

**RAFFAELLO SANZIO,
HIS SONNETS IN THE
BRITISH MUSEUM**

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Raffaello Sanzio, his sonnets in the British Museum by Louis Fagan

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LOUIS FAGAN

**RAFFAELLO SANZIO,
HIS SONNETS IN THE
BRITISH MUSEUM**



TO HER MAJESTY
THE QUEEN OF ITALY

THIS PAMPHLET

IS DEDICATED

IN

HUMBLE ADMIRATION

OF

HER ARTISTIC TASTES.



Fu forse un tempo Dolore cosa Amore,
Non perch'lo sappia il quando.

Petrarch II. Son. LXXIII.

UGO FOSCOLO, in his Essay on the love of PETRARCH, tells us how the Poet contrived to throw a beautiful veil over the figure of *Love*, whom the Grecian and Roman Poets delighted in representing naked—but a veil so transparent that we can still recognize his forms. The ideal distinction between Loves sprang at first from the different ceremonies with which the ancients worshipped the CELESTIAL VENUS, who presided over the chaste loves of girls and wives; and the TERRESTRIAL VENUS, the avowed tutelary Deity of the gallant ladies who played so

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distinguished a part in those times. In spite of the mystical and poetical allegories which ancient metaphysics and modern erudition have built on these two names, the popular distinction is constantly supported by the poets when they describe the manners of their age, and the worship of the two goddesses.

While virtuous women lived in such close retirement, that they never appeared at banquets, and occupied apartments separate from those of men—Artists, Poets, Philosophers, Magistrates, Priests and all the cultivated world met in the houses of ladies who objected not to sit as models for the Statues with which the Grecian temples were adorned. Everybody knows that ASPASIA, who governed PERICLES and educated ALCIBIADES, was a priestess of the Terrestrial Venus. "Beauty," says SOCRATES, "is illumined by a light which directs and invites me to contemplate the soul which inhabits such a form; and, if the Soul be as beautiful as the body, it is impossible not to love it. But there can be no beauty of Soul without purity; and the purity of those whom I love the most tenderly, makes me also pure."

Such opinions, FOSCOLO continues, were brought into Italy through the means of the

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ancient Fathers of the Church ; and some of the theologians, amongst others, GIOVANNI DA FABRIANO, have written treatises to reconcile the doctrines of PLATO with the Holy Scripture. The friars turned them to good account, and, in citing the example of celebrated poets, preached that the souls of deceased ladies would be more readily received into heaven, if they were appeased by the charities and prayers of their lovers. — *Ma pur Messer Francesco Petrarca, che è oggi vivo, says a Dominican preacher, habe un amante spirituale apelata Laura : però, poichè ella morì, gl'è stato più fedele che mai, et alì data tanta fama, che la sempre nominata, e non morirà mai. Et questo è quanto al corpo ; po' li ha fatto tante limosine, et facte dire tante Messe et Orationi con tanta devotione, che s'ella fosse stata la più cattiva femina del mondo, l'avrebbe tratta dalle mani del Diavolo, benchè se raxona, che morì pure santa.* — “FRANCIS PETRARCH, who is still
“ living, had a spiritual mistress, to whom
“ he owes all his glory ; and, since her
“ death, he has spent so much in charities to
“ the Church for masses, that, if she had lived
“ as a profligate woman, they would have
“ redeemed her from the hands of the devil :
“ but it is said that she died devout.”

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Believing that these few remarks represent the feelings of the greatest of Painters towards the strongest of human passions, I may now devote myself to a critical examination of the drawing and of the fourteen lines of verse which contain nearly all the material we have for the portrait of the great Urbinate as a lover.

