

MY *Fine Art* STORY BOOK

VOLUME ELEVEN

COMPILED BY MARLENE PETERSON

My *Fine Art* Story Book

Volume Eleven



Stories of Artists and Fine Art
Pieces for the Young Reader

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

Libraries of Hope

My Fine Art Story Book
Volume Eleven

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Knights of Art

Part Two




Visitation
Ghirlandaio

Domenico Ghirlandaio

1448-1494, Italy

Ghirlandaio! what a difficult name that sounds to our English ears. But it has a very simple meaning, and when you understand it the difficulty will vanish.

It all happened in this way. Domenico's father was a goldsmith, one of the cleverest goldsmiths in Florence, and he was specially famous for making garlands or wreaths of gold and silver. It was the fashion then for the young maidens of Florence to wear these garlands, or '*ghirlande*' as they were called, on their heads, and because this goldsmith made them better than any one else they gave him the name of Ghirlandaio, which means 'maker of garlands,' and that became the family name.

When the time came for the boy Domenico to learn a trade, he was sent, of course, to his father's workshop. He learned so quickly, and worked with such strong, clever fingers, that his father was delighted.

'The boy will make the finest goldsmith of his day,' he said proudly, as he watched him twisting the delicate golden wire and working out his designs in beaten silver.

So he was set to make the garlands, and for a while he was contented and happy. It was such exquisite work to twine into shape the

graceful golden leaves, with here and there a silver lily or a jewelled rose, and to dream of the fair head on which the garland would rest.

But the making of garlands did not satisfy Domenico for long, and like Botticelli he soon began to dream of becoming a painter.

You must remember that in those days goldsmiths and painters had much in common, and often worked together. The goldsmith made his picture with gold and silver and jewels, while the painter drew his with colours, but they were both artists.

So as the young Ghirlandaio watched these men draw their great designs and listened to their talk, he began to feel that the goldsmith's work was cramped and narrow, and he longed for a larger, grander work. Day by day the garlands were more and more neglected, and every spare moment was spent drawing the faces of those who came to the shop, or even those of the passers-by.

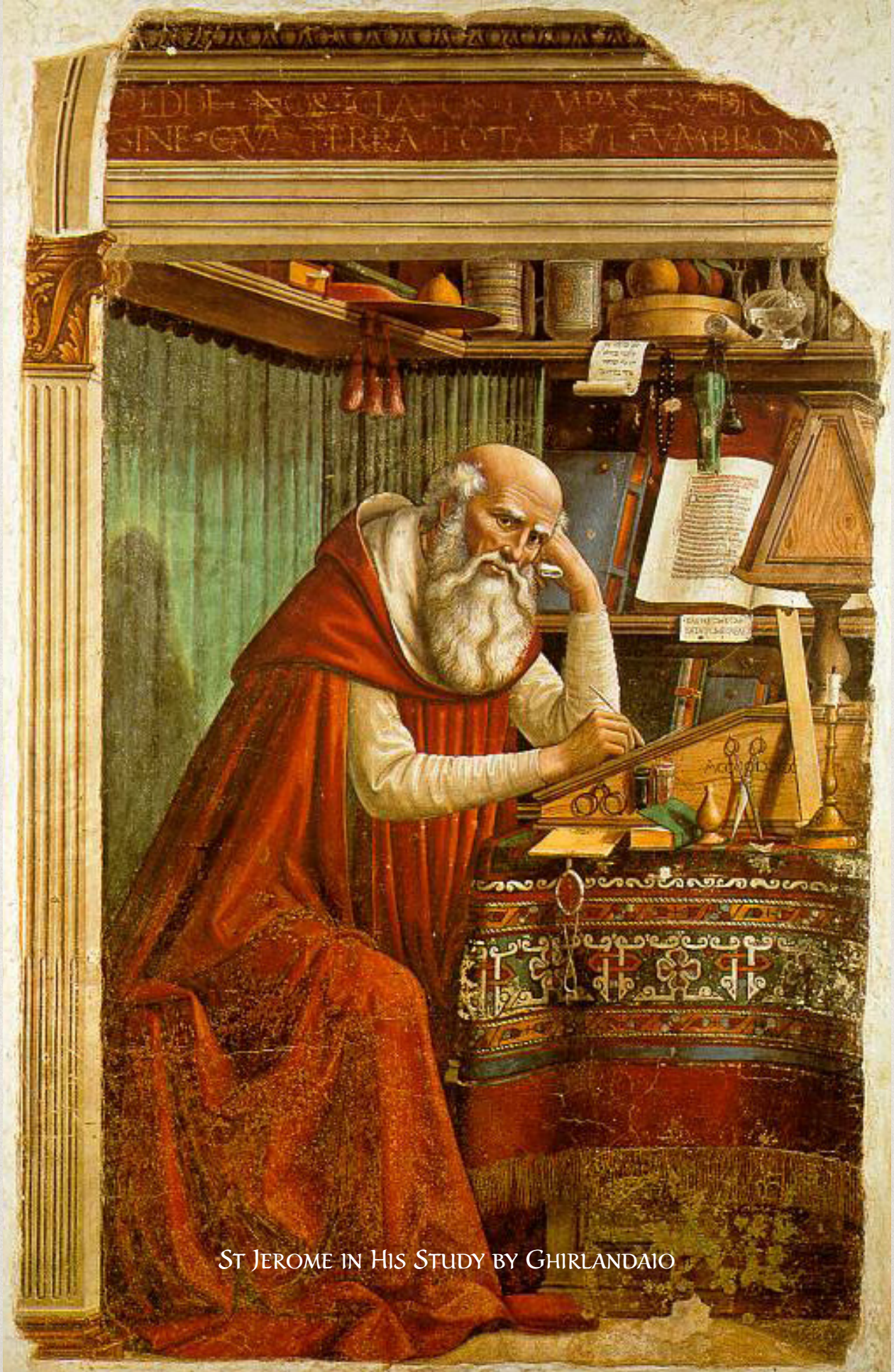
But although, ere long, Ghirlandaio left his father's shop and learned to make pictures with colours, instead of with gold, silver, and jewels, still the training he had received in his goldsmith's work showed to the end in all his pictures. He painted the smallest things with extreme care, and was never tired of spreading them over with delicate ornaments and decorations. It is a great deal the outward show with Ghirlandaio, and not so much the inward soul, that we find in his pictures, though he had a wonderful gift of painting portraits.

These portraits painted by the young Ghirlandaio seemed very wonderful to the admiring Florentines. From all his pictures looked out faces which they knew and recognised immediately. There, in a group of saints, or in a crowd of figures around the Infant Christ, they saw the well-known faces of Florentine nobles, the great ladies from the palaces, and even the men of the market-place, and the poor peasant women who sold eggs and vegetables in the streets. Once he painted an old bishop with a pair of spectacles resting on his nose. It was the first time that spectacles had ever been put into a picture.

Then off he must go to Rome, like every one else, to add his share



Death of St. Francis by Ghirlandaio



St Jerome in His Study by Ghirlandaio



Last Supper by Ghirlandaio



Tournabuoni Chapel

to the famous frescoes of the Vatican. But it was in Florence that most of his work was done.

In the church of Santa Maria Novella there was a great chapel which belonged to the Ricci family. It had once been covered by beautiful frescoes, but now it was spoilt by damp and the rain that came through the leaking roof. The noble family, to whom the chapel belonged, were poor and could not afford to have the chapel repainted, but neither would they allow any one else to decorate it, lest it should pass out of their hands.

Now another noble family, called the Tournabuoni, when they heard of the fame of the new painter, greatly desired to have a chapel painted by him in order to do honour to their name and family.

Accordingly they went to the Ricci family and offered to have the whole chapel painted and to pay the artist themselves. Moreover, they said that the arms or crest of the Ricci family should be painted in the most honourable part of the chapel, that all might see that the chapel still belonged to them.

To this the Ricci family gladly agreed, and Ghirlandaio was set to work to cover the walls with his frescoes.

'I will give thee twelve hundred gold pieces when it is done,' said Giovanni Tournabuoni, 'and if I like it well, then shalt thou have two hundred more.'

Here was good pay indeed. Ghirlandaio set to work with all speed, and day by day the frescoes grew. For four years he worked hard, from morning until night, until at last the walls were covered.

One of the subjects which he chose for these frescoes was the story of the Life of the Virgin, so often painted by Florentine artists. This story I will tell you now, that your eyes may take greater pleasure in the pictures when you see them.

The Bible story of the Virgin Mary begins when the Angel Gabriel came to tell her of the birth of the Baby Jesus, but there are many stories or legends about her before that time, and this is one which the

Italians specially loved to paint.

Among the blue hills of Galilee, in the little town of Nazareth, there lived a man and his wife whose names were Joachim and Anna. Though they were rich and had many flocks of sheep which fed in the rich pastures around, still there was one thing which God had not given them and which they longed for more than all beside. They had no child. They had hoped that God would send one, but now they were both growing old, and hope began to fade.

Joachim was a very good man, and gave a third of all that he had as an offering to the temple; but one sad day when he took his gift, the high priest at the altar refused to take it.

'God has shown that He will have nought of thee,' said the priest, 'since thou hast no child to come after thee.'

Filled with shame and grief Joachim would not go home to his wife, but instead he wandered out into the far-off fields where his shepherds were feeding the flocks, and there he stayed forty days. With bowed head and sad eyes when he was alone, he knelt and prayed that God would tell him what he had done to deserve this disgrace.

And as he prayed God sent an angel to comfort him.

The angel placed his hand upon the bowed head of the poor old man, and told him to be of good cheer and to return home at once to his wife.

'For God will even now send thee a child,' said the angel.

So with a thankful heart which never doubted the angel's word, Joachim turned his face homewards.

Meanwhile, at home, Anna had been sorrowing alone. That same day she had gone into the garden, and, as she wandered among the flowers, she wept bitterly and prayed that God would send her comfort. Then there appeared to her also an angel, who told her that God had heard her prayer and would send her the child she longed for.

'Go now,' the angel added, 'and meet thy husband Joachim, who is even now returning to thee, and thou shall find him at the entrance



Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple by Ghirlandaio



Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple by Ghirlandaio

to the Golden Gate.'

So the husband and wife did as the angel bade them, and met together at the Golden Gate. And the Angel of Promise hovered above them, and laid a hand in blessing upon both their heads.

There was no need for speech. As Joachim and Anna looked into each other's eyes and read there the solemn joy of the angel's message, their hearts were filled with peace and comfort.

And before long the angel's promise was fulfilled, and a little daughter was born to Anna and Joachim. In their joy and thankfulness they said she should not be as other children, but should serve in the temple as little Samuel had done. The name they gave the child was Mary, not knowing even then that she was to be the mother of our Lord.

The little maid was but three years old when her parents took her to present her in the temple. She was such a little child that they almost feared she might be frightened to go up the steps to the great temple and meet the high priest alone. So they asked if she might go in company with the other children who were also on their way to the temple. But when the little band arrived at the temple steps, Mary stepped forward and began to climb up, step by step, alone, while the other children and her parents watched wondering from below. Straight up to the temple gates she climbed, and stood with little head bent low to receive the blessing of the great high priest.

So the child was left there to be taught to serve God and to learn how to embroider the purple and fine linen for the priests' vestments. Never before had such exquisite embroidery been done as that which Mary's fingers so delicately stitched, for her work was aided by angel hands. Sleeping or waking, the blessed angels never left her.

When it was time that the maiden should be married, so many suitors came to seek her that it was difficult to know which to choose. To decide the matter they were all told to bring their staves or wands and leave them in the temple all night, that God might show by a sign

who was the most worthy to be the guardian of the pure young maid.

Now among the suitors was a poor carpenter of Nazareth called Joseph, who was much older and much poorer than any of the other suitors. They thought it was foolish of him to bring his staff, nevertheless it was placed in the temple with the others.

But when the morning came and the priest went into the temple, behold, Joseph's staff had budded into leaves and flowers, and from among the blossoms there flew out a dove as white as snow.

So it was known that Joseph was to take charge of the young maid, and all the rest of the suitors seized their staves and broke them across their knees in rage and disappointment.

Then the story goes on to the birth of our Saviour as it is told to you in the Bible.

It was this story which Ghirlandaio painted on the walls of the chapel, as well as the history of John the Baptist. Then, as Giovanni directed, he painted the arms of the Tournabuoni on various shields all over the chapel, and only in the tabernacle of the sacrament on the high altar he painted a tiny coat of arms of the Ricci family.

The chapel was finished at last and every one flocked to see it, but first of all came the Ricci, the owners of the chapel.

They looked high and low, but nowhere could they see the arms of their family. Instead, on all sides, they saw the arms of the Tournabuoni. In a great rage they hurried to the Council and demanded that Giovanni Tournabuoni should be punished. But when the facts were explained, and it was shown that the Ricci arms had indeed been placed in the most honourable part, they were obliged to be content, though they vowed vengeance against the Tournabuoni. Neither did Ghirlandaio get his extra two hundred gold pieces, for although Giovanni was delighted with the frescoes he never paid the price he had promised.

To the end of his days Ghirlandaio loved nothing so much as to work from morning till night. Nothing was too small or mean for him to do. He would even paint the hoops for women's baskets rather than



Marriage of the Virgin by Ghirlandaio



Resurrection of Christ by Ghirlandaio



Calling of the First Apostles by Ghirlandaio



Christ in Heaven with Four Saints by Ghirlandaio

send any work away from his shop.

'Oh,' he cried, one day, 'how I wish I could paint all the walls around Florence with my stories.'

