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MICHELANGELO



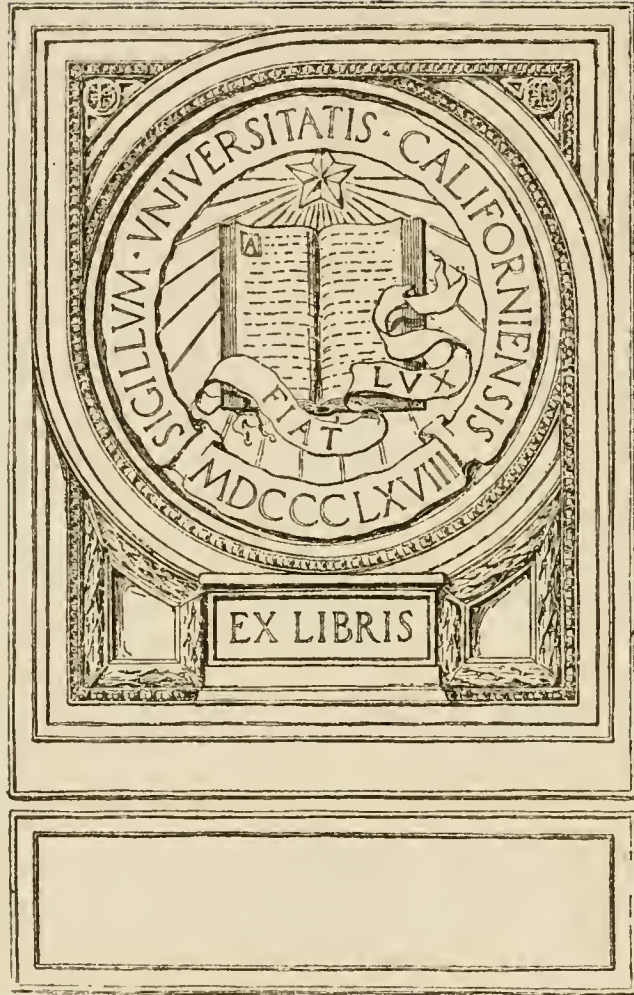
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MASTERS IN ART

A SERIES OF ILLUSTRATED
MONOGRAPHS: ISSUED MONTHLY

PART 17

MAY, 1901

VOLUME 2

Michelangelo

As a Painter

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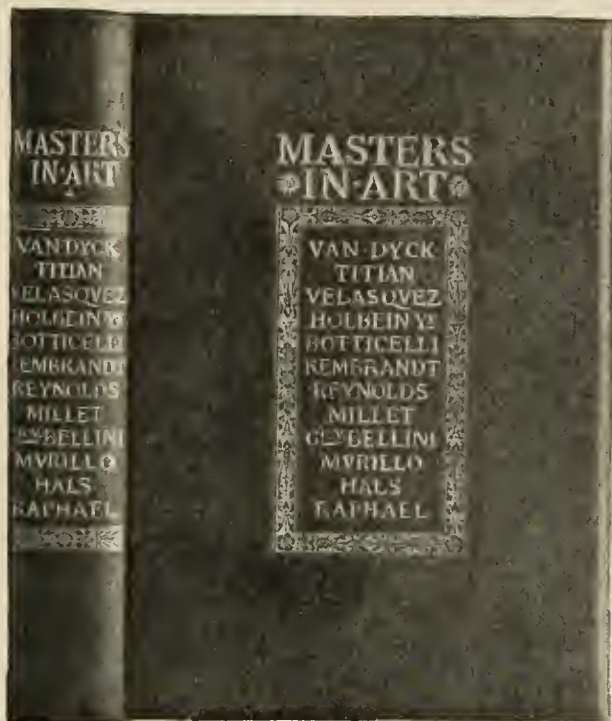
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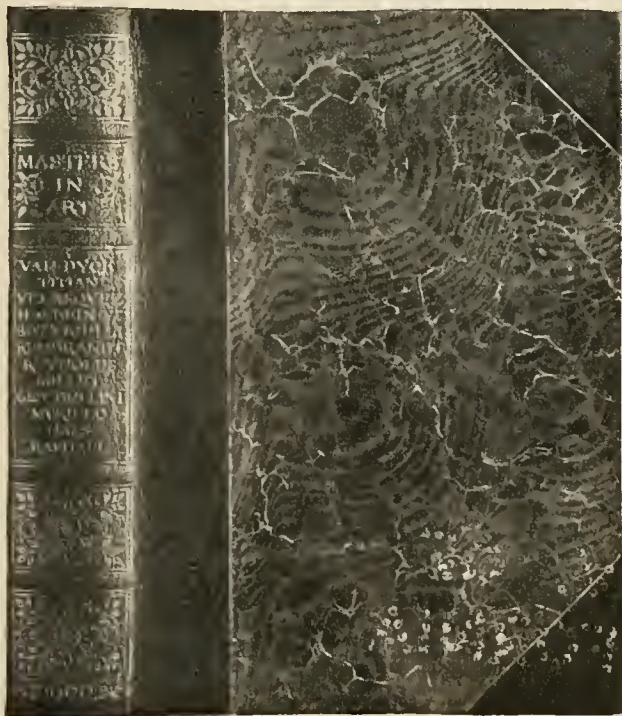
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MICHELANGELO
THE CREATION OF MAN
SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME



MASTERS IN ART PLATE III
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDERSON

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NO. 1111
ANNEXED



1875



1870



MICHELANGELO
DANIEL
SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME

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MICHELANGELO
THE CUMAEAN SIBYL
SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME

THE
SISTINE CHAPEL



MICHELANGELO
DECORATIVE FIGURE
SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME

THE
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ART
AND
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NEW YORK



THE
LIFE OF
MICHELANGELO



PORTRAIT OF MICHELANGELO

UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

Vasari mentions but two painted portraits of Michelangelo; one by his friend Bugiardini, the other by Jacopo del Conte. Del Conte's work has disappeared; but Symonds is inclined to think that the portrait here reproduced may "with some show of probability" be assigned to Bugiardini.

Michelangelo Buonarroti

BORN 1475: DIED 1564
FLORENTINE SCHOOL

In this issue only Michelangelo's works in painting are illustrated. His achievements in sculpture were considered in the preceding number of this SERIES, in which an account of his life was also given.

H. TAINE

'VOYAGE EN ITALIE'

THERE are four men in the world of art and of literature so exalted above all others as to seem to belong to another race; namely, Dante, Shakespeare, Beethoven, and Michelangelo. No profound knowledge, no possession of all the resources of art, no fertility of imagination, no originality of intellect, sufficed to secure them this position; these they all had, but these are of secondary importance. That which elevated each of them to this rank was his soul, — the soul of a fallen deity, struggling irresistibly after a world disproportioned to our own, always suffering and combating, always toiling and tempestuous, and as incapable of being sated as of sinking, devoting itself in solitude to erecting before men colossi as ungovernable, as vigorous, and as sadly sublime as its own insatiable and impotent desire. Michelangelo is thus a modern spirit, and it is for this reason, perhaps, that we are able to comprehend him without effort.

Was he more unfortunate than other men? Regarding things externally, it seems that he was not. If he was tormented by an avaricious family, if on two or three occasions the caprice or the death of a patron prevented the execution of an important work already designed or commenced, if his country fell into servitude, if minds around him degenerated or became weak, these are not unusual disappointments, or serious and painful obstacles. How many among his contemporary artists experienced greater? But suffering must be measured by inward emotion, and not by outward circumstance; and if ever a spirit existed which was capable of transports of enthusiasm and passionate indignation, it was his.

