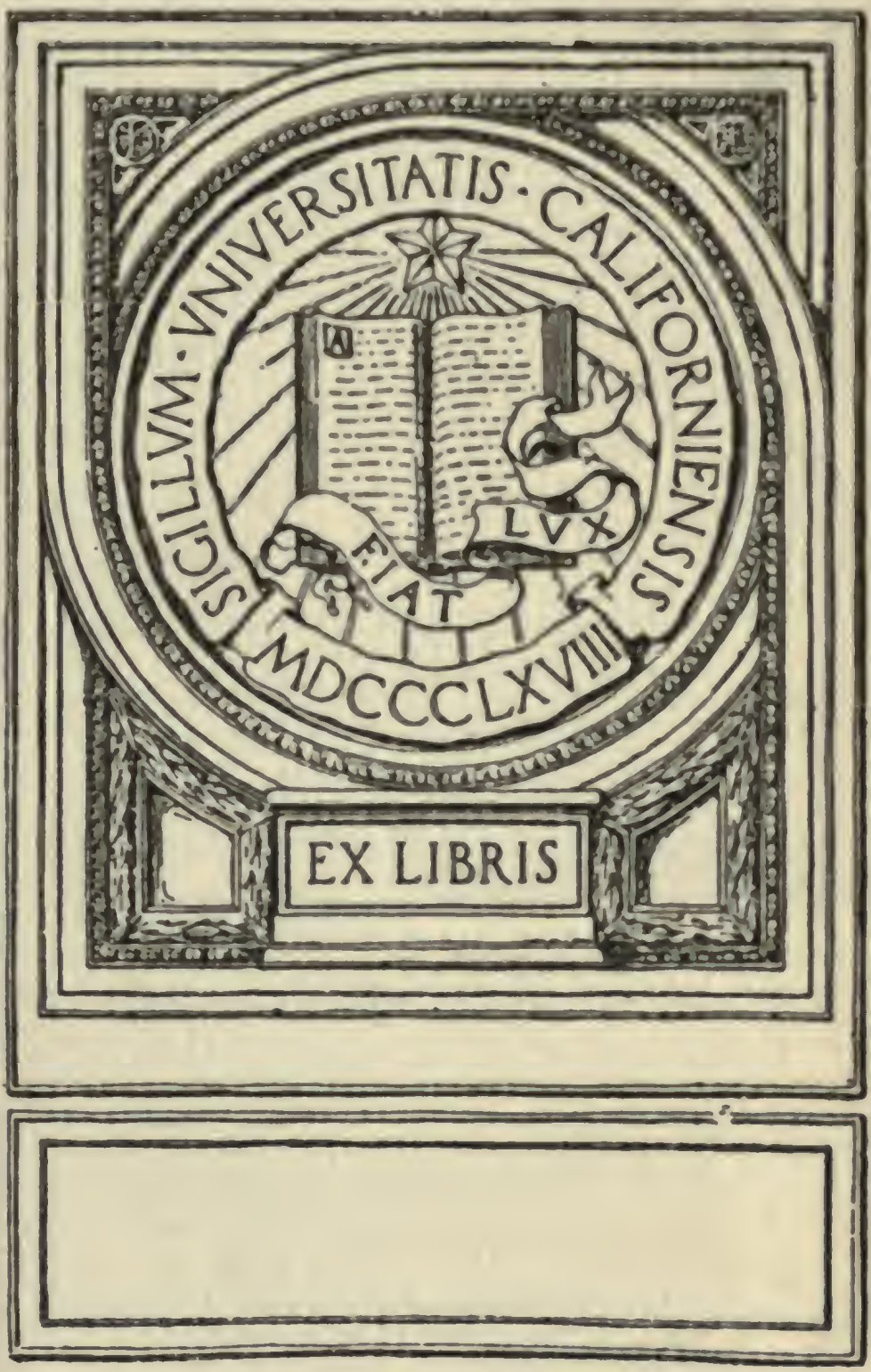
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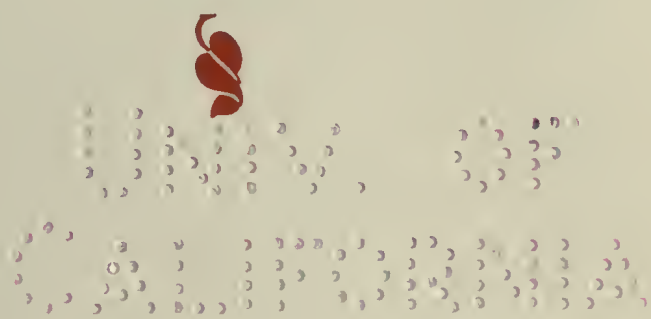
PORTRAIT OF PERUGINO (CAMBIO, PERUGIA)

PERUGINO

BY

EDWARD HUTTON



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In writing this study, my endeavour has been rather to say what I had to say of Perugino, than to give a complete catalogue of his works: and while no picture of importance has been left unmentioned, there was no room nor reason, as it seemed to me, in what is really an essay, to speak of every picture that, however doubtfully or with I know not what intervention of other hands than his, may have come from his studio or passed under his influence.

E. H.

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Introduction

As you journey to-day, perhaps from Florence to Rome, by the old road through the valley of the Arno, you come really at Cortona into Umbria Mystica, a country altogether different from Tuscany. It is a land of mountains and wide valleys, through which the Tiber winds towards Rome and the sea, and the light is softer there and more beautiful than on any Tuscan hills. Little by little as you wend your way past the lake of Trasimeno, in and out among the hills where the corn and the wine and the oil grow together in the same field, and in defiance of Virgil the vines often leap from olive to olive, the landscape opens, and at last, from Perugia, you may see for many miles down the valley of Spoleto, past Assisi, the city of St Francis, and Spello and Foligno and Trevi, to Spoleto herself under

Monte Luco, while the Tiber passes far away down another valley, wide and tender, to Todi, turning at last, within five miles of Orvieto, southwards to Rome. A country of distances, you may think, in which the little cities on their hills become just a part of the landscape —a true country place really, without a great city, for the little towns among the mountains, Gubbio, Fabriano, Camerino, and the rest, are even less important than Perugia, that strangely inaccessible city, rugged, fierce, and almost without intellectual or commercial life, which is still the chief city of Umbria. It was in this spacious world, fulfilled with all the largeness and strength of Latin earth and yet so delicate and blessed, where the slim cypresses tower over the olive gardens, and evening passes slowly down the valleys, that Pietro Perugino was born about the year 1446.

Immersed, it might seem, in a kind of religious contemplation, Perugino appears to us to-day never to have emerged from the dreaminess of the Middle Age. In spite, almost, of his masters and the strenuous vitality of the Florentine world, that influenced him so much, he was an ascetic, concerned rather with some

ideal dream than with the actual world. But his is an asceticism conceived of not as strength, almost never as just that, but as sentiment, an over-refinement as it were; so that we find him almost shocked by the mere exuberance of life, always seeking for its less strenuous and more quiet moments, and endowing them with a sweetness that at last becomes wearisome, sickly, almost wilful in its deception. The immense intelligence, the clear and perfect "cerebral power" of his most famous pupil, Raphael, he did not possess; his ideas—if ideas we may call them—would seem to have been just romantic thoughts, that with him are not quite simple or sincere, a little anæmic through loss of touch with their world, a little too pretty and sweet in their make-believe. Judging him by his pictures—and, indeed, how else are we to judge him?—he would seem all his life to have been in a continual reverie, touching actual things only once or twice, as in his portrait of Dom Baldassare di Vallombrosa, and even then finding them softened for him by a kind of glamour of holiness or the nearness of the sanctuary or the strange silence of the monastic life. It is

only there and in his landscapes, perhaps, that we find any reality or loyalty to experience and observation. And yet it is not altogether as a sentimentalist that we must think of a man whose achievement was so large; but rather as a kind of poet who very easily and simply, and with a kind of natural success, had learned from his masters all that they could teach him, but was yet imperfect by reason of some want of intelligence, a real intellectual feebleness, so that his triumph is incomplete, is postponed, till Raphael, with his profound and perfect scholarship, his immense intelligence, achieves the real victory that Perugino had only seen as it were prophetically. And while in some way not quite explicable he is the most religious painter Italy ever produced, it is at last rather as a painter of earth and sky, of space, and of all that space came to mean to him, that he interests us. Not content with any description, as it were, of the Nativity or the Crucifixion, subjects for him so full of the exquisite tragedy of heaven, he desires rather to suggest the very spirit, the serene beauty of the presence of God, and to allow his thoughts about the world to disengage

themselves from his pictures. And he was the first painter perhaps who cared for the soft sky, finding there something precious, which we too have seen because of him.

II

The Masters of Perugino

Pietro Vannucci, called Il Perugino, was born about the year 1446 at Castello della Pieve,[1] a little city on a hill some twenty-six miles from Perugia. Vasari tells us that his father's name was Cristofano, and that he was poor, while Mariotti adds that although the family was poor, it was of good origin and had "enjoyed the rights of citizenship since 1427."[2] However this may be, Vasari says that Cristofano sent Pietro to be the shop drudge of a painter in Perugia, "who was not particularly distinguished in his calling, but held the art in great veneration and highly honoured the men who excelled therein. Nor did he

[1] Castello della Pieve became Città della Pieve in 1601 by favour of Pope Clement VIII.

[2] Mariotti: "Lettere Pittoriche Perugine," 1788, p. 121.

ever cease to set before Pietro the great advantages and honours that were to be obtained from painting by all who acquired the power of labouring in it effectually; recounting to him all the rewards bestowed on the various masters, ancient and modern, thereby encouraging Pietro to the study of his art: in so much that he kindled in the mind of the latter the desire to become one of those masters, as he resolved if fortune were propitious to him that he would do." Who this painter was we do not know, but since he was evidently acquainted with Florence, it might seem that it was rather Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, "thrice dipped," as Mr Berenson tells us, "in the vivifying stream of Florentine art," than Benedetto Bonfigli, the charming but ineffectual painter of the Cappella dei Priori in Perugia.

Painting in Umbria had ever been just a handmaid of the Church; even to-day there is scarcely a picture which is not religious in the Pinacoteca at Perugia. From the time of Oderigi, that painter of miniatures, born in Gubbio, and found by Dante in Purgatory, to that of Perugino—in the work of Guido Palmerucci, of Martino and Ottaviano Nelli,

of Gentile da Fabriano, of Niccolò da Foligno, and of Bonfigli—we find for the most part merely a desire, more or less passionate, to illustrate the story of the Gospels or the teaching of the Church. There was no Giotto, no Duccio even in Umbria. Painting for its own sake or for the sake of beauty or life never seems to have taken root in that mystical soil; it is ever with a message of the Church that she comes to us, very simply and sweetly for the most part it is true, but except in the work of Gentile da Fabriano and of Niccolò da Foligno, where we often find a profound sense of life passionately sincere, the earlier work of the school that passes as Umbrian is sentimental and illustrative, content to forget the living world in a dream of that which has been, which is to be; eager to describe the angels rather than man, since it had not understood, handmaid of the Church as it was, that we were worthy of remembrance.

It was really from outside that Umbrian painting[1] received the one living inspiration

[1] For a more precise account of the rise and history of the Umbrian school of painting, see my "Cities of Umbria," pp. 133-224.

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FIORENZO DI LORENZO ?

ADORATION OF THE MAGI (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)

that has made it in Perugino, and in its influence upon Raphael, the most beloved school in Italy. In the work of Piero della Francesca, that learned pupil of Domenico da Veneziano, we find the beginnings of a wonderful comprehension of the beauty of space that later-on forms the work of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, of Perugino, of Pintoricchio, and of Raphael. And yet it was in Umbria after all that Italian art had been born as it were, flowering like a lily from the grave of St Francis. For it was to decorate the church that rose over his tomb that those painters of the Roman school had worked in Assisi, it was in his honour that Giotto had laboured there in his youth, the pupil as we may think of the Cavallini and their school, leaving in what is really the most holy place in Italy, work that is already full of a new life, a profound vitality, that was about to burst through the bonds of the Byzantine mannerism and to rediscover the world. Looking on those frescoes in that quiet Upper Church at Assisi, you might think that nothing which came after, within the radius of their influence at least, could ever be anything but an expression of naturalism, of life. But it was not so;

Umbria was not to be interrupted in her contemplation by anything so thoughtful, so revolutionary as Giotto's work, not indeed until Piero della Francesca was able to reveal to her a new and very lovely dream, religious too in its effect of quietness, of light, that led her at last to express herself perfectly, rather by means of Nature than of Man, finding in her own landscapes the only reality that might satisfy her, scornful of humanity as she was since her cities so often ran with his blood; only really intent on freedom, which continually eluded her, or on the difficult service of God, of whom she had heard so much.

Piero della Francesca was born about 1416 at the little town of Borgo San Sepolcro, just within the border of Tuscany towards Arezzo. He was a great student, the inventor almost of perspective, a friend of mathematicians, of Fra Luca Paccioli for instance, who later became the friend of Leonardo da Vinci. His work has force and is always full of the significance of life; but it is rather as the first of those painters who used space carefully for its own sake, divining as it were in just that a new effect in painting, that he interests us in

thinking of the work of Perugino. A new effect of light too! Something, I know not what, of the real open air you find in his work at Arezzo in S. Francesco, for instance, or in the wonderful fresco of *The Resurrection* at Borgo S. Sepolcro. Influenced by Paolo Uccello, founding his work on a really scientific understanding of certain laws of vision, of drawing, he is responsible for much of the work of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, of Perugino and his pupils.

Almost nothing is known of the life of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo,[1] who, one may believe, was Perugino's unknown master, spoken of by Vasari. All that we really know is that he was working between the year 1472, when we have documents relating to the altar-piece of *Madonna enthroned surrounded by Saints,* from S. Maria Nuova, now No. 43 in Sala Fiorenzo di Lorenzo of the Pinacoteca of Perugia, and the year 1521, when we have a

[1] For a more detailed account of what follows, see "The Problem of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo," by Jean Carlyle Graham: Perugia, Domenico Terese, 1903. Also my "Cities of Umbria," 1905, pp. 189-200.

document in the Archivio Notorale at Perugia referring to "an arbitration" made by him. His work is very rare out of Perugia, and even in the Pinacoteca there, much that is given to him comes to us at least with the intervention of another hand. And yet if we are to regard most of the work that passes under his name as his indeed, we seem to discern there something of that effect of light, of space, of perspective that is so sincere and novel a thing in the work of Piero della Francesca, and that is the chief characteristic of the work of Perugino. In a fresco of the *Pietà*, till lately hung high up over the door in the Sala Fiorenzo, just a shadow as it were of some delicate and lovely thing gradually fading on the wall, we seem to discern a greater debt to Piero than in any of Fiorenzo's better known works. However this may be (and seeing that the life of Fiorenzo is quite unknown to us, it is impossible for us to be sure of anything concerning him), one of those mannerisms which Morelli found in his work, "the great toe almost always convulsively turned upwards," is characteristic of Perugino too, in his early work at any rate, and indeed

the *S. Sebastian* at Cerqueto might be the work of Fiorenzo.

If it be in the pictures of these two painters that we may discern the fundamental idea that underlies Perugino's work, that apprehension of the beauty of space, of the sufficiency of just that, it is yet in the work of the founders of the Perugian school, if school it may be called, that we find much of the charm, the sentimental beauty, that in the pictures of Perugino and Pintoricchio has so captured the world. Foligno, a little city in the valley not far from Assisi, produced a painter in the middle of the fifteenth century in Niccolò da Foligno, called by Vasari Niccolò Alunno. Born about 1430, he was almost certainly the pupil of Benozzo Gozzoli, who painted much in the cities of Umbria. With a naive and delightful sincerity he tells us stories of Madonna or of Christ, really as a child might do, with a wonderful enthusiasm, a lovely affirmation; and pictorial though he be, a mere illustrator of the Gospels, his work is yet full of charm, of keen emotion, and sometimes his figures move with a true impulse of life.

The influence of Florence, the work of Fra Angelico, who brought Benozzo Gozzoli to Orvieto as his assistant and pupil when he came to paint in the Duomo there, was, it is true, not very fruitful. Benozzo Gozzoli was but a third-rate painter, and it was he who remained in Umbria when Angelico returned to Florence, teaching, it may be, Benedetto Bonfigli, the first painter of Perugia of any importance, something of his art—that art which is so pretty, so charming a treasure of the Pinacoteca Vannucci to-day. And it is at last in his work that we find a promise, a prophecy at least of the charm, the delicate sentimental beauty that came to such perfection in the work of Perugino—a certain effect of light, a suggestion of gold in the air, something of the serenity that is really everywhere in the Umbrian landscape, that Perugino knew so well how to express. And although it may be Bonfigli cannot claim to have been that unknown master of whom Vasari speaks, who taught Perugino the rudiments of his art, we yet seem to find something that he has suggested, a certain quietness and peace, an affected prettiness too

that is often exasperating in its insincerity, in the work of the great man who was, as we may remind ourselves, after all perhaps the pupil of his pupil or his friend Fiorenzo di Lorenzo.

III

Early Wanderings; Work in Sistine Chapel.