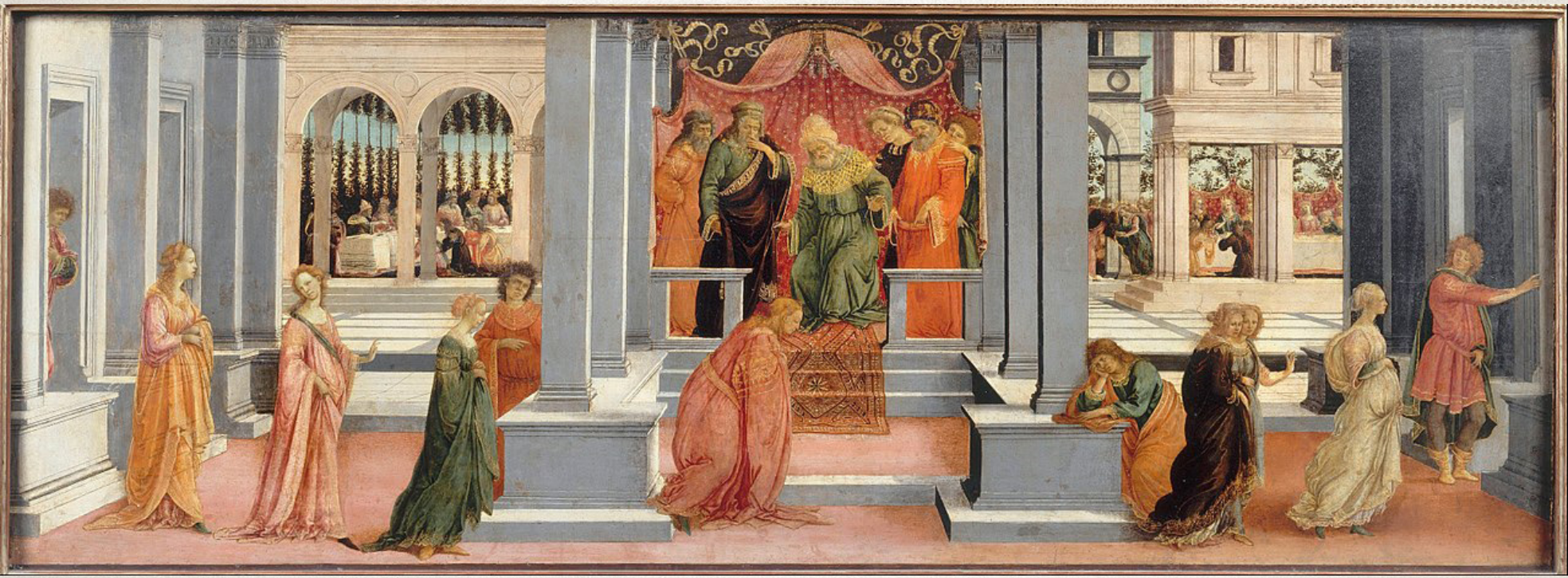
But there was no time to do all that. He was only forty-four years old when Death came and bade him lay down his brushes and pencil, for his work was done.

Beneath his own frescoes they laid him to rest in the church of Santa Maria Novella. And although we sometimes miss the soul in his pictures and weary of the gay outward decoration of goldsmith's work, yet there is something there which makes us love the grand show of fair ladies and strong men in the carefully finished work of this Florentine 'Maker of Garlands.'



Ahasuerus Chooses Esther

Lippi



Filippino Lippi

1457-1504, Italy

The little curly-haired Filippino, left in the charge of good Fra Diamante, soon showed that he meant to be a painter like his father. When, as a little boy, he drew his pictures and showed them proudly to his mother, he told her that he, too, would learn some day to be a great artist. And she, half smiling, would pat his curly head and tell him that he could at least try his best.

Then, after that sad day when Lucrezia heard of Filippo's death, and the happy little home was broken up, Fra Diamante began in earnest to train the boy who had been left under his care. He had plenty of money, for Filippo had been well paid for the work at Spoleto, and so it was decided that the boy should be placed in some studio where he could be taught all that was necessary.

There was no fear of Filippino ever wandering about the Florentine streets cold and hungry as his father had done. And his training was very different too. Instead of the convent and the kind monks, he was placed under the care of a great painter, and worked in the master's studio with other boys as well off as himself.

The name of Filippino's master was Sandro Botticelli, a Florentine artist, who had been one of Filippo's pupils and had worked with him in Prato. Fra Diamante knew that he was the greatest artist now in

Florence, and that he would be able to teach the child better than any one else.

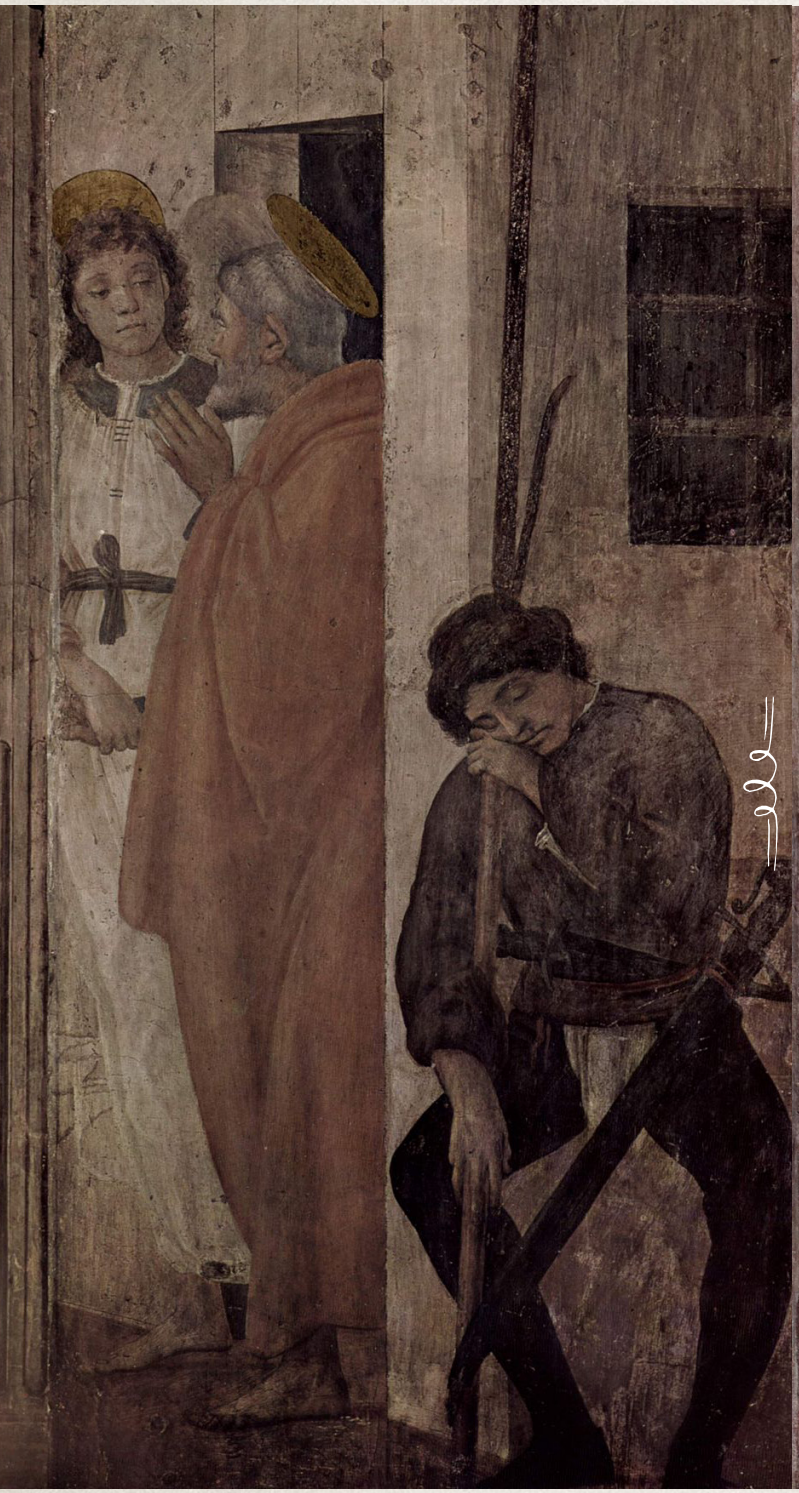
Filippino was a good, industrious boy, and had none of the faults which had so often led his father into so much mischief and so many strange adventures. His boyhood passed quietly by and he learned all that his master could teach him, and then began to paint his own pictures.

Strangely enough, his first work was to paint the walls of the Carmine Chapel—that same chapel where Filippo and Diamante had learned their lessons, and had gazed with such awe and reverence on Masaccio's work.

The great painter, Ugly Tom, was dead, and there were still parts of the chapel unfinished, so Filippino was invited to fill the empty spaces with his work. No need for the new prior to warn this young painter against the sin of painting earthly pictures. The frescoes which daily grew beneath Filippino's hands were saintly and beautiful. The tall angel in flowing white robes who so gently leads St. Peter out of the prison door, shines with a pure fair light that speaks of Heaven. The sleeping soldier looks in contrast all the more dull and heavy, while St. Peter turns his eyes towards his gentle guide and folds his hands in reverence, wrapped in the soft reflected light of that fair face. And on the opposite wall, the sad face of St. Peter looks out through the prison bars, while a brother saint stands outside, and with uplifted hand speaks comforting words to the poor prisoner.

By slow degrees the chapel walls were finished, and after that there was much work ready for the young painter's hand. It is said that he was very fond of studying old Roman ornaments and painted them into his pictures whenever it was possible, and became very famous for this kind of work. But it is the beauty of his Madonnas and angels that makes us love his pictures, and we like to think that the memory of his gentle mother taught him how to paint those lovely faces.

Perhaps of all his pictures the most beautiful is one in the church



Liberation of
Saint Peter



St Paul Visits
St Peter in Prison



Apparition of the Virgin to St Bernard by Lippi

of the Badia in Florence. It tells the story of the blessed St. Bernard, and shows the saint in his desert home, as he sat among the rocks writing the history of the Madonna. He had not been able to write that day; perhaps he felt dull, and none of his books, scattered around, were of any help. Then, as he sat lost in thought, with his pen in his hand, the Virgin herself stood before him, an angel on either side, and little angel faces pressed close behind her. Laying a gentle hand upon his book, she seems to tell St. Bernard all those golden words which his poor earthly pen had not been able yet to write.

It used to be the custom long ago in Italy to place in the streets sacred pictures or figures, that passersby might be reminded of holy things and say a prayer in passing. And still in many towns you will find in some old dusty corner a beautiful picture, painted by a master hand. A gleam of colour will catch your eye, and looking up you see a picture or little shrine of exquisite blue-and-white glazed pottery, where the Madonna kneels and worships the Infant Christ lying amongst the lilies at her feet. The old battered lamp which hangs in front of these shrines is still kept lighted by some faithful hand, and in springtime the children will often come and lay little bunches of wild-flowers on the ledge below.

'It is for the Jesu Bambino,' they will say, and their little faces grow solemn and reverent as they kneel and say a prayer. Then off again they go to their play.

In a little side-street of Prato, not far from the convent where Filippino's father first saw Lucrezia's lovely face in the sunny garden, there is one of these wayside shrines. It is painted by Filippino, and is one of his most beautiful pictures. The sweet face of the Madonna looks down upon the busy street below, and the Holy Child lifts His little hand in blessing, amid the saints which stand on either side.

The glass that covers the picture is thick with dust, and few who pass ever stop to look up. The world is all too busy nowadays. The hurrying feet pass by, the unseeing eyes grow more and more careless. But

Filippino's beautiful Madonna looks on with calm, sad eyes, and the Christ Child, surrounded by the cloud of little angel faces, still holds in His uplifted hand a blessing for those who seek it.

Like all the great Florentine artists, Filippino, as soon as he grew famous, was invited to Rome, and he painted many pictures there. On his way he stopped for a while at Spoleto, and there he designed a beautiful marble monument for his father's tomb.

Unlike that father, Filippino was never fond of travel or adventure, and was always glad to return to Florence and live his quiet life there. Not even an invitation from the King of Hungary could tempt him to leave home.

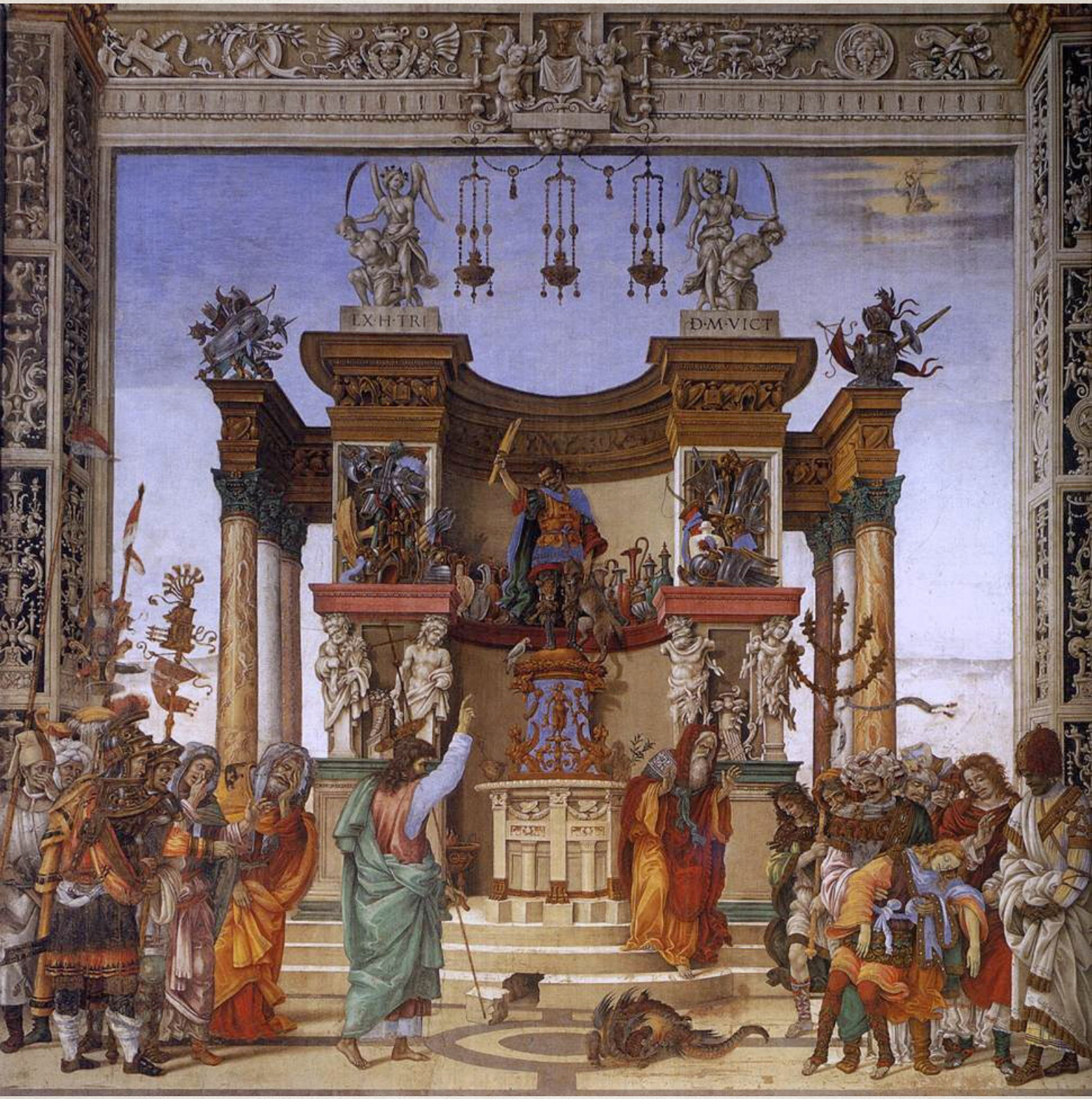
It was in the great church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence that Filippino painted his last frescoes. They are very real and lifelike, as one of the great painter's pupils once learned to his cost. Filippino had, of course, many pupils who worked under him. They ground his colours and watched him work, and would sometimes be allowed to prepare the less important parts of the picture.

