

MY *Fine Art* STORY BOOK

VOLUME TWELVE

COMPILED BY MARLENE PETERSON

My Fine Art Story Book

Volume Twelve



Stories of Artists and Fine Art
Pieces for the Young Reader

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

Libraries of Hope

My Fine Art Story Book
Volume Twelve

Copyright © 2023 by Libraries of Hope, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher. International rights and foreign translations available only through permission of the publisher.

Book Design and Layout: Krystal D'Abarno

Cover Image: *Madonna of the Harpies,* by Andrea del Sarto (1517). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

Steedman, Amy. (1907). *Knights of Art: Stories of the Italian Painters*. London: T.C. & E.C. Jack.

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website: www.librariesofhope.com
Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

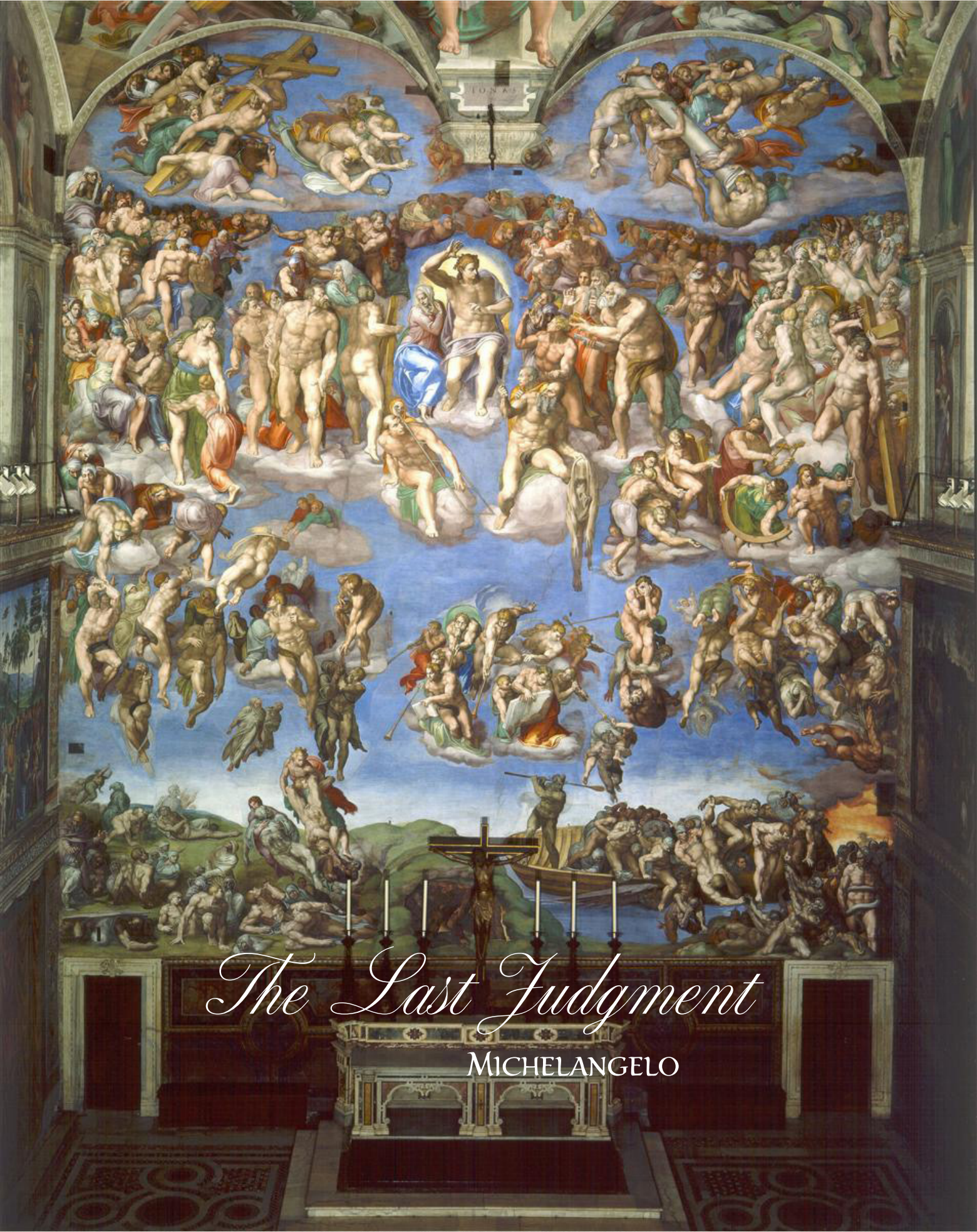
Table of Contents

Knights of Art: Part Three.....1
Michelangelo.....3
delSarto.....19
Bellini.....37
Carpaccio.....51
Giorgione.....63
Titian.....75
Tintoretto.....83
Veronese.....93

Knights of Art

Part Three




The Last Judgment
MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo

1475-1564, Italy

Sometimes in a crowd of people one sees a tall man, who stands head and shoulders higher than any one else, and who can look far over the heads of ordinary-sized mortals.

'What a giant!' we exclaim, as we gaze up and see him towering above us.

So among the crowd of painters travelling along the road to Fame we see above the rest a giant, a greater and more powerful genius than any that came before or after him. When we hear the name of Michelangelo we picture to ourselves a great rugged, powerful giant, a veritable son of thunder, who, like the Titans of old, bent every force of Nature to his will.

This Michelangelo was born at Caprese among the mountains of Casentino. His father, Lodovico Buonarroti, was podesta or mayor of Caprese, and came of a very ancient and honourable family, which had often distinguished itself in the service of Florence.

Now the day on which the baby was born happened to be not only a Sunday, but also a morning when the stars were especially favourable. So the wise men declared that some heavenly virtue was sure to belong

to a child born at that particular time, and without hesitation Lodovico determined to call his little son Michael Angelo, after the archangel Michael. Surely that was a name splendid enough to adorn any great career.

It happened just then that Lodovico's year of office ended, and so he returned with his wife and child to Florence. He had a property at Settignano, a little village just outside the city, and there he settled down.

Most of the people of the village were stonecutters, and it was to the wife of one of these labourers that little Michelangelo was sent to be nursed. So in after years the great master often said that if his mind was worth anything, he owed it to the clear pure mountain air in which he was born, just as he owed his love of carving stone to the unconscious influence of his nurse, the stonecutter's wife.

As the boy grew up he clearly showed in what direction his interest lay. At school he was something of a dunce at his lessons, but let him but have a pencil and paper and his mind was wide awake at once. Every spare moment he spent making sketches on the walls of his father's house.

But Lodovico would not hear of the boy becoming an artist. There were many children to provide for, and the family was not rich. It would be much more fitting that Michelangelo should go into the silk and woollen business and learn to make money. But it was all in vain to try to make the boy see the wisdom of all this. Scold as they might, he cared for nothing but his pencil, and even after he was severely beaten he would creep back to his beloved work. How he envied his friend Francesco who worked in the shop of Master Ghirlandaio! It was a joy even to sit and listen to the tales of the studio, and it was a happy day when Francesco brought some of the master's drawings to show to his eager friend.

Little by little Lodovico began to see that there was nothing for it but to give way to the boy's wishes, and so at last, when he was four-



The Delphic Sibyl by Michelangelo



Crucifixion by Michelangelo

teen years old, Michelangelo was sent to study as a pupil in the studio of Master Ghirlandaio.

It was just at the time when Ghirlandaio was painting the frescoes of the chapel in Santa Maria Novella, and Michelangelo learned many lessons as he watched the master at work, or even helped with the less important parts.

But it was like placing an eagle in a hawk's nest. The young eagle quickly learned to soar far higher than the hawk could do, and ere long began to 'sweep the skies alone.'

It was not pleasant for the great Florentine master, whose work all men admired, to have his drawings corrected by a young lad, and perhaps Michelangelo was not as humble as he should have been. In the strength of his great knowledge he would sometimes say sharp and scornful things, and perhaps he forgot the respect due from pupil to master.

Be that as it may, he left Ghirlandaio's studio when he was sixteen years old, and never had another master. Thenceforward he worked out his own ideas in his giant strength, and was the pupil of none.

The boy Francesco was still his friend, and together they went to study in the gardens of San Marco, where Lorenzo the Magnificent had collected many statues and works of art. Here was a new field for Michelangelo. Without needing a lesson he began to copy the statues in terra-cotta, and so clever was his work that Lorenzo was delighted with it.

'See, now, what thou canst do with marble,' he said. 'Terra-cotta is but poor stuff to work in.'

Michelangelo had never handled a chisel before, but he chipped and cut away the marble so marvellously that life seemed to spring out of the stone. There was a marble head of an old faun in the garden, and this Michelangelo set himself to copy. Such a wonderful copy did he make that Lorenzo was amazed. It was even better than the original, for the boy had introduced ideas of his own and had made the laughing

mouth a little open to show the teeth and the tongue of the faun. Lorenzo noticed this, and turned with a smile to the young artist.

'Thou shouldst have remembered that old folks never keep all their teeth, but that some of them are always wanting,' he said.

Of course Lorenzo meant this as a joke, but Michelangelo immediately took his hammer and struck out several of the teeth, and this too pleased Lorenzo greatly.

There was nothing that the Magnificent ruler loved so much as genius, so Michelangelo was received into the palace and made the companion of Lorenzo's sons. Not only did good fortune thus smile upon the young artist, but to his great astonishment Lodovico too found that benefits were showered upon him, all for the sake of his famous young son.

These years of peace, and calm, steady work had the greatest effect on Michelangelo's work, and he learned much from the clever, brilliant men who thronged Lorenzo's court. Then, too, he first listened to that ringing voice which strove to raise Florence to a sense of her sins, when Savonarola preached his great sermons in the Duomo. That teaching sank deep into the heart of Michelangelo, and years afterwards he left on the walls of the Sistine Chapel a living echo of those thundering words.

Like all the other artists, he would often go to study Masaccio's frescoes in the little chapel of the Carmine. There was quite a band of young artists working there, and very soon they began to look with envious feelings at Michelangelo's drawings, and their jealousy grew as his fame increased. At last, one day, a youth called Torriggiano could bear it no longer, and began to make scornful remarks, and worked himself up into such a rage that he aimed a blow at Michelangelo with his fist, which not only broke his nose but crushed it in such a way that he was marked for life. He had had a rough, rugged look before this, but now the crooked nose gave him almost a savage expression which he never lost.



Manasseh and Amon by Michelangelo



David and Goliath by Michelangelo

Changes followed fast after this time of quiet. Lorenzo the Magnificent died, and his son, the weak Piero de Medici, tried to take his place as ruler of Florence. For a time Michelangelo continued to live at the court of Piero, but it was not encouraging to work for a master whose foolish taste demanded statues to be made out of snow, which, of course, melted at the first breath of spring.

Michelangelo never forgot all that he owed to Lorenzo, and he loved the Medici family, but his sense of justice made him unable to take their part when trouble arose between them and the Florentine people. So when the struggle began he left Florence and went first to Venice and then to Bologna. From afar he heard how the weak Piero had been driven out of the city, but more bitter still was his grief when the news came that the solemn warning voice of the great preacher Savonarola was silenced forever.

Then a great longing to see his beloved city again filled his heart, and he returned to Florence.