Perugino's master, whoever he may have been, had, according to Vasari, always told him that "Florence was the place above all others wherein men attain to perfection in all the arts, but especially in painting"; and in the year 1472 we find him there, his name on the roll of St Luke, in the studio of Andrea Verrocchio as Vasari says, though Mariotti and Pascoli deny this, and Morelli [1] finds himself in agreement with them. Mr Berenson, however, appears to follow Vasari, for he admits that Perugino was "slightly influenced" by Verrocchio, who already had in his bottega a youth who was to come to the highest eminence, Leonardo da Vinci. In truth we know nothing of Perugino's

[1] Morelli: "Critical Studies of Italian Painters," vol. ii. p. 107. Berenson: "Central Italian Painters," p. 162.

life in Florence. Vasari tells us it is true of several pictures he painted at this time, above all of an *Adoration of the Magi*, in which he asserts one might see the portrait of Andrea Verrocchio, but unfortunately this work, with the Convent of the Gesuati where it hung, was destroyed so early as 1529, and while some of Perugino's work was rescued and is now in the Accademia, it seems to belong to a somewhat later period. One picture, however, a *Crucifixion*, now at La Calza, might seem to belong to the period of his first visit to Florence. Something of Signorelli, or of Signorelli's master is it, Piero della Francesca, has been found in this over-painted and altered old picture, perhaps in a certain energy we discern in the St John Baptist and in the St Jerome, in the studied anatomy of the Christ, and even in the composition[1] of a picture where for once we seem to have come upon people full of life and energy. But if we receive any emotion from a work that is after all without delight, it will come to us from the distant landscape that faintly suggests itself

[1] *Cf.* this picture with *The Crucifixion* of Signorelli at S. Spirito, Urbino.

behind the Cross, from the mere beauty of the world that is all the painter seems to have cared for and observed with love, with enthusiasm and sincerity.

In 1475 we hear of Perugino again as painting in Perugia in the Palazzo Pubblico there, but nothing remains of his work. In 1478, however, he was in Cerqueto, where you may still see a figure of St Sebastian, all that remains of certain frescoes by him. It is in this figure that some writers have found the influence of Luca Signorelli, and in a certain strength and energy that, forced though it be, the figure still retains, we may perhaps discern something of the spirit of that painter who is so much greater than his reputation. And yet it might seem that it is a more fantastic energy we find there than that which is so splendid in the work of Signorelli, something of the affectation of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, the excessive elegance of his figures, the delicate beauty of his *S. Sebastian* at Perugia[1] for instance; and if we remember Fiorenzo's manner of accentuating the waist and the hips,

[1] This figure is on a panel, one of the eleven that accompany the altar-piece of 1472.

his awkwardness in painting the nude, we shall perhaps hesitate to attribute to Signorelli a mannerism easily caught in Perugia. Signorelli does not paint the nude in this way, his *Flagellation* in the Brera for instance, or those nude figures in the background of his Tondo of *Madonna and Child* in the Uffizi[1] have nothing of the sentimentalism, the affected grace of Perugino, while the *S. Sebastian* of Fiorenzo is in the same attitude, standing as it might seem against the same pillar as the *S. Sebastian* of Perugino at Cerqueto.

Although these works are perhaps all that have come down to us from this period of his life, Perugino must by 1480 have been a well-known, even a famous painter, for in that year Pope Sixtus IV., della Rovere of Urbino, invited him to Rome to paint in the new chapel he had built in the Vatican, which was about to be decorated by some of the greatest painters in Italy. And it is there beside the profound unsatisfied work of Michelangelo, the exquisite and beautiful work of Botticelli, the virile work of Signorelli, the simple and splendid work of

[1] *Cf.* also Signorelli's *S. Sebastian* at Città di Castello.

Ghirlandajo, that we find the real Perugino at last, a painter of the earth and sky, full of some wonderful new spaciousness and light, the serious beauty of heaven, the largeness of the evening earth, the holiness of just that. It is a new sort of out-of-doors that you come upon still with surprise in that marvellous chapel where man is so omnipotent and so unhappy. *The Delivery of the Keys to St Peter* he called the fresco, but he has built there behind the mere subject of the picture a beautiful church in the new manner of the Renaissance, delicate and lovely, with round arched porticoes at the sides leading into an octagonal Temple that reminds one of the Duomo of Florence as seen from the corner of the Via del Proconsolo, and on either side far away in the spacious Piazza are set two triumphal arches, again in the new manner, that after all was but the old Roman style come back again with a novel sort of freshness upon it—a real new birth into a world that had never been able to satisfy itself with the gloomy, fantastic, not quite sane Gothic work, and was already waiting this new birth of old classical things impatiently. Far away

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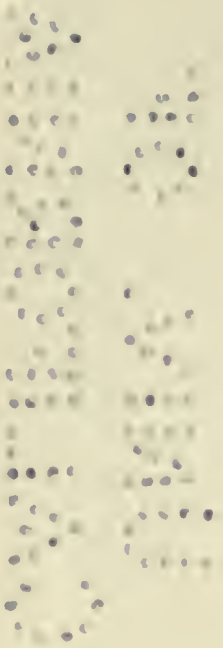
DELIVERY OF THE KEYS TO S. PETER (SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)



behind the beautiful buildings the whole world is filled with evening, and you gaze past the delicate fantastic trees to the near valley, wide and full of peace, and the mountains that the sun has kissed when night falls. That hurrying crowd of people, those delightful gesticulating figures, and even this company of disciples around Christ who is founding His Church—something as lovely and as new as that Temple before which they linger—how little they mean to us! It is not from them that we receive the emotion this fresco never fails to give, an emotion æsthetic if you will, but really religious too, something that you will find in scarcely a picture that has been painted before this time, comes from the sky full of the quiet evening light, the delicate clouds that seem to be sleeping, that are shaped like wings, from the landscape itself that is full of the breadth and coolness of evening, the holiness of the hour after the sunset.

It is as though these people, just saints and apostles after all, as we discern, with our Lord in the midst, were a vision that in the quietness of the evening had surprised our hearts, busied for the moment with a thought

of that invisible Church which so beautiful and fair a Temple had brought to us. The whole world seems to be blessed. And it is just that very perfect suggestion of evening in Umbria at least, that gives us this emotion, that has made his work so beloved. Alberti has told us that when he saw the meadows and the hills covered with flowers in the spring-time, his heart was sorrowful, and many saw him weep because of his sadness; and it might seem that something of this pantheism, that strange stirring of the spirit at the thought of the earth from which we sprung, has been understood by Perugino, for it is the one thing he never ceases to express from the time he painted this picture for the Pope in 1480, till in 1523 he painted the *Adoration of the Shepherds* now in the National Gallery. His figures, always a little aloof from life, more or less dream people, often beautiful, but always a little fantastic, a little sentimental, as we might say, become less real, less actual as he grows older; he seems continually to have repeated himself, to have been content to care little about them, but his landscapes are always full of the

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CRUCIFIXION (La Calza, Florence)

eagerness and peace which he has found in that world of valley and mountain and lake which surrounds his home and his birthplace; in it he seems to have found everything that might satisfy him, and to it he returns again and again as though, as indeed it was, it were something divine, something that in a world that was continually passing away remained always, in its profound and living beauty, the one thing that could never fail him, and in which he finds, as both before and after him so many poets and painters, philosophers and children, the simplest too among men and women have found, the very garments as it were of God, whose voice as of old we may hear still walking in the Garden.

Three other frescoes Perugino left behind him in the Sixtine Chapel, *The Nativity, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin,* and *The Finding of Moses,* but they were destroyed to make room for Michelangelo's *Last Judgment.*

A period of some confusion follows. We hear of Perugino in Perugia, in Orvieto, and in Florence, but we cannot with any certainty name any pictures that he painted at this time, unless we may consider the Tondo of

Madonna and Child with two angels and two saints, now in the Louvre (No. 1564), as belonging to this period; for we find there still the mannerism of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, in the bent little fingers of the hands, the delicate articulations of the feet, the attitude of Madonna and the angels; but these figures, more lovely and more thoughtful by far than any you will find in the work of Fiorenzo, are set in a landscape of valley, hill, and lake that we shall come upon at all hours of the day in Perugino's work hereafter, but that before him had scarcely been dreamed of by other painters. Even in a picture so wholly delightful as this, so perfectly just a religious work, you are caught at once by that aspect of nature, of the world, so much more sincere than that beautiful vision of Madonna in the midst of saints and angels. She looks at us a little sentimentally, already weary of our endless devotions, and yet ready to be worshipped since we wish it and have indeed come just for that. She is a ghost from the Middle Age seen on the first hot day of spring, she is the childhood of the modern earth, unreal to us, only to be approached with due ceremony, while we over-

whelm our thoughts with prayers; and soon she will pass from us and we shall forget her in the whole long day that lies before us among the mountains or in the cool valleys beside the Tiber, under the trees where the rocks are delicate and the grass is like hair and the wind comes at evening, and we remember her again for a moment when we hear far away across the valleys the "Ave Mary" faintly from some tower that remains to us of all that has passed away, and we know that the labour in the fields is over and the men and women in the olive gardens and the vineyards are returning home because the day is ended.

In 1489 we know that Perugino was in Perugia, because he drew there 180 ducats[1] paid him by the Pope for his work in the Sixtine Chapel some years before. About this time he seems to have visited Orvieto, where he agreed with the chapter of the Duomo to paint the Cappella di San Brizio, offering to complete the work for 1500 gold ducats if the "scaffolding, lime, gold, and ultramarine" were

[1] Mariotti: "Lettere Pittoriche Perugine," 1788, p. 150.

given him: his offer does not seem to have been accepted, and it was suggested to him that he should paint the ceilings for a lower price, and ten ducats seem to have been paid to him in advance for this. We then hear of him again in Florence as anxious to compete for the work of designing the façade of the Duomo, but again he was disappointed. He seems to have gone back to Perugia, and then Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere sends for him to Rome, whither he seems to have gone eagerly enough, glad after all his wandering to be once more in the Eternal City, where the best work of his earliest years had been done.

IV

1491-1495

It was in the year 1491 that Perugino once more went to Rome, this time in the service of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II. Of the work done for the Cardinal, but one picture remains to us, the beautiful altar-piece in six compartments now in the Villa Albani, signed and dated Petrus de Perusia Pinxit 1491. In the midst he has painted the Nativity under one of those beautiful colonnades that Piero della Francesca had almost invented. The Madonna who kneels before the Child on the ground is very like to the Madonna of the *Nativity* in the Pinacoteca at Perugia, attributed to Fiorenzo di Lorenzo; but in every essential thing, in the emotion and atmosphere that are implicit in this painting, how different it is from that hard, dry old picture. For the world is full of air and light;

far away stretches the valley between the hills, and lo, at our feet lies the Jesus Parvulus in the shadow of the colonnade, while Madonna and St Joseph kneel beside Him, and in the midst, unseen by them, unheard, in a world that seems to be listening for the first cry of a little child, two angels kneel. Behind, the oxen have roused at the daybreak, and on either side in separate compartments kneel St Raphael and St Michael is it?—with St John Baptist and St John the Divine, and above on either side the Annunciation is seen again in a colonnade as Piero della Francesca had already painted it in the altar-piece at Perugia; but here between the Angel and Madonna we find a jewel-like painting of the Crucifixion set in a marvellous landscape of rocks and water and feathery trees.

It is in this picture that we see Perugino doing just what Piero della Francesca has tried to do so often, and doing it very much better. His work is, it is true, without the vitality and strength everywhere to be found in Piero's pictures, but he has learned the whole science of perspective, and has been able to express himself, to give us a real emotion by means of

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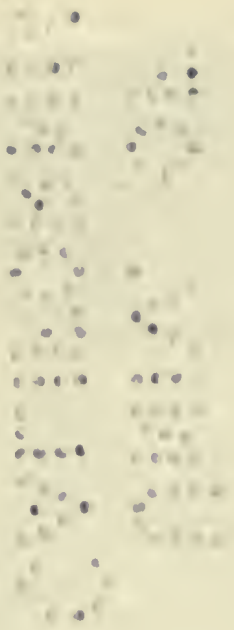
THE ALBANI ALTAR-PIECE

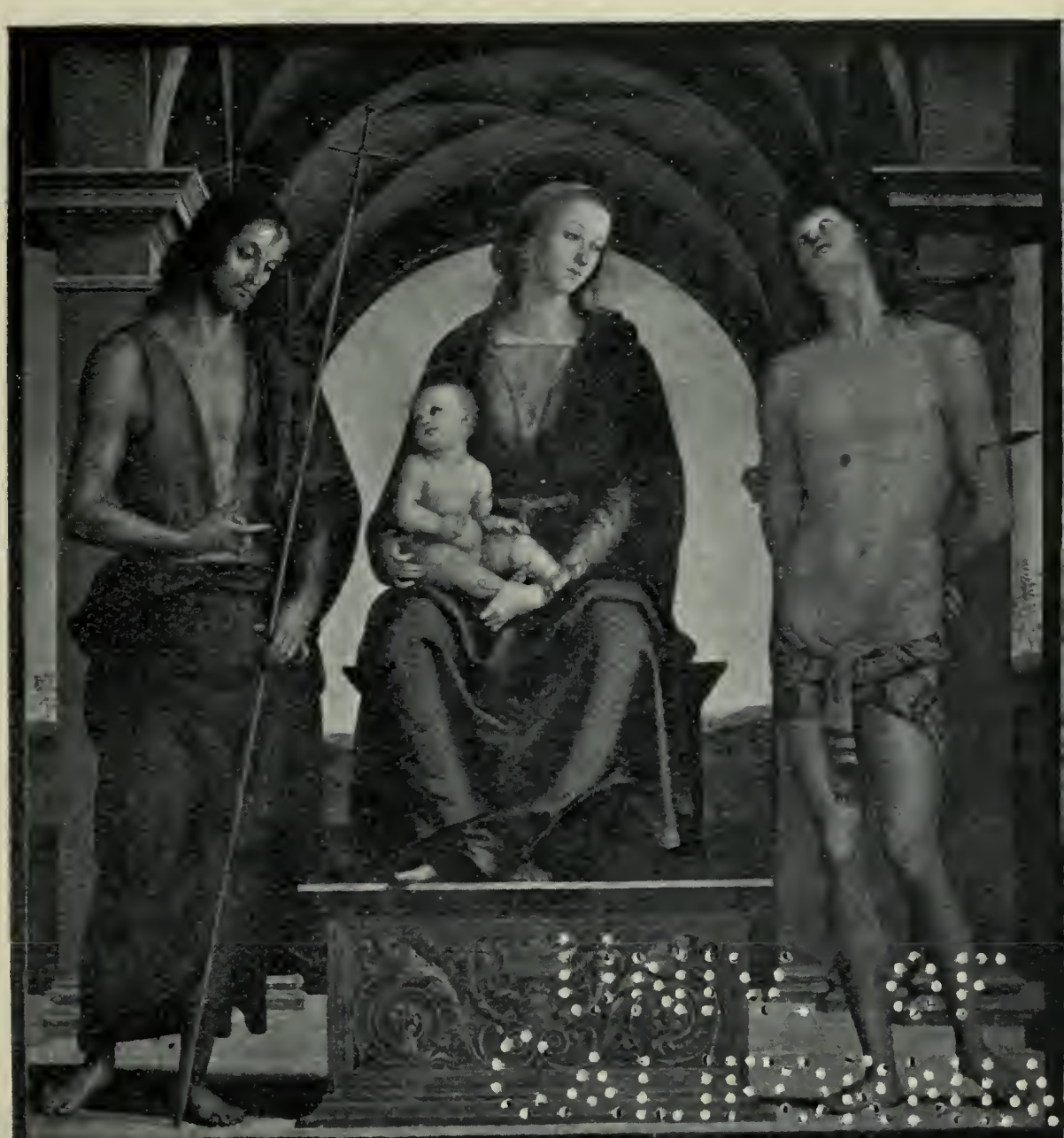


his composition; for he has found the way to compose with space, naturally almost and without effort; so that the old science of perspective, the laws of a mere material element of pictorial beauty, a mathematical problem really, have suddenly become spiritual, are at any rate full of a spiritual element of thought and passion. And he goes on painting this new heaven and new earth for us till he dies: there is scarcely a picture painted by him from this time till his death without its landscape; and while the men and women and angels become less and less living, and often indeed seem scarcely more than puppets, full of a sort of mechanical sentimentality that at last wearies us, his landscapes seem to grow more realistic, and it is in them that he seems at last to have put all the passionate beauty and sincerity that in mystical Umbria, at any rate, he was not able to express in just men and women—men and women that he has been content for the most part to forget for a masquerade of angels, a miracle play of ghosts seen on a summer's day.

How long Perugino stayed in Rome we do not know, but in 1493 he is said to have been

elected for the council of his birthplace, Città della Pieve, and even to have dwelt there; but in that year, too, he was in Florence painting some of his best known pictures, *The Virgin and Child*, in the Tribune of the Uffizi (No. 1122), the *Pietà* of the Accademia, *The Madonna and Four Saints*, now in Vienna, and perhaps *The Christ in the Garden*, now in the Accademia in Florence.

