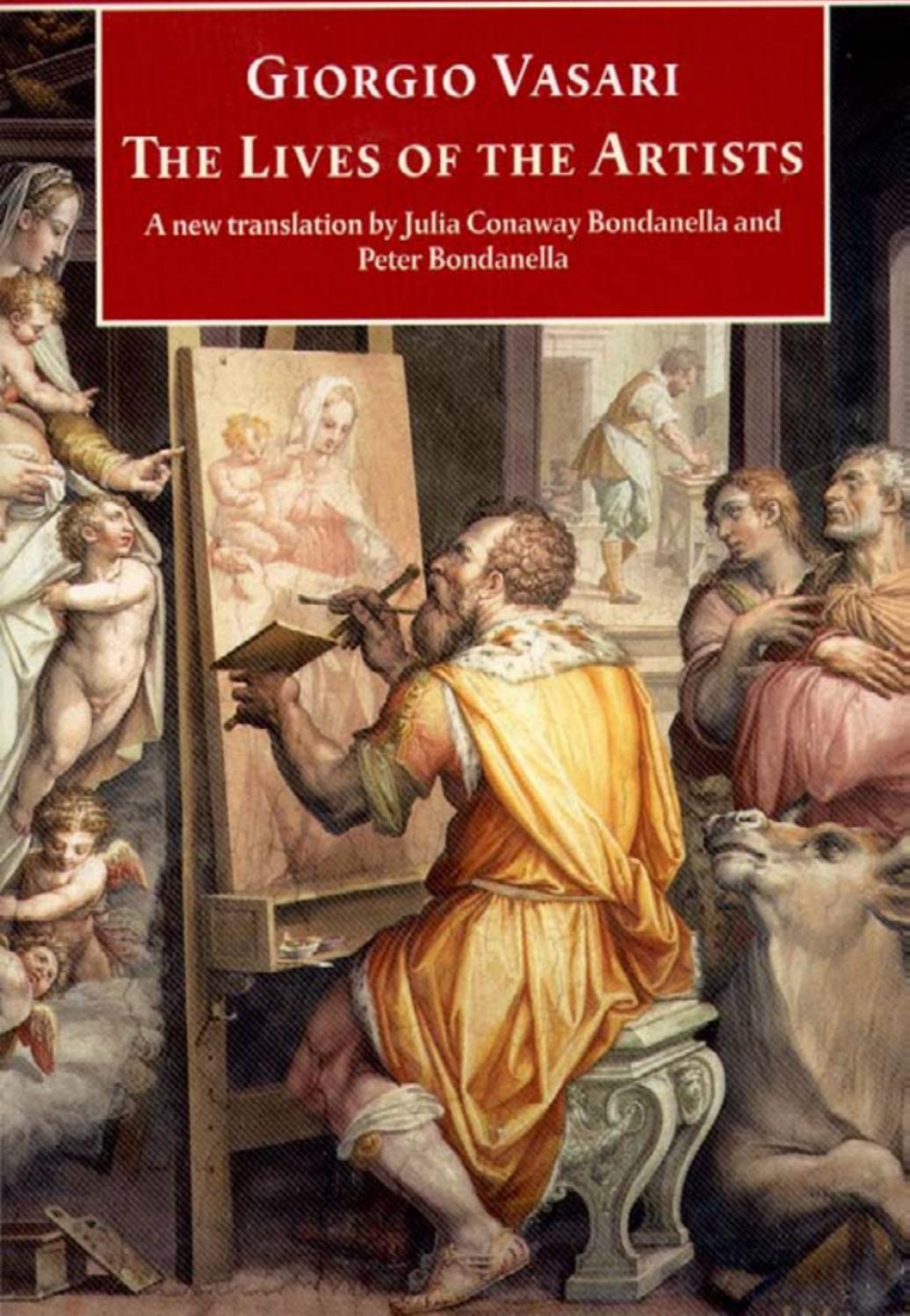


OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

GIORGIO VASARI
THE LIVES OF THE ARTISTS

A new translation by Julia Conaway Bondanella and
Peter Bondanella



*The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti,
Florentine Painter, Sculptor, and Architect*

[1475–1564]

While industrious and distinguished spirits, illuminated by the widely renowned Giotto and his followers, were striving to give the world proof of the talent which the benevolence of the stars and the proportionate mixture of their humours had bestowed upon their genius, all toiling anxiously, though in vain, in their eagerness to imitate the grandeur of Nature with the skills of art, in order to come as close as they could to that ultimate knowledge many people call intelligence, the most benevolent Ruler of Heaven mercifully turned His eyes towards earth, and, witnessing the hopeless quantity of such labours, the most fervid but fruitless studies, and the presumptuous opinion of men who were further from the truth than shadows from the light, He decided, in order to rid us of so many errors, to send to earth a spirit who, working alone, was able to demonstrate in every art and every profession the meaning of perfection in the art of design, how to give relief to the details in paintings by means of proper drawing, tracing, shading, and casting light, how to work with good judgement in sculpture, and how to make buildings comfortable and secure, healthy, cheerful, well proportioned, and richly adorned with various decorations in architecture.* Moreover, He wanted to join to this spirit true moral philosophy and the gift of sweet poetry, so that the world would admire and prefer him for the wholly singular example of his life, his work, the holiness of his habits, and all his human undertakings, and so that we would call him something divine rather than mortal. And because He saw that in the practice of these professions and in these most singular crafts—that is, painting, sculpture, and architecture—Tuscan minds were

always among the greatest and most elevated, and because they were more scrupulous in their efforts to study these arts than any other people of Italy, He wanted to bequeath to this spirit, as his native city, Florence, the most worthy among all the other cities, so that the perfection Florence justly achieved with all her talents might finally reach its culmination in one of her own citizens.

Thus, in the year 1474 under a fateful and fortunate star, a son was born in the Casentino district of an honest and noble lady to Lodovico di Lionardo Buonarroti Simoni who, according to what people say, was a descendant of the most noble and ancient family of the Counts of Canossa.* To this Lodovico, who, in that year, was *podestà** of the castle of Chiusi and Caprese, near Sasso della Vernia in the diocese of Arezzo, where Saint Francis received the stigmata, was born a son, let me say, on the sixth day of March on Sunday, around eight o'clock at night, to whom he gave the name of Michelangelo, for without thinking any further about the matter, he was inspired by One from above and wished to make him into something celestial and divine, beyond the usual human scope, as was seen in the horoscope of his birth, which had Mercury ascendant and Venus entering the house of Jupiter in a favourable position, showing that one could expect to see among his accomplishments miraculous and magnificent works created through his hands and his genius. After Lodovico's term as *podestà* ended, he returned to Florence and to his villa in Settignano, three miles from the city, where he owned a farm inherited from his ancestors (a place abundant in stone and everywhere filled with quarries of blue-grey sandstone continuously mined by stone-cutters and sculptors, most of whom are born in this area), and Michelangelo was given by Lodovico to a wet-nurse in the villa who was the wife of one of the stone-cutters. Thus, conversing with Vasari on one occasion, Michelangelo jokingly declared: 'Giorgio, if I have any intelligence at all, it has come from being born in the pure air of your native Arezzo, and also because I took the hammer and chisels with which I carve my figures from my wet-nurse's milk.'

In time the number of Lodovico's children grew, and since

he was not well off and had little income, he placed his children in service with the Wool and Silk Guilds while Michelangelo, who was already grown, was placed with Master Francesco da Urbino in his grammar school, and because Michelangelo's genius attracted him to the pleasures of drawing, he spent all the time he could drawing in secret, for which he was scolded and sometimes beaten by his father and his elders, since they probably thought applying oneself to a craft they did not recognize was a base and unworthy undertaking for their ancient house. During this time Michelangelo struck up a friendship with Francesco Granacci, also a young man, who had been placed with Domenico Ghirlandaio to learn the art of painting, and since Granacci, who was fond of Michelangelo, saw he was skilful in drawing, he assisted him every day by giving him sketches by Ghirlandaio, known at that time not only in Florence but throughout all of Italy as one of the best masters alive.* And so Michelangelo's desire to draw increased day by day, and since Lodovico could not prevent the young man from studying design and saw no remedy for it, he decided, in order to derive some benefit from it and upon the advice of friends, to place him with Domenico Ghirlandaio.

When Michelangelo was apprenticed into the craft with Domenico, he was fourteen years of age, and because the man who wrote his biography after 1550, when I wrote these *Lives* the first time, declares that some people who never associated with Michelangelo have said things which never happened and left out many details worthy of note, I cite in particular the passage where he accuses Domenico of jealousy and of never having offered Michelangelo any kind of assistance; this was obviously false, as can be seen from a document written in the hand of Lodovico, Michelangelo's father, and inscribed in Domenico's record books now in the possession of his heirs, which states as follows:

1488. On this day, the first of April, I record that I, Lodovico di Lionardo di Buonarroti, place my son Michelangelo with Domenico and David di Tommaso di Currado for the next three years to come with these covenants and agreements: that the said Michelangelo must remain with the above-mentioned for the stipulated period to

learn to paint and to practise this trade, and to do whatever the above-mentioned may order him to do, and, during these three years, the aforesaid Domenico and David must give him twenty-four newly minted florins—six in the first year, eight the second, and ten the third, in all, a total of ninety-six lire.

And below this statement is this record or entry written in Lodovico's hand: 'The above-mentioned Michelangelo on this day of 16 April received two florins in gold. I, Lodovico di Lionardo, his father, received twelve lire and twelve *scudi*.' I have copied these entries from this book to demonstrate that everything written earlier and everything that is now to be written is the truth; nor do I know anyone who was more familiar with Michelangelo than I, or anyone who has ever been a better friend or more faithful servant to him, as anyone can testify; nor do I believe that anyone can display a greater number of letters written by Michelangelo himself or letters which contain more affection than he has shown for me. I have made this digression to bear witness to the truth, and this must suffice for the remainder of his *Life*. Now, let us return to the story.*

Michelangelo's skill and character grew in such a way that it amazed Domenico, who saw him executing works beyond a young man's ability, for it seemed to him that Michelangelo not only surpassed his other students (of whom he had a large number) but on many occasions equalled works he himself had completed. It happened that one of the young men studying with Domenico had copied some clothed female figures in ink from Ghirlandaio's works, and Michelangelo took the paper and went over the outlines with a thicker pen in the way it should have been done (that is, perfectly), and it is a marvellous thing to see the difference between the two styles and the excellence and judgement of a young man who was so spirited and bold that he had enough courage to correct the work of his master. Today, I keep this drawing near me as a relic, for I obtained it from Granacci to put in my book of drawings with others I received from Michelangelo; in the year 1550, when he was in Rome, Giorgio [Vasari] showed it to Michelangelo, who recognized it and loved seeing it again,

saying modestly that he knew more of that art as a child than he did now as an old man.

Now while Domenico was working on the main chapel of Santa Maria Novella, it happened one day while he was away that Michelangelo began to sketch the scaffolding with some stools and the implements of the craft, along with some of the young men who were working there. When Domenico returned and saw Michelangelo's sketch, he declared: 'This boy knows more about it than I do.' And he was astonished by the new style and the new kind of imitation that derived from the judgement given by heaven to a youth of such a tender age, for to tell the truth, it was as much as one might expect in the practice of an artisan who had worked for many years. This was because all the knowledge and ability of true grace was, in his nature, enhanced by study and practice, for in Michelangelo it produced more sublime works every day, as he clearly began to demonstrate in the portrait he did from an engraving by Martin the German,* which gained him a fine reputation. Since a scene by this same Martin, which was engraved in copper and showed Saint Anthony being beaten by devils, had reached Florence, Michelangelo drew it with his pen in such a way that it was not recognized as his, and he painted it with colours; in order to copy the strange forms of some of the devils, he went to buy fish that had scales of unusual colours and showed so much talent in this work that he acquired from it both credit and renown. He also copied drawings done by various old masters so closely that they were not recognized as copies, for by staining and ageing them with smoke and various materials, he soiled them so that they seemed old and could not be distinguished from the originals; he did this for no other reason than to have the originals, giving away his copies, because he admired the originals for the excellence of their skill, which he sought to surpass in his copies, thereby acquiring a very great reputation.

In those days Lorenzo de' Medici the Magnificent kept Bertoldo the sculptor* in his garden near Piazza San Marco, not so much as the custodian or guardian of the many beautiful antiquities he had collected and assembled there at great expense, but rather because he wished above all else to create a

school for excellent painters and sculptors and wanted them to have the above-mentioned Bertoldo, who was a pupil of Donatello, as their teacher and guide. And although he was so old that he could no longer work, he was nevertheless a very experienced and famous master, not only because he had most carefully polished the pulpits cast by his master Donatello, but also because he had cast many other works in bronze of battle scenes as well as some other small objects, and his skill was such that no one in Florence at that time could surpass him. Thus, Lorenzo, who bore a great love for the arts of painting and sculpture, lamenting the fact that in his day no renowned and noble sculptors could be found as compared with painters of the greatest merit and fame, decided, as I said, to found a school, and accordingly he told Domenico Ghirlandaio that if he had any young men in his shop who were inclined to this art, he should send them to his garden, where he wished to train and form them in a way that would honour himself, Domenico, and his city. Thus, Domenico gave him some of his best young men, including among others Michelangelo and Francesco Granacci; and when they went to the garden, they found that Torrigiani, a young man of the Torrigiani family, was there working on some clay figures in the round that Bertoldo had given him to do.*

After Michelangelo saw these figures, he made some himself to rival those of Torrigiani, so that Lorenzo, seeing his high spirit, always had great expectations for him, and, encouraged after only a few days, Michelangelo began copying with a piece of marble the antique head of an old and wrinkled faun with a damaged nose and a laughing mouth, which he found there. Although Michelangelo had never before touched marble or chisels, the imitation turned out so well that Lorenzo was astonished, and when Lorenzo saw that Michelangelo, following his own fantasy rather than the antique head, had carved its mouth open to give it a tongue and to make all its teeth visible, this lord, laughing with pleasure as was his custom, said to him: 'But you should have known that old men never have all their teeth and that some of them are always missing.' In that simplicity of his, it seemed to Michelangelo, who loved and feared this lord, that Lorenzo

was correct; and as soon as Lorenzo left, he immediately broke a tooth on the head and dug out the gum in such a way that it seemed the tooth had fallen out, and anxiously awaited Lorenzo's return, who, after coming back and seeing Michelangelo's simplicity and excellence, laughed about it on more than one occasion, recounting it to his friends as if it were miraculous; and having resolved to assist Michelangelo and to show him favour, he sent for his father Lodovico and asked if he could have the boy, telling him that he wanted to raise him as one of his own sons, and Lodovico most willingly granted his request; and then Lorenzo prepared a room for Michelangelo in his home and had him cared for, so that he always ate at the table with his sons and other worthy and noble people who stayed with Lorenzo and by whom he was treated with honour. This occurred the year following Michelangelo's apprenticeship to Domenico when Michelangelo was either fifteen or sixteen years old, and he remained in that house for four years until the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492.

During this time, as his salary and in order to assist his father, Michelangelo received five ducats a month from Lorenzo, and to make him happy Lorenzo gave him a purple robe and his father a job in the Customs Department; indeed, all the young men in the garden were being paid a salary, some more and others less, because of the generosity of this most noble and magnificent citizen, and while he lived they were rewarded. Around this time, on the advice of a singular man of letters named Poliziano,* Michelangelo created in a single piece of marble given to him by Lorenzo the Battle of Hercules with the Centaurs, which was so beautiful that those who examine it today sometimes cannot believe it is by the hand of a young man rather than by an esteemed master who has been steeped in the study and practice of this art. Today the work is in Michelangelo's home, kept as an exceptional treasure in his memory by Lionardo, his nephew; it is not many years ago that Lionardo also owned, in memory of his uncle, a bas-relief in marble of Our Lady executed by Michelangelo a little more than an armslength high; in this work Michelangelo, as a young man at this same time who wanted to imitate Donatello's style, acquitted himself so well

that it seems to have been done by Donatello himself, except that it contains more grace and a better sense of design.* Lionardo later gave the second work to Duke Cosimo de' Medici, who considers it especially unique, since it is the only sculpture in bas-relief by Michelangelo.

