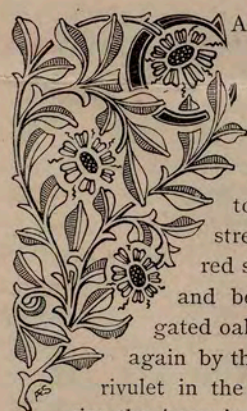


THE YOUTH OF RAPHAEL.



CAGLI is the first important town of the March which we meet after crossing the high Apennines at the Scheggia Pass. The mountains have relaxed their hold, and permit the Metauro, hitherto strangled between their rocks, to flow peaceably—a clear, ice-green stream, pink in the shallows of its bed of red sand—through the fields and meadows and between the poplar rows and congregated oaks of a wide valley, until it be gripped again by the rocks and squeezed into a foaming rivulet in the black gorge of the Furlo. All round rise the Apennine peaks—barren, rough-hewn, bluish, with snow-tipped Monte Catria and Monte Nerone; in front of them a lower amphitheatre of huge boulders, dark with scrub, ilex, and oak, patched with brilliant pasture and scarred with gashes of bright red rock; and at their foot, its walls just raised above the rushing Metauro, nestles the little white city of Cagli, one of the loyal cities of the Dukes of Urbino. It is a shabby little assemblage of whitewashed houses, about whose lower windows are strung ghastly rows of untanned goatskins: a place entirely different from the Tuscan and Umbrian towns we have left beyond the Apennines, which, in their most sordid and dilapidated wretchedness, have always the dignity of blackened houses and broken walls; a creation, one would say—nay, almost an emanation—of the characterless and squalid Rome of the seventeenth century, “Un pezzo del Ghetto di Roma,” a piece of the Roman Jewry, as an old servant from these parts used aptly to describe her native town. Of the Middle Ages there is no trace; of the Renaissance, besides a dismantled bastion, there remains apparently nothing.

Yet it is not so. For here, in Cagli, one comes in closer contact with perhaps the greatest of all men of the Renaissance; one gets a glimpse of the very origin of Raphael; one meets the earliest elements of him and of his art; his own childish person, when he was a mere big-eyed little boy, wondering at other men's work; his father, from whom, by a stronger necessity than that of pupilship, he inherited his artistic identity; and lastly, his own countrypeople, who, despite all transient imitation

1883.

of the models of Perugino, or Fra Bartolomeo, or Michael Angelo, gave him his enduring and all-pervading type of beauty.

Threading the narrow, rough-paved street, with a growing crowd of urchins at our heels, with men on the doorsteps and women at the windows to see us pass (for strangers never come to Cagli, and the great Flaminian Way on which it lies, between Fano on the Adriatic and Foligno in Umbria, is one of the most deserted of Italian high-roads), we come to the church of S. Domenico, modern, like everything in the town—at least, of the dilapidated modernness of the seventeenth century. But over one of the chapels on the left as you face the altar is a frescoed altar-piece which at the very first glance strikes one as a notable work. Above, in a semicircular space, is represented the Resurrection. In a hilly green country stands a tentlike sepulchre, or rather what looks like the overground entrance to some burying vault; the Saviour has just issued forth, and stands on the brink of the painting, a white tunic falling loose from the

shoulders, a reed with the red-crossed pennon in one hand, solemnly blessing with the other, while all round lie, in drunken lethargy and unseemly foreshortened brutishness, the sleeping guards, dressed in the short jerkin and clinging hose of the fifteenth century. In the lower compartment the Virgin sits enthroned in a niche, holding the child Christ erect on her knees. On either side of the throne stand an angel and two saints—St. Peter and St. Francis, John the Baptist and St. Dominic. Round the altar-piece projects a vaulted framework of masonry, the inside of which is painted with little naked angels, like the Cupids on Roman bas-reliefs. This painting is the masterpiece of Giovanni Santi, court painter of Urbino; and in it, disguised as one of the angel-boys attendant on the Virgin, tradition reports him to have painted the



Raphael. From the Fresco in the Church of S. Domenico, Cagli.

portrait of his little son Raphael, later to be known by the Latinized name of Sanzio. It is impossible to doubt that this oval, flat-cheeked, rosy-white face, with budlike lips, and big, round, wondering brown eyes, of which we give an illustration, is really the likeness of the child who turned into the well-known youth in the Uffizi at Florence—the youth with the perfect oval contour, somewhat too rounded forehead, and too invisible cheekbones, with the well-cut, full, yearning

mouth, and the large dark eyes, wistful under highly-arched brows. Nay, comparison of this painting with the small rounded skull, with its enormous circular eye-cavities and sudden sinking of bones of the cheek, which was unburied in Raphael's tomb in the Pantheon, and of which a cast is kept in the palace at Urbino, proves clearly that the features of the boy of eight or nine must have been precociously identical with those of the man of thirty-seven.

