

**THOMAS
CRAWFORD AND
ART IN AMERICA**

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Thomas Crawford and art in America by Samuel Osgood

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Osgood, Samuel C. 1875.

per the

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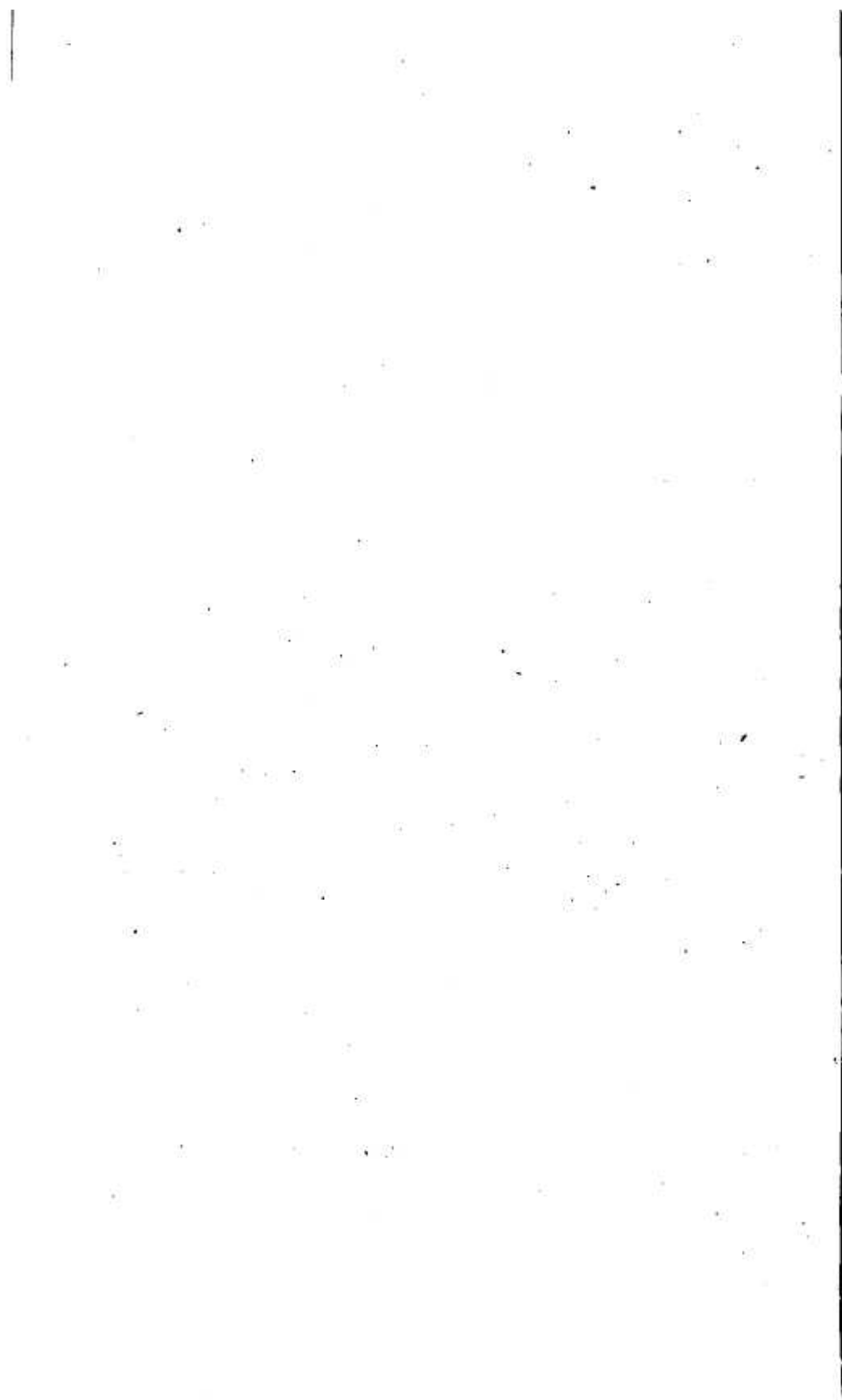
ADDRESS BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, UPON THE RECEPTION OF
CRAWFORD'S STATUE OF THE INDIAN, PRESENTED BY FREDERIC DE PRYSTER,
LL.D., PRESIDENT, TUESDAY-EVENING, APRIL 6, 1875.