Sensitive to excess, he was therefore lonely and ill at ease in the petty concerns of society, to such an extent, for example, that he could never bring himself to entertain at dinner. Men of deep, enduring emotions maintain an outward reserve, and fall back upon introspection for lack of out-

ward sympathy. From his youth up society was distasteful to Michelangelo, and he had so applied himself to solitary study as to be considered proud and even insane. Later, at the acme of his fame, he withdrew himself still more completely from his kind; he took his walks in solitude, was served by one domestic, and passed entire weeks on his scaffoldings, wholly absorbed in self-communion. He could hold converse with no other mind: not only were his sentiments too powerful, but they were too exalted.

From his earliest years he had passionately cherished all noble things; first his art, to which he gave himself up entirely, notwithstanding his father's opposition, investigating all its accessories, measure and scalpel in hand, with such extraordinary persistence that he became ill; and next, his self-respect, which he maintained at the risk of his life, facing imperious popes and forcing them to regard him as an equal, braving them, says his historian, "more than a king of France would have done." Ordinary pleasures he held in contempt; "although rich, he lived laboriously, as frugally as a poor man," often dining on a crust of bread; treating himself severely, sleeping but little and then often in his clothes, without luxury of any kind, without household display, without care for money, giving away statues and pictures to his friends, twenty thousand francs to his servant, thirty thousand and forty thousand francs at one time to his nephew, besides countless other sums to the rest of his family.

More than this: he lived like a monk, without wife or mistress, chaste in a voluptuous court, knowing but one love, and that austere and Platonic, for one woman as proud and as noble as himself. At evening, after the labor of the day, he wrote sonnets in her praise, and knelt in spirit before her, as did Dante at the feet of Beatrice, praying to her to sustain his weaknesses and keep him in the "right path." He bowed his soul before her as before an angel of virtue, showing the same fervid exaltation in her service as that of the mystics and knights of old. She died before him, and for a long time he remained "downstricken, as if deranged." Several years later his heart still cherished a great grief, — the regret that he had not, at her deathbed, kissed her brow or cheek instead of her hand.

The rest of his life corresponds with such sentiments. He took great delight in the "arguments of learned men," and in perusal of the poets, especially Petrarch and Dante, whom he knew almost by heart. "Would to heaven," he one day wrote, "I were such as he, even at the price of such a fate! For his bitter exile and his virtue I would exchange the most fortunate lot in the world!" The books he preferred were those imbued with grandeur, the Old and New Testaments, and especially the impassioned discourses of Savonarola, his master and his friend, whom he saw bound to the pillory, strangled, and burnt, and whose "living word," he wrote, "would always remain branded in his soul."

A man who lives and feels thus knows not how to accommodate himself to this life; he is too *different*. The admiration of others produces no self-satisfaction. "He disparaged his own works, never finding that his hand had expressed the conception formed within him." One day some one encountered

him, aged and decrepit, near the Colosseum, on foot and in the snow. He was asked where he was going. "To school," he replied; "to school, to try and learn something." Despair seized him often. Once, having injured his leg, he shut himself up in his house, waiting and longing for death. Finally, he even went so far as to separate himself from himself,—from that art which was his sovereign and his idol: "Picture or statue," he wrote, "let nothing now divert my soul from that divine love on the Cross, with arms always open to receive us!" It was the last sigh of a great soul in a degenerate age, among an enslaved people! Self-renunciation was his last refuge. For sixty years his works gave evidence of the heroic combat which maintained itself in his breast to the end.

Superhuman personages as miserable as ourselves, forms of gods rigid with earthly passion, an Olympus of human tragedies, such is the sentiment of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. What injustice to compare with Michelangelo's works the 'Sibyls' and the 'Isaiah' of Raphael! The latter are vigorous and beautiful, I admit, nor do I dispute that they testify to an equally profound art; but the first glance suffices to show that they have not the same soul: they do not issue like Michelangelo's forms from an impetuous, irresistible spirit; they have never experienced like his the thrill and tension of a nervous being, concentrated and launching itself forth at the risk of ruin. There are souls whose impressions flash out like lightning, and whose actions are thunderbolts. Such are the personages of Michelangelo. His colossal 'Jeremiah,' with eyes downcast, and with his enormous head resting on his enormous hand,—on what does he muse? His floating beard descending in curls to his breast, his laborer's hands furrowed with swollen veins, his wrinkled brow, his impenetrable mask, the suppressed mutter about to burst forth,—all suggest one of those barbarian kings, a dark hunter of the urus, preparing to dash in impotent rage against the golden gates of the Roman empire. 'Ezekiel' turns around suddenly, with an impetuous interrogation on his lips—so suddenly that the motion raises his mantle from his shoulder. The aged 'Persic Sibyl' under the long folds of her falling hood is indefatigably reading from a book which her knotted hands hold up to her penetrating eyes. 'Jonah' throws back his head, appalled at the frightful apparition before him, his fingers involuntarily counting the forty days that still remain to Nineveh. The 'Libyan Sibyl,' in great agitation, is about to descend, bearing the enormous book she has seized. 'The Erythræan Sibyl' is a Pallas of a haughtier and more warlike expression than her antique Athenian sister. On the curve of the vault, close to these figures, appear nude adolescents, straining their backs and displaying their limbs, sometimes proudly extended and reposing, and again struggling or darting forward. Some are shouting, and some, with rigid thighs and grasping feet, seem to be furiously attacking the wall. Beneath, an old stooping pilgrim is seating himself, a woman is kissing an infant wrapped in its swaddling-clothes, a despairing man is bitterly defying destiny, a young girl with a beautiful smiling face is sleeping tranquilly;—and many others, the grandest of human forms, that speak with every least detail of their attitudes, with every least fold of their garments.

These are merely the paintings on the curve of the ceiling. On the centre of the vault itself, two hundred feet long, are displayed historical scenes from the book of Genesis,—an entire population of figures of tragic interest. You lie down on the old carpet which covers the floor and look up. They are nearly a hundred feet above you,—smoked, scaling off, and crowded to suffocation, and remote from the demands of our art, our age, and our intellect,—yet you comprehend them at once. This man is so great that differences of time and of nation cannot subsist in his presence.

The difficulty lies not in yielding to his sway, but in accounting for it. When, after your ears have been filled with the thunder of his voice, you retire to a distance, so that only its reverberations reach you, and reflection succeeds to emotion, you try to discover the secret by which he renders his tones so vibrating, and at length arrive at this,—he possessed the soul of Dante, and he passed his life in the study of the human figure. These are the two sources of his power.

The human form, as he represented it, is all expression, expressive in its skeleton, its muscles, its drapery, its attitudes, and its proportions, so that the spectator is affected simultaneously by every part of the subject. And this form is made to express energy, pride, audacity, and despair, the rage of ungovernable passion or of heroic will, and in such a way as to move the spectator with the most powerful emotion. Moral energy emanates from every physical detail; we feel the startling reaction corporeally and instantaneously.

Look at Adam asleep near Eve, whom Jehovah has just taken from his side. Never was creature buried in such profound, deathlike slumber. In the 'Brazen Serpent' the man with a snake coiled round his waist, and tearing it off, with arm bent back and body distorted as he extends his thigh, suggests the strife between primitive mortals and the monsters whose slimy forms ploughed the antediluvian soil. Masses of bodies, intermingled one with the other and overthrown with their heels in the air, with arms bent like bows and with convulsive spines, quiver in the toils of the serpents; hideous jaws crush skulls and fasten themselves on howling lips; miserable beings tremble on the ground with hair on end and mouths agape, convulsed with fear in the midst of the heaps of humanity around them. In the hands of a man who thus treats the skeleton and muscles, who can put rage, will, and terror into the fold of a thigh, the projection of a shoulder-blade, the flexions of the vertebræ, the whole human animal is impassioned, active, and combatant.

