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The Renaissance

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THE RENAISSANCE

In the early part of the fifteenth century a change as subtle and indefinable as it was significant, came over the spirit of European society. Without sharp break with the past, involving no strictly new creation, no sudden or unheralded revolution of ideas, gradually rose an altered mode of viewing man, the world, life—far less theological than the old, less respectful to tradition, more confident in man's powers and future—in fine, laic and human. Renewed study of classical antiquity was sign and instrument, rather than essence, of the new movement. If men looked back, it was mostly to clear their vision to look and walk forward. The new thinking, if marked by temporary unbelief, and more given than the old to human and secular things, was not essentially irreligious; if less scholastic, not less profound. Vaster conceptions of the field of truth were born. It was felt that no problem had been absolutely settled, and that the human faculties, either fettered or discouraged or else applied to inane inquiries, had as yet scarcely given a hint of the productive activity possible to them. Hence fresh, courageous, successful effort to see what man might be, do, know.

“During the Middle Ages,” says Symonds, “man had lived enveloped in a cowl. He had not seen the beauty of the world, or had seen it only to cross himself, and turn aside and tell his beads and pray. Like St. Bernard, travelling along the shores of the Lake Lemman, and noticing neither the azure of the waters nor the luxuriance of the vines nor the radiance of the mountains with their robe of sun and snow, but bending a thought-burdened face over the neck of his mule; even like this monk, humanity had passed, a careful pilgrim, intent on the terrors of sin, death, and judgment, along the highways of the world, and had not known that they were sight-worthy or that life is a blessing. Beauty is a snare, pleasure a sin, the world a fleeting show, man fallen and lost, death the only certainty, judgment inevitable, hell everlasting, heaven hard to win; ignorance is acceptable to God as a proof of faith and submission; abstinence and mortification are the only safe rules of life;—these were the fixed deas of the ascetic, mediaeval Church. The Renaissance shattered and destroyed them, rending the thick veil which they had drawn between the mind of man and the outer world, and flashing the light of reality upon the darkened places of his own nature. For the mystic teaching of the Church was substituted culture in the classical humanities; a new ideal was established, whereby man strove to make himself the monarch of the globe, on which it is his privilege as well as his destiny to live. The Renaissance was the liberation

of humanity from a dungeon, the double discovery of the outer and the inner world."

Memory and love of classical culture were, during the full Middle Ages, practically dead. Boethius was the last man whom they powerfully affected. The Church viewed ancient art and letters as hopelessly bound up with heathenism. Old manuscripts were lost or forgotten, the noblest works of antique art suffered to perish or be lost in rubbish. Heathen temples were defaced or pulled down; the Roman forum, its precious buildings levelled beneath feet of earth, became a cow-pasture. Latin grew corrupt, at last scarcely reminding of its origin. At the same time, slavish reverence for ecclesiastical authority was working to prevent all originality, aggression, or courage in thinking.

In just what way, or how completely, classical life perished in the early Middle Ages, we shall never know. Unquestionably it was at no instant clean gone. There are manuscripts of some of the great Latin classics dating from every century in what are called the Dark Ages. The early humanists were wont to speak of classical literature as having gone to sleep in the seventh century, a sleep of seven hundred years. Yes, but not only the Institutes of Caius and Justinian, but Sallust, Livy, Virgil, Lucan, Horace, Ovid, Terence, Pliny, and parts of Cicero and Seneca were more or less read by a few, and contributed scattering allusions and excerpts to ecclesiastical, scholastic, and historical works. Popes might anathematize and monks might bray as they would, always was there some disobedient brother in his cell or some schoolmaster in his lonely corner, whither he had stolen away after mass on the Lord's day, with his precious fragment of Quintilian, feeling half guiltily that what he read from the heathen page was more edifying than the pitiful postil to which he had been listening in the service.

Never were there wholly wanting men who loved to con Plutarch and the *De Officiis*, and who could not repress the question whether the world was all darkness and evil even before the Lord Jesus came. But such men, after the middle of the ninth century, were very few. The little classical Latin that continued to be read was for the most part not read with an appreciative spirit. Men did not then give up to antiquity. They did not wish it back, as later the humanists did. The experience of St. Jerome, who thought that Christ appeared to him in a dream, looking at him with reproach for having been reading Cicero, and

who repented, with a vow never to be guilty of that crime again, was repeated in the cases of many.

Quite too much credit has been given to the monks for preserving the classics. They happened to do it rather than did it of set purpose. Benvenuto d'Imola went once to Monte Casino, and found there the rarest manuscripts of classical authors lying helter-skelter in a wretched chamber, unguarded by lock and key or even by doors. Many were mutilated, the monks having cut out the finest parchment as stuff for breviaries and psalters, which they made for sale to women and children. If this vandalism prevailed at Monte Casino, what might not have been done at Fulda, Cluny, and St. Gall! A complete codex of Quintilian was, at St. Gall, literally unearthed from dirt and rubbish, as a fuller Cicero was at Lodi. When Niebuhr, in 1816, discovered in the library of the Verona Cathedral the long-lost, inexpressibly precious copy of Caius's Institutes of Roman law, the old text was everywhere bedimmed and, alas, in places made irrecoverable forever, by being written over with some miserable letters of St. Jerome.