Botticelli was a sad, broken-down old man now, and Ghirlandaio was also growing old, but Florence was still rich in great artists. Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, and Filippino Lippi were all there, and men talked of the coming of an even greater genius, the young Raphael of Urbino.

There happened just then to be at the works of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Flowers a huge block of marble which no one knew how to use. Leonardo da Vinci had been invited to carve a statue out of it, but he had refused to try, saying he could do nothing with it. But when the marble was offered to Michelangelo his eye kindled and he stood for a long time silent before the great white block. Through the outer walls of stone he seemed to see the figure imprisoned in the marble, and his giant strength and giant mind longed to go to work to set that figure free.

And when the last covering of marble was chipped and cut away there stood out a magnificent figure of the young David. Perhaps he is

too strong and powerful for our idea of the gentle shepherd-lad, but he is a wonderful figure, and Goliath might well have trembled to meet such a young giant.

People flocked to see the great statue, and many were the discussions as to where it should be placed. Artists were never tired of giving their opinion, and even of criticising the work. 'It seems to me,' said one, 'that the nose is surely much too large for the face. Could you not alter that?'

Michelangelo said nothing, but he mounted the scaffolding and pretended to chip away at the nose with his chisel. Meanwhile he let drop some marble chips and dust upon the head of the critic beneath. Then he came down.

'Is that better?' he asked gravely.

'Admirable!' answered the artist. 'You have given it life.'

Michelangelo smiled to himself. How wise people thought themselves when they often knew nothing about what they were talking! But the critic was satisfied, and did not notice the smile.

It would fill a book to tell of all the work which Michelangelo did; but although he began so much, a great deal of it was left unfinished. If he had lived in quieter times, his work would have been more complete; but one after another his patrons died, or changed their minds, and set him to work at something else before he had finished what he was doing.

The great tomb which Pope Julius had ordered him to make was never finished, although Michelangelo drew out all the designs for it, and for forty years was constantly trying to complete it. The Pope began to think it was an evil omen to build his own tomb, so he made up his mind that Michelangelo should instead set to work to fresco the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. In vain did the great sculptor repeat that he knew but little of the art of painting.

'Didst thou not learn to mix colours in the studio of Master Ghirlandaio?' said Julius. 'Thou hast but to remember the lessons he taught



The Prophet Ezekiel by Michelangelo



The Torment of St Anthony by Michelangelo

thee. And, besides, I have heard of a great drawing of a battlescene which thou didst make for the Florentines, and have seen many drawings of thine, one especially: a terrible head of a furious old man, shrieking in his rage, such as no other hand than thine could have drawn. Is there aught that thou canst not do if thou hast but the will?'

And the Pope was right; for as soon as Michelangelo really made up his mind to do the work, all difficulties seemed to vanish.

It was no easy task he had undertaken. To stand upright and cover vast walls with painting is difficult enough, but Michelangelo was obliged to lie flat upon a scaffolding and paint the ceiling above him. Even to look up at that ceiling for ten minutes makes the head and neck ache with pain, and we wonder how such a piece of work could ever have been done.

No help would the master accept, and he had no pupils. Alone he worked, and he could not bear to have any one near him looking on. In silence and solitude he lay there painting those marvellous frescoes of the story of the Creation to the time of Noah. Only Pope Julius himself dared to disturb the master, and he alone climbed the scaffolding and watched the work.

'When wilt thou have finished?' was his constant cry. 'I long to show thy work to the world.'

'Patience, patience,' said Michelangelo. 'Nothing is ready yet.'

'But when wilt thou make an end?' asked the impatient old man.

'When I can,' answered the painter.

Then the Pope lost his temper, for he was not accustomed to be answered like this.

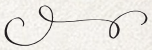
'Dost thou want to be thrown head first from the scaffold?' he asked angrily. 'I tell thee that will happen if the work is not finished at once.'

So, incomplete as they were, Michelangelo was obliged to uncover the frescoes that all Rome might see them. It was many years before the ceiling was finished or the final fresco of the Last Judgment painted

upon the end wall.

Michelangelo lived to be a very old man, and his life was lonely and solitary to the end. The one woman he loved, Vittoria Colonna, had died, and with her death all brightness for him had faded. Although he worked so much in Rome, it was always Florence that he loved. There it was that he began the statues for the Chapel of the Medici, and there, too, he helped to build the defences of San Miniato when the Medici family made war upon the City of Flowers.

So when the great man died in Rome it seemed but fit that his body should be carried back to his beloved Florence. There it now rests in the Church of Santa Croce, while his giant works, his great and terrible thoughts breathed out into marble or flashed upon the walls of the Sistine Chapel, live on for ever, filling the minds of men with a great awe and wonder as they gaze upon them.





The Prophet Joel by Michelangelo



Assumption of the Virgin

DEL SARTO

Andrea Del Sarto

1486-1531, Italy

Nowhere in Florence could a more honest man or a better worker be found than Agnolo the tailor. True, there were once evil tales whispered about him when he first opened his shop in the little street. It was said that he was no Italian, but a foreigner who had been obliged to flee from his own land because of a quarrel he had had with one of his customers. People shook their heads and talked mysteriously of how the tailor's scissors had been used as a deadly weapon in the fight. But ere long these stories died away, and the tailor, with his wife Constanza, lived a happy, busy life, and brought up their six children carefully and well.

Now out of those six children five were just the ordinary commonplace little ones such as one would expect to meet in a tailor's household, but the sixth was like the ugly duckling in the fairy tale—a little, strange bird, unlike all the rest, who learned to swim far away and soon left the old commonplace home behind him.

The boy's name was Andrea. He was such a quick, sharp little boy that he was sent very early to school, and had learned to read and write before he was seven years old. As that was considered quite enough education, his father then took him away from school and put him to work with a goldsmith.

It is early days to begin work at seven years old, but Andrea thought it was quite as good as play. He was always perfectly happy if he could have a pencil and paper, and his drawings and designs were really so wonderfully good that his master grew to be quite proud of the child and showed the work to all his customers.

Next door to the goldsmith's shop there lived an old artist called Barile, who began to take a great interest in little Andrea. Barile was not a great painter, but still there was much that he could teach the boy, and he was anxious to have him as a pupil. So it was arranged that Andrea should enter the studio and learn to be an artist instead of a goldsmith.

For three years the boy worked steadily with his new master, but by that time Barile saw that better teaching was needed than he could give. So after much thought the old man went to the great Florentine artist Piero di Cosimo, and asked him if he would agree to receive Andrea as his pupil. 'You will find the boy no trouble,' he urged. 'He has wonderful talent, and already he has learnt to mix his colours so marvellously that to my mind there is no artist in Florence who knows more about colour than little Andrea.' Cosimo shook his head in unbelief. The boy was but a child, and this praise seemed absurd. However, the drawings were certainly extraordinary, and he was glad to receive so clever a pupil.

But little by little, as Cosimo watched the boy at work, his unbelief vanished and his wonder grew, until he was as fond and proud of his pupil as the old master had been. 'He handles his colours as if he had had fifty years of experience,' he would say proudly, as he showed off the boy's work to some new patron.

And truly the knowledge of drawing and colouring seemed to come to the boy without any effort. Not that he was idle or trusted to chance. He was never tired of work, and his greatest joy on holidays was to go off and study the drawings of the great Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Often he would spend the whole day copying these



Holy Family by del Sarto



The Journey of the Magi by del Sarto

drawings with the greatest care, never tired of learning more and more. As Andrea grew older, all Florence began to take note of the young painter—'Andrea del Sarto,' as he was called, or 'the tailor's Andrew,' for *sarto* is the Italian word for tailor.

What a splendid new star this was rising in the heaven of Art! Who could tell how bright it would shine ere long? Perhaps the tailor's son would yet eclipse the magic name of Raphael. His colour was perfect, his drawing absolutely correct. They called him in their admiration 'the faultless painter.' But had he, indeed, the artist soul? That was the question. For, perfect as his pictures were, they still lacked something. Perhaps time would teach him to supply that want.

Meanwhile there was plenty of work for the young artist, and when he set up his own studio with another young painter, he was at once invited to fresco the walls of the cloister of the Sealzo, or barefooted friars.

This was the happiest time of all Andrea's life. The two friends worked happily together, and spent many a merry day with their companions. Every day Andrea learned to add more softness and delicacy to his colouring until his pictures seemed verily to glow with life. Every day he dreamed fresh dreams of the fame and honour that awaited him. And when work was over, the two young painters would go off to meet their friends and make merry over their supper as they told all the latest jokes and wittiest stories, and forgot for a while the serious art of painting pictures.

There were twelve of these young men who met together, and each of them was bound to bring some particular dish for the general supper. Every one tried to think of something especially nice and uncommon, but no one managed such surprising delicacies as Andrea. There was one special dish which no one ever forgot. It was in the shape of a temple, with its pillars made of sausages. The pavement was formed of little squares of different coloured jelly, the tops of the pillars were cheese, and the roof was of sugar, with a frieze of sweets running

round it. Inside the temple there was a choir of roast birds with their mouths wide open, and the priests were two fat pigeons. It was the most splendid supper-dish that ever was seen.

Every one was fond of the clever young painter. He was so kind and courteous to all, and so simple-hearted that it was impossible for the others to feel jealous or to grudge him the fame and praise that was showered upon him more and more as each fresh picture was finished.

Then just when all gave promise of sunshine and happiness, a little cloud rose in his blue sky, which grew and grew until it dimmed all the glory of his life.

In the Via di San Gallo, not very far from the street where Andrea and his friend lodged, there lived a very beautiful woman called Lucrezia. She was not a highborn lady, only the daughter of a working man, but she was as proud and haughty as she was beautiful. Nought cared she for things high and noble, she was only greedy of praise and filled with a desire to have her own way in everything. Yet her lovely face seemed as if it must be the mirror of a lovely soul, and when the young painter Andrea first saw her his heart went out towards her. She was his long-dreamed-of ideal of beauty and grace, the vision of loveliness which he had been trying to grasp all his life.

'What hath bewitched thee?' asked his friend as he watched Andrea restlessly pacing up and down the studio, his brushes thrown aside and his work left unfinished. 'Thou hast done little work for many weeks.'

'I cannot paint,' answered Andrea, 'for I see only one face ever before me, and it comes between me and my work.'

'Thou art ruining all thy chances,' said the friend sadly, 'and the face thou seest is not worth the sacrifice.'

Andrea turned on his heel with an angry look and went out. All his friends were against him now. No one had a good word for the beautiful Lucrezia. But she was worth all the world to him, and he had made up his mind to marry her.



St Michael and John Gualbert by del Sarto


Stories of Joseph by del Sarto

It was winter time, and the Christmas bells had but yesterday rung out the tidings of the Holy Birthday when Andrea at last obtained his heart's desire and made Lucrezia his wife. The joyful Christmastide seemed a fit season in which to set the seal upon his great happiness, and he thought himself the most fortunate of men. He had asked advice of none, and had told no one what he meant to do, but the news of his marriage was soon noised abroad.

'Hast thou heard the news of young Andrea del Sarto?' asked the people of Florence of one another. 'I fear he has dealt an evil blow at his own chances of success.'

One by one his friends left him, and many of his pupils deserted the studio. Lucrezia's sharp tongue was unbearable, and she made mischief among them all. Only Andrea remained blinded by her beauty, and thought that now, with such a model always near him, he would paint as he had never painted before.

