handed man, he commissioned Filippo Brunelleschi to draw up a plan for the church of San Lorenzo, which was soon regarded as the family church of the Medici, and in the New Sacristy of which Michelangelo was later to immortalize the family name. In 1421 seven other families were still sharing sponsorship of the building with the Medici.

That same year Giovanni became *Gonfaloniere*. He was unacceptable to the ruling party of the Optimati, but Niccolò da Uzzano was able to prevent hostilities on that account. Giovanni opposed all unpopular measures—the reduction of the small guilds proposed by Rinaldo degli Albizzi as well as the incomprehensible tax demands being put forward.

The pressure from arbitrarily levied taxation, for which the wars and the loans to pursue them were responsible, had grown so harsh that one contemporary chronicler advised his son how to protect himself against the unfair impost. He was to invest his funds in such a way that they could not be touched—in the form of dowries, by signing them over to reliable men, putting them into foreign trade. He even proposed that the money be taken to Genoa or Venice, sewn up into clothing, or simply hidden in Florence.

VIII

The Loggia de' Lanzi was begun in 1376 and gradually completed. Every show house then boasted an open hall where friends and relatives could foregather. It was this custom that the *Signoria* now adopted. Leone Battista Alberti later reported that the streets and gates were studded with such *loggie* where one could escape the heat and transact business. When customs changed, the open arches were bricked up and the houses thus enclosed.

The paving of Florence, a feast for the eyes and a boon to the

feet even today, proceeded apace—the squares of Santa Annunziata, Santa Maria Novella and San Marco—work on the last-named being done by the Serving Brothers, who asked the city for a subvention, in view of the many visitors who flocked to the miraculous image in the church.

Beginning with the second decade of the fifteenth century, many fine houses were built in Florence. That of Niccolò da Uzzano, in the Via de' Bardi, probably dating from 1420, is plain in aspect but magnificent in proportion. Then there is the palazzo of the Bardi in the Via del Fosso, with columns after ancient models, then an innovation, plain windows and an old-fashioned wooden roof projecting far outward. Finally there is the house of the Albizzi in the street also bearing their name (Borgo d'Albizzi, an extension of the Via del Corso), where one palazzo jostles the next, none coming into its own within the confined space.

From 1373 onward public readings and commentaries of Dante's Divine Comedy were held "to set our fellow citizens on the path of virtue and guard them against vice."

In 1421 the Orphanage was built with money provided by the silk weavers' guild, its inscription saying that this fine house served to receive those bereft of father and mother, against the order of nature.

In Lorenzo Ghiberti the school of Giotto is still discernible. His treatment of relief is pictorial, though he approaches the ancient style that had emerged a century and a half earlier with Niccolò Pisano. Only a little younger than Ghiberti was Donatello, less poetically disposed and seldom displaying as much veneration of beauty, but more realistic and not so much influenced by ancient sculpture, of which Rome as yet boasted preciously little. As a boy of seventeen he had been apprenticed to Ghiberti, who at that time was working on the first door of the Baptistry.

Like Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and Donatello had originally been goldsmiths, and it was from this craft that they moved on to sculpture. It was in 1403 that Ghiberti was commissioned to do

the first of his bronze doors. It took twenty years to complete. In 1424 he was given the second door of the Baptistry to do. He completed that masterpiece twenty-eight years later, three years before his death. In 1414 and 1420 he executed his two statues of St. John and St. Stephen for the niches in Or San Michele.

IX

Ghiberti made two statues for the niches of Or San Michele, and Donatello made two; but neither of these ranks for modern visitors beside Donatello's third statue for Or San Michele, the St. George, which he seems to have begun in his thirtieth year, i.e. in 1416. (The statue is now in the Bargello Museum at Florence.)

More than five hundred years have passed since this statue was created, yet it is as fresh today as the day it was finished. It is surely Donatello's most inspired work, quite free of those labored qualities that sometimes mar his style. In airy grace it even excels his excellent statues in the niches of the bell-tower of Santa Maria del Fiore.

Since the commission came from a guild, a popular rather than an official body, the work breathes the fresh air of the people. It is no set piece but an open-air monument of popular art and civic spirit.

Seen in historical perspective, the statue of St. George is a monument of the war-torn age that preceded Donatello's childhood in Florence. This proud youth with the long Florentine neck is a true compatriot of the man whose chisel gave him life. All the surging power and unbounded self-assertion of the Renaissance is embodied in the valiant young warrior. Unarmed but care-free, with raised and furrowed brow, he attentively awaits the coming of his dragon. His shield is casually held by a few fingers of his left hand, while his right arm dangles idly by his

side. His whole attitude is defensive, but his gaze is sullen and angry. It is the expression of his face alone that is awesome. The statue as a whole gives a compact, sturdy, enduring effect, but the facial expression lends wings to this architectural massiveness, instilling life even into the static elements—shield, breast plate, brassarts, greaves. He stands there firmly, St. George, the epitome of noble warrior youth, the ideal of heroism in shining armor. Clearly he was commissioned by a guild of armorers. Harmoniously he blends the chivalry of the Middle Ages with the serenity of antiquity and the aristocratic spirit of the Renaissance.

X

We can scarcely help dwelling on Donatello as an individual artist, in this broad outline of the Florentine background, without which Michelangelo cannot be understood. It was Donatello, par excellence, who provided one of the earliest influences during Michelangelo's development as a sculptor. His earliest work in this field, the *Madonna of the Stairs* in low bas-relief (ca. 1491), is strongly reminiscent of Donatello in style. Individual as is his *David* (1501–1504), in expression as in its glowering poise it harks back to the St. George of Or San Michele.

In a sense Donatello's tomb of Cardinal Rinaldo Brancacci in the Church of Sant' Angelo a Nilo in Naples is a foretaste of Michelangelo's style. It is plainer, more guileless than anything Michelangelo did, yet the whole approach of his mind is, as it were, rolled up in it. Compare Michelangelo's *Moses* with Donatello's *John the Baptist,** carved about a century before and a masterpiece of its time, and it is seen to be almost a sketch for the *Moses*—the seated posture, the attitude of the left arm, the long beard. What Michelangelo added was the crucial element

* Commissioned for a niche on the façade of the Florence Cathedral; now in the Museo dell' Opera, Florence.

of passion that enhances, emphasizes, animates, exaggerates everything—horns grow from the hair, the beard billows downward, the brow is furrowed, sending out lightning flashes—one feels it, the seated figure will leap up in a moment.

About 1420 Fra Angelico entered his novitiate in the Dominican monastery of Fiesole. Florence holds many of his sensitive paintings—in San Marco, the Accademia, Santa Maria Novella—but perhaps even more important is his *Christ Sitting in Judgment,* in the chapel of the Madonna di San Brizio in the Cathedral of Orvieto (1447), the figure from which Michelangelo later borrowed the gesture with which Jesus, in his *Last Judgment,* spurns the damned.

Curiously, the decorations in this chapel at Orvieto were completed by an artist who was as different from Fra Angelico as it is possible to be, yet who likewise now and then exerted an important stimulating influence on Michelangelo—Luca Signorelli. Among other things his frescoes, completed in 1505, show the dead rising from the grave on the day of judgment. His study of the human body and its play of muscles without question contains elements that Michelangelo remembered when he embarked on his work of painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in 1508.

In 1422 Gentile da Fabriano and Masaccio were entered in the Florentine register of painters. About three years later Masaccio began his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine and effected a complete revolution in Italian painting. His tremendous powers of representation influenced the art of Italy throughout the fifteenth century, including the giants of the age, Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael.

XI

Besides the vices for which Dante censured them, the citizens of Florence possessed rare civic virtues. Over extended periods

of the Renaissance, Florence was not behind Venice in clear judgment and firmness of will.

Despite forever recurring political unrest and revolution the people of Florence were frugal and hard-working and registered steady progress. They lived and ate simply though they valued a display of splendor during official festivities. Beginning in 1288 there were horse races during the carnival season, as in Rome. Prizes consisted of great pieces of gold or silver brocade. The most munificent popular festivals were celebrated on May 1 and tournaments were frequently arranged. Music was held in high esteem and there was a surfeit of trumpeters and other musicians.

Such were the customs in pre-Medici times. Rome and Naples were fond of mocking Florentine thrift, but neither Romans nor Neapolitans traded in Florence, while their own commerce was almost entirely in Florentine hands. Now that the warlike times of the Farinati, Cavalcanti and Donati were past, the citizen rather than the valiant warrior represented the ideal, at once lord, statesman and patron of the arts, without on that account neglecting his concern for his revenues.

Luxury was not pursued in private life, but such was the growth of the city that public buildings, ecclesiastic or secular, were given a monumental aspect pleasing to the eye. The municipality was as open-handed as the citizen was frugal. A carefully observed tradition manifested itself in an architecture of essentially harmonious character, despite a broad range in style. Most streets remained narrow and there was no overabundance of squares, but both were well paved, while for decades to come the Romans still had to wade through dust and mud.

For the most part the houses were stately and solid, and the city was encircled by a wall with towers and mighty gates, of which but one survives. Citizens who insisted on having overhanging upper stories that darkened the street below were heavily taxed.

Beyond the gates lay hospitals and hostels for lepers, and others afflicted with contagion who were not allowed inside, but

whom the citizens showed generous charity. The number of monasteries outside the walls kept growing, on the hills and at the bridges spanning the river.

The surrounding countryside provided a handsome setting. Even in Dante's time there were many villas about Florence—Boccaccio has described the rustic life led in the city's environment. Ariosto wrote that were the many villas enclosed by a wall, it would delimit an area twice the size of Rome. These Florentine villas were usually built like fortresses and did yeoman service in the numerous campaigns against neighboring towns and foreign mercenaries.

XII

Cosimo, founder of the House of Medici, was born on September 27, 1389, the day of Saints Cosmas and Damian. He was named after the former of the two, who remained the patron saints of his house and hence are to be found in Michelangelo's chapel of the Medici, the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence. The family motto ran: *Per San Cosma e Damiano/ Ogni male sia lontano.* (By Saints Cosmas' and Damian's might/ May all evil hence take flight.)

Cosimo was marked for a business career but received a well-rounded education. Trained in agriculture, he had a penchant for science and literature. At the age of twenty-four he took a wife from the house of Bardi, originally of lesser status but then numbered among the nobility.

When Pope John XXIII was persuaded to attend the Council of Constance, Cosimo was among his traveling companions, probably as a financial adviser. The Council deposed the Pope and held him prisoner in Heidelberg until payment of a high ransom. Pope Martin V took his place. The Medici offered refuge to John

XXIII in Florence. Giovanni di Bicci, Cosimo's father, was one of the executors of his last will. His fine monument stands in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo.* Significantly enough this friendly relationship with John XXIII in no way prevented a later relationship of equal friendliness with the Counter Pope, Martin V.

After the fall of John XXIII Cosimo had left Florence in disguise and spent several years in Germany and France. He was then recalled, appointed Florentine ambassador to Milan, Lucca and Bologna, winding up in the same capacity in Rome in 1426.

At his father's death Cosimo was forty years old. He had shown himself to be shrewd, vigorous and cautious and seemed destined to become leader of the opposition to the party of the Optimati which was headed by Rinaldo Albizzi, Niccolò da Uzzano and Palla Strozzi. Giovanni di Bicci had always shunned the role of a party leader, and Cosimo followed in his father's footsteps.

Prior to the Medici the Albizzi had been the most renowned, if not the most powerful clan. Since 1282 ninety-eight of its members had sat in the council of *Priori* and fourteen had been *Gonfalonieri.* Following a brief period of exile, they had been recalled in 1381. The last of them to rule as a dictator—with great cruelty, by the way—was Maso (Tommaso) degli Albizzi, who died in 1417. His son Rinaldo, who had been employed as an ambassador and in half a hundred other public offices throughout Italy, was a man of justice but also of arrogance. As long as he had the clever and moderate Niccolò da Uzzano by his side, the rivalry between Rinaldo and Cosimo was kept in leash.

The equilibrium in Florence was upset when, following Uzzano's death, Rinaldo sought to chastise Lucca, which had sided with the Visconti in Milan. The Florentines failed in their endeavor, and their great architect and military engineer Brunelleschi forfeited his reputation when the siege miscarried.

In 1433 Cosimo was summoned before the *Signoria* and there detained as a prisoner. The substance of the indictment was trea-

* In the style of Donatello; now usually attributed to the adoptive son of Brunelleschi, Andrea da Buggiano.

son during the war against Lucca. Cosimo's friend, Niccolò da Tolentino, took the field against Florence but bethought himself and desisted from intervention. Cosimo saved himself by bribing the *Gonfaloniere*. He was exiled to Padua for ten years, his brother Lorenzo to Venice for five. But in Padua as in Venice Cosimo was received with such honors as though he were an ambassador rather than an exile.

His banishment barely lasted a year; for when Rinaldo degli Albizzi sought to maintain himself by force of arms, the *Signoria* tolled the bells in alarm. He and seventy of his adherents were banished, while Cosimo and his friends were recalled.

To avoid attracting undue notice, Cosimo rode home by a side road and went to the Palazzo Vecchio rather than to his home, where a crowd was awaiting him. The city held its peace, and henceforth the house of Medici was at its helm. On January 1, 1435, Cosimo became *Gonfaloniere*.

XIII

Cosimo's political life was filled with plans for gaining power over those regions of Tuscany still independent and for attaining supremacy in the Romagna at the expense of Venice, a policy that kept alive the rivalry between Florence and Venice.

By 1464 he sensed that death was approaching. Gout, the family ailment of the Medici, was causing him more and more suffering. During the entire period of his quiet rule in Florence, he had remained citizen, merchant and especially gentleman farmer; for as already indicated he was thoroughly grounded in agriculture, knew himself how to plant and graft. By means of his bank, he controlled the money market, not only in Italy but throughout western Europe. The villa in Careggi was his favorite residence, as it was to be later on for all the Medici.

Cosimo had much on his conscience. To insure God's mercy in the hour of death and enter heaven rather than hell, there was one effective means in that age: the building of churches and monasteries. Fortunately God, as though paving the way for a reconciliation, had let Cosimo grow up in the intimate company of Michelozzo and Brunelleschi. Both of Michelozzo's sons, moreover, went in and out at the Palazzo Medici. A Michelozzo became Lorenzo's chancelor, another provided him with books from Greece. Lorenzo was generous toward talented youth.

According to Condivi, Michelangelo's early biographer, Lorenzo gave Michelangelo *una buona camera in casa, dandogli tutte quelle comodità ch'egli desiderava nè altrimenti trattandolo, si in altro, si nella sua mensa che da figliuolo.* (A good room in the palace, and he was supplied with everything he required, and was treated in other respects as well as at table no otherwise than if he were his son.)

XIV

At the time of Cosimo's death, his son Piero was forty-eight years old, in fragile health, a man of little stature though not without talent. He lacked his father's political acumen.

In Lucrezia Tornabuoni he had a competent wife, whose family, under the name of Tornaquinci, belonged to the oldest nobility of Florence. Since these ancient families had been excluded from public office in 1293, Simone Tornaquinci changed his name to Tornabuoni about the year 1400 and went over to the popular party where he attached himself to the house of Medici. The family had extensive land holdings.

Lucrezia, a vigorous chatelaine who also wrote poetry and retold biblical tales, was acquainted with diverse contemporary writers and, for the rest, concerned herself with the education

and training of her eldest son Lorenzo. Sedately Christian, she was sufficiently open-minded to cultivate so irreverent a scoffer as Luigi Pulci, with whom, indeed, she was on such familiar terms as to exert an influence on his long poem, *Morgante Maggiore,* with its blend of religion and burlesque, of austere devotion and unrestrained ribaldry.

Among her friends was Angelo Poliziano, the impoverished son of a jurist, who had implored Piero de' Medici's aid against enemies persecuting him but had soon afterward been murdered. The son chose the name by which history knows him from the town of his birth. He proved deeply devoted to the Medici family and was, in his whole attitude, a true humanist.

Italy had long yearned for a "Latin Homer," to be able at last to appreciate the renowned supreme epic of ancient Greece. Poliziano was able to complete the translation of only the second and third books of the Iliad, but these two cantos serve as an earnest of his skill. In 1483 he held a course of lectures on the philosophy of Aristotle in Florence. A curious introduction to them bears the title *Lamia* (the Witch) and represents a bit of Renaissance humor poking fun at witchcraft. The witches, we read, had cast a spell over Poliziano with artificial eyes because he, the lyric poet, would fain pretend to be a philosopher.

Lorenzo was odd in appearance—tall, well-built, pale, black of hair, rather hoarse of voice. His features were far from beautiful yet, in their way, more than fair. The shape of his head betokened strength. His hair, worn long as was the custom of the time, was thick, his nose flattened, his mouth prognathous and firmly set. His chin bespoke willpower. Oddly enough in a man whose senses and intellect were so strongly developed, he had no sense of smell.

His education was first entrusted to Gentile de' Becchi of Urbino, Bishop of Arezzo, a learned and intelligent man who maintained relations with the writers of his time, all the way from Francesco Filelfo and Marsilio Ficino to others less widely known. The curriculum was strict and included several hours of religious worship each day. Mother Lucrezia, moreover, took care that

Lorenzo was also inured to good works. She made him grant dowries to indigent girls, give money to convents in need—in short, she taught him how to employ this means too for ingratiating the house of Medici among the people and with the church.

In athletic prowess Lorenzo was soon ahead of the boys of his age. He was above all a first-rate horseman and connoisseur of horse flesh. His younger brother Giuliano too—a fair youth of artistic talent—soon became a skilled athlete. Their elder sister Bianca married Guglielmo de' Pazzi, member of a family whose harsh treatment by, and resultant enmity against, the Medici was soon to bring about a crisis. The families of Pazzi and Medici were equally renowned—besides being related. Guglielmo, who married Bianca, was Piero's nephew.

The clash between the Pazzi and the Medici was preceded by a partisan struggle between the Pitti and the Medici or—as it was put—between Hill and Plain (*del Poggio e del Piano*), since the houses of Luca Pitti lay on the slopes of San Giorgio and those of the Medici in the level part of town. The Pitti were then flirting with the famed *condottiere,* Bartolommeo Colleoni of Bergamo. The ensuing struggle led to the defeat of the Hill Party whose leaders—with the sole exception of Luca Pitti—had to go into exile.

Louis XI of France, in evidence of his good will toward the Medici, in 1465 granted Piero the privilege of displaying the French *fleur de lys* in his arms, and henceforth the Medici scutcheon flaunted three golden lilies on a blue ground in its chief. The exiles incited new uprisings, and Venice sought to use Colleoni to install a Florentine government dependent on the Venetians. The year 1467 saw a bloody but indecisive battle between Colleoni and the Count of Urbino, the Florentine general. In 1468 peace was concluded, and until his death in 1475 Colleoni remained captain general of Venice's armed forces. Oddly enough it was a Florentine sculptor, Andrea del Verocchio, who created the equestrian statue of Colleoni in Venice, unforgettable monument to the *condottiere,* his ancestral city's bitter enemy.

During a tournament in the year 1467 Lorenzo first beheld the love of his youth, Lucrezia Donati, whom he has glorified in his poems. He pledged her a festival of equal splendor and held a tournament in her honor in the Piazza di Santa Croce. Its magnificence is attested to by many contemporaries. Lorenzo was preceded by five mounted pages with fifers and drummers. His own beautiful and valuable mount was a gift from Ferrante, King of Naples. In the first tilt he wore half-armor with shoulder-pieces of white and red silk and over them a sash embroidered with roses and the legend: *Le temps revient*—either a dubious truth or an indubitable untruth. His velvet beret was surmounted by three feathers of gold fabric, studded with rubies and diamonds, with a pearl worth five hundred florins in the center. The diamond on his shield was worth not less than two thousand florins. Ten mounted youths and sixty-four armed foot concluded the procession.

Young as Lorenzo was, he carried off the prize, a helmet inlaid with silver and surmounted with a figure of Mars. But even had he not been the unquestioned victor, care would have been taken that he, as the sponsor, won the prize.

XV

Lorenzo was but eighteen years old when his mother went off to Rome and there affianced him to the young heiress of an eminent family of the Roman nobility, Clarice Orsini, who was to become the able and generous mistress of his household.

The marriage was celebrated on a summer day of the year 1469. All around the city, the towns had sent their gifts to the house in the Via Larga—one hundred fifty calves, more than two thousand brace of capons and pullets. Clarice made her entry on horseback, clad in a brocaded gown of white and gold. The

table was set for two hundred guests, and forty youths of good family served as cupbearers. Piero Parenti, who compiled the record of Lorenzo's wedding, remarks expressly that an example of moderation was to be given the citizenry, underlining the position of the Medici as citizens rather than princes, "hence the number of courses served did not exceed fifty."

Florence had conceded Lorenzo his father Piero's place, mainly because the powerful Tommaso Soderini thought he could guide the youth—in which he was much mistaken.

As a rule Florentine politics consisted in making common cause with Milan and Naples, since Venice was a rival and it was impossible to trust the papal court, the popes succeeding each other too swiftly.

Since the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and even more since their conquest of Negroponte in 1470, the popes had tried to put together an alliance of the Italian states against them. The princes had come to look upon the Medici as equals.

The alliance failed to come about because of unremitting quarrels. Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the unpopular ruler of Milan, conceived a plan to wrest Piombino from the Neapolitans with the aid of Florence. Lorenzo was weak enough to give his consent. In gratitude the prodigal Sforza entered Florence with a procession of almost insane magnificence.

The assault on Piombino was followed by one exactly like it on Volterra, a blemish on Lorenzo's reign. In the vicinity of Volterra there were then alum pits of rich yield. As happens still today, two shrewd Florentines tried to obtain leases for the pits on terms highly unfavorable to Volterra, with the help of certain local officials who were about to go out of office. Of course the municipality fought tooth and nail against recognizing the contract as valid, while on the other hand influential Florentines set their city in motion. They found this all the easier since Lorenzo was a major participant in the planned exploitation of Volterra alum.

The little town was able to muster but 1,000 foot against 5,000

foot and 1,000 horse of the Florentines. Under fire for a month, Volterra surrendered on the promise that life, honor and property of its inhabitants be spared.

In keeping with the customs of the time, the pledge was broken to the accompaniment of the most horrible pillage and atrocities. The campaign, moreover, was so costly that the Florentines saw themselves compelled to borrow from the funds appropriated for dowries. The woolen guild proceeded to strip the pits so ruthlessly that they were depleted within one hundred years.

XVI

About this same time Florence frequently tangled with the pope, especially over the town of Imola in the Romagna, which the pope had given away but which Lorenzo wished to possess. In this dispute the pope won over to his side the greatest field captain of the time, Federigo da Montefeltro, who had hitherto been in the service of Florence.

All politics around 1500 was dominated by the *condottiere* system, by double-dealing and hard bargaining. Alliances were concluded with equal frequency against former friends as against present enemies. Every possible damage was inflicted upon an ally even before the alliance was broken. Powers fancying themselves secure were attacked by surprise, even before the embassy of the attacking power was withdrawn, private property seized even before war was declared. Peculiar to the age was the custom of buying off the enemy's ablest *condottiere* with a higher offer, even when he had already received his pay. And in consequence the captains seldom scrupled to break their pledges, old or new.

The Pazzi were one of the few families of Florence that could compare with the Medici. As already mentioned, they looked back on a long and glorious past. When King René of Anjou so-

journed in Florence for some time in 1442, Andrea de' Pazzi had been deputed his companion, and the little king, in token of his favor, had knighted him. Of Andrea's sons Piero was one of the finest noblemen of his time. He was the Florentine ambassador to Louis XI, who knighted him, and he entered Florence with a magnificence unequaled by any Florentine before him. Huge crowds foregathered to watch the procession. The entire retinue wore pearls on hats and sleeves.

Lorenzo de' Medici, by means of a palpably rigged court decision, now virtually despoiled Giovanni de' Pazzi, about his own age and the wealthy heir of his wife (who was a Borromeo), in favor of a relative of the father of his wife. The act was as foolish as it was unfair. It incensed Pope Sixtus IV, who had just appointed cardinal the seventeen-year-old son of his favorite, Girolamo Riario. Girolamo, a brutal man who had been given proud Catarina Sforza in marriage for political reasons, loathed Lorenzo with a savage hatred, for he knew that his tiny principality of Imola was ever menaced by Lorenzo's schemes of conquest.

At first an effort was made to entice Lorenzo to come to Rome. He did not object but kept putting off the journey. It was then decided to strike at him right in Florence. For the Pazzi and their kin, the Salviati, were thought to be so powerful that half the city would at once come over to their side.

XVII

Jacopo de' Pazzi, Lorenzo's kin, resided permanently at the Vatican, as one of the bankers of Pope Sixtus IV, who had given his assent to the conspiracy against the Medici. Lorenzo and Giuliano were to be put out of the way, yet the pope—by virtue of his position but surely not in earnest—demanded that this be done without bloodshed, quite as though such a thing were possible.

The conspirators won the *condottiere* Giovanni Battista da Montesecco to their side—he was to strike the decisive blow against Lorenzo. The murder of the two brothers was to be effected in Santa Maria del Fiore during a church festival on April 26, 1478, at the moment when Girolamo Riario's young nephew, Raffaele Sansoni, during the celebration of the mass lifted up the chalice with the blood of Christ. But once this plan had taken firm shape, Montesecco withdrew. He was quite willing to commit murder, but not to shed blood in the House of the Lord.

His place was taken by the less timid and more ruthless Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli. He struck down Giuliano whom he had personally escorted from the Palazzo Medici, because Giuliano, on account of an indisposition, had stayed away from the service on this day. The priests wounded Lorenzo, but he had enough presence of mind to leap over the choir barrier and seek refuge in the sacristy, the door of which Angelo Poliziano swiftly slammed shut. The entire Pazzi party were assembled under arms; but it availed them nothing. The element of surprise was lost.

Archbishop Salviati, a leader of the conspiracy, had ridden to the *Signoria* instead of attending church. There he had demanded to see the *Gonfaloniere,* who happened to be at table with the *Priori* and smelled a rat when he beheld the large retinue with the archbishop. He at once had the gates closed and thus caught a whole group of the conspirators.

The plan called for Jacopo de' Pazzi to occupy the Piazza della Signoria with his armed men, once the archbishop had seized the reigns in Florence; but he found the marketplace filled with Medici adherents who greeted him with the call: *palle! palle!* (the balls in the Medici arms).

There was short shrift. Eighty of the conspirators were sentenced to death, the leaders were hurled out the windows of the Palazzo Vecchio, ropes about their necks, and hanged against the wall. The archbishop dangled in full ecclesiastic panoply beside Francesco Pazzi, who had stabbed the fallen Giuliano with

such insensate fury that he had injured his own thigh. In his death throes the archbishop tore open the front of Francesco Pazzi's clothes.

Lorenzo had the scene immortalized by the usually so gentle painter Sandro Botticelli on the façade of the Palazzo del Podestà,* with the portraits of the hanged, still at the end of the rope. In 1494, after the flight of Piero de' Medici, these frescoes were destroyed.

The severed heads of the Pazzi were carried through Florence on long poles. One of these poles was planted in front of Lorenzo's palazzo. The property of the conspirators was seized. Their names could no longer be mentioned.

And yet this name has not been forgotten. Even today the Palazzo Pazzi, built by Brunelleschi, still stands, its architecture, half medieval, half classical, as fine as that of the Palazzo Medici. And to this day the name of Pazzi is borne with honor by Brunelleschi's fine, graceful Cappella dei Pazzi in the convent garden of Santa Croce. Bearing the name of a clan that was wiped out, this chapel is marked by a festive and joyful air.

XVIII

Giuliano's murderer Baroncelli made his escape from the church and fled straightway to Constantinople. But Lorenzo never lost sight of him and demanded his extradition. He was sent back to Florence and a year later, in December 1479, he was flung from a window of the Palazzo Bargello, a rope about his neck.

Leonardo da Vinci must have been among the spectators at the time, intent upon recording the spectacle with the calm eyes

* Also called *'il Bargello,'* the headquarters of the police. (The National Museum of Florence, famous for its collections of Renaissance sculpture, is now housed in this Gothic palace.)

of the scientific observer. We still have his masterly, eloquent drawing of the hanged man.*

Sixtus pronounced anathema against Lorenzo for the murder of the archbishop and the other clerics, indeed, placed all of Florence under interdict. King Ferrante, who had always feigned friendship, joined the pope and even incited him. The papal troops were placed under the command of the renowned general already mentioned, Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino.

Milan and Venice supported Florence but proved to be inadequate allies. Louis XI on the other hand remained loyal to Lorenzo and appointed as his ambassador none less than the famed historian Philippe de Comines, who had once served Charles of Burgundy but had gone over to the king. But Louis mustered no army and Sixtus, a true Rovere, was not one to be intimidated.

Nor did it avail Louis to halt all remittances to Rome and attempt to persuade the pope that the Turks were the real enemy. Yet when even the ambassador of Emperor Frederic appeared in Rome, Sixtus felt constrained to negotiate, no longer demanded Lorenzo's banishment, and was content to drag out the affair, Naples having been designated the place where peace negotiations were to take place.

Rome and Naples, however, had marshaled heavy troop concentrations, and in September 1479 Florentine headquarters was disrupted by the defeat at Poggibonsi. Lorenzo realized that Florence might purchase peace if he gave himself up, but he remained in the city for some time and put his affairs in order.

Then he undertook the most courageous and intelligent step of his life. Having first sent Filippo Strozzi to Naples as his herald, he went to the court of King Ferrante himself. The king had gone on record that he was only after Lorenzo's life, not that of the city. Now the king had him in his power and if he wished to negotiate he could do so with Lorenzo directly. Fifteen years earlier one of the great *condottieri* of the time, Jacopo Piccinino,

* *Hanging Figure of Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli,* pen-and-ink drawing, Bayonne, Musée Bonnat.

had come to Ferrante in similar fashion, trusting in the king's honor and humanity; but Piccinino had to pay for it with his life.

Lorenzo's charm, the superior intelligence that emanated from his person, can be gauged from this occasion. Ferrante did not resist his blandishments. He had enough political experience of his own to tell him that an alliance with this young man would enhance his influence on the Italian scene. Yet he had to take many factors into consideration—the distrustful Venetians who necessarily concluded he was abandoning them, the pope who was greatly displeased with Lorenzo's brazen visit to Naples; and finally the many malcontents in Florence who were only waiting for a chance to topple the house of Medici. Lorenzo, however, had won over King Ferrante's most important adviser, Diomede Caraffa, Count of Maddaloni. The count shared Lorenzo's love of art, poetry and antiquity resurrected.

Lorenzo sponsored festivals in Naples, gave dowries to young women, manumitted and staked one hundred galley slaves. When he landed in Livorno three months later, the peace was signed, though on excessively harsh terms. It was buttressed when the fleet of Mohammed II landed seven thousand men in Apulia who initiated a dreadful massacre. Sixtus IV saw himself obliged to appeal to all the Christian princes, and on petition of Florence's most notable men he lifted the interdict on the city in December 1480.

XIX

Lorenzo de' Medici was heir to Cosimo's role as patron and protector of art and literature. Born on New Year's Day of 1449, he was just a year old when Johann Gutenberg succeeded in making the first practical movable type; he was fourteen when the first Bible went to press. He was a somewhat younger contemporary of Columbus, his death falling into the year when Colum-

bus first set sail from Palos for the "Indies," only to find the New World.

Florence, a city of quite moderate size, had by then begun to shape a new world of its own, in the arts and sciences. Even before the invention of printing Cosimo, aided by his learned friend Poggio Bracciolini, had begun to establish libraries. During his exile he endowed the library of San Giorgio in Venice, later, in Florence, the library of San Giorgio, which was completed in 1441. Through his bank he made available funds for the library at Fiesole and through Vespasiano da Bisticci he employed forty-five copyists who completed two hundred volumes in less than two years. Most of them are now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence.

Vespasiano was the most eminent book dealer of his time. When Federigo da Montefeltro organized the library at Urbino, he kept thirty to forty copyists busy in various towns for fourteen years. Printing from type, which began at this time, was held in far lower esteem, since it had to stand comparison with the triumphs of calligraphy on fine vellum. In his *Lives of Illustrious Men of the Fifteenth Century* * Vespasiano mentions printing only once, condescendingly. He lauds the library of the Duke of Urbino on account of the immaculate beauty of its volumes, all of which were graced with delicate miniatures. There was not a single printed book among them. The Duke would have been ashamed to include one.

XX

Lorenzo was not only a patron of the arts but a poet himself. He began to write verse when he was only seventeen, well-con-

* There is a good English translation of this book, by William George and Emily Waters, published under the title *The Vespasiano Memoirs,* London, 1926.

structed sonnets dedicated to his lady love, Lucrezia Donati, lines without marked originality but full of warmth and freshness. They represent love as a longing for beauty. Lorenzo also wrote longer works: Idyls in eight-line stanzas like the typically Tuscan *Nencio da Barbarino,* dealing with the love of a village girl for a peasant lad and composed almost entirely of *rispetti,* epigram-like folk songs; or the mythological poem *Ambra,* set in Poggio a Cajano, the fine Medici villa on whose decoration Lorenzo lavished large sums. A little island there is named Ambra, and Ambra is the nymph beloved of the shepherd Lauro (Lorenzo).

Another idyl, on falconry, written before 1478, pictures the merry company gathered about Lorenzo. In a poem called *The Revel* he stands in the gates of the city and limns his intimates as he watches them go home from a merrymaking, touched with drink, humorously characterizing each member of the thirsty company. In Lorenzo's hymns, expressions of religious sentiment, the world is not the traditional vale of woe but a place of beauty set in order by divinity.

His essential character has its way equally when he tries his hand in the style of popular comic poetry, as in *Benni* (The Drunkards), or in exuberant burlesque, as in his dancing songs (*canzoni a ballo*) and carnival chants (*canti carnascialeschi*) which revolve about sensual love and mock those who from sheer envy look askance at merrymaking. We look, perhaps for the first time in history,* upon a republic ruled by a poet, ever surrounded by song and dancing.

Lorenzo had not a few love affairs of his own. Machiavelli levels but one charge against him—his numerous liaisons. Especially noted was Lorenzo's protracted infatuation with Bartolommea de' Nasi, wife of Donato Benci—by contemporary standards she was thought to be neither particularly young nor beautiful.

* Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen wrote, before Dante's time, the earliest Italian love poetry; but Sicily was not a republic. And the poetry of King Akhnaton and King Solomon was not merry.

Even in the deep of winter he rode over to her villa at night, to return only at daybreak.

Pico della Mirandola, in one of his letters, lavishes praise on Lorenzo as a poet. Dante, he says, conceived a powerful theme but lacked full mastery of language. Petrarca, conversely, knew every trick of language but knew no worthy thought to express in it. But Lorenzo was both master of language and a thinker who had something to say.

The overestimate is colossal—to put Lorenzo above Dante and Petrarca is to reverse the order of merit completely; but Lorenzo did have talent and despite his many frivolous verses in the time-honored Florentine tradition he was of serious mind. From childhood he and his brother Giuliano had been inured to listen to discourses with the abbot Mariotto Allegri, dominated by the great Leone Battista Alberti.

In his *Camaldolensian Discourses* Cristoforo Landino pictures the Medici circle against a setting in the Apennines at a spring beneath a mighty beech tree; and here too the great man of the age, Leone Battista Alberti, led the discussion and praised the contemplative life.

Leone Battista Alberti (1404–1472) began as a humanist, studied Latin at Padua, Greek at Bologna, wrote a Latin comedy in his youth as well as dialogues, satires, epistles. From 1432 onward he was settled at the papal court in Rome, where his towering talents made an immense impression on the wits and scholars there assembled.

He was self-educated, had trained and subjugated his body as a lion tamer vanquishes a defiant beast. Delicate and sickly by birth, prone to catch cold, he was able to walk bare-headed in the snow as in the blazing sun with impunity, could leap over a standing man, toss a coin to the top of Brunelleschi's dome, climb mountains, break horses, drill case-hardened armor with his arrow. He was skilled in all the weapons, played all the instruments of his time.

He was steeled in every manner of ordeal, illness, exile, poverty. He had traveled in France and Germany. He had loved and suffered. His songs, ballads and sonnets deal with woman. He loved plants and beasts, mathematics, ciphers, ships, the arts of perspective, sculpture, architecture—and on all this he wrote.

He painted, molded figures in wax, drew up plans for the churches of San Francesco in Rimini, San Sebastiano in Mantua, Sant' Andrea in the same city, for the Palazzo Rucellai in Florence. He invented a surveying instrument and a method for raising an ancient ship from the bottom of Lake Nemi. In Rome he constructed a panorama. His genius spanned the universe.*

In a sense he was a first model of Leonardo da Vinci.

XXI

Most eminent of the circle, after the death of the universal genius Alberti, was the writer Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), already mentioned, Lorenzo's friend and contemporary. True, as tutor of his friend's children, he often clashed with Madonna Clarice, mistress of the house, who would not tolerate his preference for pagan over Christian writers. Lorenzo was compelled to put an end to the instruction.

Poliziano, better known to us as Politian, was primarily a philologist, translated and published the writers of antiquity. Among the Greeks he preferred Aristotle and the Stoics, among the Romans the writers of the so-called Age of Silver—Quinctilius, Statius, Persius—displaying a certain independence of mind, if not flawless taste, for Cicero was then worshiped with a passion that tolerated no dissent. True, even before him the self-willed and provocative Valla had put Quinctilian above Cicero. Poli-

* See also *L. B. Alberti on Painting*, translated by John R. Spencer, New Haven, 1956.

ziano's hatred of slavishly aping the style of the ancients must be reckoned strongly in his favor.

He had no qualms about seeking high ecclesiastic office, though he loathed the clergy and went to church only to catch them in errors in Latin. He nourished a vast vanity, as shown in a letter to the King of Portugal, whom he promised to make immortal by translating Portuguese travel accounts. To King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary he boasted that none had done more to spread a knowledge of Greek during the past thousand years than himself.

In his polemics with contemporaries, like the Florentine statesman Bartolommeo Scala, he employed every last term of invective he could muster—but then, such was the customary tenor among humanists, in Italy as in Germany.

In his verses he made no secret that handsome lads pleased him as much as pretty girls. When he sang the praises of his patrons he minced no words about looking for reward in coin of the realm. Pietro Aretino was later reproached with this state of dependence which was quite general in an age when poetry earned no income and poets had to subsist on dedications and flattery. With Lorenzo, whose foulest deeds—like the assault on Volterra—Poliziano praised as loudly as his proudest accomplishments, no pleas to open the purse strings were necessary.

It was mentioned above that Luigi Pulci (1432–1484) was under the protection of Lorenzo's mother. At heart a freethinker, he ridiculed not only the monks mendicant, as then did many of the faithful, but the miracles of Scripture and even dogmatic faith in the soul's immortality. What quaint folly, said he, to quarrel over the soul, to pry into how it gets into us and out again, how it dwells within. Plato and Aristotle are invoked to convince us with empty phrases of bliss to come, of the soul's harmony with the music of the heavenly host. They should be told the soul is stuffed in the body like a raisin in the cake and perishes with it.

His *Morgante Maggiore*, already mentioned, was a parody on chivalry that tickled the Florentine merchants and humanists. The passage describing Morgante's conversion includes this ava-

lanche of words (translated from Italian rhymes into English prose):

"I believe no more in black than I do in blue; I do believe in capons, in what is baked and braised, often too in butter and beer; and when thereof I have nought, in wine, dry rather than sweet—good wine best of all; indeed, I cherish the conviction that whosoever believeth in good wine shall find salvation therein. I believe in tarts and cakes, in mother and son; but the Lord's Prayer proper lieth in fried liver, and the servings thereof may well be one, two, or three at once."

Good taste was not Pulci's forte; yet the full circle of the house of Medici took the liveliest interest in this derisive epic.

The sharpest contrast to Pulci was offered by the humanist Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499). Opposed to the philosophy of Aristotle, he cultivated Plato, together with some of the works of the Neoplatonists Plotinus, Iamblichus and Proclus. He wrote a book on Platonic theology and on the immortality of the soul—endeavored, in other words, to blend Platonism with Christianity, which he served as rector of two churches in Florence and canon of Santa Maria del Fiore. So convinced was he of the compatibility of Plato and Bible that he called Plato "a Moses writing in the Attic tongue."

XXII

The elder members of the circle were soon outshone by a youth of such gifts that in French his name is still synonymous with dazzling learnedness and an unfailing memory. Conte Giovanni Pico della Mirandola is said to have spoken twenty-two languages at the age of eighteen. It is told of him that when he had read a page three times he could recite it from memory forward or backward.

Poliziano writes that Pico della Mirandola was eloquent and talented, of almost superhuman stature. His nephew Giovanni Francesco describes him as a man of great charm, tall and supple of figure, fair-haired, with deep blue eyes and dazzling white teeth. His life was short. Born in 1463, he died in 1494.

His letters, which he himself arrayed in twelve volumes, were addressed to such men as Giuliano de' Medici, Federigo da Montefeltro, Matthias Corvinus, Pietro Bembo. He was personally acquainted with Leone Battista Alberti as well as with Johann Reuchlin, who visited Italy in 1490.

The young Count of Mirandola attended the University of Bologna at the age of fourteen to immerse himself in canonical law, then studied theology and philosophy at several other universities, giving evidence of his ability as a debater. Even as a boy he wore the clerical garb of a prothonotary, a papal privy scribe. He had just turned twenty when he came to Florence in 1484. On account of his noble birth and kinship with the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d'Este, he became an intimate of the Medici at once. Lorenzo loved and esteemed him, was ever active on his behalf, praised him in one of his letters.

His intellectual stature was founded on his simultaneous absorption with Greek and Hebrew, his attempt to commingle these two cultures completely. Unlike Marsilio Ficino he was not content with a knowledge of Greek. Defying the prejudices of his time, which held that the Jews were unfit to teach Hebrew and did not merit the attention of scholars, he went beyond the study of Bible and Talmud, immersing himself in the mystic teachings of the Jews, the Cabbala, to which he was introduced by the philosopher Elia del Medigo. Here he hoped to learn about the workings of supernatural forces; but orthodox as he was, he found that his researches served only to confirm his conviction of the truth of Christian dogma.

As though by way of compensation, he passionately took up the struggle against the superstition of his time, astrology. None before him had openly and conclusively derided this form of

divination, for the earlier attackers secretly believed in the folly they assailed. Pico declared astrology to be a fountainhead of irreligion and immorality, indeed, took the trouble to prove the falsity of astrologic forecasts on wind and weather.

Like all the humanists of Florence Pico worshiped Plato. By Alexandrian tradition November 7 was the day of both Plato's birth and death. It was celebrated with festivities, described by Marsilio Ficino, in which Lorenzo on occasion took part.

Pico the Platonist allowed himself to become involved in a silly and ill-starred romance with the pretty wife of a tax farmer at Arezzo, a distant relative of the Medici. Pico met this lady when he happened to pass through Arezzo on his way to Rome. They soon arranged that he was to abduct her on horseback during what was ostensibly a chance encounter; but pursuers caught up with him and mauled him badly. The young and rich wife had no trouble convincing her husband of her innocence, and there were no serious consequences.

In 1485 Pico continued his studies in Paris. Following the custom of the time, he issued a challenge to a public debate in Rome the following year. He was prepared to deal with 900 theses in philosophy, theology, magic and natural science.

Some of the theses were branded heretical. Pico, for example, said that Christ had not actually descended to Hell—it had merely seemed so. He maintained that the words "This is my body" were to be understood figuratively rather than literally. He stressed that a mortal sin, being necessarily limited in time, must not and could not be punished with everlasting torments.

Lorenzo was Pico's zealous advocate with the pope, and the penalty was limited to a prohibition of the 900 theses. Pico spent his last days quietly in Florence. As already mentioned, he came to an untimely death at the age of only thirty-one.

Girolamo Savonarola, the monk and preacher of penitence soon to become famous, began to malign Pico's memory. Having known him, Savonarola could not forgive him for never having taken holy orders and expressed doubt that Pico could have gone

to Heaven. The monk grew convinced that the famous humanist must be in Purgatory.

XXIII

Among other noted families close to Lorenzo was that of Amerigo Vespucci. Amerigo himself had entered an Italian banking house in Seville at the age of forty. Since this bank provided the equipment for the second and third journeys of Columbus, Amerigo came to know the great explorer and resolved to find his own way to the New World. In 1499 he took part in the expedition to Surinam of Admiral Alonzo de Hojeda, and upon his return he seems to have traveled from Portugal to the West Indies and Brazil and thereupon to have explored the Brazilian coast in Portuguese ships between 1501 and 1504. At the behest of Columbus he reentered the service of Spain in 1505 and was appointed Quartermaster General for the journeys to the Indies.

It was not a Florentine but rather a German printer, Martin Waldseemüller, who, in an account of Amerigo's travels,* proposed that the New World be named after him—a proposal that was generally accepted. The people of Florence rejoiced in Amerigo's fame. His ancestral home was later on made a hospital, with an inscription paying him obeisance as the discoverer of America: *ob repertam Americam sui et patriae nominis illustratori amplificatori orbis terrarum.*

XXIV

The painter whom Cosimo de' Medici and his sons loved best of all was Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–1469), the former Carmelite

* Printed in 1507 at Saint-Dié in the Vosges.

monk and happy-go-lucky soul who painted pious pictures and abducted a nun—she could never be persuaded to leave him. Highest in Lorenzo's eyes stood the courteous Domenico Ghirlandajo, whose paintings in the choir of Santa Maria Novella give us the best picture of the private and public life of the citizenry of Florence.

Lorenzo imbued his relationships with artists and scholars with the true spirit of cultivated humanity. He never exacted a trace of servility. The atmosphere was one of freedom. Letters to him breathe confidence and familiarity. He did not even take practical jokes amiss. He listened patiently as the aged Bertoldo * during the war in 1479, when funds for the repair of sculpture were indeed scarce, maintained reproachfully that it were better in these days to be a cook than an artist.

Sycophantic as many of the poetic paeans to Lorenzo sound, numerous as are the parallels drawn between his name and *lauro* (laurel), it cannot be made too clear that social intercourse with him, by letter or face to face, was governed by not the slightest sense of formality. Occasionally his title of honor, Magnifico, was heard—it swiftly grew to be part of Lorenzo's name. Usually he was addressed simply as Lorenzo.

The house in the Via Larga was at once museum and meeting-place of artists and writers. It held an overabundance of ancient coins, cameos, gems, mosaics and enamel paintings, collections of carved stones and precious vessels.

A Florentine Court was then still nothing like the Court of Milan or of Naples—it was called a family (*famiglia*). The Medici were a family—a family of joy, Ariosto called them.

There was no rank at this court, nor any courtly manner. No guards were posted before the palazzo. Lorenzo's mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, dwelt in the house, busy with her doves and linens. Madonna Clarice was beloved of her children. When the

* Bertoldo di Giovanni (ca. 1420–1491), a pupil of Donatello and the teacher of Michelangelo; and a very good sculptor himself. All works of his known for certain are in bronze. Toward the end of his life he was appointed to take charge of Lorenzo de' Medici's collection of antiques (as narrated by Vasari).

children had been in the country with Poliziano and the mistress of the house rode out to meet them with the chaplain Matteo Franco, he described the encounter in these words:

"Close by the Certosa we met the paradise of angels, that is to say, Messer Giovanni (later to be Leo X), Giuliano with Giulio on his saddle, and their entourage. No sooner did they behold their mother when they dismounted, the one without help, while the other needed assistance, and ran to their mother, and Madonna Clarice embraced them with such warmth and with so many kisses that I could not describe it in a hundred letters."

Florence had lost the austere and brusque manner that still marked it in the time of Cosimo; it was beautified and rejuvenated.

So great had Lorenzo's reputation grown meanwhile that the Sultan of Egypt, Abu Nasr Kaitbei, sent envoys to him to start trade negotiations. They arrived in Florence in November 1487, bringing rare gifts to Hakim (i.e. the wise judge) Lorenzo—an Arab steed, rams and ewes of unknown breed, splendidly woven silks, colorful vases of porcelain not seen in Florence heretofore. The *Signoria*, at the same time, was presented with a giraffe and a tame lion.

Increasing illness interfered with Lorenzo's activities during his last years. Yet music remained his daily bread, and all his poems called for music. He did not sing himself, not being gifted with a fine voice.

What deeply concerned him was his second son Giovanni's advancement to cardinal's rank. He had three sons: Piero, whom he was wont to call dull; Giovanni, whom he regarded as clever; and Giuliano, who was good.

Lorenzo had Giovanni take vows when the boy was scarcely seven and asked the King of France, Louis XI, to vest the lad with an ecclesiastic living, in keeping with the rank of the Medici. A little later the king gave the eight-year-old the Abbey at Font Douce, while at the same time Sixtus IV presented him with the revenues of the wealthy monastery in Passignano. When the boy

was nine he was appointed Archbishop of Aix-en-Provence by the King of France. But the pope would not confirm the appointment. When Sixtus died the following year, Lorenzo all the more urgently entreated Innocent VIII, a friend of the house of Medici. The archbishopric was now confirmed and a wealth of honorary posts and clerical prebends fell to the boy. He became Abbot of Monte Cassino, canon of three chapters, rector of six monasteries in Italy and France—and Archbishop of Amalfi as well.

But to Lorenzo all this was not enough for his favorite son. He craved the red hat for Giovanni. Here an obstacle rose up in that Innocent himself had recently set thirty years as the minimum age for the cardinalship; but the pope's eldest son, Francesco Cybò, had been married in 1487 to Lorenzo's daughter Maddalena, so that the appointment seemed reasonably certain.

And indeed, in 1489 Giovanni, then thirteen years old, was appointed cardinal, though only on the condition, not unreasonable, that he wait three years before donning the robes. Thus it was not until March 1492 that the future Pope Leo X held his magnificent entrance into Rome, through the Porta del Popolo. His father then lay on his death bed.

Meanwhile in Florence the monk Fra Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) inveighed against the secularization of the Church. He stuck closely to the Scriptures, which were not known to the people, and in the beginning drew only small audiences to listen to his fiery though crude and formless sermons, which he delivered in the Lombard dialect, to boot. His penitential exhortations were all the less appealing since his rival, Fra Mariano fra Genazzano, possessed a mellifluous voice and, in Poliziano's description, was able to speak in majestic phrases. But time passed and official morality in Florence grew more and more austere. Dice were now cast only indoors and the ladies discarded dresses that had given offense. Savonarola's influence over the common people grew and his preachments threatened ever severer retribution. He began to oppose Lorenzo.

When five of the most noted citizens went to him to ask greater

moderation, he challenged them rather to demand of Lorenzo that he repent of his sins. And when he became *Prior* of San Marco he omitted paying Lorenzo the visit customarily paid by the *priori* to the head of the house of Medici. He insisted—the year was 1491—that he owed his election solely to God, whom alone he would give obedience.

During Lorenzo's final illness Savonarola did indeed visit him, but he demanded not only repentance as a condition for forgiveness of sins but also freedom for Florence. The dying man answered by turning his head to the wall.

The Duke of Milan, Ludovico il Moro, sent a famous Lombard physician, Lazaro da Pavia, to the Villa Careggi where Il Magnifico lay ill. When Lorenzo learned that his medicine was to be composed of powdered pearls, jewels and other precious minerals, he turned to Poliziano with shining eyes and said: "Do you hear that, Angelo, do you hear that?" We can scarcely wonder today that the great Florentine nevertheless died soon afterward, any more than we wonder at the death of Julius II, who was given molten gold to drink.

Lorenzo died on April 8, 1492, at the comparatively youthful age of forty-three, after a great and busy life not too greatly marred by blunders, some of which were his own, while others must be laid at the doorstep of his time. His physician threw himself down a well at the Villa Careggi, fearing no doubt that his life was forfeit in any event, since many would believe he had poisoned his master, a common suspicion in those days.

Rome

I

MICHELANGELO WAS MOLDED and destined by the spirit that prevailed in Rome as strongly as by the spirit of Florence.

Lorenzo, the academicians, the statues in the garden of San Marco—these gave him insight into the ideals of Platonism, the spirit of antiquity. The rise of Savonarola impinged on the life of his mind, matured within him the makings of exalted gravity, of an understanding of the Old Testament. Florence gave him a penchant for studying nature, for launching out into the new, for cultivating the newly found relics of Graeco-Roman antiquity.

In Rome—where he served Julius II and came in touch with

Bramante, first as an antagonist, later as an intellectual peer—he found occasion to develop the streak of grandeur in his nature, to shape immense compositions that will live forever undimmed, despite the inevitable ravages of time on fresco painting. Had Michelangelo not entered the service of the popes, it is unlikely he would ever have had occasion to show the world what dwelt within him. Being a titan would have availed him nothing, had he been compelled to labor for some petty prince or other, unable to defray the cost of executing grandiose plans.

Even in Florence Michelangelo's finest works were papal commissions. Certainly the *Moses,* the Sistine and Medici Chapels, the Dome of St. Peter's owe their existence to his relationship with the papacy. He lived under no fewer than thirteen popes; and of these Julius II, Leo X, Clement VII were of outstanding, Paul III and Paul IV of lesser but still considerable importance to his lifework.

II

The Papal State was founded about 1500 by Alexander VI.

Slowly but quite naturally the view had prevailed that spiritual dominance could never assert itself without worldly power. Applied to the position of the pope, this realization was bound to lead to the conclusion that the Pope of Rome would ever be in thrall to the potentates of Europe—emperors, kings or princes—unless the Church had her own secular and continuing sovereignty.

Since Gregory VII's decree of 1074 celibacy within the Roman Church had held such sway that officially no pope could have children. Even nepotism, the granting of clerical offices and revenues to one's kin, had been severely frowned upon and thus occurred but rarely. Yet now it was deemed useful and proper for

a pope to have sons upon whom he could rely in his struggles against secular enemies and nepotism had become almost a duty the pope was required to observe toward those close to him.

Lorenzo de' Medici had married off one of his daughters to the pope's son and, as we have seen, had urged the pope to make his own minor son a cardinal. He reminded Innocent VIII that no man is immortal, that even a pope means no more than he means to mean. Since his position could not be rendered hereditary, he left no more behind than the honors and benefices he was able to confer upon his own.

When Sixtus IV took a hand in the Pazzi conspiracy against the house of Medici, it was because the Medici were in his way, because he sought to carve out a principality for his nephew Girolamo Riario in the Romagna. Since the Colonna family was hostile to Riario, he pursued them with his hatred, shrank from no breach of faith when it came to advancing the interests of his nephew. He arrested a Colonna, his own prothonotary, right in the Colonna house, threatening to set the young man free only if the family ceded Marino to him. He got Marino—and had young Colonna beheaded.

In 1492 Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) ascended the papal throne. A Spaniard, he enjoyed the backing of the world power Spain in the conclave, enabling him to scotch his rivals by buying them out. To induce Ascanio Sforza to renounce his candidacy and support his own, Borgia offered Sforza a completely furnished palazzo in Rome and as much gold as several mules could carry. The powerful Orsini, Colonna and Savelli families he won over with promises of bishoprics, castles, cities. He was elected by these means. The choice met with general approval, for as a cardinal Rodrigo had shown not only an ingratiating manner but diplomatic skill as well. He was believed to possess the necessary energy to restore order in Rome, where in the brief time between Innocent VIII's illness and Alexander VI's election two hundred twenty murders had been committed.

Alexander VI, however, was himself a virtuoso in the fine art of

murder. He knew how to mix and administer poison as well as did Locusta in ancient Rome; indeed, his *cantarella* was stronger and surer than her venomous drops and toadstools. When he had poisoned even Cardinal Orsini—whose vote he had won by a substantial bribe of land—he told the Sacred College in a tone of irony: "We commended him most warmly to our physicians." Rome under the heel of the Borgia was as vulnerable to poison in 1506 as was Laocoön, whose statue had just been unearthed, to the serpents coiling about him and his sons.

Wrote Francesco Capello, Venetian Ambassador in Rome, to his *Signoria* upon Alexander's accession: "The pope is seventy years old but grows younger by the day. He is frivolous in character and thinks but of his own interests. His sole ambition is marry off his children well, with rich dowries. He has no other concern."

The orgies of the papal court outdid those of the most depraved emperors of ancient Rome. The diaries of Johannes Burcardus include an oft-cited passage in which he describes how, in honor of Lucrezia, the pope's daughter, on October 31, 1501, fifty courtesans performed a dance in a chamber of the Vatican, "at first clothed and then naked. After dinner the candelabras with their burning tapers were removed from the table to the floor and chestnuts were strewn about them, which the naked courtesans had to gather up, crawling on hands and feet among the burning lights. The Pope, the Duke (Cesare Borgia) and the Duchess Lucrezia, his sister, were present and watched."

The pope's own lassitude, hedonism and ruthlessness were heightened, in his son Cesare, to evil in the grand manner. Cesare's cruelty was not based on madness or delusions, as in certain Roman emperors. He was cold and clear-headed, utterly free of conscience or regret, fearing neither man nor God.

Burcardus relates how, one day after dinner, Cesare, dressed for the hunt, had six men who had been sentenced to be beheaded by the sword brought into St. Peter's Square, which he had barred off with timbers. Mounted on his horse, he then chased them about

the square, bringing them down one by one with his arrows. The Pope, his daughter, his son-in-law and his mistress Giulia Bella watched this evocation of the ancient circus spectacle from a balcony.

The quarrel between the Orsini and Colonna and their parties had heretofore prevented establishment of a Papal State. Alexander made a bargain with the Guelphs and Orsini, an alliance that enabled him to drive the Sforza from Pesaro, Catarina Sforza from Imola and Forlì, the Malatesta from Rimini, the Manfreddi from Faenza; but scarcely had the Orsini done their work as allies when the pope treated them as though they were enemies. Cesare attacked them, drove out the Duke of Urbino, enticed the leaders of the Orsini, Vitelli and Baglioni families into his house and had them murdered; Vitellozzo and Oliveretto were the first to be strangled. When Cesare learned that the pope had captured Cardinal Orsini and Jacopo da Santa Croce, he had Pagolo and the Duke of Gravina throttled as well.

The house of Borgia thus seemed well on the way to establishing a dynasty in the Papal State. But then destiny wrought retribution on Alexander. He had conceived a plan to put five cardinals out of the way with poison and the table was already set in a Vigna * of the Vatican, when he and Cesare arrived, both of them thirsty and asking for a drink. The wine steward, who knew the secret of which bottles were harmless and which dangerous, had just gone to the palace to fetch a basket of peaches. His servant, either in error or through bribery by a wealthy cardinal, took the wrong bottle of "laced" Chios wine and poured for father and son. The poison killed the aged pope instantly. Cesare had apparently inured his powerful body to poison, after the example of Mithridates.**

Nevertheless the corrosive powder called *cantarella* attacked

* *Vigna,* a villa in a vineyard.

** This is how some contemporary historians—Pietro Bembo, Paolo Giovio, etc.—tell the story. According to Burcardus, however, the pope died of fever. Modern writers since Gregorovius incline to believe Burcardus rather than the others.

his bowels. He survived, though supposedly only at the cost of losing all the hair on his body, yet feeling as strong and vital as a serpent that has stripped off its old skin.

Machiavelli writes: "The Duke of Valentino* told me he had thought of every contingency that might arise upon the death of his father and had arranged a way to meet them all. The one chance he had not considered is that he might himself be deathly ill at the hour of the pope's death."

So strong was hatred of the pope that his body was allowed to remain the whole night in a chapel of San Pietro in Vincoli, without lights, attended by no priest, exposed to the coarse mockery of young ruffians. Toward morning, with kicks and blows, it was forced into a coffin much too small. So great was the prevailing savagery that Fabio Orsini, having killed one of Cesare Borgia's men, rinsed his mouth with blood from his victim.

Cesare ably extricated himself from the collapse. He fortified the Vatican against the city, bargained with the Conclave, with dagger in hand forced the Cardinal Treasurer to surrender his father's riches, and left Rome as intrepidly as he used to hold his entries. The feeble Pius III who emerged as pope from the Conclave was impotent against him.

Cesare left Rome still ailing, stretched out on a pallet borne by twelve halberdiers. Beside him two pages led his mount in mourning accouterments. The bier was surrounded on all sides by his veteran musketeer mercenaries who had fought with him in all the civil wars he had kindled in Italy.

He went to Naples. The powerful Julius II, who succeeded Pius III, at once compelled Cesare Borgia to surrender all his strongholds in the Romagna. Ferdinand the Catholic, King of Spain, had him seized in Naples and brought to Spain, where he spent two years as a prisoner in the fortress Medina del Campo. He escaped by letting himself down on a rope and swinging across

* Cesare Borgia is usually mentioned by this name in contemporary writings—he was Duke of Valentinois.

the moat, made his way to his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, with whom he lived as commander of the army, until he fell from a Moorish spear during the siege of Viana in 1507.

His sister Lucrezia seems to have been far better than her reputation. She was first married at the age of thirteen, to Giovanni Sforza, whom she was compelled to divorce at the age of seventeen, so that the pope could ally himself to the Neapolitan dynasty. At eighteen she married Don Alfonso, Duke of Bisceglie, a nephew of King Alfonso. This husband of hers was murdered by her brother Cesare two years later, on August 18, 1500, whereupon she, now aged twenty-one, married a third time, this time Alfonso, heir apparent of Ferrara, whom she bore three sons. She was generally popular in Ferrara. Ariosto sang her praises. Aldus admired her. To Bembo she was the ideal of femininity. Bayard, the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche,* chose her as his lady, wore her colors, worshiped her platonically all his life.

III

We find the earliest portrait of Pope Julius II on the famous mural by Melozzo da Forlì, *Sixtus IV and His Court,* painted in 1476 and now in the Pinacoteca of the Vatican (No. 141). Julius was Sixtus' nephew and by no means without influence, but neither was he the pope's favorite, unlike the other nephew on the painting, Girolamo Riario, who was married to Catarina Sforza.

At the time of the painting the pope-to-be was thirty-three years old. Though he is a subordinate figure, the vigor of his features is commanding. Giuliano della Rovere—that was his name—had been a Franciscan friar like his uncle the pope, who had named him Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli in 1471. His expressive face is animated by unquenchable ambition, revealed in his tightly knit brows, the firmly closed mouth, the fiery glance. At the

same time there is an air of sadness in this countenance, as though the clever and pugnacious young man had an inkling of the many obstacles that would pile up between him and his goal in the course of time.

Sixtus IV suspected Giuliano of being avaricious as well as ambitious and employed him for the most part on embassies that kept him away from the Vatican. But the cardinal was by no means always in disgrace. He seems to have been his uncle's adviser on monumental art projects.

As the name indicates, the original decorations of the Sistine Chapel were done at Sixtus' behest; yet the famous chapel was actually consecrated by Cardinal Giuliano. His influence had grown under Innocent VIII, who owed him his election in large part. So great was that influence that envoys were heard on occasion to complain of having to deal with two popes.

When Innocent died in 1492, Rovere was the candidate of France for the papal tiara. As we have seen, he was crowded out by the brazen machinations of Borgia, who was not inclined to be considerate of a vanquished rival. The struggle between them lasted ten years. Rovere first retired to his palazzo in Ostia, which still stands. Still in 1492, he fled to France, to escape one of those accidents that were likely to befall cardinals who were not in favor. He went first to his bishopric of Aix, then to the court of Charles VIII, whom he tried his best to persuade to invade Italy. With the aid of Charles and of Ludovico Sforza he tried to engineer Alexander's dethronement; and when the king entered Rome in January 1495, Rovere was in his train.

He was hopeful now that he was close to his goal; but Charles was too weak and ineffectual to shake the power of the Borgia. Disappointed, Rovere left Italy with the king and spent seven years in idleness, mingled with constant apprehension, since Alexander threatened to deprive him of his ecclesiastic equities and the revenues therefrom.

Rovere saw himself constrained to bargain with the pope. This was feasible only because of the influence he had gained at the

French court. He offered his help in arranging Cesare's marriage to a French princess. Agreement was in sight when amity was suddenly shattered. A chimneyplace in the Vatican collapsed on the pope, and the resultant rumors of his death set the army of Louis XII in motion toward Rome, to secure Rovere's election. But when the pope recovered his vengeance was aroused and Giuliano trembled for his life.

In 1502 Alexander twice sought to have Rovere murdered, once in Genoa, once in Savona. Among other things, he dispatched a papal galley with two beautiful courtesans aboard. It was commanded by Francesco Troeco, who was privy to all the pope's plans. Rovere was invited to visit the galley; but he kept under cover so carefully that not even the police of the Venetian Council of Ten could find him.

Not until Alexander died, on August 28, 1503, did Rovere hasten from his hiding-place to the Conclave. The cardinals were unable to reach agreement and, as a stopgap, elected the aged and ailing Pius III, who died twenty-six days later. Now at last the road was open to Giuliano della Rovere. He was elected on November 1, taking the name Julius or Giulio II. He was then sixty years old but passionately pugnacious, like a youth in fighting trim. He was out to enlarge the Papal State, even if it took war and conquest.

He found the parties within the State locked in internecine feud. All the great families Cesare Borgia had driven out were back. The houses of Orsini, Colonna, Vitelli, Baglioni, Varanni, Malatesta, Montefeltro had resumed their wonted places. Without further ado the pope personally attacked those who refused him obedience. He subjugated the Baglioni, who had regained possession of Perugia. He compelled the aged Gian Bentivoglio to abandon his palazzo in Bologna. He wrested the Papal State's coastal cities from the Venetians, who had snatched them, carrying out this feat in the face of greatly superior enemy forces. In this campaign he took Parma, Piacenza and Reggio.

No matter how dismal his prospects, his courage was un-

quenchable and he knew no fear. These qualities brought the militant pope, hardened by failure and exile, secular power such as none of his predecessors had possessed. Neither the hardships of the field nor the dissipations of peace unsettled him. Commenting on his militancy, Machiavelli wrote: "Heretofore even the pettiest baron held the papal power in contempt; now even the king of France must reckon with it."

The Church was bound to become secularized under a pope who represented an elemental force—warrior, lecher, gourmand. Cardinals were appointed because they were favorites, or simply for money. Bishoprics were distributed as sinecures, wherever they brought greatest advantage to the pope's finances. Every favor shown had to be repaid, and the prices rose steadily. Even the law that no cleric could inherit his father's office was thrown overboard. For money a bishop could get anyone appointed coadjutor. Thus unqualified and inexperienced men came into the enjoyment of benefices, which they then administered as cheaply as possible, preferably through friars mendicant.

Sixtus IV, himself a Franciscan, had already given these monks all manner of privilege—to hear confession, give communion and administer extreme unction, to be buried in monastic habit in the order's ground. Now that they were entrusted with high ecclesiastic office, their influence grew even further. It was they too who ran the traffic in indulgences, which in time spread so very far and wide.

IV

Yet the secularization of the Church also brought some good. The Catholic view of the world underwent a change from the unworldly isolation of the Middle Ages. Acquaintance with classical antiquity shattered the narrow medieval outlook.

True, the Arabs had already appropriated the traditions of ancient Greece—but they had gone about it quite differently. Translating the old texts into Arabic, they steeped them in Oriental ideas. Aristotelianism became theosophy, astronomy astrology, employed even in medicine. The Italians, on the other hand, sought but enlightenment. From the Romans they proceeded to the Greeks, and the art of printing broadcast the ancient classics in many copies. Geography was learned from Ptolemy, medicine from Hippocrates and Galen.

The humanists fought against any belief in tradition and their worship of nature culminated in rebellion against any doctrine of renunciation. Even Lorenzo Valla, who died in 1457, had proclaimed: "Let the precepts rest and reason speak!" He knew no respect, acknowledged the authority of the ancient writers no more than that of his contemporaries.

In *De Professione Religiosorum* he denied any merit to the monastic life and insisted that those who did not take vows overcame far greater temptations. The pledges of poverty, chastity and obedience he characterized as mere phrases. "Had the priest but one spouse," he exclaimed, "rather than more than one courtesan!"

In his dialogue, *De Voluptate,* he posed the question of whether lust was indeed a good thing and gave this answer: "Verily, I declare and testify that I desire nothing more than sensual pleasure." One of his speakers says that one must not rise against nature, that tenderest of mothers, and develops the thought further in these words: "We stand amid a paradise of joys. Had we but fifty senses rather than five! Not only is virginity the worst of blights—it is a disgrace." One has to wait for the philosophic literature of eighteenth-century France before again finding passages like this.

The customs of the clergy accorded with the humanist doctrine. There had long been priests who actually owned brothels. Even Pius II had to forbid them procuring for prostitutes. When the prohibition was of no avail, Innocent VIII had to renew Pius'

bull. It was but meet and fitting for every priest to have his concubine—what was bad was when a prostitute took the place of the concubine. Burcardus in his diaries says that virtually all monasteries were beyond question hotbeds of sexual license (*monasteria nobis quasi omnia jam facta sunt lupanaria, nemine contradicente*—Burcardi Diarium, Paris, 1884, Volume III, page 79).

As for the princes, their way of life had long been in keeping with that of the clergy, and courtiers had no fault to find with them. In 1475 Galeazzo Sforza with all his court rode to the home of Lucia di Marliano and bought her from her husband, Ambrogio de' Raverti. A formal contract of conveyance was drawn up, assigning the lady for the Duke's use. In 1494, as related by Masuccio to Queen Hippolyta in his *Novellino,* King Alfonso II of Naples and Sicily had succeeded in arranging a tryst with a married lady; but so broad-minded was he that he permitted one of his courtiers who was enamored of the lady to enjoy her favors before he did. "What a Prince!" Masuccio exclaimed. "Fortunate those who serve him and bask in his presence, fortunate above all the immortal goddess Hippolyta, his worthy mate!"

Indeed, apart from such a figure as Savonarola, opposition in Italy to the character of the Roman Catholic Church was on humanist rather than moral grounds. It had to do with science and literature, infected the very Church itself, for the popes themselves, whether violent or peaceable, were deep down touched with the spirit of paganism. In other words, there was in Italy a brand of paganism that was actually in league with the Church, protected by it, hence by no means a threat to the papacy.

Literature discovered no new truths, sought only to comprehend antiquity. Latin was written to perfection, even in metric form, and spoken with assurance and fluency by the members of the upper crust. Neo-Latin poetry was the fashion. Poggio's clever epigrams were enjoyed, and the poems of Bembo and Sadolet which, though clothed in the forms of antiquity, were art in their own right.

In comedy the ancients were emulated. Usually a piece by Plautus formed the point of departure. Even when the language is Italian, as in Machiavelli's *Mandragola* or in Cardinal Bibiena's *Calandria,* the humor is that of Plautus or Terence, except for a deliberate shamelessness not found in the ancient dramatists. Pietro Aretino, in his comedies, took care not to be a mere imitator. His *Cortigiana, Marescales, Ipocrita* are satirical studies of reality that inspired Rabelais, Shakespeare and Molière.

His tragedy, *L'Orazia,* ranks high; yet even Livy's tale scarcely aroused Aretino to the heights of real pathos. Indeed, the Italian Renaissance was virtually incapable of engendering tragedy. It acknowledged no moral law. Most of its prominent men of action lacked all conscience, hence the soil of tragedy was lacking.

The most famous Renaissance tragedy is Ludovico Martelli's *Tullia,* written in 1527. These lines occur in it:

> *E l'impresa fu giusta, perchè multa*
> *si puote oprar per accquistarsi un regno*
> *che de leggi divine o l'altre varchi.*

"The deed was justified," they say, "for when it comes to acquiring power, there is no law, divine or human, that one is not fully entitled to break."

Deep down if not on the surface Julius II was as thoroughly steeped in this notion as Cesare Borgia. The old basilica of St. Peter's, center of Christendom and touchstone of so many memories of the Church, the pope had torn down to erect in its place what was in effect an ancient temple. The Renaissance ideal of what a church should be is shown in the background to Raphael's *School of Athens*—a bright and solemn colonnaded hall decked with statuary. No more was the church to be a place of mystery for the worship of God but a poetically conceived auditorium, a Platonist academy for the edification of the initiate.

Bramante, who sought in his architecture to translate the darkling Church Latin into the bright tongue of the humanists, envisioned the new St. Peter's as a Pantheon dome soaring on

mighty, lofty columns. The overwrought sweep of the Gothic age had aspired to lift man almost bodily from the ground. Bramante wished to work his effect by a pleasing, rhythmic balance in the proportions of length, breadth and height, through the solemn splendor of buttresses and arches done with the sure sense of form of the ancients.

Thus it was precisely at the center of the Catholic world that a huge, consecrated structure rose, completely in the spirit of ancient worship.

True, the pope was still challenged to wage war against the infidel followers of Mohammed, though the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre was no longer envisioned. Such a challenge was thrown down to Julius II in the preface to the *Orations of Cicero* by Naugerius—i.e., the humanist poet Andrea Navagero; but it was actually inspired by the hope that the countries of Islam might yield up long-lost Roman and Greek scriptures.

V

Thus Italy at bottom knew no conflict between the antiquity-loving humanist opposition to dogmatism and a papacy pervaded no less by the spirit of ancient Rome. In Germany, on the other hand, opposition was clear-cut and of altogether different cast—clerical, moralizing and theologic.

Luther, in the habit of an Augustinian monk, came to Rome at a time when almost half of the ancient basilica of St. Peter's had been torn down. He then still believed that if he mounted the steps to the porch of the church on his knees he would receive absolution for seven times as many years as there were steps. He then still believed that the soul of a pilgrim dying in Rome would be borne to heaven by angels. He was eager to behold the kerchief of St. Veronica with the imprint of Christ's face, and the rope with which Judas had hanged himself.

A monk like Luther, to whom the question of celibacy was not only a serious but a sacred matter, was bound to take deep offense at the life led by the clergy in Rome without drawing public censure. An upright theologian of the people, he was deeply impressed with the famous late fourteenth-century religious tract, *Theologia Deutsch,** which called on man to surrender his own will to God's. Pervaded with such notions as sin and justification, he could not but be deeply repelled by the traffic in indulgences, whose aim for the most part was to raise funds for the erection of the great new temple of St. Peter's.

Forgiveness of sins for money—the very thought must have been an abomination to him; and his resentment was bound to carry him further and further—all the way to attacking the Church entire and its head, the pope. The friars mendicant had been the most devoted adherents of the papacy. From their midst now rose its most vehement assailant. Luther's opposition was water on the mill of unbelievers in Germany, soon suited even a man like Ulrich von Hutten, who at first had held aloof from it. Thus it swiftly gained impetus and found a resounding echo.

The princes looked upon the movement as serving their interests. In their struggle against the papacy nothing could have been more welcome to them than a clerical opposition. Charles VIII had viewed Savonarola as an ally against Alexander VI; and similarly Maximilian I regarded the emerging Luther as a help in his clash with the pope. Charles V took the self-same view. He desired that no harm be done to the monk, indeed, expressly enjoined the Elector of Saxony to look after him: "One might some day have use for him."

Pope Leo X, however, was not blind to the danger. His hopes necessarily went in the direction of suppressing this religious reform movement in league with the Emperor. Once he had concluded an alliance with Charles at the Diet of Worms for the

* Luther found a manuscript of the *German Theology,* without the title of the book or the name of the author, and published it in 1516. It was one of the most successful books of the period. Some seventy editions followed, two of them edited by Luther himself.

reconquest of Milan, Luther was officially placed under the imperial ban. But Luther was kept under cover in the Wartburg, and knowing Italian politicians realized full well that Emperor Charles V had noted the pope's dread of Luther's doctrine and wished to use Luther to exert pressure on the pope.

VI

Pope Julius II was of markedly choleric temperament, ever given to action. Like the great artist Michelangelo, whose name is forever linked with his, he has been called *terribile*. He did not hesitate to use his stick on any one who contradicted him; but he was always kind to his own clan.

It is appropriate to cite a few examples of how systematically Julius II proceeded in providing for the members of his family.

There was young Francesco Maria Rovere, son of Giovanni di Sinigaglia and Giovanna Montefeltro. The boy was reared in strictest piety, but developed as a soldier at the same time, becoming a comrade-in-arms of Gaston de Foix, the victor of Ravenna. The pope had the boy adopted by Guidobaldo and appointed him, at the age of thirteen, prefect of the City of Rome. When Francesco was fifteen, the pope concluded a marriage between him and the eleven-year-old daughter of the Marchesa of Mantua, of the house of Gonzaga, which pledged a dowry of 25,000 florins. The marriage was contracted *per procura* in 1505 and celebrated in Rome with great splendor in 1509. Bull fights and other popular entertainments were held.

