SCHOOLS
OF PAINTING

Madonna di San Sisto

RAPHAEL

Royal Gallery, Dresden

SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

by

Mary Innes

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

ITHACA, NEW YORK

This edition, first published in 2022 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an unabridged republication of the text originally published by G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1911. For the complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, please visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of Gateway to the Classics which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.gatewaytotheclassics.com.

ISBN: 978-1-63334-170-8

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 339
Ithaca, NY 14851

FOREWORD

THE last five hundred years, which we may assume as the epoch of modern painting, have shown a tendency constantly growing to separate the fine arts from practical life and to give them over to a world of their own where the connection between them and the actual needs and necessities of man are but slight. Like the higher mathematics, a good deal of pictorial work remains a sealed book to all but those who make of it a serious study. A dialect of its own, naturally invented by artists and connoisseurs, aids the inevitable though gradual alienation of the mass of the people from an understanding of the purpose of the painter when he attempts anything beyond a likeness, a landscape or marine, an anecdote or a bit of still-life. Lacking the habit of studying pictures, and ignorant of the patter in which they are usually discussed, the ordinary man feels that he is out of the game. He is as much at a loss when reading the text of art criticism as he surely is who has never studied or played ball, when he takes up a newspaper and tries to navigate the torrent of slang which seems to be demanded by the devotees of sport.

Although a similar divorce between ordinary and professional language, between the common terms known to all and the sometimes barbarous and far-fetched words of the adept, is quite usual, there can be small doubt of its questionable character, so far as the

arts are concerned. It keeps a vast number of persons in a condition of latent antagonism to everything labelled with the name of art. It creates and foments a prejudice against painting, because that is almost the sole medium of art expression widely recognised as art by the public. Books like *Schools of Painting* which combine instruction as to the various schools of the old painters, clearly and simply set forth, with a certain quota of critical comment, help to impress this vast, laborious workaday public with the mass and the ubiquity of art, and force upon indifferent or prejudiced readers certain basic facts. These schools of painting could never have existed unless painting was one of the natural and normal ways for human beings to give utterance to thoughts and feelings which would be difficult to express in any other fashion.

It is much easier for people to understand the same thing with regard to music, for example. The voice and simple instruments have always led the way. But painting is farther off and requires less common implements. Perhaps, in the evolution of mankind, pictures are of later development than music; and for that reason do not seem so elementary and instinctive as music. Be that as it may, there is a great gain to be registered for the nation or community which shall be the first to raise pictorial art to the same pitch of universal credit and acceptableness as that attained by music. Yet if the will be there, this end can be accomplished.

Irritated by the inability of people to understand their aims, it is not uncommon for artists of high attainments to deny that art can ever become generally

known to, and generally appreciated by, the public.

In virtue of his profession, the artist tends to become conservative and indeed aristocratic in his feelings. As a youth he may have imbibed advanced and generous ideas; he may have begun by leaning toward reforms in the social field and in politics, just as he was then open to all the novelties in art; but the practice of his profession acquaints him with the fact that comparatively few greatly care for what he admires, and so, little by little, he tends toward scorn of the multitude. His clients are apt to be persons of wealth and social rank. It would be strange, if he did not end by becoming skeptical as to the truth of his youthful ideals. Nevertheless, he has to adapt himself. Inevitably he must express his environment.

How deeply painting is rooted in human life will be recognised at once by reflecting on the personal side of its origin, the painting by primeval man of the human face and figure, followed by tattooing and other kinds of physical embellishment. Children display their love of pictures at an early age, but especially the love of colour, which is the particular though not the only field of painting. As we ascend the scale of humanity we find that men in primitive lives pay more attention to this art than do those in higher and more complicated stages. Division of labour increases and the specialty in art appears, followed by the man who makes painting his chief occupation. When we reach the great period of Greek art we realise that many epochs must have gone before in order that the Greeks themselves should be so far advanced. Even then, as they were in the time of

Apelles and Polygnotus, painters were separated from sculptors, for instance, although sculpture was still coloured. A famous painter of Athens, also noted for his refusal to take a bath and therefore called "dirty" Nikias, was the one of all others whom Praxiteles preferred, for to him he entrusted his marble statues in order that the cold surface of the stone should be painted or stained to resemble life. Nevertheless the Athenians did not resign the criticism of art, whether in architecture, sculpture, or painting, into the hands of certain men and so lose their keen relish for the arts; they took a personal interest in the matter and it is that zeal which directly encourages and produces masters.

One difficulty with the situation of art to-day lies in that narrowness of view which would thrust art aside into a category by itself as a pleasure to be enjoyed by certain persons having leisure and learning enough to appreciate it. Artists and critics tend that way. The universal application of art is doubted. The magnitude of the problem daunts the elect. How can one expect the average man and woman to include art among the actualities of daily life, when the struggle to obtain comforts and those luxuries which have become necessities exhaust the vast majority? Some answer to that question is made by handsome public buildings decorated with paintings and mosaics, by monumental sculpture, by the art museum; but these things exert only an indirect influence without going to the root of the matter.

The ideal community is one that learns from childhood to weigh harmonious proportions, and to avoid

the ugly and welcome the beautiful in form, colour, and sound, so that this justness of perception becomes a second nature, or, as we say, becomes instinctive. We ought not to be faint-hearted because the ideal seems unattainable. We should not fold our arms and with a shrug admit that we moderns can not become Athenians, having neither frugal homes and few needs like them, nor slaves to relieve us of the hard work of the day. We should strive to approach the ideal as well as we can (*Als ik kan* was the motto van Eyck placed on his canvas) not demanding the thing that is out of keeping with our particular conditions, but searching for a way to reach the same end with the means at our command.

It is while reading an epitome of the chief products in painting during the centuries gone by, like the story told in the following chapters, that one realises how great has been the variety among the pictures made by a comparatively small number of nations and how different one from another have been the communities that produced them. The lesson for us is this: painting has a hundred faces; art is adaptable to every soil, to every varying kind of man, to every strong character among men. Schools and academies and guilds are very well in their way; they serve for short periods; but they bear in them the germ of destruction, because they must try to confine art to a method or fashion which can not remain healthy long, and so, sooner or later, they must tend to lose touch with the community ever changing about them. Dogmatic criticism is therefore not merely useless but baneful; for there is always danger

that it may interfere with the natural and unhampered expression of an individual, or a community, or a nation in the terms of art. Whatever of drill and repression and dogmatic instruction may be judged wise for the student, the mature artist at any rate can not be too free to choose the means and methods of his expression. It is one of the admirable qualities of the French that they have granted the widest latitude to painting, not fearing the extremes into which hasty theorists have run, while pursuing art into the domain of science or following a will o' the wisp of whim.

In some way or other, means will be found to knit painting more closely to the lives of all men than is now the case, or has ever been in the past. It can not be accomplished by furnishing every family with pictures. Accumulating paintings when there is wealth enough, as we do, is often of little avail, because we know not how to make use of them when we have them. If a painting is worth owning, it is worth better treatment than the mere suspension to a wall along with many others. We should not see our pictures every day, because our sight becomes blunted by familiarity, and seeing, we see them not. We should put them, one after the other, on some wall or easel and regard them separately with unjaded eyes.

One may learn much from the picture merchant who, if possible, will not weary his customer and divert his attention by displaying a room full of canvases, but shows one picture at a time in the proper light, giving the visitor leisure to examine and become impressed by each in turn. The same lesson is taught us by amateurs

among the Chinese and Japanese, who do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed and satiated by the presence of many art treasures in the same room, but, like the connoisseurs they are, display only a few at once and exchange them from time to time for others in their collections.

The plain everyday work of the painter is to make our homes more beautiful, and, if his genius fit the attempt, to rouse memories and emotions that benefit the soul. Examples are the painters of walls and windows in the Middle Ages, who made visible to the faithful the legends and dogmas of the Church. Along with such decorations and instructions by means of art in the house of God went similar efforts in city halls, palaces, and the homes of opulent burghers. In recent years, however, the painter's art has by no means kept pace with the growth of fortunes, because the modern trend toward comforts and amusements calls for a thousand expenditures which the later Middle Ages did not ask. One has only to reflect upon the vast sums poured out for sports and other transient amusements to-day in order to realise that if one-tenth of the effort and outlay were applied to forms of art (which are as permanent as sports are transitory), the nation that so distributed its surplus capital would easily lead the world, breeding artists of the first quality, amassing and eventually exporting great numbers of art works, very much as Italy once did under the stimulating influence of the Renaissance.

Something like this is indeed beginning to make itself known under adverse surroundings in the United

States. Although, so far, our municipal governments have done little to encourage art, American painters and sculptors have made their mark in Europe. Almost exclusively those of our artists who were forerunners of influence upon Europe have been painters of easel pictures who practised their work abroad in competition with their European masters and fellow students; but there is no reason to doubt that the encouragement given of late in America to mural painters will form all-round artists prepared to meet any demand for work on a grand scale whenever it shall come from abroad.