But little did Lucrezia care to help him with his work. His pictures meant nothing to her except so far as they sold well and brought in money for her to spend. Worst of all, she began to grudge the help that he gave to his old father and mother, who now were poor and needed his care.

And yet, although Andrea saw all this, he still loved his beautiful wife and cared only how he might please her. He scarcely painted a picture that had not her face in it, for she was his ideal Madonna, Queen of Heaven.

But it was not so easy now to put his whole heart and soul into his work. True, his hand drew as correctly as ever, and his colours were even more beautiful, but often the soul seemed lacking.

'Thou dost work but slowly,' the proud beauty would say, tired of sitting still as his model. 'Why canst thou not paint quicker and sell at higher prices? I have need of more gold, and the money seems to grow scarcer week by week.'

Andrea sighed. Truly the money vanished like magic, as Lucrezia's

jewels and dresses increased.

'Dear heart, have a little patience,' he said. 'I can but do my best.'

Then, as he looked at the angry discontented face of his wife, he laid down his brushes and went to kneel beside her.

'Lucrezia,' he said, 'there needs something besides mere drawing and painting to make a picture. They call me "the faultless painter," and it seemed once as if I might have reached as high or even higher than the great Raphael. It needed but the soul put into my work, and if thou couldst have helped me to reach my ideal, what would I not have shown the world!'

'I do not understand thee,' said Lucrezia petulantly, 'and this is waste of time. Haste thee and get back to thy brushes and paints, and see that thou drivest a better bargain with this last picture.'

No, it was no use; she could never understand! Andrea knew that he must look for no help from her, and that he must paint in spite of the hindrances she placed in his way. Well, his work was still considered most beautiful, and he must make the best of it.

Orders for pictures came now from far and near, and before long some of Andrea's work found its way into France; and when King Francis saw it he was so anxious to have the painter at his court, that he sent a royal invitation, begging Andrea to come at once to France and enter the king's service.

The invitation came when Andrea was feeling hopeless and dispirited. Lucrezia gave him no peace, the money was all spent, and he was weary of work. The thought of starting afresh in another country put new courage into him. He made up his mind to go at once to the French court. He would leave Lucrezia in some safe place and send her all the money he could earn.

How good it was to leave all his troubles behind, and to set off that glad May day when all the world breathed of new life and new hope. Perhaps the winter of his life was passed too, and only sunshine and summer was in store.



Disputation on the Trinity by del Sarto



Madonna of the Harpies by del Sarto

Andrea's welcome at the French court was most flattering. Nothing was thought too good for the famous Florentine painter, and he was treated like a prince. The king loaded him with gifts, and gave him costly clothes and money for all his needs. A portrait of the infant Dauphin was begun at once, for which Andrea received three hundred golden pieces.

Month after month passed happily by. Andrea painted many pictures, and each one was more admired than the last. But his dream of happiness did not last long. He was hard at work one day when a letter was brought to him, sent by his wife Lucrezia. She could not live without him, so she wrote. He must come home at once. If he delayed much longer he would not find her alive.

There could be, of course, but one answer to all this. Andrea loved his wife too well to think of refusing her request, and the days of peace and plenty must come to an end. Even as he read her letter he began to long to see her again, and the thought of showing her all his gay clothes and costly presents filled him with delight.

But the king was very loth to let the painter go, and only at last consented when Andrea promised most faithfully to return a few months hence.

'I cannot spare thee for longer,' said Francis; 'but I will let thee go on condition that thou wilt buy for me certain works of art in Italy, which I have long coveted, and bring them back with thee.'

Then he entrusted to Andrea a large sum of money and bade him buy the best pictures he could find, and afterwards return without fail.

So Andrea journeyed back to Florence, and when he was once again with his wife, his joy and delight in her were so great that he forgot all his promises, forgot even the king's trust, and allowed Lucrezia to squander all the money which was to have been spent on art treasures for King Francis.

Then returned the evil days of trouble and quarrelling. Added to that the terrible feeling that he had betrayed his trust and broken his

word, made Andrea more unhappy than ever. He dared not return to France, but took up again his work in Florence, always with the hope that he might make enough money to repay the debt.

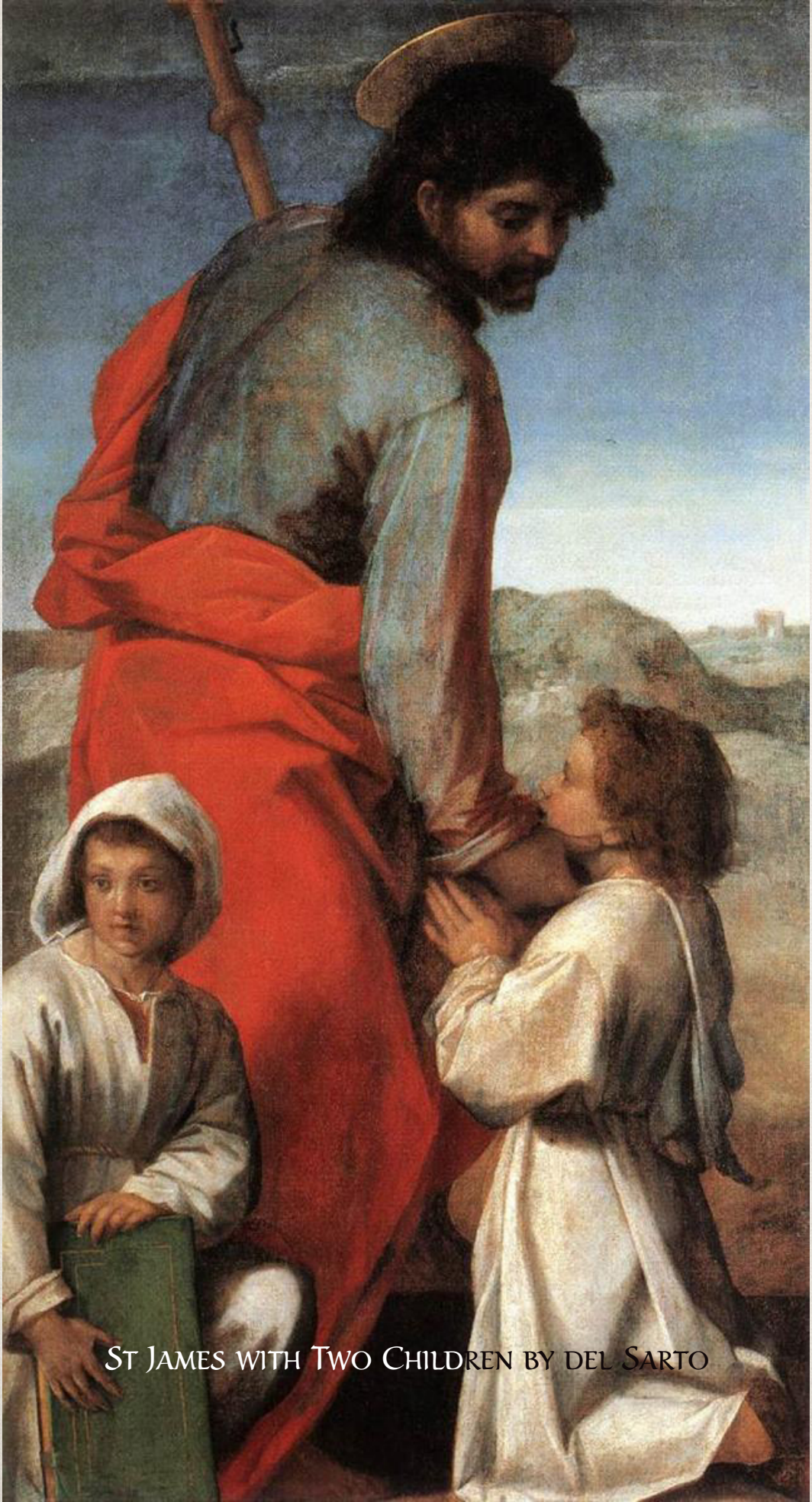
Years went by and dark days fell upon the City of Flowers. She had made a great struggle for liberty and had driven out the Medici, but they were helped by enemies from without, and Florence was for many months in a state of siege. There was constant fighting going on and little time for peaceful work.

Yet through all those troubled days Andrea worked steadily at his painting, and paid but little heed to the fate of the city. The stir of battle did not reach his quiet studio. There was enough strife at home; no need to seek it outside.

It was about this time that he painted a beautiful picture for the Company of San Jacopo, which was used as a banner and carried in their processions. Bad weather, wind, rain, and sunshine have spoiled some of its beauty, but much of the loveliness still remains. It is specially a children's picture, for Andrea painted the great saint bending over a little child in a white robe who kneels at his feet, while another little figure kneels close by. The boy has his hands folded together as if in prayer, and the kind strong hand of the saint is placed lovingly beneath the little chin. The other child is holding a book, and both children press close against the robe of the protecting saint.

But although Andrea could paint his pictures undisturbed while war was raging around, there was one enemy waiting to enter Florence who claimed attention and could not be ignored. When the triumphant troops gained an entrance by treachery, they brought with them that deadly scourge which was worse than any earthly enemy, the dreadful illness called the plague.

Perhaps Andrea had suffered for want of good food during the siege, perhaps he was overworked and tired; but, whatever was the cause, he was one of the first to be seized by that terrible disease. Alone he fought the enemy, and alone he died. Lucrezia had left him as soon as



St James with Two Children by del Sarto



The Annunciation by del Sarto

he fell ill, for she feared the deadly plague, and Andrea gladly let her go, for he loved her to the last with the same great unselfish love.

So passed away the faultless painter, and his was the last great name engraved upon that golden record of Florentine Art which had made Florence famous in the eyes of the world. Other artists came after him, but Art was on the wane in the City of Flowers, and her glory was slowly departing.

We can trace no other great name upon her pages and so we close the book, and our eyes turn towards the shores of the blue Adriatic, where Venice, Queen of the Sea, was writing, year by year, another volume filled with the names of her own Knights of Art.



San Zaccaria Altarpiece

Bellini

Giovanni Bellini

1430-1516, Italy

Almost all the stories of the lives of the painters which we have been listening to, until now, have clustered round Florence, the City of Flowers. She was their great mother, and her sons loved her with a deep, passionate love, thinking nothing too fair with which to deck her beauty. Wherever they wandered she drew them back, for their very heartstrings were wound around her, and each and all strove to give her of their best.

But now we come to the stories of men whose lives gather round a different centre. Instead of the great mother-city beside the Arno, with her strong towers and war-like citizens, the noise of battle ever sounding in her streets, and her flowery fields encircling her on every side, we have now Venice, Queen of the Sea.

No warlike tread or tramp of angry crowds disturbs her fair streets, for here are no pavements, only the cool green water which laps the walls of her marble palaces, and gives back the sound of the dipping oar and the soft echo of passing voices, as the gondolas glide along her watery ways. Here are no grim grey towers of defence, but fairy palaces of white and coloured marbles, which rise from the waters below as if they had been built by the sea-nymphs, who had fashioned them of their own seashells and mother-of-pearl.

There are no flowery meadows here, but instead the vast waters of the lagoons, which reach out until they meet the blue arc of the sky or touch the distant mountains which lie like a purple line upon the horizon. Here and there tiny islands lie upon its bosom, so faint and fairylike that they scarcely seem like solid land, reflected as they are in the transparent water.