Returning to Lorenzo the Magnificent's garden, it was completely filled with antiquities and lavishly decorated with excellent paintings, all of which had been collected there for their beauty as well as for study and pleasure, and Michelangelo always had the keys to the place, for he was far more eager than the other young men in all his actions and with great boldness always proved himself to be very quick. He sketched the paintings of Masaccio for many months in the Carmine, and he copied those works with such judgment that he amazed the artisans and others in such a way that along with his fame, envy began to grow up against him. It is said that Torrigiani, who struck up a friendship with him, was fooling around when, prompted by envy at seeing Michelangelo more honoured and more talented as an artist, he struck Michelangelo upon the nose with such force that he broke and flattened it, unfortunately marking Michelangelo for life; and this was the reason why he was banished from Florence, as was mentioned elsewhere.*

After the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Michelangelo returned to his father's home with endless sorrow over the death of such a great man, a friend to all with talent, and there he purchased a large block of marble from which he carved a Hercules that was four armslengths high, which stood for many years in the Strozzi palace and was considered a marvellous work; afterwards, during the year of the siege, it was sent by Giovambattista della Palla to France to King Francis.* It is said that Piero de' Medici, who was the heir of his father Lorenzo, often used to send for Michelangelo, with whom he had long been friends, when he wanted to purchase ancient cameos and other engraved stones; and one winter when it snowed heavily in Florence, Piero had him make a very beautiful statue out of the snow in his courtyard, and he honoured Michelangelo for his talents in such a fashion that the artist's father, who was beginning to see that his son was

esteemed by important people, dressed Michelangelo much more honourably than he usually did.

For the church of Santo Spirito in Florence, Michelangelo carved a wooden crucifix which was placed above the lunette of the main altar, where it remains, to the satisfaction of the prior who provided him with spacious quarters, where on many occasions Michelangelo dissected dead bodies in order to study the details of anatomy, and began to perfect the great skill in design that he subsequently possessed.* It happened that the Medici were driven out of Florence, and that, a few weeks before, Michelangelo had already left for Bologna and then for Venice, because, having seen the insolent actions and bad government of Piero de' Medici, he feared some sinister accident might befall him as a friend of the family; and finding nothing to keep him in Venice, he returned to Bologna, where he foolishly neglected to take the countersign for leaving the city when he came through the city gates, as had been decreed at that time as a precaution by Messer Giovanni Bentivogli, who ordered foreigners without the countersign to pay a fine of fifty Bolognese lire; and when Michelangelo found himself in this predicament without the means of paying the fine, he was fortunately spotted by Messer Giovanfrancesco Aldovrandi, one of the Sixteen in the government, who, after having Michelangelo recount the story, freed him out of compassion and kept him in his home for more than a year. One day Aldovrandi took him to see the tomb of Saint Dominic carved, as was mentioned, by the older sculptors Giovanni Pisano and, later, Niccolò dell'Arca, but which lacked an angel holding a candlestick and a figure of Saint Petronius about one armslength high, and Aldovrandi asked Michelangelo if he had the courage to complete the tomb; Michelangelo replied that he did. And so he had the marble delivered to Michelangelo, who executed the works, which are the best figures on the tomb, and Messer Francesco Aldovrandi paid him thirty ducats for them.*

Michelangelo remained in Bologna for a little more than a year, and he would have remained longer to repay the kindness of Aldovrandi, who loved him both for his skill in design and also because he liked Michelangelo's Tuscan pro-

nunciation and gladly listened to him read the works of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other Tuscan poets. But since Michelangelo realized he was wasting time, he willingly returned to Florence and carved a little figure of Saint John in marble for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, and then with another piece of marble he immediately began to carve a life-size figure of a sleeping Cupid. When this was completed, Baldassare del Milanese showed it as a beautiful piece of work to Pierfrancesco, who agreed with Baldassare's judgement and declared to Michelangelo: 'If you buried it, I am convinced it would pass as an ancient work, and if you sent it to Rome treated so that it appeared old, you would earn much more than by selling it here.' It is said that Michelangelo treated it in such a way that it appeared to be ancient, nor is this astonishing, since he had the genius to do this and more. Others maintain that Milanese took it to Rome and buried it in a vineyard he owned and then sold it as an antique statue to Cardinal San Giorgio for two hundred ducats. Still others say that Milanese sold a copy Michelangelo made for him to the cardinal, then wrote to Pierfrancesco, telling him to give Michelangelo thirty *scudi*, declaring he received no more than that from the cupid, thus deceiving the cardinal, Pierfrancesco, and Michelangelo; but later the cardinal heard from someone who had seen the cupid being carved in Florence, and, using every means to discover the truth through one of his messengers, he then forced Milanese's agent to return his money and take back the cupid, which then fell into the hands of Duke Valentino, who gave it to the Marchioness of Mantua, and she took it to her own city where it can still be seen today.* This affair did not come about without damage to Cardinal San Giorgio, who did not recognize the value of the work, which consists in its perfection, for modern works are just as good as ancient ones when they are excellent, and it is greater vanity to pursue things more for their reputation than for what they really are, but these kinds of men can be found in any age, men who pay more attention to appearances than to realities.*

Nevertheless, this affair gave Michelangelo such a reputation that he was immediately brought to Rome and taken in by Cardinal San Giorgio, with whom he stayed almost a year,

and the cardinal, who had little understanding of the arts, did not give Michelangelo anything to do. During that time, the cardinal's barber, a painter who worked with diligence in tempera but lacked all sense of design, befriended Michelangelo, who drew him a cartoon with the figure of Saint Francis receiving the stigmata, which was painted very carefully by the barber on a small panel in colour; this painting today is located in one of the first chapels on the left as you enter the church of San Piero a Montorio.* Afterwards, Messer Jacopo Galli, a Roman gentleman and a man of some intelligence, clearly recognized Michelangelo's talent and had him carve a life-size Cupid in marble and then a Bacchus ten palms high, holding a cup in his right hand and in the left a tiger's skin along with a cluster of grapes, which a little satyr is trying to eat; in this figure it is clear that Michelangelo wanted to attain a marvellous combination of various parts of the body and, most particularly, to give it both the slenderness of the young male figure and the fleshiness and roundness of the female: it was such an astonishing work that it showed Michelangelo to be more skilled than any other modern sculptor who had ever worked up to that time.*

While staying in Rome, Michelangelo acquired so much skill in his study of art that it was incredible to see his lofty concepts and his difficult style, which he put into practice with such great facility that it terrified people unaccustomed to seeing such works as well as those accustomed to good ones, for the works that others were showing seemed nothing in comparison with his. All these things aroused the desire of the Cardinal of Saint-Denis, a Frenchman called Cardinal Rouen, to leave behind some worthy memorial of himself in such a renowned city through the talents of such an unusual artist, and he commissioned Michelangelo to do a marble *Pietà* in the round, which, when completed, was placed in Saint Peter's in the Chapel of the Madonna della Febbre in the temple of Mars.*

No sculptor, not even the most rare artist, could ever reach this level of design and grace, nor could he, even with hard work, ever finish, polish, and cut the marble as skilfully as Michelangelo did here, for in this statue all of the worth and

power of sculpture is revealed. Among the beautiful details it contains, besides its inspired draperies, the figure of the dead Christ stands out, and no one could ever imagine—given the beauty of its limbs and the skill with which the body is carved—seeing a nude so well endowed with muscles, veins, and nerves stretched over the framework of the bones, or the figure of a dead man which more closely resembled a dead body than this one. The expression on the face is so very gentle, and there is such harmony in the joints and the articulations of the arms, torso, and legs, with their finely wrought pulses and veins, that, in truth, it is absolutely astonishing that the hand of an artist could have properly executed something so sublime and admirable in a brief time, and clearly it is a miracle that a stone, formless in the beginning, could ever have been brought to the state of perfection which Nature habitually struggles to create in the flesh. Michelangelo placed so much love and labour in this work that on it (something he did in no other work) he left his name written across a sash which girds Our Lady's breast. This came about because one day when Michelangelo was entering the church where the statue was placed, he found a large number of foreigners from Lombardy who were praising the statue very highly; one of them asked another who had sculpted it, and he replied: 'Our Gobbo from Milan.'* Michelangelo stood there silently, and it seemed somewhat strange to him that his labours were being attributed to someone else; one night he locked himself inside the church with a little light, and, having brought his chisels, he carved his name upon the statue. And it has such qualities that a very fine mind has described it as a true and lifelike figure:

Beauty and goodness,
 And grief and pity, alive in dead marble,
 Do not, as you do,
 Weep so loudly,
 Lest too early He should reawaken from death
 In spite of Himself,
 Our Lord and Thy
 Spouse, Son and Father,
 Only bride, His Daughter and Mother.*

Because of this statue, Michelangelo gained very great fame. And some people, more stupid than anything else, say that he made Our Lady too young, but have they failed to realize or to discover that spotless virgins keep themselves young and their faces remain well preserved for a long time without any blemish whatsoever, while those who are afflicted, as was Christ, do the opposite? And so this work added more glory and distinction to Michelangelo's talent than all the others he had done before.

Some of Michelangelo's friends wrote from Florence to tell him to return, since it was not beyond the realm of possibility that he might be given the block of spoiled marble in the Works Department, which Piero Soderini, recently elected Gonfaloniere of the city for life* had many times talked about giving to Leonardo da Vinci, and which he was then arranging to give to Master Andrea Contucci dal Monte San Sovino, an excellent sculptor, who was trying to obtain it; although it would be difficult to carve an entire figure out of it without adding additional pieces, no other man except Michelangelo had the courage to complete it without other pieces, and since many years previously he had wanted it, Michelangelo attempted to obtain it when he returned to Florence.

This marble was nine armslengths high, and unfortunately a certain master named Simone da Fiesole* had begun to carve out the figure of a giant, and the stone was so poorly hewn that he had bored a hole between its legs, and had botched and bungled everything; and so the trustees of the Works Department of Santa Maria del Fiore, who were in charge of the project, had abandoned the block without thinking about completing it, and it had already lain there for many years and was lying there still. Michelangelo once again examined it closely and, calculating that one could carve a reasonable figure from the stone by adapting its pose to the rock which had been mutilated by Master Simone, he decided to request the block from the trustees and from Soderini, who gave it to him as something of no use, believing that whatever he made of it would be better than the condition in which it then happened to be, for whether broken up in pieces or left in that poorly hewn state, it was of no use whatsoever to the Works Department.

Thus, Michelangelo did a wax model depicting a young David with a sling in hand, as the symbol of the palace, for just as David had defended his people and governed them with justice, so, too, those who governed this city should courageously defend it and govern it with justice:* he began the statue in the Works Department of Santa Maria del Fiore, where he erected a scaffolding between the wall and the tables surrounding the marble, and, working continuously without letting anyone see it, he brought the statue to perfect completion. The marble had been mutilated and spoiled by Master Simone, and in some places even Michelangelo's will-power did not suffice to achieve what he wished; so he allowed some of Master Simone's original chisel marks to remain on the extremities of the marble, a few of which can still be seen. And Michelangelo certainly performed a miracle in restoring to life a block of marble left for dead.

When the statue was completed, various disputes arose over how, given its size, it should be transported to the Piazza della Signoria. For that reason, Giuliano da San Gallo and his brother Antonio built a very strong wooden frame and suspended the statue from it with ropes so that when it was shaken it would not break or, rather, just come tumbling down, and they pulled it with winches over flat planks laid upon the ground and set it in place. They tied a slip-knot in the rope that held the statue suspended which moved very easily and tightened as the weight increased, a very fine and ingenious device that I have in my book drawn up by Michelangelo himself, a secure and strong knot for holding weights, which is remarkable. Around this time it happened that Piero Soderini saw the statue, and it pleased him greatly, but while Michelangelo was giving it the finishing touches, he told Michelangelo that he thought the nose of the figure was too large. Michelangelo, realizing that the Gonfaloniere was standing under the giant and that his viewpoint did not allow him to see it properly, climbed up the scaffolding to satisfy Soderini (who was behind him nearby), and having quickly grabbed his chisel in his left hand along with a little marble dust that he found on the planks in the scaffolding, Michelangelo began to tap lightly with the chisel, allowing

the dust to fall little by little without retouching the nose from the way it was. Then, looking down at the Gonfaloniere who stood there watching, he ordered:

'Look at it now.'

'I like it better,' replied the Gonfaloniere: 'you've made it come alive.'

Thus Michelangelo climbed down, and, having contented this lord, he laughed to himself, feeling compassion for those who, in order to make it appear that they understand, do not realize what they are saying; and when the statue was finished and set in its foundation, he uncovered it, and to tell the truth, this work eclipsed all other statues, both modern and ancient, whether Greek or Roman; and it can be said that neither the Marforio in Rome, nor the Tiber and the Nile of the Belvedere, nor the colossal statues of Monte Cavallo can be compared to this David, which Michelangelo completed with so much measure and beauty, and so much skill. For the contours of its legs are extremely beautiful, along with the splendid articulations and grace of its flanks; a sweeter and more graceful pose has never been seen that could equal it, nor have feet, hands, and a head ever been produced which so well match all the other parts of the body in skill of workmanship or design. To be sure, anyone who sees this statue need not be concerned with seeing any other piece of sculpture done in our times or in any other period by any other artist.

Michelangelo received four hundred *scudi* in payment from Piero Soderini, and the David was erected in the year 1504; this statue brought great fame to Michelangelo in the art of sculpture, and, as a result, he cast an extremely beautiful David in bronze for the above-mentioned Gonfaloniere which Soderini then sent to France;* at the same time he roughed out but left unfinished two marble tondos, one for Taddeo Taddei, which today hangs in his home, and another, only just begun, for Bartolomeo Pitti, which was given by Fra Miniato Pitti of Monte Oliveto, an unusually knowledgeable expert in cosmography and many areas of study, especially the art of painting, to his close friend Luigi Guicciardini; both works were considered most worthy and admirable.* And at the

same time, he also roughed out a marble statue of Saint Matthew in the Works Department of Santa Maria del Fiore, a statue which even in an unfinished state reveals its perfection and teaches other sculptors how to carve figures from marble without mutilating them, so that they may always be carefully improved by carving away some of the marble while leaving enough for redesigning or altering the piece as is sometimes necessary. He also did a bronze tondo of Our Lady which he cast at the request of some Flemish merchants of the Moscheroni family, extremely noble men in their own country, who paid him one hundred *scudi* and sent the work to Flanders.*

Angelo Doni, a Florentine citizen and friend of Michelangelo, as a man who took great delight in owning beautiful objects by both ancient and modern artists, decided that he wanted something done by Michelangelo; hence, Michelangelo began painting a tondo for him,* containing the figure of Our Lady kneeling down with a young child in Her arms whom She holds out towards Joseph, who receives Him; in the way Christ's mother turns Her head and fixes Her eyes upon the supreme beauty of Her Child, Michelangelo makes us understand Her marvellous sense of contentment and the emotion She feels in sharing it with that most holy old man, who takes the child with equal love, tenderness, and reverence, which can easily be discerned in his face at a glance. Since these details were not enough for Michelangelo to prove that his skill was immense, he painted in the background of this work many nudes, some leaning, others standing or seated, and he completed this painting with such diligence and polish that of all his paintings on panels, although they are few, this one is surely considered the most perfect and the most beautiful painting in existence. After it was completed, he sent it by messenger to Angelo's home, covered, along with a bill asking seventy ducats in payment. Since Angelo was a thrifty person, he thought it strange to pay so much for a painting, even though he knew it to be worth even more, and he told the messenger that forty ducats were enough and gave them to him; at this Michelangelo sent the messenger back again, telling him to say that either one hundred ducats

or the painting should be returned to him. At this, Angelo, who liked the painting, declared: 'I'll give him those seventy.' But Michelangelo was not satisfied, and, indeed, because of Angelo's lack of good faith, he wanted double the payment he had requested the first time; since Angelo wanted the painting, he was forced to send Michelangelo one hundred and forty ducats.

It happened that while that exceptional painter, Leonardo da Vinci, was working in the Grand Hall of the Council, as is recounted in his *Life*, Piero Soderini, the Gonfaloniere of that time, because of the great talent he observed in Michelangelo, commissioned him to do part of the hall, and this was why he came to compete with Leonardo on the other wall, taking as his subject the Pisan war.* For this reason, Michelangelo had access to a room in the Dyers' Hospital at Sant'Onofrio, and there he began an enormous cartoon, which he never wanted anyone else to see. He filled it with nudes bathing during the heat in the river Arno, imagining the moment when the alarm is sounded in the camp at the assault of the enemy, and while the soldiers emerge from the water to dress, the divinely inspired hands of Michelangelo depicted some hurrying to take up their arms to help their comrades, while others buckle on their cuirasses, and many put on other kinds of armour, with countless men fighting on horseback to start the scuffle. Among the other figures is an old man wearing a garland of ivy to shade his head; he has sat himself down to put on his stockings but is unable to do so because his legs are wet from the water, and hearing the tumult of the soldiers and the cries and the rolls of the drums, he hurriedly forces his foot into a stocking; besides the fact that all the muscles and nerves in this figure can be seen, Michelangelo gave him a contorted mouth, using it to show that he was suffering and exerting himself down to the very tips of his toes.

