

### *Filippo Baldinucci*

EXCERPTS FROM THE LIFE OF CAVALIERS GIOVANNI  
LORENZO BERNINI,<sup>1</sup> 1682

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*Filippo Baldinucci (1624-1696) was a Florentine employed by the Cardinal Leopold de' Medici and Cosimo III to put in order the Medici collection of drawings. Baldinucci studied the lives of the artists and wrote the Notizie de' professors del disegno da Cimabue in qua (Accounts of Professors of Design) of which three volumes were published in 1681 and three more posthumously in 1781. This work, which corrects and continues Vasari's Lives, is the first universal history of the figurative arts in Europe. He wrote the first history of engraving and etching (Florence, 1686) and the first dictionary of artistic terms (Florence, 1686). Queen Christina of Sweden commissioned him to write the biography of Bernini. It appeared in 1682, two years after the death of the artist.*

Marvelous, and almost like a miracle, is the force of that hidden seed which nature, always a wise conservator of its finest elements, prudently infuses into spirits of the finest temper and highest aspirations, as into receptive and obedient matter. Nor, in my opinion, must it seem very strange to those who look at the essence of things with subtlest discernment that his seed is of heavenly origin and wedded to our spirits. So this seed, because of its place of origin and the immortality which was bestowed on it, can boast of the closest kinship with Heaven. It is reasonable that such a seed implanted in our minds, as in a suitable field, should settle there with all its force and thrive in the same way as we observe a real seed sown in good and favorable soil, soon to sprout above the earth and then produce a rich cluster of numberless ears of corn. Although one can observe its presence more or less generally in all, it is doubtless more obvious and apparent in those destined and chosen by nature to accomplish great and miraculous deeds. And to tell the truth, whether their spirits be jewels of greater brilliance and higher value than others, or whether it be that, in those of finer clay and gentler substance, the jewels set, as it were, in gold shine through the body just as light shines through glass, there appear occasionally those whose eyes even from infancy flash out the sparks from their soul in such profusion and so brilliantly that the beholder can scarcely endure not only the direct light, but even its reflection.

It seems then in reality as if the whole soul, showing itself through the windows of the face, disdains to mix with matter and, despite the body, wants to show by its actions, glances, words, and gestures a sample of its hidden beauties.

Such extraordinary vivacity and spirit fell in our time to the lot of Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, a man who in the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture was not only great but exceptional, and would have ranked with the most brilliant and renowned masters of the ancient and modern world had he not had the misfortune of being born in the wrong age.

The marble blocks which, thanks to his chisel, live and speak in Rome and in many other parts of the world would perhaps be silent and alone in the maternal rocks if the master's hand had not subjected them to the torment of his industrious chisel. Likewise, in my opinion, the great creative talents of Bernini would have been dissipated in the frivolous pleasures and habits of youth if he had not placed himself at an early age under the discipline of incessant industry and severe studies, thereby showing that great talent uncontrolled is like the most spiritual substance of flowers, which, when pressed into an essence and poorly seated in vases, evaporates in a few hours and vanishes because of its extreme volatility.

How judiciously Bernini utilized the splendid gifts of the soul, bestowed upon him through special grace, is shown clearly enough by the great number of his works and the excellence of their execution. If one were to measure his life by them, one could consider it to have been very long; if measured by the number of years that he lived it was not short, but, measured by the desire of men and the entire world, it was exceedingly short indeed.

Wherefore, although he created a living history unto himself so that to bear witness to future generations there is no need of written testimony, nevertheless it is commendable to relate something of his life to our descendants as much for encouragement as for fitting praise of ability. This task I have undertaken to do as briefly as possible. I did this not so much to gain renown for my pen as to place in my debt future generations who will, I am convinced, be envious of the fortune that is ours in having seen, thanks to Bernini, the three noblest arts maintained in legitimate possession of their ancient dignity. These arts, which nearly met with complete degeneration and ruin, were reinstated in their proper place by the never sufficiently praised Michelangelo.

Pietro Bernini, the father of the Cavaliere, was a man of unusual reputation in painting and sculpture. In order to learn these arts, he left his native town of Florence when quite a young man and went to Rome, where,

under the direction of Cavaliere Giuseppe d'Arpino, he worked in a praiseworthy manner in both fields, in the service of Alessandro Cardinal Farnese<sup>2</sup> and many others. Because others have already written of his works and because what he accomplished is so well known, it is not necessary to speak of them.

