RUSKIN JOHN

VAL D'ARNO

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Val d'Arno / Ten Lectures on the Tuscan Art Directly Antecedent to the Florentine Year of Victories; Given Before the University of Oxford in Michaelmas Term, 1873:

Содержание

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LECTURE I.
NICHOLAS THE PISAN

1. On this day, of this month, the 20th of October, six hundred and twenty-three years ago, the merchants and tradesmen of Florence met before the church of Santa Croce; marched through the city to the palace of their Podesta; deposed their Podesta; set over themselves, in his place, a knight belonging to an inferior city; called him "Captain of the People;" appointed under him a

Signory of twelve Ancients chosen from among themselves; hung a bell for him on the tower of the Lion, that he might ring it at need, and gave him the flag of Florence to bear, half white, and half red.

The first blow struck upon the bell in that tower of the Lion began the tolling for the passing away of the feudal system, and began the joy-peal, or carillon, for whatever deserves joy, in that of our modern liberties, whether of action or of trade.

2. Within the space of our Oxford term from that day, namely, on the 13th of December in the same year, 1250, died, at Ferentino, in Apulia, the second Frederick, Emperor of Germany; the second also of the two great lights which in his lifetime, according to Dante's astronomy, ruled the world, —whose light being quenched, "the land which was once the residence of courtesy and valour, became the haunt of all men who are ashamed to be near the good, or to speak to them."

"In sul paese chadice e po riga
solea valore e cortesia trovar si
prima che federigo Bavessi briga,
or puo sicuramente indi passarsi
per qualuuche lasciassi per vergogna
di ragionar co buoni, e appressarsi."

PURO., Cant. 16.

3. The "Paese che Adice e Po riga" is of course Lombardy; and might have been enough distinguished by the name of its

principal river. But Dante has an especial reason for naming the Adige. It is always by the valley of the Adige that the power of the German Caesars descends on Italy; and that battlemented bridge, which doubtless many of you remember, thrown over the Adige at Verona, was so built that the German riders might have secure and constant access to the city. In which city they had their first stronghold in Italy, aided therein by the great family of the Montecchi, Montacutes, Mont-aigu-s, or Montagues; lords, so called, of the mountain peaks; in feud with the family of the Cappelletti,—hatted, or, more properly, scarlet-hatted, persons. And this accident of nomenclature, assisted by your present familiar knowledge of the real contests of the sharp mountains with the flat caps, or petasoi, of cloud, (locally giving Mont Pilate its title, "Pileatus,") may in many points curiously illustrate for you that contest of Frederick the Second with Innocent the Fourth, which in the good of it and the evil alike, represents to all time the war of the solid, rational, and earthly authority of the King, and State, with the more or less spectral, hooded, imaginative, and nubiform authority of the Pope, and Church.

4. It will be desirable also that you clearly learn the material relations, governing spiritual ones,—as of the Alps to their clouds, so of the plains to their rivers. And of these rivers, chiefly note the relation to each other, first, of the Adige and Po; then of the Arno and Tiber. For the Adige, representing among the rivers and fountains of waters the channel of Imperial, as the Tiber of the Papal power, and the strength of the Coronet being

founded on the white peaks that look down upon Hapsburg and Hohenzollern, as that of the Scarlet Cap in the marsh of the Campagna, "quo tenuis in sicco aqua destituisset," the study of the policies and arts of the cities founded in the two great valleys of Lombardy and Tuscany, so far as they were affected by their bias to the Emperor, or the Church, will arrange itself in your minds at once in a symmetry as clear as it will be, in our future work, secure and suggestive.

5. "Tenuis, in sicco." How literally the words apply, as to the native streams, so to the early states or establishings of the great cities of the world. And you will find that the policy of the Coronet, with its tower-building; the policy of the Hood, with its dome-building; and the policy of the bare brow, with its cot-building,—the three main associations of human energy to which we owe the architecture of our earth, (in contradistinction to the dens and caves of it,)—are curiously and eternally governed by mental laws, corresponding to the physical ones which are ordained for the rocks, the clouds, and the streams.

The tower, which many of you so well remember the daily sight of, in your youth, above the "winding shore" of Thames, —the tower upon the hill of London; the dome which still rises above its foul and terrestrial clouds; and the walls of this city itself, which has been "alma," nourishing in gentleness, to the youth of England, because defended from external hostility by the difficultly fordable streams of its plain, may perhaps, in a few years more, be swept away as heaps of useless stone; but the

rocks, and clouds, and rivers of our country will yet, one day, restore to it the glory of law, of religion, and of life.

6. I am about to ask you to read the hieroglyphs upon the architecture of a dead nation, in character greatly resembling our own,—in laws and in commerce greatly influencing our own;—in arts, still, from her grave, tutress of the present world. I know that it will be expected of me to explain the merits of her arts, without reference to the wisdom of her laws; and to describe the results of both, without investigating the feelings which regulated either. I cannot do this; but I will at once end these necessarily vague, and perhaps premature, generalizations; and only ask you to study some portions of the life and work of two men, father and son, citizens of the city in which the energies of this great people were at first concentrated; and to deduce from that study the conclusions, or follow out the inquiries, which it may naturally suggest.

7. It is the modern fashion to despise Vasari. He is indeed despicable, whether as historian or critic,—not least in his admiration of Michael Angelo; nevertheless, he records the traditions and opinions of his day; and these you must accurately know, before you can wisely correct. I will take leave, therefore, to begin to-day with a sentence from Vasari, which many of you have often heard quoted, but of which, perhaps, few have enough observed the value.

"Niccola Pisano finding himself under certain Greek sculptors who were carving the figures and other intaglio

ornaments of the cathedral of Pisa, and of the temple of St. John, and there being, among many spoils of marbles, brought by the Pisan fleet,[1] some ancient tombs, there was one among the others most fair, on which was sculptured the hunting of Meleager."[2]

Get the meaning and contents of this passage well into your minds. In the gist of it, it is true, and very notable.

8. You are in mid thirteenth century; 1200-1300. The Greek nation has been dead in heart upwards of a thousand years; its religion dead, for six hundred. But through the wreck of its faith, and death in its heart, the skill of its hands, and the cunning of its design, instinctively linger. In the centuries of Christian power, the Christians are still unable to build but under Greek masters, and by pillage of Greek shrines; and their best workman is only an apprentice to the 'Graeculi esurientes' who are carving the temple of St. John.

9. Think of it. Here has the New Testament been declared for 1200 years. No spirit of wisdom, as yet, has been given to its workmen, except that which has descended from the Mars Hill on which St. Paul stood contemptuous in pity. No Bezaleel arises, to build new tabernacles, unless he has been taught by Daedalus.

10. It is necessary, therefore, for you first to know precisely the manner of these Greek masters in their decayed power;

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[1] "Armata." The proper word for a land army is "esercito."

[2] Vol. i., p. 60, of Mrs. Foster's English translation, to which I shall always refer, in order that English students may compare the context if they wish. But the pieces of English which I give are my own direct translation, varying, it will be found, often, from Mrs. Foster's, in minute, but not unimportant, particulars.

the manner which Vasari calls, only a sentence before, "That old Greek manner, blundering, disproportioned,"—Goffa, e sproporzionata.

"Goffa," the very word which Michael Angelo uses of Perugino. Behold, the Christians despising the Dunce Greeks, as the Infidel modernists despise the Dunce Christians.[3]

11. I sketched for you, when I was last at Pisa, a few arches of the apse of the duomo, and a small portion of the sculpture of the font of the Temple of St. John. I have placed them in your rudimentary series, as examples of "quella vecchia maniera Greca, goffa e sproporzionata." My own judgment respecting them is,—and it is a judgment founded on knowledge which you may, if you choose, share with me, after working with me,—that no architecture on this grand scale, so delicately skilful in execution, or so daintily disposed in proportion, exists elsewhere in the world.

