MICHAEL ANGELO,

CONSIDERED AS

A PHILOSOPHIC POET.

WITH

TRANSLATIONS.

BY

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR.

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"Ενθουσίασμα τοῦ καλοῦ πασῶν τῶν ἐνθουσιάσεων ἀρίστη τοῦ ἄστι, καὶ ὡς ἀριστῶν τῷ τε ἰχνοτε καὶ τῷ τε κυκωσθείς αὐτῆς γίγνεται."

_Plot. Phedon._

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"Cersa da che ben s'intenda,
Che sue parole son molto profonde,
E talor hanno doppio intendimento.
Però il tuo viso scenda,
E guarda il ver che dentro vi s'asconda."

(Canzone di Giotto, tratta da un MS. della Biblioteca Ricordiana di Firenze.)
PREFACE.

The remarks on the poetry and philosophy of Michael Angelo which are prefixed to these Translations, have been collected and are now published, in the hope that they may invite the student of literature to trace the relation which unites the efforts of the pure intelligence and the desires of the heart to their highest earthly accomplishment under the complete forms of Art. For the example of so eminent a mind, watched and judged not only by its finished works, but, as it were, in its growth and from its inner source of Love and Know-
ledge, cannot but enlarge the range of our sympathy for the best powers and productions of man.

And if these pages should meet with any readers, inclined, like their writer, to seek and to admire the veiled Truth and solemn Beauty of the elder time, they will add their humble testimony to the fact, that, whatever be the purpose and tendencies of the time we live in, we are not all unmindful of the better part of our inheritance in the world.

J. E. T.

February 13, 1840.
ON

THE CHARACTER OF

MICHAEL ANGELO,

CONSIDERED CHIEFLY AS A POET.

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IN reviewing the history of literature and of art we are struck by the fact, that in their rise and glory and in their decay they have been generally coeval. The circumstances which have been propitious to the one have also given an impulse to the other; and in Greece, in the best days of Rome, and in Italy during the middle ages, the greatest poets and the greatest artists have been contemporaries and associates. As they have arisen together, so have they disappeared; and in the dark ages succeeding the downfall of the Western empire, ignorance and an almost extinction of art were alike the consequences. In the dawn of a new day of civilization, letters and the fine arts sprang twin-like to birth. Frederic the Second, Pier delle Vigne, and Guittone d’Arezzo, were the contemporaries of Guido da Siena and Cimabue; with Dante, Petrarcha and Boccaccio, appeared Giotto, Simon Memmi and Gaddi; and when, in a later age, philosophy, poetry and art again revived, Marsilio Ficino,
Poliziano, Landino, Pico di Mirandola, Pontano and Lorenzo de' Medici were the ornaments of literature; whilst Donatello, Michael Angelo, Raffaello, Tiziano and Correggio shed a lustre on art*.

A remarkable feature in art at this period is its character of generality. Its various branches, instead of being separated and cut off from the rest, were considered as intimately connected in their objects, and pursued in common. In Vasari's Lives of the Painters we see the painter, the architect, the sculptor, the poet, the philosopher frequently united in the same man. Leonardo da Vinci is the most striking instance of versatility of talent, but Michael Angelo that of solidity of acquirement. He was great in everything which he pursued;

* To these names we might add L. da Vinci, Fra Bartolomeo, Perugino, Giulio Romano, Giorgione and others—all born within fifty years! The decline of poetry in Italy in the seventeenth century was more rapid than that of art. The above remark holds good with some restrictions. Music, though amongst the earliest of the arts which were revived in the middle ages, did not keep an equal pace with the rest. In the fifteenth century,—the golden epoch of the sister arts,—the history of music in Italy presents almost a blank; Josquin and Ockenheim were Flemings. Palestrina, Luca Marenzio, Gio. Croce and Nanino flourished in the sixteenth century. It is an interesting fact, that an intimacy seems in most countries and ages to have subsisted between the greatest men who have adorned the sister arts. I may instance the friendship of Dante for Giotto and Casella, of Petrarcha for Simon Memmi, of Shakspeare and Dowland, of Ben Jonson and Ferrabosco, of Milton and Lawes, of Goethe and Zelter. I say generally, for in humiliating contrast stand the conduct of Dryden to Purcell, who withheld his approbation of that great master until he ceased to need it, and the disgraceful insults which Addison and Pope on every occasion ignorantly heaped upon music.
nor least did he merit the reward to which he made no claim, of the poet's wreath.

The works of Michael Angelo are stamped with the characteristics of unity of thought, sublimity of conception, and grandeur of design; if the attainment of the high feeling which these evince was the result of profound study and reflection, as unquestionably it was, a just estimate of his character and powers can only be gained by an insight into the secrets of his mind, the springs of thought which animated his soul and directed his hand. In this view his poetry becomes highly interesting and valuable, as revealing to us the sources of his feeling for art, and the training it underwent; and the more so because, with the exception of a few letters, and a Discourse he delivered before the Florentine Academy, it is the only key left us to the mysteries of his great and glorious creations.

The productions of our great artist's pen rank unquestionably in the number of the most perfect of his own or any subsequent age. Stamped by a flow of eloquence, a purity of style, an habitual nobleness of sentiment, they discover a depth of thought rarely equalled, and frequently approaching to the sublimity of Dante. He did not allow his compositions to be published during his lifetime; they were the secret intercourse which his genius, in her loneliness on earth, held with eternal truths, untroubled with the thought of descending to the reach of inferior intellects. He alone possessed the key of his philosophic and poetic system; its elements are scattered and confused, and to recover and collect them must be the work of application and

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study. If the task of translating the poetry of Michael Angelo is difficult, that of analysing it is still more so: we have to follow through the labyrinth of his inspirations, scattered like the Sibyl's leaves, the clue which guided his own superior reason, and which he cared not to render visible to others. Whatever may be the usual disadvantage of a paraphrase, it must in this instance go step by step with translation; and Michael Angelo has need of a commentator in order to find a faithful interpreter*.

In the honourable record of those to whom the arts the most indebted, stands pre-eminently the name of Lorenzo de' Medici. Gifted by nature with extraordinary powers of mind, a love of literature and an exquisite refinement of taste in art, these endowments were cultivated and developed under the instruction of Landino, Argyropylus, and Marsilio Ficino. Destined not only to be the restorer of his native tongue, but to foster the revival of letters and of art, he established a school of his favourite Platonic philosophy, which had at that time superseded the Aristotelian; he gathered around him a circle of the great scholars of the age, and sought, in the prosecution of his patriotic views, to associate philosophy with art, and to raise the latter to a more elevated position.

"The riches of Cosmo de' Medici and the industry of Donatello united to give rise to the celebrated collection of antiquities which, with considerable additions, was transmitted

* I would refer the reader to an article on the poetry of M. Angelo in the Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève, for 1833, of which I have in several instances availed myself.
by Piero to his son Lorenzo, and is now denominated the
*Museum Florentinum*......But it is not the industry, the liber-
ality, or the judgement shown by Lorenzo in forming his magni-
cificent collection, so much as the important purpose to which
he destined it, that entitled him to the esteem of the professors
and admirers of the arts. Conversant from his youth with the
finest forms of antiquity, he perceived and lamented the infer-
iority of his contemporary artists, and the impossibility of their
improvement upon the principles then adopted. He deter-
mimed, therefore, to excite among them, if possible, a better
taste, and by proposing to their imitation the remains of the
ancient masters, to elevate their views beyond the forms of
common life to the contemplation of that ideal beauty which
alone distinguishes works of art from mere mechanical pro-
ductions*.”

This was the school into which Michael Angelo was at
an early age introduced, and it is impossible perhaps to
estimate the value to posterity of the advantages he there
met with. In the gardens of Lorenzo’s Academy his eye
became habituated to forms of beauty, to the treasures
of the ancient schools of art; whilst in the society and
intimacy of Marsilio Ficino, Poliziano, Pico di Miran-
dola and of Lorenzo himself†; his thoughts were cast
and formed in the mould of philosophy. Its doctrines he
carried into his art, and they schooled and refined his
naturally ardent feelings, and directed them to a definite
though abstract idea of perfection. His works discover
the effect which such a mental discipline engendered.

* Roscoe’s *Life of Lorenzo de’ Medici.*
† The poetry of Lorenzo ranks foremost in the productions of
his age. I scarcely know anything more beautiful than his *Lauda,*
or his poem entitled *L’Altercazione,* in which he gives a poetical
exposition of the doctrines of Plato as taught by Ficino.
It led him to cultivate that meditative disposition which
revealed to him the grand principles of art, taught him
to regard design as the creative expression of the work-
ings of the soul; and, filled with sublimity of concep-
tion, the most glorious attribute of which the mind is
capable, the link connecting it with divinity, he studied
to bring out its revelations, and to create the image
from a contemplation of the form in the Creator's own
works. The beauty he worshiped was purely intellectual;
it was the union of all ideas of greatness, goodness, and
excellence; it was the beauty of perfection; whatever
his mind fixed upon as the nearest approach to this,
which alone resides in the Creator, he followed, he
studied, he in a manner adored; and if, with himself, we
may say

“Chi’ amar des l’ opra chi l suo Fabro adora,”

we may justly add, that such a love as his for the great
and beautiful in God’s works of creation was the surest
and most refining discipline of the mind for the highest
tribute of adoration to his Maker.

Thus was his life devoted to the pursuit of an ideal
object of sublimity. Those who, from a limited appre-
hension of art, would restrict the artist’s attention to a
servile imitation of objects presented to the eye, know
little of the real character either of the poetry of life or
of the imagination. Nature is present not only in the
world without, but in the world within: the eye is but
a single organ, a narrow inlet of impressions to the
mind; it is the imagination, the passions which must
work; and, when guided by judgement and reflection,
these are the sources whence arise that pure and deep feeling, that "fine particle within us, which expands, rarefies, and refines our whole being."

"Poetry," says Hazlitt, "is the language of the imagination and the passions; it is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself: it represents forms as they suggest other forms, feelings as they suggest other feelings; it does not define the limits of sense, or analyse the distinctions of the understanding, but signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling. The poetical impression of any object is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power which cannot be contained within itself; that is impatient of all limit; that strives to link itself to some other image of kindred beauty and grandeur; to enshrine itself, as it were, in the highest forms of fancy. Poetry, according to Lord Bacon, for this reason, 'has something divine in it, because it raises the mind and hurries it into sublimity, by conforming the shows of things to the desires of the soul, instead of subjecting the soul to external things, as reason and history do.' It is strictly the language of the imagination; and this language is not the less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind."

The value of poetry lies in the impressions which the mind receives from the forms or pictures it presents. Its figures of language are merely the employment of

a comparison of one set of images with another.—a species of abstract reality, which, in order to confirm or heighten to the mind the notion of any attribute, assimilates its object with some other, in which that attribute is characterized, and as it were embodied.

"When Lear calls upon the heavens to avenge his cause, 'for they are old like him', there is nothing extravagant or impious in this sublime identification of his age with theirs; for there is no other image which could do justice to the agonizing sense of his wrongs and his despair."

The powers of sculpture and painting are in this respect more limited. In these nothing which is false in point of fact can be true to nature; art deals not in exaggerated pictures; it may leave much to the imagination to supply, but as its representations are palpable they cannot be distorted. The poetry of art lies in form and expression; and, with certain modifications, we see how far, and how far only, the remark of Bacon may be applied to both.

A consideration of the general character of art leads to a division in its branches, and the means which each separately may with propriety follow to attain those objects in the most perfect manner. The first of these is equally within the reach of the connoisseur and the artist,—it is the comprehension of the philosophic principles and grounds of art; whilst the latter, constituting the technical science of art, justly so termed, is the proper study of the artist. There are limits to the powers of painting, of sculpture, of poetry, and of music; and in overstepping these, the artist inevitably violates the prin-
ciples which should direct him and fails in his object. But if we philosophically investigate the just province of different branches of art, other lines of distinction than those merely of the pencil, the chisel, the pen, and instruments of sound, will present themselves. We shall be led to trace the stream to its source, and to class the poet with the painter and the musician. Never perhaps was there a more glorious parallel than that which might be drawn between Dante and Michael Angelo: the same mighty spirit guided the pen of the one and the pencil of the other. Michael Angelo was the Dante of Art, Dante the Michael Angelo of Poetry*.

The interests of art have suffered from idle disputes arising from a misunderstanding of terms, and narrow views of its great aims and scope. It is the habit of shallow thinkers to draw imaginary distinctions†; and no greater proof is required of the necessity of philosophy to art. These differences give birth to parties; one set of men injuriously opposing the natural to the

* It would be easy to quote other parallels. What Dante was to Michael Angelo, Petrarcha was to Raffaello; and to descend to a totally opposite school, who has not recognised in Goldsmith and Crabbe the minute delicacy, the distinct accuracy of the Dutch painters?

† Let me be clearly understood here not to refer to the just discrimination of the proper limits of art, which is founded upon philosophic principles; on this subject the student possesses no work more instructive than Lessing’s ‘Laocoon,’ on the limits of Poetry and Painting,—a book which every artist and scholar will read with profit and delight. The advantage to the artist of such studies is a sufficient argument for the necessity of a classical education to any man who aims at something higher than a merely mechanical advancement in his art or the lucrative trade of portrait-painting.
ideal, another rising up in defence of the imagination; whilst too generally the great fact is overlooked, that it is the contemplation of the ideal which is the just preparation for the imitation of the natural,—a training which works by raising the mind, not by proposing to it the outward representation of abstractions, but by placing before it, and keeping ever in its view, a certain standard of excellence and truth.

This however, I am aware, does not define the ideal of the ancient Greeks: they studied beauty in the abstract, but their standard was a conventional one, and therefore restricted and imperfect; it was the beauty of form rather than of expression, and as the merit of the sculptor's work was measured by its accordance with established rules, a work might be regarded as beautiful, because true to the ideal, although false to nature. There is much truth in a remark of Schlegel: "Formerly it was the fashion," says he, "to preach the natural, now it is the ideal. People too often forget that these things are profoundly compatible; that in a beautiful work of the imagination, the natural should be ideal, and the ideal natural."

The study and imitation of the works of the ancients have been a prolific theme of dispute among critics. "If modern artists," says Winkelmann, "with regard to form and beauty, are not to be directed by antiquity, there is no authority left to influence them." Michael Angelo's views of art were higher; he studied indeed in the school in which they studied, but the authority to which he referred was of a divine nature; it was the principle of truth, which the mind recognises from the exercise of
reflection and study upon the observation of nature. He honoured the ancients, he studied their works; but his standard was presented by the light within him, and he never lowered the natural powers of the mind by acknowledging himself incapable of rising superior and becoming the master in his turn. Had he done so, he might have been a copyist all his life, but he would never have raised up a school of art.

Even in the golden age of art in Italy, the Florentine Academy was the arena of ridiculous disputes on the merits of sculpture and painting, in which the admiration of one was grounded on a depreciation of the other. In a letter to his friend Varchi, who had asked his opinion on the relative merits of painting and sculpture, Michael Angelo says, that he had originally considered painting as excellent in proportion as it approaches rilievo, and rilievo bad in proportion as it approaches painting*. "And therefore," he continues, "it seemed to me that sculpture was as the light to painting, and that there was the same difference between them as between the sun and moon. But now that I have read your book, wherein you say that, philosophically speaking, those things which have a similar end are one and the same thing, I have changed my opinion, and say that, if greater judge-

* Rilievo is the middle point between painting and sculpture, uniting the substantial form of the one with the ideal depth of the other. One of the early productions of Michael Angelo was a rilievo of the Battle of the Cestaurus: it stood the test of experience, and was approved by the after judgement of the artist, who expressed his regret, on seeing it some years afterwards, that he had not devoted himself to this branch of art. (See Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.)
ment and difficulty, impediment and labour, do not constitute greater excellence, painting and sculpture are one and the same thing; and, being so estimated, no painter ought to value sculpture less than painting, nor the sculptor in like manner painting less than sculpture. I understand by sculpture that art which works by removing the superfluous,—by painting, that which works by addition. Suffice it that, both the one and the other proceeding from the same intelligence, they may very well make a good peace between them, and leave such disputing; for more time is thus lost than it would require to create the works themselves."

Sir Joshua Reynolds observes that Michael Angelo possessed the most eminently poetical imagination; but if imagination lent wings to his genius, it was the philosophical study of his art and deep reflection which taught him to direct and steady its flight; and to this habit of his mind he was indebted for that perception of the sublime which was another sense to him. It has been justly remarked that where this takes possession of a mind, it overpowers the attention to the minuter accessories of art: beauty becomes absorbed in majesty, or rather forms a part of it. "The little elegancies of art, in the presence of these great ideas, thus greatly expressed, lose all their value, and are, for the instant at least, felt to be unworthy of our notice: the correct judgement, the purity of taste, which characterize Raffiello, the exquisite grace of Correggio and Parmegiano, all disappear before them.*" It is from the

* Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses.
habit of concentrating round a fixed point the powers of his mind, that Michael Angelo exhibits the singleness of purpose which is his peculiar characteristic. All the attributes of art were to his mind but the rays to a centre of sublimity; if this rendered him deficient in a sense of the more refined attributes of grace and female beauty, of tenderness and of softness, it limited the range of his vision only to energize its intensity; “his mind lends its own power to the objects which it contemplates, instead of borrowing it from them;” and his very defects may be justly considered as in a great degree valuable as enhancing his excellencies*. “If any man,” says Reynolds, “had a right to look down upon the lower accomplishments as beneath his attention, it was certainly Michael Angelo; nor can it be thought strange, that such a mind should have slighted, or have been withheld from paying due attention to all those graces and embellishments of art, which have diffused such lustre over the works of other painters†.”

I have said above that the beauty which Michael Angelo worshiped was intellectual; it was, in fact, too essentially ideal. But Beauty is a term of such varied use,

* Winkelmann gives a widely different estimate of our artist’s merits. “In sculpture,” says he, “the imitation of one great man, of Michael Angelo, has debauched the artists from grace. He, who valued himself upon being ‘a pure intelligence’, despised all that could please humanity; his exalted learning disdain’d to stoop to tender feelings and lovely grace. There are poems of his published and in manuscript, that abound in meditations on sublime beauty; but you look in vain for it in his works.” (Winkelmann on Painting and Sculpture among the Greeks.) But of this more presently.

† Sir Joshua Reynolds’ Discourses.
that we must seek to understand the sense in which our Artist himself uses it, and in which it is applicable to his works. It is in the widest and most philosophical sense that he says,

"Per fido esempio alla mia vocazione,
Nascendo, mi fu data la bellezza,
Che di due arti m'è lucerna e specchio."

He everywhere speaks of Beauty—or rather, in its Platonic sense, the Beautiful—as the object of his pursuit, and personifies it under the form of a mistress whom he adores, whom he depicts in his poetry under every attribute of grace, and exhibits in his works under every form of grandeur: it was the ideal beauty of perfection, but uniformly in the garb of greatness, which filled his mind,

"And in clear dream and solemn vision
Told him of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Began to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turned it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all was made immortal."

The Beautiful is itself an abstract idea; unrestricted to any attribute, either of grace, or gentleness, or elegance—it embraces equally the grand, the sublime, the powerful. It is the realization of a certain preconceived excellence to the mind: all that is congruous, in proportion, in harmony, all that presents what the feeling of truth in the mind requires, is beautiful. There is an inward sense which must determine its merit, and to at-

* Comus.
tain the power of so judging and feeling correctly is the discipline of the mind in the aesthetic school*.

But if we proceed to particularize and distinguish the attributes of Beauty, grace stands opposed to strength†. The highest beauty which can be wrought out in expression we term the divine. To convey a sentiment of lofty repose, of a dignity not raised above man’s sympathy, but superior to the infirmities common to his nature,—tenderness without weakness, gentleness without softness, energy of soul undisturbed by the tumult of action, strength in the repose of its own conscious power, and above the influence of things which ruffle humanity,—in short to unite, and to harmonize all that is great and lovely, dignified and powerful, and to realize this concord of glories, is as near an approach to the divine as the artist can attain. Scarcely can any one man be expected to possess the fulness of power, the wide range of feeling, or to attain the varied execution, which such expression requires. We must be content to make up the sum of perfection from the collected works of those great masters, who, living at the same period, “carried the higher excellencies of the art to a greater degree of perfection than probably they ever arrived at before, and who certainly have not been equalled

* See Schiller, *Ueber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, and his other treatises.