The picture in the Tribune is just a religious picture brought from S. Domenico of Fiesole and placed in the Uffizi by the Grand Duke Peter Leopold in 1756. Madonna sits a little indifferent on a throne under an archway holding the Child, who turns towards St John Baptist as he gazes languidly on the ground, while St Sebastian, a beautiful youth, stands on the other side looking upwards, and though the arrows have pierced his flesh, he is still full of affected grace, and is so occupied with his prayer that he has not noticed them. On the base of the throne Perugino has written his name, Petrus Perusinus Pinxit An. 1493. The Vienna picture is much the same, and an earlier altar-piece, painted as it is said in 1488 for S. Domenico, has been lost. It is in



Anderson]

FIESOLE ALTAR-PIECE, 1493 (UFFIZI, FLORENCE)

such works as these that Perugino is really least great. Painted to order, as we may think, they are so full of affectation of a kind of religiosity that there is no room left for sincerity. And yet how well he has composed these pictures after all, so that there is no sense of crowding, and the sun and the sky are not so far away. Is it perhaps that in an age that has become suspicious of any religious emotion we are spoiled for such pictures as these, finding in what, it may be, was just a natural expression of worship to the simpler folk of Umbria long ago, all the ritualism and affectation in which we should find it necessary to hide ourselves before we might see her as she seemed to them, a Queen enthroned, *Causa nostrae laetitiae,* between two saints, whose very names we find it difficult to remember? How often in our day has Perugino been accused of insincerity, yet it was not so, long ago, when he lived. Almost all his life he was engaged in painting for the Church those things which were most precious in her remembrance. If men found him insincere, it is strange that among so much that was eager and full of sincerity, his work was able to hold

its own. Again in another picture—painted as I think about this time for the Convent of the Gesuati, a *Pietà* now in the Accademia at Florence, where the dead Christ lies on His mother's knees, while an angel holds the head of the Prince of Life on his shoulders, and Mary Magdalen as of old weeps at his feet, and two saints, St John and St Joseph of Arimathea perhaps, watch beside Him—there might seem to be little to hold us, or to interest us at all; the picture is really without life for us, just because everything is so unreal; and if we gather any emotion there, it will come to us from the soft sky full of air and light, that we see through a splendid archway or from a tiny glimpse of the valley that peeps from behind Madonna's robe. Surely it was in this valley on a little hill that, as we may see in another's picture in the Accademia, Christ knelt, yes, in the garden of the world, while the disciples slept, and the angel brought Him the bitter cup. Not far away is Jerusalem and certain Roman soldiers and Judas and the priests; but it is not these dream-like figures that attract us, but the world that remains amid all interior

Anderson]

PIETÀ (ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

Anderson]

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN (ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

changes, still the same, and for once these tired men, really wearied out, who sleep so profoundly while Christ prays.

It was in this year, September 1st, 1493, that he married a certain Chiara Fancelli, a beautiful girl, the daughter of Luca the architect in the service of the Marquis of Mantua. Throughout the whole of his life Perugino had been a wanderer. Coming to Perugia as a child, he had lived in Florence, in Rome, in Siena, and in many a tiny Umbrian city, and in 1494 he seems to have gone to Venice. A picture in Cremona of Madonna and Child enthroned between St Augustine and St James, still in the church of St Augustine there, may well have been painted on his way to or from the great sea city. Something in the strength of pose of the Madonna, that for once is full of life and character, seems to suggest to us that it was on his way back to Florence after he had encountered the strong and simple work of Giovanni Bellini, in whom you may find so much of the strength of Donatello, that he painted the picture on the altar of the Roncadelli family in S. Agostino of Cremona. However this may be, it is in this year too that we

find Perugino painting perhaps his first portrait, the living and virile picture in the Tribune, the portrait of Francesco delle Opere. For many years this picture, owing it might seem to a mistake of the Chevalier Montalvo, was supposed to represent Perugino himself, so that for some time the picture was hung in the famous gallery of Portraits of Painters in the Uffizi. At last an inscription was discovered on the back of the picture which read as follows: 1494 D'Luglio Pietro Perugino Pinse Franc° delope. Francesco delle Opere was a Florentine painter, the brother of Giovanni delle Corniole. He died at Venice in 1496, and it may well be that it was in Venice that Perugino first met him. Perugino's picture shows us Francesco, a clean-shaven and young person holding a scroll on which is written, Timete Deum; the portrait is a half length and the hands are visible. In the background is a characteristic country of hill and valley under the deep serene sky, the light and clear golden air that we see in so much of his work.

Was it at this time too, that, remembering the work of Leonardo, he painted the portrait of Alessandro Braccesi, now in the Uffizi.

Alinari]

MADONNA AND CHILD (S. Agostino, Cremona)

Anderson]

PORTRAIT OF FRANCESCO DELLE OPERE

(UFFIZI, FLORENCE)

It was about this time that Perugino finished an altar-piece for the Cappella dei Priori in Perugia. It seems that there had been some trouble about the decoration of this chapel, owing to the vanity of certain magistrates, who during their term of office had employed a certain Pietro di Maestro Galeotto to paint a picture of Madonna and Child, with their portraits as donors. This the artist failed to accomplish, and the Priori turned to Perugino in November 1483, making an agreement with him to paint the picture in about four months for a hundred florins. But Perugino was called to Rome in December of that year, and therefore failed to carry out his commission. Coming to Perugia again in 1495, he found the chapel still without its picture, and we find him entering into another agreement with the Priori to paint the altar-piece for more money. It was the beautiful *Madonna enthroned surrounded by four Saints*, the patron saints of Perugia perhaps, now in the Vatican, that he painted for the city where he had spent his earliest youth. On a throne under a canopy Madonna holds the Child standing on her knees, and in some strange, not quite explicable fashion,

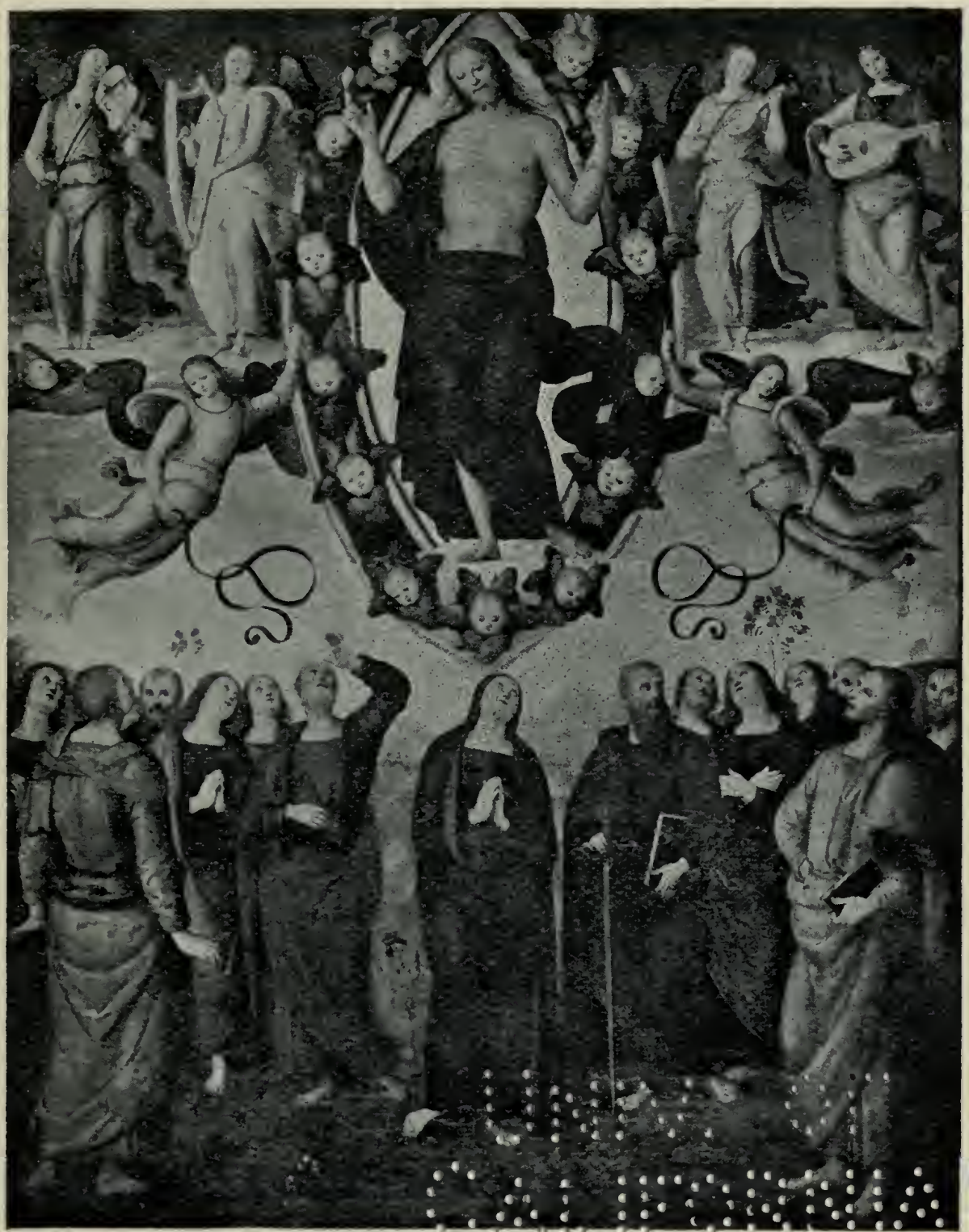
Perugino has managed to remind us of Piero della Francesca's altar-piece now in the Pinacoteca. He has signed the picture a little strangely we may think, ignoring Perugia, Hoc Petrus de Chastro Plebis Pinxit.

It was at this time too that Perugino painted the beautiful altar-piece, *The Ascension*, for San Pietro in Perugia, that has been brutally scattered; so that to-day the chief part is at Lyons, the Predella at Rouen, the lunette at S. Gervais in Paris, part of the crib at the Vatican, and really only a fragment is left in the church for which it was painted. The raids of Napoleon's Generals, the meanness of the French in clinging to stolen goods, are responsible for this; nor is this the only one of Perugino's pictures that has suffered in this manner. A certain speculation surrounds this dismembered altar-piece, owing to its likeness to a picture of the master at Borgo S. Sepolcro. It is impossible to decide, as I think, which was painted first. Vasari, a most unsafe guide in matters of chronology, certainly gives the first place to the injured San Sepolcro picture. "For the Abbot, Simone de Graziani of Borgo S. Sepolcro," he tells us, Perugino "painted a

large picture which was executed in Florence, being afterwards transported to the Church of S. Gilio at Borgo on the backs of porters at very heavy cost," and later he speaks of the Perugia picture as "one of the best paintings in oil executed by Pietro in Perugia." Mr G. C. Williamson differing in this, it might seem, from the general opinion, considers that Vasari is right for once in chronology and that the San Sepolcro picture is the earlier. However this may be, the Perugia picture, the chief part of which is now at Lyons, where it has been transferred to canvas, has been spoiled by repainting, while the picture at S. Sepolcro, damaged though it be, is yet in very fair preservation. The picture is divided into two parts: above, Christ in a mandorla of cherubim, surrounded by angels playing music, ascends into heaven; while below, Madonna surrounded by the twelve apostles with St Paul watches His flight very wistfully. Far away we catch a glimpse of the world, while the sky is serene and full of air in which certain delicate clouds float, on which the four angels stand playing and seem about to dance for joy. The Perugia picture, how-

ever, whether replica or original, was a much larger work than the altar-piece at San Sepolcro. The subjects of the predella are the Resurrection, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Baptism, which are generally said to be charming and beautiful pieces of work.

The finest work of this year is the dated picture now in the Pitti Palace, of the *Entombment of Christ*, in which we find a certain enchanting sea-side and far away mountains. Is it really the sea, or only a memory of the lake of Perugia, of Città della Pieve too, the Lake of Thrasymene surrounded by villages that climb the hills just as Perugino has painted the little city in this picture. In the foreground we find one of his best compositions, the dead figure of Christ surrounded by that little sorrowful company which is come to bury Him. Vasari gives the following description of the picture: "For the Nuns of S. Chiara Pietro painted a picture of the dead Christ, the colouring of which was so beautiful as well as new, that it awakened in the artists of the time an expectation of the excellence which Pietro was destined to attain. In this work there are some most admirable



Alinari]

ASCENSION (Borgo S. Sepolcro)

Anderson]

DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS, 1495

(PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE)

heads of old men, and the Maries who, having ceased to weep, are contemplating the departed Saviour with an expression of reverence and love which is singularly fine; there is, besides, a landscape, which was then considered to be exceedingly beautiful; the true method of treating landscapes, which was afterwards discovered, not having then been adopted. It is related that Francesco del Pugliese offered to give the Nuns three times as much as they had paid Pietro for that picture, and to cause another exactly like it to be executed for them by the same hand; but they would not consent, because Pietro had told them that he did not think he could equal the one they possessed." Thus we find Perugino in Florence again at the end of 1495, achieving there a masterpiece that he himself seems to have looked upon with a certain wonder and delight, and, as it proved, about to achieve perhaps the greatest work of his life.

Anaerson]
VIRGIN IN GLORY WITH SAINTS (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)

Anderson]

S. PLACIDO, S. BENEDETTO, S. FLAVIA (PINACOTECA, VATICAN)

Anderson]

S. ERCOLANO (S. PIETRO IN CASSINESE, PERUGIA)

Anderson]

S. MAVRO (S. Pietro in Cassinese, Perugia)

Anderson]

S. PIETRO (S. PIETRO IN CASSINESE, PERUGIA)

Anderson]

S. COSTANZO (S. PIETRO IN CASSINESE, PERUGIA)

Anderson]

S. SCHOLASTICA (S. Pietro in Cassinese, Perugia)

Hauselt]

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD (National Gallery)

Anderson]

MADONNA ENTHRONED (VATICAN, ROME)

V

1496-1498

Perugino was now about fifty years old. His life had been one of continual wandering. Famous throughout Italy, he had painted in the Sixtine Chapel, as well as in Florence and Northern Italy. Alien though he was from the tradition of Florence as from the material glory and splendour of Rome, still the capital of the world, that had never really produced a school of artists; and assuredly with but little in common with the realistic painting of Venice that was about to dawn upon the world in the profound and marvellous work of Titian, he had yet entranced these divers cities, had indeed in some sort conquered the world by the beauty of his dreams, those mystical and quiet visions that had come to him in the valleys of Umbria, that are so strange a contrast to the fierce material life that passed so

continually through the little cities on the hills and in the valleys of a country that beyond any other part of Italy was never at rest.

After a journey to Venice early in 1496, Perugino returned to Florence with the intention, we may think, of settling in that city, for Morelli quotes a document regarding the purchase of some land there. And it was at this period of his life that he produced his greatest religious works, for having painted the beautiful *Entombment* of the Pitti Palace in 1495, in 1496 he finished the fresco of the *Crucifixion* in the Chapter House of S. Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi in Florence that he had begun some years before. In almost perfect preservation still, this fresco on the wall of that quiet room in Florence is perhaps the most perfect expression of the art of Perugino, those dreams of the country and of certain ideal people he has seen there, Jesus and his disciples, Madonna and Mary Magdalen, sweet, smiling, and tearful ghosts passing in the sunshine, less real than the hills, all perhaps that the world was able to bear by way of remembrance of those it had worshipped once but was beginning to forget. And here at last

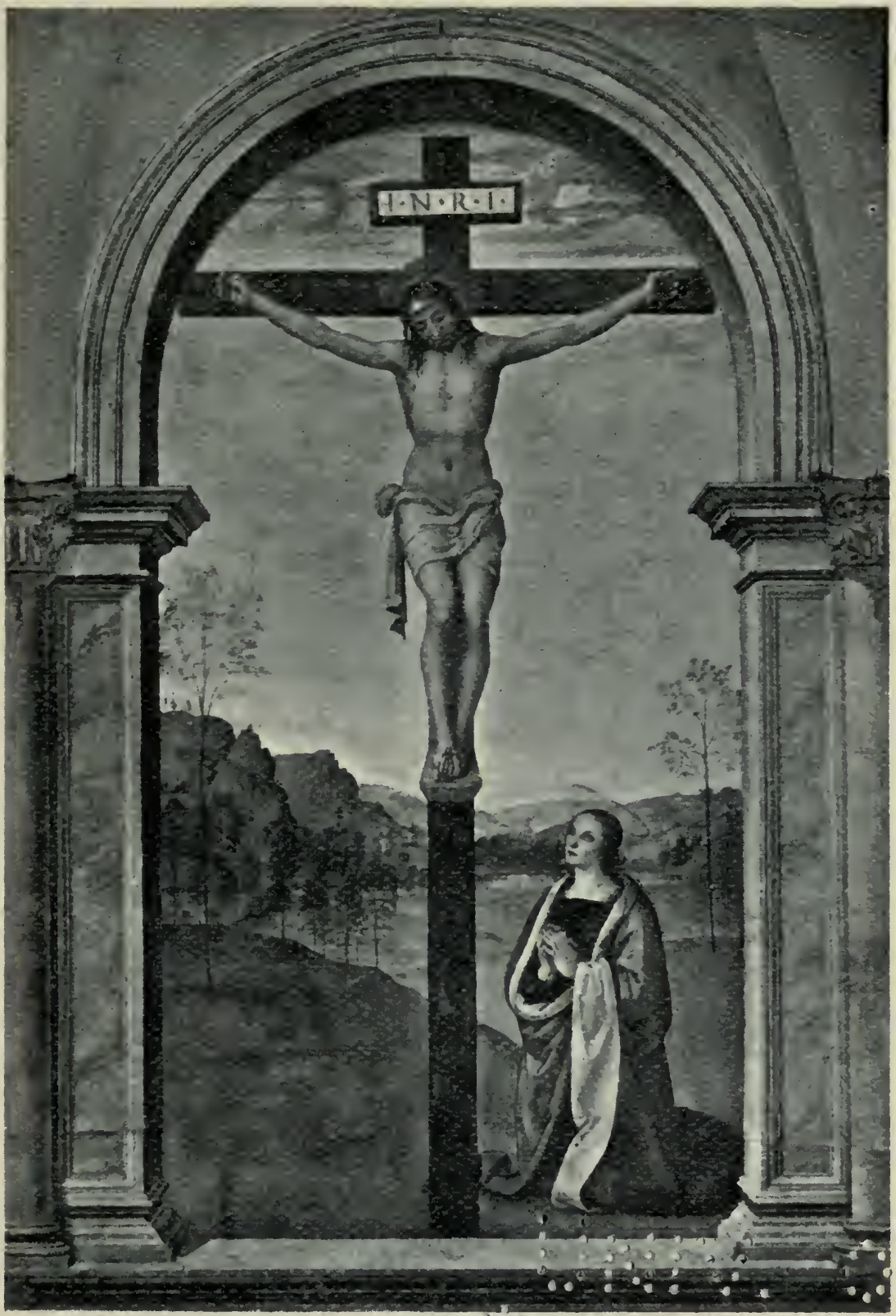
in this fresco the landscape has really become of more importance than the people who breathe there so languidly. The Crucifixion has found something of the unction of a Christian hymn, something of the quiet beauty of the Mass that was composed to remind us of it; already it has passed far away from reality, is indeed merely a memory in which the artist has seen something less and something more than the truth.