12. Is Vasari entirely wrong then?

No, only half wrong, but very fatally half wrong. There are Greeks, and Greeks.

This head with the inlaid dark iris in its eyes, from the font of St. John, is as pure as the sculpture of early Greece, a hundred years before Phidias; and it is so delicate, that having drawn with equal care this and the best work of the Lombardi at Venice (in the church of the Miracoli), I found this to possess the more subtle qualities of design. And yet, in the cloisters of St. John

[3] Compare "Ariadne Floreutina," § 46.

Lateran at Rome, you have Greek work, if not contemporary with this at Pisa, yet occupying a parallel place in the history of architecture, which is abortive, and monstrous beyond the power of any words to describe. Vasari knew no difference between these two kinds of Greek work. Nor do your modern architects. To discern the difference between the sculpture of the font of Pisa, and the spandrils of the Lateran cloister, requires thorough training of the hand in the finest methods of draughtsmanship; and, secondly, trained habit of reading the mythology and ethics of design. I simply assure you of the fact at present; and if you work, you may have sight and sense of it.

13. There are Greeks, and Greeks, then, in the twelfth century, differing as much from each other as vice, in all ages, must differ from virtue. But in Vasari's sight they are alike; in ours, they must be so, as far as regards our present purpose. As men of a school, they are to be summed under the general name of 'Byzantines;' their work all alike showing specific characters of attenuate, rigid, and in many respects offensively unbeautiful, design, to which Vasari's epithets of "goffa, e sproporzionata" are naturally applied by all persons trained only in modern principles. Under masters, then, of this Byzantine race, Niccola is working at Pisa.

14. Among the spoils brought by her fleets from Greece, is a sarcophagus, with Meleager's hunt on it, wrought "con bellissima maniera," says Vasari.

You may see that sarcophagus—any of you who go to Pisa;—

touch it, for it is on a level with your hand; study it, as Niccola studied it, to your mind's content. Within ten yards of it, stand equally accessible pieces of Niccola's own work and of his son's. Within fifty yards of it, stands the Byzantine font of the chapel of St. John. Spend but the good hours of a single day quietly by these three pieces of marble, and you may learn more than in general any of you bring home from an entire tour in Italy. But how many of you ever yet went into that temple of St. John, knowing what to look for; or spent as much time in the Campo Santo of Pisa, as you do in Mr. Ryman's shop on a rainy day?

15. The sarcophagus is not, however, (with Vasari's pardon) in 'bellissima maniera' by any means. But it is in the classical Greek manner instead of the Byzantine Greek manner. You have to learn the difference between these.

Now I have explained to you sufficiently, in "Aratra Pentelici," what the classical Greek manner is. The manner and matter of it being easily summed—as those of natural and unaffected life;—nude life when nudity is right and pure; not otherwise. To Niccola, the difference between this natural Greek school, and the Byzantine, was as the difference between the bull of Thurium and of Delhi, (see Plate 19 of "Aratra Pentelici").

Instantly he followed the natural fact, and became the Father of Sculpture to Italy.

16. Are we, then, also to be strong by following the natural fact?

Yes, assuredly. That is the beginning and end of all my

teaching to you. But the noble natural fact, not the ignoble. You are to study men; not lice nor entozoa. And you are to study the souls of men in their bodies, not their bodies only. Mulready's drawings from the nude are more degraded and bestial than the worst grotesques of the Byzantine or even the Indian image makers. And your modern mob of English and American tourists, following a lamplighter through the Vatican to have pink light thrown for them on the Apollo Belvidere, are farther from capacity of understanding Greek art, than the parish charity boy, making a ghost out of a turnip, with a candle inside.

17. Niccola followed the facts, then. He is the Master of Naturalism in Italy. And I have drawn for you his lioness and cubs, to fix that in your minds. And beside it, I put the Lion of St. Mark's, that you may see exactly the kind of change he made. The Lion of St. Mark's (all but his wings, which have been made and fastened on in the fifteenth century), is in the central Byzantine manner; a fine decorative piece of work, descending in true genealogy from the Lion of Nemea, and the crested skin of him that clothes the head of the Heracles of Camarina. It has all the richness of Greek Daedal work,—nay, it has fire and life beyond much Greek Daedal work; but in so far as it is non-natural, symbolic, decorative, and not like an actual lion, it would be felt by Niccola Pisano to be imperfect. And instead of this decorative evangelical preacher of a lion, with staring eyes, and its paw on a gospel, he carves you a quite brutal and maternal lioness, with affectionate eyes, and paw set on her cub.

18. Fix that in your minds, then. Niccola Pisano is the Master of Naturalism in Italy,—therefore elsewhere; of Naturalism, and all that follows. Generally of truth, common-sense, simplicity, vitality,—and of all these, with consummate power. A man to be enquired about, is not he? and will it not make a difference to you whether you look, when you travel in Italy, in his rough early marbles for this fountain of life, or only glance at them because your Murray's Guide tells you,—and think them "odd old things"?

19. We must look for a moment more at one odd old thing —the sarcophagus which was his tutor. Upon it is carved the hunting of Meleager; and it was made, or by tradition received as, the tomb of the mother of the Countess Matilda. I must not let you pass by it without noticing two curious coincidences in these particulars. First, in the Greek subject which is given Niccola to read.

The boar, remember, is Diana's enemy. It is sent upon the fields of Calydon in punishment of the refusal of the Calydonians to sacrifice to her. 'You have refused *me*,' she said; 'you will not have Artemis Laphria, Forager Diana, to range in your fields. You shall have the Forager Swine, instead.'

Meleager and Atalanta are Diana's servants,—servants of all order, purity, due sequence of season, and time. The orbed architecture of Tuscany, with its sculptures of the succession of the labouring months, as compared with the rude vaults and monstrous imaginations of the past, was again the victory of

Meleager.

20. Secondly, take what value there is in the tradition that this sarcophagus was made the tomb of the mother of the

{Illustration: PLATE I:—THE PISAN LATONA.
Angle of Panel of the Adoration, in Niccola's Pulpit.}

Countess Matilda. If you look to the fourteenth chapter of the third volume of "Modern Painters," you will find the mythic character of the Countess Matilda, as Dante employed it explained at some length. She is the representative of Natural Science as opposed to Theological.

21. Chance coincidences merely, these; but full of teaching for us, looking back upon the past. To Niccola, the piece of marble was, primarily, and perhaps exclusively, an example of free chiselling, and humanity of treatment. What else it was to him,—what the spirits of Atalanta and Matilda could bestow on him, depended on what he was himself. Of which Vasari tells you nothing. Not whether he was gentleman or clown—rich or poor—soldier or sailor. Was he never, then, in those fleets that brought the marbles back from the ravaged Isles of Greece? was he at first only a labourer's boy among the scaffoldings of the Pisan apse,—his apron loaded with dust—and no man praising him for his speech? Rough he was, assuredly; probably poor; fierce and energetic, beyond even the strain of Pisa,—just and kind, beyond the custom of his age, knowing the Judgment and Love of God: and a workman, with all his soul and strength, all his days.

22. You hear the fame of him as of a sculptor only. It is right that you should; for every great architect must be a sculptor, and be renowned, as such, more than by his building. But Niccola Pisano had even more influence on Italy as a builder than as a carver.