† I would by no means infer that they are incompatible. In some material points they agree: tranquillity of soul is an essential to grace, and the greatest manifestation of strength is that moral power which “lies beneath the strife of the passions.” See Winckelmann’s *Essay on Grace*, in his *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, translated by Fuseli.
since.” Those who occupied the highest rank in this class were undoubtedly Michael Angelo and Raffaello,—rivals in greatness in their art, equals in that greatness of mind which is proof against the taint of envy: the one possessing a greater combination of the higher qualities of the art than any other man; the other that sublimity “which, as Longinus thinks, being the highest excellence that human composition can attain to, abundantly compensates the absence of every other beauty, and atones for all deficiencies∗.” “Of the contemporary artists of Michael Angelo,” says Roscoe, “such only are entitled to high commendation as accompanied his studies, or availed themselves of his example†. Among these appears the divine Raffaello; second to his great model only in that grandeur of design which elevates the mind, superior to him in that grace which interests the heart; endowed, if not with vigour sufficient alone to effect a reform, with talent the best calculated to promote its progress‡.”

∗ See the parallel of the two given by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his Discourses, and that by Hazlitt in his essay on the Fine Arts in the Encyclopedia Britannica.
† “O veramente felice età nostra!” exclaims Vasari, “O beati artefici, chè ben così vi dovete chiamare, da che nel tempo vostro havete potuto al fonte di tanta chiarezza rischiarar le tenebre luci degli occhi, e vedere fattovi piano tutto quello che era difficile da si maraviglioso e singolare artefice. Certamente la gloria delle sue fatiche vi fa conoscere e honorare, da che ha tolto da voi quella benda, che avrete innanzi agli occhi della mente, sì di tenere piana, e v’ha scoperto il vero dal falso, il quale v’adombrava l’intelletto. Ringraziate di ciò dunque il cielo, e sforzatevi d’imitare Michelagnolo in tutte le cose.”
‡ Roscoe’s Life of Lorenzo de’ Medici.
It may be objected to this explanation of the Beauty which is the theme of Michael Angelo's muse, that it is indefinite and unsatisfactory; that it presents only a vague abstraction, in place of any clear notions of practical utility, to guide the artist and serve as his model. To this I answer, that it is not merely by defined and mechanical rules that the highest objects in art are to be attained; that the most important agents act upon the mind in secret and indirect ways; it is the development of the germ of thought within the mind which is the origin and cause of greatness; and individuality may hence be called its essence*. But let us distinguish the idea of the Beautiful existing in the mind, as its guide and companion in that interminable ascent towards perfection, from the ordinary acceptation in which the term is used as a mere attribute of comparison applied to objects of sense. Our notions of the highest beauty, in form and expression, vary according to the constitution of the mind, its capacity for reflection, and its powers and opportunities of observation. The idea of beauty presents itself to each in the garb in which each is peculiarly adapted to appropriate it. To compare, for example, the characteristics of Michael Angelo and Raffaello: the highest ideal beauty marks the two; but how different, and in some lights how opposite, in cha-

* It was in design that Michael Angelo was pre-eminently great. I think it is Goethe who remarks, that “in design, the soul gives utterance to some portion of her inmost being; and the highest mysteries of creation are precisely those which (as far as relates to their fundamental plan) rest entirely on design and modelling; these are the language in which she reveals them.”
racter! In the works of Michael Angelo, and still more plainly in his poetry, there appears only the development of one mighty and engrossing thought: the form which it assumed resulted from the peculiar constitution of his mind, the mould in which nature had cast it. But his feeling of the sublime and grand carried his thoughts onward in a secret and measured progression, along an undeviating path, and terminated only in that Beauty which centres in the source of all perfection: however distant, it was the one star ever in his sight. I shall illustrate this point elsewhere, and will only observe further, that the greatest minds most readily feel and acknowledge the glorious truth, that "man can only learn to rise from a consideration of that which he cannot surmount." And here let me quote the following remarks upon Beauty, from the pen of one of the greatest critics upon Art, Winkelmann.

"Les philosophes qui ont réfléchi sur la beauté universelle, en cherchant à la découvrir dans les choses crées, et en tâchant de remonter jusqu'à la source de la beauté suprême, l'ont fait consister dans un parfait accord de la créature avec la fin dans un rapport harmonieux des parties entre elles, et du tout avec les parties. Mais comme cette définition de la Beauté est synonyme avec celle de la perfection, qui est une qualité d'un ordre trop élevé pour bien convenir à l'humanité, il résulte que notre idée de la beauté universelle est indéterminée, et qu'elle se forme en nous de l'assemblage d'un certain nombre de connaissances individuelles. Cette collection de connaissances, lorsqu'elle est bien faite, nous donne l'idée la plus haute de la beauté humaine, que nous élevons, à raison de notre capacité à nous élever, au-dessus de la matière. De plus, le Créateur ayant donné cette perfection à toutes ses créatures dans le de-
gré qui convient à chacune, et chaque idée ayant une cause qu'il faut chercher ailleurs que dans cette idée, il s'ensuit que la cause de la beauté étant dans toutes les choses créées, ne saurait être cherchée hors d'elle. Enfin, ce qui fait naître la difficulté de donner une définition générale et évidente de la beauté, c'est que nos connaissances ne sont que des idées de comparaison, et que la beauté ne saurait être comparée à rien de plus élevé qu'elle. La Beauté suprême réside en Dieu. L'idée de la beauté humaine se perfectionne à raison de sa conformité et de son harmonie avec l'Être suprême, avec cet Être que l'idée de l'unité et de l'invisibilité nous fait distinguer de la matière. Cette notion de la beauté est comme une substance abstraite de la matière par l'action du feu, comme un esprit qui cherche à se créer un être à l'image de la première créature raisonnable formée par l'intelligence de la divinité. Les formes d'une pareille image sont simples et sans interruption; et par cela même qu'elles sont variées dans cette simplicité, elles se trouvent dans des rapports harmonieux. C'est ainsi qu'un son doux et agréable est produit par des corps dont les parties sont uniformes. Toute beauté devient sublime par l'unité et par la simplicité : la beauté imprime la qualité du sublime à tout ce qui agit et qui parle. Ce qui est grand en soi-même acquiert encore de la grandeur par la simplicité de l'exécution. Un objet, loin de se rétrécir, ou de perdre de sa grandeur, lorsque notre esprit peut le parcourir et le mesurer d'une seule vue, lorsqu'il peut l'embrasser et le renfermer dans une seule idée, se présente à nous dans toute sa grandeur par la facilité de le concevoir. Notre âme, charmée de toute conception facile, s'agrandit et s'élève avec son sujet. Tout ce que nous sommes obligés de considérer par parties, ou que nous ne saurions parcourir tout d'un coup à cause de la multiplicité des parties composées, perd de sa grandeur : c'est ainsi qu'une longue route nous paraît courte par la variété des objets qui charment nos regards, ou par le nombre des endroits où nous
pouvons nous arrêter.... De l'unité naît une autre qualité de la haute beauté, son indétermination, c'est-à-dire, cette sorte de qualité dont les formes ne sont décrites ni par des points, ni par des lignes, comme formant seuls la beauté.*"

It requires a great mind to feel the strength as well as loveliness of beauty; it was perhaps this sentiment which so penetrated the soul of Michael Angelo as to lead him to overrate its value. Softer charms are more superficial; they are easier to depict, and easier to detect: loveliness captivates, but serious graces charm; and whilst we gaze on, admire, then turn from and forget the eno; we look into the other, and under the veil of mere sensual beauty penetrate to the force of soul which stamps its character, which invests it with a power at first inappreciable†. It was the principle of greatness which was ever present to the mind of Michael Angelo; he could rise to the divine, but could never relax into mere grace: the sterner attributes of divinity were the food of his thoughts, and no stroke ever came from his pencil or his pen by chance.

"But the chief merit of this great man is not to be sought for in the remains of his pencil, nor even in his sculptures, but in the general improvement of the public taste which followed his astonishing productions. If his labours had perished with himself, the change which they effected in the opinions and the works of his contemporaries would still have entitled him to the first honours of the art. Those who from ignorance or from envy have endeavoured to depreciate his productions, have represented them as exceeding in their forms and atti-

* Translated from the German by M. Huber.
† See Winckelmann on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks.
tudes the limits and the possibilities of nature,—as a race of beings the mere creatures of his own imagination: but such critics would do well to consider, whether the great reform to which we have alluded could have been effected by the most accurate representations of common life, and whether anything short of that ideal excellence which he only knew how to embody, could have accomplished so important a purpose. The genius of Michael Angelo was a leaven which was to operate on an immense and heterogeneous mass, the salt intended to give a relish to insipidity itself: it was therefore active, penetrating, energetic, so as not only effectually to resist the contagious effects of a depraved taste, but to communicate a portion of its spirit to all around.*

In viewing the mind of Michael Angelo in his works and in his poetry, in following the traces of thought impressed on all that he has left behind him, we seem to be looking at the surface-mirror of a lake, whose waters, though sometimes roughened by gusts of passion, show their depth and force; whose agitation bespeaks the repose which reposes beneath it, whose movement betrays the power which impels its tide. It is the human mind carried to the verge of the imagination, soaring with upward glance to the source of all greatness and excellence,—mourning in its mighty power over the distance which separates it from the goal to which it tends; restless under the sense of imperfection, yet drawing strength and vigour from the consciousness of its superiority†.

* Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.
† "And ever up to heven, as she did pray,
Her steadfast eyes were bent, ne swarved other way,"
Speranza, in the Faery Queen, x. 14.
The estimation in which our Artist was held as a poet, by all the greatest men of his own and succeeding times, is shown in every possible form of panegyric. Varchi, at the suggestion of the Academy, and the desire of the Grand Duke, delivered his funeral oration; numerous Discourses were read before the Academy upon his compositions; and soon after his death a volume was published, containing forty-five poems, written upon that occasion.

Amongst much extravagant eulogy thus lavished upon him, there is enough of sound reflection to show the just appreciation in which the peculiar character of his compositions was held. Varchi terms him “unico pittore, singolare scultore, perfettissimo architetto, eccellentissimo poeta, ed amatore divinissimo;” and again, “singolare nella poesia, e nella vera arte dell’amare, la quale non è nè men bella, nè men faticosa, ma ben più necessaria e più profittevole, dell’ altre quattro [arti].” He elsewhere speaks as follows:

“C’è che si maravigliano come ne’ componimenti di uno uomo, il quale non faccia professione né di lettere né di scienza, e sia tutto occupatissimo in tanti e tanto diversi esercizi, possa essere così grande profondità di dottrina ed altezza di concetti, mostrano male che conoscano o quanto possa la natura quando vuole fare uno ingegno perfetto e singolare, o che la Pittura e la Poesia sono secondo molti non tanto somigliantissime fra loro, quanto poco meno che una cosa medesima.”

* Michael Angelo says, in his Discourse on one of Petrarca’s sonnets, “Con queste arte della pittura ha grandissima rassomiglianza la poesia; onde da molti l’ una è stata chiamata poesia muta, e l’
The poems of Michael Angelo were first published by his great nephew of the same name, in 1623. On this occasion Mario Giuducci delivered a discourse before the Florentine Academy, in which he thus speaks:

"Non pure le statue e le pitture fatte dalla sua mano racchiudono entro di loro tal profondità e intendimento di quelle due nobilissime arti, che elle sono il vero studio de' discepoli, e la buona idea de' maestri, ma ancora le sue Rime conservano in se stesse la medesima proprietà, di porger, conforme alla capacità e alla dottrina di chi le considera, più o meno sublime suggetto di discorrere e speculare. Onde, siccome i principianti imparano e riconoscono nelle tavole e sculture di quello tutte l'osservanze e tutti i precetti del buon disegno; ed i dotti, più a dentro penetrandoci, sono dalle medesime svegliati e innalzati a più pellegrini e alti concetti, che loro da per se stessa non rappresenterebbe la fantasia; così in gustar queste Poesie, altri dei superficiali, altri de' più intemi e squisiti sensi pase l' animo suo. Non mancano, per provare dei nobili pensieri, e delle dotte e sottili speculazioni suggerite da queste Rime, le Lezioni ed il Ragionamenti fatti in questa nostra Accademia da uomini letterati e famosi."

This first edition was prefaced by a letter addressed by Buonarotti the younger to Cardinal Barberini*.

"Whenever," says he, "we see any man become great in more than one science or art, we readily believe him capable of succeeding honourably in any other to which he may turn.

altra pittura favellante: ed il vedere del continuo i pittori ed i poeti avere tra di loro intrinseca amistà (come fu quella tra Giotto e Dante, e tra l' Petrarca e Simone da Siena) della frattanza di quelle non è debole argomento."

* Chosen Pontiff in the following year under the name of Urban VIII.
his mind. I have not without reason considered that these
Rime of Michael Angelo, as the work of a man great in all
arts, are such that, now he has been dead so many years,
deserve to be given to the world, and add the lustre of another
crown to his glory, especially considering how intimate a
union and resemblance exist between poetry and design, in
which he so much excelled. From which similarity it follows,
since both employ imitation as their proper instrument, that
perhaps no good designer can be found, who either has not the
art of versifying, or at least a love of poetry; as, on the other
hand, there is scarcely a poet who does not either himself de-
sign, or has not a just feeling for the art. Michael Angelomused
himself, when reposing from his other studies, in composing
verses; and as in designing he avoided all superfluity of or-
nament, studying philosophically the perfect constitution and
disposition of natural bodies; so in versifying he restricted
himself to the simple reality of his thought, without indulging
in extraneous flowers of speech, which, sought after by many,
serve only to mislead the ear, without leaving any permanent
impression on the mind. Hence it has been said of Michael
Angelo by an acute and elegant poet*, in reproving the empty
language of certain writers,
‘Ei dice cose, e voi dite parole.’”

Michael Angelo was from an early age devoted to
the study of the poetry of Dante and Petrarch: it is
said that he knew by heart at one time nearly all the
sonnets of the latter. Much however as he admired
and imitated the imagery of Petrarch, the boldness of
Dante’s genius was more congenial to his own. The
einement of taste in the age of Michael Angelo pre-
ered the elegance of style, the harmonious flow of the

* Berni.
muse of Petrarch, who became the model of all succeeding poets. The wide difference between those great masters of the Italian language has been well defined by Foscolo in his parallel of the two. But what is most admirable in the Rime of Michael Angelo, is that he so harmonizes the elegance of the one with the grandeur and solidity of the other, as to obliterate their discrepancies and to form a perfect unity of character. Out of differing elements he creates, rather than remodels, a style of poetry, and stamps it with an originality; and his frequent imitation of passages both from Dante and Petrarch gives us more the impression of his perfect conversance with their productions, than of transcription and paraphrase. But in his poetry, as in his designs, Dante was the text-book of his thoughts, and innumerable instances in either might be cited to illustrate this. In the ‘Last Judgement’ Dante has furnished the artist with many thoughts from the Inferno of the Divina Commedia; and one of the most interesting monuments of the genius of one artist illustrated by the kindred spirit of another, was the copy of Dante’s great poem which Michael Angelo had enriched with marginal designs. This inestimable treasure perished, it is well known, in a shipwreck.

There is a similarity in the character of Dante to that of our artist, which I may here briefly notice. How gloriously is the sympathy of the two marked in the sonnets which he wrote on Dante*! The mind of the latter was wonderfully fitted by nature to meet

* See Mr. Southey’s admirable translations of these in Duppa’s Life of Michael Angelo.
and to resist the injuries of the world, and the still greater trial of fortitude the ingratitude of his own country. Strengthened for the task by the deep and severe studies of the schools, he felt himself superior to injury, his spirit recoiled within itself, and a philosophic equanimity, springing from the conscious dignity and purity of his own mind, never forsook him. We can hear him exclaim,

"Conscienza m’assicura,
La buona compagnia, che l’uom francheggia
Sotto l’asbergo del sentirsì pura."

"The power of despising," says Foscolo, "which many boast, which few really possess, and with which Dante was uncommonly gifted by nature, afforded him the highest delight of which a lofty mind is susceptible."

If the fortitude of Michael Angelo was not subjected to the same test, it was tried in another way. He had not to undergo banishment and persecution; but, in the ardent pursuit of his art, he was crossed by the constant efforts of a petty jealousy to thwart his designs and divert from him the favour of the great and powerful. These mean artifices filled him with a just but silent contempt. He was above stooping to resentment; for, as he himself observed, "He who contends with the worthless must always be a loser." His pride showed itself to those only who were mean; he was naturally of a kind disposition, ever free and anxious to impart information and advice to others in his art; but toward supercilious ignorance his spirit was unbending, and he could as ill brook an unmerited indignity from a pope
as from a peasant. When Julius II. refused him an audience time after time, Michael Angelo indignantly returned home, saying, "If his Holiness wants me from this time forward, he must seek me elsewhere." The same night he left Rome. The Pope sent five couriers to bring him back; but when they overtook him he was beyond the papal jurisdiction. They delivered the Pope's letter, which ran thus: "Return immediately to Rome, on pain of our displeasure." But his spirit refused to bow, and he wrote the following reply: "Being expelled the antechamber of your Holiness, conscious of not meriting the disgrace, I took the only course left me, consistent with the preservation of that character which has hitherto rendered me worthy your confidence. Nor can I return; for if I were undeserving of your esteem yesterday, I shall not be worthy of it tomorrow, unless by the caprice of fortune, which can be as little desirable to your Holiness as myself." A reconciliation afterwards took place at Bologna, whither Michael Angelo went to meet the Pope after his subjection of that territory to his allegiance.  

* At this interview an honourable trait in the character of Julius showed itself. When the artist entered the presence-chamber, with a look of displeasure the Pope said: "Instead of your coming to us, you seem to have expected that we should come to you." Michael Angelo replied that his error arose from feeling too hastily a disgrace he was unconscious of meriting; but hoped his Holiness would overlook the past. The Monsignore in attendance wished to excuse to the Pope this to him insufficient apology, saying, that allowance must be made for such men, who were ignorant of everything but their art. The Pope hastily replied, "Thou hast vilified him, which I have not; thou art an ignorant fellow, and no man of genius: get out of my sight!" (See Duppa's Life of M. Angelo, p. 61.)
In this spirit of proud independence, of which the life of Michael Angelo offers many examples, his character bears a resemblance to that of Dante. The pride that springs from self-regard marks the vanity of a little mind; but his was a feeling of the dignity of right when opposed by injustice; of intellect over ignorance. He kept on his way alone amid the noisy paths of strife, intrigue and malice, fearing nothing, and desiring nothing but the freedom of an approving conscience, liberty to pursue the highest objects of his art and the friendship of those who were like-minded with himself.

"E se 'l vulgo malvagio, sciocco e rio,
Di quel che sente altrui segna ed addita,
Non m'è l'intensa voglia men gradita,
L'amor, la fede, e l'onesto di Dio."

The following sonnet presents us with an accurate transcript of his mind, in which a spirit of solitude and a conscious superiority to the world's injustice strongly tincture his feelings. I borrow Mr. Southey's beautiful version.

"Ill hath he chosen his part who seeks to please
The worthless world; ill hath he chosen his part,
For often must he wear the look of ease
When grief is at his heart;
And often in his hours of happier feeling
With sorrow must his countenance be hung;
And ever, his own better thoughts concealing,
Must he in stupid Grandeur's praise be loud,
And to the errors of the ignorant crowd
Assent with lying tongue.
Thus much would I conceal, that none should know
What secret cause I have for silent woe;
And taught by many a melancholy proof
That those whom fortune favours it pollutes,
I, from the blind and faithless world aloof,
Nor fear its envy, nor desire its praise,
But choose my path through solitary ways."