Then there was young Niccolò Rovere. The pope married him to Laura Orsini, daughter of the widow Giulia Farnese, with whom Pope Alexander VI had begotten the child. The marriage took place in the Vatican. Soon afterward the mother embarked on a marriage with a herculean Neapolitan—but she quickly left

him to resume her life of freedom. Her daughter Laura paid scant attention to either husband or home.

When Julius's daughter Felice came to Rome in 1504, her beauty created a great stir. She rejected the courtship of the Prince of Salerno, since he was possessed of no property. Negotiations were then begun with the leader of the Orsini, Giangiordano di Bracciano. This arrogant and dull-witted nobleman looked down on the daughter of the pope, but 15,000 florins persuaded him to marry her, in 1506. He consummated his physical union with her right in the chapel, then demonstrated his contempt by serving but the meagerest meal for the twenty wedding guests—two roast muttons, half a lamb, a saddle of venison and a single capon. There were no knives on the table and the bridegroom sat with his hat on, in the Spanish custom. Fortunately for Felice, he died soon afterward. She was accounted one of Rome's most charming ladies.

The pope arranged another political union between his niece, Lucrezia Rovere, and a brave and intelligent member of the Colonna family, Marcantonio Colonna. The two great rival families, Colonna and Orsini, were both to be linked in kinship with the house of Rovere. In January 1508 Julius presented the young couple with the still famous Palazzo Colonna, which he had had built beside the church of Santi Apostoli when he was a Cardinal. He also gave his son-in-law Frascati as a fief.

An old favorite, whom Julius II kept constantly beside him during his last years, was young Federigo Gonzaga, son of the Marchese of Mantua. Having appointed the Marchese *Gonfaloniere* of the Church, he wished to keep the son at his court as a hostage. The mother, Isabella d'Este, whose aristocratic mien Leonardo immortalized for us in his fine drawing,* had resisted sending the ten-year-old boy as a hostage to the court of the Emperor, which had a reputation for immorality, but in this instance Isabella offered no objections. The boy came well-recommended, being related to the house of Rovere. He seems to have been

* Various copies extant, the best in the Louvre.

exceedingly talented and he ingratiated himself not only with Julius but the entire court. He remained unaffected by the atmosphere that pervailed at the papal court, even though the tone was set by such dissolute men as Bibbiena, Bembo and Francesco Molza. The manners at his home, Urbino, moreover, had been so free and easy that they could scarcely be outdone in Rome. While Julius was laying siege to Mirandola, the boy was given permission to spend the carnival season in Urbino. No one took offense when the ladies-in-waiting set their caps for him there, nor did even Isabella d'Este take the love letters sent to her fifteen-year-old son amiss.

In April 1511 the pope returned to Rome with Federigo. His devotion to the boy was now so deep that the senators and conservators gave a banquet for Federigo at the Capitol, during which Plautus' comedy, *Gemini* was performed. At the Vatican a poet recited verses in his honor. Raphael had to portray him with his blond locks as one of the bystanders in the *School of Athens.*

In the year 1506 the pope rode in procession, followed by thirty-five cardinals, to lay the cornerstone for the new St. Peter's. Among those present was the architect Donato Bramante of Urbino, only a few years younger than the pope, who had worked many years in Milan but had come to Rome after the fall of Ludovico Sforza in 1500. In Lombardy brick had been his only raw material, and his ornaments had to be molded in terracotta; but now, in Rome, he was in the presence of the marble ruins of antiquity.

Tentatively, so to speak, he first built that little gem, the "Tempietto," in the courtyard of San Pietro in Montorio, then the cloister of San Maria della Pace with its unadorned colonnade, which became his point of departure. Julius had found his architect and began to neglect his former favorite, Giuliano de San Gallo, at whose urging Michelangelo and Sansovino had come to Rome. The project for a great tomb for Julius II, with which Michelangelo had been charged, was crowded into the background when Bramante displaced San Gallo in the pope's favor.

During the carnival season of 1513 Julius' victories were celebrated with great festivities in Rome. The Pope, however, lay ill abed. He set the program for the carnival and the next day gave instructions about his interment. On February 21 he died. With him died the surging pagan spirit in the papal power, with its well-managed policies of secularism, its flair for art as a tool of the spirit, for which no plan was too great, no task too formidable—indeed, which strove for the ancient ideal of the monumental.

VII

We have seen what trouble Lorenzo de' Medici took to achieve the appointment of his youngest son as cardinal. The goal was won in boyhood, and the young cardinal was proclaimed Pope Leo X when only thirty-seven. Scarcely ever had the Conclave of Cardinals chosen so youthful a candidate. Giuliano, however, had gained their good will by his courtesy and good manners, by the excellent banquets and splendid festivals he gave. He offered a welcome contrast to his hot-tempered predecessor, who used to deal out curses and blows. Not the least of his qualifications was that, despite his youth, he did not seem destined for a long life—he was obese and short of neck, easily fatigued.

The procession celebrating the day, March 15, 1513, that Leo ascended the papal throne, was graced by the presence of Madonna Laura Farnese. It passed under several triumphal arches, including one by Agostino Chigi, an inscription on which paid tribute to Leo's proclivity for surrounding himself with artists and for enjoying music and song, entertaining comedies, crude pranks and the witticisms of court jesters. It read:

Ol[im] habuit Cypris sua tempora, tempora Mavors,
Ol[im] habuit: sua nunc tempora Pallas habet.

(The meaning is: Alexander VI venerated Venus; Julius II Mars; with Leo begins the age of Pallas Athena.)

In thus glorifying a member of the house of Medici, Agostino Chigi, the great banker of the moment, made obeisance to the representative of the great banking house he had supplanted.

Sixtus IV had ended the relationship of the papal chair with the Medici family. He had taken part in the Pazzi conspiracy and Francesco Pazzi had been his banker. To make up for the loss of revenue and influence the Medici had suffered, Innocent VIII had again entrusted his financial affairs to Lorenzo and given him the alum pits at Tolfa. But after Innocent's death the Medici never regained their position of trust at the papal court. Lorenzo's prodigality and his neglect of the banking business had undermined confidence in the Medici bank. Two new banking houses had arisen in Rome, Altoviti and Chigi, both names well known to the history of art.

It was to Bindo Altoviti that Michelangelo gave the cartoon for one fresco in the Sistine Chapel, *The Drunkenness of Noah;* and it was for him that Raphael painted *The Madonna dell' Impannata.** But Bindo's rival, Agostino Chigi, was the more enterprising and brazen. Without Chigi's aid Julius II could have waged no wars. The popes were in the habit of putting only their tiaras in pawn. Lorenzo in his time had redeemed the precious tiara which Innocent VIII had pawned in Genoa and in one year had lent him 100,000 florins. Similarly, Chigi now lent Julius II 400,000 florins without interest, taking the tiara of Paul II in pawn, though it did not approximate this amount in value; but Chigi was able to extend his leases on the Tolfa alum workings—which had once been granted to Lorenzo—and he secured a monopoly of the alum trade in Europe and Asia. In partnership with the Fuggers of Germany, he also leased the papal mint, and he further leased the papal salt mines at Cervi, which brought him enormous revenue.

* This painting, now in the Palazzo Pitti at Florence, derives its name from the sheet (*panno*) that covers the window in the background.

To flatter Pope Julius, Agostino Chigi, who had always maintained close relations with the city of Siena, had a fanciful pedigree of the Rovere family prepared, which showed them to be Sienese. This gave the pope a claim to part of the castle of Sugura in the Sienese region. When Chigi actually ceded his share in Sugura to Julius, the pope was overjoyed, received the Chigi family into his own and granted Agostino the privilege of inscribing himself in his seal as *Agostinus Chisius Sienensis de Rovere.*

Siena had appointed Chigi a senator, conferred the title *Magnifico* on him and borrowed 8,000 florins from him in 1507. As security he received the port called Port-Ercole, which he needed for his trading fleet. The port was to become his, if the loan were not repaid within forty years. Asked by Leo how rich he was, Chigi replied that he did not know. He owned three great trading emporia, in Rome, Port-Ercole and Naples, about 100 branches, agencies in Byzantium, Alexandria, Memphis, Lyon and London, and more than one hundred vessels. He employed twenty thousand people.

Posterity remembers him for his liaison with the beautiful courtesan Imperia, who enjoyed such renown that her court resembled that of a cardinal. She never ventured abroad alone, but was always attended by a large entourage. Chigi, who succeeded another banker, Angelo dal Bufalo, in her favor, showered her with princely gifts. Her features are believed to be perpetuated for posterity in the Sappho on Raphael's *Parnassus,* painted in 1510, in the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican, as well as in the kneeling woman on the same artist's *Transfiguration,* painted in 1519, after Imperia's death, and now in the Pinacoteca of the Vatican. For Agostino Chigi Raphael also executed the cartoons for the magnificent mosaic decorations of the ceiling of the Chigi Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (1516).

Ultimately the Villa Farnesina was built and decorated for Chigi. By 1510 construction had progressed sufficiently so that the Duke of Urbino could be entertained there during the carnival

season. The decorations, begun in 1511, were completed in 1515. Peruzzi and Raphael shared the work. Raphael is said to have painted his *Triumph of Galatea* in two weeks—he was thirty-one at the time. His friendship with Chigi cooled when the banker began to dally with La Fornarina, with whom, as we know, the artist was violently and jealously in love.

VIII

Leo X was no sensualist—he lacked both health and passion to be one; but he did enjoy good company, sang well and knew something about music.

He spent much time with his brother, the Duke of Nemours, Giuliano de' Medici, a burned-out lecher who had lost all ambition and had become a mystic, ruled by sorcerers and absorbed in exaggerated religiosity. The duke was a tall, fair-haired man with blue eyes, a long neck and delicate hands. So frail was his health that he had to take to his bed on the smallest effort. The achievement of his life was the polishing of a few love sonnets. Michelangelo made of this weakling a Roman emperor, calm and imperious of gaze.*

The pope's nephew Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, son of Piero de' Medici and Alfonsina Orsini, was more robust in nature but equally barren of all true ability. Moderate in food and drink, he was a good horseman and huntsman, and his ambition ran to a wealthy marriage and possession of a small principality. It was he whom Michelangelo shaped into that great, brooding demigod known as *Il Pensieroso.**

A kinsman destined for a greater future was Giulio de' Medici, natural son of the Giuliano who had been cut down by the Pazzi. Leo made him a cardinal, and he later became Pope Clement VII.

* A statue in the Medici chapel at Florence, 1524–34.

In point of fact, a number of Florentines moved to Rome to put forward their claims as Leo's compatriots; and he did prefer the sons of his ancestral city, keeping them in his entourage and favoring them in many ways.

Bernardo Bibbiena, friend of Leo's youth, became treasurer of the Roman Curia and soon afterward a cardinal. He was a tall, spare Epicurean with a fine head, a crooked nose, thin lips, a delicate smile and a melodious voice. His high clerical office did not keep him from importuning the ladies. Raphael immortalized Bibbiena in a famous portrait. The cardinal sought to gain a hold over the artist by offering Raphael his sister in marriage; but illustrious as was marriage to the sister of a cardinal, Raphael did not feel equal to it.

Bibbiena's obscene comedy, *Calandria,* already mentioned, was first performed in 1513, during the carnival in Urbino. The theme was taken from Plautus' *Gemini,* though it was here elaborated on its own. As later with Shakespeare, the twins were brother and sister rather than brothers. Bibbiena died in 1520.

One of Leo's favorites was Bernardo Accolti from Arezzo, a sentimental troubadour. Women everywhere were mad about him—apparently even Elisabeta Gonzaga and Lucrezia Borgia—and so admired was his singing that crowds gathered to hear him improvise to his *lyra da braccio.* What aroused particular enthusiasm was his *Hymn to the Madonna,* certain passages of which were taken to be fraught with meaning. It described the Virgin as having given birth to him through whom she had conceived, carrying her own Creator within herself, giving life to him who had given her life.

Like other ex tempore singers heard in the Vatican, Accolti was richly rewarded and led a luxurious life. After the death of Raphael, whose house was situated next to his own, he bought the great artist's country estate.

Next to the improvisers—who usually recited in Latin—it was the various court jesters, great and petty, who caused most of the talk at Leo's court. An important position was occupied by

Camillo Guerno from Naples, gourmand, toper and poet. In 1519 the Pope let him deliver the opening address at the "Studiolo," a kind of Roman university. Perhaps best-known is Brandino, a former actor who also possessed talents as a chef.

One of the court jesters was a former tailor, who had taken up astrology and foretold the future from the stars. Famous among Leo's cap-and-bells, finally, was the Dominican Fra Mariano, who had once been Lorenzo's barber, then became a monk under the influence of Savonarola, and was now dubbed Head Jester (*capo di matti*)—nor shrank from poking fun at bishops and cardinals during meals. He was a notorious trencherman. Tito, the Sienese chronicler, tells of him that at one meal he devoured twenty capons, four hundred eggs and a variety of other dishes—which may be something of an exaggeration.

The pope himself was temperate. Nevertheless, his cuisine took all the revenue from Spoleto, the Romagna and the border provinces. A regular escapade at court called for letting guests eat the meat of ravens or monkeys without a warning. Fra Mariano is said to have eaten a length of rope in the belief it was an eel, and an old waistcoat baked into a pastry. As a reward for his wit he was appointed "Pre-Sealer of the Papal Bulls," a highly remunerative sinecure. In this office he was the successor to Bramante and in turn gave way to Sebastiano del Piombo.

The scholars and poets at Leo's court fared less well than the pranksters. The pope liked to fend them off with promises, as Ariosto bitterly complains in one of his satires. The Duke of Ferrara wanted to make the poet his ambassador to Clement VII, but Ariosto preferred to remain in Ferrara. He had stood enough frustration under Leo X.

The fact that the pope kept giving high office and preferment to Florentines, or at least Tuscans, incensed the cardinals, especially young Cardinal Alfonso Petrucci, who had been very active on behalf of Leo's election. His father was the dictatorial ruler of Siena and his brother Borghese occupied high office in the Sienese republic. The pope, however, gave support to the anti-

Petrucci party in Siena and succeeded in getting the family ejected. Thereupon Alfonso Petrucci resolved to poison the pope and take advantage of the resultant confusion in Rome to restore his father's rule in Siena.

Battista da Vercelli, a Florentine physician, was picked to contaminate a boil on Leo's foot, causing gangrene. Petrucci confided his plan to the cardinals Santi, Soderini and Riario. It was Riario's secretary, a fellow named Nino, who was to gain the doctor's cooperation. But a code message by Nino to Petrucci was intercepted and deciphered. Nino was arrested and tortured. The pope then advised Petrucci that he proposed to reinstate his brother Borghese, but would first have to confer with Petrucci, to whom he was therefore sending a safe-conduct; but no sooner had Petrucci arrived when the pope had him and several others cast in prison.

Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, made a special trip to Rome to plead with the pope for the utmost rigor. There was no lack of it. Nino and Vercelli were hanged, having been beaten and tortured on the way to the gallows. Petrucci, aged twenty-seven, was strangled by a powerful Negro named Roland, who was in the service of the Medici—at Leo's behest and in the prison of Sant' Angelo. The guilty cardinals were sentenced to heavy fines, geared to their wealth. Soderini and Santi had to ransom their lives with 25,000 florins each, while the wealthy Cardinal Riario got off only when he paid a reparation of 150,000 florins.

IX

To posterity Leo's name is forever linked with the greatest artists of the Renaissance; for though his appreciation of art did not go very far beyond the realm of music, he undeniably commissioned works that will never be forgotten.

He was least successful in coming to terms with so towering a genius as Leonardo da Vinci. Leo simply did not know how to use him, and let him move on from Italy to France without a murmur. Nor did the pope really know how to tie down Michelangelo in Rome. He was apparently pained that the sculptor who outshone all others was to immortalize Julius II and the house of Rovere with the gigantic tomb commissioned from him. What the pope wanted was to harness the master's genius to the greater glory of the house of Medici. But he went about it in such petty fashion as to put intolerable difficulties in Michelangelo's way.

True, he charged Michelangelo with executing the façade of the Medici family church, San Lorenzo; but he handicapped the artist with his zeal for conferring favors on Florence. He demanded that Michelangelo draw his marble, not from Carrara, as had been the custom, but from the new Pietrasanta quarry near Florence. This hurled Michelangelo into a veritable witches' caldron of trouble, and in the end the plan came to nothing. Michelangelo, for the rest, had no choice but to work with assistants, which in the long run was always beyond his endurance.

Leo's features are represented with captivating grace and dignity in Raphael's portrait, with the Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Ludovico de' Rossi (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), as well as in the great fresco, *The Meeting of Leo I and Attila,* in the *stanze* of the Vatican. The entire suite of Raphael's *loggie* in the Vatican is linked with Leo's name. Bramante began their construction in 1510, and Raphael completed the inspired decorations in 1518. Here as in the *stanze,* he had to leave the execution to pupils.

To Leo's credit it must also be recorded that the entire interior of the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo—the Medici Chapel with its marvelous family tombs—goes back to his commission, even though the project was not completed until long after the pope's death. Riding rough-shod over Michelangelo's hostility toward the house of Medici, he gave the great artist the commission, precisely because of his unchallenged greatness.

Raphael's finest frescoes in the *stanze* were painted under

Julius II; but the cartoons for the woven tapestries with which the walls of the Sistine Chapel were to be decorated were designed and woven under Leo. Seven of these cartoons are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Rubens is said to have saved them from destruction in Brussels, where the tapestries were woven from Raphael's cartoons by Pieter van Aelst (1516–20). They are kept in the Vatican.

Among the many offices entrusted to Raphael during his final years was direction of the construction work on St. Peter's. Privately, the task seemed too exacting to him—so seriously did he take it that he was not content with mere supervision but soon was quite at home at the building site and was fond of taking a hand himself.

Added to this onerous responsibility, Leo also burdened Raphael with direction of the work of excavating antiquities in Rome, a task to which the artist brought great enthusiasm. "From these walls," he wrote, "speaks the divine spirit of antiquity." He wandered among the relics of ancient Rome, drawing the ruins and rejoicing over finds such as the ornamental paintings (grotesques) in the Baths of Titus.

As though this were not enough, Raphael also had to oversee the construction of the stage which the pope's nephew, Cardinal Cybò, ordered built in Sant' Angelo; and he even had to design the sets. For five long years Raphael had to wait for his fee as architect of St. Peter's; then, in 1519, he was paid the whole sum at once.

Leo was forever in financial straits. All the resources Julius II had gathered to drive the foreigners out of Italy Leo spent to pay off the debts he had incurred as a cardinal. A war he waged in 1516 to gain the Duchy of Urbino for his nephew Lorenzo cost him more than the sale of cardinalships brought in in 1517. He himself left such huge debts that several banks went bankrupt at his death and a whole group of cardinals from whom he had borrowed large sums were ruined.

But the disorder in the papal finances is of small concern to

posterity; nor does it matter that the fat little pope with the puny legs was unable, on account of his indolence, to exert any personal influence on the art and science of the Renaissance. His name remains linked with that age at its fullest flower, cannot be divorced from that of Raphael. The luminous name of Michelangelo reflects glory on him, casual as was the personal relation between pope and sculptor. Indeed, almost throughout Leo's reign Michelangelo resided in Florence.

X

On the death of Leo X the Conclave dragged on. "Gentlemen," said Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, "I observe that none of us here assembled can become pope. We must look for one who is not here. Let us choose the Cardinal of Tortosa, a venerable old man with the odor of sanctity."

This was a Fleming, Adrian Floriszoon of Utrecht, formerly professor in Louvain, who had been tutor to Charles V and through the emperor's personal favor had become *Gobernador* of Spain and a cardinal. He was an orthodox theologian, so unfamiliar with conditions in Rome that he did not even speak Italian. Cardinal Cajetano began to sing his praises. The cardinals were carried away when they heard of Adrian's rectitude, devoutness, thrift and gravity. The Roman in the street, who expected largesse and public festivities of his popes, was embittered by the cardinals' choice and inveighed against the monkish pope.

Adrian came, kept his name, became Pope Adrian VI, brought along his aged housekeeper and conducted his office in the same artless fashion that had marked his life in the Netherlands and in Spain.

His reign was utterly out of keeping with the spirit of the Renaissance. It was but an episode, yet in a way an omen of the

austere and somber trend to be brought on by the Counter Reformation. Adrian took deep offense at the nude figures in Michelangelo's Sistine frescoes and covered his face when he stood before the much-admired Laocoön group.

When success began to attend Turkish arms, he sought to maintain peace among the princes of Christendom and observe neutrality in the struggle between Francis I and Charles V. The news that the Turks had conquered Rhodes impressed him deeply. He saw not only Hungary threatened, but Italy and Rome as well. With the Turkish danger in mind, he sought to mediate and addressed himself to the King of France. He strove to turn aside the attacks of the German reformers, endeavoring to disarm them by righting abuses within the Roman Church. But the conquest of Rhodes failed to impress the French king and the reform movement in Germany would not be stilled.

XI

When Pope Adrian VI died in September 1523, one year after his coronation, Giulio de' Medici was the only possible successor. He had already wielded great influence under Leo and Adrian, and he now mounted the papal throne under the name of Clement VII.

As a statesman he was well-intentioned, but his character was marked by vacillation and his political situation was desperate from the outset. He was obligated to Spain and had acted as Spain's ally. The Spaniards had assisted in the expansion of the Papal State and had restored the house of Medici in Florence. But once the popes had wrested Milan from the French, they were reluctant to leave it to the Spanish. Now, under Charles V, Spain

was in a position of dominance. Clement had to tremble before the power he had himself helped to strengthen.

In 1525 he tried to wean away the emperor's best general, who was disgruntled. Clement had good reason to hope that the army would follow its general. But Pescara, of Spanish birth and culture, promptly told the emperor of the pope's endeavor.

As early as November 1524 Clement had concluded a secret alliance with Francis I. But his uncertainty made him resort to duplicity, and in order to establish the best possible relations between the papal and Spanish courts, he dispatched to Charles V Baldassare Castiglione, the courtly author of the book *Il Cortegiano* (The Courtier). When Castiglione departed from Mantua, it was with a splendid entourage given him by Clement who enjoined him to stop off at Milan and pay his respects to Charles de Lannoy, assuring the Spanish viceroy of the pope's warmest sentiments for the emperor. He was then to journey to Francis I and on this roundabout route to Spain gather reliable intelligence on the relative strength of the French and Spanish troops, so that the pope, if the need arose, could join the stronger side.

When Castiglione came to Milan, the French troops, who had been promised papal support, had taken the city, and the viceroy had retired to Monticelli. There Castiglione sought him out and heard from his lips a declaration, surely given with serious mental reservations, to the effect that the emperor was convinced of the pope's fatherly good will. In Milan Castiglione then presented himself to the French general, who received him with honors, but advised him to visit the king, who was encamped near Pavia. Carrying out his orders, Castiglione told the king that the pope was intent only on preserving the peace and that his own mission to the emperor was in no wise at odds with the alliance concluded between Francis and Clement.

In Madrid Castiglione was warmly and ceremoniously received by Charles V, who did not breathe a word that he knew all about the pope making common cause with his enemy. Castiglione

escorted the emperor on all his journeys, was in Toledo with him in 1525, in Granada in 1526. Here the emperor learned of Pescara's decisive victory at Pavia and of the capture of Francis I, news that of course pleased him as much as it set afoot great unrest in Rome.

Because of his heedless policy, Clement now concluded a new alliance with the Spanish viceroy. He dispatched Cardinal Salviati to Spain to apologize for the many demonstrations of sympathy the pope had shown France and divert the Emperor's ire by imploring him to declare war on the infidel Turks.

It was at this time (1526) that the Diet met at Spires, with understandably neither the emperor nor his representative, Ferdinand of Austria, prepared to support the papal cause north of the Alps at a moment when the pope's troops south of the Alps stood ready to attack the imperial forces in Milan. The estates were left free to take whatever stand they pleased on the religious issue. This concession created a legal status for the Protestant party. The pope hesitated; he wished to save on army expenses.

Meanwhile Georg Frundsberg crossed the Alps in 1526 with an army that was preponderantly Lutheran, to wreak vengeance for the emperor. The passes into Tuscany could have been blocked with 4,000 men; but Rome, which could have well mounted 30,000 men under arms, had courage and discipline prevailed in the city, managed no more than 500.

Giovanni delle Bande Nere, Catarina Sforza's heroic son, together with the Duke of Urbino tried to hold the 14,000 Germans at Mantua in their march toward Rome. Victory seemed already won, with 4,000 Germans littering the battlefield, when an enemy ball shattered Giovanni's kneecap and he died following an operation. Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, an adherent of the emperor, fell upon Rome with his mercenaries, as had been arranged with Moncada, the Spanish ambassador, and compelled the pope, who had fled to the Castel Sant' Angelo, to accept a humiliating peace dictated by the Spanish.

But the emperor was not content and dispatched a large Hispano-German army to Rome, under Charles of Bourbon, an apostate cousin of Francis I. As we know, Charles of Bourbon was felled by a ball from the Castel Sant' Angelo, fired by Benvenuto Cellini—or so, at least, that valiant braggart maintained. The savage host that stormed the city on May 6, 1527, sacked and pillaged the world capital, leaving behind a Rome that had been thoroughly ruined. *Il sacco di Roma*—Charles V had the audacity to tell Castiglione that this outrage was the pope's fault—marks an epoch in the history of the Italian Renaissance.

It seems to have been the Spaniards who initiated the looting and the atrocities. Like the Spaniards, the Germans were without a supreme commander and, coarse mercenaries that they were, hungry for booty. They were infected with the Spanish brutality and vengefulness. They had suffered hardship and hunger on the forced march to Rome, during which, in their zeal, they had formed human chains to help one another across the obstructing water-courses. Before them lay one of the wealthiest and most luxurious cities on earth, which they had forever heard execrated as the Whore of Babylon, to boot. From Luther's diatribes against the Roman Church they had learned that the Pope of Rome was the devil incarnate, the Anti-Christ, whom it was praiseworthy to strike down. All they knew of the city itself was that its priests and cardinals were sycophantic rogues, their women prostitutes, their faith nothing but despicable superstition. They wallowed in every manner of excess—inflicted tortures, gratified their lust, looted and pillaged to their heart's content—and felt all the while they were serving justice.

Gold and silver to the value of ten million was carried away from Rome. The keenest delight was taken in forcing the rich to ransom themselves with huge sums. As a pastime fires were set to terrify the population. Campfires were kindled on the mosaic floors of the Vatican, and stained-glass windows were smashed to get at the lead mullions. The statuary in the public squares was

smashed with a savagery matched in history only by the Vandals. As devout Lutherans the soldiers were outraged by Mariolatry and the churches and madonnas were badly mauled.

For half a year Rome remained in the clutches of the mercenaries. When Clement VII ventured forth from Sant' Angelo to return to the Vatican, only 30,000 of the city's 90,000 inhabitants were left. The pope who had hoped to break Spanish hegemony in Italy was utterly humbled and had to witness the further consolidation of Spanish rule.

XII

At the very time when Rome was overwhelmed, the Medici pope had to suffer the expulsion of his family from Florence.

As Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, Clement himself had ruled the city under Leo X. Subsequently he had installed the Cardinal of Cortona as regent, a strict one, hated by the citizenry whom he oppressed with levies. The two dukes whom Michelangelo immortalized had left no legitimate male issue, though each of them had a natural son. The elder, Ippolito, was the son of Giuliano with a noble lady of Urbino; the younger, Alessandro, was of uncertain descent—his mother a mulatto slave, his father either Lorenzo or a groom or perhaps even Clement himself.

In April 1527 a popular rebellion, supported by nobles hostile to the Medici, broke out in Florence. Cortona, Ippolito and Alessandro sought aid from the Duke of Urbino, who was encamped with his troops near the city. They returned with 1,000 men. There was a brief clash among the parties, notable only because a bench hurled from the Palazzo Vecchio knocked off the left arm of Michelangelo's David, then standing before the building. A provisional settlement was reached, however. Ippolito, though but fifteen years old, was to have any office he chose. Cortona now had 3,000 men under arms. But when the evil tidings about the

capture of Rome reached Florence, the Medici felt the game was up. They left the city on May 15, 1527, and a popular government under a Grand Council, with Niccolò Capponi as *Gonfaloniere,* was installed for one year.

For fear of uprisings, the pope made new approaches to the emperor, hoping to gain his support against the Protestants. And indeed, Charles V showed himself unfriendly toward the Lutheran emissaries who sought him out in Italy.

The Counter Reformation now resolutely raised its head. In a missive to the Emperor, Cardinal Campeggio emphasized that it was now a matter of exterminating the heretics with fire and sword and of seizing their property in Germany, as in Hungary and Bohemia. Holy Inquisitors should be charged with hunting them down like the *Marrános* (Neo-Christians) in Spain. The University of Wittenberg must be excommunicated. The monks who had left their orders must be sent back to the monasteries.

But Charles V lacked the temperament so forcible a policy would have demanded. He was slow and deliberate. He took comfort in the thought of a Council. Clement, in his vacillation and with his position shaken, again sought an alliance with Francis I. He married off his young niece Catarina de' Medici to the king's second son, the later Henry II—but the prince preferred Diane de Poitiers to her. Francis, however, then maintained excellent relations with the Protestants, especially Landgrave Philip of Hesse.

From England too the pope was threatened with danger. Although Henry VIII had issued a rescript against Luther, he had also threatened the pope with British church reform as early as 1525. This controversy was settled and Henry supported Clement while the pope was besieged in Sant' Angelo. As we know, what Henry really wanted was a divorce, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn; but the pope could not do him this favor, since the Queen of England was the emperor's aunt. Thus a new and dangerous enemy arose for Clement. Henry's opposition to the pope's secular power became more and more vehement.

XIII

There were intellectual trends in Italy about this time that showed certain points of agreement with Protestantism. Initially this movement too was hostile to a secular papacy and strove for reform; but in time circumstances compelled the papacy itself to assimilate these trends. This soon utterly changed its character. The Renaissance papacy with its pagan stamp, its artistic and literary inclinations, its revival of antiquity and its indifference toward the observance of sexual morality was followed by the papacy of the Counter Reformation with its strict orthodoxy, its officially maintained rectitude. The intolerance of the Inquisition did not shrink from persecuting heresy and even imposed severe penalties on the spirit of free inquiry in the sciences.

As early as the time of Leo X an oratory styled *The Love of God* is mentioned. It was located near the spot where, according to tradition, St. Peter had dwelt, and there, in a church, half a hundred devout clerics foregathered. The most important bore names that later became well known: Contarini, Sadoleto, Giberti, Caraffa. Their aim was to reform the Roman Church from within.

When Rome was plundered, Florence captured, Milan exposed to constant feuding, this Roman company drew other good men and true to its midst. Their preferred place of assembly was Venice. Their main interest was theological in nature. They proceeded from the same doctrine of justification as Luther. Gaspare Contarini, one of the leaders of the group, maintained the gospels were no more than the glad tidings that God's only begotten Son had sought to satisfy the Father's demand for justice in flesh and blood.

The Spaniard Juan de Valdéz, secretary to the Viceroy of Na-

ples, spread the doctrine of redemption to the best of his ability. His writings are lost, but his disciple, the monk Flaminio, in 1540 issued a small book, *On the Good Works of Christ,* that dealt only with redemption. Valdez exerted a profound influence on the nobility of Naples and on the savants of Italy. Women too eagerly joined the movement he initiated.*

XIV

Of them Vittoria Colonna is the best known, indeed, perhaps Italy's most famous woman of the past four hundred years. She was born in 1492 in Castello Marino, a Colonna stronghold that commanded the approach to Rome. Her father was lord of Paliano, later Prince of Tagliacozzo, and received the title of Grand Connetable of Naples. Her mother was Agnes da Montefeltro, daughter of Duke Federigo of Urbino.

King Ferrandino had persuaded Fabrizio Colonna to betrothe his daughter Vittoria to Ferrante Francesco d'Avalos, who boasted the title of Marchese of Pescara even as a child. The marriage contract was signed in 1507, the wedding celebrated in 1509. The bride's dowry was 14,000 florins.

When the marriage of Bona of Aragon with King Zygmunt I of Poland was celebrated in Naples in 1517, Vittoria was in the bridal entourage and her grave beauty well suited the solemn splendor of the procession. She was mounted on a white pacing horse caparisoned in crimson velvet with borders of gold and silver. Six equerries in blue and yellow silks strode beside her. She wore a robe of crimson brocade under a velvet cloak with gold tassels, a snood of cloth of gold surmounted by a beret of crimson silk with massive gold jewelry. Her belt too was fashioned of gold.

* The book from which we know the doctrines of Valdéz is *Le cento et dieci diuine considerationi del S. Giovanni Valdesso,* Basle, 1550.

Six ladies of the nobility in light blue damask formed her personal train.

Later on Michelangelo, in his poems, was to address her as Column, in a play upon her name, in keeping with current poetic custom. A sonnet to her by Pietro Bembo begins: "Looming column that stands firm amid the raging of the storm!" Ariosto sings her praises in five stanzas dedicated to her in the 37th canto of his *Orlando Furioso*. "One alone I choose," he begins, "and she the one who silences even the wrath of envy. . . . By the power of sweet sound she has risen to immortality; more than that, let her but speak or sing of anyone, and he shall rise from tomb to everlasting light."

She was in touch with all the poets of her time, knew Francesco Maria Molza and exchanged letters with him. He is known to be among those who listened to her converse with Michelangelo on art in Italy in the cloister of San Silvestro and elsewhere. Galeazzo di Tarsia had seen Vittoria in Naples. She became his Muse, whose praises he ever sang, with a fervor that sets him off from other imitators of Petrarca. Through Giberti, Vittoria came in touch with Berni and with Pietro Aretino, who wrote a sonnet in her honor.

Ferrante d'Avalos whom, for the sake of brevity, we may call Pescara, had been appointed supreme commander of the imperial-papal troops under Leo. Against him the French were unable to hold Parma, the Venetians Milan. In 1522, after Leo's death, together with Prospero Colonna he defeated the French army under Lautrec. His horrifying pillage of Genoa aroused the disapproval of the Church, and in vain he implored Adrian VI, when the pope landed in Genoa, to revoke the reprimand the pillage had earned him. But then Adrian died and Vittoria privately rejoiced over the election of Clement VII.

For some three years she had been separated from her husband. On a single occasion, in 1522, he had come home to Naples for a few days from his campaigns. The dreadful disorder in the

papal finances precipitated Pescara into debt, and in 1523 Vittoria had to write to the papal captain general, Federigo Gonzaga, to remind him of the 4,000 florins owed her husband. Her letters to Gian Maria Giberti reveal her joy over the election of the pope, whom she took to be a great statesman; but as we have seen, Giulio de' Medici's stature as a pope dwindled. He was irresolute and lacking in character.

The valiant defense of Marseilles—conducted, by the way, by two Italians, Orsini and Gonzaga—compelled the imperial forces to retreat. Greatly weakened, Pescara and Bourbon in 1524 met the Spanish viceroy Lannoy in Piedmont. The king of France strutted arrogantly and demanded Naples in addition to Milan.

But then came the Battle of Pavia in which the king with the rest of his army was captured. Chief credit for the victory must go to Pescara. He had kept up Lannoy's courage, had demanded the relief of starved Pavia, and had dealt with the soldiers, restless because they had not received their pay. It was he too who had conceived the plan of attack and who had fought to the end, hand-to-hand, though bleeding from three wounds, the while the flower of the French nobility littered the battlefield—La Tremouille, la Palice, Saint Pol, de Foix, Bonnivet.

Charles V wrote Pescara letters full of gratitude but did not stir a finger to reward him. Although Pescara was half Spanish, Charles did not trust him—he trusted only Spaniards and Germans, never an Italian. As a result of the hardships he had undergone Pescara died in Milan in 1525, in the middle of the war.

When this cruel blow struck her, Vittoria sought refuge in the convent of San Viterbo. In an epistle of December 7, 1525, the pope gave his permission for her to be received there, but also forbade the abbess to exchange Vittoria's widow's weeds for the nun's habit. After 1530 Vittoria lived in various places—first on Ischia with the Duchess of Francavilla, then in Orvieto in the Convent of San Paolo. She wrote poems to relieve her heart's sorrow.

XV

With Rome plundered, the rupture with Germany a fact, and England lost to the Catholic Church, a new religious movement began, into which Vittoria was swept. Religious studies had long preoccupied her after Pescara's death.

In Viterbo Reginald Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury, became the center of Vittoria's circle. A grandson of the Duke of Clarence, whom Richard III had murdered, he was a distant kinsman of Henry VIII. He was born in 1500 and educated mainly in Padua. He was at odds with King Henry, whom he was minded to support neither in the matter of his divorce nor in the separation from the Roman Church. Banished for high treason, he lived for the most part in Italy. In the time of Clement VII he gave much thought to reform, and Paul III appointed him cardinal.

His character like his destiny was out of the ordinary. To get at him, Henry VIII persecuted his family, having his mother beheaded because of her son's diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Catholic cause in England. At the news of his mother's execution he wrote Vittoria that her letter had been one of the few consolations left to him during this access of Pharaonic rage. Having rediscovered his mother's spirit in Vittoria, he established residence in Viterbo in 1541, as a legate. His influence on Vittoria proved to be enduring.

Contarini was among Vittoria's closest friends, like Pole and also Bernardino Ochino. He was long active as an adherent of the orthodox Catholic trend, became a Franciscan and subjected himself to severe penitences, but ultimately embraced the doctrine of redemption, decried as heretical. His reputation spread far and wide. "I opened my heart to him as though to Christ Himself," wrote Pietro Bembo. "It seemed to me as though I had never beheld a holier man."

The Church was reformed from within. Paul III appointed cardinals with no regard other than merit—first Contarini, then Caraffa, then Sadoleto, Giberti and, as we have seen, the exiled Reginald Pole, all of them members of that earlier oratory, *The Love of God.*

Oddly enough an effort was made to establish a papacy that would be not only devout but also reasonable. Contarini wrote: "The law of Christ is the law of liberty and forbids the harsh servitude which Luther rightly compares to the Babylonian captivity. All rule is the rule of reason, even the authority of the pope."

XVI

On April 5, 1536, Charles V held his entry into Rome, which his army had pillaged nine years before. He paid visits to but two ladies. One of them was Giovanna Aragona Colonna. The other was her sister-in-law Vittoria, who had always remained loyal to the emperor. She hoped he would achieve the victory of cross over crescent. Her concern was then reserved to religion alone.

While the emperor bargained with Alessandro Farnese (who, as pope, called himself Paul III) Vittoria bestowed her attentions on the Capuchin order, detested by Francesco Quiñones de Luna, Cardinal of Santa Croce in Jerusalem, because it had exposed abuses in the Minorite monasteries, and the cardinal himself was a Minorite. While in Ferrara for the baptism of the duke's daughter Eleonora d'Este—whose godmother she was—Vittoria met Bernardino Ochino and admired his sermons. She was indignant over the calumnies and distortions to which he was exposed.

In February 1538 Vittoria left Ferrara, having recited some of her sonnets the day before at a court function. Through Renata di Francia of Ferrara, she knew the queen of Navarre, Marguerite

d'Angoulême the spirited and witty sister of King Francis. In 1540 she sent the queen, at her request, a hand-written collection of her sonnets.

Marguerite's opponent, the Connetable of Montmorency, had come into possession of the volume and protested to King Francis that Vittoria's sonnets contained much that was in conflict with Christian faith. Francis only laughed, in part because he knew the marchesa's devoutness, in part because he was only officially rather than privately concerned with purity of faith. Queen Marguerite, however, had been suspected of heresy as early as 1532, and was violently attacked in sermons. She was the mother of Jeanne d'Albret, whose son was Henry IV.

With Paul III the era of humanism was over. What was now important to the Church was to restore its authority. For a fleeting moment it looked as though a reconciliation between the Roman Church and the Reformation were possible. The two were never closer than during the discussions at Ratisbon in 1541. The emperor desired reconciliation. His enemies were Turkey and France rather than the Protestants. Landgrave Philip of Hesse stood well with Austria and the emperor liked him. On the Protestant side two men of peace turned up, Bucer and Melanchthon. From the Catholic side came the pliant Gaspare Contarini, leader of the new trend within the Catholic Church.

It seemed at first that agreement would be reached even on the points that then seemed most important—original sin, justification by faith alone, redemption. It was Luther who broke up every understanding. To him the struggle of the Reformation against the papacy was the struggle of heaven against hell, and any reconciliation must be the work of Satan. By way of balance it was now the reactionary cardinals Caraffa and Marcello in Rome who objected to the doctrine of justification. The emperor's enemies, most zealous among the Catholics, raised sharp opposition to all mediation.

While in Germany monasticism was abolished and the nuns set free, efforts were made in Italy to introduce stricter rules for

monastic life; indeed, celibacy was instituted even for clerics who belonged to no order. The Franciscans, Capuchins—all the orders that had been secularized—introduced a new discipline of austerity and piety. The reform was led by two high ecclesiastics, the gentle and peaceful Gaetano da Thiene and the hot-tempered, violent Giovanni Caraffa. They founded the new Theatine order for the express purpose of improving the priestly estate. Caraffa, later to become Pope Paul IV, developed a surging eloquence as a preacher.

XVII

Yet it was from Spain rather than Italy that enthusiasm for old-time orthodoxy and moral reorientation received their crucial support.

Don Iñigo Lopez de Recaldo, youngest son of the house of Loyola, a well-known Spanish family, had had the misfortune of being wounded in both legs during the defense of Pamplona against the French in 1521. Although he had unflinchingly had his legs set twice anew, they healed badly and his health was never restored.

He knew and loved the romances of chivalry, especially *Amadis,* and during his illness he also read the histories of several saints as well as of Jesus. In the workings of his mind, he was the precise Catholic counterpart to Luther. His approach was quite as naive as that of the reformer. Just as to the former Augustinian his cause was that of heaven, while the papal cause represented hell, so the veteran officer Loyola envisioned two camps, that of Christ and that of Satan, one in Jerusalem, the other in Babylon. For Loyola as for Luther one camp was wholly good, the other wholly evil. To the Spaniard Christ was a king determined to subject the land of the infidels.

Luther had fled to the lofty Wartburg. Loyola left his ancestral home and retired to Montserrat. In contrast to Luther, he did not delve into the Bible at all. Dogma left him unimpressed. He lived a purely inward life and soon felt the influence of the good spirit that succors and rejoices the soul, but also that of the evil spirit that weakens and terrifies it.

Luther clung only to God's Scripture. True, he had visions, such as when the devil tempted him, but he held fast to the words of the Bible. Loyola was wrapped up in apparitions. He halted on the stairway to San Domenico in Manresa and cried aloud with joy, because the mystery of the Trinity had become manifest to him at that moment. On another occasion he saw Christ and the Virgin Mary before him. Both, the Reformation and the Counter Reformation, are based on mental states that will always interest the psychologist.

Loyola's ecclesiastic superiors demanded that he study theology. He did so, for the first four years at the universities of his own country, Alcalá and Salamanca, completing his theological training at the University of Paris.

His military background had left deep traces on his mind, and he resolved to call himself and the companions who had joined him "the Company of Jesus," just as in those days a company of soldiers was named after its leader. As a former officer, Loyola wanted to wage war on Satan.

In Rome these early Jesuits were originally subject to strong suspicion. They were looked on as though they were heretics. Soon, however, they gave convincing evidence of their absolute orthodoxy. They were zealous preachers and teachers. Above all, they concerned themselves with nursing the sick, and here they undeniably did good. No opposition was to be anticipated of them, for Loyola had declared obedience to be the greatest virtue. The only right he granted his adherents was that of electing their own general, for life.

At the Council of Trent (1545–1563) Contarini's approach was presented by the highest representative of the Augustinian order,

Scripando, though with the express reservation that the views upheld were not those of Luther. With cunning sophistry it was explained that Contarini assumed a dual justification—an inward one, through which man grew from a child of sin into a child of God; and an external salvation through Christ's grace. But even with such distorting alterations this principle of Protestant theology did not prevail. Caraffa resisted it, and with him the Jesuits mobilized for opposition.

XVIII

The Council of Trent agreed that salvation was by Christ's grace, but only because this brought about an inner rebirth and thereby good works, which were what really mattered. But since the Protestants clung to their doctrines and doubts of the existence of Purgatory were voiced even in Italy, the pope one day asked Caraffa if he knew of a remedy for the evil. Caraffa replied: a thoroughgoing inquisition.

In Spain a court of inquisition had already been instituted. The pope was now persuaded to create a supreme Inquisition on the Spanish model. Caraffa leased a house, where he had a prison with torture instruments established. He pushed through a policy that no time must be wasted in matters of faith, that the utmost severity must be employed at once, and that there could be no distinction of person. No matter how exalted the status of prince or prelate, no tolerance must be shown him. Calvinists and Lutherans were to be equally condemned.

Many were arrested; others succeeded in making good their escape. Bernardino Ochino handed over the seal of his order to another and fled to Geneva, thence to Zwingli in Zurich; but soon he was at odds with the orthodox Protestants as well. Subsequently he had to wander restlessly from country to country for

no less than twenty-two years, to die of the plague at the age of seventy-seven, in a small town in Moravia.

Like Ochino, a few other eminent men, such as Vermigli and Curione, managed to save their lives by leaving Italy. For the rest, mutual partisan hatred militated for the Inquisition. Revenge on an enemy was best taken by denouncing him as a heretic.

In time an index of prohibited books came to be established. A beginning with this prohibition had been made in Louvain and Paris. In Italy one of those devoted to the house of Caraffa had the first Index printed, covering seventy titles. The task was tackled with fervent zeal. Thousands upon thousands of copies of Flaminio's book *On the Good Works of Christ* were burned.

Good use was now made of the Jesuits, whose numbers had steadily risen. Loyola divided them into three classes. At the top were the professors, small in number and permitted to live only on alms. Members of the two lower classes had the right to earn their bread. In complete subjection, disavowing all independent judgment, the Jesuit was to surrender to his superior, to be like a staff in his hand, bereft of volition like a corpse.

Personally Paul III (Alessandro Farnese) was as little a saint as any of the popes of the high Renaissance. Born in 1468, he had received his entire education in the age of humanism. He had studied in Rome under Pomponius Laetus, in Florence in Lorenzo's gardens. He acknowledged an illegitimate son and an illegitimate daughter. He had become cardinal at a youthful age and had begun construction of the beautiful Palazzo Farnese. After forty years as a cardinal, he was elected pope in October 1534, in his sixty-seventh year. His demeanor was marked by "splendor and grandeur," as it was then put. Rarely before had a pope been so universally popular at the outset.

Not long after his ascension, he had entered into bonds of kinsmanship with the emperor. In Oudenaarde in Belgium there still stands a pretty little house by the canal, where Charles V as a youth lived in idyllic serenity with the beautiful Johanna von der Gheynst, who bore him his daughter Margaret, renowned in

history as Margaret of Parma—the same one who, as an older woman, governed the Netherlands with shrewdness and statesmanship, to retire only with the advent of the Duke of Alba.

Margaret's first marriage, in 1536, was to Alessandro de' Medici, who cleared his way to the overlordship of Florence by poisoning his cousin Ippolito de' Medici, but was himself murdered on January 5, 1537, by his cousin Lorenzino. Margaret married again the following year, Ottavio Farnese, a grandson of the pope.

Everywhere in Italy there were malcontents, men who had left Milan, Naples, Florence, Genoa, Siena. His ties to the emperor did not keep the pope from assuming the role of their protector. Only young Duke Cosimo I of Florence, a son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, remained hostile to the pope and loyal to the emperor.

In 1545, however, pope and emperor were on a friendly footing. Margaret expected a child, and the future grandfather and great-grandfather were now to have a descendant in common. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese sought out the emperor at Worms and put him in good humor. Pope and emperor joined forces with the object of destroying the Schmalkaldic League. It looked as though the Protestant cause were lost, as though the whole North were bound to become Catholic again.

At this moment the pope withdrew his troops from the imperial army and moved the Council of Trent—ostensibly because of a plague that raged there—to Bologna, which was much closer to Rome. Oddly enough, the pope felt himself an ally of the Protestants, hoped for and believed in a defeat of the emperor.

But the luck of Charles V ruined all the papal calculations. The emperor saw through the pope and was much incensed over his behavior.

At the same time good fortune deserted Paul III. Reportedly, on the very day when he had enumerated how luck had served him all his life, news reached him that his son, Piero Luigi Farnese, had been murdered in Piacenza. Since his right to Piacenza

was contested, he resolved to restore the city to Church sovereignty. For the first time he acted against the interests of his clan; but thereupon his own grandson rose against him. When he ordered Camillo Orsini to hold Parma against all attacks, Ottavio Farnese tried to capture the city by a ruse.

Two years after the murder of his son, on November 10, 1549, Paul III died.

XIX

Julius III (Cardinal del Monte, elected in 1550) had been chamberlain to Julius II, hence chose the same name. He was on good terms with the emperor and Duke Cosimo, but for the rest was concerned only with a life of enjoyment at his villa, which lay outside the Porta del Popolo. There he often distilled the experience of his life into the form of proverbs that brought a blush to many of his listeners.

After his death the respectable party within the Church effected the election of Marcello Cervino, who ascended the papal throne in 1555 as Marcellus II. He was beyond reproach, but disappointed the hopes that had been put in him, for he died after only twenty-two days.

Cardinal Giovanni Caraffa, austere and brusque, often mentioned above, ascended the throne as Paul IV in May 1555. In his very first bull he announced his intention of reforming the Catholic Church by reintroducing the ancient faith and discipline. Born in 1476, however, he had lived most of his life before the time of Spanish dominance and therefore resented it deeply. He was convinced that Charles V had treated the Protestants so gently only from jealousy of the pope. He soon became involved in a long series of disputes with the emperor and concluded an alliance with France against him.

He was fond of the heavy, flavorsome wine from Mount Vesuvius, and, while he drank it, of cursing the Spanish, "those descendants of Jews and Marrános." His reformist aims quickly gave way to war plans. He, who had passionately fought every manifestation of nepotism, now made his bloodthirsty nephew Carlo Caraffa a cardinal, indeed, distributed the Colonna castles among his nephews.

The Duke of Alba, as captain general of the emperor, was advancing from Naples toward Rome. The Romans had already demonstrated before that they were unequal to the defense of their city. Yet Alba, a good Catholic, waged war against the pope but reluctantly. There were skirmishes at Tivoli and Ostia, while Paul implored all the world for help, even the German Protestants, indeed, even Sultan Suleiman II, whom he begged to desist from his Hungarian campaign to fall upon the two Sicilies with all his host. No help was forthcoming; but in 1557 the Spanish won at St. Quentin. Paul had to sue for peace. The Spanish general returned everything that belonged to the Church. Indeed, Alba, the victor, fell to his knees before the pope and kissed his foot.

The pope cooled toward his nephews, introduced harsh discipline everywhere, prohibited all begging for alms, fostered the Inquisition by all means at his command and died in August 1559.

While Paul IV was an aristocratic Neapolitan from a renowned family of the nobility still flourishing today, his successor, Giovanni Angelo Medici, who ascended the papal throne as Pius IV, despite his name came from a poor family, his father having been a tax farmer from Milan. He became a doctor and jurist, bought himself an office in Rome, rose in the favor of Paul III because his brother, a bold adventurer, had married a lady from the Orsini clan. He became a cardinal and showed himself skillful and good-natured in administrative matters. Since Paul IV disliked him, he was almost constantly away from Rome, practiced much charity and erected useful structures in the resorts near Pisa and Milan.

In contrast to Caraffa, he was no zealot but worldly and lively. His gay temperament disposed him against the Inquisition, but he

did not dare set it limits. On the other hand, circumstances compelled him to have the nephews of the late pope hanged. One of them, the Duke of Palliano, had killed his wife from jealousy. Cardinal Carlo Caraffa, Count Aliffe and Leonardo da Cadine had committed robbery, murder, forgery and fraud.

He was himself far too conscientious to lift a finger for his family. Only one of his nephews ever obtained an office, which he discharged to general satisfaction. This was Carlo Borromeo, who ruled irreproachably and stout-heartedly as his uncle's representative.

By January 1562 the Council of Trent had assembled in numbers sufficiently large to resume negotiations on reformation. Yet from the outset the legates of the nations sharply opposed the pope. Nevertheless Cardinal Morone was sent to Emperor Ferdinand at Innsbruck to reach an understanding, and an agreement was made. Furthermore, Philip II of Spain and the Cardinal de Guise proved themselves faithful Catholics on the French side. The Council, initially promoted with great zeal, then shunned and twice dissolved, adjourned a third time in December 1563 in general amity.

Early Youth in Florence

1475-1496

I

THE BUONARROTI-SIMONI were an ancient Florentine family, once well-to-do, whose fortunes had declined. Father Lodovico was a sturdy, upright man without much energy. His sole property was a farmstead at Settignano, some three miles northeast of Florence, which produced little revenue. Hence he was glad to take on small offices that did bring in something; and for the winter of 1474–75 he had himself appointed *podestà,* resident magistrate, in the small town of Caprese, where his second son, Michelangelo Buonarroti, was born on March 6, 1475.

The child born in Caprese got as his wetnurse a young woman from Settignano, whose father and husband were stone-masons.

The area near the slope on which Fiesole, in the same district, is built was known for its fine quarry, whence came the marble, from which many monuments in Florence were fashioned. In his maturity Michelangelo used to say jestingly that he had drunk in his propensity for sculpture at his wet-nurse's breast.

The child remained with her for some time, for within a few weeks of his birth the family moved back into the house it occupied in Florence, a house rented by Lodovico from his brother-in-law, a dyer. It lay in the narrow, crooked street called Via de' Bentaccordi.

Michelangelo's mother, Monna Francesca, daughter of Neri di Miniato del Sera and Bonda Rucellai, was only twenty when she bore him, ten years younger than her husband. She died in 1481, when her son was but six years old. Much in Michelangelo's character is more readily understood in the light of the knowledge that he had to do without the softening influence of a mother.

Four years after the death of his wife, Lodovico married again. We know nothing of the relationship between the boy and his stepmother. He was sent to school with a teacher named Francesco da Urbino. There he seems to have learned little more than reading, writing and arithmetic.

We know from Donato Giannotti's dialogue of about 1546, *De' giorni che Dante consumò* (Discourse on the Days When Dante Visited Hell and Purgatory),* that Michelangelo later complained of his ignorance of Latin. He lacked the versatile energy that enabled Leonardo da Vinci to make up for such a lack in maturer years. We are aware too that the boy's inclination did not run to book learning but toward art. So irresistible was this urge that he spent his leisure time roaming the workshops of painters, observing the works of art within the churches of Florence, and, especially, drawing on walls and in notebooks.

He made a close and enduring friend of a boy six years his senior, Francesco Granacci, who had been a student of Lorenzo di

* The best edition of this work is edited by Deoclecio Redig de Campos, Florence, 1939.

Credi, then had learned drawing with Verrocchio, and finally had been taken into the studio of Domenico Ghirlandajo. Granacci lent his friend drawings and encouraged him to become an artist. His own artistic endowments were but mediocre, but he was a very handsome boy and later on a very handsome young man. When Filippino Lippi was commissioned to paint a picture in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine, in which St. Peter awakens the king's son, he took Granacci as a model for the son.

Even though Michelangelo's young friend was unable to produce masterpieces, he did have ability as a painter and was, moreover, a versatile dilettante. Among other things, he knew how to organize masquerades and processions. He also knew how to compose carnival songs (*canti carnascialeschi*)—to texts written by Lorenzo de' Medici.

Together with Aristotile da San Gallo he erected a triumphal arch opposite the portal of the church La Badia in Florence, on the occasion of the visit of Leo X, even providing simulated relief decorations in *chiaroscuro,* i.e. monochrome painting, executed in light and dark shades of gray, "with a most beautiful display of imagination," as we are told. Later Granacci was among those who studied from Michelangelo's cartoons and helped him from the beginning in the Sistine Chapel. When his friend Michelangelo fled to Venice, Granacci kept his stored property from confiscation.

II

When young Michelangelo told his father of his desire to become an artist, both the father and the father's brother were greatly upset. They scolded him and beat him within an inch of his life in their efforts to dissuade him. They looked upon art as a mere craft far below their dignity and estate. Actually Father

Buonarroti was just an ordinary citizen of Florence, though he, and later on his great son, took great pride in a supposed relationship to the family of the Marchese of Canossa, resting on an old but erroneous tradition.

Since even as a boy Michelangelo was more than his father's match in obstinacy, Lodovico saw himself compelled to give way and in April 1488 a contract was concluded between him and the brothers Domenico and David Ghirlandajo under which Michelangelo, aged thirteen, was apprenticed to the brothers. The term of apprenticeship was set at three years. For the first year the boy was to receive six gold florins in wages, for the next two eight each, a total of twenty-two. In return he pledged to be willing, obedient and loyal to his masters. As early as April 16, as shown in a receipt, Lodovico obtained an advance of two gold florins on his son's wages.

As a man Michelangelo time and again insisted he was a sculptor by profession rather than a painter and bemoaned that he had not originally been apprenticed to a sculptor. Posterity, nonetheless, acknowledges his greatness as a painter as much—perhaps even more—than as a sculptor. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that Michelangelo enjoyed a great advantage for having even as a boy been apprenticed to the most popular fresco painters in Florence, learning the technique of *fresco buono* in his youthful years. In the choir of Santa Maria Novella he had daily opportunity to watch a master such as Domenico at work among his assistants and pupils.

It would seem that some remarks which Domenico's son Ridolfo dropped many years later on the subject of what the epochmaking artist owed his father's instruction greatly incensed the genius, increasingly irritable with age, who knew his abilities to be far ahead of his teacher's. We note further that Vasari's innocent passage about Michelangelo having been apprenticed to Ghirlandajo caused the aging artist to dictate ungracious words to his disciple Ascanio Condivi, to the effect that Ghirlandajo's instruction had not meant the least profit for the boy (*non avendo*

egli portogli aiuto alcuno); rather had master Ghirlandajo, no sooner had he seen evidence of his apprentice's talent, entertained only envy of him.

That there is not a shadow of resemblance between the artistry of Ghirlandajo and that of Michelangelo is so obvious as to go without saying. But that was scarcely a reason to deprecate this honorable and gracious artist. Ghirlandajo is without a peer in his portrayals of the everyday life then led by the citizenry of Florence. He may have kept his feet on the ground, may never have read Plato, but he worshiped beauty all the same, had worked in Rome and knew the grandeur of antiquity. And the chances are he was precisely the kind of artist from whom a talented pupil could learn all that is to be learned.

The anecdotes Condivi and Vasari relate to deprecate Ghirlandajo are incredibly trivial. One day the disciple is supposed to have darkened with smoke a drawing one of the boys had copied from a portrait by the master, causing Domenico to confuse the two, which made him ridiculous in the eyes of Michelangelo and the other youths. On another occasion one of the pupils finished a pen-and-ink drawing from a design by Ghirlandajo. Michelangelo took a broader nib and strengthened the outlines of a female figure, making it come alive. The story has the ring of truth —the more since Vasari insisted he had the drawing in his possession—but surely it did not in the least discredit Ghirlandajo. There is the story, finally, that when Domenico was absent from the work in the choir of Santa Maria Novella one day Michelangelo made a drawing of the scaffolding with all the young people and the tools on it—an achievement in perspective that was surely within the powers of the young genius. What is far less likely is that this drawing should have convinced Ghirlandajo of Michelangelo's superiority over himself, filling him with envy of his apprentice.

We know that Michelangelo did his first piece of work that was, relatively speaking, his own while he was still in Ghirlandajo's service. The master owned an engraving by Martin Schongauer

of Colmar, who was well-known and highly esteemed in Italy. Granacci showed it to Michelangelo. It represented St. Anthony borne aloft by no less than nine devils, who are composites of many kinds of beasts, with horns, beaks, claws and wings, all of them tugging and tearing at the saint, whose steadfast serenity contrasts sharply with their turmoil.

The boy set about reproducing the engraving in tempera on wood. The picture is lost, but posterity can scarcely be assumed to be the poorer for it—even though we are told that in order to give greater verisimilitude to the piscine demons the inspired neophyte had gone to the marketplace of Florence to study the fish that were hawked there. That this beginner's effort should have aroused Ghirlandajo's envy sounds altogether unlikely. Yet the aged Michelangelo let the story stand, just as he charged that the jealous Ghirlandajo would not show him his sketchbook with studies of all manner of landscapes, buildings and draperies, which the other apprentices were permitted to use as models.

III

We may well conclude that Domenico saw in this lean young fellow with the bushy black hair, gangling body and piercing eyes a student it was no particular pleasure to have about. Justified as the boy's self-assurance may have been, he was tactless in manifesting it. He was all too prone to manifest his superiority over the other apprentices in terms of scorn, nor does he seem to have been in awe of his teacher or held courtesy to be in order. Small wonder that when a bid arrived, at just the right moment, to assign some students to the school for young sculptors Lorenzo de' Medici was establishing in his gardens near San Marco, Ghirlandajo was not slow to propose Michelangelo, along with Francesco Granacci and Giuliano Bugiardini.

Much of the great art collection begun by Cosimo and expanded in many directions by Lorenzo was housed in the Palazzo Medici and the Villa Careggi; but many of the sculptures stood in the gardens of San Marco, repeatedly mentioned before, and in the mansion it sheltered, which Lorenzo had acquired ten years before as a dower for Madonna Clarice, but which had been remodeled as a museum after her death.

Now, to Lorenzo's sorrow, the great sculptors had passed away—Donatello as early as 1468, Verrocchio in 1488. Lorenzo had turned his affections to Donatello's disciple Bertoldo di Giovanni, who had helped his master with the bronze pulpits of San Lorenzo. Like most of the fifteenth-century artists of Florence, Bertoldo was a graduate of the goldsmith's craft. He liked to work in bronze and favored small pieces. His medals and plaquettes, bronze reliefs and statuettes were in great demand. Yet he must have been skilled in marble as well, since Michelangelo graduated from his school with a work such as the *Battle of the Centaurs.*

Lorenzo was very fond of bronze copies in reduced size after ancient statuary and had kept Bertoldo, whom he now put in charge of his sculptors' school, busy with such work. He also had Bertoldo execute themes merely suggested in the works of art preserved from antiquity.

True, Bertoldo was an old man in his seventies, who, according to Vasari, could no longer carry out work himself, though he was an excellent technician (*molto pratico*), well qualified to instruct others. The school of art that was now established was quite in keeping with the humanist ideal of Plato's Academy.

In Condivi's narrative of Michelangelo's development, which the artist inspired or even dictated, Bertoldo is not even mentioned. It says merely that the boy roamed about and drew as he pleased. Florence alone was his academy. That he was one day escorted to the sculpture collection is represented as pure chance.

The manner in which the boy ultimately made the personal acquaintance of Lorenzo is related as follows: In a shed in the garden he had found the head of a grinning, bearded old satyr,

much damaged about the mouth, which he very much wanted to copy in marble. This he managed to do in only a few days, for the head fascinated him—later on he used heads of satyrs in his ornamentation. Since the mouth gaped open in laughter, all the teeth were visible. Lorenzo, who happened to be in the garden, halted before the boy's work and called his attention to the fact that old men seldom had all their teeth. The young man at once removed a tooth and drilled a hole into the upper jaw, where the root would have been, and the next day Lorenzo noted his eagerness and undeniable talent with some surprise. He dispatched the boy to old Buonarroti with a message that Il Magnifico desired to speak with father.

Lodovico was reluctant at first, but finally went to the Palazzo, where he was completely won over by the great man's charm. Lorenzo actually asked what he might do for Michelangelo's father. Lodovico specified a post with the Florence customs at a monthly salary of eight florins. The request was granted with a bantering reference to its modesty.

Henceforth Michelangelo became a member of Lorenzo's household. He had his own room, allowance and maintenance, and, to top it off, a purple cloak as a sign of special favor.

IV

It is almost impossible to overestimate the good fortune that put this budding genius, at the most receptive age, under the influence of Lorenzo and Poliziano. Indeed, perhaps genius can know no greater boon than to encounter genius of different kind, in whose care it may flourish and mature. Lorenzo, with all his human weaknesses and his ruthlessness in affairs of state, was one of the elect to whom it is given to signify and even name an entire epoch. The Italian Renaissance and the house of Medici are

for all time inextricably interlinked. By the grace of Lorenzo young Michelangelo, during the great juncture from his fifteenth to his eighteenth year, made many invaluable art treasures his own intellectual property.

A Venetian ambassador once wrote of Lorenzo: "Before his lips begin to move, his eyes already speak." It was under the impress of this epitome of Florentine culture that the boy embraced the city's essence—the fusion of power and elegance—power as manifested in the palazzi built of cyclopean, rustic stone, with their delicate yet strong arches and gothic windows; elegance as shown in the campanile or in Ghirlandajo's frescoes; power and elegance as in the marvelous dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, the shadow of which—in a saying of Leone Battista Alberti—covered all of Tuscany.

Nor was Michelangelo spared a taste of the political mission of the Medici. Machiavelli makes Lorenzo's father, in his struggle against the great Lords, say these words: "Ye rob your neighbor of his property, ye bargain away justice, ye suppress the peace-loving, ye succor the arrogant. In all Italy I do not believe so many examples of violence and avarice are to be found as in this city. Did your country give you life but that you might take its life? Did it lend you victory that you but destroy it? Did it honor you but that you drag it in the dust?"

The mystery of the magic that emanated from Lorenzo lay in his blending of the civic spirit with an air of sublime sovereignty. Michelangelo's childhood—in a home where art was held in contempt—had been dismal. Happiness rarely attended his maturity—he was a recluse, prisoned in his studio, forever quarreling with stone-masons; or a lonely figure, high on a scaffold, pouring all his energy into frescoes on a scale hitherto unknown. Yet it was this brief apprenticeship under the roof of Florence's reigning spirit that made of him the incomparable imager, that kindled the spark of poetry in his soul.

Poliziano, haunted and importuned by one and all, smiled on the young man and opened up to him the spiritual heritage of

humanism, with which he soon felt at home. If Lorenzo had done nothing else for the art life of Italy but to welcome at his table this difficult lad, whose promise was by no means apparent at first sight, it would be credit enough; and when every word Angelo Poliziano wrote has passed into oblivion, people will remember him as the man who so steeped Michelangelo in the spirit and style of antiquity that the artist, barely grown-up, was able to produce the *Battle of the Centaurs* in relief.

It was Bertoldo, finally, who inculcated deep respect of ancient sculpture into the youth and who, in a rather different way than the marble cutters in the garden, taught him how to wield chisel and file, hammer and drill. It was to Bertoldo too, famous for his mastery in bronze, that Michelangelo most likely owed his ability to execute the bronze statue of Julius II in Bologna without any preliminary studies.

At the school of San Marco drawing was zealously pursued, both as a skill for itself and as a basis for all sound artistic training. Later on, when the mannerist age took hold, interest in pure contour began to lag and drawings were done in soft red chalk, but in Michelangelo's time the outline drawing was still regarded the foundation-stone and main-spring of the artist's skill; and he, as a youth, used only pen and ink. He no longer drew from patterns and designs, as he had done when he studied with Ghirlandajo, but after ancient sculpture. More and more his whole mind grew oriented toward the three-dimensional.

Bertoldo instructed his students in modeling as well as drawing; and though Michelangelo later looked askance at clay, his treatment of his early madonna reliefs shows that he passed through a course in clay modeling. We learn, moreover, that on one occasion, when he happened to catch sight of a group of clay figures, which Torrigiano had made,* Michelangelo himself was inspired to work in clay; but this brought him no luck.

* Vasari says: "When Michelangelo and Granacci came to the 'gardens,' they found that Torrigiano was modeling clay figures as Bertoldo had ordered him to do. Michelangelo immediately did some in competition." (These copies in clay were probably made from antique torsos.)

Pietro Torrigiano, a senior student at the school, was a competent decorator but an incurable brawler, and he claims a Herostratic fame in Michelangelo's life. One day the students were drawing from Masaccio's frescoes in the chapel of the church of Santa Maria del Carmine. As was his ill-mannered wont, Michelangelo vented his criticisms of his fellows' work without restraint, until Torrigiano smashed his nose with a powerful blow of the fist, disfiguring Michelangelo for life.

If Michelangelo, even in his youth, was afflicted with a measure of melancholy, it is Torrigiano who must take a large part of the blame; for Michelangelo was keenly sensitive of his own ugliness—or what he thought was his ugliness, heightened by Torrigiano. To a youth who was predestined to worship and create beauty, this must have been doubly hurtful.

Torrigiano had to leave the school and Florence on account of this assault; but as long as twenty years later he was still boasting of his deed to Benvenuto Cellini, who was a passionate admirer of Michelangelo and grew so resentful that he broke off all contact with Torrigiano.

V

It is impossible, of course, to isolate and enumerate the many creative influences that were brought to bear on the young genius in Florence. Donatello has already been mentioned, nor can there be any doubt of the strong influence that emanated from him. His extrovert nature was very different from Michelangelo's. Devoted to his disciples and to the study of reality, he was a powerful and serious-minded portrayer of teeming life, who did not shrink from the ugly. Michelangelo, on the other hand, destined by his nature for inwardness and solitude, could strive only for perfection.

Next to Donatello, the influence of Andrea del Verrocchio must be mentioned as perhaps no less important. When Michelangelo halted before Donatello's *St. George* in one of the marble niches of Or San Michele, he was doubtless touched as deeply as before Verrocchio's *Incredulity of St. Thomas* in one of the very next niches. He was bound to admire the skill with which Verrocchio found room for two figures in a tabernacle meant for only one. He must have taken pleasure in the ingenious arrangement that made Christ the main figure by placing Him on a dais, as in the interplay between the Master's eloquent hands and those of the doubting disciple who is now convinced. Verrocchio's *David* certainly did not serve Michelangelo as a model; but with equal certainty Michelangelo could not have refused that statue his admiration.

Again, Michelangelo surely must have stood delighted before the beautiful simplicity of Cosimo's sarcophagus in the sacristy of San Lorenzo—that hall he himself was to make immortal. Beyond question he also felt deep admiration for Verrocchio's masterpiece, the equestrian statue of Colleoni in Venice. When Michelangelo fled to that city in 1494, the monument had not yet been installed—this was done only a year later.* It sounds improbable that he did not visit the Venice workshop of the great Florentine, who had died six years before; but it does appear as though financial straits limited Michelangelo's sojourn to a few days; nor is there any known testimony that Venice at first sight impressed the young artist at all, strange as it sounds.

The influence of Jacopo della Quercia is not discernible until Michelangelo's sojourn in Bologna. On the other hand, he began at an early age to delve into the structure of the human body by means of anatomical studies. His preoccupation with antiquity as well as the sight of Verrocchio's works showed him how necessary was such knowledge. The science of anatomy did not yet exist in Michelangelo's youth. Andreas Vesalius was not born until 1514. But throughout Italy surgeons were studying anatomy in

* The Colleoni monument was unveiled on March 2, 1496.

an as yet superficial way; and even before Michelangelo distinguished artists like Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Signorelli, Verrocchio and, above all, Leonardo da Vinci had busily practiced dissection. (Three manuscripts with anatomical studies by Leonardo are today in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.)

The Prior of Santo Spirito, to which a hospital was attached, had given Michelangelo permission to pursue the study of anatomy in its mortuary. In return the young artist, probably in 1496, had presented him with a wooden crucifix, now lost, for the high altar of the church.

It is true that Michelangelo all his life, from sheer thirst of knowledge, occupied himself with dissection; but it is equally certain that his style of art, intent upon representing the very essence of life with the utmost passion, ultimately derived its knowledge of the movements of the human body from observation of the living rather than the dead. To him as to the other great artists, anatomy was but an indispensable element of training, a prerequisite for assurance.

VI

Great figures are traditionally seen at their apogee, as the commanding personalities they were at the very height of their unique powers. Posterity will always see Michelangelo as the master of the Sistine and Medici Chapels, superhuman yet profoundly human in spirit, instinctively given to ignoring all individuality other than his own, hence averse to portraiture in paint or stone, his art self-revelation in the last and deepest sense.

But seeing Michelangelo in such perspective, one tends to leap ahead of the years and skip his youth. In his younger years he was variable and versatile, without on that account denying his essential nature. He was necessarily dependent on the tasks

set him, the commissions entrusted to him. Chance seems largely to have governed the sequence of themes with which he dealt, and his ability to alternate styles and media bespeaks a highly elastic nature. His work shows a colorful variety. It embraces figures from classical mythology—Centaurs, Bacchus, Cupid; characters from the New Testament like the Madonna and Child with St. John, and the youthful St. John himself; themes from the history of Florence like the Battle of Cascina; characters from the Old Testament like David and Moses; groups in relief; free-standing statuary, alone or in combination; painting and sculpture; sculpture treated as painting, and painting treated three-dimensionally.

Since some of his themes proved to be less grateful than others and some of his works appear to be experimental in character, we can scarcely be surprised that they do not all satisfy us equally. Yet such a commission as the French cardinal Groslaye de Villiers gave him elicited a display of talent we might otherwise never have known. This sacred subject, a *Pietà,* was particularly popular in France in the declining years of the fifteenth century, and many examples found their way even into Italian churches. Michelangelo's group, however, put all its predecessors in the shade, and the fine nuances of sentiment manifested in it scarcely recur anywhere else in Michelangelo's work.

VII

But the commissions of crucial significance did not come until much later during his youthful years. For the boy's immediate future it was much more important that he looked up to the ancient statuary on his solitary walks in the garden of San Marco, where the Tree of Knowledge spread its branches, that he felt the urge himself to hew human figures from the marble. It must

be borne in mind that he did not view the ancients as did the French later on or other peoples to the North. To him the art of antiquity was not that of foreigners but of his own kind. The ancient Romans who had created or copied these masterpieces were his forbears.

In the nineteenth century surprise was expressed that the great men of the Renaissance were so enraptured by the perfection of ancient art in its last phase that they had no feeling for Greek sculpture at its best, let alone archaic art. Carl Justi observed perceptively that the Italians themselves had already passed through the painful struggle for perfection in the early Renaissance and thus felt little sympathy for an art that still spoke in faltering accents—even though to us it possesses the appealing freshness of the primitive. They delighted precisely in an art that was in complete command of its material and was able to achieve full realization. Statues like the *Pasquino* and the *Belvedere Torso* sounded a music that to Michelangelo's ears was a foreboding of his own ideas. We may today have certain reservations about the Laocoön, even though this work, as Burckhardt has said, encompasses the epitome of creative wisdom. When the group was unearthed in 1506, it was the object of Michelangelo's profound veneration, as of that of all his contemporaries.

As a boy the great artist had made a caricature of the ideal of beauty his point of departure—Schongauer's demons disporting themselves, the satyr mask as a foil for the serene godheads. By way of contrast his *Last Judgment* provides an illustration to Dante's *Inferno* without any display of the demonic world. His disposition tended to the heroic, and in contrast to his great rival Leonardo, who was fascinated by caricature, Michelangelo was early repelled by grotesquerie. Although he made his bow with a *Battle of the Centaurs*, he never fashioned a sphinx, a Pan, or any other supernatural or unnatural being in whom human and animal forms are blended. The sole exceptions are some early drawings and sculpture, the prone Centaur in the foreground of the *Battle* and the little satyr behind his *Bacchus*, likewise done

in his youth—the former dates back to about 1492, the latter to 1497. Michelangelo soon discovered that he could say all he wanted to say by means of the human body—unchanged and unadorned, without halo or wings, claws or cloven hoof. It alone was his theme and his work, his means and his end.

VIII

The work of a boy of seventeen, the *Battle of the Centaurs* remains technically one of the most amazing works in the history of art. The youth here shows himself already possessed of complete mastery in the representation of bodies in action, fully able, moreover, to interweave them at a moment of dramatic crisis, while still keeping the composition firmly in hand. Never again did Michelangelo essay the task of integrating more than twenty figures in a single relief. When he again saw this early work in his old age, he wondered himself that he had been able to scale such heights so soon.

The theme, to which Poliziano had called his attention, appealed to the youthful Michelangelo. He had seen Roman sarcophagi, on which battle scenes were pictured in rows, one above the other—thus a *Battle of the Amazons,* in which mounted women formed the uppermost row, warriors afoot the second, and the fallen the lowest. In his own work the equine body is kept obscure even while the centaur Eurytion looms over the topmost row and a single fallen centaur takes up much of the bottom row with the back of his ponderous body. The main struggle rages in the middle.

The scene is set in primeval times. Like the Greeks under Hercules, the centaurs fight with big boulders and bare fists, though there is an occasional club and several of the subordinate figures are archers. The battle is over women, whom the centaurs

seek to abduct, while the Greeks want them for themselves. So savagely do they tug at them that sometimes they seize the hapless woman by her hair to set her free; or they lift her to their shoulders, or hold her under the arms to bear her off. Oddly enough, these women are rather masculine in aspect—one must look closely to distinguish them from the young men by any criterion but their long hair.