For Italy, at this moment, wanted builders more than carvers; and a change was passing through her life, of which external edifice was a necessary sign. I complained of you just now that you never looked at the Byzantine font in the temple of St. John. The sacristan generally will not let you. He takes you to a particular spot on the floor, and sings a musical chord. The chord returns in prolonged echo from the chapel roof, as if the building were all one sonorous marble bell.

Which indeed it is; and travellers are always greatly amused at being allowed to ring this bell; but it never occurs to them to ask how it came to be ringable:—how that tintinnabulate roof differs from the dome of the Pantheon, expands into the dome of Florence, or declines into the whispering gallery of St. Paul's.

23. When you have had full satisfaction of the tintinnabulate roof, you are led by the sacristan and Murray to Niccola Pisano's pulpit; which, if you have spare time to examine it, you find to have six sides, to be decorated with tablets of sculpture, like the sides of the sarcophagus, and to be sustained on seven pillars, three of which are themselves carried on the backs of as many animals.

All this arrangement had been contrived before Niccola's

time, and executed again and again. But behold! between the capitals of the pillars and the sculptured tablets there are interposed five cusped arches, the hollow beneath the pulpit showing dark through their foils. You have seen such cusped arches before, you think?

Yes, gentlemen, *you* have; but the Pisans had *not*. And that intermediate layer of the pulpit means—the change, in a word, for all Europe, from the Parthenon to Amiens Cathedral. For Italy it means the rise of her Gothic dynasty; it means the duomo of Milan instead of the temple of Paestum.

24. I say the duomo of Milan, only to put the change well before your eyes, because you all know that building so well. The duomo of Milan is of entirely bad and barbarous Gothic, but the passion of pinnacle and fret is in it, visibly to you, more than in other buildings. It will therefore serve to show best what fulness of change this pulpit of Niccola Pisano signifies.

In it there is no passion of pinnacle nor of fret. You see the edges of it, instead of being bossed, or knopped, or crocketed, are mouldings of severest line. No vaulting, no clustered shafts, no traceries, no fantasies, no perpendicular flights of aspiration. Steady pillars, each of one polished block; useful capitals, one trefoiled arch between them; your panel above it; thereon your story of the founder of Christianity. The whole standing upon beasts, they being indeed the foundation of us, (which Niccola knew far better than Mr. Darwin); Eagle to carry your Gospel message—Dove you think it ought to be?

{Illustration: PLATE II.—NICCOLA PISANO'S PULPIT.}

Eagle, says Niccola, and not as symbol of St. John Evangelist only, but behold! with prey between its claws. For the Gospel, it is Niccola's opinion, is not altogether a message that you may do whatever you like, and go straight to heaven. Finally, a slab of marble, cut hollow a little to bear your book; space enough for you to speak from at ease,—and here is your first architecture of Gothic Christianity!

25. Indignant thunder of dissent from German doctors,—clamour from French savants. 'What! and our Treves, and our Strasburg, and our Poictiers, and our Chartres! And you call *this* thing the first architecture of Christianity!' Yes, my French and German friends, very fine the buildings you have mentioned are; and I am bold to say I love them far better than you do, for you will run a railroad through any of them any day that you can turn a penny by it. I thank you also, Germans, in the name of our Lady of Strasburg, for your bullets and fire; and I thank you, Frenchmen, in the name of our Lady of Rouen, for your new haberdashers' shops in the Gothic town;—meanwhile have patience with me a little, and let me go on.

26. No passion of fretwork, or pinnacle whatever, I said, is in this Pisan pulpit. The trefoiled arch itself, pleasant as it is, seems forced a little; out of perfect harmony with the rest (see Plate II.). Unnatural, perhaps, to Niccola?

Altogether unnatural to him, it is; such a thing never would

have come into his head, unless some one had shown it him. Once got into his head, he puts it to good use; perhaps even he will let this somebody else put pinnacles and crockets into his head, or at least, into his son's, in a little while. Pinnacles,—crockets,—it may be, even traceries. The ground-tier of the baptistery is round-arched, and has no pinnacles; but look at its first story. The clerestory of the Duomo of Pisa has no traceries, but look at the cloister of its Campo Santo.

27. I pause at the words;—for they introduce a new group of thoughts, which presently we must trace farther.

The Holy Field;—field of burial. The "cave of Machpelah which is before Mamre," of the Pisans. "There they buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah."

How do you think such a field becomes holy,—how separated, as the resting-place of loving kindred, from that other field of blood, bought to bury strangers in?

When you have finally succeeded, by your gospel of mammon, in making all the men of your own nation not only strangers to each other, but enemies; and when your every churchyard becomes therefore a field of the stranger, the kneeling hamlet will vainly drink the chalice of God in the midst of them. The field will be unholy. No cloisters of noble history can ever be built round such an one.

28. But the very earth of this at Pisa was holy, as you know. That "armata" of the Tuscan city brought home not only marble

and ivory, for treasure; but earth,—a fleet's burden,—from the place where there was healing of soul's leprosy: and their field became a place of holy tombs, prepared for its office with earth from the land made holy by one tomb; which all the knighthood of Christendom had been pouring out its life to win.

29. I told you just now that this sculpture of Niccola's was the beginning of Christian architecture. How do you judge that Christian architecture in the deepest meaning of it to differ from all other?

All other noble architecture is for the glory of living gods and men; but this is for the glory of death, in God and man. Cathedral, cloister, or tomb,—shrine for the body of Christ, or for the bodies of the saints. All alike signifying death to this world;—life, other than of this world.

Observe, I am not saying how far this feeling, be it faith, or be it imagination, is true or false;—I only desire you to note that the power of all Christian work begins in the niche of the catacomb and depth of the sarcophagus, and is to the end definable as architecture of the tomb.

30. Not altogether, and under every condition, sanctioned in doing such honour to the dead by the Master of it. Not every grave is by His command to be worshipped. Graves there may be—too little guarded, yet dishonourable;—"ye are as graves that appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." And graves too much guarded, yet dishonourable, "which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of

all uncleanness." Or graves, themselves honourable, yet which it may be, in us, a crime to adorn. "For they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres."

Questions, these, collateral; or to be examined in due time; for the present it is enough for us to know that all Christian architecture, as such, has been hitherto essentially of tombs.

It has been thought, gentlemen, that there is a fine Gothic revival in your streets of Oxford, because you have a Gothic door to your County Bank:

Remember, at all events, it was other kind of buried treasure, and bearing other interest, which Niccola Pisano's Gothic was set to guard.

LECTURE II. JOHN THE PISAN

31. I closed my last lecture with the statement, on which I desired to give you time for reflection, that Christian architecture was, in its chief energy, the adornment of tombs,—having the passionate function of doing honour to the dead.

