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AMERICAN STUDIOS IN ROME  
AND FLORENCE.

ONCE upon a time, as my maternal grandfather was hugging his knees complacently over the fire, in the delicious abandon of a well-beloved pastor's Sunday evening, he broke forth in laudation of some well-put point of his morning homily.

"That may all be very true, my dear, but hadn't you better let somebody else praise you?" was the conjugal counterblast to this flourish of Pharisaism.

"Somebody else? No indeed!" quoth the trumpeter; "the poor coots don't know how to put it on in the right place."

Doubtless the artists whose ill-fortune opened their studios during the last winter to my crude criticism may class me under like ornithological condemnation with the sermon-critics of my progenitor. But during my residence in Italy I was so impressed by the fact of the neglect by American tourists of the studios of their countrymen and women that I determined, at my first opportunity, to pipe a little against this ignorance and indifference before three or four deserving doors in Rome and Florence. If you will not dance I shall at least have relieved my spirit.

It is a lamentable truism that the representative American traveler prefers an indifferent bust or picture by an Italian or English artist to the best which his compatriots can achieve.

Going forth from the artistic atmosphere of an average American circle, strong in the faith that Squire Jonathan's portrait in oils, and his boarding-school daughter's monochromatics and crayons are the *ne plus ultra* of art, he enters his first European gallery to depart a sadder, but scarcely a wiser man. "Ichabod" is thenceforth written not only upon daughter Mary's thrilling sea-fights and gay beauties in pastel, but upon all American art. His self-conceit in its sloughing leaves no atom of confidence in aught which his land can produce. Yet his converse admiration of foreign art must necessarily be indiscriminating, since he retains the complacent belief that no jackanapes with his technical jargon can teach him what to admire. Not he! He hasn't called Ruskin a madman and Jarves a fool, in snubbing Mary's raptures, to go to them or any other critic for instruction. Accordingly he stocks his gallery, as he would disdain to do his shop, with foreign wares, of whose origin, intent, and worth he is utterly ignorant, only making sure that no "Yankee trash" is included.

He carries home in triumph a blear-eyed *Beatrice Cenci*, a leering *Madonna della Sedia* executed by a Roman sign-painter, a medallion portrait of himself chipped out in the putty-relievo of a third-rate English artist, and a family-group cannily altered for the occasion from a Niobe and her Children, which had long cumbered the *appartamento* of some Italian sharper.

Our own escape from the sin and condemna-

tion of the representative American traveler in regard to our compatriots' studios in Rome was owing solely to imputed grace. On our way thither we met the author of "Harper's Guide-Book," who solemnly assured us that there were two individuals in Rome whom it was desirable to see—"first the Pope, then Mrs. Dr. G." Now, it happened that to the latter little epitome of all charity and hospitality we are indebted for much of that which makes us still cry with Shakspeare,

"Was't not a happy star  
Led us to Rome—"

and being there, to *Numero tredici via Condotti!* It was her generous ire which spurred our supineness around the circle of American artists in the Eternal City, and even in remote Florence.

The pity is that this should be a notable instance of *esprit de corps* and *de esprit de pays*—that every American resident of position abroad should not feel a fraternal interest in the success of American artists around him, and make of himself a conscience for the admonition of thoughtless tourists from their native land, with hearts or purses to be touched.

I understand that Mr. Jarves has pronounced William Story to be unappreciated in America. However true this may be in regard to untraveled connoisseurs, I think the representative American traveler is least likely to neglect this among all American studios in Rome. Does not Murray indorse Mr. Story's handiwork as "much noticed" at the great London Exposition of 1862? This Anglican baptism is surely almost equivalent to British birth. Moreover, it is quite safe to give loose rein to one's adjectives and notes of admiration in the presence of the *Soul*, the *Sappho*, and the *Sybil*, and all the more because there are sure to be among the carriages which wait on the Saturday receptions in the *Via di San Nicolo di Tolentino* an Italian coronet or two, and some well-quartered British escutcheon.

