HAWTHORNE NATHANIEL

PASSAGES FROM THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN NOTEBOOKS, VOLUME 2

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FLORENCE (Continued)

June 8th. – I went this morning to the Uffizi gallery. The entrance is from the great court of the palace, which communicates with Lung' Arno at one end, and with the Grand Ducal Piazza at the other. The gallery is in the upper story of the palace, and in the vestibule are some busts of the princes and cardinals of the Medici family, – none of them beautiful, one or two so ugly as to be ludicrous, especially one who is all but buried in his own wig. I at first travelled slowly through the whole extent of this long, long gallery, which occupies the entire length of the palace on both sides of the court, and is full of sculpture and pictures. The latter, being opposite to the light, are not seen to the best advantage; but it is the most perfect collection, in a chronological series, that I have seen, comprehending specimens of all the masters since painting began to be an art. Here are Giotto, and Cimabue, and Botticelli, and Fra Angelico, and Filippo Lippi, and a hundred others, who have haunted me in churches and galleries ever since I have been in Italy, and who

ought to interest me a great deal more than they do. Occasionally to-day I was sensible of a certain degree of emotion in looking at an old picture; as, for example, by a large, dark, ugly picture of Christ hearing the cross and sinking beneath it, when, somehow or other, a sense of his agony, and the fearful wrong that mankind did (and does) its Redeemer, and the scorn of his enemies, and the sorrow of those who loved him, came knocking at any heart and got entrance there. Once more I deem it a pity that Protestantism should have entirely laid aside this mode of appealing to the religious sentiment.

I chiefly paid attention to the sculpture, and was interested in a long series of busts of the emperors and the members of their families, and some of the great men of Rome. There is a bust of Pompey the Great, bearing not the slightest resemblance to that vulgar and unintellectual one in the gallery of the Capitol, altogether a different cast of countenance. I could not judge whether it resembled the face of the statue, having seen the latter so imperfectly in the duskiness of the hall of the Spada Palace. These, I presume, are the busts which Mr. Powers condemns, from internal evidence, as unreliable and conventional. He may be right, – and is far more likely, of course, to be right than I am, – yet there certainly seems to be character in these marble faces, and they differ as much among themselves as the same number of living faces might. The bust of Caracalla, however, which Powers excepted from his censure, certainly does give stronger assurance of its being an individual and faithful portrait

than any other in the series. All the busts of Caracalla – of which I have seen many – give the same evidence of their truth; and I should like to know what it was in this abominable emperor that made him insist upon having his actual likeness perpetuated, with all the ugliness of its animal and moral character. I rather respect him for it, and still more the sculptor, whose hand, methinks, must have trembled as he wrought the bust. Generally these wicked old fellows, and their wicked wives and daughters, are not so hideous as we might expect. Messalina, for instance, has small and pretty features, though with rather a sensual development of the lower part of the face. The busts, it seemed to me, are usually superior as works of art to those in the Capitol, and either better preserved or more thoroughly restored. The bust of Nero might almost be called handsome here, though bearing his likeness unmistakably.

I wish some competent person would undertake to analyze and develop his character, and how and by what necessity – with all his elegant tastes, his love of the beautiful, his artist nature – he grew to be such a monster. Nero has never yet had justice done him, nor have any of the wicked emperors; not that I suppose them to have been any less monstrous than history represents them; but there must surely have been something in their position and circumstances to render the terrible moral disease which seized upon them so generally almost inevitable. A wise and profound man, tender and reverent of the human soul, and capable of appreciating it in its height and depth, has

a great field here for the exercise of his powers. It has struck me, in reading the history of the Italian republics, that many of the tyrants, who sprung up after the destruction of their liberties, resembled the worst of the Roman emperors. The subject of Nero and his brethren has often perplexed me with vain desires to come at the truth.

There were many beautiful specimens of antique, ideal sculpture all along the gallery, – Apollos, Bacchuses, Venuses, Mercurys, Fauns, – with the general character of all of which I was familiar enough to recognize them at a glance. The mystery and wonder of the gallery, however, the Venus de' Medici, I could nowhere see, and indeed was almost afraid to see it; for I somewhat apprehended the extinction of another of those lights that shine along a man's pathway, and go out in a snuff the instant he comes within eyeshot of the fulfilment of his hopes. My European experience has extinguished many such. I was pretty well contented, therefore, not to find the famous statue in the whole of my long journey from end to end of the gallery, which terminates on the opposite side of the court from that where it commences. The ceiling, by the by, through the entire length, is covered with frescos, and the floor paved with a composition of stone smooth and polished like marble. The final piece of sculpture, at the end of the gallery, is a copy of the Laocoon, considered very fine. I know not why, but it did not impress me with the sense of mighty and terrible repose – a repose growing out of the infinitude of trouble – that I had felt in the original.

Parallel with the gallery, on both sides of the palace-court, there runs a series of rooms devoted chiefly to pictures, although statues and bas-reliefs are likewise contained in some of them. I remember an unfinished bas-relief by Michael Angelo of a Holy Family, which I touched with my finger, because it seemed as if he might have been at work upon it only an hour ago. The pictures I did little more than glance at, till I had almost completed again the circuit of the gallery, through this series of parallel rooms, and then I came upon a collection of French and Dutch and Flemish masters, all of which interested me more than the Italian generally. There was a beautiful picture by Claude, almost as good as those in the British National Gallery, and very like in subject; the sun near the horizon, of course, and throwing its line of light over the ripple of water, with ships at the strand, and one or two palaces of stately architecture on the shore. Landscapes by Rembrandt; fat Graces and other plump nudities by Rubens; brass pans and earthen pots and herrings by Terriers and other Dutchmen; none by Gerard Douw, I think, but several by Mieris; all of which were like bread and beef and ale, after having been fed too long on made dishes. This is really a wonderful collection of pictures; and from first, to last – from Giotto to the men of yesterday – they are in admirable condition, and may be appreciated for all the merit that they ever possessed.

I could not quite believe that I was not to find the Venus de' Medici; and still, as I passed from one room to another, my breath rose and fell a little, with the half-hope, half-fear, that

she might stand before me. Really, I did not know that I cared so much about Venus, or any possible woman of marble. At last, when I had come from among the Dutchmen, I believe, and was looking at some works of Italian artists, chiefly Florentines, I caught a glimpse of her through the door of the next room. It is the best room of the series, octagonal in shape, and hung with red damask, and the light comes down from a row of windows, passing quite round, beneath an octagonal dome. The Venus stands somewhat aside from the centre of the room, and is surrounded by an iron railing, a pace or two from her pedestal in front, and less behind. I think she might safely be left to the reverence her womanhood would win, without any other protection. She is very beautiful, very satisfactory; and has a fresh and new charm about her unreached by any cast or copy. The line of the marble is just so much mellowed by time, as to do for her all that Gibson tries, or ought to try to do for his statues by color, softening her, warming her almost imperceptibly, making her an inmate of the heart, as well as a spiritual existence. I felt a kind of tenderness for her; an affection, not as if she were one woman, but all womanhood in one. Her modest attitude, which, before I saw her I had not liked, deeming that it might be an artificial shame, is partly what unmakes her as the heathen goddess, and softens her into woman. There is a slight degree of alarm, too, in her face; not that she really thinks anybody is looking at her, yet the idea has flitted through her mind, and startled her a little. Her face is so beautiful and intellectual, that it is not dazzled out of

sight by her form. Methinks this was a triumph for the sculptor to achieve. I may as well stop here. It is of no use to throw heaps of words upon her; for they all fall away, and leave her standing in chaste and naked grace, as untouched as when I began.

She has suffered terribly by the mishaps of her long existence in the marble. Each of her legs has been broken into two or three fragments, her arms have been severed, her body has been broken quite across at the waist, her head has been snapped off at the neck. Furthermore, there have been grievous wounds and losses of substance in various tender parts of her person. But on account of the skill with which the statue has been restored, and also because the idea is perfect and indestructible, all these injuries do not in the least impair the effect, even when you see where the dissevered fragments have been reunited. She is just as whole as when she left the hands of the sculptor. I am glad to have seen this Venus, and to have found her so tender and so chaste. On the wall of the room, and to be taken in at the same glance, is a painted Venus by Titian, reclining on a couch, naked and lustful.

The room of the Venus seems to be the treasure-place of the whole Uffizi Palace, containing more pictures by famous masters than are to be found in all the rest of the gallery. There were several by Raphael, and the room was crowded with the easels of artists. I did not look half enough at anything, but merely took a preliminary taste, as a prophecy of enjoyment to come.

As we were at dinner to-day, at half past three, there was a ring at the door, and a minute after our servant brought a card.

It was Mr. Robert Browning's, and on it was written in pencil an invitation for us to go to see them this evening. He had left the card and gone away; but very soon the bell rang again, and he had come back, having forgotten to give his address. This time he came in; and he shook hands with all of us, children and grown people, and was very vivacious and agreeable. He looked younger and even handsomer than when I saw him in London, two years ago, and his gray hairs seemed fewer than those that had then strayed into his youthful head. He talked a wonderful quantity in a little time, and told us – among other things that we should never have dreamed of – that Italian people will not cheat you, if you construe them generously, and put them upon their honor.

Mr. Browning was very kind and warm in his expressions of pleasure at seeing us; and, on our part, we were all very glad to meet him. He must be an exceedingly likable man… They are to leave Florence very soon, and are going to Normandy, I think he said, for the rest of the summer.

The Venus de' Medici has a dimple in her chin.

June 9th. – We went last evening, at eight o'clock, to see the Brownings; and, after some search and inquiry, we found the Casa Guidi, which is a palace in a street not very far from our own. It being dusk, I could not see the exterior, which, if I remember, Browning has celebrated in song; at all events, Mrs. Browning has called one of her poems "Casa Guidi Windows."

The street is a narrow one; but on entering the palace, we found a spacious staircase and ample accommodations of

vestibule and hall, the latter opening on a balcony, where we could hear the chanting of priests in a church close by. Browning told us that this was the first church where an oratorio had ever been performed. He came into the anteroom to greet us, as did his little boy, Robert, whom they call Pennini for fondness. The latter cognomen is a diminutive of Apennino, which was bestowed upon him at his first advent into the world because he was so very small, there being a statue in Florence of colossal size called Apennino. I never saw such a boy as this before; so slender, fragile, and spirit-like, – not as if he were actually in ill health, but as if he had little or nothing to do with human flesh and blood. His face is very pretty and most intelligent, and exceedingly like his mother's. He is nine years old, and seems at once less childlike and less manly than would befit that age. I should not quite like to be the father of such a boy, and should fear to stake so much interest and affection on him as he cannot fail to inspire. I wonder what is to become of him, – whether he will ever grow to be a man, – whether it is desirable that he should. His parents ought to turn their whole attention to making him robust and earthly, and to giving him a thicker scabbard to sheathe his spirit in. He was born in Florence, and prides himself on being a Florentine, and is indeed as un-English a production as if he were native of another planet.