With Greek it was worse still, for Greek was hardly known at all in the West. Paulus Diaconus, at the court of Charles the Great, about 800, could read it, but there were few who were able to join him. He may have learned the language at Pavia in Italy. It was Italy, we remember, and especially Southern Italy, which of all the West European lands, remained longest subject to Constantinople. In Sicily and Calabria, Greek lived on until after 1200 without break. Bartolommeo of Messina translated Aristotle's Ethics for Manfred. In the cloisters of St. Basil at Rossano, founded as refuges for Greeks and always in connection with Constantinople, Hellenic studies were all the time kept up, as their many books show. But these labours were isolated. A few among the renowned scholars of Central Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries—John Scotus Erigena, for instance, were known as Hellenists, but their attainments in this kind were thought curious rather than valuable. A little intercourse was maintained with the East, a few Greeks came to the West. Yet neither Gerbert, Abélard, nor John of Salisbury could read Greek, nor did any one of them seem to think such ignorance a loss. Richard de Bury, about the middle of the fourteenth century, is the first known to have expressed the feeling that inability to read Greek was a misfortune.

The boasted knowledge of Aristotle was for long nearly all at second, third, or fourth hand. The Arabians of Spain, earliest schoolmasters to Europe in the Aristotelian philosophy, knew nothing of the Greek original. They used Arabic translations of Syriac translations. Even the great Averroës, whom the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries supposed to have drawn his Aristotle pure from the sources, did not do so, but used a Hebrew translation of a commentary made on the basis of an Arabic translation of a Syriac translation of the Greek text.

The great merit of the Arabians consisted in introducing into Europe many new portions and pieces of Aristotle. In the full Middle Ages, but two of his writings were known to Northern scholars, the *Categories* and the one on Interpretation, and these only in a Latin translation that Boëthius had left. Abélard, dying in 1142, possessed only these two; Gilbertus Porretanus (d. 1154), had read both the *Analytics*; John of Salisbury a half-century later wrote with the whole *Organon* before him.

The Arabians brought the physical and metaphysical treatises, all still, of course, in their wretched, roundabout translations. It was an epoch in philosophy when, about 1200, Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, caused a translation of the immortal Stagirite to be prepared directly from the Greek.

Of Plato men were in almost total ignorance till the very morning of the Renaissance. The *Timæus*, in an incomplete translation, read by few, appreciated or understood by none, had been for centuries the only Platonic dialogue extant in Europe. The ecclesiastical writers almost never refer to Plato. As to Homer, his friends—which of course does not mean his readers—his friends in all Italy were counted up by Petrarch, and they amounted to seven.

The classical light rekindled by Charles the Great and Alcuin shone neither far nor long. The intellectual life of the Hohenstaufen period, whether in Germany under Frederick I or at Palermo or Amalfi under Frederick II, brilliant rather than strong, was likewise a temporary phenomenon. The revived study of Roman law, momentous in its way, could not revive the civilization whence that law sprang. Scholasticism, in the thirteenth century, with its worship¹ and partial understanding

¹ "A striking confirmation of the justness of the term 'Aristotelity' applied by Hobbes to describe the philosophy of the beginning of the 17th century is furnished by the fact that when Scheiner, the Jesuit—one of those, Galileo

of Aristotle, had a still less favourable tendency. If it created mental strength, discipline, and restlessness that were seeds of rich promise, it buried these seeds deep. With all its profound and true thoughts, dogmatism, formalism, narrowness, abstraction were its most obtrusive and effective characteristics. These things were mere forerunners of the Renaissance, not elements of the movement itself. They heralded the dawn, indeed, but for the greater part of Europe the dawn was not yet.

The intellectual darkness of Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries first broke in that Arabian Spain to which we have referred, whither with Mohammedan conquest had pressed the old culture of the east Mediterranean lands, taken up and for a time sedulously fostered by Islam. Through students from the North thronging their schools, the Arabians, both as free investigators and as editors and expounders of the classics, became teachers of Europe. One most happy outcome of the crusades was the quickened and enlarged intercourse of Western with Greek and Arabian learned men. During the crusades the Greek language began to be known, Aristotle learned at first hand. Schools and studies flourished everywhere, national literatures had birth. Bologna and Oxford had each its group of students by 1150. The Universities of Paris and Salamanca date from 1200, the former often numbering fifteen thousand pupils, sometimes more. Many other universities were active before 1300. Intelligence grew more independent as well as broader; the clergy lost their monopoly of learning. Abélard, Albertus Magnus, and Roger Bacon were worthy prophets of the Renaissance, unless indeed, we date the Renaissance itself from their days. Abélard was the first who dared to break with the traditional, dogmatic realism and to assert the rights of reason. Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon preached and introduced inductive, *a posteriori*, scientific procedure in a spirit worthy of Stuart Mill. Among his three sources of knowledge, above authority and reasoning, Roger Bacon places experi-

being another, who were the first to observe the solar spots—communicated, as he was bound to do, the discovery to the Provincial of the order of Jesuits, that functionary refused to believe in the solar spots, and even to look through Scheiner's telescope at them, saying that he had read Aristotle's writings from end to end many times, and had nowhere found in them anything like what Scheiner mentioned, and that the appearances he took for spots were the faults of his glasses or of his eyes, if not the effect of a disordered imagination." Bisset, *Historical Essays*, page 79.

ence, as the term of all speculation and as queen of the sciences, "alone able to certify and crown their results."