Divided into three compartments, we see through the beautiful round arches of some magic casement, as it were, the valleys and hills of Italy, the delicate trees, the rivers, and the sky of a country that is holy, which man has taken particularly to himself. And then as though summoned back from forgetfulness by the humanism of that landscape where the toil and endeavour of mankind is so visible in the little city far away, the cultured garden of the world, a dream of the Crucifixion comes to us, a vision of all that man has suffered for man summed up as it were naturally enough by that supreme sacrifice of love, and we see not an agonised Christ or the brutality of the priests and the soldiers, but Jesus who loved

Anderson]

PART OF FRESCO OF THE CRUCIFIXION

(S. Maria Maddalena, Florence)



Anderson]

PART OF FRESCO OF THE CRUCIFIXION

(S. Maria Maddalena, Florence)

Anderson]

PART OF FRESCO OF THE CRUCIFIXION

(S. Maria Maddalena, Florence)

us, hanging on the cross, with Mary Magdalen kneeling beside Him, and on one side Madonna and St Bernard, and on the other St John and St Benedict. And though in a sort of symbolism Perugino has placed above the cross the sun and the moon eclipsed, the whole world is full of the serene and perfect light of late afternoon, and presently we know that vision of the Crucifixion will fade away and there will be left to us only that which we really know and have heard and seen, the valleys and the hills—the earth from which we sprang. There are but six figures in the whole picture, and it is just this spaciousness perhaps, earth and sky counting for so much, that makes this work so delightful. For it is not from the figures at all that we receive the profoundly religious impression that this picture makes upon all who look unhurriedly upon it; but from the earth and the sky where in the infinite clear space God dwells, no longer hanging upon a Cross, tortured by men who have unthinkably made so terrible a mistake, but joyful in His Heaven, moving in every living thing that He has made, visible only in the invisible wind that passes over the streams

suddenly at evening, or subtly makes musical the delicate trees at dawn walking in His garden as of old, where one day it may be we shall meet Him face to face.

Another *Crucifixion* painted about this time, now in the Accademia at Florence, seems to belong to another mood, but certainly to confirm one in the thought of the spiritual, the religious impression that space, the infinite heaven of Italy, the largeness of her evening earth make on one, for here all that serenity and perfection is wanting, and we find instead a mere insistence upon the subject; the world is dark under the eclipsed sun and moon, and the figures are full of affectation. Painted for the Convent of St Jerome, it was necessary to introduce that saint and his lion, that strangely sentimental beast, so full of embarrassment, that looks at one so pathetically from many an old picture in the galleries of the world.

It was in this year, 1496, Morelli tells us that Perugino painted the *Sposalizio*—the marriage of the Virgin—now at Caen, while Crowe and Cavalcaselle say it was painted in 1500. And since Vasari also gives this

picture to Perugino, it has generally been supposed that Raphael painting his *Sposalizio*, now in the Brera, in 1503, took as his pattern, as it were, this work of his master. Yet it was always hard to believe that anything so lovely as that picture by Raphael could have come out of the gaudy provincial work now at Caen; and we are relieved in thinking both of Perugino and of Raphael, to know that the one is not the painter of the Caen picture and that the other in all probability never saw it and certainly never copied it; that it is indeed the work of Lo Spagna, itself an adaptation from the beautiful work of Raphael rather than the prototype of it. Mr Berenson[1] has proved, as we may think, to the satisfaction of all, that Perugino was not the author of the Caen picture which once hung in the Cathedral of Perugia, and has given us good ground for believing that Lo Spagna was the painter of it, and that he copied Raphael's picture. And since Vasari is the only ancient authority who gives us Perugino's name in connection

[1] See "Gazette des Beaux Arts," April 1896, and "The Study and Criticism of Italian Art," vol. ii. p. 1, 1902.

with the picture, there is really no more to be said about it.

Two other pictures seem to belong to this apparently the most crowded year of Perugino's life, *The Virgin and St Bernard*[1] at Munich, and *The Virgin in Glory* at Bologna. *The Virgin and St Bernard* originally in the Church of Santo Spirito in Florence, in the Neri Chapel there, was bought early in the nineteenth century by King Ludwig, and is now in the gallery at Munich. It remains one of the loveliest compositions of Perugino. Under a many columned arcade St Bernard sits; perhaps he has just written those three marvellous vocatives which have become part of the "Salve Regina," "O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria!" for suddenly Madonna appears to him with two angels, one of whom bears the lily of Annunciation, while behind St Bernard two figures stand, whether his own disciples or the apostles of our Lord I know not. And then between Madonna and St Bernard, through the pillars you catch a glimpse of yet another landscape, different from and yet full of the

[1] See "The Portfolio," 1893, "Perugino," by Claude Phillips.

Hanfstaengl]

VISION OF S. BERNARD

same sweet and nimble air as inspires so many of Perugino's pictures. This beautiful and quiet vision might seem to be in keeping with much of the work of that year, but in *The Virgin in Glory* at Bologna, which Mr Williamson attributes to this period, I seem to discern something of the mannerism that later disfigured so much of Perugino's work, the affectation and sentimentalism that make the Cambio frescoes, for instance, so ineffectual and even a little absurd. Madonna is on high, holding the Child standing on her knees, in a mandorla of cherubim, while two angels pose in the attitude of adoration. Below in a beautiful landscape stands St Michael, St Catherine of Alexandria, St Apollonia, and St John, with their symbols. Another picture, that "idyll more than Theocritan" as Mr Berenson calls it, the Apollo and Marsyas of the Louvre, may well belong to this period, though there is no authority for it, or beyond its style, for giving it to Perugino. It appears in the Louvre catalogue as "Le Raphael de Morris Moore," but Morelli gives it to Perugino, and Mr Berenson finds himself in agreement with him. In a beautiful landscape of hill and valley, not

far from a little city on the verge of a river, Apollo stands, a tall naked youth with a long staff in his hand, listening contemptuously to the efforts of Marsyas who, seated on a rock, is blowing a pipe. Between them on the ground are a lyre, some arrows, and a quiver. Certainly one of the loveliest things in all Perugino's work, it seems to me to belong to his best period, to be painted in his best manner, yet it is strange that it should, in subject, at any rate, be so isolated in his work, where till much later we find no Pagan figures, and almost no nudes at all. Can it be that after all this disputed picture belongs to Raphael, to his Florentine period, when he seemed to have added something to the art of Perugino in Perugino's own way and still followed painting for its own sake?

In the following years, 1497 and 1498, Perugino was at Perugia, for a *Madonna and Child*, surrounded by angels and penitents, now in the Pinacoteca of that city, remains to us. It was painted for one of the Confraternities, that of S. Pietro Martire; a study for it has been found in the Uffizi.

During these two years Perugino journeyed

Anderson]
MADONNA IN GLORY (PINACOTECA, BOLOGNA)
*p*G

Alinari]

MADONNA AND CHILD, 1497
(PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)

into the Marches so far as Fano and Sinigaglia, painting at Fano an altar-piece dated 1497 in S. Maria Nuova, of *Madonna and Saints,* with a *Pietà* in the lunette, and in the same church an *Annunciation* which I suppose belongs to the same year, as we do not know of any other visit that he made to this part of Italy. At Sinigaglia too, not far away, he painted in S. Maria della Misericordia, in the choir there, a *Madonna and Saints,* finished, as Mr Berenson tells us, by Lo Spagna. Really all there is of interest to note in these works is the *Pietà* of the lunette in the Fano picture, which was copied, or almost copied, later by the master in the lunette of the altar-piece for S. Agostino, part of which is now at S. Pietro in Cassinese at Perugia; while in the predella we may see the *Sposalizio* from Perugino's hand.

A new manner almost seems to have appeared in his work at this time; something of that affectation always latent, as some have thought, even in his best paintings, that we find certainly in the *Madonna in Glory* at Bologna, was now about to overwhelm everything and to spoil much of his

achievement. It may be well to say something here of the factory of pictures, for one can scarcely think of it as anything else, that Perugino appears to have contrived, employing there many pupils and inferior painters to turn out pictures that he himself had scarcely seen, it may be, but that passed under his name. And it is thus perhaps that the charm of his own work passes into a mere grimace, fixed mechanically, ruthlessly imitated and copied by his assistants, whose ambition might seem to have been to turn out religious pictures as plentifully as possible for every convent and church in Umbria. Probably rich, certainly famous, Perugino without scruple seems to have caricatured himself in some of his later work, and much of that which, with or without his leave, passed under his name is almost nothing but a caricature. From this time, too, that divinity which has influenced his work, so that the valleys and the hills and the sky seem to be blessed, to have kept something of the pleasure and benediction with which God saw the world in the beginning, departs from it, and in its place you find most often the work of a man a little weary and sick of his

Alinari]
MADONNA AND CHILD (S. MARIA NUOVA FANO)

art, practising it still, either because he must, or for the sake of money, busily imitating all his own characteristics, and unconsciously emphasising them as he grows older and further from his achievement, till what had been so delightful becomes a mere mannerism, the smiling or sad faces mere simpers, the men and women and angels mere effeminate caricatures of themselves, without strength, without conviction, without life; fatal insincerities that seem about to fade away into nothing.

Was he tired with so continual achievement, or weary of toil and anxious to be rich, that he permitted himself to enslave his genius till it was little more than the drudge of the Church, of the Priori of Perugia, of his great patrons, of his own avarice? We shall never know. Only even in his worst moments his work often retains some little though forced splendour, some suggestion of the glory that had passed away, in an aspect of the sky at evening, or the flashing of water, or the whisper of the wind among the leaves, or in the depth and sweetness of the sky; and sometimes he returns to life with all his old energy, and in contact with

the world, with real men and women, he achieves much of his old beauty, and even discovers a new power, and, the mere truth concerning nature having proved to be so splendid, trusts himself for a moment to glance at just that in the face of man. And though it is only for a moment he has been able to do this, returning always to those unreal people who pose and halt and strike sentimental attitudes as saints and angels whom he had never seen, the work of that moment is very lovely and seems to add a certain virile achievement to his work, that without it would show him to be a lesser man than he really was.

VI

The Cambio

1499-1500

It is not, however, as we like to think in looking on the beautiful triptych, the chief fragment of a large altar-piece finished in 1499 for the Duke of Milan, and for long one of the glories of that sumptuous monastery, the Certosa of Pavia, it is not there we discover any loss of dignity or sincerity that was soon to be obvious enough in Perugino's work. And a little anxiously perhaps, seeing that it is the chief work we possess by the Perugian master, we remind ourselves that he had been at work on it for some time, and that it was finished at last in 1499 only at the earnest entreaty of the duke, who had already paid a large sum of money in giving Perugino the commission for it. And yet in spite of every defence we can make of so lovely a thing, sometimes as

we look at it beside the work of Raphael which it produced, work that has acquired how easily all the mere craftsmanship of such a picture as this, but that somehow seems to fail even more completely to give us any real emotion; or again as we pass from it to the sterner and more virile painting, the sweeter and more sincere work of Piero della Francesca, his master, all the delight we had found in Perugino's altar-piece seems to have faded away, and instead we see there just a facile reproduction of certain earlier pictures, finding in the St Michael, for instance, just a copy from the Albani altar-piece, a repetition that, if not quite a mannerism, yet is really about to become just that. And it is only perhaps after a long absence, when much of the achievement of Perugino has been forgotten, his endless repetition, that, coming into that great bare room at the National Gallery, which would make of even the most living picture just a specimen in a museum, in a way that no gallery of the Latin peoples seems able to do, all the sunlight, so shy in London at any time, seems to have gathered itself into that narrow space on the wall where Mary watched by three angels

MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AND TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL (National Gallery, London)

MADONNA AND CHILD

(PART OF NATIONAL GALLERY ALTAR-PIECE)

worships the little Child held by an angel, in a wide, sweet valley by the river on a day of spring, while St Michael stands on guard on the one side, and on the other Tobias passes by in conversation with St Raphael. Painted, as has been said, as an altar-piece for the Carthusian convent of Pavia, the entire work consisted of six compartments; only the three principal pieces are now in the National Gallery. Above these were three others: in the centre God the Father, still at the Certosa in its original place, and on the sides the Annunciation, as we see it in the Albani altar-piece, to the right Madonna, to the left the angel: but these two wings have been lost.

That dainty, effeminate, and yet sturdy figure of St Michael is the forerunner of a whole company of youths and captains, the serene warriors of the Cambio, which seem so charming, so unreal, and yet so characteristic of Perugino. And whether indeed Perugino was living at Florence or Perugia at this time, by the year 1500 he seems to have taken up his residence at Perugia, having agreed with the Priori to decorate the Cambio of that city —it would seem with no little gladness and

pride. And yet if such was really his aim, how far he has fallen short of it, how inadequate painting must ever be to teach us anything save the beauty of the world. It was just that, that Perugino beyond his fellows had been wise enough almost by chance, we may think, to remember; telling us of Umbria, the morning there and the evening and high noon, in many an old panel up and down Italy, in many a picture that brings to-day something of the humanism, the sweetness, and light of that Latin country into many a barbarian museum. And now, as a little philosopher, a mere didactic preacher, he forgets the world and fails to convince us of anything but his own misfortune. Yet artist as he was really in spite of his respectable intentions, as though for once flattered by the honour his own city, the people among whom he had grown up, had done him, he had decided to do just what they would wish, to teach them obvious things that they had known all their lives and failed to learn, to repeat these things over again since it pleased them. He has done what they wished, but has contrived, too, really to decorate the room, even to make it spacious

Alinari]

LUCIUS SICINIUS, LEONIDAS OF SPARTA, HORATIUS COCLES

(Cambio, Perugia)

Alinari]

FABIUS MAXIMUS, SOCRATES, NUMA POMPILIUS, FURIUS CAMILLUS, PITTACUS, TRAJAN

(Cambio, Perugia)

Alinari]

LUCIUS SICINIUS, LEONIDAS OF SPARTA, HORATIUS COCLES,
PUBLIUS SCIPIO, PERICLES, CINCINNATUS

and beautiful, only the handicap was too great, and he has failed to produce a masterpiece. To-day as you enter that somewhat gloomy chamber, so bare and yet so full of the fantastical thoughts of the Renaissance, it is the real Perugino you see, and in some way not quite explicable those unreal figures posing there as virtues and warriors seem his most characteristic work; true work of the Renaissance too, of the Renaissance as it was experienced in Umbria, less virile than the Florentine, less subtle and softer too, with a suggestion of the sanctuary about it, the quietude of a holy place, the languor of the Gregorian chant, the delicacy of the fine vestments and altar cloths; it is antiquity we see there with all the affectation, the daintiness, the make-believe of the Renaissance, with something of its naïve admiration at itself, and its whole-hearted worship of antique captains and old philosophies.[1] Vasari describes the work somewhat fully. "The compartments of the ceiling," he says, "he decorated with the seven planets, each drawn in a kind of chariot by different

[1] *Cf.* "The Cities of Umbria," Methuen, 1905, p. 211.

animals, according to the old manner; on the wall opposite to the door of the entrance he painted the Birth and Transfiguration[1] of Christ; and on a panel he painted S. Giovanni in the midst of other saints. On the side wall of the building Pietro then painted figures in his own manner: those on the one side represent Fabius Maximus, Socrates, Numa Pompilius, Furius Camillus, Pittacus,[2] Trajan, L. Sicinius, the Spartan Leonidas, Horatius Cocles, Publius Scipio,[3] the Athenian Pericles, and Cincinnatus. On the opposite wall are figures of the prophets: Isaiah, Moses, and Daniel namely; with David, Jeremiah, and Solomon; the master likewise added those of the Sibyl, the Erythræan, the Lybian, the Tiburtine, the Delphic, and the rest. Beneath each of these figures is a sentence in the manner of a motto, taken from the writings or sayings of the personage represented above, and appropriate in some sort to the place wherein the artist has painted it. In one of the ornaments of this work Pietro placed his

[1] Vasari says "Resurrection" in mistake.
[2] Vasari says "Pythagoras."
[3] Vasari says "Fabius Sempronius."

own portrait, which has a very animated appearance, and beneath it is written his name in the following manner." [1]

Certainly it may be said that what the Stanze of the Vatican are in the work of Raphael, the Cambio is in the work of Perugino. But they are no Romans nor Greeks, these fragile warriors with the sweet boyish or even girlish faces, the round limbs and delicate hands. They have never heard of Ares or Mars; to them the brightness of Apollo, the beauty of Aphrodite have not been revealed; only they have understood the beauty of the delicate wounded hands of Christ, the sorrowful dreams of Mary Madonna, the fatal and fantastic lives of the saints, the ecstasies of the mystics, the eloquence of the preachers. They have not been born into the world with the Aphrodite of Melos, the Mother of Love,

[1] Vasari says Pietro wrote his own name thus, but apparently it was his fellow-citizens who wrote this inscription.