Tempted by the hope of greater advantages, Pietro went to Naples. There he married Angelica Galante, a Neapolitan, who in addition to their other children, on the 7th of December, 1598, bore a son to whom he gave the name of Giovanni Lorenzo. This is the person of whom we shall now speak. In truth he was born through divine dispensation to fill two centuries with his brilliance for the benefit of our Italy.

It seemed as if nature had employed all the strength of her skill in this boy. She granted to him a beautiful and vivacious charm, a sparkling and impressive talent, and she made it exceedingly easy for him to learn his father's art, which he loved beyond all measure, so that when he was eight years old he executed in marble a small head of a child to the wonder of all ....

But since the father's fame was daily spreading through Italy, when Paul V<sup>3</sup> planned to have a marble group executed for the façade of the Pauline Chapel, he desired the services of such a master and obtained them from the Viceroy. Therefore when Pietro came to Rome with his numerous family and established his home here in this most celebrated capital of the world, a larger opportunity opened itself for the happy ascent of Giovanni Lorenzo's genius. For only in this city can one see the famous works of both ancient and modern painters and sculptors, as well as the priceless remains of ancient architecture, which braving time, no mean enemy, still stood as wonderful and glorious ruins. Thus it was easy for Bernini, through serious and continual study of the most noteworthy art works, especially those of the great Michelangelo and Raphael-in which is found an epitome of all that is exquisite and choice-to develop, in accordance to his talent, inspirations comparable to the lofty ones of those sublime spirits.

For this purpose he spent three continuous years from sunrise to Ave Maria closeted in the rooms of the Vatican, there drawing the finest and rarest things, trying with all his ability to attain a similarity to his models, the old masters. He immediately rose to such fame that in the academies of Rome one spoke of him as something incredible and never before seen.

The first work that came from his chisel in Rome was a marble head, now located in the church of S. Pudenziana.<sup>4</sup> He was just ten years old at that time.

For this reason, the Pope, Paul V, filled with admiration at the outcry that greeted such ability, desired to see the youth. He had him brought before him and then asked Bernini in jest if he knew how to make a pen sketch of a head. Giovanni Lorenzo asked what head His Holiness wished. The Pope said that if this is so he can draw any head and ordered him to draw a head of St. Paul. In half an hour, Bernini had finished it with boldly drawn outlines, to the great delight of the Pope.

Then the Pope earnestly desired that the still delicate and youthful talent of Giovanni Lorenzo be guided by some authoritative hand in order that it might reach that degree of perfection of which it already gave promise. Therefore he entrusted the lad to the care of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who was fortunately in Rome at that time and who was a great lover and patron of letters and the arts. The Pope strictly ordered the Cardinal not only to watch zealously over the studies of Bernini but furthermore to see that they were done with fire and enthusiasm and made him answerable for the brilliant success that was expected of Bernini.

After encouraging the boy with affectionate words to continue with good spirit the career he had begun, the Pope gave him twelve gold medallions, which was as many as he could hold with both hands. Turning to the Cardinal, he said prophetically: "We hope that one day this boy will become the Michelangelo of his century"

The boy, instead of growing conceited over the fortunate success of his efforts and the praise of the great-as is the custom of only small spirits who are destined for everything else but the acquisition of true glory-indefatigably subjected himself to new and continuous studies. But what cannot an able spirit accomplish when fostered by wise and careful guidance! He showed his beautiful efforts to his father, who pointed out to him both the good and the bad. He praised the drawings but told his son that he would not again execute such good things, almost as if he thought that the perfection of the first work was due rather to a stroke of fortune than to his son's skill. It was indeed a clever idea, for in this way he induced the boy to carry on a constant competition with himself. Thus it is not to be wondered at that Bernini from then on was possessed by so great a zeal and an eagerness to surpass himself that, as he confessed when he became older, whenever he compared a work with another executed later or with some new ideas that he had conceived and desired to execute, he was never entirely satisfied.