With stained glass, for example, notable triumphs have been won in Europe by John La Farge and Louis C. Tiffany, although glass windows are not well adapted for exhibitions, very few galleries having the proper lighting and fenestration for stained glass, while the cost of transport and instalment is almost prohibitive.

Instances are not entirely lacking in the United States where taxpayers have voted municipal funds for the encouragement of art. New York helps maintain the Metropolitan Museum of Art by donations of site and annual subscriptions for building and maintenance. St. Louis has gone farther and set aside a certain proportion of the city taxes to support its art museums and art schools. These precedents will surely be followed by other cities. Philadelphia has been offered the gift of three famous collections of old and modern paintings, if a suitable art gallery be erected by the city in Fairmount Park. Everywhere we find the attention of the public directed to the founding of art museums and the opening of schools for instruction

in the arts. One might say that after establishing a vast number of schools, colleges, libraries, and hospitals the people had awaked to the idea of fostering art and had begun to pour out wealth for that purpose on a scale never known before.

When reading the following pages, one can not fail to be struck by the unlikeness between the communities which fostered and permitted the schools of European art and our own people. Democratic ways, separation of the Church from the State, absence of a class of men of leisure, the modern current toward science and business, are only a few of the factors which dig a gulf between the European past and the American present. But man remains man. Externals change tremendously; human character almost imperceptibly. We crave and must have art to-day, and in the great amalgam of nations between Atlantic and Pacific art is so far from dead that it lives with a new power.

Perhaps it is not widely realised that in the United States the public school is becoming an engine for the diffusion among the people of art in its lower and primary forms. Drawing and modelling in clay are becoming established in the schools, not, of course with the idea that a superficial tuition can by itself produce artists, but with the well-grounded belief that it will smooth the path of the few who are to become artists some day and enable them to discover their own bent toward art, while, with regard to the majority of children, it will tend to make them better and more eager appreciators of art.

We seem to have discovered quite lately the educational virtue of art tuition for the multitude.

It would be a commonplace to repeat the sneer of the skeptical regarding the democratisation of art and to echo the scoffs of those who think there are far too many artists already. Also there are too many physicians and lawyers. Nature has a way of dealing in overwhelming numbers. But it may be noted that, in her grand impersonal way, out of the cruel crush of numbers, Nature selects a favoured few for her advances. She seems to signify that it is only out of the ruck of failures that the great success can rise. If there is anything useful and advantageous to mankind in art, if there is anything in it which contributes to happiness and makes the journey through life not merely more tolerable but sweeter—then it is well that every boy and girl should have the opportunity to feel its power and realise its value, whether he or she ever become an artist or not. The old education of primary and high school, college and university, was dry because of the absence from it of the arts mentioned complacently in the diplomas. Gradually we are changing that. And perhaps the fruit of all this effort may be plucked by the generation to come. What seems fairly clear however is this: schools of painting just like those of the past cannot reappear.

It would be folly, indeed, to expect, or to wish, the repetition of any of the schools of painting so acutely and moderately set forth by Miss Innes in the ensuing chapters. But there is no school which has not some intrinsic virtue for which modern art may not be

the better, if well pondered and separated from the envelope of its surroundings. The beauty of colouring and form of the old Italians, the sober strength of the Hollanders, the raciness of the Spaniards, the logic and science of the French, the individuality of the British, these are qualities fitted for one kind of painting or another, by studying which the modern painter can learn to strike the keynote of the particular work in hand without becoming copyist or "eclectic." In our time we have seen how men like Manet and Whistler and Sargent have profited by the genius of Velasquez without being copyists or losing their individuality and national character. There are others among the great painters of the past, now perchance overlooked, whose works will be appreciated again, just as those of Goya and Greco and of a whole range of Italian primitives have been drawn recently from obscurity and added to the lengthening list of geniuses worthy of study and of honour.

A survey of painting as it has existed in Europe during the past five hundred years is a subject so extensive and so complicated that one is ready to praise the gallantry of endeavour shown by Miss Innes in this brief volume on Schools of Painting. How well she has carried out her plan, with what discretion she has avoided the pitfalls dug by pragmatic and fierce critics, the following pages will show. Suffice to say that the American edition copies the English closely, but where changes or additions have been needed in order to meet the special requirements of a trans-Atlantic audience they have been duly marked, so that for them the British

author is free of responsibility.

The chief additions are a chapter on American painting and some pages added to the chapter on painting in France. In the text many references have been made to pictures in American public and private galleries more or less accessible to readers. The illustrations are greatly increased in number and in other respects there have been slight changes and additions intended to make the volume more valuable to art lovers and students of painting in this country.

CHARLES DE KAY

NEW YORK, *March,* 1910

PREFACE

AT a time when good well-illustrated monographs abound on nearly every painter of note, it is thought that a book of this kind may prove useful. This short historical sketch aims at marshalling the best known painters in orderly procession. It does not attempt to institute a roll-call of the entire vast host of the world's Great Masters; nor does it give an encyclopædic inventory of the works of any one of them. Selection and rejection have been freely exercised, not perhaps without personal bias, in order to secure space for the fuller presentment of a few leading figures.

But, personal bias apart, there is no arrogation of any kind of professional authority: in the company of the Great Masters we are all learners together; and here, one who is still learning invites others to engage in the same stimulating pursuit. Enthusiasm has an equal right with pedantry to concern itself with pictures.

At the same time, in compiling this book every care has been taken to arrive (when possible) at accuracy, and the best and newest authorities have been consulted. In the conflict of opinions on the subject of attributions and dates for the European pictures the catalogue of the National Gallery, London, has been accepted as in the

main correct. In the case of strongly supported changes of attribution or date, the newest theory is, whenever possible, stated.

To facilitate closer acquaintance with the work of each painter, special attention is directed to any characteristic examples to be found in the National Gallery. To give a wider range of acquaintance with famous pictures, the illustrations, with very few exceptions, are from foreign galleries; and the choice exercised aims at representing the various themes treated of in European art, as well as the manner of treatment.

The historical tables will serve, it is hoped, to present a clear view of the time relations in the matter of art-development between one country and another. Their record does not extend beyond the year 1850.

For permission to reprint some valuable extracts from living authors I am indebted to the ready kindness with which my request was granted. To Mrs. Ady, Sir Walter Armstrong, Sir Martin Conway, Mr. Herbert Cook, Mr. Lionel Cust, Mr. Campbell Dodgson, Mr. Bernhard Berenson, Professor Roger Fry, Mr. E. C. Strutt, and. Mr. W. H. J. Weale, my sincere thanks are due. For several quotations from copyright works I have also to thank the following publishers: Mr. George Allen, for quotations from Mr. Ruskin; Messrs. Bell & Co., for quotations from some of their "Great Masters" Series; Messrs. Cassell & Co., for an extract from M. Wauters's *Flemish School of Painting;* Messrs. Macmillan, for a quotation from Walter Pater's Essay on Botticelli from

The Renaissance; Mr. John Murray, for a note from Mrs. Jameson's *Early Italian Painters;* Messrs. Sampson Low, for some extracts from their "Great Artists" Series; Messrs. Seeley, for an extract from the "Portfolio" Series, and some passages from Mrs. Heaton's *Life of Dürer.* On questions of disputed attribution, the help kindly given by Mr. Maurice Brockwell has proved invaluable.

To several personal friends, in particular to Professor G. H. Leonard of the University of Bristol, to Miss Doyle, and to Miss E. H. Sturge, I owe much gratitude for both help and encouragement.

Mary Innes

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XVII

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAPTER XIX

CHAPTER XX

CHAPTER XXI

SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

CHAPTER XXVII

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHAPTER XXIX

CHAPTER XXX

CHAPTER XXXI

CHAPTER XXXII

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE short, unpretending word Art covers in meaning a vast section of human experience. A full history of art would cover the same ground as a history of the world, and anything like a complete study of the subject might well occupy a lifetime.

In this book we deal only with a small portion of our art-inheritance; with the famous pictures left to us by past generations, and with the men who created them; men of such fine artistic gifts and such a high degree of imagination that they are known as the Great Masters. Their works, if rightly studied, may become a source of ever-increasing enjoyment throughout the whole of life, and we suggest a few ways in which to approach the subject.

The first step is the construction of an historical framework in which to set, in its true perspective, each fresh item of information acquired. To this end, the table is supplied (pp. 445-446) which shows the development of art simultaneously in various countries. We regard Time, the intangible region which is being traversed by men, as a kind of space, and mark on our chart the

life-lines of the most prominent artists. We are thus able to trace the rise of art in Italy, soon followed by a like beginning in Flanders; later follow the Germans and Dutch; and last of all, the Spanish, French, and British.

But in order to study pictures we must be able to see them. Reproductions in black and white should be regarded as exceedingly poor substitutes, mere memoranda to recall what has been seen already, or to prepare for what is to be seen in the future. To understand a painter's work, it is self-evident that we must read his script in paint. The illustrations of this book are intended to whet the appetite for the original pictures, and as soon as possible those described only in words should be seen by the student. An accessible collection of pictures is therefore a primary necessity, and there is no better training-school to be found anywhere than in the National Gallery in London. It contains perhaps the most representative collection in Europe; for there are examples of every school of painting, and of nearly every well-known master. Despite the fact that only a few rank as masterpieces, the average merit of the pictures is extraordinarily high.