Now it happened that one day when the master had finished his work and had left the chapel, that one of the pupils lingered behind. His sharp eye had caught sight of a netted purse which lay in a dark corner, dropped there by some careless visitor, or perhaps by the master himself. The boy darted back and caught up the treasure; but at that moment the master turned back to fetch something he had forgotten. The boy looked quickly round. Where could he hide his prize? In a moment his eye fell on a hole in the wall, underneath a step which Filippino had been painting in the fresco. That was the very place, and he ran forward to thrust the purse inside. But, alas! the hole was only a painted one, and the boy was fairly caught, and was obliged with shame and confusion to give up his prize.

Scarcely were these frescoes finished when Filippino was seized with a terrible fever, and he died almost as suddenly as his father had done.



Prato Tabernacle Shrine by Lippi



St Philip Driving the Dragon from the Temple by Lippi

In those days when there was a funeral of a prince in Florence, the Florentines used to shut their shops, and this was considered a great mark of respect, and was paid only to those of royal blood. But on the day that Filippino's funeral passed along the Via dei Servi, every shop there was closed and all Florence mourned for him.

'Some men,' they said, 'are born princes, and some raise themselves by their talents to be kings among men. Our Filippino was a prince in Art, and so do we do honour to his title.'



Abraham by Lippi



Albani Torlonia Altarpiece

Perugino

Pietro Perugino

1446-1523, Italy

It was early morning, and the rays of the rising sun had scarcely yet caught the roofs of the city of Perugia, when along the winding road which led across the plain a man and a boy walked with steady, purpose-like steps towards the town which crowned the hill in front.

The man was poorly dressed in the common rough clothes of an Umbrian peasant. Hard work and poverty had bent his shoulders and drawn stern lines upon his face, but there was a dignity about him which marked him as something above the common working man.

The little boy who trotted barefoot along by the side of his father had a sweet, serious little face, but he looked tired and hungry, and scarcely fit for such a long rough walk. They had started from their home at Castello delle Pieve very early that morning, and the piece of black bread which had served them for breakfast had been but small. A way in front stretched that long, white, never-ending road; and the little dusty feet that pattered so bravely along had to take hurried runs now and again to keep up with the long strides of the man, while the wistful eyes, which were fixed on that distant town, seemed to wonder if they would really ever reach their journey's end.

'Art tired already, Pietro?' asked the father at length, hearing a panting little sigh at his side. 'Why, we are not yet half-way there! Thou

must step bravely out and be a man, for to-day thou shalt begin to work for thy living, and no longer live the life of an idle child.'

The boy squared his shoulders, and his eyes shone. 'It is not I who am tired, my father,' he said. 'It is only that my legs cannot take such good long steps as thine; and walk as we will the road ever seems to unwind itself further and further in front, like the magic white thread which has no end.'

The father laughed, and patted the child's head kindly.

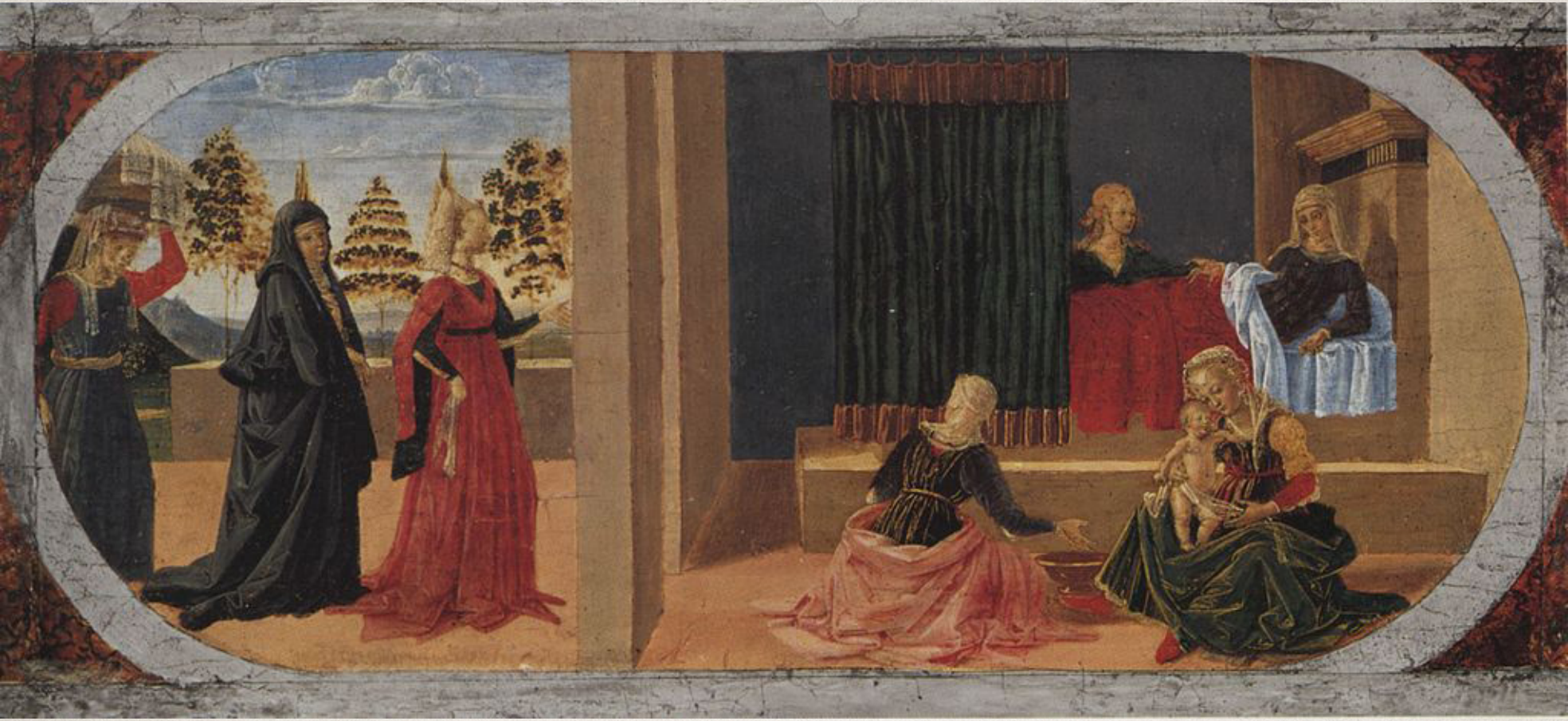
'The end will come ere long,' he said. 'See where the mist lies at the foot of the hill; there we will begin to climb among the olive-trees and leave the dusty road. I know a quicker way by which we may reach the city. We will climb over the great stones that mark the track of the stream, and before the sun grows too hot we will have reached the city gates.'

It was a great relief to the little hot, tired feet to feel the cool grass beneath them, and to leave the dusty road. The boy almost forgot his tiredness as he scrambled from stone to stone, and filled his hands with the violets which grew thickly on the banks, scenting the morning air with their sweetness. And when at last they came out once more upon the great white road before the city gates, there was so much to gaze upon and wonder at, that there was no room for thoughts of weariness or hunger.

There stood the herds of great white oxen, patiently waiting to pass in. Pietro wondered if their huge wide horns would not reach from side to side of the narrow street within the gates. There the shepherd-boys played sweet airs upon their pipes as they walked before their flocks, and led the silly frightened sheep out of the way of passing carts. Women with bright-coloured handkerchiefs tied over their heads crowded round, carrying baskets of fruit and vegetables from the country round. Carts full of scarlet and yellow pumpkins were driven noisily along. Whips cracked, people shouted and talked as much with their hands as with their lips, and all were eager to pass through the great Etruscan



Annunciation of Fano by Perugino



The Nativity of the Virgin by Perugino

gateway, which stood grim and tall against the blue of the summer sky. Much good service had that gateway seen, and it was as strong as when it had been first built hundreds of years before, and was still able to shut out an army of enemies, if Perugia had need to defend herself.

Pietro and his father quickly threaded their way through the crowd, and passed through the gateway into the steep narrow street beyond. It was cool and quiet here. The sun was shut out by the tall houses, and the shadows lay so deep that one might have thought it was the hour of twilight, but for the peep of bright blue sky which showed between the overhanging eaves above. Presently they reached the great square market-place, where all again was sunshine and bustle, with people shouting and selling their wares, which they spread out on the ground up to the very steps of the cathedral and all along in front of the Palazzo Publico. Here the man stopped, and asked one of the passers-by if he could direct him to the shop of Niccolo the painter.

'Yonder he dwells,' answered the citizen, and pointed to a humble shop at the corner of the market-place. 'Hast thou brought the child to be a model?'

Pietro held his head up proudly, and answered quickly for himself.

'I am no longer a child,' he said; 'and I have come to work and not to sit idle.'

The man laughed and went his way, while father and son hurried on towards the little shop and entered the door.

The old painter was busy, and they had to wait a while until he could leave his work and come to see what they might want.

'This is the boy of whom I spoke,' said the father as he pushed Pietro forward by his shoulder. 'He is not well grown, but he is strong, and has learnt to endure hardness. I promise thee that he will serve thee well if thou wilt take him as thy servant.'

The painter smiled down at the little eager face which was waiting so anxiously for his answer.

'What canst thou do?' he asked the boy.

'Everything,' answered Pietro promptly. 'I can sweep out thy shop and cook thy dinner. I will learn to grind thy colours and wash thy brushes, and do a man's work.'

'In faith,' laughed the painter, 'if thou canst do everything, being yet so young, thou wilt soon be the greatest man in Perugia, and bring great fame to this fair city. Then will we call thee no longer Pietro Vanucci, but thou shalt take the city's name, and we will call thee Perugino.'

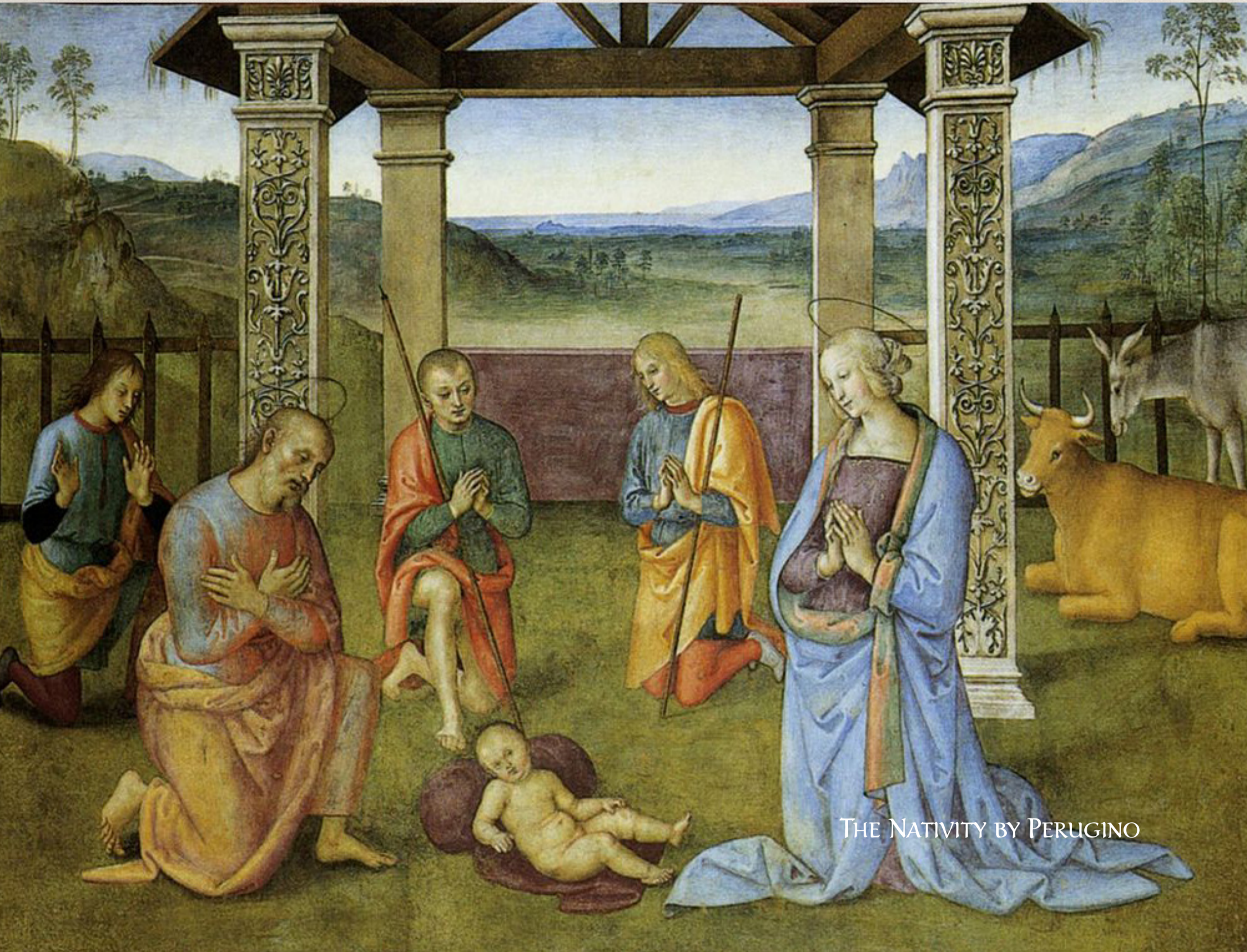
The master spoke in jest, but as time went on and he watched the boy at work, he marvelled at the quickness with which the child learned to perform his new duties, and began to think the jest might one day turn to earnest.