Michelangelo, as already hinted, has managed by clever artifice to represent five of the six centaurs in the relief as young warriors, without the equine character of their bodies becoming apparent. Like Goethe after him, Michelangelo was repelled by the notion of four lungs, two hearts and two stomachs in the body of a centaur. Essential centaur nature is revealed in the violence and ferocity of the fight, met in kind by the stone-hurling Greeks. Hercules with his somewhat more robust figure forms an interesting contrast to the slender and imperious figures toward which he strides with hostile intent. He holds a heavy boulder in his hand. Eurytion, focal point of the relief, brandishes a club at Hercules, who parries the blow with his left arm, about which he has wrapped his chlamys.

The work, now kept in the Casa Buonarroti, is executed with astonishing technical virtuosity. Michelangelo rounded the figures with the greatest care, using file and drill. Yet the work is not completely finished.

IX

Michelangelo's deep-seated preference for simplicity, for the detached and unique, drew him away from the type of Roman sarcophagus relief he had in mind when he fashioned the *Battle of the Centaurs.* He never returned to this many-charactered type of relief composition.

The *Madonna of the Stairs,* according to Vasari done at the

same time as the *Centaur* relief, is a small marble panel twenty-two inches high, in such flat relief as to deserve the Italian designation *schiacciato* and hence unique among Michelangelo's works. Vasari remarks it was intentionally made to imitate (*contrafare*) Donatello's manner.

Even here, in the calm solitude of the image of woman and mother he sought to realize, we sense the Michelangelo we know. The whole manner of treatment partakes of delicacy and restraint. The style of the Madonna has grandeur and gravity. The boy has been frolicking with his older playmates and has now fled to the security of her lap, where she holds him firm. Yet the tenderness that might have been expected is altogether lacking in the attitude. Indeed, a trait characteristic of Michelangelo is revealed even here—the mother's eyes do not fall on the child. She gazes before her, lost in grave and perhaps melancholy reverie. She is seated on a cubic stone, her feet crossed, always a sign of meditation with Michelangelo. Her foot does not quite compare with the beautiful hands, with which she gathers her robe about the little one, who turns his strong back and neck toward the beholder.

This is the first work of Michelangelo in which we encounter not only his technique but his spirit. In its innermost nature it reminds of no other artist in the world.

Yet some features of the setting soften the impression and, even though highly stylized, revert back to contemporary everyday life in Florence. The stairs by which the Madonna sits lead almost straight up, in lines surely meant to match the Holy Mother's upright posture. But it is also the kind of stone stairway that leads to a country house near Florence. Higher up a fresh-faced bigger boy leans out to hang a blanket from the wall with someone else, perhaps to protect mother and child against the draft. On the top step a pair of small boys are barely outlined. These children lend the relief an unusual element of naive exuberance. Yet the scene is dominated by the sublime dignity that issues from the profile of the great Madonna.

X

After Lorenzo's death in April 1492 Michelangelo had given up his quarters in the Palazzo Medici and returned to his father. So depressed was he that for many days on end he was unable to tackle any task. Heretofore the choice of his themes had been largely determined by Lorenzo's wishes. Henceforth, having regained his peace of mind, he must work on his own.

Since he felt a desire to do a marble figure overlifesize, he purchased for a modest sum a marble block that had long been lying exposed to wind and weather. He wanted to fashion it into a statue of Hercules. His teacher Bertoldo had made many statuettes of this subject, for the Florentines put much stock in Hercules, who appeared in the city's arms as their symbolic hero.

Quite apart from that, it is scarcely surprising that his first statue should be a Hercules, for strength was more appropriate to Michelangelo's nature than grace. Vasari calls the work admirable (*cosa mirabile*). It was bought by a Strozzi and until 1530, when Florence was besieged and taken by the armies of Pope Clement, it stood in the courtyard of the Palazzo Strozzi. Agostino Dini, major domo of Filippo Strozzi, then sold it to Giovanni Battista Palla, a close friend of Michelangelo, who bought up ancient and contemporary works of art for Francis I. Thus the statue of Hercules wound up in France, and early in the eighteenth century it still stood in the Jardin de l'Estang in Fontainebleau. It was thence removed in 1713 and has since disappeared—a loss all the more serious since we are thereby deprived of Michelangelo's first effort to represent a heroic figure.

It was not long until the Medici family again summoned the young man. Lorenzo's successor Piero once again had him sit at the Medici table. The occasion that reminded Piero of him was a

heavy snowfall in Florence. Such events were by custom festive occasions, on which huge snow figures were set up outside the churches and palazzi. Outstanding artists were glad to lend a hand. Tradition called especially for *marzocchi*, the lions couchant that are the symbol of Florence. What snow figure Michelangelo fashioned is not known, only that it stood in the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici. Piero's good will toward its creator did not melt away with it. Piero seems to have valued Michelangelo's services highly, and it is merely an expression of the resentment of the Medici the artist felt in his later years when he maintained as an old man Piero had taken pride in the services of two extraordinary men, himself and a Spanish sprinter the prince could not overtake even on horseback.

XI

The picture we have so far been able to form of Michelangelo's temperament is quite incomplete. We have noted his zeal, his capacity for learning swiftly, his love of his family—even though those closest to him scarcely understood him—his vaulting ambition, his almost innate sense of self-assertion and, finally, the arrogance and predilection for taunting his teachers and fellows to which it gave rise. Yet the immense power that slumbered within him was offset by an equally conspicuous weakness. He was necessarily sensitive—in the meaning of receptivity to a wealth of sensory impressions—and this led to sudden attacks of anxiety or embitterment, leading in turn to ill-considered actions that demanded and usually found indulgence.

At the time Savonarola was wreaking havoc and confusion among the minds of Florence with his preachments. Fear had laid hold of the people, including even the leading citizens, bearers of renowned names like Salviati and Strozzi, outstanding

scholars like Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola, eminent painters like Botticelli. The great citizens became Dominicans and the two savants—both of whom died in 1494—desired to be buried in Dominican habit. According to Vasari, Botticelli carried his drawings and paintings of nudes to the pyre to have them burned. A brother of Michelangelo joined the Dominican order.

It is likely that a breath of this anti-rationalism touched the mind of the fifteen-year-old boy when Savonarola began his sermons in 1490. It has been suggested that he witnessed Savonarola's "awesome" sermon of September 21, 1494, and was shaken by it. But those who sense a connection between Michelangelo's youthful memories of Savonarola and the religious awe that finds expression in the aged artist's verses are mistaken. Nor are there any grounds for associating his nervous attacks, his anxiety and his increasingly frequent desperate acts with the fever which the Dominican of San Marco had engendered within the mind of Florence many years before.

An utterance of Michelangelo, written down only two months before Savonarola was burned at the stake, is on record. It is quite unfeeling, indeed, almost cynical in its indifference toward human life, where monks and heretics are involved.

Himself the great master was a pagan of the purest hue, both in his character and in his art—unconsciously, it is true. Yet on March 10, 1498, he wrote to his brother Buonarroto from Rome in mocking tones. The last letter received, he said, had given him great comfort, since it had enlightened him on "your seraphic brother Jerome's [Savonarola's] cause, which is the talk of Rome. They say he is a moldy heretic, hence must come to Rome at all costs, to do a bit of prophesying here and to be canonized, which surely will please all his adherents."

The letter goes on to say: "No news here, except that yesterday seven paper bishops were appointed [heretics taken to the place of execution wore tall paper hats], five of whom were strung up." There is no trace of compassion here; and if Michelangelo felt so little for Savonarola's adherents, one may conclude that he

reacted coolly to the news of Savonarola's own execution, which took place in Florence on May 23.

No, the sudden outbreaks of apparently inexplicable anxiety that marked Michelangelo's life for many years almost certainly had no roots in religious crisis.

More likely Carl Justi is right in attributing to the prophetic mind of the inspired youth a capacity for foretelling misfortune. In the fall of 1494 he suddenly vanished from Florence. Without means, and apparently without even a fixed goal, he rode away in the direction of Bologna, leaving all his Florentine undertakings behind. He did not even tell his father of his flight.

It is possible that popular unrest about the Medici leadership unconsciously gave the hypersensitive youth an inkling that his patrons might be cast out by a rebellion. There were fears that Charles VIII, king of France, whom Savonarola during the Lenten season of 1494 had called "the new Cyrus," might hold his entry into Florence. As an old man, Michelangelo offered Condivi an explanation that implies superstition. An improviser named Cardier, highly esteemed by Lorenzo, had told him of a terrifying dream. He had seen Lorenzo before him in a black, tattered robe and had been charged to tell Lorenzo's son Piero of Lorenzo's impending banishment. The apparition had been repeated. Michelangelo had hastened to Careggi, but Piero and his chancelor Bibbiena, who chanced to meet him on the way, had only laughed at him.

XII

Michelangelo's flight, with two young companions, took place during the first half of October 1494. It led by way of Bologna to Venice.

On October 26 Piero rode out to meet King Charles and assure

him of his loyalty. On this occasion he surrendered his frontier strongholds to the king, though he had instructed his messengers, who arrived only after he did, to refuse such surrender. He invited the king to his palazzo in Florence. But on November 9, on his way to the Palazzo Vecchio to give an accounting of his accommodation with the French, he was received with such hostility by the Florentine aldermen that he and his two brothers had to take flight.

In Venice Michelangelo quickly ran out of money. He had to make up his mind to return so quickly that he scarcely got a look at the city.

On returning to Bologna, he was detained, because he had neglected to advise the authorities of his presence, as all strangers were required to do. Fortunately he attracted the notice of a Bolognese nobleman, Gianfrancesco Aldovrandi, a member of the Grand Council, who questioned him closely. Aldovrandi had been *podestà* in Florence in 1486–87 and had many connections there, especially with the house of Medici. When he learned that the young man was almost a Medici foster-son and a sculptor besides, whose training Lorenzo had personally directed, Aldovrandi generously took Michelangelo into his own home.

Not long afterward Piero, on his flight from Florence to Venice, reached Bologna, where he stopped at the Palazzo Rossi as a guest of the Bentivogli. There Michelangelo was able to pay his respects to him.

In the Palazzo Medici the young man had listened to recitals of poetry, old and new. Aldovrandi was fond of hearing Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Petrarca's sonnets and Boccaccio's *Decameron* read aloud in pure Tuscan diction, finding the Bolognese dialect harsh on his ears; thus in the evening, before his host fell asleep, Michelangelo would read to him.

Aldovrandi conceived the idea of taking advantage of the presence in his home of a talented young sculptor to set himself an enduring monument in the memory of his fellow citizens. He escorted his young guest to the church of San Domenico and

there showed him the splendid tomb that had been erected around Bologna's precious relic, the body of St. Dominic. The marble sarcophagus (*Arca di San Domenico*) had been executed in the thirteenth century and was decorated below with reliefs, above with statuettes, by Nicola Pisano. In the fifteenth century this *Arca* had been provided with a tall superstructure culminating in a single statue and adorned with smaller statues, of which three were still missing. The others were the work of Niccolò dell' Arca, who had died just before Michelangelo's arrival in the city.

XIII

According to plan eight statues of saints were to line the tall headpiece covering the old sarcophagus, four on each side. Of these, St. Petronius, patron saint and defender of Bologna, was still missing in the front row; and in the back a local saint, a Christian soldier and martyr, supposedly executed under Diocletian as the murderer of the imperial procurator Maximus. This *St. Proculus* is said to have been beheaded on the spot where his church was built. Michelangelo did the figure—and that is about all to be said of it—a stocky youth without nobility of bearing, with a large head and rather ordinary features. The tunic is reminiscent of other work the young artist did at the time. He also did the *St. Petronius* and the *Kneeling Angel* to the right below. This small angel, twenty inches high, is indeed charming; but it lacks the originality of Michelangelo's two earlier marble reliefs.

For his conception of St. Petronius Michelangelo found a model in one of the cathedral's archways. Jacopo della Quercia had there represented the saint carrying the city of Bologna in his right hand. Michelangelo transposed the miniature city, churched,

towered and walled, to the left hand of the saint, who supports the toy model with his right, thus giving more life and movement to the figure. The tall tiara and heavy bishop's mantle the young artist copied as necessary attributes. Decorative purpose and traditional ecclesiastic drapery severely limited his originality.

The third task set the beginner was a counterpiece to the kneeling, candelabra-bearing angel of Niccolò dell' Arca. Together the three statues, total creative output of Michelangelo's year in Bologna, do not weigh heavily in his life's work. Even so, they created such envy of the sculptor that he felt it best to leave town.

He did take with him one strong and lasting impression—of the reliefs on the doorway of San Petronio, by Jacopo della Quercia. Here his eye met ten scenes from Genesis, five on each of the lateral pilasters and eighteen half-length prophets set beside the portal. All the elements were ornamentally employed yet done with a rare sense of beauty, strait-jacketed by the vertical exigencies of a large door frame yet grandly conceived and imaginatively executed. Jacopo had been the first Tuscan goldsmith's apprentice to bring new form to his figures through the study of nature and of antiquity. Two of his works are particularly pleasing to the eye—his Fonte Gaia, the public fountain that lends the Piazza del Campo in Siena its poetic aspect (executed 1409–19), and these decorations of the doorway of San Petronio (about 1425–38), a great achievement that serves almost as a prelude to the ceiling paintings in the Sistine Chapel.

XIV

When Michelangelo returned from Bologna to Florence, he found the Palazzo Medici, exalted scene of his youthful years,

plundered. There was a price on Piero's head and the property of the house of Medici had been sold at public auction.

Only two grandsons of Cosimo's brother were left, Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici who, from hatred of Piero, had joined Charles VIII and returned in his train. To lend substance to their democratic sentiments, they had assumed the name of Popolani in place of Medici.

It is to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco that Michelangelo's earliest surviving letter is addressed. Lorenzo had given him letters of recommendation for his first sojourn in Rome. The letter in question is dated July 2, 1496, and testifies to a close acquaintance.

Lorenzo's brother Giovanni was accounted the handsomest young man in Florence. Caterina Sforza, following the assassination of her husband Girolamo Riario and her cruel and bloodthirsty revenge on his murderers, had taken one lover after another (Antonio degli Ordelaffi, Giacomo Feo). Giovanni Popolani, whom the republic had appointed its ambassador in Forlì, initially was her third lover, then her second husband. But he died in 1498, soon after having become the father of the renowned Giovanni delle Bande Nere.

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco lived until 1503 and knew Michelangelo, presumably through Poliziano. Michelangelo's respected patron, he was not merely a statesman but wrote verse and tried his hand at painting. Above all he was, like his greater namesake, a patron of the arts, as seen from dedications to him by Poliziano and Amerigo Vespucci and the commission for illustrating the *Divine Comedy* which he gave Botticelli, to whom he was particularly close. It was for Lorenzo's estate, the Villa Castelli, that Botticelli painted his graceful masterpieces, *Spring* and the *Birth of Venus*.

About 1495 Michelangelo made a marble statue of the youthful St. John (San Giovannino) for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco. Lost today, it was probably in the style of mingled power and elegance, inspired by antiquity, that was preferred by Lorenzo and his environment.

XV

All the biographies of Michelangelo follow Vasari and Condivi in relating the well-known anecdote of how the artist, in jest, gave one of his works, a marble statue of a *Sleeping Cupid,* the aspect of an ancient sculpture, thus realizing a much higher price. The dealer Baldassare del Milanese actually sold the statue under such a label to Cardinal Raffaello Riario in Rome for two hundred florins. But Baldassare was dishonest. He gave the young artist but thirty of the two hundred florins. When Michelangelo wanted to buy back the work, Baldassare refused; but when the cardinal learned of the fraud, he insisted the transaction be rescinded.

This incident, however, required Michelangelo to visit Rome and thus became the occasion for his beholding, while still quite young in years, the world capital with all its treasures and all the personages that ruled it in various ways. Four years he was vouchsafed in the city of antiquity, where the earth opened her bowels and by the end of the fifteenth century had given back to the world the *Apollo of Belvedere* and the *Laocoön.*

Michelangelo's own *Sleeping Cupid* passed through the collections of Isabella d'Este of Ferrara and Charles I of England, but is now lost.

XVI

On June 25, 1496, twenty-one-year-old Michelangelo made his entry into Rome through the Porta del Popolo.

Alexander VI was in residence in the Vatican, but Riario, boasting the titles of Cardinal of San Giorgio and Chamberlain of the Roman Church, was enormously influential. From the abovementioned letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici we learn that Michelangelo, immediately upon his arrival, paid his humble respects to the cardinal whom he had sought to fool by a disingenuous artifice.

The cardinal received him in his old Palazzo Sant' Apollinare, where he had lived since 1483 and whence he had transferred his ancient art treasures to his new palazzo. He invited the young artist to view them there, which Michelangelo did so thoroughly that he spent an entire day on it and was thus unable to deliver immediately the other letters of recommendation Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici had given him.

The very next day the cardinal received Michelangelo at his new palazzo, the famed Cancellaria, whither he was about to move. He asked the young man his judgment of the art works he had seen, and Michelangelo replied that "in his view there were many fine things among them." When the cardinal asked him further whether he was confident of his ability to execute comparable works, Michelangelo replied that perhaps he could not rival them in scope but that the cardinal would be able to see what he could do. Continuing in his letter, he wrote: "We have now purchased a block of marble for a lifesize figure and next Monday [July 4, 1496] I shall commence the work."

Poor but fortunate, Michelangelo had at once managed, here as in Bologna, to have a roof over his head in the home of an aristocrat, a nobleman in Riario's services, whose name is not mentioned. Unlike visitors in later years, he needed no time to get his bearings amid Rome's colorful life and relics of the past. He set about his work at once.

First Sojourn in Rome

1496-1501

I

It is quite unlikely that any romantic nostalgia for the past laid hold of the youthful Michelangelo when he first beheld Rome. With the sweeping vision of the creative artist, he swiftly perceived that the palazzi here were not built like the miniature strongholds he knew from his home town; their columns and arches lent them a brighter, more open aspect. Yet from his very first day in Rome, Michelangelo, we know, steeped himself thoroughly in such monuments of ancient art as were accessible to him.

At the outset, as already mentioned, he inspected the collection of antiquities of Raffaello Riario, the Cardinal of San Giorgio,

in the Palazzo della Cancelleria. In erecting this edifice the cardinal had ruthlessly garnered the most magnificent ancient specimens he could find, such as the forty-four granite columns from the ancient basilica of Pope Damasus I. To get the marble paneling needed, an ancient triumphal arch had been stripped, as well as a temple, the ruins of certain baths, and perhaps even the Coliseum.

Over and above many busts of emperors, the palazzo contained, among other rarities, a Minerva and two monumental statues that are familiar and renowned even today: a Hera, now in the Rotunda of the Vatican; and a Melpomene, now in the Louvre.* It was to these that the cardinal alluded when he inquired whether Michelangelo trusted himself to execute statuary on so heroic a scale; for they are indeed gigantic; and hitherto the cardinal had seen but one work from the hand of Michelangelo: the *Sleeping Cupid,* given out to be an ancient sculpture. This, to be sure, he had not been minded to include in his collection.

The Cancelleria did not stand alone. The remaining palazzi, whether of cardinals or other men of wealth, were replete with collections of ancient art. As early as 1471, Pope Sixtus IV had thrown open the Capitoline Museum to the people.

Even out in the open, it was by no means works of ancient architecture alone, large and small, from the Coliseum to the Pantheon, that were accessible to viewers of antiquities. There was sculpture as well—the *Dioscuri,* Trajan's Column, the statue of Marcus Aurelius, the *Nile,* the *Apollo of Belvedere,* the *Pasquino,* which was to be especially important to Michelangelo's own work. The *Apollo of Belvedere*—just when it was found is not known—then stood in the park of Cardinal della Rovere, later to become Pope Julius II. This was the garden of the palazzo which Giuliano da San Gallo had built the cardinal near his titular church, San Pietro in Vincoli.

* For a description of the ancient sculptures once in the collection of Cardinal Riario, see P. G. Hübner, *Le Statue di Roma,* Leipzig, 1912.

Everywhere in the many palazzi and churches sculptors and painters were busily at work. Most of them came from Florence, or at least Tuscany—though Michelangelo himself was not particularly interested in the resident Florentines or the Umbrians. The most important among them were engaged in the work on the Sistine Chapel—and in the course of time Michelangelo, in the self-same chapel, was to outshine, indeed overwhelm them all.

We have seen how little he thought of Ghirlandajo. The tombs by Pollaiuolo, meritorious as they were, left him unmoved. He never took the time for a calm appraisal of Perugino. Indeed, later he brusquely characterized him as stupid (*goffo*); and if Perugino was little to his taste, it may be imagined that Perugino's talented disciple Pinturicchio, the Borgia favorite who did the frescoes in the Appartamento Borgia, found even less favor with him. Delicate and luminous as were Pinturicchio's tints, the inward light of his feeling was not the equal of Perugino at his best.

Nor is there a trace of evidence that so grave and true a painter as Mantegna, or so passionate and beauty-loving a master as Melozzo da Forlì, left any impress on Michelangelo. Antiquity alone was his taskmistress; it harmonized with his propensity toward grandeur and simplicity.

Yet it is quite significant that the ancients by no means served as his direct model all the time. He often worked from books of sketches and patterns. In his architectural studies of building details—the Doric columns in the theater of Marcellus, among others—he originally drew from designs rather than from nature; but this, to be sure, was only in the very early days; he soon rose high above resort to crutches of any kind.

Michelangelo's original intent, on his journey to Rome, had been to stay there only briefly; but his return was put off and at last indefinitely postponed. His brothers visited him in Rome—Fra Leonardo, who seems to have been up to some mischief, since he was unfrocked, and his favorite brother Buonarroto, for whom

he found quarters in an inn, since he could not take him into his own lodgings.

A letter of July 1, 1497, shows that Michelangelo had difficulties in getting his money from the cardinal; but these seem to have been soon overcome, for not much later he was able to help not only his brothers, but his father, who had got into debt.

About this time Piero de' Medici, Michelangelo's one-time patron, now in exile, gave him a new commission. We learn that the artist bought a marble block for five florins, and then another, likewise for five florins, when the first one turned out to be worthless. But nothing became of the work for Piero, perhaps on account of the exile's financial straits. On the other hand, Michelangelo records that he was doing a figure "for his own pleasure," i.e., without a commission.

Meanwhile the artist received an important commission from another patron, the wealthy Roman nobleman Jacopo Galli, a great banker, highly respected at the papal court and carrying the title of papal secretary (*scriptor litterarum apostolicarum*). A connoisseur of art, Galli commissioned a Bacchus from Michelangelo, to be executed, according to Condivi, in his own house (*gli face fare in casa sua*). If this is the literal truth, there is a bare possibility that Galli is the nobleman from Riario's entourage who gave shelter to Michelangelo from the outset. In any event, Galli came to know the young artist through Riario, to whom he was close.

Jacopo Galli proved to be a devoted patron. Not only did he himself commission the Bacchus, and thereafter an Eros; from the Cardinal of Santa Sabina he obtained for Michelangelo the commission that was to be decisive for the artist's first Roman period, the most important work of his youth that established his reputation—the *Pietà.*

Michelangelo's Bacchus, which Shelley passionately decried as unpoetic—he called it "the most revolting mistake of the spirit

and meaning of Bacchus"—is technically among the artist's most splendid achievements. Michelangelo was not enthusiastic about the subject as such. Abstemious himself, he found no pleasure in wine, and the figure of Bacchus was quite uncongenial to his thinking. Yet that did not keep him from creating a masterpiece, if a somewhat repellent one.

What Michelangelo saw in Bacchus was a young man swaying from side to side under the influence of drink, and he took delight in showing the effects of inebriation on the male body. We know that the early Renaissance took a thoroughly humdrum view of Bacchus, never viewing this Thracian god as a symbol of ecstasy. Boccaccio found only base traits in the god of wine. It was Marsilio Ficino who first put Phoebus and Bacchus side by side, as spendor and delight (*allegrezza*) in poetic speech. Yet Michelangelo's *Bacchus* does not express exuberance but rather gluttony, and he is not far from the sleeping Noah on the Sistine ceiling, in whom drunkenness is allied with humiliation.

The elementary problem for this Bacchus with the brimful bowl is to keep his balance while drinking. Yet at heart the treatment is devoid of humor. Sculpturally, the object was to maintain plastic organization in a figure which has lost control over its limbs. This Bacchus lacks the hermaphroditic aspect that characterizes representations of the god from Greek antiquity down to the days of Thorvaldsen. The figure is massive, the small, round head seems drawn from life. By making the body flabby, the artist apparently sought to show the effects of dissipation on a drunkard. Yet all is subordinated to the goal of making the interplay of contours pleasing to the eye.

The statue is meant to be viewed in the round. The muscles of the back and the calves with their taut tendons are modeled with extreme care. Even the little Pan comes into his own, whether viewed from front or back. In him the irony that is but implicit in the statue proper is openly expressed. The boy satyr mocks the god, while nibbling at his grapes.

II

The works mentioned so far are milestones on a great artist's early road toward the kind of perfection that moves, ennobles and enriches the mind, not only of the individual, but of mankind. It is in Michelangelo's *Pietà,* dating back to his twenty-fourth year, that profound sentiment and exalted mastery are blended.

In his capacity as a banker, Jacopo Galli was in touch with a French prince of the Church, France's principal orator at the papal court, Jean de Groslaye de Villiers, Cardinal Presbyter of Santa Sabina and Abbot of St. Denis. Galli proposed that the cardinal commission Michelangelo to do a group composed of the Virgin with the body of Jesus, boldly pledging it "would be Rome's finest marble, than which none living could do better."

The work was to be installed in the "Temple of the King of France," i.e., the chapel of St. Petronilla in the original St. Peter's. King Louis XI had recently had this chapel restored. Archaic mosaics in the dome looked down on monuments and grave inscriptions of many French lords, soon to include the Cardinal of Santa Sabina himself; for he barely survived completion of his comission. On August 6, 1499, his own *castrum doloris* stood in the chapel.

The plan had been for Michelangelo to go to Carrara as early as 1497, there to obtain the great marble block needed for the group. His design for the work had been accepted in November of that year, the money remitted and a letter written by the cardinal, addressed to the authorities in Lucca and requesting them to show all the necessary courtesies to the artist upon his impending arrival for the purpose of obtaining the marble. But judging from Michelangelo's letters, he can scarcely have reached Carrara before March 1498. There he saw for the first time the

marble quarries that were to preoccupy him so deeply and take up such an inordinate share of his precious time. Michelangelo altogether lacked the ability to get others to work for him. He had to do everything himself.

When the marble block had safely reached Rome, the contract was concluded and signed. Michelangelo was to receive 450 gold florins for his work, which was to be completed one year from the date. One senses the artist's proud self-confidence in being content with so brief a time span.

The sculptors of the thirteenth century, who represented the Passion or the death of martyrs in the churches, conceived of suffering as a reflection of divine bliss. All pain was outshone by the gentleness and lovingkindness, the innocence and love here manifested. Christianity, familiar as an article of faith, was triumphant.

The early fifteenth century brought a change in sentiment. The somber and tragic elements in Christianity asserted themselves in the representation of suffering, at the expense of faith triumphant.

In Italy the theme of the Mother's reunion with her crucified son had originally attracted painters rather than sculptors. Giotto had projected his quiet inwardness, Giovanni Bellini his lofty dignity and grave sentiment into the Madonna's torment. Botticelli, finally, could scarcely outdo himself in expressing her despair. With him Mary falls in a dead faint, while the others present sob uncontrollably.

Moving from such representations to the calm of Michelangelo's *Pietà,* we find our souls deeply touched by the quiet sublimity of overwhelming but muted sorrow that speaks without words and does with a minimum of gesture. This Madonna, composed despite her deep agony, is the noblest expression of an elementary sense that something incomprehensible has happened here, doing violence to nature, senseless in its outrageous horror.

Whoever has immersed himself in Michelangelo's first quiet relief, the *Madonna of the Stairs,* knows how austere and melancholy was his emotional cast. But it is not until we confront this

wondrous work, the *Pietà*, that we fathom the full depths of his soul in its unique grandeur.

At the age of twenty-four he had plumbed the abyss of sorrow in a single human soul. He had probed it in the soul of a mother who has lost her all, her most precious treasure on earth, the being she not only loved but encompassed with complete devotion. The son whom she had given life in mysterious fashion, whom she worshiped in obscure veneration—his dead body here rests upon her lap, his life wantonly destroyed. Youthfully shy and tender was the sentiment that rendered this lifeless male body so airy and sublime, so delicate and free of the dross of earthly life.

And the Madonna herself is treated with the same tender awe. She is intentionally represented as young, scarcely older than her son; for in these mysterious reaches we are not subject to the laws of everyday life. In his old age Michelangelo offered a theologic explanation for this conspicuous youthfulness: the Virgin had never known the life of the senses, which ages and corrodes. Chaste as was her nature, she had kept young by a divine though humanly motivated miracle.

The serenity that marks her features would appear supernatural but for the eloquent gesture of the left hand, which reveals that composure has been achieved only at the cost of inward struggle. She suffers as only a higher being suffers. The misfortune that has befallen her fails to disrupt the nobility of her features, does not cloud the purity of her brow, its height emphasized by the form and fall of her kerchief. Despite her desolation, her face remains harmonious, with its fine straight nose, the beautiful closed mouth, the firm strong chin, the inclination of the head—all underlined by the ruffled hem of the robe at her throat.

As though enthroned she sits upon the flagstones of Golgatha, at the foot of the cross, shrouded in mourning weeds like the love that carefully enfolds the body on her lap. He lies stretched across her knee, resting in the folds of her cloak, supported by her right hand which reaches under his shoulder, almost reverently

shielded with a corner of the cloak, as though the slack body must not be desecrated by any rude contact.

Just as none of Michelangelo's Madonnas look straight at the proud or playing child, so the Mother of God in the *Pietà* does not direct her gaze to the face of her grown and lifeless son. Her eyes are downcast, lost in deep feelings of her own and even deeper thoughts.

On this single occasion in his life, Michelangelo signed one of his works with his name. Indeed, he did so rather conspicuously, on a narrow band running from the Madonna's left shoulder obliquely down across her body. In somewhat abbreviated form, since there was not room for all the letters, he here chiseled his signature.

Installed in the first chapel to the right of the entrance of St. Peter's, much too high and poorly illuminated, Michelangelo's *Pietà* scarcely comes into its own today. It was mounted here in 1749. A marble cross was added, a bronze halo behind the head of Christ and two mediocre bronze angels, holding a heavy crown above the head of the Madonna.

III

Toward the end of 1500 Michelangelo was so well situated that he was able to come to the aid of his brothers and provide them the means toward independence. Buonarroto, who had visited him in Rome, was to open a business with Giansimone. A letter from father to son of December 1500 echoes what Michelangelo had been able to tell the old man: his workshop like his living quarters was now well furnished and he was full of confidence, but suffered from headaches, probably a consequence of overwork and his

Spartan living habits. His father counseled him to take care of himself, to complete his work in marble as soon as possible and to return to Florence.

In the spring of 1501, probably in May, the artist was back home, after an absence of four years. He returned as one who, with a single masterpiece, had proved that at the age of twenty-six he could lay claim to being the foremost sculptor of his country and age, even though at the time a superman like Leonardo was still living and working.

Second Sojourn in Florence

1501-1505

I

MICHELANGELO HAD BEEN in Florence but a few months upon his return from Rome when, in August 1501, a committee met to deliberate an art project. Another such group met a year later. The results were commissions to Michelangelo for two statues of David, one in marble, the other in bronze.

In 1494 Pierre de Rohan, Maréchal de Gié, had been in Florence in the entourage of Charles VIII, the wretched little king, who scarcely deserves the space he takes up in the history books. Nine days before he came to Florence, where he took up residence in the Palazzo Medici, Lorenzo's three sons had been expelled (November 17, 1494).

In the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio Rohan had admired the nude bronze *David* Donatello had executed for Cosimo de' Medici. So great an impression had it made on the French connoisseur that he desired a similar one for the courtyard of his newly built estate at Bury. This wish was transmitted to the *Signoria* of Florence through the Florentine ambassador at Lyon. The council was perplexed at the request. The great old sculptor was dead.

The subject was a favorite one in Florence, where the biblical king, glorified as the poet of the psalms and the ancestor of Jesus, had assumed political significance—liberator from tyranny, with the venerable Saul playing the role of tyrant, and prototype of the just statesman. This was particularly true at the moment. The French king, Louis XII, now encamped in Lombardy, had liberated Florence from the threatening tyranny of Cesare Borgia.

Having been advised by its two ambassadors in Lyon, Piero Tosinghi and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, the *Signoria* promised to cast about for a suitable artist. For a full year the government of Florence searched for the worthiest candidate, to whom to entrust the commission. Ultimately the aldermen grew convinced that none was better qualified than the man already commissioned to do a marble *David.* On August 12, 1502, a contract was concluded with Michelangelo for the bronze statue that was to be sent to France.

A year before, on August 16, 1501, a contract had been signed for that other even more important commission. The subject was the same, though the medium was different; and this task was more interesting to Michelangelo, perhaps because it was the more difficult, and he was among those to whom "nothing is easy except the difficult."

The building committee for the cathedral, the so-called *Operai del Duomo* (i.e., the heads of the woolen guild), had commissioned Agostino di Duccio in 1463 to carve a heroic statue, and when he succeeded, they had ordered "a prophet of gigantic stature" for the cathedral a year later. This time Duccio was not so

fortunate. He ignored the terms of the contract and the commission was withdrawn. Since then the huge marble block, on which Duccio had worked, had lain unfinished for thirty-seven years. How far Agostino's work had progressed is not certain, but the block was considered to be miscut beyond salvage. The *Signoria* had shown it to Andrea Sansovino when he returned from Portugal, where he had worked with great honor for two kings in succession. He declared he could do the job only if he were permitted to add a few pieces of marble.

We know that in Michelangelo's eyes nothing was worse than patchwork in the art of carving marble. As a penniless youth he had probably never beheld a large block of marble, whether intact or given up as hopeless by another sculptor, without feeling the urge to master the stone himself. In contrast to Sansovino he now declared he could retrieve a statue in one piece from the block.

II

In the first Book of Samuel, chapter 16, David makes his appearance as a shepherd lad. He brings fresh provender to his brothers serving with the army of Saul, beholds Goliath, hears him mock the Israelite host and volunteers to slay him. Refusing at first, Saul ultimately accepts the offer, but insists on giving David his own armor, puts a helmet of brass upon his head and girds him with the king's sword. David, accustomed to go unclad, is unable to move thus encumbered: "And he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him." This, then, is the traditional explanation for David's nakedness, with Donatello setting the style, so to speak. Donatello had left David only a shepherd's cap and greaves.

Verrocchio's much later *David Armed* is different in character

from Donatello's, who is lost in an overwhelming sense of the deed accomplished. Verrocchio's lean and slender youth is invested with an unchallengeable sovereign dignity in the wake of victory.

What gives Michelangelo's *David* so much life and fascination is the circumstance that Michelangelo alone represented his hero at the height of inner and outer tension preceding combat rather than after the triumph. The youth takes his foeman's measure with his eyes, takes aim only with his glance. For the moment right arm and hand are idle, but with his left hand David tightens the sling that loops over his left shoulder and is to carry the stone. In the next moment the right hand, swift as a flash, will seize the leather pouch and hurl away the missile. The stance is lithe, the main weight on the right foot, the left heel slightly raised. The whole figure is ready to pounce, gathering itself in seeming repose for the crucial deed.

All that was of innermost concern to him Michelangelo concentrated and projected in the expression on David's features—not only the feeling of invincibility, the basic pattern of his own personality, but also the passionate temper that was his recurrent and predominant mood, the ability and frame of mind to annihilate resistance, to gain satisfaction by victory for himself and his own.

Observe this head, slightly inclined to one side the better to encompass the target, the eyes of the born victor, the frowning brow bespeaking violence in repose, the flaring, twitching nostrils, the mouth firmly clamped shut, the beautifully shaped, forceful chin, the mighty helmet of locks tumbling down in back and covering part of the strong, sinewy neck.

In representing a giant-killer, Michelangelo turned the tables and solved a much more difficult problem, to create a giant, a youthful body in heroic dimensions. That the hands, especially, are notably large is of course intentional, characterizing the figure, revealing its peculiarity. Other faults in the proportions—the shallowness of the entire back—were contingent upon the shape of the stone.

For the first time in Michelangelo's work we are startled by the astonishing fact that this overlifesize figure was hewn from the marble without the artist first having made preliminary studies. "Thereupon," says Vasari, "Michelangelo designed a model in wax [for the *operai del duomo*], a young David, sling in hand." This small model was apparently meant only to give the patrons an idea of the project. Michelangelo always thought it sufficient to give but the barest hints in his models.

One of the sonnets he wrote to Vittoria Colonna epitomizes his method:

> When once the image, perfect and inspired,
> Of form and gesture, stands before the limner,
> From humble stuff a model, plain, a glimmer,
> He shapes, first birth-pang of the work desired.
>
> A second parturition is required
> To signify the promise of the hammer
> In living stone, and what was but a stammer
> Has now, from fairest concept, life acquired.
>
> I too, born of myself the merest model,
> Can but through thee, dear lady and exalted,
> Attain that perfect stature which I cherish;
>
> Yet should you fill my voids, my warp unraddle
> In your compassion, shall I not be faulted,
> Chastised and taught by turns, in ardor perish?

D'umil materia un semplice modello—the thought is varied in still another sonnet, where the poet again speaks of the model as sparse and slight (*con breve e vil modello*).

A rough model, fashioned at the moment of conception, was all Michelangelo needed to fix outlines and attitude. The full-size, indeed even outsize figure stood before his imagination with such unfailing certainty, so vividly that, using only this lump,

scarcely deserving the name model, he was able to hew his giant from the marble block. There is a tradition that he even went so far as to forge his tools himself.

III

It was the impressions Michelangelo received in Rome from the nude *Dioscuri* on Monte Cavallo that had given him the inspiration and the courage to create a similar colossus. From his own resources he took the anatomical and physiological knowledge revealed in the statue's attitude and limbs—e.g., the swelling veins in the dangling right arm. The commission, pledged to be finished within two years, took four additional months. It was begun on September 13, 1501, and completed late in January 1504. The base for the statue was entrusted to Simone del Pollaiuolo and Antonio da San Gallo.

The Florentine authorities seem to have discovered political hints in David's wrathful glance. At the outset the figures had been viewed as a symbol of the national defense and of a government of justice. The time of its completion marked a breathing spell in public affairs. Piero de' Medici had been looked on as a tyrant and there had been fears that Cesare Borgia would foist him on Florence. But on August 18, 1502, Alexander suddenly died and the power of Cesare Borgia was broken. On December 28, 1503, only a month before the statue was finished, Piero de' Medici drowned in the river Garigliano. On the last day of October 1502, Julius II, favorably disposed toward the Florentines, had become pope. The coincidence of no less than four events gave rise to a sense of liberation from many threatening dangers.

A plan to set up the huge statue in front of the cathedral was immediately dropped. Popular opinion was in favor of making room for it either in the Loggia dei Priori (called the Loggia dei

Lanzi after 1541, because it had been the main guardroom of the German mercenaries of Cosimo I) or in the Palazzo Vecchio.

But Donatello's *David* already stood in the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, a symbol of liberation. Outside the palazzo stood Donatello's *Judith,* later sheltered in the Loggia. The consuls of the woolen guild, through the *Opera,* therefore convened a commission of thirty, which was to decide where the statue was to be permanently installed. It included sculptors, painters, architects, miniaturists, goldsmiths, clockmakers, gem-cutters, embroiderers, carpenters and also two heralds of the *Signoria.* Among well-known members were Leonardo da Vinci, Granacci, Botticelli, Perugino, Filippino Lippi, Lorenzo di Credi, Giuliano da San Gallo, Andrea della Robbia, Sansovino, David del Ghirlandajo, Simone del Pollaiuolo and Benvenuto Cellini's father. We see with what earnestness the question of finding a place for a statue was treated in Renaissance Florence—it was left to a commission of art experts.

Since the statue was manifestly not intended to be viewed in the round, the shoulder blades and entire back having been somewhat negligently treated, it seemed appropriate to set it up before a wall as a background, and this was rather swiftly agreed upon. But the painters Cosimo Roselli and Botticelli favored a location at the cathedral, with Donatello's *Judith* as a counterpart, while Giuliano da San Gallo advocated a niche in the Loggia, to protect the marble. Leonardo was of the same view, adding only that the niche should have fitting decoration (*ornamento decente*).

These views should have prevailed. It would have spared the admirable polish of the marble and the statue would have had enough light, had it been moved to the front, under the central arch. But Michelangelo preferred a location before the Palazzo della Signoria as the most honorific, a location most exposed to all exigencies. This was demonstrated (as already mentioned) during the riots of 1527, when the statue's left arm was broken into three pieces. The dimensions of the statue, moreover, were in-

appropriate to the location. It appeared small against the mighty, rough stonework of the palazzo. But the artist's wishes were heeded.

The transfer of the huge piece from the workshop to its location took four full days, March 14–18, 1504. The wall of the house of the *Opera* had had to be breached to bring it out and a guard had to be posted since stones had been thrown at it. Medici adherents were suspected of the outrage, supporting the view that the statue had timely political as well as symbolic significance. During its movement to the Piazza della Signoria the statue was held slung in a wooden cradle.

It was set up on June 8, 1504 and unveiled on September 8. Today Michelangelo's *David,* meant to be viewed in the open, stands indoors in a museum, the Accademia of Florence. The symbol of Florence has become a museum piece. In front of the Palazzo Vecchio stands a modern copy.

IV

An excellent pen-and-ink drawing, which has landed in the Louvre, gives an idea of how the other *David* statue order from Michelangelo—the one in bronze—was intended to look. The young hero is here somewhat older and more developed than the shepherd lad in marble. Like that one, he is nude, but the muscles are even more prominent. The left hand, from which the sling still dangles, is lightly set against the hip. The body is slightly bent backward, as though in a swift movement, the raised right leg treading on the huge severed head of Goliath, whose left cheek touches the small foot, finely shaped ankle and strong shin of the firmly planted left leg. A right arm (for the marble David) is carefully drawn in a larger scale on the same sheet, and a few words written beside it show that Michelangelo,

in the vigor of his own youth, compared himself to David. He read:

> *Davicte cholla fromba—e io chollarco.*
> *Michelagniolo.*
> (David with the sling and I with the bow.)

He took the Italian idiom *coll' arco dell' osso* (with full strength, with all energy) and simply shortened it. Perhaps this was intended as a contrast to a quotation from Petrarca, dealing with melancholy, which is written immediately below: "The lofty column has toppled, together with the green laurel that shaded my tired thoughts." Petrarca's poignant verse apparently found a momentary echo in Michelangelo's soul; but the cloud passed as his native self-confidence returned with the line above.

Marshal Rohan kept on pressing to get the commissioned statue for his castle. But Michelangelo could not tackle the work until the great marble namesake was finished. Of course Rohan intended to pay whatever was asked for the statue. On its part, the *Signoria,* which greatly valued France's friendship, had decided to present him with the statue as a gift, as soon as it was finished.

Meanwhile the marshal lost favor with the king. The Florentine council with its practical bent at once resolved to give the statue to some other Frenchman, whose friendly feelings might bring the city on the Arno some profit. Their choice fell upon the king's financial secretary, Florimont Robertet, who might be most useful to them in their money dealings with the king. Robertet was sounded out by ambassador Francesco Pandolfini, as shown in great detail in a letter by Pandolfini of September 1505, still preserved.

Michelangelo, as was his wont, had not finished his work. Benedetto da Rovezzano was retained in October 1508 to do what was still to be done. A Signoria notation of November 6, 1508, reports that the *David,* now cast in bronze, had been at long last "in God's name packed" and dispatched to France by way of Leghorn. Robertet had the statue installed in the courtyard of

Château Bury near Blois, where it remained until the mid-seventeenth century. It was then transferred to the Château de Villeroy, where it continued to be studied for a long time by French sculptors, who are supposed to have said it was worth its weight in gold.*

Then it vanished without a trace.

V

Among Donatello's many representations of the Madonna, all in relief, is only one bronze statue, a curious work, placed above the high altar of the church of Sant' Antonio in Padua. A crown over her rich tresses, covered with the drapery of her robe, the Virgin sits upon a throne whose two sides consist of elaborate sphinxes. Her gaze is aloof—she is lost in thought. She leans slightly forward, her arms straight down, holding with both hands the delicate child who stands unsteadily in the folds of her robe, his face turned full toward the viewer and bearing the same expression of sullen earnestness as his mother.

Such a figure may have been among the distant antecedents of Michelangelo's beautiful and memorable *Madonna of Bruges,* which startles the viewer at first glance by its smoothness and soft harmony.

Two Bruges merchants, Jean and Alexandre Mouscron, had commissioned Michelangelo to do a Madonna. Vasari and Condivi, neither of whom apparently saw it, described it as a bronze relief. Albrecht Dürer, who did see it in 1521, significantly enough called "an alabaster image of Mary, chiseled by Michael Angelo in Rome." The work is actually of highly polished white marble.

In 1506 the group was still in Florence, though ready to be

* The bronze *David* was a small statue, 2¼ *braccia* (less than five feet) high. The marble *David* with its base is almost seventeen feet high.

shipped to Bruges by way of Viareggio. In Bruges it was installed in a chapel in the church of Nôtre Dame, where a black marble niche sets off the work well and where the illumination is kind to it.

This Madonna of his Michelangelo desired to invest with the full sovereign dignity of the Queen of Heaven. He sought to express his notion of the sublime by making the figure utterly devoid of passion, and in this he succeeded. Without looking at anyone—neither at her son nor at the people—she exhibits the child crown prince to her subjects with the unswerving poise of a born ruler. In the face of neither mother nor son is there even a trace of a smile or of the slightest awareness of the worshipful congregation. They are enthroned on high and look downward before them, where ordinary mortals must be thought to dwell.

Michelangelo, indeed, never really portrayed love purely among human beings. It was foreign to his nature. He was a lonely man, scarcely feeling the need for friends. He held people in contempt and kept them at arm's length. When he did show affection, it was from filial piety, or as a devoted brother, for the sake of family honor. And when he loved—disposed as he was toward the extremes of passion and sensitivity—he tormented and consumed himself in yearning. To love a woman made him feel deeply ashamed—the prudishness of centuries of medievalism was in his blood. His only solace was that in love he worshiped beauty—beauty everlasting. And when he loved a young man, it was again his passionate veneration of beauty that acquitted him, even as it swept him up. So great would be his admiration that he would deprecate himself beyond measure, merely to enhance and ennoble the object of his passion, speak of himself as infinitely inferior. The other's favor, his approval of a newly finished work, were the pinnacle of bliss to Michelangelo.

There is no trace of Christian charity, either in his life or in his work, during his younger years. In his old age he achieved Christian repentance, embraced the religious hysteria of the

Counter Reformation. In the end he represented Christ as Jove, hurling thunderbolts, and, in the name of Christ, damned mankind, which inspired him with the deepest loathing, to the nethermost depths of hell.

Under a contract dated as early as June 19, 1501, Michelangelo's friend Jacopo Galli had got him a commission from the aged Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, for fifteen statues for the cardinal's tomb in the Siena cathedral. The task, however, apparently left Michelangelo cold and he kept putting it aside. On September 22, 1503, the cardinal became Pope Pius III, but he survived for only twenty-seven days. The contract was confirmed by his heirs. Michelangelo can have devoted himself only to the statues of St. Paul and St. Peter, which show very fine heads and hands. The statues of the two popes, Gregory the Great and Pius I, may also be partly his work.

VI

Michelangelo's mind was preoccupied with another matter—his encounter with the greatest artist of the age, Leonardo da Vinci, who had returned to Florence after an absence of seventeen years.

Leonardo had arrived in the spring of 1501, when Michelangelo was still in Rome. In 1502, as military engineer in the service of Cesare Borgia, he had inspected the strongholds in the Romagna, returning in 1503. The story of his fame pervaded the city.

Both the elder and the younger artist were on good terms with Piero Soderini, who had been elected *gonfaloniere* for life in 1502. Leonardo, accounted as handsome as he was versatile even as a youth, was now in his fifties, an impressive figure of a man.

He dressed unorthodoxly though in exquisite taste, wore, in contrast to the long Florentine robes, a rose-colored cloak that came only to his knees, let his curly and well-tended beard grow down over his chest. Magnificent in appearance, he was an artist of rarest hue, a universal genius, a legend in his own time. His demeanor was courtly, his mastery undisputed, but both his character and circumstances had made him a stranger wherever he went.

Under Ludovico Sforza, dubbed Il Moro, he had worked and trained disciples in Milan. His main lesson to them was that art had for its object the totality of the works of nature and man. In this respect he was sharply at odds with Michelangelo's highly personal and instinctive creed that only the human body was a worthy object of art. Leonardo insisted that the variety of things, living and dead, challenged the painter to reproduce the peculiar and the ugly as well as the beautiful and the graceful.

In Leonardo's view the artist had to make his soul a mirror reflecting all things, doing justice to all things. Whoever mastered but one field was a poor artist (*uno tristo maestro*). One senses, in Leonardo's later exposition of his views in his *Treatise on Painting*, a covert polemic against Michelangelo's diametrically opposite approach. Michelangelo, who all his life maintained that sculpture rather than painting was his profession, insisted in his conversations with Vittoria Colonna, which have come down to us fairly accurately through Francisco de Hollanda, that the art that takes something away, that is to say sculpture, is superior to the art that adds something, to wit painting.

As late as 1549 Michelangelo wrote to Benedetto Varchi, who had published a *lezione* examining the question of which art was the nobler, *la scultura o la pittura:* "I declare that I deem painting the better, the more it approaches relief, and that relief seems the poorer, the more it approaches painting. To me sculpture is the lamp of painting. The difference between the two is the difference between sun and moon."

Leonardo, on the other hand, like Leone Battista Alberti be-

fore him, fervently praised the virtues of painting over sculpture as over the other arts. He maintained that in view of the variety of nature it commanded a far broader field, nor did he wish to miss anything, not even dust and smoke, nor the effects of light, the wide horizon, clouds and plants—all of them matters of indifference to Michelangelo, who as a sculptor, painter and poet sought to depict only man.

Even as a painter Michelangelo worked primarily in the round, while the pictorial element proper interested him least. By contrast Leonardo's main concern was the blending of colors and shadows (*sfumato*), so much so that in his last major work, St. John, in the Louvre, he anticipates Rembrandt in making his figure emerge luminously from the dark.

All his life and even after his death, Leonardo was a thorn in Michelangelo's flesh. As late as his seventy-fifth year Michelangelo speaks of Leonardo's theories with resentment bordering on abuse. In the above-cited letter to Benedetto Varchi we read: "If the man who wrote that painting deserves the palm over sculpture knew as much about the other matters on which he wrote, my cook could have done better."

VII

These two titanic figures, separated by an age gap of twenty-three years, found it difficult to appreciate, one the other, as is not uncommon in contemporary geniuses of such different stripe, especially when circumstances place them in a state of rivalry. There can be little doubt, however, that Leonardo, whose urbanity and poise were far above envy and jealousy, would have met the rising young genius more than half way, had his willingness to pave the way to an understanding met a response.

The fiery spirit that burned within Michelangelo made that impossible. Even outwardly he sensed the contrast he formed to the stately and exemplary figure Leonardo cut. He was ugly, or so he thought, his face disfigured by Torrigiano's blow, uncouth and awkward, indifferent to dress and appearance, inured to wield his strong hands in passionate combat with marble. All his life his arrogance, served by a sharp tongue, made him see only a rival in every genius, junior or senior, who crossed his path. A rival— in his eyes that meant an enemy, to be outshone. He hated Leonardo from the beginning, as ten years later he hated Raphael.

His relationships to these two, however, were quite different. In Leonardo Michelangelo encountered the artist in his prime, one from whom he could not help but learn many things, perhaps unconsciously, even as he sought to surpass him. In Raphael Michelangelo, then himself in his prime, saw the aspiring beginner, his character even more alien than that of Leonardo, who zealously and airily appropriated for his own use all that Michelangelo had pioneered in art. Michelangelo's whole nature made it impossible for him to see in Raphael anything but an imitator and plagiarist who owed him everything. Contempt and hostility pervaded whatever recognition of merit the younger artist may have elicited. Toward Leonardo Michelangelo can scarcely have felt disdain, but beyond doubt he did entertain a frank hatred of this rival.

In versatility both artists were equally outstanding. Both were painters, sculptors, draftsmen, poets. Leonardo apparently also shone in music, but to restore the balance Michelangelo's gifts as an architect were more marked. Both were eminent engineers. Each reached the summit in painting and sculpture.

Michelangelo had the good fortune to leave behind many more works than Leonardo, whose creations seemed to be ill-starred and whose genius, moreover, led him to dissipate his energies even more than did Michelangelo. But the main difference is that Michelangelo was content with mastery in the fine arts and

notable stature as a poet, while Leonardo superimposed on the artist the thinker, scientist and inventor in the grand manner, his discoveries far outnumbering his works of art.

Leonardo's mind was in perpetual ferment. He brooded, searched, probed, analyzed, investigated, dissected everything, even the pigments he used. Then he would collect himself and after the most painstaking preparation discharge his energy in "everlasting" masterpieces that were either destroyed by time or the heedlessness of man or that crumbled of their own accord. Even when he had created something enduring, his spirit persisted in regarding it as unfinished and continued to play with it. Yet the two great men, in the face of their diversity, have many traits in common, vast as may be the gulf between brusqueness and grace, intuition and research.

In their art both held fundamentally aloof from orthodox Christianity; both were fond of omitting haloes and all the other ecclesiastic paraphernalia. They shared a delight in studying the human body. When Leonardo represented clothed figures, he first drew their nude outlines, as did Raphael after him—witness Leonardo's drawings for the *Adoration of the Kings* and the *Last Supper*. Both showed little concern for contemporary dress, in the representation of which most Florentine painters delighted.

When commissions dealt with biblical themes, Michelangelo was drawn to the Old Testament, which he unfolded before us all the way from the majesty of the *Creation* to the genre paintings of the *Ancestors of Christ*. Leonardo, on the other hand, turned to the New Testament, when appropriate, though he carefully avoided the Passion and one can scarcely envision him painting a Crucifixion. Under his brush the *Last Supper* becomes a great love feast and the Madonna and child a pure idyll.

Both have a definite affinity for antiquity. But while this was all-encompassing with Michelangelo, setting the whole tone of his art, it was of far lesser significance to Leonardo. His architectural designs show a certain interest in the ancient column orders, which he was fond of combining with Byzantine domes. He de-

rived his figure arrangements from ancient art as well. Oddly enough, we find him complaining on one occasion that he was unable to equal the symmetry of the ancients.

Like other masters of the Renaissance, Leonardo, in his architectural endeavors, was influenced by Vitruvius, whom he often cites. In his theories of proportion he proceeded from the principles of the ancient Greek sculptors. In his representations of rearing horses he was inspired by the equine figures on ancient gems —his biting war horses in *The Battle of Anghiari* are reminiscent in attitude of an ancient cameo showing the fall of Phaëthon. Throughout his work one finds small hints of antiquity. One of the figures in the *Adoration of the Kings* reminds of Praxiteles' *Faun,* another of a bronze *Narcissus* in Naples.

The hermaphroditic features in not a few of Leonardo's pictures echo the preference, at one period of antiquity, for blending masculine and feminine traits in the figure of Bacchus, to say nothing of Hermaphroditus proper. Leonardo's *St. John,* in the Louvre, seems indeed of indeterminate sex, as do so many of the youthful male figures Leonardo was fond of drawing.

Among their many resemblances, the two titans share a deficiency in education by the standards of their time, in that neither learned Latin in youth. Michelangelo, throughout his life, was preoccupied with so many things that he never found the time to make up for this lack. Leonardo, no less ambitious and more given to study, made an effort in the fourth decade of his life to learn Latin and apparently achieved a certain fluency, since he frequently gives Latin quotations. But it did not come easy, as seen from the word lists he made to aid his memory.

VIII

Different as were these two incompatible men, they shared a propensity for pursuing vast schemes. We know that Michelangelo

flirted with the idea of shaping into human form a huge rock that lay between Carrara and the sea, to serve mariners along the Riviera as a lighthouse.

Leonardo, as an architect, was given to similar dreams. He wished to erect a royal tomb, to consist of a man-made mountain measuring two thousand feet across the base, surmounted by a circular temple, the floor of which would have lain at the height of the spires of the Cologne cathedral. The interior was to have been as wide as the nave of old St. Peter's in Rome.

Leonardo's architectural plans show a tendency, foreign to Michelangelo, for harnessing mechanical forces to the purposes of beauty. Since Aristotile da Fioravantio, a Bolognese engineer who had lived and worked in Moscow, had moved a tower without damage, Leonardo proposed to the government of Florence a plan for lifting the Baptistry by mechanical power and installing it in an elevated position, with steps leading up to it. The *Signoria* was cautious enough not to essay such a scheme.

In sharp contrast to Michelangelo, Leonardo loved to dwell on the representation of feminine grace. Yet the attitude of both men toward women is not dissimilar. No woman is mentioned by name in any of Leonardo's manuscripts, with only two exceptions: a model, and an aged housekeeper. History tells of not a single liaison involving Leonardo with a woman; and the same thing is true of Michelangelo.

Like Michelangelo, Leonardo was at home in pagan mythology. He pictured a Medusa, a Leda, a Pomona, a Bacchus. On one of his little sketches for *The Great Flood* he noted that a Neptune with trident was to be shown amid the waters, and Æolus as the ruler of the winds. He called hell "Pluto's Paradise."

He eschewed contemporary fashion, hair dress, foot gear (*fugire il piu che si può gli abiti della sua età*). The toga seemed to him the ideal costume for men. But in contrast to Michelangelo, he delved deeply into the art of portraiture. We possess not a single likeness from Michelangelo's hand. His bronze statue of Julius II was soon melted down, nor was it done over for Julius'

tomb. The drawing of Cavalieri, the only other portrait Michelangelo is known to have made, is lost. We know, however, that he regarded portraiture as a low form of art.

On the other hand, nothing has so memorably impressed Leonardo's stature upon posterity as the marvelous portraits he and his disciples have left us especially that wonder of wonders, the *Mona Lisa*. One has only to regard Raphael's artless pen-and-ink copy of it to sense Leonardo's profound grasp of womanhood.* Perhaps he found in woman some part of the mysterious power that dwelt within his own soul.

Such is Leonardo, ever and always mysterious, effortless, yet without a trace of mysticism. Each of his figures is marked by an inward wealth, a fount within itself, casting a spell through which the graceful play of line and form finds a way to the beholder's soul. Compare his *Leda* with Raphael's naive conception, in which the passionate swan with his curved neck becomes nothing more than an overgrown gander.**

It is plain enough that Leonardo, even though his name was never coupled with that of a woman, did not see woman with Michelangelo's eyes, never saw her as a menace. The heterosexual relationship he may have abhorred, but he never looked down on sexual attraction as such.

IX

Both Leonardo and Michelangelo were poets. Michelangelo's verses have come down to us, and they startle us with their blending of deep human passion and sophisticated reflection. He was at

* Raphael's drawing, used for his portrait of Maddalena Doni, is in the Louvre, Paris, where Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* may also be seen.

** Drawings in the Devonshire collection, Chatsworth; in the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam; small sketches and heads in the Royal Library, Windsor.

bottom a poet of solid competence, but there is too much that is labored in his considerable output.

Surprisingly enough in a creative artist of swift decision, Michelangelo kept on revising, improving and polishing his verses; and equally surprising, Leonardo, working with infinite deliberation as an artist, making sketch after sketch before tackling a task, was an improviser par excellence as a poet. Accompanying himself on a *lyra di braccio* he had constructed himself,* he was able to sing songs he made up on the spot. *Il migliore dicitore di rime all' improviso del tempo,* he was called—the greatest lyric improviser of his time.

We are in no position to judge Leonardo's verses, for they have all been lost. We do know his prose. As for Michelangelo, his prose we know only from his letters, which deal for the most part with financial straits and family troubles. They have nothing to do with art, even though they may include an occasional emotional passage. Leonardo, however, was clearly a stylist. His description of a storm—the thrice-revised word picture of the Deluge—lives and breathes, reveals the talent of a painter and musician transmuted into words.

Michelangelo's poetry is introspective, marked now by bitter irony, now by flaming pathos. Leonardo is preeminently thoughtful and lucid, as revealed in his fables and parables. Take the one about the butterfly that burns its wings: "Thou false light, how many hast thou not wretchedly deceived in days gone by, as thou hast deceived me! Were I meant to see the light, should it not then also be within my power to tell the sun from a miserable penny taper?"

Leonardo's minor poetic endeavors reflect the clarity of his mind, the serenity of his wisdom. Michelangelo at his best impresses with the power and fierceness of his style.

A final point of contact between the two great men that should

* The lyra, predecessor of the violin, with five to ten playing strings and two humming (resonating) strings, as described in G. M. Lanfranco's *Scintille di Musica,* Brescia, 1533, p. 137.

perhaps be emphasized is their relationship to their patrons, who, by setting them great tasks, nurtured their talents, even while they were as different as their protégés themselves. For a time Leonardo's relation to Ludovico Sforza was precisely that of Michelangelo's to Julius II.

It was the destiny of both these transcendent artists that they abandoned virtually all their works before completion. Yet both, at the crucial juncture of their younger years, came upon patrons who put them to the creation of monumental works of the highest order. But for Il Moro, Leonardo would not have executed the equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza—or at least the model for it—nor *The Last Supper* in Santa Maria della Grazie in Milan. But for Julius II, Michelangelo would not have designed the pope's tomb, executed so much later and on such a reduced scale, nor have painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. And strangely enough, both rulers were matched to the divergent temperaments of the two great artists: Ludovico, groping his way, spinning his diplomatic web, vague, sensual, cruel, fond of art and eager to wear the mantle of Lorenzo de' Medici as a patron of the arts; Julius arrogant, hot-tempered, pugnacious, spontaneous, ever willing to consider and carry out the most grandiose artistic plans.

X

A letter from the Vicar General of the Carmelite Order, Pietro da Novellara, to Isabella d' Este (who kept asking that Leonardo paint her portrait) tells us that he had done his cartoon for the *Virgin and Child with St. Anne and the Infant St. John* early in April 1501. For the rest, he was at the time entirely immersed in geometry. "Quite intolerant toward the brush," he did not even like to listen to talk about painting commissions.

The cartoon of St. Anne had been displayed in the church of

Santissima Annunziata and throngs of visitors had praised it as a marvel. The Servitan monks had originally commissioned Filippino Lippi, but he had generously allowed it to go to Leonardo, in acknowledgment of Leonardo's superior talents. It must have been a drawing of overwhelming power, showing the qualities that gained fame for the painting itself, as well as for several others from Leonardo's hand—the intimate organization of four figures into a single, living whole. Michelangelo's soul could find no rest until he had done similar works, rivaling Leonardo, indeed, preferably excelling them in ingenious and close-knit composition.

Judging from Vasari's description, Leonardo's cartoon shown at the Annunziata cannot have been the one long in the Royal Academy, and now the National Gallery, London. It was presumably closer to the painting in the Louvre. Even the surviving London cartoon, however, is so beautiful that it serves to explain the enthusiasm aroused at the time by the one now lost. Together the grandmother in her youthful beauty, the young mother and the heavenly child join into a trio of love, grace and childlike innocence, expanded into a powerful quartette by the little St. John, hastening by and making obeisance to the child, who acknowledges him with a gesture of blessing.

We do not find here the curious arrangement of the painting in the Louvre, with the Virgin sitting on the lap of the broadly enthroned St. Anne and in turn drawing to herself the child, who is symbolically playing with the lamb. The whole cartoon is natural and intimate, lifted above the sphere of mere grace by intimations of great impending destiny.

The power with which Leonardo's cartoon fascinated and at once repelled Michelangelo is first revealed in a pen-and-ink drawing of his in Oxford, on which mother and grandmother are seated together in equal grace, while their heads are farther apart, allowing the figure of St. Anne to emerge with greater emphasis. But then his penchant for rivalry is unmistakably manifested in his *Madonna Doni*, in the Uffizi, a painting of the artfully entwined

Holy Family, the only oil painting he ever did.* Michelangelo despised and almost loathed the oil technique, which he was fond of calling an art for women and children.

The picture had been commissioned by the wealthy Florentine merchant Angelo Doni, reputedly a miser. Vasari's second edition relates (although this cannot be vouched for) that Doni tried to haggle over the agreed fee, with the result that the injured master doubled the price. Condivi, who drew on Michelangelo directly, simply says the painting brought seventy florins.

The very fact that Michelangelo, then overwhelmed with commissions, failed to refuse this one, which necessitated interrupting his many unfinished projects in sculpture, becomes plausible only on the premise that he accepted the picture as a challenge to wrest the crown from a rival.

Set in a broad, circular, heavily ornamented frame, the painting deals with a popular theme—the mother's joy on the return of her child. Yet this pleasure, so alien to Michelangelo's nature, finds no clear, let alone compelling expression in the features of the Madonna. The artist seems to have been concerned solely with organizing the group expertly. It is invested with a sense of animation by the Madonna's beautifully shaped, outstretched arm, cutting across her body. But Michelangelo did not succeed in rising above Leonardo's special virtues of yielding grace and warmth. His picture is cold.

The work has the effect of a relief. Since the pyramidal arrangement of the main figures does not fill the circle, the artist has peopled the space to either side. There is first of all the little St. John, already garbed in camel's hair, looking up tenderly and taking leave of the Holy Family to withdraw into his wilderness, a small fellow on the verge of tears and altogether more soulful than the trinity that dominates the picture. Then there are small groups of nude young men, two on one side, three on the other, seated

* Even this is not a proper oil painting. It is partly painted in pure tempera, and partly with emulsions of tempera with resin and oil.

on blocks of stone in the treeless landscape or preparing for athletic contest. Their extraordinary beauty and freshness foreshadow the hosts of *ignudi* that were to begin populating the Sistine ceiling some four years later.

XI

Another year was to elapse before Michelangelo again allowed himself to become involved in a serious rivalry with Leonardo. But of two beautiful Madonna reliefs from the years 1504–1505 one reveals, in its grace and splendor, that the crusty young artist had been touched by a ray of light from the spirit of Leonardo with its intoxication with beauty, by a hint of the gentle smile that marks Leonardo's women.

It is a sizable round relief, executed for Taddeo Taddei and now in the Royal Academy, London. The Madonna sits relaxed, in profile, her head inclined upon a slender, finely modeled neck, her hair entirely covered by a kerchief. She faces the little St. John, who brings her son a goldfinch. The Christ child, startled at the fluttering bird that seeks to escape confinement, flees to his mother's lap, tripping over her left leg.

The scene might mean no more than a reflection of the artist in an idyllic, playful mood but for the Madonna's beautifully remote profile with its sublime and dreamlike quality hinting that her thoughts are elsewhere. She looks at St. John, but does not see him, any more than she does her frightened son, whom she fails to clasp in her lap. She is part of a loftier world, the true world of Michelangelo. Yet the playful figures of the children show that among the artist's imperfectly developed potentialities the light touch was not missing.

Dating from the same or possibly the following year is the Madonna tondo he did for Bartolommeo Pitti, now in the Museo

Nazionale in Florence. In a quite different way, it marks the main line of Michelangelo's actual development. He had been set the modest task of doing a Madonna for the home of a citizen. He invested it with a sense of lofty power, though the relief is no larger than his *Battle of the Centaurs.*

Seated on a stone much lower than in the *Madonna of the Stairs,* its forward edge projecting toward the beholder, the figure of this Madonna almost crouches. Yet she breathes sublimity and power, despite her youth. Her features, seen full face, bear the lonely, prophetic expression of a sibyl. In her lap lies a book. Her reading has apparently been interrupted, for the Christ child has placed his elbow, supporting his great, grave head, squarely on the book. The little St. John approaches and peers over her right shoulder. None of the three looks at another. They seem scarcely to belong together, even though the Madonna holds her son with one hand under his armpit.

Not only is she the main figure; but Michelangelo has concentrated in her all his sense of nobility. Wound about her brow is a broad royal band ornamented with an angel's head with wings spread wide. As usual, she also wears a kerchief. To underline her dominance, Michelangelo has employed a simple device to unique effect. He has given the upper edge of the marble disk, which measures only thirty-three inches in diameter, a concavity to set off the relief. Note well, however, that this circular rim cannot contain the proud, tragic head of the Madonna, which breaks through and rises above it. By this inspired yet simple artifice Michelangelo conveys a feeling that the Madonna's sublime inner life cannot be confined by everyday limitations, but heedlessly and unconsciously bursts them.

Neither of these two reliefs is finished. So incomplete is the state of the relief in the Royal Academy that the foot of the Christ child has not yet emerged from the stone and the hand of St. John holding the bird is scarcely indicated, while the unfinished state of the relief in the Bargello, also beyond question, cannot be said to detract from the total effect. Against the view of many modern

connoisseurs, this conspicuous peculiarity is not born of an intent to heighten the effect by avoiding the ultimate polish of perfection. Such a thought was quite foreign to Michelangelo. Like Leonardo, who also finished virtually nothing, the great artist never worked when he was not in the mood. Another reason was that both took on too many commissions at once to be able to finish any one of them.

Michelangelo never purposely left a work unfinished, unless he had accidentally spoiled it. When his mood was sustained and he had enough time, he would go all the way to the final polish. But he was overwhelmed with work and his mind was ever restless and tempestuous. Time and again one project would crowd out another. Like Leonardo, he saw a multitude of inner visions, heard inner voices whenever his contemporaries challenged him.

XII

While he was still working on his *David*, Michelangelo signed a contract in which he undertook to supply twelve overlifesize Apostles of Carrara marble for the cathedral of Florence over a period of twelve years. He was to receive two gold florins a month for this work, as well as full reimbursement for the marble and for journeys to Carrara. The instrument was signed on April 24, 1503.

We know that nothing came of the plan. When Michelangelo followed the call of Julius II and again went to Rome, the contract was canceled in December of that year. The sole reminder of this grandiose project is Michelangelo's *St. Matthew*, only half-liberated from the marble. The vigorous power of this figure exerts an unfailing fascination.

Looking at this unfinished work, the beholder can almost

watch Michelangelo at work. He can see that the sculptor hammered with his left hand—which he did invariably when he had to render heavy blows to the stone. The statue weaves its spell through its hints of pathos, interests through the extreme contortion of the body (*contrapposto*).

The upper part is seen from the front, the head turned into profile over the lowered right shoulder, as though with a single sharp motion. Yet the left hip is advanced, and the left thigh, which is nearest completion, with the knee projecting farthest from the stone, dominates the work with its perfection. The features are marked by an expression of profound gravity.

All these traits are reminiscent of the *Heroic Captive,* which he carved about ten years later. They also show the thoroughness with which Michelangelo, during his Roman sojourn, must have studied one of the few ancient works then accessible in the open. For they all recur in the Menelaus statue, dubbed *Pasquino,* excavated and installed in Rome in the year 1501 by Cardinal Oliver Caraffa. One senses, however, that, quickly as Michelangelo mastered the ancient grandeur of form and concentration of attitude, he was never able to equal the overwhelming simplicity of antiquity.

What is crucial in Michelangelo's unfinished statue is the break it signifies with the tradition of Christian art hitherto observed. For the first time a figure aiming at monumentality is shown at a fleeting moment, moving from a state of rest under the influence of a sudden notion.

The idea behind the statue must have been that St. Matthew is responding to a call. Michelangelo is exploiting the element of faith, hinted at in the New Testament, to characterize his figure. "And he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Matthew leaves his post at the receipt of custom and follows the call. Justi has shrewdly observed that the marble stood in Michelangelo's workshop when the message came from Julius II, inviting him to come to Rome. Michelangelo too followed the

call. He too left everything behind—his two marble reliefs, his plans for *St. Matthew* and the other apostles, the great cartoon in the Palazzo Vecchio, and set out on his pilgrimage.

XIII

When Leonardo returned to Florence in March 1503 from his inspection of Cesare Borgia's strongholds, Piero Soderini wished to harness the artist's great talents to the beautification of the city, of which he was *gonfaloniere*. He proposed that Leonardo do a mural for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the city hall of Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio. The great artist liked and accepted the challenge. In February 1504 he embarked on his cartoon for the Battle of Anghiari, which Florence had won in 1440 against the Milanese *condottiere,* Piccinino.

The *gonfaloniere,* with an eye for the genius of Michelangelo as well as Leonardo, proposed on August 14, 1504 that Michelangelo provide a companion piece to Leonardo's painting—as Condivi puts it: *a concorrenza di Lionardo.* A fee of 3,000 florins was held out to the younger artist, and judging from a haughty passage in one of Michelangelo's letters to Fatucci of January 1524, he thought it was already half in his pocket at the outset (*che mi parevon mezzi guadagnati*). A hall in the Hospice of the Dyers, the Spedale di San Onofrio, was assigned to him as a studio, while Leonardo worked in the Sala del Papa of Santa Maria Novella, where the authorities had given him work space.

Leonardo was then fifty-two years old, Michelangelo twenty-nine. The one was a master, still questing in all fields, the other still a beginner, despite his early triumphs. Their paths had already crossed, though but inwardly, in Michelangelo's mind, when Leonardo's cartoon of St. Anne aroused his rival ambitions. Now the competition was no longer covert and clandestine, but sharply

in the limelight, encouraged by the highest authorities of the city both of them called home, though neither had been born in Florence proper.

The challenge was friendly, the competition honorable and peaceful, and both put forward their best efforts from the outset. And then, as though by agreement, both men dropped the work. Only Leonardo's painting got beyond the cartoon stage, but it has disappeared. Even the two cartoons themselves are lost, victims of misadventure.

XIV

Seldom in history have two such towering figures faced each other as rivals. Each was great enough to know no peer. One looks on them as on Plato and Aristotle in Raphael's *School of Athens*—only that Leonardo, actually the elder, is more like Aristotle, while Michelangelo, the younger, resembles Plato.

For the world of Platonic ideas had dominated the high society of Florence, its aristocratic, humanistically indoctrinated circles, during Michelangelo's formative years. That these views are reflected in his poems is of lesser significance, for it was not in poetry that Michelangelo's talents found their most perfect expression. His aversion to portraiture, his predilection for the typically human reveal a basic agreement with the Platonic approach, expressed further in Michelangelo's figures, which follow ideas and not nature. The entire intellectual life of Florence toward the end of the fourteenth century was under the sign of Plato.

Despite a loving and rational upbringing, Leonardo had not flourished in Florence. His illegitimate birth had done his childhood no harm. His mother, the lusty peasant girl from Vinci, had swiftly vanished from his life, marrying a man of her own estate

and being supplanted by that estimable stepmother, the young lady with whom his father, a respected notary who had adopted him, contracted matrimony shortly after his birth. When his father, upon the death of this stepmother, married a second time, Leonardo felt superfluous at home and was desirous to leave.

In Milan, where he was drawn to the court of Ludovico il Moro, and where he later executed the collossal equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza—a glorification of the individual which democratic envy would have made impossible in Florence—a practical orientation prevailed, a striving for knowing and transforming reality, which may be properly designated as Aristotelian rather than Platonic. It is instructive that the name of Plato occurs but once in Leonardo's five thousand manuscript pages, and on that occasion in a geometrical context, whereas he constantly cites Aristotle.

XV

Leonardo's life was not solely devoted to the cultivation of art, but was spent in practical activities, scientific experiments and the observation of nature. In Milan he began the construction of canals equipped with ingenious locks of his own design. Toward the end of his life he proposed to Francis I the construction of a canal to join the rivers Sauldre and Morantin and to serve irrigation as well as navigation.

He invented one machine after another, not merely numerous war devices, which can scarcely have been very practical, since otherwise they would have rendered Il Moro invincible, but countless appliances for peaceful purposes, from modest ones to serve everyday needs to highly ambitious ones. They included an ingenious pedometer, a rolling mill for iron, machines for making cylinders, files, saws and drills, for cutting cloth, for planing and

carding, a mechanical wine press, a goldbeater's hammer, a ditch-digger, a wind-driven plow, a machine for drilling into the earth, a wheel for powering ships.

He was not only the first to invent the screw propeller and to use a screw on a moving axle as a motor, but thought of using it in flight, built small paper models with thin steel propellers that could steer themselves. He invented a device for measuring the density of air.