Those who attack their subject with scholarly thoroughness will no doubt work through room after room as arranged by the Keeper. They will win an ample reward; the human interest of such a tour of inspection is absorbing, and the recent changes in the hanging of the pictures are most helpful to the historical mind. We are able to trace the whole story of art-development, not only in one country after another, but also in the pictures of one man. We see in many cases the work

of master and pupil side by side, and can verify by observation what we have learned from books.

But the more artistic way of learning about pictures is to let our individual taste guide us at first, and, with reckless devotion, to spend all our time over a few pictures which really charm us. It is best to feel first and to reflect afterwards. Preconceived notions very often act as a barrier between us and the sense-impressions which should be the first to be conveyed by a picture. That is why the Old Masters do not easily win those who are better acquainted with modern art; these pictures from a past age are like foreigners in outlandish costumes upon whom British conservatism looks askance. But if among the multitude of oddities the eye can discover some pleasing exceptions, then the work of reconciliation has begun.

We shall be ready then for the Continent, where further treasures await us. If before leaving England we know something about the Great Masters, and they have opened for us (in a way they have) the eyes of our imagination, then in every foreign gallery we shall feel at home. In every direction familiar names will greet us, and new examples of their work. We shall learn to know better the masters we already love, and shall meet others with whom we wish to become acquainted. "Art is long," says the proverb, "and life is short." We may pursue our favourite painters from gallery to gallery without any fear that we shall come to an end of their inexhaustible freshness of charm. Nor shall we easily compass the mere visiting of galleries. There are rich collections in Paris, Madrid, Antwerp, Amsterdam,

Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, Munich, Cassel, and even so far away as St. Petersburg; not to mention Italy, where pictures seem to spring up like flowers all over the land. It is only the professional *connoisseur* who can hope to see all the beautiful paintings about which we others can only read and dream.

Connoisseurship is a profession of rather recent growth. The Italian critic, Morelli, may be regarded as its founder. By the close study of small tricks of manner he professed to be able to fix with accuracy the authorship of almost any given picture. A certain droop of the eyelid, or curve of the finger-nail, or formation of the lobe of the ear was to him a secret but infallible token. And others who have learned to study pictures with the same exact observation of minute details have found the method successful. The debt owed by us all to the patient industry of connoisseurs is very great; for they are gradually correcting the mistakes of a past age, and verifying every new fact discovered by scientific demonstration. A knowledge of their work is invaluable to the exact student, but it has clearly no connection with the appreciation of beauty in works of art to which we apply the term "taste." There is many a scholar—to illustrate from another art—who can give a learned explanation of every line in *Lycidas* without ever knowing, as Dr. Johnson's friend Mrs. Thrale did, the thrill of delight in its beauty which brings tears to the eyes. If we know this thrill in the presence of great pictures we need not covet the scientific knowledge—often very dearly bought—of the connoisseur. But we shall go to him for instruction, and where taste and

knowledge are combined (as in the writings of Mr. Berenson among others) we shall find inspiration too.

We must bear in mind that in every work of art there are two factors: not only the outward presentation but also the inward thought which called it forth into being. We speak of these as the *form* and the *theme*. In pictures the form is achieved by the use of colour, of lines, and the distribution of light and shade known as *chiaroscuro.* The form appeals to the eye and makes an impression on the senses; the theme is addressed to the mind, and sometimes does not at once unfold its meaning. Yet we only half understand a picture if we confine ourselves to what offers itself to the eye.

At the same time the interpretation of a painter's theme is a subject beset with danger. In very early pictures we have a clue in the symbolism which was universally accepted, and only by the aid of this clue can we hope to understand their meaning. The trend of modern criticism is in favour of explaining technical methods rather than treating of the essential life, the soul, as we may say, of a picture. Modern critics seem to adopt, almost unconsciously, the scientific attitude even when contemplating a work of art.

"A picture is painted for the eye and not for the mind" is an axiom with many. Yet the eye which has ceased to be an organ of mind must be a poor possession; and we question whether any great artists were thus maimed. The impression left on the memory by great pictures is no mere sense-experience, but a revelation to one's own mind of the forces at work in another mind. By

imagination those pictures were created, and by the exercise of imagination they must be read. We may venture to adapt Wordsworth's words and say of this mental faculty:

> It is the fountain-light of all our day,
> It is the master-light of all our seeing.

We must not give our confidence to every self-appointed interpreter, but no student of pictures can afford to dispense with the guidance of Ruskin. He was a true seer, and although he occasionally stumbled through over-eagerness, he carries a light in his hand which still illuminates the darker problems of interpretation. He recognised imagination as the source of genius, and he trusted his own imagination when it responded to the appeal made by the painter. His writings are full of the most suggestive reasonings about what constitutes beauty, and how best we may learn to recognise it. He does not confine himself to outward beauties of technique, although he sees them with intense appreciation; he pierces nearly always below the surface and shows us something of the mental and moral attitude revealed by a painter in his pictures. He sometimes made mistakes, it is true; he had hard and fast theories which do not always fit with facts, but he recognised rightly that beneath the unconscious impulses of the artist there works the conscious mind of a man.

The student who follows Ruskin as an enlightener of the eyes of the imagination, and at the same time consults the writings of connoisseurs as a corrective

on points of historical or technical fact, is not likely, during the gradual cultivation of his taste, to fall into any serious blunders.

But, valuable as are the services of a guide, the only sure way to cultivate taste is by the exercise of a fearless sincerity. To adopt the opinions of another as to what we feel or ought to feel is an absurdity in terms. Feeling is a private and very real experience; the pretence of feeling is a peculiarly dangerous form of untruth. The honest, perfectly truthful beginner in the study of pictures will like and dislike with violence, and in that condition of mind lies salvation. Nothing paralyses more effectually the growing perception of beauty in works of art than the cant phrases which are so often caught up and repeated before their meaning is understood. But a simple, unbiassed, leisurely readiness to accept what the painter has to show us will lead in time to a growth of insight. We must be passive in order that we may feel; and it is in the power of evoking feeling that lies the mystery—the communicated, haunting sense of mystery which marks every great work of art.

As our knowledge and receptivity increase, we shall find that we grow less intolerant of the things which at first we did not like. Our taste will tend to become catholic. But it is likely that a personal bias will always enter into our estimate taste of the pictures submitted to our notice. There is no need to be afraid of this. It is natural that those painters who express for us our own ideals and aspirations should claim our warmest allegiance. But we should desire to advance farther, and to perceive new truths which greater minds than

our own have to reveal. Then gradually will come the discovery that nearly all must be in agreement about those pictures which are truly the best. A book like this tells beforehand the general verdict about each, but the reader should not unthinkingly acquiesce. There should be at each step a verifying of opinions given, and an effort to defend intelligently every personal preference. Taste is a matter of slow growth; it consists at first in unconscious feeling, then the attention is directed to the feeling; and at last we reach the knowledge of what we feel, and why we feel it.

It is in order to be able to enjoy that we wish to cultivate taste. All art is the product of joy, of the wish to create beautiful things and to show them to others. Ruskin calls every picture "an act of praise." The simplest and greatest are very truly so described; they spring spontaneously from the heart of the artist as song pours forth from the quivering breast of the bird. But man, the higher creature, offers a nobler form of praise in which mind and will are exercised. And he makes his praise permanent, so that others may rejoice with him, and the whole world may be happier than it was before.

CHAPTER II

ON SYMBOLISM

WE must know something about Symbols if we are to understand the earliest Christian art, because they were much employed during the first twelve or thirteen centuries of the Christian era.

A symbol is a sign which stands for some particular person, or some abstract thought which cannot be represented to the eye. Any object may be used as a symbol provided we know beforehand the fixed meaning it is to bear. For instance, a lily is the symbol, or emblem, of purity; the lamb, of meekness and innocence; the rose, of love. There is a natural fitness here between the symbol and the thing signified. But in Christian art a large number of arbitrary symbols are used, and we cannot possibly guess their meaning unless previously instructed. Some of them are quite easy to remember and recognise, and nearly all are connected with objects of the Christian faith with which we are familiar.

Heaven is symbolised by the segment of a circle, sometimes of pure blue, sometimes edged with the three colours of the rainbow. In dealing with the three persons of the Trinity, the most frequent symbol adopted to represent God the Father is a hand protruding from

the heaven of blue. The Holy Spirit is symbolised by a dove.

God the Son is represented under many different figures; perhaps the strangest is the mysterious looking sign  . This is really a monogram composed of the two Greek letters of the name of Christ,  and  . The  is also intended to represent the Cross, the universal symbol of the faith. This monogram sometimes appears in slightly different forms, as  ,  and  . But this mark is a hieroglyph rather than a true symbol. Among the more properly artistic symbols are the Lamb, the Lamb bearing a cross, the Vine, a Lamp or candle, to represent the "Light of the World"; and, not so familiar to us now, the Fish.