We had the privilege of entering the innermost studio, and seeing the sculptor, moulding-stick in hand. Even in its immaturity and in soulless plaster we saw in the *Medea* a grander statue than those apt fingers had previously created. The artist is said to have followed Ristori like her shadow, and has appropriated the great tragedienne's inspiration as a spiritual body for his own. It was a sad pleasure to see also in this inner sanctum that which is pronounced by Mr. Browning, and her brother Mr. Barrett, the best of all the many essays to render the drooping head and pathetic face of Elizabeth Browning. This bust was chiseled from the artist's memory of the poet (with whose personal friendship he was privileged), and its creation was trammelled by no lying portraits or superficial photographs as a model.

But why do we linger here where my pipe is absurdly superfluous? Were all America besides silent in his praise, Mr. Story might well rest content with Hawthorne's crowning.

Miss Hosmer also is too well known in America by means of her peripatetic Zenobia, and her stationary Statesman, together with fascinating traditions still rife about Boston Common and the Piazza di Spagna in regard to youthful escapades and maturer deeds of prowess, to be overlooked by the representative American traveler. She, too, has the prestige of British patronage through her master Gibson, whose characteristic dictum, "Yes, yes, true art should be descriptive!" engraved in stone, is appropriately the legend of her studio.

We approached this celebrity with inward trepidation, on one of her weekly reception-days. Unlike Mr. Story, she does all her visitors the honor of receiving them in person, and it was pleasant to find a bright, piquant woman instead of the Amazon, bustling with weapons offensive, which our fancy had conjured from the shadowy realm of gossip. Her style of conversation is rather crisp than brusque, and she enters cordially into her guest's admiration of her work. With kindly patience she told over and again in our hearing to successive visitors the story of her brazen door, which, with its twelve *bass-relievi* representing the hours of night, is to shut in the treasures of an English nobleman's art-gallery. But little Puck, rollicking little elf, won our hearts most of all among Miss Hosmer's marbles; and this not alone because the millennial state, wherein a little child shall lead all captive, has already begun with us, so that every thing fair, dimpled, and infantile attracts us. Puck seemed to us altogether the most spontaneous of the artist's works. A captive queen she never saw even in her dreams, but a mischievous morsel of humanity or fairyhood is native to a woman's fancy.

Mr. Rogers, who shares with Rheinhart the honor of completing the doors of the national capitol from the design of the lamented Crawford, had just executed a colossal statue of a Union soldier, gun in hand, for Cincinnati. In spite of the amusing account of the sitting with which the artist entertained us, we could but regret that the model of the statue had been a brave Celt, who, however, seemed from the story to have been prouder of the distinction of being "brother to him as married owld Boker's daughter" (the hero of a New York parlor and coach-house romance of several years ago) than of any personal perfections or valor. Still there he stands, grim and war-worn, but unflinching and invincible. An English lady chanced to enter this studio, and being told that in this statue she might see a brave of the United States army, remarked eagerly, "Ah, yes. It is Stonewall Jackson, I suppose;" he being the only hero among his cousins of whose exploits John Bull permits his unsophisticated family to read. "No, Madam, on the contrary," replied the loyal sculptor, with distinct enunciation, "this is the man that shot him!"

Any successful artist must accumulate vast stores of *ana* from the lips of garrulous visitors.

Another Briton, wandering superciliously

through the same studio, paused before a bust of Cicero. "Such wonderful concentration as all your American faces have!" said he. "Now I should know that to be a countryman of yours had I chanced to see it in a Japanese artist's studio. Ah, there is no mistaking the American type!" The blushing sculptor courteously allowed the citizenship of the novel Yankee to pass unchallenged, and the undaunted physiognomist passed on to further criticism.

One day Mr. Rogers was exhibiting his pretty *Nydia* to a deaf spectator.

"What did you say her name was?"

"*Nydia*, Bulwer's *Nydia*."

"You don't say! Why she looks quite intelligent for an *idiot*!"

