Chapter 6

THE DECLINE OF ROMAN PATRONAGE

– i –

IN August 1645, a little more than a year after the death of Pope Urban VIII, Poussin wrote to his Parisian patron Chantelou, who was trying to buy some antique marbles, that 'things in Rome have greatly changed under the present papacy and we no longer enjoy any special favour at court'.[1] But it was not only French interests that suffered with the election of the Hispanophil Giambattista Pamfili as Innocent X. The arts as a whole received a blow which had the most lasting consequences. Many factors were involved, great and small: the European balance of power and the political ambitions of a single family; economic collapse and individual quirks of temperament; plague, starvation, sudden death and changes of fashion.[2]

The decline had already begun some three years earlier with the outbreak of the War of Castro, a little town belonging to the Duke of Parma but situated well within papal territory.[3] A series of financial disputes with the Duke led to his excommunication and the rapid occupation of the town. But the campaign which had begun so well suddenly changed its nature when France, Tuscany, Venice and Modena banded together, either openly or in private, to put an end to what had now become an ambitious Barberini scheme to extend their private dominions. Don Taddeo showed his disastrous limitations as commander-in-chief; foreign troops once more marched on Rome and the panic of a second 1527 swept through the city. New taxes were raised, private silver was confiscated. This was hardly the moment for artistic patronage. In March 1644 a humiliating peace was signed, and, soon after, Urban VIII died amid the execration of his subjects.[4]

The Conclave that followed was particularly stormy. In Rome armed guards were called in to defend the principal palaces from roaming mobs, and clashes were frequent. The civic authorities made a feeble attempt to take over responsibility, only to be overruled by the College of Cardinals. The Pope who emerged from all this confusion, Innocent X, was inclined neither by race—he was a Roman, a nationality notorious to this day for its lack of interest in the arts—nor by his financial situation—wholly chaotic after twenty years of Barberini extravagance—nor yet by personal temperament to continue the sumptuous patronage that had distinguished the previous reign. Only ambition remained; and here he faced a difficult problem. For he had only one nephew,

[1] *Correspondance*, p. 316.
[2] Passeri, p. 301, gives a very vivid account of the situation. See also Haskell, 1959.
[3] Pastor, XIII, pp. 881–95.
[4] For the effects of the war in Rome see Gigli, pp. 203–40.

Camillo. Should this young man of 22 be given political power in the only manner possible by being made a cardinal or should he be encouraged to marry and found a princely dynasty? The Pope hesitated, and then decided that the second course was the right one. An outsider was brought in as Secretary of State, while, undeterred by the disastrous failure of Taddeo Barberini, Camillo was made commander-in-chief of all the land and sea forces and governor of the more important strong points. Hardly had this been settled when the plan was changed. In November, only two months after these arrangements, Camillo was made Cardinal nephew and given a pile of benefices. He began his duties as legate at Avignon with some enthusiasm, which rapidly decreased when he found that the Pope and the already appointed Secretary of State firmly retained all serious political authority in their own hands. And so, once again, he changed his mind and in 1647 he went through the almost unheard-of procedure of resigning his cardinalate and marrying. In these complicated manœuvres he had been alternatively encouraged and thwarted by his formidable mother, the Pope's sister-in-law, Donna Olimpia Maidalchini. This legendary figure, whose dominating position in Innocent X's court, led to endless scandals and ferocious quarrels, was shrewd, greedy and ambitious. Above all she was excessively jealous of anyone replacing her as the first lady in Rome, and she showed her displeasure at Camillo's marriage by making sure that neither he nor his wife should be allowed into the city.[1]

All this will have made it clear that for some years Camillo Pamfili was in no position to replace Francesco Barberini as the leading art patron in Rome. The Barberini themselves fled when an investigation of their incomes was threatened and the 17-year-old Francesco Maidalchini who was chosen by his aunt Donna Olimpia to supersede Camillo as papal nephew was clearly not destined to make an impact on Roman culture.

Thus it was the Pope himself who directed what patronage there was. He was determined on two things: to erect the usual great family palace and ecclesiastical buildings and to make as little use as possible of the artists most closely associated with his predecessor. Pietro da Cortona carried on working for the Oratorians; Bernini undertook his first large private commission for a generation—the Cornaro chapel in S. Maria della Vittoria with the famous *St Theresa*—and expressed the bitterness of his feelings in a group of *Time unveiling Truth*. His official career reached its lowest point when, under the chairmanship of the Pope, a special committee decided to pull down the first of the two proposed campaniles which he had added to the façade of St Peter's for Urban VIII. His place as leading architect was taken by two men—Girolamo Rainaldi, a totally unfashionable figure nearly thirty years older than himself, and Francesco Borromini, his hated rival. Rainaldi planned the vast palace on the Piazza Navona where Innocent had lived as a cardinal, and Borromini took over the complete remodelling of St John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome, whose decrepit and still largely mediaeval condition was the more glaring by contrast with the splendour of Urban VIII's decoration of St Peter's. Both these major works were somewhat 'reactionary' in

[1] Besides Pastor, XIV, see Ciampi and Brigante Colonna.

character, as were most of those created under Innocent's auspices—the family palace because of Girolamo Rainaldi's age and limitations, the church because of the inhibiting instructions given to Borromini. These will not at once be apparent to the visitor struck by the dazzling white interior of the Lateran basilica and the fantasy of its ornamentation which, as he will subsequently learn, replaces frescoes by Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello destroyed during the rebuilding. In fact, however, Borromini, the most daring of Baroque architects, was told to preserve the essential structure of the old basilica and thus had to use his brilliantly imaginative gifts on decoration rather than on the designing of a wholly new cathedral. Moreover, the financial troubles which afflicted Innocent's reign made it impossible for him to replace the sixteenth-century wooden ceiling with the vault that he had planned.[1]

Bernini also lost his position as the most favoured sculptor of the day and was replaced by Alessandro Algardi, who not only made busts of Innocent and Donna Olimpia, but was given vital commissions in St Peter's and in the construction of a villa for the Pope's family. In all these he moved away from the warmth and vigour typical of Bernini and adopted a colder, more classical manner that fitted in well enough with the disillusioned atmosphere of the 'forties. In fact, however, Bernini's achievements and reputation were too great for him to be neglected for long, and with his Fountain of the Four Rivers in the Piazza Navona, the square that Innocent made the centre of his patronage, he climbed back quickly to favour though not yet to his previous position of complete authority.[2]

It was not until the end of 1651, seven years after the change of papacy, that Pietro da Cortona was given his first official commission—to fresco the ceiling of the gallery in the papal palace in the Piazza Navona. The palace itself had been assigned to yet another substitute for a true papal nephew, Camillo Astalli, inevitably a relation of Donna Olimpia, who added to the general confusion by calling himself Pamfili. But the actual choice of Pietro da Cortona may, perhaps, reflect the reviving fortunes of the authentic Prince Camillo Pamfili, the only member of the family to show a keen interest in the arts and to have any real taste. After a series of inconclusive skirmishes with his mother, Prince Pamfili finally returned to Rome and was received by the Pope early in 1651. His 'exile' had not been very arduous or painful. During the course of it he had been responsible for the construction by Algardi of one of the most magnificent of all Roman villas. This he filled with antiquities and had lavishly decorated. In Rome he now set about building a palace for himself opposite the Collegio Romano for which he employed Antonio del Grande, and he also took in hand a number of other projects, both public and private. Indeed, after his return to the city artistic life notably revived from the torpor which had been so evident during the earliest years of Innocent X's reign, and some of the most beautiful and familiar achievements of the Roman Baroque

[1] For all these see Wittkower, 1958, and Portoghesi, 1955.