The fish, one of the commonest symbols used for Christ, and also for all Christians, has long ceased to call up for us any sacred associations. But we feel its appropriateness when used to represent the followers of Christ, because we recall his words to the apostles that he would make them "fishers of men"; and also his parable of the draw-net, in which the captured fish clearly symbolise the souls brought as spiritual captives into the Church. The rite of baptism again, in early times performed by complete immersion in water, would suggest for Christians the emblem of the fish. But when used to represent Christ its meaning is quite arbitrary, and it seems to have been adopted because the five Greek letters which make the word fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) are also, when used as an acrostic, the initial letters of Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτήρ—Jesus, Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

The Trinity itself is symbolised in the action of the child Christ when he holds up his hand in blessing, and extends only the thumb and the fore and middle finger.

For the Christian Church the most familiar and very natural figure is an ark or ship, the *navicella* (or little ship) as it is called in Italian. In early pictures representing the disciples contending with the storm on the Galilean lake, we must remember that the scene is treated as an ever-lasting allegory of the faithful souls who are borne along in the ship of salvation across the stormy waters of life.

No symbol is more familiar than that of the nimbus, aureole, halo, or glory, which in early paintings surrounds the head of Christ and the saints. This was already known and adopted by the Greeks and Romans, who represented their gods as crowned like the sun with radiating beams of light. With them this sign indicated the splendour of power. For many centuries the Christians avoided a symbol connected with heathenism, and the date when (forgetting their prejudices) they first crowned their own divine king with an aureole is not known. But in Christian art this symbol no longer typifies power, but holiness. It suggests the spiritual fact that from beautiful human souls, illuminated within by the Holy Spirit, there does break forth a visible brightness that shines about the face. The early painters, still striving after expression, and only partially able to tell their thoughts through their pictures, could at least indicate through the medium of a nimbus that this or that man or woman was a saint. The earliest form of the nimbus was a solid

gold disc, like a plate. In later times it became gradually more delicate, at last a fine gold circle, and then, in the period of declining faith and declining art, the nimbus fades altogether from the heads of the saints.

There is one form of glory used only for Christ and the Virgin, and sometimes for saints, when, life being over, they are actually mounting towards heaven. This is called the *mandorla* (almond) from its oval shape. It surrounds the whole figure with a flame of golden rays.

The crown has no connection with the nimbus, but when used as a symbol it indicates victory. Sometimes it is a wreath of laurel, always recognised as the reward of high achievement, sometimes a circlet of gold. It always typifies the "crown of glory" promised to the saints of God. It soon became the especial symbol of the glory of martyrdom. As such it is held in the hand by men, but by women martyrs it is worn on the head. Occasionally, when we know the story of the saint wearing a crown, we find that she was actually a queen, and then it is no longer a symbol, but what is called an *attribute.* Men too may wear the crown as an *attribute,* and a royal saint like Louis IX would be rightly represented with a crown on his head.

Another symbol for victory, a classical symbol, adopted by the Christians, was the palm. Those who bear palms in their hands are invariably martyrs. This symbol would call up to the mind of the Christian the picture of the triumph in heaven (Rev. xii. 9): "I beheld and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, . . . clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

To represent evil, against which the warfare of the saints is directed, the dragon is the almost universal symbol. The serpent represents Satan, the prince of darkness, but the dragon includes the thought of wickedness under all its forms. This again is no exclusively Christian conception. We may remember the Greek myth of Apollo, the god of light, and how with his arrows he slew the Python. In many eastern myths we meet with the same figure of light triumphing over darkness, good triumphing over evil. In Christian art the Archangel Michael is nearly always represented as the dragon-slayer, and in the pictures of S. George, S. Margaret, and others, this symbolic dragon, wounded, defeated, or sometimes led captive, represents the triumphant issue of the combat between holiness and sin.

When flowers or fruits are introduced into sacred pictures they are intended sometimes to serve only a decorative purpose. But the apple is often used as an emblem of the fall of man; and when in the hand of the Virgin or Child, it suggests the redemption of the world. When the apple or pear is placed in the hands of a saint, it represents the "fruits of the Spirit" ascribed by S. Paul (Gal. v. 22, 23). The half-peeled pomegranate displaying the seeds within, is an emblem of the future, and suggests the hope of immortality.

The early Christian artists also gave a symbolic meaning to different colours. Red was intended to typify love; blue, truth; green, hope; and yellow seems to have had various meanings. Sometimes it suggests sunlight and fruitfulness and religious faith. It also

symbolises marriage, and S. Joseph, as the husband of the Virgin, wears a yellow mantle; S. Peter, the married apostle, also wears yellow. Occasionally it suggests evil qualities,—jealousy, inconstancy, deceit—and Judas, the betrayer, is dressed in yellow. White symbolises purity, the joy of innocence, and faith.

In their mystical visions of heaven the early painters would represent, close round the throne of God, the ruby-coloured seraphs who eternally adore Him; beyond them a circle of cherubs coloured blue.

These are represented as less ardent in their power of love, they contemplate with the mind the wonders of divine truth. Beyond them, coloured yellow, are the "Thrones," those spiritual beings whose energy sustains the righteous rule of God. Beyond them again, a circle was imagined of "Dominations, Virtues, and Powers." And again, lowest in rank among the heavenly hosts, was the third circle of "Principalities, Archangels, and Angels." The whole conception is symbolic; the circles suggesting eternity, and their number, three times three, giving the mystic number Nine, which to Dante seemed so full of inexhaustible poetry.

There is a very fine example of mediæval symbolism in the west window of Fairford Church, England, where the first order, consisting of seraphs, cherubs, and thrones, is correctly coloured in red, blue, and yellow. The whole subject is full of interest, and deserves ampler treatment. It is admirably elucidated in Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN ART

LOOKING back over the four thousand years during which we have fairly authentic records of the doings of men, we notice that the birth of Christ separates them into two almost equal divisions. Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race, lived in the twentieth century before Christ, our place is in the twentieth century after Christ. The story of Christian art is concerned only with those later centuries to which the impressive name has been given of the "years of the Lord" (Anni Domini). Long before his birth, Greek art had declined and almost perished. But the spirit of Greece had greatly influenced the Roman conquerors of the world; they adopted and transformed most of the Greek gods and goddesses, and Roman artists learned how to copy the statues of the Greeks. In every department of public or private decoration, furniture, vases, wall-painting, Greek models were adopted. In all these some memory lingered of the old worship of heathen gods. Mythology and art were inseparably mingled, and by the Christian both were condemned. The new religion looked out

beyond the visible to truths apprehended only by the spirit. If these were to be expressed in art, a new art-language must be discovered, almost a new alphabet; and the first rude specimens of Christian art owe their pathetic interest to the fact that in them we see the gropings of a new, spiritualised, æsthetic instinct in search of some fitting mode of expression.

There are two classes of early Christian artistic work which we know as belonging either to the Later Roman style, or the Byzantine style.

The Later Roman style originated in the catacombs. These excavations under the city of Rome, consisting of underground chambers, and long, confused, winding passages, are thought to have been made during some ancient process of quarrying. When the first persecution began under Nero, the Christians fled to these gloomy labyrinths for refuge, and there for several centuries the invincible believers in Christ continued their worship in secret. It is on the walls of the catacombs that we find pictorial records of that new religious enthusiasm which triumphed over fear; mere symbols at first, the fish, or the cross, or the monogram  . Then the desire to depict their Lord under some more human form found expression at last in that of the Good Shepherd, leading or carrying his lambs. For this conception they had the warrant of his own words; and it was under the name of the "Happy Shepherd" that these despised and persecuted fugitives loved best to portray the Master who had led them to secret fountains of inexhaustible joy. They pictured him, not only with his sheep about him, but with a pipe, sometimes a lyre, in his hand. They

wished to symbolise the new spiritual power which was bringing order into a world of chaos, and subduing all the unruly passions of the heart to the one peaceful dominion of Love. In the story of Orpheus, whose music drew the birds and animals to follow him and stirred trees to break from their roots, and even melted the heart of the stubborn god of Hades, the Christians seemed to find a perfect analogy to the harmonising influence of the doctrines of Christ. And so, among these hasty sketches on the walls of the catacombs we find Christ represented as Orpheus with lyre in hand, whilst grouped about him are the spell-bound listening creatures.

Although no so-called portrait of Christ can be accepted as truly resembling him, yet a very definite type of face was at last evolved by these early unknown painters, whether merely ideal or derived from some authentic source we cannot know. It agrees, however to a remarkable degree with a written account that has come down to us. These are the words of Lentullus: "There appeared in these our days a man of great virtue, named Jesus Christ, who is yet living amongst us, and of the Gentiles is accepted for a prophet of truth, but his own disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both love and fear; his hair, the colour of a filbert full ripe, to his ears, whence downwards it is more orient in colour, somewhat curling or waving about his shoulders; in the midst of his head is a seam or partition of his hair

after the manner of the Nazarites; his forehead plain and delicate; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautiful with a comely red; his nose and mouth exactly formed; his beard thick, the colour of his hair, not of any great length, but forked; his look innocent; his eyes grey, clear, and quick; in reproving, awful; in admonishing, courteous; in speaking, very modest and wise; in proportion of body well shaped. None have ever seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. A man, for his beauty, surpassing the children of men."