At this time the boy Bernini was so enamored of art that not only did it occupy all his intimate thought, but furthermore, to associate with artists of the greatest reputation was his greatest pleasure. It happened one day that he was in the Basilica of St. Peter with the celebrated Annibale Carracci and other masters. After all had performed their devotions and were leaving the church, the great master turned again to the tribuna and spoke these words: "Believe me, some prodigious genius must come, whenever it may be, who shall create two great works in correct proportion to the vastness of this temple: one here in the middle and the other at the end." So much and no more sufficed to enflame Bernini with the desire that he might execute them. Unable to arrest an

inner impulse, he said with all the passion of his heart: "O, would that I were he!" And so unawares, he interpreted Annibale's prophecy and himself later fulfilled it, as we shall see when we come to speak of the wondrous things that he executed for those places ....

In the meantime, when he was fifteen, Bernini did a *St. Lawrence on the Grill* for Leone Strozzi which was placed in his villa. For the . . . Cardinal Borghese he executed a group, rather more than lifesize, of Aeneas carrying the aged Anchises. It was the first large work he had done. Although something of the manner of Pietro, his father, is recognizable, one can perceive how from this time on by following his own excellent taste he approached more and more the sensitive and the true. This is especially evident in the head of the old man.

It is no wonder, then, that this same Cardinal immediately ordered from him a David of the same size as the first group. In this work Bernini far surpassed himself. He executed it in the space of seven months, thanks to the fact that even at that youthful age, as he later used to say, he was able to devour the marble and never make a useless stroke. Such a mastery is not usual even in men long expert in the art; but belongs only to those who have raised themselves above the art itself. The magnificent head of this figure, in which he portrayed his own features, the vigorous downward-drawn and wrinkled eyebrows, the fierce fixed eyes, the upper lip biting the lower, expresses marvelously the righteous anger of the young Israelite taking aim at the forehead of the giant Philistine with his sling. The same resoluteness, spirit, and strength is found in every part of the body, which needs only movement to be alive. It is also worth noting that while Bernini was working on it in his likeness, the Cardinal Maffeo Barberini came often to Bernini's studio and held the mirror for him with his own hand ....

At this time Cardinal Maffeo Barberini was elevated to the Papacy [on August 6, 1623] with the name of Urban VIII. After having previously been a colleague of Gregory Ludovici in the College of the Clerics of the Apostolic Chamber, he now became his fortunate successor in this highest of offices.

Thus the widest opportunity opened itself to Bernini. For this great Pontiff had scarcely ascended the Holy Chair when he had Bernini called to him and after receiving him in an affectionate manner spoke to him in the following way:

"Great is your fortune, Cavaliere, to see the Cardinal Maffeo Barberini as Pope, but far greater is ours to have Bernini living in our Pontificate . . . ."

From the time when His Holiness, Paul V, had entrusted the supervision of this lofty genius to the Cardinal, he had lived in the expectation that Bernini would accomplish great things. Also he had conceived the ambition that Rome during his pontificate and under his influence should produce another Michelangelo. This desire was increased because he already had the magnificent suitable project in mind for the high altar in St. Peter's at the place that is called the Confessional; and also for the painting of all the Loggia della Benedizione. For this reason the Pope had given Bernini to understand that it was his wish that the artist devote a large part of his time to the study of architecture and painting in order that he might add to his other eminent gifts the knowledge of these arts. The youth was not slow in listening to the advice of his friend, the Pontiff, and undertook these studies without other masters than the ancient statues and buildings of Rome, for, he was wont to say, as many of them are found in that city as masters paid for by the young scholars.

For the space of two continuous years Bernini devoted himself to the study of painting; that is, skill in the handling of color, for he had already mastered by his intensive study the great difficulties of drawing. During this time, without neglecting the study of architecture, he executed a large number of pictures both large and small, which are splendidly exhibited today in the most celebrated galleries of Rome and other worthy places; but we will speak in detail of these in another place.

The Pope determined then to carry out his great plan for the decoration of the above-mentioned Confessional of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Vatican Basilica, and gave Bernini the commission, allowing him three hundred *scudi* monthly for this purpose.

Now it would seem to be my duty to give a description of the great work Bernini undertook; of the four wonderful bronze columns that support the Baldachin crowned with the beautiful ornament and finally with the cross. But I believe I need not describe either this or the other works in that church that may still be seen and that were executed by Bernini himself or from his designs ....