Drummers and naked figures with their clothes wrapped in a bundle are also racing towards the fight, and men in extravagant poses can be seen, some standing upright, others kneeling or bent over or lying down, all in positions drawn with the most difficult foreshortenings. There are also many figures grouped together and sketched out in various ways, some

outlined with charcoal, others drawn in with a few strokes, some shaded and illumined with white lead, since Michelangelo wished to demonstrate how much he knew about this craft. Thus, the artisans remained astonished and amazed when they saw the limits of the art of painting demonstrated to them in this cartoon by Michelangelo. Once they had examined these sublime figures, some of the people who saw them declared that no other genius, neither Michelangelo nor any other artist, could ever produce anything to equal the sublime qualities of this work of art. And this can certainly be believed, for as soon as it was finished and, to the great glory of Michelangelo, carried to the Pope's Chamber with a great clamour among the craftsmen, all those who studied the cartoon and sketched from it, which both foreigners and local artisans continued to do in Florence for many years afterwards, became distinguished individuals in this profession, as we have seen; those who later studied the cartoon included Aristotle da San Gallo, Michelangelo's friend; Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, Raphael Sanzio of Urbino, Francesco Granacci, Baccio Bandinelli, and the Spaniard Alonso Beruguete; following them were Andrea del Sarto, Franciabigio, Jacopo Sansovino, Rosso, Maturino, Lorenzetto, Tribolo as a young boy, Jacopo da Pontormo, and Perin del Vaga, all of whom were excellent Florentine masters; and since the cartoon had become a subject of study for artisans, it was taken to the large upper hall in the Medici's home, and this was the reason why it was placed too freely in the hands of the artists. Thus, during the illness of Duke Giuliano and while no one was looking after such a thing, it was, as we said elsewhere, torn apart and divided into many pieces so that it was scattered around in a number of places, as is substantiated by some pieces that can still be seen in Mantua in the home of Uberto Strozzi, a Mantuan gentleman who conserves them with great reverence.* And certainly anyone who sees them considers them something divine rather than human.

The *Pietà*, the giant of Florence, and the cartoon had made Michelangelo so famous that in the year 1503, when Pope Alexander VI died and Julius II was named pope, at a time when Michelangelo was about twenty-nine years of age, he

was summoned with great courtesy by Julius II to build his tomb, and for his travelling expenses he was paid one hundred *scudi* by the pope's agents.* After he had been brought to Rome, many months passed before he was put to work on anything. Finally the pope decided upon a design that Michelangelo had done for the tomb, which provided admirable proof of his talent and which in beauty, splendour, magnificent decoration, and the richness of its statuary surpassed every ancient and imperial tomb. And as Pope Julius's courage increased, it caused him to decide to begin rebuilding the church of Saint Peter in Rome in order to place the tomb inside it, as was mentioned elsewhere.*

Thus, Michelangelo boldly set to work: to begin the project, he went to Carrara to excavate all of the marble with two of his apprentices, and from Alamanno Salviati in Florence he received a thousand *scudi* on this account; he spent eight months in those mountains without any other salary or provisions, where, challenged by those massive blocks, he conceived many fantastic ideas for carving giant statues in those quarries in order to leave a memorial of himself as the ancients had already done. After having chosen the appropriate pieces of marble, he had them loaded at the dock and then brought to Rome, where they filled half the square of Saint Peter's near Santa Caterina and the space between the church and the corridor that runs towards Castel Sant'Angelo, where Michelangelo had set up a room to work on the figures and the rest of the tomb; and so that he could conveniently come to see Michelangelo work, the pope had a drawbridge built from the corridor to the room, and, because of this, he came to be on very intimate terms with Michelangelo, though in time these favours brought Michelangelo great annoyance and even persecution, and also stirred up a great deal of envy among his fellow artisans.

While Julius was alive and after his death, Michelangelo executed for this project four finished statues and eight others only roughed out, as I shall describe in the proper place, and since the project was conceived with the greatest powers of invention, we shall describe below the plan he followed. In order to give it a greater sense of grandeur, Michelangelo

wanted the tomb to be isolated so that it could be seen from all four sides, each of which measured twenty-four feet in one direction and thirty-six feet in the other, so that the proportions were a square and a half. The outside of the tomb had a series of niches all around it divided by terminal figures clothed from the middle upwards which supported the first cornice with their heads, and to each of these terminal figures was bound a nude prisoner standing on a projection of the base in a strange and unusual pose. These prisoners represented all the provinces subjugated by the pontiff and made obedient to the Apostolic Church; and other different statues, also bound, represented all the Virtues and the Liberal Arts and Sciences to show that they, too, were no less subject to death than the pontiff who so honourably employed them. Four large figures were to go on the corners of the first cornice: the Active and Contemplative Life, Saint Paul, and Moses. Above the cornice the work rose in diminishing steps, with a decorated bronze frieze and other figures, putti, and decorations all around, and at the top, completing the monument, there were two figures, one of which was Heaven, who was smiling and bearing a coffin on her shoulders, and the other Cybele, the goddess of earth, who seemed unhappy to remain in a world deprived of every virtue at the death of such a man, while Heaven seemed to be rejoicing that his soul had passed to celestial glory. The tomb was arranged so that one could enter and leave through the space at the ends of the square panels between the niches, while the inside had the configuration of a temple in an oval form, in the middle of which was the sarcophagus where the dead body of that pontiff was to be placed, and, finally, forty marble statues—not counting the other scenes, putti, decorations, and all the carved cornices and other architectural details—were to adorn the entire work.

To facilitate the work, Michelangelo ordered part of the marble to be brought to Florence, where he planned on occasion to pass the summer to avoid the unhealthy air of Rome, and where he executed one side of the work in several pieces down to the last detail; and in Rome, with his own hand, he completed two of the prisoners in a truly sublime

fashion as well as some other statues that have never been surpassed. Since they were not placed upon the tomb, the two prisoners were given to Signor Roberto Strozzi by Michelangelo, because Michelangelo had been in Strozzi's home during an illness; later they were sent as a gift to King Francis and are today in Écouen in France.* In Rome he also roughed out eight statues, and another five in Florence,* and he completed a Victory standing over the figure of a prisoner which is now in the possession of Duke Cosimo, to whom the work was given by Michelangelo's nephew Lionardo; His Excellency has placed the statue of Victory in the Great Hall of his palace, which was painted by Vasari.*

Michelangelo finished the figure of Moses, a statue in marble five arm-lengths high, which no modern statue could ever rival in beauty (and one could say the same of ancient statues as well), for seated with a most serious expression, Moses rests one arm upon the tablets he is holding in one hand, and with the other he grasps his long and flowing beard, which is executed so well in the marble that the hairs, so difficult to render in sculpture, are delicately carved, downy, and soft, and drawn out in such a way that it seems as if the chisel has become a brush;* and besides the beauty of the face, which wears the expression typical of a true saint and a most formidable prince, it seems that while you gaze at the statue, you feel the desire to ask for a veil to cover his face, so splendid and radiant does it appear to onlookers. And in the marble, Michelangelo has perfectly depicted the divinity God has endowed upon his most holy face, not to mention the fact that his garments are carved and finished with the most beautiful folds in the hems, while the muscles of the arms and the bones and sinews of the hands are brought to the height of beauty and perfection along with the legs and knees, and the feet below are fitted with such well-fashioned sandals, and every aspect of the work is finished so skilfully, that, today more than ever, Moses can call himself the friend of God, since through the hands of Michelangelo He wished to restore and prepare Moses' body for the Resurrection long before that of anyone else. May the Jews continue to go there, as they do in crowds, both men and women, every Saturday, like flocks

of starlings, to visit and adore the statue, for they will be worshipping something that is not human but divine.

Finally, when an agreement was reached for the completion of this work, one of the smaller of the four sides was built in San Pietro in Vincoli. It is said that while Michelangelo was carrying out this work, the rest of the marble for the tomb that had been left in Carrara arrived at Ripa, and was brought to Saint Peter's square along with the rest, and because he had to pay the men who had delivered it, Michelangelo went as usual to see the pope, but since that day His Holiness had to attend to some matters which were of interest to him concerning the Bologna affair,* Michelangelo returned home and paid for the marble himself, assuming he would immediately receive the order of reimbursement from His Holiness. He returned on another day to speak to the pope about it and found it difficult to gain entrance, because a footman told him to be patient and that he had orders not to admit him: when a bishop told the footman 'Perhaps you don't know this man!', the footman declared: 'I know him only too well, but I am here to carry out the orders of my superiors and the pope.'

This attitude displeased Michelangelo, who thought it stood in contrast to the treatment he had received up to then, and he indignantly told the footman to tell the pope that from now on when he looked for Michelangelo he would find that he had gone somewhere else, and having returned to his quarters at two o'clock in the morning, he mounted a post horse, leaving behind him two servants to sell all his household goods to the Jews with orders to follow him to Florence where he was headed. When he reached Poggibonsi, a city in the Florentine territory, he felt safe enough to stop, even though it was not long before five couriers arrived there with written instructions from the pope to bring Michelangelo back, and neither their entreaties nor the letter ordering him to return to Rome on pain of disgrace could make Michelangelo listen to anything, but the prayers of the couriers finally convinced him to write two words in reply to His Holiness, asking his pardon for not returning again to His Presence, after he had been driven away like a poor wretch, and explaining that his

faithful service did not deserve such treatment, and that the pope should look elsewhere for someone to serve him.

Having arrived in Florence, Michelangelo set about finishing, in the three months he stayed there, the cartoon for the Great Hall, which Piero Soderini the Gonfaloniere wanted him to execute. However, during this time three papal briefs reached the Signoria, ordering the government to return Michelangelo to Rome, and since Michelangelo had witnessed the pope's wrath and distrusted him, according to what people say, he wanted to go to Constantinople through the agency of some Franciscan friars to work for the Turk, who wished to have him there to construct a bridge from Constantinople to Pera. However, Piero Soderini persuaded him against his wishes to go and meet the pope as a public official with the title of ambassador of the city to safeguard his life, and he finally commended Michelangelo to the care of Cardinal Soderini, his brother, who would present him to the pope, and sent him to Bologna, where His Holiness had already arrived from Rome.

There is still another version of the story about Michelangelo's departure from Rome: namely, that the pope became angry with Michelangelo, who did not want to let him see any of his works; and that Michelangelo distrusted his own workers, believing that on more than one occasion the pope, in disguise, had seen what he was doing at certain times when Michelangelo was either not in the house or at work; and that the pope had once bribed his apprentices to allow him to enter and see the chapel of Sixtus, his uncle, which he was having Michelangelo paint (as will be described shortly); and that Michelangelo once concealed himself, since he suspected the treachery of his assistants, and dropped some planks when the pope entered the chapel, not thinking about who it was and forcing the pope to leave in anger. Let it suffice to say that in one way or another, Michelangelo was angry with the pope, and then afraid of him, and had to run away.

Thus, Michelangelo arrived in Bologna, and no sooner had he pulled off his boots than he was brought by the pope's servants before His Holiness, who was in the Palace of the Sixteen; he was accompanied by one of Cardinal Soderini's

bishops, since the cardinal was ill and could not go with him; and when they came before the pope and Michelangelo knelt down, His Holiness looked at him askance and, as if he were angry, he said: 'Rather than coming to meet Us, you have waited for Us to come to meet you?', meaning to infer that Bologna was closer to Florence than to Rome. With courteous gestures and a loud voice, Michelangelo humbly begged the pope's pardon, excusing himself, since he had acted in anger, having been unable to bear being chased away in such a fashion, and he begged the pope once again to forgive him for having done wrong. The bishop who had presented Michelangelo to the pope tried to excuse him, declaring to His Holiness that such men were ignorant and worthless in anything outside of their art, and that he should willingly forgive him. This enraged the pope, who thrashed the bishop with a mace he was holding, telling him: 'You are the ignorant one, speaking insults We would never utter!' And so the bishop was driven out by the footmen with sticks and left, and after the pope vented his anger on him he blessed Michelangelo, who was kept waiting with gifts and promises in Bologna until His Holiness ordered him to do a bronze statue in his own likeness five armslengths high; in this work Michelangelo employed the most beautiful artistry in the pose of the statue, for it reflected majesty and grandeur in every detail, its garments displayed wealth and magnificence, and its face embodied courage, strength, quickness, and magnificence. This statue was placed in a niche above the door of San Petronio.

It is said that while Michelangelo was working on the statue, *Il Francia*,* a goldsmith and most excellent painter, came to see it, since he knew Michelangelo's reputation and the praise given his works but had never seen any of them. He sent messages asking to see the statue, and gained permission to do so. Upon seeing Michelangelo's skill, he was amazed and when he was asked what he thought of the figure, *Il Francia* replied that it was a very fine casting and beautiful material. Since Michelangelo felt he had praised the bronze more than the craftsmanship, he said: 'I have the same obligation to Pope Julius who gave me the bronze as you have to the apothecaries who give you the colours for your paint', and in the

presence of some gentlemen he angrily declared that Il Francia was a fool. And on this same subject, when Michelangelo encountered Il Francia's son, who was a very handsome boy, Michelangelo said to him: 'Your father makes more handsome figures in life than he does in painting.' Among the same gentlemen, there was one whose name I do not know who asked Michelangelo which was larger, the statue of Julius or a pair of oxen, and Michelangelo answered: 'That depends on the oxen, for these Bolognese oxen are no doubt larger than our Florentine ones.'

Michelangelo completed the statue in clay before the pope left Bologna for Rome; and when His Holiness went to see it, he did not know what was to be placed in the statue's left hand, while the right hand was raised in a proud gesture, and the pope asked if it was giving a blessing or a curse. Michelangelo answered that it was advising the people of Bologna to behave wisely; and when he asked His Holiness if he thought he should place a book in the left hand, the pope said: 'Put a sword there, I know nothing about literature!' The pope left one thousand *scudi* in the bank of Messer Antonmaria da Lignano to complete the statue, which was later, at the end of the sixteen months it took to complete it, placed on the front of the main facade of the church of San Petronio, as was previously mentioned, just as its size has already been described. The statue was destroyed by the Bentivogli and its bronze sold to Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, who had an artillery piece made from it called *La Giulia*, except for the head, which is in the duke's wardrobe.*

While the pope had returned to Rome and Michelangelo completed the statue in Bologna, Bramante, the friend and relative of Raphael of Urbino, and therefore no real friend of Michelangelo, realized, in Michelangelo's absence, that the pope favoured and encouraged Michelangelo's works in sculpture, and, along with Raphael, began thinking of a way to change his mind, so that upon Michelangelo's return His Holiness would not try to complete his tomb, by telling him that this would seem to hasten his death and that it was bad luck to build one's tomb while alive; and Bramante and Raphael persuaded the pope that upon Michelangelo's return, in mem-

ory of his uncle Sixtus, the pope should have Michelangelo paint the vault of the chapel that Sixtus had built in the [Vatican] palace, and in this way Bramante and other rivals of Michelangelo hoped to take Michelangelo away from sculpture, in which they saw he had reached perfection, and to drive him to desperation, assuming that by having him paint he would produce a less praiseworthy work and would be less likely to succeed than Raphael, since he had no experience in doing frescos in colour; and even if the work turned out well, doing it would make him angry with the pope at any rate, so that in one way or another their intention of getting rid of him would succeed.*

And so Michelangelo returned to Rome, and the pope decided not to complete his tomb for the time being and asked him to paint the vault of the chapel. Michelangelo, who wished to finish the tomb and saw that painting the vault would be an enormous and difficult task, considering his lack of experience with colours, tried in every way possible to remove this burden from his shoulders, recommending above all Raphael for the job. But the more he refused, the more persistent he made the pope, who was an impetuous man in his undertakings and was once again urged on by Michelangelo's rivals, especially by Bramante, so that the pope, who was quick to anger, almost flew into a rage with Michelangelo. But having seen that his Holiness persisted in this idea, he decided to do what he was asked, and the pope ordered Bramante to build the scaffolding in order to paint it; Bramante did so by piercing the ceiling and hanging everything from ropes; upon seeing this, Michelangelo asked Bramante how, once the painting had been completed, he would be able to fill the holes; and Bramante replied, 'We'll worry about that later', and added that there was no other way to do it. Michelangelo then realized that either Bramante knew little about it or he was not much of a friend, and he went to the pope and told him that this scaffolding was unsatisfactory and that Bramante had not understood how to build it; in Bramante's presence, the pope replied that he should build one in his own way. And so Michelangelo ordered scaffolding built on poles which did not touch the wall, the

method for fitting out vaults he later taught to Bramante and others, and with which many fine works were executed. For this project, Michelangelo had the poor carpenter who rebuilt the scaffolding paid in advance for so much rope that, by selling what was left over, which Michelangelo gave him as a gift, he paid the dowry for one of his daughters.