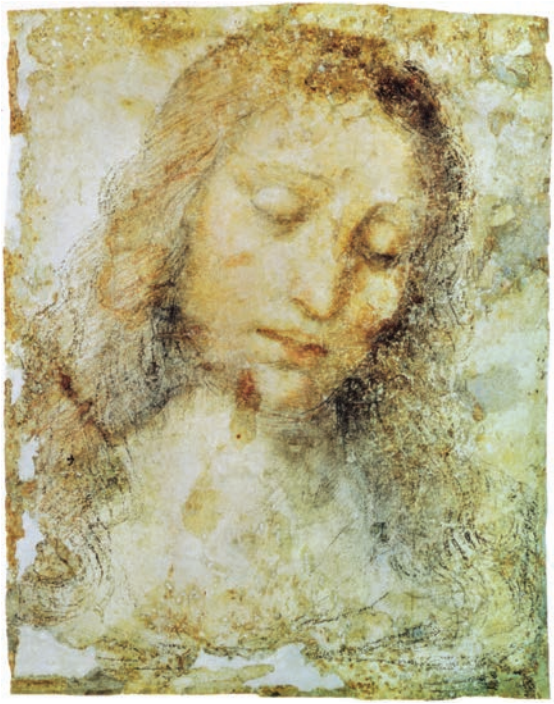
Some are of opinion that the catacomb pictures represent only the abstract "Spirit of Christianity," rather than the "man Christ Jesus," and that the type of face which afterwards became traditional originated later at Byzantium. But from whichever source, Eastern or Western, this conception of Christ took its origin, we shall find it was accepted and adhered to with little alteration until the period of the Renaissance. Our illustration is from the chamber known as the Catacomb of S. Domitilla. In contrast we show Leonardo's *Head of Christ* (see p. 20).

When Constantine the Great adopted the Christian faith, he introduced it into the Roman Empire, and abolished by edict the worship of the heathen gods. At once the whole position of the Christian Church was altered. Christianity became the fashion; the fervour of faith, which had animated early Christian artistic work, seems now gradually to have declined. Not that Christian art perished, but it changed. In Rome, Milan, Ravenna, Constantinople, churches were now raised to the Christians' God. The old heathen temples were not

Head of Christ

From the Catacomb of S. Domitilla, Rome

suited by their construction for the new worship, but certain existing buildings called basilicas, chiefly used for courts of justice, were often converted into churches. The main features of a basilica were its oblong shape; the division of the floor-space, by parallel rows of pillars into a nave and two aisles: and at the end facing the entrance, a raised recess covered in by an apse. In Italy this pattern was usually adopted for all new churches of the early Christian period. One curious result was that two companion buildings were soon erected beside it: the tall bell-tower known as the *campanile,* and the baptistery, usually a circular building which contained the large font required in these early times for baptism



Head of Christ
ATTRIBUTED TO LEONARDO DA VINCI
Brera, Milan

by immersion. To adorn these Christian basilicas new forms of art-decoration were introduced.

This kind of work had been practised for many centuries. It consisted in binding together, with cement, small coloured cubes of stone or terra-cotta, so as to form a patterned, smooth surface, which was used chiefly for pavements. During the reigns of the early Roman emperors in the first century A.D., the art of making mosaics attained a high degree of perfection. Not only patterns were produced in it, but natural objects and human figures. Necessarily these were rather

stiffly portrayed, but the general outline was clear, and the various colours of the tiny cubes enabled the artist to copy nature pretty closely. Sometimes cubes of glass were used, and these, when gilt, sparkled brilliantly, and, when coloured, shone with the transparency of jewels.

At what date mosaics were first used for decorating walls and ceilings does not seem to be positively known. But it is certain that the earliest known mosaics representing Christian subjects are the work of the fourth century. Very few specimens of these now remain, but much original work of the fifth century may still be seen in very old churches in Rome and Ravenna. The subjects chosen by the now triumphant and powerful Christian Church were those which proclaimed the majesty of Christ as King. Very frequently on the wall space behind the altar, he is represented far beyond life-size, either standing, or sitting on a throne. Beside him, in later work, the Virgin appears, and sometimes she usurps his place. Around the central figure are grouped the twelve apostles. Below very often are sacred emblems chosen from the book of the Revelation: the Lamb, the mysterious sealed Book, the Candlestick, and other symbols which suggest the second advent of Christ in glory. We should remember that the work belonging to the Later Roman style preserves some of the feeling for beauty which had been caught by the Romans from the Greeks. But gradually this element of beauty is lost, and the stiff angular figures of the mosaics of the sixth and following centuries, whether found in Italy or in Greece, are classed as belonging to the Byzantine style.

When Constantine became a Christian, he shifted the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium on the Bosphorus. Very soon this town had grown into a magnificent imperial city, and it received the new name of Constantinople, or the "city of Constantine." Here he built one of the most famous churches of the world, and dedicated to "Hagia Sophia," the Greek for "Divine Wisdom." This has been corrupted to "Saint Sophia," by which name it has been known ever since. The design of this splendid church was quite different from that of a basilica. It consisted of four transepts, placed opposite and at right angles to each other, thus forming a Greek cross. Over the central space, on to which the four arms opened, was raised a high dome; and occasionally, when this type was more developed, a small dome was also placed over each of the four transepts. All the churches of the Eastern Empire were built in this shape, which is known as Byzantine; and in 532 Justinian, the famous Emperor of the East, rebuilt S. Sophia from its foundations, and lined its walls with some of the finest mosaics of the period. When the Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453 they converted this Christian church into a Mohammedan mosque, and such it remains to the present day.

But from the time of Justinian onward the mosaics and paintings of the Eastern Empire are regarded as belonging to the Byzantine style, and they may still be seen on the walls of those Christian buildings which the Turks have preserved.

We must remember that Justinian, and the succeeding Emperors of the East, continued to claim

dominion in the West; and, though at length the Ostrogoths and Lombards became masters of Northern and Central Italy, the coast towns remained faithful to the authority of the emperors. The changes in art which originated in the Eastern Empire were therefore communicated to Italy, and we have specimens of Byzantine art in both countries.

Its characteristics are an extreme stiffness of form, a monotonous repetition of the same unnatural attitudes in all the figures represented, and a large use of gold and brilliant colours to compensate for the absence of correct drawing. Almost invariably the background is in gold. Both faces and figures are little better than rude caricatures. This degraded condition of art was without doubt partly due to the influence of the Church. It assumed control over the artists employed to decorate Christian churches, and repressed that exercise of free choice of subject and treatment which is a necessity to those who are striving after artistic expression. The Church went so far as not only to dictate the subjects, but the precise manner in which they were to be represented. Of this we have a proof in some old documents discovered in a Greek convent on Mount Athos. One is a manual on the art of painting, which first gives directions for preparing and grinding the colours, and the way in which they are to be applied. Then it proceeds to give rules for the grouping of every figure in any given sacred subject; fixing the type for each, the attitude, colour of dress, even the arbitrary lines or shadows used to express youth or age, or the different mental qualities of the persons represented.

This is quite in accordance with words used at one of the great Church Councils: "It is not the invention of the painter which creates the picture, but an inviolable law, a tradition of the Catholic Church. It is not the painters, but the holy fathers who have to invent and to dictate. To them manifestly belongs the composition, to the painter only the execution." Thus arose one traditional type for the "portrait" of Christ and of the Virgin; and for the grouped figures of Mother and Child; for the Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion, and other scenes from the life of the Lord.

Though art receives its purest inspiration from religion, we are not surprised to find that it was stifled by this kind of domineering patronage. It required no imaginative power to produce copies of helplessly feeble and inert figures which soon became conventional; and for some six centuries men seem to have lost altogether the power of seeing beauty and representing it.

CHAPTER IV

LEGENDS OF THE VIRGIN MARY

IF we would understand the power and charm of mediæval pictorial art, we must try, by an act of imaginative sympathy, to enter into the beliefs of the period.

To the painters of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and early fifteenth centuries, the Virgin mother was a celestial being about whom they cherished devout and ardent thoughts, and to whom they addressed their most passionate prayers. We cannot trace, as an historian would do, the origin of this worship of the mother of Christ, but we know that it was of gradual growth; and that it exercised a very humanising influence on the races of Europe as they worked their way upwards from barbarism. This honour paid to the Virgin was of theological value because it served to emphasise an important doctrine, that of the complete union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. For early heresies more often questioned the humanity of Christ than his divinity. So every picture in which Mother and Son appear together may be regarded as

enshrining in symbolic form this doctrine of the perfect humanity of Christ.