But there is an ethic, or simply didactic and instructive architecture, the decoration of which you will find to be normally representative of the virtues which are common alike to Christian and Greek. And there is a natural tendency to adopt such decoration, and the modes of design fitted for it, in civil buildings.[4]

32. *Civil*, or *civic*, I say, as opposed to military. But again observe, there are two kinds of military building. One, the robber's castle, or stronghold, out of which he issues to pillage; the other, the honest man's castle, or stronghold, into which he retreats from pillage. They are much like each other in external forms;—but Injustice, or Unrighteousness, sits in the gate of the one, veiled with forest branches, (see Giotto's painting of him); and Justice or Righteousness *enters* by the gate of the other, over strewn forest branches. Now, for example of this second kind

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[4] "These several rooms were indicated by symbol and device: Victory for the soldier, Hope for the exile, the Muses for the poets, Mercury for the artists, Paradise for the preacher."—(Sagacius Gazata, of the Palace of Can Grande. I translate only Sismondi's quotation.)

of military architecture, look at Carlyle's account of Henry the Fowler,[5] and of his building military towns, or burgs, to protect his peasantry. In such function you have the first and proper idea of a walled town,—a place into which the pacific country people can retire for safety, as the Athenians in the Spartan war. Your fortress of this kind is a religious and civil fortress, or burg, defended by burgers, trained to defensive war. Keep always this idea of the proper nature of a fortified city:—Its walls mean protection,—its gates hospitality and triumph. In the language familiar to you, spoken of the chief of cities: "Its walls are to be Salvation, and its gates to be Praise." And recollect always the inscription over the north gate of Siena: "Cor magis tibi Sena pandit."—"More than her gates, Siena opens her heart to you."

33. When next you enter London by any of the great lines, I should like you to consider, as you approach the city, what the feelings of the heart of London are likely to be on your approach, and at what part of the railroad station an inscription, explaining such state of her heart, might be most fitly inscribed. Or you would still better understand the difference between ancient and modern principles of architecture by taking a cab to the Elephant and Castle, and thence walking to London Bridge by what is in fact the great southern entrance of London. The only gate receiving you is, however, the arch thrown over the road to carry the South-Eastern Railway itself; and the only exhibition either of Salvation or Praise is in the cheap clothes' shops on each side;

[5] "Frederick," vol. i.

and especially in one colossal haberdasher's shop, over which you may see the British flag waving (in imitation of Windsor Castle) when the master of the shop is at home. 34. Next to protection from external hostility, the two necessities in a city are of food and water supply;—the latter essentially constant. You can store food and forage, but water must flow freely. Hence the Fountain and the Mercato become the centres of civil architecture.

Premising thus much, I will ask you to look once more at this cloister of the Campo Santo of Pisa.

35. On first entering the place, its quiet, its solemnity, the perspective of its aisles, and the conspicuous grace and precision of its traceries, combine to give you the sensation of having entered a true Gothic cloister. And if you walk round it hastily, and, glancing only at a fresco or two, and the confused tombs erected against them, return to the uncloistered sunlight of the piazza, you may quite easily carry away with you, and ever afterwards retain, the notion that the Campo Santo of Pisa is the same kind of thing as the cloister of Westminster Abbey.

36. I will beg you to look at the building, thus photographed, more attentively. The "long-drawn aisle" is here, indeed,—but where is the "fretted vault"?

A timber roof, simple as that of a country barn, and of which only the horizontal beams catch the eye, connects an entirely plain outside wall with an interior one, pierced by round-headed openings; in which are inserted pieces of complex tracery, as foreign in conception to the rest of the work as if the Pisan

armata had gone up the Rhine instead of to Crete, pillaged South Germany, and cut these pieces of tracery out of the windows of some church in an advanced stage of fantastic design at Nuremberg or Frankfort.

37. If you begin to question, hereupon, who was the Italian robber, whether of marble or thought, and look to your Vasari, you find the building attributed to John the Pisan;[6]—and you suppose the son to have been so pleased by his father's adoption of Gothic forms that he must needs borrow them, in this manner, ready made, from the Germans, and thrust them into his round arches, or wherever else they would go.

We will look at something more of his work, however, before drawing such conclusion.

38. In the centres of the great squares of Siena and Perugia, rose, obedient to engineers' art, two perennial fountains Without engineers' art, the glens which cleave the sand-rock of Siena flow with living water; and still, if there be a hell for the forger in Italy, he remembers therein the sweet grotto and green wave of Fonte Branda. But on the very summit of the two hills, crested by their great civic fortresses, and in the centres of their circuit of walls, rose the two guided wells; each in basin of goodly marble, sculptured—at Perugia, by John of Pisa, at Siena, by James of Quercia.

39. It is one of the bitterest regrets of my life (and I have many which some men would find difficult to bear,) that I never saw,

[6] The present traceries are of fifteenth century work, founded on Giovanni's design.

except when I was a youth, and then with sealed eyes, Jacopo della Quercia's fountain.[7] The Sienese, a little while since, tore it down, and put up a model of it by a modern carver. In like manner, perhaps, you will some day knock the Elgin marbles to pieces, and commission an Academician to put up new ones, —the Sienese doing worse than that (as if the Athenians were *themselves* to break their Phidias' work).

But the fountain of John of Pisa, though much injured, and glued together with asphalt, is still in its place.

40. I will now read to you what Vasari first says of him, and it. (I. 67.) "Nicholas had, among other sons, one called John, who, because he always followed his father, and, under his discipline, intended (bent himself to, with a will,) sculpture and architecture, in a few years became not only equal to his father, but in some things superior to him; wherefore Nicholas, being now old, retired himself into Pisa, and living quietly there, left the government of everything to his son. Accordingly, when Pope Urban IV. died in Perugia, sending was made for John, who, going there, made the tomb of that Pope of marble, the which, together with that of Pope Martin IV., was afterwards thrown down, when the Perugians enlarged their vescovado; so that only a few relics are seen sprinkled about the church. And the Perugians, having at the same time brought from the mountain of

[7] I observe that Charles Dickens had the fortune denied to me. "The market-place, or great Piazza, is a large square, with a great broken-nosed fountain in it." ("Pictures from Italy.")

Pacciano, two miles distant from the city, through canals of lead, a most abundant water, by means of the invention and industry of a friar of the order of St. Silvester, it was given to John the Pisan to make all the ornaments of this fountain, as well of bronze as of marble. On which he set hand to it, and made there three orders of vases, two of marble and one of bronze. The first is put upon twelve degrees of twelve-faced steps; the second is upon some columns which put it upon a level with the first one;" (that is, in the middle of it,) "and the third, which is of bronze, rests upon three figures which have in the middle of them some griffins, of bronze too, which pour water out on every side."

{Illustration: PLATE III.—THE FOUNTAIN OF PERUGIA.}

41. Many things we have to note in this passage, but first I will show you the best picture I can of the thing itself.

The best I can; the thing itself being half destroyed, and what remains so beautiful that no one can now quite rightly draw it; but Mr. Arthur Severn, (the son of Keats's Mr. Severn,) was with me, looking reverently at those remains, last summer, and has made, with help from the sun, this sketch for you (Plate III.); entirely true and effective as far as his time allowed.

Half destroyed, or more, I said it was,—Time doing grievous work on it, and men worse. You heard Vasari saying of it, that it stood on twelve degrees of twelve-faced steps. These—worn, doubtless, into little more than a rugged slope—have been replaced by the moderns with four circular steps, and an iron

railing;[8] the bas-reliefs have been carried off from the panels of the second vase, and its fair marble lips choked with asphalt:—of what remains, you have here a rough but true image.

In which you see there is not a trace of Gothic feeling or design of any sort. No crockets, no pinnacles, no foils, no vaultings, no grotesques in sculpture. Panels between pillars, panels carried on pillars, sculptures in those panels like the Metopes of the Parthenon; a Greek vase in the middle, and griffins in the middle of that. Here is your font, not at all of Saint John, but of profane and civil-engineering John. This is *his* manner of baptism of the town of Perugia.

42. Thus early, it seems, the antagonism of profane Greek to ecclesiastical Gothic declares itself. It seems as if in Perugia, as in London, you had the fountains in Trafalgar Square against Queen Elinor's Cross; or the viaduct and railway station contending with the Gothic chapel, which the master of the large manufactory close by has erected, because he thinks pinnacles and crockets have a pious influence; and will prevent his workmen from asking for shorter hours, or more wages.