But although Venice has no meadows decked with flowers and no wealth of blossoming trees, everywhere on every side she shines with colour, this wonderful sea-girt city. Her white marble palaces glow with a soft amber light, the cool green water that reflects her beauty glitters in rings of gold and blue, changing from colour to colour as each ripple changes its form. At sunset, when the sun disappears over the edge of the lagoon and leaves behind its trail of shining clouds, she is like a dream-city rising from a sea of molten gold—a double city, for in the pure gold is reflected each tower and spire, each palace and campanile, in masses of pale yellow and quivering white light, with here and there a burning touch of flame colour. She seems to have no connection with the solid, ordinary cities of the world. There she lies in all her beauty, silent and apart, like a white sea-bird floating upon the bosom of the ocean.

Venice had always seemed separate and distinct from the rest of the world. Her cathedral of San Marco was never under the rule of Rome, and her rulers, or doges, as they were called, governed the city as kings, and did not trouble themselves with the affairs of other towns. Her merchant princes sailed to far countries and brought home precious spoils to add to her beauty. Everything was as rich and rare and splendid as it was possible to make it, and she was unlike any other city on earth.

So the painters who lived and worked in this city of the sea had their own special way of painting, which was different to that of the Florentine school.

From their babyhood these men had looked upon all this beauty



Transfiguration of Christ by Bellini

Polyptych of San Vincenzo Ferreri by Bellini



of colour, and the love of it had grown with their growth. The golden light on the water, the pearly-grey and tinted marbles, the gay sails of the galleys which swept the lagoons like painted butterflies, the wide stretch of water ending in the mystery of the distant skyline—it all sank into their hearts, and it was little wonder that they should strive to paint colour above all things, and at last reach a perfection such as no other school of painters has equalled.

As with the Florentine artists, so with these Venetian painters, we must leave many names unnoticed just now, and learn first to know those which shine out clearest among the many bright stars of fame.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, four hundred years ago, when Fra Filippo Lippi was painting in Florence, there lived in Venice a certain Jacopo Bellini, who was a painter, and who had two sons called Gentile and Giovanni. The father taught his boys with great care, and gave them the best training he could, for he was anxious that his sons should become great painters. He saw that they were both clever and quick to learn, and he hoped great things of them.

'Never do less than your very best,' he would say, as he taught the boys how to draw and use their colours. 'See how the Tuscan artists strive with one another, each desiring to do most honour to their city of Florence. So, Gentile, I would have thee also strive to be great; and thou, Giovanni, endeavour to be even greater than thy brother.'

But though the boys were thus taught to try and outdo each other, still they were always the best of friends, and there was never any unkind rivalry between them.

Gentile, the eldest, was fond of painting story pictures, which told the history of Venice, and showed the magnificent doges, and nobles, and people of the city, dressed in their rich robes. The Venetians loved pictures which showed forth the glory of their city, and very soon Gentile was invited to paint the walls of the Ducal Palace with his historical pictures.

Now Venice carried on a great trade with her ships, which sailed to

many foreign lands. These ships, loaded with merchandise, touched at different ports, and the merchants sold their goods or took in exchange other things which they brought back to Venice. It happened that one of the ships which set sail for Turkey had on board among other things several pictures painted by Giovanni Bellini. These were shown to the Sultan of Turkey, who had never seen a picture before, and he was amazed and delighted beyond words. His religion forbade the making of pictures, but he paid no attention now to that law, but sent a messenger to Venice praying that the painter Bellini might come to him at once.

The rulers of Venice were unwilling to spare Giovanni just then, but they allowed Gentile to go, as his work at the Ducal Palace was finished.

So Gentile took his canvases and paints, and, setting sail in one of the merchant ships, soon arrived at the court of the Grand Turk.

He was received with every honour, and nothing was thought too good for this wonderful painter, who could make pictures which looked like living men. The Sultan loaded him with gifts and favours, and he lived there like a royal prince. Each picture painted by Gentile was thought more wonderful than the last. He painted a portrait of the Sultan, and even one of himself, which was considered little short of magic.

Thus a whole year passed by, and Gentile had a most delightful time and was well contented, until one day something happened which disturbed his peace.

He had painted a picture of the dancing daughter of Herodias, with the head of John the Baptist in her hand, and when it was finished he brought it and presented it to the Sultan.

As usual, the Sultan was charmed with the new picture; but he paused in his praises of its beauty, and looked thoughtfully at the head of St. John, and then frowned.

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that there is something not quite right about that head. I do not think a head which had just been cut off would



The Annunciation by Bellini



Fra Teodoro of Urbino by Bellini



Frari Triptych by Bellini



Saint Francis in the Desert by Bellini

look exactly as that does in your picture.'

Gentile answered courteously that he did not wish to contradict his royal highness, but it seemed to him that the head was right.

'We shall see,' said the Sultan calmly, and he turned carelessly to a guard who stood close by and bade him cut off the head of one of the slaves, that Bellini might see if his picture was really correctly painted.

This was more than Gentile could stand.

'Who knows,' he said to himself, 'that the Sultan may not wish to see next how my head would look cut off from my body!'

So while his precious head was still safe upon his shoulders he thought it wiser to slip quietly away and return to Venice by the very first ship he could find.

Meanwhile Giovanni had worked steadily on, and had far surpassed both his father and his brother. Indeed, he had become the greatest painter in Venice, the first of that wonderful Venetian school which learned to paint such marvellous colour.

With all the wealth of delicate shading spread out before his eyes, with the ever-changing wonder of the opal-tinted sea meeting him on every side, it was not strange that the love of colour sank into his very heart. In his pictures we can see the golden glow which bathes the marble palaces, the clear green of the water, the pure blues and burning crimsons all as transparent as crystal, not mere paint but living colour.

Giovanni did not care to paint stories of Venice, with great crowds of figures, as Gentile did. He loved best the Madonna and saints, single figures full of quiet dignity. His saints are more human than those which Fra Angelico painted, and yet they are not mere men and women, but something higher and nobler. Instead of the angels swinging their censers which the painter of San Marco so lovingly drew, Giovanni's angels are little human boys, with grave sweet faces; happy children with a look of heaven in their eyes, as they play on their little lutes and mandolines.

But besides the pictures of saints and angels, Giovanni had a won-

derful gift for painting portraits, and most of the great people of Venice came to be painted by him. In our own National Gallery we have the portrait of the Doge Loredan, which is one of those pictures which can teach you many things when you have learned to look with seeing eyes. So the brothers worked together, but before long death carried off the elder, and Giovanni was left alone.

Though he was now very old, Giovanni worked harder than ever, and his hand, instead of losing power, seemed to grow stronger and more and more skilful. He was ninety years old when he died, and he worked almost up to the last.

The brothers were both buried in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, in the heart of Venice. There, in the dim quietness of the old church, they lie at rest together, undisturbed by the voices of the passers-by in the square outside, or the lapping of the water against the steps, as the tides ebb and flow around their quiet resting-place.





Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan by Bellini



Glory of St Vidal

CARPACCIO

Vittore Carpaccio

1465-1525, Italy

Like most of the other great painters, Giovanni Bellini had many pupils working under him—boys who helped their master, and learned their lessons by watching him work. Among these pupils was a boy called Vittore Carpaccio, a sharp, clever lad, with keen bright eyes which noticed everything. No one else learned so quickly or copied the master's work so faithfully, and when in time he became himself a famous painter, his work showed to the end traces of the master's influence.

He must have been a curious boy, this Vittore Carpaccio, for although we know but little of his life, his pictures tell us many a tale about him.

In the olden days, when Venice was at the height of her glory, splendid fetes were given in the city, and the gorgeous shows were a wonder to behold. Early in the morning of these festa days, Carpaccio would steal away in the dim light from the studio, before the others were astir. Work was left behind, for who could work indoors on days like these? There was a holiday feeling in the very air. Songs and laughter and the echo of merry voices were heard on every side, and the city seemed one vast playground, where all the grown-up children as well as the babies were ready to spend a happy holiday.

The little side-streets of Venice, cut up by canals, seem like a

veritable maze to those who do not know the city, but Carpaccio could quickly thread his way from bridge to bridge, and by many a short cut arrive at last at the great central water street of Venice, the Grand Canal. Here it was easy to find a corner from which he could see the gay pageant, and enjoy as good a view as any of those great people who would presently come out upon the balconies of their marble palaces.

The bridge of the Rialto, which throws its white span across the centre of the canal, was Carpaccio's favourite perch, for from here he could see the markets and the long row of marble palaces on either side. From every window hung gay-coloured tapestry, Turkey carpets, silken draperies, and delicate-tinted stuffs covered with Eastern embroideries. The market was crowded with a throng of holiday-makers, a garden of bright colours, and from the balconies above richly dressed ladies looked down, themselves a pageant of beauty, with their wonderful golden hair and gleaming jewels, while green and crimson parrots, fastened by golden chains to the marble balustrades, screamed and flapped their wings, and delighted Carpaccio's keen eyes with their vivid beauty.

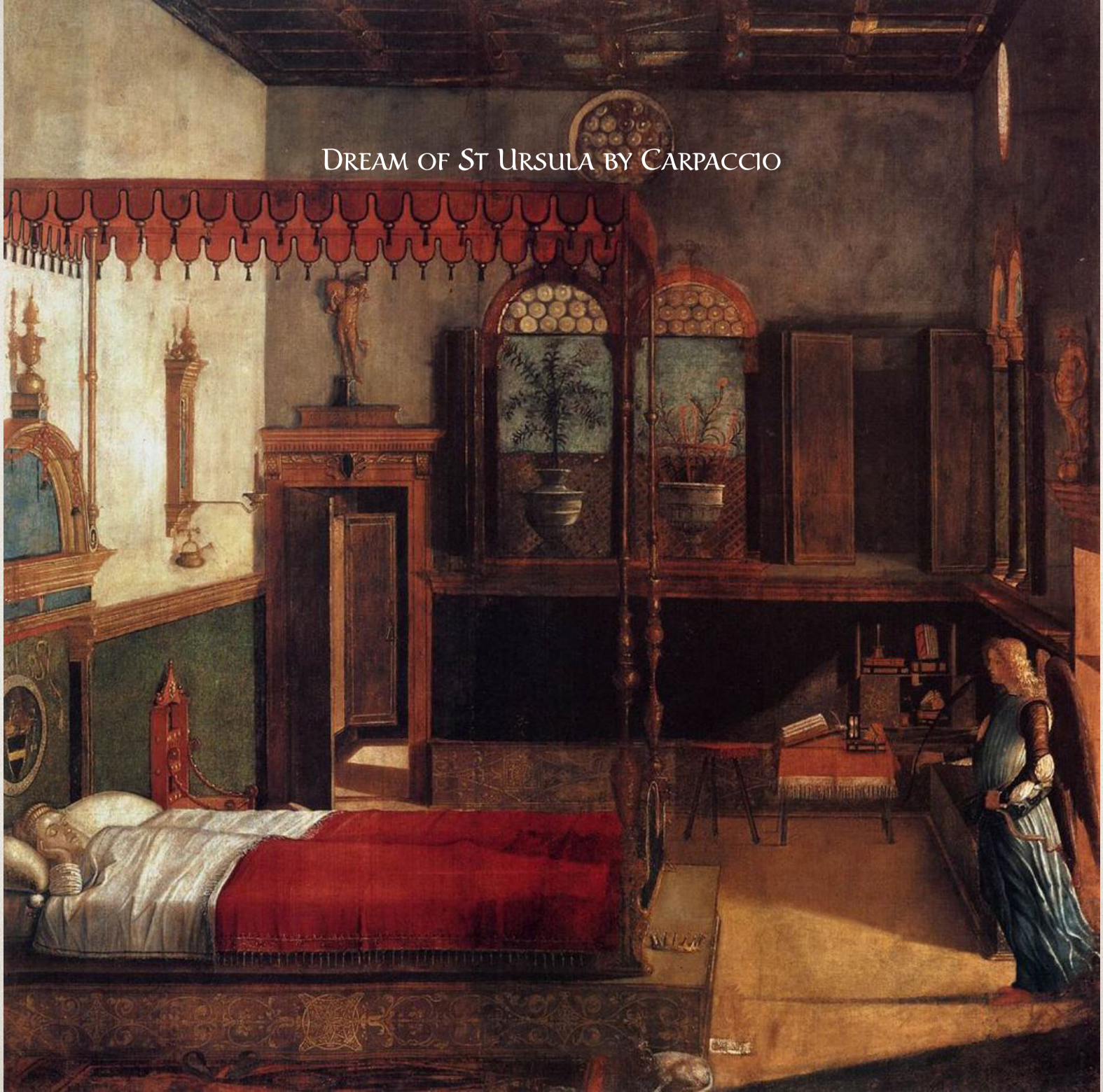
Then the procession of boats swept up the great waterway, and the blaze of colour made the boy hold his breath in sheer delight. The painted galleys, the rowers in their quaint dresses—half one colour and half another—with jaunty feathered caps upon their floating curls, the nobles and rulers in their crimson robes, the silken curtains of every hue trailing their golden fringes in the cool green water, as the boats glided past, all made up a picture which the boy never forgot.