Mrs. Browning met us at the door of the drawing-room, and greeted us most kindly, – a pale, small person, scarcely embodied at all; at any rate, only substantial enough to put forth her slender

fingers to be grasped, and to speak with a shrill, yet sweet, tenuity of voice. Really, I do not see how Mr. Browning can suppose that he has an earthly wife any more than an earthly child; both are of the elfin race, and will flit away from him some day when he least thinks of it. She is a good and kind fairy, however, and sweetly disposed towards the human race, although only remotely akin to it. It is wonderful to see how small she is, how pale her cheek, how bright and dark her eyes. There is not such another figure in the world; and her black ringlets cluster down into her neck, and make her face look the whiter by their sable profusion. I could not form any judgment about her age; it may range anywhere within the limits of human life or elfin life. When I met her in London at Lord Houghton's breakfast-table, she did not impress me so singularly; for the morning light is more prosaic than the dim illumination of their great tapestried drawing-room; and besides, sitting next to her, she did not have occasion to raise her voice in speaking, and I was not sensible what a slender voice she has. It is marvellous to me how so extraordinary, so acute, so sensitive a creature can impress us, as she does, with the certainty of her benevolence. It seems to me there were a million chances to one that she would have been a miracle of acidity and bitterness.

We were not the only guests. Mr. and Mrs. E – , Americans, recently from the East, and on intimate terms with the Brownings, arrived after us; also Miss F. H – , an English literary lady, whom I have met several times in Liverpool; and lastly came the white head and palmer-like beard of Mr. – with his daughter.

Mr. Browning was very efficient in keeping up conversation with everybody, and seemed to be in all parts of the room and in every group at the same moment; a most vivid and quick-thoughted person, logical and common-sensible, as, I presume, poets generally are in their daily talk.

Mr. – , as usual, was homely and plain of manner, with an old-fashioned dignity, nevertheless, and a remarkable deference and gentleness of tone in addressing Mrs. Browning. I doubt, however, whether he has any high appreciation either of her poetry or her husband's, and it is my impression that they care as little about his.

We had some tea and some strawberries, and passed a pleasant evening. There was no very noteworthy conversation; the most interesting topic being that disagreeable and now wearisome one of spiritual communications, as regards which Mrs. Browning is a believer, and her husband an infidel. Mr. – appeared not to have made up his mind on the matter, but told a story of a successful communication between Cooper the novelist and his sister, who had been dead fifty years. Browning and his wife had both been present at a spiritual session held by Mr. Hume, and had seen and felt the unearthly hands, one of which had placed a laurel wreath on Mrs. Browning's head. Browning, however, avowed his belief that these hands were affixed to the feet of Mr. Hume, who lay extended in his chair, with his legs stretched far under the table. The marvellousness of the fact, as I have read of it, and heard it from other eye-witnesses, melted strangely away in his hearty

gripe, and at the sharp touch of his logic; while his wife, ever and anon, put in a little gentle word of expostulation.

I am rather surprised that Browning's conversation should be so clear, and so much to the purpose at the moment, since his poetry can seldom proceed far without running into the high grass of latent meanings and obscure allusions.

Mrs. Browning's health does not permit late hours, so we began to take heave at about ten o'clock. I heard her ask Mr. – if he did not mean to revisit Europe, and heard him answer, not uncheerfully, taking hold of his white hair, "It is getting rather too late in the evening now." If any old age can be cheerful, I should think his might be; so good a man, so cool, so calm, so bright, too, we may say. His life has been like the days that end in pleasant sunsets. He has a great loss, however, or what ought to be a great loss, – soon to be encountered in the death of his wife, who, I think, can hardly live to reach America. He is not eminently an affectionate man. I take him to be one who cannot get closely home to his sorrow, nor feel it so sensibly as he gladly would; and, in consequence of that deficiency, the world lacks substance to him. It is partly the result, perhaps, of his not having sufficiently cultivated his emotional nature. His poetry shows it, and his personal intercourse, though kindly, does not stir one's blood in the least.

Little Pennini, during the evening, sometimes helped the guests to cake and strawberries; joined in the conversation, when he had anything to say, or sat down upon a couch to enjoy his own

meditations. He has long curling hair, and has not yet emerged from his frock and short hose. It is funny to think of putting him into trousers. His likeness to his mother is strange to behold.

June 10th. – My wife and I went to the Pitti Palace to-day; and first entered a court where, yesterday, she had seen a carpet of flowers, arranged for some great ceremony. It must have been a most beautiful sight, the pavement of the court being entirely covered by them, in a regular pattern of brilliant lines, so as really to be a living mosaic. This morning, however, the court had nothing but its usual stones, and the show of yesterday seemed so much the more inestimable as having been so evanescent. Around the walls of the court there were still some pieces of splendid tapestry which had made part of yesterday's magnificence. We went up the staircase, of regally broad and easy ascent, and made application to be admitted to see the grand-ducal apartments. An attendant accordingly took the keys, and ushered us first into a great hall with a vaulted ceiling, and then through a series of noble rooms, with rich frescos above and mosaic floors, hung with damask, adorned with gilded chandeliers, and glowing, in short, with more gorgeousness than I could have imagined beforehand, or can now remember. In many of the rooms were those superb antique cabinets which I admire more than any other furniture ever invented; only these were of unexampled art and glory, inlaid with precious stones, and with beautiful Florentine mosaics, both of flowers and landscapes, – each cabinet worth a lifetime's toil to make it, and the cost a

whole palace to pay for it. Many of the rooms were covered with arras, of landscapes, hunting-scenes, mythological subjects, or historical scenes, equal to pictures in truth of representation, and possessing an indescribable richness that makes them preferable as a mere adornment of princely halls and chambers. Some of the rooms, as I have said, were laid in mosaic of stone and marble, otherwise in lovely patterns of various woods; others were covered with carpets, delightful to tread upon, and glowing like the living floor of flowers which my wife saw yesterday. There were tables, too, of Florentine mosaic, the mere materials of which – lapis lazuli, malachite, pearl, and a hundred other precious things – were worth a fortune, and made a thousand times more valuable by the artistic skill of the manufacturer. I toss together brilliant words by the handful, and make a rude sort of patchwork, but can record no adequate idea of what I saw in this suite of rooms; and the taste, the subdued splendor, so that it did not shine too high, but was all tempered into an effect at once grand and soft, – this was quite as remarkable as the gorgeous material. I have seen a very dazzling effect produced in the principal cabin of an American clipper-ship quite opposed to this in taste.

After making the circuit of the grand-ducal apartments, we went into a door in the left wing of the palace, and ascended a narrow flight of stairs, – several tortuous flights indeed, – to the picture-gallery. It fills a great many stately halls, which themselves are well worth a visit for the architecture and frescos;

only these matters become commonplace after travelling through a mile or two of them. The collection of pictures – as well for their number as for the celebrity and excellence of many of them – is the most interesting that I have seen, and I do not yet feel in a condition, nor perhaps ever shall, to speak of a single one. It gladdened my very heart to find that they were not darkened out of sight, nor apparently at all injured by time, but were well kept and varnished, brilliantly framed, and, no doubt, restored by skilful touches if any of them needed it. The artists and amateurs may say what they like; for my part, I know no drearier feeling than that inspired by a ruined picture, – ruined, that is, by time, damp, or rough treatment, – and I would a thousand times rather an artist should do his best towards reviving it, than have it left in such a condition. I do not believe, however, that these pictures have been sacrilegiously interfered with; at all events, I saw in the masterpieces no touch but what seemed worthy of the master-hand.

The most beautiful picture in the world, I am convinced, is Raphael's "Madonna della Seggiola." I was familiar with it in a hundred engravings and copies, and therefore it shone upon one as with a familiar beauty, though infinitely more divine than I had ever seen it before. An artist was copying it, and producing certainly something very like a fac-simile, yet leaving out, as a matter of course, that mysterious something that renders the picture a miracle. It is my present opinion that the pictorial art is capable of something more like magic, more wonderful and

inscrutable in its methods, than poetry or any other mode of developing the beautiful. But how does this accord with what I have been saying only a minute ago? How then can the decayed picture of a great master ever be restored by the touches of an inferior hand? Doubtless it never can be restored; but let some devoted worshipper do his utmost, and the whole inherent spirit of the divine picture may pervade his restorations likewise.

I saw the "Three Fates" of Michael Angelo, which were also being copied, as were many other of the best pictures. Miss Fanny Howorth, whom I met in the gallery, told me that to copy the "Madonna della Seggiola," application must be made five years beforehand, so many are the artists who aspire to copy it. Michael Angelo's Fates are three very grim and pitiless old women, who respectively spin, hold, and cut the thread of human destiny, all in a mood of sombre gloom, but with no more sympathy than if they had nothing to do with us. I remember seeing an etching of this when I was a child, and being struck, even then, with the terrible, stern, passionless severity, neither loving us nor hating us, that characterizes these ugly old women. If they were angry, or had the least spite against human kind, it would render them the more tolerable. They are a great work, containing and representing the very idea that makes a belief in fate such a cold torture to the human soul. God give me the sure belief in his Providence!

In a year's time, with the advantage of access to this magnificent gallery, I think I might come to have some little

knowledge of pictures. At present I still know nothing; but am glad to find myself capable, at least, of loving one picture better than another. I cannot always "keep the heights I gain," however, and after admiring and being moved by a picture one day, it is within my experience to look at it the next as little moved as if it were a tavern-sign. It is pretty much the same with statuary; the same, too, with those pictured windows of the Duomo, which I described so rapturously a few days ago. I looked at them again the next morning, and thought they would have been hardly worthy of my eulogium, even had all the separate windows of the cathedral combined their narrow lights into one grand, resplendent, many-colored arch at the eastern end. It is a pity they are so narrow. England has many a great chancel-window that, though dimmer in its hues, dusty, and perhaps made up of heterogeneous fragments, eclipses these by its spacious breadth.

From the gallery, I went into the Boboli Gardens, which are contiguous to the palace; but found them too sunny for enjoyment. They seem to consist partly of a wilderness; but the portion into which I strayed was laid out with straight walks, lined with high box-hedges, along which there was only a narrow margin of shade. I saw an amphitheatre, with a wide sweep of marble seat around it, enclosing a grassy space, where, doubtless, the Medici may have witnessed splendid spectacles.

June 11th. – I paid another visit to the Uffizi gallery this morning, and found that the Venus is one of the things the charm of which does not diminish on better acquaintance. The world

has not grown weary of her in all these ages; and mortal man may look on her with new delight from infancy to old age, and keep the memory of her, I should imagine, as one of the treasures of spiritual existence hereafter. Surely, it makes me more ready to believe in the high destinies of the human race, to think that this beautiful form is but nature's plan for all womankind, and that the nearer the actual woman approaches it, the more natural she is. I do not, and cannot think of her as a senseless image, but as a being that lives to gladden the world, incapable of decay and death; as young and fair to-day as she was three thousand years ago, and still to be young and fair as long as a beautiful thought shall require physical embodiment. I wonder how any sculptor has had the impertinence to aim at any other presentation of female beauty. I mean no disrespect to Gibson or Powers, or a hundred other men who people the world with nudities, all of which are abortions as compared with her; but I think the world would be all the richer if their Venuses, their Greek Slaves, their Eves, were burnt into quicklime, leaving us only this statue as our image of the beautiful. I observed to-day that the eyes of the statue are slightly hollowed out, in a peculiar way, so as to give them a look of depth and intelligence. She is a miracle. The sculptor must have wrought religiously, and have felt that something far beyond his own skill was working through his hands. I mean to leave off speaking of the Venus hereafter, in utter despair of saying what I wish; especially as the contemplation of the statue will refine and elevate my taste,

and make it continually more difficult to express my sense of its excellence, as the perception of it grows upon one. If at any time I become less sensible of it, it will be my deterioration, not any defect in the statue.