Alone since the Greeks, Michelangelo knew the full value of all the members. With him, as with them, the body lived by itself, and was not subordinated to the head. Supplemented by his solitary study, he rediscovered the sentiment of the nude with which the Greeks were imbued by their gymnastic life. Before his Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise nobody thinks of looking to the face to find grief; it resides in the entire torso, in the active limbs, in the frame with its internal parts, in the friction and play of its moving joints; it is the ensemble which strikes you. The head enters into it only as a portion of the whole; and you stand motionless, absorbed in contemplating thighs that sustain such trunks and indomitable arms that are to subject the hostile earth.

But what, to my taste, surpass all are the twenty youthful figures seated on the cornices at the four corners of each fresco,—veritable painted sculpture that gives one an idea of some superior and unknown world. They all seem adolescent heroes of the time of Achilles and Ajax, as noble in race, but more ardent and of fiercer energy. Here are the great nudities, the superb movements of the limbs, and the raging activity of Homer's conflicts, but with a more vigorous spirit and a more courageous, bold, and manly will. Who would suppose that the various attitudes of the human figure could affect the mind with such diverse emotions? The hips actively support; the breast respires; the entire covering of flesh strains and quivers; the trunk is thrown back over the thighs; and the shoulder, ridged with muscles, is about to raise the impetuous arm. One of them falls backward and draws his grand drapery over his thigh, whilst another, with his arm over his brow, seems to be parrying a blow. Others sit pensive, and meditating, with all their limbs relaxed. Several are running and springing across the cornice, or throwing themselves back and shouting. You feel that they are going to move and to act, yet you hope that they will not, but maintain the same splendid attitudes. Nature has produced nothing like them; but she ought thus to have fashioned the human race. In the ceiling of the Sistine she might find all types: giants and heroes, modest virgins, stalwart youths, and sporting children; that charming 'Eve,' so young and so proud; that beautiful 'Delphic Sibyl,' who, like some nymph of the Golden Age, looks out with eyes filled with innocent astonishment,—all the sons and daughters of a colossal militant race, who preserved the smile, the serenity, the pure joyousness, the grace of the Oceanides of Æschylus, or of the Nausicaa of Homer. The soul of a great artist contains an entire world within itself. Michelangelo's soul is unfolded here on the Sistine ceiling.

Having thus once given it expression, he should not have endeavored to repeat the attempt. His 'Last Judgment,' on the altar-wall beneath, does not produce the same impression. When he finished the latter picture Michelangelo was in his sixty-seventh year, and his inspiration was no longer fresh. He had long brooded over his ideas, he had a better hold of them, but they had ceased to excite him. He had exhausted the original sensation,—the only true one,—and in the 'Last Judgment' he but exaggerates and copies himself. Here he intentionally enlarges the body and inflates the muscles; he is prodigal of foreshortenings and violent postures; here he converts his personages into mere athletes and wrestlers engaged in displaying their strength. The angels who bear away the cross clutch each other, throw themselves backward, clench their fists, strain their thighs, as in a gymnasium. The saints toss about the insignia of their martyrdoms, as if each sought to attract attention to his strength and agility. Souls in purgatory, saved by cowl and rosary, are extravagant models that might serve for a school of anatomy. The artist had just entered on that period of life when sentiment vanishes before science, and when the mind takes especial delight in overcoming difficulties.

Even so, however, this work is unique; it is like a declamatory speech in the mouth of an old warrior, with a rattling drum accompaniment. Some

of the figures and groups are worthy of his grandest efforts. The powerful Eve, who maternally presses one of her horror-stricken daughters to her side; the aged and formidable Adam, an antediluvian colossus, the root of the great tree of humanity; the bestial, carnivorous demons; the figure among the damned that covers his face with his arm to avoid seeing the abyss into which he is plunging; another in the coils of a serpent, rigid with horror; and especially the terrible Christ, like the Jupiter in Homer overthrowing the Trojans and their chariots on the plain; and, by his side, almost concealed under his arm, the timorous, young, shrinking Virgin, so noble and so delicate; — all these form a group of conceptions equal to those of the ceiling. They animate the whole design; and in contemplating them we cease to feel the abuse of art, the aim at effect, the domination of mannerism; we only see the disciple of Dante, the friend of Savonarola, the recluse feeding himself on the menaces of the Old Testament, the patriot, the stoic, the lover of justice who bears in his heart the grief of his people, who has been a mourner at the burial of Italian liberty, one who, alone, amidst degraded characters and degenerate minds, labored for many daily saddening years at this immense work, listening beforehand to the thunders of the Last Day, his soul filled with thoughts of the supreme Judgment.—FROM THE FRENCH.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

REVUE DES DEUX-MONDES: 1837

MICHELANGELO'S genius, like that of Homer among the ancients, is the fountain-head from which all great painters since have drunk. Raphael and the Roman school, the schools of Florence and of Parma, including Andrea del Sarto and Correggio, the school of Venice, including Titian, all reflect his influence. Rubens, in the north, owes much of his exuberance and audacity to him — indeed, there has been none in painting since his advent so self-poised as not to have felt his potent influence.

Art will never overstep the bounds that Michelangelo has traced for her; he leaped at once to limits that cannot be surpassed. Into whatever deviations she may be led by caprice or the desire for novelty, the great style of the Florentine master will always serve as the magnetic pole to which all must turn who would rediscover the road to true grandeur and beauty.—FROM THE FRENCH.

BERNHARD BERENSON

'FLORENTINE PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE'

THE first person since the great days of Greek sculpture to comprehend fully the identity of the nude with great figure art was Michelangelo. Before him, it had been studied for scientific purposes — as an aid in rendering the draped figure. He saw that it was an end in itself, and the final purpose of his art. For him the nude and art were synonymous. Here lies the secret of his successes and his failures.

First, his successes. Nowhere outside of the best Greek art shall we find, as in Michelangelo's works, forms whose tactile values so increase our sense of capacity, whose movements are so directly communicated and inspiring.

Other artists have had quite as much feeling for tactile values alone — Masaccio, for instance ; others still have had as much sense of movement and power of rendering it — Leonardo, for example ; but no other artist of modern times having at all his control over the materially significant has employed it as Michelangelo did, on the one subject where its full value can be manifested — the nude. Hence, of all the achievements of modern art, his are the most invigorating. Surely not often is our imagination of touch roused as by his Adam in the 'Creation,' by his Eve in the 'Temptation,' or by his many nudes in the same ceiling of the Sistine Chapel — there for no other purpose, be it noted, than their direct tonic effect ! And to this feeling for the materially significant and all this power of conveying it, to all this more narrowly artistic capacity, Michelangelo joined an ideal of beauty and force, a vision of a glorious but possible humanity, which, again, has never had its like in modern times. Manliness, robustness, effectiveness, the fulfilment of our dream of a great soul inhabiting a beautiful body, we shall encounter nowhere else so frequently as among the figures in the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo completed what Masaccio had begun, the creation of the type of man best fitted to subdue and control the earth, and, who knows ! perhaps more than the earth.