There are three other men, still more worthy of mention as the heralds of a brighter time. I refer to Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. All three received much inspiration from classical letters, which they knew and used well enough to propagate their enthusiasm therefor as a rich legacy to the men of the full Renaissance. Boccaccio is famous as the greatest story-teller in all literary history, superior even to our Chaucer, his imitator and debtor. *The Canterbury Tales*, it is well known, are, to no small extent, a simple reproduction of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

In Italy Boccaccio and Petrarch became literary law-givers, Boccaccio especially in prose, Petrarch, more deservedly, in poetry and prose both. Petrarch's diction, almost unapproachable in both purity and elegance, formed an everlasting enrichment of his mother speech. Dante had, we know, already given fixity to Italian, which was thus the earliest among modern languages to assume a national character. What Ennius did for the Latin tongue, and Luther with his Bible for the High German, that Dante accomplished for the language of Italy.

But Dante's greatness is far more than literary. He is philosopher, divine, historian, publicist. His immortal poem, *The Divine Comedy*, in style as unique as in contents it is often difficult, sets forth the entire body of mediæval ideas on theology, philosophy, natural science, astronomy, history, politics, antiquity. Heaven, hell, and purgatory as well as earth are here ransacked, and the simplest of the matters brought to view, made to reveal deep meanings.

"The reading of Dante," wrote, a few years ago, the most famous man of affairs our age has reared,—I mean Mr. Gladstone,—“the reading of Dante is not only a pleasure, an effort, a lesson, it is a strong discipline of the head, the intellect, the man. In the great school of Dante I have learned a very great part of that mental provision, small as it may be, with which I have made the journey of human life until nearly seventy-three years of age. . . . He who serves Dante serves Italy, Christianity, and the world.”

In *The Divine Comedy* we may read of the poet's strong, sad inner life, even the details. They obtrude; they fix attention. But Dante's sorrows never make him forget his political creed. He is a radical Ghibelline, and it is hardly more difficult to detect this in his *Divine Comedy* than in his professedly political volume, the *De Monarchia*. The Church is glorious, but subordinate to

the Empire. If Beatrice, personification of purity and love, guides through Paradise, so Virgil, panegyrist of Augustus, advocate of strong earthly government, is made to conduct through hell, where, as they pass along, they see Brutus and Cassius in torment, close by Judas Iscariot. Yet Dante does not thrust forward political or any philosophy, or theology even, to the lessening of poetic power. In fact, literature can boast not more than two poems comparable with *The Divine Comedy*.

These men stand at the door of the Renaissance but cannot quite let us in. I find Dante quoting from Homer, but I believe there is no evidence that he knew Greek. All his theology and philosophy are mediaeval and churchly. Everywhere in these he takes Thomas Aquinas for his master. He may prize and praise antique poets and philosophers highly, still—churchman-like—he leaves them all in limbo. Virgil, whom in the *De Monarchia* he calls “our poet,” “our divine poet,” and “our divine teacher” twenty or thirty times, cannot guide in Paradise, he says, “since he who has never known the law of the Lord, can never attain the seats of the blessed.” Avicenna and Averroës, with Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and, it would seem, nearly all the famous heathen, might have been in Heaven, he thinks, only that they had not been baptized. Dante’s spirit is humanistic but has not brought the body of his thinking under.

Petrarch was much more advanced, and was aware of having changed. He had a copy of Homer, which he kissed though he could not read it. Boccaccio even, living as he did far more fully in the new aeon than either of the others, never became an independent Greek scholar. He tells us in his *Genealogy of the Gods* how he toiled to get Leonzio Pilato to settle at Florence, kept him for years in his own house, managed to procure classical manuscripts from Greece to read with him, and at last saw a Greek professorship established for him there in the Tuscan capital, the first in Italy; but he seems to have found himself and Petrarch the only pupils, and the task of learning the new language with so indifferent teaching and appliances, beyond their powers. Boccaccio’s zeal for Greek was rewarded, and his influence in its behalf is his greatest glory; still competent Greek scholars were none too plentiful in Italy a century later. Ariosto knew no Greek, and had to apply to Bembo to name him a good Greek tutor for his son. What is more significant than their ignorance of Hellenic speech, neither member in this illustrious

triumvirate of the *quattro cento* betrays the slightest interest in antique art.