We had the pleasure of seeing in clay Mr. Rogers's conception of Isaac kneeling upon the Altar of Sacrifice. The face of the young martyr is marked by exquisite beauty of expression. One could judge of the popularity it was destined to obtain by the fact that two copies in marble had already been bespoken, although the model was by no means complete. The frequent duplication throughout the studio of companion statuettes representing an *Indian Hunter-Boy* and *Fisher-Girl* recalled comically to our memory the nursery ditty which dwells upon John Brown's proprietorship in "one little, two little, three little Indians," and so on through the digits.

At Mr. Mozier's we found the celebrated *Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, sculptured at the moment when memory is struggling with time for the recollection of the cradle-hymn her Christian mother used to sing. We saw also, in clay, the dawning of his ideal of *Il Penseroso*. But in the colossal group of the *Return of the Prodigal* I thought I saw, what I understand is not universally admitted, a wonderful rendering of the blessed old idyl. It may be, for aught I know, anatomically incorrect, or like somebody's statue in this thing, or somebody's else in that; but to me there was great pathos in the utter repose of the son as he lays his sinful, sorrowful head on the old man's heart, having let go at once all his old life and old self. It seemed to me that such a sermon in stone set up in a church-chose, or by the wayside, might touch some obdurate heart to whom the pulpit had been voiceless.

In the studio of a young American woman, whose genius with no adventitious aids has already won her an enviable position, we found in clay a lofty embodiment of the poet-artist's ideal of *Jeremiah the Prophet*. A well-known Boston clergyman visiting this studio the day before ourselves, exclaimed as soon as the moist napkin was removed from this superb medallion:

"Ah, one of the old prophets has risen from the dead!"

"Which of the prophets is he?" asked the artist; "you being a divine are supposed to know them all."

"Jeremiah, of course. Who could doubt it?"

Who, indeed, who felt the majestic sorrow of

that face, the eloquent grieving of heavenly wisdom over human folly. This medallion realizes vividly Heine's description of Jehuda ben Halevy: "Down to his breast fell, like a gray forest, his hair, and cast a weird shadow on the face which looked out through it, his troubled, pale face with the spiritual eyes." More than all it recalled the infinitely pathetic cry those lips once uttered, "Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

The sculptor of this superb medallion is Miss Margaret Foley. She has worked her way bravely up to fame and success, winning peculiar honors from Italian and English critics as well as her own countrymen. She has been forced to confine herself too closely to portrait medallions to allow the freest development of her genius. It is an epoch to her when she dare take a free breath and evoke from the marble a kingly head like that of the Prophet of Lamentation. And yet her portraits are true creations of art.

Ye who think that while sculpture in the round is a wonderful art, all that is required for the production of a *bas-relief* is a flat surface of sufficient thickness to allow chippings *ad libitum*, go to the Villa Albani and study the Lotus-crowned *Autinous*; or, what is next, compare Miss Foley's medallions with those which pass unchallenged from the studio of many a distinguished sculptor.

But I forget an oracle recently uttered: *bassirievi* are not statuary! It remained for an astute sitter at the New York Customs to discover that a case of medallion portraits and ideal heads, sent to America by Miss Foley in execution of various commissions, did not come under the Act for the protection of American artists in foreign countries, and were therefore subject to a duty of 50 per cent. in gold! And all this when a case of mere stone-mason's pedestals passed the same Custom-house free. Various appeals were made by indignantly sympathetic artists and friends against the absurd decision of this Art-Dogberry, but several months later we heard that the case was still in durance vile; the purchasers of the sculpture being naturally unwilling to pay the unrighteous tax, and the artist threatened with the return of her handiwork unless she herself discharged it.

In the benign face of Bishop Whipple, of Minnesota, Miss Foley found an irresistible temptation, and with one or two sittings from the good missionary she created in clay at once a perfect portrait and an admirable ideal of St. John the Beloved. This was immediately appropriated (with other of her marbles) by Mr. William Aspinwall, to whose generous and yet discriminating patronage American artists abroad and art-lovers at home are so deeply indebted. We heard a sculptor say of him, "He is the only visitor to my studio who doesn't make me tremble by touching my tools: he knows what to do with them." Adding, with amusing commiseration: "It is such a pity he hadn't been poor, he would have made a true artist!"