"Petrus Perusinus egregius pictor,
Perdita si fuerat pingendo hic retulit artem;
Si nunquam inventa esset hactenus, ipse dedit.
Anno D.M.D."

but with Mary Madonna, Mother of God; and though God be Love and she His mother, it is of the salt of her tears they have tasted and not of the salt of the sea. They seem to cry for some memory of their greatness to linger with us on the way to death, and almost in pity we are eager to remember them. But indeed they have never existed, these delicate, sorrowful Christians that masquerade as Greeks and Romans; they are the dreams of a fortunate age in the midst of misfortune; they are pale sunbeams on a winter's day, ghosts of some golden age in heaven that never came to our earth; already they are fading on the wall, and even while we look they seem to pass away like some exquisite, fantastic dream. Endowed with all the ideal grace and humility of Christianity, they seem to tell us of an age of chivalry that never happened. Thermopylæ passed them by in a dream, Aspasia was but a vision seen in some convent on a day of spring, Hannibal is a tale that is told, and Carthage a city in a Book of Hours. If we think for a moment how differently Signorelli would have dealt with his ideas, how firmly and with a profound sincerity he would have excluded

from his work all trace of sentiment, and with a certain intellectual and spiritual grasp almost terrible in its power (and how far from the poetical dreams of Perugino) he would have evoked all the splendour of old time, not without a certain curiosity, a certain fantasy peculiar to his age, we shall understand not only how far two pupils of the same master may travel the one from the other, but something too it may be of Perugino's limitation, not here only, but in very much of the work that he was yet to do. And yet it may be that in a world so fierce, in a city so brutal as Perugia, the eyrie of the Baglioni, the shambles of the Oddi, people could only bear some such sentimental ideal dream of actual things, of things which had once been actual, of men that had once been living. Was it perhaps that they needed this over-sweetness to reconcile them to their own lives, always full of bloodshed and disaster? It is true that when love became too disastrous for S. Angela of Foligno, she fled away into the mystery of God: was this too but an expression of the mysticism of Umbria? To think so would perhaps be to assert that Perugino painted here only for his public.

But indeed I think he has worked here, if anywhere, really for himself, with a profound satisfaction, as though he had expressed himself at last: and he has painted his own face in the midst. For Pietro Vannucci was all his life a sort of spiritual rhetorician; it is one side of his character. There was nothing so splendid in all the old stories of the Prince of Life, but he has added to it as one who was a poet might strive to make a valiant tale more valiant by using words that were rare and beautiful, and in the life of Madonna too there is nothing sweet but he has made it sweeter; continually he has refined upon or added to the truth, till it seems too good to be true. He has stated mere facts nowhere in all his work but he has tried to save us and himself too from the consequence of it. How rugged and scornful and indifferent he looks in that portrait of himself that he has painted here, as it is said, at the request of the city. But in his heart he was a poet, and for that cause he could not be content with the mere truth that had come to him with all the mediocrity of the people still upon it. Remember too that it is not the fundamental truth of which he is con-

temptuous, but just hearsay things that he has striven too often in vain to express over again, anew as it were with an enthusiasm and sweetness they will not bear now. When he is dealing with truth itself, that he alone of all painters of his time has found the way to express, he adds nothing. There is no rhetoric in his landscapes, he has understood that nothing he can say is better than just what he has really seen, the vision of the world from Perugia, from Città della Pieve, from Montefalco, from Cortona, and from many a little city on the shores of Thrasymene. So he takes the knowledge that Piero had given him and develops it not as Signorelli has done, intellectually, but rather temperamentally, in a way entirely his own, applying perspective with all its intricate problems, its suggestion of music too, not to the works of man only but to the creation of God. How he has planned out heaven and earth in spaces of light, full of air and sunshine! And even as the understanding of just that is rather a secret of the emotion than of the intellect, so we shall do wrong I think if we consider his work as anything but an expression of emotion, of the senses rather

than of the intellect, the work of a man who was eager only for beauty, and whose intellect was without integrity, who cared little what he painted so that under his hands it passed into beauty. And for us at least, initiated as we are by our own souls into the genuine and lonely sorrows of the world, it is rather as the painter of Italy, of all that Italy means to us, than as a painter of religious pictures, that Perugino appeals to us, and in a sense that would make him one of the most religious painters of the world. For it is in the beauty of the world, its joyful summer fields, its uplifted hills and the soft sky which we have learned to love so passionately, that we find the best expression of all that we mean by religion. Not Paganism, but an apprehension of God in his unspoiled work, that even yet in some unaccountable way reminds us how inevitably of Him. And though there is little enough of that joy in the sunshine and the sky in those Cambio frescoes, it is in looking at them that we understand what it is that is so lovely, the unique delight, in Perugino's work, seeing that lacking it he is merely a charming painter who has lost himself in a sentimental dream.

VII

1500-1505

Those delicate warriors that stand at attention so languidly in the Cambio seem to have haunted Perugino for some time. If we find the first of them in the Bologna altar-piece, it is but others of the same company that appear as St Michael, for instance, in the Certosa picture now in the National Gallery, and in the *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin* which Perugino painted at Vallombrosa, as Vasari tells us, late in the year 1500, now in the Accademia, while the last of them lingers still in the altar-piece painted for S. Agostino in Perugia so late as 1521.

The picture of the *Assumption* is a fine piece of work in his more mannered style; above, God the Father, in a glory of cherubim with a worshipping angel on either side, blesses Madonna, who in mid-heaven gazes upward

seated on a cloud in a mandorla of cherubim, surrounded by four angels playing musical instruments, while two others are at her feet following her in her flight; below four saints with St Michael stand disconsolate. And indeed these four figures who look so languidly and with such unction, some towards Madonna and some into their own hearts, are but four more of the isolated figures of the Cambio. And yet in their sincerity, their fitness, how real they seem beside those dreamy Romans and Greeks. It is as though they were overcome by the unction of one of their own hymns, those early hymns of the Latin Church that by some magic not wholly Christian, but full of a sort of popular enthusiasm nevertheless, have forced the stately sonorous Latin words to rhyme, and almost to dance at last before God, who has really declared Himself at last as Love. And since He has for our sakes deigned to love an earthly woman, and thus to make alliance with us, a truce after all the ages of fear, treachery, and ill-will, it is necessary that we should be true in our allegiance; and so these monks and saints came into the world, slight flame-like figures with

Alinari]

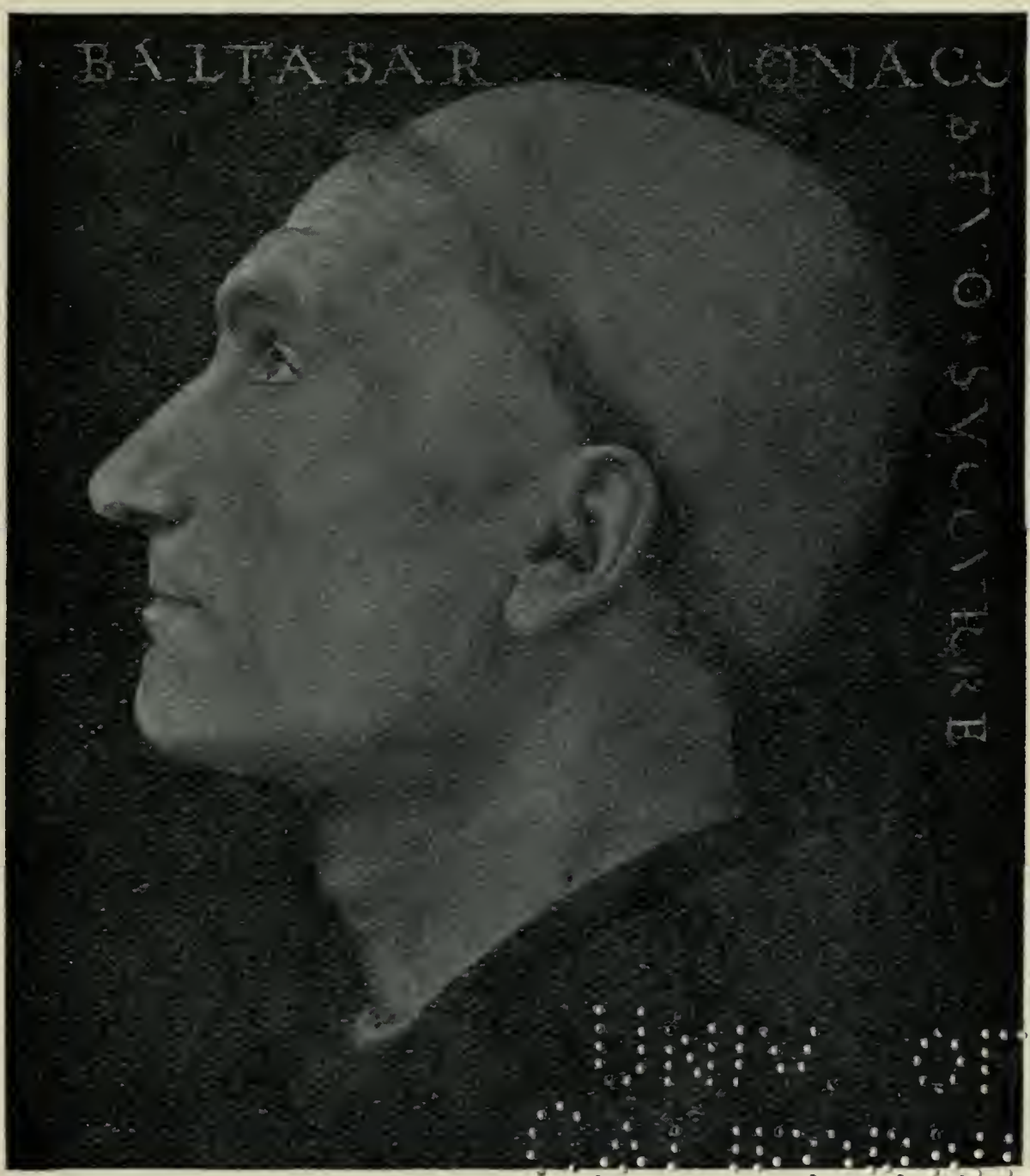
ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN, 1500

(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

only half the real nature of men, having sacrificed their chief attribute that they might become in due measure like to God, man's ambassadors in His presence, who have already caught something of His nature and are strangers to us ever after. And we are especially aware of this ideal grace that Perugino has given to all who come officially as it were into God's presence, if we compare with such a picture as this the two portraits that he painted about this time of the Abbate Baldassare and of Don Biagio Milanesi of the Vallombrosa, both now in the Accademia of Florence. For at last in these two portraits he has touched reality very successfully, and it may well be that some will consider them his greatest works. How simple they are, and full of life too, finding it beautiful in its reality just for a moment between two heart beats in the cloister. And though it is not in any ordinary human being, immersed in the affairs of life, full of thoughts of the world, that he has come at last to consider man, but even here too in people touched and transfigured a little by the simplicity, the chaste lowly ways of the monastery, it is perhaps the only way in which a

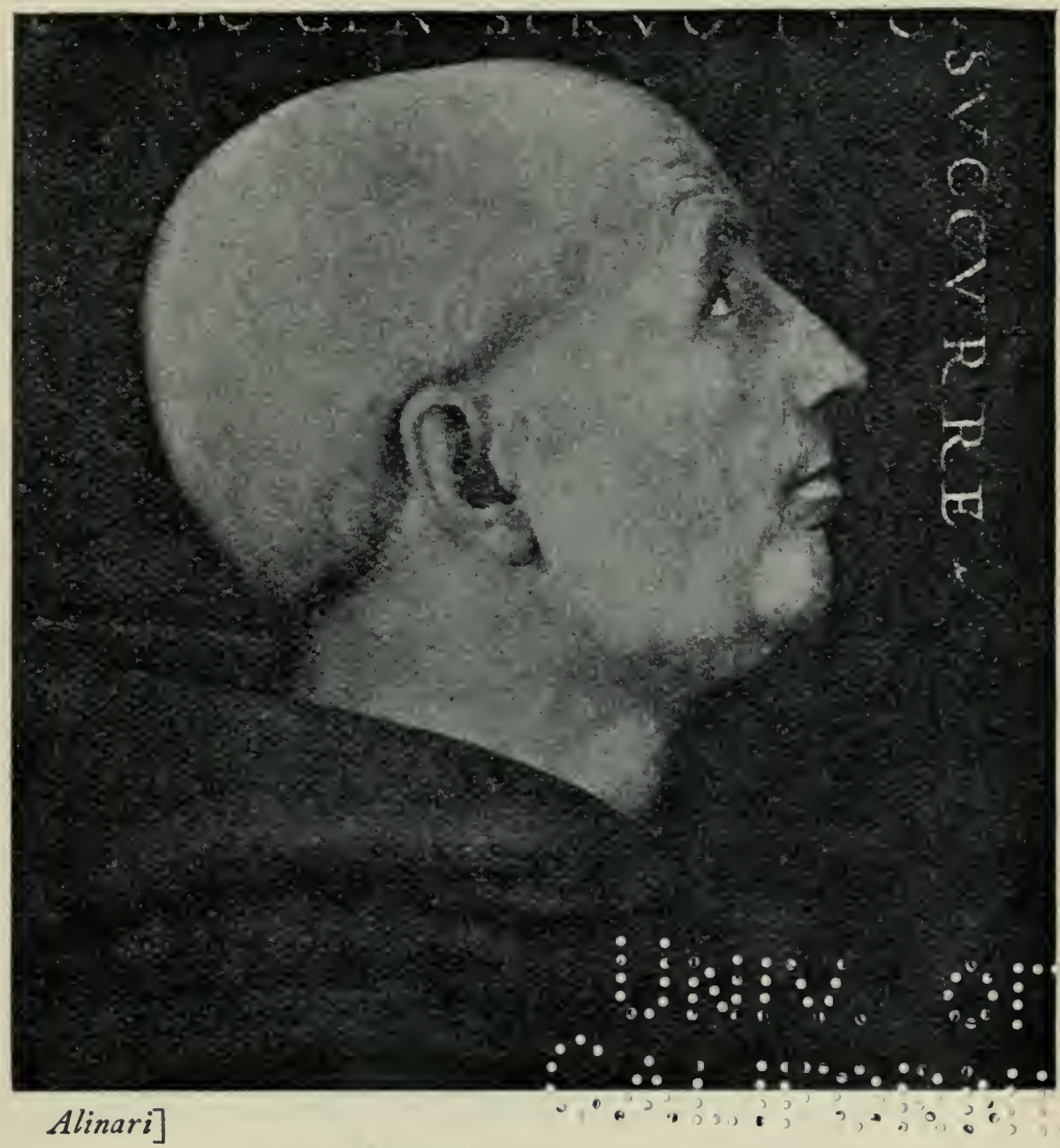
mind so affected, so shy of reality as Perugino's, could bear reality at all, save in inanimate things that are silent, and search out nothing, and speak only to the soul. The two portraits seem to show us how simply, how naïvely almost, Perugino approached anything he could not wholly transform with his own spirit, could not make his own, and endow with the emotions of his own mind. Is it for this reason that he has used almost no colour at all, he who was used to put the flowers to shame and had dressed the gods in all the colours of the rainbow? It is strange that after all the praise that has at last almost destroyed the reputation of Perugino and his pupil Raphael, we should return to them at last as portrait-painters with a sort of surprise.

And it may really have been about this time, while Perugino was in Perugia, at work on the frescoes of the Cambio, that the most beloved painter of Italy became his pupil. Whether indeed, as Morelli has suggested, Timoteo Viti was, after his father's death, Raphael's first master, no one will be ready to deny that Perugino sooner or later took the son of Giovanni Santi into his studio. Rumour tells



Anaerson]

ABATE BALDASSARRE (ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)



Alinari]

DON BIAGIO MILANESI (ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

us that the Daniel of the Cambio is the young Raphael, and whether this be so or not, it might seem that Raphael must have been in Perugia about this time, and being in Perugia he is not likely to have been elsewhere than in the studio of Perugino. Vasari says that Perugino loved him well; it is easy to believe it. His was one of those "unworldly types of character which the world is able to estimate." And if he came to Perugia, as we may believe, when he was about eighteen years old, in appearance, as we know from his own drawing in the galleries of the University of Oxford, somewhat stronger in mould than we have been led to believe, into what an eager, fierce life he had stepped from that quiet old hill city of Urbino, whose steep, wide streets and windy piazzas he seems to have forgotten so easily; so that it is ever afterwards only Umbria that we see in his pictures, the valley of Spoleto, with Foligno there in the valley and the Tiber winding towards Rome. And there were scenes too within those fierce old streets of Perugia that he was not to forget either. For after much fighting the Oddi had been thrown out of the city and the Baglioni were

masters; and for a time there was peace, and it may be it was then Raphael worked with Perugino and his pupils in the Cambio laboriously in the hot summer weather. But in August, Astorre Baglioni married himself amid every sort of festival and rejoicing to Lavinia Colonna, and the opportunity was seized by Grifonetto their cousin to seize the city for himself. Matarazzo tells us that Grifonetto lived in great magnificence, "kept many race horses, jesters, and other properties pertaining to a gentleman, even a lion; and all who went to the house compared it to a King's Court."