Then when it was all over, Carpaccio would climb down and make his way back to the master's studio, and with the gay scene ever before his eyes would try, day after day, to paint every detail just as he had seen it.

There is another thing which we learn about Carpaccio from his pictures, and that is, that he must have loved to listen to old legends and stories of the saints, and that he stored them up in his mind, just as he treasured the remembrance of the gay processions and the flapping



Portrait of a Knight by Carpaccio



Dream of St Ursula by Carpaccio

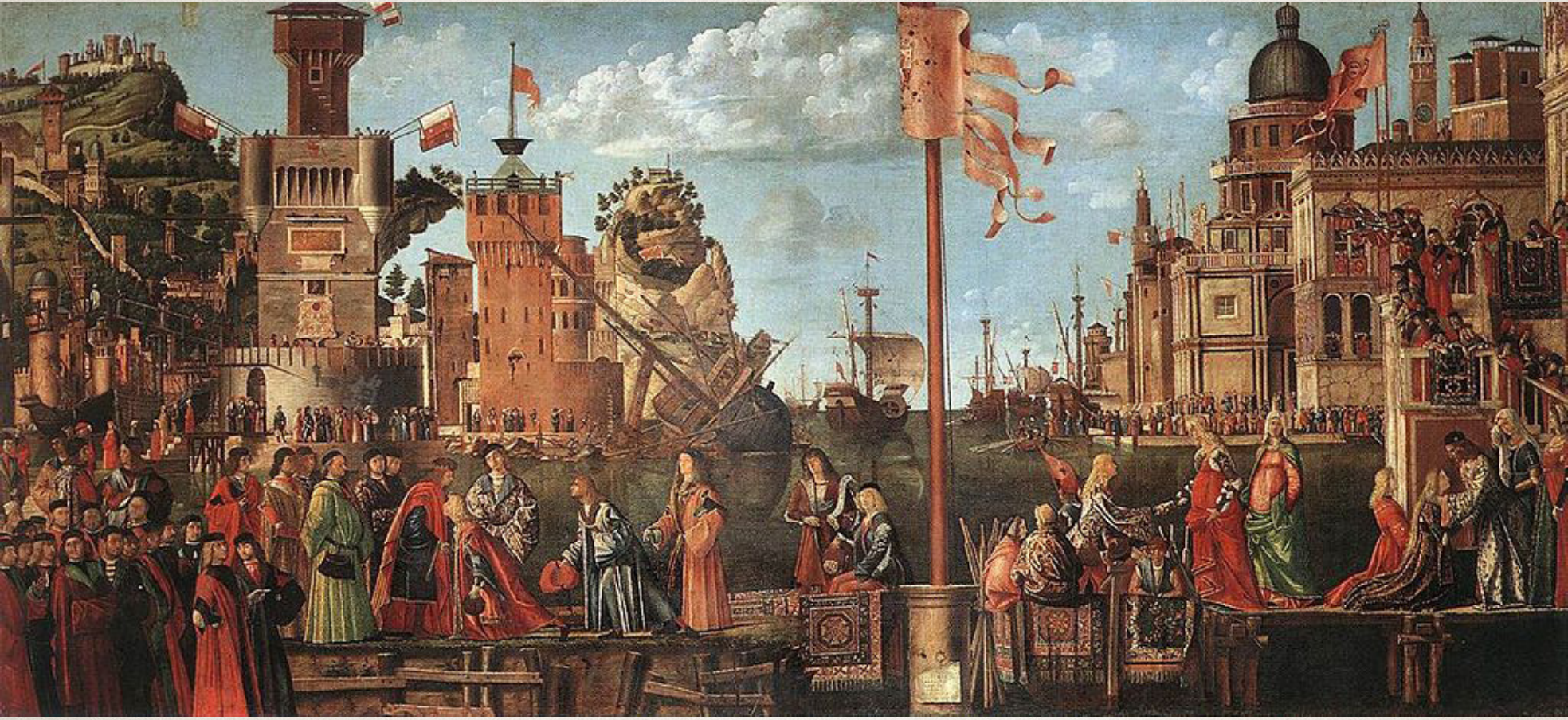
wings of those crimson and green parrots.

So, when he grew to be a man, and his fame began to spread, the first great pictures he painted were of the story of St. Ursula, told in loving detail, as only one who loved the story could do it.

But though Carpaccio might paint pictures of these old stories, it was always through the golden haze of Venice that he saw them. His St. Ursula is a dainty Venetian lady, and the bedroom in which she dreams her wonderful dream is just a room in one of the old marble palaces, with a pot of pinks upon the window-sill, and her little high-heeled Venetian shoes by the bedside. Whenever it was possible, Carpaccio would paint in those scenes on which his eyes had rested since his childhood—the painted galleys with their sails reflected in the clear water, the dainty dresses of the Venetian ladies, their gay-coloured parrots, pet dogs, and grinning monkeys.

In an old church of Venice there are some pictures said to have been painted by Carpaccio when he was a little boy only eight years old. They are scenes taken from the Bible stories, and very funny scenes they are too. But they show already what clever little hands and what a thinking head the boy had, and how Venice was the background in his mind for every story. For here is the meeting of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, and instead of Jerusalem with all its glory, we see a little wooden bridge, with King Solomon on one side and the Queen of Sheba on the other, walking towards each other, as if they were both in Venice crossing one of the little canals.

There were many foreign sailors in Venice in those old days, who came in the trading-ships from distant lands. Many of them were poor and unable to earn money to buy food, and when they were ill there was no one to look after them or help them. So some of the richer foreigners founded a Brotherhood, where the poor sailors might be helped in time of need. This Brotherhood chose St. George as their patron saint, and when they had built a little chapel they invited Carpaccio to come and paint the walls with pictures from the life of St. George and other



Meeting of Etherius and Ursula and the
Departure of the Pilgrims by Carpaccio



Martyrdom of the Pilgrims and the Funeral of St Ursula by Carpaccio

saints.

Nothing could have suited Carpaccio better, and he began his work with great delight, for he had still his child's love of stories, and he would make them as gay and wonderful as possible. There we see St. George thundering along on his war-horse, with flying hair, clad in beautiful armour, the most perfect picture of a chivalrous knight. Then comes the dragon breathing out flames and smoke, the most awesome dragon that ever was seen; and there too is the picture of St. Tryphonius taming the terrible basilisk. The little boy-saint has folded his hands together, and looks upward in prayer, paying little heed to the evil glare of the basilisk, who prances at his feet. A crowd of gaily dressed courtiers stand whispering and watching behind the marble steps, and here again in the background we have the canals and bridges of Venice, the marble palaces and gay carpets hung from out the windows. Everything is of the very best of its kind, and painted with the greatest care, even to the design of the inlaid work on the marble steps.

As we pass from picture to picture, we wish we had known this Carpaccio, for he must have been a splendid teller of stories; and how he would have made us shiver with his dragons and his basilisks, and laugh over the antics of his little boys and girls, his scarlet parrots and green lizards.

But although we cannot hear him tell his stories, he still speaks through those wonderful old pictures which you will some day see when you visit the fairyland of Italy, and pay your court to Venice, Queen of the Sea.