So much for this earliest glimpse of the child Raphael—a handsome, amiable, meditative, eminently well-brought-up little boy, quite different from what one might imagine the violent little Michael Angelo; the weak and wilful little Andrea; the neglected, half-starved, and gutter-bred Masaccios, and Peruginos, and Lippo Lippis of the same age. It is an impression, this earliest one given us by the likeness at Cagli, which is never dispelled, but only heightened, by our knowledge of Raphael the youth and Raphael the man; as the exemplary painter, amiable man, and accomplished gentleman *par excellence*; a harmonious—perhaps some might say too harmonious—and evenly-balanced nature, made more harmonious by a model home, domestic and artistic, by a God-fearing, cultured, and eminently aristocratic Court; by a subdued, subtle, and devotional school of painting; so harmonious that no amount of versatility of natural endowment, of eclecticism of earliest influences, of conflicting impressions and studies in later years, can ever, by any possibility, put it for a moment in disarray.

The second knowledge which Cagli affords us is of Raphael's father; an insight into his talent, his school, or rather fusion of schools, far more complete than that afforded by his easel pictures at Urbino. And the general impression which we carry away is, that much as Raphael absorbed of other masters, he is, at bottom, the creature of his father, inheriting from him something more than he ever learnt from any other single man; indeed, receiving from him the real nucleus of his genius. A very serious painter this Giovanni Santi, able to make up, by high intelligence and wide appreciation, for more conspicuous talents, which yet left many an artist of his day behind him; an artist essentially of what one might call the art of manifold representation by balanced means, not bound, like almost every other even of his far greater contemporaries, to one kind of mood, to one expression, to one mode of seeing and showing things; more especially not directed into the choice of arrangements and effects by the development of any one particular branch of painting; correct as draughtsman, pleasant as a colourist, solid in the more scientific parts of his art; but thinking most of the intellectual sides, forcing his mechanical power to carry out a precon-

ceived plan, rather than letting, like every specially endowed painter, Florentine or Lombard or Venetian, his mechanical means suggest his conception of a whole work. Herein essentially the prototype of his son in intellectual qualities which separate him so completely from other painters. But Giovanni Santi is as the rough sketch of Raphael in even more characteristic matters; he is what we see his son to be, if we take him as a whole, and not merely during his Perugino period; essentially not an Umbrian, but a native of a neutral territory, unproductive of a special school, but subject, for two generations, to influences from both Apennine slopes; influences through Piero della Francesca and Signorelli, from the Tuscan schools of anatomy and outline; through Melozzo da Forlì and Mantegna, of Lombard perspective and Venetian colour; influences so widely different as those brought from Flanders by Justus of Ghent and those re-echoed from antiquity by the sculptors of the palace at Urbino and the church at Rimini. As the art of the son partakes of Michael Angelo and Lionardo and Fra Bartolomeo, so also does the art of the father partake of Piero della Francesca, Melozzo, and Perugino; the men, born near

the frontiers of Tuscany and Lombardy, in a court eccentric and eclectic above everything, are both of them mongrels, and their art is a fusion. One thing more does the Cagli fresco teach us, and that one thing brings us perhaps closer to the real artistic ideality of Raphael than any mere intellectual peculiarities: we find that Giovanni Santi drew his figures in the same manner as his son, the cherubs in the arch surround-



The Room where Raphael was Born, Urbino.

ing the altar-piece are essentially Raphaellesque; no other painter except Raphael drew just such Cupids or angel babies as those; and in their naked bodies, better even than in the larger figures, do we remark as a peculiarity of Giovanni Santi, that trick of sketching the nude figure in a series of circles, which is the most obvious characteristic of Raphael's drawings.

Thus much of Raphael's father. Meanwhile, as we are looking at Giovanni's altar-piece, the desolate church gradually fills with a crowd of townsfolk, women and children for the most part; and as we go out and retrace our steps towards the inn, a little procession gathers about us, curious to see live foreigners. Let us glance at them as they walk with shy yet persistent stare all round us, interchanging whispers and laughs at our expense. We have seen these people before, these young women and children, so singularly like each other and so singularly handsome; we have not met one such face in a thousand among the people beyond the Apennines or nearer the Adriatic; there are very few such to be met even among the handsome Umbrians,

with their high cheekbones, narrow chins, prominent grey eyes beneath pale eyebrows, just as Perugino and Pinturicchio painted them four hundred years ago. Yet we know the faces of these people at Cagli, of these peasants whom we meet in every village of the highlands of Urbino: we know the oval sweep of outline, the bossy forehead, the flat cheeks, the brown complexion and hair, the big, vague, deep-set brown eyes under highly-curved eyebrows. It is the face of Raphael's men and women and children, of his saints and gods and martyred angels; it is the face of Raphael himself and of Raphael's Fornarina; it is the type of beauty which, wherever he is, and disguised no matter how much with flaxen hair or reddish beard, is unmistakable and ever recurring; the face not of one model, as in the case of Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, and Michelangelo and Andrea del Sarto, but of a whole race of those curiously southern and Latin people of the heart of the Apennine, so different from their Tuscan and Umbrian and Lombard neighbours, and of whom Raphael was so unmistakably the offspring.