He then began work on the cartoons for the vault, and the pope also wanted him to destroy the walls that had already been painted in the time of Sixtus by masters who came before him,* and decided that Michelangelo should receive fifteen thousand ducats for the cost of the entire project, the price being set by Giuliano da San Gallo. Obligated by the size of the undertaking to seek assistance, Michelangelo sent to Florence for men, and having decided to demonstrate in this project that those who had painted there before him were unequal to his labours, he also wished to show modern artisans how to design and paint. Thus, the theme of the work compelled Michelangelo to aim high for the sake of both his reputation and the well-being of the art of painting, and he began and completed the cartoons; then wishing to colour them in fresco but lacking the necessary experience, he brought some painters who were friends of his to Rome from Florence to assist him in the project and also to see their method of working in fresco, in which some were skilled; these included Granacci, Giuliano Bugiardini, Jacopo di Sandro, the elder Indaco, Angelo di Domenico, and Aristotle; and after starting the project, he had them begin a few things as a sample of their work. But when he saw that their labours were far from what he wished to achieve and failed to satisfy him, he decided one morning to pull down everything they had done. And closing himself inside the chapel, he would not open it to them or even see them at his home. And when they thought this joke had been carried far enough, they made up their minds and returned to Florence in disgrace. Then Michelangelo made arrangements to do the whole work by himself, and he readily brought it to a very fine conclusion with diligent effort and study; nor would he ever see anyone, to avoid having to reveal his work, and, as a result, everyone's desire to see it grew greater every day.

Pope Julius was very anxious to see the work Michelangelo was doing, and the fact that it was hidden from him made his desire grow tremendously; so one day he wanted to go to see it but was not admitted, for Michelangelo would never agree to show his work. This gave rise to the disagreement which, as was discussed, caused Michelangelo to leave Rome, since he did not wish to show his work to the pope, and according to what I learned from Michelangelo to clarify this matter, when a third of the chapel had been completed, certain spots of mould started to appear one winter as the north wind was blowing. This was caused by the fact that Roman lime, which is white and made from travertine, does not dry very quickly, and when mixed with *pozzolana*,* which is tan in colour, it makes a dark mixture that is watery when it is in a liquid state, and when the wall is well moistened, it often develops a powdery crust while drying; here, in this case, the salty secretion popped up in many places but was worn away by the air with the passage of time. Michelangelo was in despair over this and did not want to continue, and when he apologized to the pope for the work that did not turn out well, His Holiness sent Giuliano da San Gallo there, who explained to Michelangelo the origin of the defect, encouraged him to continue, and showed him how to remove the mould. When he had finished half of the chapel, the pope, who had then climbed up to see it on several occasions on certain step-ladders assisted by Michelangelo, wanted him to uncover the painting, for he was by nature impetuous and impatient and could not wait until the work was complete and had received, as we say, the final touches.

As soon as it was uncovered, it drew all of Rome to see it, and the pope was the first, since he did not have the patience to wait until the dust settled from the dismantling of the scaffolding. Once Raphael of Urbino, who was a very excellent imitator, saw it, he quickly changed his style, and in order to show his skill he immediately painted the prophets and the sibyls in Santa Maria della Pace, while Bramante still tried to convince the pope to give the other half of the chapel to Raphael. When Michelangelo learned of this, he complained about Bramante and openly told the pope of Bramante's

many defects, both in his life and in his architectural works, and, as it later turned out, Michelangelo became the one to correct his mistakes in the Works Department of Saint Peter's. But the pope, recognizing Michelangelo's skill more each day, wanted him to continue, and when he saw the chapel uncovered, he judged that Michelangelo could do the other half much better. And so, Michelangelo brought the project to perfect completion in twenty months, wholly by himself alone without even the assistance of someone to grind his colours. Michelangelo sometimes complained that because of the pope's haste he was not able to complete it in his own way as he would have wished, since the pope importunately demanded to know when he would finish; on one occasion among others, Michelangelo replied that the work would be finished 'when it satisfies me in its artistic details'. 'And We', remarked the pope, 'want you to satisfy Us in Our desire to see it done quickly.' Finally, the pope threatened that if Michelangelo did not finish quickly, he would have him thrown down from the scaffolding. And so Michelangelo, who feared and had reason to fear the pope's temper, immediately finished what was left without wasting any time, and after he had dismantled the rest of the scaffolding, he unveiled it on the morning of All Saints' Day when the pope came to the chapel to sing Mass, to the satisfaction of the whole city.

Michelangelo wanted to retouch some details *a secco*, as those older masters had done on the scenes below, painting certain fields, draperies, and skies in ultramarine blue and golden decorations in some places to give the painting greater richness of detail and a finer appearance; when the pope understood that this decoration was still missing, having heard the work so highly praised by everyone who had seen it, he wanted this to be provided, but because it would have taken too long for Michelangelo to rebuild the scaffolding, the painting remained as it was. Since the pope saw Michelangelo often, he used to say to him: 'Let the chapel be embellished with colours and gold, for it looks too plain.' And Michelangelo replied in a familiar tone: 'Holy Father, in those days men did not wear gold, and those who are painted there never were rich, for they were holy men who despised wealth.'

Michelangelo was paid on account for this work in several instalments, a total of three thousand *scudi*,* of which he had to spend twenty-five on colours. These frescos were done with the greatest discomfort, for he had to stand there working with his head tilted backwards, and it damaged his eyesight so much that he could no longer read or look at drawings if his head was not tilted backwards; his condition lasted for several months afterwards, and I can testify to this fact, for after working on the vaults of five rooms in the great chambers of the palace of Duke Cosimo, if I had not built a chair upon which to rest my head and to stretch out while I was working, I would have never completed the work, for it ruined my sight and weakened my head to such an extent that I can still feel it, and I am amazed that Michelangelo tolerated such discomfort. But every day kindled even more his desire to work, and with the progress and improvement he made, he neither felt fatigue nor worried about all the discomfort.

The compartments in the work were organized into six pendentives on either side and one in the centre of the walls at the foot and one at the head, in which Michelangelo painted sibyls and prophets six armslengths in height, and in the middle of the ceiling he depicted scenes from the Creation of the World up to the Flood and the Drunkenness of Noah, and in the lunettes he painted all the ancestors of Jesus Christ. In the compartments he did not employ any rules of perspective for foreshortening, nor any fixed vantage point, but he went about accommodating the compartments to the figures rather than the figures to the compartments, since it was sufficient to execute the nude and clothed figures with a perfection of design that no work has ever equalled or will ever equal, and it is scarcely possible, even with hard work, to imitate what he did. This work has been and truly is the beacon of our art, and it has brought such benefit and enlightenment to the art of painting that it was sufficient to illuminate a world which for so many hundreds of years had remained in the state of darkness. And, to tell the truth, anyone who is a painter no longer needs to concern himself about seeing innovations and inventions, new ways of painting poses, clothing on figures, and various awe-inspiring details, for Michelangelo

gave to this work all the perfection that can be given to such details.

But any man will be astonished by this work who knows how to discern the excellence of the figures, the perfection of the foreshortenings, the truly stupendous round contours, all of which possess grace and delicacy, and the beautiful proportions seen especially in those beautiful nudes, in which he demonstrates the extremes and perfection of his craft, by creating nudes of all ages, all different in their expressions and forms, both in their faces and in their features, some with slimmer bodies and others with larger ones. Likewise, his artistic skill can be recognized in their beautiful and varied poses, for some are sitting, others are turning around, and still others are holding up garlands of oak and acorn leaves representing the coat of arms and insignia of Pope Julius and signifying the fact that the period during his rule was an age of gold, since Italy had not yet entered into the hardships and miseries that she later encountered.

Thus, in the middle of the ceiling the nudes are holding some medals containing roughed-out scenes painted in bronze and gold and taken from the Book of Kings. Furthermore, to demonstrate the perfection of his art and the greatness of God, Michelangelo depicted God dividing the light from the darkness in these scenes, where He is seen in all His majesty as He sustains Himself alone with open arms in a demonstration of love and creative energy. In the second scene, with the most admirable judgement and ingenuity, Michelangelo depicted the moment when God creates the sun and moon, where He is supported by many putti and shown to be awesome by means of the foreshortening of His arms and legs. Michelangelo did the same thing in this same scene when God blesses the earth and creates the animals, while He is seen flying on the vault, a foreshortened figure which continually turns and changes direction as you walk through the chapel; likewise the next scene depicts the moment when God divides the waters from the earth, with extremely beautiful figures revealing true insight and worthy of being created only by the most divinely inspired hands of Michelangelo.

And then below* this scene, he continued with the Creation

of Adam, in which he has represented God carried by a group of nude angels of a tender age who seem to sustain not only one figure but the entire weight of the world, an effect made visible in the most venerable majesty of God and His manner of movement, for He embraces some putti with one arm almost as if to support Himself, while with the other he stretches out his right hand to Adam, a figure whose beauty, pose, and contours are of such a quality that he seems newly created by his Supreme and First Creator rather than by the brush and design of a mere mortal. Just below this in another scene Michelangelo depicted God creating Our Mother Eve from Adam's rib, in which two nudes are seen, one almost dead from being imprisoned by sleep, while the other comes alive completely awakened by the benediction of God. The brush of this most ingenious artisan reveals the true difference between sleep and awakening, as well as how stable and firm His Divine Majesty may appear when speaking in human terms.

Following this below is the scene when Adam, at the instigation of a figure half woman and half serpent, partakes of his death and our own in the apple, and Adam and Eve are seen as they are banished from Paradise. There, in the figure of the angel, the execution of the order of a wrathful Lord is made visible with grandeur and nobility, while Adam's pose displays the sorrow he feels over his sin along with his fear of death; likewise, in the figure of the woman, shame, cowardice, and the desire for pardon are revealed through her contracting arms, her hands joined at the palms, and the lowering of her head upon her bosom; and when she turns her head towards the angel, she appears more fearful of justice than hopeful of divine forgiveness. No less beautiful is the scene of the Sacrifice of Cain and Abel, where some people are carrying wood, while others are leaning over to blow on the fire, and still others cut the throat of their sacrificial victim; this scene is certainly done with no less consideration and care than the others. Michelangelo employed the same skill and good judgement in the scene of the Flood, where various dying men appear, frightened by the horror of those days, and search as best they can for different ways to escape with their lives. Accordingly,

the heads of these figures reveal that life falls prey to death, no less than fear, terror, and scorn for all things. Michelangelo shows the compassion of many others, helping one another climb up to the summit of a rock seeking safety. Among the figures is one who has embraced a half-dead man and is trying as best he can to save him, a figure Nature herself could not have depicted any better. And no one can describe how well the story of Noah has been expressed in the scene where Noah, inebriated from the wine, sleeps naked in the presence of one son who is laughing at him while two others are covering him up, a scene and the incomparable talent of an artisan that could not be surpassed except by Michelangelo himself. And then, as if he had gained courage from the things he had painted up to that point, Michelangelo's talent was reinvigorated and proved itself greater in the figures of the five sibyls and the seven prophets he painted here, each five armslengths high or more; all of them are in different poses, with beautiful garments and variety in their dress, and all, in short, are executed with invention and miraculous judgement, appearing divinely inspired to anyone who can distinguish the emotions they express.

Jeremiah can be seen with his legs crossed, holding on to his beard with one hand and resting his elbow on his knee; the other hand rests on his lap, with his head bent in a manner which clearly displays his melancholy, his worry, his thinking, and the bitterness he feels over his people, and two putti behind him express similar emotions; likewise, in the figure of the first sibyl below him in the direction of the door, Michelangelo wanted to express the nature of old age, and besides enveloping her in draperies, he wished to show that her blood was already frozen with the passing of time, and, since her eyesight is failing, Michelangelo has her draw the book she is reading very close to her eyes. Below this figure is the old prophet Ezekiel, who is depicted with a very beautiful sense of grace and movement and dressed in ample garments, carrying a scroll of prophecies in one hand while he raises the other and, turning his head, shows that he means to speak of lofty and important matters, and behind him are two putti holding his books. Below these scenes follows a sibyl who, in

contrast to the Erythraean sibyl mentioned above, is holding a book some distance away and is trying to turn a page, while, with one knee over the other, she is absorbed in thought, considering seriously what she must write, while a putto behind her is blowing on a burning brand to light her lamp. This figure is extraordinarily beautiful owing to the expression of its face, the arrangement of its hair, and the style of its garments, not to mention its bare arms, which are as beautiful as the rest of the body. And below this sibyl he painted the prophet Joel, who, deep in his own thoughts, has taken a scroll and is reading it with great attention and emotion. From his appearance, it is obvious that he is so pleased by what he has found written there that he appears to be a living person who has most vigorously applied his mind to some question. Likewise, over the door of the chapel, he placed old Zachariah, who is searching through a book for something he cannot find, with one leg raised high and the other down low, and while his haste in searching for what he cannot find makes him sit this way, he is oblivious to the discomfort he endures in such a posture. This figure is most admirable owing to its depiction of old age; it is rather stout in stature dressed in a garment with few folds that is very handsome, and, beyond it, there is another sibyl turning in the direction of the altar on the other side and displaying certain writings who, with her putti, is no less praiseworthy than the other figures.

Above her, the prophet Isaiah, transfixed by his own thoughts, has his legs crossed, and, keeping one hand inside his book to mark the place where he is reading, he rests his other elbow on the book and his chin in his hand; he is called by one of the putti behind him and turns only his head, without twisting the rest of his body; and anyone who examines this figure will see details taken from Nature herself, the true mother of the art of painting, and will see a figure that with close study can in broad terms teach all the precepts of good painting. Above this prophet is a very beautiful old sibyl with extraordinary grace who, while seated, is studying a book, and the poses of the two putti by her side are no less beautiful. Nor could one even imagine making any improvements in the beauty of the figure of a young man representing Daniel, who

is writing in a large book and copying some things he has found in certain other writings with an incredible eagerness. As a support for that weight, Michelangelo painted a putto between his legs who is supporting him while he writes, and this figure could never be equalled by a brush in the hand of any other artist; the same is true of the extremely beautiful figure of the Libyan sibyl, who, after having written a huge volume drawn from many books, is about to rise to her feet in a feminine pose, and, at the same moment, she shows her wish to arise and her desire to close the book—a difficult, not to say impossible, detail for any other master but Michelangelo.

What can be said of the four scenes at the corners in the pendentives of the vault? In one of them there is a David, expressing that boyish strength which can be especially effective in defeating a giant by cutting off his head and which brings astonishment to the faces of several soldiers shown around the camp; equally amazing are the extremely beautiful poses of the figures in the story of Judith in the opposite corner, where the headless, quivering body of Holofernes appears, while Judith places the severed head in a basket that one of her elderly maids carries on her head, and since the maid is tall in stature, she leans over so that Judith can reach it and arrange it properly; keeping her hands on this burden, she tries to cover it up, and, turning her face towards the body which, although dead, lifts an arm and a leg, making a noise inside the tent, the woman reflects in her expression her fear of the armed camp and her dread of the dead man: this is truly a very highly thought-of painting.

But more beautiful and divinely inspired than this and all the others is the scene depicting Moses' serpents over the left corner of the altar, for in it the slaughter of the dead can be seen as the serpents rain down, biting and stinging, as well as the bronze serpent itself that Moses placed upon the pole; this scene vividly portrays the diversity among the deaths suffered by those deprived of all hope by the serpents' bites. The deadly poison is seen to cause the deaths of countless people by convulsions and terror, not to mention the twisted legs and intertwined arms of those who remain in the position they were in when struck down, unable to move, or the extremely

beautiful heads shown screaming and turned up in despair. No less beautiful than all these are the figures of the people who, while examining the serpent, feel themselves restored to life with the lessening of their pain; they gaze at it with tremendous emotion, and among them a woman can be seen supported by another figure in a way that reveals not only the assistance offered by the person holding her up but also her need, as she is bitten in this sudden moment of terror.

Similarly, the scene which depicts Ahasuerus lying in bed and reading his chronicles contains very beautiful figures, and among others to be seen are three men eating at a table, who represent the council held to liberate the Hebrew people and to hang Haman; the figure of Haman himself is foreshortened in an extraordinary manner, since Michelangelo depicted the trunk holding up his body and his arm coming forward so that they seem alive and in relief rather than painted, just like the leg that he pushes out and other parts of his body that turn inward: a figure that is certainly the most beautiful and difficult among many difficult and beautiful figures.