The fifteenth was the real Renaissance century; Florence the Renaissance centre. Florence became intellectually what she already was in virtue of her political constitution, a second Athens. By 1400 some ten thousand Florentine children could read, nearly six hundred were studying logic and Latin. Pilato indeed soon gave up his, but several other professorships of Greek were founded presently. More Greek manuscripts were imported; learned Byzantines came to Florence, young Florentines went to study at Constantinople. The Medici were not less zealous in aid of letters and culture than in their business and their conduct of the state. With Poggio, who took the lead, Bruni, Ficino, Valla, Poliziano, and many others vied in the discovery, interpretation, and publication of ancient writings. The neglected treasures of Monte Casino, of Cluny, of St. Gall, of Fulda were pulled to the light. Classical philosophy was studied without theological prejudice and from the sources—how successfully is shown by one of Raphael's incomparable paintings, *The School of Athens*. It recites the whole history of Greek philosophy.

From Florence this Renaissance spirit spread throughout Italy. At the Court of Naples, in the halls of the Lombard tyrants at Milan, as well as in the republican centres of Siena, Venice, and Genoa, men fell to poring over the glorious classics, striving through reconstruction of the great past to create for themselves a more worthy present. By Poggio and his circle, by Popes like Nicholas V, Julius II, and Leo X, the Holy See itself was brought under the same all-dominating influence. From Italy it passed to the rest of Europe, breaking forever the power of mediæval traditions and views of life. Ecclesiasticism, as Gregory VII and Innocent III had known it, was smitten with death.

This is the bright side of the Renaissance, but confessedly there was a dark. Passion for classical things turned in some quarters to downright paganism. Boccaccio in his time had treated Venus, Cupid, and Mars as if not less real than Christ and the saints. With him nuns are priestesses of Diana; sin is Atropos; Satan is Pluto; the apostles are knights afield against him. God is "that exalted and inestimable Prince, the Supreme Jove." Christ is son of Jove, and his resurrection a "return from the spoiled kingdoms of Pluto."

Now it was worse. Bembo, the favourite cardinal of Leo X, the same who used to swear "by the immortal gods," abhorred sermons and the Pauline letters; their style was so bad. He believed that nothing new could be created in literature; writers must simply imitate Cicero and Petrarch. Bembo's famous epitaph to Raphael might, for perfect latinity and exquisite beauty, have come from Virgil, for pantheistic sentiment, from Lucretius. It reads:

"Here lies that Raphael by whose flourishing the great mother of nature feared that herself would be outdone, yet in whose death she feared that she too would die."

Cardinal Bessarion comforted certain orphans by assuring them that their father "had gone to the place of the pure, to dance the mystic Bacchus-reel with the gods of Olympus." Carraro, protonotary of Pope Eugene IV, adapted Horace to the purpose of Christian worship. He availed himself, among other passages, of the twelfth ode of the first book, turning *gentis humanae pater atque custos*, into *gentis humanae pater et redemptor*. An oration before the University of Ingolstadt, 1502, calls Plato second Moses, physician of the soul, the inspirer of all highest moral striving, and ranges Zoroaster, Linus, Orpheus, Empedocles, Parmenides, and other heathen celebrities on a level with Moses, David, and the prophets. Milman reminds us that "on his deathbed Cosmo de Medici is attended by Ficino, who assures him of another life on the authority of Socrates, and teaches resignation in the words of Plato, Xenocrates, and other Athenian sages." Pletho, during the Council of Florence, avowed to George of Trebizond his conviction that men were upon the point of renouncing both gospel and Koran for some form of heathen religion. Conservatives felt called upon to denounce Plato, Averroës, and Alexander of Aphrodisia as the three pests of Italy.

Some humanists in high places not only forgot but transgressed Christian law. Popes lived like Nero and cursed by Jupiter and Venus. In inner rooms of the Lateran papal secretaries, who had spent the day in deciphering inscriptions or glossing manuscripts, devoted nights to carousing and plays of filthy wit, touching the Pope, the Church, and the most sacred as well as all manner of worldly things. They named their club the "bugiale," or "smithy of lies." Such was the evening pas-

time of that apostolic circle from whose pens solemn bulls and breves would next morning issue.

The Italian literature of the Renaissance proper, rich in quantity and variety, is not in quality what the prodigious intellectual life of the time and the inspiration awakened by so large acquaintance with the classics would lead us to expect. Only a few of its products can criticism declare great. Among these Guicciardini's *History of Italy* may perhaps be placed, certainly Machiavelli's writings, whatever opinion we may have in regard to their ethics. The most famous piece from Machiavelli is, of course, his *Prince*. It is a treatise on statecraft, wherein Caesar Borgia figures as hero, as model in a way, and where perfidy and falsehood seem to be recommended as quite legitimate means to political ends. Through this book the devil himself is supposed to have gotten a new title, that of "Old Nick," after the "Nicholas" in Machiavelli's name, Nicholas Machiavelli.