"In 1500, when the events about to be related took place," says Symonds, "Grifonetto was quite a youth. Being rich, handsome, and married to a young wife, Zenobia Sforza, he was the admiration of Perugia. He and his wife loved each other dearly, and how indeed could it be otherwise, since 'L'uno e l'altro sembravano dei angioli di Paradiso'? . . . The night of the 14th of August was finally set apart for the consummation of *il gran tradimento*: it is thus that Matarazzo always alludes to the crime of Grifonetto. . . . A heavy stone let fall into the courtyard of

Guido Baglioni's palace was to be the signal: each conspirator was then to run to the sleeping chamber of his appointed prey. . . . All happened as had been anticipated. . . . Astorre, who was sleeping in the house of his traitorous cousin Grifonetto, was slain in the arms of his young bride, crying, as he vainly struggled, 'unhappy Astorre, dying like a poltroon.' Simonetto flew to arms, exclaiming to his brother, 'Have no fear, Gismondo, my brother.' He too was soon despatched. Filippo da Braccio, after killing him, tore from a great wound in his side the still quivering heart, into which he drove his teeth with savage fury. Old Guido died groaning, and Gismondo's throat was cut while he lay holding back his face that it might be spared the sight of his own massacre. The corpses of Astorre and Simonetto were stripped and thrown naked into the streets. Men gathered round and marvelled to see such heroic forms with faces so proud and fierce even in death. . . . Meanwhile the rest of the intended victims managed to escape. At the same time Grifonetto's mother Atalanta, taking with her his wife Zenobia and the two young sons of

Gianpaolo . . . fled to her country-house at Landona. Grifonetto in vain sought to see her there. She drove him from her presence with curses for the treason and the fratricide that he had planned. It is very characteristic of these wild natures framed of fierce instincts and discordant passions, that his mother's curse weighed like lead upon the unfortunate young man. Next day, when Gianpaolo returned to try the luck of arms, Grifonetto, deserted by the companions of his crime and paralysed by the sense of his guilt, went out alone to meet him on the public place. The semi-failure of their scheme had terrified the conspirators: the horrors of that night of blood unnerved them. All had fled except the next victim of the feud. Putting his sword to the youth's throat, Gianpaolo looked into his eyes and said, 'Art thou here, Grifonetto? Go with God's peace, I will not slay thee, nor plunge my hand in my own blood as thou hast done in thine.' Then he turned and left the lad to be hacked in pieces by his guard. The untranslatable words which Matarazzo uses to describe his death are touching from the strong impression they convey of Grifonetto's

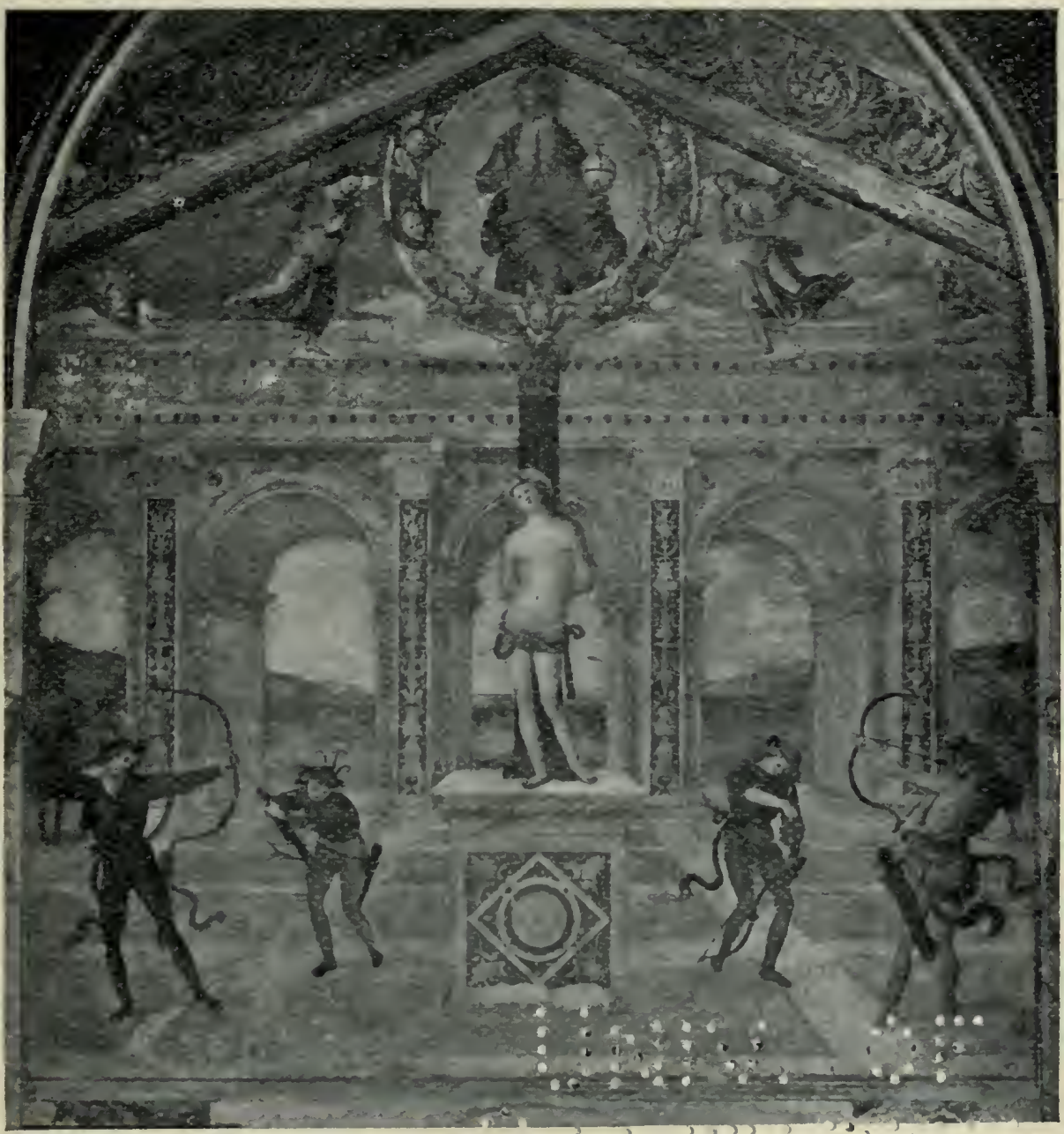
goodliness: Qui ebbe sua signoria sopra sua nobile persona tante ferita che suoi membra leggiador strie in terra—Here his lordship received upon his noble person so many wounds that he stretched his graceful limbs upon the earth. None but Greeks felt the charm of personal beauty thus. But while Grifonetto was breathing out his life upon the pavement of the piazza, his mother Atalanta and his wife Zenobia came to greet him through the awe-struck city. As they approached, all men fell aside and slunk away before their grief. None would seem to have had a share in Grifonetto's murder. Then Atalanta knelt by her dying son and ceased from wailing, and prayed and exhorted him to pardon those who had caused his death. It appears that Grifonetto was too weak to speak, but that he made a signal of assent and received his mother's blessing at the last."

Such was life often enough in Perugia, and it was such scenes that Perugino and Raphael must often have seen. It is said that the figure who holds the feet of the dead Christ in the *Entombment* by Raphael, now in the Borghese Gallery, but originally painted for

Atalanta Baglioni, is a portrait of Grifonetto. And we may well ask ourselves, remembering that such a desperate affair as that fight in Perugia was not an uncommon occurrence, whether the very fierceness and brutality of life in the city of his youth had not more than a little to do with the quietness, the immense peace of Perugino's pictures, in which, by a sort of reaction, he and the people too found a real relief from the vivid splendour and horror of their lives. And at this time Perugino was much in Perugia. In 1501, according to Mariotti, he was chosen one of the Priori of the city, and as such it was necessary for him to be in almost daily attendance there. A picture still in Perugia might seem to belong to that year, the double altar-piece that he painted for the convent of S. Francesco al Monte. Here he has painted Madonna, Mary Magdalen, St John, and St Francis round a monstrous wooden crucifix, and even the delicate landscape, of the Tiber between the low hills in a vista of the valley, cannot reconcile us to the horror of those terrible wounds and emaciated body; on the back of this strangely moving work is a *Corona-*

tion of the Virgin executed by his pupils. One other picture, no longer in Perugia, seems to me possibly to have been painted at this time—the *St Anne* at Marseilles. Originally painted for the convent of S. Anna, and later acquired by the church of S. Maria dei Fossi at Perugia, the picture is now at Marseilles, part of the stolen property France failed to return after the fall of Napoleon. Under a beautiful deep arch, on a throne, Madonna sits with Christ on her knees; behind St Anne stands, looking down in love upon them, while on the right of the throne stands Mary, the mother of St John, with her child in her arms, and behind St Joachim, the husband of St Anne, and at his feet St James, the brother of St John, a tiny child. On the left is St Mary, the mother of St James the Less, with her child on her breast; behind her is St Joseph, the protector of Madonna, and between them another child, St Joseph Justus—Joseph of Arimathæa—while on the steps of the throne in front, St Simon and St Thaddæus, two more children, embrace one another. Under the cornice of the pedestal of the throne Perugino has written his name as he generally seems to have done

in his Perugia pictures, Petrus de Chastro Plebis Pinxit. It is now too that we hear of a commission for a *Sposalizio* for the Cappella del Anello of the Duomo, and since we have gladly given the Caen picture to Lo Spagna, we must suppose this work was never carried out. Again, it is in this year we hear of a commission for a great altar-piece for S. Agostino, but the work was not done till later. The rest of his life is a kind of sunset, a fading repetition of all his former glory. He seems to have left Perugia in 1503, and to have gone it may be to Florence, at any rate we find him there in 1504, helping to choose the place where Michelangelo's *David* shall stand. There were present on this occasion, Leonardo, Lorenzo di Credi, Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, one of the della Robbia, and Davide Ghirlandajo. Perugino and his friends were out-voted and their opinion disregarded. And because of this perhaps he returned to his own land, to Umbria, famous now because of him. He went perhaps first to Perugia, and then at last to his birthplace, Città della Pieve, where he painted the *Adoration of the Magi*, almost for love, since he knew they



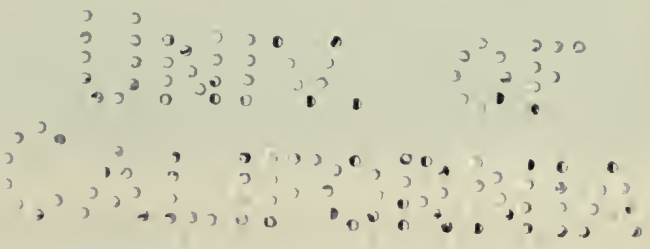
Alinari]

S. SEBASTIANO (S. Sebastiano, Panicale)

were too poor to pay the cost. You may see it to-day in all its ruined splendour: Mary and the Child in front of a beautiful wooden shed, St Joseph a little sorrowful beside them, and the three kings with all their retinue come to worship there, yes, in the valley of his birth-place at the foot of the hill. It is a landscape more fantastic than any he has painted before, and full of a new light; the setting sun streaming as from the gates of heaven down the long valley on that little company of people. It is a kind of allegory of his own life, that had been almost as splendid as a king's progress, and yet always full of devotion to so unperceived a thing as the earth, or the sky. Those fantastic creatures too in the background, dromedaries and camels and I know not what strange creatures, we seem to find in them already a suggestion of the exuberant story-telling of his pupil Pintoricchio. For he had other pupils beside Raphael, less perfect spirits, who failed always to understand. And if the pretty illustrative art of Pintoricchio could scarcely have come into existence without the work of Perugino, it had almost from the first disregarded every fundamental thing

in the work of the master. And having been made free of the earth and sky by Perugino, Pintoricchio without seriousness (maybe his life was too unhappy to permit him to find anything in nature but a distraction from it) played with the world and filled it with fantastic things, painting a child's story-book instead of life, till death grimly took him off in the midst of his fairy tales, his wife leaving him to starve in a locked room while she played with her lover.

In another little city, in Panicale, not far from Lago Trasimeno, between Perugia and Città della Pieve, we find another picture by him, a *St Sebastian*, painted it may be with the help of another of his pupils, Lo Spagna, for he lived there, and had already perhaps painted a fresco of *Madonna and Child* in S. Agostino in this city with the help of his master. Thus in the quiet country places he had loved, Perugino took refuge from the world in which he was almost outmoded, that was about to follow Michelangelo who had slighted him.



Lévy]

MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH TWO SAINTS

(VIENNA)

VIII

Isabella d'Este

But all Perugino's splendours were not finished, for in the very year in which he retired from Florence he received a letter from Isabella d'Este, Duchess of Mantua, begging him to paint for her a picture which she describes. Apparently she had long desired to possess a picture by the Umbrian master, whose work was well known and admired in Northern Italy, where his Certosa altar-piece, and work at Cremona and Bologna, had proclaimed his genius. Moreover, Perugino was especially well known to the Court of Mantua, for his wife Chiara was the daughter of Luca Fancelli, the architect who had been for more than forty years in the Gonzaga's service. Already in 1496, and again in 1500, Isabella had endeavoured to obtain a "poesia" for her collection from Perugino, and had written to

Giovanna della Rovere, sister of the Duke of Urbino, when Perugino was at work in the Marcha, to "use her influence" to this end with him. This failing, in 1502 she wrote to Francesco Malatesta, begging him to speak to Perugino on the subject. "Since we desire," she says,[1] "to have in our camerino paintings of allegorical subjects by the best painters in Italy, among whom Il Perugino is famous, we beg you to see him and find out through the intervention of some friend if he be willing to accept the task of painting a picture on a *storia* or invention which we will give him, with small-sized figures such as those which you have seen in our *camerino*. You will find out what payment he requires, and if he can set to work soon, in which case we will send him the measurements of the picture with our *fantasia*. And be sure to send me a prompt answer." But Malatesta was by no means encouraging, advising her rather to employ Sandro Botticelli or his pupil, Filippino Lippi. Isabella, however, was not to be denied; she promised the

[1] *Cf.* "Isabella d'Este," by Julia Cartwright, 1903, i. 329; also C. Yriarte, "Gazette des Beaux Arts," 1895.

painter one hundred ducats, twenty of which were to be paid in advance, and at last persuaded him to undertake to paint the composition she was to describe. "The Marchesa," we hear, "desires that the picture should be painted on canvas, like Mantegna's compositions, and recommends the master to use the greatest care and diligence ; but this, no doubt, will be superfluous [to mention], since her Excellency feels certain that Perugino will not wish his work to be unworthy of his fame, especially as it will have to bear comparison with Mantegna's paintings." It was not a Madonna or a Holy Family that Isabella desired, but something in the manner of the *Apollo and Marsyas,* a battle between Love and Chastity; Pagan in the manner of the Renaissance, full of a kind of Romance.

"My poetic invention," she writes[1] in the course of her instructions, "which I wish to see you paint, is the Battle of Love and Chastity —that is to say, Pallas and Diana fighting against Venus and Love. Pallas must appear almost to have vanquished Love. After break-

[1] *Cf.* Julia Cartwright, op. cit. 331-2. Yriarte, "Gazette des Beaux Arts," 1895.

ing his golden arrows and silver bow and flinging them at her feet, she holds the blindfolded boy with one hand by the handkerchief which he wears over his eyes, and lifts her lance to strike him with the other. The issue of the conflict between Diana and Venus must appear more doubtful. Venus's crown, garland, and veil will only have been slightly damaged, while Diana's raiment will have been singed by the torch of Venus, but neither of the goddesses will have received any wound. Behind these four divinities, the chaste nymphs in the train of Pallas and Diana will be seen engaged in a fierce conflict—in such ways as you can best imagine—with the lascivious troops of fauns, satyrs, and thousands of little loves. These last will be smaller than the god Cupid, and will carry neither gold bows nor silver arrows, but darts of some baser material, either wood or iron if you please. In order to give full expression to the fable, and to adorn the scene, the olive tree sacred to Pallas will rise out of the ground at her side, with a shield bearing the head of Medusa, and the owl which is her emblem will be seen in the branches of the tree. At the side of

Venus her favourite myrtle tree will flower, and to heighten the beauty of the picture a landscape should be introduced with a river or the sea in the distance. Fauns, satyrs, and loves will be seen hastening to the help of Cupid—some flying through the air, others swimming on the waves or borne on the wings of white swans, but all alike eager to take part in the Battle of Love. On the banks of the river or on the sea-shore, Jupiter will be seen in his character as the enemy of chastity, changed into the bull that carries off the fair Europa. Among the gods attending on him, Mercury will appear flying like an eagle over Glaucera, the nymph of Pallas, who will bear a small cestus engraved with the attributes of the goddess; Polyphemus, the one-eyed Cyclops, will be seen chasing Galatea; Phœbus in pursuit of Daphne, who is already changing into a laurel; Pluto carrying off Persephone to the infernal realm, and Neptune about to seize Coronis at the moment when she is metamorphosed into a raven. I send you all these incidents in a small drawing, which may help you to understand my explanations. If you think there are too many figures, you can

reduce the number, as long as the chief ones remain—I mean Pallas, Diana, Venus, and Love—but you are forbidden to introduce anything of your own invention." It was thus the great religious painter of the age was asked to paint a subject which could never have suited a genius so mystical, so little interested in action. He finished the work, however, and we may see it to-day in the Louvre. Full of a sort of movement, and with something of his old beauty of space and light and air, its mere carelessness, its mixed perspective, for instance, show us how little he cared for work into which he was forbidden to put "anything of his own invention."