It may be interesting to read, in connexion with
the above, the following letter, written by Dante to one
of his friends, who had obtained his restoration to his
country and his possessions, on condition of his com-
pounding with his calumniators, avowing himself guilty,
and asking pardon of the Commonwealth.

"From your letter, which I received with due respect and
affection, I observe how much you have at heart my restoration
to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully, since
an exile rarely finds a friend. But after mature consideration,
I must by my answer disappoint the wishes of some little
minds; and I confide in the judgement to which your impartiality and prudence will lead you. Your nephew and mine
has written to me, what indeed had been mentioned by many
other friends, that, by a decree concerning the exiles, I am
allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of
money, and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving
absolution. Wherein, father, I see two propositions that are
ridiculous and impertinent. I speak of the impertinence of
those who mention such conditions to me; for in your letter,
dictated by judgement and discretion, there is no such thing.
Is such an invitation to return to his country glorious for
Dante, after suffering in banishment almost fifteen years? Is
it thus then they would recompense innocence which all the
world knows, and the labour and fatigue of unremitting study?
Far from the man who is familiar with philosophy be the
senseless baseness of a heart of earth, that could act like a little
scientist, and imitate the infamy of some others by offering himself up as it were in chains! Far from the man who cries aloud for justice be this compromise for money with his persecutors! No, father, this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. But I shall return with hasty steps, if you or any other can open me a way that shall not derogate from the fame and honour of Dante. But if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I will never enter. What! shall I not everywhere enjoy the sight of the sun and stars? and may I not seek and contemplate in every corner of the earth, under the canopy of heaven, consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me.*

Michael Angelo's character was no less distinguished by moral virtues than by intellectual greatness. The love of the great and the good appears to have produced corresponding effects upon his heart and his understanding. It disclosed to his mind the apprehension of all that was grand and noble, taught him the excellence of virtue, and opened his heart to the influence of the purest affections. Although this view of his character belongs rather to biography than to the subject of this brief sketch, I cannot pass it by without notice. We see in so rare and admirable a union of the noblest qualities with the greatest talents, a glorious illustration of the truth that the affinity of the sister-arts is in nothing more happily manifested than in their common effect of disposing the mind to virtuous impressions. Rousseau† has the following just and pertinent observations.

* Ugo Foscolo's Essays on Petrarch, p. 203.
† Nouvelle Heloise, l. 79.
“J’ai toujours cru,” says he, “que le bon n’étoit que le beau mis en action, que l’un tenoit intimement à l’autre, et qu’ils avaient tous deux une source commune dans la nature bien ordonnée. Il suit de cette idée que le goût se perfectionne par les mêmes moyens que la sagesse, et qu’une âme bien touchée des charmes de la vertu doit à proportion être aussi sensible à tous les autres genres de beautés. On s’exerce à voir comme à sentir, ou plutôt une vue exquise n’est qu’un sentiment délicat et fin ; c’est ainsi qu’un peintre à l’aspect d’un beau paysage ou devant un beau tableau s’extasie à des objets qui ne sont pas même remarqués d’un spectateur vulgaire.

“Sitôt qu’on veut rentrer en soi-même, chacun sent ce qui est bien, chacun discerne ce qui est beau ; nous n’avons pas besoin qu’on nous apprenne à connaître ni l’un ni l’autre, et l’on ne s’en impose là-dessus qu’autant qu’on s’en veut imposer. Mais les exemples du très bon et du très beau sont plus rares et moins connus, il les faut aller chercher loin de nous : la vanité, mesurant les forces de la nature sur notre faiblesse, nous fait regarder comme chimériques les qualités que nous ne sentons pas en nous-mêmes ; la paresse et le vice s’appuient sur cette prétendue impossibilité ; et ce qu’on ne voit pas tous les jours, l’homme faible prétend qu’on ne le voit jamais. C’est cette erreur qu’il faut détruire ; ce sont ces grands objets qu’il faut s’accoutumer à sentir et à voir, afin de s’ôter tout prétexte de ne les pas imiter. L’âme s’élève, le cœur s’enflamme à la contemplation de ces divins modèles ; à force de les considérer on cherche à leur devenir semblable, et l’on ne souffre plus rien de médiocre sans un dégoût mortel.”

I cannot better conclude this notice of the character of our artist than with the following extracts from Mr. Duppa’s work *.

“In the discharge of his duty at all times he was inflex-

* Duppa’s Life of M. Angelo, p. 236.
ible, and his actions were ever governed by one principle, that of accomplishing the end by the most direct means. He also established it as a principle, that to live in credit was enough, if life were virtuously and honourably employed for the good of others and the benefit of posterity; thus he laid up the most profitable treasure for his old age, and calculated upon its best resources. * * *

“The love of wealth made no part of Michael Angelo's character: he was in no instance covetous of money, nor attentive to its accumulation; that which was sufficient for his moderate wants bounded his wishes, and he was an example of his own opinion,

'Che l' tempo è breve, e l' necessario poco.'

When he was offered commissions from the rich, with large sums, he rarely accepted them, being more stimulated by friendship and benevolence than the desire of gain. For eighteen years he gave up his time to the building of St. Peter's, without emolument; and when Paul III. sent him a sum equivalent to forty pounds of our money, for one month's pay, at the commencement of his appointment, he returned it, being influenced to undertake that employment from other motives. He freely assisted literary men, as well as those of his own profession, who were not in good circumstances, without any desire that they should be sensible of the obligation; rather wishing at all times to confer a benefit, than to have the reputation of it. But the most enviable instance of his liberality is a donation he made to his old and faithful servant Urbino. Michael Angelo, talking to him one day, asked him, 'What would become of you, Urbino, if I were to die?' He replied, 'I must then serve
another.' 'Poor fellow,' said Michael Angelo, 'I will take care that you shall not stand in need of another master,' and immediately made him a present of two thousand crowns,—an act, as Vasari exclaims, only to be expected from popes and great emperors*. For this servant he had a very sincere regard; and during his last illness Michael Angelo waited upon him, and sate up with him by night, though he was himself then eighty-two years of age. At his death he was greatly affected, and upon that event he wrote this letter to Vasari, which does honour to his feelings†.

* To his nephew Leonardo Buonarrotti he gave three or four thousand crowns at a time. He also obtained for Urbino the appointment of Custode of the pictures in the Vatican.

† A trait of benevolence similar to the above is recorded in one of Pliny’s letters, addressed to his friend Paternus. "I am," says he, "much disconcerted at the illness of my servants, among whom some of the youngest have died. Two consolations only are left me, although they are by no means equivalent to my grief. The first is the readiness I showed in granting their freedom; for after manumission I seem not to have lost them immaturity: the second is the permission I gave, even to my slaves, to make complete wills. I keep these wills in my own custody, as if they had been legal; and I have obeyed their several dispositions and desires with the utmost exactness......These proceedings have afforded me some comfort in my distress, notwithstanding which I am still dispirited and unhinged by the same motives of humanity that induced me to grant such indulgencies. However I by no means wish to become less susceptible of tenderness. I know this kind of misfortunes would be estimated by other persons only as common losses, and from such feelings they would conceive themselves great and wise men. I shall not determine either their greatness or their wisdom; but I am certain they have no humanity. It is the part of a man to be affected with grief, to feel sorrow, at the same time that he is to resist it, and to admit of comfort."—Plin. Epist. vii. 16.
"My dear Giorgio,

"I am but ill disposed to write; however I will sit down to say something in reply to your letter. You already know that Urbino is dead. His death has been a heavy loss to me, and the cause of excessive grief; but it has also been a most impressive lesson of the grace of God; for it has shown me that he who in his lifetime comforted me in the enjoyment of life, dying has taught me how to die, not with reluctance, but even with a desire of death. He lived with me twenty-six years, grew rich in my service, and I found him a most rare and faithful servant; and now that I calculated upon his being the staff and reose of my old age, he is taken away, and has left me only the hope of seeing him again in Paradise. That he will go there, the beneficence of God has already given a sign in the happy serenity of his last moments; for his death caused him much less sorrow than the concern he felt at leaving me in this treacherous world surrounded with troubles: my better part, however, is gone with him, and nothing remains to me now but misery. Farewell*."

Amongst the happiest influences on the character of Buonarotti was the intimate friendship which subsisted between him and Vittoria Colonna, the wife of the celebrated Marquis of Pescara. History affords no instance of a purer or stronger affection. The circumstances of her birth and alliance would have entitled the name of this extraordinary woman to a place in history; but it was the union of high mental endowments with refinement, innocence of heart, and moral purity which endears to us her character; conjugal fidelity was the crown of her virtues, and we sympathise even more vividly with her in sorrow than in the brief sunshine of

* See also a sonnet he sent to Beccadelli on this occasion.
her early life. She was the theme of poets,—worshiped, no less for her beauty than her genius, by the great and noble. But "not the least of Vittoria's titles to fame was the intense adoration with which she inspired Michael Angelo, who not only employed his pencil and his chisel for her pleasure or at her suggestion, but has left among his poems several which are addressed to her, and which breathe that deep and fervent, yet pure and reverential love, she was as worthy to inspire as he was to feel."

"She added feathers to the learned's wing,
He gave to grace a double majesty."

She frequently repaired to Rome, from Viterbo and other places, with no other view than to enjoy his society: in her last moments "he stood by her side, and when her lofty and gentle spirit had forsaken its fair tenement, he raised her hand and kissed it with a sacred respect."

"Udite quanto Amor le fecse erranza;
Ch'io l'vidi lamentare in forma vera
Sovra la morta immagine avvenente:
E riguardava ver lo ciel sovente,
Ove l'alma gentil già locata era."†

From one of his sonnets Michael Angelo appears to

* Mrs. Jameson's 'Loves of the Poets', ii. 76. It is scarcely necessary to refer the reader to a work so known and admired. Mrs. Jameson has invested this subject with the peculiar charm which is found in all her writings: her pen lends a grace to everything it treats of, captivating the imagination, but leaving a deeper impression on the mind by appealing to the understanding.—The reader may also turn to Condivi's account.

† Dante's Vita Nuova.
have had the idea of perpetuating her memory either in marble or on the canvas.

"Forse ad amendeue noi dar lunga vita
Posso, o vuoi nei colori, o vuoi nei sassi,
Rasembrando di noi l'affetto, e l'volto;
Sichè mill' anni dopo la partita,
Quanto tu bella fosti, ed io t'amassi,
Si veggia, e come a amarti io non fu stolto."

This he never accomplished; but he has left us a no less imperishable monument of her virtues and of his affection in the inspired productions of his pen,—the several sonnets which he addressed to her whilst living, and the beautiful epitaphs which he wrote in her memory after her death.

The mention of this intimacy is briefly recorded by historians: I am inclined to regard it not as a mere episode in his life, but as a circumstance which exerted considerable influence upon his character; and in saying this I may claim exemption from a reproach to which some remarks I shall presently make might be subject.

In all the relations of life Michael Angelo evinces a uniform sensibility and tenderness of feeling. History tells us little of his father and his brother: but the verses he wrote on their deaths, which occurred within a short interval, have left ample proof of his filial and fraternal piety and affection. Well has Vasari observed that, "in addition to greatness in the arts which he professed, heaven gifted him with a love of true moral philosophy, and with the adornment of sweet poetry, to serve as a mirror to the world of the sanctity of virtue in all the relations of life."
The poetry of Michael Angelo is all devoted to the depicting of feeling, of the passions of the soul. And in the course of a long life, troubled by constant vexations, he rallies his affections successively around two objects; first, the love of the Beautiful in art, and finally the preparation for death by the contemplation of eternal truths. From this division in his intellectual system arises an analogous one in the subject of his poetry; the first portion is given principally to love, and the second to devotion. In both of them we find an equal energy, an equal profundity; but age, by maturing without weakening it, has given to it an additional charm.

In the sonnets written at the close of his life there is a depth of devotional feeling, mingling painfully with regrets of the past*. The limited power of human nature seemed at once revealed to him; for it has been well observed, that an ardent character, a life of continual vicissitude and engaged in severe labour, seem to retard old-age by concealing its first approaches. All that he had accomplished passed from his memory, whilst the distance from the object towards which he had through life pressed forward grew upon him. The past appeared spent in vain efforts, in vain longings; and the ardour which had carried him on, stimulated his aspirations, given strength to his mind and power to his hand, now filled his soul with disappointmant and pain. It had supported him whilst, in the strength of life, he had looked forward to what he was capable of achieving.

* I have attempted to translate several of these sonnets, which will be found in a subsequent part of this little work.
it failed him now, when the activity of his mind was wasting away, when the thoughts of the future could alone rest on eternity.

Yet amid this conflict of the reminiscences of past greatness and the present conscious enfeebling of his manual powers, we see the ruling passion strong to the last: an occasional gleam breaks for a moment through the thickening mists that dim his sight, reminding us that although the night is approaching the sun has not yet set, revealing glimpses of the past, and recalling the brightness of its noontday splendour. His mind reverts to his beloved pursuits with an unextinguishable attachment:

"Se per mordace di molti anni limp
Discresce, e manca ogna tua stanca spoglia,
Anima inferma, or quando fia ti scoglia
Da quella il tempo, o torni o'eri in cielo
Candida e lieta prima?
Chè bench'é cangi il pelo,
E già sì di mia vita il fil s' accorti,
Cangiart non posso il mio tristo antico uso,
Che più invecchiando, più mi sferza e preme."

There is a grandeur in the melancholy which clothed his thoughts at this period of life. As he felt age stealing on him, the object of his earthly devotion and thoughts faded before him, and a strong sense of the feebleness of man prostrated his soul in the presence of the Almighty. Inexpressibly touching, and at the same time natural, is this transition of his feelings. His mind could aspire no further; the law of humanity was upon him, whispering, 'Thus far shalt
thou go, but no further;’ his spirit stood, like the man
of God upon the mount, in sight of the promised land,
whither through the divine favour his power had car-
ried him: and now, on the verge of the grave, his soul
turned to its Creator, and devotion taking possession of
his feelings, faith gave strength to his weakness and sup-
port to his infirmities.

“L’anima mia, che con la morte parla,
Seco di se medesma si consiglia,
E di nuovi pensieri ognor s’attrista;
E il corpo di dì in dì crede lasciarla,
Onde l’immaginato cammin piglia
Di speranza e timor confusa e mista.”

Not unaptly may we apply to himself at this period
the words with which he thus concludes a Discourse
delivered before the Florentine Academy: “Chi vive
adunque di vita onesta e laudabile, come fa quegli che
ama di vero e perfetto amore, o contemplando Iddio e
le cose superiori, o contemplando le terrene che a noi
sono i forse più somiglianti, sortisce piacevoli e giocon-
dissima fine....Trapasseremo senza pericolo lo angusto
e tremante varco della morte, e diverremo felici, lo che
piaccia a colui che fu ed è sempre di tutti gli honesti
benefici larghissimo donatore.”

Bel fin fa chi ben amando more!
In the preceding sketch of the character of Michael Angelo, I have spoken only in general terms of his poetry; and my subject would be left very incomplete, did I not devote a few concluding remarks to its closer examination. I had intended to trace more fully the peculiar features of the class of amatory poetry to which it belongs; but to follow historically this stream of allegory to its source, even in the most general way, would carry me into a wider field of inquiry than my present object would admit; and I must be content with glancing at those salient points of its Platonic character which bear more particularly on our present subject: its true development is a matter for deep research, requiring for its interpreter more learning than meets us in the every-day walks of life, and has hitherto been a blank chapter in the history of literature*. Those who desire to investigate this subject

* In making this remark, I cannot pass unnoticed the labours of one man, who stands foremost in the present day as the commentator of Dante and the poets of his age,—Professor Rossetti. He has brought to the arduous task deep learning and patient research, joined to an unwearied zeal in the discovery of historical truth. Prejudice is a powerful friend to error, and it is easy summarily to condemn as visionary any new theory, whether really sound or not, where few will take the trouble to examine. However much opinions may differ as to the correctness of his views, or the extent of that correctness, Professor Rossetti has the just merit of being regarded as an honest and zealous inquirer into historical truth; and candour at least requires that whoever condemns the conviction to which his labours have honestly led him, should have perused his works with impartial attention. I refer to his Remarks on the Divina Commedia, his “Spírito Antipapale del Medio Evo,” and a work now in the press containing a further and most curious examination of the spirit of the Italian writers of that period. Among the
will find their interest grow as they advance; but without penetrating beyond the poetical allegory of its pages, we may draw from it an explanation of much hidden beauty.

No one, that I am aware, ever employed poetry as Michael Angelo did*. Its association with philosophical studies characterized the age in which he lived; and it was natural that a mind of so imaginative a cast should seize upon and connect them with his feeling of the high powers and purposes of the art he so ardently pursued. They served as a light to his studies, animating, strengthening, and elevating his powers; and his poetry thus acquires a greater interest from its effects upon his own mind, than from the mere pleasure which its beauty affords to ours. The office of philosophy was not to teach him the mechanical part of his profession, but it was a higher one,—to school the intellect, to raise the imagination, to steady and confirm the judgement; and profoundly has he said,

"a quello solo arriva
La man che ubbidisce all'intelletto."

The abstract principles of art cannot supersede the study of mechanical rules; they are not the grammar,

strictures which these works have called forth, appeared one from the pen of Mr. Arthur Hallam, who, whilst he dissent entirely from their author's theories, never loses sight of the courtesy due to an opponent. Harshness was indeed foreign to the nature of that amiable and highly gifted young man, whose death is widely and sincerely lamented.

* On one of the sketches of Raffaello in the Lawrence Collection there was a fragment of an unfinished sonnet, written in the same spirit of allegory as the poetry of Michael Angelo.
but the philosophy: the one may teach the exercise of the artist's tool, but the other gives the power which is to wield them. Without a practical study of rules, no one can paint, or sculpture, or write; but without that feeling for art which reflection upon general and abstract principles imparts, no one can become a great painter, sculptor, poet, or musician. Reynolds has the following just observations*:

"To distinguish between correctness of drawing and that part which respects the imagination, we may say the one approaches to the mechanical (which in its way too may make just pretensions to genius), and the other to the poetical. To encourage a solid and vigorous course of study, it may not be amiss to suggest, that perhaps a confidence in the mechanic produces a boldness in the poetical. He that is sure of the goodness of his ship and tackle, puts out fearlessly from the shore; and he who knows that his hand can execute whatever his fancy can suggest, sports with more freedom in embodying the visionary forms of his own creation. I will not say Michael Angelo was eminently poetical only because he was greatly mechanical; but I am sure that mechanic excellence invigorated and emboldened his mind to carry painting into the regions of poetry, and to emulate that art in its most adventurous flights. Michael Angelo equally possessed both qualifications. Yet of mechanic excellence there were certainly great examples to be found in ancient sculpture, and particularly in the fragment known by the name of the Torso of Michael Angelo; but of that grandeur of character, air, and attitude, which he threw into all his figures, and which so well corresponds with the grandeur of his outline, there was no example; it could, therefore, proceed only from the most poetical and sublime imagination."

* Sir J. Reynolds' Discourses, xv.
Our inquiry leads us first to consider the philosophical character of Love, in connexion with this class of poetry of which it is the prominent feature.

Love, or desire, has been termed the motion of the soul: it originates in, and is the mark of, imperfection; prompted by a desire to attain something which is not possessed; it ceases when its object is attained; and the unconscious actions of the infant, and the highest aspirations of the sage, indicate alike a requirement unsatisfied*. How admirable is the law of Providence, which constitutes these very proofs of imperfection the highest prerogative of our nature; rendering the finite power of the mind capable of an infinite longing after and pursuit of perfection! "It is the province of the soul to move, and of the intellect to know," says Proclus; and the very consciousness of our ignorance becomes our incitement to reach after knowledge†.