He was forever occupied with building different types of aircraft. He wrote a study on the flight of birds, constructed wings, flying chairs, gondolas for airships. He invented the parachute. "If a man have a tent of stiffened canvas," he writes, "twelve ells wide and twelve ells long, he can plunge down from any height without fear."

Heat radiation is the object of his inquiries. He notes that rays passing through a glass globe filled with cold water are warmer than the fire whence they come, behaving much like rays reflected by a concave mirror.

Leonardo understood steam power before anyone else did. He gives a careful description of a device he constructed to hurl a ball weighing one talent a distance of six stadia.

All matters of mechanical construction came easily to him. He took the use of iron for cogwheels, beams, levers and rolls for granted, though it was quite rare at his time. He constantly pondered on how to replace hand work with machines.

Leonardo understood before Copernicus that the earth revolves around the sun. He discovered the law of complementary colors before Chevreul. Before Pascal he perceived that water in two joined pipes always maintains the same level, whatever the form of the vessels. He studied cloud formation. Before the invention of telescopes, he recommended that eye glasses be made for seeing the moon larger (*fa occhiali da vedere la luna grande*). He was a passionate student of optics. He delved into the peculiarities of mirrors. He invented the *camera obscura* and explained its

property of inverting images. He studied the nature of magnets. He invented the diving bell, but was reluctant to publish this invention, for fear, he said, that it might be used to commit murder under water.

He studied acoustics as he did optics. He had a vague notion of radio communications, asserting that if holes were bored into the earth at two distant points, the human voice could be heard over great distances.

He grasped the function of the heart and the circulation of the blood before anyone else did. He immersed himself into botany, found the rules by which leaves are arranged about a stalk and tested the effects of poisons on plants. Numerous drawings of plants from his hand, testify to his love of plant life.

He had insight into geology before anyone else. He protested that 5,288 years, given by the theologians of his time as the age of the earth, were not long enough. The banks of the Po, he insisted, showed alluvial deposits that would have required at least 200,000 years to accumulate. His geological studies led him to voice cautious doubt that there could have been anything like a general deluge.

Seventy years before Bernard Palissy, founder of ceramics, who is regarded in France as the creator of geology, Leonardo laid the foundations of that science. Pondering the marine shells found high up in the mountains, he says: "These shells cannot have been carried there by the Deluge. They are all found at the same level, even though the mountain peaks are often still higher. If one believes that these molluscs, ordinarily found near the sea coast, began to move when the oceans swelled, then forty days of rain would not have been enough for these slow-moving creatures to traverse the distance of two hundred fifty miles from the Adriatic coast to Montferrat." He grasped that these shells had been deposited on the mountains by waters that had run off—something Voltaire failed to understand two-and-a-half centuries later.

Leonardo declared, further, that the reflex movements of the limbs originated in the spinal cord rather than the brain. Like Michelangelo after him, he was a devoted anatomist. He had no patience with artists who, in revulsion before flayed and decomposing cadavers, shrank from obtaining insight into the structure and true character of the human body. Unlike Michelangelo, he concentrated on the influence of the emotions on the organs rather than on the interplay of muscles.

Nor did he limit his biological studies to man. He surveyed the manifold life of plants and animals, distinguished vertebrates from invertebrates—those who had their skeleton inside, as he put it, from those who carried it outside.

Universal as he was, he strove to grasp the very essence of life. He found the source of life in movement (*il moto è causa d'ogni vita*) and here as in so many other areas anticipated the future.

Among the many astonishing aspects of his genius is the fact that he left his manuscripts unpublished, indeed, made them difficult of access by employing mirror-writing, from right to left. He seems to have been entirely free of scientific ambition, for he allowed no one even to see his manuscripts.

This constitutes but a superficial similarity to Michelangelo, who also locked his studio, would have none watch him at work and long kept his cartoon, for example, concealed from those who wished to make drawings after it. Leonardo's secrecy was different in character. Initially it seems to have had two motives—first, fear that others might steal his ideas; and second, fear that his views might draw charges and persecution on the grounds of heresy. But these motives are not adequate. Even during his development from youthful self-assertion to sovereign mastery of art coupled with a passion for research, there was imbedded deep in Leonardo's character a profound indifference to the judgment of his contemporaries. Growing more and more marked, it was fostered by the sense of loneliness peculiar to great geniuses—and here he and Michelangelo are on common ground.

XVI

Leonardo never emerged in the role of scientist. He was an engineer and he was a painter. We have seen that he spoke with a certain deprecation of Michelangelo's proper art, work in marble, regarding it as a mere craft (*mecanissimo*). He himself had taken on a commission in sculpture as something of a sideline, yet in its execution he had solved one of art's most difficult problems, creation of a colossal equestrian statue, which unfortunately got only as far as the plaster stage.

When he sought a post in Milan, Leonardo had boasted that he could, among other things, rival anyone in sculpture, whether in clay, marble or bronze. His statue, admired by all the world, had shown that his self-praise was no exaggeration—even though the difficulties of casting a 200,000-lb. statue in bronze, together with Ludovico il Moro's financial straits, kept the work from proceeding beyond the model stage.

That the work fell victim to a mob of unruly soldiers is an incalculable loss to art lovers. In token of his stoicism and his customary indifference to his reputation, Leonardo, who notes down so many fleeting notions in his manuscripts, devotes not a single word to the destruction of his work, which cost him fully seventeen years.

Leonardo is known to have been a master horseman and knew the nature and anatomy of the horse as no other artist did. Yet following his custom he tackled the work only after new and exhaustive studies on the character of the horse.

Michelangelo himself never saw the equestrian statue in Milan; but the paeans of praise for it are certain to have irked him deeply. Judging from the designs for it in diverse small-scale drawings, the statue breathed a fiery spirit in its three-dimensional

presence. Many Florentines had seen it, and they were singularly impressed with Leonardo's knowledge of horses and his talent for representing them. In this field Michelangelo could have scarcely thought of taking up the challenge of the elder artist, even though he may have been briefly disposed to do so.

As we know, nothing has survived of Leonardo's cartoon for the *Battle of Anghiari* but a few sketches and Rubens' drawing of the main group that occupied the center. Leonardo saw the battle as a hot skirmish among two mounted troops, reaching its climax in a struggle for the flag. His approach may be gleaned from his description of battle in his *Treatise on Painting.* Earlier times had known only battles between the hired armies of two *condottieri,* which sought to inflict as little damage on each other as possible, capturing instead the largest number of wealthy officers, so that substantial ransom would be paid. The invasions of the French kings, however, had brought a taste of the atrocities of modern warfare.

Leonardo was by no means an admirer of war, which to him was mass murder and as such an outgrowth of bestial madness (*pazzia bestialissima*). But war as an artistic theme did fascinate him. Coolly, but not without a certain contempt for bestiality, he enumerates its features: The writhing death throes of the wounded, the coup de grace, footprints marked in blood, broken shields, the ground littered with spears and swords, the red glare of fires, powder smoke whirling through the air, projectiles sailing through the air like little clouds, the sinister gloom into which figures vanish, dark shadows against a light background.

In his *Treatise* he dwells on horses leaping over mounds of bodies, discusses them at length. So prominent were they in his painting that Francesco Albertini, in his *Memoriale* (1510), calls the cartoon simply *Leonardo's Horses.* In his *Treatise* Leonardo speaks of horses that drag along their dead riders, that fight against the current of the rivers, that run away, trampling down and breaking through everything. He speaks of horsemen fighting for the flag—just as he drew it—with horse and rider becoming a

single unit, like a Centaur, the horses becoming so infected with ferocity that they sink their teeth into one another. And finally, he describes the leaders of the reserves, cautiously moving up. (*Come si deve figurar una battaglia,* in the *Trattato della Pittura,* Book II.) *

XVII

One can imagine with what feelings Michelangelo regarded Leonardo's cartoon, when it was displayed for public inspection. The purely pictorial elements did not greatly interest him, the facial expressions scarcely more. It was part and parcel of Leonardo's doctrine that no figure was commendable unless it expressed its inner state of mind. His main emphasis was on eloquence of features. To Michelangelo, on the other hand, the heart of the matter was not the mien but the movements of the body. What spurred him to effort was the wild agitation of the mounted group in Leonardo's much-admired cartoon.

He did not dream of tackling the task from the pictorial aspect, as had Leonardo. Leonardo the painter was content to represent a group which, in the heat of battle, had become locked in an inextricable snarl. From this focus the mounted host divided, and each scene, indeed, each individual horseman, received his own peculiar physiognomy. Michelangelo the sculptor was tempted to use the battle theme as a pretext for showing a throng of nude men, each of them in vehement and characteristic motion, the whole group taken by surprise when a signal reports the enemy's approach, hastily pulling on garments and reaching for arms.

Michelangelo could not envision competing with Leonardo in

* The best editions, for an English reader, of Leonardo's writings are: *Treatise on Painting,* translated and annotated by A. Philip McMahon, Princeton, 1956 (2 vols.); and *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci,* edited by J. P. Richter, second edition, London, 1939 (2 vols.).

the latter's special province, picturesque confusion and effect. He wished to conquer Leonardo on his own field, his capacity, as yet undemonstrated, for plastic representation of every conceivable attitude and contortion which the human body is capable of assuming.

Requested to glorify the martial deeds of the Florentines, Michelangelo officially chose the Battle of Cascina, an ancient clash with Pisa which had taken place on July 31, 1364. In its time the victory had signified liberation from a dangerous threat. Refurbishing its memory was all the more appropriate since in 1494 the Pisans had once again defected and had to be forced anew to acknowledge Florentine sovereignty.

In those days Pisa had recruited a band of English mercenaries, the so-called Compagnia Bianca, whose *condottiere,* John Hawkwood, had trained his men in the French war, but had no employment for them now, after the Peace of Bretigny. He had planned to take the Florentine camp by surprise. But a vigilant soldier named Manno Donati had foiled the attack.

Michelangelo probably picked Manno Donati as the main figure in his painting. The day before the battle, Donati, crying out "We are lost!" had created a false alarm, in order to accustom his men to presence of mind. Italian chronicles relate that on the day of the battle the soldiers had scattered in the hot July weather to bathe in the Arno and that Hawkwood took advantage of this carelessness for his attack. But since the Florentine soldiers had been trained for surprise attack only the day before, they armed themselves in the greatest haste.

Thus, while Leonardo seized the occasion to represent a fictitious battle for the flag in such a way as to show the full passions of war and atrocity unleashed, Michelangelo was content to show a mere episode. Rather than witnessing a heroic passage at arms, the beholders saw a group of men swiftly dressing and arming themselves after a swim.

Michelangelo's contemporaries did not by any means regard this solution as unsatisfactory. When the cartoon was finished and

displayed in the Sala del Gran Consiglio, it drew huge crowds and the issue was, in the words of the artist's biographer, for the *grandissima gloria di Michelangelo.* This is scarcely surprising, for his technical skill gripped the art experts of his time no less than Leonardo's display of poetic fantasy and pictorial genius.

With Leonardo the raging battle reaches its climax in the whirling movement preserved for us in Rubens' drawing. In Michelangelo's cartoon the sculptor asserts himself. Each figure is a small unit on its own, fully modeled and shaped—indeed, each individual muscle has been thoroughly studied, though this elaboration of detail in each figure does not detract from the total impression. The figures stand out in sharp outline, as though drawn with a single stroke.

Proceeding from the idea of masses in movement, Michelangelo soon came round to sculptural modeling of the various figures, all of which lie in the same plane, as though on a relief. In contrast to the massed figures in his later paintings of the serpent of brass or the deluge in the Sistine Chapel, the many interrelated figures were here seen with the eyes of a sculptor rather than of a painter. The cartoon marks Michelangelo's transition from sculpture to painting. Not until he deals with the crowds on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel does his treatment become truly pictorial rather than sculptural.

XVIII

In Michelangelo's development the cartoon for the *Battle of Cascina* marks the close of an epoch. It has been called the watershed, the dividing line between his first style and his second.

In any event, no work of the master, not yet thirty, had created such a furor among the artists and connoisseurs of the time. The press of people seeking to view this masterfully drawn cartoon was

extraordinary. It was not yet finished when Michelangelo in 1505 followed the call to Rome from Julius II, which had reached him through Giuliano da San Gallo. When he fled Rome the following year in a bitter rage, because he had been scornfully turned away at the Vatican one day upon calling to demand the money needed to execute the tomb, and briefly returned to Florence, he used the half-year until he was reconciled with the pope to finish his cartoon.

For years Italian and foreign artists made pilgrimages to the Sala del Papa in the church of Santa Maria Novella to study and copy it. Among those who came at once Vasari mentions Aristotile da San Gallo, Ridolfo del Ghirlandajo, Raphael, Francesco Granacci, Baccio Bandinelli and finally a Spaniard, Alonso Berruguete. Later there were Andrea del Sarto, Franciabigio, Jacopo Sansovino, Rosso, Niccolò Triboli, Jacopo Pontormo and Perino del Vaga.

Among all of these the young Raphael holds the greatest interest for us. In the winter of 1504–05 he had only just come from his quiet Urbino to Florence, where he heard no name mentioned more often than that of Michelangelo, whose *David* had been recently installed in the Piazza della Signoria. In the home of Taddeo Taddei, where Raphael was a guest, stood the Madonna relief with the Christ child startled by the goldfinch in the hand of little St. John. In the home of another patron, Angelo Doni, who had commissioned Raphael to paint his wife, the young painter saw Michelangelo's magnificent *Madonna Doni,* now in the Uffizi. He began instantly to make his own everything that Michelangelo could offer him, as his Madonnas of this period testify.

An aura of awe emanated from the person of Michelangelo, and Raphael almost certainly never sought him out. But the handsome youth was reverently and sincerely intent upon learning all he could from the great master's riches as he sat among the artists from hither and yon, attentively drawing from the cartoon.

This cartoon, then, destined to perish so completely that not

one scrap of it has survived, became the model for a whole generation of art students, indeed, for the whole Mannerist school. This was retribution of a kind, as Justi has said. Intended by the authorities to kindle the patriotic spirit of Florence, the commission had been taken on by Michelangelo primarily to satisfy his ambition in competing with a hated rival. The picture became no more than a coruscating display of the skill at his command.

Nor can one altogether quarrel with Symonds' bold assertion that the cartoon's virtuosity and dazzling technique, underlying its undeniable power and sincerity, contributed much to the decline of Italian art—in token of which Symonds cites Cellini, who put the cartoon above the masterpiece of the Sistine ceiling. Like many of his contemporaries, Cellini was more enthralled by the sheer technical facility in Michelangelo's art than by its innermost essence.

XIX

The while Michelangelo was finishing his cartoon, Leonardo was engaged in applying his design *al fresco.* In vain he tried—with the aid of a passage in Pliny—to fathom the secret of how the ancients had prepared their wax pigments. His paints blistered off the wall. He lost heart and abandoned the undertaking. Not a trace of it is left.

Leonardo must have known of Michelangelo's hostility toward him. But while the young Raphael did not muster the courage to seek the acquaintance of the terrible-tempered artist, the urbane Leonardo, according to tradition did try to bring about a relationship of mutual courtesy. Vasari confirms that the antipathy was mutual (*era sdegno grandissimo fra Michelangelo Buonarroti e lui*), and we have already convinced ourselves that Michelangelo's character and art theories could scarcely be congenial to Leo-

nardo. But in so well-balanced a personality as Leonardo this did not rule out a sincere desire to understand his opposite, to reach a *modus vivendi* with him. The effort came to grief on Michelangelo's brusqueness.

As related by one of Michelangelo's contemporaries (Anonimo Gaddiano, about 1540), Leonardo and a friend one day, in the Piazza Santa Trinita, passed a group of learned Florentines who were discussing a passage in Dante. They appealed to Leonardo to elucidate its meaning.

At that moment Michelangelo passed and was saluted by one of the group. Leonardo remarked "There is Michelangelo—he can explain the verses to us." Michelangelo, taken by surprise and suspicious and gruff as he was, thought Leonardo was making fun of him and replied: "Explain them yourself, you who modeled a horse but could not cast it in bronze and had to abandon the work to your everlasting disgrace." So saying, he turned his back on the group and moved on. As Leonardo stood frozen, flushing under the scorn hurled at him, Michelangelo wheeled and drove home the barb: "And those fools in Milan had faith in you!"

The anecdote has the ring of truth. The sneering words are in character with what Michelangelo said about other great artists of his time. What made matters worse was that his insult was groundless, was aimed at a pointless misfortune that surely reflected no discredit on Leonardo. To call him incompetent was the height of absurdity.

XX

It was in March 1505 when the call came that made Michelangelo depart, leaving all his work behind unfinished. He may not have been particularly fond of the Florentines; but unlike, Leonardo, who cared little about his environment, Michelangelo felt

himself a citizen of Florence, shared the family traditions and prejudices of his compatriots.

He had good reason to find the call to Rome irresistible. His demon drove him there, to the only place that offered scope to a spirit of his ilk. His instinct told him that the man who had mounted the papal throne in Rome was cast in his own mold, burning with boundless passion and ambition, receptive to vast projects, minded to understand and use him, impatient like himself, *terribile* like himself, never petty but sweeping in thought, stronger of character and firmer of will than himself yet filled with his own furious, soaring vigor.

One day the pope would have to see that they were meant for each other. With his instinct for genius in every form, Julius II was bound to conceive a singular sympathy for Michelangelo, just as it was certain that the artist's quarrelsome and distrustful nature on the one hand and the pope's intractability on the other, his sudden abandonment of a plan that had become a matter of life and death to the artist, were bound to provoke clashes between them. Invariably they ended in reconciliation, the ruler showing lenience toward the artist, the artist humbly acknowledging the ruler.

It was Romain Rolland who said these rueful words of Michelangelo: "He hated and was hated. He loved and was not loved." They are true, by and large—to the degree that his consuming ambition made him surly and his tireless energy lonely. But they can scarcely be applied in the literal sense to his whole life. Rail against the first pope he served Michelangelo did, but he surely sensed the high esteem in which Julius held him, felt the power and inspiration that emanated from the pope. He was eager to dedicate the greatest works of his life to his glorification.

The Tragedy of the Julius Tomb*

I

DESPITE HIS ASTUTENESS, Machiavelli had no grasp whatever of the essential nature of Julius II. His official dispatches about the Conclave of 1503 testify to his indifference toward the newly elected pope and to his enthusiasm for Cesare Borgia. The false rumor that the pope had had Cesare murdered was the only thing that elicited anything akin to respect from him. And when Machiavelli encountered Julius for the second time three years later, on his march against Bologna, he was still utterly unmoved. His hatred of the church rendered him incapable of understand-

* The expression "the tragedy of the tomb" was first used by Condivi in his Michelangelo biography of 1553. In our times it was used by Carl Justi (1900) and almost every writer on Michelangelo—without giving credit to Condivi.

ing that this pope was about to establish the secular power of the papacy for centuries to come. How different Michelangelo! He instantly grasped the essential nature of Julius, as soon as he was face to face with him and received the first great commission from his hands—to do the pope's tomb.

It was Giuliano da San Gallo who had called the pope's attention to Michelangelo, whom he had known ever since the days when the half-grown youth enjoyed the favor of Lorenzo de' Medici. At the height of his powers, Giuliano, as one of Brunelleschi's successors under Lorenzo, had wielded great influence in Florence. In 1489 he had provided the model for that masterpiece, the Palazzo Strozzi, which Benedetto di Majano later built. He had created the cloister of Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, the sacristy of Santo Spirito, and famous edifices elsewhere. Like the Medici, he was a passionate collector of ancient art.

On February 28, 1537, his son Francesco wrote: "My father had Michelangelo come to Rome to get him the commission for the tomb."

We need not be surprised that San Gallo is mentioned neither by Vasari nor Condivi. Michelangelo was not among those who remember their benefactors with gratitude. Yet San Gallo unquestionably was his benefactor, indeed, a most active one.

Giuliano had known the pope and done work for him when he was still Cardinal Rovere, and he had fortified Rocca in Ostia for him. During Rovere's cardinalate San Gallo had built him his titular church, San Pietro in Vincoli, as well as the palazzo in whose garden stood the *Apollo of Belvedere.* In his birth city of Savona he had built him a second palazzo. When Rovere fled for his life to France under Alexander VI, San Gallo had followed him into exile. Small wonder that upon the pope's election he became his responsible adviser in all matters of architecture and interior decoration.

By the testimony of Michelangelo's two contemporary biographers, Condivi and Vasari, several months went by until the pope made up his mind how to employ him, surely indicating that

he had not summoned Michelangelo on his own initiative. This makes all the more plausible the report by San Gallo's son that Michelangelo was constantly in their home, indeed, happened to be there when the pope commanded attendance at the Baths of Titus, where the Laocoön had just been found.

We can trace Giuliano's concern with preventing a rupture of the good relationship between Michelangelo and Julius. When Michelangelo, irate over having been refused an audience, fled to Bologna and his provocative letter to the pope threatened an irreparable break, it was Giuliano who wrote to Bologna and mediated the quarrel. Michelangelo's reply, dated May 2, 1506, shows how hurt he felt because of the treatment accorded him, but also reveals his intimate relationship with San Gallo. The letter proposed that he be allowed to execute the tomb in Florence rather than Rome and concludes: "Giuliano *mio carissimo,* please answer me at once."

When the Pope later abandoned the tomb project, San Gallo proposed decoration of the Sistine Chapel by way of compensation, setting the fee at fifteen thousand florins (of which Michelangelo only received three). And when Michelangelo, in one of his episodes of anxiety, was close to abandoning that work, it was again San Gallo who served as the reassuring friend.

The chances are that San Gallo with his love of domes trained Michelangelo in architecture and also communicated to his young friend his professional knowledge of military engineering.

As early as the reign of Pope Nicolaus V the Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino had prepared a design for a new St. Peter's. San Gallo seems to have spoken to the pope about this old project, Rossellino had also added a tribune behind the choir of old St. Peter's, on a masonry pedestal several yards high. San Gallo seems to have suggested to the pope that it would be a fine idea to have a princely memorial tomb reared in this eminently suitable spot even while he was alive. He was appealing to the new pope's most powerful instinct—his ambition.

As early as the mid-fifteenth century Leone Battista Alberti,

in his treatise, *De re aedificatoria,* had written that San Pietro in Vaticano was leaning alarmingly to the left, and sixty years later Sigismondo de' Conti repeated the observation. In his biography of Nicolaus V Manetti says that pope was considering comprehensive reconstruction of St. Peter's.

But none heretofore had dared lay impious hand on the venerable basilica built by Constantine the Great and Pope Sylvester and hallowed by the centuries. Who would have the audacity to tamper with the tombs of the apostle Peter and such popes as Gregory the Great!

II

Evidently San Gallo managed to arouse the pope's prompt interest in creating a grandiose mausoleum. He convinced Julius that Michelangelo alone was the man for the job. Finally, he pointed out Rossellino's chapel as the logical place for a monument, for which there was no other place in the crowded basilica.

Justi, who went through San Gallo's sketch books in the Barberiana and in Siena, has no doubt whatever that Michelangelo's design for the tomb was conceived in the architect's house. Indeed, he believes it quite likely San Gallo had a hand in the motives for the projected statues, which hark back so conspicuously to antiquity.

Assuredly Michelangelo, abruptly leaving Florence where he had been busy on a variety of important works—the cartoon, the twelve apostles for the cathedral, for which the marble had already been purchased—proposed to create something grandiose and altogether unprecedented in the service of the pope—no tomb like the two of bronze which Antonio Pollaiuolo had made in St. Peter's for Sixtus II and Innocent VIII, but a massive array of statuary like Hadrian's mausoleum in ancient times.

Michelangelo knew that a ring of columns had once encircled the rotunda of this mighty sepulchre, surmounted by a host of

statues, which had been hurled down on Alaric's Goths when they sacked Rome in the year 410.

Why should not he, entirely on his own, be able to create such a host of figures as the joint efforts of the artists of antiquity had done? Some eighty statues, in size and bulk like the only ones to be executed, the Moses in San Pietro in Vincoli and the so-called *Captives* or *Slaves* in the Louvre, were to grace Julius' mausoleum.

The drawings in the Uffizi and the later, modified drawings in Berlin allow us to form an idea of the work as Michelangelo envisioned it. We see that all its elements, joined and crystallized into a single whole within his mind, harked back to ancient Roman tombs, temples and triumphal arches. Everything was borrowed from the monuments of antiquity as we know them—the divisioning through pillars and niches, the sculptural themes, the grave steles, the fettered captains and chieftains, the reliefs in honor of the dead.

Michelangelo's design points up how his mind was pervaded by the spirit of antiquity in a manner entirely different from Leonardo. To a far higher degree is he an expression of the age we call the Renaissance. His deepest ambitions coincided with those of his time. He sought to reawaken what had pleased the Romans some fifteen or sixteen centuries before rather than give new life to what he created.

One has only to look at his proud and triumphant figures of victory with the subjugated provinces at their feet—so Vasari calls them in his first edition (*infiniti provincii*). Later on, when Michelangelo's pagan sentiments had waned and he was anxious to appear as having been more of a Christian in his earlier days, Condivi maintained the statues represented the liberal arts paralyzed by the pope's death, an altogether implausible theory.

Surely the idea of Christian humility was the last thing either Michelangelo or the supreme pontiff had in mind in connection with this tomb. Niches and pillars join to proclaim the glory of a Caesar and a Maecenas. Some, indeed, believe Giuliano della Rovere chose the papal name of Julius precisely with the figure of

Julius Caesar in mind. But whether the triumphant goddesses of the niches and the shackled giants of the pillars were meant to represent the arts and sciences in mourning or simply vanquished enemies in impotent rage, they proclaim as with one voice that Michelangelo saw the prince of the church as what he truly was, a war lord reaching for the palm of victory rather than a conciliator offering the olive branch of peace.

In 1503, during one of the pope's entrance processions into his city, Machiavelli reported seeing tabernacles, triumphal arches and temples wherever he looked. When Julius II returned to Rome from his campaign against Bologna, he passed under thirteen truimphal arches bearing the inscription: *Divo Julio, P.M., expulsori tyrannorum.* Caesar too had been *pontifex maximus.*

To blend pagan elements into Christian appurtenances was sound ecclesiastic tradition. Antonio Filarete's bronze doors for the old basilica of St. Peter's showed the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid and even Leda with the Swan, and they were simply taken over into Bramante's new church. The very papal throne, *cathedra Petri,* also brought from the old basilica to St. Peter's, bears small ivory rectangles on back and armrests showing centaurs in battle and the twelve deeds of Hercules.

Hence Erasmus' astonishment during his sojourn in Rome is puzzling—in the papal chapel and in the presence of Julius II he listened to a sermon dealing with the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the heroic death of Marcus Curtius rather than Christ's death on the cross. Of the pope, Erasmus wrote: "He wages war, wins victories and plays the role of Julius [Caesar] to perfection."

III

The strange part is that Michelangelo made the first sketch that has come down to us at a time when the pope had not yet won a single victory, nor conquered a single province. If we knew no better, we would be tempted to conclude Julius had confided

his secret political plans to his sculptor, who proclaimed him victor through the agency of twelve goddesses of victory before he had even drawn sword. Michelangelo had seen the pope in his true colors before anyone else, had correctly interpreted the bull of January 10, 1504, in which Julius asserted the inalienable right of the church to all the possessions wrested from it in the course of time and now in the hands of usurpers.

As early as 1503 the pope had threatened to mobilize all the powers of Christendom against those who had laid impious hands on church property. Never, he declared, would he rest until he had wiped out the shame of the church and put an end to the dismemberment of its property. This was a point of honor, he said; and Machiavelli, who noted down this philippic, taunted him that if he yielded he would ever after be no more than the "chaplain of Venice."

Michelangelo must have seen him breathe fire, heard him thunder anathema. He did not wait for Julius to triumph in the field, allowing the sculptor to make his tomb a historical record. He could not have cared less. To him the allegorical figures were merely a pretext to represent the human body, gratifying his creative and intellectual bent, his desire to walk in the footsteps of antiquity.

He was in the full flush of youth. His patron may have been the Vicar of Christ on earth, the father of all Christendom; but the thought of his death and his tomb never for a moment aroused in Michelangelo, any more than in the pope, sentiments of devotion, forgiveness of sin, salvation or redemption. There is not one spark of piety in the plan for the tomb—not a single Christian symbol, not even a crucifix. Its sole aim was to glorify power and vitality, conquest and victory. Michelangelo's first design for the Julius tomb in 1505 was conceived wholly in the spirit of the Roman Caesars.

The statues at the upper level, ostensibly representing Moses and Paul, action and contemplation, are seated in dignity and thought. In the center we see a great sarcophagus, destined to receive the body of him who was still so vigorously alive. From

it proceeds the Resurrection. Manifested on either side of this figure, hovering at the very top, are two genies, whom Vasari describes as angels but Condivi more appropriately calls Cybele and Cielo, earth and heaven. Cybele grieves over the loss earth has suffered, heaven rejoices at the entry into paradise of the beatified.

Yet these details are not the main thing—Michelangelo naturally reserved to himself the right to alter them as the work proceeded, the spirit moved him and the marble inspired new ideas. What matters is the plan as a whole, a free-standing construction, accessible on all sides, twenty-four feet wide and thirty-six deep and almost thirty high, its lower level of twelve feet separated from the upper by a massive projecting cornice. Every detail, above and below, had but a single purpose—to proclaim the grandeur and glory of the pope.

IV

As far as we can judge from Michelangelo's sketches and from copies of his designs, the fettered captives in the original plan were meant to signify the pope's unconquerable power rather than to arouse interest on their own. Yet the two finished marble *Captives* in the Louvre do completely hold the viewer's interest in their own individuality, altogether apart from the larger design of which they were originally intended to form a part. But then, some ten years lie between the design and the execution of the two figures in marble.

One of them has his hands bound behind his back. An expression of desperate defiance in his upward gaze, he seems about to break the bonds that make him powerless. In this effort, the upper part of the trunk is slightly twisted, while the left leg, on which the weight rests, and the right leg with its projecting knee are supported against an elevation in the marble and the face with its

eloquent anger is turned toward the beholder. This slave, fettered but still struggling against his fate, is known as the *Heroic Captive,* or else as the *Rebellious Slave.*

The other, the so-called *Dying Captive,* is calculated to move the viewer's mind. His eyes are shut. His handsome young countenance is pervaded by a sense of melancholy, playing on the beholder's compassion. The figure's attitude is odd and can be understood only on the theory that the Captive is held upright by the broad band encircling his chest. Yet if he were dead or unconscious, this band could scarcely secure him, since it in turn does not seem to be fastened to anything. In all likelihood the figure, its swelling muscles and sinews betraying vitality, was made after a supine model. It reminds strongly of the Niobid who lies as one dead. So great is the similarity in the upper portion that it can scarcely be by accident.

Michelangelo's *Dying Captive* is a moving masterpiece that appeals to the emotions as do few sculptures by this ordinarily austere and unsentimental artist. Its kinship with ancient art is precisely what here sharpens the beholder's appreciation of Michelangelo's own manner, the keynote of his soul, as it were. There is something profoundly touching in the contrast between the heroic figure's defenseless posture and the latent power of those great muscles.

Of the four unfinished later figures from the Boboli Gardens (now in the Accademia, Florence), also representing captives, only one, that of a bearded man, one hand raised to his head, a strap about one leg, is sufficiently advanced to convey the intended tragic effect.

V

Michelangelo failed in his endeavor to execute the Julius tomb according to his original plan, to immortalize the secular triumphs

of the Papal State. The project was never realized; and the venerable church that was to receive it was torn down bit by bit.

His gracious protector, Giuliano da San Gallo, ceased to dominate the pope's artistic tastes. Donato Bramante, the greatest architectural genius of the time, a native of Urbino, had come to Rome in 1499, at the age of fifty-five, having worked in Milan before. There he had built imperishable works—the choir, transept and dome of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the graceful dome of Madonna di San Satiro. In Rome he built that admirable palazzo, la Cancelleria, the plans for which he had sent on from Milan, and later, in the Vatican, the Cortile di San Damasco, made famous by Raphael's *Loggie*.

Julius, with his empathy for genius, soon made Bramante his favorite architect and grew more and more used to following his artistic counsel. Bramante shared the pope's predilection for enterprises in the grand manner.

As yet his and Michelangelo's paths had not crossed. Once the pope had authorized the design for the tomb and signed the contract, Michelangelo, armed with 1,000 florins, went to Carrara to buy marble. He stayed there for eight months. In November he entered into agreements with a company of shippers in Lavagna, under which they were to hold themselves ready to sail thirty-four carrats (of twenty-five hundredweights each) from Avena to Rome, including two blocks of fifteen carrats each. In December he signed another contract for delivery of no less than sixty carrats of marble, including blocks for four figures. A part of this shipment arrived in Rome in January 1506. The blocks were stacked up in St. Peter's Square.

Michelangelo had set up his workshop in a house "behind Santa Catarina," which Julius had given him. He had obtained beds for his assistants, whom he had sent for from Florence. They were no sculptors but stone masons (*garzoni, scarpellini, omini di quadro*).

In his mind's eye the monument, at this time, must have been finished to the last detail.

VI

Like a bolt from the blue the news reached him: the pope wanted nothing further to do with the tomb.

Bramante, popularly known in Rome as *Il Rovinante,** because of his ruthless wrecking activities that were to give him room for realizing his plans, had promised his master to erect a far greater miracle in stone. In place of the old he wanted to build a vast new St. Peter's, to superimpose the pagan Pantheon on the Temple of Peace, of which a few ruined vaults were preserved in the Forum.

For some time Michelangelo had had trouble seeing the pope or obtaining funds needed to keep and pay his assistants. On several occasions he called in vain. Then, one day, when he sought to speak to the pope, he was turned away by a common groom. The youthful Cardinal Galeotto Franciotti, a nephew of the pope and Bishop of Lucca, witnessed the rebuff with astonishment and inquired whether the servant did not know Messer Buonarroti. The man answered that he knew him well but was under orders not to admit him.

No wonder Michelangelo, infuriated by the insult, went and wrote the pope these lines, transmitted through the major domo, Messer Agostino: "Holy Father: This morning I was chased from the palace on orders of Your Holiness. Hence this is to let you know that hereafter, if you should need me, you must look for me elsewhere than in Rome."

Michelangelo's despair over the meaning of the incident was second only to his wild rush of resentment. There could be no other sense to the rebuff but that the pope was giving up a project that meant the artist's lifework. Fully planned and zealously begun, it was suddenly to be abandoned. On top of that, Michel-

* *Il Rovinante* or *Rovinatore*—a man who sends to ruin.

angelo, who was well aware of his own worth, had to suffer the indignity of having the door slammed in his face by a lackey.

There was a third element, a sudden unease, begotten of the morbid distrustfulness in his sensitive soul, now grown into a kind of inner panic verging on delusions of persecution. What was behind it all? A plot? Yes, but whose? Probably it was Bramante in whose way he thought he stood. Manifestly this was but the opening gun to things far worse. They wanted to have him out of the way! Indeed, they were most likely after his life! There was but one way to save honor and life—escape!

We gain the impression that Michelangelo thought Bramante was toying with the idea of actually having him murdered. San Gallo, who was indeed directly displaced by Bramante, never harbored such fears. Like Michelangelo, he undoubtedly regarded Bramante as an intriguer; and he probably knew quite well that Bramante was profiting illicitly by using poor materials in his buildings. But only Michelangelo thought Bramante capable of murder.

It has been said and believed that Julius II withdrew from the tomb project because he had been told it was an evil omen to build one's tomb while still alive; but the pope was not one to be so easily diverted. The plain facts of the matter are that Michelangelo's project had become homeless, because of the reconstruction of St. Peter's.

VII

Here, then, is the explanation why Michelangelo on the one hand fled helter-skelter from Rome to Florence and on the other wrote as follows to San Gallo on May 2, 1506:

"Giuliano, I note from your letter that the pope has taken my departure badly and that His Holiness is ready to deposit the funds, as agreed between us, so that I may return to Rome without anxiety.

"As for my departure, it is indeed true that on the Saturday before Easter [April 11] I heard the pope say, as he sat at table with a jeweler and the Master of Ceremonies, he would not spend another farthing for stones, little or big. Nevertheless, before my departure, I asked him for part of what was my due for carrying on the work. His Holiness replied, asking me to call again on Monday. I did call again on Monday and on Tuesday and on Wednesday and on Thursday, as you well know. At last, on Friday morning, I was sent away, that is to say, thrown out—by a miscreant who said he knew me but was acting under orders. Since I had heard the pope's words the preceding Saturday and now witnessed their effect, I was seized by utter despair. This, however, was not the sole reason for my departure. There was another, about which I do not wish to write now. Suffice it to say that it brought on the notion that if I stayed on in Rome my own tomb might have to be erected before the pope's. That is why I decamped so suddenly."

It was on April 17, 1506 that Michelangelo fled Rome. On April 18 Julius II, in solemn ceremony, laid the cornerstone for the new St. Peter's.

The chosen spot lies by the great pillar holding up the dome, near the present altar of St. Veronica. A hole had been dug, something like a well, and into it the aged pope calmly descended, calling to the crowd to stand back lest some of the heaped-up earth be pushed down on him. A vase with coins and medals was deposited, and on top of it a heavy piece of marble which the pope sprinkled with holy water and blessed. That same day he wrote to King Henry VII of England that he "had, under the guidance of Our Lord and Redeemer, begun the repair of the ancient basilica, fallen into decay on account of its age."

VIII

Michelangelo remained in Florence no less than seven months. He needed half a year to finish his cartoon. Meanwhile his faithful friend San Gallo seems to have proposed to Julius that he be assuaged with another great task, the decoration of the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. As we know, Michelangelo maintained in his long autobiographical letter of 1542 that Bramante and Raphael were behind the whole quarrel between Julius II and himself. The charge against Raphael is cut from the whole cloth, since in 1506 Raphael had not even entered the papal service. There is more substance to the possible intervention of Bramante, but Michelangelo's suspicion that Bramante had persuaded the pope to give him the Sistine ceiling in the tacit expectation he would be unable to execute the work is totally unfounded. Bramante could not possibly be ignorant of Michelangelo's triumph with his cartoon; and in any event, if he really hated San Gallo's protégé, there, close to him, was Raphael, whom he surely would have preferred to receive the commission.

Unmistakable evidence against the view that Bramante was behind the plan is provided in this letter of May 6, 1506, to Michelangelo from his close friend Cosimo Rosselli:

"While the pope sat at supper Saturday evening, I showed him several drawings, which Bramante and I had received for appraisal. When I placed them before him at the end of the meal, the pope sent for Bramante and said: 'San Gallo leaves for Florence tomorrow to fetch back Michelangelo.' Bramante replied: 'Holy Father, it will be to no avail. I have talked much with Michelangelo and he has often told me he does not want to undertake the chapel you have in mind for him and that, despite your wishes, he proposes to devote his talents solely to sculpture. He

wants nothing to do with painting.' And then he added: 'Holy Father, I do not think he has the courage to essay the work, since his experience in figure-painting is slight and these would lie high above the line of sight and have to be viewed in foreshortening. That is quite a different matter from standing on the ground and painting.'

"The Pope replied: 'If he does not come, he does me wrong; hence I believe he will return.'

"Then I leaped up and told the man off, right in the pope's presence, speaking as I believe you would have spoken in my place; and he was momentarily struck dumb, as though he realized how foolish he had been to express himself in this way. I said: 'Holy Father, the man has never exchanged a word with Michelangelo, and if what he says is true you may chop off my head; for he never spoke with Michelangelo. Hence I am quite certain he will return, if Your Holiness demands it.' "

A letter from Giovanni Balducci (in Gotti's collection, volume II)* shows that Michelangelo's friends in Rome asked him to return soon, being of the opinion he was risking fortune and reputation by his stubborn refusal. Michelangelo, however, had no faith in the pope's good will. In his long letter of 1542 he maintains the pope sent three letters to the *Signoria* in Florence to get him back, and that the Florentine government ultimately let him know it could not risk a war with Julius II on his account.

Condivi's report goes into greater detail. Not until the third letter had been received did Piero Soderini, head of the Florentine government, tell Michelangelo he had provoked a quarrel with the pope such as not even the king of France would have dared start; and then followed the sentence to the effect that Florence could not on that account risk war.

Next, as Michelangelo likewise told Condivi, he thought of entering the service of the Sultan. He was to build a bridge from Constantinople to Pera and execute other great projects. The *gonfaloniere* advised Michelangelo against accepting the offer, using

* Aurelio Gotti, *Vita di Michelangelo*, 2 vols., Florence, 1876.

these strong words: Better to die in the service of the pope than to live in Turkey. The pope was at heart well-disposed toward him, and if Michelangelo still felt disquiet, he could return with the title of ambassador. His person would then be inviolable.

Only one letter from Pope Julius to the *Signoria* has come down to us, and it could scarcely be more calm and compassionate. Dated in Rome, July 8, 1506, it includes this passage:

"The sculptor Michelangelo, who left us without reason, fears to return, we hear, though on our part we hold no anger against him, well knowing the whims of men of talent. That he may relinquish all apprehension, we trust in your convincing him loyally in our name that in the event of his return no harm nor injury shall come to him and that our apostolic favor shall be his as it was before."

A few days later Soderini was constrained to reply to the Pope: "Michelangelo the sculptor is so terrified that it will be necessary, despite the assurances of Your Holiness, to have the Cardinal of Pavia write us a hand-signed letter, pledging his safety and liberty. We have done and will do all in our power to persuade him to return and we desire to assure Your Holiness that, in the event he is not well treated [in Rome], he would also leave Florence [and move to Turkey], as he has already twice threatened to do."

This letter was followed by another, addressed to the Cardinal of Volterra on July 28, in which Soderini repeated that Michelangelo refused to stir unless he received an unconditional safe-conduct.

By August the artist's resistance seems to have been overcome. On August 31 the *Signoria* wrote to the Cardinal of Pavia: "Michelangelo the sculptor, citizen of Florence and by us highly esteemed, will present this letter, having at last convinced himself that he may place his faith in His Holiness." Michelangelo, the letter adds, will arrive in good spirits and of good will.

Something must have supervened to rekindle Michelangelo's anxiety, for the letter of state was never delivered and there is no further mention of negotiations until late November. It has

been assumed, rightly no doubt, that when Michelangelo heard of the pope's military undertakings against Perugia and Bologna, he realized he would not be missed in the circumstances.

On November 21 the Cardinal of Pavia sent a letter to the *Signoria* from Bologna, imploring it to send Michelangelo there at once, since the pope was impatient to see him and wanted to employ him on important work.

On November 27, finally, Soderini wrote the letter to the Cardinal of Volterra that was to put an end to the quarrel and disaffection. "Bearer of this," it begins, "is Michelangelo the sculptor, whom we have dispatched thither to please and satisfy His Holiness. We betoken that he is an estimable young man, without a peer in his art in Italy and perhaps the world. We cannot commend him too strongly. Such is his nature that all may be gained of him, if one but speak kindly to him and show him friendliness. Given love and fair treatment, he will do things to astonish the whole world."

Soderini emphasized he was doing the pope a great favor in leaving Michelangelo to him, since thereby the mural of the Battle of Cascina would never be executed.

IX

The pope's campaign began in a manner calculated to inspire respect of his irresistible power. When he marched against Perugia, Gianpaolo Baglioni, its bloody and ruthless tyrant who had murdered his own kin, lost heart. He rode out to meet the pope at Orvieto and then rode by his side to Perugia, knowing full well that Julius came only to take his power from him.

Approaching Imola beyond the Apennines, the pope learned that the king of France had sent him six hundred horse and three thousand foot in support, causing the Bentivogli to flee in terror

from Bologna to Milan. On November 11 the Holy Father held his triumphal entry into Bologna and ten days later was dispatched the request to Michelangelo to meet him there.

As the artist arrived in the morning and went to attend mass in San Petronio, the pope's servants discovered him at once and led him into the presence of the Holy Father who (according to Condivi) was sitting at table in the Palace of the Sixteen. As soon as the pope laid eyes on Michelangelo he said crossly: "It was your duty to come and seek us out, yet you waited until we came and sought you out." What he meant was that Bologna was halfway to Florence.

Michelangelo knelt to beg forgiveness and cited in extenuation that he had not wilfully erred but had acted only upon being unexpectedly shown the door. The pope sat with lowered head, without making reply. A monsignor who felt called upon to help bring about a reconciliation sought to intervene and said: "Your Holiness must be indulgent with the man's foibles. They stem from ignorance. The artists are all like that when they venture beyond their field." The pope flew into a rage and exclaimed: "It is you who mock him, not we! It is you who are ignorant and insolent, not he. Get away from me, go to the devil!" When the prelate stood his ground, servants drove him off with cuffs and blows. Evidently the scene gave Michelangelo the satisfaction for which he had yearned.

Having vented his spleen on the hapless bishop, the pope took the artist aside and forgave him. Soon afterward he told him: "I want you to make a great portrait study of me to place on the façade of San Petronio." No sooner had he returned to Rome than he transferred a thousand florins for the purpose to the bank of Messer Antonmaria da Lignano.

Michelangelo began to model the statue in clay. Doubtful of what the pope wished to do with his left hand, he asked Julius who had come to inspect the work whether he would like to see himself holding a book in his left hand. "What? A book?" the pope

replied. "A sword! I'm not one for book learning." And jestingly he inquired about the right hand, which Michelangelo had caught in a vehement gesture: "Is your statue giving a blessing or a curse?" "It threatens, Holy Father," the artist replied. "It threatens those who do not obey."

Messer Bernardino, *maestro d'artigleria* (chief gun founder) to the *Signoria* of Florence, was to cast the statue; but the first attempt miscarried, only the lower half of the mold, up to the belt line, being filled with bronze, the remainder of which cooled down and stuck in the furnace—an incident which may have taught Michelangelo how unfair he had been to Leonardo, when he mocked him for a failure in casting.

Asked at the time by the pope how much the statue would cost, Michelangelo had replied: "I think I can do it for a thousand florins"; and Julius had said: "Proceed with the work! Cast it again and again, until you succeed, and I shall give you enough for you to be satisfied."

In a letter to his friend Gianfrancesco Fattucci Michelangelo later wrote: "I cast the statue twice, and after spending two years on the work in Bologna I found I had four-and-a-half florins left over. For my work I got nothing. I had paid out the whole thousand florins."

The statue was almost three times lifesize. Some ten feet high, it showed the pope seated. On February 21, 1508, it was hoisted to a pediment above the center portal of San Petronio.

It was meant to show the pope as the founder of the Papal State, the recreator of papal power, the victor over Italy's petty despots. It was the only true portrait Michelangelo ever executed —and no trace of it survives.

When the Bentivogli returned to Bologna in 1511, the statue was hurled from its vantage place. Alfonso I of Ferrara bought it for his cannon foundry and had a gun made from it, which was mockingly dubbed *La Giulia* and used in his war against Papa Giulio.

X

From Bologna Michelangelo went to Florence, whence he was commanded by the pope to come to Rome. He arrived there in March or April 1508. Soon afterward the pope confirmed his decision to suspend work on the tomb. Despite his reluctance, Michelangelo was to take on the ceiling decorations in the Sistine Chapel.

This work is a great chapter on its own in the life of the artist. Here we wish first to present a connected narrative of the tragedy of the Julius tomb, which extends from the days of Michelangelo's young manhood into his old age (1505–45).

Julius II had withdrawn the commission for his tomb while he lived, but in his will he renewed it. He died on February 21, 1513, and was followed by Leo X on March 11. On May 6 Michelangelo's contract with the executors was signed. Julius' will had provided for a more modest tomb, but his heirs seem to have desired one more substantial, else they would not have offered the large sum of 16,500 scudi—against which, however, the 3,500 paid before were to be credited. Lorenzo Grosso della Rovere and Lorenzo Pucci, whom Leo made a cardinal, were to supervise the undertaking.

There was no more thought of a free-standing structure. The monument was still to include some forty figures on three sides, but it was to be set against a wall, in keeping with precisely the tradition with which Michelangelo had wanted to break. There could be no question of taking up the original plan. The new one, however, was to expand in a vertical direction.

The lowest level was to be flanked by two "tabernacles" with goddesses of victory, ringed by pillars with captives. The middle level was left unchanged. In place of *Earth* and *Heaven*, four angels were to busy themselves with the body of the pope in the

topmost level and above, in Michelangelo's drawing, within a fine, almond-shaped oval below the tall arch of a chapel wall, soars a Madonna, child in arm.

Prospects for resuming the work were anything but favorable, though Michelangelo always infinitely preferred working in stone to painting. Despite the restrictions imposed upon him, he still looked upon the work as a giant enterprise, for in 1513 he calculated it would take him seven years, while in 1506 (in a letter dated May 2) he had estimated that the original plan would take only five, adding that it would be without parallel in the world.

One might think that Leo could not have been overly happy seeing the greatest artist of the time devoting the best years of his life to the glorification of his predecessor. Nonetheless he seems to have had scarcely a thought for Michelangelo during the early years of his reign. Only after three years did he summon him to challenge his talents. By then, had Michelangelo retained the zealous concern for the tomb of his younger years, the project should have been far advanced. Apparently, however, his interest had cooled in the intervening years, perhaps under the influence of his herculean labors in the Sistine Chapel; or he must have felt that sense of tedium even lesser artists know when they feel chained to an idea conceived many years ago. He was forestalled in shaping his future as he would. The past held him in its grip.

XI

Initially Michelangelo in all likelihood tackled the work with his wonted fervor. He moved his workshop to a house on the Macello de' Corvi, which was to become his property on the conclusion of the job. Thither he had the pieces he had started as well as the blocks brought, which Julius' gold had secured and which had been stored in St. Peter's Square. They had lain there

exposed to wind and weather, and according to Michelangelo there had been much pilferage. Several smaller blocks and two large ones, worth fifty florins each, seem to have been appropriated by Agostino Chigi. Two others, rough-hewn, had come from Carrara, and another substantial shipment had arrived thence in July 1508. It must have lasted Michelangelo a long while, for it was 1516 before he again went to Carrara.

In a letter to his brother Buonarroto of July 30, 1513, he wrote he did not think he would be able to come to Florence in September, since "I am working so hard that I scarcely have time to eat."

When Michelangelo did visit Florence in the summer of 1514 on the occasion of the festival of St. John, several journeymen and masters were employed in his Roman workshop. Apparently they were working with him on the *Moses* statue. There can be no question, however, that this statue was far from finished. In 1518, when Julius' heirs importuned him, he had not a single finished statue to show them. The house of Rovere was already in eclipse and a thing of the past even in Michelangelo's mind.

Yet in a letter of June 1515 he was still hopeful of being able to complete the tomb quickly. For he was playing with the thought, he wrote brother Buonarroto, of entering the service of Pope Leo upon its completion and had, on that account, already purchased twenty thousand pounds of bronze "to cast certain figures." What these were is not known.

What we observe here as on many other occasions is that he was ignoring his patrons' bidding. They wanted him to use a competent staff of assistants and get the work done; but Michelangelo fetched up, as with other composite sculpture projects, on his inability to work with others. Not only was he aloof in spirit—he insisted on doing everything himself, which was simply beyond his powers.

Incapable of organizing a school of apprentices and assistants, he nevertheless tortured himself when the heirs kept importuning him to speed up the work. It made him furious to hear the cardinal

say he worked too slowly. He hated it when his patrons stuck their noses into his problems and professional secrets.

XII

He wanted away from Rome to Florence, to work in peace, time and again begged permission to do the tomb there—and got it in 1516. But when he was there about to fall to in earnest, realizing the youthful plan that had been his pride but now had become his affliction, another, totally different task supervened, demanding all his thought and strength.

According to Michelangelo's own testimony (in a letter to an unidentified friend of February 1520), Pope Leo X suddenly had him summoned from Carrara to Rome, whither he set out on December 5, 1516. There the pope charged him with providing a façade, still wanting, for the Medici family church in Florence, San Lorenzo. Michelangelo does not say just how the pope conceived the notion of entrusting such a task to an artist with no reputation whatever in architecture.

When Leo, in 1515, following his meeting with Francis I of France in Bologna, came to Florence, the *Signoria* and Giuliano de' Medici, Duke of Nemours, then reigning in the city, gave the pope a princely welcome. The Florentine artists had built wooden arches of triumph, adorned with statues and paintings; but the pope was most deeply impressed with the pseudo façade Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea del Sarto had given the then bare front of the church of Santa Maria del Fiori. This is what suggested to Leo the creation of a real façade for his much smaller family church. To enhance it would surely aid the prestige of the house of Medici, a matter of much concern to Leo, as it would be to the next Medici on the papal throne, Clement VII.

Apparently the pope consulted the cathedral architect, Baccio

d'Agnolo, Raphael and perhaps even Jacopo Sansovino; but none of these is likely to have proposed Michelangelo as the most qualified architect. Most probably it was again Michelangelo's loyal old advocate, Giuliano de San Gallo, who planted the notion in Leo's mind. Following Bramante's death, San Gallo had reemerged from the background to which he had been relegated. In 1514 he had been appointed architect of St. Peter's; and it had long been his ardent desire to crown the work of his ideal, Brunelleschi, with a façade.

But San Gallo was old and feeble. By July 1, 1515, he had resigned his office, and he died in October 1516 at the age of 74. While he lived, Michelangelo was reluctant to compete with his benefactor for an architectural assignment. Now that San Gallo was dead, his innate ambition made him fear the work might be given to men whom he believed incapable of doing it properly and whom he begrudged it.

XIII

Great artists are often reluctant to see a job within their powers slip through their fingers, especially one that might be both honorific and remunerative and give them a chance to display hitherto unsuspected faculties. In this respect Michelangelo, gifted as he knew he was, was no exception. But in contrast to other artists who accepted many commissions and often allowed far too much time elapse until they were done, he was altogether incapable of letting associates carry most of the burden, as did his contemporary, Raphael, and in a later century, Rubens. Michelangelo never had a collaborator worthy of the name, only menials, *garzoni,* to whom he could give no responsibility. Neither his willpower nor his creative moods, on the other hand, were strong enough to sustain him. He dissipated his energies, squandered his time on

lesser work in the marble quarries, lost his temper in perpetual wrangling with sullen workers and hostile drovers and skippers.

Doubly ill-starred the hour Michelangelo insisted on weighing himself down with this new burden, at the very time when he stood a chance of having done with the job that for so long had meant the *chef d'œuvre* of his life—the Julius tomb.

One senses that his work could come into proper focus only when a commanding personality like Pope Julius stood over him, capable of an astringency equal to his own. Left to his own devices he was forever in danger of letting everything go half-done. Troubles piled up in his way and discouragement laid hold of him. His best friends, the marbles, refused to speak to him. He was fed up with them—he who had watched ecstatically as they broke away from the rock face.

There can be little doubt that a fair share of Michelangelo's energy went into his addiction for haunting the quarries, wandering about among huge marble blocks that held untold possibilities and gave him a thousand and one ideas, picking and choosing among them, now discarding one that was marred by a vein, now finding one which skilled masons might dress into rough shape to the master's liking.

But once the irksome problem of transport had been solved and the slabs piled up outside his shop, they began to take on another face. No longer did they smile on him temptingly as they had when they were wrested from the bowels of the hills. No longer did they seem to long for the mallet's blow and the chisel's bite. There they lay, cold and dead, daunting him with their massiveness—and the master would shut the door and sit down to write a sonnet.

This brought momentary relief, but it was all too fleeting, and as he brooded on the seemingly insurmountable tribulations that threatened to entangle him, he saw in his mind's eye the root cause of all evil—the malice of his fellow men.

The Sistine ceiling he had had to paint, because Bramante and Raphael had hoped he would come a cropper over this task outside his proper field; and now Leo had given him the façade of San

Lorenzo to sabotage the work on the Julius tomb, from hatred of the house of Rovere. Similarly, he was to discover later on that Cardinal Giulio (the later Pope Clement VII) commissioned him to do the tombs of the two Medici dukes and the Laurentian Library, to boot, solely from hatred of the Rovere popes. The pope asked only that he present his plan for oral approval. Together with Baccio d'Agnolo, who was supervising the building work on the cathedral, he was to meet Pope Leo in Montefiascone. With his usual pig-headed incivility, Michelangelo refused. Baccio d'Agnolo's presence would do, and whatever settlement he would reach had Michelangelo's approval in advance. Baccio, of course, foresaw quite clearly that the stiff-necked artist would never rest content with a decision reached in his absence and declined to go alone.

In November 1516 Michelangelo was sent a letter advising him that the pope deemed his presence essential and desired to speak with him. He must hurry, to arrive before the court returned to Rome. Perhaps to goad him, there were hints about a "friend" who was eager to foil his plans and about other obstacles that might threaten. Michelangelo agreed to come at once, but then changed his mind and sent a refusal.

This obduracy of Michelangelo's is utterly perplexing. Only in November he had placed large orders for marble in Carrara. He was sure of being welcomed in Rome and of finding funds waiting for him. Every concession was made to him. As brother Buonarroto assured him on January 1, 1517, Baccio was willing to submit to him in every way. The pope was prepared to make the work as easy and convenient as possible—Baccio Baglioni and Baccio Bigi were to do the rough stone work, Michelangelo only the sculptural decoration. Indeed, the pope was content that he should do only the main figures, making models of the others, which his assistants could then execute.

This is what was conceded on November 9. Apparently his reluctance even to travel in anyone's company was now accepted —he had become more and more the lone wolf. He was asked to

come alone. Overcoming his aversion, he made the short trip and showed the pope a drawing, which was approved.

XIV

It is true that Michelangelo felt a profound distaste. Slowly there had grown up within him a hatred of the Medici family that blunted all his zest. He worked at a snail's pace on the Julius tomb, if at all, for he had become alienated from the shrunken project. His memories of Julius II had neither depth nor strength.

In 1515 Pope Leo X had deprived Francesco Maria della Rovere, Julius' nephew, of the Duchy of Urbino, to give it to his own nephew Lorenzo; and Michelangelo could not escape the suspicion that all Leo's favors were meant only to keep him from finishing the tomb for the greatest of the Rovere.

He began to view the Medici as the tyrants of his home town. His hatred deepened when he later mingled with the Florentine exiles in Rome. He vented his feelings when he did his bust of Brutus about the year 1540. These cross-currents in his mind paralyzed his wonted enterprise.

Immediately upon signing the 1516 contract, he had gone to Carrara, with the title of *sedis apostolicae archimagister et sculptor,* sculptor-in-chief to the papal throne. On November 1, following his petition to be given the San Lorenzo façade to do, he ordered nineteen "statues"—i.e., marble slabs—from Francesco Pelliccia for the Julius tomb, and the supplier received a hundred florins on account, for having them roughly dressed to shape (*abozzare*). They were for four large statues, thirteen feet high, and fifteen somewhat smaller ones, for the monument's lower level. On November 18 he ordered another four blocks of different sizes from Bartolomeo, called *Il Mancino,* and one Domenico Fancelli signed for Bartolomeo, who could not write.

Yet as early as February 12, 1517, Michelangelo entered into an agreement with Lionardo da Cagione, covering a shipment from his quarry of columns, statues and relief slabs for the San Lorenzo façade. And then, only two months later, came the retreat. By April Michelangelo had grown convinced that he could not do the tomb according to the plan of the preceding July. The order for the nineteen blocks was canceled and Michelangelo secured a refund of the hundred florins.

At this time the most pressing task must have been delivery of a model for the façade, for which the pope and his people were impatiently waiting. Michelangelo had already received a thousand florins on account; but he was content to give his drawing to Baccio d'Agnolo in Florence, on his way from Rome to Carrara, so that Baccio could make the model from it. Evidently Michelangelo himself was in no hurry to make a start.

When he was actually asked for the model, he stood empty-handed. (He himself called Baccio's effort a botch—*cosa di fanciulli.*) He next thought of having an assistant in Carrara, La Grassa, make a clay model but then he thought better of it and decided to make the model with his own hands.

By July and August 1517 he still had not found time to do the model. As he wrote unblinkingly to Domenico Buoninsegni, "it would lead too far afield" why. "I made a tiny clay model for my own private purposes," he went on, "and though it is as crooked as a rolled waffle [*crespello*], I am prepared to send it, so that you may know I am not deceiving you."

After this extraordinary admission—that from November 1516 to July or August 1517 he did not have a day's time to make a proper model of this major project—the letter goes on to make great promises and equally great demands:

"I have more to communicate to you—read it with patience for it is important. I am confident of being able to give the façade of San Lorenzo such form that it will become the mirror of architecture and sculpture for all Italy. To this end it will be necessary for the pope and the cardinal to decide promptly whether they

wish me to do it or not. If they do, they must give me a contract as well as their full confidence."

Already, he continues, he has ordered much marble, but he will account for only what he actually uses, not for what proves worthless, for he knows nothing about bookkeeping. He will entrust the marble shipments to three or four of the best men in Carrara, men of his choosing, and the stone must match the quality of several excellent ones already quarried. The cost would come to thirty-five thousand florins and the work completed within six years.

The pope knew very well that Michelangelo disliked him, but he can scarcely be accused of willfulness toward the great man. He accepted everything. All he wanted to see was the model. So Michelangelo went to Florence late in August, only to fall ill there. He dispatched his assistant Pietro Urbano to Rome with a wooden model, on which statues and other plastic decorations in wax had been mounted. This was approved and a contract was signed on January 19, 1518. Michelangelo insisted on the protection of an instrument in writing, which he could flourish in the faces of the Rovere heirs, who were forever snapping at his heels, because of the Julius tomb.

XV

It was now a matter of recruiting competent craftsmen, who would work under Michelangelo's direction, nor was there any lack of talented young artists eager to work with so great a master. But again his aloofness and seclusiveness made it impossible for him to use collaborators.

One would have to be obtuse to blame Michelangelo for his distrust of his fellow artists. It had grown on him for good reason. The trouble was that his suspicions were forever misdirected,

whereas he gave his full trust to mediocre artists like Antonio Mini, to whom he entrusted his cartoons and models to take to France, or Ascanio Condivi, his biographer-to-be. He confided in nonentities like Silvio Falcone, who began running his workshop in 1513 but suddenly left him in 1517, or Bernardino di Settignano, who proved to be a villain. With all his distrustfulness, Michelangelo was no judge of men. He entrusted the finishing of his Christ statue (in Santa Maria sopra Minerva) to his assistant Pietro Urbano of Pistoja, who ruined the marble and thereupon fled to Naples, not without taking along a ring worth forty florins belonging to Michelangelo.

Every time he blundered in this way, his distrust deepened, and it found expression precisely against those on whom he might have indeed relied and who could have been of real use to him.

It is the same story on this occasion. He failed to accept even one of the young Lombard artists recommended to him by Buoninsegni, the pope's treasurer, who was well-disposed toward the project. He was totally incapable of tolerating opposition or of unbending. He now turned away eminent men like Andrea Contucci, as he had once turned away Domenico Fancelli and Benedetto da Rovezzano. We have seen how scornfully he spoke of the model Baccio d'Agnolo had made from his drawing, with great reluctance and solely as a favor to Michelangelo. In Baccio's place he accepted La Grassa, a far lesser man than the cathedral architect and one whom even brother Buonarroto called a fool.

Those men of talent who did ingratiate themselves with him, like Sebastiano del Piombo (whose letters to Michelangelo are an object lesson in character judgment), gained his acceptance less by true devotion than by deprecating Raphael, the hated rival. Sebastiano ridiculed Raphael with his many students as *il principe della sinagoga.* The Venetian was forever taking advantage of Michelangelo as a patron and anonymous collaborator; and Michelangelo, yielding to the weakness of many great men, felt closer to the artist who exploited him than to the many capable ones who wanted only to be used by him.

Jacopo Tatti, dubbed Sansovino, the great architect and sculptor, is the most melancholy example. An old friend of the Buonarroti family, he had been called to Rome at the same time as Michelangelo. The two were of about the same age—Sansovino was only four years younger. Originally a disciple of the eminent sculptor Andrea Contucci, from whom he had taken the name Sansovino, his art was quite uninfluenced by Michelangelo. He was eager to lighten the labors of the master, who had orally accepted him as a collaborator on the façade. But the pope and Cardinal Salviati had made certain promises to Sansovino, concerning some reliefs (*storie*) he was to do—and suddenly Michelangelo could no longer get on with him. He threw out Sansovino and replaced him with the wretched Baccio Bandinelli, later on to become such a bitter enemy of Michelangelo.

Sansovino's letter of June 21, 1517, makes sad reading. Cut to the quick, he reproached Michelangelo with duplicity, breach of promise and ingratitude. Ignorant of the many things Michelangelo had done for his family, Sansovino wrote: "Verily, you have never done good to anyone"; and in equal ignorance of Michelangelo's compassion for the worthy and unworthy alike, he added: "A curse on you, if even once you ever said a good thing of anyone." It speaks well of Michelangelo's highmindedness that soon afterward he was instrumental in getting Sansovino the commission for a monument for the Duke of Sessa. At the same time his utter failure to grasp where his own advantage lay is underlined by his rejection of a collaborator who had built the splendid Libreria di San Marco, perhaps the finest building in Venice.

XVI

The discovery of the marble quarries at Seravezza near Florence had an effect on the Florentine government comparable to

that of a new gold strike on the London Stock Exchange in our days. It meant an unexpected source of revenue and an end to dependence on Carrara. In 1515 the township of Seravezza had ceded the quarries to the city of Florence and they now belonged to the woolen guild (*arte della lana*), which presided over the work on the cathedral.

Oddly enough these marble deposits, abandoned as worthless by the Florentines and the cause of a breakdown in Michelangelo's life, were actually of the highest quality. Reopened some three hundred years later, they proved so rich that after 1830 they provided the marble for Napoleon's tomb in the Invalides, for the Isaac church in St. Petersburg and many other monuments.

But in the life of Michelangelo the name of Seravezza was to become an exercise in utter frustration. It stood for menial work and self-torture, created a vacuum in his creative career.

One might think momentarily that Michelangelo would have welcomed the discovery of marble at Seravezza together with the pope's strict injunction to secure all the marble needed from the new quarry in Pietrasanta. At the time he had had a most serious falling-out with the quarrymen at Carrara. In August 1516 he wrote that he neither cared to go to Carrara again himself nor to send an emissary, since the people there were intolerably treacherous (*traditori e tristi*), if not altogether mad. Yet during the next few months, as we have seen, he placed big orders for marble with Pellicia.

Quite naturally he did not find it easy to break with the Carrarese, who had worked for him to his satisfaction ever since he had done his *Pietà*. There was a whole platoon of skilled craftsmen in Carrara, accustomed to abide by his every whim. For a long time, moreover, he had maintained the friendliest relations with the Marchese Alberigo Malaspina, ruler of the tiny principality where the quarries were located, and his chancelor, Antonio di Massa.

But not for nothing was the pope a Florentine. Eager to protect the interests of his city, he would no longer hear of Carrara.

Salviati proceeded to Seravezza in January 1517 and Michelangelo was commanded to put in an appearance there. His insistence on entering into an agreement with Lionardo da Cagione in February 1517, as already mentioned, aroused deep resentment in Florence as well as Rome, where, as his brother wrote him, it was concluded that he must be hand in glove with Signor Alberigo. He was reminded of the allegiance he owed as *archimaestro sculptore de la sedia apostolica.* Salviati told him in no uncertain terms that he must desist from his obstinacy—nothing but marble from Tuscany was to be used for San Lorenzo and for St. Peter's.

In May 1518 Michelangelo at last arrived in Seravezza. He demanded and was granted supervision over the building of roads from the coast to the best marble outcroppings, as well as the lifetime right to bring marble into Florence duty-free. He asked for the services of Messer Donato Benti, but kept all authority in his own hands, since he alone knew where the best places were. He already had all the trouble he could handle, for he had now made enemies of the Carrarese. When he chartered four ships to load the marble from Carrara, they tried to stop him by bribing the skippers. He decided to go to Pisa to find other ships.

He had meanwhile succeeded in exacting the concession that he might get his marble from Seravezza or Carrara, as he pleased. Oddly enough, in the beginning he felt quite happy in his role as boss of the stone masons at the marble camp, as though all thought of art had gone from his mind. With not a word did he mention his heroic statues and reliefs—not a hint that he craved to embark on his creative work. The months lengthened, the years slipped by, while he forgot the end for the means. His every thought revolved around finding unveined marble, immaculate white plinths for columns.

As it turned out, he got on even worse with the hewers at Pietrasanta than with those at Carrara. The masons he had brought out from Florence himself knew nothing about quarrying, he complained. Already they had cost him 130 florins (April 18, 1518), without splitting off even a tile to his satisfaction. If he had his

own way, he would ride off to the pope and the Cardinal de' Medici, leaving the whole Seravezza mess to its own devices and heading back for Carrara. To teach these people anything about art, to tame these mountains was like trying to awaken the dead. It was simply too much, he said. The ships he had chartered in Pisa had not arrived. They were making a fool of him. "A thousand curses on the hour and the day I left Carrara! That was when all my troubles began." He had completely forgotten the intolerable treachery of the Carraronese, about which he had complained only a short time ago.

Thus he buried himself and his talents in the marble quarries, now in Seravezza, as before in Carrara. He cut roads, had blocks of various sizes dressed, chartered barges to have them shipped to Florence. There he cast about for a commodious building where he could do all his marbles and bronzes, tentatively settled on a site on the square facing the church of Ognissanti, on November 24, 1518, purchased another lot on the Via Mozza (now the Via Zanobi) for 170 florins, and by Christmas had a fine workshop finished, capable of accommodating twenty figures at once (none of which was ever finished). His only complaint was that the place could not be roofed over, since Florence was short of lumber, and that the severe drought kept the marble blocks from being shipped by the Arno.

In other words, while maintaining that in his head he had finished twelve marble statues, six seated bronze figures and nineteen reliefs, he wasted his time and energy on menial work a competent assistant could have done just as well—solely because of his obsession with doing everything himself.

Slowly his creative capacities waned. No longer did he feel the compulsion to realize his ideas; and day by day the work grew more difficult, as hand and eye got out of practice.

The moment came at last when pope and cardinal lost their patience. The cardinal asked for an accounting of monies received and it was found that only 500 of 2,300 florins were left. As usual, Michelangelo rationalized the situation to himself and to all and

sundry by attributing it to the vengefulness of a subordinate. The way he put it, Buoninsegni, the cardinal's treasurer, had dropped broad hints about getting a cut from the marble shipments and when Michelangelo had rebuffed him, he had persuaded the cardinal to ask for an accounting.

Michelangelo's original design for the façade was that of a sculptor rather than an architect. True, its broad space could have been imbued with life only by means of sculpture. Yet throughout the period he was charged with this work, from December 1516 to January 1520, Michelangelo, so far as can be seen, did not even rough out a single statue or relief. The pope abandoned all further thought of having him build a façade for San Lorenzo.

XVII

The time had now come when Michelangelo, according to his pledge to the heirs of Julius II and the pope's promise to him, should have concentrated on the tomb that had dragged on for so many years. As we have seen, he had set up a workshop for himself. It seems to have sheltered the four unfinished figures from the Boboli Gardens and a model for the *Victory*, now in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. In Rome the tale got about that he was not working at all and a Monsignor Francesco Pallavicini was dispatched to inspect the studio. He saw the many marble blocks in it, including various works in progress, among them probably the two magnificent *Captives* now in the Louvre.

But when it was proposed in 1542 to install the tomb in an ancient Roman basilica, thus assembling everything that was intended for it, Michelangelo steadfastly refused to release the two *Captives* and the *Victory;* and ultimately they were indeed excluded.

Actually, once the façade project had been abandoned, the way

was open for Michelangelo to complete the Julius tomb in whatever manner he chose. One might have thought he would have welcomed the opportunity to get out from under the mausoleum project that had haunted him since his youth.

But Leo X and his counselor, the Medici cardinal, had conceived plans for a new undertaking that was to enhance the prestige of the Medici name. This was to have Michelangelo execute monuments in the sacristy of San Lorenzo in memory of the late dukes of the great family. The Venetian Sebastiano del Piombo, who was in constant correspondence with Michelangelo, was asked to interest him in the plan, to assuage his brusqueness and to put him in a favorable mood by the clever use of flattery. In a letter of October 27, 1520, Sebastiano wrote:

"The pope speaks of you as of a brother, almost with tears in his eyes. The two of you have been raised together,* he says; but you terrify him."

Elsewhere in the letter the Venetian writes that the pope agreed that Sebastiano could do wonders with Michelangelo's help; for, said the pope, "you have all learned from him. Raphael stopped painting in the style of Perugino, once he had seen Michelangelo's work. But as you see, Michelangelo is *terribile* and there is no getting on with him."

Sebastiano dearly wished Michelangelo's help in painting the great Sala di Costantino in the Vatican—in which the history of the Emperor Constantine was to be depicted—and promised the pope he would indeed "do wonders" in that event. Leo did not doubt it, but he bemoaned Michelangelo's *terribilità* even while emphasizing the debt all other artists owed him. (As we know, the Sala was painted by some of Raphael's disciples.)

Justi maintains that in Michelangelo's time the word *terribile* was used synonymously with *stupendo,* and *terribilità* with *prontezza, fierezza, vivacità, vivezza*—in other words, implying zeal and

* The two: Michelangelo and Giulio de' Medici, the later pope Clement VII. Giulio was a nephew of Lorenzo Magnifico and lived in his palace, where Michelangelo stayed for a few years as a guest. Michelangelo was three years younger than Giulio de' Medici.

fervor, vehemence, force, animation. Vasari found that Michelangelo's virtue over the ancients was *certa vivacità*. Fanfani defines *terribile* in his dictionary as marvelous (*terribile vale maravigliosa*). We see that it certainly was not limited to the present meaning of "inspiring terror." It did not connote a degree of menace and awe, in contrast to exuberance. It was applied on the one hand to such themes as the *Last Judgment*, on the other to the demoniac power of the imagination to create works that stun and transfigure. In English the word terrific is sometimes used in a similar vein, if we define it not merely as "causing great terror" but also as "enormously intense."

XVIII

It was in an effort to overcome Michelangelo's reclusion by harnessing his *terribilità* to solitary work that Leo gave him the task of doing the tombs in San Lorenzo.

The new project struck a spark in the artist's mind. To demonstrate his creative powers to his home town despite the fiasco of the façade was to him a challenge. He went to Carrara at once, in April 1520, made careful scale models in clay and placed orders for marble.

Then the project began to falter, according to Michelangelo solely on account of Cardinal Giulio. But the interruption was to last two-and-a-half years, spanning the brief reign of Pope Adrian, until Giulio mounted the papal throne as Clement VII. We might think Michelangelo would have resumed work on the Julius tomb and perhaps finished it. Strange as it may seem, he was apparently unable to make up his mind.

Once again, it would appear, he was disconcerted by financial stringencies that crippled his willpower. No doubt, too, the new Medici project attracted him far more strongly than the everlasting

Julius tomb. Whatever his state of mind may have been, here for the second time was a conflict between two projects, and again Michelangelo was paralyzed by irresolution.

Pope Leo X had dethroned and even exiled Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino and head of the house of Rovere. But when Hadrian Dedel Floriszoon of Utrecht became pope in January 1522 under the name of Adrian VI, he at once returned the duchy to Francesco Maria and gave him the prefecture of the city of Rome as well.

This brief shift in power between the Medici and the Rovere put Michelangelo in a humiliating position. The Duke of Urbino quite rightly reproached him. He had taken money for the Julius tomb right down to 1518 without accomplishing anything. To make matters worse, Michelangelo had worked for the man who had taken the duke's lands, put him to flight, excommunicated him.

Francesco Maria, known especially because of Baldassare Castiglione's admiring friendship for him, had been compelled to flee to Mantua. Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (The Courtier) exalts him beyond measure, though he was in fact a brutal and violent man. As a young man he had commanded the army of Julius II, whose defeat brought on the loss of Bologna and the destruction of the Julius statue Michelangelo had cast in bronze in 1506.

The Duke of Urbino now brought suit against Michelangelo, demanding repayment of the funds advanced, with interest.

Michelangelo's first impulse was to concede his responsibility. In a letter to Fatucci of April 1523 he declared he could not but yield to these demands for interest and damages, that he would have to do the tomb and postpone the work in the Medici chapel, unless the pope freed him of his obligations.

But this was soon followed by outbursts of anger and resentment. He brooded over the wrongs he had suffered, the fees he should have got. His return from the Julius statue had been only four or five florins, for the Sistine Chapel far less than promised; and now the Rovere heirs insultingly demanded sums spent for

necessary purchases. It was they who owed him money rather than he them.