It was at this time too that he paid another visit to Florence, meeting there Lorenzo di Credi on a matter of business in the Duomo, and remaining, a little unfortunately we may think, to finish the work of Filippino Lippi, lately dead, in the SS. Annunziata. Vasari has left us a vivid account of this unfortunate journey and of his meeting with Michelangelo. Coloured though Vasari's account is by his very obvious Florentinism, his worship of Florentine artists, and especially of Michelangelo, we may yet

discern perhaps under the mere hostility of much of that which he says, something of the true state of affairs, something of the reaction that was already setting in against the work of Perugino and all that it represented in Italian painting.

"Pietro had worked so much," says Vasari, "and had received such perpetual demands for his works, that he frequently used one and the same object or figure several times in different pictures; his theory and mode of treatment in art had, indeed, become so mannered, that he gave all his figures the same expression. Now Michelangelo was, by this time, coming forward to his place, and Pietro earnestly desired to see his works, because of the great praise bestowed on them by artists,[1] but as he perceived that the great-

[1] Vasari's chronology is altogether at fault in the life of Perugino. Pietro must have known something of Michelangelo's work, since he had already voted in the decision as to the position in the Piazza Signoria to be given to the *David*. Perhaps Vasari refers to Michelangelo's work in painting; in which case perhaps it is the tondo of *Madonna*, painted for Agnolo Doni between 1498 and 1504, now in the Tribune, that Perugino was anxious to see.

ness of the name which he had himself acquired in all places began to be obscured by others, he sought much to lower and mortify all who were then labouring to distinguish themselves by the caustic severity of his remarks. This caused him to receive various offences from different artists, and Michelangelo told him publicly that he was but a dolt and blockhead in art. But Pietro could not endure so grievous an affront, and the two artists presented themselves before the Council of Eight, whence Perugino withdrew, however, with very little honour." And it was at this time, Vasari tells us, that the Servite monks of Florence, wishing to have completed the altar-piece, begun in 1503 by Filippino Lippi and left unfinished at his death in 1505, sent for Perugino and commissioned him to do the work. For, he adds, these monks "desired to have the picture for their high altar painted by some master of renown, and had indeed given the commission to Filippino Lippi on account of the departure of Leonardo da Vinci to France; but the former, when he had completed the half of one out of the two pictures of which the altar-piece was to be composed, departed

to another life, whereupon the monks, moved by the faith they had placed in Pietro, confided the whole work to his care. In this painting, wherein Filippino had begun to represent the Deposition of Christ from the Cross, that master had finished the upper part, where Nicodemus is lowering the body; Pietro therefore continued the work by painting the lower part, the swooning of our Lady namely, with certain other figures. And as this work was to consist of two pictures, the one to be turned towards the choir of the monks, and the other towards the body of the church, the monks proposed to have the *Deposition* towards the choir, with an *Assumption of the Virgin* towards the church; but Pietro executed the latter in so ordinary a manner that they determined to have the *Deposition* in front, and the *Assumption* towards the choir. . . . I find it related that when the painting was first uncovered all the new artists censured it greatly, principally because Pietro had again adopted the same figures that had been previously painted in other of his works, for which his friends reproached him not a little, declaring that he had taken no pains, but, whether

induced by avarice or by the desire to spare his time, had departed from his usual good manner; to all which Pietro replied, 'I have painted in this work the figures that formerly you commended, and that once pleased you greatly; if they now displease you and you no longer extol them, what can I do?' This did not prevent many from assailing him sharply with satirical verses and offending him publicly in various ways; wherefore, having now become old, he left Florence altogether and returned to Perugia." And indeed Morelli tells us that "but for these offences, Pietro would seem to have disposed his affairs for passing the remainder of his days in Florence, where he had also purchased a burial-place for himself and his descendants in the Church of the Annunziata." Of these two pictures, the former is in the Accademia, the latter in the Church of the Annunziata dei Servi. In the former, full of extraordinary movement in its upper part, the work of Filippino Lippi, where Christ is lifted from the cross by three men full of energy and vitality, a little fantastic and flamboyant, a little excessive too, for it has led the painter

to leave certain bands of linen fluttering from the Cross in the wind, we find the soft, quiet work of Perugino below, in the group of women supporting the Blessed Virgin, a kneeling golden-haired Magdalen with two male figures, perhaps St John and St Joseph of Arimathea. Something, however, of the dramatic energy of Filippino seems to have touched Perugino for a moment when he painted the Magdalen, who kneels there full of distraction and terror, with dry eyes.

The *Assumption*, however, is not a good picture in spite of the care that Perugino seems to have spent upon it; we seem to discern there all his faults without anything of that spaciousness, the charm of devotion, the beauty of the open air, that save so much of his work from mediocrity or a charge of over-sweetness, of sentimentalism. The likeness to the *Ascension* now at Lyons is marked, and wherever indeed this picture differs in intention from it, it is the more feeble.

Perhaps because of those satirical verses, perhaps because it was almost his home, Perugino returned to Perugia in 1506, where we find his name on the roll of the guild of

painters. He seems to have contented himself for a time in transacting business, collecting such monies as were still owing to him from his clients, the city of Perugia among them. And then in 1507 he received a commission from the executors of a certain Giovanni Schiavone, a master carpenter of Perugia, for an altar-piece for the Church of S. Maria Nuova dei Servi. He finished this work within the year, and to-day, after passing through many hands, it hangs in the National Gallery. In a landscape fainter than usual, Madonna with her little Son stands on a sort of terrace surrounded by a low stone parapet, between St Jerome and St Francis, while above two seraphim hold a crown over her head, as though to relieve her, who has known the weight of a hundred crowns, of the heaviness of it. It has been said of this picture that "it displays in perfection that quality of tone in which the master stands unsurpassed; and the rich and liquid but subdued colour is steeped in a transparent atmosphere of pale golden glow." And indeed it is extraordinary to find the man who had just finished a picture so feeble as the *Assumption*, painting a thing so full of light, so full of the

MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH S. JEROME AND S. FRANCIS (National Gallery)

MADONNA AND CHILD (National Gallery)

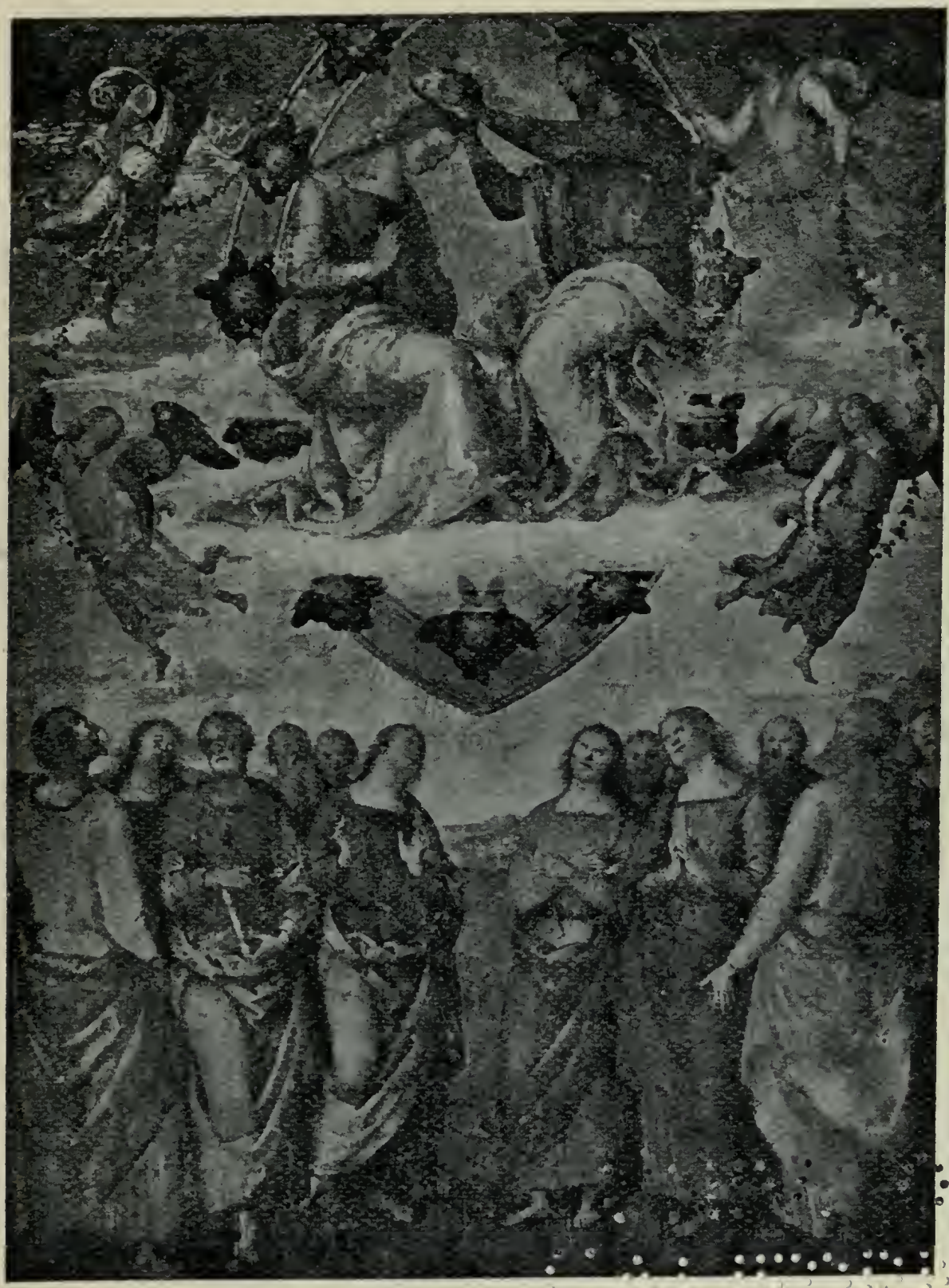
living sun of Umbria as this altar-piece. However fantastic it may seem, we need some such explanation as Mr Williamson offers us in his book on Perugino, to wit, that Perugino's "studies and cartoons were still in Florence *en route* for Perugia, and that in their absence he was compelled to design a work of unusual character, and on original lines," to explain the sudden beauty of this work after so much that was almost mediocre.

About this time we hear of Perugino in Foligno, where his work in the old Church of Annunziata has been destroyed, and then quite suddenly it seems he is ordered to Rome by Pope Julius II. to paint in the Vatican.

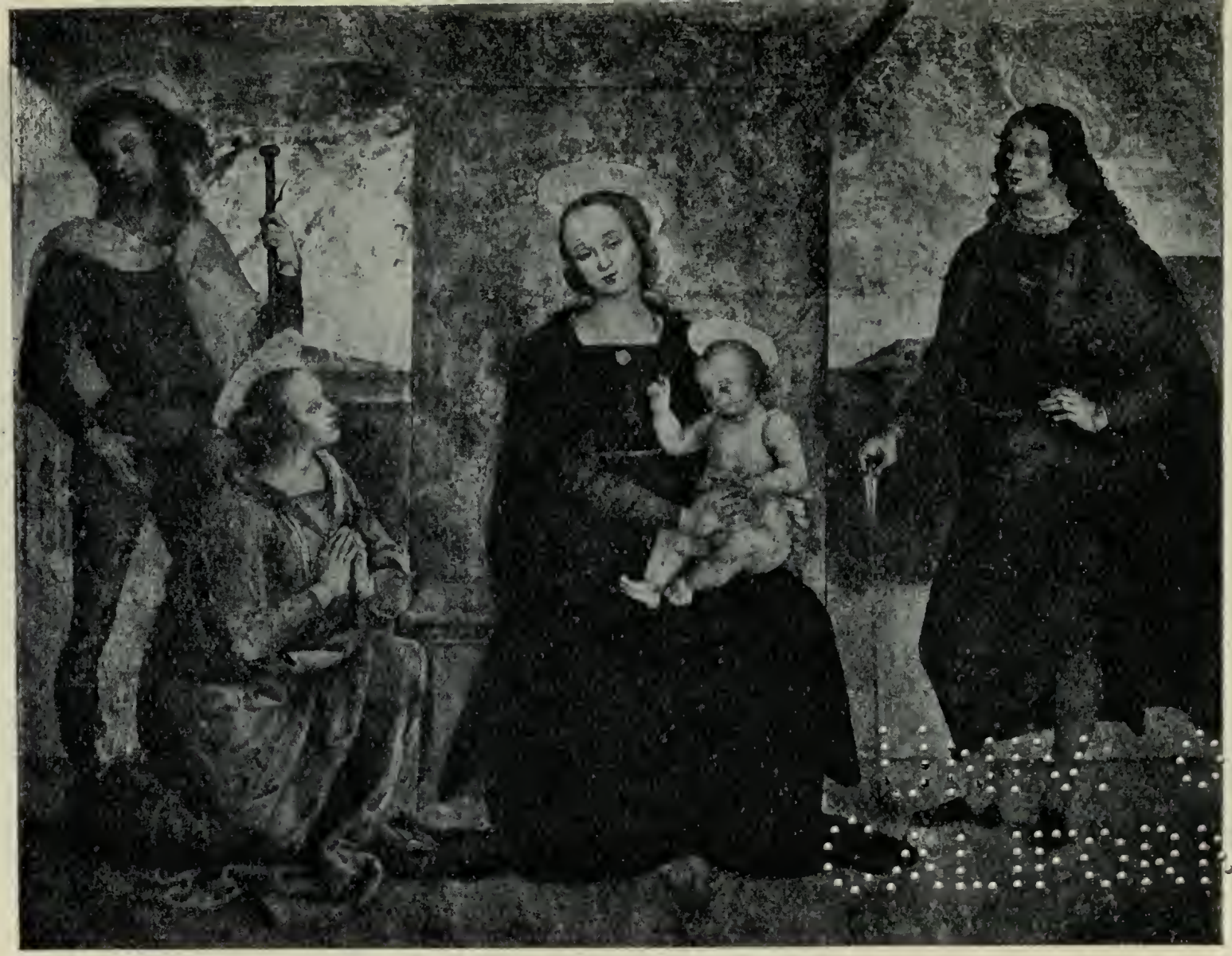
IX

Last Works and Death

And so even as it had been in Rome in the service of the Pope, in the Vatican, that the art of Perugino, that Umbrian art, full of the mystery of sunshine, had first dawned upon the world, so it was in Rome in the service of another Pope, in the Palace of the Vatican too, though not in the Sixtine Chapel, that his work fades away, there in the Camera dell' Incendio, a mere decoration over the frescoes of his most famous pupil. And it was really through his own discouragement and decrease that in this instance at any rate he was able to be of service to Italian art. For it is generally supposed that he painted other ceilings too besides that which remains to us, spared by Raphael, then just twenty-five years old; but of these no trace remains to us, hidden as they are by the glory of that pupil



Alinari]
CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)



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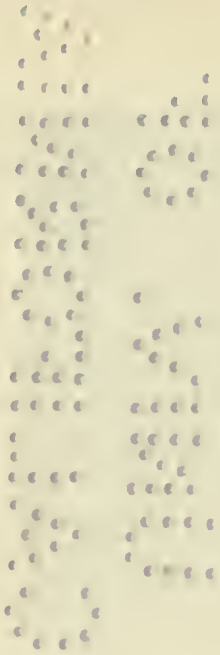
MADONNA AND CHILD (Duomo, Perugia)

Anderson]

IL PRESEPIO (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)



Alinari]