I looked at many of the pictures, and found myself in a favorable mood for enjoying them. It seems to me that a work of art is entitled to credit for all that it makes us feel in our best moments; and we must judge of its merits by the impression it then makes, and not by the coldness and insensibility of our less genial moods.

After leaving the Uffizi Palace… I went into the Museum of Natural History, near the Pitti Palace. It is a very good collection of almost everything that Nature has made, – or exquisite copies of what she has made, – stones, shells, vegetables, insects, fishes, animals, man; the greatest wonders of the museum being some models in wax of all parts of the human frame. It is good to have the wholeness and summed-up beauty of woman in the memory, when looking at the details of her system as here displayed; for these last, to the natural eye, are by no means beautiful. But they are what belong only to our mortality. The beauty that makes them invisible is our immortal type, which we shall take away with us. Under glass cases, there were some singular and horribly truthful representations, in small wax figures, of a time of pestilence; the hasty burial, or tossing into one common sepulchre, of discolored corpses, – a very ugly piece of work, indeed. I think Murray says that these things were made for the

Grand Duke Cosmo; and if so, they do him no credit, indicating something dark and morbid in his character.

June 13th. – We called at the Powers's yesterday morning to leave R – there for an hour or two to play with the children; and it being not yet quite time for the Pitti Palace, we stopped into the studio. Soon Mr. Powers made his appearance, in his dressing-gown and slippers and sculptor's cap, smoking a cigar… He was very cordial and pleasant, as I have always found him, and began immediately to be communicative about his own works, or any other subject that came up. There were two casts of the Venus de' Medici in the rooms, which he said were valuable in a commercial point of view, being genuine casts from the mould taken from the statue. He then gave us a quite unexpected but most interesting lecture on the Venus, demonstrating it, as he proceeded, by reference to the points which he criticised. The figure, he seemed to allow, was admirable, though I think he hardly classes it so high as his own Greek Slave or Eva; but the face, he began with saying, was that of an idiot. Then, leaning on the pedestal of the cast, he continued, "It is rather a bold thing to say, isn't it, that the sculptor of the Venus de' Medici did not know what he was about?"

Truly, it appeared to me so; but Powers went on remorselessly, and showed, in the first place, that the eye was not like any eye that Nature ever made; and, indeed, being examined closely, and abstracted from the rest of the face, it has a very queer look, – less like a human eye than a half-worn buttonhole!

Then he attacked the ear, which, he affirmed and demonstrated, was placed a good deal too low on the head, thereby giving an artificial and monstrous height to the portion of the head above it. The forehead met with no better treatment in his hands, and as to the mouth, it was altogether wrong, as well in its general make as in such niceties as the junction of the skin of the lips to the common skin around them. In a word, the poor face was battered all to pieces and utterly demolished; nor was it possible to doubt or question that it fell by its own demerits. All that could be urged in its defence – and even that I did not urge – being that this very face had affected me, only the day before, with a sense of higher beauty and intelligence than I had ever then received from sculpture, and that its expression seemed to accord with that of the whole figure, as if it were the sweetest note of the same music. There must be something in this; the sculptor disregarded technicalities, and the imitation of actual nature, the better to produce the effect which he really does produce, in somewhat the same way as a painter works his magical illusions by touches that have no relation to the truth if looked at from the wrong point of view. But Powers considers it certain that the antique sculptor had bestowed all his care on the study of the human figure, and really did not know how to make a face. I myself used to think that the face was a much less important thing with the Greeks, among whom the entire beauty of the form was familiarly seen, than with ourselves, who allow no other nudity.

After annihilating the poor visage, Powers showed us his two

busts of Proserpine and Psyche, and continued his lecture by showing the truth to nature with which these are modelled. I freely acknowledge the fact; there is no sort of comparison to be made between the beauty, intelligence, feeling, and accuracy of representation in these two faces and in that of the Venus de' Medici. A light – the light of a soul proper to each individual character – seems to shine from the interior of the marble, and beam forth from the features, chiefly from the eyes. Still insisting upon the eye, and hitting the poor Venus another and another and still another blow on that unhappy feature, Mr. Powers turned up and turned inward and turned outward his own Titanic orb, – the biggest, by far, that ever I saw in mortal head, – and made us see and confess that there was nothing right in the Venus and everything right in Psyche and Proserpine. To say the truth, their marble eyes have life, and, placing yourself in the proper position towards them, you can meet their glances, and feel them mingle with your own. Powers is a great man, and also a tender and delicate one, massive and rude of surface as he looks; and it is rather absurd to feel how he impressed his auditor, for the time being, with his own evident idea that nobody else is worthy to touch marble. Mr. B – told me that Powers has had many difficulties on professional grounds, as I understood him, and with his brother artists. No wonder! He has said enough in my hearing to put him at swords' points with sculptors of every epoch and every degree between the two inclusive extremes of Phidias and Clark Mills.

He has a bust of the reigning Grand Duchess of Tuscany, who sat to him for it. The bust is that of a noble-looking lady; and Powers remarked that royal personages have a certain look that distinguishes them from other people, and is seen in individuals of no lower rank. They all have it; the Queen of England and Prince Albert have it; and so likewise has every other Royalty, although the possession of this kingly look implies nothing whatever as respects kingly and commanding qualities. He said that none of our public men, whatever authority they may have held, or for whatever length of time, possess this look, but he added afterwards that Washington had it. Commanders of armies sometimes have it, but not in the degree that royal personages do. It is, as well as I could make out Powers's idea, a certain coldness of demeanor, and especially of eye, that surrounds them with an atmosphere through which the electricity of human brotherhood cannot pass. From their youth upward they are taught to feel themselves apart from the rest of mankind, and this manner becomes a second nature to them in consequence, and as a safeguard to their conventional dignity. They put themselves under glass, as it were (the illustration is my own), so that, though you see them, and see them looking no more noble and dignified than other mortals, nor so much so as many, still they keep themselves within a sort of sanctity, and repel you by an invisible barrier. Even if they invite you with a show of warmth and hospitality, you cannot get through. I, too, recognize this look in the portraits of Washington; in him, a mild, benevolent coldness

and apartness, but indicating that formality which seems to have been deeper in him than in any other mortal, and which built up an actual fortification between himself and human sympathy. I wish, for once, Washington could come out of his envelopment and show us what his real dimensions were.

Among other models of statues heretofore made, Powers showed us one of Melancholy, or rather of Contemplation, from Milton's "Penseroso"; a female figure with uplifted face and rapt look, "communing with the skies." It is very fine, and goes deeply into Milton's thought; but, as far as the outward form and action are concerned, I remember seeing a rude engraving in my childhood that probably suggested the idea. It was prefixed to a cheap American edition of Milton's poems, and was probably as familiar to Powers as to myself. It is very remarkable how difficult it seems to be to strike out a new attitude in sculpture; a new group, or a new single figure.

One piece of sculpture Powers exhibited, however, which was very exquisite, and such as I never saw before. Opening a desk, he took out something carefully enclosed between two layers of cotton-wool, on removing which there appeared a little baby's hand most delicately represented in the whitest marble; all the dimples where the knuckles were to be, all the creases in the plump flesh, every infantine wrinkle of the soft skin being lovingly recorded. "The critics condemn minute representation," said Powers; "but you may look at this through a microscope and see if it injures the general effect." Nature herself never made

a prettier or truer little hand. It was the hand of his daughter, – "Luly's hand," Powers called it, – the same that gave my own such a frank and friendly grasp when I first met "Luly." The sculptor made it only for himself and his wife, but so many people, he said, had insisted on having a copy, that there are now forty scattered about the world. At sixty years, Luly ought to have her hand sculptured again, and give it to her grandchildren with the baby's hand of five months old. The baby-hand that had done nothing, and felt only its mother's kiss; the old lady's hand that had exchanged the love-pressure, worn the marriage-ring, closed dead eyes, – done a lifetime's work, in short. The sentiment is rather obvious, but true nevertheless.

Before we went away, Powers took us into a room apart – apparently the secretest room he had – and showed us some tools and machinery, all of his own contrivance and invention. "You see I am a bit of a Yankee," he observed.

This machinery is chiefly to facilitate the process of modelling his works, for – except in portrait-busts – he makes no clay model as other sculptors do, but models directly in the plaster; so that instead of being crumbled, like clay, the original model remains a permanent possession. He has also invented a certain open file, which is of great use in finishing the surface of the marble; and likewise a machine for making these files and for punching holes through iron, and he demonstrated its efficiency by punching a hole through an iron bar, with a force equivalent to ten thousand pounds, by the mere application of a part of his own weight.

These inventions, he says, are his amusement, and the bent of his nature towards sculpture must indeed have been strong, to counteract, in an American, such a capacity for the contrivance of steam-engines..

I had no idea of filling so many pages of this journal with the sayings and characteristics of Mr. Powers, but the man and his talk are fresh, original, and full of bone and muscle, and I enjoy him much.

We now proceeded to the Pitti Palace, and spent several hours pleasantly in its saloons of pictures. I never enjoyed pictures anywhere else as I do in Florence. There is an admirable Judith in this gallery by Allori; a face of great beauty and depth, and her hand clutches the head of Holofernes by the hair in a way that startles the spectator. There are two peasant Madonnas by Murillo; simple women, yet with a thoughtful sense of some high mystery connected with the baby in their arms.

Raphael grows upon me; several other famous painters – Guido, for instance – are fading out of my mind. Salvator Rosa has two really wonderful landscapes, looking from the shore seaward; and Rubens too, likewise on a large scale, of mountain and plain. It is very idle and foolish to talk of pictures; yet, after poring over them and into them, it seems a pity to let all the thought excited by them pass into nothingness.

The copyists of pictures are very numerous, both in the Pitti and Uffizi galleries; and, unlike sculptors, they appear to be on the best of terms with one another, chatting sociably, exchanging

friendly criticism, and giving their opinions as to the best mode of attaining the desired effects. Perhaps, as mere copyists, they escape the jealousy that might spring up between rival painters attempting to develop original ideas. Miss Howorth says that the business of copying pictures, especially those of Raphael, is a regular profession, and she thinks it exceedingly obstructive to the progress or existence of a modern school of painting, there being a regular demand and sure sale for all copies of the old masters, at prices proportioned to their merit; whereas the effort to be original insures nothing, except long neglect, at the beginning of a career, and probably ultimate failure, and the necessity of becoming a copyist at last. Some artists employ themselves from youth to age in nothing else but the copying of one single and selfsame picture by Raphael, and grow at last to be perfectly mechanical, making, I suppose, the same identical stroke of the brush in fifty successive pictures.

The weather is very hot now, – hotter in the sunshine, I think, than a midsummer day usually is in America, but with rather a greater possibility of being comfortable in the shade. The nights, too, are warm, and the bats fly forth at dusk, and the fireflies quite light up the green depths of our little garden. The atmosphere, or something else, causes a sort of alacrity in my mind and an affluence of ideas, such as they are; but it does not thereby make me the happier. I feel an impulse to be at work, but am kept idle by the sense of being unsettled with removals to be gone through, over and over again, before I can shut myself into

a quiet room of my own, and turn the key. I need monotony too, an eventless exterior life, before I can live in the world within.