43. It *seems* only; the antagonism is quite of another kind,—or, rather, of many other kinds. But note at once how complete it is—how utterly this Greek fountain of Perugia, and the round arches of Pisa, are opposed to the school of design which gave the trefoils to Niccola's pulpit, and the traceries to Giovanni's

[8] In Mr. Severn's sketch, the form of the original foundation is approximately restored.

Campo Santo.

The antagonism, I say, is of another kind than ours; but deep and wide; and to explain it, I must pass for a time to apparently irrelevant topics.

You were surprised, I hope, (if you were attentive enough to catch the points in what I just now read from Vasari,) at my venturing to bring before you, just after I had been using violent language against the Sienese for breaking up the work of Quercia, that incidental sentence giving account of the much more disrespectful destruction, by the Perugians, of the tombs of Pope Urban IV., and Martin IV. Sending was made for John, you see, first, when Pope Urban IV. died in Perugia—whose tomb was to be carved by John; the Greek fountain being a secondary business. But the tomb was so well destroyed, afterwards, that only a few relics remained scattered here and there.

The tomb, I have not the least doubt, was Gothic;—and the breaking of it to pieces was not in order to restore it afterwards, that a living architect might get the job of restoration. Here is a stone out of one of Giovanni Pisano's loveliest Gothic buildings, which I myself saw with my own eyes dashed out, that a modern builder might be paid for putting in another. But Pope Urban's tomb was not destroyed to such end. There was no qualm of the belly, driving the hammer,—qualm of the conscience probably; at all events, a deeper or loftier antagonism than one on points of taste, or economy.

44. You observed that I described this Greek profane manner

of design as properly belonging to *civil* buildings, as opposed not only to ecclesiastical buildings, but to military ones. Justice, or Righteousness, and Veracity, are the characters of Greek art. These *may* be opposed to religion, when religion becomes fantastic; but they *must* be opposed to war, when war becomes unjust. And if, perchance, fantastic religion and unjust war happen to go hand in hand, your Greek artist is likely to use his hammer against them spitefully enough.

45. His hammer, or his Greek fire. Hear now this example of the engineering ingenuities of our Pisan papa, in his younger days.

"The Florentines having begun, in Niccola's time, to throw down many towers, which had been built in a barbarous manner through the whole city; either that the people might be less hurt, by their means, in the fights that often took place between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, or else that there might be greater security for the State, it appeared to them that it would be very difficult to ruin the Tower of the Death-watch, which was in the place of St. John, because it had its walls built with such a grip in them that the stones could not be stirred with the pickaxe, and also because it was of the loftiest; whereupon Nicholas, causing the tower to be cut, at the foot of it, all the length of one of its sides; and closing up the cut, as he made it, with short (wooden) under-props, about a yard long, and setting fire to them, when the props were burned, the tower fell, and broke itself nearly all to pieces: which was held a thing so ingenious and so useful for

such affairs, that it has since passed into a custom, so that when it is needful, in this easiest manner, any edifice may be thrown down."

46. 'When it is needful.' Yes; but when is that? If instead of the towers of the Death-watch in the city, one could ruin the towers of the Death-watch of evil pride and evil treasure in men's hearts, there would be need enough for such work both in Florence and London. But the walls of those spiritual towers have still stronger 'grip' in them, and are fireproof with a vengeance.

> "Le mure me parean die ferro fosse,
> . . . e el mi dixe, il fuoco eterno
> Chentro laffoca, le dimostra rosse."

But the towers in Florence, shattered to fragments by this ingenious engineer, and the tombs in Perugia, which his son will carve, only that they also may be so well destroyed that only a few relics remain, scattered up and down the church,—are these, also, only the iron towers, and the red-hot tombs, of the city of Dis?

Let us see.

47. In order to understand the relation of the tradesmen and working men, including eminently the artist, to the general life of the thirteenth century, I must lay before you the clearest elementary charts I can of the course which the fates of Italy were now appointing for her.

My first chart must be geographical. I want you to have

a clearly dissected and closely fitted notion of the natural boundaries of her states, and their relations to surrounding ones. Lay hold first, firmly, of your conception of the valleys of the Po and the Arno, running counter to each other—opening east and opening west,—Venice at the end of the one, Pisa at the end of the other.

48. These two valleys—the hearts of Lombardy and Etruria—virtually contain the life of Italy. They are entirely different in character: Lombardy, essentially luxurious and worldly, at this time rude in art, but active; Etruria, religious, intensely imaginative, and inheriting refined forms of art from before the days of Porsenna.

49. South of these, in mid-Italy, you have Romagna,—the valley of the Tiber. In that valley, decayed Rome, with her lust of empire inextinguishable;—no inheritance of imaginative art, nor power of it; dragging her own ruins hourly into more fantastic ruin, and defiling her faith hourly with more fantastic guilt.

South of Romagna, you have the kingdoms of Calabria and Sicily,–Magna Graecia, and Syracuse, in decay;–strange spiritual fire from the Saracenic east still lighting the volcanic land, itself laid all in ashes.

50. Conceive Italy then always in these four masses: Lombardy, Etruria, Romagna, Calabria.

Now she has three great external powers to deal with: the western, France—the northern, Germany—the eastern, Arabia. On her right the Frank; on her left the Saracen; above her, the

Teuton. And roughly, the French are a religious chivalry; the Germans a profane chivalry; the Saracens an infidel chivalry. What is best of each is benefiting Italy; what is worst, afflicting her. And in the time we are occupied with, all are afflicting her.

What Charlemagne, Barbarossa, or Saladin did to teach her, you can trace only by carefullest thought. But in this thirteenth century all these three powers are adverse to her, as to each other. Map the methods of their adversity thus:–

51. Germany, (profane chivalry,) is vitally adverse to the Popes; endeavouring to establish imperial and knightly power against theirs. It is fiercely, but frankly, covetous of Italian territory, seizes all it can of Lombardy and Calabria, and with any help procurable either from robber Christians or robber Saracens, strives, in an awkward manner, and by open force, to make itself master of Rome, and all Italy.

52. France, all surge and foam of pious chivalry, lifts herself in fitful rage of devotion, of avarice, and of pride. She is the natural ally of the church; makes her own monks the proudest of the Popes; raises Avignon into another Rome; prays and pillages insatiably; pipes pastoral songs of innocence, and invents grotesque variations of crime; gives grace to the rudeness of England, and venom to the cunning of Italy. She is a chimera among nations, and one knows not whether to admire most the valour of Guiscard, the virtue of St. Louis or the villany of his brother.

53. The Eastern powers—Greek, Israelite, Saracen—are at

once the enemies of the Western, their prey, and their tutors.

They bring them methods of ornament and of merchandise, and stimulate in them the worst conditions of pugnacity, bigotry, and rapine. That is the broad geographical and political relation of races. Next, you must consider the conditions of their time.

54. I told you, in my second lecture on Engraving, that before the twelfth century the nations were too savage to be Christian, and after the fifteenth too carnal to be Christian.

The delicacy of sensation and refinements of imagination necessary to understand Christianity belong to the mid period when men risen from a life of brutal hardship are not yet fallen to one of brutal luxury. You can neither comprehend the character of Christ while you are chopping flints for tools, and gnawing raw bones for food; nor when you have ceased to do anything with either tools or hands, and dine on gilded capons. In Dante's lines, beginning

> "I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
> In leathern girdle, with a clasp of bone,"

you have the expression of his sense of the increasing luxury of the age, already sapping its faith. But when Bellincion Berti walked abroad in skins not yet made into leather, and with the bones of his dinner in a heap at his door, instead of being cut into girdle clasps, he was just as far from capacity of being a Christian.