[2] Besides the Fountain of the Four Rivers Bernini's only important commissions from Innocent were the equestrian statue of Constantine and a series of portrait busts.

were created—Pietro da Cortona's frescoes of *Scenes from the Aeneid* in the gallery of the papal palace, and Borromini's dome and façade of the adjoining S. Agnese.[1]

Yet, despite all this, neither now nor later did Prince Pamfili prove a satisfactory art patron. He was an amiable man, but very lazy and uncultivated and much more interested in riding than any other activity.[2] Above all he was mean. 'Though he, more than anyone of his time, gave opportunities to painters and sculptors,' wrote Passeri soon after his death,[3] 'he was always having trouble with them over questions of money.' Pierfrancesco Mola painted frescoes for his palace at Valmontone which were pulled down and replaced by others by Mattia Preti after one such dispute.[4] Both the sculptors Francesco Baratta and Ercole Ferrata were involved in prolonged financial difficulties with Pamfili and his heirs, and other artists also suffered complications of the same kind.[5] Only in his support of Bernini's S. Andrea al Quirinale, begun after the death of his uncle, did Prince Pamfili display the enlightened generosity that had marked the rule of the Barberini. So that although many very fine artists were employed by him in enterprises of the greatest distinction, his patronage was never very inspiring.[6] The reasons for this, however, were not wholly personal, for from the 'forties onwards the economic climate became ever more menacing.

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The difficulties facing the student of papal finances are as insuperable today as they were in the seventeenth century. That the basic resources were vast is shown by the repeated recovery and aggrandisement of Rome long after every observer had noted impending disaster. Yet expenses too were on a huge scale and a pope sensitive to change and anxious to maintain his prestige was bound to try and cut them down. Urban VIII had begun his rule with assurances to this effect, but had followed them up with unparalleled expenditure. When he died he left the Treasury hopelessly indebted and it never fully recovered. It took about two generations for the situation to become clear to everybody, but already under Innocent X some steps had to be taken. As always they were only fitful and did nothing to remedy the real troubles facing Rome. Indeed this was hardly possible. For apart from local difficulties such as a disastrous drought, the expensive, though victorious, second War of Castro and repeated financial scandals in the court itself, the papal states were more and more affected by the general collapse of the Italian economy which reached its climax in the middle of the century, due largely to competition from England, France and Holland.[7] In Rome itself, where

[1] Pietro da Cortona's frescoes were painted between 1651 and 1654—see Briganti, 1962, p. 146. Borromini took over the building of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona from the Rainaldis in 1653—see Wittkower, 1958, p. 141.

[2] Barozzi e Berchet, II, pp. 71 and 98.

[3] Passeri, p. 337.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 371, and Montalto, pp. 267-302.

[5] Passeri, p. 337, and Golzio, 1933-4, p. 304.

[6] A eulogistic account of Pamfili's patronage is given in the poems edited by Girolamo Brusoni under the title *Allori d'Eurota* in 1662.

[7] For a general outline of the situation see Cipolla, 1952, pp. 178-87.

trade and industry were negligible, the effects were only indirect. Gradually, however, the tributes from abroad, upon which the city had always relied, began to dry up, and the process was intensified as mercantilist doctrines made headway. 'Today', wrote the Venetian ambassador in 1660,[1] 'there is no ruler who does not look to the good of his own subjects and who does not therefore prevent the incomes from ecclesiastical benefices (especially the richest ones) from leaving his territory and being enjoyed by foreigners. At Rome they put up with their disappointment in patience so as not to have to face worse troubles.' But these troubles came none the less.

Meanwhile sudden and improvised taxes were imposed and in the general hardship that resulted the public naturally began to resent the vast sums that were being spent on building and decorating the papal palaces and squares. As the magnificent reconstruction of the Piazza Navona proceeded, notes with poignant and bitter little rhymes were found attached to the stones[2]:

> Noi volemo altro che Guglie, et Fontane,
> Pane volemo, pane, pane, pane.

This was not a hint that the Pope and his courtiers were at all likely to take, for the grandiose adornment of Rome was far too deep rooted an ambition to be deterred by such considerations as a starving population. As often happens in such situations it was smaller scale enterprises that suffered rather than the vast showy undertakings. In 1648 the Accademia di S. Luca, which only a few years earlier had been so well endowed by the Barberini, faced great difficulties. The director 'did everything to restore its fortunes, and proposed many sound arrangements, but only a few of them were carried out . . .'.[3] At first minor, but later quite well established, artists began to suffer. Mattia Preti found many of them unemployed when he came to Rome in the middle 'forties.[4] It was now that dealers began to play an important rôle and that the first serious complaints began to be made about the comparative success of the *bamboccianti*.

As a final economy measure, and one which in its squalid avarice and feuds symbolises much of Innocent X's reign, Donna Olimpia and Prince Camillo Pamfili refused to pay for a coffin for the Pope when he died in January 1655. While the corpse lay rotting in a cellar, mother and son quarrelled over who should be charged for the burial. 'He says that he has never received anything from His Holiness. . . . She replies that she is not the heiress. . . .'[5] The accession of Fabio Chigi as Pope Alexander VII at least removed the personal obstacles that stood in the way of enlightened patronage. He was a direct descendant of the fabulously rich Sienese banker Agostino 'il Magnifico' whose friendship with Raphael was legendary and whose life he himself had written.[6] Before spending thirteen years as Papal Legate in Cologne he had been the intimate friend of

[1] Barozzi e Berchet, II, p. 214.
[2] Gigli, p. 233.
[3] Missirini, p. 116.
[4] De Dominici, IV, p. 19.
[5] Pastor, XIV, p. 37.
[6] Cugnoni, 1879–81.