It would take too long to explain the many beautiful and different poses and gestures Michelangelo imagined to represent the genealogy of the Fathers, beginning with the children of Noah, and to display the ancestry of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to recount the diversity of details in these figures, such as their garments, their facial expressions, and countless extraordinary and original inventions, all most beautifully conceived. In them there is no single detail that was not brought into being by Michelangelo's genius, and all the figures are most beautifully and skilfully foreshortened, while everything that is to be admired is worthy of the highest praise and splendid. But who will not admire and remain astonished upon seeing the magnificence of Jonah, the last figure in the chapel? There, through the power of art, the vault that by nature moves forward curving along the wall, is pushed up by the appearance of this figure turning in the opposite direction so that it seems straight, and then, conquered by the art of design, along with light and shadow, it truly seems to turn backwards.

Oh, truly happy age of ours! Oh, blessed artists! For you

must call yourselves fortunate, since in your own lifetime you have been able to rekindle the dim lights of your eyes from a source of such clarity, and to see everything that was difficult made simple by such a marvellous and singular artist! Certainly the glory of his labours has made you recognize and honour them, for he has removed the blinders from the eyes of your minds, so full of shadows, and has shown you how to distinguish the true from the false that clouded your intellects. Therefore, thank Heaven for this and strive to imitate Michelangelo in all things.

When the chapel was uncovered, people from everywhere wanted to rush to see it, and the sight of it alone was sufficient to leave them amazed and speechless; and so the pope, exalted by this project and encouraged to undertake even greater enterprises, rewarded Michelangelo greatly with money and rich gifts, and Michelangelo used to say that the favours he received from this pope proved that he fully recognized his talents; and if on some occasions, because of their intimate relationship, the pope abused him, he would heal his wounds with gifts and extraordinary favours. For instance, this occurred when Michelangelo, seeking the pope's permission to go to spend the feast day of Saint John in Florence, asked him for some money for this purpose, and the pope said:

'Well, what about this chapel? When will it be finished?'

'When I can, Holy Father,' replied Michelangelo.

The pope, who had a staff in his hand, struck Michelangelo with it as he declared: 'When I can, when I can: I'll make you finish it myself!'

But when Michelangelo returned home to make his preparations for going to Florence, the pope immediately sent Cursio, his chamberlain, to Michelangelo with five hundred *scudi*, and Cursio tried to excuse the pope, declaring that such acts were all signs of his favour and affection, fearing that if he did not do something to placate Michelangelo, he would react in his usual manner. And because Michelangelo understood the pope's character and, in the end, loved him dearly, he laughed about it, and then finally saw everything redound to his favour and profit, since the pope would do anything to keep Michelangelo's friendship.

When the chapel was completed and before the pope died, His Holiness ordered Cardinal Santiquattro and Cardinal Aginense,* his nephew, that in the event of his death they should finish his tomb on a smaller scale than first planned. And Michelangelo set to work once more, and thus willingly began again working on this tomb to finish it once and for all, without any further obstacles, but from then on it always caused him more displeasure, bother, and distress than anything else he ever did in his life, and also for some time and in some respects it earned him the reputation of being ungrateful towards the pope who had loved and favoured him so greatly. And so he returned to the tomb, working on it continuously, while also spending part of his time putting into order the plans to be executed for the façades of the chapel, but envious Fortune decreed that this memorial, which had such a perfect beginning, would never be brought to completion, since Pope Julius died at this time, and the project was abandoned with the creation of Pope Leo X, whose courage and bravery were no less splendid than Julius's and who, as the first pope elected from Florence, wished to leave behind himself in his native city, in his own memory and in that of a divinely inspired artisan who was his fellow citizen, those marvels that only a very great prince such as he was could create. And so he gave orders that the façade of San Lorenzo in Florence, the church built by the House of the Medici, should be completed for him, and this was why the work on the tomb of Julius remained incomplete, for Leo asked Michelangelo to advise him as well as to draw up plans and to take charge of the project. Michelangelo resisted as best as he could, claiming he was under an obligation to Cardinals Santiquattro and Aginense to finish the tomb; the pope replied that he should not worry about that, since he had already taken care of it and had arranged for them to release him, promising that Michelangelo could work in Florence, just as he had already begun to do, on the figures for the tomb; all this was done to the great displeasure of the cardinals and of Michelangelo, who left in tears.

The discussions that followed about the façade were various and endless, since such a project should have been divided

among several people, and many artisans flocked to Rome to compete for the architectural commission before the pope: Baccio d'Agnolo, Antonio da San Gallo, Andrea and Jacopo Sansovino, and the gracious Raphael of Urbino, who was later brought to Florence during the pope's visit for this purpose. Michelangelo therefore decided to construct a model and wanted no one else as his superior or guide in the architecture.* But his refusal of all assistance was the reason why neither he nor any others went to work, and in desperation the other masters returned to their usual jobs. And Michelangelo passed through Florence on his way to Carrara with an order for Jacopo Salviati to pay him one thousand *scudi*, but since Jacopo was shut up in his room in a business meeting with some other citizens, Michelangelo did not wish to wait for an interview and left without a word, going immediately to Carrara. When Jacopo heard of Michelangelo's arrival, and did not find him in Florence, he sent him the thousand *scudi* in Carrara. The messenger wanted Michelangelo to give him a receipt, to which Michelangelo replied that they were for the pope's expenses and not for his own purposes, and that he should report to Salviati that he was not accustomed to giving vouchers or receipts to anyone; and so, out of fear, the messenger returned to Jacopo without a receipt. . . . *

Michelangelo spent many years quarrying marble; it is true that while he was doing this he made wax models and other things for the façade. But this undertaking was drawn out for so long that the money the pope set aside for the project was spent on the wars in Lombardy, and on the death of Leo the project remained incomplete,* and nothing had been accomplished on it except the foundations to support it, and the shipment of a huge marble column from Carrara to the Piazza of San Lorenzo. The death of Leo paralysed the artisans and the arts both in Rome and in Florence to such an extent that while Adrian VI lived, Michelangelo worked in Florence on the tomb of Julius. But when Adrian died Clement VII became pope,* a man no less anxious than Leo and his other predecessors to acquire fame in the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting. At that time and in the year 1525,* Giorgio Vasari was brought as a young boy to Florence by the Car-

dinal of Cortona and was placed with Michelangelo to learn the arts. But since Michelangelo had been summoned to Rome by Pope Clement VII, who had begun the Library of San Lorenzo and the New Sacristy in which to place the marble tombs he was having built for his ancestors, Michelangelo decided that Vasari should go to stay with Andrea del Sarto until he sent for him, and he himself went to Andrea's shop to introduce him.

Michelangelo left for Rome in a hurry, and once again he was harassed by Francesco Maria, duke of Urbino and the nephew of Pope Julius, who complained about Michelangelo, declaring that he had received sixteen thousand *scudi* for the tomb and that he had willingly remained in Florence, and he threatened him angrily that if he did not attend to the matter, he would make him regret it. When he arrived in Rome, Pope Clement, who wished to make use of him, advised Michelangelo to settle accounts with the duke's agents, for the pope thought that, considering what Michelangelo had done for him, he was more a creditor than a debtor; the matter was left at that. And, discussing together a number of projects, they decided to finish completely the sacristy and the new library of San Lorenzo in Florence. And so, after leaving Rome, Michelangelo vaulted the dome that can be seen there today, which he finished in a variety of styles, and for it he had Piloto the goldsmith make a very beautiful golden ball with seventy-two facets. It happened that while they were vaulting the dome, Michelangelo was asked by some of his friends:

'Michelangelo, you will have to make your lantern very different from that of Filippo Brunelleschi.'

And he replied to them: 'It can be made different but not better.'*

Inside the sacristy, Michelangelo executed four tombs as decorations for the walls to hold the bodies of the fathers of the two popes, the elder Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano, as well as those of Giuliano, brother of Leo, and Duke Lorenzo, his nephew.* And since Michelangelo wanted to execute the project in imitation of the Old Sacristy done by Filippo Brunelleschi but with a different order of decorations, he

created inside a composite decoration, more varied and original than ancient or modern masters had for some time been able to achieve, for in the originality of its beautiful cornices, capitals, bases, doors, tabernacles, and tombs, Michelangelo departed in a significant way from the measures, orders, and rules men usually employ, following Vitruvius and the ancients, because he did not wish to repeat them. His licence has greatly encouraged those who have seen his way of working in order to set about imitating it, and new fantasies were subsequently seen to exhibit more of the grotesque than reason or rules in their decorations. Thus artisans owe an immense and everlasting debt to Michelangelo, since he broke the bonds and chains that made them all continue to follow a common path.

But then he displayed this technique even more effectively and sought to make it known in the Library of San Lorenzo in the same location: that is, in the beautiful divisions of the windows and the ceiling, and the marvellous entrance hall. Never before had there been seen such resolute grace in the whole as well as in the parts, as in the corbels, tabernacles, and cornices, nor was there ever a more commodious staircase: in it, he executed so many unusual breaks in the steps and departed so far from the usual custom in other details that everyone was astonished by it.*

At that time, Michelangelo sent Pietro Urbano of Pistoia, his pupil, to Rome to prepare a painting of a naked Christ bearing the cross, a truly admirable figure which was placed in Santa Maria sopra Minerva near the main altar for Messer Antonio Metelli. Around this time the Sack of Rome and the expulsion of the Medici from Florence occurred, and during the change [of government], those governing the city made plans to refortify Florence, and they named Michelangelo commissioner general over all the fortifications.* Thus, he made plans for various parts of the city and had it fortified, and finally he surrounded the hill of San Miniato with ramparts, which he did not build with the commonly used clumps of earth, timbers, or bundles of brushwood, but rather with a framework underneath interwoven with chestnut, oak, and other good materials, and in place of the sod he used

rough bricks made from tow and manure, levelled with the greatest care; and because of this, he was sent by the Signoria of Florence to Ferrara to examine the fortifications of Duke Alfonso I, as well as his artillery pieces and munitions, where he received many courtesies from that lord, who begged Michelangelo to make something for him with his own hands, all of which Michelangelo promised to do. After returning to Florence, he continued fortifying the city, and despite these obstacles he nevertheless worked on a painting of Leda for the duke, which he coloured in tempera with his own hand (a splendid work, as will be explained in the proper place), while he was also secretly working upon the tombs for San Lorenzo. At the same time, Michelangelo remained some six months on San Miniato in order to hurry on the fortification of the hill, for if the enemy seized it the city would be lost, and so he pursued these undertakings with great care.

And during this time he continued to work on the previously mentioned sacristy; of this project there remained seven statues that were partially finished and partially not, in which, along with the architectural inventions of the tombs, it must be confessed that he had surpassed every man in all three crafts. These statues still bear witness to this fact, and he roughed them out and finished the marble in the place where they can be seen: one is Our Lady, Who is seated with Her right leg crossed over the left, resting one knee upon the other, while the Child, sitting astride Her highest leg, twists around towards His Mother with the most beautiful expression to ask for milk, and She holds Him with one hand, while with the other she supports Herself and bends down to give Him some. Although various parts of this statue were unfinished, what is left roughed out and full of chisel marks reveals, in its incomplete state, the perfection of the work. But those who examined the way Michelangelo fashioned the tombs of Duke Giuliano and Duke Lorenzo de' Medici were astonished even more by the artist's notion that the earth alone was insufficient to give them an honourable burial worthy of their greatness, and by his decision to include all the parts of the world here, and to cover and surround their tombs with four statues: on one tomb he placed Night and Day, and on the other Dawn

and *Dusk*; these statues are carved with the most beautifully formed poses and skilfully executed muscles and would be sufficient, if the art of sculpture were lost, to return it to its original splendour. Among the other statues, there are also the two captains in armour: one the pensive Duke Lorenzo, the image of wisdom, with the most handsome legs fashioned in such a way that the eye could not see better ones; and the other Duke Giuliano, so proud a figure with his head, throat, the setting of his eyes, the profile of his nose, the opening of his mouth, and his hair all made with splendid artistry, along with his hands, arms, knees, and feet; and, in short, everything that Michelangelo accomplished here is done in such a way that the eyes could never become bored or satiated. And truly, anyone who gazes at the beauty of the boots and cuirass will believe that this is a heavenly rather than a mortal work. But what can I say about the naked female figure of *Dawn*, a work that can arouse the melancholy in one's soul and confound the style of sculpture? Her posture reveals her concern as she arises sleepily, extricating herself from the downy cushions, for it seems as if, upon awakening, she has discovered the eyes of this great duke closed. And so she twists around with grief, lamenting in her everlasting beauty as a sign of her great sorrow. And what can I say about the figure of *Night*, a statue not only rare but unique? Is there anyone who, in the art of any century, has ever seen ancient or modern statues made like this one? For this work reveals not only the stillness of someone who is sleeping but the sorrow and melancholy of someone who is losing something great and honourable. It is possible that this figure may be the night that forever eclipses all those who for some time thought, I will not say to surpass but to equal, Michelangelo in sculpture or the art of design. The figure reveals the kind of drowsiness that can be seen in the living images of sleep; as a result, many verses in Latin and the vernacular were written in praise of his accomplishment by very learned people, such as these whose author is unknown:

Night, that you see in such sweet repose
Sleeping, was sculpted by an angel

In this stone, and since she sleeps, she lives;
Wake her, if you don't believe it, and she will speak to you.

To these verses, speaking in the person of Night, Michelangelo replied as follows:

Sleep is dear to me and even more so being made of stone,
As long as injury and shamefulness endure;
Not to see, not to hear is my great good fortune;
Therefore do not wake me, lower your voice.*

And certainly if the enmity that exists between Fortune and ability, between the skill of one and the envy of the other, had allowed this work to be finished, art could have demonstrated to Nature that it surpasses Nature by far in every thought. But while he was working with diligence and great love upon these works, the siege of Florence took place in the year 1529, which unfortunately prevented its completion; this was the reason why he did little or no more work on it, for the citizens of Florence had entrusted to his care not only the fortifications on the hill of San Miniato, but also those of the city itself, as has already been mentioned. . . .*

After the surrender agreement had been signed,* Baccio Valori, the pope's commissioner, had orders to arrest and imprison in the Bargello some of the citizens most involved in the opposing faction, and the court itself looked for Michelangelo in his home, but, suspecting this, Michelangelo had secretly fled to the home of one of his closest friends, where he remained hidden for many days until the uproar died down and Pope Clement remembered Michelangelo's talents and took great pains to find him with the order that nothing should be done to him but that his usual provisions should be returned to him and that he should attend to the project at San Lorenzo, naming Messer Giovanbatista Figioanni, an old servant of the House of Medici and prior of San Lorenzo, as the supervisor.* Once Michelangelo had been reassured by this, he began, in order to ingratiate himself with Baccio Valori, a marble figure three armslengths high of Apollo drawing an arrow from his quiver which he almost brought to completion; it stands today in the apartment of the prince

of Florence, a most rare work even if it is not completely finished. . . .*

Michelangelo had to go to Rome to work for Pope Clement, who, although angry with him, forgave him completely as a lover of talent and ordered him to return to Florence and to finish the entire library and sacristy of San Lorenzo, and, in order to save time on this project, numerous statues that were to go there were assigned to other masters. Two were commissioned to Tribolo, one to Raffaello da Monte Lupo, and one to Fra Giovanni Angelo of the Servite friars, all three sculptors, and Michelangelo assisted them in this work, making models in rough clay for each of them, and they all worked boldly while Michelangelo was having the library attended to, where the ceiling was completed with carved woodwork based on his models, executed by Carota and Tasso, excellent Florentine woodcarvers and masters;* in like manner the bookshelves were then done from Michelangelo's designs by Batista del Cinque and his friend Ciapino, both skilful masters in this profession. To give the work the final touches, the splendid Giovanni da Udine was brought to Florence, who with some of his own workmen and still other Florentine masters worked on the stucco decorations for the tribune. And so with great diligence everyone sought to finish this enterprise.