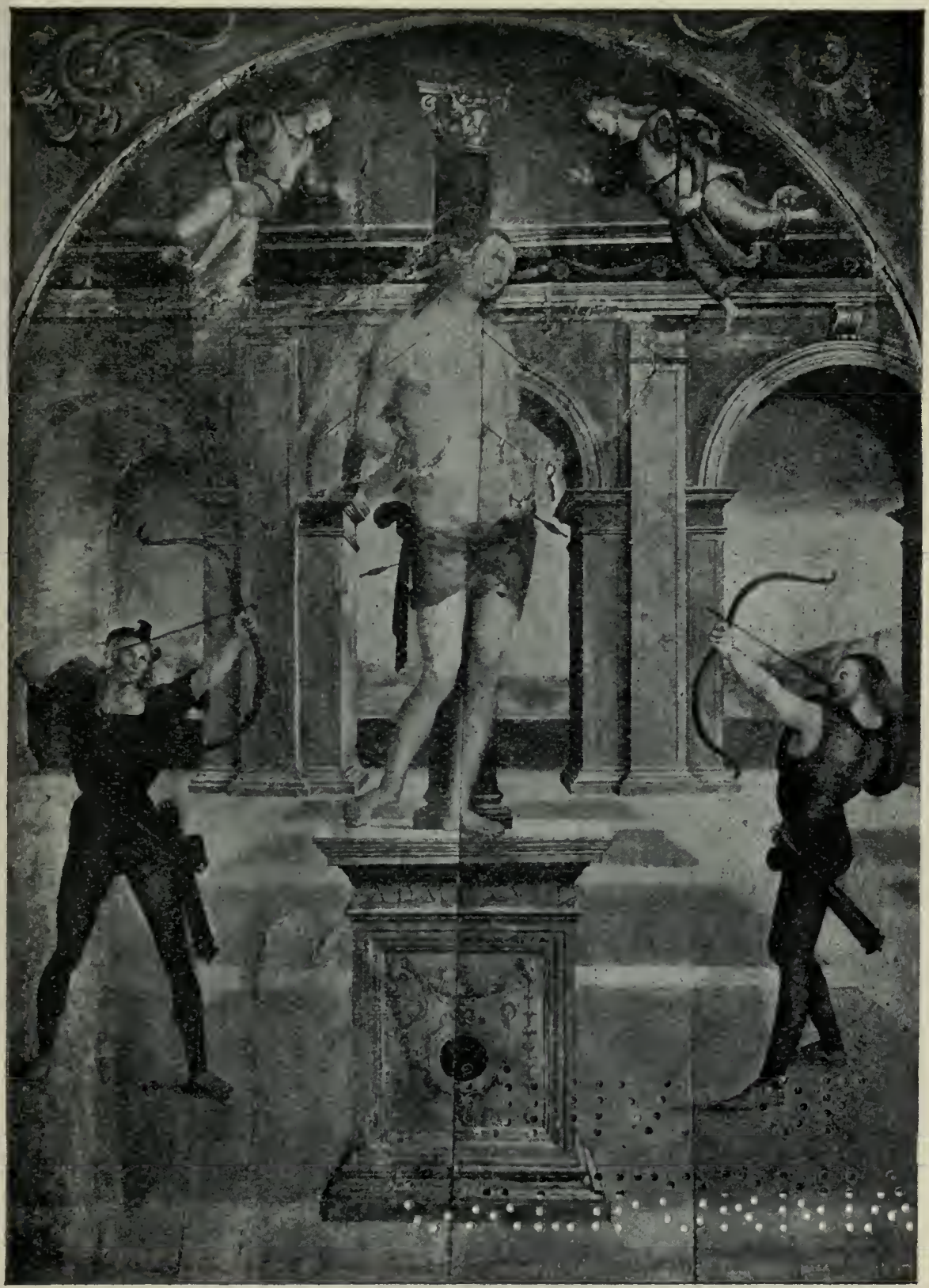
ADORATION OF THE MAGI (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)

of his who was never able altogether to forget him.

We catch a glimpse of him in Rome, dining in the house of Bramante with Luca Signorelli and Pintoricchio in the commentary of Caporali to the work on Architecture by Giovanni Baptista Vetruvius;[1] but whether he did other work in Rome, or whether, outworked and defeated at last, really an old man, he returned to Perugia, we do not know. It seems rather that he set out in the company of Signorelli and Pintoricchio for Umbria, staying a little at Assisi perhaps, to paint a *Crucifixion*, now destroyed by earthquake and vandalism, over the eastern porch of the Porziuncula, that holy place which St Francis built with his own hands, and over which an immense church has risen in which, as in a casket, you may still find that very precious relic of the Middle Age, the very stones that the feet of the little poor man have trod, vanishing fragment by fragment beneath the kisses of the faithful. Almost certainly it was at this time that he went to Siena, painting there a picture for the family of Vieri in the Church of S. Francesco, but of

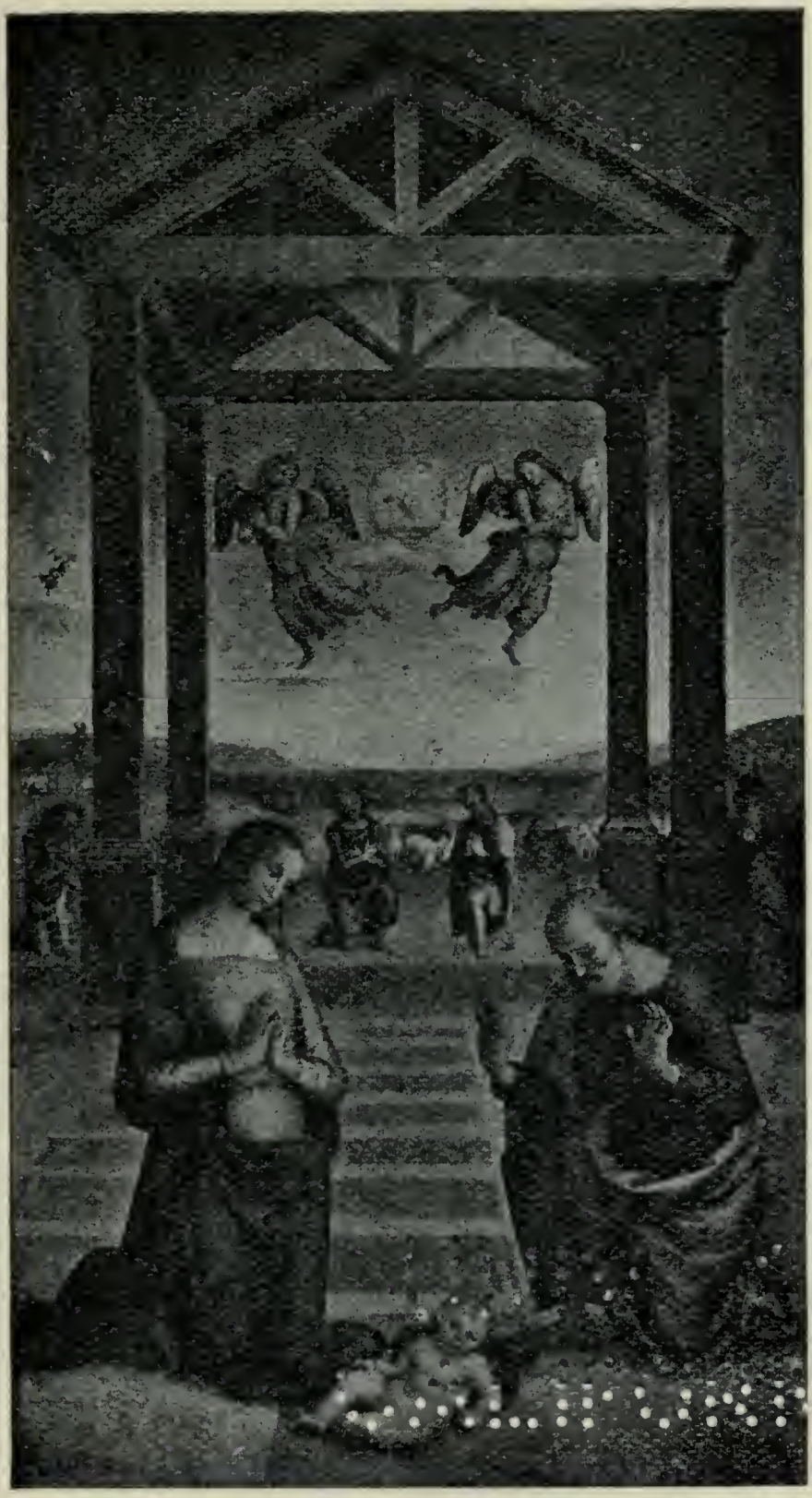
[1] Quoted at length in Vermiglioli's "Pintoricchio."

this only a fragment remains, no longer in Siena. In 1502, however, he painted in the Church of S. Agostino in that city a *Crucifixion* for the altar of the chapel of Prince Chigi; but all vitality has departed from his work, so that if it were not for the landscape perhaps, we might think it just a school piece by one of his almost innumerable pupils. From Siena we are told that he went to Florence, and however this may be, in 1512 he was back in Perugia, buying there land and houses. He seems to have worked in the country round about, at Bettona, for instance, and at Trevi, at Città della Pieve, his birthplace, and at Spello. What remains of his work at Bettona would lead us to believe that for once he had departed there from his tradition, from what had become a tradition with him, and had permitted himself just for a moment to paint in a new manner, so that there is something very like to a real study from life in the strong and beautiful figure that towers there as Madonna della Misericordia, with man and woman in the fold of her garment as it were, and in the St Antony at whose feet kneels, as it is said, Boto da Maraglia, who commissioned this work. In



Anderson]

S. SEBASTIANO, 1518 (PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)



Anderson]

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

(PINACOTECA, PERUGIA)

Alinari]

ADORATION OF THE MAGI, 1521
(S. Maria delle Latrine, Trevi)

the same year, as in the year following, we hear of him at Città della Pieve, where at that time and in 1517 he painted in all five pictures, of which little can be said; they are full of the ineffectual grace, the grimacing sentimentalism, the charm that has become a mere mannerism, so characteristic of his later work. And yet in the *Deposition from the Cross* in the Church of the Servites some have found a real and sincere loveliness, a profound pathos too in that little group of holy women that surrounds the Virgin, which is almost all that remains of the fresco.[1]

In 1518 Perugino was back again in Perugia painting a *St Sebastian* for the Church of S. Francesco al Ponte. This almost spoiled work is in the gallery at Perugia; it is perhaps less mannered than much of his work at this time, yet far below his earlier paintings: it bears the date on the pedestal of the column to which St Sebastian is bound. And indeed it might seem that many an old picture up and down Umbria and in Perugia itself passed under his name at this time for which it were almost a

[1] *Cf.* Broussolle, "Pélerinages Ombriens," p. 271; "Cities of Umbria," p. 216.

crime to hold him accountable. He seems to have manufactured these things—there is really no other name for it—to meet a demand, and it may be too to earn money. And so for two years we lose sight of him altogether, and though it may be he was busy during this time with the great altar-piece for S. Agostino in Perugia, ordered in 1512, and now scattered over France, at Lyons, at Toulouse, at Grenoble and Nantes, while part of it still remains in S. Francesco at Perugia, it might seem also that he was busy with that business of his, in which so many mediocre painters seem to have been employed in making great religious pictures. In 1521 we find him painting at Spello, in the same mechanical way, and at Trevi too, and at last in that year finishing the work of his pupil Raphael, then so famous, at S. Severo, an early work in which much of the very thought of Perugino may be seen, in the sensitive work of the young Raphael, always so easily influenced and so loyal to one master at least.

And while thus completing the work of one whom he seems to have loved, who was so lately dead, Perugino was himself not far from death, for though we find him at work

Anderson]
MADONNA AND CHILD (S. MARIA MAGGIORE, SPELLO)

Anderson]

PIETÀ, 1521 (S. Maria Maggiore, Spello)

Anderson]

MADONNA AND SAINTS (S. AGNESE, PERUGIA)

again in 1522 painting the *Transfiguration*, now in the Perugia gallery, for S. Maria Nuova, and the frescoes in the little Nunnery of S. Agnese that have faded so strangely among the flowers and the herbs of that tiny, silent place, a few pictures perhaps now in the Pinacoteca of Perugia and the great Fontignano fresco that shines so dimly in the National Gallery, death came to him, as it is said, in the plague of 1524. A certain mystery shrouds his burial and all concerning it. Vasari, who here at least we might think could scarcely speak less than the truth, says he was "honourably buried at Castello della Pieve"; but others assert that he died at Fontignano, and refusing the last sacraments of the Church, was buried in unconsecrated ground; and this gossip has been used to prove Perugino's irreligion. It might seem that any such assertion is scarcely worth combating, since no man so eagerly antagonistic to Christianity, so strong a rebel as to refuse in his last helplessness the ministrations of the priest, the comfortable words of those who had always, as the world believed, possessed the words of life, would have devoted the whole of his life to

that service, so that in all his work there are scarcely five pictures which do not in some sort repeat her message and have not stood on her altars, or been worshipped on the walls of the temples she has built for God and man to come together. Nor is it likely that a fanatic atheist would have so often received commissions from religious orders, or devout persons, or have been permitted to paint in the sanctuary of St Francis. That he died as he had lived, a son of the Catholic Church, whose work he had done so successfully, that he was honourably buried at the last, seem necessary to be believed, and since Vasari expressly states thus much, there appears to be but little ground for any doubt about it.

CONCLUSION

In thinking of the work of Perugino, so much beloved in his day and in ours, we may ask ourselves to define if we can what it really is that still holds us so surely when much of the work of Raphael even, and certainly of Pintoricchio, fails to give us any emotion. What is it then that Perugino has been able to do that almost every other painter of his school has failed in attempting or has been able to do only because of him? And we find, I think, after due consideration that it is the space and air, the sky, the landscapes in his work that move us, and scarcely ever the figures at all; and yet sometimes the people who live so quietly, so restfully, almost without movement, in the far smiling valleys, the beautiful evenings, the cool dawns, are involved too in the magic of his dream, of a dream that seems for once to have come true. In the *Delivery of the Keys to St Peter* in the Sixtine

Chapel for instance, there seems to be almost as much life and delight in the figures as in the landscape or the sky that through the arches beckon us somehow, someway, toward heaven. But this achievement is so rare in his work that we might say almost that this is the only example of it.

For indeed the real achievement of his life had too little to do with the human form, contenting itself as it did with a sort of music, the effect of music at any rate composed with space, so that what we see in his pictures, that exquisite grave and happy land of Umbria, moves us as the plain-song does, as the best religious music can do, quite apart from the words, to a real religious emotion, in which we identify ourselves with it and with the universal life, whose rhythm we seem to have overheard for a moment during an interval of particular silence, or in some fortunate hour when the details of life give way, and our souls already seem to be attuned to the solemn and glad movement of eternity. And it is just this extraordinary clairvoyance, as we might say, to something that is always present in the world, but present in no satisfying

quantity, that makes Perugino's work, beyond that of any other Italian painter, beyond that of any painter whatever, so religious in its effect. For he makes us captive to the eternal firmament, and confounds us with our God. Nor do I suggest that in any other sense Perugino is a religious painter: for that he painted religious subjects is nothing to the point; his subjects scarcely, if at all, enter into our consideration; it is something that we divine there that belongs to the manner of his work and to its intention that gives us this emotion, that thrusts this mood upon our hearts, and not the Madonna who smiles so fantastically or the angels who a little too exquisitely perhaps carry out some beautiful ordained ritual.

He has shown us too the earth from which we are sprung, and has certainly loved it as no other Italian who was a painter has dared to do. And thus he becomes valuable to us as the first painter of landscape, often no ideal world of woods and water and mountain, but of the real country about his home, the valleys of Umbria, so that without extravagance we might call many of his pictures a view from

Montefalco, a sunset beside the Tiber, or noontide in a valley, or dawn among the hills. And all this world he has seen as it really is, fulfilled with a sort of beatitude, that seems to betray the presence of some deity and to remind us of the first footsteps of man. And it is there if anywhere that the real "subject," as we say, of his pictures lies; it is this world that he has painted for himself, and the more obvious scene of the Crucifixion or the Birth of Christ to the order of those who had forgotten, or who maybe, in spite of Petrarch or Alberti and all those great spirits of the Renaissance, had never learned to look across the valleys and the hills, and in the shadow of the day as it passes to find God who still walks in His garden.

Perugino was not a sentimental painter, but he had many limitations, and he was careless and merely practical, especially in his later years, about those things for which he seems to have cared little enough. It was no sentimentalist certainly who painted the portraits of Francesco delle Opere, of Alessandro Braccesi, of Dom Balthazar and Dom Blasio, and last of all of himself, for these works are

among the most vital and truthful of that age, and as we may remind ourselves, sentimentality is ever an evasion of, an excuse from, the truth.

Merely practical about those things for which he seems to have cared little enough, I said, and it is that practical ability that has given us so many of the religious compositions that are sentimental and almost nothing else — those figures that, so tearfully, so foppishly, without energy and sincerity carry out the accustomed devotions. For a people continually engaged in bloodshed, in brutal action, in the tiring pursuit of other men's goods, in possessing themselves of everything, are often sentimental enough, and at least pleased with the sentimentality, the weakness of women, of all those perhaps who do not engage in action, the merely bodily energy of an age that had not yet understood itself. Well, it was for these people that Perugino's saints and Madonnas, and Crucifixions and religious compositions generally, were painted, and he pleased them readily enough, and not without understanding; yet he failed after all to understand that the basis of all art was just

life, that without that any profound and living beauty was impossible, and that the most perfect expression of life was the human body, which he has painted to the satisfaction, it may be, of his clients in an age of war, but really with no idea of movement, so that there is no vitality at all in his figures, nor is there a figure in all his work that has been painted for its own sake.

Thus it is at last as a landscape painter and as a poet or mystic that Perugino appears to us, achieving his end not by means of those clouds on clouds of saints, but by a marvellous attention to the aspect and beauty of the world. The most religious painter in Italy, in the whole world, he has brought us this emotion not for any moral reason, as we have come to use the phrase, but for its own sake, because he has heard a bird sing, and has desired to realise his own excitement therefor, because he has watched the evening in the valleys among the flowers, or the trees by the river, or heard and loved the silence of the dawn, and known the beauty of the world, the loveliness of the Garden of God.

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