In July 1524 he wrote Fatucci: "To begin the work [on the Medici tombs] I must await arrival of the marble blocks, and I think they are never going to come! I could tell you stories that would amaze you—but I would never be believed. Enough of it, it drives me to despair. If the work were a little more advanced, the pope would have long since straightened out my problem [the Julius Tomb] and I would be out of all my misery. . . . Yesterday I met a man who told me to pay up or I would risk a penalty at the end of the month." As usual, he then began to exaggerate, wildly venting his frustration. "I never believed there were any penalties but hellfire, or two florins' income tax if I ran a silk or goldsmith's shop and lent out the rest at usurious interest. For three hundred years we have been paying taxes in Florence. O to be a tax collector just once! Always it's pay, pay! Unless I pay they will take everything, and I must go to Rome. If my affairs were in order, I might have sold something, bought government securities and stayed in Florence."

XIX

All Michelangelo's hopes were now centered on the house of Medici. The period during which he had been indifferent and irresolute about doing the Julius tomb had been followed by one in which it weighed on him like a nightmare. He had but one thought—to shake it off.

He welcomed Giulio's elevation to the papacy* in November 1523 with the utmost elation. He was sure there would be no further humiliation for him—even though he had but recently complained of how the pope, when he still was a cardinal, had

* Giulio de' Medici took the name Clement VII.

humiliated him, by terminating the façade project. Now he was hopeful the pope would shield him from all the demands made on him and to that end set the work on the tombs and the library in San Lorenzo going. The pope did indeed see to it that there were efforts at mediation in 1526. Michelangelo made another drawing for the Julius tomb, which the duke saw and approved.

But now came the deluge of war, sweeping away all thoughts of monuments. In 1526 Cardinal Colonna and other Medici enemies launched an armed attack on Rome, plundered the Vatican, chasing Clement into the Castel Sant' Angelo for the first time. In the fall of 1526 the mercenary armies of Emperor Charles V crossed the Alps. Charles of Bourbon was approaching Tuscany. A rebellion broke out in Florence.

Early in May 1527 came the dreadful sack of Rome at the hands of the Lutheran mercenaries. On May 17 the Medici were expelled from Florence. Work on the Medici tombs in the sacristy of San Lorenzo was out of the question.

For nine months on end Clement, bottled up in Sant' Angelo, watched the smoke rise from burning palazzi, listened to the screams of men tortured, women raped. Small wonder the Medici lost their hold on Florence. There is precious little evidence of what Michelangelo was about in the year 1527. We do know that to his great sorrow his brother Buonarroto died of the plague on July 2, 1528. Michelangelo is said to have held the dying man fearlessly in his arms. His bills show that the clothes of widow and children were burned after the funeral, to avoid contagion.

All the family expenses rested on the lonely Michelangelo. He paid the widow Bartolommea her dowry, placed his niece Francesca in a convent until she should marry and provided in every respect for his nephew Lionardo.

A study of Michelangelo's letters reveals his extreme preoccupation with money matters. There is incessant mention of payments and deposits, marble purchases, wages for assistants, support for his family, financial straits.

To understand these last troubles one must know the great

artist's curious idiosyncrasies in money matters. Probably for good reason, he was reluctant to keep large sums in his home. Whatever he earned was usually given in the keeping of a Florentine bank, even when he was in Rome, and invested in real estate, so that it could not be touched. Personally he was frugal, if not ascetic. He ate and drank little, dressed plainly and spent virtually nothing on himself. By contrast he gave large sums to his father, his brothers and his nephews, for reasons of traditional Italian family pride and status, but without enthusiasm.

Though little given to ostentation, he freely offered his nephew and heir Lionardo Buonarroti fifteen hundred to two thousand florins on the young man's marriage, so that he might buy a family home. They were Florentine citizens of noblest descent, he wrote the same nephew (December 4, 1546)—that is why he had always endeavored to advance the family fortunes, an effort in which his brothers had frustrated him.

Significantly, Michelangelo, who in his younger years always signed himself *Michelagniolo, scultore in Roma,* on a later occasion took offense when he received a letter addressed *scultore.* It should have borne only his name. He was a gentleman, not a craftsman, a *cittadino fiorentino* who had never pursued art as a business, "a Florentine patrician who had never kept a shop."

On countless occasions Michelangelo might undoubtedly have created works of art, if he had had the money for materials and wages—or had been willing to spend it when it mattered; but the result of his poor management was that he lived in perpetual and totally needless financial difficulties that clouded his life. It took time and trouble to withdraw money from a bank, often located in another city. To nag reluctant popes and cardinals for funds, without which the whole work would grind to a halt, was equally troublesome and aroused resentment.

Despite his largesse toward his family, he had the thriftiness of the true Florentine and tended to count every penny in his marble purchases and workshop expenses. If he insisted on doing everything himself, even the most menial work, this was not just pride

and egotism but often a matter of plain thrift. He was reluctant to pay wages to assistants to get a job done. With enough assistants, generously paid, he could well have finished both the Julius tomb and the façade of San Lorenzo in time.

He abandoned all thought of the tomb—but he cannot have been very happy over it. Just as the daily sight of the bare wall, when he passed San Lorenzo, served him as a painful reminder of the job he had been given and had neglected, so the numerous marble blocks in his Florence and Rome studios kept reminding him of the statues slumbering within, waiting for decades to be freed from their stone prison. But they were destined to languish there forever, waste their lives within the marble, never to emerge into the light of day.

XX

By August 1527 France and England had agreed to put pressure on Charles V, who had the sack of Rome on his conscience. Under the Treaty of Barcelona (June 1529) the emperor agreed to relinquish the Florentine Republic, which enabled the pope to take revenge on Florence for its disloyalty toward the house of Medici.

The citizens of Florence rallied in the emergency. The Council of Ten, Florence's war ministry, marshaled an armed force under generals Malatesta Baglioni and Stefano Colonna. In the spring of 1529 the Council (now reduced to nine) resolved to recruit Michelangelo as a military engineer. Defense exigencies might dictate the tearing down of houses and the building of barricades, which meant that a man with reputation as a builder was needed. In its whole language the document appointing Michelangelo (April 6, 1529) breathes the respect the age of the Renaissance paid the manifold talents of true genius:

"Whereas Michelangelo di Ludovico Buonarroti, a man of demonstrated talent and practical skill, is known to us as an eminent architect, apart from his other extraordinary gifts in the fine arts, wherefore he is universally considered to be unsurpassed by any other master of our day; and whereas we are furthermore convinced that he yields to no other good and right-thinking citizen in love and devotion for his ancestral city; and whereas we are furthermore mindful of the work he has freely undertaken without pay and of the zeal he has displayed to this day in the fortification of the city; and whereas we furthermore propose to employ his ability and energy in the time to come; now therefore do we of our own free will and initiative ordain him governor and procurator general for the construction and fortification of the city walls and for other tasks relating to the defenses of the City of Florence, his term of office for the present to run for one year from the present date, to be vested with plenipotentiary powers over anyone and everyone with respect to the aforementioned works."

He was to receive a daily remuneration of one gold florin for his work, and the first thirty gold florins were paid him on April 26. From letters by Busini to Varchi we learn that the appointment caused sharp dissatisfaction among the aristocratic party. "In a republic," writes Busini, "envy is always inevitable, especially when the nobility constitutes a substantial element." Actually, Michelangelo, following the wishes of the *Signoria,* did not limit his work to Florence. The citadels of Pisa and Livorno had to be strengthened as well. He was in Pisa early in June, returning to Florence in the middle of the month.

Ramparts were built along the Arno, but Michelangelo's plan called especially for the erection of bastions on the heights of Miniato, for to a besieging army San Miniato was the key point from which all Florence could be dominated. But *Gonfaloniere* Niccolò Capponi kept resisting this plan and the Nine dispatched Michelangelo to various other spots, the while fortification of the hill was neglected. In consequence of this conflict between Michelangelo and the council it was decided to appeal to the greatest

military authority in Italy at the time, Duke Alfonso of Ferrara.

Armed with letters to the duke, Michelangelo arrived in Ferrara on August 2, where he was royally received, but declined, as he had once done in Pisa, to leave his inn and take residence in the palace. He had not forgotten the fate his bronze statue of Pope Julius had suffered in Ferrara. He was inclined to believe, moreover, that the Nine had sent him to Ferrara only to get rid of him, and upon his return he found the bastions on San Miniato in a worse state than ever.

XXI

By mid-September Michelangelo was back in Florence; and now ensued one of those mental crises we have already witnessed more than once, a kind of panic induced partly by rational causes, partly by irrational instinct.

Through Condivi Michelangelo later related that rumors of impending treachery circulated among the Florentine soldiery, that he was himself warned by friends among the officers and that he told the *Signoria* what he had heard and seen, explaining the danger facing the city but, to his disappointment, earning only ingratitude for his dire forebodings and being mocked as timid and suspicious.

All this agrees with what Michelangelo told Busini twenty years later about the reasons for his flight. It was generally known at the time that the Florentine General Malatesta was a traitor and had sold out to the pope. The Nine, who assigned troops to the walls and bastions and all officers to their posts, supplying each with provender and ammunition, had given Malatesta eight cannon to defend the bastions on San Miniato. But rather than pulling the guns to the top of the hill, Malatesta left them at its foot and did not even assign them crews.

Seeing the treachery with his own eyes, Michelangelo resolved to extricate himself from the situation and depart Florence. He communicated his thoughts to Rinaldo Corsini, who told him: "I shall come with you." The two supplied themselves with money and took to their horses. When they were halted at the gate, one of the guard exclaimed: "That's one of the Nine, let him pass! It's Michelangelo."

All this is quite rational in explaining the artist's flight. The irrational factors are revealed in a letter Michelangelo dispatched from Venice, whither he had fled, to his good friend Giovan Battista della Palla in Florence. Palla was an art buyer for Francis I and thus traveled to France often:

"Battista, dearest friend, I left [Florence], as no doubt you well know, to go to France and upon arriving in Venice inquired as to the road, being advised that one must pass German territory and that the journey is difficult and hazardous. Hence it occurs to me to ask you whether you still expect to go and in that event where I might meet you, so that we could depart together.

"I left Florence without dropping a hint to a single friend and in a quite irregular manner. As you know, I have long been intent upon going to France and since I had vainly applied for leave on several occasions, I was resolved to await the end of the war. But Tuesday morning, September 21, someone from the Porta San Niccolò came to me and whispered in my ear that I could no longer stay if I valued my life. He went home with me, ate there with me, secured me horses and did not leave me until he knew that I was safely outside Florence, having proved to me this was the best course. Whether it was God or the Devil I do not know. . . ."

Here we encounter the mysterious messenger who once before in Michelangelo's life had ushered in sudden flight. Some scattered later statements also seem to have been designed to ward off the charge that he had deserted his post in panic.

To avoid visitors and protocol, Michelangelo kept to himself and took up secluded quarters on the island of Giudecca. But the government at once dispatched two noblemen to welcome him

in the name of the republic and proffer whatever he or his companions might wish. According to Vasari, the doge is said to have asked him to draw a bridge for the Rialto and he is supposed to have delivered a design remarkable both for its construction and its decoration.

Meanwhile the *Signoria* in Florence announced that thirteen citizens who had left the city without permission would be declared rebels and have their property confiscated. Michelangelo's name was considerately omitted and under a decree of November 16, 1529 the government seems to have been prepared to rest content with depriving him of his post and salary.

Actually, it was quite anxious to get him back and to this end wrote to its ambassador in Ferrara. At the same time the French ambassador in Venice called his king's attention to the opportunity for recruiting Michelangelo into French service; but we do not know whether Francis I took any steps in that direction.

The great artist's friends in Florence in the meantime did what they could to safeguard his property against the likelihood of seizure. There is still in existence an inventory of his stores of wine, wheat and household goods, given by his servant Catarina to his friend Francesco Granacci, who was willing to take charge of them. On October 13 Galeotto Giugni wrote from Ferrara to the Florentine war council that Michelangelo had asked him to intercede, had promised to return and throw himself at the feet of the *Signoria*. In answer to Giugni the *Signoria* stated that it had made out a safe-conduct.

On October 23, a gem-cutter close to Michelangelo, Sebastiano di Francesco, equipped with traveling expenses by Giovan Battista della Palla, set out from Florence to Venice to bring Michelangelo an answer to his letter. This answer reveals that Palla, on account of the war situation, had given up all thought of traveling to France, and it is of great interest in showing the heroic spirit animating the Florentine citizenry in the face of danger. Palla wrote Michelangelo:

"Yesterday I and ten other friends of yours sent you a letter

and a safe-conduct from the *Signoria* for the month of November, and though I am firmly convinced it will reach you, I take the precaution of attaching another copy to this letter. I need scarcely repeat what I have written at such length; nor need I again mobilize your friends. I know that they have one and all, without hesitation or a shadow of disagreement, encouraged you to come home immediately upon receipt of these letters and the safe-conduct, that you may preserve your life, your country, your friends, your honor and your property, and that you may furthermore rejoice over these times for which you have so earnestly hoped and striven [the liberation of Florence].

"Had anyone told me I would not feel the slightest fear in learning that a hostile army was marching against us, I would have believed it impossible. Yet I assure you that not only am I entirely without fear but confident of honorable victory. My soul has long been filled with such happiness that should God, on account of our sins or for some other mysterious reason, deny us defeat and annihilation of this army at our hands, I should entertain the kind of sadness one feels over the loss of something long owned rather than only hoped for."

After setting forth plans for the permanent rather than temporary fortification of Florence, Palla writes that the entire environs of the city had been razed, sparing neither churches nor convents nor private homes. "Among our fellow citizens," he continues, "I observe a high-minded contempt for their heavy losses and for the luxury for their former life in the villas. Instead there is an admirable zeal and unity in preserving our freedom. They fear God alone, trust in Him and in the justice of our cause. There are many other good things to report, which are certain to bring back the Golden Age, which I hope with all my heart you will share with all of us who are your friends."

The letter concludes with an offer to meet Michelangelo in Lucca, where he is to be received with all due honor. He is motivated solely by the passionate desire, Palla emphasizes, that Florence shall not lose its great son, nor he it.

XXII

Upon receipt of this letter Michelangelo set out from Venice and arrived in Ferrara on November 9, where he was given a letter with the duke's seal, to safeguard his journey through Modena. But the local unrest must have detained him and the faithful Palla had to wait in Lucca a full week in vain.

The faith of this high-minded idealist in God and the just cause was thoroughly frustrated. When the traitor Malastesta Baglioni had surrendered the city to the pope and the Prince of Orange, the pope had Palla arrested and poisoned in prison, in retribution for his love of liberty.

The *Signoria* let off Michelangelo with nothing worse than a scare. As it happened, he did not reach Florence until after his safe-conduct had expired; but while the property of other runaways was seized, he got off with being banned from the Grand Council for three years—not too harsh a penalty.

But the days of the *Signoria* were numbered. Even in the Treaty of Barcelona (June 1529) Charles V had promised Florence as a kind of dowry for Margaret, the emperor's illegitimate daughter,* if she married the wretched and brutal Alessandro de' Medici. When Michelangelo returned five months later, Florence had already lost nearly all of its territory and the imperial troops were encamped on the heights around the city. In vain he now fortified San Miniato as well as he could and made the famous campanile, which he protected with layers of woolen mattresses, a look-out post for Florentine snipers.

Florence surrendered in August 1530. The pope's commissioner general, Baccio Valori, emerged on higher orders as dictator

* At that time, 1529, Margaret of Austria was only nine years old. She was married to Alessandro, Duke of Florence, in 1536; a year later the Duke was murdered.

and executioner. In the end Charles V had to put a stop to the pope's vengeance. An example of Clement's cruelty is his behavior toward the monk Fra Benedetto da Foiano, whose fiery sermons during the siege had helped to keep up Florentine morale. The pope had him carried off to Rome and immured in a dungeon beneath Sant' Angelo, where he was slowly starved to death, his ration of bread and water being reduced day by day.

With the pope too Michelangelo got off with a scare. Clement had been subjected to every possible humiliation. He had seen Rome go up in flames, Florence wrested from the Medici dynasty. Now he lived to see that dynasty restored to power. What he wanted was to see it firmly anchored in the memory of people who were attached to art and culture. To this end he needed the one man whose works were sure of immortality.

What matter that this man had but recently built bastions and fired cannon against the allies of the very house he was now to glorify? The pope's eyes were fixed only on his goal, and Michelangelo was an indispensable means for reaching it. Not enough that the pope was unwilling to see him penalized in any way—he instructed his emissaries in Florence to win him over by flattery.

That meant he had to be rid of the work on the Julius tomb. The suit by the heirs was based on the contract of 1516. The agreed term had long since elapsed. Michelangelo now declared he was ready to resume the work against payment of 8,000 scudi—a proposal that could scarcely be taken seriously. Even the pope, who took Michelangelo's side, told him that he must be out of his mind if he thought the heirs, who for some thirty years had seen nothing whatever in return for all the money they had invested in the monument, would now begin anew with a large payment.

A new contract was signed. For the money already paid in advance the monument was to be delivered in reduced size. Michelangelo promised to have all the materials in his possession taken from Florence to Rome—statues, rough-dressed blocks and all—and to pay 2,000–3,000 florins to other masters to supply what was missing.

At last the difficulties seemed to be out of the way. The understanding heirs were content to accept this quite imperfect solution.

XXIII

Suddenly, Michelangelo again began to balk. He was willing, he declared, to pay other sculptors to take over the tomb; but he would not have the figures he had begun or finished shipped from Florence to Rome. The heirs quite naturally demanded that he finish what was already in the workshop on the Via Mozza in Florence; and Sebastiano del Piombo, whose correspondence with Michelangelo had been interrupted since 1525, but who was always willing to do his best, proposed to him in 1531 that he should send at least a few works from Florence, to reassure the heirs and show them his good will.

But apparently Michelangelo, despite his pledged word, felt an insurmountable revulsion against incorporating into the tomb the two *Captives* originally meant for it, or the *Victory* group. He said he no longer wished to have anything to do with the work on the monument and only wanted to buy his way out.

Judging by Sebastiano's letters, he seems to have had a curious fear that he would be held responsible for lesser portions of the monument, done by others, if he accepted overall supervision of the work. Sebastiano found it necessary to assure him that his work was instantly recognizable and that there was no possibility of confusion.

Things had reached the point where in Michelangelo's mind the tomb had become the curse of his life (*maledizione*). He knew that if the case with the heirs came to court he was bound to lose. His sole remaining hope was the pope, whose power to join and sunder extended into heaven.

Letters by Benvenuto della Volpaia of January 1532 show that Michelangelo intended to go to Rome to speak to the pope. Volpaia, son of a well-known mechanic and clock-maker in Florence, offered to get him a room in the Belvedere, where His Holiness had assigned quarters to Volpaia and whither the pope came daily to visit him and his brother. Michelangelo did not take up the offer, and on February 24 Sebastiano del Piombo wrote that he really need not come to Rome, unless it were to look after his house and workshop, which were in a state of dissolution. The pope, Sebastiano said, was Michelangelo's sincere friend and had long since forgiven the artist his participation in the defense of Florence. Sebastiano also speaks of efforts to assuage the Duke of Urbino about the constant delay in the work on the Julius tomb.

The duke's confidant, Hieronimo Staccoli, stubbornly stuck to his guns. Sebastiano reminded him that "Michelangelos do not grow on bushes and that we scarcely have men to maintain his work, let alone finish it." There were negotiations with Giovan Maria della Porta, the duke's ambassador in Rome, with Clement personally taking part in every session and always siding with Michelangelo.

Giovanni Mini, uncle of Antonio, Michelangelo's pupil, addressed a letter to Baccio Valori, apparently for submission to the pope, which shows how deeply the artist's health was affected during these nerve-wracking negotiations. From the fall of 1530 to late 1533 he worked incessantly on the monuments in the sacristy of San Lorenzo. Giovanni Mini wrote:

"Michelangelo is not long for this life, unless measures for his welfare are taken. He is working very hard, eats little and poorly and sleeps even less. He is suffering from two ailments, in the head [headache, vertigo] and in the heart. Neither is incurable, since he has a strong constitution. As for his head, Our Lord the Pope should give him dispensation from working in the sacristy [of San Lorenzo, the Medici chapel] in the winter, the air there being bad

for him. As for his heart, the best remedy would be if His Holiness succeeded in putting in order the matter with the Duke of Urbino."

In another letter Mini suggests that melancholy will put Michelangelo in his grave. Anyone who would rid him of his obligations, Mini says, would have Michelangelo for his slave for the rest of his life. The pope, on November 21, 1531, in consequence sent his sculptor a *breve* ordering him under penalty of excommunication to put aside all work but the most necessary on the Medici monuments and to take better care of his health.

Sebastiano wrote anew that the pope loved him and called him *amico*. The pope was told of uncomplimentary things Michelangelo allegedly said of him. Clement merely replied: "Michelangelo is wrong; I have never done him injury (*Michelangelo a torto; non li feci mai ingiuria*)."

Again and again Sebastiano emphasized how very little was asked of the artist in order to put an end to the ordeal of the Julius tomb: "None torment you but yourself—I mean your great renown and the grandeur of your work. I do not say this to flatter you. We cannot satisfy the opposing party without showing it the merest shadow of you. It would seem to me that you could readily do some drawings or models, leaving the execution to some master of your choosing. But there must be a shadow of your own self. Once you take the matter in hand, it will prove to be trifling. You need not do anything, yet you will seem to be doing everything. But remember that the work must be done in your shadow."

XXIV

Responding to the pope's request, Michelangelo traveled to Rome and a new contract was concluded. On April 30, 1532, Della Porta happily wrote the Duke of Urbino he had made a new agree-

ment with Michelangelo the day before, which he would like the duke to confirm within two months. There was to be no further talk of the 8,000 florins the artist had already received. There would be a new model and the tomb would be done within three years, calculated from August 1. Michelangelo would utilize whatever he had begun or finished for the purpose in his workshops in Florence and Rome. Six statues were to be his own work. The rest would be done by competent masters. The whole cost of the work, at least 2,000 florins, would be borne by the artist.

As we can see, this was a settlement by mutual compromise. Michelangelo assumed overall direction, agreed to deliver to the duke the drawings for the monument he had withheld before, promised to deliver his statues, which he had also withheld before. For the first time too a place was designated where the monument was to be (and was in fact) installed—the church of San Pietro in Vincoli.

But scarcely had the recalcitrant artist returned to Florence when he suffered a new relapse. Condivi enlightens us as to the reason. We know how Michelangelo was in the habit of playing off the pope's claims on him against the Duke of Urbino and his people—he could not finish the Julius tomb so long as he had the unfinished monuments for the Medici dukes on his back. Now he conceived the idea of turning the tables and playing off his obligations to the Duke of Urbino against the pope, to persuade the latter to allow him to leave Florence and take up residence in Rome. For with all that had happened in Florence, Michelangelo felt very insecure there. The city was ruled with barbaric cruelty by Alessandro de' Medici, who made no secret of his dislike for Michelangelo and his desire for making the artist suffer.

Michelangelo got the men from Urbino to state he had received several thousand florins more from the duke than was actually the case—so that he might claim before the pope that his increased obligation compelled him to live in Rome. But either from indifference or incomprehension of the ruse, the additional few thousand florins were incorporated into the contract in Urbino, and now

Michelangelo had fallen into the very trap he had intended to set for the pope. With some justification he maintained he had been deceived by the agreement and again lapsed into idleness.

Yet the pope too at this time had conceived the desire of bringing him to Rome for good, for he had earmarked a big commission for Michelangelo there, the painting of the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo was fascinated by the magnitude of the task and (according to Condivi) was able to work on the Julius tomb only in secret.

Just then, on September 26, 1534, Clement died, the last Medici of Cosimo's line. Whatever evil this pope may have wrought on various citizens of Florence and on Michelangelo's close friends, his attitude toward the artist himself had always been exemplary. Neither he nor, among his predecessors, Leo ever resented Michelangelo's negligence and lack of consideration, indeed, not even his open enmity.

XXV

But the pope's death changed the artist's life completely. So long as Clement lived, his protection was likely to curb the hatred of Alessandro de' Medici. Now that he was gone, Michelangelo had to be prepared for anything, if he remained in Florence. So before the year 1534 was ended he left his home town, never again to return.

The three-year term granted the artist to finish the Julius tomb went by without a finger having been lifted. Paul III had ascended the papal throne. Michelangelo had drawn the cartoon for the *Last Judgment* while Clement was still alive; and it is rather surprising to learn that he is supposed to have been startled by a rumor that the pope wanted him near. That, after all, was unavoidable if he worked in the Vatican. Perhaps Michelangelo was apprehensive over a new relationship of dependence.

Condivi hints that he thought of emigrating to Genoa or Urbino. It is true that an abbey belonging to his friend, the Bishop of Aleria, lay in Genoese territory and that Carrara was near by too. Yet Michelangelo was tied to Rome. Urbino seems an even more improbable refuge. Duke Francesco Maria, long hostile to Michelangelo, reigned there.

And in truth, only another year elapsed before Paul III laid thorough hold of Michelangelo. Farnese, who had waited thirty years for the tiara, insisted he had yearned all that time for the day when he would have Michelangelo at his disposal. On September 1, 1535, he appointed him supreme architect, sculptor and painter of the apostolic palace.

Instantly he released his protégé from the pressure of the contract. If it had not been fulfilled, this was, so he testified, because Michelangelo had been prevented by excusable difficulties (*per giusti e legitimi impedimenti*). And at last the ill-starred artist's fortunes changed for the better. Duke Francesco Maria died in 1538 and his son Guidobaldo, in contrast to his father a friend of art and literature, freed Michelangelo of all his oppressive obligations while he was painting the *Last Judgment*, expressing only the hope that once it was finished he would redouble his efforts in completing the tomb for the great Rovere pope.

But when Paul III gave Michelangelo another painting commission—the two murals for the Cappella Paolina, to represent the martyrdom of the great Apostle Peter and the conversion of the great Apostle Paul—work on the Julius tomb was again postponed.

XXVI

On August 20, 1542, the fifth and last contract for the Julius tomb was drafted. It was to include the *Moses* statue, flanked by *Rachel* and *Leah*, allegories on religious contemplation and good

works (*vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*); and three other figures to be only designed by Michelangelo, while their execution was to be left to his assistant, Raffaello da Montelupo, though the right to do them himself was expressly left within the artist's discretion.

Among the figures of the upper story the *Sibyl* is the most pleasing. She is distantly related to the sibyls of his youth, while her counterpart, the *Prophet,* is altogether devoid of interest. (Both statues are by Montelupo.) Michelangelo worked on the *Madonna,* in the center, as late as 1537—it was then finished by assistants in the workshop of Montelupo.

To see the figure of Julius II by Maso di Bosco is saddening. Michelangelo had promised to retouch the face; but nothing in this marble hulk is by his hand.

The *Moses* was installed in 1542. It was a figure that had long fascinated Michelangelo. The legendary prophet stood before his eye as the liberator of his people, more properly, its founder. He had wanted to invest him with an excess of strength; but in keeping with the religiosity of the Counter Reformation it was to be power in the service of the Almighty rather than power for rebellion.

In the style of his youth, Michelangelo shows us the seated figure from the front, its head sharply turned to one side. Moses' flaring anger at the faithlessness of his people provides Michelangelo with the motive for the contrast between the right and left halves of his body. There is in this figure much that is strange, above all an overwhelming surge of power not even remotely equaled by any subsequent representation of Moses.

Michelangelo sensed that the power of a popular leader rests largely in his physical appearance, so that in such a personality temperament is more important than reason. Hence his figure is marked by passion, fervor, wrath, rather than by superior intellect. The prognathous jaw of Moses is almost animalic, and Michelangelo follows the Vulgate in giving the prophet horns. The great, braided beard seeks to invest Moses with the primitive savagery

of ancient Asiatic kings. The muscular arms with the prominent veins are bare, though the figure is otherwise clothed.

This sepulchral monument, dragging on through an entire lifetime, ultimately turned out not to mark a grave at all. Julius II is buried in St. Peter's. The monument in San Pietro in Vincoli is only a memorial, a patchwork that honors neither the pope nor the artist, despite its great central figure.

The Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel

I

THE SISTINE CHAPEL is not a free-standing structure with outer walls of its own, access to which is gained through a lobby. It is a rectangular space, twice as long as it is wide and fifty feet high. The impression upon entering it is that it is relatively narrow, rather long and of immense height up to its arched ceiling. It is built right into the apostolic palace in the Vatican.

Its walls are smooth. Its round-arched windows, six along each side, are relatively small and high. Directly below them a projecting cornice supports a narrow balcony. Above the windows the ceiling vault rises gently.

At the time Sixtus IV ascended the papal throne, the chapel

was a plain, bare hall. It had been built by a Florentine, Giovanni dei Dolci. It was the first Rovere pope who decided to make it into a pleasing and inviting house of God. He summoned the six best Florentine and Umbrian painters of his time, and in 1481 they embarked on the band of frescoes girdling the hall, consisting of fifteen great paintings from Bible history.

These men were to paint the lives of Moses and Jesus, filling their historical pictures with landscapes and buildings, with which they were familiar. It was understood too that they would represent their contemporaries as they walked and stood, as participants in the sacred events unrolling before the eye of the beholder. Above this sequence of crowded paintings, thirty-two figures of popes were set between the windows.

The most important themes were assigned to the highly esteemed Perugino. He painted the altar picture, the *Ascension of Mary,* and a main picture, *Jesus Giving the Keys to St. Peter.* Though given to the somewhat stereotyped repetition of a soulful expression in his figures, Perugino knew how to invest their features with an air of tenderness and unfathomable depth. His outlines have the effect of a simple, quiet melody. His art was marked by a soothing calm, his landscapes by delicacy of mood, and he was skilled like no other in blending the contours of his figures with those of his buildings. None minded that he might translate a scene from the Jordan region to a Roman square with temple and triumphal arch.

Another painter who had decorated the hall under Sixtus IV was Michelangelo's first preceptor, Domenico Ghirlandajo. Against a broad river landscape, framed by steep hills set with giant columns and towers, he painted half a hundred Italians in the dress of his time, grouped to the right and left about a fine but vacant Christ figure, a broad halo about its head. Kneeling respectably before this Christ are two venerable graybeards with folded hands, Peter and his brother Andrew, both of them likewise bearing haloes, while Jesus with raised index finger ordains them apostles. They kneel ceremoniously like prelates before the pope. There is

in Jesus not a spark of illumination that might make him see the fishermen as men of the future; nor do these expressionless gentlemen with the radiant crowns about their necks betray a trace of emotion, such as might have overwhelmed them in the presence of the godhead in human form.

Three of the frescoes are from the hand of Botticelli; yet if there was anything out of character with this sensitive and refined painter of femininity, it was surely Biblical art in the monumental style. One might have thought, moreover, that the pope would have had nothing to do with him. Sixtus, after all, had had a hand in the Pazzi conspiracy, while Botticelli had painted the gruesome picture of the hanged on the wall of the Bargello, the removal of which the pope had demanded for two long years.

But Botticelli was famous and the pope wanted him. The painter who had glorified the Medici was now to do the same thing for Sixtus IV; and Botticelli did what was asked of him. On his fresco, the *Healing of the Leper,* Christ, spurning Satan's temptation, stands not on a mountain top but on the pinnacle of a Roman basilica, with the façade of the great leper hospital, Santo Spirito, which the pope had recently built and which shows his name.

The best of these pictures are surely those by Perugino, Ghirlandajo, Botticelli and Luca Signorelli, with their straightforward representation of reality and their pleasure in fresh, strong tints. A confusion of color and movement, a welter of well-intentioned figures, they fit into no overall pattern. For the fifteenth century, nevertheless, they constituted good, honest craftsmanship, with which one was well-pleased. Sixtus IV consecrated the chapel on August 15, 1483, the year before his death.

The tempestuous mind of Michelangelo can have scarcely felt anything but condescension toward this kind of art. He may have made allowances for it, even though it lacked all sweep and passion. But now he had been given the task of painting the great vault above these pictures, only a few years in the past yet already dim and remote. As though for posterity, he made this note:

"Today, May 10, 1508, I, Michelagniolo, sculptor, have received

from His Holiness, Pope Julius II, 500 florins, paid to me by Messer Carlino, chamberlain, and Messer Carlo Albizzi as an advance for the painting which I shall today begin in the chapel of Pope Sixtus, according to the agreement drafted by the Monsignor of Pavia, which I have signed in my own hand."

II

Entering the Sistine Chapel for the first time today, one feels a sense of dismay in beholding Italy's most famous painting at a height of fifty feet. One simply cannot take it in, cannot immerse oneself in it without bending the head back so far that it hurts. This difficulty in viewing conveys an idea of the immense physical difficulties the painter had to overcome in his work.

His first concern must have been a scaffold from which he might paint. Bramante had had holes made in the vault, from which such a scaffold was suspended by ropes. On this uncertain support the artist was expected to stand or lie. The first question Michelangelo asked was what he was supposed to do about the holes. Clearly they had to be filled in and painted over.

The first thing Michelangelo did was to have Bramante's scaffold dismantled. Next he pondered on how to devise an altogether new method. To support the scaffold from below with an understructure of beams was out of the question, since that would have meant that the chapel was not available for services.

Both Condivi and Vasari explain that the new scaffold was so designed that its strength increased with the load it bore, from which we may conclude that Michelangelo employed a keystone arch system. Apparently the projecting cornice, alone or in combination with pillars along the walls, provided the support for obliquely running beams separated at the top by blocks of wood driven between them like wedges.

On this support, then, was mounted the flooring of boards that formed the scaffold proper. It is said this invention by Michelangelo was so ingenious that Bramante later used the idea in the construction of St. Peter's. Yet surely this vantage point, to which the artist had to ascend each day on steep ladders, could scarcely have been very comfortable.

Michelangelo rejected as tedious and unimaginative the pope's proposal to divide the ceiling into twelve panels with a simple decoration of lines and garlands, limiting the number of figures to be represented to the twelve apostles along the upper sides. He decided to ignore the actual ceiling structure and hold together the immense curved surface by means of painted pseudo architecture, using no other decorative element but the human body. The total effect was to be given quiet unity, indeed, a certain solemn harmony, by means of carefully matched tints.

The ceiling is a barrel vault, cut into by the apertures and dormers of the windows. Michelangelo paid no attention to the triangular form of the wedge-shaped areas, simply using them for the marble-like thrones of his sibyls and prophets. He introduced a degree of variety and life such as had never been seen before, using different scales for his various groups. The prophets and sibyls, seven and five in number, are of heroic size, and measured by their great standard, the other figures appear more or less small. There is a sharp contrast too between the three-dimensional representations of human figures, in realistic color or in bronze, and the crowds of figures in the marginal spaces, who do not emerge so immediately as living beings. The sense of tension is effectively enhanced, finally, by the fact that the nude youths, seated at the four corners of each of the smaller panels, are oriented in a direction different from that of the pictures in those panels, so that the two types of groups cannot be viewed at once.

The narrow ceiling oblong Michelangelo divided into nine segments of different size. These nine panels, four larger and five smaller ones, he framed in an imaginary architecture. The four larger ones occupy the full width of the vault, while the five

smaller ones leave enough room at the four corners for the nude youths, each of whom is seated on a seemingly solid pedestal. There are twenty of them, and the spaces between them are filled with bronze-colored medallions.

Since the chapel decorations were commissioned by a Rovere, the heraldic symbol of the Rovere, the oak, naturally had to come to the fore on the ceiling. Oak leaves could be used in the form of garlands and wreaths. Hence Michelangelo gave his nude youths the task of decorating the chapel with oak leaves. To this he joined an element from ancient triumphal arches, the medallion in the form of a bronze shield.

The nude young men, seated on their stools of stone, are busy drawing a long ribbon through holes in the bronze shields and winding it with oak leaves, thus transforming it into a garland. In one place bags with oak leaves are brought to the scene, at another the leaves burst from an open bag, at still another the garland is finished—until, with the progress of the work, Michelangelo gradually loses interest in the motive.

III

Unfamiliar with the fresco technique, Michelangelo, once he had finished his first cartoons, sent to Florence for a number of young collaborators. They were eager to serve as his assistants. There was Francesco Granacci, the friend of his youth; a certain Jacopo Indaco, a fellow student in Ghirlandajo's school; Giuliano Bugiardini, who had joined the school of Bertoldo together with Granacci and Michelangelo; Bastiano (Aristotile) da Sangallo, already mentioned, who had joined Michelangelo after having been a disciple of Perugino; and three other painters who knew the fresco technique.

They began to do the first fresco after the master's cartoon.

But Michelangelo soon grew dissatisfied with the results. He decided to part with his painter friends. Since he could not very well send them packing, having summoned them himself, he resorted to the curious stratagem of having them one day simply find the doors to the chapel locked. They remained so until the painters took the hint and departed for home.

Michelangelo set to work alone, assisted only by his pigment-grinder. Scraping away what the others had done, he began with the picture of the *Great Flood*. But when he was barely half-finished, his colors mildewed and blistered, so that the figures were almost unrecognizable. In deep dismay he went to Julius and said: "Did I not tell Your Holiness at once that painting is not my profession? All I have painted is destroyed. If you do not believe me, send someone to inspect the work."

The pope dispatched Giuliano da San Gallo, who discovered at once where the trouble lay. The plaster used by the still inexperienced Michelangelo had been too damp. His old mentor gave him the necessary technical advice, and Michelangelo locked himself into the chapel, barring all spectators and assistance, to do the work that is without peer.

IV

It is necessary to dwell at greater length on the technical difficulties. Before fresco painting can be applied to a wall, the wall must receive a ground or mortar consisting of coarse sand and white plaster or lime, troweled to give a smooth surface. Over this comes a thin finish coat or wash of lime and fine sand. While this is still damp and soft, the drawing is transferred to the wall, often by simple tracing, and the painting proceeds with pigments mixed with lime water. The painter does as much as he can in a day's time, and the next day the unused finished coat is scraped away,

to make room for a fresh coat on which the painter continues his work. The pigments become chemically bonded to the plaster, the soluble lime surrounding each particle and turning into insoluble calcium carbonate under the influence of the carbon dioxide in the air.

The painter cannot make revisions, for the damp plaster undergoes chemical change the very same day. He must have his composition fully planned and execute it with unfailing precision. If he wants to change anything, he must scrape away the old and start afresh. Hence not only outlines but tints must be set before a beginning is made.

The first picture to be done was the one at the near end, the *Drunkenness of Noah,* and most probably it was directly followed by the pictures in the two adjoining corner-spandrels, *David's Victory Over Goliath,* and *Judith and Holofernes.* These pictures belong together insofar as they share a certain relief style. They are the creations of a painter coming from sculpture. In another sense the picture showing the sons of Noah with their drunken father must be mentioned in the same breath with that of the *Great Flood* and the next panel, *Noah's Offering.* For these three paintings, the first to be executed, have one thing in common out of the whole sequence. Michelangelo did not yet know how to judge the size he must give to his figures so that they could be plainly discerned from below. Despite their respectable dimensions, the figures in these three frescoes are too small.

The moment the artist recognized this deficiency, he applied an altogether different scale to his figures and began to strip down his compositions to the utmost simplicity. Indeed, with the progress of the work we see an unmistakable tendency for the figures in the various paintings, the nude youths at the corners and even the prophets and sibyls on their thrones to grow larger and larger under Michelangelo's hands.

The *Drunkenness of Noah* was still a painted relief. The swift rate at which the artist's purely pictorial faculties were developing is demonstrated in the *Great Flood,* which purely as a painting

is a creation of high merit, indeed, one of the most crowded frescoes Michelangelo ever did, except for the much later *Last Judgment*. Its carefully worked out perspective pierces the wall surface, so to speak. The ceiling spews out desperately struggling knots of figures in several successive planes.

The image of the deluge was one with which Michelangelo was familiar. Great floods had visited Rome in his time. Late in 1500 he had been an eye-witness in Rome when the flood waters swirled into houses and churches and even cut off the Vatican altogether.

He may have been too close to his subject; for he dissolved the scene into several episodes, each with a throng of people. The sizes and visibility of his figures, moreover, declines with the distance of the plane in which they are located.

In the foreground groups of nude or half-clothed people struggle for a foothold on a bare rock rising above the water and barely offering enough room for those who have already gained it. Fear and movement pervade the scene, which is dotted with finely conceived groups—a nude, reclining mother with her two children, two lovers embracing. One family has fled on its mule, from which the father hands down a child into the mother's arms.

In the middle ground is a fine group that is pure sculpture—a muscular father carrying his unconscious, grown son. He strides heavily, the son's fair face drooping against his own head with its even more magnificent and virile features.

To the right another bare rock shelf rears from the swirling waters. Here a crowd of refugees has sought brief refuge, spreading a cloth overhead that does makeshift service as a tent. In the middle a boat is struggling against wind and tide. The passengers fear it will capsize, for drowning men cling to the gunwales in an effort to save their lives. Those inside the boat strike at the swimmers to make them let go. In the distance the Ark floats safe. In one porthole one sees Noah with his white beard, his arm outstretched in horror.

Viewed from below, this whole splendid painting, a kind of prologue to the *Last Judgment* in that it too runs the gamut of terror, becomes no more than a confusing blur of color, in which the figures can be made out only with difficulty.

The last of the paintings with figures in small scale is *Noah's Offering*, somewhat unquiet in composition, but masterful in its vivid action and the beauty of its lines. Henceforward the master simplified his style, enlarged his figures and soon reached a state of pure creative exuberance. Sure of his mastery both over his art and over the mysteries of fresco-painting, he was able to surrender to his genius, lie flat on his back and paint away.

The *Fall of Man* with its dual action introduces the next sequence.

On this fresco the Tree of Knowledge with its foliage joins and divides two successive scenes, an archaic form of representation here given new life and grandeur of style. To the left the first pair being tempted, to the right the same pair being expelled. The halves are equally expressive in the play of muscles and features; but the Eve on the left, seated beneath the rich foliage of the tree and reaching up her arm, is the fairer. She reaches for the fruit proffered by the temptress, whose beautiful body ends in double serpent's coils twining about the trunk of the tree. Eve's body retains its attitude of communing with Adam, turned toward him and away from the serpent; but her charming and beautiful head turns toward the temptress, giving the full, youthful body an aspect that enchants the eye of the beholder. Added to this is the harmonious interplay among the lines of the three outstretched arms, Adam's, Eve's and the temptress'.

The Tree of Knowledge is not at the precise center of the fresco, but a little to the right. This leaves no empty space above, where a fully clothed angel hovers, sword in outstretched left hand, invoking the curse Adam seeks to avert with his hands and whole attitude. Eve, with an incomparable expression of grief and horror,

cowers with rounded back, arms pressed to her body, hand to one ear, shaking herself, so to speak, and seeking protection from the divine wrath behind the taller and heavier Adam, as they stride away sadly.

V

For Michelangelo the *Creation of Man* was an opportunity to give meaning and value to life itself, to its culmination, the marvelous, inexhaustible subject of art, the human body, in particular the male body, whose beauty affected him most deeply. Quite naturally the *Creation of Man* is at once his simplest and richest composition, the most perfect painting he ever produced.

Adam is a youth of about twenty, just awakening to life. His attitude is surpassingly beautiful and natural. Resting on his right forearm, he supports his outstretched left arm on sharply bent knee. As he did invariably when emphasizing masculine beauty, Michelangelo gave him a wide, arching thorax, while his fair features carry a dreamy expression of childlike trust, surprised and questioning.

Like a revelation of earthly and heavenly exaltation in its divine richness, the picture is counterbalanced by a swirling, cloudlike mantle with the sublime figure of the Almighty soaring toward Adam. God is borne up, as it were, by horizontally floating angels. Over him little angels are comfortably nestled into the gently gliding cloak, and his one arm rests over the shoulders of a particularly handsome young female angel, who looks upon the miracle about to be performed with an eloquent and attentive expression. Michelangelo scorns all frills. The ground at the rim of the world on which Adam rests is as bare as he is and as are the angels of heaven. Only the figure of the Creator is covered with

a diaphanous garment that leave his strong, finely shaped limbs free.

The rhythm of this unforgettable picture is as sweeping and harmonious as that of which Beethoven speaks when he said music must strike sparks from the human soul. It is like a mass by Palestrina, in which the artfully interwoven counterpoint of voices still allows both words and melody to come through.

Michelangelo took but one day each to paint the head of Adam and that of God the Father, a firmly formed whole despite the play of brow, nostrils and face muscles.

The *Creation of Woman* is a somewhat quieter affair. In creating Adam, God soared through the cosmos with his heavenly train. Creating Eve, he stands on the earth, solitary and shrouded. The God who creates Adam is mature and virile, with no trace of age, but the God who creates Eve is an old man, wise and powerful.

With the sure hand of genius, Michelangelo limns the difference in the nature of man and woman at the moment they are awakened to life. The Creator, with a calm gesture of his hand, calls forth Eve from the side of Adam, who is fast asleep. The artist makes ingenious use of the legend of Eve's creation from Adam's rib. She is conjured up from the bend in Adam's body, where the lowest rib marks the division between thorax and abdomen.

There is a noteworthy contrast between the earth-born man, formed directly from the clay, still only dimly aware of himself, turning in quiet wonder toward the heavenly appearance; and Eve, created from man's body, fleshly in origin, humbly grasping her situation at once, bowing with outstretched, folded hands to worship her Creator.

The mother of mankind to come, she is rich in body, though her bent-over attitude can scarcely be described as graceful. For the effect intended by Michelangelo it was necessary. He wished to represent the very movements of creation. As between the sleeping Adam and the firm-standing godhead, Eve, in a pose unmistakably expressing her own creation, was to draw the beholder's attention.

VI

To represent the Creator a second time suspended in the air, after having painted him in the picture of the Creation of Man in the likeness of a mighty cloud soaring through the empyrean, would have been impossible for anyone else. Michelangelo accomplished the impossible with ease.

On the next picture of the *Creation* God hovers over the waters and then above the land, giving them his benison. How marvelously this picture is drawn, yet idyllic in all its power! The powerful shoulders of the Creator are modeled in a light half-shadow; his face with the flowing white beard has assumed an expression of superhuman loving-kindness and creativity; from his hands raised in blessing life flows down over land and sea, as though he bore two cornucopias. By the art of foreshortening, which Michelangelo mastered with ease, the lower part of the Creator's body is almost invisible. A strong light falls on the two charming lads hovering by his side and on brow and cheeks of the third, smaller one, in the middle, whose body is hidden behind God's up to the shoulders.

We have watched Michelangelo in Carrara, falling prey to the raptures of his imagination, wandering about the marble quarries, the great pure blocks filling his mind with hundreds of ideas for statues and reliefs. Here we see him engulfed in the raptures of creation itself, one to whom nothing is impossible, to whom difficulties are nothing more than a challenge. We see him at the height of his being, unconquerable, irresistible, creating a world of his own like the godhead he never tired of depicting anew.

There is little resemblance between the hovering Creator, quietly blessing plants and beasts as he gives them life, and the swifter-winged God who creates Adam, and again the star-making Magus who rushes through the vault of heaven. Storming onward

with both arms outstretched, little attendant genies in the folds of his thunder cloud, he calls forth the sun from chaos. At the mere behest of his right hand it begins to shine as he assigns it its place, while at the same time an imperious gesture of his pointing left, shadowy but sharply limned against the bright air, beckons the moon to assume her place as earth's satellite.

Admirable the distribution of light and shade on the figures as in the drapes of the flowing robe, about the newly created heavenly bodies as on God himself, veering and rushing on through space. So carefully is it all modeled through the interplay of light and varying degrees of shade that even in black-and-white reproduction the effect is highly dramatic. Long since past is the time when Michelangelo felt himself solely the sculptor, balked at having a brush pressed into his hand. A painter he is now, as though he had never been anything else—the arch-painter among painters.

Michelangelo arrives at last at the beginning of his epic of the world's creation, the final picture which becomes the beholder's first. God hovers upright, visible only to the knees. His lean but powerful body is bent back, slightly twisted, as though he were about to describe a great arc. With outstretched arms, palms turned outward, he sunders light from darkness.

This painting, in point of time the last, in point of content the first, strikes the keynote for the entire ceiling decoration. Of the nine large panels on the ceiling it is the only one with but one figure—the Creator, from whom all issues forth. None is about him or near him, before him or behind him—he is the beginning. There are other figures on the ceiling whose inner loneliness is marked. Only this one is truly alone even outwardly. This is God who is the prime force, the first cause, the patrix. He is the archetype, That Which Was First.

According to Condivi, Julius came often to see how the work was progressing. He climbed the ladders, took Michelangelo's proffered hand to gain the scaffold. Things moved much too slowly to suit the pope. He champed at the bit to see the painting finished. He asked Michelangelo one day when this would be. "When

I am able," came the laconic answer. The pope was unmoved. When Michelangelo had reached the point of our narrative, with all the pictures in the central oblong done, the pope, unable to gain a proper perspective from his vantage point beside the artist, demanded that the scaffold be taken down, so that he might be able to judge the effect. In all likelihood he wanted to hear what the Romans might have to say as well.

Not surprisingly, Michelangelo refused. Not even half of his work was done, and he knew better than to show unfinished work even to fools. "Would you like me to throw you off the scaffold?" the pope thundered. Michelangelo had no choice but to give in.

The scaffold was dismantled and the chapel thrown open to the curious and the connoisseurs alike on November 1, 1509. All Rome crowded inside to see what the solitary painter had created in less than a year's time. These people loved great art, and when they saw it, their enthusiasm knew no bounds.

There now ensued a pause in Michelangelo's work on the ceiling decorations, though it cannot have lasted long. One of Michelangelo's letters of August 1510 says: "My life here goes on as usual and by the end of next week I expect to have my painting [in the chapel] done, that is, the parts with which I have begun [in addition to the center panels, the prophets and sibyls]. And when I have unveiled that, I hope to get some money and shall furthermore try to get a month's leave in Florence."

It is almost inconceivable to us that the energy of anyone should suffice to do so much work in so short a time.

There are, first of all, the twenty nude youths, known to some art historians as "The Slaves." Their ultimate purpose, in the artist's mind, was to give him occasion to display beauty, to represent the appealing qualities of the male body, strong, graceful, well-built, in the glow and splendor of youth. The predominant theme is virility—even in so heart-warming a figure as the handsome Achilles (to the left, above Jeremiah), lost in melancholy thought.

Occasionally the artist, in an experimental mood, was tempted

to vary his subject, to go to the borderline where male and female features merge, as in the fair head, the body to which has almost entirely vanished (to the left, above the Delphic Sibyl). Its expression is as rare with Michelangelo as it is common with Leonardo —the form and features of a young man with the expression of a young woman.

Among the figures in this rich ceiling decoration are some that appertain to pillars or columns, couples to fill an interstice, creatures but half alive, statues or statuettes, now of marble, now of bronze. But the twenty nude youths in the vault do not belong among their number. Even though they may not entirely live up to the Canon of Polycletus, they are living, breathing Greek Renaissance.

Sprung from the imagination of a Michelangelo drunk with beauty, they resemble now satyrs, now heroes. One of them will laugh, rock on his seat, his exuberance bursting out in the swing of a leg, the dart of a hand. Another will be broad of shoulder, still another lean, a fourth the embodiment of suppleness. Here is one earnestly working away at decorating the chapel with oak leaves, while that one is lost to the world, immersed in his own.

They spring, as we have said, from the inner eye rather than being portraits. They are the sons of a painter who has returned to his art by way of sculpture, the sustained study of which has given him unparalleled assurance in the representation of the human body sans need for a model.

And indeed, he sometimes vests these his darlings with so much life of their own that they almost blanket his fine paintings. Ruthlessly they reach beyond the frames, showing little respect for the works of art they are meant to serve.

The fervor that vented itself in the creation of these godlike ceiling figures was the same that later on drove him to worship an unworthy youth like Febo di Poggio, or an entrancing lad like Cecchino Bracci, Luigi del Riccio's nephew who died at the age of fifteen, or the high-minded young Tommaso Cavalieri.

VII

With his figures of the prophets and sibyls Michelangelo reached a high point as a painter. In the whole history of art the figure of man was scarcely ever before depicted so spiritualized.

The very notion of fastening upon the image of the prophet as a theme was an admirable one. Of course we need not ignore that earlier Italian artists like Giotto occasionally display a gravity and inwardness that remind distantly of Michelangelo; nor need we deny that Ghiberti's small-scale prophets sometimes stand lost in thought or seem about to preach to the people. That Fra Angelico's prophets in Orvieto dwell blissfully in paradise has little to do with the Old Testament. And neither Jacopo della Quercia's dervishlike prophets nor Melozzo da Forlì's beturbaned ancients in Loreto betray the spirit of ancient Palestine.

Michelangelo instinctively grasped what he had never learned and could not know. He thought of these men of the poor called prophets, who were still talked about two or three thousand years after they lived, as men who must have been altogether extraordinary.

And indeed it was the *nabi* (prophet) alone who distinguished ancient Israel from Edom, Ammon, Moab and all the other closely related little tribes clustering about the people who thought of themselves as chosen. The prophets proved stronger than the kings. In the end they succumbed only to the ordained priesthood, to whom they were a thorn in the flesh.

The priest was a man without deeper creative power. He had his ritual to cling to while the *nabi,* rather than being Israel's remembrancer of forgotten truths as whom the pontifical Bible exegesists tried to stamp him, made his pronouncements from his own inner self. He was visionary, soothsayer, magus—a poet, half-

mad and half-inspired, who wrote down his visions, thoughts and imprecations. The prophets' grandeur lay in their wrath over the injustices men did one another.

From a certain juncture onward, the prophets turned society topsy-turvy. The humble and the poor were spoken of with warmth and compassion, while the rich and profligate were scorned with a passion demonstrating that the prophet was indifferent toward civilization, championing equality alone.

VIII

The prophets Michelangelo painted earliest are those of less animated demeanor, in the van *Zechariah,* the venerable, bald-headed ancient, seen in profile, lost in his reading. His robe is yellow, with a projecting collar of blue, and he is enveloped in a cloak of greenish gray. He ignores the two boys peering over his shoulder from the left, as though waiting for him to give a signal for some errand. He is thumbing through his book hastily, as though looking for confirmation of his visions and forebodings.

Joel too is immersed in reading, but his face is turned toward the beholder as he attentively scans the first part of his parchment scroll. There is nothing calm about his reading. He is tense, full of disquiet over what the scripture tells him. His face, apparently a portrait, reminds of Bramante as he is represented on Raphael's *School of Athens.*

The boys behind *Joel*—perhaps his disciples, for the Bible often speaks of prophetic schools—stand on either side, and the one seems to be whispering or calling out to the other. They are painted from the same models as the boys behind Zechariah. *Joel's* dress is meant to please the eye. His tunic is of light violet, belted in white and held together on the chest by two gold eyelets under a green hem. A blue sash is bound about the robe above the

waist. A heavy cloak over shoulders and knees frames the figure in red.

Jeremiah, the grandest of all the prophets, is depicted in the attitude of deep thought which Michelangelo a quarter-century later was to give to the statue, *Il Pensieroso,* in the Medici chapel.

Daniel, in his Sistine ceiling picture, is reading in the Book of Jeremiah. The great, broad volume lies across his knees, and so wide apart are his legs that a small nude boy has found place between them to support the prophetic scripture from below, reaching around it with a sturdy left hand; for *Daniel* has momentarily interrupted his reading to make a note on a tablet mounted obliquely to his right. He alone among the prophets is pictured in the act of writing by Michelangelo.

Daniel's features are youthful yet wise; but his is not one of the figures on which the artist has staked his whole being. An impression of quiet harmony issues from the prophet. The little boy supporting himself against *Daniel's* right knee and filling the space between his covered legs is vastly effective.

The attitude of *Ezekiel* has a power and grandeur of its own. The mighty Oriental figure has suddenly wheeled to the right on its seat with a sudden gesture of the hand, the face with its strong brow and aquiline nose being seen in profile. His gaze seems fixed on the whirlwind coming out of the north, the great cloud, the fire infolding itself, and the brightness therein. For greater emphasis the child behind the prophet points outward to where the vision must be imagined. The gesture of *Ezekiel's* right hand seems to express his readiness to hearken to revelation: "And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me."

When his eyes move on from *Ezekiel* to *Isaiah,* the beholder feels himself translated to another region of heaven. *Isaiah* is aloof from the word, lost in his visions, almost in a trance. *Ezekiel's* vision came from without, but *Isaiah's* revelation is inward, ecstatic. *Ezekiel* is willpower incarnate, *Isaiah* pure meditation.

Isaiah's posture holds the eye. His right arm cuts across his

body, holding a book that rests on its spine, while his face is turned in the opposite direction in which a little genie points with outstretched arm; but the real point of fascination is the ineffably eloquent gesture of the left arm, resting on its elbow. *Isaiah's* left hand tells almost as much of what is passing through his soul as do his features. The movement of the fingers hints that he has just heard the inner voice. Raphael appropriated this gesture for the Sappho in his *Parnassus,* as she sits lost in poetic reverie.

The prophet *Jonah,* twisting back in his seat, the only naked figure among the prophets, occupies an entire corner of the ceiling decoration. *Jonah* has thrown himself backward and to the right, while his head is turned to the left, his eyes turned heavenward. The prophet is exceedingly wroth with God. On Jehovah's command he had proclaimed to the city of Niniveh that it should be overthrown in forty days. But God of a sudden took pity on the town and spared it. *Jonah* vehemently reproaches the Lord with having changed his mind and making a liar of his prophet. The position of the hands is noteworthy, both index fingers extended, indicating an argument in the sign language of the Italians.

IX

The five sibyls that alternate with the seven prophets on the Sistine ceiling are surely not of lesser worth. Indeed, they are as memorable as their fellow visionaries of the opposite sex. None of them, not even the youngest, is conspicuously marked with the attributes of her sex. None is in the least sensual in expression, carries even a spark of sex. They are women in whom the eternal feminine has receded into the background.

Some are of extraordinary beauty, each has a character all her own. They are meant to be majestic rather than heart-warming,

and even the passing fair ones like the *Delphic,* the *Erythrean,* the *Libyan* are creatures who have never loved a man—mysterious, primitive, divinely inspired. All of them exude an air of power. This is one of the points in which they are distinguished from the sibyls of Giovanni Pisano in Pistoia.

X

The four corner pictures at the end walls are not among those that grip the beholder, much as they may testify to the artist's great skill. David standing broad-legged over Goliath, about to strike off the giant's head with a mighty blow of his sword, constitutes a simply organized composition, yet impressive in its drama. Judith's deed on the opposite corner-spandrel is tripartite in plan. On the left a sleeping guard is dimly discerned. To the right on a pallet lies the headless body of Holofernes, still thrashing, left knee drawn up, right arm thrown high.

It is the central portion that was Michelangelo's main concern. The figures on either side were apparently meant but to fill the space. Here we see Judith covering with a cloth the hacked-off head borne in a basket on the head of her serving-woman, who lightly bends forward.

The picture of the brazen serpent in a sense anticipates the painting of the *Last Judgment.* To the right a crowd of contorted figures, seeking vainly to evade the dreadful bite of the serpents raining down from heaven, pushing and shoving with none of the grandeur of the ancient Laocoön. To the left a single quiet group—a man supporting his wretched wife, helping her to stretch forth her bitten hand toward the saving image.

The fourth corner-spandrel, again in tripartite composition, is far more satisfying in an artistic sense. To the left Esther, Ahasuerus and Haman, unmasked by Esther, sit at table. To the right

the king lies sleepless on his couch as he summons Mordecai. In the center the figure of Haman nailed to the cross, shown in masterful foreshortening.

The children standing two by two to the right and left of prophets and sibyls are painted to simulate marble relief. There is always a boy and a girl, children of five or six. The couples on the pillars rising from either side of the thrones are mirror images of each other. One can almost see how the cartoon was simply turned over, transposing the sides.

Yet in detail these figures are anything but uniform. Those painted first seem to be the most sedate, wholly preoccupied in holding up the marble lintels with their heads and arms and taking no notice of one another. Later on Michelangelo gave free play to child nature in these semi-caryatids. The solemn and even sleepy-eyed little ones begin to make each other's acquaintance, point out things of interest, talk and play together, even try to wrestle (as above *Daniel's* throne) or dance (to the right and left of the *Erythrean Sibyl*).

The bronze figures filling the triangular spaces above the spandrels are quite different in character from these marble children, let alone the nude youths that seem almost to dominate the center of the ceiling. These bronzes are back to back in pairs, each again the mirror image of the other. They enliven these small spaces that would otherwise be empty with handsome male and female nudes, further epitomizing the vault's architectural tension, so to speak, for they carry it on bent back, prize their feet against the frames.

They can scarcely be thought of as living beings, for they would have to slip off the steep, smooth surfaces on which they are wedged. They are mere symbols, enhancing the tension of the imaginary architecture to the beholder's eye, creating and maintaining the illusion of countervailing force in equilibrium that keeps the vault from falling.

XI

Helpful prelates and cardinals instructed Michelangelo in the ecclesiastic principles of Catholic tradition on prophets and sibyls. Every detail of these pre-Christian figures, as of the ceiling decorations as a whole, had to conform to the conventions of ecclesiastic art, had to fit into a dogmatic structure that could be interpreted as a prelude to the salvation and redemption of man or at least reminded of them. Sibyls and prophets after all prophesied the coming of Christ. Reading in the book of fate, they divined and foresaw the distant birth of the Redeemer.

Hence the concept of the ceiling decoration called for various genealogical sequences—the ancestors of Christ, as naively enumerated in the New Testament (i.e. the supposed progenitors of Joseph, even though he was later not accounted the true father), were a dogmatic necessity.

The great artist gladly complied with this theological challenge, which gave him a welcome opportunity for laying a quieter groundwork for the storms of passion he unleashed in the center panels. The tempo of this series is *adagio,* their basic theme unrequited yearning, the everlasting frustration he felt in his own soul and gave poetic form in his sonnets. The figures are melancholy in temper, occasionally lightened with the vigor and vitality that blossomed within himself whenever he reveled in the throes of creation, the nearest thing to happiness he knew.

Above the chapel's fourteen windows are fourteen semicircular areas or lunettes, each divided in two by a nameplate at the top of the arch, allowing room on each side for at least one figure, preferably a man and a woman. Even though unrelated, they formed a pair, and each could be surrounded with small children, giving an air of family life.

Above the lunettes the dormer ceilings cutting into the vault form another eight triangular fields. For an artist of Michelangelo's mettle, these formed an excellent background for seated or reclining figures in pyramidal groups. The form of the triangle suggested a tent flap, and what could be more natural than that Christ's nomadic ancestors had lived in tents! Following the dictates of fresco painting, Michelangelo began at the top, painting the eight triangles before the fourteen lunettes.

Michelangelo, needless to say, wasted no time on trying to imagine what Jesse or Asa or Ozias had been like or looked like. He gave the figures names because this was expected and for the rest allowed his imagination free rein. In these eight paintings, quietly effective in their harmony of line and color, he simply played variations on the theme of idyllic family life.

XII

The time is long past when critics, on the premise that Michelangelo was a reluctant painter, spoke slightingly of his colors and insisted he had merely painted reliefs in color. Actually he did just what he set out to do. Many different artists have expressed their admiration for the warm, lifelike flesh tones that mark every nuance of his figures on the Sistine frescoes. They run a broad gamut, these tones, from Eve's pale complexion, paler than Adam's, to Jonah's ruddy tint—he has been spewed up by the whale and swum through the cold water. The nude youths on the ceiling are sun-tanned, the skin color appropriate to Italy.

Michelangelo's teacher Ghirlandajo favored strong, luminous reds in his frescoes, but the disciple avoided both pure red and pure blue in his ceiling decorations. He preferred mixed and blended colors. He was fond of adding a dash of orange to his reds, as in *Ezekiel's* robe or the lining of the *Delphic Sibyl's* cloak. He changes his hues with the light, giving them white highlights

and letting the native tint emerge only in the shadows. Indeed, modeling was his main concern (as it was Leonardo's), and color was subordinated to it.

Just as Michelangelo avoided pure reds and blues on the ceiling, so he also avoided pure white. His white fabrics carry a strong bluish, light yellow or even brownish tinge. He seldom uses carmine and violet. Gold is only simulated with other pigments. When Julius II remarked on the absence of real gold, Michelangelo lightly replied: "The prophets I have painted were poor men; they had no gold."

In its entire color scheme the ceiling gives the impression of an immense water-color painting. If the effect is memorable, it is because of the vivid contrasts. Some of the highlighted drapery seems like gold-embroidered brocade, even though there is no gold. It is true, however, that the use of pure blue as of gold would have allowed the individual effects to merge into an overall festive air more in keeping with Julius' temperament than with Michelangelo's.

He was after grandeur rather than gayety. In his earliest youth in Florence he now and then strove solely for realism (as in his *Bacchus*) or gracefulness (as in his *Giovannino*), but like Raphael at the same time, the move to Rome imbued him with a penchant for grandeur, readily awakened in so extraordinary a mind at the sight of the imposing ruins and relics of a great past.

Aside from Rome there was, of course, in all Italy no city that had room for a work like the Sistine ceiling. It is inspired, moreover, by that sense of grandeur which was the very air breathed in the capital of the Catholic world during the Italian Renaissance.

One man, a solitary spirit, lifted the Sistine Chapel not only above the Cappella Palatina in Palermo and the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris but above all the chapels in the world. He made the immense space a vehicle for what he alone had to say to mankind. Michelangelo in his lonely grandeur made the chapel the expression and instrument of the full stature, pathos and imagination that dwelt within him.

One cannot help being moved by the utter simplicity and unpretentiousness with which Michelangelo (in a letter of late September or early October 1512) writes his father that his work is at last finished. He makes no more ado over it than if it were a perfectly commonplace commission: "I am done with the chapel where I have been painting the decorations. The pope is well satisfied. My other affairs are not coming off as well as I thought. I blame the times, which are most unfavorable to our art." And as usual, the man who had just completed the most famous paintings in the world signs himself "Michelagniolo, sculptor in Rome."

Michelangelo and Raphael

I

It was in January 1509 that Michelangelo began with his decoration of the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. Toward the end of that same year his contemporary, Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, eight years his junior, made the first brush strokes in execution of frescoes that were to become almost as famous as the titanic work of the Florentine artist.

In the second story of the Vatican wing built by Pope Nicholas V were three middle-sized vaulted chambers which, together with a larger adjoining hall, are called *le stanze.* They belong to the pope's living apartments and were not without adornment even before the time of Raphael. Francesco Albertini in his Guide to

Rome (*Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris Romae,* 1510) mentions that the Vatican chambers were decorated by a number of eminent painters in competition with one another. We do not know precisely what the different ones whose names have come down to us had painted originally, but we do know that Raphael was respectful enough to spare some of the ceiling pictures by his predecessors, for example paintings by Perugino and Sodoma.

In the middle room, now called Stanza della Segnatura, Sodoma had already done a number of frescoes which Julius II had ruthlessly scraped away to make room for the plans of the youthful master to come.

As we note, Michelangelo and Raphael originally had this in common with respect to their position in the Vatican—subordinate painters had begun the decoration of the halls subsequently entrusted to them. Otherwise their destiny was as different as their character. They were opposites, even though they were fated always to be mentioned in the same breath by posterity as twin geniuses in the fine arts of the time.

Unquestionably it was Bramante, enjoying the pope's favor, who first drew Julius' attention to Raphael. He persuaded the pope, who was ever receptive to genius, to take Raphael into his service, give him important commissions, even have his portrait painted by Raphael. Like Raphael, Bramante himself came from Urbino; but it seems to have been Perugino who was the link between them. Perugino was Raphael's teacher and Bramante's friend. In Bramante's Roman house he met the older painters—Pinturicchio, Signorelli and many others.

Raphael was born in April 1483 in Urbino, the son of a by no means untalented painter, Giovanni Santi, and his wife Magia Ciarla. He lost his mother when he was only eight, a premature loss he shares with Michelangelo, though in Raphael's case it does not seem to have chilled and hardened his character. Since his father died when he was only eleven, Raphael can scarcely have learned much from him, precocious as he was in painting. Yet the elder Santi's forte was perspective and quite likely the groundwork

for the young man's later skill in perspective drawing was laid in his home.

A maternal uncle, Simone di Battista di Ciarla, took in the orphan as his own and became the object of Raphael's filial affection. A letter to Ciarla written in 1508 shows that the handsome and talented youth had gained access to the small but wealthy court at Urbino, where Guidobaldo II, son of Federigo da Montefeltro, was regent. Since Giovanni Santi had been court painter with the title *pictor de la illustrissima duchessa di Urbino,* the son enjoyed the protection of this art-loving family, around whom everything revolved in the little city.

Guidobaldo was a fine man, learned and brave. Ill health compelled him to let his universally admired wife Elisabeta Gonzaga lead the life of a virtual widow, but this harmed the good name of neither. The best-known poets and humanists of the Renaissance belonged to the court circle—men like Bibbiena, Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione—and all of these later became Raphael's friends and protectors in Rome. Guidobaldo's palazzo in Urbino had the same significance for the early development of Raphael the palazzo of Lorenzo il Magnifico in Florence had for Michelangelo.

II

The young Raphael was apprenticed to Pietro Perugino. The precise year this occurred is not known, but it was early in Raphael's life* and there was a sharp contrast between Raphael's relationship to Perugino and Michelangelo's to Ghirlandajo. In the latter case it was limited to the barest essentials and later steadfastly denied, while Raphael as a growing youth devotedly submitted to his master's style. Indeed, for a long time he painted the

* At that time Raphael was about thirteen. Michelangelo and Dürer were apprenticed at the same age.

same themes as Perugino, using the same methods and compositions. He ultimately broke free because of the simple fact that he began to outdo his teacher in the self-same subjects, until everyone had to realize that mastery lay on the side of the pupil. Raphael rose high above his teacher.

While Raphael was his pupil, Perugino painted an *Assumption*, a *Marriage of Mary*, a *Coronation of Mary*, a *Baptism of Christ*. Raphael treated these same subjects in his first independent works. The relationship between teacher and pupil was so close that there are sheets with drawings by Perugino on one side and by Raphael on the other. There are other drawings by Perugino which the young Raphael completed. He made a drawn copy of Perugino's *Resurrection*.

In 1502 Perugino moved from Perugia to Florence, but this caused no break in the relationship between the fifty-year-old master and his pupil who was not yet twenty. It is not known whether Raphael departed at the same time as Perugino, but Florentine influences are discernible in his art at an early date and, in any event, he long clung to Perugino's ways of dividing up space and grouping figures. His famous *Sposalizio* of 1504 echoes in its whole arrangement Perugino's *Marriage of Mary*, except that what in Perugino's painting is stiff and unimaginative becomes inspired and expressive with Raphael.

III

Raphael's long series of Florentine Madonnas—the drawings even more than the paintings—show how originality can assert itself with growing richness and unvarying grace, even when copying and imitating. The poses, quite simple at the outset, become more subtle. The Madonna's features keep growing in beauty and charm. They express emotions that were foreign to

Michelangelo and that he was not given to represent—modesty and virginal freshness, combined with a mother love so tender as to be downright radiant.

Raphael's endless sketches give us insight into his unremitting zeal. He explored every possible position a child can assume with respect to its mother. Themes burst forth as from a cornucopia, and with a genius rooted in an unswerving sense of beauty Raphael's pen or brush invariably found the arrangement that would best feast the beholder's eye.

Thus in the *Madonna del Granduca* Raphael begins by showing mother and child essentially in vertical lines, broken only by a gentle inclination of the head. With the introduction of St. John as a third figure, the Madonna pictures gradually grow richer in movement. At first the group is organized in pyramid form, of simple architectural structure. Then the compositions grow freer. In the fine *Alba Madonna* (National Gallery, Washington) the influence of Leonardo's *St. Anne* is seen. In the *Madonna del Baldachino* Fra Bartolommeo's influence is reflected in the great figure of St. Peter.

From the moment the young artist from Urbino tried his hand at portraiture, during his Florentine period, the powerful influence Leonardo exerted on him, as on virtually all artists of the time, becomes noticeable. His *Maddalena Doni* invokes the *Mona Lisa* in attitude. Judging from Vasari's remark about the close acquaintance between Raphael and Fra Bartolommeo, it was the latter, particularly, who opened the eyes of the young genius to the art and teachings of Leonardo.

IV

Originally Raphael, unlike Michelangelo, was not deeply influenced by antiquity. A trace of such an influence is found in the fine

painting, the *Three Graces,* in Chantilly. The idea stems either from a marble group that was found in Siena, when Raphael was there in 1503–1504 as Pinturicchio's assistant, or from some carved gemstone. The influence of ancient tomb reliefs is unquestionable in the drawing, the *Death of Adonis,* in Oxford. (Signorelli used the same Roman relief as a model.) It is, so to speak, a study for the *Entombment.* Yet Adonis is here a dying rather than a dead man being carried away by friends. In Raphael's further development during his stay in Rome we see impressions from antiquity more often and plainly, though it cannot be said that this influence was ever dominant in his painting, whereas it clearly was in his work as an architect. As a painter Raphael borrows only minor details from the ancients. His lifework reflects Roman antiquity only to the degree that it reflects the spirit of humanism—the spirit that found expression in the Italian Renaissance, utterly permeating its finest creations.

V

The execution of the frescoes in the *stanze* marked a turning-point in Raphael's life, no less important than the ceiling decorations of the Sistine Chapel in the life of Michelangelo. Like the older artist, the younger grew with his work and attained ever greater perfection. Yet they took different courses. Michelangelo proceeded from pictures on too small a scale, crowded with figures, to large-scale compositions for which a few sufficed. Raphael started from a first great composition, dominated by symmetry in heaven as on earth and arrived at a still symmetrical but far livelier and richer arrangement of figures. The step from the *Disputà* to the *School of Athens* marks an advance.

The young master's further progress is from compositions characterized essentially by tranquillity and perfect harmony to such

a fresco as *Heliodorus Driven from the Temple*, in which those portions in repose are but resting-points for the eye in taking in the whole, flooded with dramatic life.

In the *Disputà* all was still intent upon beauty of line and total structure. Whether the expressions of the faces were appropriate or flat was a matter of secondary importance. The *School of Athens* and *Parnassus* are magnificent paintings, especially the former, but in both philosophers and poets have assumed meaningful postures.

Heliodorus, on the other hand, embodies a measure of passion unknown in any of Raphael's earlier paintings. Michelangelo offered a similar but far feebler composition in one of the bronze medallions placed between the nude youths on the Sistine ceiling.*

VI

The first of Raphael's great fresco paintings, in the Stanza della Segnatura, shows the open sky up above, with a mass of small, winged, praying angels, and below six larger, grown figures, grouped about the figure of God, visible to the waist, a venerable ancient, right hand upraised, the world globe in his left. Still further down sits Christ, encompassed by a scallop shell of tiny winged angels' heads, his body bare, a white mantle over his loins and left arm. On his right side is Mary in devotion, on his left St. John.

Below them, in a rising arc like the new moon, come the saints of the church triumphant, firmly seated on clouds, and still further down there is another profusion of angels. Four of them have the

* This bronze medallion represents, according to Edgar Wind (1960), *The Chastisement of Heliodorus;* formerly it was called *The Death of Uriah.*

gospels open before them, while a mass of smaller fellows are on either side of the sacred dove that forms the center of the picture.

By its vivid animation the earthly gathering provides the necessary contrast to the blissful serenity of the heavenly. Here too the action has a focus in the center of the picture, the monstrance on the altar. It is a symbol of the miracle of the church militant on earth, and this is what gives the painting its surging movement. From the left a group of worshiping young men, half on their knees, sweep toward the altar.

In different ways four church fathers about the altar express the religious meditation and rapture brought to them by the revelation of the mysterious sacrament. The group on the right is in action too, and on both sides the wavelike contours are broken by looming figures, giving poise and firmness to the picture, amid the passions surging about them. The two groups ebbing away at the outer edges dovetail artfully with the central portions. At each end a figure leans out over a balustrade or pedestal, underscoring the sense of movement. The man on the far right, gathering up his cloak and gesturing toward the altar, is borrowed from Leonardo's *Adoration of the Kings,** which was among the works that impressed Raphael most deeply. Traces of it haunt all his *stanze,* especially his *School of Athens.*

Among the four famous ceiling paintings, representing Theology (*divinarum rerum notitia*), Poetry (*numine afflatur*), Philosophy (*causarum cognitio*) and Jurisprudence (*jus suum unicuique tribuit*), Poetry is the most significant. It expresses sublime fervor. The gold ground softens the deep hues. The laurel wreath about the head takes the place of a halo.

An answer to the question of how Raphael, a stripling of twenty-five, was able to tackle and solve such immense tasks can be given fully only by accepting the fact of his genius; although he did have careful training in the difficult fresco technique in Perugia.

* The unfinished painting in the Uffizi, Florence; Raphael must have studied it while he was working in Florence (1504–08).