While Michelangelo was intending to have the statues executed, the pope came up with the idea of having him nearby, since he was anxious to paint the walls of the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo had painted the vault for Julius II, the nephew of Sixtus; upon the main wall behind the altar, Clement wanted him to paint the Last Judgement* so that he could demonstrate in this scene all that the art of design was capable of achieving; and on the opposite wall over the main door he ordered Michelangelo to paint the moment when Lucifer was driven out of Heaven because of his pride and cast down to the centre of Hell along with all those angels who sinned with him. It was discovered that many years earlier Michelangelo had made studies and various drawings for these creations, one of which was later executed in the church of the Trinity in Rome by a Sicilian painter, who stayed with

Michelangelo for many months, assisting him and grinding his colours. This work is in the transept of the church in the chapel of Saint Gregory, painted in fresco, and even though it is badly executed, one can see a certain magnificent quality and variety in the poses and groups of the nudes raining down from heaven and the fallen at the centre of the earth, transformed into various kinds of very terrifying and unusual devils, and this is certainly an original flight of fantasy.*

While Michelangelo was preparing to do these sketches and the cartoons of the Last Judgement for the first wall, he could not avoid being disturbed every day by the agents of the Duke of Urbino, who alleged that he had received sixteen thousand *scudi* from Julius II for his tomb, and Michelangelo could not tolerate this accusation; he wanted to complete it one day even though he was already an old man, and he would gladly have remained in Rome, having unexpectedly been given a pretext for not returning again to Florence, since he was very much afraid of Duke Alessandro de' Medici, whom he considered to be no friend of his, for after the duke, through Signor Alessandro Vitelli, had given him to understand that he ought to determine the best site for constructing the castle and citadel of Florence, Michelangelo had replied that he did not wish to go there unless he was ordered to do so by Pope Clement.

Finally, an agreement was reached on the tomb, and it was to be finished in this way: Michelangelo would no longer make the tomb free-standing and four-sided but would do only one side in whatever way he liked, and he was obliged to include six statues by his own hand; and in the contract he made with the Duke of Urbino, His Excellency conceded that Michelangelo was legally bound to work for Pope Clement for four months during the year, either in Florence or wherever he wished to employ him. And while Michelangelo thought he was satisfied, it did not end like that, for Clement wished to see the ultimate proof of the power of his talents and forced him to work on the cartoon for the Last Judgement. But while Michelangelo showed the pope that he was engaged on that project, he never ceased working in secret, as hard as he could, on the statues that were to go on the

previously mentioned tomb. In the year 1533 came the death of Pope Clement,* and in Florence the work on the sacristy and the library, which Michelangelo had taken such great pains trying to finish, stopped and the work remained incomplete. Michelangelo then thought himself truly free to attend to completing the tomb of Julius II, but after the creation of the new pope, Paul III, not much time passed before he, too, summoned Michelangelo, and after offering him special signs of affection and proposals, he tried to convince Michelangelo that he ought to serve him and that he wanted him nearby. Michelangelo refused this request, declaring that he was unable to do so, since he was contractually obligated to the Duke of Urbino until the tomb of Julius was completed. At this, the pope became angry and said:

'I have had this desire for thirty years, and now that I am Pope, am I not to satisfy it? I will tear up this contract, and, in any case, I intend to have you serve me!'

When Michelangelo saw his determination, he was tempted to leave Rome and find some means of completing the tomb. Nevertheless, being a prudent man who feared the pope's power, he decided to keep him waiting and to satisfy him with words, given that he was a very old man, until something came up. . . . *

Since he could do nothing else, Michelangelo decided to serve Pope Paul, who ordered him not to change in any way the invention or concept he had been given by Clement; indeed, the pope respected Michelangelo's talent and bore him so much love and reverence that he sought only to please him, as was evident when His Holiness wanted to place his coat of arms under the figure of Jonah in the chapel where the coat of arms of Pope Julius II had originally been placed; when Michelangelo was asked about it, he did not wish to put it there to avoid doing an injustice to either Julius or Clement, declaring that it was not a good idea, and His Holiness remained satisfied with this so that he would not offend Michelangelo, for he very clearly recognized the goodness of this man who always aimed for what was honest and right without any show of respect and adulation, something princes are rarely accustomed to experience.

Michelangelo therefore had a scarp built for the wall of this chapel from bricks which were properly baked, selected, and laid, and he wanted it to overhang the summit half an arm'slength to prevent dust or other dirt from settling on the wall. I shall not go into the particulars of the invention or the composition of this scene, for it has so often been copied and printed in sizes large and small that it does not seem necessary to lose time in describing it. It is sufficient to see that the intention of this singular man was never to paint anything other than the perfect and perfectly proportioned composition of the human body in its most unusual poses, as well as the effects of the soul's passions and joys, for Michelangelo was content to give satisfaction in the area in which he had proven himself superior to all his fellow artisans, and to display the method of his grand style and his nudes and the extent to which he understood the problems of design, and he finally revealed the way to achieve facility in the principal aim of the art of painting—that is, the depiction of the human figure—and, applying himself to this one goal, he left aside the charm of colours, the caprices and novel fantasies of certain small details and refinements, that many other painters, perhaps with some reason, have not entirely neglected. Thus some artists, lacking such a grounding in design, have sought with a variety of tints and shades of colour and various new and unusual inventions—that is, in brief, with this other method—to find a place among the ranks of the foremost masters. But Michelangelo, always standing firm in the profundity of his art, demonstrated to those artists who are most knowledgeable how to attain perfection.

Now, to return to the scene. Michelangelo had already completed more than three-quarters of the work when Pope Paul came to see it, and when Messer Biagio da Cesena, master of ceremonies and a scrupulous man who was in the chapel with the pope, was asked what he thought of the painting, he declared that it was a most unseemly thing in such a venerable place to have painted so many nudes that so indecently display their shame and that it was not a work for a pope's chapel but rather one for baths or taverns. This comment displeased Michelangelo, and, wishing to avenge himself, as soon as

Messer Biagio had left, he drew his actual portrait without his being present, placing him in Hell in the person of Minos with a large serpent wrapped around his legs in a heap of devils. Nor did Messer Biagio's entreaties to the pope and to Michelangelo that it be removed do any good, for Michelangelo left it there in memory of the event, where it can still be seen today.

During this time it happened that Michelangelo fell no small distance from planks on the scaffolding of this work and hurt his leg, but because of the pain and his anger he did not wish to be treated by anyone. For this reason, Master Baccio Rontini, a Florentine who was still alive at that time and was Michelangelo's friend and admirer as well as a clever physician, took pity on him, and went one day to knock on his door, and when neither Michelangelo nor the neighbours replied, he kept climbing up through certain secret passages from room to room until he came upon Michelangelo, who was in desperate shape. And until Michelangelo was cured, Master Baccio naturally refused to be away from him or to leave his bedside. After he was cured of this injury and had returned to the project, working on it continuously, Michelangelo brought it to a conclusion in a few months, giving so much power to the paintings in the work that he attested to the saying of Dante: "The dead seemed dead, and the living seemed alive."* And this work reveals the misery of the damned and the happiness of the blessed.

When the Last Judgement was uncovered, Michelangelo proved not only that he had triumphed over the first artisans who had worked in the chapel but that he also wished to triumph over himself in the vault he had made so famous, and since the Last Judgement was by far superior to that, Michelangelo surpassed even himself, having imagined the terror of those days, in which he depicted, for the greater punishment of those who have not lived good lives, all of Christ's Passion; he has various naked figures in the air carrying the cross, the column, the lance, the sponge, the nails, and the crown in different and varied poses with a grace that can be executed only with great difficulty. There is the figure of

Christ Who, seated with a stern and terrible face, turns to the damned to curse them, while in great fear Our Lady, wrapping Herself in Her cloak, hears and sees great devastation. Countless figures of the prophets and apostles are there surrounding Christ, especially Adam and Saint Peter, who are thought to have been included because one was the first parent of those brought to judgement, while the other was the first foundation of the Christian religion. And at Christ's feet is the very beautiful figure of Saint Bartholomew displaying his flayed skin. There is also a nude figure of Saint Laurence, besides countless numbers of male and female saints and other male and female figures all around Christ, both nearby and far away, who are embracing each other and rejoicing because they have earned eternal blessedness through God's grace and as a reward for their good works. Under Christ's feet, the Seven Angels described by Saint John the Evangelist with their Seven Trumpets are sounding the call to judgement, and the awesomeness displayed in their faces causes the hair of those looking at them to stand on end, and, among others, there are two angels holding the Book of Life in their hands; nearby the Seven Deadly Sins can be seen depicted with the finest judgement in the form of devils in a band, fighting and pulling down to Hell the souls that are flying to Heaven with the most beautiful expressions and very admirable foreshortenings. Nor in the depiction of the resurrection of the dead did Michelangelo hesitate to demonstrate to the world how these bodies take on their bones and flesh anew from the very earth, or how, assisted by others who are alive, they go flying towards Heaven, where they are given assistance by some of the souls who are already beatified, along with all those details of good judgement considered appropriate to such a work as this one. In fact, Michelangelo executed studies and exercises of every kind for this painting, which is equally apparent throughout the work, and is also clearly shown in the detail depicting the boat of Charon who, with a frenzied expression, is beating with his oar the souls being dragged down into his boat by the devils in imitation of the description given by his very favourite poet, Dante, when he declared:

The devil Charon, with eyes of glowing coals,
summons them all together with a signal,
and with an oar he strikes the laggard sinner.*

Nor could anyone imagine the variety in the heads of these devils, truly monsters from Hell. In the figures of the sinners we can recognize their sins along with the fear of eternal damnation. And besides every beautiful detail, it is extraordinary to see such a work painted and executed so harmoniously that it seems to have been done in a single day and with the type of finish that no illuminator could ever have achieved; to tell the truth, the multitude of figures and the magnificence and grandeur of the work are indescribable, for it is full of all the possible human emotions, all of which have been wonderfully expressed: the proud, the envious, the avaricious, the lustful, and all the other sinners can be easily distinguished from every blessed spirit, since Michelangelo observed every rule of decorum in portraying their expressions, poses, and every other natural detail; although this was a marvellous and enormous undertaking, it was not impossible for this man, for he was always shrewd, wise, and a great observer of men, who had acquired the same understanding of the world from experience that philosophers acquire through speculation and books. Thus, any person who has good judgement and an understanding of painting will see in this work the awesome power of the art of painting, for Michelangelo's figures reveal thoughts and emotions which were never depicted by anyone else; such a person will also see how he varied with diverse and strange gestures the many poses of the young and old, male and female: to whom do these figures not display the awesome power of his art along with the sense of grace with which Nature endowed him? For he moves the hearts of all those who know nothing about painting, as well as the hearts of those who understand this profession. The foreshortenings that appear to be done in relief, the soft harmony of lights and colours, and the refined details of the lovely things he painted truly demonstrate that paintings have to be executed by good and true painters, and one can see in the contours of the forms he drew, using a method no other artist could ever have

followed, the true Judgement and the true Damnation and Resurrection. In our art, this painting is that example and that great picture sent by God to men on earth so that they could see how Fate operates when supreme intellects descend to earth and are infused with grace and the divinity of knowledge. This work leads like bound captives all those who are convinced they understand the art of painting, and in seeing the strokes he drew in the outlines of all his figures, every magnificent spirit is fearful and trembles, however knowledgeable he may be in the art of design. And in studying his labours, the senses are confused solely at the thought of how other paintings, both those that have been executed and those to come, would compare to this one. And how truly happy are those who have seen this truly stupendous wonder of our century, and how happy their memories must be! Most happy and fortunate Paul III, for God granted that under his patronage the glory that the writers' pens will accord to his memory and to your own would find shelter! How greatly will your merits enhance his own worth! Certainly his birth has brought a most happy fate to the artists of this century, for they have seen him tear away the veil from all the difficulties that can be encountered or imagined in the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture.

Michelangelo laboured on this work for eight years and unveiled it (I believe) in the year 1541 on Christmas Day,* to the wonder and amazement of all of Rome, or rather, of the entire world, and that year, when I was living in Venice, I went to Rome to see it, and I was stupefied by it. . . . *

It happened that in the year 1546 Antonio da San Gallo died, and thus there was no one to guide the building of Saint Peter's, and the assistants on the project expressed different opinions to the pope about who should be given the position. Finally, inspired, I believe, by God, His Holiness decided to send for Michelangelo, and when the pope sought to put him in San Gallo's place, Michelangelo refused, declaring, in order to escape this burden, that architecture was not his true profession. Finally, after his entreaties were to no avail, the pope ordered Michelangelo to accept the job, and to his greatest displeasure and very much against his will he was

forced to join in this enterprise. And one day among others he headed to Saint Peter's to see the wooden model San Gallo had executed and the building itself in order to examine it, and there he came upon all of San Gallo's faction who had come forward and declared to Michelangelo in the best way they knew how that they were delighted the responsibility for the building had been entrusted to him, adding that San Gallo's model was a meadow where there would always be good grazing.

'That's certainly true,' Michelangelo answered, wishing to imply, as he later declared to a friend, that it was a pasture for sheep or oxen who understood nothing about art; and afterwards he used to declare publicly that San Gallo had constructed the building without proper lighting, that outside it had too many orders of columns one over another, and that with all its projections, spires, and excessive details and ornaments, it possessed much more of the German workmanship than the good ancient method or the pleasing and beautiful modern style; he added that he could save fifty years of time in completing the work and more than three hundred thousand *scudi* in expenses, and could finish it with more majesty, grandeur, and facility, as well as a superior design, greater beauty, and more convenience. And he then demonstrated this in a model he executed in order to convert the building to the style of the completed work as we see it today, and he made it understood that what he was saying was the simple truth. This model cost him twenty-five *scudi* and was completed in fifteen days; that of San Gallo, as was mentioned, cost more than four thousand *scudi* and took many years. And from this fact and other ways of doing things it became obvious that the building project was a shop and a business making a profit which was extended for the benefit of those who had cornered the market rather than for the purpose of finishing the church. These methods did not satisfy this righteous man, and to rid himself of these men while the pope was pressing him to accept the position of architect on the project, he told them one day openly that they should gain the assistance of their friends and do everything they could to prevent him from taking the post, for if he were given the

office, he did not want any of them involved in this building project; they took these words spoken in public very badly, as one might imagine, and this was the reason why they hated Michelangelo so deeply, a hatred which grew every day as they saw him changing the entire plan inside and out; why they could not allow him to go on living; and why every day they devised new and different stratagems to torment him, as will be explained in the proper place.

Finally, Pope Paul issued a *motu proprio* to Michelangelo, making him the head of the building project with full authority so that he could do and undo what was there, increase, decrease, or vary anything to his liking, and he decided that all the officials there should be under Michelangelo's authority. Thus, when Michelangelo saw the confidence and faith that the pope had in him, he insisted on proving his own goodness by having it declared in the papal decree that he was serving on the building project for the love of God and not for any other reward, although earlier the pope had given him the tolls over the river in Parma,* which earned him six hundred *scudi* that he lost upon the death of Duke Pier Luigi Farnese, when he was given in exchange a chancellery in Rimini of less value and interest to him. And though the pope also sent him money on numerous occasions as a salary, Michelangelo never wanted to accept this, as Messer Alessandro Ruffini, then chamberlain to the pope, and Messer Pier Giovanni Aliotti, Bishop of Forlì, can confirm.

Finally the model Michelangelo had executed which reduced Saint Peter's to a smaller size but also greater grandeur was approved by the pope, to the satisfaction of all those with good judgement, although certain people who profess to understand (but, in fact, do not) do not approve of it. Michelangelo discovered that the four main pillars made by Bramante and left in place by Antonio da San Gallo to support the weight of the tribune were weak, and he partly filled them up by building two spiral or winding staircases on the sides with flat steps up which pack animals could climb and carry all the materials to the summit, and likewise men could go there on horseback as far as the highest level. He executed the first cornice under the travertine arches; it curves around, and

is a marvellous thing, graceful and very different from the others, and better than any other work of this kind. He began the two large arms of the transept, and where, according to the plans of Bramante, Baldassare [Peruzzi], and Raphael, as we mentioned, eight tabernacles were being built facing the Camposanto, a plan continued later by San Gallo, Michelangelo reduced the number to three, with three chapels inside, and above these he placed a travertine vault and an arrangement of windows bright with light, which possess different shapes and magnificent grandeur, but since these elements are there and can also be seen in published prints (not only those by Michelangelo but those by San Gallo), I shall not begin describing them unnecessarily; let it suffice to say that, with great thoroughness, he began to have work done in all those places where the plan of the building was to change, so that the building would be permanent and no one else could ever change his design: this was the precaution of a wise and prudent genius, for doing something well is not enough unless one safeguards it in the future, since the presumption and impudence of those who think they know something (if words are believed more than deeds), along with the partiality of those incapable of understanding, can cause many problems to arise.