the circle of poets, intellectuals and artists which gravitated round the court of Urban VIII. He was therefore deeply cultivated and he at once showed that he intended to fulfil the high hopes that were aroused by his distinguished ancestry and associations. On the very day of his election he summoned Bernini to tell him of his ambitious plans for St Peter's and to order him to continue the work he had already begun on the family chapel in S. Maria del Popolo.[1] During the twelve years of Alexander's pontificate Bernini enjoyed once again the complete supremacy that had been his under Urban VIII, and he put it to even more spectacular use. For the new Pope seemed to be making a deliberate attempt to undo the eleven-year interruption of Innocent X and to resume the projects of Urban.[2] Once more St Peter's returned to the centre of the scene. Bernini crowned his life's work there by erecting in the apse the Apostle's chair in an overwhelmingly rich decor of golden putti and Doctors of the Church. A mystical and expressionist element which had first entered his work after the death of Urban VIII was here turned to dramatic use. Light streams through the window and takes corporeal shape in the gilt stucco rays, clouds and putti which converge round it and are at the same time forced by the violence of the centrifugal pressure to break through the classical framework of the architecture. At the base of the Chair itself, guarded by angels bearing the palms of martyrdom, the Doctors are frenziedly distorted by the tense, quivering and yet ascetic passions that rage through their bodies—such nervous religious energy had not been seen in Italian art since the work of those Milanese painters who had been inspired by Cardinal Federico Borromeo in the early years of the century. Bernini was also commissioned to build the papal tomb, though work on that great, macabre memorial, so different in spirit to the triumphal monument to Urban VIII, only began after the Pope's death. Outside the church he reverted to his more extrovert manner and built the huge colonnade which stretches out to embrace the square. In the Vatican palace he designed the Scala Regia and almost completed the statue of Constantine the Great. Elsewhere he and his pupils were responsible for new palaces, churches, fountains, streets and squares. It seemed as if the golden age had returned, and Alexander certainly earned his punning nickname as a 'Papa di grande edificazione'.[3] In the Quirinal, meanwhile, the Barberini favourite Pietro da Cortona was in charge of a large decorative scheme which employed all the leading Roman artists in painting scenes from the Old Testament in the great gallery.[4] Pietro also worked on the reconstruction of S. Maria della Pace and, despite his increasing age and gout, painted a number of altarpieces for other churches patronised by Alexander VII, as did many other artists.

This astonishing flowering of the Roman Baroque proves how difficult it is to make any real estimate of the economic crisis that afflicted the city during the second half of the seventeenth century. It is evident that despite the tremendous drains on the

[1] Baldinucci, 1948, p. 107.

[2] For general surveys of Alexander VII's patronage see P. Sforza Pallavicino, Libro V, cap. 5, Pastor, XIV, pp. 506 ff., and Ozzola, 1908, pp. 5-91.

[3] Ozzola, 1908, p. 6.

[4] Wibiral, 1960, pp. 123-65.

Pope's finances, his accumulated resources were still plentiful. Yet the decline continued without interruption and the contrast between his spectacular building policy and the general state of the city was starkly apparent. To the Venetian ambassadors the Pope complained of his poverty,[1] and they in turn watched the ruinous expenses of Bernini's portico and cautiously drew some obvious conclusions. 'The Pope has long paid particular attention to beautifying the city and repairing the roads,' wrote Niccolò Sagredo in 1661,[2] 'and truly in this labour he has far surpassed his predecessors. . . . The building of the colonnades which encircle the piazza di S. Pietro will be an achievement to recall the greatness of ancient Rome. It is estimated that the work is about half way through and that in three years it will be complete. I am not going to discuss whether such efforts are advisable at the present moment and will leave that to those who understand these things better than I do. It is true that Rome is getting more and more buildings and fewer and fewer inhabitants. This decrease is very striking and obvious to everyone, and in the Corso and the busiest streets one sees nothing but empty houses and the sign *To Let*.' Seven years later Sagredo's heir, Giacomo Querini, had no such hesitations. 'One very striking reason for the waste of so much treasure', he wrote after describing the state of papal finances under Alexander VII,[3] 'has been the putting up of buildings which have destroyed rather than added to this city, the capital of the world. The erection of the porticos at St Peter's is without any conceivable advantage. There are obvious weaknesses in the architecture for which Bernini has been blamed. The three hundred columns, arranged according to an oval plan, merely serve as an architectural precinct for the marvellous church of the Prince of the Apostles. But they will make the Leonine city permanently uninhabitable, cause the Vatican to be abandoned and perhaps make it impossible to hold the conclave there. For the razing of houses, the increase in water for fountains and the extinction of fires will lead to malaria. All this confirms the worst rumours that over a million *scudi* have been spent on a series of catastrophic mistakes.'

Querini was exaggerating for political reasons. But, in fact, much of the desolation he referred to was real enough, though its origins were very different. In 1656 the last great plague to afflict Europe began moving north from Naples and struck Rome a few months later at the very beginning of Alexander VII's reign. Though we are specifically told that work on the decoration of the Quirinal continued throughout this terrible year,[4] the long-term effects on the economy were serious. As usual it was the independent artists who suffered most from the impoverishment of Rome. 'For seven months now people have been talking only of reforms and retrenchment', wrote Salvator Rosa in 1662, and two years later the situation was no better: 'As for commissions, I haven't had any, even from a dog, for a full year, and if the war news gets any worse, I might as well plant my brushes in the garden. . . .'[5]

[1] Barozzi e Berchet, II, p. 247: 'e sempre si duole non della ristrettezza, ma della povertà sua . . .'.
[2] *ibid.*, II, p. 245.
[3] *ibid.*, p. 320.
[4] Bellori, 1942, p. 82.
[5] De Rinaldis, 1939, pp. 150 and 161-2.

The war to which Rosa alluded was averted by the total surrender of the Pope to Louis XIV who was threatening it. And, in fact, the political situation of Rome was as important as the financial decline in affecting patronage. The career of Alexander VII demonstrated the collapse. As legate in Germany he had vainly protested against the peace settlement of 1648 which put an end to the Thirty Years War without taking papal interests into account. As Pope he soon began to suffer from Louis XIV's aggressive nationalism. This reached a climax in 1662 when his ambassador, the Duc de Créqui, seized on one of the characteristic street brawls of the time as a pretext for inflicting the most bitter humiliation that any pope had suffered since the Sack of Rome in 1527. Alexander's nephews and representatives were publicly insulted and compelled to apologise for an incident that they had not provoked; Avignon was threatened with French occupation; the Pope was forced to dismiss his guard.

The effects of this crushing defeat soon made themselves felt in other spheres. Within a month of the Treaty of Pisa, which settled the immediate crisis, Bernini and a number of other architects were approached and asked to provide designs for the rebuilding of the Louvre. A year later Bernini was invited to Paris to supervise his proposals. The correct forms were upheld. The letters from Colbert and from the King himself were exceedingly flattering. Permission was sought from the Pope with great delicacy. But beneath the exchange of courtesies more powerful forces were at work. Bernini was actively engaged on the colonnade of St Peter's at the time. His presence in Rome was very desirable as the Pope acknowledged. Yet 'in view of the arrangements then being made with that Crown', Alexander VII gave him three months leave of absence, and Oliva, the General of the Jesuits, who was most anxious to appease the French, put the greatest moral pressure on him to go. After he had been away some six months, the feeling in Rome was tense and nervous. 'Many people, and not least the Pope and his principal courtiers, were . . . daily expecting to hear that Bernini had decided to stay in Paris.' To such a state had the Pope's authority now fallen.[1]

The unwelcome departure of Bernini for a few months was the most immediate artistic result of Alexander VII's defeat. Psychologically the effects were much more profound and, in the long run, much more disturbing. Humiliated abroad, the Pope's prestige naturally suffered in Rome itself. Anti-clerical literature and pasquinades had had a long and vigorous history in the city. The extravagance of the Barberini and the War of Castro, followed by the dominance at court of Donna Olimpia, provided obvious and much appreciated targets. Now, under Alexander VII, satirical contempt for the Pope, and sometimes even for the institution of the papacy, reached new heights.[2] The general dissatisfaction was focused in a picture painted by Salvator Rosa for Carlo de' Rossi (Plate 24). This represented *Fortune*, who, seated at the top of the canvas with a great cornucopia, indifferently poured out her riches to a gathering of

[1] Baldinucci, 1948, pp. 111 ff. In a note (107 on page 249) in this edition Samek Ludovici says that one of the clauses of the Treaty of Pisa actually granted the French King the right to employ the Pope's artists. This clause certainly does not occur in the published versions of the Treaty.