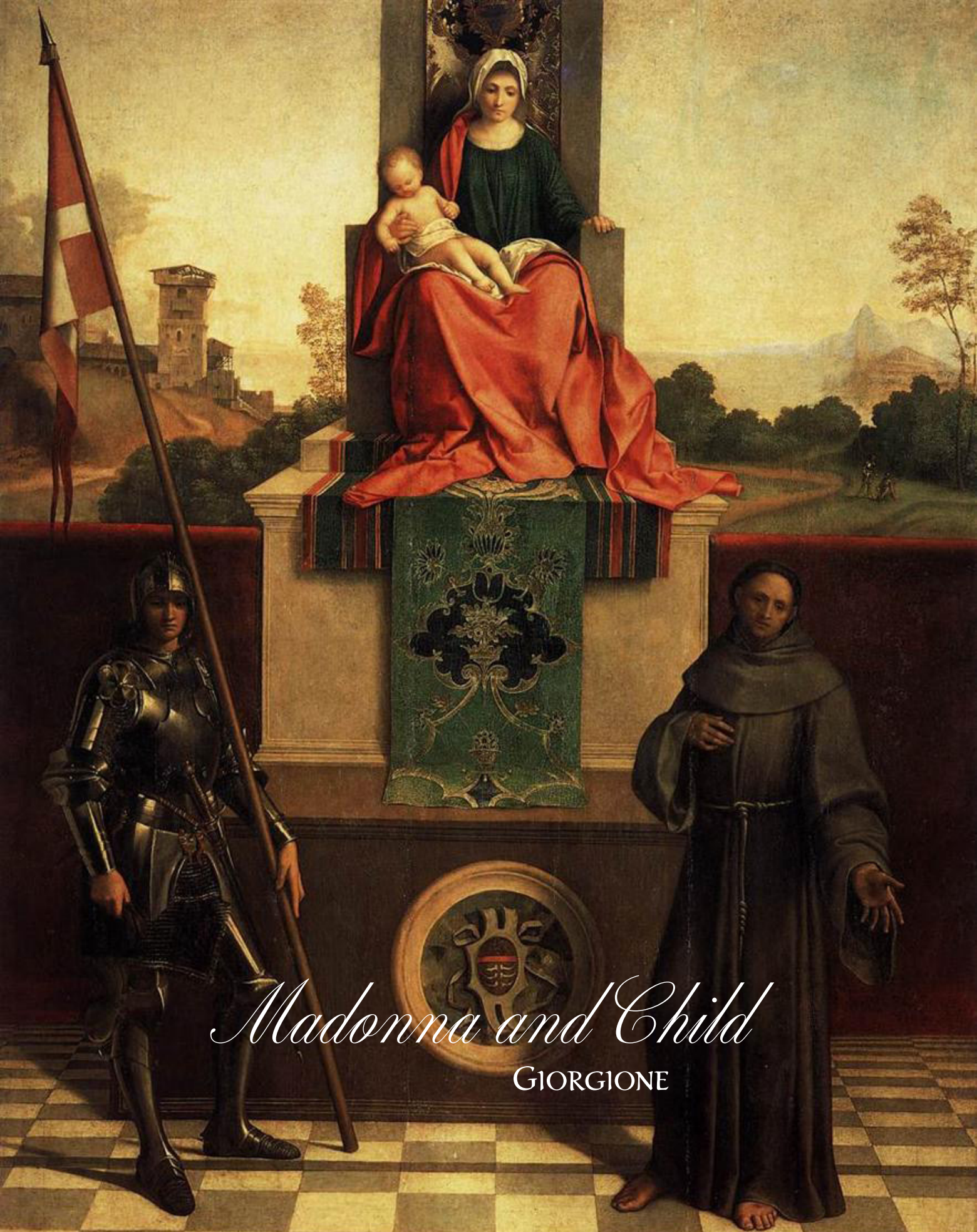


St. George and the Dragon by Carpaccio



The Miracle of the Relic of the True Cross
on the Rialto Bridge by Carpaccio


The Visitation by Carpaccio



Madonna and Child

GIORGIONE

Giorgione

1477-1510, Italy

As we look back upon the lives of the great painters we can see how each one added some new knowledge to the history of Art, and unfolded fresh beauties to the eyes of the world. Very gradually all this was done, as a bud slowly unfolds its petals until the full-blown flower shows forth its perfect beauty. But here and there among the painters we find a man who stands apart from the rest, one who takes a new and almost startling way of his own. He does not gradually add new truths to the old ones, but makes an entirely new scheme of his own. Such a man was Giorgione, whose story we tell to-day.

It was at the same time as Leonardo da Vinci was the talk of the Florentine world, that another great genius was at work in Venice, setting his mark high above all who had gone before. Giorgio Barbarelli was born at Castel Franco, a small town not far from Venice, and it was to the great city of the sea that he was sent as soon as he was old enough, there to be trained under the famous Bellini. He was a handsome boy, tall and well-built, and with such a royal bearing that his companions at once gave him the name of Giorgione, or George the Great. And, as so often happened in those days, the nickname clung to him, so that while his family name is almost forgotten he is still known as Giorgione.

There was much of the poet-nature about Giorgione, and his love

of music was intense. He composed his own songs and sang them to his own music upon the lute, and indeed it seemed as if there were few things which this Great George could not do. But it was his painting that was most wonderful, for his painted men and women seemed alive and real, and he caught the very spirit of music in his pictures and there held it fast.

Giorgione early became known as a great artist, and when he was quite a young man he was employed by the city of Venice to fresco the outside walls of the new German Exchange. Wind and rain and the salt sea air have entirely ruined these frescoes now, and there are but few of Giorgione's pictures left to us, but that perhaps makes them all the more precious in our eyes.

Even his drawings are rare; there is one that is taken from a bigger sketch in the Uffizzi Gallery of Florence. It shows a man in Venetian dress helping two women to mount one of the niches of a marble palace in order to see some passing show, and to be out of the way of the crowd.

There is a picture now in the Venice Academy said to have been painted by Giorgione, which would interest every boy and girl who loves old stories. It tells the tale of an old Venetian legend, almost forgotten now, but which used to be told with bated breath, and was believed to be a matter of history. The story is this:

On the 25th of February 1340 a terrible storm began to rage around Venice, more terrible than any that had ever been felt before. For three days the wild winds swept her waters and shrieked around her palaces, churning up the sea into great waves and shaking the city to her very foundations. Lightning and thunder never ceased, and the rain poured down in a great sheet of grey water, until it seemed as if a second flood had come to visit the world. Slowly but surely the waters rose higher and higher, and Venice sunk lower and lower, and men said that unless the storm soon ceased the city would be overwhelmed. No one ventured out on the canals, and only an old fisherman who hap-


The Holy Family by Giorgione



Moses Undergoing Trial by Fire by Giorgione

pened to be in his boat was swept along by the canal of San Marco, and managed with great difficulty to reach the steps. Very thankful to be safe on land he tied his boat securely, and sat down to wait until the storm should cease. As he sat there watching the lightning and hearing nothing but the shriek of the tempest, some one touched his shoulder and a stranger's voice sounded in his ear.

'Good fisherman,' it said, 'wilt thou row me over to San Giorgio Maggiore? I will pay thee well if thou wilt go.'

The fisherman looked across the swirling waters to where the tall bell-tower upon the distant island could just be seen through the driving mist and rain.

'How is it possible to row across to San Giorgio?' he asked. 'My little boat could not live for the minutes in those raging waters.'

But the stranger only insisted the more, and besought him to do his best.

So, as the fisherman was a hardy old man and had a bold, brave soul, he loosed the boat and set off in all the storm. But, strangely enough, it was not half so bad as he had feared, and before long the little boat was moored safely by the steps of San Giorgio Maggiore.

Here the stranger left the boat, but bade the fisherman wait his return.

Presently he came back, and with him came a young man, tall and strong, bearing himself with a knightly grace.

'Row now to San Niccolo da Lido,' commanded the stranger.

'How can I do that?' asked the fisherman in great fear. For San Niccolo was far distant, and he was rowing with but one oar, which is the custom in Venice.

'Row boldly, for it shall be possible for thee, and thou shalt be well paid,' replied the stranger calmly.

So, seeing it was the will of God, the fisherman set out once more, and, as they went, the waters spread themselves out smoothly before them, until they reached the distant San Niccolo da Lido.

Here an old man with a white beard was awaiting them, and when he too had entered the boat, the fisherman was commanded to row out towards the open sea.

Now the tempest was raging more fiercely than ever, and lo! across the wild waste of foaming waters an enormous black galley came bearing down upon them. So fast did it approach that it seemed almost to fly upon the wings of the wind, and as it came near the fisherman saw that it was manned by fearful-looking black demons, and knew that they were on their way to overwhelm the fair city of Venice.

But as the galley came near the little boat, the three men stood upright, and with outstretched arms made high above them the sign of the cross, and commanded the demons to depart to the place from whence they had come.

In an instant the sea became calm, and with a horrible shriek the demons in their black galley disappeared from view.

Then the three men ordered the fisherman to return as he had come. So the old man was landed at San Niccolo da Lido, the young knight at San Giorgio Maggiore, and, last of all, the stranger landed at San Marco.

Now when the fisherman found that his work was done, he thought it was time that he should receive his payment. For, although he had seen the great miracle, he had no mind to forgo his proper fare.

'Thou art right,' said the stranger, when the fisherman made his demand, 'and thou shalt indeed be well paid. Go now to the Doge and tell him all thou hast seen; how Venice would have been destroyed by the demons of the tempest, had it not been for me and my two companions. I am St. Mark, the protector of your city; the brave young knight is St. George, and the old man whom we took in last is St. Nicholas. Tell the Doge that I bade him pay thee well for thy brave service.'

'But, and if I tell them this story, how will they believe that I speak the truth?' asked the fisherman.

Then St. Mark took a ring off his finger, and placed it in the fisher-



The Three Philosophers by Giorgione



Sea Storm by Palma Vecchio (Misattributed to Giorgione)

man's rough palm. 'Thou shalt show them this ring as a proof,' he said; 'and when they look in the treasury of San Marco, they will find that it is missing from there.'

And when he had finished saying this, St. Mark disappeared.

Then the next day, as early as possible, the fisherman went to the Doge and told his marvellous tale and showed the saint's ring. At first no one could believe the wild story, but when they sent and searched in St. Mark's treasury, lo! the ring was missing. Then they knew that it must indeed have been St. Mark who had appeared to the old fisherman, and had saved their beloved city from destruction.

So a solemn thanksgiving service was sung in the great church of San Marco, and the fisherman received his due reward.

He was no longer obliged to work for his living, but received a pension from the rulers of the city, so that he lived in comfort all the rest of his days.

In the picture we see the great black galley manned by the demons, sweeping down upon the little boat, in which the three saints stand upright. And not only are the demons on board their ship, but some are riding on dolphins and curious-looking fish, and the little boat is entirely surrounded by the terrible crew.

[Editor's note: The painting discussed above, *Sea Storm*, was actually incorrectly attributed to Giorgione at the time *Knights of Art* was written. It has since been correctly attributed to Palma Vecchio. We left it in the story and included the painting to keep true to the author's original text, but wanted to add a note here to mitigate any potential confusion.]

We do not know much about Giorgione's life, but we do know that it was a short and sad one, clouded over at the end by bitter sorrow. He had loved a beautiful Venetian girl, and was just about to marry her when a friend, whom he also loved, carried her off and left him robbed of love and friendship. Nothing could comfort him for his loss, the light seemed to have faded from his life, and soon life itself began to wane.

A very little while after and he closed his eyes upon all the beauty and promise which had once filled his world. But though we have so few of his pictures, those few alone are enough to show that it was more than an idle jest which made his companions give him the nickname of George the Great.



The Sunset by Giorgione


Annunciation
Titian

Titian

Died 1576, Italy

We have seen how most of the great painters loved to paint into their pictures those scenes which they had known when they were boys, and which to the end of their lives they remembered clearly and vividly. Giotto never forgets the look of his sheep on the bare hillside of Vespignano, Fra Angelico paints his heavenly pictures with the colours of spring flowers found on the slopes of Fiesole, Perugino delights in the wide spaciousness of the Umbrian plains with the winding river and solitary cypresses.

So when we come to the great Venetian painter Titian we look first with interest to see in what manner of a country he was born, and what were the pictures which Nature mirrored in his mind when he was still a boy.

At the foot of the Alps, three days' journey from Venice, lies the little town of Cadore on the Pieve, and here it was that Titian was born. On every side rise great masses of rugged mountains towering up to the sky, with jagged peaks and curious fantastic shapes. Clouds float around their summits, and the mist will often wrap them in gloom and give them a strange and awesome look. At the foot of the craggy pass the mountain-torrent of the Pieve roars and tumbles on its way. Far-reaching forests of trees, with weather-beaten gnarled old trunks,

stand firm against the mountain storms. Beneath their wide-spreading boughs there is a gloom almost of twilight, showing peeps here and there of deep purple distances beyond.

Small wonder it was that Titian should love to paint mountains, and that he should be the first to paint a purely landscape picture. He loved those strange solemn mountains and the wild country round, the deep gloom of the woods and the purple of the distance beyond.

The boy's father, Gregorio Vecelli, was one of the nobles of Cadore, but the family was not rich, and when Titian was ten years old he was sent to an uncle in Venice to be taught some trade. He had always been fond of painting, and it is said that when he was a very little boy he was found trying to paint a picture with the juices of flowers. His uncle, seeing that the boy had some talent, placed him in the studio of Giovanni Bellini.