The Roman people with the consent of the pope wished to give some beautiful, useful, and suitable form to the Capitol, and to furnish it with architectural orders, ascents, ramps, and staircases, and with decorations consisting of ancient statues brought there to embellish the place; and Michelangelo, sought as an advisor for this project, made for them a very beautiful and rich drawing, in which on the side of the Senators' Palace, which faces towards the east, he arranged a façade of travertine and a flight of steps ascending from two sides to reach a level space through which one enters into the middle of the hall of this palace, along with rich volutes full of varied balusters that serve as supports and parapets. Then, to embellish the design further, he placed two ancient marble statues of recumbent river gods on pedestals: one represented the Tiber, the other the Nile, each nine armslengths long, something most rare, while between them a statue of Jupiter

was to go in a large niche. On the south side, where the Palazzo de' Conservatori stands, to square off the shape he continued with a rich and varied façade with a gallery at the foot full of columns and niches for many ancient statues, and all around are various decorations, doors, and windows, some of which are already in place. And on the opposite side, towards the north, below the Aracoeli, there was to be another similar façade; and in front of this, to the west, an almost level ascent of bastions with an enclosure and a parapet of balusters where the principal entrance will be decorated with an order of columns and bases upon which will be placed all the noble statues with which the Capitol is today so richly endowed. In the middle of the piazza, on an oval-shaped base, stands the highly renowned bronze horse upon which rests the statue of Marcus Aurelius, the one the same Pope Paul had removed from the piazza of the Lateran where Pope Sixtus IV had placed it. Today this project is turning out to be so beautiful that it deserves being counted among the worthy things that Michelangelo created, and today it is being guided to its completion by Messer Tommaso de' Cavalieri, a Roman gentleman, who was and is one of the best friends that Michelangelo ever had, as will be explained below. . . . *

Michelangelo had spent seventeen years in the building of Saint Peter's, and on more than one occasion his deputies had tried to remove him from that post, and when they did not succeed, they then went around thinking about how they could oppose him in everything, now with some strange proposal, and now with another, so that he would resign out of weariness, since he was already too old to continue. . . . * Thus, we have seen that God, the protector of the good, has defended Michelangelo as long as he has lived, and has always worked for the benefit of this building and the protection of this man until his death. And it came about that Pius IV, living after Michelangelo, ordered the superintendents of the building not to change any of Michelangelo's plans, and his successor, Pius V, had them followed with even greater precision, for, in order to avoid confusion, he wanted Michelangelo's plans followed without deviations, and while the architects Pirro Ligorio and Jacopo Vignola were directing the

construction and Pirro presumptuously wanted to change and alter this plan, he was removed from the project with little honour to himself and Vignola was left in charge.* And finally, in the year 1565, when Vasari went to kiss His Holiness's feet, and again in the year 1566 when he was recalled, this pope, no less zealous in defending the reputation of the building of Saint Peter's than in defending the Christian religion, spoke of nothing except ensuring that the designs left behind by Michelangelo would be followed; and in order to prevent any confusion, His Holiness commanded Vasari to go with Messer Guglielmo Sangalletti, his private treasurer, and, on his authority, to find Bishop Ferratino, the head of the builders of Saint Peter's, and to tell him that he should pay attention to all the notes and records Vasari would explain to him, so that the words of malignant and presumptuous people would never change a suggestion or an order left behind by the superb talent and memory of Michelangelo. And Messer Giovambatista Altoviti, a close friend of Vasari and these same talents, was present at this event. Once Ferratino had heard what Vasari had to tell him, he gladly accepted every record and promised without fail to observe and to make everyone else observe every order and plan for the building that Michelangelo had left behind for it, and, besides this, to protect, defend, and preserve the labours of such a great man.

And to return to Michelangelo, let me say that about a year before his death, Vasari had secretly arranged for Duke Cosimo de' Medici to persuade the pope, through the mediation of Messer Averardo Serristori, his ambassador, that since Michelangelo's condition had greatly deteriorated, special care should be taken to watch those who looked after him or frequented his home, for if some sudden misfortune befell him (as often happens with old men), some provision should be made for his belongings, drawings, cartoons, models, money, and all his property to be inventoried after his death and to be set aside and donated to the building of Saint Peter's, if there were anything pertaining to the project, as well as to the sacristy, the library, and the façade of San Lorenzo, so that they would not be carried off, as often happens; eventually these precautions proved useful and were finally all carried out.

Michelangelo's nephew Lionardo wanted to go to Rome on the following Lent, for he guessed that Michelangelo was already near the end of his life, and Michelangelo was very pleased about this, but when he fell ill with a slow fever he immediately had Daniel write for Lionardo to come, but his illness grew worse, even though his doctor Messer Federigo Donati and other physicians were in attendance, and, with the greatest lucidity, he pronounced his last testament in three sentences, leaving his soul in the hands of God, his body to the earth, and his property to his closest relatives, admonishing his closest friends to recall to him in his passing from this life the suffering of Jesus Christ; and so, on the seventeenth day of February in the year 1563 at the twenty-third hour according to the Florentine usage, or in 1564, according to the Roman, he expired to go to a better life.*

Michelangelo had a real propensity for the labours of art, given that he succeeded in everything, no matter how difficult it was, for he had received from Nature a very fit mind that was well adapted to his exceptional talents in the art of design; in order to become completely perfect in this art, he did anatomical studies on countless occasions, dissecting human beings in order to observe the principles and the ligatures of the bones, the muscles, nerves, veins, and their various movements, as well as all of the positions of the human figure. And he not only studied the parts of the human body but those of animals, and, most particularly, of horses, which he took great delight in keeping; and he wanted to see the principles and structure of all things in terms of his art and demonstrated this knowledge so thoroughly in the works he happened to produce that those who study nothing but anatomy achieve little more. Furthermore, he executed his works, which are inimitable, just as well with a brush as with a chisel, and he has given, as has already been said, so much skill, grace, and a certain vitality to his works that—and this may be said without disagreement—he surpassed and triumphed over the ancients, for he knew how to resolve the problems in his works so easily that they appear to be executed without effort even though, when others later try to sketch his works, they discover the difficulties in imitating them. Michelangelo's talent

was recognized during his lifetime and not, as happens to so many, only after his death, for as we have seen, Julius II, Leo X, Clement VII, Paul III, Julius III, Paul IV, and Pius IV, all supreme pontiffs, wished to have him nearby at all times, and, as is well known, Suleiman, Emperor of the Turks, Francis Valois, King of France, Emperor Charles V, the Signoria of Venice, and finally Duke Cosimo de' Medici, as was mentioned, all provided him with generous salaries for no other reason than to avail themselves of his great talent; this happens only to men of great worth, as he was, for it was recognized and understood that all three of these arts had reached a true state of perfection in his works, and that God had not granted such genius either to the artists of antiquity or to those of the modern period as He had to Michelangelo, in all the many years the sun had been revolving.* Michelangelo had such a distinctive and perfect imagination and the works he envisioned were of such a nature that he found it impossible to express such grandiose and awesome conceptions with his hands, and he often abandoned his works, or rather ruined many of them, as I myself know, because just before his death he burned a large number of his own drawings, sketches and cartoons to prevent anyone from seeing the labours he endured or the ways he tested his genius, for fear that he might seem less than perfect; and I have a number of these studies which I found in Florence and placed in our book of drawings; and although they display the greatness of this genius, they also reveal that when he wanted to bring forth Minerva from the head of Jupiter he needed Vulcan's hammer, for he used to make his figures with nine, ten, or twelve heads, seeking only to create, by placing them all together, a certain harmonious grace in the whole which Nature does not produce, declaring that it was necessary to have a good eye for measurement rather than a steady hand, because the hands work while the eyes make judgements: he also held to this same method in architecture. No one should think it strange that Michelangelo took pleasure in solitude, as a man deeply enamoured of his art, which wants a man to be alone and pensive for its own purposes, since anyone who desires to apply himself to the study of this art must avoid companions: it so

happens that those who attend to the considerations of art are never alone or without thoughts, and people who attribute their desire for solitude to daydreams and eccentricity are wrong, for anyone who wishes to work well must rid himself of cares and worries, since talent requires thought, solitude, comfort, and concentration of mind. All the same, Michelangelo cherished the friendships of many people, great men, learned scholars, and talented people, and he maintained these friendships whenever it was appropriate. . . . *

He loved and frequented the company of his fellow artisans, including Jacopo Sansovino, Rosso, Pontormo, Daniele da Volterra, as well as Giorgio Vasari of Arezzo, for whom he displayed countless signs of affection, and, with the intention of employing him some day, he caused Vasari to apply himself to architecture, and he gladly conferred with Vasari and discussed with him matters concerning art. And those who declare that he never wanted to teach are wrong, for he always taught his friends and anyone who asked his advice, and I myself was present on many such occasions which I shall not mention for modesty's sake, since I do not wish to reveal their shortcomings. It is quite obvious that he had bad luck with those who came to live with him in his home, for he came across students who were scarcely fit to imitate him: for example, his student Piero Urbano from Pistoia was a gifted person but he never wanted to exert himself; Antonio Mini would have liked to work, but he did not have a fit mind, and when wax is hard it does not take a good impression; Ascanio dalla Ripa Transone endured much hard work but never saw the fruits of his labours either in finished works or in drawings, and he spent a number of years on a panel for which Michelangelo had given him the cartoon, but in the end the high expectations everyone had for him all went up in smoke, and I remember that Michelangelo felt pity for him on account of his troubles and helped him with his own hands, but it did little good.* And as Michelangelo told me several times, if he had found a proper student, even as old as he was, he would often have done anatomical studies and would have written something on this subject for the benefit of his fellow artisans, who were often misguided by others, but he hesitated

because he was not capable of expressing with words what he might have wished to say, since he was not practised in rhetoric, although the prose in his letters explains his ideas well and concisely, and he took particular delight in reading the vernacular poets, especially Dante, whom he loved and imitated in his conceits and inventions, as he did Petrarch, enjoying the composition of madrigals and very serious sonnets upon which commentaries have been written. Messer Benedetto Varchi of the Florentine Academy read a very distinguished lecture on the sonnet which begins as follows:

Even the best of artists can conceive no idea
That a single block of marble will not contain.*

He sent countless numbers of his poems, receiving replies in verse and in prose, to the Most Illustrious Marchioness of Pescara,* of whose talents Michelangelo was enamoured, as she was of his, and on many occasions she came to Rome from Viterbo to visit him, and for her Michelangelo drew a *Pietà* showing Christ in Our Lady's lap, with two marvellous little angels, as well as a splendid Christ nailed to the cross, lifting His head and commending His spirit to God the Father, and another Christ with the woman of Samaria at the well.

As the admirable Christian he was, Michelangelo took great pleasure from the Holy Scriptures, and he held in great veneration the works written by Fra Girolamo Savonarola, whom he had heard preaching in the pulpit. He dearly loved human beauty which could be imitated in art, where the essence of the beautiful could be separated from beautiful things, since without this kind of imitation nothing perfect can be created, but he did so without lustful or dishonest thoughts, which he demonstrated in his personal life by being extremely frugal, for as a young man he had been content while absorbed in his work with a bit of bread and wine, and he had continued this practice as he grew older up to the time he did the Last Judgement in the chapel, by refreshing himself in the evening after he had finished the day's work, even though very frugally. Although he was wealthy, he lived like a poor man, and his friends rarely or never ate with him, nor did he accept presents

from anyone, for he thought that when someone gave him something he would always be obliged to him. His sobriety made him very restless and he rarely slept, and very often during the night he would arise, being unable to sleep, and would work with his chisel, having fashioned a helmet made of pasteboard holding a burning candle over the middle of his head which shed light where he was working without tying up his hands. And Vasari, who saw the helmet on numerous occasions, noticed that he did not use candles made of wax but those made from pure goat's tallow (which are excellent), and he sent Michelangelo four bundles of them which weighed forty pounds. His courteous servant brought them to Michelangelo's door at two o'clock in the morning, and when he presented them to Michelangelo, who protested that he did not want them, the servant said:

'Sir, they have worn out my arms from the bridge to here, and I don't want to take them back home. There's a solid mound of mud in front of your door, and they would easily stand upright. I'll light them all for you.'

And Michelangelo answered: 'By all means, put them down. I don't want you playing any jokes at my doorstep.'

Michelangelo told me that in his youth he often slept with his clothes on, just like a man who, exhausted by his work, does not bother to undress, since later on he must get dressed once again. There are some who have accused him of being stingy; they are mistaken, for he always demonstrated the contrary, both with his works of art and with his other property.... *

Michelangelo possessed such a deep and retentive memory that after seeing the works of others a single time, he recalled them in such detail and used them in such a way that scarcely anyone ever realized it; nor did he ever create any works which resembled one another, because he remembered everything that he had done. Once, in his youth, he was with his painter friends, and they wagered a supper on whoever could draw a figure which had no sense of design whatsoever and was clumsy, like those stick figures drawn by people who do not understand the art of design when they scribble on walls. Here, Michelangelo's memory served him well, for he

remembered having seen one of these clumsy drawings on a wall and reproduced it down to the slightest detail as if he had it before his eyes, and he surpassed all his fellow painters, a most difficult task for a man so knowledgeable in the art of design, accustomed to elegant work which turns out successfully.

He justly scorned those who injured him, but he was never seen to take revenge, and he was a very patient man, modest in all his behaviour and most prudent and wise in his speech; his responses were at times most thoughtful and serious, while on other occasions they were full of witty, pleasing, and sharp retorts. He said many things that have been noted by us, and we shall report only some of these, for it would take too long to describe them all. Once a friend of his was speaking to Michelangelo about death, and he declared that it must make him grieve, since he was constantly at work on artistic projects and never took a break, but Michelangelo replied that it was of no real concern, because if life pleased him, death should please him as well, since it came from the hand of the same master. A fellow citizen found him near Orsanmichele in Florence where he had stopped to look at Donatello's statue of Saint Mark, and when he asked Michelangelo what he thought of the statue, Michelangelo answered that he had never seen a figure that possessed more of the appearance of a good man than this one, and that if Saint Mark was like this, he could believe what he had written. When he was shown a drawing done by a young boy who had been recommended to him and who was then learning to draw, and some people tried to excuse him by saying that he had only begun to learn this craft a short while ago, Michelangelo replied: 'That's obvious.' He made a similar witty response to a painter who had painted a *Pietà* and had not carried it off well, declaring that it really was a pity to see it.*

When he learned that Sebastiano Veneziano was to paint a friar in the chapel of San Piero a Montorio, he said that this would ruin the chapel; when asked the reason for this, he answered that since friars had ruined the world which is so large, it would not be difficult for them to ruin such a small chapel. A painter had completed a painting with enormous effort and had struggled over it for a long time, and, after

unveiling it, he had earned a good deal of money from it; Michelangelo was asked what he thought of the painter of this work, and he answered:

‘As long as he wants to be rich, he will continue to be poor.’

A friend of his who was already saying the Mass and had taken vows arrived in Rome dressed up in buckles and silk cloth, and he greeted Michelangelo, who pretended not to recognize him, so that the friend was obliged to tell him his name; Michelangelo pretended to be amazed that he was dressed in such a fashion, and then, almost congratulating him, he added:

‘Oh, you do look fine! If you were as fine on the inside as I see you are on the outside, it would be good for your soul.’

This same person had recommended a friend of his to Michelangelo, who had given the man a statue to execute, and he then begged Michelangelo to give his friend more work, which Michelangelo kindly did, but the man who had made the request assumed Michelangelo would not fulfil it, and when he saw that he had done so, his envy caused him to complain, and Michelangelo was told about it; he replied that he disliked deceitful gutter-men, using a metaphor from architecture by which he meant to say that one can have only bad dealings with people who have two mouths. When a friend of his asked him what he thought of someone who had made marble copies of some of the most famous antique statues, boasting that in imitating them he had by far surpassed the ancients, Michelangelo answered:

‘Anyone who follows others never passes them by, and anyone who does not know how to do good works on his own cannot make good use of works by others.’

Some painter or other had completed a work in which an ox was better rendered than anything else; Michelangelo was asked why the painter had made the animal more lifelike than the other details, and he declared: ‘Every painter paints his own portrait well.’

Passing by San Giovanni in Florence, he was asked his opinion of [Ghiberti’s bronze] doors, and he answered:

‘They are so beautiful that they could easily be at the gates of Paradise.’

While he was working for a prince who changed his plans every day and could never make up his mind, Michelangelo told a friend of his: 'This lord has a brain like a weather vane, for every wind that blows behind it turns it around.'

He went to see a piece of sculpture that was to be placed outside because it was finished, and the sculptor was working hard to arrange the lights in the windows to show it off properly, and Michelangelo told him: 'Don't work so hard, the important thing will be the light in the square', meaning to imply that when works are displayed in public, the people judge whether they are good or bad.

In Rome there was a great prince who fancied himself an architect, and he had made certain niches in which to place statues, each of which was three squares high with a ring at the top, and inside these niches he tried to place various statues, none of which looked right. When he asked Michelangelo what he should place inside, the artist replied: 'Hang some eels from the ring.'