But it is not necessary to take the Florentine publicist in quite so bad a sense. He perhaps means only this, not that a ruler like his *Prince* is intrinsically desirable, but that in the then condition of Italy, so distracted in politics, such a ruler was necessary to stable national government. His judgment was natural at any rate, and there is much reason for believing it true. Poor Italy, so brilliant, so patient, so unfortunate, victim to every adventurer at home or from without—Italy never had a single or a solid government over it between Justinian and Victor Emanuel.

The names of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso have also passed into the literary history of the world. The *Orlando Inamorato* of Boiardo, and the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, re-work, only in a far richer way than had yet been done, the old sages relating to Roland (Orlando), the renowned Paladin of Charles the Great. The *Inamorato* is the more serious, deep, and moral; the *Furioso* the more flippant, imaginative, and beautifully expressed. Tasso, with his *Jerusalem Delivered*, in which he handles the First Crusade as Homer and Virgil do the Trojan War, falls far behind Ariosto, whom he strives to excel.

The small bulk of Italy's truly worthwhile literature in this period is due to a moral lack. It was Epicurean, not Stoic, antiquity which the Italian humanists raised from the dead. Dante, so set and heroic in goodness, had no second. In Petrarch is little moral strength. The man who, though arch-

deacon in the Church, and ceaselessly excoriating the clergy for vices, is himself not always chaste, one who devoted over three hundred sonnets and gave up the best twenty years of his life to moping over an unrequited love, could not have been influenced much by Zeno or by Seneca. "I am one of those," says he, "who take delight in grieving."

Boccaccio was at a level lower still, vulgar and sensual; and writers followed him, falling away from the rugged morality of Dante more and more. Authors were chiefly courtiers and of a most sycophantic type. Machiavelli, we have seen, glorifies Caesar Borgia. Ariosto makes an angel out of Caesar's sister, Lucretia, calling her "a second Lucretia, brighter for her virtues than the star of regal Rome"; and he also praises to immortality, in return for employment, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, whom he subsequently testifies that he for the best of reasons despised all the time. Yet Ariosto was a saint compared with some of his contemporaries.

Not strange that when a seer was raised up to divine and declare the real significance of the Renaissance movement, it was no Italian poet or Italian literator in any kind, but an artist. In the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican, in his immortal paintings, the *Dispute, Parnassus, School of Athens* and *Delivery of the Laws*, Raphael voiced the most characteristic message of the Renaissance to man—that Revelation, Culture, Philosophy, Church and State, each divine in its way, are ordained of God to live and work together in harmony.

This brings us to the art of the Renaissance period.

Renaissance art varies from that which it supplanted, by its infinitely greater beauty, exuberance, variety, and naturalness. Traditional subjects and the old stiff modes of treatment no longer give law. Motion enters the domain of art-representation. The beauty of saints and angels is made to heighten the expression of their holiness. Artists no longer neglect or degrade the human body as mere unworthy tenement of the spirit, but study and delineate it as noble in itself. Graceful positions, graceful movements, lovely landscapes are introduced. The world and man assume a strange air of joyousness. In short, art casts quite aside its old ascetic and pessimistic spirit. Artists now astonish not only by their numbers, but also by both their range and their profundity of genius. Giotto, Michelangelo, and Raphael were masters of the three great arts; Michelangelo

poet and engineer besides. Da Vinci's genius was more universal still. In point here is the fact that painting, totally lacking that classical stimulus so helpful to architecture and sculpture, was now the field of the most copious production. But in all art—besides new cycles of sacred subjects, mythical, classical, and profane—historical ones are brought in, the old themes handled in a free way, and subjected to limitless variations. Draperies are composed, actions and expressions suited to subjects and moments. Apostles, prophets, saints are now portrayed as actual human beings. Madonna and child, with Joseph and the little John, image real domestic experience. The sacred blends with the natural, heaven comes down to earth. In these ways the love of beauty and the interests of our present life are brought to mingle with the devotion inspired by the art, which thus acts to deliver from narrow and distorted religiousness. Let us add that much of the new architecture and sculpture, especially Michelangelo's, was characterized by a strength and grandeur never before attained.

Architecture was the first of all the arts to defy tradition, a forwardness for which there were several reasons. First, innovations in architecture were little liable to the charge of heterodoxy, not embodying so visibly or so confessedly as did most of the paintings, religious or theological ideas. Another cause was that the Renaissance, among the earliest of its influences, directed study to the large number of ancient buildings which had survived the Dark Ages, and set men about the excavation of ruins. Still another was that in Italy no architectural style had become strict law. The Byzantine prevailed in South Italy, the Gothic only in the North, neither in Rome, where a Romanesque fashion had unconsciously survived. The Baptistery in Florence, finished by 1300, gives foregleams of the Renaissance, especially in its "paradise-doors." The Cathedral there, with its immense horizontal spaces, strives away from the Gothic, which Giotto's tower retains only in its ornament.

Renaissance architecture proper owes most to Brunelleschi's initiative, who boldly introduced vaulting in the Florence Cathedral, and gave the flat, basilica roof to San Lorenzo. Michelangelo, being asked where he wished to be buried, replied: "Where my eyes may eternally rest on the work of Brunelleschi."