From early morning until sundown Pietro was never idle, and when the rough work was done he would stand and watch the master as he painted, and listen breathless to the tales which Niccolo loved to tell.

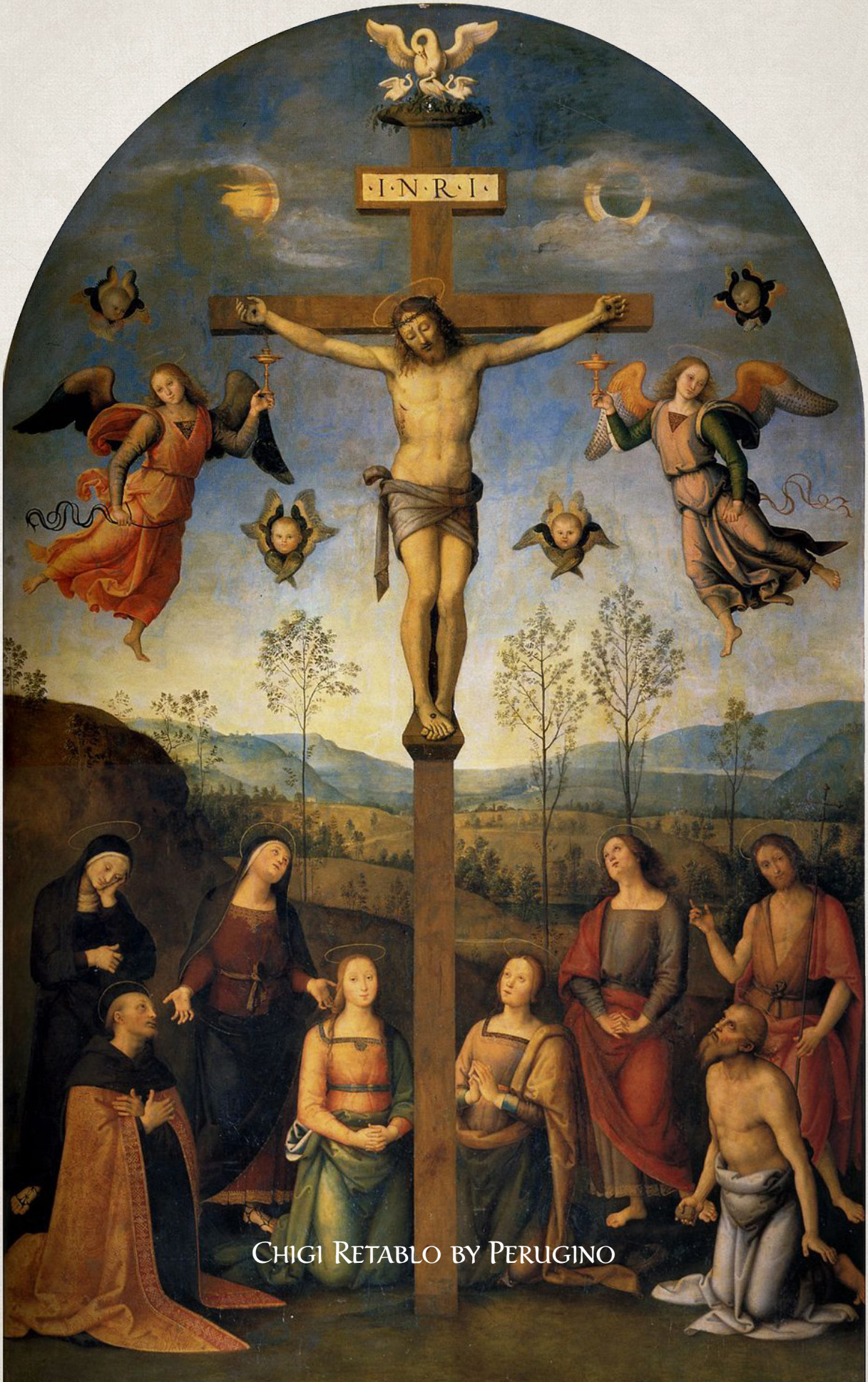
'There is nothing so great in all the world as the art of painting,' the master would say.' It is the ladder that leads up to heaven, the window which lets light into the soul. A painter need never be lonely or poor. He can create the faces he loves, while all the riches of light and colour and beauty are always his. If thou hast it in thee to be a painter, my little Perugino, I can wish thee no greater fortune.'

Then when the day's work was done and the short spell of twilight drew near, the boy would leave the shop and run swiftly down the narrow street until he came to the grim old city gates. Once outside, under the wide blue sky in the free open air of the country, he drew a long, long breath of pleasure, and quickly found a hidden corner in the cleft of the hoary trunk of an olive-tree, where no passer-by could see him. There he sat, his chin resting on his hands, gazing and gazing out over the plain below, drinking in the beauty with his hungry eyes.

How he loved that great open space of sweet fresh air, in the calm pure light of the evening hour. That white light, which seemed to belong



The Nativity by Perugino



Chigi Retablo by Perugino

more to heaven than to earth, shone on everything around. Away in the distance the purple hills faded into the sunset sky. At his feet the plain stretched away, away until it met the mountains, here and there lifting itself in some little hill crowned by a lonely town whose roofs just caught the rays of the setting sun. The evening mist lay like a gossamer veil upon the low-lying lands, and between the little towns the long straight road could be seen, winding like a white ribbon through the grey and silver, and marked here and there by a dark cypress-tree or a tall poplar. And always there would be a glint of blue, where a stream or river caught the reflection of the sky and held it lovingly there, like a mirror among the rocks.

But Pietro did not have much time for idle dreaming. His was not an easy life, for Niccolo made but little money with his painting, and the boy had to do all the work of the house besides attending to the shop. But all the time he was sweeping and dusting he looked forward to the happy days to come when he might paint pictures and become a famous artist.

Whenever a visitor came to the shop, Pietro would listen eagerly to his talk and try to learn something of the great world of Art. Sometimes he would even venture to ask questions, if the stranger happened to be one who had travelled from afar.

'Where are the most beautiful pictures to be found?' he asked one day when a Florentine painter had come to the little shop and had been describing the glories he had seen in other cities. 'And where is it that the greatest painters dwell?'

'That is an easy question to answer, my boy,' said the painter. 'All that is fairest is to be found in Florence, the most beautiful city in all the world, the City of Flowers. There one may find the best of everything, but above all, the most beautiful pictures and the greatest of painters. For no one there can bear to do only the second best, and a man must attain to the very highest before the Florentines will call him great. The walls of the churches and monasteries are covered with pictures of

saints and angels, and their beauty no words can describe.'

'I too will go to Florence,' said Pietro to himself, and every day he longed more and more to see that wonderful city.

It was no use to wait until he should have saved enough money to take him there. He scarcely earned enough to live on from day to day. So at last, poor as he was, he started off early one morning and said good-bye to his old master and the hard work of the little shop in Perugia. On he went down the same long white road which had seemed so endless to him that day when, as a little child, he first came to Perugia. Even now, when he was a strong young man, the way seemed long and weary across that great plain, and he was often footsore and discouraged. Day after day he travelled on, past the great lake which lay like a sapphire in the bosom of the plain, past many towns and little villages, until at last he came in sight of the City of Flowers.

It was a wonderful moment to Perugino, and he held his breath as he looked. He had passed the brow of the hill, and stood beside a little stream bordered by a row of tall, straight poplars which showed silvery white against the blue sky. Beyond, nestling at the foot of the encircling hills, lay the city of his dreams. Towers and palaces, a crowding together of pale red sunbaked roofs, with the great dome of the cathedral in the midst, and the silver thread of the Arno winding its way between—all this he saw, but he saw more than this. For it seemed to him that the Spirit of Beauty hovered above the fair city, and he almost heard the rustle of her wings and caught a glimpse of her rainbow-tinted robe in the light of the evening sky.

Poor Pietro! Here was the world he longed to conquer, but he was only a poor country boy, and how was he to begin to climb that golden ladder of Art which led men to fame and glory?

Well, he could work, and that was always a beginning. The struggle was hard, and for many a month he often went hungry and had not even a bed to lie on at night, but curled himself up on a hard wooden chest. Then good fortune began to smile upon him.



Madonna Between Two Saints by Perugino



Christ Giving the Keys to Peter by Perugino

The Florentine artists to whose studios he went began to notice the hardworking boy, and when they looked at his work, with all its faults and want of finish, they saw in it that divine something called genius which no one can mistake.

Then the doors of another world seemed to open to Pietro. All day long he could now work at his beloved painting and learn fresh wonders as he watched the great men use the brush and pencil. In the studio of the painter Verocchio he met the men of whose fame he had so often heard, and whose work he looked upon with awe and reverence.

There was the good-tempered monk of the Carmine, Fra Filipo Lippi, the young Botticelli, and a youth just his own age whom they called Leonardo da Vinci, of whom it was whispered already that he would some day be the greatest master of the age.

These were golden days for Perugino, as he was called, for the name of the city where he had come from was always now given to him. The pictures he had longed to paint grew beneath his hand, and upon his canvas began to dawn the solemn dignity and open-air spaciousness of those evening visions he had seen when he gazed across the Umbrian Plain. There was no noise of battle, no human passion in his pictures. His saints stood quiet and solemn, single figures with just a thread of interest binding them together, and always beyond was the great wide open world, with the white light shining in the sky, the blue thread of the river, and the single trees pointing upwards—dark, solemn cypress, or feathery larch or poplar.

There was much for the young painter still to learn, and perhaps he learned most from the silent teaching of that little dark chapel of the Carmine, where Masaccio taught more wonderful lessons by his frescoes than any living artist could teach.

Then came the crowning honour when Perugino received an invitation from the Pope to go to Rome and paint the walls of the Sistine Chapel. Henceforth it was a different kind of life for the young painter.

No need to wonder where he would get his next meal, no hard rough wooden chest on which to rest his weary limbs when the day's work was done. Now he was royally entertained and softly lodged, and men counted it an honour to be in his company.

But though he loved Florence and was proud to do his painting in Rome, his heart ever drew him back to the city on the hill whose name he bore.

Again he travelled along the winding road, and his heart beat fast as he drew nearer and saw the familiar towers and roofs of Perugia. How well he remembered that long-ago day when the cool touch of the grass was so grateful to his little tired dusty feet! He stooped again to fill his hands with the Sweet violets, and thought them sweeter than all the fame and fair show of the gay cities.

And as he passed through the ancient gateway and threaded his way up the narrow street towards the little shop, he seemed to see once more the kindly smile of his old master and to hear him say, 'Thou wilt soon be the greatest man in Perugia, and we will call thee no longer Pietro Vanucci, but Perugino.'

So it had come to pass. Here he was. No longer a little ragged, hungry boy, but a man whom all delighted to honour. Truly this was a world of changes!

A bigger studio was needed than the little old shop, for now he had more pictures to paint than he well knew how to finish. Then, too, he had many pupils, for all were eager to enter the studio of the great master. There it was that one morning a new pupil was brought to him, a boy of twelve, whose guardians begged that Perugino would teach and train him.

Perugino looked with interest at the child. Seldom had he seen such a beautiful oval face, framed by such soft brown curls—a face so pure and lovable that even at first sight it drew out love from the hearts of those who looked at him.

'His father was also a painter,' said the guardian, 'and Raphael,



Coronation of the Virgin by Perugino



Marriage of the Virgin by Perugino

here, has caught the trick of using his pencil and brush, so we would have him learn of the greatest master in the land.'

After some talk, the boy was left in the studio at Perugia, and day by day Perugino grew to love him more. It was not only that little Raphael was clever and skilful, though that alone often made the master marvel.

'He is my pupil now, but some day he will be my master, and I shall learn of him,' Perugino would often say as he watched the boy at work. But more than all, the pure sweet nature and the polished gentleness of his manners charmed the heart of the master, and he loved to have the boy always near him, and to teach him was his greatest pleasure.

Those quiet days in the Perugia studio never lasted very long. From all quarters came calls to Perugino, and, much as he loved work, he could not finish all that was wanted.

It happened once when he was in Florence that a certain prior begged him to come and fresco the walls of his convent. This prior was very famous for making a most beautiful and expensive blue colour which he was anxious should be used in the painting of the convent walls. He was a mean, suspicious man, and would not trust Perugino with the precious blue colour, but always held it in his own hands and grudgingly doled it out in small quantities, torn between the desire to have the colour on his walls and his dislike to parting with anything so precious.

As Perugino noted this, he grew angry and determined to punish the prior's meanness. The next time therefore that there was a blue sky to be painted, he put at his side a large bowl of fresh water, and then called on the prior to put out a small quantity of the blue colour in a little vase. Each time he dipped his brush into the vase, Perugino washed it out with a swirl in the bowl at his side, so that most of the colour was left in the water, and very little was put on to the picture.

'I pray thee fill the vase again with blue,' he said carelessly when the colour was all gone. The prior groaned aloud, and turned grudgingly

to his little bag.

'Oh what a quantity of blue is swallowed up by this plaster!' he said, as he gazed at the white wall, which scarcely showed a trace of the precious colour.

'Yes,' said Perugino cheerfully, 'thou canst see thyself how it goes.'

Then afterwards, when the prior had sadly gone off with his little empty bag, Perugino carefully poured the water from the bowl and gathered together the grains of colour which had sunk to the bottom.

'Here is something that belongs to thee,' he said sternly to the astonished prior. 'I would have thee learn to trust honest men and not treat them as thieves. For with all thy suspicious care, it was easy to rob thee if I had had a mind.'

During all these years in which Perugino had worked so diligently, the art of painting had been growing rapidly. Many of the new artists shook off the old rules and ideas, and began to paint in quite a new way. There was one man especially, called Michelangelo, whose story you will hear later on, who arose like a giant, and with his new way and greater knowledge swept everything before him.