But unfortunately, though born and nurtured in a world where his feeling for the nude and his ideal of humanity could be appreciated, he passed most of his life in the midst of tragic disasters, and while yet in the fulness of his vigor, in the midst of his most creative years, he found himself alone, perhaps the greatest, but alas ! also the last, of the giants born so plentifully during the fifteenth century. He lived on in a world he could not but despise, in a world which really could no more employ him than it could understand him. He was not allowed, therefore, to busy himself where he felt most drawn by his genius, and, much against his own strongest impulses, he was obliged to expend his energy upon such subjects as the 'Last Judgment.' His later works all show signs of the altered conditions, first in an overflow into the figures he was creating of the scorn and bitterness he was feeling ; then in the lack of harmony between his genius and what he was compelled to execute. His passion was the nude, his ideal power ; but what outlet for such a passion, what expression for such an ideal, could there be in subjects like the 'Last Judgment,' or the 'Crucifixion of Peter' — subjects which the Christian world imperatively demanded should incarnate the fear of the humble and the self-sacrifice of the patient ? Now humility and patience were feelings as unknown to Michelangelo as to Dante before him, or, for that matter, to any other of the world's creative geniuses at any time. Even had he felt them, he had no means of expressing them, for his nudes could convey a sense of power, not of weakness ; of terror, not of dread ; of despair, but not of submission. And terror the giant nudes of the 'Last Judgment' do feel, but it is not terror of the Judge, who, being in no wise different from the others, in spite of his omnipotent gesture, seems to be *announcing* rather than *willing* what the bystanders, his fellows, could not *unwill*. As the representation of the moment before the universe disappears

in chaos,—gods huddling together for the *Götterdämmerung*,—the ‘Last Judgment’ is as grandly conceived as possible; but when the crash comes none will survive it—no, not even God. Michelangelo therefore failed in his conception of the subject, and could not but fail. But where else in the whole world of art shall we receive such blasts of energy as from this giant’s dream, or, if you will, nightmare? What a tragedy, by the way, that the one subject perfectly cut out for his genius, the one subject which required none but genuinely artistic treatment, his ‘Bathing Soldiers,’ executed forty years before these last works, has disappeared, leaving but scant traces! Yet even these suffice to enable the competent student to recognize that this composition must have been the greatest masterpiece in figure art of modern times.

That Michelangelo had faults of his own is undeniable. As he got older, and his genius, lacking its proper outlets, tended to stagnate and thicken, he fell into exaggerations—exaggerations of power into brutality, of tactile values into feats of modelling. I have already suggested that Giotto’s types were so massive because such figures most easily convey values of touch. Michelangelo tended to similar exaggerations, to making shoulders, for instance, too broad and too bossy, simply because they make thus a more powerful appeal to the tactile imagination. Indeed, I venture to go even farther, and suggest that his faults in all the arts, sculpture no less than painting, and architecture no less than sculpture, are due to this selfsame predilection for salient projections. But the lover of the figure arts for what in them is genuinely artistic and not merely ethical, will in Michelangelo, even at his worst, get such pleasures as, excepting a few, others, even at their best, rarely give him.

EUGÈNE MÜNTZ

‘HISTOIRE DE L’ART PENDANT LA RENAISSANCE’

AS if to stand in living antithesis, Destiny placed Michelangelo and Raphael together on the threshold of a new era in art—the latter to die before he had been able to give the full measure of his genius, the former to bridge generations with his tireless activity.

Before Michelangelo’s advent, art, trammelled by the timidity and hesitations of the Primitives, had advanced slowly, never falling back, it is true, but scrupulous and self-mistrustful, feeling its way tentatively and with deliberation, and always leaving some newly discovered problem for solution by those who should follow.

Then, sudden as a thunder-clap, came Michelangelo, and struck into life the frescos of the Sistine, the ‘Bound Captives’ of the Louvre, the ‘Moses,’ and the tombs of the Medici—and three great arts were definitely enfranchised! In these unheralded masterpieces he had proclaimed and illustrated unlimited liberty of expression, absolute liberty of movement and attitude, and the expression of a whole world of uplifting sentiments,—majesty, pride, melancholy, terror, justice,—all with a maximum of intensity which no one since has been able to approach.

Such was Michelangelo’s rôle in the evolution of the Renaissance.—FROM THE FRENCH.

HEINRICH WÖLFFLIN

'DIE KLASSISCHE KUNST'

LIKE a mighty mountain torrent, enriching and devastating at the same time, did the appearance of Michelangelo affect Italian art. Irresistible in his force, carrying all along with him, he became a deliverer to a few — a destroyer to many.

From the very beginning Michelangelo was a distinct personality, almost fearful in his one-sidedness. He grasped life as a sculptor, and only as a sculptor. What interested him was the solid form, and to him the human body was alone worthy of being represented. His type of man was not that of this earth, but rather of a race by itself, gigantic and powerful. In the strength of his delineation of form and in the clearness of his conception he is entirely beyond comparison. No experiments, no tentative efforts; with the first stroke he gives the definite expression. We find in his drawings a profoundly penetrating quality. The internal structure, the mechanical movements of the body, are so rendered as to be full of expression even to the smallest detail. Each turn, each bend of the limbs, shows a secret power. There is an incomprehensible force even in the exaggerations, and so great is the impression produced that it does not occur to us to criticise. It was characteristic of the master to exercise his talent ruthlessly for the sake of producing the utmost possible effect.

Michelangelo enriched art with new and hitherto undreamed-of qualities, but at the same time he impoverished it by taking from it all delight in simple, every-day subjects, and he it was who brought about a dissonance in the Renaissance, and prepared the way for a new style,—the barocco. . . . No one, however, should hold Michelangelo responsible for the fate of Italian art. He was as he had to be, and he will always remain supremely great. But the effect that he produced was indeed disastrous, for all beauty came to be measured by the standard of his works, and an art brought into the world under peculiarly individual conditions became universal. — FROM THE GERMAN.

E. H. AND E. W. BLASHFIELD AND A. A. HOPKINS, EDITORS 'VASARI'S LIVES'

THE personality of Michelangelo is so tremendous, he is so different from all other artists who have gone before, or come after him, that when the critic is called upon to place this sculptor, painter, architect, in the long series of Italian artists, his formidable figure starts forth from the frame and will not be fitted to any usual environment. But the more Michelangelo is studied the more this "man with four souls" is seen to have been in his central artistic consciousness a sculptor; moreover, — we have the word of another sculptor for it, — this autocratically personal artist underwent the gradual evolution of a sculptor. Though he so impressed his own character upon his own style that, once formed, it was perhaps more completely *sui generis* than that of any artist who has lived, yet he did form it; he felt the influence of antiquity in the Medici gardens, and in his first visit to Rome he felt, too, the influence of predecessors, and vibrated instinctively to the

quality of force in others, — grave force in Giotto, rude force in Della Quercia, feverishly vital force in Donatello, violent force in Signorelli. He became the disciple of Savonarola, the spiritual brother of Dante, the interpreter of the Hebrew prophets; he lived among Titans, and his creations were Promethean; man and man's body alone in nature interested him; and the body used as the material for the expression of his thought became colossal to suit that thought whose purpose was to picture the creation, the promise of redemption, and the wrath to come.

The work of Michelangelo may be broadly divided into three periods. His youthful period included the creation of the 'Bacchus,' the South Kensington 'Cupid' (Apollino?), the 'Adonis,' the two Madonne in tondo, the 'Madonna of Bruges,' and ended with the execution of the colossal 'David' and of the 'Pietà,' — which showed Michelangelo at the age of twenty-four to be the greatest sculptor in Europe, — and the cartoon ('Bathing Soldiers'), which proclaimed him the greatest draughtsman. His second period was that epoch of tremendous gestation which witnessed the birth of the most potent, fascinating, and dominating painting and sculpture the world had seen for eighteen hundred years, work which warped the talent of a generation of artists, — the frescos of the Sistine Chapel and the sculptures of the Medici tombs in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo. To the army of Titans of the vaulting and the seven colossal shapes of San Lorenzo must be added the 'Moses' and the so-called 'Captives' of the Louvre. His style was determined and had reached its highest point. His final period as painter and sculptor included the 'Last Judgment,' the frescos of the Pauline Chapel, and the 'Pietà,' or 'Descent from the Cross,' of the Duomo of Florence. After the execution of this latter work the sculptor-painter became architect and poet, and laid aside brush and chisel forever.