The laws of Vitruvius were now generally introduced, palaces completely Romanized, churches brought back more to that pat-

tern which, save the transept, had been borrowed from the Roman basilica and is still dominant in the churches of Western Christendom. Of this new mode of building the centre was Rome, where Bramante began, Michelangelo completed, its most splendid representative, St. Peter's. Contemporaneously with Michelangelo wrought Palladio, mainly in Venice, Verona, and Genoa, famous still for palaces wherewith his skill adorned them. In sculpture as well as in architecture, Michelangelo is the greatest name, his *David*, *Moses*, and *Night* equalling, if they do not surpass, the choicest extant specimens of antique statuary.

The new Italian painting soared highest, unquestionably outdoing Greek. Cimabue, who astonished the world by painting a Madonna as a real and beautiful woman, led in point of time, his pupil, Giotto, Ruskin's idol, coming next. Massaccio, another mighty Pre-Raphaelite, advanced not a little upon his predecessors in mastery of light, shade, colour, and drapery. He made subjects live, breathe, speak. For delineating spiritual beauty Fra Angelico is unequalled. Michelangelo's great paintings in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican, awful in conception, miracles of execution, are among the chief glories of art-creation.

But Raphael is the foremost painter of all the ages, his Sistine Madonna, of which every one knows but no one ever wearies, standing in unapproachable excellence upon the pinnacle of art. He is as prolific as he is consummate, yet in neither respect so wonderful as in his restless effort toward an ever advancing ideal. Titian, Paul Veronese, Leonardo da Vinci, and Correggio, contemporary with Angelo and Raphael, were artists that would have astounded any other age. If the seventeenth century betrays some decline in strength, originality, and morality, Guido Reni and Carlo Dolci at least keep on high the sense of beauty, Dolci's Corsini Madonna being in this quite without rival.

In turning, now, from the outward features of this history more to its inner sources and causes, we envisage a pair of very common errors that should be unlearned. One resides in the notion that the Renaissance came to Italy from without, through mechanical impact, instead of rising from the depths of Italian society's own life and experience. The Latin occupation of Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade, and the fall of that city in 1453, have been referred to as if the westward hegira of Greek scholars caused by these events were the main cause of the classical refflorescence.

Now the Renaissance was a new birth of classical Latin things as well as of classical Greek. The turning-point in it so far as related to Greek antiquity, was its lifting of Plato to prominence and renewing the old Athenian war between Academy and Lycaeum, this time with success to the Academy. But the Greek fugitives from Constantinople were not the bringers of Plato to the West, at any rate not the first bringers. Most of them were in fact not acquainted with him. Petrarch, so early, had sixteen of the Platonic writings, which Boccaccio laid plans to get translated. Several were in fact translated by Bruni. Cosmo dei Medici formed his Academy and trained Ficino on purpose to make Plato and Plotinus known.

The state of Greek letters at Constantinople on the opening of the Renaissance, is matter even yet of very imperfect knowledge. It is certain that Greek was still cultivated there, that old Greek manuscripts were at least as plentiful there as old Latin ones were in and about Rome, and that classical Greek was never a dead language. The stability of the court and of schools worked to the good of literature. Manuscripts were preserved, as in the West, by the clergy, by monks, schoolmasters, and isolated savants. Xenophon, Strabo, Plutarch, and Arrian were continually copied and read. And there were critical Greek scholars: Chrysoloras, George of Trebizond, Theodore of Gaza, Bessarion, Laskaris. But the "hungry little Greeks" *Græculi esurientes*, as they were called, who flocked westward from the face of the conquering Turk, were very few of them truly learned men.

I am far from questioning, however, that many of the things which I have set down as effects of the Renaissance-spirit, became with time causes in turn. Thus, printing incalculably spread and stimulated intelligence, and the influence of Columbus and Copernicus reached philosophy and theology. God and his universe were seen to be greater than men had dreamed. The time-honoured, ever-ready explanations of things no longer sufficed. Far-reaching questions pressed for answer. One could ask whether man, whether this world, were really the centre of the divine plan.

These remarks introduce us to the other error, that of taking the Renaissance for a merely Italian affair. It is not surprising that Italy saw the sunrise of the new age and, in some respects, its fullest day,—Italy, chief heir of the classical world, chief centre of mediaeval civilization. In Italy, to say sooth, paganism

had never died. Italy was also the earliest land to acquire wealth, that indispensable prerequisite to leisure for thought and study. Here, too, feudalism was feeble, liberty first had birth. Here almost alone in the Middle Ages was liberty enjoyed. Lastly, the whole mediaeval history of Italy, so stormy and changeful, was calculated to nurse individuality, inventiveness, daring. It thus became possible for Italy to bear the brunt of the Renaissance struggle, doing in this a work without which no subsequent progress could have been made. Yet it is very erroneous to suppose the Renaissance confined to Italy. It was European. All Western humanity now started up to put away childish things. Thought, renouncing prescription and mere formal work, was set free for effort in a hundred new directions.