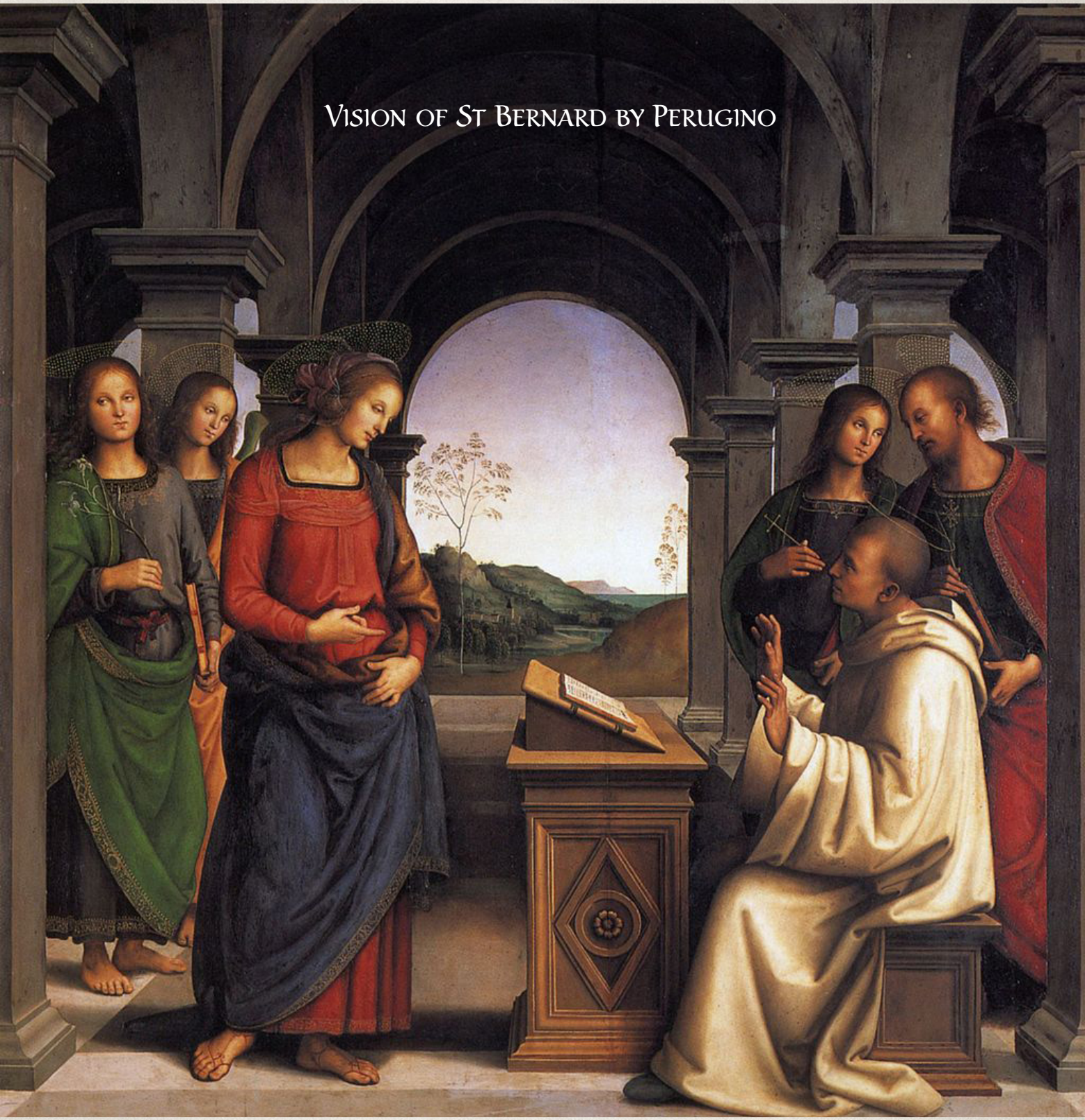
Perugino was jealous of all these new ideas, and clung more closely than ever to his old ideals, his quiet, dignified saints, and spacious landscapes. He talked openly of his dislike of the new style, and once he had a serious quarrel with the great Michelangelo.

There was a gathering of painters in Perugino's studio that day. Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, and Leonardo were there, and in the background the pupil Raphael was listening to the talk.

'What dost thou think of this new style of painting?' asked Botticelli. 'To me it seems but strange and unpleasing. Music and motion are delightful, but this violent twisting of limbs to show the muscles offends my taste.'

'Yet it is most marvellously skilful,' said the young Leonardo thoughtfully.

'But totally unfit for the proper picturing of saints and the blessed



Vision of St Bernard by Perugino



San Pietro Polyptych by Perugino

Madonna,' said Filippino, shaking his curly head.

'I never trouble myself about it,' said Ghirlandaio. 'Life is too short to attend to other men's work. It takes all my care and attention to look after mine own. But see, here comes the great Michelangelo himself to listen to our criticism.'

The curious, rugged face of the great artist looked good-naturedly on the company, but his strong knotted hands waved aside their greetings.

'So you were busy as usual finding fault with my work,' he said. 'Come, friend Perugino, tell me what thou hast found to grumble at.'

'I like not thy methods, and that I tell thee frankly,' answered Perugino, an angry light shining in his eyes. 'It is such work as thine that drags the art of painting down from the heights of heavenly things to the low taste of earth. It robs it of all dignity and restfulness, and destroys the precious traditions handed down to us since the days of Giotto.'

The face of Michelangelo grew angry and scornful as he listened to this.

'Thou art but a dolt and a blockhead in Art,' he said. 'Thou wilt soon see that the day of thy saints and Madonnas is past, and wilt cease to paint them over and over again in the same manner, as a child doth his lesson in a copy book.'

Then he turned and went out of the studio before any one had time to answer him.

Perugino was furiously angry and would not listen to reason, but must needs go before the great Council and demand that they should punish Michelangelo for his hard words. This of course the Council refused to do, and Perugino left Florence for Perugia, angry and sore at heart.

It seemed hard, after all his struggles and great successes, that as he grew old people should begin to tire of his work, which they had once thought so perfect.

But if the outside world was sometimes disappointing, he had always his home to turn to, and his beautiful wife Chiare. He had married her in his beloved Perugia, and she meant all the joy of life to him. He was so proud of her beauty that he would buy her the richest dresses and most costly jewels, and with his own hands would deck her with them. Her brown eyes were like the depths of some quiet pool, her fair face and the wonderful soul that shone there were to him the most perfect picture in the world.

'I will paint thee once, that the world may be the richer,' said Perugino, 'but only once, for thy beauty is too rare for common use. And I will paint thee not as an earthly beauty, but thou shalt be the angel in the story of Tobias which thou knowest.'

So he painted her as he said. And in our own National Gallery we still have the picture, and we may see her there as the beautiful angel who leads the little boy Tobias by the hand.

Up to the very last years of his life, Perugino painted as diligently as he had ever done, but the peaceful days of Perugia had long since given place to war and tumult, both within and without the city. Then too a terrible plague swept over the countryside, and people died by thousands.

To the hospital of Fartignano, close to Perugia, they carried Perugino when the deadly plague seized him, and there he died. There was no time to think of grand funerals; the people were buried as quickly as possible, in whatever place lay closest at hand.

So it came to pass that Perugino was laid to rest in an open field under an oak-tree close by. Later on his sons wished to have him buried in holy ground, and some say that this was done, but nothing is known for certain. Perhaps if he could have chosen, he would have been glad to think that his body should rest under the shelter of the trees he loved to paint, in that waste openness of space which had always been his vision of beauty, since, as a little boy, he gazed across the Umbrian Plain, and the wonder of it sank into his soul.



Mary Magdalene by Perugino

Annunciation DA VINCI



Leonardo da Vinci

1452-1519, Italy

On the sunny slopes of Monte Albano, between Florence and Pisa, the little town of Vinci lay high among the rocks that crowned the steep hillside. It was but a little town. Only a few houses crowded together round an old castle in the midst, and it looked from a distance like a swallow's nest clinging to the bare steep rocks.

Here in the year 1452 Leonardo, son of Ser Piero da Vinci, was born. It was in the age when people told fortunes by the stars, and when a baby was born they would eagerly look up and decide whether it was a lucky or unlucky star which shone upon the child. Surely if it had been possible in this way to tell what fortune awaited the little Leonardo, a strange new star must have shone that night, brighter than the others and unlike the rest in the dazzling light of its strength and beauty.

Leonardo was always a strange child. Even his beauty was not like that of other children. He had the most wonderful waving hair, falling in regular ripples, like the waters of a fountain, the colour of bright gold, and soft as spun silk. His eyes were blue and clear, with a mysterious light in them, not the warm light of a sunny sky, but rather the blue that glints in the iceberg. They were merry eyes too, when he laughed, but underneath was always that strange cold look. There was a charm about his smile which no one could resist, and he was a favourite with

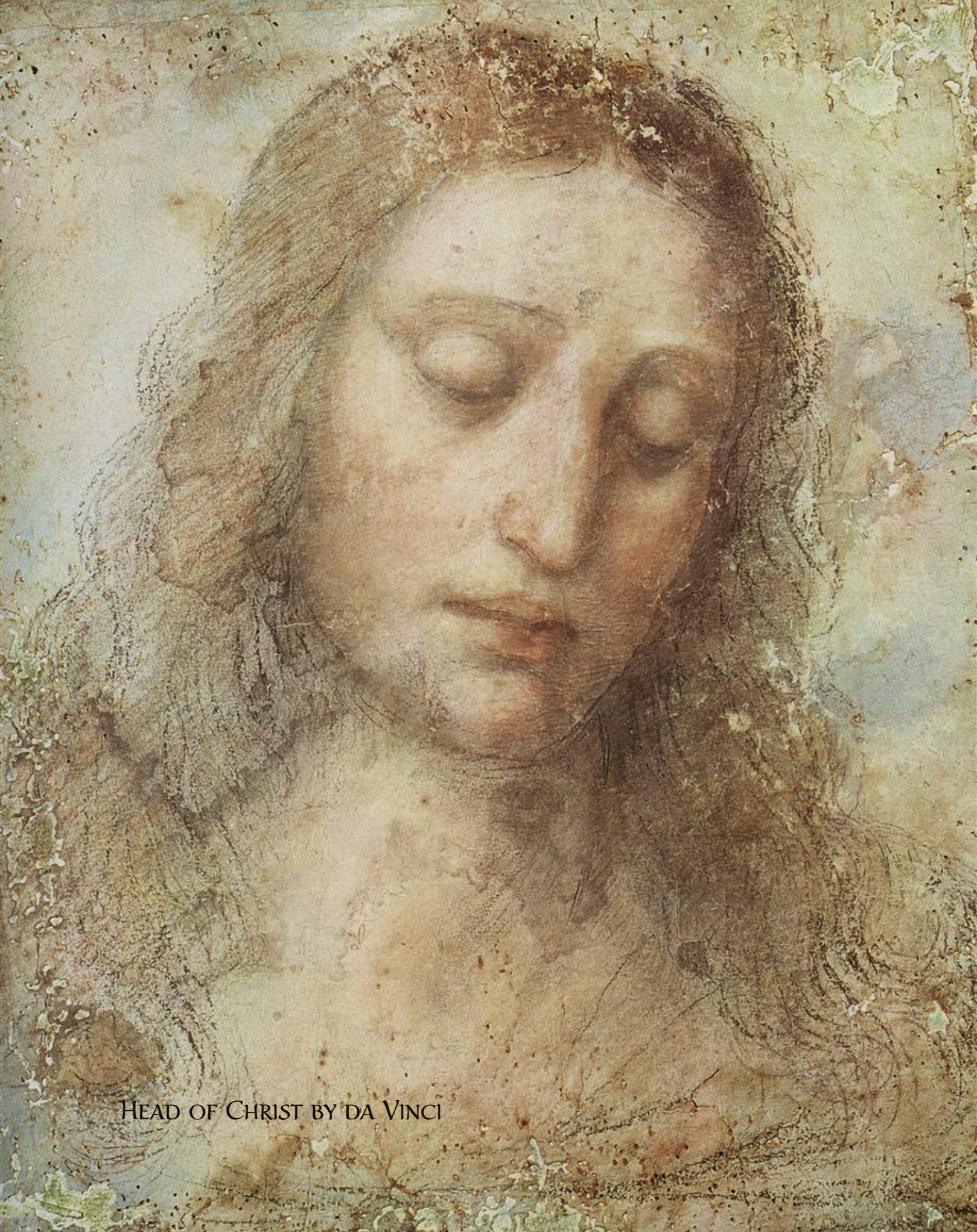
all. Yet people shook their heads sometimes as they looked at him, and they talked in whispers of the old witch who had lent her goat to nourish the little Leonardo when he was a baby. The woman was a dealer in black magic, and who knew but that the child might be a changeling?

It was the old grandmother, Mona Lena, who brought Leonardo up and spoilt him not a little. His father, Ser Piero, was a lawyer, and spent most of his time in Florence, but when he returned to the old castle of Vinci, he began to give Leonardo lessons and tried to find out what the boy was fit for. But Leonardo hated those lessons and would not learn, so when he was seven years old he was sent to school.

This did not answer any better. The rough play of the boys was not to his liking. When he saw them drag the wings off butterflies, or torture any animal that fell into their hands, his face grew white with pain, and he would take no share in their games. The Latin grammar, too, was a terrible task, while the many things he longed to know no one taught him.

So it happened that many a time, instead of going to school, he would slip away and escape up into the hills, as happy as a little wild goat. Here was all the sweet fresh air of heaven, instead of the stuffy schoolroom. Here were no cruel, clumsy boys, but all the wild creatures that he loved. Here he could learn the real things his heart was hungry to know, not merely words which meant nothing and led to nowhere.

For hours he would lie perfectly still with his heels in the air and his chin resting in his hands, as he watched a spider weaving its web, breathless with interest to see how the delicate threads were turned in and out. The gaily painted butterflies, the fat buzzing bees, the little sharp-tongued green lizards, he loved to watch them all, but above everything he loved the birds. Oh, if only he too had wings to dart like the swallows, and swoop and sail and dart again! What was the secret power in their wings? Surely by watching he might learn it. Sometimes it seemed as if his heart would burst with the longing to learn that secret. It was always the hidden reason of things that he desired to know.



