



Knights of Art: Stories of the Italian Painters

Amy Steedman

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Then came the time which is called 'The Renaissance,' a word which means being born again, or a new awakening, when men began to draw real pictures of real things and fill the world with images of beauty. Now it is the stories of the men of that time, who put new life into Art, that I am going to tell you—men who learned, step by step, to paint the most beautiful pictures that the world possesses.

In telling these stories I have been helped by an old book called *The Lives of the Painters*, by Giorgio Vasari, who was himself a painter. He took great delight in gathering together all the stories about these artists and writing them down with loving care, so that he shows us real living men, and not merely great names by which the famous pictures are known.

It did not make much difference to us when we were little children whether our pictures were good or bad, as long as the colours were bright and we knew what they meant. But as we grow older and wiser our eyes grow wiser too, and we learn to know what is good and what is poor. Only, just as our tongues must be trained to speak, our hands to work, and our ears to love good music, so our eyes must be taught to see what is beautiful, or we may perhaps pass it carelessly by, and lose a great joy which might be ours.

So now if you learn something about these great artists and their wonderful pictures, it will help your eyes to grow wise. And some day should you visit sunny Italy, where these men lived and worked, you will feel that they are quite old friends. Their pictures will not only be a delight to your eyes, but will teach your heart something deeper and more wonderful than any words can explain.

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