The telescope, already known to the Arabs, Roger Bacon described to Europe in 1250. The compass was brought to light in 1302, linen paper and gunpowder about 1320. Printing triumphs in 1438, and in less than a century Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, and Plato appear in noble editions. America is discovered in 1492, the Cape rounded in 1497. Copernicus explains the solar system in 1507, proves the revolution of the earth in 1530. Savonarola closes the fifteenth century, Luther opens the sixteenth, which, going out, leaves behind Boehme, Bacon, Hobbes, and Descartes. In this same period feudalism gave way and absolute monarchy rose in France, Spain, England, Austria, and Turkey. Modern history, in the narrower and strict sense, begins with the Renaissance. "The history of the Renaissance," says Symonds, "is the history of the attainment of self-conscious freedom by the human spirit, manifested in the European races."

The Renaissance beyond Italy assumed great consequence only toward the end of the fifteenth century. France felt Italy soonest and most. Italian artists and scholars visited that land, the soldiers of Charles VIII carried home its spirit when chased from Naples. The sixteenth century produced several French artists of high rank, none, however, reaching the exalted quality of the Dutch painters, the brothers Van Eyck, in the preceding. Hans Holbein the Younger was the first non-Italian to do this, when he painted that Darmstadt Madonna which belongs among the very small number of consummate masterpieces. The works of Dürer, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Van Dyck still delight all beholders.

In Germany, however, the inspiration begotten of the Renais-

sance tended more to study, thought, and reform in life than to art. Just at the moment when Machiavelli was inditing his *Prince*, Luther was thinking out those ideas of spiritual liberty which were to set free North Germany and the world. Universities were founded and filled, clubs of humanists formed, breadth of view cultivated, an astonishing mass of learning acquired. Reuchlin, Erasmus, Von Hutten, and Melanchthon were foremost in these activities, and to them in more than one respect the modern world owes an immeasurable debt. They fought obscurants, discovered and verified manuscripts, corrected texts, made commentaries. Erasmus was the first modern to edit the Greek New Testament; there is scarcely a prominent Greek or Latin classic which Melanchthon did not expound.

We cannot but see from this point the vital connection between the Renaissance and the Reformation. They were not two movements but parts of one. Amid such ideas and currents of feeling as have been described, it was impossible that the Church should be revered and valued as before. Various other causes aided depreciation of her, turning it in many quarters into contempt and hatred.

There was the great schism of the West, 1378-1417, two rival Popes, five years of the time three, with credentials of apparently equal validity, thundering excommunications at each other. Great dissidence of view prevailed, during and after the Council of Pisa and Constance, on the question whether Council or Pope was superior. The Inquisition, organized by Innocent III and extensively used against the Albigenses, was always unpopular with the masses, especially in Germany. It was discovered that St. Thomas had in many ways misinterpreted Aristotle. Averroistic views were abroad on several important questions, notably that of immortality. The chill which zeal for the positive element in Christianity received from the prevalent ardent study of the classics was felt everywhere. The poverty of even the royal laity contrasted strikingly with the wealth of ecclesiastical institutions and the exorbitant demands on their behalf urged by greedy and assuming churchmen.

Most serious of all was the moral corruption in ecclesiastical circles, especially in Italy. Popes practised open concubinage and simony, and in governing the Church, purely in their own interest, made free use of poison and the dagger. Prelates who had paid high for places, were butchered that these might be sold

again. The worst was under Alexander VI, his court a den of fiends, embracing an assassin-in-chief, a professional poison-mixer, a numerous harem. The moral gangrene spread to monasteries, nunneries, laic life. Bastards were too common to bear stigma, the words "honour" and "virtue" lost their old meanings, morality sunk to a level lower than Epicurean. Boiardo wrote:

"Tis said by some that by and by the good
Pope and his prelates will reform their ways.
I tell you that a turnip has no blood,
Nor sick folk health, nor can you hope to raise
Syrup from vinegar to sauce your food.
The Church will be reformed when summer days
Come without gadflies; when a butcher's store
Has neither bones nor dogs about the door."

And Boiardo was a churchman.

Alexander VI was Alexander Borgia, father of Caesar Borgia, Machiavelli's hero. Caesar was a chip of the old block. He used to go around often in the night with a squad of his ruffians, visiting vengeance on whomsoever he hated; and in the morning, four or five bodies of murdered men would be found with the marks of his dagger upon them. The Carmelite, Adam of Genoa, who had preached against simony, was found dead in his bed, stabbed in twenty places. For such as Caesar did not dare or care to take off in this way, he had a white, pleasant-tasting powder to poison withal, killing gradually. The father met his death, the son narrowly escaping the same fate, by accidentally drinking wine which they had drugged with this powder for use in removing a cardinal. There is awful satire in one of Boccaccio's Decameron tales, about a Jew, converted to Christianity through a visit to Rome. He reasoned that a religion which was able to live in spite of such utter godlessness in its highest places, could not but be of God.