The Cavaliere used to say that it was due to chance that this work came out so well. He wished to infer that artistic ability alone would not have been able to supply the correct measurements and proportions under such a large dome and in so vast a space and among piers of such enormous size, had it not been that the genius and the mind of the artist knew how to conceive without any rule what that correct measure ought to be.

I must not pass over, at this point, the fountain that Bernini executed<sup>5</sup> in the Piazza di Spagna at the suggestion of Pope Urban, because in it, in his customary fashion, he demonstrated the brilliance of his genius. Because of the fact that there was not sufficient pressure for a fountain in the Piazza, a monument which was to give the impression of either richness or magnificence presented no small problem to any artist, no matter how skillful he might be. Bernini, therefore, made a large, beautiful basin that was to be filled with the water from the fountain. In the middle of the basin, almost as if floating on the waves of the sea, he placed a noble and gracious ship from several points of which, as from so many gun barrels, water was made to spring forth in abundance.

This idea appeared so beautiful to the Pope that he deigned to express it in the following beautiful verses:

*Bellica Pontificum non fundit machina flammam,  
Sed dulcem, belli qua pent ignis, aquam*<sup>6</sup>

. . . But since we speak of fountains, I shall say that it was always Bernini's opinion that in designing fountains a good architect ought to give them some real significance or at least an illusion of something noble taken from either reality or imagination. Even during the lifetime of Pope Urban, this principle was practiced by Bernini, as is seen in the beautiful fountain of Piazza Barberina executed from his design and by his chisel, in which three dolphins support a basin above which is a beautiful figure of Triton blowing a shell from which water gushes ....

But the Pope, whose opinion of Bernini grew with every day, desired, so to speak, to immortalize him and continually urged him to marry, not so much in order that some of his children might remain in Rome as heirs of his skill as to have someone who would look after Bernini's needs so that the artist would have more time and quiet for the practice of art. Although the Cavaliere disdained the idea, saying that his statues would be his children which would keep his memory alive in the world for many centuries, he finally decided to give in to the Pope's advice and reconciled himself to marriage. In the course of the year 1639, he chose from among the many excellent offers made to him the daughter of Paolo Tezio, secretary of the Congregation of the Santissima Nunziata, a good and able man. Bernini lived with his wife thirty-three years and had numerous children.

But to return, so many were the works that he executed during the lifetime of that great Pope, that in order not to tire the reader we will discuss them with brevity and without binding ourselves to chronological order. He made the designs for the Palazzo Barberini, for the Campanile of St. Peter, and for the façade of the Collegio de Propaganda Fide. This building, which was threatening to collapse, was reinforced by Bernini by such artistic means that the ornament itself served as support for the building—a thing that no one ignorant of the fact would ever suspect ....

Ordinarily as often as a man loses what he has grown accustomed to have, or fails to obtain what he wishes, he gives way to violent feelings which, like enemies assailing a city, destroy his peace and keep him in continual torment; wherefore those are esteemed the wisest who permit themselves to be carried away the least by such passions. It seemed necessary, therefore, that a man like Bernini should be subjected to the ordeal of persecution, and that he should for a while be denied that acclaim which his talents were wont to receive, so that the world might learn thereby the constancy and other qualities of his character. These were brilliantly demonstrated both by the fortitude with which he bore so many blows and by the complete control of his feelings which enabled him to live quietly and at the same time produce the most beautiful works of his career.

These were in the first place, the design for the chapel of the Cardinal Federigo Cornaro in the Church of S. Maria della Vittoria of the Barefooted Carmelites, not far from the Porta Pia, and surpassing all, the admirable group of St. Teresa with the Angel who, while she is transported into sweetest ecstasy, wounds her heart with the arrow of divine love. This is a work which, because of its great delicacy and all its other qualities, was always an object of admiration. I shall not exert myself in praising it and shall only say that Bernini himself was accustomed to say that this was the most beautiful work that ever came from his hand ....

