

**THE SONNETS OF
MICHELANGELO
BUONARROTI TRANSLATED
INTO ENGLISH VERSE**

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The sonnets of Michelangelo Buonarroti translated into English verse by S. Elizabeth Hall

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S. ELIZABETH HALL

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The Sonnets of
Michelangelo Buonarroti

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

S. ELIZABETH HALL

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
A LIFE OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI
TRANSLATED BY THE SAME FROM THE
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LIFE OF
MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

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LIFE OF
MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

(Translated from the Italian of Ascanio Condivi.)

I. MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, a painter and sculptor of singular excellence, derived his origin from the Counts of Canossa, a family of the district of Reggio, noble and illustrious, both through their own merit and ancient descent, and also through alliance with the Imperial family. Forasmuch as Beatrice, sister of Henry II., was given in marriage to Count Bonifazio da Canossa, who was then lord of Mantua: and of this union was born the Countess Matilda, a woman of rare and excellent wisdom and piety: who, after the death of her husband Gottifredo, held in Italy, besides Mantua, Lucca, Parma and Reggio, and that part of Tuscany, which is now called the patrimony of San Piero. And she, having in her lifetime done many things worthy of record, at her death was buried in the Abbey of San Benedetto on the outskirts of Mantua, which she herself had built and liberally endowed.

II. A descendant of this family, one Messer Simone, came as Podestà to Florence, in the year 1250, and, as the reward of his virtue, was made a citizen of that country, and head of one of the six divisions: for the city at that time was divided into six parts, though now it has only four. And as the Guelf faction was then ruling in Florence, in consequence of the many benefits which he had received from that party, he ceased to be a Ghibelline, and became a Guelf; changing the

colour of his arms, so that where formerly there was a white dog rampant with a bone in his mouth in a red field, he made the dog of gold in an azure field: and the Signoria then gave him five red lilies on a portcullis, and likewise the crest with two horns of a bull, one gold and the other azure, which at this day may be seen painted on their ancient shield. The original arms of Messer Simone are to be seen in the palace of the Podestà, where he caused them to be made of marble, as was the custom with most of those who held that office.

III. The reason why the family changed its name in Florence, and, instead of da Canossa, was then called de' Buonarroti, was as follows: The name of Buonarroti having been in their family generation after generation almost continually till the time of Michelangelo, who indeed had a brother called Buonarrotto: and many of these Buonarroti having been of the number of the Signori, that is to say, of the chief magistrates of that Republic: and the said brother especially being of their number at the time that Pope Leo was at Florence, as may be seen in the annals of that city: this name, being passed on from one to another of them for so long, became the cognomen of the whole family: and this was the more easy, inasmuch as the custom of Florence in elections and nominations is to add, after the proper name of the citizens, that of their father, of their grandfather, of their great-grandfather, and sometimes of ancestors still more remote: so that from these successive Buonarroti, and from that Simone who was the first in Florence of the family descended from the house of Canossa, they were called de' Buonarroti Simone, by which name they are known to this day. Finally, when Pope Leo X. came to Florence, besides giving many other privileges to that

house, he added to their arms the azure ball of the arms of the house of the Medici, with three golden lilies.

IV. Of this house, then, was sprung Michelangelo, whose father was named Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simone, a good and religious man, of habits rather antiquated than otherwise: and to him, being chief magistrate of Chiusi and of Caprese in the Casentino, this son was born in the year of our salvation 1474, on Monday the 6th of March, four hours before daybreak. A marvellous nativity certainly, and one which showed at once how great the boy should be, and of how great genius: for Mercury and Venus being in the second house of Jupiter, and having a friendly aspect, it gave promise of that which did indeed ensue, namely, that the child then born should be of noble and lofty intellect, succeeding in every undertaking without exception, but principally in those arts which delight the senses, as painting, sculpture, and architecture. His period of office drawing to an end, the father returned to Florence, and put the child out to nurse in a village called Settignano, three miles from the city, where they still have an estate: which indeed was one of the first properties acquired by Messer Simone da Canossa in that country. The nurse was the daughter of a sculptor, and was likewise married to a sculptor. On account of which Michelangelo is wont to say that it is no wonder that he should take such delight in the chisel: jesting merely, unless perchance he say this in earnest, knowing that the nurse's milk has so much power within us, that changing the constitution of the body, it often introduces a new propensity, quite diverse from that which belongs to us by nature.

V. And when the boy grew up, and reached a fit