But though Titian learned much from Bellini, it was not until he first saw Giorgione's work that he dreamed of what it was possible to do with colour. Thenceforward he began to paint with that marvellous richness of colouring which has made his name famous all over the world.

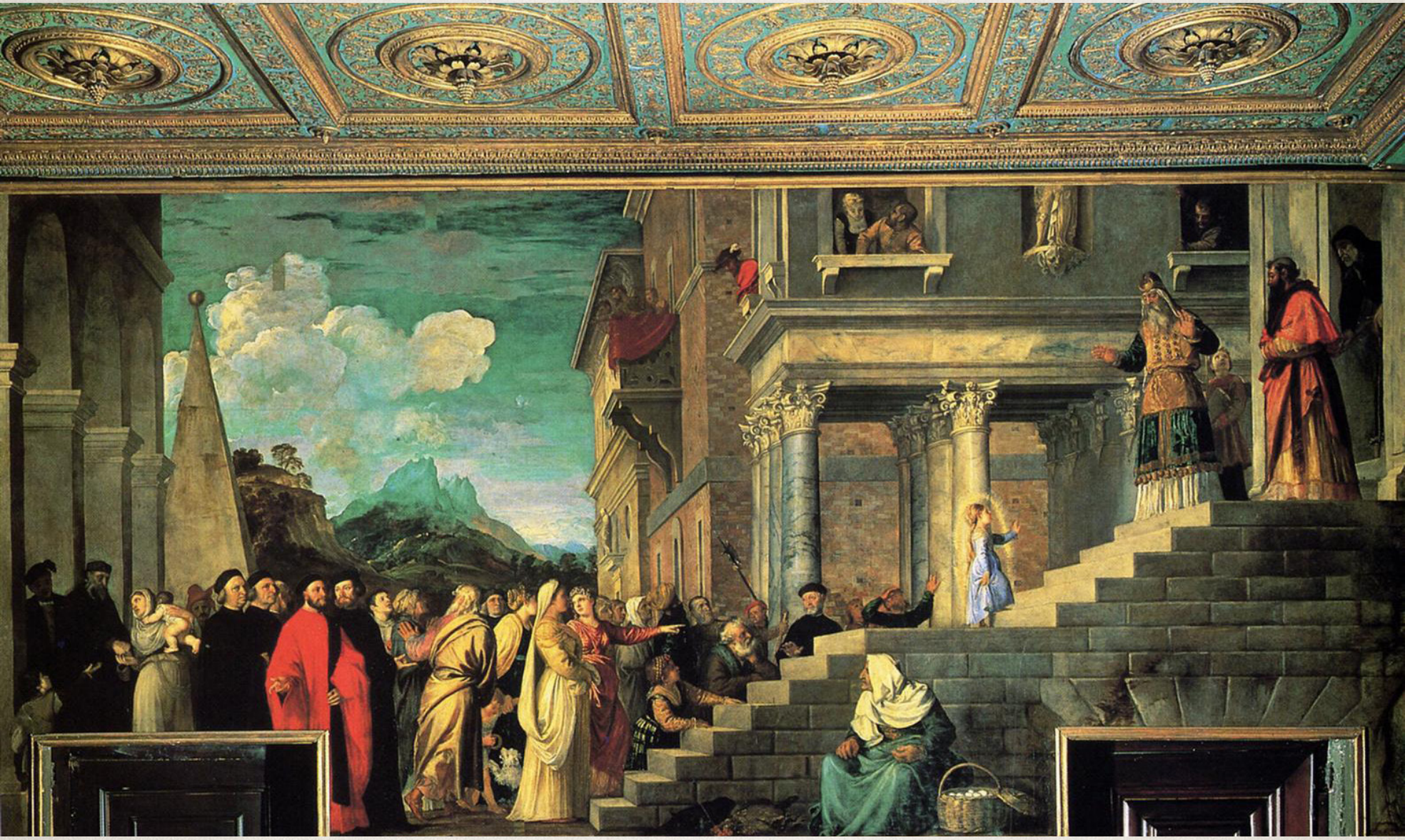
At first young Titian worked with Giorgione, and together they began to fresco the walls of the Exchange above the Rialto bridge. But by and by Giorgione grew jealous. Titian's work was praised too highly; it was even thought to be the better of the two. So they parted company, for Giorgione would work with him no more.

Venice soon began to awake to the fact that in Titian she had another great painter who was likely to bring fame and honour to the fair city. He was invited to finish the frescoes in the Grand Council-chamber which Bellini had begun, and to paint the portraits of the Doges, her rulers.

These portraits which Titian painted were so much admired that all the great princes and nobles desired to have themselves painted by the Venetian artist. The Emperor Charles V himself, when he stopped at



The Birth of Adonis by Titian



Entry of Mary Into the Temple by Titian

Bologna, sent to Venice to fetch Titian, and so delighted was he with his work that he made the painter a knight with a pension of two hundred crowns.

Fame and wealth awaited Titian wherever he went, and before long he was invited to Rome that he might paint the portrait of the Pope. There it was that he met Michelangelo, and that great master looked with much interest at the work of the Venetian artist and praised it highly, for the colouring was such as he had never seen equalled before.

'It is most beautiful,' he said afterwards to a friend; 'but it is a pity that in Venice they do not teach men how to draw as well as how to colour. If this Titian drew as well as he painted, it would be impossible to surpass him.'

But ordinary eyes can find little fault with Titian's drawing, and his portraits are thought to be the most wonderful that ever were painted. The golden glow of Venice is cast like a magic spell over his pictures, and in him the great Venetian school of colouring reaches its height.

Besides painting portraits, Titian painted many other pictures which are among the world's masterpieces.

He must have had a special love for children, this famous old Venetian painter. We can tell by his pictures how well he understood them and how he loved to paint them. He would learn much by watching his own little daughter Lavinia as she played about the old house in Venice. His wife had died, and his eldest son was only a grief and disappointment to his father, but the little daughter was the light of his eyes.

We seem to catch a glimpse of her face in his famous picture of the little Virgin going up the steps to the temple. The little maid is all alone, for she has left her companions behind, and the crowd stands watching her from below, while the high priest waits for her above. One hand is stretched out, and with the other she lifts her dress as she climbs up the marble steps. She looks a very real child with her long plait of golden hair and serious little face, and we cannot help thinking

that the painter's own little daughter must have been in his mind when he painted the little Virgin.

Titian lived to be a very old man, almost a hundred years old, and up to the last he was always seen with the brush in his hand, painting some new picture. So, when he passed away, he left behind a rich store of beauty, which not only decked the walls of his beloved Venice, but made the whole world richer and more beautiful.





Supper at Emmaus by Titian



Presentation of Mary

Tintoretto

Tintoretto

1518-1594, Italy

It was between four and five hundred years ago that Venice sat most proudly on her throne as Queen of the Sea. She had the greatest fleet in all the Mediterranean. She bought and sold more than any other nation. She had withstood the shock of battle and conquered all her foes, and now she had time to deck herself with all the beauty which art and wealth could produce.

The merchants of Venice sailed to every port and carried with them wonderful shiploads of goods, for which their city was famous—silks, velvets, lace, and rich brocades. The secret of the marvellous Tyrian dyes had been discovered by her people, and there were many dyers in Venice who were specially famous for the purple dye of Tyre, which was thought to be the most beautiful in all the world. Then too they had learned the art of blowing glass into fairy-like forms, as delicate and light as a bubble, catching in it every shade of colour, and twisting it into a hundred exquisite shapes. Truly there had never been a richer or more beautiful city than this Queen of the Sea.

It was just when the glory of Venice was at its highest that Art too reached its height, and Giorgione and Titian began to paint the walls of her palaces and the altarpieces of her churches.

In the very centre of the city where the poorer Venetians had their

houses, there lived about this time a man called Battista Robusti who was a dyer, or 'tintore,' as he is called in Italy. It was his little son Jacopo who afterwards became such a famous artist. His grand-sounding name 'Tintoretto' means nothing but 'the little dyer,' and it was given to him because of his father's trade.

Tintoretto must have been brought up in the midst of gorgeous colours. Not only did he see the wonderful changing tints of the outside world, but in his father's workshop he must often have watched the rich Venetian stuffs lifted from the dye vats, heavy with the crimson and purple shades for which Venice was famous. Perhaps all this glowing colour wearied his young eyes, for when he grew to be a man his pictures show that he loved solemn and dark tones, though he could also paint the most brilliant colours when he chose.

Of course, the boy Tintoretto began by painting the walls of his father's house, as soon as he was old enough to learn the use of dyes and paints. Even if he had not had in him the artist soul, he could scarcely have resisted the temptation to spread those lovely colours on the smooth white walls. Any child would have done the same, but Tintoretto's mischievous fingers already showed signs of talent, and his father, instead of scolding him for wasting colours and spoiling the walls, encouraged him to go on with his pictures.

As the boy grew older, his great delight was to wander about the city and watch the men at work building new palaces. But especially did he linger near those walls which Titian and Giorgione were covering with their wonderful frescoes. High on the scaffolding he would see the painters at work, and as he watched the boy would build castles in the air, and dream dreams of a time when he too would be a master-painter, and be bidden by Venice to decorate her walls.

To Tintoretto's mind Titian was the greatest man in all the world, and to be taught by him the greatest honour that heart could wish. So it was perhaps the happiest day in all his life when his father decided to take him to Titian's studio and ask the master to receive him as a pupil.



Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery by Tintoretto



Creation of the Animals by Tintoretto

But the happiness lasted but a very short time. Titian did not approve of the boy's work, and refused to keep him in the studio; so poor, disappointed Tintoretto went home again, and felt as if all sunshine and hope had gone forever from his life. It was a bitter disappointment to his father and mother too, for they had set their hearts on the boy becoming an artist. But in spite of all this, Tintoretto did not lose heart or give up his dreams. He worked on by himself in his own way, and Titian's paintings taught him many things even though the master himself refused to help him. Then too he saw some work of the great Michelangelo, and learned many a lesson from that. Thenceforward his highest ideal was always 'the drawing of Michelangelo and the colour of Titian.'

The young artist lived in a poor, bare room, and most of his money went in the buying of little pieces of old sculpture or casts. He had a very curious way of working the designs for his pictures. Instead of drawing many sketches, he made little wax models of figures and arranged them inside a cardboard or wooden box in which there was a hole to admit a lighted candle. So, besides the grouping of the figures, he could also arrange the light and shade.

But, though he worked hard, fame was long in coming to Tintoretto. People did not understand his way of painting. It was not after the manner of any of the great artists, and they were rather afraid of his bold, furious-looking work.

Nevertheless Tintoretto worked steadily on, always hoping, and whenever there was a chance of doing any work, even without receiving payment for it, he seized it eagerly.

It happened just then that the young Venetian artists had agreed to have a show of their paintings, and had hired a room for the exhibition in the Merceria, the busiest part of Venice.

Tintoretto was very glad of the chance of showing his work, so he sent in a portrait of himself and also one of his brother. As soon as these pictures were seen people began to take more notice of the clever young painter, and even Titian allowed that his work was good. His

portraits were always fresh and lifelike, and he drew with a bold strong touch, as he did in his drawing of the head of a Venetian boy, such as Tintoretto met daily among the fisher-folk of Venice.