So strong was the sinister influence<sup>7</sup> which the rivals of Bernini exercised on the mind of Innocent X that when he planned to set up in the Piazza Navona the great obelisk brought to Rome by the Emperor Antonino Caracalla, which had been buried for a long time at Capo di Bove, for the adornment of a magnificent fountain, the Pope had designs made by the leading architects of Rome without giving an order for one to Bernini. But how eloquently does true ability plead for its possessor, and how effectively does it speak for itself! Prince Niccolò Ludovisio, whose wife was a niece of the Pope and who was at that same time an influential friend of Bernini, persuaded the latter to prepare a model. In it Bernini represented the four principal rivers of the world, the Nile for Africa, the Danube for Europe, the Ganges for Asia and the Rio della Plata for America, with a mass of broken rocks that supported the enormous obelisk. Bernini made the model and the Prince arranged for it to be carried to the Casa Pamfili in the Piazza Navona and secretly installed there in a room through which the Pope, who was to dine there on a certain day, had to pass as he left the table. On that day, which was the day of the Annunciation, after the procession, the Pope appeared and when the meal was finished he went with Cardinal Pamfili and Donna Olimpia, his sister-in-law, through that room and, on seeing such a noble creation and the sketch for such a vast monument, stopped almost in ecstasy. Being a Prince of the keenest judgment and the loftiest ideas, after admiring and praising it for more than half an hour, he burst forth, in the presence of the entire privy council, with the following words: "This is a trick of Prince Ludovisio. It will be necessary to employ Bernini in spite of those who do not wish it, for he who desires not to use Bernini's designs must take care not to see them?" He sent for Bernini immediately. With a thousand demonstrations of esteem and affection and in a majestic way, almost excusing himself, he explained the reasons and causes why Bernini had not been employed until that time. He gave Bernini the commission to make the fountain according to the model ....

The sun had not yet set upon the day which was the first of Cardinal Chigi in the Highest Pontificate, when he summoned Bernini to him. With expressions of affectionate regard, he encouraged Bernini to undertake the great and lofty plans that he, the Pope, had conceived of for the greater embellishment of the Temple of God, the glory of the pontifical office, and the decoration of Rome.<sup>8</sup>

This was the beginning of a new and still greater confidence that during this entire pontificate was never to be ended. The Pope wished Bernini with him every day mingling with the number of learned men he gathered around his table after dinner. His Holiness used to say that he was astonished in these discussions how Bernini, alone, was able to grasp by sheer intelligence what the others scarcely grasped after long study.

The Pope named him his own architect and the architect of the Papal Chamber, a thing which had never before happened to Bernini because each former pope had had his own family architect on whom he wished to confer the post. This practice was not observed by popes after Alexander VII because of the respect they had for Bernini's singular ability, so that he retained the office as long as he lived .

. . . Bernini, with a monthly provision of 260 *scudi* from the Pope, began to build the Portico of St. Peter, which in due time he completed. For the plan of this magnificent building he determined to make use of an oval form, deviating in this from the plan of Michelangelo. This was done in order to bring it nearer to the Vatican Palace and thus to obstruct less the view of the Piazza from that part of the palace built by Sixtus V with the wing connecting with the Scala Regia. The Scala Regia is also a wonderful work of Bernini and the most difficult he ever executed, for it required him to support on piles the Sala Regia and the Paolina Chapel, which lay directly over the stairs, and also to make the walls of both rest on the vault of the stairs. Furthermore, he knew how to bring, by means of a charming perspective of steps, columns, architraves, cornices, and arches, the width of the beginning of the stairway most beautifully into harmony with the narrowness at its end. Bernini used to say that this stairway was the least bad thing he had done, when one considered what the stairway looked like before. The supporting of these walls was the boldest thing he had ever attempted, and if, before he applied himself to the task, he had read that another had done it, he would not have believed it.

It is wonderful how at this same time Bernini was able to carry forward the great work of the Portico and to apply himself also, at the order of Alexander VII. to the execution of the Cathedral of St. Peter, filling the end of that great basilica with the mighty monument in accordance with the abovementioned prophecy of Annibale Carracci. The Cathedra was supported by four great bronze colossi representing the four doctors of the church: the two Greeks, Gregorious of Nazianzen and Athanasius, and the two Latins, Augustine and Ambrose. With a singular grace they support a base on which the Cathedra lightly rests. Here one must admire the incomparable patience of Bernini, who, having made with his own hands all the clay models of this great work, found that the colossal figures were too small and did not hesitate to remake it in the exact size in which the figures now appear.