55. The following passage, from Carlyle's "Chartism," expresses better than any one else has done, or is likely to do it, the nature of this Christian era, (extending from the twelfth to the sixteenth century,) in England,—the like being entirely true of it elsewhere:—

"In those past silent centuries, among those silent classes, much had been going on. Not only had red deer in the New and other forests been got preserved and shot; and treacheries[9] of Simon de Montfort, wars of Red and White Roses, battles of Crecy, battles of Bosworth, and many other battles, been got transacted and adjusted; but England wholly, not without sore toil and aching bones to the millions of sires and the millions of sons of eighteen generations, had been got drained and tilled, covered with yellow harvests, beautiful and rich in possessions. The mud-wooden Caesters and Chesters had become steepled, tile-roofed, compact towns. Sheffield had taken to the manufacture of Sheffield whittles. Worstead could from wool spin yarn, and knit or weave the same into stockings or breeches for men. England had property valuable to the auctioneer; but the accumulate manufacturing, commercial, economic skill which lay impalpably warehoused in English hands and heads, what auctioneer could estimate?

"Hardly an Englishman to be met with but could do something; some cunninger thing than break his fellow-creature's

[9] Perhaps not altogether so, any more than Oliver's dear papa Carlyle. We may have to read *him* also, otherwise than the British populace have yet read, some day.

head with battle-axes. The seven incorporated trades, with their million guild-brethren, with their hammers, their shuttles, and tools, what an army,—fit to conquer that land of England, as we say, and hold it conquered! Nay, strangest of all, the English people had acquired the faculty and habit of thinking,—even of believing; individual conscience had unfolded itself among them;—Conscience, and Intelligence its handmaid.[10] Ideas of innumerable kinds were circulating among these men; witness one Shakspeare, a wool-comber, poacher or whatever else, at Stratford, in Warwickshire, who happened to write books!—the finest human figure, as I apprehend, that Nature has hitherto seen fit to make of our widely Teutonic clay. Saxon, Norman, Celt, or Sarmat, I find no human soul so beautiful, these fifteen hundred known years;—our supreme modern European man. Him England had contrived to realize: were there not ideas?

"Ideas poetic and also Puritanic, that had to seek utterance in the notablest way! England had got her Shakspeare, but was now about to get her Milton and Oliver Cromwell. This, too, we will call a new expansion, hard as it might be to articulate and adjust; this, that a man could actually have a conscience for his own behoof, and not for his priest's only; that his priest, be he who he might, would henceforth have to take that fact along with him."

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[10] Observe Carlyle's order of sequence. Perceptive Reason is the Handmaid of Conscience, not Conscience hers. If you resolve to do right, you will soon do wisely; but resolve only to do wisely, and you will never do right.

56. You observe, in this passage, account is given you of two things—(A) of the development of a powerful class of tradesmen and artists; and, (B) of the development of an individual conscience.

In the savage times you had simply the hunter, digger, and robber; now you have also the manufacturer and salesman. The ideas of ingenuity with the hand, of fairness in exchange, have occurred to us. We can do something now with our fingers, as well as with our fists; and if we want our neighbours' goods, we will not simply carry them off, as of old, but offer him some of ours in exchange.

57. Again; whereas before we were content to let our priests do for us all they could, by gesticulating, dressing, sacrificing, or beating of drums and blowing of trumpets; and also direct our steps in the way of life, without any doubt on our part of their own perfect acquaintance with it,—we have now got to do something for ourselves—to think something for ourselves; and thus have arrived in straits of conscience which, so long as we endeavour to steer through them honestly, will be to us indeed a quite secure way of life, and of all living wisdom.

58. Now the centre of this new freedom of thought is in Germany; and the power of it is shown first, as I told you in my opening lecture, in the great struggle of Frederick II. with Rome. And German freedom of thought had certainly made some progress, when it had managed to reduce the Pope to disguise himself as a soldier, ride out of Rome by moonlight,

and gallop his thirty-four miles to the seaside before summer dawn. Here, clearly, is quite a new state of things for the Holy Father of Christendom to consider, during such wholesome horse-exercise.

{Illustration: PLATE IV.—NORMAN IMAGERY.}

59. Again; the refinements of new art are represented by France—centrally by St. Louis with his Sainte Chapelle. Happily, I am able to lay on your table to-day—having placed it three years ago in your educational series—a leaf of a Psalter, executed for St. Louis himself. He and his artists are scarcely out of their savage life yet, and have no notion of adorning the Psalms better than by pictures of long-necked cranes, long-eared rabbits, long-tailed lions, and red and white goblins putting their tongues out.[11] But in refinement of touch, in beauty of colour, in the human faculties of order and grace, they are long since, evidently, past the flint and bone stage,—refined enough, now, —subtle enough, now, to learn anything that is pretty and fine, whether in theology or any other matter.

60. Lastly, the new principle of Exchange is represented by Lombardy and Venice, to such purpose that your Merchant and Jew of Venice, and your Lombard of Lombard Street, retain some considerable influence on your minds, even to this day.

And in the exact midst of all such transition, behold,

[11] I cannot go to the expense of engraving this most subtle example; but Plate IV. shows the average conditions of temper and imagination in religious ornamental work of the time.

Etruria with her Pisans—her Florentines,—receiving, resisting, and reigning over all: pillaging the Saracens of their marbles —binding the French bishops in silver chains;—shattering the towers of German tyranny into small pieces,—building with strange jewellery the belfry tower for newly-conceived Christianity;—and, in sacred picture, and sacred song, reaching the height, among nations, most passionate, and most pure.

I must close my lecture without indulging myself yet, by addition of detail; requesting you, before we next meet, to fix these general outlines in your minds, so that, without disturbing their distinctness, I may trace in the sequel the relations of Italian Art to these political and religious powers; and determine with what force of passionate sympathy, or fidelity of resigned obedience, the Pisan artists, father and son, executed the indignation of Florence and fulfilled the piety of Orvieto.

LECTURE III.
SHIELD AND APRON

61. I laid before you, in my last lecture, first lines of the chart of Italian history in the thirteenth century, which I hope gradually to fill with colour, and enrich, to such degree as may be sufficient for all comfortable use. But I indicated, as the more special subject of our immediate study, the nascent power of liberal thought, and liberal art, over dead tradition and rude workmanship.

To-day I must ask you to examine in greater detail the exact relation of this liberal art to the illiberal elements which surrounded it.

62. You do not often hear me use that word "Liberal" in any favourable sense. I do so now, because I use it also in a very narrow and exact sense. I mean that the thirteenth century is, in Italy's year of life, her 17th of March. In the light of it, she assumes her toga virilis; and it is sacred to her god Liber.

63. To her god *Liber*,—observe: not Dionusos, still less Bacchus, but her own ancient and simple deity. And if you have read with some care the statement I gave you, with Carlyle's help, of the moment and manner of her change from savageness to dexterity, and from rudeness to refinement of life, you will hear, familiar as the lines are to you, the invocation in the first Georgic

with a new sense of its meaning:—

> "Vos, O clarissima mundi
> Lumina, labentem coelo quae ducitis annum,
> Liber, et alma Ceres; vestro si munere tellus
> Chaoniam pingui glandem mutavit arista,
> Poculaqu' inventis Acheloia miscuit uvis,
> Munera vestra cano."