June 15th. – Yesterday we went to the Uffizi gallery, and, of course, I took the opportunity to look again at the Venus de' Medici after Powers's attack upon her face. Some of the defects he attributed to her I could not see in the statue; for instance, the ear appeared to be in accordance with his own rule, the lowest part of it being about in a straight line with the upper lip. The eyes must be given up, as not, when closely viewed, having the shape, the curve outwards, the formation of the lids, that eyes ought to have; but still, at a proper distance, they seemed to have intelligence in them beneath the shadow cast by the brow. I cannot help thinking that the sculptor intentionally made every feature what it is, and calculated them all with a view to the desired effect. Whatever rules may be transgressed, it is a noble and beautiful face, – more so, perhaps, than if all rules had been obeyed. I wish Powers would do his best to fit the Venus's figure (which he does not deny to be admirable) with a face which he would deem equally admirable and in accordance with the sentiment of the form.

We looked pretty thoroughly through the gallery, and I saw many pictures that impressed me; but among such a multitude, with only one poor mind to take note of them, the stamp of each new impression helps to obliterate a former one. I am sensible, however, that a process is going on, and has been ever since I came to Italy, that puts me in a state to see pictures with

less toil, and more pleasure, and makes me more fastidious, yet more sensible of beauty where I saw none before. It is the sign, I presume, of a taste still very defective, that I take singular pleasure in the elaborate imitations of Van Mieris, Gerard Douw, and other old Dutch wizards, who painted such brass pots that you can see your face in them, and such earthen pots that they will surely hold water; and who spent weeks and months in turning a foot or two of canvas into a perfect microscopic illusion of some homely scene. For my part, I wish Raphael had painted the "Transfiguration" in this style, at the same time preserving his breadth and grandeur of design; nor do I believe that there is any real impediment to the combination of the two styles, except that no possible space of human life could suffice to cover a quarter part of the canvas of the "Transfiguration" with such touches as Gerard Douw's. But one feels the vast scope of this wonderful art, when we think of two excellences so far apart as that of this last painter and Raphael. I pause a good while, too, before the Dutch paintings of fruit and flowers, where tulips and roses acquire an immortal bloom, and grapes have kept the freshest juice in them for two or three hundred years. Often, in these pictures, there is a bird's-nest, every straw perfectly represented, and the stray feather, or the down that the mother-bird plucked from her bosom, with the three or four small speckled eggs, that seem as if they might be yet warm. These pretty miracles have their use in assuring us that painters really can do something that takes hold of us in our most matter-of-fact moods; whereas, the

merits of the grander style of art may be beyond our ordinary appreciation, and leave us in doubt whether we have not befooled ourselves with a false admiration.

Until we learn to appreciate the cherubs and angels that Raphael scatters through the blessed air, in a picture of the "Nativity," it is not amiss to look at, a Dutch fly settling on a peach, or a bumblebee burying himself in a flower.

It is another token of imperfect taste, no doubt, that queer pictures and absurd pictures remain in my memory, when better ones pass away by the score. There is a picture of Venus, combing her son Cupid's head with a small-tooth comb, and looking with maternal care among his curls; this I shall not forget. Likewise, a picture of a broad, rubicund Judith by Bardone, – a widow of fifty, of an easy, lymphatic, cheerful temperament, who has just killed Holofernes, and is as self-complacent as if she had been carving a goose. What could possibly have stirred up this pudding of a woman (unless it were a pudding-stick) to do such a deed! I looked with much pleasure at an ugly, old, fat, jolly Bacchus, astride on a barrel, by Rubens; the most natural and lifelike representation of a tipsy rotundity of flesh that it is possible to imagine. And sometimes, amid these sensual images, I caught the divine pensiveness of a Madonna's face, by Raphael, or the glory and majesty of the babe Jesus in her arm, with his Father shining through him. This is a sort of revelation, whenever it comes.

This morning, immediately after breakfast, I walked into the city, meaning to make myself better acquainted with its

appearance, and to go into its various churches; but it soon grew so hot, that I turned homeward again. The interior of the Duomo was deliciously cool, to be sure, – cool and dim, after the white-hot sunshine; but an old woman began to persecute me, so that I came away. A male beggar drove me out of another church; and I took refuge in the street, where the beggar and I would have been two cinders together, if we had stood long enough on the sunny sidewalk. After my five summers' experience of England, I may have forgotten what hot weather is; but it does appear to me that an American summer is not so fervent as this. Besides the direct rays, the white pavement throws a furnace-heat up into one's face; the shady margin of the street is barely tolerable; but it is like going through the ordeal of fire to cross the broad bright glare of an open piazza. The narrow streets prove themselves a blessing at this season, except when the sun looks directly into them; the broad eaves of the houses, too, make a selvage of shade, almost always. I do not know what becomes of the street-merchants at the noontide of these hot days. They form a numerous class in Florence, displaying their wares – linen or cotton cloth, threads, combs, and all manner of haberdashery – on movable counters that are borne about on wheels. In the shady morning, you see a whole side of a street in a piazza occupied by them, all offering their merchandise at full cry. They dodge as they can from shade to shade; but at last the sunshine floods the whole space, and they seem to have melted away, leaving not a rag of themselves or what they dealt in.

Cherries are very abundant now, and have been so ever since we came here, in the markets and all about the streets. They are of various kinds, some exceedingly large, insomuch that it is almost necessary to disregard the old proverb about making two bites of a cherry. Fresh figs are already spoken of, though I have seen none; but I saw some peaches this morning, looking as if they might be ripe.

June 16th. – Mr. and Mrs. Powers called to see us last evening. Mr. Powers, as usual, was full of talk, and gave utterance to a good many instructive and entertaining ideas.

As one instance of the little influence the religion of the Italians has upon their morals, he told a story of one of his servants, who desired leave to set up a small shrine of the Virgin in their room – a cheap print, or bas-relief, or image, such as are sold everywhere at the shops – and to burn a lamp before it; she engaging, of course, to supply the oil at her own expense. By and by, her oil-flask appeared to possess a miraculous property of replenishing itself, and Mr. Powers took measures to ascertain where the oil came from. It turned out that the servant had all the time been stealing the oil from them, and keeping up her daily sacrifice and worship to the Virgin by this constant theft.

His talk soon turned upon sculpture, and he spoke once more of the difficulty imposed upon an artist by the necessity of clothing portrait statues in the modern costume. I find that he does not approve either of nudity or of the Roman toga for a modern statue; neither does he think it right to shirk the difficulty

– as Chantrey did in the case of Washington – by enveloping him in a cloak; but acknowledges the propriety of taking the actual costume of the age and doing his best with it. He himself did so with his own Washington, and also with a statue that he made of Daniel Webster. I suggested that though this costume might not appear ridiculous to us now, yet, two or three centuries hence, it would create, to the people of that day, an impossibility of seeing the real man through the absurdity of his envelopment, after it shall have entirely grown out of fashion and remembrance; and Webster would seem as absurd to them then as he would to us now in the masquerade of some bygone day. It might be well, therefore, to adopt some conventional costume, never actual, but always graceful and noble. Besides, Webster, for example, had other costumes than that which he wore in public, and perhaps it was in those that he lived his most real life; his dressing-gown, his drapery of the night, the dress that he wore on his fishing-excursions; in these other costumes he spent three fourths of his time, and most probably was thus arrayed when he conceived the great thoughts that afterwards, in some formal and outside mood, he gave forth to the public. I scarcely think I was right, but am not sure of the contrary. At any rate, I know that I should have felt much more sure that I knew the real Webster, if I had seen him in any of the above-mentioned dresses, than either in his swallow-tailed coat or frock.

Talking of a taste for painting and sculpture, Powers observed that it was something very different and quite apart from the

moral sense, and that it was often, perhaps generally, possessed by unprincipled men of ability and cultivation. I have had this perception myself. A genuine love of painting and sculpture, and perhaps of music, seems often to have distinguished men capable of every social crime, and to have formed a fine and hard enamel over their characters. Perhaps it is because such tastes are artificial, the product of cultivation, and, when highly developed, imply a great remove from natural simplicity.

This morning I went with U – to the Uffizi gallery, and again looked with more or less attention at almost every picture and statue. I saw a little picture of the golden age, by Zucchero, in which the charms of youths and virgins are depicted with a freedom that this iron age can hardly bear to look at. The cabinet of gems happened to be open for the admission of a privileged party, and we likewise went in and saw a brilliant collection of goldsmiths' work, among which, no doubt, were specimens from such hands as Benvenuto Cellini. Little busts with diamond eyes; boxes of gems; cups carved out of precious material; crystal vases, beautifully chased and engraved, and sparkling with jewels; great pearls, in the midst of rubies; opals, rich with all manner of lovely lights. I remember Benvenuto Cellini, in his memoirs, speaks of manufacturing such playthings as these.

I observed another characteristic of the summer streets of Florence to-day; tables, movable to and fro, on wheels, and set out with cool iced drinks and cordials.

June 17th. – My wife and I went, this morning, to the Academy of Fine Arts, and, on our way thither, went into the Duomo, where we found a deliciously cool twilight, through which shone the mild gleam of the painted windows. I cannot but think it a pity that St. Peter's is not lighted by such windows as these, although I by no means saw the glory in them now that I have spoken of in a record of my former visit. We found out the monument of Giotto, a tablet, and portrait in bas-relief, on the wall, near the entrance of the cathedral, on the right hand; also a representation, in fresco, of a knight on horseback, the memorial of one John Rawkwood, close by the door, to the left. The priests were chanting a service of some kind or other in the choir, terribly inharmonious, and out of tune..

On reaching the Academy, the soldier or policeman at the entrance directed us into the large hall, the walls of which were covered on both sides with pictures, arranged as nearly as possible in a progressive series, with reference to the date of the painters; so that here the origin and procession of the art may be traced through the course of, at least, two hundred years. Giotto, Cimabue, and others of unfamiliar names to me, are among the earliest; and, except as curiosities, I should never desire to look once at them, nor think of looking twice. They seem to have been executed with great care and conscientiousness, and the heads are often wrought out with minuteness and fidelity, and have so much expression that they tell their own story clearly enough; but it seems not to have been the painter's aim to

effect a lifelike illusion, the background and accessories being conventional. The trees are no more like real trees than the feather of a pen, and there is no perspective, the figure of the picture being shadowed forth on a surface of burnished gold. The effect, when these pictures, some of them very large, were new and freshly gilded, must have been exceedingly brilliant, and much resembling, on an immensely larger scale, the rich illuminations in an old monkish missal. In fact, we have not now, in pictorial ornament, anything at all comparable to what their splendor must have been. I was most struck with a picture, by Fabriana Gentile, of the Adoration of the Magi, where the faces and figures have a great deal of life and action, and even grace, and where the jewelled crowns, the rich embroidered robes, and cloth of gold, and all the magnificence of the three kings, are represented with the vividness of the real thing: a gold sword-hilt, for instance, or a pair of gold spurs, being actually embossed on the picture. The effect is very powerful, and though produced in what modern painters would pronounce an unjustifiable way, there is yet pictorial art enough to reconcile it to the spectator's mind. Certainly, the people of the Middle Ages knew better than ourselves what is magnificence, and how to produce it; and what a glorious work must that have been, both in its mere sheen of burnished gold, and in its illuminating art, which shines thus through the gloom of perhaps four centuries.