[2] For examples see Spini and Limentani, 1961.

pigs, wolves, foxes, wild birds and beasts of prey. It has already been shown that Rosa had his own motives for bitterness which were not necessarily inspired by the political situation. None the less the allusions of this picture were too obvious to pass unnoticed, and jealous rivals were quick to point to its potentially subversive significance when Rosa exhibited it at S. Giovanni Decollato. 'The affair assumed such proportions', wrote Baldinucci,[1] 'that the painter was on the point of having to explain the meaning of his picture in prison', had it not been for the intervention of Don Mario Chigi, the Pope's brother and, incidentally, one of those most obviously implicated in Rosa's satirical interpretation of Fortune.

There is a double irony in Don Mario's generous move, for at about this time his son, Cardinal Flavio Chigi, was commissioning from a second-rate Sienese painter, Bernardino Mei, a ceiling fresco of *Fortune under the control of Virtue*.[2] The issue was thus a live one, but general opinion certainly shared Rosa's view that the overwhelming riches that accrued to the papal family were the results of Fortune only, with little or no sign of Virtue. In fact, the hostility aroused by the Pope's brother Mario, and his two nephews, Flavio and Agostino, was all the greater because it had seemed for a time that he had decided not to summon them from his native Siena. As the traditional pattern developed, and the family grew ever richer and more overbearing, disappointment became intense. Neither of the Chigi nephews showed any great intelligence or culture, but Cardinal Flavio was fond of painting and he naturally employed Bernini to build, or rather rebuild, the palace in piazza SS. Apostoli which he bought from a branch of the Colonna family in 1662. The result of Flavio's mediocrity of taste and Bernini's genius led to a situation rare, if not unique, in Rome at the time: a spectacular façade with colossal pilasters running through the top two floors led into a building whose decoration and pictures must have appeared as an extraordinary anti-climax. There were the allegories by Mei—*Fortune under the control of Virtue, Justice and Peace* and *Youth rescued from the Pleasures of Venus*—a theme of special relevance to Cardinal Flavio, who, in his country house at Ariccia some years later, was to hang a collection of portraits of the thirty-six most beautiful women in Rome[3]; there were other ceilings by Giovanni Angelo Canini whom the Cardinal had taken with him to draw scenes of interest on his humiliating visit to Paris; there were, above all, mythological paintings and portraits by Gaulli and, of course, antique statues in plenty. No doubt there were some fine pictures, but, compared to the collections of earlier papal nephews, the list is not a distinguished one.[4]

– iii –

Flavio's limited interest was not the only reason for this lack of distinction. The very extent of his uncle's patronage reduced his opportunities for employing first-rate

[1] Baldinucci, VI, 1728, pp. 558-9. The picture is now the property of the Paul Getty Museum, Malibu.

[2] Golzio, 1939, p. 14.

[3] Pastor, XIV, p. 329.

[4] Apart from Golzio, 1939, see also for Flavio's collecting Incisa della Rocchetta, 1925, pp. 539-44.

artists—it is significant that Bernini did not begin to reconstruct the palace until Alexander VII had been on the throne for nearly ten years. It is also true that the wide choice of talent that had been available to Paul V and Urban VIII was no longer in existence. But this, in turn, was at least partly due to a general decline in the numbers and standards of great patrons. The reasons for this decline are not very far to seek. The economic collapse, which has already been referred to, and a number of measures introduced by the Pope to prevent prelates deserting their provincial sees and living in Rome, played a considerable part in the process.[1] The old families were increasingly impoverished; new ones more and more reluctant to settle in Rome. Indeed, of the old-established clans only the Colonna continued, almost without interruption, to acquire important new pictures. Their palace, situated near the one sold to the Chigi, had been largely rebuilt and decorated by Filippo and his son, Cardinal Girolamo, during the first half of the century, despite the poverty which had compelled them to sell their principality of Palestrina to the Barberini.[2] But the most interesting and influential patron of the family was Lorenzo Onofrio, Grand Constable of the Kingdom of Naples. In 1661, at the age of 24, he married Maria Mancini, the niece of Cardinal Mazarin and the first love of Louis XIV. When she arrived in Rome she was struck, as so many visitors have subsequently been, by the splendour of her husband's family palace after the comparative meanness of its exterior. For some years, while she bore him son after son, she was one of the two leading ladies in Roman society, rivalled only by Queen Christina of Sweden. Lorenzo Onofrio, meanwhile, continued to make a series of impressive additions to the family picture collection which had so impressed Maria on her arrival. His taste was eclectic and at one time or another most of the principal Roman artists worked for him, from the *bamboccianti* to history painters.[3] But his greatest passion seems to have been for mythological fables and landscapes, wherever possible in combination. Gianfrancesco Grimaldi and many other artists were engaged to paint landscapes in his palace, and he commissioned innumerable pictures by specialists in the subject such as Salvator Rosa and, above all, Gaspard Dughet (sometimes with figures by Carlo Maratta) and Claude.[4] In this striking preference for landscape decoration Lorenzo Onofrio helped to launch, or at least to confirm, a fashion which did not meet with general critical approval. Commenting on the constant demand for landscapes which reached its peak at the beginning of the new century, Padre Sebastiano Resta, a scholarly collector and pioneer in the study of Renaissance drawings, wrote rather acidly that he did 'not derive much pleasure from these landscape artists and *bamboccisti*...' and that even in his earlier days he had 'not much enjoyed such finicky modern works'.[5] Colonna, however, was far too lively and expansive a patron to take any note

[1] Barozzi e Berchet, II, p. 245.

[2] Prospero Colonna, 1925.

[3] See the catalogue of the collection published anonymously in Rome in 1783 and the brief modern account by Corti.

[4] Seventeenth-century artistic literature contains a large number of references to Colonna patronage. See, in this connection, especially Pascoli, I, pp. 35, 60, 72, 115, 125, 139, and also Bellori, 1942, p. 128.

[1] Bottari, II, pp. 115-16.

of the complaints of scholars or pedants, and his employment of Claude, ranging over a period of nearly twenty years, showed the discrimination of his taste.[1] After a *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt* which he bought from the artist in 1662, the year after his marriage, he subsequently commissioned from him a series of eight mythological scenes, including the so-called *Enchanted Castle* and Claude's last picture, *Ascanius shooting the Stag of Sylvia*, now in the Ashmolean Museum.