Head of Christ by da Vinci



Madonna with the Yarnwinder by da Vinci

Much as he loved the flowers he must pull their petals off, one by one, to see how each was joined, to wonder at the dusty pollen, and touch the honey-covered stamens. Then when the sun began to sink he would turn sadly homewards, very hungry, with torn clothes and tired feet, but with a store of sunshine in his heart.

His grandmother shook her head when Leonardo appeared after one of his days of wandering.

'I know thou shouldst be whipped for playing truant,' she said; 'and I should also punish thee for tearing thy clothes.'

'Ah! but thou wilt not whip me,' answered Leonardo, smiling at her with his curious quiet smile, for he had full confidence in her love.

'Well, I love to see thee happy, and I will not punish thee this time,' said his grandmother; 'but if these tales reach thy father's ears, he will not be so tender as I am towards thee.'

And, sure enough, the very next time that a complaint was made from the school, his father happened to be at home, and then the storm burst.

'Next time I will flog thee,' said Ser Piero sternly, with rising anger at the careless air of the boy. 'Meanwhile we will see what a little imprisonment will do towards making thee a better child.'

Then he took the boy by the shoulders and led him to a little dark cupboard under the stairs, and there shut him up for three whole days. There was no kicking or beating at the locked door. Leonardo sat quietly there in the dark, thinking his own thoughts, and wondering why there seemed so little justice in the world. But soon even that wonder passed away, and as usual when he was alone he began to dream dreams of the time when he should have learned the swallows' secrets and should have wings like theirs.

But if there were complaints about Leonardo's dislike of the boys and the Latin grammar, there would be none about the lessons he chose to learn. Indeed, some of the masters began to dread the boy's eager questions, which were sometimes more than they could answer. Scarcely

had he begun the study of arithmetic than he made such rapid progress, and wanted to puzzle out so many problems, that the masters were amazed. His mind seemed always eagerly asking for more light, and was never satisfied.

But it was out on the hillside that he spent his happiest hours. He loved every crawling, creeping, or flying thing, however ugly. Curious beasts which might have frightened another child were to him charming and interesting. There as he listened to the carolling of the birds and bent his head to catch the murmured song of the mountain-streams, the love of music began to steal into his heart.

He did not rest then until he managed to get a lute and learned how to play upon it. And when he had mastered the notes and learned the rules of music, he began to play airs which no one had ever heard before, and to sing such strange sweet songs that the golden notes flowed out as fresh and clear as the song of a lark in the early morning of spring.

'The child is a changeling,' said some, as they saw Leonardo tenderly lift a crushed lizard in his hand, or watched him play with a spotted snake or great hairy spider.

'A changeling perhaps,' said others, 'but one that hath the voice of an angel.' For every one stopped to listen when the boy's voice was heard singing through the streets of the little town.

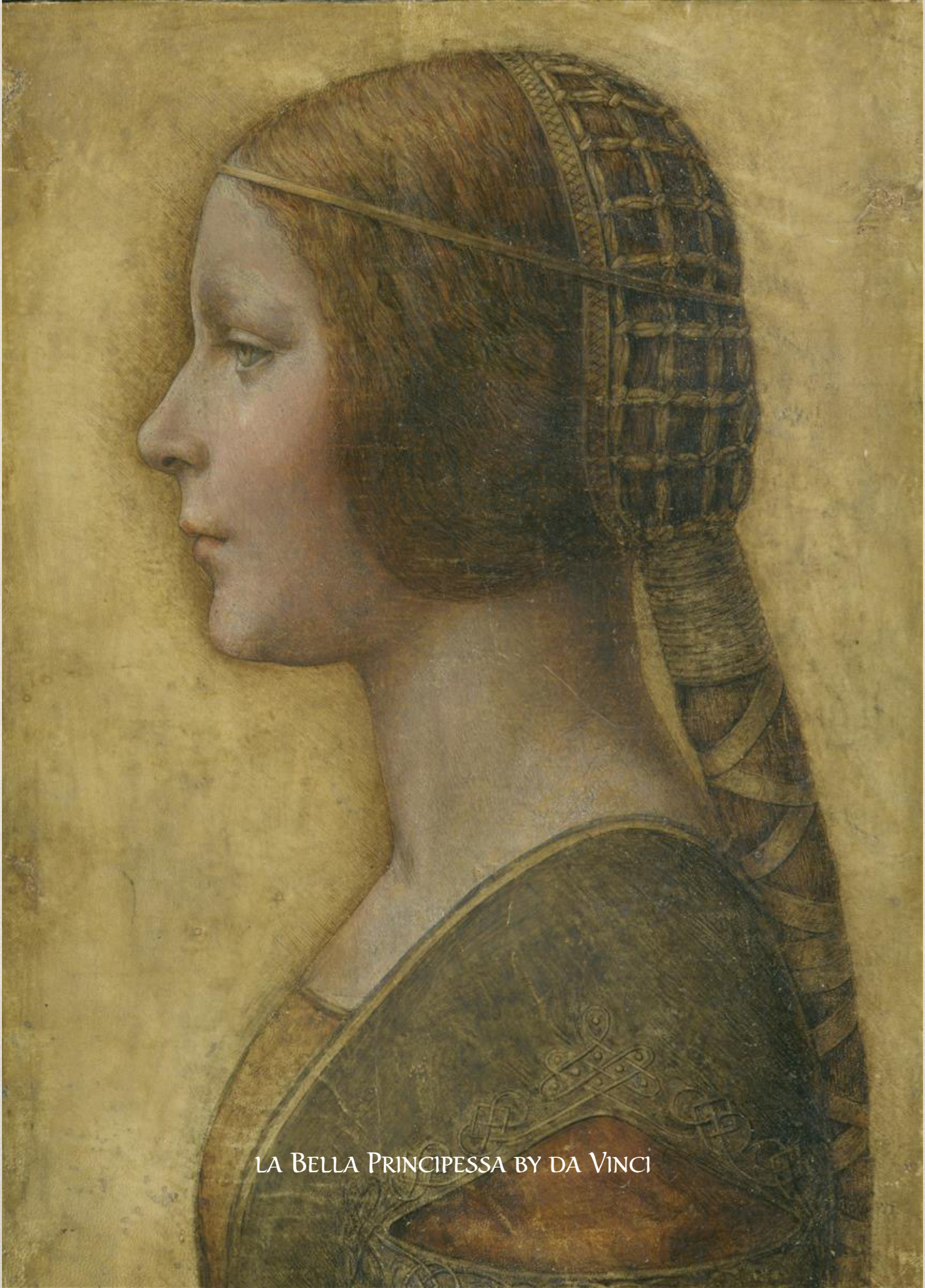
He was a puzzle to every one, and yet a delight to all, even when they understood him least.

So time went on, and when Leonardo was thirteen his father took him away to Florence that he might begin to be trained for some special work. But what work? Ah! that was the rub. The boy could do so many things well that it was difficult to fix on one.

At that time there was living in Florence an old man who knew a great deal about the stars, and who made wonderful calculations about them. He was a famous astronomer, but he cared not at all for honour or fame, but lived a simple quiet life by himself and would not mix with the gay world.



Madonna with a Flower by da Vinci



la Bella Principessa by da Vinci

Few visitors ever came to see him, for it was known that he would receive no one, and so it was a great surprise to old Toscanelli when one night a gentle knock sounded at his door, and a boy walked quietly in and stood before him.

Hastily the old man looked up, and his first thought was to ask the child how he dared enter without leave, and then ask him to be gone, but as he looked at the fair face he felt the charm of the curious smile, and the light in the blue eyes, and instead he laid his hand upon the boy's golden head and said: 'What dost thou seek, my son?'

'I would learn all that thou canst teach me,' said Leonardo, for it was he.

The old man smiled.

'Behold the boundless self-confidence of youth!' he said.

But as they talked together, and the boy asked his many eager questions, a great wonder awoke in the astronomer's mind, and his eyes shone with interest. This child-mind held depths of understanding such as he had never met with among his learned friends. Day after day the old man and the boy bent eagerly together over their problems, and when night fell Toscanelli would take the child up with him to his lonely tower above Florence, and teach him to know the stars and to understand many things.

'This is all very well,' said Ser Piero, 'but the boy must do more than mere star-gazing. He must earn a living for himself, and methinks we might make a painter of him.'

That very day, therefore, he gathered together some of Leonardo's drawings which lay carelessly scattered about, and took them to the studio of Verocchio the painter, who lived close by the Ponte Vecchio.

'Dost thou think thou canst make aught of the boy?' he asked, spreading out the drawings before Verocchio.

The painter's quick eyes examined the work with deep interest.

'Send him to me at once,' he said. 'This is indeed marvellous

talent.'

So Leonardo entered the studio as a pupil, and learned all that could be taught him with the same quickness with which he learned anything that he cared to know.

Every one who saw his work declared that he would be the wonder of the age, but Verocchio shook his head.

'He is too wonderful,' he said. 'He aims at too great perfection. He wants to know everything and do everything, and life is too short for that. He finishes nothing, because he is ever starting to do something else.'

Verocchio's words were true; the boy seldom worked long at one thing. His hands were never idle, and often, instead of painting, he would carve out tiny windmills and curious toys which worked with pulleys and ropes, or made exquisite little clay models of horses and all the other animals that he loved. But he never forgot the longing that had filled his heart when he was a child—the desire to learn the secret of flying.

For days he would sit idle and think of nothing but soaring wings, then he would rouse himself and begin to make some strange machine which he thought might hold the secret that he sought.

'A waste of time,' growled Verocchio. 'See here, thou wouldst be better employed if thou shouldst set to work and help me finish this picture of the Baptism for the good monks of Vallambrosa. Let me see how thou canst paint in the kneeling figure of the angel at the side.'

For a while the boy stood motionless before the picture as if he was looking at something far away. Then he seized the brushes with his left hand and began to paint with quick certain sweep. He never stopped to think, but worked as if the angel were already there, and he were but brushing away the veil that hid it from the light.

Then, when it was done, the master came and looked silently on. For a moment a quick stab of jealousy ran through his heart. Year after year had he worked and striven to reach his ideal. Long days of toil and



The Baptism of Christ by Verrocchio and da Vinci



The Lady with an Ermine by da Vinci

weary nights had he spent, winning each step upwards by sheer hard work. And here was this boy without an effort able to rise far above him. All the knowledge which the master had groped after, had been grasped at once by the wonderful mind of the pupil. But the envious feeling passed quickly away, and Verocchio laid his hand upon Leonardo's shoulder.

'I have found my master,' he said quietly, 'and I will paint no more.'

Leonardo scarcely seemed to hear; he was thinking of something else now, and he seldom noticed if people praised or blamed him. His thoughts had fixed themselves upon something he had seen that morning which had troubled him. On the way to the studio he had passed a tiny shop in a narrow street where a seller of birds was busy hanging his cages up on the nails fastened to the outside wall.

The thought of those poor little prisoners beating their wings against the cruel bars and breaking their hearts with longing for their wild free life, had haunted him all day, and now he could bear it no longer. He seized his cap and hurried off, forgetful of his kneeling angel and the master's praise.

He reached the little shop and called to the man within.

'How much wilt thou take for thy birds?' he cried, and pointed to the little wooden cages that hung against the wall.

'Plague on them,' answered the man, 'they will often die before I can make a sale by them. Thou canst have them all for one silver piece.'

In a moment Leonardo had paid the money and had turned towards the row of little cages. One by one he opened the doors and set the prisoners free, and those that were too frightened or timid to fly away, he gently drew out with his hand, and sent them gaily whirling up above his head into the blue sky.

The man looked with blank astonishment at the empty cages, and wondered if the handsome young man was mad. But Leonardo paid no heed to him, but stood gazing up until every one of the birds had disappeared.

'Happy things,' he said, with a sigh. 'Will you ever teach me the secret of your wings, I wonder?'

It was with great pleasure that Ser Piero heard of his son's success at Verocchio's studio, and he began to have hopes that the boy would make a name for himself after all. It happened just then that he was on a visit to his castle at Vinci, and one morning a peasant who lived on the estate came to ask a great favour of him.

He had bought a rough wooden shield which he was very anxious should have a design painted on it in Florence, and he begged Ser Piero to see that it was done. The peasant was a faithful servant, and very useful in supplying the castle with fish and game, so Ser Piero was pleased to grant him his request.

'Leonardo shall try his hand upon it. It is time he became useful to me,' said Ser Piero to himself. So on his return to Florence he took the shield to his son.

It was a rough, badly-shaped shield, so Leonardo held it to the fire and began to straighten it. For though his hands looked delicate and beautifully formed, they were as strong as steel, and he could bend bars of iron without an effort. Then he sent the shield to a turner to be smoothed and rounded, and when it was ready he sat down to think what he should paint upon it, for he loved to draw strange monsters.