These gifts, innocent, rich, full of life, exquisitely beautiful in order and grace of growth, I have thought best to symbolize to you, in the series of types of the power of the Greek gods, placed in your educational series, by the blossom of the wild strawberry; which in rising from its trine cluster of trine leaves, —itself as beautiful as a white rose, and always single on its stalk, like an ear of corn, yet with a succeeding blossom at its side, and bearing a fruit which is as distinctly a group of seeds as an ear of corn itself, and yet is the pleasantest to taste of all the pleasant things prepared by nature for the food of men,[12]—may accurately symbolize, and help you to remember, the conditions of this liberal and delightful, yet entirely modest and orderly, art, and thought.

64. You will find in the fourth of my inaugural lectures, at the 98th paragraph, this statement,—much denied by modern artists and authors, but nevertheless quite unexceptionally true,

[12] I am sorry to pack my sentences together in this confused way. But I have much to say; and cannot always stop to polish or adjust it as I used to do.

—that the entire vitality of art depends upon its having for object either to *state a true thing*, or *adorn a serviceable one*. The two functions of art in Italy, in this entirely liberal and virescent phase of it,—virgin art, we may call it, retaining the most literal sense of the words virga and virgo,—are to manifest the doctrines of a religion which now, for the first time, men had soul enough to understand; and to adorn edifices or dress, with which the completed politeness of daily life might be invested, its convenience completed, and its decorous and honourable pride satisfied.

65. That pride was, among the men who gave its character to the century, in honourableness of private conduct, and useful magnificence of public art. Not of private or domestic art: observe this very particularly.

"Such was the simplicity of private manners,"—(I am now quoting Sismondi, but with the fullest ratification that my knowledge enables me to give,)—"and the economy of the richest citizens, that if a city enjoyed repose only for a few years, it doubled its revenues, and found itself, in a sort, encumbered with its riches. The Pisans knew neither of the luxury of the table, nor that of furniture, nor that of a number of servants; yet they were sovereigns of the whole of Sardinia, Corsica, and Elba, had colonies at St. Jean d'Acre and Constantinople, and their merchants in those cities carried on the most extended commerce with the Saracens and Greeks."[13]

[13] Sismondi; French translation, Brussels, 1838; vol. ii., p. 275.

66. "And in that time," (I now give you my own translation of Giovanni Villani,) "the citizens of Florence lived sober, and on coarse meats, and at little cost; and had many customs and playfulnesses which were blunt and rude; and they dressed themselves and their wives with coarse cloth; many wore merely skins, with no lining, and *all* had only leathern buskins;[14] and the Florentine ladies, plain shoes and stockings with no ornaments; and the best of them were content with a close gown of coarse scarlet of Cyprus, or camlet girded with an old-fashioned clasp-girdle; and a mantle over all, lined with vaire, with a hood above; and that, they threw over their heads. The women of lower rank were dressed in the same manner, with coarse green Cambray cloth; fifty pounds was the ordinary bride's dowry, and a hundred or a hundred and fifty would in those times have been held brilliant, ('isfolgorata,' dazzling, with sense of dissipation or extravagance;) and most maidens were twenty or more before they married. Of such gross customs were then the Florentines; but of good faith, and loyal among themselves and in their state; and in their coarse life, and poverty, did more and braver things

[14] I find this note for expansion on the margin of my lecture, but had no time to work it out:—'This lower class should be either barefoot, or have strong shoes—wooden clogs good. Pretty Boulogne sabot with purple stockings. Waterloo Road—little girl with her hair in curlpapers,—a coral necklace round her neck—the neck bare—and her boots of thin stuff, worn out, with her toes coming through, and rags hanging from her heels,—a profoundly accurate type of English national and political life. Your hair in curlpapers—borrowing tongs from every foreign nation, to pinch you into manners. The rich ostentatiously wearing coral about the bare neck; and the poor—cold as the stones and indecent.'

than are done in our days with more refinement and riches."

67. I detain you a moment at the words "scarlet of Cyprus, or camlet."

Observe that camelot (camelet) from *kamaelotae*, camel's skin, is a stuff made of silk and camel's hair originally, afterwards of silk and wool. At Florence, the camel's hair would always have reference to the Baptist, who, as you know, in Lippi's picture, wears the camel's skin itself, made into a Florentine dress, such as Villani has just described, "col tassello sopra," with the hood above. Do you see how important the word "Capulet" is becoming to us, in its main idea?

68. Not in private nor domestic art, therefore, I repeat to you, but in useful magnificence of public art, these citizens expressed their pride:—and that public art divided itself into two branches—civil, occupied upon ethic subjects of sculpture and painting; and religious, occupied upon scriptural or traditional histories, in treatment of which, nevertheless, the nascent power and liberality of thought were apparent, not only in continual amplification and illustration of scriptural story by the artist's own invention, but in the acceptance of profane mythology, as part of the Scripture, or tradition, given by Divine inspiration.

69. Nevertheless, for the provision of things necessary in domestic life, there developed itself, together with the group of inventive artists exercising these nobler functions, a vast body of craftsmen, and, literally, *man*ufacturers, workers by hand, who associated themselves, as chance, tradition, or the accessibility

of material directed, in towns which thenceforward occupied a leading position in commerce, as producers of a staple of excellent, or perhaps inimitable, quality; and the linen or cambric of Cambray, the lace of Mechlin, the wool of Worstead, and the steel of Milan, implied the tranquil and hereditary skill of multitudes, living in wealthy industry, and humble honour.

70. Among these artisans, the weaver, the ironsmith, the goldsmith, the carpenter, and the mason necessarily took the principal rank, and on their occupations the more refined arts were wholesomely based, so that the five businesses may be more completely expressed thus:

> The weaver and embroiderer,
> The ironsmith and armourer,
> The goldsmith and jeweller,
> The carpenter and engineer,
> The stonecutter and painter.

You have only once to turn over the leaves of Lionardo's sketch book, in the Ambrosian Library, to see how carpentry is connected with engineering,—the architect was always a stonecutter, and the stonecutter not often practically separate, as yet, from the painter, and never so in general conception of function. You recollect, at a much later period, Kent's description of Cornwall's steward:

"KENT. You cowardly rascal!—nature disclaims in thee, a tailor made thee!

CORNWALL. Thou art a strange fellow—a tailor make a

man?

KENT. Ay, sir; a stonecutter, or a painter, could not have made him so ill; though they had been but two hours at the trade."

71. You may consider then this group of artizans with the merchants, as now forming in each town an important Tiers Etat, or Third State of the people, occupied in service, first, of the ecclesiastics, who in monastic bodies inhabited the cloisters round each church; and, secondly, of the knights, who, with their retainers, occupied, each family their own fort, in allied defence of their appertaining streets.

72. A Third Estate, indeed; but adverse alike to both the others, to Montague as to Capulet, when they become disturbers of the public peace; and having a pride of its own,—hereditary still, but consisting in the inheritance of skill and knowledge rather than of blood,—which expressed the sense of such inheritance by taking its name habitually from the master rather than the sire; and which, in its natural antagonism to dignities won only by violence, or recorded only by heraldry, you may think of generally as the race whose bearing is the Apron, instead of the shield.

73. When, however, these two, or in perfect subdivision three, bodies of men, lived in harmony,—the knights remaining true to the State, the clergy to their faith, and the workmen to their craft,—conditions of national force were arrived at, under which all the great art of the middle ages was accomplished. The pride of the knights, the avarice of the priests, and the gradual abasement

of character in the craftsman, changing him from a citizen able to wield either tools in peace or weapons in war, to a dull tradesman, forced to pay mercenary troops to defend his shop door, are the direct causes of common ruin towards the close of the sixteenth century.