The unusual nature of many of the subjects, and the fact that some of them almost certainly contain allusions to the Colonna family and estates, suggest that Lorenzo Onofrio himself was closely connected with the creation of these beautiful pictures. Certainly, his love of art was in no way diminished by the growing complications of his private life. Within a few years of his marriage he was compelled to agree to his wife's demand for a 'separatione di letto', and his reckless infidelities led to her leaving him in 1672. A fantastic pursuit delighted the scandalmongers but served little other purpose, and after a brief visit to Spain, with which country his connections became ever closer, he virtually retired from public life and died in 1689. Fourteen years earlier he had employed the two Lucchese artists Giovanni Coli and Filippo Gherardi on one of the most important decorative schemes of the second half of the seventeenth century: the frescoes, recording the exploits of his ancestor Marc'Antonio Colonna at the Battle of Lepanto, on the ceiling of the great gallery in his palace. This battle scene with its plunging ships and toppling masts all rendered in bold Venetian colouring is in a category of its own as decoration and has little connection with Gaulli's contemporary frescoes in the Gesù or Carlo Maratta's in the Altieri palace. But the scheme is also significant from another point of view. The Colonna, though greatly impoverished, were among the few families still in the very forefront of Roman society who could genuinely claim an ancestry of heroic antiquity. As the 'new' families usurped more and more of their previous glories, contemplation of past prowess was one of the most obvious consolations, as the Venetian patricians were soon to discover in somewhat similar circumstances.

– iv –

While grandiose schemes of this kind could still occasionally be promoted by the nobility, the more subtle and discriminating patronage of contemporary art, which had been such an important feature of earlier years, now began to decline in significance. Cardinal Massimi has already been discussed, but he was an exceptional figure. More characteristic of the second half of the century were a number of scholars and men of letters who projected into their art collecting their predominantly literary interests.

The strangest of all these collectors was the antiquarian and local historian Antonio degli Effetti.[2] His pictures have disappeared, and thus our knowledge of his taste can

[1] For Lorenzo Onofrio and Claude I have closely followed Röthlisberger, 1961, p. 374, and other references indicated there.

[2] For Antonio degli Effetti see the many references in Moroni; also Orbaan, 1914, p. 46; Vaes, 1925, p. 171; Bellori, *Nota dei Musei* and, above all, the manuscript account and inventory of his collection in the Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, MS. 2372.

be derived only from the catalogue that he himself drew up. Doubts have even been expressed as to whether he owned, rather than imagined, some of the pictures he mentions, but we have independent evidence that he was known as a collector. To foreign travellers Antonio's *Studiolo* might appear to consist of little more than 'petites peintures, mignatures, pierres precieuses, et autres bijoux'.[1] For himself its significance was very much greater and of a totally different order. Antonio was above all a man of letters and he had been deeply impressed by a Platonic dialogue called *The Table*, at the time attributed to a Theban disciple of Socrates called Cebes.[2] The vogue of this work, which later caught the fancy of Lord Shaftesbury, was largely due to Agostino Mascardi, a well-known Professore d'Eloquenza at Rome University under Urban VIII, who had translated it with an extremely long commentary in 1629. It purports to describe a picture, which represents an allegory of human life, found by two travellers in front of the temple of Kronos. A stranger explains the details of the picture, pointing out the follies of vice and false values and the rewards of virtue; neither in form nor in content does the dialogue show much originality. But ever since the Renaissance patrons and artists had eagerly seized on descriptions of antique pictures, and it is easy to understand the appeal to the erudite Antonio degli Effetti of such a neglected and recherché example. He had a version of it reproduced at the entrance of his gallery and most of the pictures he owned were designed to illustrate its lessons. Antonio (as was natural in a scholar) seized on one of these especially. 'Consider how often a man is to be found possessed of wealth, but living an evil and wretched life. . . . Wealth is not a good thing if it does not help men to be better.' Virtually all the artists he employed were required to illustrate the effects of wealth on man's destiny. But just as many seventeenth-century poets, and in particular Marino, were so taken with the elaboration of their metaphors that they ignored their original purpose and continued to enrich them to the detriment of the theme, so Antonio degli Effetti clearly took delight in the idea of wealth for its own sake with or without moral implications. The Bible, ancient literature and history, as well as sixteenth-century poetry, were all indiscriminately ransacked for suitable chances to portray gold and precious jewels. *King Midas* hung near *The Feast of Cleopatra*, *Armida* next to *Danaë* and *The Judgement of Paris*.

There is no doubt that Antonio degli Effetti revelled in the literary possibilities of such a gallery. But, in general, the artists represented were so modest—many have fallen into total obscurity—that we can certainly accept the truth of his claims. Of established painters only Pietro da Cortona and Carlo Maratta, with one picture each, were included. The others were men like Bernardino Gagliardi, Francesco Allegrini and, above all, a great number of Flemish artists. The minor reputations of these painters and the small dimensions of the pictures doubtless brought them within the range even of a man as obsessed with the benefits of poverty as was Antonio degli Effetti.

Another interesting patron and collector was the Florentine Francesco Marucelli,

[1] Spon and Wheler, I, p. 232.

[2] In fact the *Pinax* is by a totally different author and probably dates from the first century A.D. I have used the English version by H. E. Seebohm, Chipping Campden, 1906.

who lived in the piazza di Spagna.[1] Books were his real passion and he amassed a considerable library which he recorded in a work of a great scholarly erudition. But he also showed a keen interest in the arts of his day. He wrote the lives of some of the principal painters, many of whom were his friends, and he sent details about artists working in Rome to Filippo Baldinucci when that scholar was writing his great history of Italian art. His patronage shows an inconsistency which is characteristic of the breakdown of taste which occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century but which is certainly refreshing when compared to the arid pedantry of many of his contemporaries. On the one hand he commissioned busts in stucco, wood, marble and paint of the great writers whose works filled his excellent library; on the other, he delighted in the *bambocciate* of the Flemish painter Theodor Helmbrecker whose most enthusiastic admirer he was and who painted sixteen pictures for him, some of them scenes of country life and some with a hint of allegory.[2]

And a third and more modest of these scholarly collectors was a certain Luigi Adami. He too was keen to obtain portraits of the most significant men in history. In 1667 we find him writing that he has just obtained pictures of Lord Essex and 'Francesco Drach' among the English as well as distinguished Germans, Spaniards, French and Portuguese. And he observed sententiously that 'there is no history which does not provide me with some flower capable of delighting the eye of the curious with the beauty of its colour and reviving the spirit of the idle with the strength of its perfume'.[3]

But all these men, and others like them, are interesting more for themselves than because they play any significant part in the history of painting. Not one of them was able through a combination of wealth, intellect and taste to influence the development of art. That rôle was now taken over from the patron by the critic. Indeed to some extent the growing importance of the latter was the direct result of the fall of the former.

The most important of all the Roman critics who began to make their influence felt in the second half of the seventeenth century was Gian Pietro Bellori.[4] He was born in about 1615 and was said to be the nephew of the antiquarian collector and writer Francesco Angeloni who was certainly his guardian. In Angeloni's house Bellori could see Annibale Carracci's drawings for the Farnese Gallery and could meet Domenichino from whom he took lessons. At an early date he became an active member of the Accademia di S. Luca, but instead of practising art he began to write about it, at first rather haphazardly and then with growing assurance. Like Angeloni he devoted much of his time to the study of antiquity, but he also watched contemporary developments with keen interest. He drew up a catalogue of some of the leading Roman collections, and in 1664 he delivered a lecture to the Accademia on the 'Ideal' in art. He was already engaged in writing the Lives of a number of important painters and when he published

[1] For the life of Marucelli see the introduction by Guido Biagi to his *Mare Magnum*.
[2] Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 597.
[3] Abbate Michele Giustiniani, I, p. 336.
[4] For the life of Bellori see Donahue, 1946.

these in 1672 he included his lecture of some years earlier as a preface to the book. From then onwards he was a dominant figure in artistic circles, more influential, both in the short and the long run, than the Jesuits, the popes or any of the other bodies which are held to have moulded stylistic developments.