The achievement of Michelangelo, phenomenal in its strength and depth, may yet be followed by its development. Even his very early work, the 'Sleeping Cupid,' was (if we may believe Vasari) the marvellously precocious work of one who had quickly learned the lesson of Greek antiquity. When he was but twenty-four years old he had passed onward to a style of his own, and, in the execution of the 'Pietà,' of a science which looked back upon the art of the Quattrocento and forward beyond anything that, save from his own chisel, we have had since. His 'David,' called by the sculptor-critic, M. Guillaume, his "*chef-d'œuvre de maîtrise*," is yet a youthful work in its fault of choice, the selection of a stripling that should become a colossus. In his 'Bathing Soldiers' he relinquished for a time his *terribilità*, which, hinted at in the 'Pietà,' was seen in the 'David;' and in that world-famous cartoon he produced (this much can be told even from the flotsam that has reached us) the very ultimate expression of the academy drawing, the perfect examples which set all young Italy, crayon and portfolio in hand, to copying in the hall of the Medici Palace.

Upon the upper vaulting of the Sistine Chapel Michelangelo next rose (in spite of what Cellini has told us) far above his figures of the cartoon, and yet here the departure from nature began; but here, too, commenced that use of

his knowledge of nature for the expression of a spiritual thought so great as to pass, says Symonds, beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries, who still worshipped the naturalistic perfection of the cartoon of the 'Bathing Soldiers.' By regular progression this departure from nature continued, as Michelangelo passed down the vaulting of the Sistine Chapel; it is seen in the 'Persic Sibyl' and in the huge Prophets more than in the Adam and Eve above. It is shown more plainly in the 'Last Judgment;' here knowledge and mannerism are perilously near each other; at last, in the Pauline Chapel, mannerism has full possession of the field. Between the Sistine frescos and the 'Last Judgment,' at the time of Michelangelo's best technical and spiritual creativeness, he gave to the world the second of his great ensembles, his completest expression in sculpture, the seven statues of the Sacristy of San Lorenzo.

In the technical achievement of Michelangelo nothing has made his work more fascinating, more personal, than his application (emphasized so felicitously and authoritatively by M. Eugène Guillaume) of sculptural qualities in his painting, of pictorial qualities in his sculpture. The isolation, relief, self-contained and statue-like character of his Prophets and Sibyls in the Sistine Chapel is not more noticeable than the surface treatment of the marble in his Medici statues; portions polished here, portions left in the rough there, enhancing each other, giving color, making the stone live; and again his use of light and shadow upon these same rough or polished spaces, most of all upon his masses—witness the casqued face of his 'Pensieroso.' It is easy, where all is so individual, to point out idiosyncrasies which become indifference or exaggeration in the artist, but by this very indifference or exaggeration Michelangelo produced the effect which he sought for. It is easy to say that he eschewed naturalism in its ordinary sense, though few naturalistic artists have studied the body more conscientiously, or to see that he disdained the portrait.

In these same figures of the Sistine and San Lorenzo we may note the master's bias as to physical type: the small head, the huge thorax, the tendency to turn the latter to one side, while the legs, reversing the movement, are turned to the other, the pelvis becoming the pivot, and the abdominal and stomach muscles especially testifying to the science of the artist. The hips are narrow, the thighs powerful, and in many of his seated figures of the Sistine Michelangelo liked to foreshorten the legs from the knees down till they seem almost dissimulated by pose and shadow. We come to the head last of all, and it apparently was what came last in the sculptor's thought. At Oxford there is a sheet covered with drawings in red chalk, of profile or three-quarter heads, by Michelangelo. They are what a modern student would call "chic" heads; that is to say, they are such profiles as the artist would draw without the model (or using the model, if at all, only as a suggestion of the broad relations of light and mass), varying each head a little from the other, making this one a caricature, that one almost antique in its outlines. Anton Springer is perhaps the only critic who has pointed out how strongly Leonardo has influenced Buonarroti in such work. These heads are neither beautiful, deli-

cate, nor subtle, yet in them can be found the characteristics of the type which includes the heads of all Michelangelo's most famous statues—the high-bridged nose with its depressed end, the hollow between the chin and jaw, the flattening of the end of the chin, the horizontal depression running in Greek fashion across the middle of the forehead. Make them finer, subtler, more real in every way, and from three of these heads you might evolve many of Michelangelo's; for though no man differed more from other men, no one adhered more faithfully to the type which he had selected. The heavy slumbering features of the 'Night' proclaim her, nevertheless, own sister to the strong yet alert-faced duke who sits above; even the strange "goat-face" of the 'Moses' is but an exaggeration of the nose and forehead which the sculptor carved almost instinctively. The 'Adonis,' the 'Dawn,' the 'Madonna of Bruges,' the noble Madonna of the Roman 'Pietà,' all share the same facial construction.

Besides type, proportion, modelling, movement, common to Buonarroti as painter and sculptor, we have also to consider the purely pictorial quality of color. His color is known only by the vaulting frescos of the Sistine, since the 'Last Judgment' has suffered too greatly to afford us any data. In this vast decorative ensemble of the chapel vaulting Michelangelo's intense sense of dignity has saved him, in spite of inexperience, or of inherited Florentine tendencies, from the slightest triviality of juxtaposition of gaily varied tones, or from hardness; the color-scheme is as measured, restrained, perfectly fitting, as if Leonardo and Andrea del Sarto had stood at either elbow; and the sculptor, in his first great essay with pigments, models delicately in a tonality which, though sober, is neither heavy nor muddy.

In composition Michelangelo differed widely from his great rival, Raphael, and much in the same way as he differed from him in his attitude toward those about him. Raphael's relations with all men were harmonious, and in his pictures each figure, too, was harmoniously related to every other. To Michelangelo it was as hard to make his figures accord with each other as it was for him personally to accord with his fellows. As artist he was spiritually and creatively autonomous; his figures are autonomous, and every one is sufficient to itself, as is a detached statue. Often Michelangelo's groups are not ill-composed, but there is no such relation between the parts of the composition as with Raphael, Titian, or Veronese. Each figure has plenty of harmony within itself, between its own proportions and parts, but it is centralized harmony. Take, for instance, the 'Last Judgment;' the groups are so many masses arranged symmetrically, one group balancing another as a mass; but once within these masses each figure seems to be thought of for itself only, as if this tremendously personal artist could not bear the yoke even of his own creations, and must know each artistic thought as independent and subject only to itself. Even in a great architectonic distribution, where the artist is successful and deeply impressive, as in the arrangement of the Sistine vaulting, he still refuses to in any way co-ordinate his decorative scheme with that of the men who had gone before him and had painted the lower walls.

There are many to whom Michelangelo's art stands first and last for exaggeration; they say that they cannot admire him because of the huge muscles which he gives to his people; this is largely because the exaggeration, which upon the vaulting of the Sistine was full of meaning, became meaningless in the work of an army of followers. The very volume of this work so impresses on-lookers of to-day that they forget that Michelangelo's force was not material alone, but spiritual as well. Let his censors set aside the 'Last Judgment' and the Pauline frescos, the works of his old age, and they will find that in the infinite strength of his 'Night' and 'Twilight,' his 'Adam' and his 'Moses,' there is also infinite delicacy, infinite subtlety.

His influence upon the art of his time was in many senses most unfortunate; but he did not cause the decline of Italian art, he only precipitated it; Italian art decayed because it bloomed.