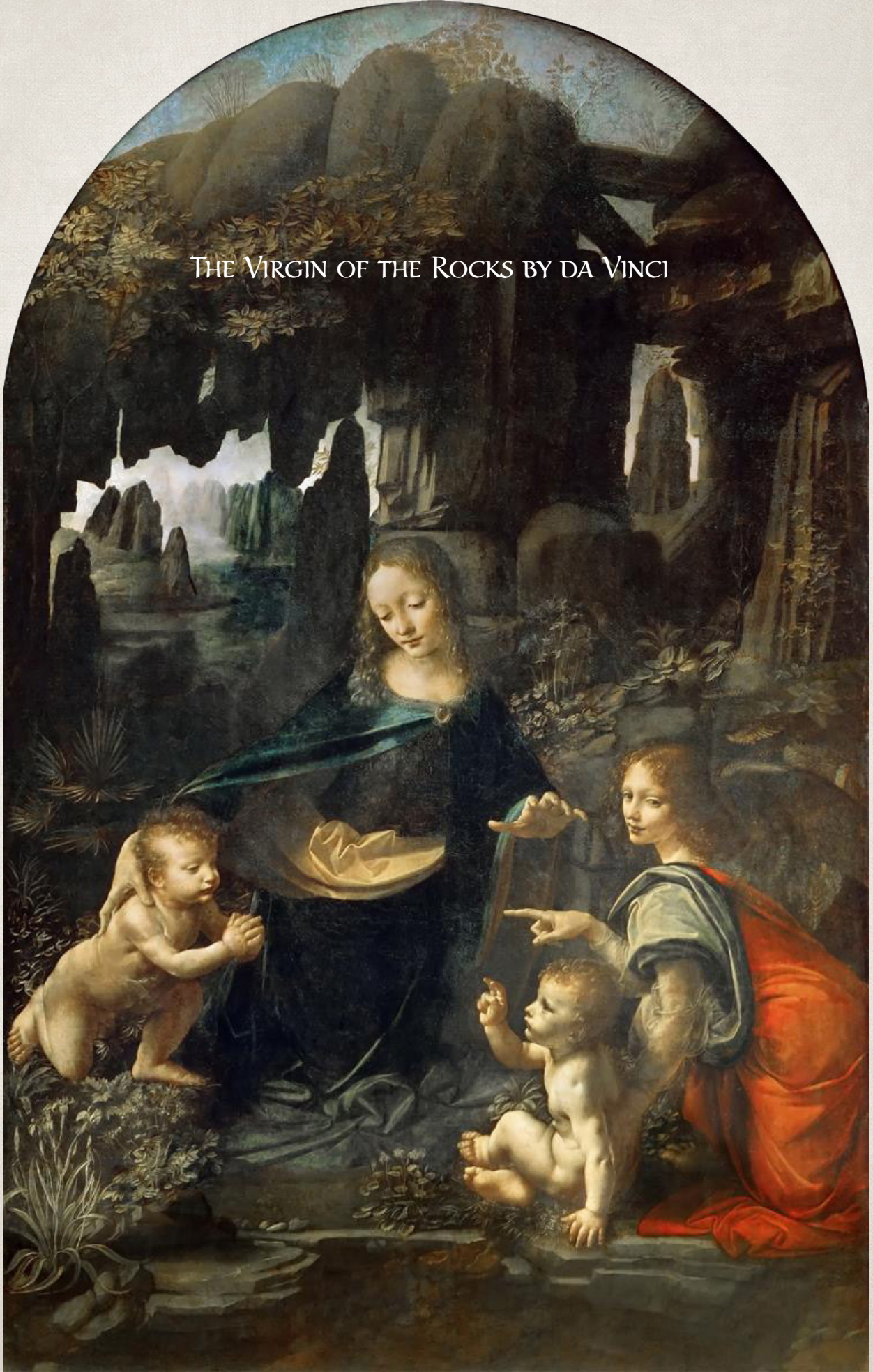
'I will make it as terrifying as the head of Medusa,' he said at last, highly delighted with the plan that had come into his head.

Then he went out and collected together all the strangest animals he could find—lizards, hedgehogs, newts, snakes, dragonflies, locusts, bats, and glow-worms. These he took into his own room, which no one was allowed to enter, and began to paint from them a curious monster, partly a lizard and partly a bat, with something of each of the other animals added to it.

When it was ready Leonardo hung the shield in a good light against a dark curtain, so that the painted monster stood out in brilliant contrast, and looked as if its twisted curling limbs were full of life.



Dragon Drawing by da Vinci



The Virgin of the Rocks by da Vinci

A knock sounded at the door, and Ser Piero's voice was heard outside asking if the shield was finished.

'Come in,' cried Leonardo, and Ser Piero entered.

He cast one look at the monster hanging there and then uttered a cry and turned to flee, but Leonardo caught hold of his cloak and laughingly told him to look closer.

'If I have really succeeded in frightening thee,' he said, 'I have indeed done all I could desire.'

His father could scarcely believe that it was nothing but a painting, and he was so proud of the work that he would not part with it, but gave the peasant of Vinci another shield instead.

Leonardo then began a drawing for a curtain which was to be woven in silk and gold and given as a present from the Florentines to the King of Portugal, and he also began a large picture of the Adoration of the Shepherds which was never finished.

The young painter grew restless after a while, and felt the life of the studio narrow and cramped. He longed to leave Florence and find work in some new place.

He was not a favourite at the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent as Filippino Lippi and Botticelli were. Lorenzo liked those who would flatter him and do as they were bid, while Leonardo took his own way in everything and never said what he did not mean.

But it happened that just then Lorenzo wished to send a present to Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, and the gift he chose was a marvellous musical instrument which Leonardo had just finished.

It was a silver lute, made in the form of a horse's head, the most curious and beautiful thing ever seen. Lorenzo was charmed with it.

'Thou shalt take it thyself, as my messenger,' he said to Leonardo. 'I doubt if another can be found who can play upon it as thou dost.'

So Leonardo set out for Milan, and was glad to shake himself free from the narrow life of the Florentine studio.

Before starting, however, he had written a letter to the Duke setting

down in simple order all the things he could do, and telling of what use he could be in times of war and in days of peace.

There seemed nothing that he could not do. He could make bridges, blow up castles, dig canals, invent a new kind of cannon, build warships, and make underground passages. In days of peace he could design and build houses, make beautiful statues and paint pictures 'as well as any man, be he who he may.'

The letter was written in curious writing from right to left like Hebrew or Arabic. This was how Leonardo always wrote, using his left hand, so that it could only be read by holding the writing up to a mirror.

The Duke was half amazed and half amused when the letter reached him.

'Either these are the words of a fool, or of a man of genius,' said the Duke. And when he had once seen and spoken to Leonardo he saw at once which of the two he deserved to be called.

Every one at the court was charmed with the artist's beautiful face and graceful manners. His music alone, as he swept the strings of the silver lute and sang to it his own songs, would have brought him fame, but the Duke quickly saw that this was no mere minstrel.

It was soon arranged therefore that Leonardo should take up his abode at the court of Milan and receive a yearly pension from the Duke.

Sometimes the pension was paid, and sometimes it was forgotten, but Leonardo never troubled about money matters. Somehow or other he must have all that he wanted, and everything must be fair and dainty. His clothes were always rich and costly, but never bright-coloured or gaudy. There was no plume or jewelled brooch in his black velvet beretto or cap, and the only touch of colour was his golden hair, and the mantle of dark red cloth which he wore in the fashion of the Florentines, thrown across his shoulder. Above all, he must always have horses in his stables, for he loved them more than human beings.

Many were the plans and projects which the Duke entrusted to Leonardo's care, but of all that he did, two great works stand out as



Self-Portrait by da Vinci



The Last Supper by da Vinci

greater than all the rest. One was the painting of the Last Supper on the walls of the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, and the other the making of a model of a great equestrian statue, a bronze horse with the figure of the Duke upon its back.

Year after year Leonardo worked at that wonderful fresco of the Last Supper. Sometimes for weeks or months he never touched it, but he always returned to it again. Then for days he would work from morning till night, scarcely taking time to eat, and able to think of nothing else, until suddenly he would put down his brushes and stand silently for a long, long time before the picture. It seemed as if he was wasting the precious hours doing nothing, but in truth he worked more diligently with his brain when his hands were idle.

Often too when he worked at the model for the great bronze horse, he would suddenly stop, and walk quickly through the streets until he came to the refectory, and there, catching up his brushes, he would paint in one or perhaps two strokes, and then return to his modelling.

Besides all this Leonardo was busy with other plans for the Duke's amusement, and no court fete was counted successful without his help. Nothing seemed too difficult for him to contrive, and what he did was always new and strange and wonderful.

Once when the King of France came as a guest to Milan, Leonardo prepared a curious model of a lion, which by some inside machinery was able to walk forward several steps to meet the King, and then open wide its huge jaws and display inside a bed of sweet-scented lilies, the emblem of France, to do honour to her King. But while working at other things Leonardo never forgot his longing to learn the secret art of flying. Every now and then a new idea would come into his head, and he would lay aside all other work until he had made the new machine which might perhaps act as the wings of a bird. Each fresh disappointment only made him more keen to try again.

'I know we shall some day have wings,' he said to his pupils, who sometimes wondered at the strange work of the master's hands. 'It is

only a question of knowing how to make them. I remember once when I was a baby lying in my cradle, I fancied a bird flew to me, opened my lips and rubbed its feathers over them. So it seems to be my fate all my life to talk of wings.'

Very slowly the great fresco of the Last Supper grew under the master's hand until it was nearly finished. The statue, too, was almost completed, and then evil days fell upon Milan. The Duke was obliged to flee before the French soldiers, who forced their way into the town and took possession of it. Before any one could prevent it, the soldiers began to shoot their arrows at the great statue, which they used as a target, and in a few hours the work of sixteen years was utterly destroyed. It is sadder still to tell the fate of Leonardo's fresco, the greatest picture perhaps that ever was painted. Dampness lurked in the wall and began to dim and blur the colours. The careless monks cut a door through the very centre of the picture, and, later on, when Napoleon's soldiers entered Milan, they used the refectory as a stable, and amused themselves by throwing stones at what remained of it. But though little of it is left now to be seen, there is still enough to make us stand in awe and reverence before the genius of the great master.

Not far from Milan there lived a friend of Leonardo's, whom the master loved to visit. This Girolamo Melzi had a son called Francesco, a little motherless boy, who adored the great painter with all his heart.

Together Leonardo and the child used to wander out to search for curious animals and rare flowers, and as they watched the spiders weave their webs and pulled the flowers to pieces to find out their secrets, the boy listened with wide wondering eyes to all the tales which the painter told him. And at night Leonardo wrapped the little one close inside his warm cloak and carried him out to see the stars—those same stars which old Toscanelli had taught him to love long ago in Florence. Then when the day of parting came the child clung round the master's neck and would not let him go.

'Take me with thee,' he cried, 'do not leave me behind all alone.'



Mona Lisa by da Vinci



Battle of Anghiari (Unfinished) by da Vinci

'I cannot take thee now, little one,' said Leonardo gently. 'Thou art still too small, but later on thou shalt come to me and be my pupil. This I promise thee.'

It was but a weary wandering life that awaited Leonardo after he was forced to leave his home in Milan. It seemed as if it was his fate to begin many things but to finish nothing. For a while he lived in Rome, but he did little real work there.

For several years he lived in Florence and began to paint a huge battle-picture. There too he painted the famous portrait of Mona Lisa, which is now in Paris. Of all portraits that have ever been painted this is counted the most wonderful and perfect piece of work, although Leonardo himself called it unfinished.

By this time the master had fallen on evil days. All his pupils were gone, and his friends seemed to have forgotten him. He was sitting before the fire one stormy night, lonely and sad, when the door opened and a tall handsome lad came in.

'Master!' he cried, and kneeling down he kissed the old man's hands. 'Dost thou not know me? I am thy little Francesco, come to claim thy promise that I should one day be thy servant and pupil.'

Leonardo laid his hand upon the boy's fair head and looked into his face.

'I am growing old,' he said, 'and I can no longer do for thee what I might once have done. I am but a poor wanderer now. Dost thou indeed wish to cast in thy lot with mine?'

'I care only to be near thee,' said the boy. 'I will go with thee to the ends of the earth.'

So when, soon after, Leonardo received an invitation from the new King of France, he took the boy with him, and together they made their home in the little chateau of Claux near the town of Amboise.

The master's hair was silvered now, and his long beard was as white as snow. His keen blue eyes looked weary and tired of life, and care had drawn many deep lines on his beautiful face. Sad thoughts were

always his company. The one word 'failure' seemed to be written across his life. What had he done? He had begun many things and had finished but few. His great fresco was even now fading away and becoming dim and blurred. His model for the marvellous horse was destroyed. A few pictures remained, but these had never quite reached his ideal. The crowd who had once hailed him as the greatest of all artists, could now only talk of Michelangelo and the young Raphael. Michelangelo himself had once scornfully told him he was a failure and could finish nothing.

He was glad to leave Italy and all its memories behind, and he hoped to begin work again in his quiet little French home. But Death was drawing near, and before many years had passed he grew too weak to hold a brush or pencil.

It was in the springtime of the year that the end came. Francesco had opened the window and gently lifted the master in his strong young arms, that he might look once more on the outside world which he loved so dearly. The trees were putting on their dainty dress of tender green, white clouds swept across the blue sky, and April sunshine flooded the room.

As he looked out, the master's tired eyes woke into life.

'Look!' he cried, 'the swallows have come back! Oh that they would lend me their wings that I might fly away and be at rest!'

The swallows darted and circled about in the clear spring air, busy with their building plans, but Francesco thought he heard the rustle of other wings, as the master's soul, freed from the tired body, was at last borne upwards higher than any earthly wings could soar.



Salvator Mundi by da Vinci


The School of Athens
Raphael

Raphael

1483-1520, Italy

Among the marvellous tales of the *Arabian Nights*, there is a story told of a band of robbers who, by whispering certain magic words, were able to open the door of a secret cave where treasures of gold and silver and precious jewels lay hid. Now, although the day of such delightful marvels is past and gone, yet there still remains a certain magic in some names which is able to open the secret doors of the hidden haunts of beauty and delight.

For most people the very name of 'Raphael' is like the 'Open Sesame' of the robber chief in the old story. In a moment a door seems to open out of the commonplace everyday world, and through it they see a stretch of fair sweet country. There their eyes rest upon gentle, dark-eyed Madonnas, who smile down lovingly upon the heavenly Child, playing at her side or resting in her arms. The little St. John is also there, companion of the Infant Christ; rosy, round-limbed children both, half human and half divine. And standing in the background are a crowd of grave, quiet figures, each one alive with interest, while over all there is a glow of intense vivid colour.

We know but little of the everyday life of this great artist. When we hear his name, it is of his different pictures that we think at once, for they are world-famous. We almost forget the man as we gaze at his

work.

It was in the little village of Urbino, in Umbria, that Raphael was born. His father was a painter called Giovanni Santi, and from him Raphael inherited his love of Art. His mother, Magia, was a sweet, gracious woman, and the little Raphael was like her in character and beauty. It seemed as if the boy had received every good gift that Nature could bestow. He had a lovely oval face, and soft dark eyes that shone with a beauty that was more of heaven than earth, and told of a soul which was as pure and lovely as his face. Above all, he had the gift of making every one love him, so that his should have been a happy sunshiny life. But no one can ever escape trouble, and when Raphael was only eight years old, the first cloud overspread his sky. His mother died, and soon after his father married again.