VII

Like Michelangelo, Raphael was of course under the necessity of listening to sage advice on his compositions from the scholars who went in and out at the Vatican. His masterpiece, the *School of Athens,* and the not quite so consummate *Parnassus* express the spirit of humanism at its purest. As in a burning glass they show how the best minds of the time looked on science and art, which they represent as revelations of beauty.

There is no part in the *School of Athens* that does not please the eye. The manner in which the groups are arranged and counterbalanced, satisfying by their equilibrium and delighting with their variety, is beyond compare. How felicitously and remarkably the sprawling Diogenes fills his space! How subtly composed is the Pythagoras group with the counterpoint of its four heads—the two seated ancients, the beturbaned man leaning forward and the youth holding the tablet! Graven on it in Greek are the terms for a full note, a fourth, a fifth and an octave—epagdoön, diatessaron, diapente and diapason—to illustrate, naturally enough, the close relation between mathematics and music, to which the great humanists Alberti and Ficino had drawn attention. Especially prominent among the musical notations on the tablet is the figure ten, which Aristotle called the most perfect, the sum of the first four integers. The care that went into this inscription testifies to the respect Raphael paid to his humanist friends and patrons.

Even more fascinating is the Archimedes group, opposite, with the great preceptor leaning forward to expound a geometric problem on another tablet. Here the painter shows his genius in the solution of a psychological study—four heads show four different stages of comprehension, and the beauty of his lines is well-nigh ideal.

Raphael employed an ostentatiously painted architecture to lend his picture style and grandeur. The effect of this magnificent

interior is marvelous. But for the mighty vault arching above Plato and Aristotle and their disciples, half of the effect of beauty issuing from the figures would be lost. In this miraculous work the youth of twenty-five emerges with absolute assurance in the balanced use of every artifice, masterful in his ability to dominate rather than titillate the beholder, to convey a sense of tranquil harmony.

Details remind of Michelangelo and his use of *contrapposto*. Note for example the unnaturally contorted posture of the man with the beard who stands with one foot on a stone cube, holding a book against his left knee while reaching for the book with his right hand across his body, which is turned to the left even as the head points to the right.* These Michelangelesque mannerisms show the overpowering impression the elder master must have made on the younger.

Yet these details mean little in the face of the consummate mastery with which Plato and Aristotle are here plausibly presented to posterity as the two princes of the intellect who dominated ancient thought. Nothing could be more unassuming than the quiet gesture with which Plato points upward, nor anything more eloquent than the outstretched hand with which Aristotle indicates his desire and decision to cleave unto the earth. Their retinue is worthy of them—the groups on either side are full of life. Some of the individual figures are monumental in effect. Gladly the eye comes upon the youthful self-portrait of Raphael, discreetly and modestly painted beside the figure on the extreme right.

VIII

It is probably unnecessary to give much weight to the circumstance that at the time he was painting the Stanza della Segnatura

* Compare Michelangelo's *St. Matthew* in the Academy of Florence.

Raphael was embroiled in the love affair to which the sonnets scribbled on the backs of sketches for the *Disputà* testify. We may take for granted that affairs of the heart were no rarity in the life of a handsome young painter of his stature. His contemporaries give evidence to this effect.

What is important is that Raphael's Roman works, like his earlier ones, reveal his overflowing love of his fellow man, even though in restrained and intangible fashion—an emotion quite foreign to Michelangelo. It is true that the master from Urbino works his spell most often and most strongly through his innate yet schooled gift for delighting and enchanting the eye of the beholder. But this talent merely reflects his capacity for love, preeminently love of mankind in its beauty.

Raphael may have been, quite literally, a worshiper at the altar of Venus; indeed, he depicted the goddess in the ceiling mosaic of the Cappella Chigi with angels above her head pointing to her with roguish smiles of admiration; yet he was at the same time preeminently a worshiper of the Madonna and, in a sense, her creator.

It was Michelangelo, in his Sistine ceiling fresco, who fixed for all time the image of God the Father—so firmly that when Raphael set about painting his own Bible primer in the Vatican's *loggie*, he had no alternative but to walk in Michelangelo's footsteps; but when it came to portraying the Virgin, it was Raphael who kept adding touches of tenderness, intimacy and distinction, until in the *Sistine Madonna* (in Dresden) he attained to that state of perfection we mortals like to call absolute, a composition of climactic beauty that can never be forgotten.

This Madonna with her gossamer gait faces the beholder like an apparition yet seems more real than anyone in the world of reality. The overwhelming blend of innocence and devotion in her glance, the humble yet motherly manner in which she proffers her marvelous child—"the awesome boy genius," as Burckhardt called him—as though she were bearing the world ruler—these are without compare even in the art of Raphael. It is scarcely neces-

sary to dwell on the inspiration that here joins every feature to create the impact of unearthly revelation—the sense of balance, the unerring design, the light on the billowing clouds while the Madonna's feet are left in shadow.

Innocence, tenderness, devotion and love inspire this master even when he is after grandeur and attains it. He deserves immortality, this gracious creator of beauty, even if only on account of his drawings for sun, moon and planets in the Cappella Chigi.* His original sketches for the figures of God and for Jupiter's angels are preserved in Oxford. A drawing of Mars in red chalk is in Lille. All else has vanished.

The Stanza d'Eliodoro displays the full originality Raphael had acquired in his incredibly fast growth as a dramatist of the brush. It is extraordinary what the great artist did with the artless theme from the third chapter of 2 Maccabees that was put to him. He stuck to the text—he shows the splendidly vaulted nave of a temple, identified as being in Jerusalem by a seven-branched candlestick, with the High Priest kneeling in devotion before the altar; and still following the text, he shows a group of frightened women and children (verse 19) and depicts the story of the horse that appeared (verse 25) with its terrible rider who seemed to wear armor of gold. "And the horse ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet."

The horse is not particularly well painted, but the vigor and dash with which the rider bursts upon the scene are excellently rendered. The important thing is the picture's admirable composition—the vast empty space in the center, affording a perspective of the High Priest; the entire action crowded into the right side, with its fleeing, booty-laden temple robbers and the fallen Heliodorus (caught in a position surely reminiscent of Michelangelo, repeated by Vasari in the curiously contorted attitude of his reclining Venus, after a drawing by Michelangelo). It is the heavenly scourgers that give the right side of the picture its sweep.

This agitated group is counterbalanced on the left by the two

* In the church Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.

lads who have clambered on the pediment of a column, clinging there, the better to see. For the rest, the left side of the picture contains a group that is agreeable in its repose. Pope Julius is seen at the extreme edge, high upon a sedan chair, borne by men in his train, among whom the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi, trim and slender, occupies the front rank.

IX

In the *Mass of Bolsena,* facing the doubting young priest, we again encounter Julius, the pope who is beyond doubt because of his firm faith in the miracle. This too is a beautifully composed painting, in which the Swiss guards with their altogether un-Latin demeanor—though sincerely devout—form a refreshing contrast to the finely featured cardinals and the typically Roman aspect of the choir boys.

One senses here one of the many differences between the art of Michelangelo and that of Raphael. This picture has high historical value. This is what the Swiss guards looked like in the time of Julius II. The elder artist thought it beneath his dignity to give us a plausible picture of the interesting personalities and institutions of his age. Such a thing never even entered his mind.

In this picture, as in his *Parnassus,* Raphael was able to turn into a distinct compositional advantage the window that cuts into his painting area, breaking and tearing it up.

In his *Deliverance of St. Peter* Raphael reached his apex as a technician of painting, achieving light effects such as Michelangelo never sought nor attained. In three frescoes grouped about a window the artist shows how St. Peter is awakened at night in prison by an angel who liberates him. In the center is the barred prison cell. St. Peter sits on the ground, asleep. An angel enwrapped in

radiance bends over him, touches his shoulder and points to the outside. Two sleep-sodden soldiers lean against the side-walls.

The effect of liberation is enhanced because St. Peter, unlike older pictures, does not discourse with the angel but emerges from the gloom like a sleepwalker, his figure lying partly in the shadow of the angel's radiant light. Another picturesque effect is created by the flickering shine of a torch, reflected in red from the stones and the armor.

The Stanza della Segnatura was painted in the years from 1508 to 1511, the Stanza d'Eliodoro from 1512 to 1514. When the last fresco was done, Michelangelo had already finished the ceiling decorations in the Sistine Chapel some two years before.

Immediately afterward Raphael began the cartoons for the tapestries that were to be hung in the Sistine Chapel below the Florentine frescoes. Seven original, colored cartoons for the tapestries are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Here Raphael reached supreme autonomy. Some of the vivid scenes—like the *Death of Ananias*—do carry distant hints of Michelangelo—though the compositions are entirely Raphael's own. In the great cartoons interest in individualism is entirely supplanted by interest in expressive gesture of body and features. The composition in the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* is unexcelled and absolutely original. It is impossible to imagine any clearer expression of its spiritual content. The beholder sees both boats—purposely kept too small—full length, for the one in front overlaps the second but slightly. A single sweeping line, rising and then falling, leads from the steersman in the second boat by way of the two fishermen drawing up the net to the almost upright St. Andrew in the first boat, who approaches the seated Christ in an attitude of devotion. St. Peter is already on his knees before Christ, his hands upraised. St. Andrew himself has no place to kneel but seems to sink down in adoration. The manner in which the contours of the landscape in the background follow the lines of the second boat, and in which the lake opens up to make room for

the dominant figures of Christ and St. Peter testify to Raphael's swiftly acquired virtuosity.

X

Among the many known disciples of Raphael the most eminent are probably Giovan Francesco Penni, Giulio Romano and Perino del Vaga. Of them Giulio Romano achieved the greatest renown after the master's death.

In contrast to the solitary Michelangelo, circumstances compelled his admired rival more and more to leave to pupils and assistants execution of works he was but able to design. He was overwhelmed with commissions and in the last year of his life the pope even put him in charge of Rome's antiquities, indeed, of the city's entire artistic life. The sole question that touches us is whether in his swift development he managed to move away from or only toward Michelangelo's style.

The available evidence points in the latter direction. Petty criticism of such a masterpiece as the *Transfiguration* (probably dating from the year 1519) dwells on the contrast between the figure of Christ, soaring upward above Mount Tabor into the glorious light with Moses and Elijah, and the agitated scene at the foot of the mountain where, according to St. Matthew (17, 14), a child possessed is brought to the disciples, who are unable to heal him. There is no contrast here but rather, as Goethe sensed and said, only harmony between the transfigured attendants above and the earthly sufferers below. What is significant, however, is that a figure like the epileptic boy and the group about him—the kneeling mother, the young woman leaning forward, the abstracted man with the beard who holds the screaming lunatic—would be inconceivable, had not Michelangelo pointed the way for Raphael.

XI

One important advantage that Raphael developed as a painter over Michelangelo in his Roman period was his incomparable skill in portraiture.

Foremost to be mentioned are his two great portraits, the one of Julius II, the other of Leo X, with the two cardinals, Giulio de' Medici and Ludovico de' Rossi. The great pope sits lost in thought, his mouth firmly closed. His lofty brow bespeaks power, no less than his great white beard. The strong, well-shaped nose, dominating the face, is in full light, while the piercing eyes lie deep in the shadow of the projecting brows. Raphael saw and depicted the majestic statesman in this pope. In his successor with the fat and shapeless face Raphael emphasized the fine head to obtain an effect of beauty. Leo, whose nearsightedness is hinted at by the magnifying glass in his hand, has a book of miniature paintings before him, from which he is looking up and out of the picture. He looks sophisticated, yet good-natured. The two cardnials behind him, also holding up their heads without a trace of stiffness, are merely his seconds. Arranged at a somewhat lower level than the pope, they contribute their share toward gathering the picture into a single expression of quiet dignity.*

Neither of these two paintings, however, equals in stature the portrait of a cardinal (in Madrid), falsely supposed to depict Bibbiena.** Utterly compelling in the simplicity of its grandeur, it represents the art of aristocratic portraiture at its best. There is

* The best version of the Julius portrait (1511) is in the Uffizi, Florence, probably the original. Another version is in the Pitti, and a very good copy in the National Gallery, London. The portrait of Pope Leo X and the two cardinals (1517) is in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

** It probably represents Cardinal Ippolito d'Este.

a sincerity, coupled with profound psychological insight, in this masterful likeness of a prince of the church, with his thin neck, his pale, lean face, his narrow lips, his great, finely arched nose. His expression is one of extreme shrewdness—handsome and rather morbid, with the superiority of the born diplomat. Viewed purely as a painting, this waist-high portrait is impressive, its lower two-thirds being taken up almost entirely by the broad expanse of the cardinal's habit, most skillfully represented. One arm, in a light-colored sleeve, extends across the bottom like a base on which the whole picture rests.

In his portraits—even more in those of women than of men—Raphael moves in an area where he altogether defies comparison with Michelangelo, who never even seems to have aspired to speaking likenesses, indeed, who held the art of portraiture in low esteem.

There is in existence, however—probably dating from the years 1514 to 1519—a fresco by the master from Urbino, in which even in subject matter he begins to take Michelangelo's measure. He painted it for Agostino Chigi above an arch in the church of Santa Maria Della Pace. In an arrangement that admirably utilizes the limited space it represents four sibyls surrounded by various angels, large and small. At heart the composition is austerely symmetrical, but in execution it is full of life. At the very top center is a small angel with a torch, framed by two large ones holding the tablets, on which the oracular sayings are already partly inscribed. The space to the right and left above the seated sibyls is filled with angels flying off with inscribed parchments.

At the left is the Cumaean sibyl, in keeping with tradition here represented as youthful, but full of vigor, as she reaches for a parchment unfolded by a flying angel. The space between her and the Persian sibyl on her right is taken up by a pensive little angel, head resting on hand. The Persian sibyl leans with her left arm against the rim of the arch, turning with a Michelangelesque gesture and writing with her right hand on a tablet held out to her by a full-grown angel. The left side of the composition is thus

full of colorful life and rich in lines that divide up the space. The opposite side is dedicated to calm and reflection. Its dominant figure, the Phrygian sibyl, rests her bare right arm unmoved against the rim of the arch, her body turned to the right, her head to the left, again in an attitude reminiscent of Michelangelo. Her beauty is overpowering—she is the fairest sibyl Raphael created. The fourth sibyl, designated as the Tiburtian, is a shrewd old woman with haggard features.

We see here one of Michelangelo's main themes in variation. Yet the similarity is essentially limited to the subject matter and a few chance elements. The differences are far more noteworthy. One could fall in love with these young women, whereas the sibyls in the Sistine Chapel inspire only awe. Raphael's are not at all above the common touch. They are merely splendid specimens of warm-blooded womanhood. They may be sibyls—but they are still women, and they are not utterly caught up in the reading and writing of oracles.

The sibyls were actually figures from Graeco-Roman mythology rather than the Biblical characters as which Michelangelo's ceiling stamped them. Here as elsewhere in his work, we find Raphael renewing antiquity as the full and happy life. Yet Raphael was not all exuberance, not even fully of the Renaissance. Just as Michelangelo, with his four recumbent figures of the Phases of Day in the Medici Chapel, representing life as torment, was soon to point beyond the Renaissance, so the master from Urbino, in his *St. Cecilia* (1515, now in Bologna), pointed toward the art of the baroque with its sense of ecstatic surrender and sensual inwardness, as exemplified in Bernini's *St. Theresa* in Rome's Santa Maria della Vittoria.

How deep and earnest was Raphael's love of antiquity and of all the great ancient monuments left in Rome is shown not only in the reports of his conscientious administration in his papal office of conservator of these mighty and imposing relics, but also in the *Memoriale* that is no doubt rightly ascribed to him. There he expresses his fervor for the precious ancient architecture and his

sadness over the vandalism that destroyed the finest buildings down into his own times; and he showed how one must go about measuring and depicting these remnants of splendid ancient works.

He was indignant that even the Romans, over long periods of time, showed no more respect for these marble treasures than the Goths and Vandals; and his dislike of the Goths led him to reject the whole Gothic style. He must have meant that style by what he calls German architecture, for he describes the pointed arch as its distinguishing feature. He disapproved of it partly because it had less load-bearing capacity than the round arch, partly because he thought it ungraceful. His classic taste was also affronted because "the Germans," rather than using the fine ornamentation of antiquity, resorted to ill-made little figures and mythical monsters to support their beams and to tasteless foliage for decoration.

It is quite likely that Michelangelo, despite his reluctance to agree with Raphael on anything, completely shared his younger rival's prejudice against the Gothic style. One is driven to this conclusion by the slighting remarks on nordic art in the conversations Francisco de Hollanda has passed down to us.

Despite the deep gulf between the genius from Florence and the genius from Urbino, both unfolded fully only in Rome. Both breathed the air of Rome, thrived on its spirit, remained all their lives under the spell of ancient art, reborn in the Renaissance.

The Medici Chapel

I

*E*NTERING THE SACRISTY of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence, one has the feeling of setting foot in a hallowed shrine of mankind—and the feeling recurs no matter how many times one has passed this threshold. Despite its unfinished character, what has been created here works a powerful spell that compels awesome admiration. Unique in the history of sculpture, sprung from the deepest sources of creative power raised to the ultimate, it reflects the intensely personal tragedy of a somber mind and leaves the beholder with a new and moving vision of life.

What is to be seen here is but a fraction of the work originally planned. That work was abandoned in midstream—relinquished

so utterly that in the thirty years left to him Michelangelo, having left Florence before its completion, never saw it in place, indeed, never saw any part of it again and in time forgot what the original plan had been. To posterity, nevertheless, this work has fused into an entity of its own, is accounted, in any event, the fullest and most characteristic expression of Michelangelo's inner life and artistry in his maturity.

Both the intellectual and the physical work on the statues of the grave chapel embrace the entire period from 1520 to 1534. Yet as always in Michelangelo's life—that life beset with difficulties, cumbered with obstacles—there was so much to overcome in these years before the work could begin, and once it was begun there were such serious interruptions, that only a few of these long years were actually devoted to the main work; and ultimately it was broken off by a departure akin to flight, never to be resumed.

Everything speaks for the assumption that the plan for a memorial to the renowned Medici family originated with Cardinal Giulio, the later Pope Clement, soon after Cosimo's last descendant, Lorenzo de' Medici the younger, Duke of Urbino, died on May 4, 1519. Already a few years before, on March 17, 1516, Pope Leo's elder brother, Giuliano de' Medici, Duke of Nemours, had died. In a letter from Michelangelo to Domenico Buoninsegni, written as early as 1519, we read: "I am ready at any time to serve the cardinal with my person and life, at his pleasure. I mean the tombs and the blocks that have been ordered in Carrara."

There is something touching in this willingness of the great artist to serve Giulio de' Medici after all the disappointments and humiliations the work on the façade of San Lorenzo had brought Michelangelo in the service of this same cardinal. But Michelangelo's unquenchable creative temperament was not humbled by the abandonment of that project to the degree of failing to respond ardently to the possibility of carrying out a still vaster one.

II

The plan began to take shape in 1520. Michelangelo submitted a first design. Like the first plan for the Julius tomb, it contemplates a free-standing structure, in the center of the new sacristy of San Lorenzo, not yet completed. The structure was to hold four tombs—of the two *Magnifici,* the great Lorenzo and his murdered brother Giuliano, and the two younger Medici, the Duke of Urbino and the Duke of Nemours, but recently dead.

The cardinal approved the design, merely suggesting (November 20, 1520) that the small size of the chapel might make a free-standing structure difficult. Michelangelo tirelessly made design after design. A first one with a square floor plan was followed by a second, octagonal one. Sketches showing a single level are succeeded by others showing two. In the first plan the sarcophagi were to be placed foot first toward the beholder, in a later one sideways.

The final order was entered by Michelangelo in his *ricordi:* "On April 9, 1521, I received a letter from Cardinal Medici and, through Domenico Buoninsegna, two hundred florins from him, to go to Carrara and negotiate on the quarrying of marble blocks for the tombs meant for the new sacristy of San Lorenzo. I went to Carrara, stayed there twenty days, took down all the measurements for the above-mentioned tombs in clay and drew them on paper."

He made an agreement with two companies concerning the delivery of quantities of marble intended mostly for the chapel's architectural interior. There is, however, special mention of two blocks for figures and one for a seated Madonna. It then proved impossible to get the cardinal to agree to any of Michelangelo's proposals on how the work was to be paid. He would neither approve payment of a single lump sum for the whole project nor

pay the artist for the actual working time involved. Nor could any agreement be reached when Michelangelo offered to prepare full-scale wooden models of the tombs.

In a letter to Fatucci written in 1523, Michelangelo complained that almost two years had gone by on trivialities, and still no clear-cut commitment or adequate reply from the cardinal. He enumerated a number of fruitless efforts, expressly relating the last, in December 1521, when the cardinal said: "We too desire that something good be found in the execution of the tombs, to wit, something from your hand." Michelangelo added: "He did not tell me, however, that he wished me to do them." Perhaps Cardinal Giulio de' Medici felt ill at ease under the rule of Pope Adrian and dared not commit himself for lack of money.

III

Things improved when Giulio, on November 19, 1523, became Pope Clement VII. In his *ricordi* Michelangelo noted: "Today, January 12, 1524, Bastiano the carpenter began working with me on the models for the tombs."

In 1421 Filippo Brunelleschi had submitted a plan for the construction of the basilica of San Lorenzo to Giovanni di Bicci. His son Cosimo and grandson Piero had finished the structure, except for the façade. Family crypts were already provided for. Cosimo rested in the vault below the altar. His parents lay in the old sacristy. In the new sacristy a sarcophagus of porphyry held his sons Giovanni and Piero.

The south chapel, called the new sacristy, had been finished only in the rough. Its completion had to coincide with the construction of the tombs it was to shelter. By early 1524 construction work had progressed. On February 6 the ceiling had been divided into panels for plastering, and during the early months of that year completion of the cupola was being pushed hard.

One can scarcely overemphasize the advantages to Michelangelo in thus witnessing the progress of the work to his desire and satisfaction. For the first time he was able to fit the surrounding space to his figures so that each was in keeping with the other. Now he succeeded in what he had failed to do with his *David*, his *Pietà* and his *Moses*—to utilize the light in the space as he pleased, and he did so to great effect.

To mention only the use to which he put shadow, everyone senses the powerful impression that issues from the brooding features of Lorenzo de' Medici by virtue of the face being wholly shadowed. Similarly, the impression of melancholy in *La Notte* is enhanced because her face, drooping in sleep, is in deep shadow.

The next stage after the plan for a free-standing structure provided, as the designs show, two memorials along the walls, each with two sarcophagi. There was to be a *Madonna* in the middle, at first standing, then seated, in a tabernacle, to join the two parts of the work.

But when work began in earnest in January 1524, this idea too had been abandoned, and the models to be executed were those of the two tombs we know today. Each had its own sarcophagus, but the two figures on their volutes were to be supplemented by river gods, recumbent on the ground. These figures were soon eliminated, for reasons of space. The necessity for fitting the monuments precisely into the available space led to this limitation. And from the moment the number of sarcophagi was reduced to two, strangely enough the plan to set monuments to the two elder, greater Medici was abandoned. The artist was content with tombs for the two younger, less interesting descendants.

IV

There was actually an overruling ecclesiastical consideration. This was a chapel in which mass for the dead was to be said. One

of the four sides necessarily had to be reserved for the altar. Only three were left, one for the *Madonna* with the two Medici patron saints, the other two for the tombs.

Michelangelo could not bring himself to give up the plan of setting a monument to the two *Magnifici* altogether. The double grave kept haunting him down to the crucial year 1534 when he broke off his work in the sacristy and left Florence forever. In the British Museum is a rough sketch, explained by a pen-and-ink drawing by Aristotile da San Gallo in the same frame. It shows a single sarcophagus, the *cassone,* meant by him to receive the bodies of both brothers. He had it hewn from a single marble block. Its disappearance remains unexplained.

Michelangelo himself did only the broad footpiece into which the wooden coffins of the two famous brothers were later placed (1559) and above which rises the *Madonna* statue in all its glory, no longer part of the tomb architecture proper, but standing between Sts. Cosmas and Damian, whose execution was left to Michelangelo's mediocre assistants. *St. Damian* we owe to Raffaello da Montelupo, *St. Cosmas* to Giovanni Montorsoli. We know that they worked from Michelangelo's models, but there is no trace of that in the two statues.

V

Even more surprising than the circumstance that the tombs for Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother were displaced by monuments to two lesser men is the fact that the artist settled on these at all, for it had been suggested to him to erect monuments to the two popes from the house of Medici, Leo and the then reigning Clement. The tombs for these two were planned in May 1524. As late as 1526 the pope reverted to this plan. But it never got beyond a few designs and sketches. Here too the artist envisioned a tripartite architecture, with a tiaraed figure in the middle, giving the blessing. It all came to nothing.

Later on Clement himself picked a spot in the choir of the basilica as suitable for the tombs of the two popes. They were executed by lesser artists and ultimately erected elsewhere, in the choir of the Minerva church in Rome, where few pay attention to them.

In the sacristy at Florence a wooden model was begun in January 1524 and finished in March. Immediately afterward the first figures for the sarcophagi were modeled in clay and appropriate marble blocks in Carrara rough-dressed. By June 17, 1526, the masonry work for one of the tombs was finished and that for the other about to begin. The statue of Duke *Giuliano* had been begun and Michelangelo was to start the other, *Lorenzo,* within a fortnight. The master's letter of the above-mentioned date to Fatucci for the rest discusses the work on the vestibule of the Laurentian Library, a commission with which the fickle pope had frustrated the work on the statues and contributed his share toward robbing the artist's mind of the requisite concentration.

But then events already described supervened—the outbreak of war, the sack of Rome, the siege of Florence, the artist's flight—and all work in the sacristy was put off for years, to be resumed only in the fall of 1530. A year later *Notte* and *Aurora* were done and one of the two elders, probably *Crepuscolo,* was being finished.* The work on *Giuliano* was also nearing completion, and during the winter of 1531–1532 work proceeded on the *Lorenzo.* The *Madonna* received her final aspect.

Even though the work on these figures was tortuous, with one design following another, this was not seen as the statues came forth from their marble cocoons. None of them shows a trace of uncertainty. They stand there, perfect for all time, stamped by their inner destiny as though they could not be different even by a hair. And like a many-voiced choir they proclaim the tragedy of man's life.

The power of this choir is enhanced by the contrast between

* There are four reclining figures, two male, two female. The Italian-English equivalents for the titles are: *l'Aurora*—the Dawn; *il Giorno*—the Day; *il Crepuscolo*—the Dusk, or the Evening; *la Notte*—the Night.

the great chiseled bodies and the delicate elements of the architecture. Although chapel and figures grew together, the space has been deliberately treated with a strange ruthlessness. In neither case does the statue of the man form an actual part of his tomb. They are set in niches in the wall, while the sarcophagus with its figures stands before the wall. Nor are considerations of space observed either in the relationship of the figures toward one another or in their relationship to the architecture. The heads of *Giorno* and *Notte* rear up so high that *Giuliano's* feet are actually between them. There is somewhat more distance in the case of *Lorenzo,* who was done later. But heads and shoulders of all four recumbent figures burst through the wainscot line that should be their architectural frame.

The space as such seems to have been slighted and neglected. Yet in the four superhuman figures of the sarcophagi time itself has become filled space hewn from the marble. At the same time these tremendous human figures are the best expression of Michelangelo's basic principle of variety and contrast in the attitude of individual limbs as well as in the attitude of corresponding limbs. He demonstrated that he had retained his sovereignty over marble, even though for a long time he had functioned essentially only as a painter.

It is very odd that for the first time in his life he here made large-scale models for his statues—or rather, had them made. Baccio di Puccione made models of clay for the statues under his eyes. The clay was mixed with chopped wool, *cimatura.* On the wooden models carpenters worked from 1524 to 1526.

VI

In the case of the Julius tomb Michelangelo had begun with the subsidiary figures, had first done the so-called *Captives* (in the

Louvre). The carving of the main figure, Julius II, he had put off and put off until, a full forty years after he had the intended marble shipped to Rome, he left the task to Maso di Bosco, to do what he would with it, or rather what tradition demanded.

But here, hurling himself into sculpture with renewed vigor, he began with the main figures. He applied his full energy to the marvelous *Madonna,* for which he made long preliminary studies until he found the most effective and rewarding composition, one most characteristic of his mature style. By comparison the artless attitude of the *Bruges Madonna* and child seems an elementary phase, long since passed.

The body is bent forward, the head turned to one side. The left arm reaches forward and holds the nursing child, while the right arm lies back, finding no proper place in the marble block. The left knee lies over the right, and the strapping boy bestrides his mother's leg, turning his body backward and reaching for her breast with hand and mouth.

As historical personages the two dukes are of little interest to posterity and would have long since been forgotten, had not Michelangelo immortalized them. Yet they were of no ordinary importance in their lifetime, for ambitious plans were linked to their names. Urbino had been conquered in the interest of the Papal State, and Giuliano was actually appointed its duke against his will. There had even been thought of securing Naples for him as a papal fief.

No less a man than Machiavelli attentively followed these hopes and plans. He had written his famous book, *The Prince,* in 1513* and had thought of dedicating it to Giuliano, whose death supervened.

Lorenzo was possessed of ambition, perhaps a heritage from the side of his mother, who was an Orsini. But he lacked experience and generalship. In his time he was nonetheless accounted the very model of a prince, and after Giuliano's death Machiavelli dedicated his book to Lorenzo. Like Dante before him, Machiavelli

* It was first printed but five years after Machiavelli's death, in 1532.

hoped for the liberator prince who would drive the barbarians from Italy and restore the grandeur of antiquity.

Lorenzo's ambition, however, did not go beyond being the vassal of France he was as Duke of Nemours. For the rest he did have the minor princely virtues, such as dignity and decency, and he was shrewd in the choice of his friends and counselors. In 1518 he had celebrated his marriage to Margaret of Anjou with great splendor in Paris and in the fall of that year held his entry into Florence. Then he turned melancholy and sought solitude. He suffered from syphilis, which had affected his brain. His young wife died in late April 1519, having borne him a daughter. He died a week later, after a painful illness.

VII

The tragedy of his death gave Michelangelo the idea of creating a figure over which hung the shadow of melancholy. No greater feat of creative idealism can be found than this transformation of syphilitic decay into the lofty brooding on the brevity of life and the vanity of all that is mortal which distinguish the unforgettable *Pensieroso*.

Some surprise has been expressed over the contradiction between this glorification and Michelangelo's resentment of Medici rule, seemingly embodied in the famous verse in which he replied to Giovanni di Carlo Strozzi's paean of praise for the figure of *La Notte*. Strozzi wrote:

> Carved from the marble by an Angel's skill,
> Here in sweet slumber lies the heavenly Night,
> Yet, sleeping, still obeys life's endless might.
> She'll speak to you—awake her, if you will.

Michelangelo replied:

> How sweet to slumber here, when all about
> My marble carcase shame and woe prevail
> To make man's eye and ear with dread to quail.
> Leave me to sleep, I pray you, do not shout.

These lines were once dated back to about 1530, when Michelangelo was working on the "Four Phases of the Day." If this were so, we would be entitled to believe that *Notte* was intended as a political indictment. But since the epigram actually dates from 1545, it is clear that it represents no more than a belated rationalization. As for the bust of *Brutus,* done after 1539, which is often cited in this connection, it had definitely a political meaning. Its inspiration was the murder of Alessandro by Lorenzino de' Medici (Lorenzaccio) in 1536. The murderer of the hated Alessandro was universally praised as a Brutus. Michelangelo did the bust from a portrait on an ancient carnelian gemstone, assumed to be Brutus but more probably Caracalla. It was done on order from Donato Giannotti. Actually, Giannotti's *Dialoghi* reveal Michelangelo's uncertainty on the subject of whether Caesar's assassination was justifiable, though he subscribed to the traditional view of Caesar as a tyrant.

In Giannotti's dialogues Michelangelo calls attention to the fact that Dante, in the first canto of the *Divine Comedy,* speaks out against tyrants and invokes the punishment of immersion in boiling blood against those who use violence against their neighbors. He concludes, somewhat boldly, that Dante regarded Caesar as the tyrant of his country and Brutus and Cassius as justified in murdering him; for a tyrant is but a beast in human form, bereft of humanity, rather than a man.

But the artist's qualms are shown in his next question, whether Dante may not have implied after all that these men did wrong by their murder, since so much evil came upon the world in consequence of Caesar's death. Perhaps the poet thought it would

have been better if Caesar had lived and realized his plans. Donato replies that Caesar had intended to have himself crowned king. Michelangelo concedes this to be the truth but inquires whether it might not have been the lesser evil, compared to the consequences of Caesar's death. He concludes with the conjecture that Caesar, like Sulla, might have relinquished his power and restored freedom and republican institutions to his country.

The worthy Giannotti, himself a downright dogmatist, thus represents his great friend as essentially less dogmatic than he would have liked, even though tending strongly toward the prevailing view. The dialogue dates from the year 1545 and is an expression of sorrow over the fall of the Florentine republic.

VIII

Michelangelo does not seem to have personally known the Duke of Nemours (*Il Pensieroso*), though as a boy, in the palazzo of Il Magnifico, he knew the duke's uncle, Giuliano, whose *cortesia* he remembered, according to Condivi. Originally of sterling character, a friend of poets and humanists, himself a poet of sorts, the younger Giuliano loved splendor and profligacy and fitted well into the circle about Guidobaldo of Urbino, at whose court he and his brothers lived in exile. Hence he resented Leo's rape of Urbino, which took place the year he died.

True, in 1497 he had taken arms against Florence himself, and at the Congress of Mantua, where the princes of Italy consulted on action against the danger threatening from France, he had successfully pleaded for the reinstatement of his dynasty. On August 31, 1512, he had thereupon held his entry into Florence. However, he took no vengeance for the expulsion of his family and since he

was indolent and unwarlike, his brother the pope deprived him of command of the city. A zealous boudoir hero, he yielded to mysticism and melancholy, as already mentioned. He too, like Michelangelo's other duke, died of syphilis, at the age of thirty-six.

During the year after Giuliano's restoration Michelangelo seems to have come into closer contact with him. Yet despite this personal acquaintance he aspired even less to a portrait likeness than in the case of Lorenzo. Such verisimilitude would have detracted from the impression of archetypical universality he sought. When someone remarked that the statues did not resemble the dukes, he is supposed to have said arrogantly: "What difference? A thousand years from now none will mind the missing likeness, for there will be none to know how these gentlemen looked." It would seem today that his faith in the centuries will not be disappointed; but we cannot forget that his two bronze statues of *Pope Julius* and *David* have vanished.

Michelangelo simply ignored the age difference between the two Medici dukes, uncle and nephew, who were thirty-six and twenty-six. They appear to be of the same age, the better to bear comparison—just as Shakespeare, some seventy years later, in Part I of Henry IV, simply struck off twenty years from Harry Percy's life, to make him the contemporary of the king's youthful son.

How fortunate are historical personages who come under the ministrations of the greatest poets and artists! A ruffian Shakespeare turned into the "king of honor," a witch-burner into England's radiant national hero. Before him Michelangelo had turned two wretched syphilitics who failed at almost everything they did and died decadently before their time into the two finest and most significant male statues since the days of ancient Greece.

Giuliano seems to bear the same relationship to *Lorenzo* as the *Vita Activa* does to the *Vita Contemplativa*. His attitude, the head turned sharply to one side, hints at a general leading a battle, but this would make his seated position rather surprising. It

would scarcely befit the *gonfalionere* of the Roman Church in battle. Nor is there an expression of command in *Giuliano's* glance. He seems to be observing something sorrowfully and the negligently held marshal's baton slips from one hand into the other. Perhaps symbolically, he averts his head from the nephew to whom the pope gave the baton taken away from him.

To give the features of *Lorenzo* the expression of lofty melancholy he sought, Michelangelo made the eyes deepseated, gave the figure an air of abstraction in which the world is forgotten, characterized it by an attitude of sublime repose. One searches in vain in this face for the kind of soulful sorrow that marks Franciabigio's youthful melancholiac in the Louvre. Here the calm is as of stone. The gaze utterly ignores the beholder. The unprecedented, hence unforgettable pose of *Il Pensieroso* exerts a much stronger effect than the play of the features. Besides, chin and mouth are hidden behind the upraised hand with its crooked index finger, a hand that by its very gesture bespeaks pensiveness.

To enhance the effect of mystery, this handsome and austere head is surmounted by a heavy helmet that shades the brow. The right hand is supported palm outward against the right knee. To get the left hand up to the mouth, the artist has placed a small casket, decorated with an animal head, on the left knee. The left elbow rests on this box.

Although *Giuliano* wears a kind of breastplate with protective metal shoulderpieces, his close-fitting leather singlet allows his tremendous chest musculature to show through as though his body were bare. *Lorenzo's* body, on the other hand, is clothed in some opaque stuff and his legs too are less exposed than *Giuliano's*.

The whole attitude of *Il Pensieroso* is perfection incarnate. *Giuliano's* contours may be pleasing to the eye, but one can at least imagine his pose to be somewhat different, without the statue being any the worse for it. In *Lorenzo* everything is as though ordained. Not the slightest detail could be changed without losing the incomparable effect.

IX

Michelangelo's dazzling originality emerges in the entirely new form of grouping he found for these tombs. In all likelihood it was the abandoned design under which the two eminent Medici brothers were to recline on the lid of a single sarcophagus that gave the artist the idea of mounting figures on each of the two. Beneath the statues of the dead, shown here as living, enthroned princes—as had heretofore been the case only with the statue of *Innocent VIII* by Pollaiuolo in St. Peters—there lie in repose, half erect, half recumbent, more expressive than any truly reclining figure could have been, those four superhuman symbols that seem to be mere abstractions but that carry the vitality of a hundred people.

It was the custom then to show allegories of various virtues on tombs. But with Michelangelo the simple, basic notion of the vanity of all that is mortal, wholly appropriate to a grave, grew as from a bud into the ideas that inspired him to create the four figures representing time—time which calls man into this life of bitter sorrow, only to banish him to the grave.

In Michelangelo's mind time became "The Four Phases of the Day," and he saw them as four human figures, powerfully idealized to manifest their inner meaning in their very pose, in the opposition of each limb, more specifically in the constant tension of their seemingly ever-moving muscles. So stylized has the human form become here that it is altogether transformed into an expression of all-encompassing emotion, asserted differentially rather than evenly and harmoniously in each limb—some parts of these bodies are rigid or dangle slackly, while others burst with life in every fiber. The men are demigods, athletic, herculean. The women are no less stamped with the passionate power of primitive archetypes.

But for Michelangelo's absolute mastery, long since become second nature, of the human body in all its forms and movements —a mastery he was able to carry to the very limits of the possible —this marvelous harmony from contending elements would be inconceivable.

For there is harmony here, even though the canker eating at Michelangelo's heart was a sense of the futility of life. He did know fear—fear unto death. Unless we accept that he could be suddenly overpowered by such spells of anxiety, we are at a loss to explain his repeated attempts at flight. Even more than by the thought of his own death, he was tormented by the specter that all beauty passes and dies, not only in the world of man but in art as well. True, the marble statue survives its creator, but it too, as he said in one of his sonnets, ultimately crumbles into dust.

Time is here seen as the power that is dogged by death. It transforms these heroic figures into phantasms. Their titantic forms, called *Giorno* and *Notte, Aurora* and *Crepuscolo,* mere projections of inexorable fate, are heavy as lead and supremely indifferent to the human condition. These creatures are themselves mere symbols of life as sorrow, too haunted by nightmares to take pity on others.

Ineffably sad, they lie there moaning. They draw up their knotted limbs in paroxysm. They are tired unto death, utterly sickened by life. There is no peace within them. They do not trouble to conceal their contempt of man. For them no joy in awakening to another day, no zest at high noon, no sweet repose in sleep. One thing they have in common—they suffer.

They are the true children of Michelangelo, of the artist who never portrayed happiness. And if the Renaissance was in essence a hymn to life, an affirmation of life as an expression of nature seen with new eyes, then Michelangelo even here points beyond the Renaissance.

For in the last reckoning these figures do not represent Day or Night—or indeed, anything to which a name can be given. What they reflect is the interior of Michelangelo's mind as it looked in the years from 1524 to 1534, made visible in perfect form.

X

La Notte beyond question is the figure that was done first. This is seen among other things by the many appurtenances with which Michelangelo felt it necessary to equip her—owl, poppy pods, the tragic mask with the hollow eyes that mirror nightmares, the diadem, queenly symbol, and in the hair above the brow the crescent moon with a star, reminiscent of Diana.

Michelangelo always felt that night was the time most in accord with his own being. Numerous passages in his poems lend expression to this feeling, which was part of his innate melancholy. Hence his sayings that he was destined for night from birth and cradle (*nel parto e nella cuna*) and that night is more sacred than day. Only lowly creatures unfold by light. Man is begotten by night. Night looms as high above day as man does above plant. True, elsewhere, in another mood, the artist calls it wanton to praise the night, since darkness is but the shadow created when the earth turns away from the sun. But this is of small moment. *La Notte* proves conclusively that the other passages truly reflect Michelangelo's mind.

La Notte is represented as the universal mother. The prominent nipples and deep abdominal folds point unmistakably that way. Michelangelo was not intent upon investing the figure with charm or grace. Yet the head, even with the features frozen in sleep and the small occiput, is of sublime beauty.

Of all Michelangelo's male figures *Il Giorno* is by far the most expressive, and the oddest. One has only to immerse oneself into this one figure to grasp the basic pattern of the man in his maturity, the fierce pride and grandeur of him, his contempt for the petty and mundane, so extreme that it needed no words where a glance was enough.

Everything is given in the mere pose—the tremendous body turning away from the beholder, the marvelous back like the *Her-*

cules torso Michelangelo so greatly admired, with its powerfully rippling muscles that show not a single sharp ridge, the fine lines created by the left leg thrown over the right, and above all the crowning feature of this masterpiece, the frontal position of the head peering over the right shoulder.

Such a head! No one with even the most elementary sense of beauty who has ever seen it, even but in reproduction, can ever forget it. It hints of the sun rising behind a mountain range. *Procul o procul este, profani!* says that forbidding, awe-inspiring, minatory glance from beneath the strong, clipped brow over which the thick hair lowers like a thunder cloud. *Il Giorno* is aloof and unapproachable like a god. His features but half hewn from the stone, their incompleteness serving merely to enhance the expression of power and revulsion, *Giorno* is made of firmer stuff than mortals. He turns away from them in distaste and anger. There is no radiance on his face. It is somber. He wakes, not for action, but in disgust of mankind and all its works.

He is as unfeeling as the destiny that swept away the two dukes in their youth—destiny which turns away from us when we invoke it, without cruelty but with inexorable indifference.

XI

There is a certain symmetry between *Giorno* and *Notte*, in that both have one leg raised: nor do their outer limbs project below the volutes upon which they rest. The other pair, *Aurora* and *Crepuscolo* differ, in that both allow one leg to dangle carelessly, the feet reaching below the lid of the sarcophagus. While *Notte* droops her head on her breast, *Giorno* raises his defiantly behind his right shoulder, marking a distinction in accent. In the other two the contrast relieving the artful symmetry consists in *Crepuscolo* having his right leg crossed over the left while *Aurora,* barely awake, stretches her fair body in deep dismay over having to begin another day.

She wakes, not to joy in being alive but to sorrow over life's tribulations. Her mien is doleful. Her lips open in silent plaint. Her great body has the freshness of youth. Her left hand, bent toward her throat with finger drooping, is modeled with consummate elegance, yet it is a hand that also shows strength. The marvelously shaped leg bespeaks the most painstaking, comprehensive and vigorous study of nature. Unlike *Notte,* there is nothing violent or improbable about *Aurora.*

She was carved under a creative tension so extreme that the artist's health began to give way. On September 29, 1531, Giovanni Battista Mini wrote to Baccio Valori, the papal nuncio in Florence: "He is emaciated and thin as a rail. The other day I spoke about it to Bugiardini and Antonio Mini, who are always with him, and we agreed in the end that Michelangelo's days will be numbered unless something is done on his behalf." As far as we know he was at the time in fear of the pope's wrath on account of his actions during the siege of Florence. At the same time he was depressed because of importunities to deliver the Julius tomb.

Mini saw *La Notte* and *Aurora. La Notte,* he writes, had already been inspected by Valori; and about *Aurora* we read: "This altogether marvelous work far exceeds *La Notte* in every respect."

Aurora has just awakened from deep slumber. Still sodden with dreams, she is struggling to regain full consciousness. Yet the dawn of the new day fills her with no delight. Her expression is sullen and woebegone. It is just another day to her.

Still drowsy, she seeks to rise. Supporting herself on her left foot, she seeks to throw her weight on her right hip to get her right leg under her and rise from her couch. Her left hand gropes for her veil, as though to hide her nakedness. The harmony of these movements is pleasing to the eye, like a chord in a minor key.

In giving *Aurora* an expression of such reluctance to awaken, Michelangelo may have been thinking of the destiny of Florence rather than his own, in which every day brought trouble and frustration.

Mini concludes the above-cited letter: "Michelangelo is now at

work on the old man [*Crepuscolo*]. Next winter he will be able to finish the *Madonna* and then carve the statue of Duke Lorenzo." We thus get the sequence in which these statues were done from this letter, though not the order in which they were conceived, of course.

Crepuscolo, Aurora's counterpiece, is less brusque and violent in character than *Giorno,* and his fascination is also not up to that of the earlier figure. Powerful as the figure is, the main impression it leaves is one of weariness, renunciation and surrender.

This too is a man no longer young. Once again the artist forewent portraying masculine youth, always his favorite subject. But even though both figures represent men in their maturity, neither is so old that one would today apply to them the term current during the Renaissance: the old men. Their strength is undiminished, despite their deep distaste and melancholy.

As we know, there is a Michelangelo drawing in the Casa Buonarroti showing three column pediments in red chalk and also containing a written exposition of the tomb of Giuliano. It is as labored and synthetic as the explanation Condivi gives of the *Captives* in the original design for the Julius tomb—that they represented the liberal arts, paralyzed by the death of Julius II. Here is the text:

"Heaven and earth, day and night speak and proclaim: In our swift course we have escorted Duke Giuliano to his death. It is meet and proper that he take vengeance. His vengeance is that he whom we killed, dead as he is, has robbed us of light, closing our eyes as he closed his, so that we shine no more on earth. What would he not have made of us, had his life been spared!"

The elevated locutions are quite characteristic of Michelangelo's love of abstruse symbolism, often seen in his poems. The mention of "heaven and earth" specifically harks back to the figures which, under the original plan for the Julius tomb, were to fill the space beside the great pope.

What literary or allegorical meaning the beholder imputes to a piece of sculpture is unimportant. For Michelangelo the artist,

as for all artists, what matters is not the actual representation but its effect. As in his earlier major works, what Michelangelo was after was to unify the details into a single, concentrated impression on the mind. He fixed the aspects from which the sculptures were to be viewed, enhancing the effect, for example, by letting full light fall on the recumbent figures of *Crepuscolo* and *Aurora,* while *Giorno* and *Notte* are partly in shadow and half-light, adding to their mysterious shimmer.

It is comparatively rare for a sculptor to write about sculpture; but in his book on *The Problem of Form,* Adolf Hildebrand, with an intellectualism of which only a German sculptor would be capable, touches upon the question of Michelangelo's technique.* He rightly emphasizes that Michelangelo always made his works as massive as possible, using his marble blocks to the fullest. So powerful are his representations of life that he leaves no portion of his space dead. He avoids all aimless or distracting limb positions and gestures. Despite their pent-up inner energy, his forms always take up the least possible space. Indeed, he created a whole new world of the human body. He brought to the fore a wealth of gestures and movements that are perfectly plausible in nature but that none had observed before his time. Thus he was able to concentrate the greatest creative and spiritual wealth within the smallest compass.

XII

Technique was naturally to the fore during the actual work, but to Michelangelo technical mastery was always but the means for shaping his intent. It has been suggested that the spirit of these tombs, dwelling on the vanity of life and the power of inexorable destiny in which the dead are but the playthings of blind forces,

* Adolf Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst,* Strasbourg, 1893. (No English translation of this book has been published.)

must have appeared oddly un-Christian to Michelangelo's contemporaries, even though the work had been commissioned by the pope.

It cost Michelangelo much time to mold this work to his satisfaction. Indeed, we may question whether he ever was satisfied, since he left it unfinished. Only in the year before Michelangelo's death did Duke Cosimo order the two tombs and the *Madonna* with the two saints to be installed.

We get an idea of the river gods that were supposed to find a place beneath the sarcophagi under the original plan from a large model, made of clay and oakum, in the Accademia in Florence.

In retrospect we can see the whole work as an integration of architecture and sculpture, as already mentioned. The cupola of the New Sacristy was slimmer than Brunelleschi's dome. Its height to the base of the lantern is twice its width, a proportion in keeping with the tall group structures. Michelangelo further used three windows on each side to secure illumination from above, needed to show his figures to fullest advantage.

Since the architecture is sparse and austere, it forms a vivid contrast to these figures that breathe power and life. Michelangelo loved the dry classical style of architecture. He never used spiral columns (as did Raphael in his tapestry cartoon, *The Healing of the Lame Man*). He never knew, far less used, the swelling, overelaborate forms of the baroque for which he is supposed to have paved the way. Here in the sacristy he is entirely himself, classical in his architecture, personal to the extreme in his sculpture, leaving us imperishable symbols of his visions of life and death.

XIII

A few works that do not belong to the tombs but date from the same time and bear a certain relation to them must be briefly

mentioned. The one that brings them most vividly to mind is Michelangelo's large picture of *Leda.*

Taking leave of Michelangelo after his stay in Ferrara in August 1529, the Duke of Ferrara is supposed to have jestingly asked him for souvenir: "You are my prisoner. If I am to release you, you must promise me something from your hand, sculpture or painting, as you please." Michelangelo promised, and back in Florence at once set about painting a large picture in tempera on wood, from a cartoon he had drawn. As his subject he chose *Leda,* perhaps because he believed this would suit the duke's taste, having seen in his residence pictures on mythological themes by Titian —*The Feast of Venus, Ariadne, Bacchanalia.*

Perhaps Michelangelo simply felt tempted to turn his melancholy *Notte* into a voluptuous creature, keeping the whole attitude virtually unchanged but for one slight modification, blending the lines of swan and woman into what was meant as a symbolic expression of the mystery of nature. Although we know the picture but from mediocre copies that do not do it justice, we must admit that the swan's neck rising between Leda's breasts until the bill touches her lips and the great white pinions as a backdrop for Leda's shapely leg and graceful foot join to form an enchanting composition. Yet the theme was too foreign to Michelangelo. He was bound to fail in his effort to transform the attitude of *La Notte,* one of gloomy self-surrender, into one of violent and unnatural sensuality.

The subject of *Leda with the Swan* was much more in character with Leonardo. It gave this great worshiper of nature satisfaction to bring together in a painting of great beauty the sinuous lines of the female body and the swan, each enhancing the other. In a tender and almost connubial touch, the swan spreads his wings protectively about the standing Leda. (The best copy is in the Spiridon Collection, Rome.)

Correggio found the theme even more congenial as a pretext to delight the eye with a charming landscape showing a bevy of nude young beauties at play in a rippling brook. The open-air erotic

element enters only remotely, with the approach of the swan.

Leonardo put all his emphasis on beauty of line; Correggio appealed to a robust exuberance not in the least offensive; but Michelangelo was incapable of taking the frivolous myth lightly. His swan is Zeus incarnate, and Leda gravely and solemnly allows the great white bird congress, as though nuptials were here celebrated betwixt heaven and earth, between an earth-bound creature and one whose elements are water and air.

The fate of the painting was strange and tragic.

Michelangelo sent word to the Duke of Ferrara when it was finished. In October 1530 Alfonso dispatched one of his courtiers, Jacopo Laschi, called Il Pisanello, to Florence to pick it up. Jacopo brought the following letter from the duke:

"Dearest Friend! Messer Alessandro Guarini, my former ambassador in Florence, has given me your message about the picture you have done for me, of which I was exceedingly glad. As I have told you in person, I have so long harbored the desire to have one of your works in my house that I count the hours, each one seeming like a year. Hence I have dispatched the bearer, my servant Pisanello, to ask you to send me the picture with his help and to instruct him how it may be safely conveyed. Do not take it amiss that I send you no payment by this messenger, for neither have I heard from you your fee, nor can I judge the value myself, not having seen the picture. I pledge you, however, that you will not consider the effort spent on my account wasted, and you would give me great pleasure by writing me how much you ask, for I know that your view in setting a value is more reliable by far than mine. I assure you, moreover, that apart from any honorarium for your work, I shall ever be intent upon giving you pleasure and amenity such as, in my opinion, your high qualities and rare talents deserve. Now and always I am, from the bottom of my heart, ready to do whatever you may desire, insofar as I am able."

The duke's messenger turned out to be neither a diplomat nor a connoisseur of art. Shown the picture, he is supposed to have exclaimed: "What a trifle!" (*O questa è poca cosa!*) whereupon

the resentful artist asked him his profession (*Che arte è la vostra?*). When the courtier jestingly replied that he was a merchant, Michelangelo angrily burst out: "You have made a poor bargain for your master." Then he showed the man the door.

To take vengeance for the insult, in which the duke had not the slightest part, Michelangelo resorted to the most unfortunate alternative. He gave the picture to his assistant Antonio Mini to take to France to offer to Francis I, known to be a connoisseur, and particularly fond of Italian art—it was he who had brought Leonardo to France. Mini had copies of the picture made in Lyons. He saw an opportunity for profit.

He actually succeeded in selling the original to Fontainebleau, where it remained to the time of Louis XIII. But oddly enough so little was the culture of art developed in the best French circles then that people were ashamed of the picture. The minister Desnoyers had it removed from the château. Either at his behest or that of Maria de' Medici, it was burned on the grounds of indecency. (Copies exist in London, Dresden and elsewhere.)

XIV

The unfinished marble group, *Victory*, belongs to the period when the sacristy of San Lorenzo was being finished. The marble from which the group is hewn comes from the quarries at Seravezza, which were opened only in March 1518. It must have been politically inspired, for Michelangelo showed it to no one, keeping it hidden in his workshop in the Via Mozza the whole seven years during which Alessandro de' Medici ruled with the help of banishments and executions. The work is first mentioned in the second edition of Vasari's book, published four years after Michelangelo's death.

There is much that is mysterious in this work, apparently

carved from a block pyramidal in form. It shows a slender youth with conspicuously small head who, having freed himself in a fight, rests on his right leg while he puts his raised left knee on the back of the vanquished foe, an old man of large head and noble mien.

The position is not without peculiarity. The torsion of the body to the left while the head is turned sharply to the right gives the figures an almost corkscrewlike aspect. The hero seems to be looking out for a new adversary, never giving his already beaten enemy a glance.

How the struggle just concluded is to be explained is not clear. There is a kind of thong about the right calf of the youth, fastened to the elder man's loins. With his right hand the victor draws forward the hem of a garment that droops over his back. There are straps about the left leg and the left wrist, as though he had been bound. Neither the left arm nor the figure of the vanquished foe are finished but are still imprisoned in the marble.

When this curiously fascinating work came to light after Michelangelo's death, his nephew Lionardo presented it, together with several other objects left by his uncle, to Grandduke Cosimo, who had the group installed in the *salone regio* of the Palazzo Vecchio in 1565.

Emperor Charles V, as early as 1535, had picked Cosimo as the ruler over Florence, so to speak. When the emperor held his entry into Florence in April of that year, he was received by Duke Alessandro and his cousin Lorenzino (Lorenzaccio), who only eight months later killed the duke by stabbing him six times. The emperor inquired after young Cosimo, whom his mother had taken the precaution of keeping at home. When the handsome lad was sent for, Charles V patted him on the shoulder and congratulated him upon being descended from a noble (Lorenzo il Magnifico), before whom—as the emperor said with a trace of exaggeration—even France and Spain had trembled.

Alessandro's assassination provided the occasion for the Brutus bust, already mentioned. The killer was certainly not a figure of

interest in his own right but rather a dissipated idler who had allowed himself to be used as a spy and procurer by the bloodthirsty tyrant whom he secretly hated even while he served him. The murder was motivated by the hope of securing the glory that fell to tyrannicides in ancient Greece and Rome.

Charles V, steadfast supporter of the house of Medici, was forever being threatened with war—by Francis I, invading Savoy, and by Sultan Suleiman II, the Great, who, driven out of Tunis, still kept invading Hungary—and so the Florentine exiles imagined that a republican constitution might be restored to Florence. They hailed Lorenzaccio as a new Brutus.

The assassin shared his essential shallowness with Caesar's murderer, though his fame did not long endure. For the moment, however, he was immensely popular, not only among the exiles from Florence but among Italian intellectuals generally. Jacopo Sansovino was deeply moved when he was commissioned to do a statue of Lorenzino as liberator of his country. Lorenzino, who had not dared stay in Florence, had meanwhile been foully murdered himself in Venice.

Michelangelo had hated Alessandro from the bottom of his heart and had shared the popular enthusiasm for Lorenzino immediately after the murder. He had, after all, fled Florence in fear of what Alessandro might do to him. His goal, Rome, was the meeting-place for the Florentine exiles. They were led by two Florentine cardinals, nephews of Leo X, the brothers Ridolfi and Giovanni Salviati. A central figure in this circle was Donato Giannotti, who had held a position of great influence in the declining years of the Florentine republic. During the months following Alessandro's assassination he had maintained contact between Florence and the exiles, but had counseled the latter against trying to take the city by surprise, since he felt certain Charles V intended to install young Cosimo as its ruler.

When nevertheless Filippo Strozzi, Italy's wealthiest and most gracious nobleman, whom Emperor Charles and King Francis called their friend, led his armed host against his ancestral city,

he was beaten and captured at Montemurlo. Filippo Strozzi died in prison, either by strangling or poison, though the official story was that he committed suicide. His son-in-law Baccio Valori, already mentioned, who had engineered Michelangelo's reconciliation with the pope, was beheaded as a traitor on Cosimo's order.

When Giannotti came to Rome soon afterward to negotiate with the two cardinals about terms for their return to Florence, he proposed that Michelangelo do a bust of *Brutus* to present to Ridolfi Salviati. The enthusiasm with which the great artist began the bust soon slackened. The cause of the Florentine exiles and their dreams involved considerable danger. If only from consideration for his family in Florence, Michelangelo had to move carefully. Cosimo asserted the privileges of the house of Medici with sword and gibbet.

As we have seen, Giannotti, in his dialogue of 1545, represented Michelangelo as vacillating in his judgment of Brutus' deed. In time he went so far as to deny all sympathy with the cause of the exiles. Indeed, in a letter to his nephew Lionardo of October 22, 1547, he not only declared that he was not in any way beholden to Filippo Strozzi (in whose house he was nursed during a serious illness—true, by Luigi del Riccio who lived there) but zealously sought to prove how aloof he held from the intrigues of the Florentines in Rome.

"All Rome can testify to my mode of life. I am always alone, seldom go out, speak to no one, especially not to Florentines. When I am greeted on the street, I simply make the necessary acknowledgment and continue on my way. If I could identify the exiles, I would not even respond in any circumstances. Henceforth, as I already said, I shall take the greatest precautions, since I have enough other things to think of and my life is difficult enough as it is."

Reading this letter one begins to understand why the *Brutus* bust was never finished and never reached the hands of Cardinal Ridolfi Salviati. The defiant political fanaticism of which *Brutus* was to be an expression had all but died in Michelangelo.

Chest and shoulders in this bust are seen from the front, while the ponderous head is turned to the right in sharp profile. The brow is neither high nor thoughtful but marked with energy, the nose strong and well-shaped. The rather small but slightly prognathous chin bespeaks willpower. The two features that give the head its character are the full, firmly closed mouth, the lower lip projecting slightly beyond the upper, giving the features a curious negroid cast, and the powerful neck, much more muscular than normal, seemingly the result of inspired intuition, for the only important political assassin whom the sculptor had known personally had just such a neck.

As usual, Michelangelo offered no portrait. The head is neither that of Marcus Brutus, as he is known from ancient busts, nor of Lorenzaccio, as pictured on a medallion of 1537.

What Michelangelo sought to represent with this bullnecked negroid head with its prominent cheekbones and powerful lower lip was a creature symbolizing pure willpower, an energy that may not be of a high order but that ruthlessly pursues and attains its goal.

How the bust got into the possession of the house of Medici is not known. In the seventeenth century it stood in the Medici villa La Petraja, part of the grandducal art collection. An inscription below it said that the sculptor, while carving the image of Brutus in marble, conceived the notion that his deed was a crime and left the work unfinished:

> *Dum Bruti effigiem sculptor de marmore ducit,*
> *In mentem sceleris venit et abstinuit.*

Works like *Victory* and *Brutus*, technically or ideologically akin to those in the sacristy of San Lorenzo, are yet of far lesser significance. They were interrupted by the siege of Florence and the city's surrender, which was followed by general pillage and mass killings. Whoever was able fled the city or kept under cover. Michelangelo too went into hiding. While his house was repeatedly searched he sat secreted in the campanile of the Church

Niccolò oltra Arno, not far from the gate that led to San Miniato.

But because of his great reputation he was permitted to return to his house and his work without interference from the pope. When he reentered the sacristy, he found that during the siege the scaffold serving the completion of the work had been torn down and burned for fuel. He let the construction work rest for a while and devoted himself to the tomb statuary with such passionate zeal that he grew ill and his life was endangered.

When on Pope Clement's death in the year 1534 he saw himself exposed to the hatred of Duke Alessandro, he suddenly abandoned all work in the sacristy, gave up Florence, never to see it again, and went to Rome. There is something oddly touching in the equanimity with which he thus left unfinished works that represented perhaps his life's crowning achievement, never to see them again, indeed, virtually to forget them.

Only the greatest of the great show such indifference to the fate of their works, the fruit of their greatest intellectual efforts. So did Leonardo neglect all his writings, testimony of the most penetrating research, never having them published. So half a century later Shakespeare published not one of his plays, leaving it to others to do with them what they would—indeed, nineteen of them appeared only after his death.

To these colossi the work itself was its only true reward. When it was done or abandoned, they were no longer interested. Michelangelo was soon so utterly absorbed in the work he took up in Rome that he almost completely lost sight of his past, however significant it may have been.

Poems and Letters

I

THE FINE ARTS which Michelangelo pursued in the forms of sculpture and painting were not sufficient to contain all the passion and emotion that dwelt in his soul, his need to admire, his irony and humor. His surging feelings often transcended chisel and brush, required an outlet in another creative medium, burst forth in forms that could be captured only by the pen. His wry wit and self-detachment, particularly, called irresistibly for the epigram as a mode of expression.

Despite his role as a statesman, Lorenzo de' Medici, the protector of Michelangelo's youthful years, had dabbled in verse, love lyrics and other poetic forms, defending and glorifying the Italian idiom, then still waging a hard battle against the much more

highly esteemed Latin. Lorenzo called Italian a beautiful and mellifluous tongue, legitimized as a vehicle for poetry by Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio. Angelo Poliziano, who thought highly of the young Michelangelo, was no less bent upon breathing new life into vernacular poetry, and through his good offices the youth was soon initiated into the mysteries of prosody. So strong an influence did Poliziano's verse exert on Michelangelo that in his stanzas in praise of the rustic life (*in lode della vita rusticale*) the young artist followed the paean to nature Poliziano indited in stanzas 17 to 21 of his poem *Giostra.*

Even in these verses Michelangelo's native self soon went beyond mere imitation, displaying his distaste of everything that did not harmonize with nature. Yet they are scarcely rewarding for the modern reader, since they consist largely of allegories strung together. Vainly Michelangelo tries to make generalizations come to life. In one passage, speaking of doubt, he says that the word "why" is lean and jingles many keys at its belt, fiddling with all the locks since none of the keys fits.

Other members of Lorenzo's circle, like Cristoforo Landino, commentator of the Divine Comedy, and Pico della Mirandola, served to introduce him to Dante's poetry. And here he found a spirit worthy of his own, the same pride and austerity, the same love of beauty and virtue, the same tendency to damn personal enemies and other contemptibles to the nethermost depths of hell. He read Dante over and over and in the end became a recognized Dante expert. He made an offer to the city of Florence to erect a worthy monument to the great poet, provided Ravenna would, as was hoped, surrender his remains to his ancestral city; and he wrote one of his finest sonnets in honor of Dante:

> From heaven he came, in mortal clothing, when
> All that was worst and best had been observed.
> Living, he came to view the God he served
> To give us the entire, true light again.
>
> For that bright star which with its vivid rays
> Picked out the humble place where I was born—

For this, the world would be a prize to scorn;
None but its Maker can return its praise.

I speak of Dante, he whose work was spurned
By the ungrateful crowd, those who can give
Praise only to the worthless. I would live

Happy were I but he, by such men scorned,
If, with his torments, I could also share
His greatness, both his joy and exile bear.

II

The sonnet form, however much of a straitjacket to sentiment, was popular in sixteenth-century Italy, on the one hand, because it lent itself to the traditional cerebral style of verse with its more or less barbed points; and on the other because theoreticians and practitioners of the muse, like Lorenzo il Magnifico, had expressly declared it the finest poetic form of all. Its brevity seemed to preclude even a single superfluous word; hence it was suited to lofty statement or polished thought, compelled the utmost clarity while avoiding volubility.

A predilection for conciseness leads logically from the sonnet to the epigram, and we note indeed that Michelangelo, in addition to writing a large number of sonnets, also composed a great many epigrams, including no less than forty-eight on a single occasion, when Luigi del Riccio lost his fifteen-year-old nephew, dearly beloved on account of his grace. Responding to his friend's request, Michelangelo in these epigrams rang many changes on the theme of sorrow that death should have cheated the world of so much beauty. No one at the time took offense at the passionate love Riccio felt for Cecchino Bracci. Michelangelo had known the youth but briefly, but he too had warmed to him and in his first access of feeling promised to design a fine marble tomb.

The pledge was redeemed only with a rough sketch, which served as a model for the marble sarcophagus and bust, executed by Michelangelo's assistant, Francesco Urbino (in the church Santa Maria in Araceli).

Of the many poems Michelangelo wrote about Cecchino, the sonnet to Riccio is probably the finest, yet even it is labored. It mourns the fact that the handsome lad, so soon after Michelangelo had first beheld his beautiful eyes—those eyes that meant paradise to Riccio—opened them in heaven to behold God. And Michelangelo adds that if he, as a sculptor, were to immortalize Cecchino in stone he would have to create a statue of Riccio, since the lover was one with the beloved.

In a manner no less affected, the epitaphs insist that Cecchino Bracci was asleep rather than dead; for he lived on in the weeping Luigi del Riccio, the beloved ever living in the lover. The letters accompanying the verses include acknowledgments of various delicacies Riccio had sent when asking Michelangelo for further poems.

Thus epigram No. 18 bears the note: "In appreciation of the preserved mushrooms, since you desire further verses." No. 23: "Thus speak the trout, not I; if the verses do not please you, then do not again pickle it without pepper." No. 28: "With this slip I send you back the melons, but the drawing is not finished. I shall, in any event, do the very best I can." No. 29: "This is for the turtle-dove; as for the fish, Urbino [a servant and assistant of Michelangelo] will have to write you an epigram, for he ate them."

III

One element in Michelangelo's character that never found expression in his works of art comes to the fore in his letters no less

than his poetry—a penchant for mockery, especially self-mockery, but also scorn of others. The humor in his verses, with himself as the butt, is usually bitter, though at times he asserts himself in a vein of broad irony. Michelangelo never commanded the wit the French call *esprit,* but like his later compatriot Napoleon he occasionally shows a streak of farce—what the Italians call *buffo,* a coarse variety of humor, not always in the best of taste. Here, for example, is a stanza in a parody on rhymed declarations of love:

> When I behold your pointed dugs, I see
> Two ripe cucumbers in a sack of gunny
> And soon go up in flame, like a fusee.
> The hoe has bent my back—'tis scarcely funny;
> But were I still just as I used to be,
> I'd chase you like a cur. You draw me as honey
> Draws the bee. How easy then it seemed—
> What would today quite marvelous be esteemed.

Most surprising perhaps is that in one of the epitaphs for Cecchino Bracci Michelangelo puts words in the youth's mouth that unadornedly reveal the true nature of his relationship with Riccio:

> *Tan fede a quel ch'i'fu gratia nel lecto.*
> *Che abbracciava, e'n che l'anima vive.*

Ordinarily Michelangelo was very far from jesting at, let alone accepting such relationships, as seen from an undated letter to Niccolò (Quaratesi) in Florence, in which he indignantly rejects a handsome apprentice, whose father had cynically told the master he was certain to keep him, in his bed if not his house, if he but laid eyes on him. "I shall forego such solace," he wrote, "and do without the boy."

Characteristic of his bent toward barbed satire is the reply Michelangelo made when Clement VII, through the priest Fatucci, asked him to do a marble colossus 40 ells high, to be composed of smaller blocks and set up at a street corner in Florence.

The draft, in his own hand and dating from about December 6, 1525, reads:

"As for the colossus 40 ells high which, as you advise me, is to stand on the corner of the garden loggia of the Palazzo Medici opposite the house of Messer Luigi della Stufa, I have thought on the matter not a little, as you desired me to do. Methinks the colossus would not be well situate there, taking up too much room on the street. It would look much better at the other corner, where the barber has his shop, nor would it there confine the traffic. But since, no doubt, there will be great reluctance to displace the barber shop, the revenue therefrom becoming lost, I have bethought myself that the figure in question may be represented seated; for, the seat being placed sufficiently high, the whole thing could be constructed hollow, not difficult of accomplishment, since it is to be composed of small pieces. The barber shop could then be accommodated inside and the rent would not be forfeit. And to provide the barber shop with the kind of vent it now has to let out the smoke, I believe we might let the figure hold a cornucopia to serve as a chimney. Furthermore, since I propose to make the head as well as the limbs of the figure hollow, this could be turned to account; for at the place in point dwells a dealer in bacon, who is my good friend and has confided to me in secret that he desires to install a pretty dovecote inside the head.

"I have just thought of something even better, but that would mean making the figure a good deal taller. The head might serve as belfry for San Lorenzo, which is badly in need of one. With the bells suspended inside, the sound would emerge from the mouth, as though the colossus were calling for mercy, especially on holidays, when the big bells are often rung.

"With respect to the transport of the statue, hereinabove repeatedly adverted to, I propose that the pieces arrive by night well packed, lest they attract attention. There may be some trouble at the main gate, but surely we shall be able to think of something. If worse comes to worst, there is always the gate of San Gallo, which is kept open until daylight."

IV

The clear-cut and consistent irony with which a foolish plan is here rejected is characteristic of Michelangelo's cast of mind, even though the bizarre touches of whimsy that so often mark his style are missing. Another of his letters hints at a quarrel between him and his wealthy friend Luigi del Riccio, who was employed in the Strozzi bank, apparently over Riccio's refusal to destroy a poem, or perhaps several, which Michelangelo had sent him, and for which he had refused a proffered fee. "You give me what I decline to accept," he wrote, "while balking at what I ask." And in a passage utterly typical of his irrepressible self-deprecation, he adds under his signature: "Neither painter nor sculptor nor architect, but what you will, except a drunkard, as I told you in your house."

In a similar vein, scoffing at his lack of influence, compared to his worth, he began a letter of recommendation in 1520 to Cardinal Bibbiena, on behalf of Sebastiano del Piombo, asking that the Venetian rather than Raphael's disciples be given the decoration of the Hall of Constantine in the *stanze:*

"Monsignor: I beg Your Right Reverend Magnificence, not as a friend or servant, neither of which I deserve to be, but as a poor, worthless, half-crazed person, to give the painter Bastiano from Venice a share of the work in the palace, now that Raphael is dead."

Not only was this recommendation, couched in tones of such bitter humility, ignored; it served merely to make the cardinal guffaw and later passed from hand to hand in the papal circle, creating merriment wherever it went. None perceived the poignant frustration behind the mock humility.

A memorable example of how this bitter self-irony took poetic

form is seen in a sonnet describing his physical ordeal while painting the frescoes under the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Another, showing his passionate scorn, is the sonnet against the Pistoians (*contro a' Pistoiesi*). While lacking in wit, it testifies to the depth of his ire. The Pistoians, Michelangelo writes, show clearly that they are descended from Cain, and he invokes Dante's judgment of the town (Inferno, 24 and 25).

In still another poem Michelangelo enumerates all the tribulations his long life brought him. Offal of every kind was deposited outside his door day in, day out, while age ravaged his body and health. Deliberately he chooses the strongest and most picturesque expressions, often approaching the baroque, with never a polished word:

> Grape-munching behemoths my doors beleaguer,
> Takers of purges, hulking apparitions,
> Their piles of ordure to deposit eager.
>
> I am familiar with their micturitions,
> Hissing through hairy vents, as they forever
> Arouse me with matutinal emissions.

V

Michelangelo's capricious style of writing was matched by a highly personal sense of the incongruous in his everyday life, shared not even by Leonardo with his keen sense for caricature. Both Condivi and Vasari report that Michelangelo was fond of surrounding himself with eccentrics and simpletons.

An example is the painter Menighella, an uncouth fellow from Valdarno who showed up at times to implore Michelangelo to draw him a San Rocco or San Antonio he could copy for the peasants; and the man whom kings petitioned in vain to work for them would

drop what he had in hand and provide Menighella with saleable merchandise—a crucifix, for example, which the wretched fellow cast and sold in many specimens. Michelangelo was highly amused when Menighella, in an effort to appease a peasant patron who had objected to the drab habit of a St. Francis, painted the saint in rich brocade.

Another of the master's favorites was a stone cutter from Carrara named Topolino who fancied himself as a sculptor and never failed to include a few figures from his own chisel whenever he shipped marble blocks to Michelangelo. One day in Florence Topolino exhibited a Mercury to his mentor, who laughingly pointed out that the legs were many inches too short, making a dwarf of the figure. Topolino resolutely sawed off the legs and made up for the deficiency by giving his Mercury a pair of high boots. Michelangelo was delighted at such shrewdness and praised the man for his genius.

While he was working on the Julius tomb, he once had a stone mason carve a stele under his direct supervision, telling the man to cut away a section here and smooth a surface there, until a figure had come into being without his knowing in the slightest what he was about. When it was finished the mason looked at it in utter astonishment. "What do you think of it?" Michelangelo inquired. "Excellent! I am most grateful to you." "What for?" "Because through your help I have discovered a talent I did not know I possessed."

On another occasion a mason who did work for Michelangelo was asked by another client to make a mortar for domestic use. Thinking this a trap set by an envious rival, the craftsman said he did not carve mortars, "but here dwells one who plies this trade"; and he pointed to Michelangelo's house. Innocently the client applied to Michelangelo, who merely inquired who had sent him and when he heard the facts realized the mason in a sense felt himself to be a fellow sculptor. Michelangelo promptly made a mortar adorned with foliage, arabesques and masks and asked the client to let the mason judge what would be a fair fee. This put the

doughty craftsman at a loss. The mortar, he said, was much too fine for him. Let Michelangelo keep it and make another in the common, smooth style.

Among the petty artists Michelangelo liked to see about him, we hear of one Piloto, a goldsmith, who accompanied the master on his second trip to Venice and was accounted a witty and entertaining chap. Then there was Jacopo dell' Indaco, with whose work on the Sistine ceiling Michelangelo had once been so dissatisfied. A lazy fellow, Indaco was full of comic notions. So well did he entertain Michelangelo with his pranks and stories that he was almost always asked to stay for dinner when he visited, or so the story goes. On occasion, however, his loquacity and importunity were too much even for Michelangelo, who, one day when Indaco had particularly irritated him, is supposed to have sent out the painter to buy some figs and locked the door against him.

Vasari says Michelangelo was fond of Giuliano Bugiardini, his fellow student at Ghirlandajo's studio. Apparently Bugiardini was particularly good-natured and sweet-tempered, his only fault being that he vastly overestimated his own talent. Michelangelo, at any rate, said that he envied such complacency, never being satisfied with his own work.

Ottaviano de' Medici once asked Bugiardini to make a clandestine portrait of Michelangelo while he talked to the sculptor. For two hours Michelangelo laughed at Bugiardini's jokes and stories, until the painter said: "Arise, if you would see yourself!" Michelangelo cast one glance at the portrait and exclaimed: "What the devil have you done? One of my eyes is smack in my temple!" Bugiardini did not take the remark in kindly fashion but replied brazenly: "I do not think so, but if you will sit down again, I shall try to correct it."

