

**THE ANONIMO: NOTES ON
PICTURES AND WORKS OF ART IN
ITALY MADE BY AN
ANONYMOUS WRITER IN THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY**

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The Anonimo: Notes on Pictures and Works of Art in Italy Made by an Anonymous Writer in the Sixteenth Century by George C. Williamson & Paolo Mussi

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GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON & PAOLO MUSSI

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

[Michiel, Marcantonio] #46? - 1552.

THE ANONIMO

NOTES ON PICTURES AND WORKS OF
ART IN ITALY MADE BY AN
ANONYMOUS WRITER IN THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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EDITED BY
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THE ANONIMO

visitor would be expected to treat them, whilst of the Venetian houses he speaks with an air of certainty and perfect acquaintance.

Arguments have been based upon the appearance of the manuscript itself, having reference to the style of the calligraphy, and with the view of ascertaining whether or not the work was written by one Marcantonio Michiel, but there has been no decided proof either way. Some critics are of opinion that this Marcantonio Michiel copied the manuscript from the writing of another man, and base their arguments upon the variety of the handwriting in the pages, upon the differences in the colour of the ink, and upon the numbering of the folios, whilst others, taking the same set of arguments, strive to prove that the actual writer of the pages was Marcantonio Michiel himself.

The dialect in which the manuscript is written is that spoken in the Venetian territory; but as that, with the addition of a few local words, one of which has already been mentioned, was in familiar use in Padua, no sound argument can be based upon this.

It is clear that the writer was an observant man; that he was keenly interested in cataloguing the objects which met his eye during his journeyings from town to town; that he

never completed his manuscript, but left places into which he could fill names later on, and many of which are still vacant; and that he wrote his guide-book at different times in the different places which he visited.

It would appear, also, that he prepared another manuscript dealing specially with Venice, which has been lost, but to which he makes some reference in the pages of this book, and that he was himself a collector of works of art, as he mentions some things that were in his own collection, and with which he compares the works he sees from time to time.

He was probably a man of good means, in high, and perhaps noble position; and was in the habit of visiting his friends, and for his own satisfaction recording a list of what special treasures they possessed, and what important works of art there were in the cities in which they resided. He was much interested in art and in artists, and he mentions any facts that he was able to obtain as to the painters of the pictures or the workers in marble or wood.

He was also interested in the questions of attribution, which even then had begun to arise, and he deals with them in his own direct way whenever they occur in his narrative. It does not in reality much matter who he was. It is

sufficient to us to know that he was a careful and cultivated observer, that he noted down the opinions, not to say the gossip, of the day, and that through him we have it presented to us more than three centuries after he recorded it. The information which he gives was quickly recognized to be of value, and is often quoted. It enables us to determine who were in his time considered to be the authors of many a noble work which still exists; it aids us in our search for those which have been lost, and it enables us to trace the wanderings from one place to another, from one collection or gallery to another, of many of the pictures which to-day adorn the galleries of Europe both public and private.

Hitherto this famous and invaluable manuscript has not been available in English. There have been several editions of it in Italian since its first appearance in 1800, and the latest, that printed in 1884, has been the basis upon which these pages have been compiled. To that edition Doctor Frizzoni contributed an exhaustive series of invaluable notes, mentioning where many of the pictures are now to be found, and adding information as to their history and the persons who in the time of the Anonimo, and since his death, have owned the works of art. By his permission and that of his publishers,

Messrs. Zanichelli Brothers, these notes have been made use of in this edition of the book, and to both Dr. Frizzoni and his publishers very hearty thanks are rendered for their courtesy and kindness. The notes have in all cases been abbreviated, and though it is believed that they will be found to contain all that is ordinarily required, the student must still be referred to the Italian edition for exhaustive information on the subject. Dr. Frizzoni's notes have been supplemented by me from various sources, and have in many cases been brought up to date by the help of other students in the same field who have written or mentioned information about the pictures in question.

Reference must especially be made to the works of Mr. Bernhard Berenson, on "Lotto" and on "Venetian Painters"; to the volume by Mr. Herbert Cook on "Giorgione," in the Great Masters Series; to the one on "Donatello" by Miss Hope Rea; and to the works of Giovanni Morelli (Ivan Lermolieff), Sir A. H. Layard, and Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

I have also to thank especially my friend Mr. Berenson for certain important notes, for reading my proofs, and for the loan of several photographs.

The translation has been made by Signor

Paolo Mussi, who bravely grappled with the numerous and complex difficulties of the quaint Venetian dialect, and who also summarized the notes from Dr. Frizzoni. The whole work has, however, been re-read with the original by me, with the invaluable aid of my son, Mr. Cuthbert A. Williamson.

Issued in English, with suitable illustrations, I think that this work should have a new course of usefulness. It will be available to many persons who have desired to use it, but whose want of knowledge of its most puzzling dialect has prevented such use. I hope that its publication may even now be the means of tracing some of the missing pictures, or at least of identifying those which are mentioned with works in various galleries, and if only one such result follows, the translators will have obtained a great reward for their labours in preparing and issuing the book.

GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON.

THE MOUNT,
GUILDFORD,
April, 1903.