* "Ciascuna cosa naturalmente disia la sua perfezione; senza quella esser non può contenta, ch’è esser beato; che quantunque l’altr’ cose havesse, senza questa, rimarrebbe in lui desiderio, il quale essere non può con la beatitudine; acciòché la beatitudine sia cosa perfecta, e il desiderio defectiva cosa sia; che nullo desidera quello che ha, ma quel che non ha, che è manifesto defetto. E in questo sguardo solamente, l’humana perfezione s’acquisita, cioè la perfezione della ragione, della quale, si come da principiassima parte, tutta la nostra essentia depende."—Dante, Convito.

† "Anima quoque habitus disciplina et meditacione, que motiones sunt, doctrinam consequitur, servatur, atque perfectur." (Soc. up. Plat.) Socrates describes Love poetically as the offspring of Plenty and Want. (See the Banquet of Plato.) Cicero says, "Motus utem animorum duplices sunt; alteri, cogitationis,—alteri, appetitus. Cogitation in vero inquirendo maximo versatur; appetitus impellit ad agendum: curandum est itur ut cogitatione ad res quam optimum utamur,—appetitum ratione obedientem praebamus." (De Officiis, lib. 1.)
The basis of all the various allegories of Love is the innate propensity of the soul toward what is consonant to its own nature, the grand law of moral affinity. In the world within, as in the external face of nature, the same general principle applies. The mind, according to the Platonists, pure in its essence, naturally loves the good and beautiful, and turns from the evil and deformed*. But the general law of the affections rendering them instruments of evil as of good, of the highest aspirations as of the most debasing propensities, Grecian fable invented a terrestrial and a celestial Venus. In different countries this principle has assumed various personifications, and given birth to various myths†.

We must limit our attention to the general Platonic character which this subject assumed in the middle ages, and regard only its actuating principle. Socrates gives the most beautiful exposition of this in his dialogue with Diotima in the ‘Banquet’ of Plato‡.

*Boethius says: “Est mentibus hominum veri boni naturaliter inserta cupiditas, sed ad falsa devius error abductit.”—De Cons. Philos. lib. 3.
†In Persia, for instance, Love was regarded under twenty-five characters or attributes. In Greece the myths underwent various changes: the antagonistic principle of Eros and Anteros was a graft on the original stock. The most beautiful fable of the connexion of Love and the soul is that of Psyche and Cupid in Apuleius. (See for its different expositions Keightley’s admirable Mythology.) This fable reappears in Boccaccio’s tale of Cimone, and will also be found in a humorous story in the Pentamerone of Battista Basile.
‡In the ‘Banquet’ of Xenophon is also a similar discourse by Socrates, in a strain scarcely less eloquent and elevated.
tude and indigence of good, between wisdom the highest good, and ignorance the lowest deformity; also as a mediator between the subject and object of desire, the lover and the beloved. But when Socrates examines the question, What is Love? gravely and logically, he discourses in this way. Love, he says, is that longing after happiness which exists in every individual of the human kind, a mighty power which in various ways subdues and governs the hearts of all. In its most comprehensive sense it is the desire of good; in its limited and appropriate sense it is the desire of beauty; a desire of uniting itself with the beautiful, of possessing it, and retaining it in perpetuity. But beauty and goodness are one; for beauty is either external or internal, material or intellectual; hence Love is the desire of virtue, the desire of a union with a virtuous mind, and vice, being mental deformity, is its abhorrence.

"To go then, or to be led by another, along the right way of love is this; beginning from beauties of lower rank, to proceed to those that are higher, in a continual ascent, all the way proposing the highest beauty as the end, and using the rest merely as so many steps in the progress; ascending from one to another through all the varied degrees of beautiful bodies, both animate and inanimate; from the beauty of bodies to that of souls, from the beauty of souls to that of arts, from the beauty of arts to that of sciences; and if the soul be endowed with a genius of the higher kind, she rests not here, nor fixes her attachment on any one of these beauties or mental excellences in particular, but rises from hence to the contemplation of that universal, original, and exemplar beauty, from which everything beautiful both in the intelligible and sensible world

* "Whoever seeks for the true definition of Love, discovers it to be only a desire of the Beautiful. And if this be the case, vice and deformity in every shape must be disgusting to him who truly loves."—Lorenzo de' Medici.
proceeds. Whoever, then, is advanced thus far in the mysteries of Love, by a right and regular progress of contemplation, approaching now to perfect intuition, will suddenly discover, bursting into view, a beauty astonishingly admirable; that very beauty, to the gaining a sight of which the aim of all his preceding studies and labours had been directed; a beauty whose peculiar characters are these: In the first place, it never had a beginning, nor will ever have an end, but always is, and always flourishes in perfection, unsusceptible of growth or of decay. In the next place, it is not beautiful only when looked at in one way or seen in one light, at the same time that, viewed another way or seen in some other light, it is far from being beautiful. It is not beautiful only at certain times or with reference only to certain circumstances, being at other times or when things are otherwise circumstanced quite the contrary; nor is it beautiful only in some places or as it appears to some persons, whilst in other places or to other persons its appearance is the reverse of beautiful. Nor can this beauty, which is indeed no other than the Beautiful itself, ever be the object of imagination, as if it had face, or hands, or any other parts belonging to body; nor is it some particular reason, or some particular science: all other forms that are beautiful participate of this; but in such a manner they participate, that by their generation or destruction this suffers no diminution, receives no addition, nor undergoes any alteration. It resides not in any other being, nor in any animal, nor in the earth, nor in the heavens, nor in any other part of the universe; but simple and separate from all other things it subsists alone with itself, and possesses an essence eternally uniform. Here then is to be found, here if anywhere, the supreme good, the happy life, the ultimate object of desire to man, which is, to live in beholding this consummate beauty, the divine essence, in its own simplicity of form. In beholding it with that eye with which alone it is possible to behold
it, thus, and thus only, true virtue can be attained; and he who
attains her thus, and brings her up till she be mature, will be-
come a favourite of the Gods, and at length will be, if ever man
himself one of the Immortals*.

It is worthy of remark that, in delivering these elev-
ing doctrines, "which conduct the mind by a gradual
ascent to the contemplation of the unity and incompre-
hesibility of the First Cause, of that Being which is
goodness and beauty itself, and a union with whom is
the end of human existence, the sole object of heavenly
love, and which alone can confer immortal felicity,"
Socrates declares that they were imparted to him by a
priestess gifted with superhuman wisdom, named Dioti-
ma†. "In like manner," it has been well observed, "the

* Sydenham’s Plato.

† "Hae me in anamoria facultate instruxit." (Soc. op. Plat.) I
think it very questionable whether her existence was any more
real than that of the Daemon of Socrates. If this opinion be correct,
we may date the use of the amatory Prosopopoeia from the Diotima
of Plato; the dialogue between her and Socrates is unquestionably
a fiction of that philosopher.

Since I hazarded this suspicion I have found it started by one of
the nine guests at the Convivium Platonicum which Lorenzo de’
Medici instituted. Thomas Bentius, who there discourses upon the
instruction which Socrates received from Diotima, makes this re-
mark: "Socrates, noster Greecorum omnium sapientissimus oraculo
Apollinis judicatus amandi artem prae ceteris propter solubat, quasi
ob artis ejus peritiam potissimum et Socrates et alius quisvis easset
sapientissimus judicandus. Artem hujusmodi non ab Anaxagora
Damon, Archelaus, physicus, non a Prodico Chio et Aespasia rhetorice
professoribus, non a Chono musico, a quibus multa didicerat,—sed a
Diotima fatidica muliere divino afflata spiritu se accepisse dicebat;
mea quidem sententia, ut ostenderet, sola divinitatis inspiratione
quid vera pulchritudo sit, quid legitimus amor, qua ratione aman-
dum, homines intelligere posse. Tanta est amatorie facultatis po-
tentia, tanta sublimitas."
divine instructions delivered by Dante are imparted to him by Beatrice, the representative of Christian theology, as she soars with him from heaven to heaven* through Paradise; she still rising in beauty and wisdom as they ascend, and he in admiration and intellectual power; till at last she conducts him to the Empyrean, where he contemplates the fountain of truth, and tastes the ineffable bliss of the beatific vision†.

The principle of the Platonic doctrine regarding the soul is that it is an emanation from the Divine essence, pure in its nature, till corrupted by its connexion with the body; and that on earth it is thus subject to a probation. This at least was the opinion adopted by the Platonic writers of the period of which we treat‡.

"There is inherent in us," says Proclus, "a certain occult vestige of the Onx, which is more divine than our intellect, and in which the soul, perfecting and establishing herself, becomes divine, and lives, as far as it is possible for this to be accomplished by her, a divine life§." To each soul was assigned a presiding demon, in-

* Dante says: "Dico che per cielo io intendo la scientia, et per li cieli le scientie," etc.—Courtilt (in the comments on "il terzo cielo").
† See Introduction to a translation of the Canzonieri of Dante, by Charles Lyell, Esq., of Kinnordy,—a work which surprisingly masters the difficulties of those poems, and forms a valuable addition to our literature.
‡ I have not space to enlarge on this subject, or to examine particularly the opinions of Plato respecting the soul of the world, through the intervention of which he imagined the divine emanation of the soul of man to be derived from the Deity. (See Enfield’s Hist. of Philos. i. 232.)
§ "L’ anima humana con la nobiltà della potentia ultima, cioè ragione, participa della divina natura ad guisa di sempiterna intelligencia; perché l’ anima è tanto in quella sovrana potentia nobilitata e diluitata da materia."—Courtilt.
termediate between it and the divine nature, “ultimate natures being of themselves unable to participate with such as are primary.” By this Demon, so frequently mentioned by Socrates, he appears to me to intend the feeling of truth implanted in the mind*, which, as the moral arbiter of right and wrong, we term conscience, and which in its application to Art is the standard of feeling by which the mind measures degrees of beauty and excellence†. It is that principle which guides, by a refining and corrective process, the highest faculty of man, reason or intellect‡. To use the words of Dante,

* “Mens autem aut idem est quod veritas, aut omnium certe simillima atque verissima.”—Soc. ap. Plat.
† Socrates termed this excellence, in its general sense, the Good; and the mind acknowledges the justness of the analogy between beauty and virtue. This sentiment is happily expressed in the following passage: “Virtus etiam animi decorum quandam prae se ferre videtur, in verbis, gestibus, operibus, honestissimum. Celos quoque sublimis corum substantia clarissimo lumine circumfundit. In his omnibus interna perfectio product externam: illam bonitatem, hanc pulchritudinem possunus appellare. Quo circiter bonitatis forem quendam esse pulchritudinem volumus: cujus floris illechris, quasi eca quodam, latens interius bonitas allicit intuentes.” (Carolus Marsupinus, in Plat. Conviv.) It was the grand aim of Socrates to elicit the sanction of the minds of his auditors to this truth, to raise their ideas from a sensible perception of beauty to a recognition of the supreme excellence of virtue, and from a love of it to induce its practice; for it naturally follows that, in proportion as our ideas of virtue are enlarged and elevated, our responsibility to become virtuous is increased. This is the soul and spirit of moral obligation.
‡ “Omnis natura daemonum inter mortales deosque est media... trajectit humana ad deos, divina ad homines....Deus quidem homini non miscetur, sed per id medium commercium omne atque collo.
"Questo angelo è questa nostra nobiltà, che da Dio viene, e che nella nostra ragione parla." This character of the Daemon is beautifully alluded to in a Fragment of Menander, where it is represented as acting as the guide through life, in allusion to the office of the initiating priest in the Eleusinian Mysteries:

"Απαντει δαίμων ἀνδρὶ συνπαρατάτει
Εἰδὼς γενομένῳ
Μυστικών τοῦ βίου
'Αγαθός.

The Italian literature of the sixteenth century is, if I may use the expression, steeped in these Platonic ideas; and in our own poets, of the same and after periods, (especially Chaucer and Spenser,) we find

quium inter deos hominesque consitutur....Hi daemones multi atque
varii sunt : ex his unus est amor."—Plato, Cive.

* "Angels that come to lead frail minds to rest,
In chaste desires, on heavenly beauties bound."—Spenser.

† See the poetry of Bernardo Tasso, Molza, Sanazaro, Poliziano,
Guidicioni, Mutio, Tansillo, Benbo, and in short almost all the
poets of that age. I regret that my space does not allow me to cite
some passages in Illustration.

‡ I would especially refer to Spenser's four Hymns on Love, as
the most beautiful poetical exposition of Platonic Love in our
language. The amatory poetry of England, which was derived
from that of Italy, soon lost its character of ideality; its spirit was
gone, and, being deprived of the charm of allegory, its beauty was
at once changed into extravagance and absurdity. Spenser refers
to and laments this in his 'Teares of the Muses.'

"For that which was accounted heretofore
The learned's meede is now lent to the fool;
He sings of love, and making loving layes,
And they him heare, and they him highly prayse."
frequent allusions to them. In his play of ‘The New Inn’ Ben Jonson discusses the Platonic theory of love and beauty with the subtlety of an adept and the grace of a poet. Milton, in the beautiful paraphrase in Comus of a passage of the Phaedon, says,

“The soul grows clotted with contagion,
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.”

And Spenser:

“Most gentle spirit breathed from above,
Out of the bosome of the Maker’s blis,
In whom all bountie of all vertuous love
Appeared in their native properties.”

One of the most perfect modern odes which the English language possesses—perhaps the most perfect philosophical ode ever written in any language—is Wordsworth’s sublime celebration of the Platonic intimations of immortality from the recollections of early childhood.

In the union of perfection with imperfection there is a constant struggle of the purer portion of the soul with the baser elements of the body,—the struggle of the immortal to divest itself of its degrading combination with the mortal, and to re-assume its pristine purity. All the highest aspirations of man’s nature, all his love of

* The Ruines of Time.
† “L’anima nostra, benchè sia piena di divinità, anzi veramente figliuola di Dio, nondimeno intanto è occupata dal corpo, alla cura e regimino del quale naturalmente è proposta, che il piu delle volte diventa piu simile al temebroso carcere, dove è inclusa, che allo autore d’onde procede. E per lì antichi teologi chiamarono il corpo sepolcro dell’anima.”—Cattani.
the good and the beautiful, are indications of this conflict; and at death (for "immortal things love to assimilate") the pure essence of the soul is disencumbered of the body and received into heaven to join its own*. 

"Quivi si fa divina, onesta, e bella,
Come a se simil vuol cosa immortale."

From the division of the soul into the mortal and the immortal, arises that of love into the divine and earthly; the one following the intellect, the other sense†. The

* Proclus has the following fine passage in his work on Providence. "This is the debility of the soul, that, failing of the perfection pertaining to the first life, it tends downwards; but it there again acquires a power of ascending to the region from which it fell, and is led back to being itself, and the most splendid of being....And we shall not be able to fly from these maladies, nor to rest from labours, till, rising above things foreign to our nature, we separate from mortal nugasity our own good and the contemplation of real being. We must therefore strip ourselves of the garments with which in descending we became invested, we must proceed naked from hence thither, must entirely purify the eye of the soul by which we contemplate truly existing being, and instead of sense must make intellect to be the principal ruler of our internal life....Our oblivion and ignorance arise from surveying that which is unintellectual and dark; but our good consists in a flight and similitude to that which is divine."

† This latter Plato divided into the moral and animal affections. I pass over the division of love into three kinds: first, the lowest, or that which is common to all things in nature, animate and inanimate, plants, &c.; secondly, that which is common to all animate things endowed with senses; and thirdly, the rational love of intellectual creatures. These are derived from his division of the soul into three portions: the first, the seat of intelligence, which he conceived to be derived from God; the second, the seat of passion; the third, that of appetite; which two last he considered as derived from matter,
intellect (or the divine portion of our nature) became obscured by its union with the body; and in proportion as it retains more or less remembrance of the source from whence it proceeded, so is its love for the good and beautiful more or less strong*. "The Beautiful," says Plato, "is the remembrance of those things which our soul has some time seen, proceeding with God, and surveying those things which we now say exist, and penetrating into that which really exists†."

From the earliest period of Italian poetry, Love appears as its prominent feature; but the veil of allegory under which it is presented is intricate and closely woven. The writers of this period, observes Ginguené, all treat of love, and are all enamoured of a single object. "Ils sont tous occupés du même sujet, qui est l'Amour; et l'on pourrait en quelque sorte les croire tous amoureux du même objet, puisque aucun d'eux ne dit le nom de sa maîtresse, aucun ne la peint sous des traits particuliers et sensibles. Ils défigurent l'expression d'un sentiment dont ils parlent sans cesse et qu'ils ne peignent jamais.... Ils ne peignent rien de vrai, d'existant; on ne voit pas leur maîtresse, on ne la connoit point: c'est un être de raison, une sylphide si l'on veut, jamais une femme. Ce fut là, pendant tout un siècle, la seule poésie connue en Italie."

* These opinions on the nature of the soul and its powers of contemplation were embraced by most of the early Fathers. Mosheim observes that, among the early superstitions of the church, "if any real sparks of piety subsisted, it was among the Mystics, who exhorted their followers to aim at nothing but internal sanctity of heart and communion with God, the centre and source of holiness and perfection."—Eccl. Hist. iii. 301.

† Plat. Phaedon.
During the whole of the twelfth century we find this mistress of the poet's love only under such appellations as la Rosa, la Fiore, la Luce, la Stella d'Oriente, etc.* Guido Cavalcanti in the thirteenth century, as his friend Dante tells us, first gave a real name to this donna mistica, calling her Primavera; and this practice was no sooner introduced than it was generally followed by the poets of the age. Barberino adopted the name of Costanza,—Dante da Maiano that of Nina,—Boeceaccio, Fiammetta,—Cino, Selvaggia,—Angelieri, Beppina,—Montemagno, Laura, etc. To these we must add the names on which Alighieri and Petrarch have conferred immortality,—Beatrice and Laura†.

The Revival of Letters forms the most interesting period in the history of philosophy; understanding by that term, not the mere investigation of any particular system of theories, but in a wider range that science which re-

* The first poem in the Italian language was written in 1194, by the Sicilian Giulio d'Alcamo; it begins thus:

"Rosa fresca, aulentisima,
Che appari in ver l'estate;
Le donne te desiano,
Pulzelle e maritate."

† I must dismiss the interesting question with regard to the real or allegorical nature of these two illustrious characters, with briefly remarking that, if we are to consider the loves of Dante's and Petrarch's muse merely in the light of a human affection, we do so in opposition to their own explicit declarations to the contrary, and the concurrent testimony of all the poetry of their age. They stand in that case as single and singular exceptions. Dante tells us that he writes in "duo sensi, interi e esteri." The elaborate comments of Landino and Vellutello are all given to unfold the moral allegory of the Divina Commedia; and the early commentators agree in attributing both to Dante and Petrarch a double meaning.
gards man psychologically, the changes and fluctuations, development, culture, and the decay which Mind undergoes in successive periods. The age was unmarked by the appearance of any great founder of a school, or of any systematic code of opinions. Mind—to speak generally—was in a state of intellectual ferment; its powers were vigorous, but the materials on which they were exercised were only partially understood, undigested and confused: yet amidst the philosophical speculations which were rife, we perceive the germs of an intelligence, which awaited only experience and cultivation to mature and rectify. How conflicting were its elements when Thought was thus struggling to birth, amidst the ignorance which had so long wrapped the religious and intellectual world!

This era dates from the appearance of Dante, the most extraordinary philosophical poet of any age or country; the herald of a light which was to dawn upon Europe, not in his own but in an after age, he stood on the limits of a region of darkness, and his mighty spirit stretched into the future, prescient of the issue of the conflict between truth and error in which he led the way. In him a devotion to scholastic study was wonderfully combined with a rich imaginative genius (of how individual a cast!) and a rare love of philosophy, hallowed by its association with a firm belief in the supreme sanctity and purity of Truth.