Fra Angelico is a man much admired by those who have a taste for Pre-Raphaelite painters; and, though I take little or

no pleasure in his works, I can see that there is great delicacy of execution in his heads, and that generally he produces such a Christ, and such a Virgin, and such saints, as he could not have foreseen, except in a pure and holy imagination, nor have wrought out without saying a prayer between every two touches of his brush. I might come to like him, in time, if I thought it worth while; but it is enough to have an outside perception of his kind and degree of merit, and so to let him pass into the garret of oblivion, where many things as good, or better, are piled away, that our own age may not stumble over them. Perugino is the first painter whose works seem really worth preserving for the genuine merit that is in them, apart from any quaintness and curiosity of an ancient and new-born art. Probably his religion was more genuine than Raphael's, and therefore the Virgin often revealed herself to him in a loftier and sweeter face of divine womanhood than all the genius of Raphael could produce. There is a Crucifixion by him in this gallery, which made me partly feel as if I were a far-off spectator, – no, I did not mean a Crucifixion, but a picture of Christ dead, lying, with a calm, sweet face, on his mother's knees ["a Pieta"].

The most inadequate and utterly absurd picture here, or in any other gallery, is a head of the Eternal Father, by Carlo Dolce; it looks like a feeble saint, on the eve of martyrdom, and very doubtful how he shall be able to bear it; very finely and prettily painted, nevertheless.

After getting through the principal gallery we went into

a smaller room, in which are contained a great many small specimens of the old Tuscan artists, among whom Fra Angelico makes the principal figure. These pictures are all on wood, and seem to have been taken from the shrines and altars of ancient churches; they are predellas and triptychs, or pictures on three folding tablets, shaped quaintly, in Gothic peaks or arches, and still gleaming with backgrounds of antique gold. The wood is much worm-eaten, and the colors have often faded or changed from what the old artists meant then to be; a bright angel darkening into what looks quite as much like the Devil. In one of Fra Angelico's pictures, – a representation of the Last Judgment, – he has tried his saintly hand at making devils indeed, and showing them busily at work, tormenting the poor, damned souls in fifty ghastly ways. Above sits Jesus, with the throng of blessed saints around him, and a flow of tender and powerful love in his own face, that ought to suffice to redeem all the damned, and convert the very fiends, and quench the fires of hell. At any rate, Fra Angelico had a higher conception of his Saviour than Michael Angelo.

June 19th. – This forenoon we have been to the Church of St. Lorenzo, which stands on the site of an ancient basilica, and was itself built more than four centuries ago. The facade is still an ugly height of rough brickwork, as is the case with the Duomo, and, I think, some other churches in Florence; the design of giving them an elaborate and beautiful finish having been delayed from cycle to cycle, till at length the day for spending mines

of wealth on churches is gone by. The interior had a nave with a flat roof, divided from the side aisles by Corinthian pillars, and, at the farther end, a raised space around the high altar. The pavement is a mosaic of squares of black and white marble, the squares meeting one another cornerwise; the pillars, pilasters, and other architectural material is dark brown or grayish stone; and the general effect is very sombre, especially as the church is somewhat dimly lighted, and as the shrines along the aisles, and the statues, and the monuments of whatever kind, look dingy with time and neglect. The nave is thickly set with wooden seats, brown and worn. What pictures there are, in the shrines and chapels, are dark and faded. On the whole, the edifice has a shabby aspect. On each side of the high altar, elevated on four pillars of beautiful marble, is what looks like a great sarcophagus of bronze. They are, in fact, pulpits, and are ornamented with mediaeval bas-reliefs, representing scenes in the life of our Saviour. Murray says that the resting-place of the first Cosmo de' Medici, the old banker, who so managed his wealth as to get the posthumous title of "father of his country," and to make his posterity its reigning princes, – is in front of the high altar, marked by red and green porphyry and marble, inlaid into the pavement. We looked, but could not see it there.

There were worshippers at some of the shrines, and persons sitting here and there along the nave, and in the aisles, rapt in devotional thought, doubtless, and sheltering themselves here from the white sunshine of the piazzas. In the vicinity of the choir

and the high altar, workmen were busy repairing the church, or perhaps only making arrangements for celebrating the great festival of St. John.

On the left hand of the choir is what is called the old sacristy, with the peculiarities or notabilities of which I am not acquainted. On the right hand is the new sacristy, otherwise called the Capella dei Depositi, or Chapel of the Buried, built by Michael Angelo, to contain two monuments of the Medici family. The interior is of somewhat severe and classic architecture, the walls and pilasters being of dark stone, and surmounted by a dome, beneath which is a row of windows, quite round the building, throwing their light down far beneath, upon niches of white marble. These niches are ranged entirely around the chapel, and might have sufficed to contain more than all the Medici monuments that the world would ever care to have. Only two of these niches are filled, however. In one of them sits Giuliano de' Medici, sculptured by Michael Angelo, – a figure of dignity, which would perhaps be very striking in any other presence than that of the statue which occupies the corresponding niche. At the feet of Giuliano recline two allegorical statues, Day and Night, whose meaning there I do not know, and perhaps Michael Angelo knew as little. As the great sculptor's statues are apt to do, they fling their limbs abroad with adventurous freedom. Below the corresponding niche, on the opposite side of the chapel, recline two similar statues, representing Morning and Evening, sufficiently like Day and

Night to be their brother and sister; all, in truth, having sprung from the same father..

But the statue that sits above these two latter allegories, Morning and Evening, is like no other that ever came from a sculptor's hand. It is the one work worthy of Michael Angelo's reputation, and grand enough to vindicate for him all the genius that the world gave him credit for. And yet it seems a simple thing enough to think of or to execute; merely a sitting figure, the face partly overshadowed by a helmet, one hand supporting the chin, the other resting on the thigh. But after looking at it a little while the spectator ceases to think of it as a marble statue; it comes to life, and you see that the princely figure is brooding over some great design, which, when he has arranged in his own mind, the world will be fain to execute for him. No such grandeur and majesty has elsewhere been put into human shape. It is all a miracle; the deep repose, and the deep life within it. It is as much a miracle to have achieved this as to make a statue that would rise up and walk. The face, when one gazes earnestly into it, beneath the shadow of its helmet, is seen to be calmly sombre; a mood which, I think, is generally that of the rulers of mankind, except in moments of vivid action. This statue is one of the things which I look at with highest enjoyment, but also with grief and impatience, because I feel that I do not come at all which it involves, and that by and by I must go away and leave it forever. How wonderful! To take a block of marble, and convert it wholly into thought, and to do it through all the obstructions

and impediments of drapery; for there is nothing nude in this statue but the face and hands. The vest is the costume of Michael Angelo's century. This is what I always thought a sculptor of true genius should be able to do, – to show the man of whatever epoch, nobly and heroically, through the costume which he might actually have worn.

The statue sits within a square niche of white marble, and completely fills it. It seems to me a pity that it should be thus confined. At the Crystal Palace, if I remember, the effect is improved by a free surrounding space. Its naturalness is as if it came out of the marble of its own accord, with all its grandeur hanging heavily about it, and sat down there beneath its weight. I cannot describe it. It is like trying to stop the ghost of Hamlet's father, by crossing spears before it.

Communicating with the sacristy is the Medicean Chapel, which was built more than two centuries ago, for the reception of the Holy Sepulchre; arrangements having been made about that time to steal this most sacred relic from the Turks. The design failing, the chapel was converted by Cosmo II. into a place of sepulture for the princes of his family. It is a very grand and solemn edifice, octagonal in shape, with a lofty dome, within which is a series of brilliant frescos, painted not more than thirty years ago. These pictures are the only portion of the adornment of the chapel which interferes with the sombre beauty of the general effect; for though the walls are incrusted, from pavement to dome, with marbles of inestimable cost, and it is a Florentine

mosaic on a grander scale than was ever executed elsewhere, the result is not gaudy, as in many of the Roman chapels, but a dark and melancholy richness. The architecture strikes me as extremely fine; each alternate side of the octagon being an arch, rising as high as the cornice of the lofty dome, and forming the frame of a vast niche. All the dead princes, no doubt, according to the general design, were to have been honored with statues within this stately mausoleum; but only two – those of Ferdinand I. and Cosmo II. – seem to have been placed here. They were a bad breed, and few of them deserved any better monument than a dunghill; and yet they have this grand chapel for the family at large, and yonder grand statue for one of its most worthless members. I am glad of it; and as for the statue, Michael Angelo wrought it through the efficacy of a kingly idea, which had no reference to the individual whose name it bears.

In the piazza adjoining the church is a statue of the first Cosmo, the old banker, in Roman costume, seated, and looking like a man fit to hold authority. No, I mistake; the statue is of John de' Medici, the father of Cosmo, and himself no banker, but a soldier.

June 21st. – Yesterday, after dinner, we went, with the two eldest children, to the Boboli Gardens… We entered by a gate, nearer to our house than that by the Pitti Palace, and found ourselves almost immediately among embowered walks of box and shrubbery, and little wildernesses of trees, with here and there a seat under an arbor, and a marble statue, gray with

ancient weather-stains. The site of the garden is a very uneven surface, and the paths go upward and downward, and ascend, at their ultimate point, to a base of what appears to be a fortress, commanding the city. A good many of the Florentines were rambling about the gardens, like ourselves: little parties of school-boys; fathers and mothers, with their youthful progeny; young men in couples, looking closely into every female face; lovers, with a maid or two attendant on the young lady. All appeared to enjoy themselves, especially the children, dancing on the esplanades, or rolling down the slopes of the hills; and the loving pairs, whom it was rather embarrassing to come upon unexpectedly, sitting together on the stone seat of an arbor, with clasped hands, a passionate solemnity in the young man's face, and a downcast pleasure in the lady's. Policemen, in cocked hats and epaulets, cross-belts, and swords, were scattered about the grounds, but interfered with nobody, though they seemed to keep an eye on all. A sentinel stood in the hot sunshine, looking down over the garden from the ramparts of the fortress.

For my part, in this foreign country, I have no objection to policemen or any other minister of authority; though I remember, in America, I had an innate antipathy to constables, and always sided with the mob against law. This was very wrong and foolish, considering that I was one of the sovereigns; but a sovereign, or any number of sovereigns, or the twenty-millionth part of a sovereign, does not love to find himself, as an American must, included within the delegated authority of his own servants.