For Bellori, unlike these others, had an absolutely consistent point of view which he expressed with clarity and authority.[1] It is this last feature which makes him so important, for his views in themselves were derived from many different sources, and he was more of a transmitter than an originator. Bellori broke with the art-historical tradition that had been established by Vasari and feebly continued into the seventeenth century by Baglione. He did not aim at completeness either in his selection of artists or in his accounts of their lives or yet in his listing of their works. He ruthlessly subordinated studio gossip and even serious biographical information to a critical examination of what he regarded as the most significant achievements of the seventeenth century. His criterion of judgement was based on the concept of the Ideal as it had already been elaborated by pioneers such as Monsignor Agucchi. After the Renaissance, art had degenerated into senseless mannerism from which it had eventually been rescued by Annibale Carracci and his Bolognese followers. They had turned back to nature and also to a profound study of the antique and of the great masters, especially Raphael. For extreme naturalism was just as dangerous as extreme mannerism. The *Lives* had an enemy—Caravaggio—though one whom Bellori was compelled to respect, for he was a sensitive judge of quality as well as a deeply intelligent man. But, fortunately, there were also heroes—Domenichino, from whom he had once taken lessons, and Nicolas Poussin, his great friend, who unquestionably inspired many of the ideas in the book. It was, therefore, the 'classical' qualities in his contemporaries and predecessors that he singled out for praise. The sculptor Algardi was given a full-scale life; Bernini a few casual mentions. He wrote, but was unable to publish, a life of Andrea Sacchi; Pietro da Cortona was wholly ignored. But of all the artists of his time it was Carlo Maratta, Sacchi's pupil, who most appealed to him. In 1652 he helped to get Maratta one of his first important commissions and in later years he had his portrait painted by the artist, whose reputation he did everything he could to promote.[2] It was to Bellori that Maratta and his pupil Giuseppe Chiari went for iconographical and no doubt other advice when given difficult commissions.[3] The devout love for Raphael that both men felt was genuinely, if unfortunately, expressed by Maratta's restoration of the frescoes in the Vatican and the Farnesina and Bellori's *Descrizione delle Immagini dipinte da Raffaello d'Urbino*. Furiously he attacked those who refused to subscribe to the cult, and he wrote sarcastically of 'some people who in their schools and their books teach that Raphael is dry and hard, that his manner is statuine (a word that has come into the language in our own day), and who claim that he had no fire or spirit [furia o fierezza di Spirito]'.[4] In passages like this he was at once preparing the way for neo-classicism

[1] For the literature on Bellori's critical theories see Schlosser Magnino.
[2] Bellori, 1942, p. 99.
[3] *ibid.*, p. 92, and Pascoli, I, p. 211.
[4] Bellori, 1942, p. 115.

and doing everything that he could to oppose a rival view of art that was soon to gain ground in much of Europe—a love for brio, the unfinished, the sketchy, the *belle matière*. In a later chapter it will be shown that it was, in fact, partly owing to the overriding influence of Bellori that this view made few converts in Rome.

It is a strange experience to confront Bellori's words, which when taken up by followers hardened into dogma for over a century, with the paintings of his favourite Maratta. To us his watered-down versions of the Baroque bear little relation to the classical ideal of antiquity or Raphael; none the less when compared to the high Baroque of Pietro da Cortona or Gaulli the move towards simplicity and respect for the rules is obvious. Indeed the hostile reception that Gaulli's frescoes in the Gesù met with in certain circles[1]—'all the artists concluded that [the vault] would be beautiful if the proportions of the painting were less inaccurate and by someone else'—was no doubt due in part to the classicising influence of Bellori, and in his subsequent works Gaulli himself adopted a far more classical style. Artists from other cities, particularly Naples, were generally scorned in Rome and, if they came to work there, were compelled to regularise their style in conformity with the prevailing dogmas. And the rise of articulate criticism had another effect. More than ever before there was a widely held sentiment that art was not what it had been. 'All over Europe there is a shortage of good artists and even in Flanders there are no longer the painters that there once were', wrote Jacomo di Castro in 1670, echoing a general feeling.[2] In part this was merely the recognition of what was an undoubted fact; but in part it reflected the growing attention being paid to critics such as Bellori.

His influence grew with the years. In 1671 he was made secretary of the Accademia di S. Luca and not long after he was appointed librarian and antiquarian to Queen Christina of Sweden. This extraordinary figure, 'cross-backed . . . [with] a double Chin strew'd with some long Hairs of Beard', weirdly dressed in a man's cloak and wearing a cravat round her neck,[3] had first come to Rome in 1655 after her sensational conversion to Catholicism at the age of 28. Apart from voyages, which were frequently lengthy, to France and Sweden, she remained in the city until her death in 1689. She soon intrigued, and sometimes horrified, society by the eccentricity of her behaviour, but none the less began to exert great influence in political, literary and artistic circles. In the palazzo Riario on the Lungara she displayed the marvellous collection of pictures which her father Gustavus Adolfus had looted from Prague—Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Veronese, Rubens and other old masters.[4] It was, however, a sign of the times that artists in Rome no longer possessed the creative vitality to make use of these in the way that a previous generation had drawn inspiration from the Aldobrandini Titians. In her patronage of contemporaries Christina was not very imaginative nor did she have much scope. She particularly admired Pierfrancesco Mola, the most genuine heir to the

[1] See the *avvisi* published in *Roma*, XIX, 1941, p. 392.
[2] In a letter to Don Antonio Ruffo of 20 September 1670 published by V. Ruffo, 1916, p. 290.
[3] Skippon, p. 676, and Misson, 1717, II, p. 167.
[4] Bildt, 1904, pp. 989-1003.

Venetian tradition, and his pupil, Antonio Gherardi, another special devotee of Venetian colour. When she let herself be guided by Bellori, the results were different, for he encouraged her to patronise one of Domenichino's most faithful pupils and a protégé of his own, Gianangelo Canini.[1] In fact, however, the Queen's patronage of living painters was of little significance and her influence made itself felt far more in the literary field, where it led eventually to the formation of the Society of Arcadia a year after her death.