As I am reluctantly obliged to limit my attention to a single feature of the poetry of this period, I select Dante as the representative of the Italian mind, in which so many springs of imaginative thought and speculation met and mingled. The Troubadours of Provence had
gone forth disseminating their "gaia scienza:" from the
East flowed in many and secret channels a rich stream of
allegory*; whilst from the schools of ancient Greece, fable
and philosophy, truth wrapped in fiction, poured in a full
and free tide. Never had Poetry, in any age, so mighty
an office to perform; for three centuries it had but one
character, in fact during the whole of that period the
poetry of Italy was but the amplification of a single fi-
gure—the most beautiful—the Prosopopeia. It was not
addressed to the ignorant, but its office was to convey
the deepest truths, under the veil of fiction, to the ini-
tiated in the mind's mysteries. Hear what Petrarca says:
"Poëte, inquam, studium est veritatem rerum pulchris
velaminibus adornare, ut vulgus insulsum lateat: inge-
niosis autem studiosisque lectoribus, et quesitum difficilior
et dulcius sit intentu †." And again: "Jam poëte, de
quo quæri solet, officium est, non fingere, id est mentiri,
quod quidam cogitant indocti ... Quid ergo? Offi-
cium ejus est fingere, id est, componere atque ornare et
veritatem rerum, vel mortalium vel naturalium, vel qua-
rumlibet aliarum, artificiis adumbrare coloribus, et velo
amenæ fictionis obscurere, quo dimoto veritas elucescat,
eo gratior inventu quo difficilior sit quæsitum ‡."

In the great moral allegory of Love, which was drawn
from the writings of Plato§, and which, we may say, is

* Sir W. Jones remarks that the sonnets of Petrarca not only
bear a striking resemblance to the poetry of Persia, but "seem
written in the very same spirit."
† Petrarca, contra Medici lib. 1.
‡ Petrarca, Lit. Fam. xii. 2.
§ "These metaphorical allusions and allegorical personages give
that energy and life to the compositions of Plato which have been
admired through so many ages. The prosopopeia, the most beauti-
embodied in the language of Socrates above quoted, lay the whole spirit of the poetry of the age. But in connexion with this we trace, among other differing elements, the principle of antagonistic natures—the moral and abstract veiled under the natural and ostensible—which was derived from the East, and applied in every shape and under every form. Rossetti acutely observes:

"Prima di Dante adunque la Gaja Scienza avea stabilito il variato edifizio del suo illusorio linguaggio sopra le due parole Amore ed Odio, cui tenia dietro la lunga schiera di regno dell’ Amore e regno dell’ Odio, piacere e dolore, verità e falsità, luce e tenebre, Sole e Luna, vita e morte, bene e male, virtù e virtuì, cortesia e villania, valore e vile, nobiltà e ignobiltà, gentilezza e rozzezza, persone sottili e persone grosse, oni e lupi, destra e sinistra, monte e valle, fuoco e gelo, giardino e deserto, ecc. E Dante aggiunse a tutto ciò la sacra nomenclatura di Dio e Lucifero, Cristo e Anticristo, Angeli e Demonj Paradiso e Inferno, Gerusalemme e Babilonia, Donna pudica e Donna meretricia, e tutto il resto che ne dipende."

The writings of Dante are so inseparably connected, in the order in which they were penned, that no one can unravel their mysteries without studying them consecutively. That most remarkable production the Vita Nuova contains the first development of a genius, which had already conceived the marvellous structure of the Divina Commedia. In it is concealed the perfect germ

ful figure in poetry, founded on the moral sense, is frequently used in almost every Dialogue; which, representing the affections and modes of the mind as persons, brings the very images of them before our eyes, and convinces the reason even through the senses.” (Life of Socrates, by J. E. Cooper.)

of the tree of Paradise. There Beatrice first appears to Dante—"la gloriosa Donna della mia mente la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice, i quali non sapevano che si chiamare." The poet there, in a mysterious and wondrous manner, opens to us her pure and lofty character, her divine offices; and he concludes it with this remarkable and glorious passage, following the last sonnet. "Appresso a questo sonetto apparve a me una mira visione, nella quale vidi cose che mi fecero proporre non dir più di questa benedetta infinito che ch’io non potessi più degnamente trattar di lei. E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso, sì com’ella sa, veramente. Sì che, se piacere sarà di Colui per cui tutte cose vivono che la mia vita per alquanto perseveri, spero dire di lei quello che mai non fu detto d’alcuna. E poi piaccia a Colui ch’è sì della cortesia, la mia anima se ne possa ire a vedere la gloria della sua donna, cioè quella benedetta Beatrice che gloriosamente mira nella faccia Colui qui est per omnia secula benedictus. Laus Deo."

From the Vita Nuova and the Convito I shall select a few illustrations of my subject, namely the allegorical use in poetry of a female character to personify an object of the mind. The following passage deserves a marked attention.

"Avenne un dì," says Dante, "che essendo io pensoso in alcun luogo, ed io mi sentii venire un tremito nel core, com’io fossi stato presente a questa donna. Allora dico che mi venne una imaginazione d’Amore; che mi parve vederlo venire in quella parte ove la mia donna stava; e paremi che lietamente mi dicesse nel cor mio: Penso di benedere lo dì ch’io ti presi, perocché tu lo del fare. E certo mi parea avere lo core così
lieto, che mi parea che non fosse il mio core per la sua nova
condizione: e poco dopo queste parole che'l core mi disse con
la lingua d'Amore, lo vidi venire verso me una gentilissima
donna, la quale era di famosa beltade, e fu già molte volte
donna di questo mio primo amico*. E lo nome di questa
donna era Giovanna; salvo che per la sua beltade, secondo
ch'altre crede, imposto l'era nome Primavera, e così era chi-
amata: E appresso lei guardando vidi venire la mirabile
Beatrice. Queste andaro appresso di me così l'una appresso
l'altra, e parve mi che Amore mi parlassi e dicesse: Quella
prima è chiamata Primavera solo per questa venuta d'oggi;
che io mossi lo impostore del nome a chiamarla Primavera,
cioè prima verrà il dì che Beatrice si mostrerà dopo l'imagi-
nazione del suo fedele. E se anco vuoli considerare lo primo
nome suo, tanto è quanto dire Primavera; perche lo suo nome
Giovanna è da quel Giovanni lo quale precedette la verace
luce, dicendo: Ego vox clamantis in deserto, parate viam
Domini. Ed anche mi parea che mi dicesse queste parole:
E chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamà-
rebbe Amore per molte somiglianze che ha meco. Ond'io ri-
pensando proposi di scrivervi per rima al primo mio amico
(tacendo certe parole, le quali pajono da tacere), credendo io
che ancora il suo cuore mirasse la beltà di questa Primavera
gentile: e disse questo Sonetto.”

Then follows the sonnet beginning,

“Io mi sentii svegliar dentro a lo cuore
Un spirito amoroso che dormia:”

after which Dante explains in remarkable words the use
of this amatory allegory, and the adoption of the lingua
volgare, instead of the Latin tongue, by the early Italian
poets. After speaking of the figurative style of personi-

* Guido Cavalcanti.
fying the Muses* and other “cose inanimate,” Dante adds:

“E per questo puote essere manifesto a chi dubita in alcuna parte di questo mio libello. Ed acciocché non ne pigli alcuna baldanza persona grossa, dico che non li poeti parlavano così senza ragione, nè que’ che rimano deono così parlare, non avendo alcuno ragionamento in loro di quello che dicono; perché grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cose sotto veste di figura, o di colore retorico, e poi domandato non sapesse dinudare le sue parole da cotale vesta in guisa che avessero verace intendimento: e questo mio primo amico ed io ne sapemo bene di quelli che così rimano stoltamente.”

Here I must leave the reader to follow Dante through the labyrinth of this most curious production. Let us now turn to his other work, the ‘Convito,’ a Banquet to which he invites his readers with the following remarks.

“La vivanda di questo Convito sarà di quattordici maniere ordinata: cioè, quattordici canzoni si d’Amore come di virtù materiale: le quali senza lo presente pane havevano d’alcuna scritta ombra: si che a molti lor bellezza più che lor bontà era in grado. Ma questo pane, cioè la presente esposizione, sarà la luce, la quale ogni colore di loro sententia farà parvente. E se nella presente opera, la quale è Convito nominata, et vo’ che sia, più virlmente si trattasse che nella Vita Nuova, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente giovare per questa quella.”

Again, in his comments on the fourth Trattato he makes the following remarks.

* Castelveltrro defends the personification of le donne on the same grounds. (Opere Critiche di Castelveltrro, p. 94.)
“Dico que questa esposizione conviene essere literale ed allegorica; e acciò dare ad intendere, si vuol sapere le scritture si possono intendere, e debbonsi esporre maximamente per quattro sensi. L’ uno si chiama letterale, e questo è quello che si nasconde sotto l’ manto di queste favole, ed è una verità ascosa sotto bella menzogna. . . . Lo terzo senso si chiama morale; e questo è quello che gli lettori deono interasmente andare appostando per le scritture ad utilità di loro e di loro discreti. . . . Lo quarto senso si chiama enagorio, cioè sopra senso; e questo è quando spiritualmente si espone una scrittura.”
—Convito.

The ‘Convito,’ or ‘Amoroso Convivio,’ of Dante consists of three Odes, upon each of which he comments largely, and explains their allegorical meaning. From the subject of which it treats, he adopted the title probably from the ‘Symposium’ of Plato; but the form in which it is conveyed is different, not being thrown into dialogue. Dante treats of Philosophy as the highest object of man’s pursuit: “Philosophia è uno amoroso uso di sapientia, il quale massimamente è in Dio; però che lui è somma sapientia e sommo amore.” He commences by saying, that “all men naturally desire knowledge; the reason of which may be that everything is by Providence gifted with a natural inclination towards its own perfection; and as knowledge is the ultimate perfection of the soul, in which consists our highest felicity, we are all by a natural law subjected to a desire of it.”

The love of truth and knowledge, which in its highest sense he terms Philosophy, is converted, after the manner of the amatory poetry of the age, into a mistress of his affection: “Per mia donna intendo sempre quella luce virtuosissima. Philosophia, il cui raggi fanno i fiori
rinfronzire e fructificare la verace degli uomini nobiltà." This he repeats again and again, in commenting upon the Canzoni: turn for instance to the explanation of the concluding lines of the fourth Trattato of the Convito.

"Contr’ agli erranti mia tu n’andrai;
E quando tu sarai
In parte dove sia la donna nostra,
Non le tenere il tuo mestier covento.
Tu le puoi dir per certo:
Io vo parlando dell’amica vostra."

Which he thus explains:

"In parte dove sia la donna nostra.—Comando alla canzone che il suo mestieri discoupra là dove è questa donna, cioè la Philosophia, si troverà. Allora si troverà questa donna nobilissima, quando si trova la sua camera, cioè l’anima, in cui essa alberga. E essa philosophia non solamente alberga pur inelli sapienti, ma etiamdio essa è dovunque alberga l’amore di quella; e a questi costoli dico che manifesti il suo mestieri; perché a loro sarà utile la sua sententia, e da loro ricolta. E dico ad essa, Di a questa donna, Io vo parlando dell’amica nostra. Bene è sua amica nobilissime: che tanto l’una col’altra fama che nobiltà sempre la dimanda: e Philosophia non volge lo sguardo suo dolcissimo all’altra parte. O quanto e come bello adornamento è questo che nell’ultimo di questa canzone si dà ad essa, chiamandola amica di quella la cui propria ragione è nel secretissimo della Divina mente*!"

Dante moreover himself tells us who his instructors were in this school of Love. "Boetio e Tullio†, colla dolcezza del lor sermone, invitarono me nello Amore,

* Dante, Convito.
† And Cicero carries us back to Plato: "Ex hoc igitur Platonis quasi quodam sancto augustoque fonte nostra omnis manabit crat.

(Tusc. Quest. v.)
cioè nello studio di questa donna gentilissima Philosophia, veramente piena di dolcezza, ornata d’honestate, mirabile di sapere, gloriosa di libertà.” Boethius, who was the favourite study of the poets of this age, was, like Cicero, a Platonist of the New Academy. In the opening of his ‘Consolations of Philosophy’ he gives a fine personification of Philosophy*.

The reader too may perhaps here recall to mind another student of old Boethius, our own Chaucer, a poet of this school, who delighted in rehearsing the praises of his “Margarite Perle,” and that “comfortable ladye” (Love) who discourses to him of philosophy and religion in the Testament of Love †, and who he tells us is “a woman betokening grace, learning, or wisdome of God, or els holie churche.”

It would be beyond my present purpose, and impossible in so limited a space, to enter further into the labyrinth

* Thomas Aquinas, in his copious exposition of Boethius, comments largely and admirably upon this passage, and explains the figurative sense of every expression.

† Chaucer wrote this work on the model of the ‘Consolations of Philosophy’ of Boethius, which he translated. Petrarch in his admirable work De vera Sapientia introduces a dialogue between ‘Orator’ and ‘Idiota’, in which the latter discourses in a high strain of the nature of true wisdom, which he terms the “indeficiens vitae pabulum, de quo aeternaliter vivit spiritus noster, qui, si rectus est, non nisi sapientiam et veritatem amare potest.” And in like manner old Chaucer says, “Forsothe the most soueraine and finall perfection of man is in knowynge of a sothe, withouten any entent deceivable, and in loute of one very God, that is inchaungeable, that is to knowe, and loute his creature.”

‡ In his poem the Court of Love, Chaucer also represents himself as under the guidance of Philobone,—another figurative personage of the same class.
of this allegorical system. But I am aware that we have passed only the threshold of a wide field of inquiry, alike interesting and difficult. How deeply Michael Angelo knew and was impressed by this fact—how well he was acquainted with the extent of that inquiry—let his own words declare: “Tanto è grande ed intralciata la selva della scienza amorosa, che chi senza la scorta di gran dottrina temerariamente vi s’imbosca, dopo non lungo viaggio conviene che per essa avvolgendosi si smarrisca; e quinci è avvenuto che molti, nel dare la definizione ad amore indistintamente procedendo, non hanno compreso ed abbracciato ciascuna specie di quello sotto un medesimo genere, o dagli effetti diversi che da quello risultano, descrivendolo, non hanno investigato la vera natura sua.”

My chief intention is to show, from the poetry of Michael Angelo, not merely his general acquaintance with the great poets of his own and preceding times, but how intimately he entered into their spirit, how familiar he was with the philosophic studies which occupied their attention, the sympathy between his and their master-minds: in short, I would assert his claim to being ranked in the great circle of the amatory poets of the middle ages. But the interest of the inquiry does not stop here: if we revert to the character of the artist, and look first into the merit of his works themselves, and then regard the influence which they produced upon the state of art through subsequent ages, we trace and appreciate the value of the discipline which a mind that produced such

* Michael Angelo’s Discourse upon one of Petrarch’s sonnets.
effects underwent; we see a wonderful instance of the interchange of offices between philosophy, poetry and art, and recognise in the works of the artist the operation of the mind of the philosopher*.

The transition from the ideal personification of the love of knowledge or wisdom to that of the Beautiful in its highest Platonic sense in art—from the moral to the aesthetic sense—is easy and obvious.

The love of beauty and the love of knowledge, says St. Augustine (that favourite author of Petrarca), are the twin offspring of the same mind; the one beautiful in outward form, the other admirable for inward truth†.


* “Toute èpoque intellectuelle,” it has been well observed, “est une èpoque philosophique. La philosophie, c’est la pensée; et partout où la pensée domine, quels que soient du reste ses tendances et ses développemens, domine aussi la philosophie. Or, à cet égard, la période de la renaissance des lettres se distingue essentiellement. Le travail de la pensée, c’est là son caractère et sa gloire. Cette période, à l’envisager dans son rapport avec la philosophie, est une des moins connues; elle mérite de l’ètre.” (See an admirable Discourse lately delivered in the Academy of Geneva, by M. Diodati.
—Bibliotheque Universelle, Dec. 1838.)

† “Cum amorem dicimus, pulchritudinis desiderium intelligite; hae enim apud omnes philosophos amoris definitio est.”—Marc. Ficinus.

‡ S. August. contra Academ. lib. ii. cap. 3.
Dante refers to these two characters in the following sonnet:

"Due donne in cima de la mente mia
Venute sono a ragionar d’amore;
L’una ha in sè cortesia e valore,
Prudenzia ed onestate in compagnia;
L’altra ha bellezza e vaga leggiadria,
E adorna gentilezza le fa onore;
Ed io, mercé del dolce mio signore,
Stommene a piè de la lor signoria.
Parlan bellezza e virtù allo ‘stelletto,
E fan quistion, come un cuor puote stare
Infra duo donne con amor perfetto:
Risponde il fonte del gentil parlare,
Che amar si può bellezza per diletto,
E amar puossi virtù per alto opare."

The few illustrations I have offered will perhaps suffice to introduce the reader to the true character of this *donna imaginaria* of our artist. We have seen philosophy personified as an object of their love by Dante, Petrarcha, Boethius, Chaucer, and I might have cited many other writers of the same school; we have seen this love interpreted, in the eloquent words of Socrates, as the desire of beauty and of excellence in its highest sense; which, "beginning from beauties of lower rank, proceed to those that are higher, in a continual ascent, all the way proposing the highest beauty as the end, and using the rest merely as steps in the progress,"—the desire of that beauty which is "simple and separate from all other things, subsisting by itself in the Divine essence, in its own simplicity of form:"
“Amor (e questo à quel che tutti avanza)
Da volar sopra il ciel gli avea dat’ali,
Per lo cose mortali,
Che son scala al Fattor, chi ben l’estima”.

And this idea, in all its abstract grandeur, simplicity and truth, Michael Angelo carries into his art, and personifies as the object of his pursuit. He glorifies art as an instrument which God has given for high and noble uses; and, as the agent of the Divine will upon the intellect of his creatures, he honours and adores it. We comprehend therefore the full sense in which he applies to it the terms "leggiadra, altera, e diva,"—beautiful in its pursuit, exalted in its character, divine in its offices; and well does he say:

"Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale
Quando refusse in me la prima face
Dei tuoi sereni, e in lor ritrovar pace
L’alma sperò, che sempre al suo fin sale.
Spiegando, omd’ella scese, in alto l’ale,
Non pure intende al bel, ch’agli occhi piace;
Ma perchè è troppo debile e fallace,
Trascende inver la forma universale."

In treating of a subject so based upon the doctrine of Ideality, it is needful to examine it in its bearings upon Art. In this inquiry two considerations are presented—the mind, or that within man which is the seat of impressions, and the causes of impressions which act upon it. Their relation is explained aesthetically by Art, which is the medium of those impressions; in the

* Petrarca, Canz. 48.
Platonic sense of the word we may term it an “angel.” It is the light whose beams, derived from the Fountain of light, irradiate the mind and call into exercise the faculties implanted in its nature. For in the mind there is a principle, a germ of intellectual vitality, whose powers, like those of the material organization of man, depend upon an influence derived externally and acting internally; and such is the influence of Art; it is not life, but the accessory cause of life—not illumination, but the mediate cause which illumines.

I speak of the impressions of sensible objects on the mind; but, without stopping to argue their reality, it is clear that the mind rests not in these; they in turn are cause to an effect, which is to call up ideas or conceptions; and this leads me to the question, in what do these ideas consist?

Plato divides the objects under the cognizance of the mind into two classes, Intelligibles and Sensibles; the former apprehensible by the intellect* only, the other revealed through the senses. The knowledge of Intelligibles (“the true science,”) is the study of certain fixed images, termed Ideas, originating and existing eternally and immutably†.

