

A Vision Seen Through the Curtains of a Bed

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FALMOST four hundred years ago the Benedictine monks of Saint Sixtus gave Raphael an order to paint the picture that you see on this page.

The Infant Jesus in His mother's arms excels in this wonderful painting in majesty and beauty all the efforts of all the painters of the world.

The monks who gave the order demanded of the painter that he should present the Virgin and the Infant in the company of St. Sixtus and St. Barbara.

The composition of this painting is marvelous in simplicity and beauty. On either side is a green curtain. It is said that the inspiration of his greatest work came to Raphael as he lay looking through the curtains at the foot of his bed. The vision of celestial beauty presented itself to his mind framed in those curtains, and so he painted it.

Reproductions of this wonderful painting, inspiring and beautiful above all works of art in this world, perhaps, should be in every home, before the eyes of all mothers and fathers and children.

Everything important in our lives you see most beautifully presented here.

The goodness and purity of woman, the dignity and power of man, the celestial beauty of childhood and the infinite grandeur of simplicity—all are in this most wonderful work.

Greatest and most impressive of all is the face of the Infant Jesus, looking out in majesty from His mother's arms.

That is the most perfect and marvelous face of a child that has ever been painted. It is a face that should have its place in the room of every woman looking forward to the blessing of maternity. We wish that it might be possible, with our rapid, defective printing, striking off tens of thousands of copies in an hour, to give a better idea of this beautiful picture. But some idea may be had here at least, and those that choose may purchase for themselves an accurate reproduction at very slight cost.

You may study this painting for hours, the misty cloud of cherubim in the background, the two little angels at the bottom of the picture, looking up at Mary in adoration; the kneeling Pope, St. Sixtus, at the left and St. Barbara at the right, looking down from the clouds to the earth and interceding for mankind.

Every detail is perfect, but always the eye returns to the majestic and fearful face of Jesus, the Infant God, and to the beautiful face of the Virgin mother.

This picture of the divine Infant is not the picture of the laughing child so often painted by great men. It is, as Gruyer writes, "the God himself, it is the God of Justice and of the Last Day. In the most humble state of our flesh, beneath the veil of infancy, we see the terrifying splendor of infinite majesty in this picture. The divine Infant leaves between Himself and us a place for fear, and in His presence we experience something of the fear of God that Adam felt and that he transmitted to his race. For attaining such heights of impression the means employed by Raphael are of an incomprehensible simplicity.

"The Infant Jesus nestles familiarly in His mother's arms. Sitting on a fold of the white veil that the Virgin supports with her left hand, He leans against the Madonna's right arm; His legs are crossed one above the other; the whole



The Picture Thus Seen by Raphael---Greatest Painter of Power and Beauty in the Faces of Women and Children---Shows All That Is Important in Life. Beautiful Motherhood, Perfect Childhood and Earnest, Reverent Manhood Are All in This Great Painting.

of the left arm follows the bend of the body, and the left hand rests upon the right leg; at the same time the right shoulder being raised by Mary's hand, the right arm is bent at the elbow and the hand grasps the Virgin's veil.

"This attitude, so natural, so true, so unstudied, expresses grandeur and sovereignty. Nothing can be more elementary or powerful.

"The light rests calmly upon every part of this beautiful body and all its members in such fine repose. Humanity was never seen under such radiance. The Son of God, in transporting to Heaven the terrestrial form of His infancy, has made it divine for all eternity.

"The Infant Jesus seems to recoil from the spectacle of human shame; He lovingly presses against the Virgin's breast, softly rests His forehead against His mother's cheek and darts toward the world one of those flaming and terrible glances at which, it is said, everything

in heaven, on earth and in hell trembles. His disordered hair stands upright and quivers in the breath of the tempest, and sombre clouds pass across the widely modelled forehead; the brows are frowning, the pupils dilate and the flame is ready to dart forth; the eyes, profound and terrible, are preparing to flash with lightning; they still withhold it, but we feel that it may break forth, and we tremble. This glance is truly splendid; it fascinates you, attracts you, and at the same time fills you with terror."

For every man and woman there is the highest teaching in this painting.

Let women learn from it that there is one glory above all others, **MOTHERHOOD**, giving to the world a child to help in the world's work and fight against the sin and the sorrow of ignorant humanity.

And let women learn from this picture

how beautiful and how perfect is **ABSOLUTE SIMPLICITY**.

Absolutely simple is the beautiful costume that Raphael gives to the Mother of God.

The hair, a light chestnut, is arranged simply, as women should arrange their hair seeking to give expression to the soul.

The forehead, the ears, the cheeks and the temples are left completely uncovered in this perfect painting. There is no artifice. It is perfect beauty, unspoiled by any thought of self.

Beautiful as is the figure of St. Barbara at the right, it is a figure decorated; the hair and clothing lack the wonderful simplicity of the Virgin's dress.

Men can learn from this picture, from the expression of earnestness and reverence in the face of St. Sixtus what their attitude toward women should be.

Earnestness, force, reverence are in the face, the hands and the kneeling figure of the Pope, clad in a white rochet tied by a girdle with golden tassels, a pallium woven with gold and a chasuble lined with red enveloping his shoulders and arms. A white tiara, with a triple crown, is placed on the balustrade at the foot of the picture. It is a magnificent picture of an earnest man. "His emaciated face is full of ardor and power; his eyes penetrate straight into the splendor of God; and his mouth, although partially hidden by the gray beard that covers the lower part of his face, is praying with extraordinary fervor. His gesture, so resolute and respectful, is in itself an act of love and charity, and his very hands, so true in drawing and so bold in action, have their special eloquence. It seems impossible that the divine Justice will not allow itself to be swayed by such intercession."

This greatest painting of a child and mother that the world knows is said to have come to Raphael as a sudden and complete inspiration. There exists no preliminary drawing, sketch or plan of the picture. The whole vision was formed in the painter's mind as he looked out from his pillow and saw the painting complete, the Virgin walking on the clouds carrying her beautiful and majestic son in her arms.

In this picture there is material for many hours of study and contemplation.

Happy those that can learn and apply even part of the lesson that the picture conveys.

For two hundred and thirty-six years the "Sistine Madonna" remained in the possession of the monks of St. Sixtus. And every day during the two hundred and thirty-six years divine service was held before the picture. It was in front of this painting that Correggio, the great artist, realizing the grandeur of his profession, cried, "And I also, I am a painter!"

In 1734 the monks of St. Sixtus sold the painting for about twenty thousand dollars to Augustus III, the elector of Saxony and king of Poland. It could not be bought for twenty millions to-day. Augustus took the picture to Dresden, where it is now, and received it with royal honors, as well he might, in the reception hall of his palace.

In that great hall the throne occupied by himself occupied the place of honor. The king seized the royal chair, ordered it pushed aside, crying, "Room for the great Raphael!"

In the centuries that have passed many have found inspiration in this great work. Now the marvellous science of photography and other forms of reproduction duplicate great paintings perfectly. And where this picture in the past has delighted thousands it will delight tens of millions in the ages that are to come.

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