– V –

After the death of Pope Alexander VII official patronage of the arts declined precipitously. The deeply cultivated Giulio Rospigliosi, who became Pope Clement IX in 1667, reigned for only two years, barely enough to commission a magnificent portrait from Carlo Maratta and figures of the Angels carrying the Symbols of the Passion from Bernini to be placed on the Ponte S. Angelo. His successor, Clement X, was already aged 80 when he came to the throne, and the great and natural preoccupation of his family, the Altieri, was that he would die before they had time to complete the new family palace which they were building next to the church of the Gesù to the great indignation of the Jesuits.[2] Work continued throughout the night with the help of torches and by 1673 the ceiling of the principal hall was ready for decoration. On the advice of Camillo Massimi, the artist chosen was Carlo Maratta and he in turn consulted Bellori as regards the iconography. The fresco was thus the most considered work of the late seventeenth century in Rome, as representative of its period as Pietro da Cortona's Barberini ceiling had been of the rule of Urban VIII. Here too the climax of the fresco is a female figure, Clemency (a punning reference to the Pope's name), bathed in golden light. But with that the similarity between the two works ends. Everything has shrunk. The fresco is now reduced to a thin oval rigidly enclosed within a carved stucco frame. The adulation survives—one of the figures standing with the three cardinal virtues is Public Happiness holding a standard to symbolise Don Gasparo Altieri, the Pope's adopted nephew and Gonfaloniere of the Church—but the means to express it have been so controlled that the painting loses all its propagandist fervour and is turned instead into a remote, impersonal and frigid allegory. The formal language is that of the Baroque, but the life has been drained away and only a still, flat echo remains.[3]

It is also characteristic that the work dragged on for some twenty years and that the decoration planned for the palace by Carlo Maratta and his pupils was never completed owing to some unspecified differences with Don Gasparo Altieri.[4]

The differences were no doubt economic. Pope Clement X was making a serious, and not wholly unsuccessful, attempt to reduce excessive nepotism, and Don Gasparo, though keenly fond of luxury, was unable to indulge his tastes on the scale of a Barberini

[1] Pascoli, I, p. 124, and II, pp. 119 and 290.
[2] See the *avviso* of 9 April 1672 published in *Roma*, XVIII, 1940, p. 57.
[3] Bellori, 1942, pp. 91-4 and, for the work by Berrettoni in the palace, A. Clark, 1961, pp. 190-3.
[4] Pascoli, I, p. 140.

or a Chigi so that the most memorable record of his patronage is Claude's *The landing of Aeneas in Latium* which he added to the same artist's *Sacrifice to Apollo*, painted for his father some twelve years earlier.[1] Clement X had good reason to try to economise. 'The States of the Church are very impoverished', wrote the Venetian ambassador.[2] 'The treasurers report that when their officials proceed against debtors they do not get the gold and silver that they used to, but only worn and wretched rags. In the countryside around Rome cultivation is being increasingly abandoned because of the losses suffered by farmers owing to excessively low prices. This state of affairs is made worse by the habit adopted by the Genoese three years ago of getting their grain from the Adriatic so that crops from the Roman shores remain unsold. In the Marches, Romagna and nearby provinces the ease of navigation encourages the supply of money, but the land is short of ready cash. In any case even there the disadvantages of luxury are making themselves felt.' It was natural that the opposition to extravagant art patronage, which was always latent in certain sections of the community, should become vocal once again. A plan of Clement IX to remodel the tribune of S. Maria Maggiore, and thus provide a burial-place for himself even more imposing than those of Sixtus V and Paul V in the same church, was dropped after his death—to the great satisfaction both of his family, which feared that they would be called upon to assume the expense, and of the clergy which disliked the threat to the venerable mosaics.[3] Meanwhile the municipal authorities were said to be drawing up a 'resolution to give to His Holiness which was directed against the Cavaliere Bernini, who was the instigator of the Popes' indulging in useless expenses in such disastrous times'.[4] Of Innocent XI, who succeeded Clement X and ruled for thirteen years, we are told that 'his whole mind was given to driving back the Turks who had descended with all Asia on Vienna and Hungary' and that for this reason Carlo Maratta, by now unquestionably the most famous artist of the day, did not have the opportunity to be introduced to him.[5] This is not wholly true, as Maratta was certainly employed on one very characteristic task—the covering of an overexposed breast of the Virgin Mary painted in the Quirinal by Guido Reni at the beginning of the century.[6] For this was a period of great austerity. The theatre and the carnival were discouraged and everything was done to suppress indecency in art—not with complete success, if we are to believe a French envoy, who found that Cardinal Basadonna's bedroom was full of 'tableaux de nudités'.[7] 'La misère est déjà très grande à Rome, et le gouvernement odieux, et haï extrêmement', wrote another witness in

[1] For the history and significance of these two Claudes, now at Anglesey Abbey, see Röthlisberger, I, p. 369.

[2] Barozzi e Berchet, II, p. 360.

[3] Pastor, XIV, p. 558.

[4] See *avviso* of 2 August 1670 published in *Roma*, XVIII, 1940, p. 95. Bernini was under constant attack at this period—see further *avvisi* published *ibid.*, pp. 58 and 95.

[5] Bellori, 1942, p. 107.

[6] *ibid.*, p. 108.

[7] See the report of the French envoy, l'abbé de Servient, to M. de Croissy in 1683—quoted Michaud, I, p. 176. Cardinal Basadonna's tomb with a penetrating bust is in the church of S. Marco in the Palazzo Venezia.

1685.[1] In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Pope 'did not have much taste for building'[2] and did 'not have the ambition to leave behind any permanent memorial of himself'.[3] He refused to allow the chapter of St Peter's to build a third colonnade and thus enclose altogether the square in front of the church; and when the Jesuits, who had been given a large sum of money by the King of Spain with which they hoped at last to decorate the tribune of the Gesù, asked for permission to make use of the papal foundries, he replied that 'if they had any money they should keep it and not spend it, for this was not the time to indulge in useless luxuries'. Most significantly of all, the chronicler who reported this added that 'a hundred craftsmen could have lived for at least three years on the work'.[4]

And, indeed, if an artist of the stature of Carlo Maratta could see his official commissions almost vanish during two successive papacies, the situation of lesser men can easily be imagined. It was undoubtedly the threat of unemployment on this scale, as well as the increasing dogmatism of Roman critics, that discouraged so many painters from other Italian cities from coming to live and work in Rome towards the end of the century. This in turn naturally affected such patrons as still survived and wished to continue the great traditions of the Barberini and their entourage. For it must not, of course, be imagined that extensive building and decoration came to an end during the last phase of the century. If the darker side has here been singled out for special attention, that is because it was the side that struck contemporaries with special force; and it is impossible for us to survey the patronage of the whole century without noticing the great decline that set in during its second half and thereafter gathered weight. None the less even a drastic decline from the standards set by the Barberini could still leave rich, and sometimes magnificent, results, and there were certainly a number of important figures who greatly contributed to Roman art life at the turn of the new century. For reasons that have already been suggested the popes themselves were not usually the most prominent of these. The situation of Clement XI (1700-1721) is indicative. He commissioned many works from leading artists all over Italy, 'and his feelings for painting were certainly not less than those of his predecessors, and he would have done very much more had he not been snatched away [from such plans] by the death of Charles II [of Spain] and the rapid and fierce flames of war which swept through the whole of Europe'.[5] It is symbolic of the conditions to be described in the following chapter that when Clement commissioned statues and paintings for the Lateran basilica, other potentates, including the Schönborn family of Pommersfelden in Franconia, had to pay for most of them.[6]

Characteristic also of this state of affairs was the career of the most adventurous

[1] *ibid.*, I, p. 68. In estimating the reliability of these reports account must be taken of the extreme French hostility towards the Pope.

[2] Pascoli, I, p. 311.

[3] See *avviso* of 28 January 1679 published in *Roma*, XIX, 1941, p. 161.

[4] See *avviso* of 18 February 1679 published *ibid.*

[5] Pascoli, II, p. 546.