Socially the influence of the cult of the Virgin was of incalculable value. It fixed the attention of undisciplined, combative men on the feminine virtues, such as meekness, purity, tenderness, the exercise of mercy to the weak. True, all these virtues are included in the perfect manhood of Christ as revealed in the gospels. But the Church understood the unconscious craving of battle-weary men for a vision of motherhood, of the woman element in human nature exalted to its highest perfection. And so the "lowly hand-maiden" of the Magnificat was lifted step by step (in obedience to ecclesiastical teaching) up to the position of "Mother of God," "Queen of Heaven," and the central object of devotion throughout Europe. Chivalry bestowed on her the name of "Our Lady," churches were raised to her honour, and brotherhoods of monks and friars enrolled themselves in the service of the Virgin queen. The poets sang of her purity and compassion; and Dante in particular, describing her in his *Paradiso* as the "Mystic Rose" and the queen of heaven, inspired men with the desire to represent her more worthily in art.

She is known under many names, each representing some one aspect of her manifold benignity. These are a few: Our Lady of Succour, Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady of Consolation, Our Lady of Peace. She is known as the Mater Dolorosa (the Mourning Mother) when contemplating the sacrifice of the cross, and sharing the sufferings of the Redeemer of the world. She is known as *Madonna* (my lady) in every Christian land.

The early "portraits," as they may be called, of the Virgin, during the Byzantine period of art, are mere symbols intended to fix the mind and direct the course of meditation.

The later pictures fall into two distinct classes: those intended for altar-pieces would be treated devotionally; those meant for instruction, in the historical manner. A "devotional" picture is intended to fix the mind on some great truth of which the picture is only a symbol. As mentioned above, the group of Mother and Child represents the *Incarnation*. This subject is presented as a *mystery,* and the aim of the painter is to lead us out beyond the visible figures on the panel or canvas to an unseen object of religious adoration. The harmony of colours, the quiet, almost statuesque attitude of the figures, the flowers, fruits, birds, and other graceful accessories, are all meant to draw the thoughts heavenward. In a devotional picture we may see S. John the Baptist, as a grown man, standing beside the infant Christ, and we may also see the saints and martyrs who lived centuries later. This is no anachronism; they too, with ourselves, are adoring the same eternal mystery, which cannot be restricted within the limits of space and time.

But in a sacred subject treated historically, the time limits must be correctly observed. Here we shall see the child-Christ and the child S. John of the same age, and there would be some attempt to give a realistic setting to the scene. Not that we should ever have an actually Eastern representation of these Bible events—such pedantic literalism seems never to have suggested

itself to early Christian painters—but we should have the story dramatically rendered under circumstances that could be imagined as probable in the painter's own country.

In devotional pictures of the Virgin she is occasionally alone. When represented as weeping over the dead body of Christ the picture is called a *Pietà.*

Two very favourite subjects in which she appears apart from the Child, though not uncompanioned, are the *Assumption* and the *Coronation.* In the former she is seen ascending on the clouds, with angels floating around her in the air. Below we generally see the tomb, a heavy sarcophagus, whose stone lid has been forced open by the tall Madonna lilies that have miraculously grown inside. (No. 1126 in the National Gallery, London, is a good example.) And in the lower part of the picture it is usual to place the twelve apostles gazing upward at the ascending form.

In the Coronation we see her in heaven, where Christ himself puts a royal crown upon her head. Sometimes, in an Assumption, we see in the upper part of the tall picture the scene of the Coronation too, so that the whole represents a continuous episode—the passing from the grave up through the clouds to the throne prepared for her in heaven.

But when the Coronation alone is represented, with kneeling figures of saints of all ages in the foreground, then we are before a picture which embodies a doctrine. This is no longer a scene or an action, but a great religious mystery. Here the Virgin typifies the redeemed

and glorified Church. She has now become the mystical Bride of the Lamb, and the crown placed on her head foretells her final spiritual victory over the world:

> When the great Church victorious
> Shall be the Church at rest.

In all renderings of the Coronation, whether by Italian, Flemish, Spanish, or German artists the dress of the Virgin is magnificent, embroidered in colours, brilliant with jewels, loaded, in the early pictures, with gold.

This is the most usual representation of the Mother and Child as an object of devout contemplation. The throne may be simply a chair raised on a daïs, or it may be some elaborately decorated seat overhung by a canopy. It is usual in such a picture to add in the foreground the figures of saints, these varying according to the town, church, or convent for which the picture was painted. S. John the Baptist, as patron saint, will be seen in Florence; S. Mark in Venice; S. Ursula in Cologne.

In votive pictures, commissioned by some patron of art to testify gratitude to the Virgin for an answer to prayer, we shall find the saints supposed to be personally interested in the donor's family. Cosmo and Damian, for instance, the doctor-saints, the "holy money-despisers," appear often in pictures painted for the great House of Medici. Sometimes, too, in the foreground of a votive picture are represented the kneeling figures of the donor and his family.

The natural, human relation of mother to child is itself, apart from all religious associations, one of

the most beautiful themes that life affords. Sir Joshua Reynolds has often given us a rendering of this *mystery* which rivals in simplicity of sentiment the work of the best mediæval artists.

When, in addition to the natural love of mother and child, shown in smile or caress, we have the solemnity of treatment which typifies the wonder of the Incarnation, the picture still is considered to be devotional. But when the little S. John is introduced as a playmate, and S. Joseph looks on with paternal eyes, we have what may be called a *domestic* Holy Family. This particular form of sacred picture was not introduced until the late fifteenth century, and at once became popular.

Unfortunately, though treated with perfect reverence by the majority of painters, and by Raphael in particular with a delicate grace, this more familiar rendering of a sacred subject led in time to abuses. Many of the realistic painters, who very rightly drew from a model for the subordinate figures, now would copy some light woman of the town in their studies for the head of the Virgin, and the whole spiritual potency of the subject was thus lost.

When the life of the Virgin is dealt with as an historical subject, the treatment is always more dramatic than in a devotional picture. Now the artist is called on to paint a story, and with freer scope for individual invention he often supplies us with new and naïve renderings of some well-known episode.

Joachim and his wife Anna, the parents of the Virgin, could trace their descent from the royal house

of David, but no child had blessed their union. Late in life, in obedience to a vision, they separated for a time, Joachim spending some months in solitary exile in the wilderness. Reunited at the Golden Gate of the Temple (a favourite scene in early pictures) the aged couple received the promise of a child.

This child, the Blessed Mary, was dedicated to God, and when taken at three years old to the Temple, she ran of her own accord up the long flight of steps to the high priest who was waiting to receive her. She was brought up in the precincts of the Temple, and in due time a husband was sought for her of the high priest. Widowers alone were invited to sue for her hand; each was to bring a rod and lay it on the altar, when by some clear sign the chosen husband would be revealed. From the rod of Joseph the carpenter there escaped a pure white dove, which, after settling on his head, soared up to heaven.

Another tradition relates that the rods of the suitors were laid over-night before the altar in the Temple, and in the morning it was found that the rod of Joseph had broken forth into blossom. He was the chosen husband; and the other suitors, angry and disappointed, some of them breaking their rods in despair, withdrew from the scene.

When these stories are treated of in art, we often find the whole series of events presented in consecutive order. They were often painted in fresco on the walls of churches, and served, like a pictorial Bible, for the instruction of the people. One of the most famous series

is that painted by Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua.

The *Presentation in the Temple,* which follows the earlier scenes of Joachim and Anna, and the Meeting at the Golden Gate, is a very favourite subject, and has been treated both in fresco and oil by nearly every painter ranging from Giotto to Titian. Our illustration is by Vittore Carpaccio, the Venetian (below). He follows the old rules as to composition, but introduces in the foreground a most attractive little modern child, whose presence rather distracts our attention from the sacred legend. The picture is in the Brera Gallery at Milan.

The Presentation of the Virgin
CARPACCIO
Brera, Milan

The Marriage of the Virgin
RAPHAEL
Brera, Milan

The scene of the *Marriage* (in Italian *Lo Sposalizio*) is again a very great favourite with artists. It is generally represented as taking place in the open air, the Temple rising in the background. The white-haired high priest in his magnificent robes stands in the centre of the picture, and unites the hands of Mary and Joseph, while beyond Mary are her maidens, and grouped near Joseph are the disappointed suitors. In Raphael's famous *Sposalizio* in the Brera Gallery at Milan there is one young suitor (not quite the regulation widower in appearance) whose life-like attitude cannot easily be forgotten. Clad in red he bends and snaps his rod across his knee in such a manner as to betray the bitterness of his disappointment. The whole scene, rich in colour,

delicate in outline, breathing the true spirit of reticent romance, has been likened by Kugler to a lyric poem. Our illustration shows this celebrated early Raphael.

There are two very small, quaint pictures on this subject in Room II of the National Gallery, London, Nos. 1109 and 1317. Joseph's blossoming rod may be seen in No. 625 by Bonvicino, and in No. 13 by Murillo.

Of the scriptural scenes in the life of the Virgin perhaps the favourite ones are the *Annunciation,* the *Nativity of Christ,* and the *Visit of the Magi.* The Annunciation is invariably treated in a devotional manner, and so simple is the whole conception that more artists have achieved excellence in this subject than almost any other. We reproduce on the opposite page a singularly beautiful example from a church in Fano. The scene, as usual, is represented in a *loggia* or open corridor, and here we have the spacious background to be expected from Perugino. As in all other Annunciations, the angel Gabriel holds the symbolic lily. But the representation above of God the Father in a mandorla of cherub-heads is quite original. Peace and harmony and a sense of mystery should always pervade the scene.