In Miss Foley's studio there was also still in clay a fine bust of the son of the sculptor Crawford, as also various medallions in different stages of progress. A small bust of Theodore Parker, who gave her frequent sittings while in Rome, and with whose face in its vigor she had been most familiar, is far more satisfactory than the Socrates of Mr. Story, or any other attempted likeness of that most brave and intolerant philanthropist. His old congregation should order a colossal copy of this authentic bust for their Assembly Room.

During a brief visit to her native land the past season Miss Foley modeled several admirable medallions, among them fine profiles of Mr. Longfellow, Charles Sumner, and Julia Ward Howe. This artist has also long been distinguished for her superiority as an artist in Cameos.

No American tarrying in Rome should fail to visit the *appartamento* of the Freemans. Here Mr. Freeman plies his accurate, conscientious brush, devoting as many hours to the perfecting of a few threads of drapery as would many artists to the execution of an entire picture. Here Mrs. Freeman wields the chisel skillfully, and here their niece paints charming cabinet pictures and copies successfully.

Living in a beautiful apartment, far up, like Hilda in her tower, we found Miss Church, a young Vermonter, if I mistake not. One of Claude Lorraine's luscious landscapes, copied in the Louvre, was just receiving her finishing touch, it having been purchased by Mr. Le Grand Lockwood, whose wealth has blessed many a deserving artist and many a distressed countryman abroad. Three little pictures pleased us best in this studio. Two views (standing and sitting) of an obstreperous little Roman with an irresistibly jolly face. This little imp of a model regards the confinement incident to his vocation with disgust, and is therefore always accompanied by his father, whom he mercilessly snubs. "What time is it, old father?" "Ten and a half, my gentle little son." "No, old father, you lie—it is long after *mezzo giorno*!" Then turning his weariness toward his picturesque costume, he cries, stormily, "Look here, old father! I must have new clothes! Why don't you dress me like the little *Francesi* on the Pincio! I shall buy clothes for myself hereafter."

The third picture is the portrait of an equally irresponsible little chicory-girl, who is attired in all the pretty absurdity of a Roman peasant's costume, with the heavy folds of the *panno* on her graceful little head. This little mother of Gracchi in prospect declines to favor the artist with a sitting of her august presence without a head of her favorite vegetable with which to beguile the hour, meditatively devouring the tough mass of vegetation. Accordingly, there she stands in the picture, chicory in hand, and is a bewitching little figure for one's drawing-room.

Our visit to the pleasant home of the cheery sisters, the Misses Williams, brought upon us

an acute attack of *mal du pays*. On their table lay a fresh, crisp copy of the *Springfield Republican*, and on the walls hung half a dozen admirable sketches of autumnal scenery, which could only have had their birth among the maples, oaks, and beeches of New England. Their previous vacation having been spent in Sicily we were able to judge, both from their enthusiastic descriptions and abundant sketches, how delightful the scenery must be. A fine picture of Mount Etna, with sunrise tints, pleased us exceedingly. It had just been purchased by Mr. Morehead, of Philadelphia.

We were fascinated by the beauty of Mr. Tilton's Venetian views and Venetian coloring before we had learned of Mr. Jarves that it was artistically wrong so to be, and our first impression still abides. This artist's *naïveté* in the exposition of the "luminosity" and other perfections of his own pictures is sublime. Yet the oddest thing of all is, that he seemed to us only to tell the plain truth eloquently about these glowing re-creations of his brush, albeit it might, perhaps, have come with better grace from some "poor coot" of a spectator instead of from the Titianesque artist himself.

We cherish a grudge against the Fates, which prevented us from executing frequently-renewed plans for visiting the studios of other distinguished Americans in Rome. Unless the tourist conscientiously assign every moment of his time to some specific object, however long he may remain in Rome, in leaving he will carry away many such regrets and suffer remediless loss.