[6] Hantsch und Scherff, pp. 92 and 93.

patron of the time, Pietro Ottoboni, nephew of Pope Alexander VIII who reigned for only two years.[1] Pietro who was made cardinal in 1689 was then aged 22. He sprang from the Venetian nobility, but on different occasions both he and his father were temporarily struck off the *Libro d'Oro* by the jealous Republic for accepting stipends from foreign governments. The offence was a natural one, for most of Pietro Ottoboni's long life was passed in a desperate attempt to raise money from whatever source was available. He was a man with all the extravagant tastes of the traditional Cardinal-nephew who was able to enjoy the rôle for only two years. None the less he continued under successive régimes to hold the post of papal Vice-Chancellor and until his death in 1740 the palace of the Cancelleria in which he lived was the centre of the most enlightened and extravagant patronage in Rome.

It is, in fact, with some reluctance that one discusses Pietro Ottoboni in a chapter devoted to the decline of patronage. He was by far the most cultivated papal-nephew since Francesco Barberini, and it is perfectly possible to see him as a figure just as influential—and perhaps even as constructive—in his effect on the arts.[2] He was a versatile musician and a composer of operatic librettos; he fostered an important theatre whose scenery was managed by Filippo Juvarra[3]; at one time or another he acquired pictures by most of the leading Italian artists. None the less, Pietro Ottoboni was living during a period when the creative impulse in Rome was at a low ebb. He was able to revive for some half-century an echo of the Barberini glamour, but he left little behind him of permanent value. To his contemporaries he rightly seemed to be a figure of exceptional importance; to us he emerges as a man of the most amiable character and of consummate taste from an essentially second-rate epoch. Despite this he certainly deserves a full-length essay to himself; for a few pages, such as the following, coming at the end of a study devoted to patronage in Baroque Rome, cannot but judge him unfairly.

Ottoboni was a Venetian and the artist whom he patronised with the greatest enthusiasm was Francesco Trevisani who came to Rome from Venice in about 1682.[4] For his chief protector Trevisani painted innumerable pictures of religious, historical and genre scenes as well as portraits.[5] Many of these are of high distinction and some are painted with the sensitivity to colour one would expect from a man of his origins. But the classical ambience of Rome and the influence of Carlo Maratta, whom Trevisani eventually succeeded as the leading Roman painter, were too powerful to be withstood, and it was as a gentle, sweet and academic artist that Trevisani won his European reputation. Such was indeed the effect of Ottoboni's circle on most of the painters who

[1] For a summary of Cardinal Ottoboni's political career see Cicogna, I, pp. 269-70.

[2] Every author of the period writes at length about Ottoboni's passion for art; the fullest evidence for this is to be found in the manuscript inventory of his pictures in the Archivio di Stato, Rome—Atti del notaio de Caesaris, 1740, protocolli 1838 and 1839.

[3] For this theatre see Rava, 1942.

[4] For Ottoboni's relations with Trevisani see the unpublished life of this artist by Lione Pascoli in the Biblioteca Augusta di Perugia, MS. 1383.

[5] For Trevisani's portrait of Ottoboni, now in the Bowes Museum, see Waterhouse, 1953, p. 120.

worked for him. Sebastiano Conca, the pupil of Solimena in Naples, gradually lost the vigorous brio of his early years when he came to Rome in about 1706 and was taken up by the Cardinal and his friends.[1] Gaulli, another favourite, also became flaccidly academic as the years went by. Only Juvarra, whose architectural style was certainly affected by the ten years during which he absorbed the academic Baroque of Carlo Fontana between 1704 and 1714, produced new work of exceptional verve and vitality when working for Cardinal Ottoboni. But that was confined to his marvellous stage sets for the theatre in the Cancelleria.[2] In so far as one can point to any specific influence of Pietro Ottoboni on the arts it must be sought in a rather bland sweetness, restrained by the rules of academic classicism from verging too far in the direction of the rococo, and tending towards a certain cool anonymity. It was a style easily transmitted from master to pupil, from court to court, and easily appreciated by princes and general public alike. It lacked the vigour of the true Baroque, the intricate fantasy of French rococo, with which it was contemporary, and the severity of later eighteenth-century painting. With the coming of neo-classicism it was condemned out of hand and it still has not found many friends.

But Pietro Ottoboni's significance in this story is not only that of a patron who affected those artists who came into close contact with him and his circle. It is also important to consider his failure to attract other painters who worked for him but who would not be lured to Rome. And these included the very men under whose genius and guidance a great revival of Italian painting was springing up at the turn of the century in almost programmatic opposition to the values fostered by Rome. The case of Sebastiano Ricci is symptomatic. He came to Rome at about the time that Ottoboni was attaining power, and, being a Venetian, he naturally did some work for him and his friends.[3] But, says Mariette 'j'ai entendu dire . . . que, lorsqu'il fut venu à Rome et qu'il eut commencé à étudier d'après les fresques de Raphael, il souhaita de retourner promptement à Venise, disant que la manière de ce grand homme étoit capable de corrompre la sienne. Il sentait bien qu'il ne pourroit jamais atteindre à la pureté de son dessein, et il craignoit que son coloris faible ne gatât le sien. Il n'avoit pas tout à fait tort.'[4]

More than thirty years later Ricci's pupil, Gaspare Diziani, also came to Rome and was at once taken up by the patriotic Cardinal. But he produced nothing more for him than a magnificent stage set for the ceremony of the Forty Hours in Ottoboni's titular church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso.[5] Another artist, closely associated with Venice though he lived in Bergamo, Fra Galgario, refused to come to Rome when called there by Ottoboni.[6]

[1] Loret, 1934, p. 545.

[2] Many of his sketches for these are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, DT.33.b.

[3] Among these friends was the great violinist Arcangelo Corelli. He owned a *Europa* by Ricci—see the inventory of his pictures published by Alberto Cametti, 1927, pp. 412-23.

[4] Mariette, IV, p. 393.

[5] See the unpublished *Zibaldone* by Tommaso Temanza—MS. 796 in Seminario Patriarcale, Venice.

[6] Tassi, II, p. 60.

From Bologna Giuseppe Maria Crespi sent the Cardinal one of his most attractive and adventurous pictures—*The Confession*, in which a subject that had not been painted since Poussin was treated as the pretext for an affectionate yet slightly ironic scene from clerical life. Ottoboni, who was as easy going as Cassiano dal Pozzo had been austere, was delighted, and commissioned the remaining six Sacraments. These were equally successful, but Crespi remained as firmly in Bologna as did Solimena (who also sent pictures to the Cardinal) in Naples.[1]

Other patrons, besides Ottoboni, were finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to attract their favourite artists to Rome.[2] Financial uncertainty and the rigours of a classical taste, already outmoded elsewhere, were taking their toll. And, besides, two important rivals to the city of the Popes were now making themselves felt—the European powers and the other towns of Italy.

[1] L. Crespi, p. 213. These pictures are now at Dresden.

[2] For instance the Marchese Niccolò Maria Pallavicini who was, after Ottoboni, the most munificent art patron in Rome during the early years of the eighteenth century, found it impossible to keep Paolo Girolamo Piola as his private painter—Soprani, II, p. 186; Cardinal d'Adda, seconded by Cardinals Gozzadini and Albani, was unsuccessful in getting the Bolognese painter Domenico Maria Viani to come to Rome—Guidalotti Franchini, p. 19. Lazzarini, the Venetian, also refused to come, though strongly pressed—da Canal, p. 69.