74. But the deep underlying cause of the decline in national character itself, was the exhaustion of the Christian faith. None of its practical claims were avouched either by reason or experience; and the imagination grew weary of sustaining them in despite of both. Men could not, as their powers of reflection became developed, steadily conceive that the sins of a life might be done away with, by finishing it with Mary's name on the lips; nor could tradition of miracle for ever resist the personal discovery, made by each rude disciple by himself, that he might pray to all the saints for a twelvemonth together, and yet not get what he asked for.

75. The Reformation succeeded in proclaiming that existing Christianity was a lie; but substituted no theory of it which could be more rationally or credibly sustained; and ever since, the religion of educated persons throughout Europe has been dishonest or ineffectual; it is only among the labouring peasantry that the grace of a pure Catholicism, and the patient simplicities of the Puritan, maintain their imaginative dignity, or assert their practical use.

76. The existence of the nobler arts, however, involves the harmonious life and vital faith of the three classes whom we

have just distinguished; and that condition exists, more or less disturbed, indeed, by the vices inherent in each class, yet, on the whole, energetically and productively, during the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. But our present subject being Architecture only, I will limit your attention altogether to the state of society in the great age of architecture, the thirteenth century. A great age in all ways; but most notably so in the correspondence it presented, up to a just and honourable point, with the utilitarian energy of our own days.

77. The increase of wealth, the safety of industry, and the conception of more convenient furniture of life, to which we must attribute the rise of the entire artist class, were accompanied, in that century, by much enlargement in the conception of useful public works: and—not by *private* enterprise,—that idle persons might get dividends out of the public pocket,—but by *public* enterprise,—each citizen paying down at once his share of what was necessary to accomplish the benefit to the State,—great architectural and engineering efforts were made for the common service. Common, observe; but not, in our present sense, republican. One of the most ludicrous sentences ever written in the blindness of party spirit is that of Sismondi, in which he declares, thinking of these public works only, that 'the architecture of the thirteenth century is entirely republican.' The architecture of the thirteenth century is, in the mass of it, simply baronial or ecclesiastical; it is of castles, palaces, or churches; but it is true that splendid civic works

were also accomplished by the vigour of the newly risen popular power.

"The canal named Naviglio Graude, which brings the waters of the Ticino to Milan, traversing a distance of thirty miles, was undertaken in 1179, recommended in 1257, and, soon after, happily terminated; in it still consists the wealth of a vast extent of Lombardy. At the same time the town of Milan rebuilt its walls, which were three miles round, and had sixteen marble gates, of magnificence which might have graced the capital of all Italy. The Genovese, in 1276 and 1283, built their two splendid docks, and the great wall of their quay; and in 1295 finished the noble aqueduct which brings pure and abundant waters to their city from a great distance among their mountains. There is not a single town in Italy which at the same time did not undertake works of this kind; and while these larger undertakings were in progress, stone bridges were built across the rivers, the streets and piazzas were paved with large slabs of stone, and every free government recognized the duty of providing for the convenience of the citizens."[15]

78. The necessary consequence of this enthusiasm in useful building, was the formation of a vast body of craftsmen and architects; corresponding in importance to that which the railway, with its associated industry, has developed in modern times, but entirely different in personal character, and relation to the body politic.

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[15] Simondi, vol ii. chap. 10.

Their personal character was founded on the accurate knowledge of their business in all respects; the ease and pleasure of unaffected invention; and the true sense of power to do everything better than it had ever been yet done, coupled with general contentment in life, and in its vigour and skill.

It is impossible to overrate the difference between such a condition of mind, and that of the modern artist, who either does not know his business at all, or knows it only to recognize his own inferiority to every former workman of distinction.

79. Again: the political relation of these artificers to the State was that of a caste entirely separate from the noblesse;[16] paid for their daily work what was just, and competing with each other to supply the best article they could for the money. And it is, again, impossible to overrate the difference between such a social condition, and that of the artists of to-day, struggling to occupy a position of equality in wealth with the noblesse,—paid irregular and monstrous prices by an entirely ignorant and selfish public; and competing with each other to supply the worst article they can for the money.

I never saw anything so impudent on the walls of any exhibition, in any country, as last year in London. It was a daub professing to be a "harmony in pink and white" (or some such nonsense;) absolute rubbish, and which had taken about a quarter of an hour to scrawl or daub—it had no pretence to be

[16] The giving of knighthood to Jacopo della Quercia for his lifelong service to Siena was not the elevation of a dexterous workman, but grace to a faithful citizen.

called painting. The price asked for it was two hundred and fifty guineas.

80. In order to complete your broad view of the elements of social power in the thirteenth century, you have now farther to understand the position of the country people, who maintained by their labour these three classes, whose action you can discern, and whose history you can read; while, of those who maintained them, there is no history, except of the annual ravage of their fields by contending cities or nobles;—and, finally, that of the higher body of merchants, whose influence was already beginning to counterpoise the prestige of noblesse in Florence, and who themselves constituted no small portion of the noblesse of Venice.

The food-producing country was for the most part still possessed by the nobles; some by the ecclesiastics; but a portion, I do not know how large, was in the hands of peasant proprietors, of whom Sismondi gives this, to my mind, completely pleasant and satisfactory, though, to his, very painful, account:—

"They took no interest in public affairs; they had assemblies of their commune at the village in which the church of their parish was situated, and to which they retreated to defend themselves in case of war; they had also magistrates of their own choice; but all their interests appeared to them enclosed in the circle of their own commonality; they did not meddle with general politics, and held it for their point of honour to remain faithful, through all revolutions, to the State of which they formed a part, obeying,

without hesitation, its chiefs, whoever they were, and by whatever title they occupied their places."

81. Of the inferior agricultural labourers, employed on the farms of the nobles and richer ecclesiastics, I find nowhere due notice, nor does any historian seriously examine their manner of life. Liable to every form of robbery and oppression, I yet regard their state as not only morally but physically happier than that of riotous soldiery, or the lower class of artizans, and as the safeguard of every civilized nation, through all its worst vicissitudes of folly and crime. Nature has mercifully appointed that seed must be sown, and sheep folded, whatever lances break, or religions fail; and at this hour, while the streets of Florence and Verona are full of idle politicians, loud of tongue, useless of hand and treacherous of heart, there still may be seen in their market-places, standing, each by his heap of pulse or maize, the grey-haired labourers, silent, serviceable, honourable, keeping faith, untouched by change, to their country and to Heaven.[17]

82. It is extremely difficult to determine in what degree the feelings or intelligence of this class influenced the architectural design of the thirteenth century;—how far afield the cathedral tower was intended to give delight, and to what simplicity of rustic conception Quercia or Ghiberti appealed by the fascination of their Scripture history. You may at least conceive, at this date, a healthy animation in all men's minds, and the children of the vineyard and sheepcote crowding the city on its festa days,

[17] Compare "Sesame and Lilies," sec. 38, p. 58. (P. 86 of the small edition of 1882.)

and receiving impulse to busier, if not nobler, education, in its splendour.[18]

83. The great class of the merchants is more difficult to define; but you may regard them generally as the examples of whatever modes of life might be consistent with peace and justice, in the economy of transfer, as opposed to the military license of pillage.

[18] Of detached abbeys, see note on Education of Joan of Arc, "Sesame and Lilies," sec. 82, p. 106. (P. 158 of the small edition of 1882.)

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.