From that time Fortune began to smile on Tintoretto. Little by little work began to come in. He was asked to paint altarpieces for the churches, and even at last, when his name became famous, he was invited to work upon the walls of the Ducal Palace, the highest honour which a Venetian painter could hope to win.

The days of the poor, bare studio, and lonely, sad life were ended now. Tintoretto had no longer to struggle with poverty and neglect. His house was a beautiful palace looking over the lagoon towards Murano, and he had married the daughter of a Venetian noble, and lived a happy, contented life. Children's voices made gay music in his home, and the pattering of little feet broke the silence of his studio. Fame had come to him too. His work might be strange but it was very wonderful, and Venice was proud of her new painter. His great stormy pictures had earned for him the name of 'the furious painter,' and the world began to acknowledge his greatness.

But the real sunshine of his life was his little daughter Marietta. As soon as she learned to walk she found her way to her father's studio, and until she was fifteen years old she was always with him and helped him as if she had been one of his pupils. She was dressed too as a boy, and visitors to the studio never guessed that the clever, handsome boy was really the painter's daughter.

There were many great schools in Venice at that time, and there was much work to be done in decorating their walls with paintings. A school was not really a place of education, but a society of people who joined themselves together in charity to nurse the sick, bury the dead, and release any prisoners who had been taken captive. One of the greatest of the schools was the 'Scuola de San Rocco,' and this was given into the hands of Tintoretto, who covered the walls with his paintings, leaving but little room for other artists.



Triumph of Venice by Tintoretto



Paradiso by Tintoretto

But it is in the Ducal Palace that the master's most famous work is seen. There covering the entire side of the great hall, hangs his 'Paradiso,' the largest oil painting in the world.

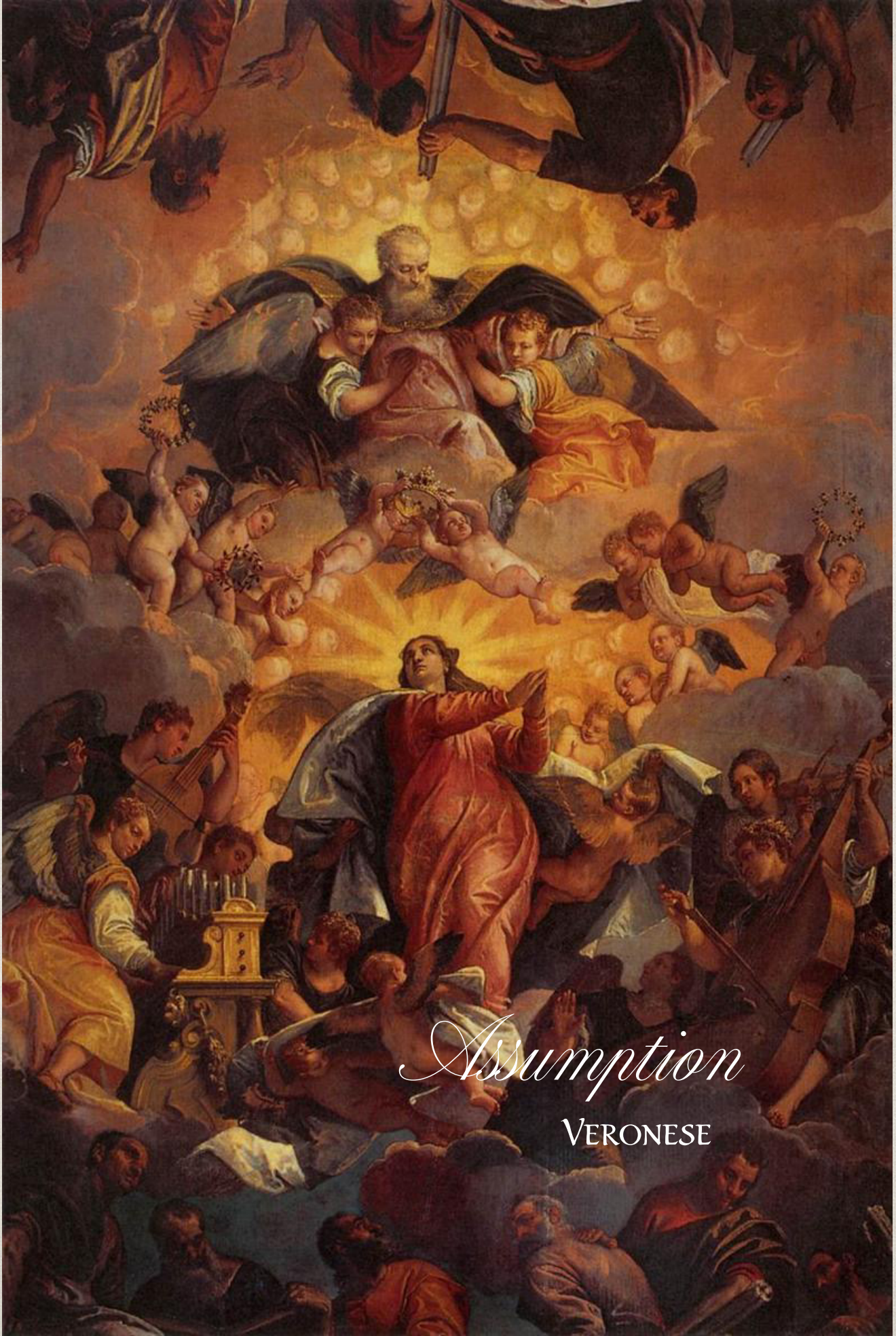
At first it seems but a gloomy picture of Paradise. It is so vast, and such hundreds of figures are crowded together, and the colour is dark and sombre. There is none of that swinging of golden censers by white-robed angels, none of the pure glad colouring of spring flowers which makes us love the Paradise of Fra Angelico.

But if we stand long enough before it a great awe steals over us, and we forget to look for bright colours and gentle angel faces, for the figures surging upwards are very real and human, and the Paradise into which we gaze seems to reveal to our eyes the very place where we ourselves shall stand one day.

At the time when Tintoretto was painting his 'Paradiso,' his little daughter Marietta had grown to be a woman, and her painting too had become famous. She was invited to the courts of Germany and Spain to paint the portraits of the King and Emperor, but she refused to leave Venice and her beloved father. Even when she married Mario, the jeweller, she did not go far from home, and Tintoretto grew every year fonder and prouder of his clever and beautiful daughter. Not only could she paint, but she played and sang most wonderfully, and became a great favourite among the music-loving Venetians.

But this happiness soon came to an end, for Marietta died suddenly in the midst of her happy life.

Nothing could comfort Tintoretto for the loss of his daughter. She was buried in the church of Santa Maria dell Orto, and there he ordered another place to be prepared that he might be buried at her side. It seemed, indeed, as if he could not live without her, for it was not long before he passed away. The last great stormy picture of 'the furious painter' was finished, and all Venice mourned as they laid him to rest beside the daughter he had loved so well.



Assumption

VERONESE

Paolo Veronese

1528-1588, Italy

It was in the city of Verona that Paul Cagliari, the last of the great painters of the Venetian school, was born. The name of that old city of the Veneto makes us think at once of moonlight nights and fair Juliet gazing from her balcony as she bids farewell to her dear Romeo. For it was here that the two lovers lived their short lives which ended so sadly.

But Verona has other titles to fame besides being the scene of Shakespeare's story, and one of her proudest boasts is that she gave her name to the great Venetian artist Paolo Veronese, or Paul of Verona, as we would say in English.

There were many artists in Verona when Paolo was a boy. His own father was a sculptor and his uncle a famous painter, so the child was encouraged to begin work early. As soon as he showed that he had a talent for painting, he was sent to his uncle's studio to be taught his first lessons in drawing.

Verona was not very far off from Venice, and Paolo was never tired of listening to the tales told of that beautiful Queen of the Sea. He loved to try and picture her magnificence, her marble palaces overlaid with gold, her richly-dressed nobles, and, above all, the wonder of those pictures which decked her walls. The very names of Giorgione and Titian sounded like magic in his ears. They seemed to open out before him

a wonderful new Paradise, where stately men and women clad in the richest robes moved about in a world of glowing colour.

At last the day came when he was to see the city of his dreams, and enter into that magic world of Art. What delight it was to study those pictures hour by hour, and learn the secrets of the great masters. It was the best teaching that heart could desire.

No one in Venice took much notice of the quiet, hard-working young painter, and he worked on steadily by himself for some years. But at last his chance came, and he was commissioned to paint the ceiling of the church of St. Sebastian; and when this was finished Venice recognised his genius, and saw that here was another of her sons whom she must delight to honour.

These great pictures of Veronese were just the kind of work to charm the rich Venetians, those merchant princes who delighted in costly magnificence. Never before had any painter pictured such royal scenes of grandeur. There were banqueting halls with marble balustrades just like their own Venetian palaces. The guests that thronged these halls were courtly gentlemen and high-born ladies arrayed in rich brocades and dazzling jewels. Menservants and maidservants, costly ornaments and golden dishes were there, everything that heart could desire.

True, there was not much room for religious feeling amid all this grandeur, although the painter would call the pictures by some Bible name and would paint in the figure of our Lord, or the Blessed Virgin, among the gay crowd. But no one stopped to think about religion, and what cared they if the guests at the 'Marriage Feast of Cana' were dressed in the rich robes of Venetian nobles, and all was as different as possible from the simple wedding-feast where Christ worked his first miracle.

So the fame of Paolo Veronese grew greater and greater, and he painted more and more gorgeous pictures. But here and there we find a simpler and more charming piece of his work, as when he painted the



Feast in the House of Levi (Last Supper) by Veronese



Madonna Enthroned with Saints by Veronese

little St. John with the skin thrown over his bare shoulder and the cross in his hand. He is such a really childlike figure as he stands looking upward and rests his little hand confidingly on the worn and wounded palm of St. Francis, who stands beside him.

Although the Venetian nobles found nothing wanting in the splendid pictures which Veronese painted, the Church at last began to have doubts as to whether they were fit as religious subjects to adorn her walls. The Holy Office considered the question, and Veronese was ordered to appear before the council.

Was it, indeed, fit that court jesters, little negro boys, and even cats and pet dogs should appear in pictures which were to decorate the walls of a church? Veronese answered gravely that it was the effect of the picture that mattered, and that the details need not be thought of. So the complaint was dismissed.

These pictures of Paolo Veronese were really great pieces of decoration, very wonderful in their way, but showing already that Art was sinking lower instead of rising higher.

If the spirits of the old masters could have returned to gaze upon this new work, what would their feelings have been? How the simple Giotto would have shaken his head over this wealth of ornament which meant so little, even while he marvelled at the clever work. How sorrowfully would Fra Angelico have turned away from this perfection of worldly vanity, and sighed to think that the art of painting was no longer a golden chain to link men's souls to Heaven. Even the merry-hearted monk Fra Filippo Lippi would scarce have approved of all this gorgeous company.

Art had indeed shaken off the binding rules of old tradition, and Veronese was free to follow his own magnificent fancy. But who can say if that freedom was indeed a gain? And it is with a sigh that we close the record of Italian Art and turn our eyes, wearied with all its splendour and the glare of the noonday sun, back to the early dawn, when the soul of the painter looked through his pictures, and taught us the

simple lesson that work done for the glory of God was greater than that done for the praise of men.



Conversion of Mary Magdalene by Veronese



Apotheosis of Venice by Veronese