A gentleman who claimed to understand Vitruvius and to be a good critic was appointed to the administration overseeing the building of Saint Peter's. And Michelangelo was told: 'You now have someone on the building project who has a great mind'.

'That is true,' replied Michelangelo, 'but he has bad judgement.'

A painter had painted a scene and had copied many of the details from various drawings and pictures, and there was nothing original in the work, and it was shown to Michelangelo, who, after having examined it, was asked by one of the painter's close friends what he thought of it, and he replied:

'He has done very well, but when the Day of Judgement arrives and all the bodies take back their own parts, what will become of this scene when nothing is left?'

This was a warning that those who work in the arts should learn to do their own work.

As he was passing through Modena, he saw many beautiful terracotta figures coloured to look like marble by Master Antonio Bigarino, a sculptor from that city,* all of which

seemed to him to be excellent works, and, because the sculptor did not know how to work in marble, Michelangelo declared:

‘If this clay were to become marble, woe to ancient statues.’

Michelangelo was told that he ought to resent Nanni di Baccio Bigio because he was always trying to compete with him, and he replied:

‘Anyone who fights with a good-for-nothing wins very little.’

A priest, a friend of his, said: ‘It’s a pity you haven’t taken a wife, for you would have had many children and bequeathed to them many honourable works.’

Michelangelo answered: ‘I have too much of a wife in this art that has always afflicted me, and the works I shall leave behind will be my children, and even if they are nothing, they will live for a long while. And woe to Lorenzo di Bartoluccio Ghiberti if he had not created the doors of San Giovanni, for his sons and nephews sold and spoiled everything he left them, while the doors are still standing.’

When Julius III sent Vasari at one o’clock in the morning to Michelangelo’s home for a design, he found him working on the marble *Pietà* that he broke into pieces. Having recognized him by his knock on the door, Michelangelo arose from his work and took a lantern by the handle; when Vasari had explained what he wanted, Michelangelo sent Urbino upstairs for the drawing, and they began to discuss something else; in the meanwhile Vasari turned his eyes to look at one of the legs of the figure of Christ on which Michelangelo was working and trying to make some changes, and to prevent Vasari from seeing this, Michelangelo let the lantern drop from his hand, leaving them in the dark; Michelangelo called to Urbino to bring a light, and coming out of the partition where he was, he declared:

‘I am so old that death often tugs me by the cape to go along with him, and one day, just like this lantern, my body will fall and the light of life will be extinguished.’

Nevertheless, Michelangelo enjoyed the company of certain kinds of men who were to his liking, such as Menighella, the clumsy, second-rate painter from Valdarno,* who was an extremely agreeable person; he sometimes came to visit

Michelangelo, who made him a drawing of Saint Rocco and Saint Anthony to paint for the peasants. Michelangelo, whom kings found difficult to handle, would put everything aside and set to work, making Menighella simple sketches suited to his style and desires, just as he requested, and among others he did the model for a crucifix which was very beautiful, from which Menighella made a mould and made copies in pasteboard and other mixtures, selling them around the countryside, which made Michelangelo double up with laughter; Michelangelo was especially amused by his escapades, such as the story about a peasant who had him paint a picture of Saint Francis and was upset when Menighella painted the saint in grey robes, since he would have preferred a brighter colour; by adding a brocaded cope on the saint's back, Menighella made the peasant happy.

Michelangelo also liked equally well Topolino the stone-carver,* who imagined himself a fine sculptor although he was a very poor one. He spent many years in the mountains of Carrara sending blocks of marble to Michelangelo, and he never sent a boat-load without including on it three or four statues he had roughed out himself, which caused Michelangelo to die of laughter. Finally, he returned from Carrara and, after roughing out a figure of Mercury in marble, Topolino set about finishing it, and one day when he had almost done so, he wanted Michelangelo to look at it and absolutely insisted that he declare his opinion of it.

'Topolino, you're a crazy man', Michelangelo told him, 'to want to make statues; don't you see that this Mercury lacks more than a third of an arm's length between the knees and the feet, and that you've made him a dwarf as well as crippled?'

'Oh, that's no problem! If it doesn't have any other defects, I will fix it. Leave it to me.'

Michelangelo laughed once again over Topolino's simplicity and left, while Topolino took a piece of marble, and, after cutting off a quarter of the statue of Mercury below the knees, he mounted it on this piece of marble and made a neat joint, carving a pair of boots for Mercury which covered the seam, lengthening it the required amount: when Michelangelo was later brought in and shown the work once again, he laughed

and marvelled that such clumsy artists, forced by necessity, may seize upon artistic solutions that the most worthy men cannot discover.

While Michelangelo was completing the tomb for Julius II, he had a stone-cutter execute a terminal figure to place on the tomb in San Pietro in Vincoli, with these words: 'Now, cut this away, smooth it out there, polish it here.' In this way and without the man's realizing it, Michelangelo made him carve a figure, and when it was finished the man stared at it in amazement, while Michelangelo asked: 'What do you think of it?'

The man answered: 'I like it a lot, and I am very much in your debt.'

'Why?' enquired Michelangelo.

'Because with your help I have rediscovered a talent that I never knew I had.'

But, to sum up, let me say that Michelangelo had a strong, healthy constitution, for he was lean and very sinewy, and although he had been a delicate child, as a man he only suffered two serious illnesses, and he always withstood every kind of hardship and had no ailments, except that in his old age he suffered from gravel in his urine which finally turned into kidney stones, and for many years he was in the hands of Master Realdo Colombo, his very close friend, who treated him with injections and looked after him carefully.* Michelangelo was of medium height, broad in the shoulders but well proportioned in the rest of his body. As he grew old, he constantly wore boots fashioned from dogs' skins on his bare feet for months at a time, so that when he later wanted to remove them his skin would often peel off as well. Over his stockings he wore boots of Cordovan leather fastened from the inside, for protection against the dampness. His face was round, the brow square and wide with seven straight furrows, and his temples jutted out some distance beyond his ears, which were rather large and stood out from his cheeks; his body in proportion to his face was rather large, his nose somewhat flattened, having been broken by a blow from Torrigiani, as was explained in his *Life*;* his eyes were rather small, the colour of horn marked with bluish-yellow flecks; his eyebrows had little hair; his lips were thin, and the lower lip

was larger and protruded somewhat; his chin was well shaped in proportion with the rest of his face; the hair of his beard was black, streaked with many white hairs and not too long; it was forked and not very thick.

Michelangelo was certainly, as I declared at the beginning, a man sent by God into the world as an example for men in our profession, so that they might learn from his life how to behave, and from his works how to become true and splendid artisans. And I myself, who must thank God for countless blessings that rarely befall men in our profession, count this among the greatest of them: that is, to have been born in the time Michelangelo was alive and to have been worthy of having him for a teacher, and for him to have been on such familiar and friendly terms with me, as everyone knows and as the letters he wrote to me prove; on account of my obligation to the truth and to his kindness, I have been able to write many details about his life, all of which are true, which many other writers could not have known. The other blessing is one that Michelangelo once mentioned to me:

'Giorgio, thank God for having placed you in the service of Duke Cosimo, who spares no expense to allow you to build and paint and to realize his ideas and plans; you must consider that other artists, about whose lives you have written, had no such support.'

With a very dignified funeral attended by the entire artistic profession, as well as all his friends and the Florentine community, Michelangelo was buried in a tomb in the church of the Santi Apostoli in the presence of all of Rome, while His Holiness planned to erect a special memorial and a tomb in Saint Peter's itself.

Lionardo, his nephew, reached Rome after the funeral was over, even though he had travelled by coach; and, having learned of it, Duke Cosimo decided that since he had not been able to honour Michelangelo while he was alive, he would have him brought to Florence where he would not rest content until he had honoured him with every sort of pomp after his death, and Michelangelo's body was secretly shipped like merchandise in a bale, a method used so that in Rome there would be no chance of creating an uproar or of preventing

Michelangelo's body from being taken to Florence. But before the body arrived, word of his death reached Florence, and after the principal painters, sculptors, and architects gathered together at the request of the lieutenant of their Academy, who was at that time the Reverend Don Vincenzio Borghini, this man reminded them all that they were obliged, following the rules of the Academy, to honour the death of all their fellow artists, and having done so most lovingly and to the satisfaction of all in the funeral of Fra Giovan'Agnolo Montorsoli (the first to die after the creation of the Academy), they could clearly see what ought to be done in honour of Buonarroti, who had been unanimously elected by the entire company the first academician and head of them all. To this proposal they all replied that as men who loved and were indebted to the talents of such a man, they would do everything they could in their own way to honour him as lavishly and splendidly as possible. After agreeing on this, in order to avoid assembling so many people every day to their great inconvenience, and also in order to arrange things more quickly, four men were elected to organize the burial and the ceremonies: the painters Angelo Bronzino and Giorgio Vasari, and the sculptors Benvenuto Cellini and Bartolomeo Ammannati—all men of high standing and illustrious talent in their arts—so that, I should add, they might consult each other and decide among themselves and with the lieutenant about how and where everything should be done, with the authority to use all the resources of the Academy. They undertook this task all the more willingly, since all the members, young and old, each man from his own profession, eagerly volunteered to execute the paintings and statues required for the ceremonies. Later, it was decided that the lieutenant, because of his position, accompanied by the consuls, acting in the name of the confraternity and the Academy, should report everything to the Lord Duke and should request the assistance and support that were required, and most especially his permission to hold the funeral in San Lorenzo, the church of the most illustrious House of the Medici and where most of the works to be seen in Florence by Michelangelo are found. And besides this, they were to ask His Excellency to allow Messer Benedetto Varchi

to write and deliver the funeral oration, so that the matchless talents of Michelangelo would be praised by the exceptional eloquence of such a man as Varchi, who was also in His Excellency's service and who would not have undertaken such a task without the duke's permission, even though they were sure the duke would never have refused, since he was a most loving man by nature and extremely devoted to Michelangelo's memory....*

While these matters were being handled in Florence, Lionardo Buonarroti, nephew of Michelangelo, who, having heard of his uncle's illness, had gone to Rome by coach but had not found him alive, learned from Daniello da Volterra, a very close friend of Michelangelo, and from still others who had been close to that saintly old man, that Michelangelo had asked and begged for his body to be taken to Florence, his most noble native city which he had always tenderly loved; and so, with great determination, Lionardo had cautiously and quickly smuggled the body out of Rome and, as if it were merchandise, sent it to Florence in a bale. Here I shall not remain silent in declaring that, contrary to the opinion of some, Michelangelo's last wish proclaims the truth: that is, that he had for many years been absent from Florence for no other reason than the quality of the air in that city, since experience had taught him that the air in Florence, which is penetrating and thin, was very harmful to his constitution, whereas the sweeter and more temperate air in Rome kept him in fine health until he reached his ninetieth year, with all his senses as sharp and intact as they had ever been, and with such strength, relative to his age, that up to his last day he had never ceased working on something.

Then, since Michelangelo's body arrived so suddenly and unexpectedly in Florence, it was not possible at that moment to do everything that was to be done later, and on the day of its arrival in Florence—that is, the eleventh of March, a Saturday—his coffin was placed, as the deputies wished, in the Confraternity of the Assumption, which is under the steps behind the main altar of San Piero Maggiore, without ever being touched. The following day, which was the Sunday of the second week of Lent,* all the painters, sculptors, and

architects gathered in secret around San Piero, where they had brought only a velvet pall, all trimmed and embroidered with gold, to cover the casket, upon which lay a crucifix, and the entire bier. And then, about half an hour after dusk, they all drew close to the body, and the oldest and most distinguished artisans among them immediately took in their hands a large quantity of torches they had brought there, while the younger men picked up the bier so quickly that those who were able to draw near and get their shoulders under the bier could count themselves fortunate, as if they believed that in the future they could boast of having carried the remains of the greatest man who ever belonged to their professions.

Seeing this group gathered around San Piero caused a large number of people to stop there, as happens on similar occasions, and the crowd grew larger when it was rumoured that Michelangelo's body had arrived and that it was to be carried to Santa Croce. And as I said, everything had been done to keep the matter quiet, for fear that, as the news spread through the city, such a crowd of people would converge on the place that a certain uproar and confusion could not be avoided, and also because they wished at that time to carry out their little ceremony quietly and without pomp, reserving all the rest for a more suitable and convenient time, but everything turned out to the contrary, for the crowd, which (as I mentioned) gathered by word of mouth, filled the church in the blink of an eye, so that only with the greatest difficulty was the body finally carried from the church into the sacristy to be unpacked and put in its resting place. And as for the solemnity of the ceremony, although it cannot be denied that seeing a vast array of religious people in funeral processions with a large quantity of wax candles and a great number of mourners hastily prepared and dressed in black is a great and magnificent sight, it is also no less extraordinary to witness unexpectedly a group of those distinguished men who, today, are held in such esteem and will be held in even higher esteem in the future, gathered around Michelangelo's body to perform their duties with love and affection. And, to tell the truth, the number of these artisans in Florence (all of whom were present) has always been very great, since the arts have always truly

flourished there, and I believe it can be declared without offence to other cities that Florence is the true and principal home and dwelling place of the arts, just as Athens was once home of the sciences. Besides this large number of artisans, there were so many citizens following behind them, and so many bands of people from the streets through which they passed, that the place could hold no more of them. And what is even more important, nothing was heard from anyone but praise for Michelangelo's merits, with everyone declaring that true talent possesses such great power that after all hope of continuing to receive profit or honour from a talented man is lost, it is, nevertheless, still loved and honoured for its own nature and special merits. For this reason, the demonstration appeared more lively and more precious than any display of gold and silk could possibly have been. With this fine crowd, the body had been brought into Santa Croce, and since the friars had to perform the usual ceremonies for the deceased, it was carried into the sacristy, but not without the greatest difficulty, as was mentioned, because of the conflux of people; and there the lieutenant, who was present because of his office, thinking to do something that would please many others and also (as he later confessed) wishing to see in death the man he had never seen while he was living or had seen at such an early age that he had lost all memory of it, decided at that moment to have the casket opened. And after he had done so, although he and all of us who were present thought we would find the body already putrefied and decomposed since Michelangelo had already been dead twenty-five days, twenty-two of them in the casket,* we found him with all his bodily members intact and without any foul odour, and we were tempted to believe that he was only resting in a sweet and most tranquil sleep. And besides the fact that his features were exactly as they were when he was alive (except that his colour was a little like that of a dead man), none of his limbs were decomposed or showed any sign of decay, and his head and cheeks were, to the touch, no different than if he had died only a few hours earlier.

After the frenzy of the crowd had subsided, the order was given to place the body in a tomb in the church near the altar

of the Cavalcanti family by means of the door leading towards the cloister of the chapter house. Meanwhile, the news spread through the city and a great multitude of young people ran to see him, so that the tomb was closed only with great effort. And if it had been day, instead of night, it would have had to have been left open for many hours in order to satisfy all the people. The following morning, while the painters and sculptors were beginning to organize the ceremonies, many of the gifted people who have always abounded in Florence began to attach verses in Latin and the vernacular over the tomb, and this continued for some time although these compositions, which were published later, formed only a small part of the many which were written. . . .*

And because it was not possible for the entire city to see the previously mentioned display in a single day, it was left standing by the Lord Duke's command for many weeks, to the satisfaction of his people and the foreign visitors who came to see it from nearby places.*

We shall not include here the great many epitaphs and verses in Latin or Tuscan composed by many worthy men in Michelangelo's honour, because these would require a separate book and also because they have already been written down and published by other writers. But I shall not forget to say in this last section that, after all the previously described ceremonies, the duke ordered that Michelangelo be given an honoured place in Santa Croce for his tomb, the church in which, when he was alive, he had decided to be buried, in order to be near the tombs of his ancestors. And to Lionardo, Michelangelo's nephew, His Excellency gave all the marble blocks and various stones for this tomb, which with the design by Giorgio Vasari was commissioned to Batista Lorenzi, a worthy sculptor, along with a bust of Michelangelo. And since there were to be three statues upon the tomb representing Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, one of these was commissioned to this Batista, another to Giovanni dell'Opera, and the third to Valerio Cioli, all Florentine sculptors who are presently working upon the tomb, which will soon be completed and set in place. After receiving the marble from the duke, the expenses were borne by Lionardo Buonarroti,

but in order not to fail in any way to pay homage to such a man, His Excellency will carry out his plans to place a memorial inscribed with Michelangelo's name along with his bust in the Duomo, where the names and images of other excellent Florentines can be seen.

THE END OF THE LIFE OF MICHELANGELO
BUONARROTI, FLORENTINE PAINTER, SCULPTOR,
AND ARCHITECT