There is a sheet of water somewhere in the Boboli Gardens, inhabited by swans; but this we did not see. We found a smaller pond, however, set in marble, and surrounded by a parapet, and alive with a multitude of fish. There were minnows by the thousand, and a good many gold-fish; and J – , who had brought some bread to feed the swans, threw in handfuls of crumbs for the benefit of these finny people. They seemed to be accustomed to such courtesies on the part of visitors; and immediately the surface of the water was blackened, at the spot where each crumb fell, with shoals of minnows, thrusting one another even above the surface in their eagerness to snatch it. Within the depths of the pond, the yellowish-green water – its hue being precisely that of the Arno – would be reddened duskily with the larger bulk of two or three gold-fishes, who finally poked their great snouts up among the minnows, but generally missed the crumb. Beneath the circular margin of the pond, there are little arches, into the shelter of which the fish retire, when the noonday sun burns straight down into their dark waters. We went on through the garden-paths, shadowed quite across by the high walls of box, and reached an esplanade, whence we had a good view of Florence, with the bare brown ridges on the northern side of the Arno, and glimpses of the river itself, flowing like a street, between two rows of palaces. A great way off, too, we saw some of the cloud-like peaks of the Apennines, and, above them, the clouds into which the sun was descending, looking quite as substantial as the distant mountains. The city did not present a

particularly splendid aspect, though its great Duomo was seen in the middle distance, sitting in its circle of little domes, with the tall campanile close by, and within one or two hundred yards of it, the high, cumbrous bulk of the Palazzo Vecchio, with its lofty, machicolated, and battlemented tower, very picturesque, yet looking exceedingly like a martin-box, on a pole. There were other domes and towers and spires, and here and there the distinct shape of an edifice; but the general picture was of a contiguity of red earthen roofs, filling a not very broad or extensive valley, among dry and ridgy hills, with a river-gleam lightening up the landscape a little. U – took out her pencil and tablets, and began to sketch the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio; in doing which, she immediately became an object of curiosity to some little boys and larger people, who failed not, under such pretences as taking a grasshopper off her dress, or no pretence at all, to come and look over her shoulder. There is a kind of familiarity among these Florentines, which is not meant to be discourteous, and ought to be taken in good part.

We continued to ramble through the gardens, in quest of a good spot from which to see the sunset, and at length found a stone bench, on the slope of a hill, whence the entire cloud and sun scenery was fully presented to us. At the foot of the hill were statues, and among them a Pegasus, with wings outspread; and, a little beyond, the garden-front of the Pitti Palace, which looks a little less like a state-prison here, than as it fronts the street. Girls and children, and young men and old, were taking their

pleasure in our neighborhood; and, just before us, a lady stood talking with her maid. By and by, we discovered her to be Miss Howorth. There was a misty light, streaming down on the hither side of the ridge of hills, that was rather peculiar; but the most remarkable thing was the shape into which the clouds gathered themselves, after the disappearance of the sun. It was like a tree, with a broad and heavy mass of foliage, spreading high upward on the sky, and a dark and well-defined trunk, which rooted itself on the verge of the horizon.

This morning we went to the Pitti Palace. The air was very sultry, and the pavements, already heated with the sun, made the space between the buildings seem like a close room. The earth, I think, is too much stoned out of the streets of an Italian city, – paved, like those of Florence, quite across, with broad flagstones, to the line where the stones of the houses on each side are piled up. Thunder rumbled over our heads, however, and the clouds were so dark that we scarcely hoped to reach the palace without feeling the first drops of the shower. The air still darkened and darkened, so that by the time we arrived at the suite of picture-rooms the pictures seemed all to be changed to Rembrandts; the shadows as black as midnight, with only some highly illuminated portions gleaming out. The obscurity of the atmosphere made us sensible how splendid is the adornment of these saloons. For the gilded cornices shone out, as did the gilding of the arches and wreathed circles that divide the ceiling into compartments, within which the frescos are painted, and whence

the figures looked dimly down, like gods out of a mysterious sky. The white marble sculptures also gleamed from their height, where winged cupids or cherubs gambolled aloft in bas-reliefs; or allegoric shapes reclined along the cornices, hardly noticed, when the daylight comes brightly into the window. On the walls, all the rich picture-frames glimmered in gold, as did the framework of the chairs, and the heavy gilded pedestals of the marble, alabaster, and mosaic tables. These are very magnificent saloons; and since I have begun to speak of their splendor, I may as well add that the doors are framed in polished, richly veined marble, and the walls hung with scarlet damask.

It was useless to try to see the pictures. All the artists engaged in copying laid aside their brushes; and we looked out into the square before the palace, where a mighty wind sprang up, and quickly raised a prodigious cloud of dust. It hid the opposite side of the street, and was carried, in a great dusky whirl, higher than the roofs of the houses, higher than the top of the Pitti Palace itself. The thunder muttered and grumbled, the lightning now and then flashed, and a few rain-drops pattered against the windows; but, for a long time, the shower held off. At last it came down in a stream, and lightened the air to such a degree that we could see some of the pictures, especially those of Rubens, and the illuminated parts of Salvator Rosa's, and, best of all, Titian's "Magdalen," the one with golden hair clustering round her naked body. The golden hair, indeed, seemed to throw out a glory of its own. This Magdalen is very coarse and sensual,

with only an impudent assumption of penitence and religious sentiment, scarcely so deep as the eyelids; but it is a splendid picture, nevertheless, with those naked, lifelike arms, and the hands that press the rich locks about her, and so carefully permit those voluptuous breasts to be seen. She a penitent! She would shake off all pretence to it as easily as she would shake aside that clustering hair… Titian must have been a very good-for-nothing old man.

I looked again at Michael Angelo's Fates to-day; but cannot satisfactorily make out what he meant by them. One of them – she who holds the distaff – has her mouth open, as if uttering a cry, and might be fancied to look somewhat irate. The second, who holds the thread, has a pensive air, but is still, I think, pitiless at heart. The third sister looks closely and coldly into the eyes of the second, meanwhile cutting the thread with a pair of shears. Michael Angelo, if I may presume to say so, wished to vary the expression of these three sisters, and give each a different one, but did not see precisely how, inasmuch as all the fatal Three are united, heart and soul, in one purpose. It is a very impressive group. But, as regards the interpretation of this, or of any other profound picture, there are likely to be as many interpretations as there are spectators. It is very curious to read criticisms upon pictures, and upon the same face in a picture, and by men of taste and feeling, and to find what different conclusions they arrive at. Each man interprets the hieroglyphic in his own way; and the painter, perhaps, had a meaning which none of them

have reached; or possibly he put forth a riddle, without himself knowing the solution. There is such a necessity, at all events, of helping the painter out with the spectator's own resources of feeling and imagination, that you can never be sure how much of the picture you have yourself made. There is no doubt that the public is, to a certain extent, right and sure of its ground, when it declares, through a series of ages, that a certain picture is a great work. It is so; a great symbol, proceeding out of a great mind; but if it means one thing, it seems to mean a thousand, and, often, opposite things.

June 27th. – I have had a heavy cold and fever almost throughout the past week, and have thereby lost the great Florentine festivity, the Feast of St. John, which took place on Thursday last, with the fireworks and illuminations the evening before, and the races and court ceremonies on the day itself. However, unless it were more characteristic and peculiar than the Carnival, I have not missed anything very valuable.

Mr. Powers called to see me one evening, and poured out, as usual, a stream of talk, both racy and oracular in its character. Speaking of human eyes, he observed that they did not depend for their expression upon color, nor upon any light of the soul beaming through them, nor any glow of the eyeball, nor upon anything but the form and action of the surrounding muscles. He illustrates it by saying, that if the eye of a wolf, or of whatever fiercest animal, could be placed in another setting, it would be found capable of the utmost gentleness of expression. "You

yourself," said he, "have a very bright and sharp look sometimes; but it is not in the eye itself." His own eyes, as I could have sworn, were glowing all the time he spoke; and, remembering how many times I have seemed to see eyes glow, and blaze, and flash, and sparkle, and melt, and soften; and how all poetry is illuminated with the light of ladies' eyes; and how many people have been smitten by the lightning of an eye, whether in love or anger, it was difficult to allow that all this subtlest and keenest fire is illusive, not even phosphorescent, and that any other jelly in the same socket would serve as well as the brightest eye. Nevertheless, he must be right; of course he must, and I am rather ashamed ever to have thought otherwise. Where should the light come from? Has a man a flame inside of his head? Does his spirit manifest itself in the semblance of flame? The moment we think of it, the absurdity becomes evident. I am not quite sure, however, that the outer surface of the eye may not reflect more light in some states of feeling than in others; the state of the health, certainly, has an influence of this kind.

I asked Powers what he thought of Michael Angelo's statue of Lorenzo de' Medici. He allowed that its effect was very grand and mysterious; but added that it owed this to a trick, – the effect being produced by the arrangement of the hood, as he called it, or helmet, which throws the upper part of the face into shadow. The niche in which it sits has, I suppose, its part to perform in throwing a still deeper shadow. It is very possible that Michael Angelo may have calculated upon this effect of sombre

shadow, and legitimately, I think; but it really is not worthy of Mr. Powers to say that the whole effect of this mighty statue depends, not on the positive efforts of Michael Angelo's chisel, but on the absence of light in a space of a few inches. He wrought the whole statue in harmony with that small part of it which he leaves to the spectator's imagination, and if he had erred at any point, the miracle would have been a failure; so that, working in marble, he has positively reached a degree of excellence above the capability of marble, sculpturing his highest touches upon air and duskiness.

Mr. Powers gave some amusing anecdotes of his early life, when he was a clerk in a store in Cincinnati. There was a museum opposite, the proprietor of which had a peculiar physiognomy that struck Powers, insomuch that he felt impelled to make continual caricatures of it. He used to draw them upon the door of the museum, and became so familiar with the face, that he could draw them in the dark; so that, every morning, here was this absurd profile of himself, greeting the museum-man when he came to open his establishment. Often, too, it would reappear within an hour after it was rubbed out. The man was infinitely annoyed, and made all possible efforts to discover the unknown artist, but in vain; and finally concluded, I suppose, that the likeness broke out upon the door of its own accord, like the nettle-rash. Some years afterwards, the proprietor of the museum engaged Powers himself as an assistant; and one day Powers asked him if he remembered this mysterious profile. "Yes," said

he, "did you know who drew them?" Powers took a piece of chalk, and touched off the very profile again, before the man's eyes. "Ah," said he, "if I had known it at the time, I would have broken every bone in your body!"

Before he began to work in marble, Powers had greater practice and success in making wax figures, and he produced a work of this kind called "The Infernal Regions," which he seemed to imply had been very famous. He said he once wrought a face in wax which was life itself, having made the eyes on purpose for it, and put in every hair in the eyebrows individually, and finished the whole with similar minuteness; so that, within the distance of a foot or two, it was impossible to tell that the face did not live.

I have hardly ever before felt an impulse to write down a man's conversation as I do that of Mr. Powers. The chief reason is, probably, that it is so possible to do it, his ideas being square, solid, and tangible, and therefore readily grasped and retained. He is a very instructive man, and sweeps one's empty and dead notions out of the way with exceeding vigor; but when you have his ultimate thought and perception, you feel inclined to think and see a little further for yourself. He sees too clearly what is within his range to be aware of any region of mystery beyond. Probably, however, this latter remark does him injustice. I like the man, and am always glad to encounter the mill-stream of his talk… Yesterday he met me in the street (dressed in his linen blouse and slippers, with a little bit of a sculptor's cap on the

side of his head), and gave utterance to a theory of colds, and a dissertation on the bad effects of draughts, whether of cold air or hot, and the dangers of transfusing blood from the veins of one living subject to those of another. On the last topic, he remarked that, if a single particle of air found its way into the veins, along with the transfused blood, it caused convulsions and inevitable death; otherwise the process might be of excellent effect.

Last evening, we went to pass the evening with Miss Blagden, who inhabits a villa at Bellosguardo, about a mile outside of the walls. The situation is very lofty, and there are good views from every window of the house, and an especially fine one of Florence and the hills beyond, from the balcony of the drawing-room. By and by came Mr. Browning, Mr. Trollope, Mr. Boott and his young daughter, and two or three other gentlemen..