BY SAMUEL OSGOOD, D.D., LL.D.

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WE receive to-night the gift of a masterpiece from the chisel of the master sculptor of our America; and this fact, with its date, so full of interesting associations, tells us, that we Americans, as such, have something to do with the world of art. This month begins our round of Centennial jubilees; and whilst our Massachusetts neighbors are bent upon celebrating the battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, we may try our lungs a little at bragging in a different way, as we think not of smashing human profiles with muskets and cannon, bayonets and swords, but of modelling the human face as well as we can, in clay and marble, with hand and stick and chisel. Four hundred years ago, a month since, March 6, 1475, the prince of modern sculptors, Michael Angelo Buonarotti, was born, and we are just hearing the echo of the joy of Italy at the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of her illustrious son. This day, moreover, is the anniversary of the death of Raphael, who died April 6, 1520, three hundred

and fifty-five years ago. Thus Italy, in the persons of her greatest sculptor and painter, meets with us now; and she who gave us Columbus and Americus, and who educated Crawford in his art, looks with a patronizing eye upon the rising art of our young America. It is nearly four hundred years since her Columbus opened our new world to the old; and there is something at first a little disheartening in the thought, that in all that time we have done nothing in art to equal her doings in the first hundred of those years, and that the first century since we became a nation has given us no name in sculpture or painting like those of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

But think a little more seriously upon the facts of the case, and there will be no occasion for discouragement. When Columbus, in April, 1492, fixed his articles of agreement with Ferdinand and Isabella for his great voyage of discovery, a Tuscan boy, who at fourteen had been apprenticed in 1489 for three years in the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandajo for about eight dollars a year, was practising his eye and hand among the busts, statues, and bas-reliefs in the gardens of Lorenzo de Medici. Then, seventeen years old, he had shown his genius, and more than a year before, when under sixteen years, he had given immortality to a piece of marble by the touch of his chisel—the copy of the mask of the old Faun, which is still preserved in the public gallery of Florence. He lived to be nearly ninety years of age, and died February 17, 1564, about two months before William Shakespeare was born. There is something in this conjunction of names that

honors the Italian sculptor, and also comforts us, the blood relations of the English poet. With all his marvellous genius and his manifold works as sculptor, painter, and architect, Michael Angelo never took hold of the popular life of Italy as Shakespeare took hold of England. He was obliged to give the gifts of his inspiration and the toils of his years to a power which he did not love, and instead of breathing a new spirit into dormant Italy, he helped to turn the influence of the rising revival of letters towards the restoration of mediæval despotism. Without meaning to do it, he helped to turn the Rome of Dante into the Rome of Loyola, and before he died he saw enough to tell him that the St. Peter's which rose under his master hand was not lifting the old Roman manhood, with the Roman Pantheon before the eyes of Italy, towards the mercy-seat of heaven.

Raphael, as he lay in state, robed for the grave, with his marvellous picture of the Transfiguration behind his head, this April 6, 1520, in Rome, the whole city doing him homage, was in more respects than one to be envied by his sublimer rival; for to Raphael beauty was its own paradise, and he opened its treasures to astonished Italy without any misgivings of the time when returning superstition would prefer the grotesque Bambino to his peerless Madonnas and Holy Child Christs, and the Barocco architecture of the Jesuit Church to the grandeur of Michael Angelo. Successful they both were, and their art was literature and eloquence to their time. Their pictures, statues, and buildings were poems, orations, romances, sermons, and philosophy, yet they