



Edo<sup>do</sup> s<sup>r</sup> priore et molto mio car<sup>o</sup>mo. patrono

È non è dubbio niſſuno et se a quel tempo che io chiesi la meta et la grandezza delle figure emi fuisse stato risposto e dato quel et mi si perueniva a questa hora io sarei tanto innanzi et di mia modellini canovauo alla presenza mia io harei pensato sicuro mi sarei promesso di potere ancor io comparire infra cotesti altri valoti hominj ma hora quedermi così impedito dal male no mi par douere ne et le forze ne che l'honor mio lo comporti impo hauendo eletto v. s. M<sup>o</sup> Vinc<sup>o</sup> de Rossi io afferino et l'ha ben fatto e di tutto mi rimetto a lei con questa humil m<sup>o</sup>de le bacio le mane emele raccomando di casa il di 13 di Aprile 1564 -

Alli seruitij di v. s.

Bonvenuto Cellini

powers to act. Four friends of the illustrious dead, all men of high standing in the Arts, were singled out: Benvenuto Cellini and Bartolommeo Ammannati, sculptors, and Angelo Bronzino and Giorgio Vasari, painters. Don Vincenzo Borghini, Prorector of the Academy, conducted the negotiations with the Duke. As the result of the most elaborate preparations, the church of Santa Croce was transformed into a Hall of Arts: sculpture, painting, architecture and the lesser arts of design contributed to a glorious event which could have occurred only amid the dying glories of the Italian Renaissance.

The ceremonies took place July 14, 1564, at a solemn papal High Mass. Benedetto Varchi pronounced the funeral eulogy.

But Benvenuto Cellini took no part. Why?

Vasari says:

Benvenuto Cellini, who had been indisposed from the first took no part.

Symonds referred twice to Cellini's surprising absence (*Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, Boston, 1893, v. II, page 329; *Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, London, 1888, v. II, page 441) and Grimm also took note of it in his *Life of Michelangelo* (Boston, 1900, v. II, page 446).

Others have suggested that Cellini dropped out because of his dislike for Ammannati who had succeeded in being selected over Cellini for the erection of the great fountain in the Piazza della Signoria, Florence. However, for years, I have believed that the reason Cellini did not serve as a pall-bearer was that when the arrangement was made it was understood that two sculptors would walk behind the coffin, followed by two painters, architects, and members of the other arts; that when the actual march of the funeral took place, two architects were put first, a change which Cellini resented, and he, therefore, would not take part.

The Bibliotheca Parsoniana has acquired a relevant letter, written by Cellini to Don Vincenzo Borghini, Prorector of the Academy and Prior of the Innocenti. It is dated April 13, 1564, and may be interpreted:

To the Reverend and Holy Prior and my most dear Patron.

There is no doubt that if when I asked for the measurements and size of the figures I had received an answer and had been given what I required, I should be now so far advanced, that the work being done in my presence from my little models, I should have thought it safe to promise to appear myself among these other worthy men. But now being impeded by illness I do not feel that I should, neither my strength nor my honour permit of it. For this reason Master Vincenzo de Rossi having already told you, I affirm that he has done well. I thank you for all and kiss your hand most humbly and commend me.

At home, the 13th day of April, 1564.

At the service of your Holiness.

Benvenuto Cellini.

BIBLIOTHECA PARSONIANA, NEW ORLEANS

A different interpretation of the Cellini letter by Ruth W. Kennedy (Smith College) will appear in the next issue of this news letter.