Browning was very genial and full of life, as usual, but his conversation has the effervescent aroma which you cannot catch, even if you get the very words that seem to be imbued with it. He spoke most rapturously of a portrait of Mrs. Browning, which an Italian artist is painting for the wife of an American gentleman, as a present from her husband. The success was already perfect, although there had been only two sittings as yet, and both on the same day; and in this relation, Mr. Browning remarked that P – , the American artist, had had no less than seventy-three sittings of him for a portrait. In the result, every hair and speck of him was represented; yet, as I inferred from what he did not say, this accumulation of minute truths did not, after all, amount to the

true whole.

I do not remember much else that Browning said, except a playful abuse of a little King Charles spaniel, named Frolic, Miss Blagden's lap-dog, whose venerable age (he is eleven years old) ought to have pleaded in his behalf. Browning's nonsense is of very genuine and excellent quality, the true babble and effervescence of a bright and powerful mind; and he lets it play among his friends with the faith and simplicity of a child. He must be an amiable man. I should like him much, and should make him like me, if opportunities were favorable.

I conversed principally with Mr. Trollope, the son, I believe, of the Mrs. Trollope to whom America owes more for her shrewd criticisms than we are ever likely to repay. Mr. Trollope is a very sensible and cultivated man, and, I suspect, an author: at least, there is a literary man of repute of this name, though I have never read his works. He has resided in Italy eighteen years. It seems a pity to do this. It needs the native air to give life a reality; a truth which I do not fail to take home regretfully to myself, though without feeling much inclination to go back to the realities of my own.

We had a pleasant cup of tea, and took a moonlight view of Florence from the balcony..

June 28th. – Yesterday afternoon, J – and I went to a horse-race, which took place in the Corso and contiguous line of streets, in further celebration of the Feast of St. John. A crowd of people was already collected, all along the line of the proposed

race, as early as six o'clock; and there were a great many carriages driving amid the throng, open barouches mostly, in which the beauty and gentility of Florence were freely displayed. It was a repetition of the scene in the Corso at Rome, at Carnival time, without the masks, the fun, and the confetti. The Grand Duke and Duchess and the Court likewise made their appearance in as many as seven or eight coaches-and-six, each with a coachman, three footmen, and a postilion in the royal livery, and attended by a troop of horsemen in scarlet coats and cocked hats. I did not particularly notice the Grand Duke himself; but, in the carriage behind him, there sat only a lady, who favored the people along the street with a constant succession of bows, repeated at such short intervals, and so quickly, as to be little more than nods; therefore not particularly graceful or majestic. Having the good fortune, to be favored with one of these nods, I lifted my hat in response, and may therefore claim a bowing acquaintance with the Grand Duchess. She is a Bourbon of the Naples family, and was a pale, handsome woman, of princely aspect enough. The crowd evinced no enthusiasm, nor the slightest feeling of any kind, in acknowledgment of the presence of their rulers; and, indeed, I think I never saw a crowd so well behaved; that is, with so few salient points, so little ebullition, so absolutely tame, as the Florentine one. After all, and much contrary to my expectations, an American crowd has incomparably more life than any other; and, meeting on any casual occasion, it will talk, laugh, roar, and be diversified with a thousand characteristic

incidents and gleams and shadows, that you see nothing of here. The people seems to have no part even in its own gatherings. It comes together merely as a mass of spectators, and must not so much as amuse itself by any activity of mind.

The race, which was the attraction that drew us all together, turned out a very pitiful affair. When we had waited till nearly dusk, the street being thronged quite across, insomuch that it seemed impossible that it should be cleared as a race-course, there came suddenly from every throat a quick, sharp exclamation, combining into a general shout. Immediately the crowd pressed back on each side of the street; a moment afterwards, there was a rapid pattering of hoofs over the earth with which the pavement was strewn, and I saw the head and back of a horse rushing past. A few seconds more, and another horse followed; and at another little interval, a third. This was all that we had waited for; all that I saw, or anybody else, except those who stood on the utmost verge of the course, at the risk of being trampled down and killed. Two men were killed in this way on Thursday, and certainly human life was never spent for a poorer object. The spectators at the windows, to be sure, having the horses in sight for a longer time, might get a little more enjoyment out of the affair. By the by, the most picturesque aspect of the scene was the life given to it by the many faces, some of them fair ones, that looked out from window and balcony, all along the curving line of lofty palaces and edifices, between which the race-course lay; and from nearly every window, and over every

balcony, was flung a silken texture, or cloth of brilliant line, or piece of tapestry or carpet, or whatever adornment of the kind could be had, so as to dress up the street in gala attire. But, the Feast of St. John, like the Carnival, is but a meagre semblance of festivity, kept alive factitiously, and dying a lingering death of centuries. It takes the exuberant mind and heart of a people to keep its holidays alive.

I do not know whether there be any populace in Florence, but I saw none that I recognized as such, on this occasion. All the people were respectably dressed and perfectly well behaved; and soldiers and priests were scattered abundantly among the throng. On my way home, I saw the Teatro Goldoni, which is in our own street, lighted up for a representation this Sunday evening. It shocked my New England prejudices a little.

Thus forenoon, my wife and I went to the Church of Santa Croce, the great monumental deposit of Florentine worthies. The piazza before it is a wide, gravelled square, where the liberty of Florence, if it really ever had any genuine liberty, came into existence some hundreds of years ago, by the people's taking its own rights into its hands, and putting its own immediate will in execution. The piazza has not much appearance of antiquity, except that the facade of one of the houses is quite covered with ancient frescos, a good deal faded and obliterated, yet with traces enough of old glory to show that the colors must have been well laid on.

The front of the church, the foundation of which was laid

six centuries ago, is still waiting for its casing of marbles, and I suppose will wait forever, though a carpenter's staging is now erected before it, as if with the purpose of doing something.

The interior is spacious, the length of the church being between four and five hundred feet. There is a nave, roofed with wooden cross-beams, lighted by a clere-story and supported on each side by seven great pointed arches, which rest upon octagonal pillars. The octagon seems to be a favorite shape in Florence. These pillars were clad in yellow and scarlet damask, in honor of the Feast of St. John. The aisles, on each side of the nave, are lighted with high and somewhat narrow windows of painted glass, the effect of which, however, is much diminished by the flood of common daylight that comes in through the windows of the clere-story. It is like admitting too much of the light of reason and worldly intelligence into the mind, instead of illuminating it wholly through a religious medium. The many-hued saints and angels lose their mysterious effulgence, when we get white light enough, and find we see all the better without their help.

The main pavement of the church is brickwork; but it is inlaid with many sepulchral slabs of marble, on some of which knightly or priestly figures are sculptured in bas-relief. In both of the side aisles there are saintly shrines, alternating with mural monuments, some of which record names as illustrious as any in the world. As you enter, the first monument, on your right is that of Michael Angelo, occupying the ancient burial-site

of his family. The general design is a heavy sarcophagus of colored marble, with the figures of Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture as mourners, and Michael Angelo's bust above, the whole assuming a pyramidal form. You pass a shrine, within its framework of marble pillars and a pediment, and come next to Dante's monument, a modern work, with likewise its sarcophagus, and some huge, cold images weeping and sprawling over it, and an unimpressive statue of Dante sitting above.

Another shrine intervenes, and next you see the tomb of Alfieri, erected to his memory by the Countess of Albany, who pays, out of a woman's love, the honor which his country owed him. Her own monument is in one of the chapels of the transept.

Passing the next shrine you see the tomb of Macchiavelli, which, I think, was constructed not many years after his death. The rest of the monuments, on this side of the church, commemorate people of less than world-wide fame; and though the opposite side has likewise a monument alternating with each shrine, I remember only the names of Raphael Morghen and of Galileo. The tomb of the latter is over against that of Michael Angelo, being the first large tomb on the left-hand wall as you enter the church. It has the usual heavy sarcophagus, surmounted by a bust of Galileo, in the habit of his time, and is, of course, duly provided with mourners in the shape of Science or Astronomy, or some such cold-hearted people. I wish every sculptor might be at once imprisoned for life who shall hereafter chisel an allegoric figure; and as for those who have sculptured

them heretofore, let them be kept in purgatory till the marble shall have crumbled away. It is especially absurd to assign to this frozen sisterhood of the allegoric family the office of weeping for the dead, inasmuch as they have incomparably less feeling than a lump of ice, which might contrive to shed a tear if the sun shone on it. But they seem to let themselves out, like the hired mourners of an English funeral, for the very reason that, having no interest in the dead person, nor any affections or emotions whatever, it costs them no wear and tear of heart.

All round both transepts of the church there is a series of chapels, into most of which we went, and generally found an inscrutably dark picture over the altar, and often a marble bust or two, or perhaps a mediaeval statue of a saint or a modern monumental bas-relief in marble, as white as new-fallen snow. A chapel of the Bonapartes is here, containing memorials of two female members of the family. In several chapels, moreover, there were some of those distressing frescos, by Giotto, Cimabue, or their compeers, which, whenever I see them, – poor, faded relics, looking as if the Devil had been rubbing and scrubbing them for centuries, in spite against the saints, – my heart sinks and my stomach sickens. There is no other despondency like this; it is a new shade of human misery, akin to the physical disease that comes from dryrot in a wall. These frescos are to a church what dreary, old remembrances are to a mind; the drearier because they were once bright: Hope fading into Disappointment, Joy into Grief, and festal splendor

passing into funereal duskiness, and saddening you all the more by the grim identity that you find to exist between gay things and sorrowful ones. Only wait long enough, and they turn out to be the very same.

All the time we were in the church some great religious ceremony had been going forward; the organ playing and the white-robed priests bowing, gesticulating, and making Latin prayers at the high altar, where at least a hundred wax tapers were burning in constellations. Everybody knelt, except ourselves, yet seemed not to be troubled by the echoes of our passing footsteps, nor to require that we should pray along with them. They consider us already lost irrevocably, no doubt, and therefore right enough in taking no heed of their devotions; not but what we took so much heed, however, as to give the smallest possible disturbance. By and by we sat down in the nave of the church till the ceremony should be concluded; and then my wife left me to go in quest of yet another chapel, where either Cimabue or Giotto, or both, have left some of their now ghastly decorations. While she was gone I threw my eyes about the church, and came to the conclusion that, in spite of its antiquity, its size, its architecture, its painted windows, its tombs of great men, and all the reverence and interest that broods over them, it is not an impressive edifice. Any little Norman church in England would impress me as much, and more. There is something, I do not know what, but it is in the region of the heart, rather than in the intellect, that Italian architecture, of whatever age or style, never seems to reach.