Cagli has shown us, as it were, the original stuff of which Raphael and his art were made, and which for all momentary influences remained unalterable, and constituted the essential quality of the man and of his works. The child Raphael, the quiet, pliable, intellectual, well-behaved child, is the same, physically and morally, as the steady, versatile, literary, idealistic man. The art of Giovanni Santi—art which is composed of so many balanced elements—is the art of Raphael; art neither Tuscan, nor Umbrian, nor Lombard, but art such as it necessarily was in that meeting-place of currents, Urbino. And the people, finally, whom we see to-day all round us, are the people whom Raphael painted in the Sixtine Madonna and in the Parnassus, in the Galatea and in the Heliodorus.

But Cagli is but a speck in Raphael's biography: Giovanni Santi went thither in 1492 to paint the fresco in S. Domenico, and brought with him, for the short stay which he made, his newly-married second wife and his son of nine years. It has, by a curious accident, brought home to us three important points of Raphael's lore; but further it has no interest. To understand the youth of Raphael, to understand how were previously formed and how were subsequently developed those germs of a man and of an art which Cagli has shown us, we must go, first back to Urbino, then away to Perugia.

And first, let us return to Urbino, and try to get some notion of what it was at the end of the fifteenth century, and

what it made of Giovanni Santi and his son. The Apennines tighten in all round us, tighten in and widen out again; the sea-green Metauro, after passing out of the grip of the black rocks of the Furlo, flows once more between green fields, through a wide bed of reddish sand; we seem to be getting into an opener country, and a sense of relief and liberty comes upon us. But suddenly far off, above the surrounding hills, high up against the sky, appears a dark line of town: a crown of houses and towers, vague, distant, on the top of everything, as shown in our illustration. That is Urbino. Nothing can look more inaccessible. And inaccessible it does seem, as we drag slowly upwards, always in sight of that distant city, one great green hillside after another left beneath us, valley after valley narrowing into an unseen precipice by



Urbino.

our side; one peak after another of bare and snow-streaked Apennines rising all round; till little by little, as the shape of houses, walls, and belfries becomes clearer, and only a ravine separates us from Urbino, all the centre range of Apennines surround you, the peaks of Catria, Monte Cucco, Monte Nerone, Carpegna, the mountains of Gubbio and Borgo, S. Sepolcro and S. Marino rising abruptly all round, with only the reddish town in front, and no other trace of life as far as you can see. Once in Urbino there is a shock of surprise. A scrap of Lombard city, a corner of Ferrara or Modena or Piacenza, with porticoes, streets with marble carriage-tracks, big plastered seventeenth-century houses, has been stuck on the top of the mountains; a staring Jesuit church, a great barracklike rough brick palace in a

wide, deserted thoroughfare, with more plastered barrack-like private palaces all round. Such is the first impression of Urbino. For Urbino, as the capital of an independent duchy, lasted into the second quarter of the seventeenth century, when it passed from the last Della Rovere into the power of a legate sent from the Rome of Bernini and Maderna; and its courtly portions have suffered ducal and Jesuitical changes such as we cannot find at Perugia or Siena, nay, not even at Florence.

But in the less courtly part of the town, nature and the Middle Ages have their way, and tier upon tier of narrow black alleys and long flights of steps cling to the mountain side. The palace, which looks so like some barracks of a Lombard ducal residence when seen from inside the town, is like some strange fantastic French castle, but a French château magnified tenfold, when one sees it from the ravine beyond the town, hanging with its balconies and turrets, its strange irregularities of projection, propped upon cliffs and rows of sustaining arches. It is a thing which, even bleak and empty, gives more than any other an idea of the aristocratic and courtlike side of the early Renaissance. There is, throughout its dismantled halls and empty corridors, and long-deserted porticoes, a luxury of exquisite decoration; but so delicate, this arabesque stonework of doors, windows, and cornices, scrolled doors with leafage and fantastic animals and Cupids, that one receives an impression from it and from the long-since decayed furniture and fittings which one conjures up to match it, not so much of magnificence as of a wealthy but sparing elegance, like that of a small and simple but exquisitely cooked and served dinner. This palace looks pre-eminently what the dialogues of Baldassare Castiglione, the letters of Bembo,