In the year 1664 of the Roman calendar, before the end of March, His Majesty the King of France, Louis XIV, decided to restore and enlarge the Louvre with regal magnificence. Plans and projects had already been made by his own architects, but wishing to satisfy his own exquisite taste, impossible unless the plan met the approval of even the most cultured eye, he wanted the opinion of our architect. M. Colbert, one of his principal ministers, was directed to write the following:

Monsieur:

The rare products of your genius which make you admired throughout the world and of which the King, my master, has a perfect knowledge, would not permit him to finish his superb and magnificent edifice, the Louvre, without showing the plans to a man as excellent as yourself and obtaining your opinion. Thus it is that he has commanded me to write these lines to request you particularly to give a few of those hours you spend with such glory in the embellishment of the first city of the world to view the plans which will be presented to you by Monsignor the Abbot Ellipidio Benedetti. His Majesty hopes that you will not only give him your opinion of these plans, but will also put on paper some of those admirable ideas that occur so frequently to you, and of which you have given such ample proof. He desires you to give complete credence to all the Abbot will tell you about this subject. I assure you in these few lines that I am truly,

Monsieur,

Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant,  
Colbert

Since he had received such an order, Bernini studied the plans and went to work on designs of his own which he sent to the King, meanwhile continuing his work on the Cathedra and the Portico of St. Peter's. In proof that his design for the palace greatly pleased the King, I shall not cite the very valuable gift of his portrait studded with diamonds worth three thousand *scudi*, for to attempt to evaluate the King's esteem by this gift would be an obvious mistake, since it might better be interpreted as a token of the King's great generosity. The real proof of

the King's esteem lies rather in the letter which he sent to the artist and still more in that written to the Pope. Both letters I shall quote . . .

Letter of His Majesty the King.

Signor Cavaliere Bernini:

I have so high a regard for your merit that I have a great desire to see and know better so illustrious a personage, provided that my wish is compatible with the service you are rendering our Holy Father, and with your own convenience. My desire prompts me to send this by special courier to Rome, to invite you to honor me with a journey to France when the Duke of Crequi, my Cousin and special Ambassador, returns. He will tell you about the urgent cause which makes me wish to see you and discuss with you your beautiful plans which you have sent me for the building of the Louvre. As to the rest, my Cousin will let you know my good intentions. I pray God that he may have Signor Bernini in his Holy custody.

From Lyon

Written in Paris, April 11, 1665

Louis

Letter of the Most Christian King to the Pope.

Most Holy Father:

Having already received by order of Your Holiness two plans for my edifice, the Louvre, by so celebrated a hand as the Cavahere Bernini's, I should thank you for that favor rather than demand others of you. But as it is a question of a building that for many centuries has been the principal residence of Kings who are the most zealous in all Christendom for the Holy See, I believe I may dare approach Your Holiness with every confidence. I implore you, (if his service permits him) to command the Cavaliere to travel here to finish his work. The Holy Father could not grant me a greater favor under the circumstances. I shall add that there will never be anyone who will show him more veneration and sincere respect than I, Most Holy Father,

Your most devoted son,

Louis

His Majesty's letters arrived at a time when the Duke of Crequi, Royal Ambassador to Rome, had already taken leave of His Holiness and was on the point of departure. It was necessary for him to reappear at the Palace with the customary ceremony to present the letters. He went to Bernini with the same pomp, explaining that His Majesty wished him to journey to France, not only for the sake of the Louvre, but also because of his great desire for a portrait bust by him. At such a great summons, Bernini felt joy and fear at the same time. His joy persuaded him to go and reap the fruits of his long and unceasing efforts to attain this great honor the Monarch offered by calling him to his own service, but his heart failed him at the thought of exposing himself at the age of sixty-eight to the dangers of such a long journey. His great anxieties were quickly dispelled by the care, the eloquence, and the affectionate love of his dearest friend, Father Gianpaolo Oliva, General of the Company of Jesus, who was as much a credit to that noblest of all orders as he is the glory of our century. Obeying his own dictates, desiring to please the King, and urged by Cardinal Antonio Barberini in the King's name, Father Oliva persuaded Bernini to accept the invitation. He quieted with hope the Cavaliere's just fears and confirmed the belief that to obey such a summons was a beautiful act, even at the cost of one's life. Therefore we see Bernini, hesitating no longer, determined upon and ready for the journey...