The Nativity of Christ is another subject of inexhaustible interest to mediæval painters. Certain conventions must be observed, but there is much scope for the exercise of religious fancy in the arrangement and expressions of the three principal figures. If regarded as an historical event, the presence of the ox and the ass is indispensable; and to lovers of animals

The Annunciation
PERUGINO
Church of S. Maria Nuova, Fano

the expression of pious astonishment often depicted on their faces as they discover the Babe in the Manger is a source of delightful dramatic interest.

When treated as a mystery the Child often lies on the ground, a centre of light, while mother and father kneel in adoration. Sometimes angels are present, and sometimes, as in other devotional subjects, there are saints introduced as spectators. A very famous picture of the Nativity is Correggio's *La Notte* (the Night) in the Dresden gallery. He presents the scene as occurring during the real deep darkness of a northern night. But from the new-born wonderful Child there shines forth

a glory which fills the whole picture with unearthly light (p. 188).

As a sacred allegory there is perhaps no better example than Botticelli's *Nativity* in the London Gallery (No. 1034). In the centre of a rough shed open in front, lies the Child, his finger on his lip, which symbolises the words "I am the Word" or "I am the Bread of Life." Mary kneels in adoration; Joseph, a crouching figure to the left, seems paralysed by deep emotion. On the right of the shed three angels present three shepherds, and symmetrically placed on the opposite side of the shed are the three Magi from the East. In the foreground three angels, robed in the celestial colours of white, green, and red (for faith, hope, and love), embrace three mortals, while grotesque demons fly to hide themselves in the crevices of the rocks. On the roof of the shed three angels (in white, green, and red) are bending over one book, and reading from it a song of praise. At the top of the picture, in a golden haze, beyond the blue of our seen heavens, there are twelve angels engaged in a joyous and mystic dance. They carry an olive branch in one hand, and from the other hangs a crown. Their colours are white, green, and red. Behind the shed the lower scene is closed in by a belt of very dark trees.

It is not hard to interpret the allegory. We see, as in a magic crystal, that one moment of crisis from which sprang the rejuvenescence of a world. The gloom of that heathen world is shown in the background of dark, almost malignant-looking forest trees; but the Child born in the lowly stable, with father and mother beside him, will restore the lost harmonies of family life. He

will attract to his cradle both peasant and scholar and heal the feud which parts class from class. At his coming the worst vices of heathendom, like the loathly creatures in the picture, will flee. Men and angels will embrace, for man will remember that he too is of heavenly lineage. Peace will return to the earth and gladness; we learn this from the olive branches borne by the angels, from the colours of love and hope and purity in which they are arrayed, and from their song and their jubilant dance. This picture is a true Christmas Carol.

The Adoration of the Magi, as known to art, is accompanied by many details for which there is no warrant in the gospel narrative. But the story is in its nature picturesque, and legend upon legend grew up around it as the centuries advanced. It was very soon positively known that the Wise Men were kings, for in those days, the writer of an early legend naïvely informs us, "it was not unusual for kings to be also wise." These kings were three in number, and before very long they were familiarly known by name, and their ages were fixed. Caspar was old, with a long white beard; Melchior was middle aged; Balthasar was young. Moreover, despite ignorance as to the countries from which they came, there was a general agreement as to the conplexion of Balthasar, who should appear in pictures as a black. From this grew their mystical interpretation as Europe, Asia, and Africa, and the beautiful thought suggested in the kneeling bareheaded figure of the first, the lifting of his crown by the second, and the detached air of insensibility in the third. As real kings many stories of them were current, and it was

positively asserted that their bones—discovered long after death by the Empress Helena—were transported to Constantinople. Thence, centuries later again, they were removed to Milan, and in the twelfth century they found their way to Cologne, where they lie gorgeously enshrined in the cathedral. They are known now as the "Three Kings of Cologne." There are so many pictures on this subject in every gallery in Europe that it is hard to single out any one in particular for description. In contrast to our Italian *Annunciation* we give a German *Adoration,* painted in 1504 by Albert Dürer. It now hangs in the Uffizi gallery at Florence and ranks among its treasures. The standing king with long hair

The Adoration of the Magi
ALBERT DÜRER
Uffizi, Florence

(Melchior) is said to be a portrait of Dürer himself; in the Virgin—strong, capable, matronly—we have a characteristic and beautiful presentment of the ideal German mother.

There is an interesting Adoration by Vincenzo Foppa of Milan in the London National Gallery (No. 729) and several by Tuscan artists.

Lastly, we should not omit the scene of the Virgin's death. This, according to legend, was foretold by an angel; and to distinguish this announcement of death from the true Annunciation the angel now bears a palm instead of a lily. More frequent than the announcement of it is the scene of the death itself, at which the twelve apostles are always present grouped around the bed.

Our illustration from a picture by Mantegna in the Prado Gallery, Madrid, is considered to be one of the finest on the subject. The beautiful lake stretching far away towards the edge of heaven suggests the coming emancipation of a "peace-parted" soul. It is in reality the Lake of Mantua, seen often by the painter, here immortalised and transfigured in a devotional picture. We see the angel with the palm to the left: S. Peter has the sacred vessels in his hand, S. John bends over the body of his Lord's mother. The quiet attitude of the other apostles, the tapers, the purity of every line and the harmonious colouring combine to produce a very solemn impression; but the solemnity is blended with a sense of exceeding peace (p. 143).

CHAPTER V

SOME LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS

SOME slight knowledge of the legends of the saints is the almost necessary key to the understanding of mediæval pictures. In a few quaint old specimens the artist has obligingly labelled his saints, by writing in the name very small upon the halo or the robe. But we cannot always expect this, nor can we accept the practice as legitimate art. The only alternative is a recognised code of symbols, or an arbitrarily fixed and separate attribute for every saint. This is what has really been done, and those who have thoroughly mastered their subject can recognise every saint at first sight. We can only speak of a few of the best known.

The three archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, should first be named. Gabriel nearly always carries the lily, and we know him well in pictures of the Annunciation. Michael, the angel of judgment, is the captain of the hosts of heaven, and he is represented in armour, with a sword girt round his waist. He stands frequently with his foot on a dragon, the symbol of evil. Sometimes he holds the balances in which are weighed

the good and evil deeds of departed souls. Sometimes the souls themselves, little naked figures, are placed in the scales to be weighed.

Of the third archangel, Raphael, we read in the apocryphal Book of Tobit. He is especially the guardian of the human race, and in many ways resembles the Greek conception of Hermes as the friend of travellers, and the protector of the home. Raphael is represented in pilgrim garb with a staff in his hand, and a wallet or perhaps a bottle of water slung to his waist. He is gentle, sympathetic, concerned in human affairs, and can never be confounded with the stately and formidable S. Michael. He appears chiefly in scenes from the Book of Tobit, treated in the historical manner. We then see him in disguise (without wings) acting as the friendly guide of young Tobias who carries a fish in his hand. But if the fish is unnaturally small, and Raphael wears his wings, then the picture becomes a sacred allegory. The fish, we remember, is the symbol of the Christian, and S. Raphael, the guardian angel, is seen guiding a Christian soul through the difficulties of this earthly life.

The Evangelists too we should be able at once to recognise. Their four attributes are—the cherub's head for S. Matthew, the lion for S. Mark, the ox for S. Luke, and the eagle for S. John. Sometimes S. John holds a chalice, from which rises the head of a snake. This is thought to symbolise the "cup" of which he and his brother asked to drink. S. John should always be young in appearance, and have long, fair, curling hair, and his dress should be red, with a green or blue tunic. S. Peter is old, with a bald head surrounded by a fringe of white

hair, and his dress is yellow, as we know that he was married (see p. 14).

Some of the best known legendary saints are S. George, S. Nicholas, S. Sebastian; and in Florence, in particular, the two doctor-saints, Cosmo and Damian.

S. George, the patron saint of England, Germany, and Russia, was not born in any of those places. He was a native of Cappadocia and lived in the days of the Emperor Diocletian. He was an officer in the Roman army and a Christian. Travelling once to join his legion he rode through the land of Libya, then devastated by a horrible dragon who claimed daily two children to satisfy his hunger. At last on the daughter of the king fell the fatal lot, and she set forth alone on her road to death. Then George, the gallant soldier, passing that way, resolved to rescue her, and boldly attacking the dragon he overcame him. Then all in that city feared the God of S. George, and "the King and people believed and were baptised, twenty thousand in one day,"—so affirms the ancient chronicle. A few years later, in consequence of Diocletian's edict against the Christians, he suffered death as a martyr.

It was during the Third Crusade that Richard Cœur de Lion first placed an English army under the protection of the warrior-saint, and thus linked us as a nation to S. George. In 1222 his feast (April 23) became by royal edict a public holiday throughout the country; and when Edward III in 1344 instituted the Order of the Garter, S. George's position as patron saint of England was finally confirmed.