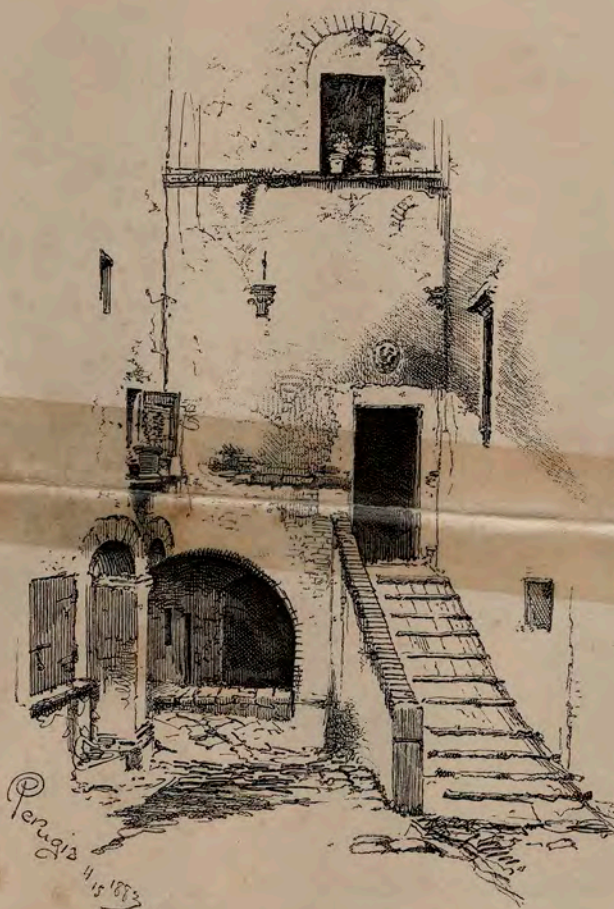
and the satires of Ariosto show it in fact to have been in the reign of Duke Guidubaldo—a delightful château, to which charming guests, poets, beautiful women, gallant soldiers, and witty statesmen are permanently invited; not a castle, much less the residence of a sovereign. A place wherein to enjoy the hot weather, on the balconies and turrets and garden terraces, or sitting tête-à-tête on the marble seats of the delicately-carved windows; looking out at the great grey mountains, chain upon chain, peak upon peak, circling round and enclosing the stronghold of princely courtesy in the heart of the Apennines. A place also, with its strong walls hung with tapestry and inlaid with fanciful patterns, lutes, and

books and flowers and weapons, in warm tinted wood; its many cosy irregular corners, where winter may be met and laughed at, gathered round the huge fireplaces (the large hall has no less than four) with their lovely friezes of Cupids hunting and fighting, and their caryatides of antique gods or of children laden with roses and carnations. Nay, the very existence of such a palace among these bleak heights is itself a sort of aristocratic jest, a courtly freak, as of some marvelously elegant dress of furs made to go out in the snow, and yet looking fit for a ball. Such is the palace; and the palace means Urbino, for Frederick Count of Montefeltro, first Duke of Urbino, who caused that palace to be built by Luziano Lauranna and decorated by Francesco di Giorgio at the same time—that is to say, in the middle of the fifteenth century—made the Duchy of Urbino, the town, the court, what they have remained in the history of the Renaissance, the model principality, the model town, the model court, where, amidst the Apennine wilderness and the brigand princelets of central Italy, chivalric honour lingered on from earlier times, wide and paternal despotism foreshadowed the eighteenth century, and at the same time there flourished all the glory of letters and of Art belonging specially to the Renaissance.

In this model state, and, so to speak, at this model court, lived Giovanni Santi, a man whom Duke Frederick might have looked upon with satisfaction as the highly respectable, well-to-do, intellectual, versatile artist who fitted into a duchy like his. The Santi family was one of those which have a tendency steadily to rise: the ancestors of Giovanni, small proprietors at Colbordolo, in the Apennines, gradually retrieved their possessions destroyed in the long wars between the

houses of Montefeltro and of Malatesta; his father, Sante di Peruzzuolo, made a considerable fortune as a corn merchant, and bought various pieces of land and a large house in the Contrada del Monte, one of the best streets of Urbino, and there, some thirty years later, Raphael was born. Giovanni Santi seems early to have adopted the double profession of painter and frame maker; the latter becoming more intelligible to us when we remember the beautiful partitioned tabernacle frames, Gothic like that of Gentile da Fabriano's Nativity, or classical like that of Bellini's Frari altar-piece, which were in vogue in the fifteenth century.

VERNON LEA.



House in Perugia where Raphael studied.

(To be continued.)