* “E dico intellecto per la nobile parte dell’ anima nostra, che commune vocabulo mente si può chiamare. Onde è da sapere ch’il nostro intellecto si può dire sano e infermo: sano, quando per matitia d’animo o di corpo impedito non è nella sua operazione, che è conocerse quello che le cose sono.”—Convito.
† In the eleventh century the speculations on the nature of ideas gave rise to the sects of the Realists and Nominalists. The former held the opinion that Ideas constituted the only Realities, and that things derive their apparent existence only from a relation to these
"Having," says Aristotle, "been from his youth conversant with Cratylius, a disciple of Heraclitus, and instructed in the doctrine of that school, that all sensible things are variable, and cannot be proper objects of science, there must exist, besides sensible objects, certain permanent natures, perceptible only by the intellect. Visible things were regarded by Plato as fleeting shades, and Ideas as the only permanent substances. These he conceived to be the proper objects of science to a mind raised by divine contemplation above the perpetually varying scenes of the material world. His conceptions on this subject are beautifully expressed in a passage of his Republic, in which he compares the state of the human mind, with respect to the material and the intellectual world, to that of a man who, in a cave into which no light can enter but by a single passage, views upon a wall opposite to the entrance the shadows of external objects, and mistakes them for realities."*

Ideas,—their seeming reality arising from the accidents of their condition; that realities exist only in what they termed Universal forms, and not in Individuals. The Nominalists maintained the reverse, and that Ideas are only the abstract generic terms embracing classes of existing realities. Archbishop Anselm, the celebrated John Scotus Erigena, and William of Champeaux were Realists; Roscellinus founded the sect of the Nominalists. The difference however between these two sects, as was well observed by Guazzo Verona in the tenth century, is no other than that between the opinions of Plato and Aristotle; the former of whom maintained the reality of "Universals," which he termed Ideas, whilst the latter recognized them as merely abstract forms, and denied their independent existence. The same distinction, Rixner observes, may be drawn in modern times between Spinoza as a Realist, and Kant and Fichte as Nominalists. (See Rixner's Geschichte der Philosophie, ii. 28.)

* Enfield's Hist. of Philos. i. 229.
The obscurity of Plato's doctrine of Ideas has given rise to conflicting interpretations among his followers. Cicero, and those of the New Academy, certainly held that Plato admitted only two primary and incorruptible principles, God and Matter. "Through the whole of the Timeæus, Plato supposes two eternal and independent causes of all things; one, that by which all things are made, which is God; the other, that from which all things are made, which is matter. It was also a doctrine of Plato, that there is in matter a necessary but blind and refractory force, and that hence arises a propensity in matter to disorder and deformity, which is the cause of all the imperfection which appears in the works of God, and the origin of evil*."

This notion of Plato seems to have originated in his belief in the necessity of opposite principles. "It cannot be," says he, "that evil should be destroyed, for there must always be something contrary to good." But he writes on this subject with great obscurity, and many of his immediate successors either did not understand his real opinions, or dissented from them.

I must distinguish the simple power of perception by the mind, from the effect to which that leads. All sound minds are gifted with perception, which is the simple recognition of images reflected through the senses upon the mind. But there is within man, in varying degrees, a higher and a nobler principle, observable in two modes of action—reason, and feeling; distinct, yet acting upon one another, and both working together to

* Enfield's Hist. of Philos. I. 224.
the same end, the apprehension of Truth. And does not this difference between the reasoning and the feeling powers explain the use of the terms mind and soul? It is true that these ultimately resolve into one; since by whatever process the mind works, the result must be an apprehension which can only be confirmed and realized by a feeling of the just deduction of consequences; whilst, on the other hand, feeling necessarily implies a certain act of the reason. But by the feeling of the soul, I here intend that source of apprehension arising involuntarily from the simplest process of reasoning, the mere power of distinguishing between right and wrong, beauty and deformity. The demonstrative process of reasoning derives its value from the feeling of the results to which it leads; but the simple intuition of the imagination, which is also a feeling natural to the mind, may exist and be cultivated apart from what may be termed the mathematical process.

I have here to speak of the first of these, and I would ask from what does the feeling of truth, which we call imaginative instinct, arise? Now every affirmation includes a negation; for every reality is opposed to something (present to the eye or mind,) unreal; and this is the groundwork of the doctrine of opposite natures. When the mind recognises a truth, it is by a distinction and separation from error, and in this involuntary process how many gradations are there of which the mind must be cognisant! But as there is only one reality—truth,—so error can have only a negative character; and this is again evident from the reflection that, in considering the nature of evil, the thoughts follow a
train of comparisons, but can arrive at no limit; they find that it is ever only a further removal from good. But when the mind ascends to a consideration of Truth, we feel the defined and distinct reality of its existence, and we derive a confirmation of this from its manifestations in every lower degree—the links in a chain of consequences, which, whilst it touches earth, we feel convinced depends from Heaven. As in God therefore is the only reality of existence—the fountain of truth and good,—so that attribute of His nature, in which we comprehend the completion of all that is true and good, we term perfection. "The mind," says Feltham, "can walk beyond the sight of the eye, and (though in a cloud) can lift us into heaven while we live: meditation is the soul's perspective-glass, whereby, in her long remove, she discerneth God as if He were nearer at hand."

To revert to the inquiry as to the feeling of truth existing in the mind. We distinguish it from a deliberate act of reasoning, because we are conscious of its being involuntary, often momentary; and to this involuntary act of the mind we give the name of intuitive consciousness. When we regard any object, the mind instantly determines in a general way its attributes—for instance, of beauty, proportion, harmony: but to arrive at their relative value it voluntarily calls in the aid of a reasoning process, which is one of comparison; and thus, whilst the exercise of the reasoning powers enhance those of feeling, the latter reciprocally judges and ratifies the conclusions of reason.

Reason then is our aid, but where is the arbiter? It
is that germ of truth within the mind itself, a consciousness of the nature and value of truth, which we may term (according to the mode of its exercise) conscience, or aesthetic feeling. All attributes must be comparative, and reasoning is the employment of comparison of a chain of intuitions: the feeling which judges that a thing is good, judges at the same time that it is good only in degree. By degrees therefore we must rise; and where is the ultimate point to which our reasoning carries us, except in that source of perfection which our feeling or intuition recognises as the only true and good? Here then we arrive at the sense in which I understand the term idea; in this view it is a fixed image, which the mind conceives as embodying the perfection of any attribute; it is the point at which the recognition of truth terminates, and hence all ideas centre in the Deity who is their source. They are not variable, but fixed, and their existence is in the mind. "Nempe arbitror, in ordine ipso intelligibili, boni ipsius ideam supremam existere, vixque videri; si autem visa fuerit, asserendum eam omnibus omnium quae recta et bona sunt causam esse, cum ipsa in loco visibili lumen creaverit, et luminum autorem; in ipso verò intelligibili regnet ipsa, veritatem et mentem protulerit. . . . . . . Ita omnium supradictarum artium studium deducit animum per umbras non simulaeorum, sed eorum potius quae verò sunt, dijudicareque eas facit, ad alium quoddam lumen tanquam ad solem, habetque vim quandam ex-tollendi id quod est in animo præstantissimum." *

* Plat. Repub. lib. vii.
But again, truth is separable into two kinds. In a certain sense, whatever presents itself to any mind in the light of truth, to that mind is really so; nevertheless the impression may be a false one, and the conviction arise from ignorance. This view, however, would suppose as many contradictory arbiters of truth as there are minds in the world; we must therefore pass from an individual distinction to a universal principle of truth, and thus we arrive at the abstract idea I have mentioned, which is simply a term to express that reality, in its all-comprehensive sense, of which the mind has a natural consciousness, but is incapable of embracing in its fullness of perfection. It is beyond the limit of our perception, but we are both by reasoning and by feeling conscious of its existence. With this feeling of truth and this aid of reason, for the mind's guide in the ascent to knowledge, we learn to measure and determine the bounds and degrees of good and evil, beauty and deformity*.

It must be remembered, that Dante and the poets of the middle ages derived their Platonism through the New Academy; and we consequently expect to find them embracing, not the exact opinions of Plato, but those of the later expounders of them. With regard to the doctrine

* "Aliud judicium Protagore est, qui putet id cuique verum esse quod cuique videtur; alius Cyrenaicorum, qui pretex pernotiones intimas nihil putant esse judicium; alius Epicuri, qui omne judicium in sensibus et in rerum notitiis et in voluptate constituit: Plato autem omne judicium veritatis, veritatemque ipsam, abductam ab opinionibus et a sensibus, cogitationis ipsius et mentis esse voluit." —Cicero, Acad. Quest. ii.
of Ideas, it appears to me to gain much of beauty by being divested of its obscurity; and in its immediate reference to our present subject, I shall quote the following passage from Cicero, in which in a lucid manner he states and illustrates the question.

"I do not ask," he says*, "what has existed, but I ask you to show me that which nothing can by any possibility exceed in excellence. I maintain that there exists nothing of any kind so excellent and perfect, of which the abstract notion or idea in the mind is not more excellent, and still more perfect; as when an object is described which has never been either seen or heard, and which cannot be embraced by any of the senses, but only apprehended in thought and imagination. Although, for instance, it is impossible to behold statues more exquisite than those of Phidias, or pictures more beautiful than those with which we are familiar, yet the mind is able to conceive of statues and of pictures far more beautiful and exquisite. Phidias himself, when he chiselled the form of Jupiter or of Minerva, beheld no model whose likeness he might copy; but in his mind there dwelt a certain ideal figure of most transcendent splendour, by the contemplation of which he endeavoured to realize the idea of superhuman excellence. Thus then there is, in reference to every object, some mental image perfect and surpassing, with which we are accustomed to compare those visible objects which are presented to the senses. These mental images and forms Plato terms Ideas, and denies that they are produced, but says that they have ever existed and been eternally contained in the original fountain of reason and intelligence;—that other things (that is Sensibles) are produced, and undergo change, decay, and death, but that Ideas are eternal and unchangeable."

* Orator, § 3. (I borrow the translation from a useful little work entitled 'The Progress of Philosophy,' by Mr. J. T. Smith.)
Thus do I interpret the *Ideal of Michael Angelo*, as a mental image, in distinction to the ordinary acceptation of the term as applied to the ancient schools of art; and, as I have before observed, whilst the one is founded upon rules dictated by the consent of the many, the other is essentially individual. If this distinction is just, and this fact established, the results of the inquiry will, I think, justify the importance which I have attached to it; since we must regard the causes which operated upon the mind of the artist, as ultimately the causes of the greatness his works discover.

In classing Michael Angelo with the greatest poets and the greatest thinkers of his country, we substantiate an important link in the chain which connects the arts; and we derive an interesting and instructive lesson from the consideration, that the bond which unites them is, in its noblest sense, Philosophy. As Dante worshiped the Philosophy of Religion, Michael Angelo adored the Philosophy of Art; the "donna Philosophia" of the poet is, under a different form, the "donna Philologia" of the artist: in the same spirit are they lovers, in the same allegorical language do they immortalize their devotion.

In the foregoing observations I have endeavoured to give a general clue to the interpretation of the poetry of Michael Angelo; and I shall close the subject with briefly examining two of his sonnets. The first of these, as beautiful as it is profound, Varchi justly terms "uno
altissimo sonetto, pieno di quella antica purezza e dan-
tesca gravità."

Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto,
Ch’ un marmo solo in se non circonscriva
Col suo superchio ; e solo a quello arriva
La mano che obbedisce all’ intelletto *.
Il mal ch’ io fuggo, e ’l ben ch’ io mi prometto†,
In te, donna leggiadra, altera e diva,
Tal si nasconde, e, perch’ io più non viva,
Contraria ho l’ arte al desiate effetto‡.
Amor dunque non ha, né tua beltade,
O fortuna, o durezza, o gran disdegno,
Del mio mal colpa, o mio destino, o sorte ;
Se dentro del tuo cor morte e pietade
Porti in un tempo, e che ’l mio basso ingegno
Non sappia ardendo trarre altro che morte.

* "La main n’a aucune part à toutes ces choses qu’autant qu’elle est conduite par la tête : ainsi, à proprement parler, il n’y a rien dans la peinture qui ne soit l’effet d’une profonde spécu-
lation."—De Piles, Cours de la Peinture, p. 461.
† Thus Bernardo Tasso,
"Da voi nasce il mio ben, da voi il mio male ;"
and Petrarcha says of Laura,
"Perché ogn’ mia fortuna, ogn’ mia sorte,
Mio ben, mio male, e mia vita e mia morte,
Quel che solo il può far, le ha poste in mano."
‡ He elsewhere says,
"Che dove à Morte non s’appressa Amore."
If we consider matter* to be a substance solidly extended, figured, moveable and divisible, and situable with respect to other matter, we see that the first two of these terms are passive states, and imply the original necessity of a maker: the three last are passive qualities, capacities or properties, whereby matter is capable of being variously affected by some being possessing the power to vary or to modify it. From these inherent qualities Aristotle assigns two states of being to matter, which he terms the potential and the real existence. A block of marble, for instance, may be said to contain whatever form the imagination can conceive in idea: it has the property of figuration, or having that form which it contains brought out to light; this is the potential property: the form when thus educe is the real existence,—not a creation, but an extraction; for, says Aristotle, "actio agentis nihil aliud est quam extrahere rem de potentia ad actum;" and again, "agens extrahens aliqua de potentia ad actum, non largitor multitudinem, sed perfectionem."

As the good in its highest sense is the knowledge or attainment of good, so the poet, carrying the idea into his art, calls the good the knowledge or attainment of the highest excellence in art†. Ill is but the privation

* Plato defines primary matter as something without form, void of quality in itself, but apt to receive any impression, out of which all things were formed, (the Idea of its form and qualities having existed with the Deity eternally,) not suffering annihilation, but infinitely divisible.
† "Nam cum bonus simulque contraria sint, si bonum potens esse constiterit, liquet inscelleritas nullam."—Boethius.
of good*, as death is that of life, and darkness that of light; under which and corresponding figures he constantly refers to the same thing. As within the rude marble there may be said to exist a potential existence of all imaginable forms, so in this object of his love there exists in secret his satisfaction or disappointment; and only when the thoughts are guided by the intellect, can the mind draw its satisfaction from the love and pursuit of its object; just as the hand, only when guided by the intellect, figures or brings out the form conceived by the idea.

"The greatest artist," says our poet, "has no conception which is not contained hidden within a block of marble; and the hand alone can reach that form which obeys the intellect." Then he continues: "In thee, lady, beauteous, noble and divine, is thus concealed the ill from which I fly, and the good which my mind proposes to itself." In her, or in the love of her, he experiences his joy or his pain, his life or death, his light or his darkness, his knowledge or his ignorance; for, he adds, "To cause my death (or the cause of my death is that) my skill is adverse to the desired effect. The fault is not with

* The doctrine of the negative existence of evil—so purely Platonie—pervades the Middle Age poetry of Italy. The most admirable reasoning upon it will be found in Proclus' Treatises on Providence. "E però che essa è beatitudine dello intellecto, la sua privazione e amarissima, e piena d' ogni tristizia." (Convito.) Dante especially distinguishes between this death, which is a mere privation of intellectual life, and which supposes life to have existed, and that of inanimate things: "Altro è la morte, ed altro è non vivere; chè non vivere è nelle pietre; e però che morte dice privazione, che non può essere se non nel soggetto di vita."
love nor thy beauty, if thou bearest at once death and life within thy heart, and that my power is able whilst I love to draw from it only death."

We may here observe, that the use of the Prosopopoeia is so completely carried out by the poets of this school, that each individual feature is allegorized; every expression must be understood figuratively*, and interpreted according to the sense which existed in the poet’s mind. Our artist here, in opposing pietà to morte, explains its meaning; it is life, or the cause of life, hope. But pietà has two significations; and as in the one sense it is referable to the mind of the lover, so in the other sense he constantly applies it to his beloved, terming her "donna pietosa e bella," and speaking of her "pietosi sguardi," her "mercede," in opposition to her cruelty and unkindness†. These and a multitude of similar figurative expressions represent the conflict between the satisfaction and disappointment which the mind of the artist by turns experiences, its rapturous delight in conceiving and dwelling upon an ideal of greatness or perfection, and the mortification of being incapable of following it in execution.

* I do not mean that the poet always writes in allegory, but that when he does this rule must be always present to the reader.
† "Chiamà il poeta Amore suo signore, perch’ avendo egli costanto tempo e costante fatica consumato in servirlo, ed amando per severatamente, e di lui leggiadramente scrivendo con tanta gloria, molto a ragione lo poteva fare... E non solo egli, ma quasi chiunque n’ ha scritto così l’ ha chiamato, non pure poeticamente, ma erandio da filosofo, come Platone nel Convivio, dicendo massimamente che tutte le cose a lui obbediscono."—Lezione di M. Angelo sopra un sonetto del Petrarca.
Dante interprets the terms life and death in the following words: "Quando si dice l’huomo vivere, si dee intendere l’huomo usare la ragione, ch’è sua speciale vita e acto della sua nobile parte: dico adunque che vita del mio core, cioè del mio dentro, suole essere un pensiero* suave,"—i.e., as he explains it, the contemplation of his donna.

The reader will easily understand the sense of core, as applied to this Donna: the heart and the countenance—il dentro and il fuori—are opposites constantly occurring in this language, and denoting the secrets and the revelations of a science. But I shall recur to this presently.

Our artist says then, addressing his donna Philoclia, "The fault is not with Love, nor thy beauty, if thou bearest at once death and life within thy heart, and that I am able in loving to draw from it only death." For, as the inability to express a form equal to the perfection which the mind conceives rests with the sculptor’s defective knowledge of his art, so, he says, does the fault of his being unable to draw aught but failure from his studies rest with himself alone: it was not the fault of perfection, which he pursued, that he could not attain to it; but he truly says that his ill, or disappointment, was "concealed" within that object of his thoughts, since it was the consciousness of the nature of perfection that revealed to him its distance from his hopes.

* Dante elsewhere interprets pensiero to be "un spirito d’Amore,"—by which "s’intende un pensiero che nasce del mio studio." M. Angelo, commenting on a sonnet of Petrarcha, explains seven different significations of the word pensiero.
The power of Love is continually represented as a consuming fire, and opposed to the "ice" which figures the impediments and difficulties the mind meets with in the realization of its thoughts.

"Tanto alla speme mia di se promette
Donna pietosa e bella,
Che, in rimirando quella,
Sarei qual fui per tempo, o vecchio, e tardi.
Ma perché'ognor si mette
Morte invidiosa e fella
Fra i miei diletti e i suoi pietosi sguardi,
Solo convien ch'io arzil
Quel picciol tempo che la morte obblia.
Ma perché'l pensier mio
Pur là ritorna al paventoso errore,
Dal mortal ghiaccio è spento il dolce ardore."

In this manner the lover one while reproaches his beloved with her obstinacy and her crudelità, whilst at another he speaks of her pietà and her mercede. He represents Love as a tyrant, a master, cruel and unkind, "who comes to take from him his peace?"

"Ch' al cuor dai morte, e pietà porti in bocca."

But again, Love "arms in his defence," to save from death:

"Che dove è Morte non s'appressa Amore."

Thus too in the following lines he opposes Love to the cruelty of his mistress:

"Amore e Crudelità m' han posto il campo,
L' un s'arma di pietà, l'altra di morte:
Questa m'ancide, e quel mi tiene in vita."
All this figurative language refers to the conflict, the workings in the mind of the lover. It is the power of the mind wrestling with constraint; it depicts the hopes, the fears, the passion of the soul, the inadequacy of the manual powers to attain the execution of all that the mind is capable of conceiving in idea; and well indeed might Michael Angelo echo the words of Dante when he exclaims, “Non è da guardare negli occhi di questa Donna che tema angoscia e sospiri!” So when his powers were failing, from the advances of old-age, he exclaims,

“Qual meraviglia è se vicino al fuoco
   Mi strusse ed arsi, se poi ch’egli è spento,
   M’afigge sì, che consumar mi sento,
   E in cener mi riduce a poco a poco?
Già vedea ardendo si lucente il loco
   Onde pendeva il mio grave tormento,
   Che sol la vista mi facea contento,
   E morte e strazio m’eran festa e gioco.”

In the following sonnet, which is no less philosophically just than poetically beautiful, Michael Angelo describes the fluctuations, the unequal struggles of his mind and powers.