S. Nicholas is a contrast to S. George, and is essentially the saint of the poor. A Bishop by office he came S. Nicholas to be universally honoured as a glorified saint and benefactor. He is the guardian of little children, of school boys, and especially of orphans. He is the protector of the labourer and the merchant, and of all who travel "by land or by water."

Nicholas after many years of faithful work as a priest was chosen to be Bishop of Myra, and in this high station was distinguished for piety, self-abnegation, and boundless charity to the poor. After death his tomb became an object of pilgrimage, and in 1084 some merchants of Bari, a seacoast town of Italy, determined to become possessed of his valuable wonder-working body. They attacked Myra, secured the body of the saint, and sailed away with it to Bari, where a magnificent church was erected over a second tomb. The Venetians tell a similar tale, and affirm that the true S. Nicholas lies with them. But Christendom sides with the men of Bari, and this saint is known by the two titles of S. Nicholas of Myra and S. Nicholas of Bari.

In art S. Nicholas is represented, as a rule, in pontifical robes with the crozier in his hand. At his feet, and sometimes in his hand, are three balls. Some critics give to these the symbolic meaning of the Trinity; but most connect them with a story of three purses given to a destitute nobleman for his daughters. As the protector of seafaring men we find churches dedicated to S. Nicholas in a large number of European seaport towns; even in England there are about 376. As one of the great patron saints he is frequently introduced

into devotional pictures of the Madonna. There is no finer presentment of him than Raphael's in the *Ansidei Madonna* (No. 1171 in the London Gallery). The clear-cut intellectual face is refined by the strict discipline of unremitting self-denial. But the gentleness of his expression shows that it was a self-denial borne for the sake of others, and not to gratify any form of spiritual pride. In Holland S. Nicholas, known as Santa Claus, is beloved by all the children as the bringer of their Christmas gifts.

The story of S. Sebastian has a sounder historic foundation than either of the two preceding. He was a native of Narbonne in Gaul, an officer in the prætorian guard, and secretly a Christian. During the persecutions of Diocletian he fell under the suspicions of the Emperor, openly avowed his faith, and was condemned to death. The order was given that he should be bound to a stake and shot, and that the troops should know his only fault was his love of Christ. Pierced with many arrows (none however striking a vital spot) he was left for dead; but the friends who carried away his body found that life was not extinct, and they tended his wounds, and he recovered. Instead of fleeing as his friends advised, he boldly pleaded with the Emperor the cause of his fellow-Christians: a vain effort which resulted only in his own death.

It was probably the arrows, a frequent symbol for the pestilence (Ps. xci. 5), which led to the veneration of S. Sebastian as a protector from the plague. He was thought to have power to avert that fearful scourge, and in nearly all the cities of Europe there are churches

dedicated to him in thanksgiving for deliverance from the plague.

In art he is occasionally represented as spreading out his robe to protect those who are praying to him from the destructive arrows that are falling among them. But we know S. Sebastian better as the martyr bound half-naked to the stake, and transfixed with arrows. Even thus we have no mere record of an historical event, we must bear ever in mind the mythical conception of his power to save. He remains young, beautiful, full of life, and the dreaded arrows cannot harm him; therefore it was believed that his prayers to heaven could render his votaries alike invulnerable. No saint is more popular in Italy, and no subject has been more frequently treated in the art of all countries.

There is an interesting draped S. Sebastian (No. 724) in the London Gallery where we see him as the soldier and courtier; his dress is gorgeously brilliant, and only by the arrow in his right hand do we recognise the martyr. On the opposite wall (No. 807) he appears again, transfixed with arrows. Both pictures are by Crivelli.

Among women-saints none is more famous than S. Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr. She was daughter and heiress to a King of Egypt, and remarkable both for beauty and high intellectual gifts. Secretly she learned to know Christ, and, having dreamed that he put on her finger a ring of betrothal, she vowed to wed none other. On her father's death she became queen, but rejected the many suitors who asked for her hand. Among these was Maximus, a cruel Roman governor,

who in his anger denounced her as a Christian. He ordered that four revolving wheels should be made, studded with sharp points, and that Catherine should be torn to pieces in the midst of them. But an angel from heaven broke them and delivered her. At last, by the hand of an executioner, her head was severed from her body. The angels bore her after death to the summit of Mount Sinai, where her tomb may be seen to this day in the monastery which is known by her name.

The pictures of S. Catherine as a patron saint, or historically depicted as a martyr, are extremely numerous. She may be known by the accompanying wheel. Occasionally, when this is absent, the crown on her head and the palm of martyrdom in her hand enable us to recognise her. We have a *portrait* picture of her by Raphael in the London Gallery (No. 168). She appears frequently, grouped with other saints, in pictures of the Holy Family.

The most important and interesting subject connected with her story is the *Marriage of S. Catherine*. This is essentially a spiritual allegory, and is treated by early painters with a reverent and delicate restraint. It represents the *mystery* of the union of the soul with Christ, an experience of the religious life which art alone can express.

There is probably nowhere a more beautiful example of this subject, treated in the true spirit of mysticism, than the picture by Borgognoné in the London Gallery (No. 298), which is here reproduced. Simplicity and gravity are the chief characteristics in the face of the

The Marriage of S. Catherine
BORGOGNONÉ
National Gallery, London

young mother. The Child wears a little coat of yellow, the symbolic colour for marriage. His face too is grave, and the flashes of gold breaking from his curly hair give an air of majesty to the childish figure. S. Catherine to the left is dressed in red (the colour of love) and on her raised hand the Child is gently pressing a ring. He holds out a second ring towards S. Catherine of Siena, the Dominican nun, whose story belongs to history rather than legend. This picture suggests more than can be read by the eye. Here are two "brides" of the "King of Glory." The one in her dismal black robes may

be regarded as a symbol of the soul which unites itself to Christ through abnegation. Here is the absence of earthly desire rather than the presence of a longing for divine satisfaction. But Catherine of Alexandria, in her flame-coloured robe, is the symbol of those other and more eager souls, who give themselves with gladness to the one whom they recognise as the "altogether lovely."

A second very interesting *Marriage of S. Catherine* in the London Gallery is by Gheeraert David (No. 1432). It is painted with the exquisite finish for which the master is noted. It is full of the same repose, solemnity, and sense of mystery which we have observed in Borgognoné's picture. And here there is the additional symbolism of growing flowers and a wall behind the group; suggesting the "garden enclosed" of the Canticles (chapter iv. 12). Beyond again is a vineyard where an angel is gathering grapes. S. Barbara and S. Mary Magdalene are seated to the right, and in the foreground kneels the donor—a very noble-looking priest in the surplice and cassock of his office (see p. 217).

To realise the peculiar spiritual charm which pervades these beautiful pictures, we should contrast them with others painted at a later period when the love of line and colour and chiaroscuro, for their own delightful sake, had clouded the more delicate inward perception of ideal beauty.

So we give also the famous *Marriage of S. Catherine* by Correggio in the Louvre (No. 1117). It is attractive enough when regarded as the presentment of a pretty domestic scene. The Child is pushing the ring on to

The Marriage of S. Catherine
CORREGGIO
Louvre, Paris

the finger of S. Catherine with the anxious, almost officious look of an every-day human baby engaged in an act which he regards as important. S. Catherine has the slightly amused look of the mature person who finds this important act both comic and charming. The mother's smile shows the maternal gratification naturally aroused by such an incident. An effeminately handsome S. Sebastian "assists," as the French would say, at the precocious performance. All very natural, pretty, and true to life. But the catalogue describes this as a *mystic* marriage. It is obvious that Correggio has no mystic purpose in its composition.

Again it is very interesting to notice Titian's treatment of S. Catherine in No. 635 in the British National Gallery. True, this is only an ordinary *domestic* Holy Family, and a peculiarly lovely picture it is. But the S. Catherine bending to kiss the Child as an elder sister would fondle her baby brother, is quite false to the conception of her character and her relation to Christ. Titian, the great colourist, feels that her soft green frock gives the right central note of colour to his foreground, and our artistic sense is entranced. Before a picture like this it is pedantic to insist on strict adherence to the legend. But afterwards, when reflection is at work, we may recall some of the introductory remarks about *theme* and *form;* and realise that the earlier painters with their more serious and poetic rendering of their theme may exert a charm quite as potent as that which is achieved by the greater masters of form, such as Correggio and Titian.

A few words only about S. Barbara. She too lived in Egypt, and, on account of her extraordinary beauty, her father confined her in a tower to guard her from undesirable suitors. Solitude led her to question the creeds of heathenism, and she secretly communicated by letter with a Christian bishop who taught her the true faith. Her father, on learning of her conversion, put her to death with his own hand. S. Barbara was regarded as the patron saint of armourers and gunsmiths, of firearms and fortifications. She protected her votaries from injury in battle, and from thunder and lightning and sudden death. She was the saint of the active life, the mediæval life of almost constant warfare. S. Catherine,

on the other hand, who is her frequent companion in pictorial groups of saints, was the patron of the contemplative life led by the scholar and the monk.

S. Barbara may be known by her tower, and as protectress against sudden death she alone of all female saints bears the sacramental cup. For it was believed that her votaries would never die neglected by the Church.