But before speaking of Cavaliere Bernini's last illness, and of his death, which appeared to our eyes truly like his life, it should be stated here that although until his fortieth year-which was the year he married-he had been entangled in certain youthful affairs, it was, however, without any consequences which could have been prejudicial to his studies of art and to what the world calls "prudence." We may say with truth that not only did his marriage put an end to that manner of living, but from that time he began to behave like a religious rather than a secular man, and with such sincerity, according to what was reported to me by those who knew him well, that he might have been admired by the most perfect monastics.

The idea of death he kept always present before his mind and on this subject he often held long discussions with his nephew, P Marchesi, the priest of the congregation of the oratory of the Chiesa Nuova, a man who is well known for his goodness and learning. With such desire did Bernini always long for the happiness of this a step that, for this sole end, he continued for forty years to frequent the special devotions celebrated for this purpose by the Jesuits in Rome. Here, too, he went twice a week to partake of the sacrament. He increased

the alms which from an early age it had been his custom to give.

He lost himself in contemplation of this thought of death and in the expression of the most profound reverence and understanding that he always had of the efficacy of Christ's blood, in which he was wont to say he hoped to drown his sins. For this same reason he drew and then had printed an image of Christ crucified from whose hands and feet gushed rivers of blood which formed almost a sea while the great Queen of Heaven stands there offering it to the

Eternal Father. This same sacred meditation he also had painted on a great canvas which he wished to have hung always before his bed in life and in death.

When the time had come, I know not if I should say whether because of the great loss of strength which was to be expected or because of his longing for the eternal repose so long desired, he fell ill of a slow fever which was followed at the last by a stroke of apoplexy which then deprived him of life.

He was about to breathe his last when he made a sign to Mattia de' Rossi and Giovanni Battista Contini, who had been his pupils in architecture. Almost jokingly he expressed as best he could his amazement that they could not think of some contrivance to draw the catarrh from his throat, and pointed with his hand to a mathematical instrument for raising exceedingly heavy weights. His confessor then questioned him about the state of his soul and asked if he had any fears. He replied: "My father, I have to account to a Lord who in bestowing His goodness does not count His farthings." Then he observed that his right arm and side were somewhat incapacitated by apoplexy and added: "It is fitting that this arm should rest somewhat before death because it has worked so hard in life."

Meanwhile Rome wept for her great loss and his house was filled with persons of high rank and people of every kind seeking news of him and wishing to visit him. The Queen of Sweden, many Cardinals and the ambassadors of many princes come in person or sent messengers at least twice a day. Finally His Holiness sent Bernini his blessing, and about midnight, early on the twentyeighth day of November, after fifteen days of illness, Bernini passed from this life to another, just nine days short of eighty-two years of age.

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## NOTES

1. The excerpts are translated from Alois Riegl, *Filippo Baldinucci's Vita des Gio. Lorenzo Bernini mit Uebersetzung und Kommentar*. Vienna, 1912, by the editor [Elizabeth Gilmore Holt.] Prof. A. T. MacAllister, Princeton University, kindly checked the translation. All except the bracketed footnotes are from the text. See also; Schlosser, *Lett. Art.*, p. 405, and *Kunstlit.*, p. 420; Venturi, *History*, p. 123; S. Frascchetti, *Il Bernini*, Milan, 1900; Baldinucci, Filippo, *The Life of Bernini*. tr. C. Enggass, University Park, Pa., 1966; R. Wittkower, *G. L. Bernini, the sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, 2d ed., London, 1966; H. Hibbard, *Bernini*, Penguin, 1965.
2. He was employed for the decoration of the Villa of Caprarola.
3. Paul V (1552-1621).
4. In S. Prassede. Baldinucci confused the churches. It is on the tomb of Bishop Santoni. It is questionable that he executed it at the age of ten, as Frascchetti suggests. See Riegl. pp. 42 ff.
5. 1640.
6. "The warlike machine of the Pontiff does not pour out flames but sweet water by which it extinguishes the flames of war."
7. As a result of the necessary demolition in 1646 of the two bell towers which Bernini had built for St. Peter's, he incurred the disfavor of Innocent X.
8. Sant' Andrea al Quirinale.

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