The new mother was very young, and did not care much for children, but Raphael did not mind that as long as he could be with his father. But three years later a blacker cloud arose and blotted out the sunshine from his life, for his father too died, and left him all alone.

The boy had loved his father dearly, and it had been his great delight to be with him in the studio, to learn to grind and mix the colours and watch those wonderful pictures grow from day to day.

But now all was changed. The quiet studio rang with angry voices, and the peaceful home was the scene of continual quarrelling. Who was to have the money, and how were the Santi estates to be divided? Stepmother and uncle wrangled from morning until night, and no one gave a thought to the child Raphael. It was only the money that mattered.

Then when it seemed that the boy's training was going to be totally neglected, kindly help arrived. Simone di Ciarla, brother of Raphael's own mother, came to look after his little nephew, and ere long carried him off from the noisy, quarrelsome household, and took him to Perugia.

'Thou shalt have the best teaching in all Italy,' said Simone as



Madonna of the Baldacchino by Raphael



The Marriage of the Virgin by Raphael

they walked through the streets of the town. 'The great master to whose studio we go, can hold his own even among the artists of Florence. See that thou art diligent to learn all that he can teach thee, so that thou mayest become as great a painter as thy father.'

'Am I to be the pupil of the great Perugino?' asked Raphael, his eyes shining with pleasure. 'I have often heard my father speak of his marvellous pictures.'

'We will see if he can take thee,' answered his uncle.

The boy's heart sunk. What if the master refused to take him as a pupil? Must he return to idleness and the place which was no longer home?

But soon his fears were set at rest. Perugino, like every one else, felt the charm of that beautiful face and gentle manner, and when he had seen some drawings which the boy had done, he agreed readily that Raphael should enter the studio and become his pupil.

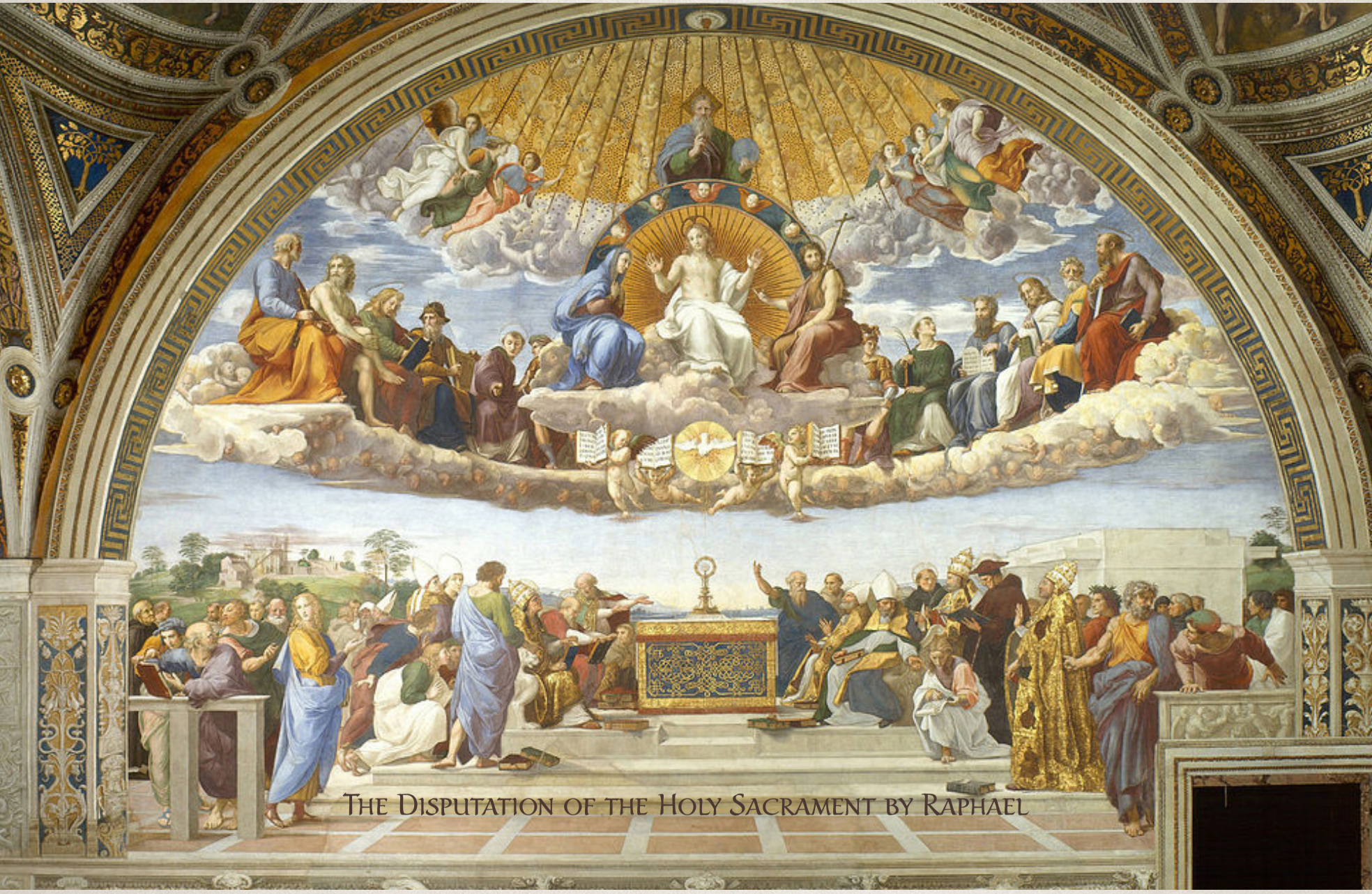
Perugia had been passing through evil times just before this. The two great parties of the Oddi and Baglioni families were always at war together. Whichever of them happened to be the stronger held the city and drove out the other party, so that the fighting never ceased either inside or outside the gates. The peaceful country round about had been laid waste and desolate. The peasants did not dare go out to till their fields or prune their olive-trees. Mothers were afraid to let their little ones out of their sight for hungry wolves and other wild beasts prowled about the deserted countryside.

Then came a day when the outside party managed to creep silently into the city, and the most terrible fight of all began. So long and fiercely did the battle rage that almost all the Oddi were killed. Then for a time there was peace in Perugia and all the country round.

So it happened that as soon as the people of Perugia had time to think of other things besides fighting, they began to wish that their town might be put in order, and that the buildings which had been injured during the struggles might be restored.



The Madonna Conestabile by Raphael



The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament by Raphael

This was a good opportunity for peaceful men like Perugino, for there was much work to be done, and both he and his pupils were kept busy from morning till night.

Of all his pupils, Perugino loved the young Raphael best. He saw at once that this was no ordinary boy.

'He is my pupil now, but soon he will be my master,' he used to say as he watched the boy at work.

So he taught him with all possible carefulness, and was never tired of giving him good advice.

'Learn first of all to draw,' he would say, when Raphael looked with longing eyes at the colours and brushes of the master. 'Draw everything you see, no matter what it is, but always draw and draw again. 'The rest will follow; but if the knowledge of drawing be lacking, nothing will afterwards succeed. Keep always at hand a sketch-book, and draw therein carefully every manner of thing that meets thy eye.'

Raphael never forgot the good advice of his master. He was never without a sketch-book, and his drawings now are almost as interesting as his great pictures, for they show the first thought that came into his mind, before the picture was composed.

So the years passed on, and Raphael learned all that the master could teach him. At first his pictures were so like Perugino's, that it was difficult to know whether they were the work of the master or the pupil. But the quiet days at Perugia soon came to an end, and Perugino went back to Florence. For some time Raphael worked at different places near Perugia, and then followed his master to the City of Flowers, where every artist longed to go. Though he was still but a young man, the world had already begun to notice his work, and Florence gladly welcomed a new artist.

It was just at that time that Leonardo da Vinci's fame was at its height, and when Raphael was shown some of the great man's work, he was filled with awe and wonder. The genius of Leonardo held him spellbound.



The Fall on the Road to Calvary by Raphael



Sistine Madonna by Raphael

'It is what I have dreamed of in my dreams,' he said. 'Oh that I might learn his secret!'

Little by little the new ideas sunk into his heart, and the pictures he began to paint were no longer like those of his old master Perugino, but seemed to breathe some new spirit.

It was always so with Raphael. He seemed to be able to gather the best from every one, just as the bee goes from flower to flower and gathers its sweetness into one golden honeycomb. Only the genius of Raphael made all that he touched his very own, and the spirit of his pictures is unlike that of any other master.

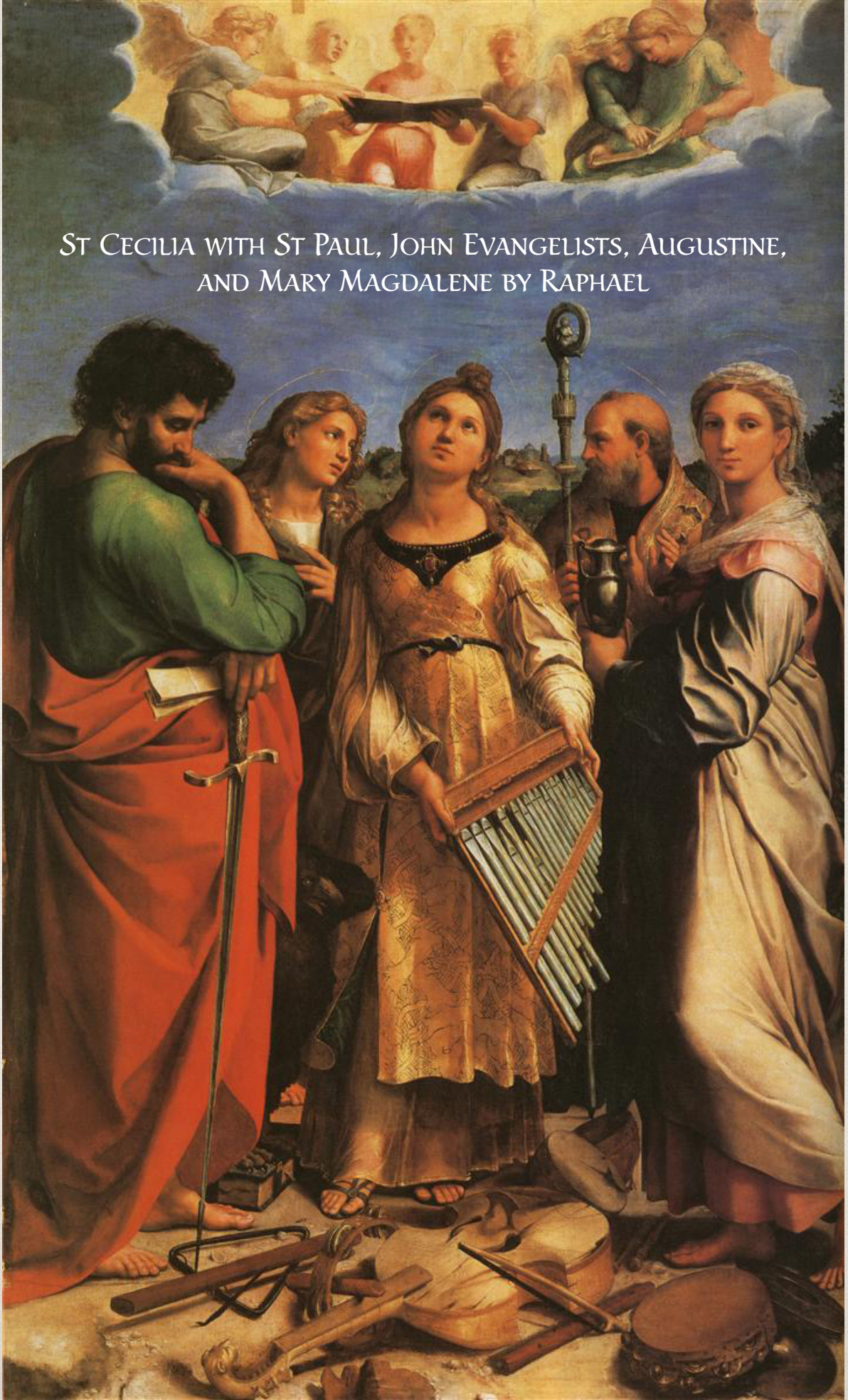
For many years after this he lived in Rome, where now his greatest frescoes may be seen—frescoes so varied and wonderful that many books have been written about them.

There he first met Margarita, the young maiden whom he loved all his life. It is her face which looks down upon us from the picture of the Sistine Madonna, perhaps the most famous Madonna that ever was painted. The little room in the Dresden Gallery where this picture now hangs seems almost like a holy place, for surely there is something divine in that fair face. There she stands, the Queen of Heaven, holding in her arms the Infant Christ, with such a strange look of majesty and sadness in her eyes as makes us realise that she was indeed fit to be the Mother of our Lord.

But the picture which all children love best is one in Florence called 'The Madonna of the Goldfinch.'

It is a picture of the Holy Family, the Infant Jesus, His mother, and the little St. John. The Christ Child is a dear little curly-headed baby, and He stands at His mother's knee with one little bare foot resting on hers. His hand is stretched out protectingly over a yellow goldfinch which St. John, a sturdy little figure clad in goatskins, has just brought to Him. The baby face is full of tender love and care for the little fluttering prisoner, and His curved hand is held over its head to protect it.

'Do not hurt My bird,' he seems to say to the eager St. John, 'for



St Cecilia with St Paul, John Evangelists, Augustine, and Mary Magdalene by Raphael



The Annunciation by Raphael

it belongs to Me and to My Father.'

These are only two of the many pictures which Raphael painted. It is wonderful to think how much work he did in his short life, for he died when he was only thirty-seven. He had been at work at St. Peter's, giving directions about some alterations, and there he was seized by a severe chill, and in a few days the news spread like wildfire through the country that Raphael was dead.

It seemed almost as if it could not be true. He had been so full of life and health, so eager for work, such a living power among men.

But there he lay, beautiful in death as he had been in life, and over his head was hung the picture of the 'Transfiguration,' on which he had been at work, its colours yet wet, never to be finished by that still hand.

All Rome flocked to his funeral, and high and low mourned his loss. But he left behind him a fame which can never die, a name which through all these four hundred years has never lost the magic of its greatness.





The Transfiguration by Raphael