Leaving the Santa Croce, we went next in quest of the Riccardi Palace. On our way, in the rear of the Grand Ducal Piazza, we passed by the Bargello, formerly the palace of the Podesta of Florence, and now converted into a prison. It is an immense square edifice of dark stone, with a tall, lank tower rising high above it at one corner. Two stone lions, symbols of the city, lash their tails and glare at the passers-by; and all over the front of the building windows are scattered irregularly, and grated with rusty iron bars; also there are many square holes, which probably admit a little light and a breath or two of air into prisoners' cells. It is a very ugly edifice, but looks antique, and as if a vast deal of history might have been transacted within it, or have beaten, like fierce blasts, against its dark, massive walls, since the thirteenth century. When I first saw the city it struck me that there were few marks of antiquity in Florence; but I am now inclined to think otherwise, although the bright Italian atmosphere, and the general squareness and monotony of the Italian architecture, have their effect in apparently modernizing everything. But everywhere we see the ponderous Tuscan basements that never can decay, and which will look, five hundred years hence, as they look now; and one often passes beneath an abbreviated remnant of what was once a lofty tower, perhaps three hundred feet high, such as used to be numerous in Florence when each noble of the city had his own warfare to wage; and there are patches of sculpture that look old on houses, the modern stucco of which causes them to look almost new. Here and there an unmistakable

antiquity stands in its own impressive shadow; the Church of Or San Michele, for instance, once a market, but which grew to be a church by some inherent fitness and inevitable consecration. It has not the least the aspect of a church, being high and square, like a mediaeval palace; but deep and high niches are let into its walls, within which stand great statues of saints, masterpieces of Donatello, and other sculptors of that age, before sculpture began to be congealed by the influence of Greek art.

The Riccardi Palace is at the corner of the Via Larga. It was built by the first Cosmo de' Medici, the old banker, more than four centuries ago, and was long the home of the ignoble race of princes which he left behind him. It looks fit to be still the home of a princely race, being nowise dilapidated nor decayed externally, nor likely to be so, its high Tuscan basement being as solid as a ledge of rock, and its upper portion not much less so, though smoothed into another order of stately architecture. Entering its court from the Via Larga, we found ourselves beneath a pillared arcade, passing round the court like a cloister; and on the walls of the palace, under this succession of arches, were statues, bas-reliefs, and sarcophagi, in which, first, dead Pagans had slept, and then dead Christians, before the sculptured coffins were brought hither to adorn the palace of the Medici. In the most prominent place was a Latin inscription of great length and breadth, chiefly in praise of old Cosino and his deeds and wisdom. This mansion gives the visitor a stately notion of the life of a commercial man in the days when merchants were

princes; not that it seems to be so wonderfully extensive, nor so very grand, for I suppose there are a dozen Roman palaces that excel it in both these particulars. Still, we cannot but be conscious that it must have been, in some sense, a great man who thought of founding a homestead like this, and was capable of filling it with his personality, as the hand fills a glove. It has been found spacious enough, since Cosmo's time, for an emperor and a pope and a king, all of whom have been guests in this house. After being the family mansion of the Medici for nearly two centuries, it was sold to the Riccardis, but was subsequently bought of then by the government, and it is now occupied by public offices and societies.

After sufficiently examining the court and its antiquities, we ascended a noble staircase that passes, by broad flights and square turns, to the region above the basement. Here the palace is cut up and portioned off into little rooms and passages, and everywhere there were desks, inkstands, and men, with pens in their fingers or behind their ears. We were shown into a little antique chapel, quite covered with frescos in the Giotto style, but painted by a certain Gozzoli. They were in pretty good preservation, and, in fact, I am wrong in comparing them to Giotto's works, inasmuch as there must have been nearly two hundred years between the two artists. The chapel was furnished with curiously carved old chairs, and looked surprisingly venerable within its little precinct.

We were next guided into the grand gallery, a hall of

respectable size, with a frescoed ceiling, on which is represented the blue sky, and various members of the Medici family ascending through it by the help of angelic personages, who seem only to have waited for their society to be perfectly happy. At least, this was the meaning, so far as I could make it out. Along one side of the gallery were oil-pictures on looking-glasses, rather good than otherwise; but Rome, with her palaces and villas, takes the splendor out of all this sort of thing elsewhere.

On our way home, and on our own side of the Ponte Vecchio, we passed the Palazzo Guicciardini, the ancient residence of the historian of Italy, who was a politic statesman of his day, and probably as cruel and unprincipled as any of those whose deeds he has recorded. Opposite, across the narrow way, stands the house of Macchiavelli, who was his friend, and, I should judge, an honester man than he. The house is distinguished by a marble tablet, let into the wall, commemorative of Macchiavelli, but has nothing antique or picturesque about it, being in a continuous line with other smooth-faced and stuccoed edifices.

June 30th. – Yesterday, at three o'clock P. M., I went to see the final horse-race of the Feast of St. John, or rather to see the concourse of people and grandees whom it brought together. I took my stand in the vicinity of the spot whence the Grand Duke and his courtiers view the race, and from this point the scene was rather better worth looking at than from the street-corners whence I saw it before. The vista of the street, stretching far adown between two rows of lofty edifices, was really gay

and gorgeous with the silks, damasks, and tapestries of all bright hues, that flaunted from windows and balconies, whence ladies looked forth and looked down, themselves making the liveliest part of the show. The whole capacity of the street swarmed with moving heads, leaving scarce room enough for the carriages, which, as on Sunday, passed up and down, until the signal for the race was given. Equipages, too, were constantly arriving at the door of the building which communicates with the open loggia, where the Grand Ducal party sit to see and to be seen. Two sentinels were standing at the door, and presented arms as each courtier or ambassador, or whatever dignity it might be, alighted. Most of them had on gold-embroidered court-dresses; some of them had military uniforms, and medals in abundance at the breast; and ladies also came, looking like heaps of lace and gauze in the carriages, but lightly shaking themselves into shape as they went up the steps. By and by a trumpet sounded, a drum beat, and again appeared a succession of half a dozen royal equipages, each with its six horses, its postilion, coachman, and three footmen, grand with cocked hats and embroidery; and the gray-headed, bowing Grand Duke and his nodding Grand Duchess as before. The Noble Guard ranged themselves on horseback opposite the loggia; but there was no irksome and impertinent show of ceremony and restraint upon the people. The play-guard of volunteer soldiers, who escort the President of the United States in his Northern progresses, keep back their fellow-citizens much more sternly and immitigably than the Florentine

guard kept back the populace from its despotic sovereign.

This morning J – and I have been to the Uffizi gallery. It was his first visit there, and he passed a sweeping condemnation upon everything he saw, except a fly, a snail-shell, a caterpillar, a lemon, a piece of bread, and a wineglass, in some of the Dutch pictures. The Venus de' Medici met with no sort of favor. His feeling of utter distaste reacted upon me, and I was sensible of the same weary lack of appreciation that used to chill me through, in my earlier visits to picture-galleries; the same doubt, moreover, whether we do not bamboozle ourselves in the greater part of the admiration which we learn to bestow. I looked with some pleasure at one of Correggio's Madonnas in the Tribune, – no divine and deep-thoughted mother of the Saviour, but a young woman playing with her first child, as gay and thoughtless as itself. I looked at Michael Angelo's Madonna, in which William Ware saw such prophetic depth of feeling; but I suspect it was one of the many instances in which the spectator sees more than the painter ever dreamed of.

Straying through the city, after leaving the gallery, we went into the Church of Or San Michele, and saw in its architecture the traces of its transformation from a market into a church. In its pristine state it consisted of a double row of three great open arches, with the wind blowing through them, and the sunshine falling aslantwise into them, while the bustle of the market, the sale of fish, flesh, or fruit went on within, or brimmed over into the streets that enclosed them on every side. But, four or five

hundred years ago, the broad arches were built up with stone-work; windows were pierced through and filled with painted glass; a high altar, in a rich style of pointed Gothic, was raised; shrines and confessionals were set up; and here it is, a solemn and antique church, where a man may buy his salvation instead of his dinner. At any rate, the Catholic priests will insure it to him, and take the price. The sculpture within the beautifully decorated niches, on the outside of the church, is very curious and interesting. The statues of those old saints seem to have that charm of earnestness which so attracts the admirers of the Pre-Raphaelite painters.

It appears that a picture of the Virgin used to hang against one of the pillars of the market-place while it was still a market, and in the year 1291 several miracles were wrought by it, insomuch that a chapel was consecrated for it. So many worshippers came to the shrine that the business of the market was impeded, and ultimately the Virgin and St. Michael won the whole space for themselves. The upper part of the edifice was at that time a granary, and is still used for other than religious purposes. This church was one spot to which the inhabitants betook themselves much for refuge and divine assistance during the great plague described by Boccaccio.

July 2d. – We set out yesterday morning to visit the Palazzo Buonarotti, Michael Angelo's ancestral home… It is in the Via Ghibellina, an ordinary-looking, three-story house, with broad-brimmed eaves, a stuccoed front, and two or three windows

painted in fresco, besides the real ones. Adown the street, there is a glimpse of the hills outside of Florence. The sun shining heavily directly upon the front, we rang the door-bell, and then drew back into the shadow that fell from the opposite side of the street. After we had waited some time a man looked out from an upper window, and a woman from a lower one, and informed us that we could not be admitted now, nor for two or three months to come, the house being under repairs. It is a pity, for I wished to see Michael Angelo's sword and walking-stick and old slippers, and whatever other of his closest personalities are to be shown..

We passed into the Piazza of the Grand Duke, and looked into the court of the Palazzo Vecchio, with its beautifully embossed pillars; and, seeing just beyond the court a staircase of broad and easy steps, we ascended it at a venture. Upward and upward we went, flight after flight of stairs, and through passages, till at last we found an official who ushered us into a large saloon. It was the Hall of Audience. Its heavily embossed ceiling, rich with tarnished gold, was a feature of antique magnificence, and the only one that it retained, the floor being paved with tiles and the furniture scanty or none. There were, however, three cabinets standing against the walls, two of which contained very curious and exquisite carvings and cuttings in ivory; some of them in the Chinese style of hollow, concentric balls; others, really beautiful works of art: little crucifixes, statues, saintly and knightly, and cups enriched with delicate bas-reliefs. The custode pointed to a small figure of St. Sebastian, and also to a

vase around which the reliefs seemed to assume life. Both these specimens, he said, were by Benvenuto Cellini, and there were many others that might well have been wrought by his famous hand. The third cabinet contained a great number and variety of crucifixes, chalices, and whatever other vessels are needed in altar service, exquisitely carved out of amber. They belong to the chapel of the palace, and into this holy closet we were now conducted. It is large enough to accommodate comfortably perhaps thirty worshippers, and is quite covered with frescos by Ghirlandaio in good preservation, and with remnants enough of gilding and bright color to show how splendid the chapel must have been when the Medicean Grand Dukes used to pray here. The altar is still ready for service, and I am not sure that some of the wax tapers were not burning; but Lorenzo the Magnificent was nowhere to be seen.

The custode now led us back through the Hall of Audience into a smaller room, hung with pictures chiefly of the Medici and their connections, among whom was one Carolina, an intelligent and pretty child, and Bianca Capella.

There was nothing else to show us, except a very noble and most spacious saloon, lighted by two large windows at each end, coming down level with the floor, and by a row of windows on one side just beneath the cornice. A gilded framework divides the ceiling into squares, circles, and octagons, the compartments of which are filled with pictures in oil; and the walls are covered with immense frescos, representing various battles and triumphs

of the Florentines. Statues by Michael Angelo, John of Bologna, and Bandinello, as well historic as ideal, stand round the hall, and it is really a fit theatre for the historic scenes of a country to be acted in. It was built, moreover, with the idea of its being the council-hall of a free people; but our own little Faneuil, which was meant, in all simplicity, to be merely a spot where the townspeople should meet to choose their selectmen, has served the world better in that respect. I wish I had more room to speak of this vast, dusky, historic hall. [This volume of journal closes here.]

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.