Michelangelo was docile enough to seat himself once more, but kept his ironic smile. Bugiardini soon remarked: "I see you just as I have painted you; that is the way nature shows you to me." "There must be a flaw in nature then," Michelangelo replied. "Carry on and spare neither brush nor art."

Despite the acerbity in Michelangelo's character, his mordant wit and gruff mockery, we sense an underlying current of warmth, good nature and tolerance toward the petty.

VI

It was love, or rather heedless infatuation, that first made Michelangelo a poet. The passion that informed his whole character strained his every fiber when he was in love. He "takes flame like tinder," "blows up like gunpowder" at the very sight of whoever it is that rules his mind at the time. His emotional life is ever under the sign of fire. Indeed, fire and ice are images that recur continually in his writings. Now he speaks of ice melting before the fire, now of fire struck from steel or stone.

But even his most ardent love poems retain a wry sense of reality that does not always stop at the trite. As a poet Michelangelo had no conception of what constituted good taste. What mattered to him was that the simile struck home. Whether it was repulsive was a matter of indifference to him.

Note the grossness of the imagery in the love poem that is probably the longest he wrote and that turns on his obsession with the face and figure of his beloved. It begins: "Yes, I believe that if you were but stone," and includes this curious stanza:

> You entered through my eyes—see, I am weeping!
> Like grapes thrust down the gullet of a ewer,
> Their bulk within its ample belly keeping,
> So does your image grow—these tears are newer;
> For what my eyes devoured, my heart is leaping;
> As marrow swells the bark, you swell your wooer;
> And since you came in through so close a portal,
> I fear not you will leave, while you are mortal.

The image is intentionally unpoetic—the beloved enters his heart as a berry slips through a bottleneck! But the poem also

includes a simile that is true and striking. The poet is illustrating his contention that such great beauty can conceal only a noble heart:

> For never can a scabbard that is made
> To hold a straight knife hide a crooked blade.

In his younger years, especially, Michelangelo went to Petrarca for models by which to shape his feelings. Petrarca's seventy-sixth sonnet from *In Vita di M. Laura* reverberates in a little love lyric from Michelangelo's youth. Petrarca says: "Here I saw her, full of humility, here full of pride as well, now brusque, now homely, now pitiless, now soft; here she was gentle, here again full of contempt and savagery. Here she sang so sweetly; here she sat down. Here she turned; here she tarried. Here she pierced my heart with her fair eyes. Here she said a word; here she smiled. Here her features changed. Ah, Cupid, thou our lord, thou forcest me to think on it day and night."

And here is Michelangelo:

> Not far from here my lover stole from me
> My heart, my very life—a greater prize.
> 'Twas here he promised succor with his eyes,
> But to withhold what he had pledged would be.
> Not far from here he bound me, set me free,
> And here I wept my sorrowful goodbyes;
> Yet from this stone he went, despite my cries,
> Whom, though he stole me, I shall never see.

Of much later vintage and greater independence is the passionate lyric, available in a copy by Luigi del Riccio's hand. The notion that it was addressed to Vittoria Colonna is probably groundless. The tone Michelangelo used with Vittoria was in an altogether different key; but even should the poem date from the time after he had met her, it would serve only to show that there was another woman in his life. In the original the poem begins: *Sicome secho legnio in foco ardente.* Here is the translation:

As dry wood may I die in burning fire
If I do love you less! May hell chastise
My soul, if other beauty I desire!

Oh, if another beauty but your eyes
I even look upon, let their sweet splendor
Eclipse—without its life my spirit dies!

If I adore and love you less, O render
My highest thoughts as much devoid of hope
As they are strong now in your love's surrender!

One learns with some surprise that even in Michelangelo's lifetime many of his poems were set to music and sung, for there is scarcely one among them that could be truly called a song. Nature does speak on occasion in his opus, but there is no chanting, nor caroling, nor warbling. The lines are solemn like church music, or shrill with irony, or hot with desire. They reverberate with despair or sound a dirge over the vanity of life and death.

VII

Until Michelangelo fell under the religious spell of the Counter Reformation, he worshiped only beauty—at first the beauty of women, then that of men. The beauty he sought after was inseparable from youth. Like the ancient Greeks, and like many men in all ages, he was more strongly attracted to youth in all its fascination than to the mysterious power of sex.

Usually Michelangelo's reflections on the beauty of his beloved come less from the heart than from a sophisticated mind. They are often far-fetched—for example, when in one of his poems (*Da maggior luce e da più chiara stella*) he insists that, just as the stars at night receive their light from some greater star, the beauty of

his beloved is enhanced by every approaching lesser beauty; or when in another poem on beauty he says the sorrow that makes him ugly makes the beloved all the fairer.

It was often maintained at the time that at bottom a painter was compelled always to paint himself. To this premise Michelangelo assented in two madrigals to "a fair and cruel lady." In the first (*S'egli è che 'n dura pietra alcun somigli*) he says that since a sculptor represents himself in stone while seeking to carve the features of another, he must needs make his beloved look as sad as he was himself. The stone is as hard as she. So long as she torments him with her scorn, he can shape only his own misery in marble.

Of much greater value are the poems, like the one written in Bologna in 1507 (*Quanto si gode lieta e ben contesta*), in which Michelangelo simply speaks a lover's admiration. This poem to a young woman reads:

How much a garland pleases when it lies,
Woven with flowers, upon some golden hair;
It seems as if each blossom thrusts and tries
To be the first to kiss that forehead fair.

Contented all day long that garment is
Which spreads itself but first clings to her breast.
The golden thread asks nothing but to rest,
Touching her cheeks and throat with tenderness.

More honored still that ribbon which can lie,
Gilded and shaped in the most cunning fashion,
Touching the breast which it so carefully laces.

And that small belt that knots so easily
Seems to declare, "Unceasing my caresses."
Would that my arms might join in such a passion!

Of importance too is the renowned and beautiful sonnet to Tommaso Cavalieri from the year 1532, lending virile and worthy

expression to Michelangelo's intoxication with beauty (*S'un casto amor, s'una pietà superna*):

> If love is chaste, if pity comes from heaven,
> If fortune, good or ill, is shared between
> Two equal loves, and if one wish can govern
> Two hearts, and nothing evil intervene:
>
> If one soul joins two bodies fast for ever,
> And if, on the same wings, these two can fly,
> And if one dart of love can pierce and sever
> The vital organs of both equally:
>
> If both love one another with the same
> Passion, and if each other's good is sought
> By both, if taste and pleasure and desire
>
> Bind such a faithful love-knot, who can claim,
> Either with envy, scorn, contempt or ire,
> The power to untie so fast a knot?

The poem that follows (*Veggio co be vostr' ochi un dolce lume*) is not far behind:

> This glorious light I see with your own eyes
> Since mine are blind and will not let me see.
> Your feet lend me your own security
> To carry burdens far beyond my size.
>
> Supported by your wings I now am sped,
> And by your spirit to heaven I am borne.
> According to your will, I'm pale or red—
> Hot in the harshest winter, cold in sun.
>
> All my own longings wait upon your will,
> Within your heart my thoughts find formulation,
> Upon your breath alone my words find speech.

Just as the moon owes its illumination
To the sun's light, so am I blind until
To every part of heaven your rays will reach.

There is in these poems a passion that could scarcely ring stronger and purer—the passion of a lover, surely not of one who is loved in return. We are amazed to see a man of such gruff virility speak like a woman of his love to another man.

VIII

Except for Tommaso Cavalieri, we know little of the young men who—to judge from the well-known letter of invective by Pietro Aretino—wielded such influence over Michelangelo that he readily made them gifts of his magnificent drawings.

The first one to whom Aretino points was a young Florentine, Gherardo Perini. A brief and courteous note from him has survived, beginning: *Honorandissimo et damme amato singolare.* It says the writer is well and hopes the same of the master. He is at his disposal, hopes to see him again soon, sends his own regards and those of Master Giovan Francesco (Fatucci) and Michelangelo's other friends. May God protect him!

Michelangelo replied with a brief and highly mannered letter from Florence, dated February 1522, addressed to *al prudente giovane* (the prudent youth) Gherardo Perini in Pesaro. It merely expressed pleasure at having heard from him. He was well. It was unnecessary to write at length now, since they would soon meet. *Non mi sento però soffiziente a farla,* he wrote—he felt unable to reply to the letter, barely hinting at a warmer feeling, also evident from the plaintive signature, *vostro fedelissimo e povero amico.* Vasari reports that Michelangelo presented this young man with three splendid drawings in chalk (now in the Uffizi, Florence).

That is all we know of Perini.

We know little more about Febo di Poggio, to whom Michel-

angelo twelve years later, in September 1534, addressed the following letter from Florence:

"Febo: Although you harbor the deepest hatred of me—wherefore I do not know, for I cannot believe it is on account of my love for you, rather must it be because of the gossip of others, to which, knowing me, you should lend no credence—I am constrained to write you this: I shall depart tomorrow early and go to Pescia, there to meet Cardinal di Cesis and Messer Baldassare, with whom I shall go on to Pisa and thence to Rome. I shall not return here. And I tell you that as long as I live and wherever I may be I shall ever be faithfully and lovingly at your service, feeling for you as does no other friend of yours in the world. I pray God may open your eyes in one way or another to see that he who has your well-being at heart more than his own is capable only of love, never of hate."

Under this letter the great artist wrote six lines of verse, the fourth version of a longer poem apparently written to a woman in 1524, but here addressed to a man. Their meaning may be rendered approximately as follows: "Nothing but my death will satisfy you. . . . The more I suffer, the less you show pity on all my woe. . . . Oh, Febo, Phoebus, Sun, who gives warmth and light to all the world, why are you dark and cold to me and to no one else?"

Apparently Michelangelo sang the praises of Febo di Poggio in a fragment from another sonnet. It is addressed to the eagle and the word *poggio* (height) is used in a double meaning: "Oh, happy bird! You fly up to the sun (Phoebus, Febo) and see his beautiful face; you safely soar from the hill (*poggio*) where we come to fall."

A third poem, again playing on the name Febo, begins: "When Phoebus still sent all his rays over the hills, I was to have soared aloft into the air. His wings would have borne me, and death would have been sweet for me." The imagery continues with similar hyperbole: "Pen became wing, the hill a stair, Phoebus a light for my foot."

In all this labored effusiveness an altogether baroquelike air emanates from the letter in which Febo di Poggio, writing on January 14, 1535, from Florence, sought to dispel Michelangelo's apprehensions:

"Most noble Michelangelo, whom I honor like a father! I arrived here yesterday from Pisa, whither I had gone to visit my father. Directly upon my return, through your friend who is employed at the bank, I received your letter, which I read with the greatest pleasure, since I learned from it that you are well. I see from it further that you believe I am angry with you. Surely you must know I could never entertain such feelings toward you, since I look upon you like a father, nor has your conduct toward me ever been of such a nature as to give rise to such feelings. You must also know that on the night before your departure I was unable to get away from Messer Vincenzo, though I felt a great desire to see you. The next morning I went to your home, but you had already left and I was most unhappy not to be able to meet you again."

Quite plausible and fair enough; but then we read: Michelangelo had told him he could turn to one of the artist's friends, if he needed anything. Unfortunately, the friend happened to be away and Febo needed money for clothes to attend the races at Monte. Would Michelangelo be kind enough to see to it that he got the funds?

The only young man of breeding and stature among the several young men Michelangelo admired was the Roman nobleman, Tommaso de' Cavalieri. There are astonishing accesses of admiration in the master's letters to young Cavalieri. In a letter from Rome, dated December 1532, we read, for example:

"If I lack the skill to sail that ocean formed by your mighty genius, that genius will pardon me and neither despise me on account of my inequality with you nor demand of me what I cannot do; for he who, in every way, stands alone cannot find fellows. Your Magnificence, sole light of the world in our century, hence can find no satisfaction in the work of another, since you

are peerless and nonpareil. If nonetheless one or the other of my works, which I hope and pledge to do, may find your favor, I should call the work fortunate rather than good. And if indeed I had the certainty, as I have been told, to please Your Magnificence in this way or that, I should offer you as a gift my presence with all the future may bring me. I am grieved exceedingly not to be able to regain the past, the better to serve you, having toward that end but the future, which cannot long endure, since I am even now too old."

When Cavalieri wrote Michelangelo he felt as though reborn since he had come to know the master, Michelangelo replied from Rome on January 1, 1533: "On my part, I should feel unborn, still-born, or bereft of heaven and earth, but for having gained from your letters faith that Your Magnificence will agree to accept a few of my works. . . ." In a letter to Sebastiano del Piombo half a year later, he sent greetings to "Messer Tommaso," adding: "I believe I should instantly fall dead, were he no longer in my thoughts."

To be sure, this Platonic love must be viewed in the light of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Montaigne's friendship for Estienne de la Boëtie, Languet's passionate tenderness toward young Philip Sidney are instructive examples. Some remarks on friendship in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) closely mirror Shakespeare's sentiments and those of Michelangelo: "I love my friend before myself, and yet, methinks, I do not love him enough. Some few months hence, my multiplied affection will make me believe I have not loved him at all. When I am from him, I am dead, till I be with him."

Note this passage from a letter by Michelangelo to Cavalieri of late July 1533: "I would far easier forego food, which nourishes but the body, and even that imperfectly (*infelicemente*), than your name, which sustains my body and soul, filling both with such great joy (*dolcezza*) that I feel neither sorrow nor fear of death so long as I carry it in my thoughts."

The drawings of figures from Greek mythology—Phaëthon,

Tityus, Ganymede—which Michelangelo presented to Cavalieri were accompanied by sonnets. One of them carries an allusion to Cavalieri's name:

> Why, more than ever, do I give such vent
> To my desire, when neither tears nor words
> Can change the destiny I move towards?
> Nothing I do can my own fate prevent.
>
> Why does the weary heart make death appear
> Desirable, since every man must die?
> There is no consolation for me here
> Where joy is far outweighed by misery.
>
> Yet if the blows must come decreed by fate
> And I am powerless, there's comfort in
> The thought that nothing now can intervene.
>
> If to be blest I must accept defeat
> It is no wonder if, alone and nude,
> I am by one in arms chained and subdued.

It is the last line of the original that alludes to Cavalieri: *Resto prigion d'un cavalier armato.*

There are other poems of stature that were evidently addressed to Cavalieri, though by modern standards they are all somewhat mannered. One senses in them an awe of beauty, an unfulfilled yearning for love, a vague metaphysics of beauty and love.

IX

The passionate though perhaps innocent veneration for the beauty of these young men provoked an attack upon Michelangelo by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), the great contemporary author

of scurrilous pamphlets. Aretino was artistic in temperament and appreciative of greatness. He was considered to possess a mordant wit—though to us it seems more like outrageous gall; he had a talent for satirical comedy and in his time was in turn feared, hated and honored, like Voltaire two centuries later; but he lacked Voltaire's idealism and waged no lofty and selfless crusades for human welfare, unlike the sage of Ferney. Aretino's sole ambition was power, and he became the arbiter of success and failure, ultimately gaining the title *divino.* He counted among his friends many of the greatest men of his time—Titian, Sansovino, Sebastiano del Piombo, Vasari, Sodoma, Tintoretto.

Benedetto Varchi, Michelangelo's admirer, wrote a sonnet praising Aretino to the skies. Almost year after year Aretino received stipends from Charles V, the Duke of Urbino and four or five other Italian nobles, including the later Pope Julius III. He got valuable gifts from Francis I and the Empress Isabella.* It was his protector, Francesco of Urbino, who introduced him to Charles V, and the emperor was so impressed by Europe's pioneer of journalism in the grand style that he had Aretino ride on his right during his entry into Peschiera.

It was in 1535 that Aretino first addressed Michelangelo. He began by expressing his vast respect of the master whose outstanding merit, as he put it, was the greatest eloquence in the merest outline. Then he came to the point: "I who by my praise or censure am virtually able to settle whether recognition or condemnation shall come to others greet you in all my insignificance." He would not dare it but for the fact that the respect of princes had reduced the worthlessness of his name. "Yet am I all admiration for you. There are in the world kings aplenty but only one Michelangelo. How strange that nature, unable to create anything so exalted that you cannot equal it, cannot stamp her own works with that sublime majesty peculiar to the immense power of your hand! You put Apelles, Phidias and Vitruvius in the shade."

* Isabella of Portugal, the wife of Charles V.

Aretino then turned to the fresco of the *Last Judgment* which the pope had ordered from Michelangelo, enumerating a number of allegorical representations he would like to see used in the picture. While he had sworn never again to set foot in Rome, he concluded, his desire to see the *Last Judgment* might make him go back on his word.

The artists of the time were constrained to bow to Aretino's rule. A past master in self-advertisement, he was well able to carry along whomever he wished; but in return for his praise and commendation he exacted pictures and sketches and drawings. He sent an angry letter to Bandinelli, when that artist failed to pay the required tribute. His letters were published and read all over Italy. What was then considered barbed and corrosive may seem fatuous to us today, but beyond question Aretino was a power to be reckoned with.

Upon Aretino's request Vasari had sent him two drawings by Michelangelo, as well as the clay model of a head. Presumably he did so in the name of Duke Alessandro, and Aretino thanked him in the most effusive terms. The two drawings are supposed to have been a *St. Catherine,* drawn by Michelangelo when he was a boy, and a picture of an eagle. Aretino speaks of them as works of art of the first water.

It must be borne in mind that even such a man as Titian, even in Venice where his fame was ubiquitous, and even by his friend Aretino, was never put on the same level with Michelangelo.

Michelangelo replied to Aretino's letter with great courtesy and a touch of irony:

"Highly esteemed friend and brother, your letter saddened and at once pleased me. It pleased me because it comes from you who are one of a kind. It saddened me because so much of my painting is already done that I cannot employ your ideas. You could not have better described the Last Judgment, had you undergone it yourself. As to your offer to write about me, it gives me more than mere pleasure. Since kings and emperors deem it

the greatest favor to be mentioned by your pen, I do indeed request it.

"Should anything I own take your fancy, I readily offer it to you. As for your resolve to come no more to Rome, please do not break it on my picture's account—that were truly too much. I commend myself to you."

Michelangelo must have dispatched this reply more than a quarter-year after he received Aretino's letter. Not until January 20, 1538, was Aretino heard from again, taking Michelangelo at his word and with seeming modesty asking for "a sketch of the kind you would usually throw into the fire."

There was no reply.

In 1544 Aretino wrote again. The emperor had allowed him to ride on his right side and shown him astounding honors (*stupendi onori*). Cellini had written him that Michelangelo had received his greetings well—this were more important than all else. He had wept upon seeing Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in an engraving and thanked God for having been born into this age. Michelangelo was his idol, as he was Titian's.

There was no reply.

Two months later Aretino asked a Roman friend to remind Michelangelo of the promised drawings. The letter arrived while Michelangelo lay ill in the home of Riccio. Another year went by. Undismayed, Aretino now mobilized Benvenuto Cellini. At last there was a shipment, apparently including several drawings, none of them of great virtue. Cellini received a threatening letter—Michelangelo should be ashamed; let him say whether Aretino was to get anything or not. If not, Aretino's love of the master would change to hate. The letter was dated April 1545.

In the fall of that year Titian came to Rome at the invitation of Paul III, to paint the pope's portrait, being assigned quarters and a workshop in the Vatican. Michelangelo was not acquainted with Titian's best works. The ugly features of the aged Farnese pope provided the Venetian with scarcely more than an occasion

to demonstrate his competence. He probably painted other pictures in Rome, but nothing of outstanding merit.

Michelangelo has been credited with saying that Titian would have gone far, had he learned to draw and had better models, of which there was surely no dearth in Venice. But he liked Titian's colors very much. His pictures were lifelike and realistic, and had he learned to draw as well as he painted, he would have been unexcelled. This is what Michelangelo told Vasari, who was Titian's cicerone in Rome. All the artists, Vasari adds, agreed with this judgment.

But the artists of Rome hated Titian. They feared he would stay. Perino del Vaga, who, using Michelangelo's designs, painted the ornamentation in the Sistine Chapel that fills the space between the *Last Judgment* and the ground, as well as the ceiling in the Cappella Paolina, was afraid Titian might take over the work and inveighed against him. Since del Vaga was Michelangelo's protégé, the master may have taken his part. We do not know what happened between Titian and Michelangelo, but in Aretino's next letter Michelangelo was no longer mentioned. Perhaps Titian mentioned the promise to Michelangelo and received a brusque rebuff.

In November 1545 Aretino wrote Michelangelo a letter deploring the unbridled license with which the painter had dared to represent what was an object of reverence by all the faithful.

"This Michelangelo, forsooth, whose reputation is so great; this Michelangelo, who is so famous for his spirit; this Michelangelo, whom all of us admire—here he seeks to show the people that he is as lacking in faith and devotion as he is skilled in his art. Is it possible that you, so touched with divinity that you do not even trouble to traffic with common men, have brought such stuff into God's highest temple, putting it up above Christ's foremost altar in the world's foremost chapel, where great cardinals and venerable prelates, indeed, Christ's very Vicar on earth, profess and worship the Savior's flesh and blood, to the sacred ceremonies and divine words of the church?

"Were it not impious or worse to draw a comparison, I might pride myself on what I succeeded in doing in my *Nanna,* where, instead of resorting to intolerable nakedness, as you have done, I treated of the most lascivious and voluptuous subjects with prudent caution, in seemly and carefully chosen terms. Yet you, dealing with so exalted a theme, show your angels stripped of their heavenly robes, while your saints appear without a trace of mortal shame!

"Even the pagans showed Diana robed, and when they carved a nude Venus, they posed her and gave her gestures to appear clothed. You, who are a Christian, range faith so far below art that, in portraying martyrs and holy virgins, you violate decency to create a spectacle from which one would all but avert one's eyes even in a house of ill fame. Verily, it were better you were an infidel rather than posing as one of the faithful while laying rude hands on the faith of others. But heaven will not let your incredible effrontery go unpunished. Marvelous as is your work on its own, it will surely be the grave of your fame."

Having vented his divine spleen in this fashion, Aretino came to his main point, the missing gifts. Striking with weapons against which Michelangelo could not defend himself, he wrote: "It would have been well, had you redeemed your pledge, if only to silence evil tongues that maintain only a Gherardo or Tommaso know how to command your courtesy."

Following this suggestive animadversion to Michelangelo's admiration for young men, along lines to be expected of an Aretino, came a final blast charging Michelangelo with breach of promise, ingratitude, avarice and theft.

"What could a man like myself expect, if the piles of gold Pope Julius left to have his earthly remains properly entombed—a work entrusted to you—could not persuade you to meet your commitments! Surely it is not owing to your avarice and ingratitude, O great painter, that Julius' bones rest in a plain coffin but rather to his own merit. God willed such a pope to be what he is on his own rather than because of some splendid edifice. All the

same, you did not do what you should have done, and that means stealing."

The doughty braggart and extortioner concluded with a reminder to Michelangelo that if his suggestions about the *Last Judgment* had been followed, nature would not now have to be ashamed of having granted the artist so great a talent—him who now resembled nothing more than a heathen idol.

X

The real point of this insolent letter—the suggestion that the master's sex life was abnormal—was beyond question an important consideration in persuading Michelangelo's great-nephew, who first published the poems in 1623, sixty years after Michelangelo's death, to change every reference to a *signor* to a *signora.* Not until 1863, when Cesare Guasti in Florence published *Le Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti, cavate dagli autografi,* Florence, 1863, did we know the authentic versions in broad outline. Subsequently the researches of Carl Frey added much to their completeness and accuracy.*

Michelangelo never wrote poetry with publication in mind. He wrote from inner necessity, whenever he felt the urge, and almost certainly it took him a long time before he showed anything he had done to another. That readership was not his object is seen from the fact that he burned all the poetry of his youth, surely not because he thought it worthless, as Carl Frey suggests, but clearly because it might have afforded an insight into his youthful life he wished to deny to prying eyes.

* Carl Frey's edition (*Die Dichtungen des Michelagniolo Buonarroti,* Berlin, 1897), recording all the variants of the poems, can still be regarded as the standard work. There is, however, a more critical edition by Enzo Girardi (Bari, 1960). A revaluation of Michelangelo's poetry has been undertaken by Valerio Mariani, *La Poesia Di Michelangelo* (Rome, 1941).

He burned many drawings and poems on many occasions. When he left Florence for Rome in the reign of Leo X, he burned all his papers. Shortly before his death he burned all he could find. Vasari reports that he staged two such incinerations during his final years. Moreover, many of his papers, including drawings as well as poems, were stolen from him.

In the decade from 1530 to 1540 he addressed some of his poems to persons he esteemed highly, especially Vittoria Colonna and Tommaso Cavalieri. At times in his old age he would write rhymed letters to friends and acquaintances. Sometimes he would recite a few of his poems before a circle of intimates. During his lifetime an unidentified lady in Rome owned a note book of his poems, which she would lend to those who wished to make copies.

Since so many of his poems were in circulation, often in garbled form, he responded to the urgings of his friends Luigi del Riccio and Donati Gianotti; and when past the age of seventy, he agreed to assemble and edit for publication a selection of the scattered pages. This was actually done during the years 1545 and 1546—but then Michelangelo let the matter drop and the plan for publication came to nothing. There was still another attempt at a published collection of his poems. When Ascanio Condivi had finished his "Life of Michelangelo," written almost at the master's dictation, he tackled an edition of the poems. Again the undertaking was abandoned in midstream, despite the renown enjoyed by some of the poems that had become known, as seen from the well-known dictum of Francesco Berni: *Ei dice cose et voi dite parole*—He says things while you speak words.

Michelangelo's verses cost him immense effort. Most of them he polished over and over again, sometimes at intervals of many years. We know as many as eight versions of some of them. As in the case of his sculpture, he left many of them unfinished. He expressed what was close to his heart, what he felt at the moment; but he lacked the patience and will to finish it when inspiration ebbed or some poem had miscarried.

To be rated highest are the several poems in which images and similes are taken from the art that was closest to him, sculpture. Here he moved in a sphere where he was at home, yet even these poems are never quite unambiguous and unequivocal in their imagery. Here Michelangelo's intellectualism was a handicap. There is a dearth of sensual richness in these poems. Take the famous sonnet on which Benedetto Varchi in Michelangelo's lifetime held an entire lecture before the Florentine Academy (February 25, 1547). Beginning *Non ha l'ottima artista alcun concetto,* it is addressed to a fair and fickle lady:

The marble not yet carved can hold the form
Of every thought the greatest artist has,
And no conception ever comes to pass
Unless the hand obeys the intellect.

The evil that I fly from, all the harm,
The good as well, are buried and intact
In you, proud Lady. To my life's sad loss
My art's opposed to the desired effect.

Thus love, and your own beauty and the weight
Of things, are not to blame for my own plight.
Fate, scorn or chance can never be accused

Because both death and pity are enclosed
Within your heart, and I have only breath
And power to draw from you not life but death.

XI

In time the thought of death became a constant refrain in Michelangelo's poetry. The years went by, his solitude grew, his chances for finding love had dwindled. Reaction against the great

ideas of the Renaissance grew in strength. In many ways, especially through his liaison with Vittoria Colonna, the great artist's mind was increasingly haunted by doubts over the worship of beauty and hopes of salvation by God's grace.

Of much significance is this fine sonnet from 1554, plainly influenced by Petrarca:

> Already now my life has run its course,
> And, like fragile boat on a rough sea,
> I reach the place which everyone must cross
> And give account of life's activity.
>
> Now I know well it was a fantasy
> That made me think art could be made into
> An idol or a king. Though all men do
> This, they do it half-unwillingly
>
> The loving thoughts, so happy and so vain,
> Are finished now. A double death comes near—
> The one is sure, the other is a threat.
>
> Painting and sculpture cannot any more
> Quieten the soul that turns to God again,
> To God who, on the cross, for us was set.

Deeply felt as is this sonnet, the thought that this is how the poet Michelangelo is to end is even sadder. There is a touch of the spirit of the Council of Trent in this sonnet. All the fire that once meant the grandeur of the Renaissance is dead and only the ashes remain.

The reformers had shouted so long about the corruption of the Roman Church and especially the immorality among the clergy, that the Council of Trent resolved to restore the strictest discipline. The divine streak in the Renaissance, its exuberance and irreverence, its mighty espousal of the essential rights of humanity, its faith in the beauty of ancient art and indeed, its worship of all art—all this was crushed by censorship, killed by the Inquisi-

tion. Cynicism was supplanted by hypocrisy. Freedom of thought and freedom to write were revoked. The human body was banished from the fine arts.

Strangest of all, the creative artist who in youth and manhood seemed to be the Renaissance incarnate was to end as an instrument of the trend that unseated and murdered the Renaissance.

The Draftsman

I

MANY OF MICHELANGELO'S POETIC FRAGMENTS are noted down on sheets on which he had made drawings. As works of art, poems and drawings are not of equal rank. Michelangelo was a gifted amateur poet, whose intellectual stature occasionally achieved a verse with the stamp of perfection. With pen and crayon,* however, he was the greatest artist who ever lived.

True, one can argue convincingly against some of his work as a sculptor, painter and architect. Great as he was, his loathing of

* The word *crayon* is used here, in a rather loose sense, for black and for red chalk; and for the natural material as well as for the artificial. (For a technical discussion of Michelangelo's drawing materials see Ludwig Goldscheider, *Michelangelo Drawings*, London, 1953, p. 174.)

the humdrum, the accessible, the attainable could make his work abstruse and forbidding, despite its basic content of beauty. But, pen or crayon in hand, he was peerless.

One might think nothing could bring Michelangelo closer than reading the letters and poems in which he poured out his thoughts. Not so. They convey little more than a surface Michelangelo, busy in his private world, emotional, brooding, cantankerous.

But a study of his drawings brings him into far sharper focus. It means touching his inmost artistry, the subtlest elements of his personality, the loftiest aspects of his genius. Here, beyond peradventure of doubt, he was the master nonpareil.

Numberless sketches of details and portions of later works manifest his approach. Equally numerous drawings, sometimes merely tossed off, often finished in such detail as to be works of art on their own, demonstrate his skill.

His verses differ in quality, sometimes failing to come off altogether; but one may say unhesitatingly that no drawing ever left Michelangelo's hands that shows the slightest weakness or even the distraction of the moment. They all testify to his complete command of form, as they do to his overpowering personality. In these drawings genius holds undisputed sway.

They express inexhaustible strength, in various nuances, but always with a sure hand. They are alive with a passion that makes the drawings of other artists appear thin or cold or flabby. Michelangelo's mastery of this medium is so complete that not even the most difficult subject ever deterred him.

Looking at his drawings closely, one learns to see them not merely in their finished state—one can watch them growing, line by line. One discovers that to Michelangelo drawings never were what they are to many other artists, what his own poems occasionally were to him: a kind of calligraphy. He never set pen to paper unless he had something to say.

In earnest; for humor and the light touch are absent. An austere firmness of purpose holds sway here. The consummate beauty achieved is grave and unsmiling. The artist's inward bent, more-

over, was fixed upon the awe-inspiring, the horrifying—at the very least upon grandeur.

II

The fascination exerted upon Michelangelo by what we have connoted with the term *terribile* is striking. He loves to represent scenes that terrify or show the effect of fear. A characteristic example is the elaborate drawing of *Phaëthon,* hurtling head first from heaven to earth with his team of four. Not only are the falling youth and the tangle of harnessed horses seized with terror—the nude beauties that look up to witness the disaster are frozen in horror.

Michelangelo could surely never have achieved such utter mastery over animal form and human movement but for his unceasing study of the workings of each muscle and his equally ceaseless drawings from nude models. Incomplete as is the opus of his drawings necessarily today, it includes hundreds of studies of models. Yet it must be kept in mind that in time his mastery was able to dispense with the need for working directly from life. It was, of course, physically impossible to draw the plunging *Phaëthon* from nature, or *Ganymede* abducted by the eagle. More to the point, models could scarcely serve when it came to painting the damned tumbling into hell or the saved soaring to heaven in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment.**

Michelangelo could muster many styles of drawing, and each corresponded to a specific mood. In his last phase he was fond of using a red crayon so soft that the contours become heavy, the shading delicate, the transitions from light to shade so fluid that only Correggio ever equaled him. Only the covert energy of line,

* In such cases Michelangelo used not living models but small manikins made of wax or clay.

the unmistakably Michelangelesque movements reveal his hand. This is the style he used most often when fixing or reshaping an image from memory.

But let him draw from a nude model, perhaps to capture a figure for one of his frescoes, and he will be using the pen, the tool of his choice. Then there is firmness and resolution in his lines. One senses that he seeks, first of all, the definitive contour, finds and fixes it, then shades with vigorous, closely spaced cross-hatching that becomes more and more open as the highlights are reached. Projecting surfaces and arches—on the thighs or in the chest—emerge strongly into full light. Shadows create soft hollows where the forms leave room for them. The buttocks surely are not the body's fairest parts, yet when Michelangelo draws them they take on such beauty that both man and woman become indeed callipygean.

It is with the pen too that he designed figures he meant to do in marble or bronze, as the pen-and-ink drawing for his bronze *David* shows. Such a drawing, together with a miniature model,* was usually all he needed before tackling the marble directly.

Some of these drawings look like anything but sketches. They resemble rather finished engravings—indeed, engravings made after statuary. Others are made with the very finest drawing pen—little black outline drawings like the six different designs for *Fettered Captives* (two standing against steles), two or three inches high, alive and moving, tossed off with absolute assurance, light as a breath. They share the page with a study, in red chalk, for the boy to the left of the *Libyan Sibyl*, a study for the right hand of the sibyl, and the splendid architectural design for the mausoleum of Pope Julius (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum; Frey 3, Berenson 1562r).

Naturally there is a deep gulf between such drawings as these, which were only means to end for the artist—the end being marble, stone or pigment—and drawings that were an end in themselves.

* Usually 10 to 20 inches high.

The former let the beholder follow a work from the moment of conception, the moment when the idea struck a spark from Michelangelo's mind. Often the themes he committed to paper never reached the actual working stage—a knot of figures like the one for the *Brazen Serpent,* or tiny figures like the *Captives.* They were set down only because the master was not content to compose in his head, instead fixing his notions with the drawing pen.

Occasionally, as already mentioned, there are drawings that unmistakably hark back to actual experience, revealing the artist's keen memory. Most of them, however, mirror his inner life. His poetic nature found more perfect expression in his drawings than in his verse.

Like his drawings, his handwriting is full of character. His characters stand proud and virile, the beauty of the script spelling out the creative draftsman. It was Charles Blanc who called attention to the fact that there is nothing really round in this writing, not even the letter o. It does have a distinct style of its own. Michelangelo rests his f's on a base, as though they were columns, and crowns them with a small arc ending in a straight line. He writes his d's in such a manner that they exhibit the *contrapposto* of his statues. The topmost stroke, customarily turned to the left, stubbornly turns right with him. Genius is always revealed in unexpected action. Michelangelo's is seen even in so trifling a trait.

III

When one spreads out Michelangelo's drawings, the eye lingers on the page that bears the most important studies for his *Libyan Sibyl,* fairest and most elegant of them all—the lady among his women. Those who have never studied the artist will be surprised to see that he worked out all the details from a male model—head, neck, back, the difficult arm position, the foot. We see that

Michelangelo did not exchange the male figure for an attractive female form until he was absolute master of pose and attitude.

In the same way he changed *signor* to *signora* in many passages when reworking his poems. When Ludwig von Scheffler went through them in 1892—apparently with the intention of making as much as possible of Michelangelo's inclination toward the male sex, in order to class him among the famous homosexuals—he posited that Michelangelo had invariably seen to it that those addressed to men were suitably readdressed to women—in other words, regularly writing *donna* for *signor*.

This theory does not stand up with *all* the poems. As we see in his drawings, we must conclude that to him sex was altogether subordinate to beauty. Until the time that he was swept up in Vittoria Colonna's Christian renunciation he paid homage to the Platonic and humanistic approach to love: beauty has its origin in God; it is the sole reflection of heavenly splendor on earth, hence ever aspires to return to God.

A particularly powerful impression emanates from the page on which Michelangelo immortalized three of the *Labors of Hercules*, in red chalk (Royal Library, Windsor Castle; Berenson 1611). The hero is first shown in his struggle with the lion, whose maw he is tearing apart bare-handed; next in the combat with Antaeus, whom he has lifted off the ground and holds head and arm downward against his own body and thigh, the back, hips, legs and foot of the vanquished foeman forming a splendid arc to the left, corresponding to Hercules's own muscular back, which curves lightly to the right with strain. In the third episode, composed with consummate mastery like the other two, Hercules rests his right knee against the massive body of the Hydra, whose numerous heads on serpents' necks seek to bite him, snapping at his face and below the left arm, where he is seemingly defenseless. One head has already fastened its fangs firmly to his right loin. There is more than a hint of Laocoön here, though there is no actual resemblance to the famous group in this drawing, in which

the lone hero contends with a monster as studded with venom as the world is with hate.

It is hard to say whether these three drawings are better suited to painting than to sculpture. The frays with lion and Hydra would look magnificent in fresco. The two figures locked in battle cry for stone. Possibly with some slight modifications, to enhance the pose of Hercules, they might have made masterpieces among Michelangelo's sculpture. By way of comparison, one has only to think of Baccio Bandinelli's flabby treatment of the same subject in the group on the Piazza della Signoria. Unlike Bandinelli, Michelangelo does not skip the struggle proper, providing a rare feast for the eye by the beauty of his lines.

IV

The *Fall of Phaëthon* fascinated Michelangelo so profoundly that he left no less than three renderings of the theme (British Museum, Venice Academy, Windsor Castle; Berenson 1535, 1601, 1617r).

Perhaps least successful is the drawing in which two horses hurtle down symmetrically on either side of the youth and his chariot. In the two others, which are closer to each other, symmetry gives way to a tangle of human and animal bodies calculated to inspire awe. One of them is little more than a sketch. The other painstakingly overlooks not a single detail.

Michelangelo had carefully read, in Italian translation, the fascinating account of this mythological incident by Ovid at the end of the first and the beginning of the second canto of his *Metamorphoses,* an account bubbling over with imaginative life. One fairly sees Phaëthon, torn with doubt of his descent from the sun god Phoebus by the mockery of Epaphus, imploring his mother

Clymene to swear to him that he was sired by Phoebus, and then going to the sun palace himself to cajole his radiant father into fulfilling his every wish. Too late Apollo rues his frivolous pledge and senses the danger threatening his son, and heaven and earth besides, from entrusting the sun chariot to Phaëthon for even a single day.

Ovid's medium is, of course, quite different from Michelangelo's, though the Latin poet's mastery is no whit behind. Indeed, his account of the spirited, heavenly sun horses shines with a radiance the draftsman could scarcely equal; and Michelangelo's empty little cart cannot compare with Vulcan's hand-tooled chariot, golden-wheeled and silver-spoked, studded with gems sparkling in the sun.

Ovid's account of Apollo's disquiet and Phaëthon's youthful impetuousness is matchless, as is his description of the young demigod's desperate journey, of how Phaëthon loses control over the four mighty, winged steeds—Michelangelo, of course, shows them without wings. Heaven and earth are set on fire, the springs dry up, the rivers seethe, the mountains split open, the cities are consumed, grass and crops go up in flames, metals melt—all these marvelously effective poetic images could scarcely be rendered in a drawing. Michelangelo merely indicated the river Eridanus—rather traditionally, at that—into which Phaëthon hurtled according to myth, and where his body was found by the river god, shown in closely similar attitude at the bottom of his two better drawings.

The first sketch in black chalk (British Museum) is the more graceful, some of the detail being marked by greater spontaneity, such as the frightened women witnessing the fall from below. Yet the definitive version (Windsor Castle) shows the greater power—even though the two drawings are actually only a day apart.

This drawing is in three levels, so to speak. At the top one sees Zeus bestriding his eagle and twisting his slender, youthful body in such a way that it is seen from all sides. With his upraised right he hurls his thunderbolt at the clumsy youth who has piloted the

chariot of Helios so ineptly as to almost set the whole earth on fire. In the first version Zeus is seen full face, his anger less strongly marked in his attitude. In the second version he is as wrathful as later is Christ in the fresco of the *Last Judgment.*

The center field is preempted by the four plunging horses, the hurtling chariot and the upturned Phaëthon, instinctively seeking to ward off the impact that will smash his head. The motions of falling are masterfully rendered in the first version, but the horses are rather carelessly drawn. In the finished version the lines of the mighty, plunging group are more pleasing. The horses are unmistakably horses. Phaëthon's handsome, youthful body is more extended than in the first version (though no handsomer than there); but here the lines of his body follow the outline of the plunging horse at the extreme right, unifying the entire group more than before.

In both drawings the sun chariot is a simple empty little wooden two-wheeler, shaped like a trough. Michelangelo's imagination was not challenged by inorganic forms. To a Benvenuto Cellini the chariot would have been the main element.

The figures at the lowest level are probably most effective in the first version, where the attitude of the two nude women perfectly reveals their utter surprise and horror. In altogether different ways their arms seek to ward off the plunging figures, while their faces express amazement at the unheard-of event. Less effective is the figure of a man who merely puts his hands to his head, and even less remarkable is the recumbent river god Eridanus who should be more than a mere witness.

The first drawing was done during Michelangelo's sojourn in Rome, just before his departure in June 1533. It was sent to Cavalieri with a note: "Messer Tomao, if you like this sketch, tell Urbino, that I may arrange my time to make another by tomorrow night, as I have promised. If you desire me to finish it, say so."

If we judge correctly, Cavalieri sent back the sheet and asked for the more elaborate version that is now at Windsor Castle. In it everything is firmer and sharper, the outlines harder. The spon-

taneity of attitude is lost. The river god Eridanus has altogether lost interest in the tragedy unfolding before him, merely performing his work of letting the river flow from an urn. To fill an empty space, a small figure has been introduced, from an ancient genre model, a boy with a water jug on his back.

In a letter dated September 1, 1533, and sent from Rome to Florence Cavalieri acknowledges this second version. The last version (now in Windsor) is much more coherent in composition and more consistent in its treatment of light and shade, but the original freshness and spontaneity have become lost.

V

In two of the drawings that may be considered finished works of art the larger part of the area is occupied by a bird with outstretched wings. The first of these picturesque drawings represents a vulture with lowered head, pecking out the liver of the titan *Tityus* who reclines on the rocky ground, shackled to the rock by his arms and left foot (Windsor Castle; Berenson 1615).

The titan is envisioned as immense—according to legend, he covered nine acres of the cliff. His face is contorted with pain and anger. With his raised left knee thrust against the rock he seeks in vain to fend off the vulture. All the action proceeds on the two-thirds of the sheet on the left, while on the right third a desolate landscape is outlined. In a curious notion Michelangelo gives a bare tree trunk on the right a savage animal aspect, with an evil eye, curved beak and yawning maw.

This drawing too, dating from late 1532, was done for Cavalieri, as was the other, the full width of which shows a spreadeagle, soaring aloft to Zeus with the kidnaped *Ganymede*. Executed with consummate skill, it was greatly admired even in its own time. (It is preserved only in an excellent copy, in Windsor Castle.)

Despite its supernatural strength and immense wingspread, hinting at divine powers, the eagle gently embraces Ganymede's strong, youthful body with its head and neck, while its claws are securely clamped about his legs, one about each shin, just below the boy's knees. There is a wonderful contrast between the firm white body and the softer body and wing plumage of the eagle surrounding and emphasizing it. The main impression is one of soaring upward flight, the boy resigning himself to his fate with closed eyes, but without sorrow or concern.

Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, who had had the *Tityus* drawing engraved in crystal, desired to do the same with *Ganymede;* but Cavalieri was afraid the drawing might suffer harm and, as related by Michelangelo in a letter dated September 5, 1533, declined the cardinal's request.

VI

Likewise made for Tommaso Cavalieri was a drawing dating back to late 1534, which is one of the most elaborate compositions Michelangelo ever did in his life. This *Bacchanal of Children* (Windsor Castle; Berenson 1618) includes no less than thirty-one figures (twenty-nine of them children) in five groups, each individual figure being modeled with the utmost care, while fitting effortlessly into a well-organized, picturesque whole.

Here Michelangelo quite evidently indulged himself in tossing off, for once, a whole cluster of strapping boys, all about the same age of five, harking back to remembered ancient art works on bacchanalian themes. The peculiarity of this drawing lies in part in the complete omission of the sensual element in the service of Bacchus. These boys are merely engaged in childish games of various kinds. None of them has had too much to drink; indeed, there is almost no drinking at all among the boys, merely play.

Among the lower groups on either side of the great drawing recline two grown-ups—on the left an aged she-fawn with long goat legs and pendulous breasts, from which one of the children tries to nurse. On the opposite side lies a heavily inebriated young man, head fallen forward in sleep, whose nakedness one of the boys seeks to cover, like the sons of Noah, while the other playing children in the group ignore the sleeper.

In the center field of the drawing several herculean boys drag on an ass,* carrying it in such a way that its kicking feet are upended, while they hold it by the body, head and one hoof. The children, seen from the back or side, are modeled like statues. They are wholly preoccupied with their heavy, struggling burden.

The two upper groups in the drawing show a degree of correspondence, in that both center about a vessel. To the left nine boys have gathered about a kettle, beneath which they have lit a great fire, blowing on it to bring the water to a boil. They bring up firewood, and a slaughtered suckling-pig to throw into the boiling water. On the right eight boys sample wine from an open barrel, their youthful bodies taking on every manner of gymnastic pose. One of them bends forward and holds a bowl under the bunghole. Another seeks to drink straight from the barrel and leans so far over the rim that he almost falls in. Still another has seated himself on the rim. Others, close by, hold a larger bowl, from which they drink. Michelangelo takes up the ribald Renaissance theme so often seen in Dutch paintings of merry-making: one of the little boys makes water to rid himself of the surplus fluid only just imbibed. He borrowed it from Donatello's relief of a *Child Bacchanalia* on the pediment of his Judith, which then stood in the Palazzo Medici (now in the Loggia dei Lanzi).

The whole inspiration entering into this drawing stems from antiquity, even though there is no clear-cut ancient model. As in so many other fields, Donatello was Michelangelo's precursor here, but the influence is almost infinitesimal. Michelangelo in his rich creativity emerges here as the epitome of the Renaissance artist.

* Or, as scholars believe today, the carcass of a red deer, not a living ass.

VII

A small group of its own among Michelangelo's drawings is taken up with figures, or more commonly heads, of heroic women, and perhaps they reflect his inner life most deeply. The finest of these heads turns so far to the right that the muscles of the throat are tensed. Done in red chalk, it shows a woman of about thirty—though actually ageless—who seems to be moving away from the beholder and is seen from the back, her head turned to show an almost pure profile. There is a diadem about the head, as the ancients understood the term—a headband, perhaps made of precious metal, since it rises above the brow in two high rims. A small ribbon droops down before the beautifully drawn ear, from which dangles an earring with a circular stone. The hair itself is plaited with narrow ribbons, held together by a broader band. A small tuft of hair shows over the back of the neck. (Original drawing in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; copy in the Uffizi; Berenson 1552.)

A well-built young woman, Roman, to judge from the features, sits turned slightly to the left but facing the viewer. Her clothing, drawn with great care in pen-and-ink over red chalk, consists of a gown with much embroidery and a wide belt, wide-sleeved and loose to leave the throat open. She wears a divided kerchief, held together by a clasp above the brow.

What matters, however, is her expression—attentive, grave, observant, brooding. She is not at all lost in reverie, yet Michelangelo creates the illusion that something is happening inside this woman's soul. Her almost peering eyes have seen something that has affected her deeply. Something like anger is rising within her. (British Museum; Berenson 1482. Cat. No. 41.)

On the back of the page, lightly drawn in charcoal, a young

woman, standing. The graceful, vigorous head with its delicate oval, the strong, fine nose, the gentle, lowered eyes are all elaborated in full detail. Her undeniable gravity merges into a femininity softer than what we usually expect from Michelangelo.

One of his most charming and carefully drawn women's heads, widely known for its artful coiffure and curious head-covering is in the British Museum (Berenson 1689), and there are also several copies painstakingly reproducing the shading. For no sound reason it is often titled *Vittoria Colonna*. A noteworthy feature is the heavy braid that falls down in an arc, to be fastened above the neck. It appears heavier at the end than at the roots. Another is the scale-covered, feathered hood that hides part of the hair like a light, silk-lined helmet.

The profile is austere and beautiful, marked by a long, straight nose and calm, deep-seated eyes. There is something queenly in the whole attitude, as though the lady were inured to being regarded with awe.*

VIII

Michelangelo's contemporaries were overwhelmed by the beauty of this drawing. Vasari relates that he presented three marvelous portrait studies (including the so-called *Zenobia*) to Gherardo Perini, which later came into the possession of Grandduke Francesco, "who guarded them as though they were precious jewels, which indeed they are." Cavalieri presented the drawing called *Cleopatra* to Duke Cosimo in 1562. The surviving letter that accompanied the gift emphasizes its immense value.

Cleopatra seems to have been drawn about 1533. Unfortunately the original is lost. There are, however, three copies, the

* A drawing in red chalk, Cat. No. 42. The version in the British Museum is regarded by J. Wilde as the original.

best one in the Casa Buonarroti, the other two in the British Museum and the Museum Boymans, Rotterdam. This memorable drawing seems to have been suggested by Piero di Cosimo's portrait of *Simonetta Vespucci,* now in Chantilly, to which it shows some resemblances. *Cleopatra* is represented as a bust turned to the left, with the head looking to the right—it bears no resemblance to the historic Cleopatra, by the way. The lines are ravishing. The queen is shown in the hour of her death, majestic of head, with large, sorrowful eyes and a sad, sensual mouth. A long serpent, its tail visible beside the right shoulder, is wound about her magnificent body, biting into the bare left breast. The regal impression is enhanced by the odd coiffure, a wreath of braids above a plentiful fringe of hair, more of which rises from the top of the head like a flame.

Also of noteworthy beauty and akin to some of the drawings already described is one in the Uffizi (Berenson 1626), showing a tall, slender woman in almost full profile. The extraordinarily handsome features bear an expression of hate and contempt that shows in the flaring nostrils, the brilliantly drawn mouth and the large, vigorously shaped chin. The breasts, both of them visible on account of a slight turn in the body, are unusually well-developed. The fabric covering them is so thin that they seem almost bare, with both nipples prominent. She too seems to represent a queen. She wears a headband, held together in the middle with a great gemstone. On her head is a half-helmet with a great, arched crest that follows the curve of the neck, flaring outward below it. A standing collar completes the costume, which is of oddly exotic cut.

To the left behind the lady is a child, to the right the baroque figure of a man of hostile demeanor. The drawing is today titled *Venus, Mars and Cupid** and is regarded as one of the three presentation drawings for Perini.

* Florence, Uffizi, Cat. No. 185. Regarded by J. Wilde and L. Goldscheider as an original, by others attributed to Bachiacca.

IX

The Archers (Windsor Castle; Berenson 1613), a painstaking drawing of great vitality dating from the year 1530, as shown from a letter fragment on the back, is primarily a study of nude youths running, leaping and soaring forward side by side. The attitudes of the supple, powerful backs and legs all represent varieties of the act of aiming a bow (which is omitted, by the way) at a target, a herma at the extreme right, with a well-modeled nude trunk, in front of which is mounted a long shield. At this the archers are aiming, with indifferent success, for one of the arrows has struck the herma in the body, while another is firmly embedded in the pedestal.

Michelangelo lovingly drew the slender, sunlit backs of these youths, gleaming as in a Greek *palaestra*. A few rather undifferentiated girls mingle with the throng of youths—one of them at the extreme right, her sex actually revealed only by her long, braided hair. One vacant spot at the extreme left is taken up by a satyrlike figure, bow in hand. The space at the bottom on both sides is filled with figures of children, the two at the left bringing up firewood, a theme that recurs with Michelangelo, and blowing into a fire in which they perhaps wish to temper arrowheads. At the right lies Cupid, fast asleep, his head resting against a pillow, a long bow across his knee. His quiver lies before him.

Frey discovered an ancient model for this drawing, in a panel on the ceiling of the House of Nero, partly uncovered even in Michelangelo's time, showing a herma with shield and five archers. It was copied by Francisco de Hollanda. There are also a number of literary sources for the allegory in the drawing. Conze found a passage in Lucian's *Nigrinus*, where the human spirit is compared with a target, at which many marksmen aim the arrows of

speech. Others have conjectured the allegory represents man, driven by his instincts, making chase after false fortune. Lucian, however, speaks of good marksmen and bad, of arrows that hit or miss. Words that move the mind are likened to shots that hit the black. They gratify the soul.

Thode has drawn attention to a passage in Marius Equicola's *Libro di natura d'amore,* according to which the allegory is meant to show the contrast between heavenly and earthly love. This would make the presence of Cupid as a slumbering archer among the many alert ones more plausible. Both Thode and Symonds cite one of Michelangelo's poems: *Non è sempre di colpa aspra e mortale.* The sestet of the sonnet on heavenly and mortal love uses the image of archery:

> To this, the love of which I speak aspires.
> Woman is different and seldom worth
> The fiery love which only strong hearts know.
>
> One pulls me to the heaven, the other to earth,
> One in the soul dwells, one in sensual fires
> And to attain base things will draw the bow.

That Michelangelo, as was his custom, must have had some symbolic meaning in mind is as certain as that the meaning does not really matter. The importance of the drawing in no wise depends on it. The *Archers* simply records Michelangelo's pleasure at the sight and representation of groups of youthful bodies, for the most part male, twisting and turning in lively, stressful action. It stands as testimony to his unique genius for composition. The group of running and leaping youths is harmoniously rounded out with a youth for example, who, having stumbled to his knees, puts out his left leg and still gets off his arrow at point-blank range.

Still another drawing deserves mention for its singularly imaginative treatment. Appropriately titled *The Dream of Human Life* (private collection, London; Berenson 1748B), it was engraved in copper even in Michelangelo's lifetime, and copies in oil are in the National Gallery, London, and the Vienna Gallery.

A youth is seated in graceful attitude on an open, boxlike base, leaning back and supporting himself with both arms against a great globe. A winged angel, soaring headlong down from heaven, his fine legs extended in the air, holds his trumpet against the youth's right ear and has just awakened him from sleep.

All about, as though seen through a mist, are tiny groups showing the sleeper's dream images and unconscious desires. Some are battling, to symbolize contentiousness and lust for power, others portray greed for riches. Men and women copulate ferociously and every manner of sin and vice is revealed.

X

Michelangelo always regarded the art of drawing with profound respect. It was to him the common source of painting, sculpture and architecture. He held its mastery to be a requisite for all other artistic skills. He did not lay aside pen and crayon until old age caused his trembling hand to refuse him obedience.

Several phases can be distinguished in his approach to draftsmanship. In the pen-and-ink medium he started out with closely spaced strokes that crossed to indicate shadow and he modeled the inner and outer structure with a care approaching pedantry. This was followed by a freer style, as in the above-described drawing of the seated woman in the British Museum. The pen curves and leaps in broader strokes, modeling carefully but without regard to the effect of light. After the turn of the century he began to favor a more purely pictorial style, trading his pen for red and black chalk. Contour grew less important than the transitions from light to shade. With his soft crayon he was able to lend depth to the shadows and a kind of prismatic range to his halftones.

Under the influence of Vittoria Colonna, of a surety, he began to treat of Christian themes—a purely human and creative interest had already earlier drawn him thither, especially to the Old Testament. Yet if we judge correctly, before he made the acquaintance of the Marchesa di Pescara it was usually the commission itself that dictated the choice of subject in this area.

Following the surrender of Florence, the victorious general, Alfonso d'Avalos, urgently importuned Michelangelo for some work, a drawing in red or black chalk. Since the artist had been spared, despite his participation in the city's defense, he could not very well refuse.

He decided to do a cartoon, *Christ Taking Leave of His Mother,* for which we still have a few slight sketches. Fleeting as they are, it must be admitted that they are more soulful than the Christ in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, botched by Montelupo and provided with an apron by the popes. Indeed, they have more emotional content than the Christ in the *Last Judgment,* done by the artist's own hand. The two surviving studies are in England (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Berenson 1396A).

The statue of *Christ* in Santa Maria sopra Minerva seems flat and bungled when compared with Michelangelo's pen and ink drawing for it. This drawing is a fine piece of work, though the upper part of the body is given only in outline, the lower part alone having been finished (private collection, London; Berenson 1543). The expression in the drawing is tragic, where in the statue it is merely vacant, skillful as is the figure's pose.

Of high technical competence, though without any real religious inspiration, is a drawing of a nude Madonna with nude child (British Museum, London; Berenson 1493). It shows a carefully modeled muscular woman with the child, in a rather odd attitude, bestriding her knee as in the Madonna group in the Medici Chapel. There is thus a chance that this is one of several studies for this group. If so, it altogether lacks the sublime grace of the sculpture itself.

XI

In the years around 1536 Michelangelo was evidently deeply preoccupied with the Resurrection of Christ, the miracle of Easter, commended to him in all likelihood by Vittoria Colonna. This is perhaps the occasion to discuss at greater length the change within him initiated by his acquaintance with this devout lady.

All his life Michelangelo had remained a good Catholic, never having been touched by the theoretical paganism of the humanists or the antipapism of the Lutherans. Yet his whole inner nature was one flaming protest against the Christian repudiation of nature, against the view that the human body was something to be ashamed of. Unconsciously Michelangelo was a pagan to the core.

Nor was his more or less inherent religious disposition touched by the fact that his passionate temperament and restless artist's soul endowed him all his life with the fires of sensuality. The poem, *Al cor di zolfo, alle carne di stoppo,* is a confession rather than a momentary mood:

> With heart of sulphur and with flesh of tow,
> With bone designed of dry and rotting wood,
> With spirit lacking any guide to show
> Which impulses are evil and which good,
>
> With reason which displays itself so weak
> Confronted with a world so full of snares,
> It is no wonder that my flesh should break
> When it first stumbles on such furious fires.

Time and again Michelangelo reverts to the theme that age, against his hopes, never quenched the fires of the senses. No reasonable man can have any doubt that at the age of sixty he fell

head over heels in love when he first met Vittoria Colonna, then forty-seven, who fervently admired him for his art. There is telling evidence in the poem, *D'altrui piestoso e sol do se spietato* (To others merciful, and only to itself unkind), which can be dated the spring of 1535, being written on the back of a letter to Michelangelo from Pierantonio (Cecchini) in Rome.

The poem breathes the firiest sensuality. Michelangelo compares himself to a silkworm dying for the welfare of mankind. He would dearly die for "his ruler," here from the context clearly meaning "his lady"; and the word *colonna,* dragged in, so to speak, leaves no doubt as to who is meant. Gladly would he exchange his hide for a *gonna,* a long robe worn by women, to clasp her fair breast with its two snow-white hillocks, gladly be the sandal that might serve as base and pillar (*colonna*) for the fair body:

> For if that skin were mine I could at least
> Be woven in a gown to clasp that breast,
> And so embrace the beauty which I crave.
>
> Then would I gladly die. Or could I save
> My Lord's feet from the rain by being shoes
> Upon his feet—this also would I choose.

Yet it would be quite erroneous to assume there was, however, briefly, an erotic liaison between Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna. Such a thing is out of the question. She firmly rebuffed his every approach. Indeed, as he was approaching his seventieth year she asked him to write her no more, since she wished to concentrate on meditation and prayer and was not disposed to answer. On July 20, 1542, from the Convent at Viterbo, she wrote him:

"Noble Messer Michelangelo. I have not sooner answered your letter, because in a way it was a reply to mine. If we are to keep on writing each other, I should have to neglect the chapel of St. Catherine here, forego meeting with the company of sisters at the appointed time; while you would have to interrupt your work in the Pauline Chapel, could not before daybreak discourse with

your pictures, which speak to you no less naturally than the living creatures that surround me. Thus would we both offend, I against the sisters, you against Christ's Vicar. Since I know your steadfast friendship for me, and your devotion rooted in the bonds of Christianity, methinks I need bear no witness by letter but may, in spiritual preparedness, await the occasion to serve you, sending a prayer to the Lord above, about whom you spoke so warmly and humbly at my departure from Rome. I shall pray him to let me find you again, his image in your soul, renewed in the true and living faith, as you have represented him in your drawing of *The Woman of Samaria at the Well.*"

The mannered epistolary style and pronounced devoutness clearly disprove even a hint of the kind of association that might have had a background or past of fleshly love. Not even a nun could have more completely disavowed all sentiment that was anything but spiritual.

All the stronger was the spiritual influence the marchesa exerted upon Michelangelo. It is expressed with poetic fervor in the madrigal, *Un uomo in una donna, anzi uno dio:*

> God speaks through woman's lips, not man alone—
> Almighty God on high—
> And listing to her, I
> Can call no longer my own soul my own.
> Now that I must bemoan
> The self which she has taken,
> How can I but make self-pity a duty?
> The beauty I have known,
> All vanity forsaken,
> Makes me behold but death in other beauty.
> O Lady, do your duty—
> To joy my soul through water lead, and fire,
> Nor to myself again let me aspire.

Clearly the poem implies complete conversion, a turning away from the self. Michelangelo had heretofore taken it for granted that he must love beauty, wherever he beheld it. All he had

striven for was to purify such instincts and sentiments as he felt. His pronounced sensual nature had made him indifferent to the Christian doctrine of renunciation.

Under the impact of the changing times and the personality of Vittoria Colonna, regrets and doubts about the value of his profession now began to haunt Michelangelo. She insisted that the Christian faith was the power by means of which he could master those base instincts he was at times unable to control; and he began to view his glorious past with jaundiced eyes, looked back on his life as on a concatenation of disordered passion. His repentance took the form of such a statue as the *Rachel* in the Julius tomb, replacing the tragic and defiant *Captives.* He wrote repenant sonnets and—sometimes at Vittoria's express request—did a series of pious drawings.

XII

Sensual exuberance turned into religious ecstasy. Erotic fancies were now but unwelcome visitations. His whole intellectual and emotional life was pervaded by a kind of praying for forgiveness for the pagan art of his youth. Michelangelo thought he was surrendering to the love of God.

It was against this background that he directed his mind toward the Resurrection of Christ. Perhaps he was at first interested only in drawing the main figure. The risen Christ welcomes the light with both arms, having emerged and ascended from his somber grave to the fresh air, like a muscular Apollo, his shroud fluttering about him like capacious mantle (Windsor Castle; Berenson 1616). He is preeminently engaged in an act of free will, though he seems also to be drawn by some supernatural power. The drawing, done with great love and care, addresses the sense of art rather than the emotions.

The theme is repeated in another drawing (Windsor Castle; Berenson 1612). Indeed, the whole situation is there elaborated, on the basis of St. Matthew, chapters 27 and 28. The tomb which Joseph of Arimathaea had hewn into the rock provides the gloomy background, against which the sarcophagus stands obliquely. The soldiers, no less than thirteen of them, are negligent in their watch. Most of them lie sleeping on the ground. One of them, who had found a resting-place on the stone slab that forms the lid of the sarcophagus, is hurled aside as the tomb opens and vainly clings to the heavy stone.

Michelangelo ignores the account of the angel of the Lord rolling back the stone from the door. His risen Christ has no need of angels. Here too, in a passionate gesture, he lifts above his head the arms with which he has burst open the tomb. Those members of the watch who have awakened are seized with terror, as St. Matthew relates. In their nudity they take on every conceivable position that will help them grasp the miracle, yet they remain simply and effectively grouped to maintain equilibrium, composing a kind of pyramid to each side of the powerful figure of the risen Christ.

We know from Condivi that Michelangelo, "for love of Vittoria Colonna drew for her a Christ crucified, living in attitude rather than dead, his face lifted up to his father, as though calling out: Eli, Eli!"

Six drawings of the crucifixion have come down to us. On two of them Christ's arms are raised as in a St. Andrew's cross, on the rest they are horizontally extended.

The drawing coming closest to Condivi's description is the carefully finished one which Michelangelo gave to the Marchesa di Pescara (British Museum; Frey 287). Beneath the crossarms are two mourning angels. At the foot of the cross lies a skull. The body of the crucified is powerfully built, as is to be expected of Michelangelo.

More noteworthy, though shallower in emotional depth, is another drawing, a *Descent from the Cross* (Teyler Museum, Haar-

lem; Berenson 2480). It is particularly eloquent in conveying a sense of the difficulty encountered in taking down the body. Its figures are masterfully assembled into a single living tangle; and the drawing forms a kind of transition toward the treatment of this theme by Rubens.

XIII

There is one subject, in the treatment of which Michelangelo's essential nature burst through rich and full, even in the time when he had come under the influence of Vittoria Colonna. This is in the scene, taken from St. Mark, where Jesus drives out of the temple them that sold and bought, and overthrows the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of them that sold doves (drawings in the British Museum, Cat. Nos. 76, 77, 78).

Here it is matter of one pitting his powers against many, the great and exalted one versus the petty shopkeeper mentality. It was the act of a judge who censured, chastised and struck hard. Quite likely Michelangelo, at the time these drawings were conceived, was preoccupied with the popular cause of ecclesiastic reform, whose advocates—Reginald Pole, Gaspare Contarini, Bernardino Ochino—were at the time Vittoria Colonna's closest friends. Actually, at the time the drawings were done, about 1555, Contarini and Vittoria were already dead and Pole and Ochino no longer in Italy.

The mildness with which these men pursued church reform was scarcely in character with Michelangelo. He took delight in letting his Christ wield the scourge. He shows Christ as a powerful nude figure holding a whip. He worked out a whole series of drawings before, on the fifth attempt, he found the grouping that best accorded with his basic notion.

The moneychangers sit or stand at low tables. The dove deal-

ers carry their baskets of birds on their heads. Jesus has opened a way through the crowd, dealing out blows from his whip to the right and left. Many flee before him. A few drag away boxes. The changers hurriedly scoop up their coins.

Michelangelo never did anything with this masterly drawing. Marcello Venusti did a crowded but mediocre painting from it, now on view at the National Gallery in London.

Michelangelo represented Jesus as the great taskmaster, the supreme judge and nemesis. Having himself conceived a deep revulsion against man, he felt at one with God in the role of world judge.

The Last Judgment

I

*M*ICHELANGELO'S BROTHER BUONARROTO had died in 1528. Though there had been minor clashes between the two, Michelangelo had been fonder of him than of any other member of his family. Father Lodovico, to whom he was devoted with filial piety despite the strong dissension that prevailed at times between father and son, died in his nineties and the great son set him a monument in a *capitolo* of tercets. Here are a few of its finest lines:

> Now you have died of death and are in heaven
> No more in fear of life's vicissitudes—
> Alas! if I were but such respite given;

Nor time nor destiny, whose fickle moods
Are ever certain to bring woe to others,
Your threshold darkens and your world obtrudes.

Yet his father's death helped rupture the bond that had tied Michelangelo to Florence, although he remained there for another three years.

As early as his sojourn in Rome from the fall of 1533 to the spring of 1534 Michelangelo had received a commission from Clement VII to paint a *Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, as well as a *Fall of the Angels* on the entrance wall. (This second work was never executed.)

On Clement's death, in September 1534, his successor, Paul III, again took up the project for a fresco of the *Last Judgment.* Since it was originated by the last Medici on the papal throne, Paul did not insist on having the Farnese crest appear on the altar wall. For the last time the three renowned balls were depicted there. The master had embarked on a cartoon for the fresco while Clement was still alive and, to judge from a number of surviving drawings, was apparently disposed to make major changes in it. Paul III, however, insisted that the design approved by Clement be rigidly followed.

Michelangelo found nothing absurd in the ancient Hebrew notion of a Creator who, after eons of tedious solitude, wrought earth and life as a kind of grandiose disciplinary institution for mankind; then, dissatisfied with his work, engaged in the hapless experiment of the Deluge; and finally destroyed that work himself on a Day of Judgment. On the contrary, it went well with his hot temper and sense of frustration. Celano's hymn echoed in his mind:

Dies irae, dies illa
Solvet saeclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

(Comes the day of retribution
When the world dissolves in ashes,
As the sibyl said, and David.)

David never dreamed of such a thing and the sibyl never existed, comments Renan in a passage where he cites these lines. But to the men of 1500 these myths still retained the vitality they possessed for Dante two hundred years before.

People clung to Christian dogma in all its contradictions. The body—or, as it was put, the flesh—was sinful and only the spirit was pure and everlasting. Yet the corruption of the flesh in the grave was but a passing phase—on the Day of Judgment it would rise again. The graves would open and all their terrors see the light of day. The dead would once again clothe themselves in their long-rotted mortal shells, then to be summoned before heaven's highest court of judgment. The blessed would be rewarded with everlasting bliss in the mansions of heaven, while the damned would be plunged into the nethermost depths of hell, where there is everlasting fear and torment. Thus would come the Day of Justice and Judgment.

II

The divine judge had already been described by the prophet Isaiah. By ancient Hebrew tradition he comes on the Day of the Lord, the day of his flaming wrath, the day of vengeance. He turns the world into a wilderness, exterminates its sinners.

The prophet Micah describes him as the Lord God of the Heavenly Hosts, who stand to his right and to his left. The prophet Joel has the Day of the Lord proclaimed by fanfares from the trumpets of Zion. Isaiah is responsible for the judge's gesture. When the wrath of the Lord has been kindled, his hand is stretched out, and even when he has struck, making the mountains to tremble, his hand remains stretched out. He shaketh the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place before the wrath of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Thus does the Old Testament pave the way for the growth of the myth; and it is on this foundation that the New Testament

builds. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that the Lord cometh with many thousand saints, and in 1 Corinthians that these saints are to judge the world. Thus heaven is populated on the Day of Judgment.

Both the Old and New Testaments see to it that hell is not untenanted. "Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction," says Psalm 55; and Chapter 8 of the Gospel According to St. Matthew threatens the children of the Kingdom with being cast out into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In Michelangelo's picture of the *Last Judgment* this plunge into the abyss is balanced by the soaring aloft of the redeemed. In the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we read: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." And similarly, in the eleventh chapter of the Revelation of St. John the Divine: "And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud."

That the angels blowing the trumpets were seven in number Michelangelo learned from Revelation 8, 2. There too he found that there are two books from which judgment is rendered—and which the angels hold in his fresco—a Book of Life, often mentioned in the Old Testament (Exodus, 32, 32; Psalm 69, 28; Daniel, 12, 1), and a second book in which the misdeeds of the dead are recorded.

All these theological minutiae provided the artist with themes for the composition of his great fresco.

III

There were earlier pictorial representations of the *Last Judgment*, elements of which flashed through Michelangelo's memory

and were utilized. Worthy of mention in this connection are Giotto's painting on the wall of the Camposanto in Pisa, Giovanni Pisano's sculpture on the pulpit of San Andrea in Pistoia, and Fra Angelico's and Signorelli's frescoes in Orvieto. Finally there is the reverse side of a medallion his old teacher Bertoldo had made for Archbishop Filippo de' Medici (Hill, No. 914).

Tradition required Jesus to appear at the very top, hand upraised, bathed in radiance, surrounded by the saintly host, the angels blowing their trumpets below. The saved were arrayed to the left below, the damned to the right. Bertoldo had already shown cross and column being erected above the figure of Jesus, each by a single angel. As for the nudity of the figures, the dead rising from the ground, and Charon and his ferry, Luca Signorelli had pointed the way.

But if Michelangelo took over this entire theological and artistic tradition, it was only to recast it completely into a vast dramatic panorama, a sequence of struggle and suffering that reflects the unending tragedy of man's life. There is no forgiveness of cruelty and injustice here, no River Lethe, only Styx, and the serene Greek ferryman has become a brutal executioner's henchman plying the waters of the underworld, in the Etruscan tradition.

In the nature of the subject, one might expect an even distribution of bliss and torment. But with Michelangelo bliss draws the short end of the deal. The graves open and spew forth their horror. The saved seem to be storming heaven as a fortified castle was stormed in the Renaissance, rather than to be feeling joy at being reunited with loved ones, from whom they were separated for centuries. The judge of heaven, reminiscent of Zeus hurling Phaëthon into the depths with his thunderbolt, is far less inclined to acquit than to condemn. This Jesus, his huge form dominating the painting, beside whom even his mother seems to feel small and powerless, embodies all Michelangelo's loathing of the indignities he had suffered, his condemnation born of revulsion. His contempt for his times is as sincere and profound as that which inspired the great Dante to consign to his Inferno the contemporaries who misjudged and exiled him. Small wonder one British

Protestant said the fresco would have been eminently suited to adorn a hall where the Inquisition held its sessions.

IV

Yet the painting is still so utterly a product of the Renaissance that it was precisely the Inquisitors and their henchmen who took offense at it. Aretino would not have so brazenly professed indignation at the nude figures, had he not known that the spirit of the Counter Reformation would regard them as a desecration.

In the year of Michelangelo's death Andrea Giulio da Fabiano published *Due Dialoghi,* in which he attacked not only the nudity of the figures in the master's *Last Judgment* but also the many deviations from Christian tradition—the beardless Jesus, the aloof Madonna, who should be displaying the same revulsion of the damned as her son, the wingless angels, the portrayal of devils sans hooves and horns, the appearance of Charon, a figure from Greek mythology.

Many of the devout doubtless resented as well the fact that three frescoes by Perugino were torn down to make room for these nude figures. They included not only the altar piece proper, an *Assumption,* but a picture of St. Peter, indeed, one of Jesus himself, worthy paintings on which the sacred persons were shown clothed, as decency demanded.

In the world of art, however, Perugino was not so highly estimated that the loss was regarded as intolerable, especially since there was no alternative, if room was to be made. More astonishing is the fact that Michelangelo laid hands on two of his own lunettes with the *Ancestors of Christ,* painted as part of the ceiling decorations, which were sacrificed to make room for the two groups of angels with cross and column, now taking up the topmost panels. There had been no thought of such groups at the

outset. They are absent from the earliest sketch for the *Last Judgment,* the rough drawing now in the Casa Buonarroti.

This is a noteworthy drawing. It is dominated by the giant figure of Christ, compared to which all others are of smaller stature. Even here is seen the condemnatory gesture of the hand, hurling the damned into the abyss. But posture and entire attitude of the Madonna are quite different from the actual painting. She too is drawn in the nude. Half-kneeling, she bends toward her irate son, imploring him for mercy with outstretched arms, one of her hands brushing his right thigh.

Most detailed in this drawing is the left side of the composition, where individual figures strive to the fore from the dense throng. At the extreme lower left the awakening to life is indicated. At bottom right one perceives the reception of a sinner and a plunge of the damned not seen at that place in the painting. In the center of the drawing three or four angels blowing long trumpets are lightly sketched in black chalk. Otherwise the center portion and the extreme right are still quite empty. Several of the black chalk contours are carefully redrawn in ink.

Similar in character, but indicating a more advanced stage in the studies for the *Last Judgment,* is a sheet preserved in the British Museum, with drawings on both sides. On one side are two male heads, looking down, apparently life studies. Turning the sheet around, one sees lightly drawn black chalk contours of small figures, falling or struggling. On the reverse side are several sketches for the powerful figure of the Judge, lacking a head, and over these groups of saints, done with great finesse and imagination. On the left side are various angels, so called, engaged in violent struggle, using brute force and mighty blows of their fists to send whole heaps of naked men and women plunging through the air and into the abyss.

Masterly as the sketch is, it has a sinister aspect. It is as though Michelangelo's whole disgust with ignoble mankind, which in his younger years found expression in his representation of the *Flood* and of the *Brazen Serpent* on the Sistine ceiling, had in the course

of time and with his bitter experiences grown to such a degree that he felt no compunction whatever in charging the angels of heaven with the task of passing forcible judgment on a race that deserved only to perish.

In the Uffizi is still another sketch, lightly drawn in black chalk, in which Christ is shown entirely nude, pronouncing judgment with mien and gesture close to those in the painting, while a barely hinted Mary bends toward him, somewhat as in the first study. To the right here a large mass of martyrs are seen, among whom St. Lawrence with his gridiron can be clearly distinguished. Most of the others are shown in attitudes that bear no relation to those used in the painting.

V

One aspect involved in a painting of the resurrection of the flesh was bound to warm Michelangelo's heart. Nudity was part and parcel of the whole concept. It was the bodies that were to rise, not their garments. It thus seems particularly absurd that the bigots should have taken such offense at his treatment.

On April 16, 1535, the joiner Perino del Capitano received twenty-five florins for the erection of a scaffold. There were many preparations to be made. Five paintings by Perugino and Michelangelo had to be removed. Two windows had to be walled up and the wall itself prepared. Michelangelo ordered it to be inclined forward by about half an ell toward the top, hoping in this fashion to protect his work against the accumulation of dust.