Our faithful, clever Consul, Mr. Stillman, true as truth, but not always in sunshine, was just about removing to a new post, so that his studio was in a transition state. We saw enough of his painting, however, to convince us that his talents would reap a rich harvest in the new and artistically unexplored field before him. In the beautiful island of Candia he will be likely to find worthy material for his skillful pencil and pen, while in the inhabitants he will find his very antipodes, unless they have outgrown their portrait so graphically sketched by one of their own artists centuries ago: *The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*

Having tarried so long in the Eternal City we had far too little time for doing justice to Florence and her American studios.

Hiram Powers is the one American artist whose merits seem to be fully appreciated at home. Every representative American traveler longs to have his Ciceronic features immortalized by this sculptor, and joyfully exchanges his thousand silver scudi for one of his exquisitely-finished busts. Aside from his talent Mr. Powers deserves his brilliant success on account of his generous interest in younger, less famous artists, and his vigorous loyalty. Few Americans visit his studio without hearing the suggestion from the beautiful-eyed old man as they reluctantly take leave, "You must not think of going from Florence without seeing such and such studios."

His thirty years' exile have only deepened his patriotism, and his children, all of Florentine birth, have been chiseled by their parents into noble specimens of New Englanders—not a foreign touch about them. During our four years of darkness and combat this good man never once lost heart, and, perhaps, did as much as any American resident abroad to silence English impertinence. His studio is much frequented by British tourists, and it is doubtful if one is ever suffered to escape scot-free. He repeated to us a *bon mot* of his own similar to that already narrated of Mr. Rogers. An English visitor was struck on entering Mr. Powers's studio by the well-known bust of Andrew Jackson.

"Who is this, pray? An American?"

"Yes; General Jackson."

"Oh, indeed!" turning with beatific delight to Mrs. John Bull. "My dear, this is that brave Stonewall Jackson of whom you have heard so much."

"No, Sir, by no means. It is a man, who, if he had been living, would have hung Stonewall Jackson long ago."

Mr. Powers also related with great gusto the story of a bluff Englishman, who came storming into his studio one day with the frank announcement:

"I don't know any thing about statuary. I've come to your studio because it's one of the sights of Florence. Busts all look just alike to me."

After wandering about for a long time among the crowded treasures of the many-roomed studio with a vacant stare, a sudden gleam of intelligence illumined his broad countenance. Mr. Powers, startled, turned to discover what had so transfigured his stolidity. It was a plaster cast of the famous Florentine Boar, before which the delighted connoisseur had struck an attitude.

"That's a foin hanimal, Sir! I raise pigs myself, Sir. A foin hanimal; pray what breed is it?"

"A wild boar."

"Ah, poor condition he's in, Sir; 'twould take a long time to fetch him up to where my pigs are. But he's a foin hanimal, Sir!"

A Tennessean came one day into Mr. Powers's studio.

"Only just come to town!" said he; "had to wait in Paris to get my gallery packed. Bought a whole gallery of Old Masters—paid fifteen hundred dollars for 'em, too! How much is that statoo worth?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"My stars! Why, I bought one t'other day for two hundred dollars, and it ain't plaster neither; for I drew my jack-knife right cross her nose, and it never made a scratch."

Do you know the story of Powers's *America*? Fifteen years ago, in prophetic inspiration, he wrought a beautiful figure crowned with stars, treading under foot broken chains. He regarded Congress as pledged to its acceptance for the Capitol; but two successive Presidents shuddered at the awful radicalism of the trampled

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fetters, and at the time of our visit America still lay boxed in New York. Can she not now safely come forth with her crown of stars?

Mr. Powers's patriotism is so extreme that he prefers to model in American clay, which is regularly exported, as he told us, for his use. Home soil is better to him than that of classic Arno or Tiber. One might think that his marble also was brought from some more favored mount than the quarries of ordinary artists, since it acquires in his studio an inimitable velvetness of texture. We hope it may be many years before our country shall lose such a representative of American manhood, patriotism, and art as Hiram Powers.

