

us, which he sees there, but something of which the fading material form is only a partial revelation. Here is the concluding tercet of one of his sonnets:

Nor hath God deigned to show himself elsewhere
More clearly than in human form sublime,
Which, since they image Him, alone I love.

He almost creates a special form of art to satisfy this conception and expends all his science in finding a naturalistic basis for it. Hence there is never anything that is sensuous and even little that is distinctively feminine in the expression of his line.

"A great soul in a degenerate age," says Taine. He looked on with scornful indignation at what he could not help, the political and moral debasement of his country. He fell back even more on an austere renunciation of the ordinary pleasures of life and sought refuge in the solitary grandeur of his conceptions. The spirit which impresses itself on such works as the "Moses," the sculptures on the tombs of the Medici in San Lorenzo and the

Last Judgment, while it is profoundly religious, has a certain severity and bitterness, even something like a disdain of humanity. He disdains to use its common mould for any noble purpose. Vasari quotes a quatrain which Michelangelo himself composed on the famous figure of Night which decorates the tomb of Giulians dei Medici. The figure is supposed to be replying to a neatly turned compliment that you need only touch and wake it to make it live. The first two lines are as follows:—

Piace il sonno
e piu l'esser di
sasso,

Mentre che il
danno e la ver-
gogna dura.

"Welcome is sleep, and still more welcome that it is of stone while the ignominy and decadence exist." The condensed bitterness of the first line is like the stroke of his own powerful chisel upon the marble. Vasari's eloquent eulogy of the



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"Night" shows us how greatly contemporaries admired its art and also how little they understood the depth of that sombre melancholy which is expressed. "Who ever saw in any other statue," writes Vasari, "such a power of expressing not only the repose of one who sleeps but the grief and melancholy of one who