Sebastiano del Piombo had persuaded the pope that the painting would look best in oil, and the wall was therefore prepared to receive oil pigments. This delayed the beginning of the work, since Michelangelo declared oil-painting to be an effeminate art and insisted on painting *al fresco,* as he had done with the ceil-

ing. The wall surface had to be done over. The irate artist ever after severed all contact with his former protégé Sebastiano.

Until spring 1536 Michelangelo busied himself solely with the cartoons and never set hand to the work itself. He began with the painting between mid-April and mid-May 1536. In February 1537 he received a visit from the pope, who wished to see how the work was progressing. On November 20, 1537 Michelangelo replied to Pietro that it was largely finished. This we can scarcely take in the literal sense, for the work was not completed until October 1541. Yet by 1537 the composition was no doubt already roughed out substantially as it was finally executed.

It must have been a strange experience for Michelangelo once again to be standing on a scaffold to paint a vast fresco in the very chapel where, twenty-eight years before, he had locked himself in to paint the ceiling; and surely it must have been his intent to outdo what he had done then. Presumably this was the moment when he turned his back on paganism and was about to throw himself into the open arms of his Redeemer. Yet the image in which the Savior manifested himself to Michelangelo first and most strongly was that of the Judge. The ancient Hebrew doctrine of retribution, with its glorification of vengeance as the Lord's essential attribute ("vengeance is mine"), was much closer to his mentality than any gospel of love, any doctrine of grace and forgiveness.

It is true that the features of Christ are spiritualized, despite his powerful build, yet the expression is hard and cold like that of a judge pronouncing sentence. It holds no welcoming smile for the ascending blessed—indeed neither he nor the allegedly saved can be envisioned as blissful or ecstatic. It is at his behest that the massive angels, flying without wings, blow their trumpets or hurl the ineligible from the heavenly realm. On his orders the executioner demons take on the damned for torture. Michelangelo certainly cannot be charged with sentimentality, in contrast to so many modern paintings, where Christ appears repulsively effeminate. His Christ epitomizes justice and the gesture of his hands

follows the example of older and gentler painters (no less orthodox in this point, however) in expressing deep revulsion. Yet in Michelangelo this disgust is conceived differently and more deeply than by Fra Angelico, for example, who was still pervaded by a fundamental love of man. By the time he had reached the age of sixty, Michelangelo looked on mankind as repulsive in the mass.

VI

Yet it is not true that his *Last Judgment* is, as has been asserted, one great cry of vengeance. Grouped in heaven stand the disciples of Jesus and their successors, as well as his ancestors back to Adam. There are patriarchs here, and apostles, prophets, martyrs and angels, picturesquely arranged in serried ranks, in admirable mastery of technique.

Ancient Adam stands hugely to the left of Christ, the new Adam, devouring him with his eyes. Close to him is the guiltless Abel, and on Adam's other side, closest to Christ, is the Good Thief. A magnificent group, perhaps the finest in the great fresco, is formed by a huge, half-naked woman, surely Eve, protecting a young woman kneeling before her. With a motherly gesture Eve touches the back of the girl seeking refuge, who, by the way, is fully dressed.

Closest to Jesus on the right is a young man who can be only St. John. He forms a counterpart to the Madonna, but with the difference that he is completely absorbed in contemplating the Master, while the Madonna, seeming to droop in pity and dismay, has eyes for neither Jesus nor anyone else but looks down in inward musing. The counterpart on the right to the hulking figure of Adam is formed by St. Peter, no less large and conspicuous. He holds the key to heaven in his hand and seems to ask his Lord for whom he is to throw open the gate.

The question comes too late. For there is no longer any gate, and heaven is being assaulted like a fortress by the rising hosts. As already mentioned, it is defended by strong-armed angels who deal out blows to those seeking entry without leave.

Deeper, beneath the feet of Jesus, two great figures are seen to the right and left, St. Lawrence with his gridiron and St. Bartholomew, holding in his left hand the skin that has been flayed from off his body (in which Michelangelo portrayed himself). Behind Bartholomew we see head and shoulders of a kneeling youth, surely meant to represent the Apostle Thomas. On the fresco this head, like so many other portions of the work, has been overpainted almost out of recognition; but on the old copy by Marcello Venusti in the Naples Museum,* its peculiar beauty is noteworthy, and there is much in favor of Thode's conjecture that Michelangelo here sought to set a memorial to his admired young friend Tommaso Cavalieri, giving his features to his apostle namesake.

The row of saints is continued to the right with St. Catherine, bending over the wheel on which she was martyred, and St. Sebastian, kneeling and holding in his left hand the arrows that had pierced him.

The center space among all these figures is occupied by the mighty angels with the trumpets and the two books, of life and judgment. On the left are the ascending saved, on the right the plunging damned, in well-organized composition, down to the base of the picture, which shows the rising from the graves on the left, and Charon's boat on the right, with the demons' brutal reception of his passengers. At the extreme right stands Minos, encircled by serpents, ready to judge those who have been found wanting (Dante's *Inferno*, 21). The story goes that Michelangelo gave the tormented Minos the features of the papal master of ceremonies, Biagio, who was the first to quibble over the nude figures.

* Since 1957 all the pictures of the Museo Nazionale in Naples are housed in the Pinacoteca Reggia di Capodimonte.

VII

The task set Michelangelo was inherently insoluble: to marshal all mankind down the centuries for judgment face to face with the Lord of Heaven, in a painting free of confusion and pleasing to the eye. The first problem was how to divide up the space. This was a land of pure imagination, as it was in Dante's *Divine Comedy.* It had to be so organized as to afford stages for the various scenes —a new world rising, an old one crashing.

Basically the theme was religious in character and overdramatization had to be avoided. Here Michelangelo was in no danger, for his art always remained distinct from the later histrionics of the baroque.

What fascinated Michelangelo was the occasion, not only for venting his bitter resentment, but for displaying his full skill in representing the human body in every conceivable attitude—standing and walking, lying and kneeling, rising and falling, hovering and soaring, bending, twisting, leaping, striking out, climbing, grappling. Here at last was the place where his every experience, all the studies he had ever made, would stand him in good stead. Here was an unparalleled opportunity to show his lifetime knowledge of the structure and movements of the body, to show it in boldest foreshortening—yet ever and always as an expression of inward struggle, heroic stature, lofty and tragic sentiment, or of unrestrained passion and every manner of grief, horror and torment.

His worship of nudity still made him entirely a man of the Renaissance. True, he was no longer the fervent young man, drunk with beauty, who painted the frescoes on the ceiling of the chapel. He had become a virtuoso in a field in which he was already undisputed master. Yet inside he was really unchanged. The human

body to him was the only object worthy of great art. Clothes and landscape he utterly ignored. Even his angels have limbs and muscles that are completely of this world. In one of the lunettes at the top they struggle with the great cross like a team of sweating workmen. In the other they have their hands full erecting the heavy column on which Jesus was scourged. One of them is in imminent danger of being crushed beneath its base. They manhandle it more roughly than the marblemen of Carrara would wrestle a slab on to a wagon. The theme may be symbolic, but the treatment is earthy.

Like the saints and the humans, the angels are bare to the buff. It would have run against Michelangelo's innermost convictions as an artist to gird their loins with even a breech-clout.

VIII

But the time was past when the intelligentsia of Italy, humanist and clerical alike, could take nudity in art for granted. Michelangelo's painting was left intact for only fourteen years.

The *Last Judgment* was completed and unveiled late in 1541. In May 1555 the most bigoted of all the cardinals, Giovanni Caraffa, ascended the papal throne as Paul IV. His first impulse was to have the whole fresco removed, and it was only with difficulty that he was dissuaded from such an act of iconoclasm.

Instead, Michelangelo's talented disciple, Daniele da Volterra, was commissioned to mitigate the offense and paint clothes on the figures. He also had to change the positions of Sts. Catherine and Blaise, which the pope regarded as indecent. As we know, Volterra was ever after known as *Il Brachettone* (the breeches-maker), but he discharged his commission with such skill and restraint as to incur not even the displeasure of Michelangelo.

But after the great artist's death the hubbub over the remain-

ing traces of paganism in the *Last Judgment* grew more vociferous. Cardinal Rusticucci persuaded Pius V (1566–1572) to order two mediocre painters, Girolamo da Fano and Domenico Carnevali, to carry further the work of dressing up the figures. Under Gregory XIII (1572–1585) the fresco was once again in danger of being altogether removed. The pope proposed to have his court painter, Lorenzino Sabbatino, replace Michelangelo's "obscenities" with a picture of *Paradise*.

Fortunately this extremity was avoided; but under Clement VIII—who had Tasso crowned in the Capitol and Beatrice Cenci executed—the *Last Judgment* was once again bowdlerized. As late as 1762, under Clement XIII, according to an eyewitness, the "most beautiful nudes" were again dressed in clothes.

Since, in addition, the vast painting was repeatedly cleaned in the course of the centuries, we can imagine how little the state in which we see it today accords with its pristine condition at the time the master laid down his brush. Small wonder the colors today look dingy and muddy.

Quite apart from all the irresponsible damage the picture has suffered, however, it would not be an unmixed pleasure to admirers of Michelangelo's earlier work, even if it were well-preserved. True, here too the giant among painters was free of the restraints with which orthodoxy had once shackled art. He still wallowed ecstatically in representing the human body, individually or in the mass. At times he achieved the utmost in pathos, as in the horror-stricken, half-seated figure, left hand almost covering his face, who is being dragged down into the abyss by gleeful demons.

But despite this continuing testimony that Michelangelo remained the great—perhaps the greatest—artist of the Renaissance, the spirit that speaks from this painting is no longer that of the Renaissance and of humanism. There is less in it of freedom and harmony, of exuberance, and more of a demand for a weighing in the balance—the very spirit of dour puritanism that, by a strange quirk of fate, turned against the work itself, condemned

it as a work of art, scored it as indecent and irreligious, violated it by giving the figures flounces, and ultimately, in its fanaticism destroyed its hues.

IX

The tragic part of it all is that Michelangelo himself, the master of masters, in the final poems of his old age made common cause, so to speak, with his detractors, in a way agreeing with them against himself. Once he had stormed the very heavens. Now he knuckled under, hearkening to the devout chants of Vittoria Colonna from behind her convent walls, as she decried the blandishments of humanism. In one of her theological sonnets she sang the praises of even this work of his. The trumpet sounded from heaven, proclaiming perdition to those ensnared by gluttony and lechery. It was all reminiscent of Michelangelo's drawing, *The Dream of Human Life*. Vice could not hide from the incandescent radiance that issued from the eye of God and pierced the heart. Like Michelangelo in his *Last Judgment,* Vittoria proclaimed the need for renewing life and the way of life.

In 1538 Michelangelo had said to Francisco de Hollanda that true art was in itself exalted and devout; for nothing so ennobled the soul as the creation of beauty. In 1554 or 1555 he sent Vasari a sonnet, ruefully repenting his folly of ever having made art the ruling power of his life. Neither painting nor carving the stone gave him peace, but solely Love Divine, spreading its arms on the cross.

The drawings of the scourged and crucified *Christ* (Louvre, British Museum, Windsor), the frescoes of the *Conversion of St. Paul* and the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Cappella Paolina, the *Pietà* with Nicodemus, Magdalene and the Madonna in the choir of the Florentine cathedral—they all express this mental state. They still show the old Michelangelesque forms, but they no longer reflect the spirit that once filled these forms.

X

Immediately after the completion of the *Last Judgment,* Pope Paul III commissioned Michelangelo to decorate his new chapel in the Vatican, the Cappella Paolina, with two frescoes: *The Conversion of St. Paul,* and *The Crucifixion of St. Peter.*

The *Conversion of St. Paul* was begun in November 1542 and finished in July 1545. The subject gave occasion for a display of passion, deeply rooted in Michelangelo's nature, which he could not use in the second fresco.

We are outside Damascus—though the painting conveys no impression of its pretty gardens, since nothing grows in Michelangelo's stony soil. Yet the picture itself breathes fiery life, on two levels, on earth and in heaven.

Blinded by the apparition that has revealed itself, Saul has fallen from his mount, which gallops away down the middle of the picture. Saul lies on the ground, his face toward the beholder, his hand to his brow. His revelation has dazzled and stunned him. Remarkably enough, he does not look up at Christ and the heavenly host, as in other versions of the scene, though they are shown as explicitly as in the *Last Judgment.* Dazed and confused, he is still pondering the overwhelming vision that has now become truly inward.

All about the unhorsed Saul are groups of men and women in paroxysmal attitudes of emotion. Some stare aloft numbly, endeavoring to cover their eyes. A few have thrown themselves to the ground. Others flee the scene in terror. Significantly—for Michelangelo—Christ is not serenely enthroned in heaven, but soars down feet upward, arms outspread. The right hand points downward, seeming to command Saul to cease from his persecutions.

Among the heavenly host are several figures of great beauty. All of them display devout exaltation. A lone angel flies close to Christ, stretching out folded hands toward him. He stands as a symbol of the spirit that had laid hold of the aged master's mind.

The *Crucifixion of St. Peter* took from August 1546 to March 1550 to do. As a composition, the work is unexceptionable, but the subject did not fire the artist's imagination. The subject itself is equivocal—the barbarous crucifixion head down. The master sought to soften the action by placing the cross obliquely across the picture and letting St. Peter raise head and shoulders from it, while turning his suffering gaze toward the beholder. This avoided the necessity for showing the repulsive spectacle of the martyr's congested head.

It takes no less than six men to raise up the heavy cross, preliminary to planting it in a hole being dug in the ground. On the left a group of Roman soldiers, following the orders of mounted officers, rides up a rise. To the right below a knot of four women regard the martyr with compassion, while up above crowds of witnesses or gapers huddle together or come down the rise. Each figure is immaculately drawn. They are skillfully distributed, leaving no gaps. As always with Michelangelo, the landscape is treeless and desolate, if not flat, for rolling hills somewhat enliven the background; but the ground is arid and unrelieved.

Vasari relates that Michelangelo passed the age of 75 while still at work on it and that, in his own words, the task was exceedingly burdensome for him, fresco painting not being suitable work for men past a certain age.

XI

These were the last pictures Michelangelo painted. Yet life-long desire still drew him to sculpture. Apparently in an access of Chris-

tian devoutness, he sought to set a tangible memorial to the new world of feeling that had awakened within him.

He tried at first—according to several sketches now in Oxford—to create a standing *Madonna* holding the body of her son upright before her, grasping it under the shoulders. The dangling, lifeless leg is the only part of the sculpture that is finished. By mischance the great artist's mallet struck a wrong blow on the right arm, and for a long time he left the block untouched.

Beginning over again, he found it necessary to give the arm a different position behind the body. The hapless first arm remained, like a disembodied memory of the original design. The change also enforced an alteration in the proportions, which left head and body of Christ too small for the finished leg. Besides, in turning the new arm backward Michelangelo overlooked that this would leave no room in the block for the Madonna's right arm.

Hence the work remains but a hint in stone. How difficult Michelangelo found it to give up, down to within a week of his death, is seen from a letter Daniele da Volterra sent to nephew Lionardo afterward: "I am not sure I told you in all this that all day Saturday before carnival [i.e., February 12, 1564] Michelangelo worked standing up on the body in the *Pietà*."

His servant Antonio inherited the misshapen block, which disappeared and was again found, in a cellar, only in mid-seventeenth century and offered for sale. It was subsequently in the Palazzo Rondanini, Florence, and is now in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan.

Michelangelo's final work, in a far more advanced state of completion, though it was abandoned, indeed, smashed by him, is the large group of four, again a *Pietà*, that now stands in the gloomy choir of the Duomo at Florence. Had it not been shattered to pieces and painstakingly reassembled, it would have surely been assigned the place for which it was originally meant—his grave.

It too is a late work. From the report of a French traveler we know he was working on the group full time in 1553; and we see that two years later, in despair at having spoiled it, he tried to destroy it. Blaise de Vigenère, in his notes to Philostratus' *Imagines*

(*Les Images*, Paris, 1579), wrote: "I saw Michelangelo at work when he was over sixty [precise age uncertain],* and though he was not very strong, he struck more chips off the defiant marble block in a quarter-hour than three or four young stone masons could have done in three or four times as long a time—which may sound incredible, unless one saw it. So zealous was he that I was sure the work must break in pieces. With a single blow he struck off pieces three or four fingers thick, and he struck the marked point [*segno tracciato*] so precisely that the whole would have been destroyed, had only a little more marble split off."

He worked with the left hand as well, by the way, as Raffaele da Montelupo testifies, and when it came to particularly forceful blows of the mallet, he used only his left. This use of the left hand in art Michelangelo shared with Leonardo da Vinci, who was altogether left-handed, however.

Michelangelo faced the difficult task of hewing a group of no less than four figures from a single block, trusting only to his sure eye and skill and with only a small wax model to go by; and for the first time we see that he overestimated his practiced hand and eye. He was intent on portraying his own inner torment and sorrow; and there can be little question that despite the fiery zeal with which he worked he placed his blows carefully. It was his misfortune that the marble was worthless. It contained slate and was so hard that the chisel often struck sparks.

Condivi reported in 1553 on the work on this group: "At the time he is engaged with a marble he is doing for his own pleasure, like one who is so rich in energy and imagination that every day must bring forth something. It is an overlifesize group, a Christ taken from the cross and held upright by his mother. One sees her in wonderful motion, enfolding the body with arms, knees and breast, being assisted by Nicodemus, who stands firmly upright, gripping the body under the arms, and by the other Mary on the left. Grief-stricken as she is, Mary [Magdalene] nevertheless de-

* Vigenère visited Michelangelo after 1550, probably in 1553 when the master was 78 years old.

votes herself to this service, which is too hard for the mother unaided. . . . It is impossible to describe the beauty of the work and of the emotions perceived in the sorrowing faces, especially of the mother."

But Michelangelo was dissatisfied with the group; and one day he smashed it to pieces. The Florentine sculptor Tiberio Calcagni, for whom the master felt deep friendship, got hold of the fragments. One day, when Michelangelo visited him in the house where he kept the pieces, he inquired why so marvelous a work had been destroyed. The master blamed his servant Urbino, who had bedeviled him too insistently to finish it. Then, by mischance, he had struck off a piece from the Madonna's elbow. When, in addition, a fissure appeared in the marble, his patience was at an end. He attacked the group with blows, and upon the pleas of his servant Antonio, gave it to him, who in turn sold it to Tiberio Calcagni for two hundred gold scudi.

Francesco Bandini, Michelangelo's intimate, was present and asked whether Tiberio might not reassemble the group for him. Permission was granted.

Michelangelo's last work was his farewell to marble, that stubborn shell for the finest creations of his imagination. All his life marble had given him limitless joy and sorrow; indeed, his life was an unending duel with the stone.

The effect of the work on the mind of the beholder is enhanced by its placement in the shadows of the choir of Santa Maria del Fiore,* where it merges with the gloom and the mysterious aura of the church. In their pure gravity the noble features of Nicodemus, filled with sorrow, remind of Michelangelo's own, which, under the group's original purpose as his own monument, they were probably intended to depict. Vasari (1568) calls the Nicodemus simply a self-portrait of Michelangelo.

* The cathedral of Florence.

The Architect

I

WE HAVE SEEN that the time came when the aged master could no longer paint. Afterward came the moment when he lost the sureness of eye and hand, with which he had hewn his statues from the marble.

Yet he still had before him a period of rich activity as an architect. About 1546 he began with a plan for remodeling the Capitol square, whither he had had the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius taken as early as 1538. It had until then stood in the Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano, graced since 1588 with the red granite obelisk of Thebes.

The façade of the Palazzo Senatorio was first completely done

over. The old loggia on the right side and the old stairway were removed. Instead, after Michelangelo's drawing, the fine double stairway and the portal with the river gods *Nile* and *Tiber* on either side were put together. Between 1550 and 1555 Vignola built the broad stairway that leads to Santa Maria in Aracoeli and the Tarpeian Rock, with its loggias composed of three arches.

The work then rested for a number of years. In 1560 it was resumed. The piazza was encircled with a balustrade and the wide access stairway was built. Not much more had been by the time Michelangelo died. Two Senators, one of them Tommaso Cavalieri, were then charged with seeing to it that the work followed his plan. The Palazzo dei Conservatori was erected—it was finished in 1568. Then the remodeling of the Palazzo Senatorio was carried out by Giacomo della Porta. The third palazzo, opposite the Palazzo dei Conservatori, was not done until the seventeenth century. Yet, with a few deviations from the original plan, the entire Piazza Capitolina with its blend of architecture and sculpture represents Michelangelo's work.

To achieve a stronger effect and make the rather small square look larger, he conceived the idea of having the two palazzi on the side slant away at a slight angle; and he purposely gave them but two stories, the lower ones opening up into colonnades. He ran many of the great pillars up through the second story and gave the buildings their flat roofs with the balustrades that bear statue upon statue.

As was his wont from the time when he was planning the façade of San Lorenzo, Michelangelo sought to divide up the outer wall surface, thus enlivening it. Thus at each side of the entrances in the lower floor he erected a column, while the upper façade was almost entirely given to wide windows with column-borne gables. In actual execution the windows were made somewhat smaller, to give the wall surface its architectural due. The vehemence in Michelangelo's character is reflected in the sharp contrasts between horizontal building lines and vertical pilasters.

Careful scrutiny of a building like the Palazzo dei Conservatori

conveys a powerful impression of Michelangelo's peculiarities as an architect. He felt himself to be creative and he meant to display his originality without let or hindrance. It was more important to him that the building should bear the imprint of his spirit than that it accorded with what was generally regarded and felt to be normal and harmonious.

It is in point to dwell on the manner in which Michelangelo ignored tradition, indeed, even rules that are anything but arbitrary. Here and on many other occasions he flew in the face of the Vitruvian orthodoxy to which he paid lip service and which he perhaps sincerely believed he maintained.

We have written testimony to this orthodoxy from the year 1545. The façade of the Palazzo Farnese had been completed up to the top cornice by Antonio da San Gallo the younger when Paul III, who wanted to make a model structure of this family palace, asked Michelangelo's opinion of the plan.

We have the draft of this opinion, badly written, outspoken, couched in the harshest terms. It was clearly intended as a devastating condemnation of Antonio da San Gallo's scheme. Points one to six enumerate the main points by which a building, according to Vitruvius, must be judged. Each of them, Michelangelo contended, was either bungled or missing altogether. Nothing about this beautiful façade found mercy before his eyes.

The result of this sweeping and thoroughly unfair critique was that the pope asked all the leading architects of Rome to submit plans for completing the building. One morning, as Paul sat at breakfast in the Belvedere of the Vatican, all the plans were put before him, in the presence of San Gallo. There were plans by Perino del Vaga, a disciple of Raphael, and by Sebastiano del Piombo and Giorgio Vasari, disciples of Michelangelo. Vasari, in addition, had with him a design drawn by Michelangelo himself, who had given it to Vasari for submission when Vasari came to consult him about his own design. Vasari was also to offer excuses for Michelangelo's absence. Michelangelo was indeed at the time not well enough to go out.

The pope praised all the designs but "most of all that of the divine Michelangelo," to quote Vasari. Paul III then demonstratively took the project away from Antonio da San Gallo and entrusted completion of the Palazzo Farnese to Michelangelo.

San Gallo took the slight very hard. He died soon afterward, in October 1546. In 1547 Michelangelo topped the façade with his own cornice. But the bitterness engendered by the affair did not die with San Gallo. His partisans perpetuated it for a long time, and Michelangelo felt it for the rest of his life in the form of hostility, both overt and covert, while he supervised the work on St. Peter's.

In keeping with his invocation of Vitruvius and the ancient style in the opinion he gave the pope, Michelangelo observed greater stylistic purity and severity in the Palazzo Farnese than in his other architectural works. He began his revision of the façade with the creation of the large window over the main entrance, and above this window he installed the Farnese crest in colored marble, just as it survives today.

Michelangelo showed his infallible sense of terrain—a genius he shares with the greatest of generals—when, immediately on taking over the work on the Palazzo Farnese, he proposed that a bridge be struck across the Tiber directly in front of the building. This, he pointed out, would make it possible to walk in a straight line from the palazzo to the Villa Farnesina, or from garden to garden. From the main portal at the Campo di Fiore one would have been able to take in at a glance the court, the fountain, the Strada Giulia, the bridge and the beauty of the other garden, all the way to the gate that leads to the Strada di Trastevere (now the Via della Lungara). Unfortunately this plan was not acted upon.

Vasari gives Michelangelo sole credit for the beautiful courtyard of the Palazzo Farnese. He intentionally failed to mention that the Doric columns with the open portals on which the building rests, as well as the Ionic columns on the first upper floor are the work of San Gallo. The top floor with the great pilasters is

Michelangelo's work. Once again he gratified his dislike of flat wall surfaces.

We can scarcely credit Michelangelo with any consideration for San Gallo's work. Such gentleness was not in his nature. In regarding the building one plainly perceives that two sets of hands, and especially two entirely different minds, worked on it without achieving a true fusion. Yet despite these planning deficiencies and the lack of coherence, the Palazzo Farnese is so beautiful a building that all objections are forgotten.

II

Immersing oneself in Michelangelo's highly individual architectural style in his declining years, one notes that these peculiarities are clearly foreshadowed in the manner in which he supervised the building of the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, the Medici Chapel, during the years following 1524. At that time he had not the slightest notion of submitting to the discipline of Vitruvius. All he was out for was to use architecture as a backdrop for sculpture. It is possible to distinguish no less than three styles in the sacristy, all put to the service of sculpture, as the architect-sculptor deemed best.

The architectural shell of the chapel is strictly in the classic style. The marble architecture of the tombs, with their volutes that are too short and too narrow to afford anything but the most uncomfortable resting-places for the huge figures, are already semi-baroque. The treatment of the walls, so rich in surprising originality, is pure Michelangelo—the two flat niches on either side of Giuliano and Lorenzo; the deeper but still shallow recesses in the walls over the small doors; and above these pseudo-niches the immensely complex gables that seem to be leaping at the throats of the pilasters in between, as though they wanted to throttle them.

All that seems to have mattered to Michelangelo was to breathe life into everything, even the smallest corner. He did not let rules slow the flight of his creative imagination. Skilled technician that he was, he subordinated mechanics to the idea, even here was willing to waive the rules to achieve a certain effect he deemed essential.

This impression is strengthened at the sight of the vestibule of the Laurentian Library in Florence, the stair hall of which was built between 1552 and 1560 from Michelangelo's plans and ultimately completed by Bartolommeo Ammanati from a small clay model. Work on this vestibule, from drawings for which the master had finally obtained the pope's approval, began as early as 1524–1526. From 1526 to 1530 the work rested, on account of the turmoil of war, to be resumed 1530–1534. In the years 1552 and 1553 the tile flooring was laid by Niccolò Tribolo with Michelangelo's advice. But as indicated the stairs were not finished until 1560.

At first glance it seems almost as though the stairway does not fit into the vestibule. Through a door in the corner one enters a large oblong hall, its walls subdivided by sets of double columns which actually break out of the wall, and beneath which are curious consoles. The walls are decorated with empty, flat tabernacles, surmounted by heavy, segment-shaped gables; and above these are squarish blind windows. Only narrow, pillarlike sections of wall remain, while the columns themselves seem to form the actual wall.

In this columned and pillared hall the stairway seems almost anomalous. It begins at the bottom three flights wide, separated by two stone balusters. It then narrows to the single center flight that leads directly to the library entrance. This seems all the more curious since Michelangelo, according to a letter to Vasari, intended the center flight for the gentry and the side flights for the servants. In some degree everything here appears paradoxical; but that is only because Michelangelo's overpowering creative personality respected no laws but its own. Under his hands the space

comes alive, as though it were an organism. He destroys the wall surface as though it were clay to be kneaded in the sculptor's hand; and flying in the face of custom and tradition he achieves an impression of power and movement.

The center flight of stairs seems like a train of waves washing up on a beach one behind the other, frozen into stone under the molder's magic wand. The overall impression of the vestibule on the beholder comes closest to some fantastic temple hall carved out of living rock, with the walls decorated only as an afterthought.

After four of the steps had been finished, Vasari, charged with the work, was unable to find Michelangelo's measurements and interior plans. Neither the markings on the stone floor nor the various old clay models served as an adequate guide, and he sent to Rome to persuade the master to return to Florence. Duke Cosimo, he said, would receive Michelangelo with all due honors. But Michelangelo thought it sacrilegious to interrupt his work on St. Peter's, which he had taken on without pay for the salvation of his soul. And he stayed in Rome.

III

Michelangelo devoted much time and thought to the fortification of Rome, which was to be restored after the damage suffered in the siege and sack of 1527. Since 1534 the work had been in the charge of Antonio da San Gallo, the builder of the Palazzo Farnese, who was then regarded as Rome's premier architect.

Vasari tells us about negotiations on how the work was best to be done, conducted in 1545–1546 in the presence of the pope. San Gallo was provoked into an outburst, when Michelangelo voiced opinions that strongly differed from his own. The master was a sculptor and painter, he said, not a military engineer. Michelangelo retorted that he did not know much about sculpture and

painting. He had, however, spent much time pondering problems of fortifying cities, added to his practical experience during the siege of Florence. This gave him a great advantage over San Gallo and his whole tribe. He then demonstrated many errors that had already been committed. There were sharp words on both sides and the pope adjourned the discussion.

The day after this clash, February 26, 1545, Michelangelo sent a letter to the commander of Castel Sant' Angelo, setting forth what he had been unable to explain the day before. He proposed that the fortification works be entrusted to Captain Giovan Francesco Montemellini, whose competence and sincerity he acknowledged, even though he did not agree with the soldier in all points.

After San Gallo's death in October 1546, supervision of the work was given to Michelangelo, jointly with the engineer Jacopo Melleghini. Michelangelo promptly submitted an overall plan to the pope. But when the imperial armies imminently threatened Rome after the fall of Piacenza, Paul III entrusted the work to Jacopo Fusto Castriotto, an engineer from Urbino, who placed the fortifications on the city's heights rather than in the plain, as Michelangelo had envisioned.

Michelangelo's work on the city's gates stems from his concern with its fortification. The curious Porta Pia is his work. He prepared no less than three plans for it in 1561. Pope Pius IV approved the one that cost the least.

IV

Even under Pope Nicolaus V (1447–1455) the ancient basilica dedicated to St. Peter had shown alarming signs of delapidation. Leone Battista Alberti (*De arte aedificatoria* I, 10) reports that the long wall of the nave, resting on columns, was no less than three braccia (six and a half feet) out of plumb, being held together only by the roof beams.

Hence Pope Nicolaus had good reason to give thought to the building of a new St. Peter's. He considered it essential, moreover, for the consolidation of the power of the church that it should have a visible, tangible symbol to capture the imagination of the faithful even in its outward form.

Bramante's plan for the reconstruction of St. Peter's shows a structure in the form of a Greek cross with limbs of equal length and includes a drawing of a dome. He began with the erection of the four immense pillars on which the dome rests to this day. They are so high that the ancient Pantheon might have been built with their capitals as a base.

Bramante supervised the work from 1506 until his death in 1514. He was succeeded by Giuliano da San Gallo. Then, in August 1514, Raphael assumed the post of chief architect and held it until his death in 1520.

It proved necessary, above all, to reinforce the dome pillars. Raphael also revised the floor plan. While Bramante wanted the dome at the center of four sections of equal length, Raphael lengthened the front, turning the Greek into a Latin cross and the central structure into a nave.

Baldassare Peruzzi, who took on the work from 1520 to 1536, again changed the plan and sought to return to the earlier form. But money was short and during the sack of Rome the work necessarily rested. Paul III resumed it, and Peruzzi continued in charge until his death in 1536.

Antonio da San Gallo had been an assistant on the project for no less than thirty years when he was appointed chief architect in 1536. He had come to Rome in 1503 at the age of eighteen and on the recommendation of his great uncle Giuliano had at once found employment in the building trades. But when Giuliano withdrew from the group directing the work on St. Peter's after differences with Bramante, his nephew sided with the opposing camp, and Bramante instantly perceived that the young man, with his facility in drawing and his talent for architecture, could be of great service to him. He had all the more need for such assistance, since

he was suffering from gout, which grew more and more painful with the years. In 1513 his illness actually forced him to recall Giuliano, who, as we have seen, was superseded by Raphael the following year.

We know not only Antonio's floor plan for the church—which differs radically from Bramante's—but also his drawing of the exterior. In his pedantic visualization the façade is fussy rather than forceful, the dome surmounting two colonnades, one above the other, and itself carrying another colonnade culminating in a pyramid-shaped pinnacle. On either side of the dome are two towers of many stories, also with pointed pinnacles, and the three pinnacles are at precisely the same height.

Under Antonio's direction the base of the dome pillars was strengthened, though not nearly enough. To increase their load-bearing capacity, he filled in the niches left in the pillars and, according to Vasari, he also filled in with solid material certain hollows in the foundation.

As important, if not more so, is the circumstance that under San Gallo's administration, which was in itself dishonest, the whole project became riddled with fraud and thievery. All the subalterns were in league to plunder the papal exchequer. As Vasari rightly put it, Michelangelo (who worked without pay) rescued St. Peter from the thieves and assassins.

V

When Michelangelo, by the end of the year 1546, was appointed chief architect of St. Peter's, he found the following situation: The nave of the old basilica was still intact, for Bramante's reconstruction had so far involved but the choir; the altar, in the Doric style, had been begun by Bramante and completed by Peruzzi.

In a letter dating from late 1546 or the spring of 1547, ad-

dressed to a certain Bartolommeo (presumably Ferratino), Michelangelo severely censured what had been done by Antonio da San Gallo up to that time:

"Dear Messer Bartolommeo, valued friend.

"Without doubt Bramante was one of the ablest architects since ancient times. [Note that Michelangelo was big-minded enough to ignore his personal feud with Bramante.] He designed the first plan for St. Peter's. There was nothing confused in it. It was clear, gave the church good lighting, and he proposed to let the structure stand free on all sides, so that it would not overlap the Vatican Palace in any respect. His plan was deemed beautiful, which it is even today. Yet everyone who departed from this plan (like San Gallo) departed also from the rules of art. The unprejudiced can see this from his model. The rotunda he wanted to build around Bramante's design deprives that structure of light, and the many nooks and crannies he arranges above and below the choir will certainly bring no light into the church. This will only give occasion for all manner of trouble, for example, that the homeless and wanted will hide there and counterfeiters seek refuge. On closing time at night it would take twenty-five men to look for the stow-aways, and even they would have difficulty in checking all the hiding-places.

"Further, if the expansion of Bramante's plan, as envisioned in San Gallo's model, were effected, it would become necessary to tear down the Cappella Paolina and part of the palace. Indeed, in my opinion not even the Sistine Chapel could be spared. As for the finished part of the rotunda, the cost of its erection is estimated at a hundred thousand florins; but the calculation is wrong; it could be done for sixteen thousand; and if it is torn down again, the loss will be slight. For the dressed stone would be very welcome and result in a saving of two hundred thousand florins for the entire structure, which would last for three hundred years. That is my unprejudiced opinion. For if my views prevail, it would be only to my own lasting damage. I would be glad if you were to tell this to the pope. I don't feel well enough to do it myself."

The clear meaning is that he would then have to take over the work, much against his inclination.

No trace remains today of San Gallo's rotunda.

When Michelangelo came to the building site one day to view Antonio's model, all of San Gallo's partisans (*la sette Sangalesca*) were gathered there and one of them sneered at him: "San Gallo's plan is a fine meadow for you to graze on." Michelangelo retorted that they were right in calling the plan a meadow. They judged like cattle.

VI

Michelangelo decided to simplify Bramante's plan still further. In place of the wealth of separate parts he put the simple effect of space itself. He abandoned the colonnade that was to gird the dome, reduced niches and chapels in number. But he preserved Bramante's ideas about the core of the structure. The model he built in 1546 in only two weeks, known from the engraving by Stephan du Perrac, got him the appointment as chief architect.

Since he still thought the dome pillars too weak to bear the weight of the dome, he had their cores filled in (according to Vasari) and at the same time built two evenly rising spiral ramps at their sides over which mules could carry up materials and up which mounted men could ride all the way to the top, where the arches began. He built the first round moldings of travertine above the arches. In the words of Vasari, they were "marvelously graceful, different from all others, and they could not have been more perfectly made."

In 1549 work was proceeding simultaneously on the drum—the base for the dome—the right limb of the cross and its choir, and, following removal of the older structural elements, the northern arm of the cross and its choir; and finally the erection of the

southern choir, which, by 1551, had reached the architrave of the pilasters. The barrel vault, which Antonio da San Gallo had erected above the left limb of the cross, had to be torn down, since it violated the plan. Work on this choir then rested for several years.

The building commission, which belonged to the San Gallo faction, addressed a complaint about Michelangelo to Julius III, stating among other things:

"As for the structure and what is to become of it, we are unable to report anything, since everything is kept secret from us, as though we had nothing to do with it. We have repeatedly protested and do so again, to relieve our conscience. We do not approve Michelangelo's activities, especially his wrecking. So great has been the destruction, and still is to this day, that all who are witness to it are seized with pity. Yet if Your Holiness approves, the commission has no grounds for complaint."

A meeting was held before the pope. San Gallo's faction had arranged matters so that all the workers on the project were present, with the clear intention to show how Michelangelo had ruined the structure. His opponents insisted that under his plan the church would not have enough light. He had built the royal niche where the three chapels were; but no one knew how he intended to construct the vaulting.

The opposing faction had actually persuaded the pope, Cardinal Salviati and Cardinal Marcello Cervini (who was later to become pope) that the church would be but dimly lighted. When all were assembled Julius III therefore addressed Michelangelo in these words: "The commission is of the opinion that the church will have too little light." Michelangelo replied: "I would prefer to hear the members of the commission on the subject." Cardinal Marcello said: "We are ready." Michelangelo replied: "Above these three windows I shall install three more in the vaulting, which will be built of travertine." "You have never told us a word about it," the cardinal objected. Michelangelo said: "I am under no obligation to tell Your Magnificence or anyone else what I am to do or wish to do. It is your concern to provide the funds and

to see to it that nothing is stolen. The building plans you must leave to me."

And with a glance at the masons and joiners he addressed the pope: "Let him go thither and lay the stone, him wield the chisel, that one do his joining. Let each one do his work as I have set it out; for none of them shall ever learn what I propose to do; that would be beneath my dignity. Yet I say unto Your Holiness: one must take pity on them, for envy is a great temptation for people of base disposition. Holy Father, you see what profit I derive! If the pains I take do not give balm to my soul, I shall indeed have wasted my time and labor."

(This reply, which cannot claim to be a literal quotation, is reconstructed from Vasari and from a letter by Giovanni Paggi to Girolamo Paggi.)

The pope put his hands on Michelangelo's shoulder and said: "Be without fear, you win, body and soul." Michelangelo's defense completely won over Julius III, and the pope commanded him to come to the Villa Giulia with Vasari the next day, where long discussions on art were conducted.

In January 1555 Julius III confirmed Paul III's writ. The work proceeded at full speed. Then, in 1557, lack of money compelled an interruption. Duke Cosimo took advantage of it, to invite Michelangelo to return to Florence, as he had done repeatedly in the past. As we already know, the artist courteously declined.

VII

Michelangelo's admirers were apprehensive on account of his advanced age. They feared he might die without leaving a detailed plan for the completion of the work. His friends Tommaso Cavalieri, Donato Giannotti, Francesco Bandini and Cardinal Rodolpho da Carpi implored him to make a wooden model for the dome.

Michelangelo did not find it easy to make up his mind to do the dome. At last, however, he made a small model in clay. From this and from the plans and profiles he drew it proved possible to construct a large-scale model of wood. It was built with such care by Messer Giovanni Franzese that it served for every detail of the actual construction work. It included the columns with bases and capitals, doors, windows, cornice, projections—everything. The model stands today in the Museo Petriano of the Vatican.

A letter from Michelangelo to Duke Cosimo, dated May 31, 1557, reveals how much trouble the negligence and incompetence of his subordinates caused him. Flaws crept into the vault construction of the Chapel of the King of France, which the master himself described as unusually artful, for the reason that the old man was unable to visit the site every day. He was compelled to have much of the completed work torn down. He dreamt of being able to take refuge in Florence, once these errors were corrected and the dome model finished, to spend his declining days in peace there. But this was not to be. Until his death St. Peter's was to hold him in its grip.

This eventuated even though he handed in his resignation on September 13, 1560. He wrote to Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi in the then mandatory terms of humility but with well-concealed irony:

"To the renowned and reverend Lord, my esteemed patron.

"Messer Francesco Bandini told me yesterday Your Renowned and Reverend Magnificence had declared matters could not be worse with the construction of St. Peter's. This statement has indeed given me great pain, since it shows that you are not informed of the true state of affairs and since I necessarily feel a keener desire than anyone else that matters should go well; and unless I am mistaken, I can assure you that what work is presently in progress in the church could scarcely go better. But since I may be deceived by self-interest or old age, hence may be doing harm to the above-named building project against my will, I propose, as soon as I can, to ask our lord, His Holiness, to relieve me; better

yet, to save time, I should like to ask Your Renowned and Reverend Magnificence to have the kindness to relieve me of this burden, which, as you know, I have borne for seventeen years at the behest of the pope. What has been done for the aforesaid structure in that time by my work is manifest to anyone. I therefore repeat my urgent request to be relieved. You could do me no greater favor. With every humility I kiss Your Renowned and Reverend Magnificence's hand."

As we see from this letter, there were perpetual difficulties. Money was lacking. There was a shortage of workers ready to fall to with a will. The foremen were surly or careless, and there was pilferage on every side.

In a letter to Vasari we read: "It would greatly please certain thieves if I were on my way, and I would become the cause of the building's ruin. Indeed, the work might halt altogether."

In a letter to the building commission he had written: "You know I have told Balduccio to send his lime only if it were good. He has sent poor lime and seems not to wish to believe that he will be compelled to take it back, proving that he is in league with whoever accepted the lime. This greatly heartens the people I have dismissed. Everyone who accepts poor materials for use in the building, goods whose approval I have forbidden, is, among other things, disposed to make friends with those of whom I have made enemies. I believe a new conspiracy is now afoot. Probity is being undermined by promises, tips and presents."

VIII

Unfortunately the building commission to which Michelangelo was appealing sided with his enemies. A number of Michelangelo's biographers incline to agree with Sebastiano del Piombo, who wrote in 1520: "You are yourself your own sole enemy (*pensate*

che non avete altro che vi faccia guerra se non voi medesimo)."
The truth of the matter is that Michelangelo was basically of melancholy disposition and for good reason thoroughly suspicious. He had indeed enemies by the score. Especially during the years he supervised the construction of St. Peter's he was subjected to a virtual bombardment of attacks and accusations. Had not the popes shown themselves disinclined to listen to this vilification, he would have surely been deprived of his post.

When Michelangelo was eighty-one, a minor architect employed on the project became the leader of the cabal against him. His name was Nanni di Baccio Bigi, and Michelangelo knew him well, for in his early youth, according to Vasari's story, Nanni had stolen some drawings from Michelangelo, "more from love of art than from a desire to do harm." No sooner had Michelangelo assumed his post when Nanni spread stories that he knew nothing about architecture, that the model he had submitted was childish and ludicrous, that he wasted money senselessly, and that he worked at night so that none would gain access to his plans.

Rumors went the rounds that Michelangelo's cornice on the Palazzo Farnese was about to collapse. They came to the attention of the building commission, which lent them credence, or pretended to. Michelangelo had to write one of its members:

"Messer Bartolommeo, have the kindness to read this letter [informing him of the intrigues against Michelangelo] and ponder who the two rascals might be that first spread the lies about my work on the Palazzo Farnese and now tell more lies in the report they have submitted to the commission for St. Peter's. That is the thanks I get for all the kindnesses I have shown them. But what can one expect from a couple of unconscionable rogues!"

During the brief reign of Marcellus II Michelangelo, despite the many attacks he had turned back, felt himself to be so utterly without support that he seriously contemplated leaving Rome and accepting the bid to return to Florence. It must be borne in mind that this was the pope who, as a cardinal, had been the spokesman for his detractors. But Paul IV ascended the papal throne soon

afterward and his persuasion detained the master. The petition he had addressed to Cardinal Carpi was not granted. Instead the pope gave him plenipotentiary powers in a new rescript and forbade all departures from his plans.

Still there were clashes with the building commission and its evil spirit, Nanni di Baccio Bigi.

Life in Rome all about Michelangelo's quiet workshop had become a single terror, the Inquisition having grown all-powerful. For a chance meeting with heretics the fine, on the first offense, was five hundred florins, on repetition, death. A single extended discussion with someone who had been summoned on a charge of heresy (whose guilt, in other words, had not yet been proven) resulted, on the first offense, in a fine of two hundred and fifty florins, on the second, again in death. This was the situation in 1558. Three years later an ordinance was promulgated under which all letters and packages could be opened on behalf of the Inquisition. Merchants who made trips abroad were kept under strict surveillance. Soon the death penalty was introduced for anyone who had any contact with Geneva. When Paul IV died, the furious Romans struck the head off his statue in the Capitol and rolled it through the streets into the Tiber. The prison of the Inquisition was stormed and burned.

Michelangelo suffered a painful loss late in 1555, with the death of his servant Urbino, a stone mason who had become his assistant, and had worked on the Julius tomb in San Pietro in Vincoli, for example. The great artist provided for the widow but earned only ingratitude. On Urbino's death he wrote to his nephew Lionardo, under date of December 4, 1555: "I must tell you that last night at ten Francesco, yclept Urbino, passed away to my great sorrow. So sad and disconsolate has he left me that, in the light of the love I felt for him, death in his company seems sweeter than life. He deserved my love, for he was a fine man, the epitome of loyalty and honesty. Now that he is dead it seems to me that I myself am without life."

Several months later, on February 23, 1556, he wrote Vasari:

"You know that Urbino is dead. With this event God has shown me great grace, even as I have suffered a profound loss and sorrow beyond fathoming. The grace shown me is that Urbino, who, while he lived, kept me alive, in dying taught me how to die, not with reluctance but with a desire for death. He was in my service for twenty-six years and I found him completely honest and loyal. Now that I had made him well-to-do and expected him to be the life and pillar of my old age, he has been taken from me and I have no other solace than the hope of seeing him in paradise."

In addition to Urbino, Michelangelo kept a serving-woman, Vincenza, daughter of a small shopkeeper. He dined alone. When he was at work he often subsisted all day on a little bread and wine. He always had young people about his house who worked for him. One of these was the occasion for his final clash with the building commission. A letter to the governors of November 1561, when Michelangelo was entering his eighty-seventh year, reads:

"My lords governors. Since I am old and see that Cesare [da Castel Durante, the master's general representative at the building project] is so busy that the men are often without supervision, I have deemed it necessary to give the said Cesare an associate in Pierluigi [Gaëta], whom I consider a person calculated to do credit and be of profit to the project. He has long been familiar with building work. And since he lives in my house, he will be able to report to me every evening what is to be done the next day."

The building commission now conceived the idea of getting rid of Michelangelo by discharging Gaëta. He was accused of theft and thrown into prison. Cesare da Castel Durante was stabbed to death near St. Peter's. Michelangelo now declared he would no longer set foot on the building site, which was precisely what his treacherous and deceitful enemy, the architect Nanni di Baccio Bigo, desired.

The building commission was now convened and declared that the whole project would be ruined under Michelangelo's direction. The pope was uncertain and ordered an investigation; but Nanni di Baccio Bigi was unable to substantiate even a single accusation

he had made against Michelangelo and Gaëta and was at last dismissed in disgrace. We see that it was more than Michelangelo's introspective temperament that caused him, down to his dying breath, to fancy himself persecuted by hatred and envy.

IX

The dome of St. Peter's is generally acknowledged to be Michelangelo's work. But the two smaller cupolas too are almost certainly done from his drawings, which Giacomo della Porta closely followed. In addition the entire exterior of the crossed naves and the choir go back to him.

The dualism in his nature is clearly revealed in the structure of St. Peter's. On the one hand we find, in the restless, composite window frames, the same trend away from antiquity toward the caprice of the baroque that we observe in his other architectural works. On the other hand the grandeur and simplicity of his nature is revealed in his stripping down of Bramante's plan from rich detail to essential elements. Cruciform cloisters and wall-paneling were waved aside to enhance the simple harmony of the dome area and the side spaces. Michelangelo scorned decoration for its own sake. He succeeded in breathing life into the architectural masses, as though they were organic life forms, striving upward on every side, the soaring movement merging into pure flight in the case of the dome itself. Unfortunately the façade, which is not by Michelangelo, today largely hides the exterior of the dome base from view.

After Michelangelo's death Pius IV entrusted the work to Vignola and Ligorio with strict instructions to stick to the master's plan; and when Ligorio broke the agreement, he was removed. From 1571 to his death in 1573 Vignola had sole direction. Gregory XIII then appointed Giacomo della Porta as chief architect, with

Domenico Fontana as his assistant, under whose supervision the mighty dome took shape in twenty-two months, just as Michelangelo had envisioned it. It was finished in 1590.

In later times many changes were made in St. Peter's; but looking down on the dome from Monte Pincio and seeing it float on the brow of the capital of the Old World like a diadem, one senses what Michelangelo envisioned with his masterpiece, even though his eyes had been closed for almost a generation before the great dome took its place over the Eternal City for all to see, visible symbol of the spirit of the late Renaissance.

X

If Duke Cosimo de' Medici tried for many years to persuade Michelangelo to leave Rome and return to his ancestral city, this was surely not for love of the old man, but because he wanted the Laurentian Library and the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo finished. From a letter by Michelangelo to his nephew Lionardo in July 1557 we can deduce that Cosimo did not take the master's refusal well.

"I would much rather die than incur the disfavor of the duke. In all matters I ever strove for sincerity, and if I hesitated to come, though I had promised, the reason is that my promise was always given on condition that the work on St. Peter's should have advanced sufficiently so that my plan could no longer be altered or destroyed, and that there should be no opportunity for the kind of thievery to which the robbers have so long been inured."

To Vasari too he wrote scornfully that he would ride from Rome to Florence, if it were still possible, to explain the circumstances to the duke; but he no longer had heart for anything but death.

In August 1557 the duke granted him permission to stay in Rome. But in May 1558 the importunities began again, together

with promises of the greatest honors. By virtues of his position, Cosimo regarded himself as Michelangelo's sovereign, and as a loyal citizen of Florence Michelangelo shared this view, despite his theoretical republicanism.

When Cosimo and the Duchess Leonora came to Rome in November 1558, Michelangelo at once hastened to pay his respects. He was received with the greatest honors and given a seat beside the duke; and Cosimo's son, the young Don Francesco de' Medici, showed his respect by addressing the great artist only hat in hand.

The duke evidently gained the impression on this occasion that Michelangelo was too old to be expected to face the hardship of still another move. He was content to prevail upon the pope, with the help of his ambassador, to keep under close surveillance, for the remainder of Michelangelo's life, everyone who went in and out at the artist's home, so that in the event of his sudden death no drawings, cartoons, models, or property and money were stolen.

In February 1564 Michelangelo suffered from fever. On February 14 Tiberio Calcagni wrote: "When I went out in Rome today, I heard from many sides that Michelangelo is ill. I went to visit him at his house and though it was raining found him about to go out. I told him I thought it unwise for him to go out in such weather. 'What would you have me do?' he replied. 'I am ill and cannot find rest anywhere.' His uncertain speech and his look and complexion made me afraid for his life."

Michelangelo kept to his home on the ensuing days. His servant Antonio and his friends Tommaso Cavalieri and Daniele da Volterra were in attendance. He asked the latter to write to his nephew to come to Rome, "but to proceed with great care, since the roads are bad." The nephew arrived in Rome only three days after Michelangelo's death.

Daniele da Volterra wrote: "I then left him a little after eight in full possession of his senses and in a quiet mood, but plagued with constant drowsiness. This so irritated him that in the after-

noon between three and four he tried to go out for a ride as he did every evening in good weather. But the cold weather and the weakness in his head and legs prevented him. He returned to his fireplace and seated himself in his armchair, which he prefers to his bed."

When he felt worse during the following days, he made his will in the presence of his two physicians, saying that he entrusted his soul to the hands of God, his body to the earth and his property to his family.

He died on February 18, 1564.

Only a few marble works and three cartoons were found among his possessions. He had burned his drawings.

At his request his coffin had to be taken to Florence in secret. It was at first placed in San Piero Maggiore and then, on Sunday, March 12, taken to the church of Santa Croce. There the lid was lifted and the body found to be unchanged. The artists placed a gold-embroidered velvet coverlet on the coffin, and on it a gold crucifix.

The great memorial service did not take place until July, in San Lorenzo, the Medici family church.

Michelangelo's sarcophagus stands in Santa Croce.

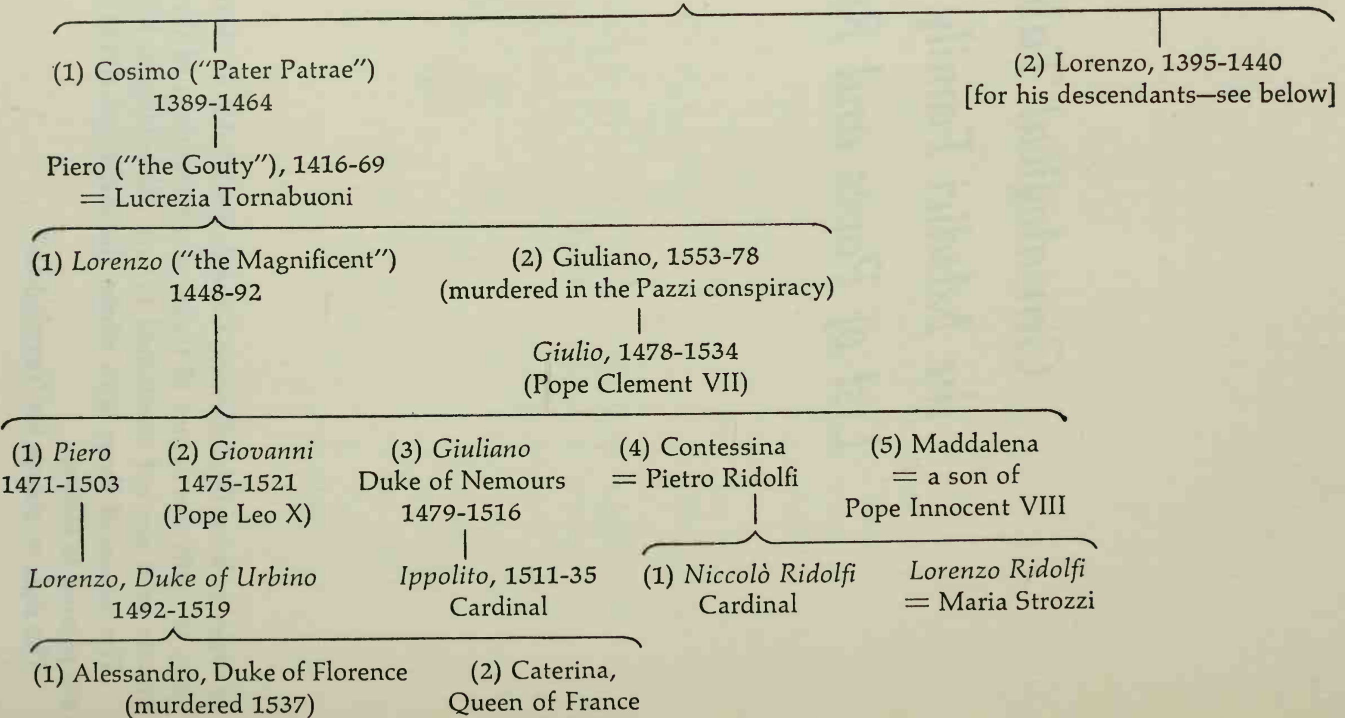
Genealogical Table of the Medici Family and List of Popes and Rulers

In order to keep the following Genealogical Table as clear as possible, it omits the names of those minor members of the Medici Family who are not mentioned in any Michelangelo biography.

The names of those with whom the artist had direct dealings are printed *in Italics.*

The sign = stands for "married to."

THE MEDICI FAMILY: Direct Line



THE MEDICI FAMILY: Younger Branch

Giovanni d'Alverardo de' Medici, 1360-1429

(1) Cosimo, 1389-1464
[for his descendants—see above]

(2) Lorenzo, 1395-1440

Pierfrancesco, 1415-76

(1) *Lorenzo*, 1463-1503

Pierfrancesco
(died 1530)

(1) Lorenzino
(murdered Alessandro,
Duke of Florence)

(2) Maddalena
= *Ruberto*
Strozzi

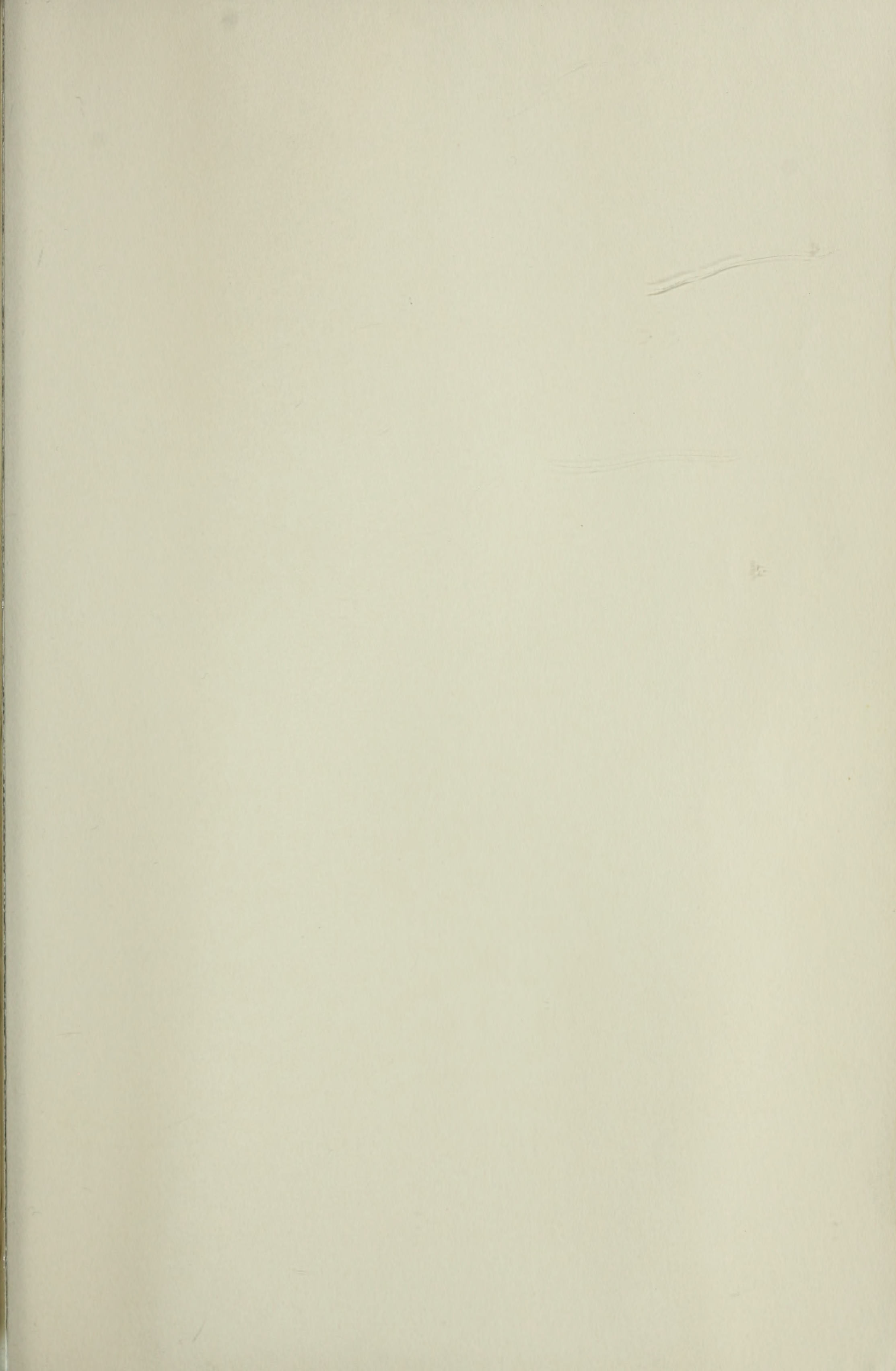
(2) Giovanni, 1467-98
= Caterina Sforza

Giovanni delle Bande Nere
1498-1526

Cosimo I, 1519-74
(First Grand Duke of
Florence)

POPES, EMPERORS AND KINGS IN MICHELANGELO'S TIME

GERMAN EMPERORS	POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE
Frederick III (from 1440)	1471 Sixtus IV	Louis XI (from 1461)
	1484 Innocent VIII	1483 Charles VIII
	1492 Alexander VI (Borgia)	
		1498 Louis XII
1493 Maximilian I	1503 Pius III (Piccolomini)	
	1503 Julius II (Rovere)	
	1513 Leo X (Medici)	
		1515 Francis I
1519 Charles V	1522 Hadrian VI (from Utrecht)	
	1523 Clemens VII (Medici)	
	1534 Paul III (Farnese)	
	1550 Julius III	1547 Henry II (married Caterina de' Medici)
	1555 Marcellus II	
	1555 Paul IV (Caraffa)	
1558 Ferdinand I	1559 Pius IV (Medici from Milan)	1559 Francis II (married Mary Stuart)
		1560 Charles IX



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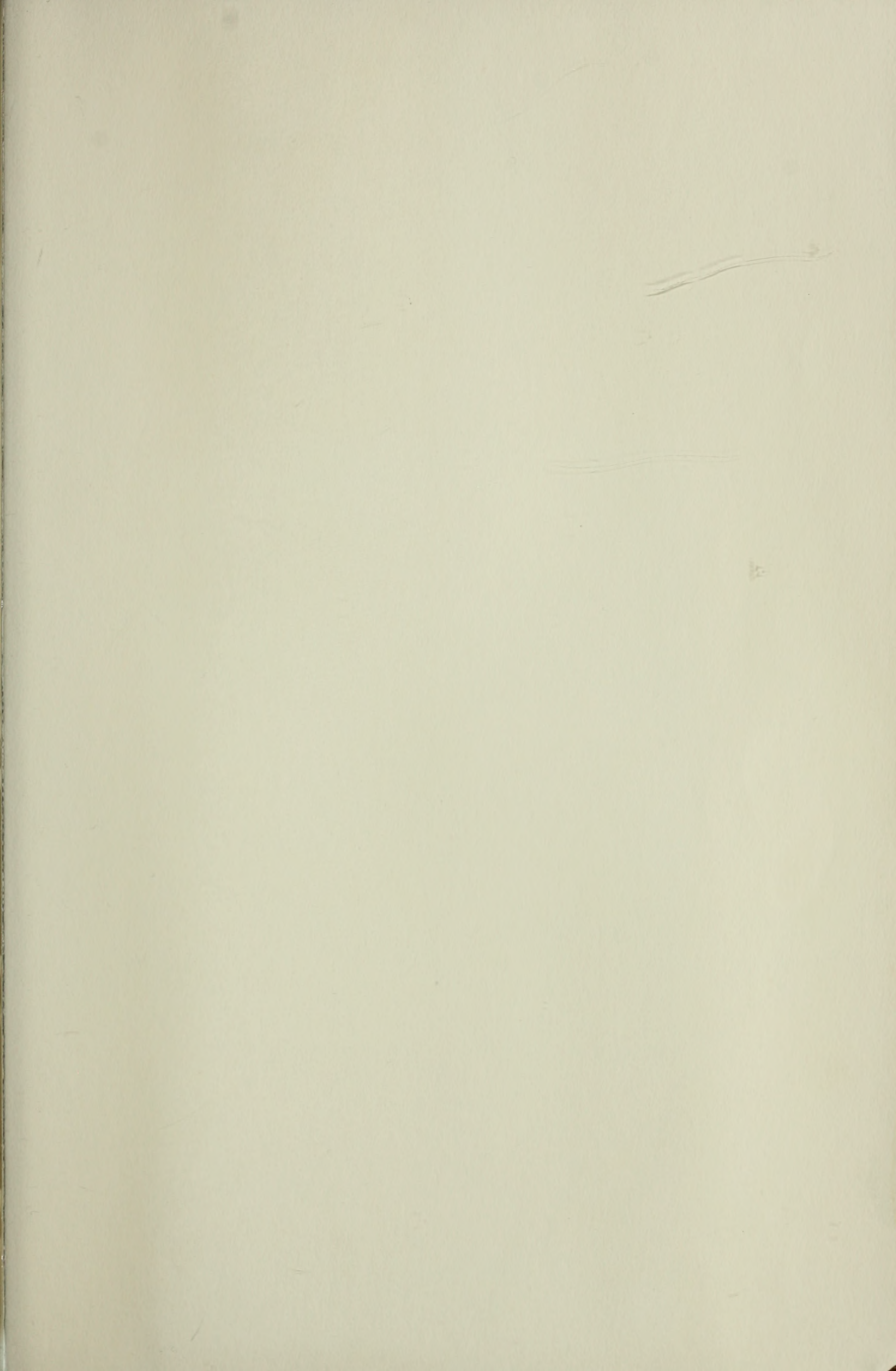

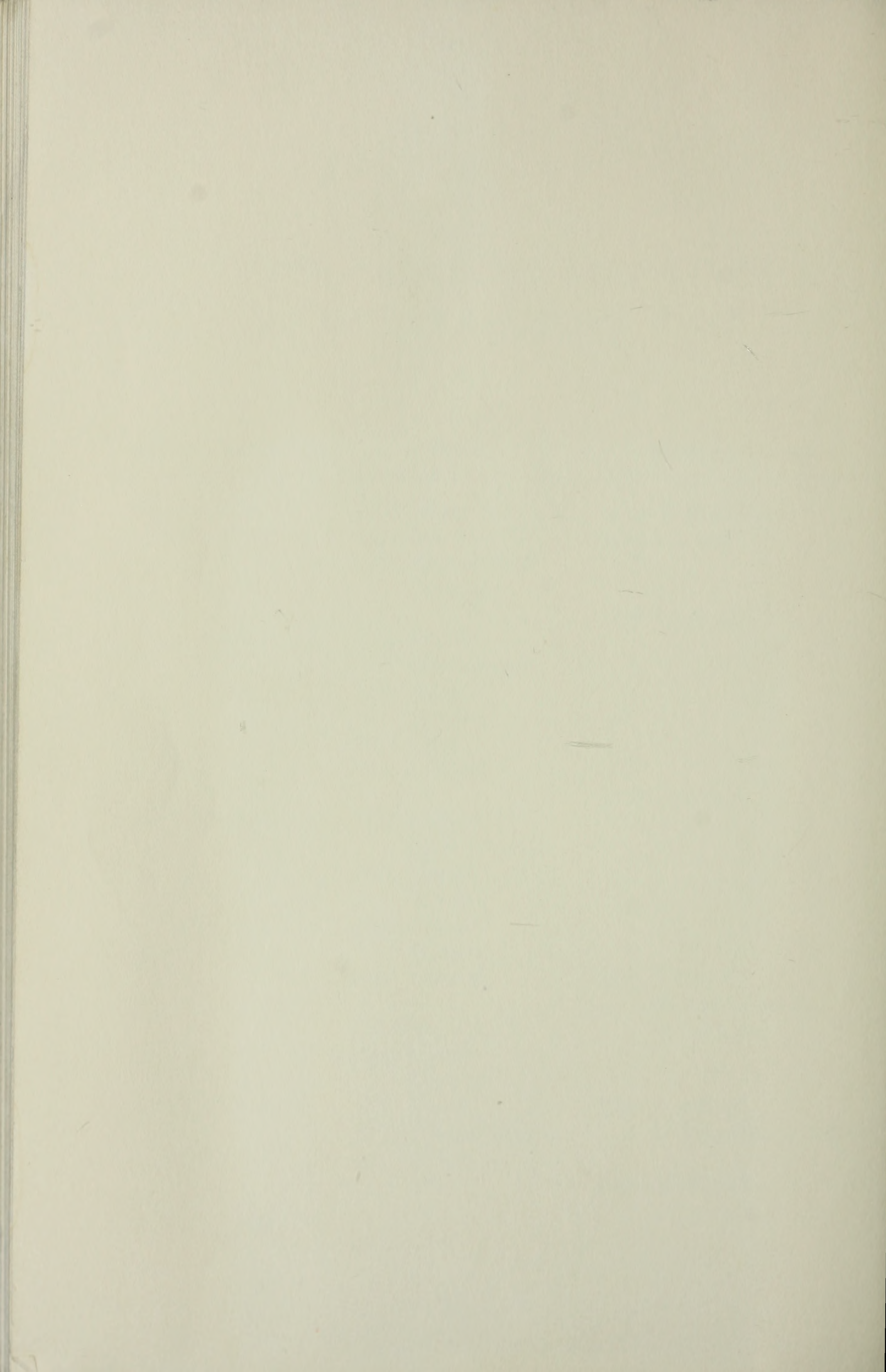

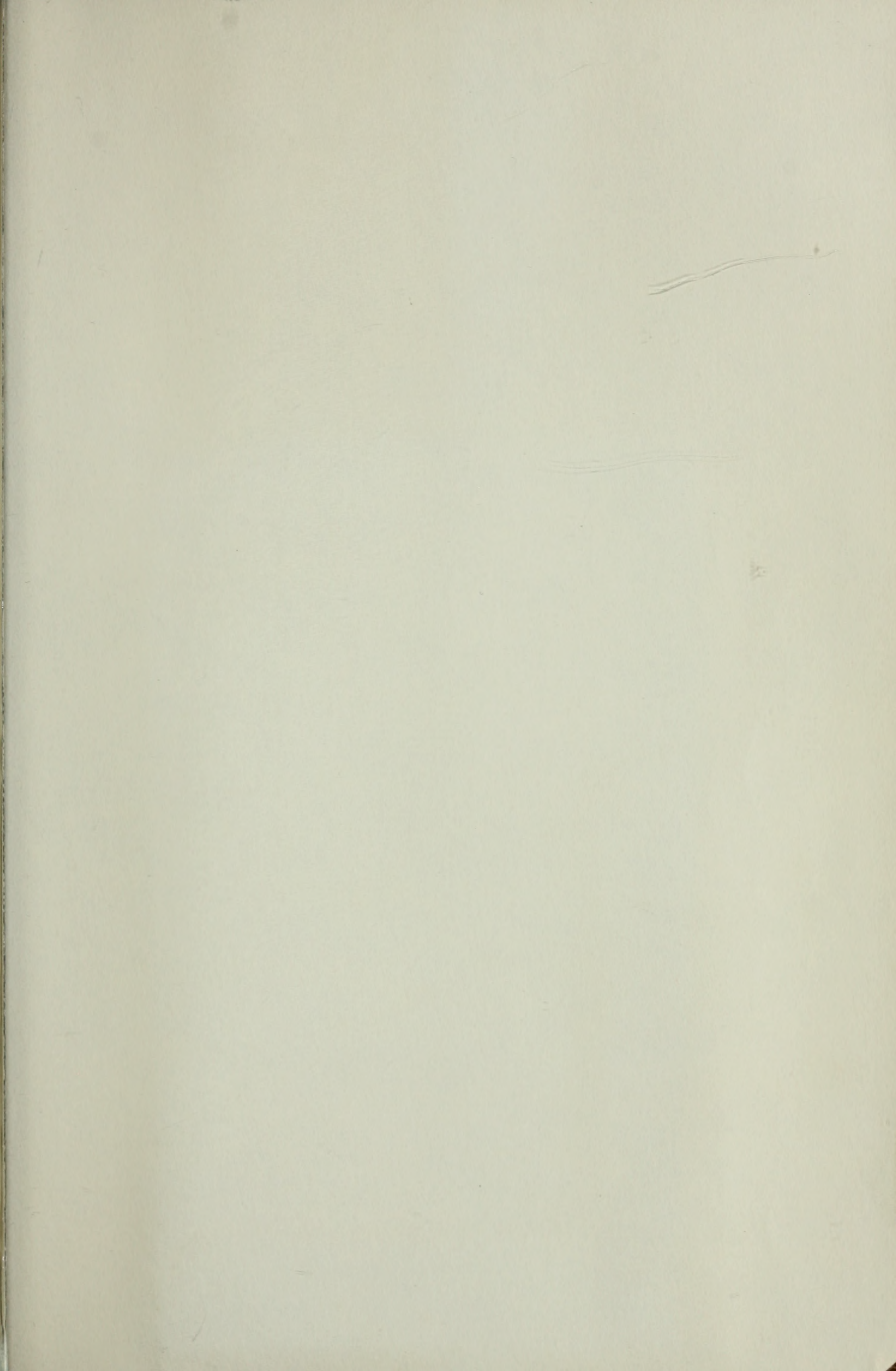

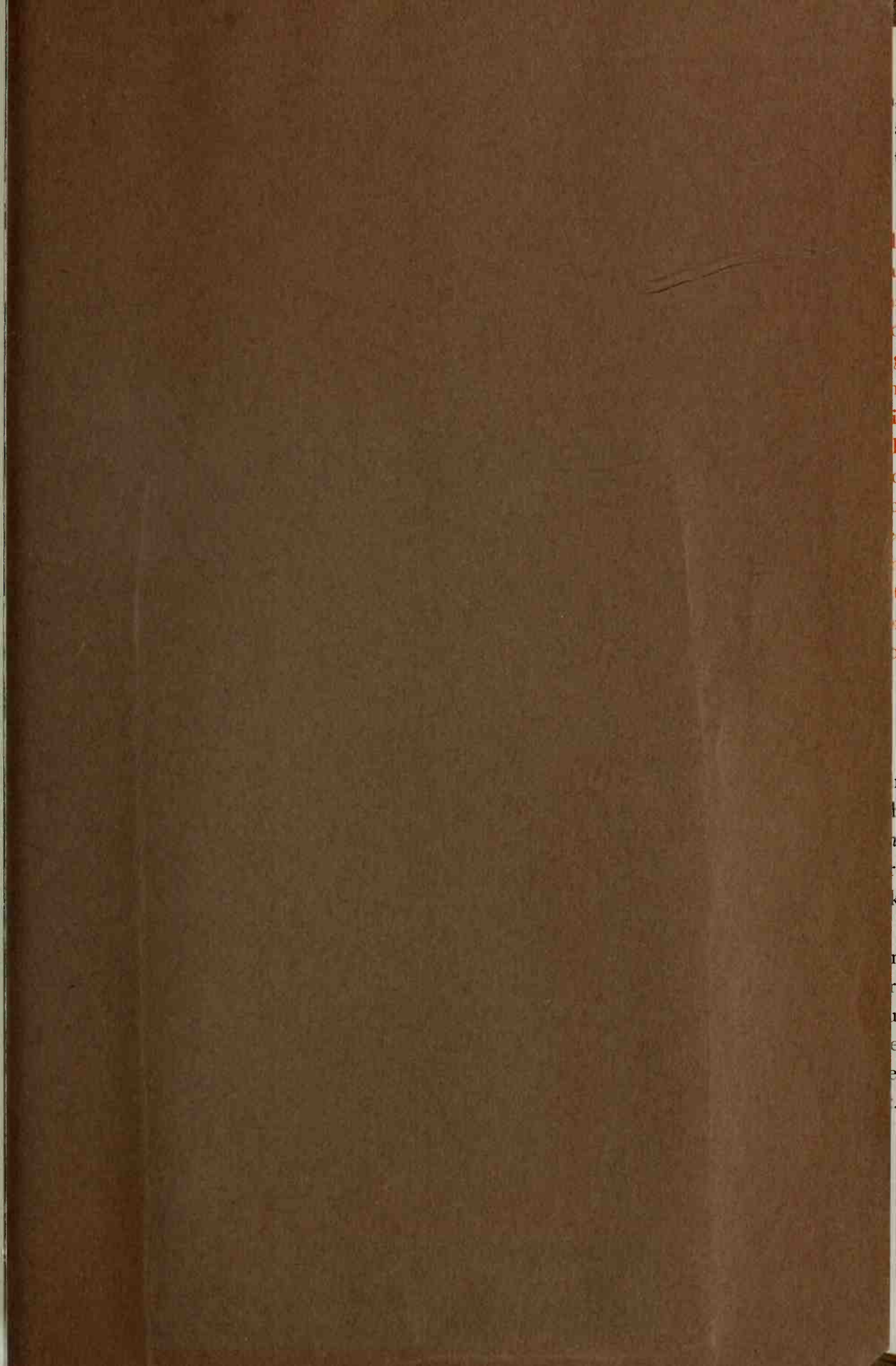

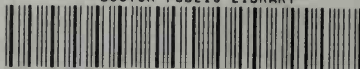

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