He possessed the most wonderful technique of his time, but what impresses far more than his technique is his spirit. Vittoria Colonna said rightly that what was in Michelangelo's work was as little beside what was in his soul. From the time that he finished the 'David' and the cartoon of the 'Bathing Soldiers' began a period of eternal struggle with his own art, of disdain for that of others. In all that he did was seen a mighty force, struggling, Enceladus-like, to upheave, as if he felt that every creature which came from his brush or chisel needed its giant shoulders to support the burden of man's fate. In its supreme technique his achievement became all-powerful, the tyrant of sixteenth-century art; but in his spirit as artist in his ceaseless struggle against human limitations, Michelangelo the man is an incarnate protest.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

'LIFE OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI'

MICHELANGELO, as Carlyle might have put it, is the Hero as Artist. When we have admitted this, all dregs and sediments of the analytical alembic sink to the bottom, leaving a clear crystalline elixir of the spirit. About the quality of his genius opinions may, will, and ought to differ. It is so pronounced, so peculiar, so repulsive to one man, so attractive to another, that, like his own dread statue of Lorenzo de Medici, "it fascinates and is intolerable." There are few, I take it, who can feel at home with him in all the length and breadth and dark depths of the regions that he traversed. The world of thoughts and forms in which he lived habitually is too arid, like an extinct planet, tenanted by mighty elemental beings with little human left to them but visionary Titan-shapes, too vast and void for common minds to dwell in pleasantly. The sweetness that emerges from his strength, the beauty which blooms rarely, strangely, in unhomely wise, upon the awful crowd of his conceptions, are only to be apprehended by some innate sympathy or by long incubation of the brooding intellect. It is probable, therefore, that the deathless artist through long centuries of glory will abide as solitary as the simple old man did in his poor house at Rome. But no one, not the dullest, not the weakest, not the laziest and lustfullest, not the most indifferent to

ideas or the most tolerant of platitudes and paradoxes, can pass him by without being arrested, quickened, stung, purged, stirred to uneasy self-examination by so strange a personality expressed in prophecies of art so pungent.

The Works of Michelangelo

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

HOLY FAMILY

UFFIZI GALLERY: FLORENCE

THIS work, executed about the year 1503 for Angelo Doni, of Florence, is the only finished easel picture which can without question be attributed to Michelangelo. It is, as the recent editors of Vasari have said, "rather a colored cartoon than a painting, hard and dry and disagreeable, yet full of the power of Michelangelo, magnificently drawn, having decorative beauty in the composition of its lines, and impressing, by its force, its originality, and its difference from other artists' conceptions of the same subject." "Michelangelo's love of restless and somewhat strained actions," writes Sidney Colvin, "is illustrated by the introduction (wherein he follows Luca Signorelli) of some otherwise purposeless undraped figures in the background." Springer calls attention to the fact that these figures are not the only evidence of the plastic character of the picture. "The whole work," he says, "is full of it, showing how decidedly the artist's mind turned to finely drawn and well modelled forms. The color, in the upper part of the Madonna's robe reddish, in the lower part blue, in Joseph's dress bluish-gray above and orange below, and in the flesh scarcely more than a prevailing brownish tone, serves to emphasize the light and shade, to round the surfaces and give prominence to the limbs, but is used only as a secondary means of expression."

SISTINE CHAPEL

VATICAN: ROME

THE Sistine Chapel was built by Baccio Pintelli, a Florentine architect, in the year 1473, for Pope Sixtus IV. It is oblong in shape, and is lighted by twelve round-arched windows, six on either side. Two painted windows are at the entrance end, and upon the clear wall above the altar at the opposite end is Michelangelo's fresco of the 'Last Judgment.' The side walls of this celebrated chapel are decorated in fresco with scenes from the life of Moses and of Christ by Perugino, Pinturicchio, Signorelli, Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Cosimo Rosselli. In the year 1508 Michelangelo was called upon by Pope Julius II. to decorate the ceiling, and in spite of remonstrance on the part of the artist, who declared that painting was not his trade, in that same year the task was begun.

"Destiny so ruled," writes Sidney Colvin, "that the work thus thrust upon him remains his chief title to glory. His history is one of indomitable will and almost superhuman energy, yet of will that hardly ever had its way,

and of energy continually at war with circumstance. The only thing which in all his life he was able to complete as he had conceived it was this of the decoration of the Sistine ceiling. The pope had at first proposed a scheme including figures of the twelve apostles only. Michelangelo would be content with nought so meagre, and furnished instead a design of many hundred figures, embodying all the history of creation and of the first patriarchs, with accessory personages of prophets and sibyls dreaming on the new dispensation to come, and, in addition, those of the forefathers of Christ. The whole was to be enclosed and divided by an elaborate frame-work of painted architecture, with a multitude of nameless human shapes supporting its several members or reposing among them, — shapes meditating, as it were, between the features of the inanimate frame-work and those of the great dramatic and prophetic scenes themselves. Michelangelo's work was accepted by the pope, and by May, 1508, his preparations for its execution were made. Later in the same year he summoned a number of assistant painters from Florence. Trained in the traditions of the earlier Florentine school, they were unable, it seems, to interpret Michelangelo's designs in fresco either with sufficient freedom or sufficient uniformity of style to satisfy him. At any rate, he soon dismissed them, and carried out the remainder of his colossal task alone, except for the necessary amount of purely mechanical and subordinate help. The physical conditions of prolonged work, face upwards, upon this vast expanse of ceiling were adverse and trying in the extreme. But after four and a half years of toil the task was accomplished. Michelangelo had during its progress been harassed alike by delays of payment and by hostile intrigue. His ill-wishers at the same time kept casting doubts of his capacity, and vaunting the superior powers of Raphael. That gentle spirit would by nature have been no man's enemy, but unluckily Michelangelo's moody, self-concentrated temper prevented the two artists being on terms of amity such as might have stopped the mouths of mischief-makers. Once during the progress of his task Michelangelo was compelled to remove a portion of the scaffolding and exhibit what had been so far done, when the effect alike upon friends and detractors was overwhelming. Still more complete was his triumph when, late in the autumn of 1512, the whole of his vast achievement was disclosed to view."

"Entering the Sistine Chapel," writes Symonds, "and raising our eyes to sweep the roof, we have above us a long and somewhat narrow oblong space, vaulted with round arches, and covered from end to end, from side to side, with a network of human forms. The whole is colored like the dusky, tawny, bluish clouds of thunder-storms. There is no luxury of decorative art — no gold, no paint-box of vermilion or emerald green, has been lavished here. Sombre and aërial, like shapes condensed from vapor, or dreams begotten by Ixion upon mists of eve or dawn, the phantoms evoked by the sculptor throng that space."

The ceiling of the chapel — some ten thousand square feet in area — forms a flattened arch, of which the central portion, an oblong, flat surface, is divided into nine sections, four larger alternating with five smaller ones.

The subjects depicted in these are, reckoning from the altar-end, over which is the figure of the prophet Jonah (see design), (1) 'The Separation of Light and Darkness,' (2) 'The Creation of the Sun and Moon' (Plate II), (3) 'The Creation of Vegetable Life,' (4) 'The Creation of Man' (Plate III), (5) 'The Creation of Woman,' (6) 'The Temptation and Expulsion' (Plate IV), (7) 'The Sacrifice of Noah,' (8) 'The Deluge,' and (9) 'The Drunkenness of Noah.' Outside of this central panel, and on either side of those subjects denoted above as numbers 1, 3, 5, and 7, are seated alternate, colossal figures of prophets and sibyls, foretellers of the coming of the Saviour, and at each end of the central panel are the figures of two other prophets,—at one end Zachariah, at the other Jonah. "Michelangelo's prophets," writes Kugler, "embody the highest ideas of inspiration, meditation, and prophetic woe. Jeremiah may be singled out as their grandest personification" (Plate V). In the triangular spaces at the four corners of the ceiling are depicted the 'Brazen Serpent,' the 'Punishment of Haman,' 'David and Goliath,' and 'Judith and Holofernes.' In the twelve lunettes above the windows, and in the twelve triangular vaulted spaces over them, are groups of figures known as the 'Ancestors of the Virgin.' On projecting parts of a painted simulated cornice which surrounds the great panel in the centre of the ceiling are seated, in pairs, twenty nude, decorative figures, each pair holding ribbons which support medallions. Among the creations of Michelangelo none are more beautiful than these seated youths (Plate IX). "Equally distinct from modern character, or from reminiscence of the antique," says Kugler, "these figures, like the Sibyls, are a new race."