Do not suppose that these terrible evils were caused by the Renaissance. Most of them antedated it long. But it called fresh attention to them, in that way rendering serious an opposition to the Church, or to its administration, which had been wanting in no age. This opposition was partly practical, insisting on reform of morals without attacking the frame of the Church, and criticizing ecclesiastical powers only so far as they withstood this; and partly theoretical, aimed at the very constitu-

tion of the Church. The theoretical critics were of very various stripes, from pure independents to such as merely wished to subject the Pope to new guaranties of fidelity to duty. Doctrine, as distinct from polity, did not enter into these controversies, even the most licentious Popes being scrupulously orthodox. To the first of these classes, the practical, belongs Savonarola of Florence, whose difficulty with the Church was complicated by politics; and in the main, Huss of Bohemia, burned at Constance.

To the second, or more theoretical class of reformers, we may reckon the Albigenses and Waldenses, objects of crusade and Inquisition, to counteract whose influence the great preaching orders of Dominicans and Franciscans had been organized; Abbot Joachim of Flora, with his "Eternal Gospel," which proclaimed in essence a new, churchless dispensation, of spiritual men, free through the Holy Ghost, even from the law of Christ; John Wyclif, the first English reformer, who declared the Papacy to be the poison of the Church, the Pope, however good personally, Antichrist by virtue of his claim to rule the universal Church; and lastly, a large party of devoted churchmen, strongly represented at the Councils of Pisa and Constance, who merely opposed papal absolutism and wished to subject the Pope entirely to the authority of general councils.

The land where, for special reasons, this spirit of ecclesiastical rebellion was strongest was Germany. Real piety and morality had here their chief seat. The Bible was common and in the vernacular; preaching likewise, much of which was evangelical and earnest. John Wessel had proclaimed up and down the Rhine Valley much the same doctrines which Luther was about to advocate with such success. Wessel, Goch, and the Friends of God had been influential in the same direction. Italian vice was near enough to be known, not familiar enough to be popular. The spirit and beliefs of Huss had lived on, nourished by the memory of his holy life, his brave and unjust death. With all this was joined that Teutonic individualism and love of independence, which, partly good, partly evil, have made Germany even to our day, a theatre of political disorder.

Luther had at first no thought of breaking with the Church, was drawn to the step gradually and by force of circumstances rather than of set purpose. A year after arraigning Tetzl he appeals to the Pope, holds an equally docile attitude in conference with Miltitz in 1519, is not averse to peace even at the

Colloquy of Regensburg so late as 1541. The Augsburg Confession disclaimed all purpose of framing a new Church. But his outcry against Tetzels's shameless traffic had voiced a popular feeling stronger than he thought, and after his bold stand at Worms he found himself head of a movement for which times were ripe, bearing him on in spite of himself. The intelligence and moral earnestness which speedily sided with him, soon commanded the people. Before the Reformation was half a century old—notwithstanding its foes and its excesses, the Peasants' War, the Münster anarchy, and much else—fully ninety per cent. of the Germans had embraced it. Meantime a more radical revolt against Latin Christianity had been spreading in Switzerland, led by Zwingli. Checked for a time by his death, this Southern Protestantism assumed double vigour under Calvin. From Geneva, its centre, zealous preachers went forth in all directions, fearless of death, bent on the salvation of souls.

To be impressed with the glory of the Reformation, look away from its theological disputes and think of it—only so can it be philosophically accounted for—as piece or product of the Renaissance. While Eck was hurrying over the Brenner Pass to reach Leo and spread before him his bundle of lies about Luther, while Luther himself at Marburg was expressing to Zwingli a temper only better than Eck's own; the ordinary believer all over Europe was passing into a new and beatific world of religious life and conceptions. A better thought came to prevail of God as not fickle or vindictive but rational, law-loving, and benign. Men's consciences became freer, worship more spiritual, religious devotion less a slavish service, less a thing of form and ceremony. Life was viewed more as something besides probation, as having legitimate interests of its own. The present world, too, men felt, was meant to be enjoyed. This is in part, what the "humanism" of the Renaissance signifies. Man was looked on less as a merely religious being, as simply an instrument for God's glory in the old sense, and religion, more as a personal instead of a collective concern. In general, individualism replaced the mediaeval spirit, so dominant before, of ecclesiasticism, of class, guild, fraternity. Larger belief in the prevalence of law and order in the universe, along with the discovered falsity of many old beliefs, brought the entire scholastic method of truth-seeking into disrepute, and substituted for it the more rational and fruitful one of observation, experiment, induction.

An age of criticism came, wherein thought refused to limit itself to formal exercise or allow its field to be prescribed. The content of truth, revealed or other, had to be examined. Theology began perforce to be scientific.

Not in a day, not in a century, was the old-time narrowness, crudity, heathenism of religious thinking to pass away. Alas, it lingers still. The mills of God grind slowly. But every moment since the Renaissance it has felt and been realizing its doom.

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