“Perchè si tardil, e perchè non più spesso
   Questo possente mio nobile ardore
   Mi solleva da terra, e porta il core
   Dov’ir per sua virtù non gli è concessò?
Forse ch’ogni intervallo n’è permesso
   Dall’alta provvidenza del tuo amore,
   Perch’ogni raro ha più forza e valore,
   Quant’è più desiat e meno appressò?”
La notte è l'intervallo, e 'l di la luce,
L'una m'agghiaccia il cuor, l'altra m'infiamma
D'amor, di fede, e di celesti rai:
Onde, se rimirar come riluce
Potesse il fonte egner della mia fiamma,
Chi di più bello incendio arse giuamai?"

I shall select one more sonnet for remark, which from its apparent obscurity invites our attention.

Mentre ch'alla Beltà, ch'io vidi in prima,
L' alma avvicino, che per gli occhi vede,
L' immagin dentro cresce, e quella cede,
Che in se diffida, e sua virtù non stima.
Amor, ch'adopra ogni suo ingegno e lima,
Perch' io pur viva ancora, a me sen riede,
E studia l' alma di riporre in sede,
Che sol la forza sua regge e sublima.
Io conosco i miei danni, e 'l vero intendo,
Che mentre a mia difesa s'arma Amore,
M'ancide ei stesso, e più se più m'arrendo.
In mezzo di due morti ho stretto il cuore,
Da quella io fuggo, e questa non comprendo,
E nello scampo suo l' alma si muore.

Every expression in these exquisite lines, which so wonderfully reveal the mind of the artist, might be singly subjected to copious comment and illustration. Let us as briefly as possible follow the train of thought and endeavour to explain it. The veil is here withdrawn; the true character of that “Donna leggiadra,
diva e altera” stands confessed the “Beauty which at first the artist saw,” and to which he thus adverts:

“Per fido esempio alla mia vocazione
Nascendo mi fu data la Bellezza,
Che di due arti m’è lucerna e specchio.”

Nor is it possible to interpret this Beauty, this Donna, otherwise than as an object presented by the feeling of Truth within him, which was “the mirror and the light” to his studies, and which I have noticed above in speaking of Ideas.

“Son i giudizj temerari e sciocchi
Che al senso tiran la beltà che muove
E porta al cielo ogni intelletto sano.”

“Whilst my soul,” says the artist, “which beholds through the eyes, approaches in thought that Beauty which from the first has been present to my mind, the image grows within †, and the soul retires, grows diffident of itself, and esteems less its own powers.” The

* Sano is used for sapiente. So Dante,—

“O voi ch’avete gli intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina cui s’asconde
Sotto ‘l velame degli versi strani.”—Inferno, canto 9.

† Michael Angelo elsewhere repeats the idea in these lines:

“Per gli occhi ti ricevo, e in me ti spargo
Come grappol d’agresto in una ampolla,
Che sotto il collo cresce, av’è più largo,
E vi rigonsia com’una midolla.
Poich’io t’ho dentro al cuor, col cuor m’allargo
Quanto quel di tua immagin si satolla.
Né mi puoi donde entrarsi uccid dal petto,
S’entro vi cresci, e l’occhio è tanto stretto.”
contemplation of the ineffable beauty of this object of his love, growing in his mind, raises a distrust of his own powers, and incapacitates him for their exercise; and this is one figurative death, or the cause of it, to which he alludes in the last stanza.

But "Love," he continues, "which employs every means to save me from this death (of discouragement) returns to me, and studies to reinstate and assure the soul,—Love, whose power alone it is that guides and elevates its powers*. "I know my ills, and comprehend the truth; that whilst Love arms himself in my defence, he himself kills, and more the more I yield myself to him." In other words his ardour and his hope are re-kindled; but, as Dante observes, unless the reason keeps pace with the desire, the latter degenerates into blind passion or enthusiasm; and this, I conceive, is the other death to which he alludes. But we may add, in the beautiful words of Dante,—

"Tu non se' morta ma se' ismarrita,
Anima nostra, che si ti lamenti,
Dice uno spiritel d'Amor gentile."

This fluctuation between hope and discouragement, which so forcibly indicates the ardent temperament of his mind, recurs constantly, variously expressed, in the poetry of Michael Angelo. It seems as if he sought in writing a needful vent to his strong feelings: but we see at the same time how profound was the study which rendered those feelings so acute.

* "Dal desiderio," says Michael Angelo, "è partorita la speranza: e la speranza pocia fa ad altrui con ogni forza procurare ed investigare quei mezzi onde al dilecto in qualunque modo si pervenga."
Thus, whilst on the one hand his powers are in danger of a loss of energy arising from distrust, they are also threatened to be led astray from reason to enthusiasm, and these he terms two deaths; for, as reason is the “speciale vita” of the mind, and its exercise generates knowledge (life), so whatever hurries the desire away from the control of reason must cause it to run into ignorance, or death.

In another madrigal Michael Angelo describes these effects of his passion with less obscurity; and I think from the previous remarks the reader will at once feel and acknowledge its beauty.

“Questa mia Donna, lusinghiera, ardita,
Allorch’ella m’uccide, ogni mio bene
Con gli occhi mi promette, e parte tiene
Il crudel ferro dentro alla ferita;
E così morte e vita
Contrarie insieme in un breve momento
Dentro all’anima sento.
Ma la gioia e ’l tormento
Minaccia morte e guada per lunga pruova;
Ch’assai più nuoce il mal, che ’l ben non gioia.”

I cannot refrain from once more referring to Dante, and citing a few extracts which will further elucidate what I have said above. In the second Trattato of the Convito, the poet, speaking of Love as “un soave pensier che suolea esser vita dello cor dolente,” says,

“E signoreggia me di tal vertute,
Che ’l cor ne trema sì che fuori appare:
Questi mi face una donna guardare;
E dice: Chi veder vuol la salute,
Faccia che gli occhi d’esta donna miri,
S’egli non teme angoscia di sospiiri.”
Upon this he comments:

"Subsequently mostro la potentia di questo pensiero nuovo per suo effetto, dicendo, che esso mi fu mirare una donna, e dice mi parole di lusinghe, cioè ragiona dinanzi agli occhi del mio intelligibile affecto; e per meglio indurermi, permettendomi che la vista degli occhi suoi è sua salute; e a meglio fare ciò credere all’anima experta dice: Non è da guardare negli occhi di questa donna per persona che teme angoscia di sospiri. Ed è bel modo rhetoric; quando di fuori pare la cosa disabellirsi, e dentro veramente s’abellisce."

Now let the reader note attentively the words marked in italics in this extract, and he will find their further explanation in Dante’s own words.

"Questi mi face una donna guardare.

"Ove si vuole sapere che questa donna è la Philosophia; la quale veramente è donna piena di dolcezza, ornata d’honestade, mirabile di sapere, gloriosa di libertà.

"Chi veder vuol la salute,

Faccia che gli occhi d’esta donna miri.

"Gli occhi di questa donna sono le sue dimostrazioni, le quali, dritte negli occhi d’intelletto, innamorano l’anima liberata nelle condizioni. O dolcissimi e ineffabili sembianzi! veramente in voi è la salute, per la qual si fu beato chi vi guarda, e salva dalla morte della ignorantia, e dalli viti*."

Again, in his exposition of the Trattato “Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,” he thus comments on these two lines:

"Cose appariscon nello suo aspetto
Che mostran de’ placar del paradiso.

“Dice il testo che nella faccia di costei (Sapientia) apparisco-

* Convito.
no cose che mostrano de’ piaceri di paradiso; e distingue il
luzuo dove ciò appare, cioè negli occhi e nel riso. E qui si con-
viene sapere che gli occhi della Sapienza sono le sue dimostra-
zioni, con le quali si vede della verità certissimamente; e il
suo riso sono le sue persuasioni; nelli quali si dimostra la luce
interiore della sapienza sotto alcuno velamento*.

Thus does Dante figuratively describe the elevating
effects of his passion for Philosophy, whose demonstra-
tions, conveyed through the eyes of the intellect to the
soul, fill it with a pure and holy love; and he adds:
“Let him who would behold that health which saveth
from the death of ignorance and vice, regard the eyes,
or teachings, of Philosophy; for in her countenance is
seen the shadowed reflex of the bliss of Paradise.” But
not only is there life, and joy; he soon after tells us that
there is a power which kills, that the love which con-
ducts to life brings also death.

“Io dicea: Ben negli occhi di costei
De’ star colui che li miei pari uccide;
E non mi valse chi’ io ne fosse accorta,
Che non mirassi tal, chi’ io ne son morta.
Tu non se’ morta, ma se’ ismarrita,
Anima nostra, che si ti lamenti,
Dice uno spirito d’amor† gentile.
Chè questa bella donna, che tu senti,
Ha trasformata in tanto la tua vita,
Che n’hai paura, sì se’ fatta vile‡.”

* Convito.
† “Un spirito d’Amor—s’ intende un pensier che nasce del mio
studio.”—Dante.
‡ Convito, Trat. ii.
And he then proceeds to explain this apparent contradiction in these words.

"Che par contro a quel che detto è disopra della salute di questa Donna; e però è da sapere che qui parla l’ una delle parti, e là parla l’ altra: le quali diversamente litigano; onde non è maraviglia se là dicesse e qui dicono, se ben si guarda, chi discende e chi sale."

So too Michael Angelo:

"Io giuro a chi no ’l credo,
Che da cesti, che del mio pianger ride,
Sol mi difende, e scampa chi m’ uccide."

And in the same figurative language our Artist says:

"Perché pur d’ ora in ora mi lusinga
La memoria degli accusi, e la speranza,
Per cui non sol son vivo, ma beato;
La forza, e la ragion par che ne stringa
Amor, natura, e la mia antica usanza
Mirarti tutto ’l tempo che m’ è dato."

I have given these illustrations, and must leave the reader to apply them to the study of the poetry of Michael Angelo. He will find in almost every sonnet the same profound and philosophic thoughts, veiled under the same figurative images,—often expressed in the same or corresponding language. The comments which Dante has given to explain the mysteries of his muse, will unlock the difficulties of that of Michael Angelo.

There are many who will argue against this employment of poetry, as taxing the ingenuity rather than awakening the sensibility and sympathy of the reader. It is not my purpose to meet this question, or to deter-
mine the proper limits of the use of poetry: the subject I have to treat of is historical, not critical; but I would observe, that the objection may have force to those minds which regard poetry only as addressed to their own imaginations, only as it stirs and quickens their own affections or passions. We are not however thus to measure the productions of Michael Angelo; they are, as I have before observed, but the secret communings of his own thoughts with eternal truths, and it is in their revelations of the mind of the poet that we must seek for delight and instruction. "Impassioned poetry is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as of the sensitive;" and the moral and intellectual greatness which here gives expression to its own feelings, can affect those minds alone which have corresponding sympathies at least to feel and appreciate, however far removed from attaining, such greatness. The strings must be attuned, or they cannot sound to the touch.

Having briefly examined the leading features of this school of poetry, in which Michael Angelo studied and wrote, I am surely justified in the assertion with which I started, that he was largely indebted to Philosophy for that feeling of the greatness in art, which, conveying to his mind its perfection, he terms in the highest sense the Beautiful. I am justified in assigning to the productions of his pen a peculiar value and interest, as opening the secrets of a mind so singularly great,—a mind which comprehended and felt the depth and fullness of that love which is the desire of all greatness and of all beauty. The idea which this must present to the mind is necessarily of
an abstract nature, since perfection resides alone in the
eternal source of all excellence; and any standard which
the mind adopts short of this unattainable excellence
is a false and conventional one. The limit which man
may reach, man may also pass; but as Providence has
so framed the mind as to be capable of an indefinite pro-
gression, and given it the desire of going forwards ever,
there can be no limit, no resting-place; its highest priv-
ilege is the consciousness of its imperfectible consti-
tution. And beautifully is the term "life of the intel-
lect" applied by Petrarca and Dante to this love of the
good and great in the highest,—the "indefindens vitae
pabulum, in quo aeternitier vivit spiritus noster." I
cannot define this glorious and exalted faculty of the
soul better than by quoting the following eloquent pas-
sage from Petrarca.

"Sapientia, quam omnes homines natura seire desiderant, et
cum tanto mentis affectu querunt, non alter situr quam quod
ipsa est omni scientia altior et inscibilia . . . sola infinitas quod
est illa altitudo. Cum enim ipsa sit vita spiritualis intellectus,
qui in se habet quandam constatam pregestationem, per
quam (intellectus) tanto studio inquirit fontem vitae sue, quem
sine prestagatione non quieretur. Hinc (intellectus) ad eam,
ut ad propriam suam vitam, moverur; et dulce est omni spi-
riti ad vitam principium, quamvis inaccessibile, continue
ascendere, et, quando co ducitur, vitam suam querens, tanto
plus gaudet quanto suam vitam infinitam atque immortalem
consipicit. . . . . Et haee est grandissima comprehensio
Amanitis, quando incomprehensibilem esse amati amabilitatem
comprehendit. . . . Hae enim est ejus assimilatio, quam spi-
ritui nostro naturaliter inest, per quam non quietatur imagi
nisi in eo cujus est imago, a quo habet principio, medium, et
finem. Viva autem imago, per vitam motum ex se exerit ad exemplar in quo solum quiescit. . . . . Si igitur exemplar est aeternum, et imago habet vitam, in qua praelegat suum exemplar, idcirco desiderose ad ipsum movetur.*

And here let me, in conclusion, apply to the subject to which I have imperfectly invited the attention of my readers the following admirable observations upon the high purposes and uses of art; conveying entirely my own sentiments, I gladly avail myself of an expression of them which I could but feebly echo†. "These things are fictions—be it so; but they are fictions that are wise and good; and I will not envy that man's temperament who cannot find it in his heart to love them for the sake of that which they depict. Without doubt they mould and fashion to better things and higher ends than the daily business of the world; they will not teach us much of looms and steam-engines, but they will speak to high and noble feelings within us, to mighty voices which make answer from the depths of our own souls, and which, stifle them as we will, at some period must and will be heard, and ought to be so. If we rest with delight upon the forms of beauty which the graver calleth from within the stone, and the limner fixeth on the canvas,—if in the contemplation of forms pure and beautiful, in plastic art, we feel a revelation of purity and beauty within ourselves, a softened, and kindly, and harmonious spirit, a humble yet lofty sense of the dignity of our own nature, and the power of our own works,—in so far have the sculptor and

* Petrarch, De Vera Sapientia.
† I regret that I am not at liberty to mention the name of the friend who has favoured me with this eloquent passage.
the painter been moral teachers and guides to us. I will not say with Tieck, that he too is pious upon whom a picture flashes rapturous delight, and who while he reads the Midsummer Night's Dream of Shakspere feels blest and in paradise, because, though near akin to piety, the love of beauty cannot be made to stand for the higher law, the love of God and duty; but this I will say, that I never came away from contemplating the Torso of the son of Niobe, without feeling in a much fitter state to read my Bible than I was before."

Thus having traced this Amatory school of Poetry from its origin in the teachings of Socrates,—pure and simple in their elements, but capable of an indefinite progression and adaptation to the various branches of philosophy and art,—we may observe it unfold itself by degrees through successive periods, and influence in a secret and wonderful manner the speculations of mind in distant ages. I have had occasion to advert to the doctrines of Platonism, not with a view to eulogize or to examine their speculative points, but to render them subservient to my purpose of illustration. Such studies are good and profitable to the mind, if they teach it to look further into things, if their tendency is to incline to the love of a virtuous principle and a consequent desire to act up to it: they are useful, in common with all other aids, in strengthening the intellect by exercising its faculties: they are, above all, useful, as they prepare the mind for a firmer hold upon higher truths and stronger hopes. Those who most deeply feel the value of Christianity, who in their hearts and lives embrace and endeavour to act up to its laws, will feel that in this
alone is our faith perfected, and our highest obligations and hopes are fixed. At the same time, in whatever shape truth and holiness present themselves, they are sanctified as aids to our virtue and our enlightenment; in accomplishing this intent they fulfill a holy office, and in proportion as they enlarge and raise the powers of the mind, they increase the moral obligations of man.

Similmente la tua gran belleza,
   Ch'èsempio è di quel ben che 'l ciel fa adorno,
   Mostroci in terra dall' Artista eterno,
Venendo men col tempo, o con l'etade,
   Tanto avrà più nel mio soggiorno,
   Pensando al bel ch'ètà non cangià, o verno.

*Michael Angelo.*
I regret that the foregoing pages were printed off before my attention was called to an admirable article on the poetry of Michael Angelo, which appeared some time ago in the Retrospective Review (vol. xiii.), written by my friend Dr. Rudice, the accomplished Professor of Italian literature in the Dublin University. It affords me, however, great pleasure to find that the estimate I have very imperfectly given of the character of Michael Angelo, and of his poetry, agrees closely with that of one so well able to appreciate the productions of the poet and the artist.

I wish here to make one observation with respect to the following translations. All I have aimed at has been faithfulness to the originals. Many expressions, I am aware, sound quaint and inharmonious, and many words are used in a sense now obsolete. Still I have endeavoured to adhere as much as I could to the idiom of the Italian, and to render as literally as possible the Poet's simple but forcible expression of his thoughts. To modernize the poetry of Dante or Michael Angelo would be to put the dress of a dandy upon the limbs of a Hercules. Moreover, if we discard the phraseology of the age, we are left without any equivalent medium of expression, and are driven to resort to paraphrase; which, even if the limits of verse admitted it, must always weaken and dilute the simplicity and beauty of the original expression.
TRANSLATIONS.
"Canzone, io credo che saranno radi
Color che tua ragione intedan bene,
Tanto lor parli faticosa e forte;
Onde se per ventura egli addiviene
Che tu dinanzi da persone vadi,
Che non ti pajan d’essa bene accorte,
Allor ti priego che ti riconforte,
Dicendo lor, dileta mia novella,
Ponete mente almen com’io son bella."

_**Dante.**_
Per fido esempio alla mia vocazione.

Beauty was given at my birth to serve
As my vocation's faithful exemplar,
The light and mirror of two sister arts:
Who otherwise believes in judgement errs.
She alone lifts the eye up to that height
For which I strive, to sculpture and to paint.
O rash and blind the judgement that diverts
To sense the Beauty which in secret moves,
And raises each sound intellect to Heaven!
No eye infirm the interval may pass,
From mortal to divine, nor thither rise
Where without grace to' ascend the thought is vain.
La vita del mio amor non è cuor mio.

My heart is not the life-seat of my love;
The love wherewith I love thee hath no heart;
Turned thither where affection cannot be
Mortal, of error full, nor guilty thought.
Love, in the parting of the soul from God,
Did make me a sound eye, and splendour thee,
Which my desire must needs discern in thee
Even in that which through our frailty dies.
As warmth from cold, so is the Beautiful
Inseparable from the Eternal; all which thence
Descends, and wears its semblance, my thoughts exalt.
Perceiving Paradise within thine eyes,
Burning with love I seek again thy brows,
There to return where first I loved thee.
Non so se è l’immaginata luce.

I know not if it be the imaged light
Of its first Maker which the soul doth feel,
Or if, derived from memory or the mind,
Some other beauty shine into the heart;
Or if the ardent ray of its first state
Doth still resplendent beam within the mind,
Leaving I know not what unrestful pain,
Which is perchance the cause that makes me weep.
That which I see and feel is not with me:
I have no guide, nor know I where to look
To find one; yet it seems as if revealed.
Thus, lady, have I been since I beheld you;
Moved by a Yes and No,—sweet bitterness!
It surely was the effect your eyes produced.
S'egli è che d'uom mortal giusto desio.

If it be true that any beauteous thing
Rises the pure and just desire of man
From earth to God, the eternal fount of all,
Such I believe my love: for as in her
So fair, in whom I all besides forget,
I view the gentle work of her Creator,
I have no care for any other thing
Whilst thus I love. Nor is it marvellous,
Since the effect is not of my own power,
If the soul doth by nature, tempted forth
Enamoured through the eyes,
Repose upon the eyes, which it resembleth,
And through them riseth to the primal love,
As to its end, and honours in admiring:
For who adores the Maker needs must love his work.
Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale.