Including the nameless and subordinate figures too numerous to mention here, it has been estimated that there are in the vaulting of the Sistine Chapel three hundred and forty-three figures. Of these more than two hundred are important, and many are in size colossal.

"If we consider the painting of the Sistine ceiling simply as a work of art," write the recent editors of 'Vasari's Lives,' "nothing in the history of painting equals the boldness and the grandeur of this decoration in its entirety. If we think of it as the intellectual conception and physical achievement of one man, it is equally tremendous. If we consider it only architectonically, and in reference to the principles and laws of decoration, a wholly different ground may be taken by the critic; here Michelangelo's painted architecture and arrangement, as Symonds has said, 'bordered dangerously upon the barocco style, and contained within itself the germs of a vicious mannerism,' but the arrangement is frankly chosen, and frankly adhered to, and there is no loss of dignity anywhere from tricks of perspective foreshortening."

Sidney Colvin writes: "The work represents all the powers of Michelangelo at their best. His sublimity, often in excess of the occasion, is here no more than equal to it; moreover, it is combined with the noblest elements of grace, and even of tenderness. Whatever the soul of this great Florentine, the spiritual heir of Dante, with the Christianity of the Middle Age not shaken in his mind, but expanded and transcendentalized by the





DESIGN OF THE CEILING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL.

knowledge and love of Plato, — whatever the soul of such a man, full of suppressed tenderness and righteous indignation, and of anxious questionings of coming fate, could conceive, that Michelangelo has expressed or shadowed forth in this great and significant scheme of paintings.”

LAST JUDGMENT

SISTINE CHAPEL: ROME

IN a brief issued by Pope Paul III., September 1, 1535, appointing Michelangelo chief architect, sculptor, and painter at the Vatican, allusion is made to the fresco of the ‘Last Judgment,’ which was therefore probably begun about this time, although the cartoon for the work had been made the year before, during the lifetime of Clement VII., from whom Michelangelo had received the original commission. The great fresco was completed in 1541, and shown to the public on Christmas day of that year. It measures fifty-four feet six inches in height by forty-three feet eight inches in width, and occupies the end wall-space above the altar in the Sistine Chapel—a space which had previously been decorated with frescos by Perugino.

Vasari tells us that when Michelangelo had almost finished the work, Pope Paul went to see it, accompanied by Messer Biagio da Cesena, his master of ceremonies, and that the latter, being asked his opinion of it, found fault with the nude figures introduced into the composition. “Displeased by his remarks,” says Vasari, “Michelangelo resolved to be avenged; and Messer Biagio had no sooner departed than our artist drew his portrait from memory, and placed him in hell, under the figure of Minos, with a great serpent wound around him, and standing in the midst of a troop of devils: nor did the entreaties of Messer Biagio to the pope and Michelangelo, that this portrait might be removed, suffice to prevail on the master to consent; it was left as first depicted, a memorial of that event, and may still be seen.” It is said that when Messer Biagio complained to the pope, Paul assured him that he could do nothing. “Had the painter sent thee to purgatory,” said his Holiness, “I would have used my best efforts to release thee; but since he hath sent thee to hell, it is useless to come to me, as I have no power there.”

After the accession of Paul IV. it was arranged that the painter Daniele da Volterra should add draperies to some of the figures, whereby he earned the title of “il Braghettone,” the breeches-maker. In 1566 the fresco was again retouched, and still later, in 1762, more draperies were added, probably by Stefano Pozzi.

“Time, negligence, and outrage,” writes Symonds, “the dust of centuries, the burned papers of successive conclaves, the smoke of altar-candles, the hammers and the hangings of upholsterers, the brush of the breeches-maker and restorer, have so dealt with the ‘Last Judgment’ that it is almost impossible to do it justice now. What Michelangelo intended by his scheme of color is entirely lost. Not only did Daniele da Volterra, an execrable colorist, dab vividly tinted patches upon the modulated harmonies of the flesh-tones painted by the master, but the whole surface has sunk into a bluish fog, deepening to something like lampblack around the altar. Nevertheless, in its composition the fresco may still be studied, and we are not unable to understand the



knowledge and love of Plato, — whatever the soul of such a man, full of suppressed tenderness and righteous indignation, and of anxious questionings of coming fate, could conceive, that Michelangelo has expressed or shadowed forth in this great and significant scheme of paintings.”

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SISTINE CHAPEL: ROME

IN a brief issued by Pope Paul III., September 1, 1535, appointing Michelangelo chief architect, sculptor, and painter at the Vatican, allusion is made to the fresco of the ‘Last Judgment,’ which was therefore probably begun about this time, although the cartoon for the work had been made the year before, during the lifetime of Clement VII., from whom Michelangelo had received the original commission. The great fresco was completed in 1541, and shown to the public on Christmas day of that year. It measures fifty-four feet six inches in height by forty-three feet eight inches in width, and occupies the end wall-space above the altar in the Sistine Chapel—a space which had previously been decorated with frescos by Perugino.

Vasari tells us that when Michelangelo had almost finished the work, Pope Paul went to see it, accompanied by Messer Biagio da Cesena, his master of ceremonies, and that the latter, being asked his opinion of it, found fault with the nude figures introduced into the composition. “Displeased by his remarks,” says Vasari, “Michelangelo resolved to be avenged; and Messer Biagio had no sooner departed than our artist drew his portrait from memory, and placed him in hell, under the figure of Minos, with a great serpent wound around him, and standing in the midst of a troop of devils: nor did the entreaties of Messer Biagio to the pope and Michelangelo, that this portrait might be removed, suffice to prevail on the master to consent; it was left as first depicted, a memorial of that event, and may still be seen.” It is said that when Messer Biagio complained to the pope, Paul assured him that he could do nothing. “Had the painter sent thee to purgatory,” said his Holiness, “I would have used my best efforts to release thee; but since he hath sent thee to hell, it is useless to come to me, as I have no power there.”

After the accession of Paul IV. it was arranged that the painter Daniele da Volterra should add draperies to some of the figures, whereby he earned the title of “il Braghettone,” the breeches-maker. In 1566 the fresco was again retouched, and still later, in 1762, more draperies were added, probably by Stefano Pozzi.

“Time, negligence, and outrage,” writes Symonds, “the dust of centuries, the burned papers of successive conclaves, the smoke of altar-candles, the hammers and the hangings of upholsterers, the brush of the breeches-maker and restorer, have so dealt with the ‘Last Judgment’ that it is almost impossible to do it justice now. What Michelangelo intended by his scheme of color is entirely lost. Not only did Daniele da Volterra, an execrable colorist, dab vividly tinted patches upon the modulated harmonies of the flesh-tones painted by the master, but the whole surface has sunk into a bluish fog, deepening to something like lampblack around the altar. Nevertheless, in its composition the fresco may still be studied, and we are not unable to understand the

enthusiasm which so nobly and profoundly planned a work of art aroused among contemporaries.