One young artist commended to us by Mr. Powers we had already learned to admire. The same dainty fancy which once wrought itself out through the evanescent medium of Brattleborough snow now moulds Carrara marble into enduring forms of beauty. We were so fortunate as to find in his studio the model of his Lincoln monument. The four groups about the base, representing Cavalry, Artillery, Marine, and Infantry, have wonderful life and action. Although the *dolce far niente* of Italian workmen prevented our seeing the model complete, yet we saw enough to convince us that here was Larkin Meade's *chef-d'œuvre*.

A pretty statue of a Puritan girl on a visit to her poultry-yard had been christened a *Contadine*: we recognized too well the exquisite refinement of the New England type of girlhood not to protest against the misnomer. A fine group of a soldier, telling the story of his campaign to the little daughter upon his knee, had just been ordered of colossal size to be the admirable ornament for the grounds of an asylum for soldiers' orphans in Connecticut. Before the soldier stretches an awful vision of blood, indicated by the fixed gaze, the outstretched hand, and the eloquent face of the little maiden as she looks up into his war-worn face with wondering sympathy.

I can only speak of a single artist more. The story of John Jackson is so touching that I take the liberty of telling it simply. His design for a monument to Dr. Kane having been accepted by an organization formed for the purpose, he was sent to Italy to execute it in marble. He was assured that on arriving in Florence he should find funds to a large amount, and that further remittances would be made until the sum proposed on the acceptance of his design should have been received. Accordingly, breaking up his home in the midst of an appreciative circle in Boston, he removed to Florence. On his arrival no funds were found—none were sent. After many anxious weeks he received a letter from the committee who had expatriated him, stating that, in consequence of the panic incident to the outbreak of the rebellion, Dr. Kane's monument must be indefinitely postponed.

A stranger in a strange land, winter coming on (one is not beyond the rigor of winter in Florence), few tourists abroad, no commissions

possible, a family to provide for—what shall be done? This true hero valiantly betook himself to the trade which his father (mindful of the Hebrew proverb, "Blessed is he that hath a trade to his hand; he is like a vineyard well fenced") had obliged him to learn before he would suffer him to devote himself to his beloved art. Uncomplainingly he went into a machine-shop, and wrought in iron when he longed to be in his studio.

Of late something of the success he so richly deserves has crowned this artist. But when we were in Florence there stood in his studio, still in plaster, a most poetic conception of *Eve*, the "Mother of all Living," holding upon her lap the body of the dead Abel. Every detail is admirably rendered, but the most distinguishing points in the group are the contrast between the beautiful hand of the mother, with full, eager life coursing through its veins, and the limp, lifeless fingers which fall without response from her grasp; and chief of all, the expression of the bereaved mother's face. It is not so much the "bootless bene" of a childless Rachel weeping uncomfited, as the marvel of the Mother of the Living over the first revelation of the awful miracle of Death.

I have before me one of the exquisite photographs of Powers *frères* (the artist's sons). It is a copy of the rough model (the original of which we saw) of a commemorative monument. It represents a pure shaft eighty feet in height, surmounted by a graceful statue of Liberty, bearing aloft in one hand the star-spangled banner, and holding in the other a wreath, as if about to let it fall upon the honored graves beneath. The design was to ornament the base with *bass-reliefs*, according to the subjects commemorated. But the uniqueness of this monument consists in the capital of the graceful column, which is of rare beauty, and distinctively American. It is at once so natural and striking that the marvel is that it was not conceived long ago, and adopted in place of Corinthian or Composite ornament in many of our national buildings throughout the republic. The existence of this model at the time of our visit to the studio was known only to the photographer and a few favored friends. If I am betraying a secret at this late day by even these incoherent hints, I shall not beg Mr. Jackson's pardon, for it is high time this beautiful design were executed in pure white marble (or in Quincy granite with bronze ornaments), and were set up in the sight of all men in some *Place Vendôme* of America.

Is it not already evident that among the gracious fruit which is to spring from fields which we have been for weary years sowing in tears, but in faith, is a fresh, beautiful growth of native art? The demand for commemorative monuments is great, the supply of unmeaning meretricious designs is perhaps greater; let severely discriminating taste be exercised in the selection of these memorials, lest they prove unworthy not alone of our glorious dead, but of the new era of American art which is now dawning.

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