Mine eyes beheld no thing of mortal shape,
When the first gleam of thy serene regards
Shone on me, and the soul, that aye ascends
To' its end, had hoped to find in them its peace.
Stretching its wing toward Heaven, from whence it came,
It aims not only at the beauty which
Pleases the eyes; since that is frail and weak,
It passes on to universal form.
The wise man, I affirm, in that which dies
Cannot find rest; nor seems it meet to love
What changes with the variance of time,
It is uncurbed desire and sense, not love,
That kill the soul. Love makes more perfect here
On earth the mind, but perfecter in Heaven.
Dimmi di grazia, Amor, se gli occhi miei.

_Poet._—Tell me, O Love, I pray thee, do mine eyes
Behold that Beauty's truth which I admire?
Or lives it in my heart, for wheresoe'er
I turn, more fair her countenance appears?
Thou well must know, for thou dost come with her
To take from me my peace, whence I complain;
And yet I would not wish one brief sigh less,
Nor that the flame within me were less strong.

_Love._—The Beauty thou regardest is from her,
But grows as to a better place it riseth,
If through the mortal eyes it finds the soul.
There it becomes ennobled, fair, divine;
For immortal thing assimilates the pure:
This one, and not the other, meets thine eye.
Ben può talor col mio ardente desio.

Well may at times my hope with strong desire,
With longing rise, and unfallacious prove.
If our affections all displeasing are
To Heaven, to what end hath God made the world?
What juster cause to love thee can I have,
Than rendering glory to the eternal Peace
Whence the divine depends, that gives thee grace
To please, and sanctifies each gentle heart.
That love alone hath cheating hope which dies
With beauty that doth wane with every hour,
Since it is subject to a changeful face.
Sure is indeed the hope in a chaste heart,
That fades not with the changing of the bark,
And, drooping not, gives earnest here of Heaven.
Ogni cosa ch’io veggo mi consiglia.

Each thing I see brings argument and force,
And counsels me to follow you and love:
For all that is not you, is not my good.
Love, which all other marvels disregards,
Wills for my good that you alone I seek,
My single sun; and thus it holds the soul
Void of all other hope, and all desire,
Desiring I should burn, and live,
Not for you only, but for that which bears
The light reflected from your looks, your eyes;
And he who separates from you,
Ye eyes, my life, has afterwards no light;
For where ye’ are absent, Heaven indeed is not.
Come avró mai virtute.

How shall I e'er have power,
Taken from you, to keep myself in life,
Unable if at parting to invoke
Your aid? These plaints, these sorrowings, these sighs,
With which my grieving heart still follows you,
With cruel indication, lady, show
My near approaching death, my sufferings.
But lest by absence you forgetful prove
How I have served you with all faithfulness,
As a remembrance of my long-borne woes
I leave to you my heart, which is not mine.
Veggio co’ bei vostri occhi un dolce lume.

Through your clear eyes I view a beauteous light,
That my dark sight would ever seek in vain;
With your firm steps a burden I support,
Which my weak power was never used to bear.
I soar aloft, unplumed, upon your wings,
By your intelligence to Heaven am raised;
Your smile or frown maketh me pale or red,
Cold in the sun, warm ’mid severest chills:
In your will is mine own will ever fixed,
My thoughts find birth and growth within your heart;
My words are from your spirit only drawn;
And like the moon, alone in heaven, I seem,
That to our eyes were indiscernible,
Save by that light which from the sun proceeds.
Mentre ch’alla beltà ch’io vidi in prima.

WHILST to that Beauty which at first I saw
The soul is drawn, which through the eyes beholds,
The image grows within,—the soul retires,
Distrusts itself, esteems not its own powers.
Love, which all art and each device employs,
That I may longer live, returns to me,
Studying to’ assure and reinstate the soul,
Whose power Love guides alone and elevates.
I know my ills, and comprehend the truth;
That whilst Love arms himself in my defence,
Himself destroys me,—more, the more I yield.
My heart is compassed in between two deaths;
I fly from this, and comprehend not that,
And in escaping the soul struggling dies.
Non so figura alcuna immaginarmi.

I can no image figure to myself
Of naked shadow, or of earthly cast,
With highest thought, such that my ardour might
Therewith against thy beauty arm itself.
Parted from thee, I seem to fall so low,
My heart of every power is bereft:
And thinking to diminish, I augment
My pain, and thus it comes to bring me death.
It then avails me not to spur my flight,
Whilst Beauty as a foe still follows me:
The tardy cannot fly the swifter pace.
Love, with his hands doth dry my tearful eyes,
And promises to soften every toil;
Nor is that valueless which costs so much.
Ben posson gli occhi miei, presso e lontano.

Well can mine eyes, afar or near, behold
How shines the light of thy fair countenance;
But when I turn my steps to follow thee,
Oft do I seek in vain thy beauteous trace.
The soul, the sound and perfect intellect,
Ascends more freely through the eyes, to scan
Thy lofty beauty; but the greatest love
Yields not such privilege to human frame,
Heavy and mortal; so that, unpossessed
Of wings, it ill pursues an angel's flight,
And in the view alone its glory is.
Oh, if in Heaven thou hast power as here on earth,
Convert this frame into one only eye,
That I be wholly blest in viewing thee.
S’un casto amor, s’una pietà superna.

If a chaste love, exalted piety,
If equal fortune between two who love,
Whose every joy and sorrow are the same,
One spirit only governing two hearts,—
If one soul in two bodies made eterne,
Raising them both to Heaven on equal wings,—
If the same flame, one undivided ray,
Shine forth in each, from inward unity,—
If mutual love, for neither’s self reserved,
Desiring only the return of love,—
If that which one desires the other swift
Anticipates, impelled by an unconscious power,—
Are signs of an indissoluble faith,
Shall aught have power to loosen such a bond?
Beati voi, che su nel ciel godete.

O blessed ye who find in Heaven the joy,
The recompense of tears Earth cannot yield!
Tell me, has Love still power over you,
Or are ye free'd by death from his constraint?
The eternal rest to which we shall return,
When time has ceased to be, is a pure love,
Deprived of envy, loosed from sorrowing.
Then is my greatest burden still to live,
If whilst I love such sorrows must be mine.
If Heaven's indeed the friend of those who love,
The world their cruel and ungrateful foe,
Oh, wherefore was I born, with such a love?
To live long years? 'Tis this appalleth me:
Few are too long for him who serveth well.
Già piansi e sospirai, misero, tanto.

So much, alas! have I already wept
And mourned, I thought that all my grief
Had sighed itself away, or passed in tears.
But Death still nourishes the root and veins
With bitter waters from the fount of woe,
Renewing the soul's heaviness and pain.
Then let another grief, another pen,
Another tongue distinguish in one point
A twofold bitterest regret for you.
Thy love, my brother, and the thought of thee
Our common parent, weigh upon my heart,
Nor do I know my greater misery.
Whilst busy memory pictures forth the one,
Another love, betrayed in my pale looks,
Graves livingly the other on my soul.
'Tis true that, since to the serene abode
Ye are returned (as Love doth whisper me),
I ought to still the grief that fills my breast.
Unjust is grief, that welleseth in the heart,
For those who bear their harvest of good deeds
To Heaven, released from all earth’s crooked ways.
Yet cruel were the man that should not weep,
When he may never here behold again
Him who first gave him being, nourishment.
Our sufferings are more or less severe,
In just proportion to our sense of pain,
And thou, O Lord, dost know how weak I am.
But if the soul to reason yield consent,
So cruel the restraint that checks my tears,
That the attempt but makes me suffer more.
And if the thought in which I steep my soul
Did not assure me, that thou now canst smile
Upon the death thou ’st feared in this world,
I had no comfort: but the painful stroke
Is tempered by a firm abiding faith,
That he who lives aright finds rest in Heaven.
The infirmities of flesh so weigh upon
Our intellect, that death more sorrow brings,
The more with false persuasion sense prevails.
For ninety years hath the revolving sun
In the far ocean yearly bathed his fires,
Ere thou wert gathered to the peace of Heaven.
Now Heaven has ta’en thee from our misery,
Have pity still for me, though living dead,
Since God hath willed me to be born through thee.
Thou art released from death, and made divine,
Fearing no longer change of life or will;
Scarce can I write it without envying.
Fortune and Time attempt not to invade
Your habitation; they conduct the steps
'Midst doubtful happiness and certain grief.
No cloud is there to intercept your light,
The measured hours pass o'er you unobserved,
Chance and necessity no longer rule.
Your splendour shineth unobscured by night,
Nor borroweth lustre from the eye of day,
When the high sun invigorates his fire.
Thy death reminds and teaches me to die,
O happy father! I in thought behold thee,
Where the world rarely leads the wayfarer.
Death is not, as some think, the worst of ills
To him whose closing day excels the first,
Through grace eternal, from the mercy-seat.
There, thanks to God! I do believe thee gone,
And hope to see thee, if my reason can
Draw this cold heart from its terrestrial clay.
And if pure love doth find increase in Heaven
Twixt son and father, with increase of virtue,
Rendering all glory to my Maker, there
I shall, with my salvation, share thine too.
Com' esser, donna, qu'ote, e pur se'l vede.

How, lady, can it be—which yet is shown
By long experience—that the imaged form
Lives in the mountain-stone, and long survives
Its maker, whom the dart of Death soon strikes?
The frailer cause doth yield to the effect,
And nature is in this by art surpassed.
I know it well, whom Sculpture so befriends,
Whilst evermore Time breaketh faith with me.
Perchance to both of us I may impart
A lasting life, in colours or in stone,
By copying the mind and face of each;
So that for ages after my decease
The world may see how beautiful thou Wert,
How much I loved thee, nor in loving erred.
Spinto ben nato, in cui si specchia, e vede.

Thou high-born spirit, on whose countenance,
Pure and beloved, is seen reflected all
That Heaven and Nature can on earth achieve,
Surpassing all their beauteous works with one,—
Fair spirit, within whom we hope to find,
As in thine outward countenance appears,
Love, piety, and mercy, things so rare
As with such faith were ne’er in beauty found:
Love seizes me, and beauty chains my soul;
The pitying love of thy blest countenance
Gives to my heart, it seems, firm confidence.
Thou faithless world, thou sad deceitful life,
What law, what envious decree denies
That Death should spare a work so beautiful?
Occhi miei, siete certi.

Mine eyes, ye are assured
That the time passeth, and the hour is nigh
Which shuts the floodgates of the tears and sight.
Let gentle Pity keep ye still unclosed,
   Whilst she, my heavenly fair,
Yet deigneth to inhabit upon earth.
   But if the heaven dispair,
The singular and peerless beauty to receive
   Of my terrestrial sun,—
If she return to Heaven, amid the choir
Of blessed souls, 'tis well that ye may close.
Quando il principio dei sospir miei tanti.

When she who was the source of all my sighs
By Heaven was ta'en away from earth in death,
Nature, who never formed so fair a face,
Stood by abashed, and he who saw it wept.
O cruel fortune of my cherished love,
O ye deceitful hopes! and thou fair spirit,
Where art thou fled? The earth has back received
Thy beauteous frame, and Heaven thy pious thoughts.
Vainly did cruel Death believe it had
Power to silence here thy virtue's fame,
O'er which oblivion is impotent.
For when thou 'rt gone, thy memory shall survive
In many a page; and thus alone through death
Could'st thou regain thy resting-place in Heaven.
Amor, se tu sei Dio.

Love! if thou art a god,
As the world calls thee, and all-powerful,
Take from my soul, alas! thy snares.
Hope with the great desire
Of lofty Beauty ill accords,
In the last years, when parting-time is near.
Thy every grace now burdens, weighs on me;
For, if the joy be short, the pain is doubled,
And late enjoyment cannot bring me peace.
Tornami al tempo, allor che lenta e sciolt.

Return me to the time when loose the curb,
And my blind ardour's rein was unrestrained;
Restore the face, angelic and serene,
Which took from Nature all she had of charm;
Restore the steps, wasted with toil and pain,
That are so slow to one now full of years;
Bring back the tears, the fire within my breast,
If thou wouldst see me glow and weep again.
Yet if 't is true, O Love, that thou dost live
Alone upon our sweet and bitter tears,
What can'st thou hope from an old dying man?
Now that my soul has almost reached the shore,
'Tis time to prove the darts of other love,
And become food of a more worthy fire.
Già vecchio, e d'anni grave.

Already full of years and heaviness,
I turn to former thoughts of young desires,
As weight that to its centre gravitates,
Which ere it reach, it findeth no repose.
   Heaven holdeth out the key;
Love turns it, and unlocks to virtuous minds
The sanctuary of the Beautiful.
He chaseth from me every wrong desire,
And leads me on, feeble and weak with age,
And all unworthy, midst the good and great.
For from this Beauty there doth grace proceed
So strange, so sweet, and of such influence,
That he who dies through her, through her doth live.
Perchê si tardi, e perchê non più spesso.

Why with such slow, and interrupted flights
Doth the strong noble ardour of my soul
Raise me from earth, and upward bear my heart
To where by its own powers it ne'er could rise?
Such intervals, it may be, are allowed
By the high providence that rules thy love,
Since what is rare has greater force and power,
The more it is desired, the less approached.
The interval is night, the light is day;
That sinks my spirit, this enkindles it
With love, with faith, and with celestial rays.
Then could I but behold with ceaseless view
How shines the source from whence proceeds my flame,
Who with more glorious ardour ever burned?
Se 'l molto indugio spesso a più ventura.

It much delay doth oft lead the desire
To its attainment more than haste is wont,
Mine but afflicts and pains me in these years,
For late enjoyment lasteth little time.
'T is contrary to heaven, to nature strange,
To burn as I for lady do, in years
That are more used to freeze: therefore my sad
And solitary tears I balance with old age.
But, alas! now that, at the close of day,
Already with the sun I've almost passed
The' horizon, amid dark and chilling shades,
If love inflames us only in mid life,
Perchance that Love, thus aged and consumed,
May point the dial back to the noon hours.
Per tornar là donde venne fuora.

Thither to wing its flight from whence it sprung,
The'immortal form did like an angel come
To'its earthly prison, in such holiness
It makes sound every mind, adorns the world.
'T is this alone inflames, enamours me;
And while with outward grace her eye serene
Awakens love, of that which fadeth not,
It places all its hope where virtue dwells.
And if her beauty doth at times so move,
'T is the first step in the ascent to heaven,
Whereon is further grace vouchsafed to rise;
And God doth nowhere manifest himself
More than within a beauteous mortal frame,
Where the sound eye may view his excellence.
Veggio nel volto tuo col pensier mio.

Within thy looks my mental eye beholds
That which I never in this life can tell;
The soul, while still enclosed in earthly veil,
Quickened and beauteous, rising oft to God.
And though the ignorant, perverse and base,
Deride and scoff at what another feels,
Not the less dear to me the ardent wish,
The love, the faith, the pure and chaste desire.
In' that holy fount, from whence we all proceed,
Is centred every beauty, that on earth
More than aught else is seen by prudent minds.
Nor have we other knowledge, other fruits
Of heaven on earth; and who with faith loves thee,
Rises toward God, and takes the sting from death.
Tanto alla speme mia di se promette.

So much doth lady, piteous and fair,
    Give promise to my hope,
    That in beholding her
I should be as in youth, now old and worn:
    But since death intervenes,
    Thievish and envious,
Between my joys and her all-piteous looks,
    'Tis given me but to love,
The little space when I recall not death.
    But as my thought returns
Back to the fearful error, the sweet flame
Is all extinguished by the mortal ice.
Burdened with years, and full of sinfulness,
And firmly fixed in evil habitude,
I see me near the one and other death,
And yet with poison partly feed the heart.
Nor have I inward strength, which habit, love,
And my sad state demand, to change my life,
Without thine aid divine to lead me on,
Thy guidance to direct my erring course.
Yet it sufficeth not, O Lord, that thou
Shouldst thither bear my feeble spirit up
To where from nothing thou didst it create;
Ere thou divest it of mortality,
Oh let repentance first make smooth the path,
That it return to thee more surely blest.
Non è più bassa o vil cosa terrena.

No earthly thing is there more base or vile
Than, miserable, that I am deprived of thee:
Therefore my weak, infirm and tottering powers,
Wearied of error, do for pardon cry.
Stretch out, O Lord most high! to me that chain
Which linketh with itself each heavenly gift,
The faith, I mean, to which I turn and reach,
Flying the sense that to destruction leads.
So much the greater, that it is more rare,
Will be that gift of gifts—the greater since
The world has no content or peace without.
For only from this fount of bitter grief
Can penitence arise within my heart;
No other key doth open Heaven to man.
Per non si avere a ripigliar da tanti.

Pure and unsullied beauty Heaven lent
Unto one noble, lofty fair alone,
Beneath a spotless veil, that when through death
Reclaimed, it should not have to leave so many.
If Heaven indeed had shared it among all
That mortal are, it scarce could have withdrawn
It back, and re-enriched its treasury.
Heaven has re-ta'en it from this mortal goddess,
(To call her so,) and borne it from our eyes;
Yet the sweet, beautiful, and holy verse
Cannot so soon into oblivion pass,
Although the mortal be removed by death.
But Pity, merciless, appears to us
To show that, if to each one Heaven had given
The beauty of this fair one to partake,
We should be all obliged to suffer death,
That Heaven might repossess it of its own.
Appena in terra i begli occhi visi.

I scarce beheld on earth those beauteous eyes,
That were two suns in life’s dark pilgrimage,
Before the day when, closed upon the light,
Heaven hath re-ope’d them to contemplate God.
I know, and grieve, yet mine was not the fault
To’ admire too late the beauty infinite,
But cruel Death’s. You he hath not despoiled,
But ta’en her from a blind and wicked world.
Therefore, Luigi, to eternalize
The unique form of that angelic face
In living stone, which now with us is earth,
Since Love such transformations doth effect,
And Art the object cannot reach unseen,
’Tis meet, to sculpture her, I copy you.
Condotto da molti anni all'ultim'ore.

Conducted by long years to the last hours,
Too late, O world, I learn thy emptiness;
Proffering to man the quiet thou hast not,
And that repose which dieth in its birth.
But not on that account reproach nor grief,
For all my fugitive and ill-spent years,
Renews desires and thoughts within my heart;
For he who in sweet error groweth old,
Whilst he appears to quicken his desire,
Doth kill the soul,—the body profits not.
At length I see, by sad experience,
That he enjoys a better, surer lot,
Who at his birth is nearest unto death.
ON DANTE.

There is no tongue to speak his eulogy;
Too brightly burned his splendour for our eyes:
Far easier to condemn his injurers,
Than for the tongue to reach his smallest worth.
He to the realms of sinfulness came down,
To teach mankind; ascending then to God,
Heaven unbarred to him her lofty gates,
To whom his country hers refused to ope.
Ungrateful land, to its own injury
Nurse of his fate! Well too does this instruct,
That greatest ills fall to the perfectest.
And 'midst a thousand proofs let this suffice,
That, as his exile had no parallel,
So never was there man more great than he.

H 2
FROM DANTE.

Since that I ne'er can satisfy mine eyes
With gazing on Madonna's beauteous face,
I'll fixedly regard her,
Till I grow blest but in beholding her;
And as an angel, clad in purity,
Dwelling in heaven above,
Doth become blest in contemplating God;
So I, that am but human creature frail,
In contemplating her
Who holds unshared possession of my heart,
E'en here on earth may taste beatitude;
Such is the influence her virtue sheds,
Yet felt alone by him
Who in his love doth honour her he loves.
FROM VITTORIA COLONNA.

Blest union, that in heaven was ordained,
In wondrous manner, to yield peace to man,
Which by the spirit divine and mortal frame
Is joined with sacred and with love-strong tie.
I praise the beauteous work, its author great,
Yet fain would see it moved by other hope,
By other zeal, before I change this form,
Since I no longer may enjoy it here.
The soul, imprisoned in this tenement,
Its bondage hates; and hence distressed it can
Neither live here, nor fly where it desires.
My glory then will be to see me joined
With the bright sun that lightened all my path;
For in his life alone I learned to live.
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