“It has sometimes been asserted that this enormous painting, the largest and most comprehensive in the world, is a tempest of contending forms, a hurly-burly of floating, falling, soaring, and descending figures. Nothing can be more opposed to the truth. Michelangelo was sixty-six years of age when he laid his brush down at the end of the gigantic task. He had long outlived the spontaneity of youthful ardor. His experience through half a century in the planning of monuments, the painting of the Sistine vault, the designing of façades and sacristies and libraries, had developed the architectonic sense which was always powerful in his conceptive faculty. Consequently, we are not surprised to find that, intricate and confused as the scheme may appear to an unpractised eye, it is in reality a design of mathematical severity, divided into four bands, or planes, of grouping. The pictorial divisions are horizontal in the main, though so combined and varied as to produce the effect of multiplied curves, balancing and antiphonally inverting their lines of sinuosity. The pendentive upon which the prophet Jonah sits descends and breaks the surface at the top, leaving a semicircular compartment on each side of its corbel. Michelangelo filled these upper spaces with two groups of wrestling angels, the one bearing a huge cross, the other a column,—chief emblems of Christ’s Passion. The crown of thorns is also there, the sponge, the ladder, and the nails. It is with no merciful intent that these signs of our Lord’s suffering are thus exhibited. Demonic angels, tumbling on clouds like Leviathans, hurl them to and fro in brutal wrath above the crowd of souls, as though to demonstrate the justice of damnation. The Judge is what the crimes of the world and Italy have made him. Immediately below the corbel, and well detached from the squadrons of attendant saints, Christ rises from his throne. His face is turned in the direction of the damned; his right hand is lifted as though loaded with thunderbolts for their annihilation. The Virgin sits in a crouching attitude at his right side, slightly averting her head, as though in painful expectation of the coming sentence. The saints and martyrs who surround Christ and his Mother, while forming one of the chief planes in the composition, are arranged in four unequal groups of subtle and surprising intricacy.

“The two planes which I have attempted to describe occupy the upper and larger portion of the composition. The third in order is made up of three masses. In the middle floats a band of Titanic cherubs, blowing their long trumpets over earth and sea to wake the dead. Dramatically, nothing can be finer than the strained energy and superhuman force of these superb creatures. Their attitudes compel our imagination to hear the crashing thunders of the trump of doom. To the left of the spectator are souls ascending to be judged, some floating through vague ether, enwrapped with grave-clothes, others assisted by descending saints and angels, who reach a hand, a rosary, to help the still gross spirit in its flight. To the right are the condemned, sinking downwards to their place of torment, spurned by seraphs, cuffed by angelic grooms, dragged by demons, hurling, howling, huddled in a mass of horror. There is a wretch, twined round with fiends, gazing straight before him as

he sinks; one-half of his face is buried in his hand, the other fixed in a stony spasm of despair, foreshadowing perpetuity of hell. Just below is the place to which the doomed are sinking. Michelangelo reverted to Dante for the symbolism chosen to portray hell. Charon, the demon, with eyes of burning coal, compels a crowd of spirits in his ferry-boat. They land and are received by devils, who drag them before Minos, judge of the infernal regions. He towers at the extreme right end of the fresco, indicating that the nether regions yawn infinitely deep, beyond our ken; just as the angels above Christ suggest a region of light and glory, extending upward through illimitable space. The scene of judgment on which attention is concentrated forms but an episode in the universal, sempiternal scheme of things. Balancing hell, on the left hand of the spectator, is brute earth, the grave, the forming and the swallowing clay, out of which souls, not yet acquitted or condemned, emerge with difficulty, in varied forms of skeletons or corpses, slowly thawing into life eternal.

“Vasari, in his description of the ‘Last Judgment,’ seized upon what after all endured as the most salient aspect of the puzzling work, at once so fascinating and so repellent. ‘It is obvious,’ he says, ‘that the peerless painter did not aim at anything but the portrayal of the human body in perfect proportions and most varied attitudes, together with the passions and affections of the soul. That was enough for him, and here he has no equal. He wanted to exhibit the grand style,—consummate draughtsmanship in the nude, mastery over all problems of design. He concentrated his power upon the human form, attending to that alone, and neglecting all subsidiary things, as charm of color, capricious inventions, delicate devices and novelties of fancy.’ Vasari might have added that Michelangelo also neglected what ought to have been a main object of his art,—convincing eloquence, the solemnity proper to his theme, spirituality of earthly grossness quit. As a collection of athletic nudes in all conceivable postures of rest and action, of foreshortening, of suggested movement, the ‘Last Judgment’ remains a stupendous miracle.

“The note is one of sustained menace and terror, and the total scheme of congregated forms might be compared to a sense-deafening solo on a trombone. While saying this, we must remember that it was the constant impulse of Michelangelo to seize one moment only, and what he deemed the most decisive moment, in the theme he had to develop. Having selected the instant of time at which Christ, half risen from his judgment-seat of cloud, raises an omnific hand to curse, the master caused each fibre of his complex composition to thrill with the tremendous passion of that coming sentence.

“Partial and painful as we may find the meaning of the ‘Last Judgment,’ that meaning has been only too powerfully and personally felt. The denunciations of the prophets, the woes of the Apocalypse, the invectives of Savonarola, the tragedies of Italian history, the sense of present and indwelling sin, storm through and through it. Technically, the masterpiece bears signs of fatigue and discontent, in spite of its extraordinary vigor of conception and execution. The man was old and tired, thwarted in his wishes and op-

pressed with troubles. His very science had become more formal, his types more arid and schematic, than they used to be. The thrilling life, the divine afflatus, of the Sistine vault have passed out of the 'Last Judgment.'"

THE PAINTINGS OF MICHELANGELO, WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

ENGLAND. LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: Virgin and Child with Angels (unfinished); Entombment (unfinished)—ITALY. FLORENCE, UFFIZI GALLERY: Holy Family (Plate 1)—ROME, PAULINE CHAPEL, VATICAN: Conversion of St. Paul (fresco); Martyrdom of St. Peter (fresco)—ROME, SISTINE CHAPEL, VATICAN: Ceiling (frescos) (Plates II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX); Altar Wall, Last Judgment (fresco) (Plate X).

Michelangelo Bibliography

THOSE who desire a comparatively comprehensive bibliography relating to Michelangelo are referred to Luigi Passerini's 'Bibliografia di Michelangelo Buonarroti' (Florence, 1875), to 'La Bibliographie Michelangellesque,' by M. Anatole de Montaiglon, in the 'Gazette des Beaux-Arts' for 1876 (Paris, 1876), to Mr. Charles Eliot Norton's 'List of the Principal Books relating to the Life and Works of Michel-Angelo' (Cambridge, 1879), and to the more recent bibliography, compiled by E. H. and E. W. Blashfield and A. A. Hopkins, editors, in their 'Vasari's Lives of the Painters' (New York, 1897). In the following list are named only a few principal works chosen from the enormous literature upon Michelangelo.

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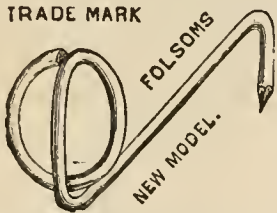
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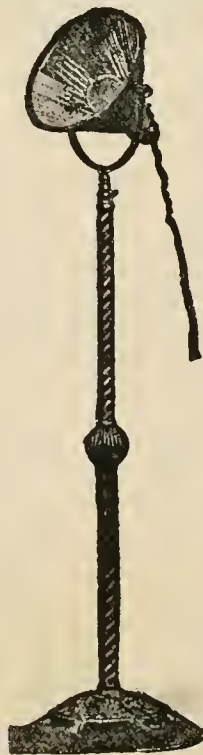
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