

# Filippo Bigioli di Sanseverino

Italian painter  
(1798-1878)

He was born in San Severino Marche, June 4, 1798, by Venantius, from whom he learned the first elements of the design.

Venanzio, born in Frontale (San Severino Marche) in 1771, worked as a wood sculptor (rarely in stone) almost exclusively in San Severino Marche, where he left numerous works that testify an expert technique that are influenced by the style of Baroque influence (second Chiocci had been studying in Venice with "French emigrants"). He died in San Severino on 19 December. 1854.

The following wooden works can still be found in San Severino Marche: new cathedral (S. Agostino): high altar, gilded ornaments in the Collio chapel, angel supporting episcopal symbols above the central door inside; Church of St. Philip: *Dead Christ*; sanctuary of the Madonna dei Lumi: angels who support the altar table and other ornaments; church of S. Teresa (Castle): high altar; church of S. Chiara (Castle): wood carvings of the three altars; church of S. Pacifico: decorations in the chapel of the saint, four statues representing the *Virtues* and medallions with the six *Pontiffs* who deliberated the canonization of s. Pacifico; church of S. Lorenzo: carvings and decorations of the side altars; Church of St. Joseph: statues of the *Risen Christ* and St. *Joseph*; church of S. Rocco: statue of the *saint*; villa Collio: stones, masks, two lions at the foot of the steps, all in stone.

Bigioli, who moved to Rome, enrolled in the Academy of St. Luca in 1819, participating in his competitions (he also won a first prize for a drawing of *Laocoon* ), and attended the study of J.-B. Wicar, director of the Academy of France. He also took active part in the Roman artistic life; in 1842 he became superintendent of the Accademia dei Virtuosi Gallery. In the church of S. Rocco all'Augusteo painted in fresco in the left arm of the transept two *Stories of S. Luigi Gonzaga* and biblical characters, and the *Crucifixion* in the third chapel of the right aisle. Other paintings of his, recalled by the sources as existing in Rome, are scattered (his frescoes were in the demolished Palazzo Torlonia in Piazza Venezia). According to many, including Chiocci, which seems well documented, in 1860 had been chosen with others to restore the lodges of Raphael in the Vatican. Numerous works are conserved in San Severino Marche; in the Pinacoteca we recall among other things: *Self-portrait*, portrait of *Bartolomeo Eustachi*, portrait of Monsignor G. C. *Gentili*, the *Meeting of Raffaello with Fornarina, Paolo and Francesca*, various mythological scenes; some paintings of religious subjects, such as *Magdalene penitent, San Sebastiano*, etc.; other paintings with historical subjects, such as *Pius IX separating himself from the King of Naples to Gaeta* (a replica is found in the Vatican Pinacoteca warehouse: it was commissioned from Bigioli by Antonelli); two *Walks to the Pincio*, etc. In the new cathedral (S. Agostino): altar on the right, *Vergine del pianto*; sulfrontone del cappellone, *The Virgin with Saints Agostino, Severino and Pacifico*; side chapel, the *Blessed Luzi with St. Agostino es. Monica*. In the church of S. Domenico: *S. Vincenzo Ferreri*. In the church of S. Caterina: *Deposition from the Cross*. In the church of the female Oratory: altarpiece. In the theater Feronia: curtain with the priestess *Camurena Celerina*. On the Settempedana road,

at the gates of San Severino Marche, in a kiosk: *The Virgin with Saints Severino and Pacifico*. An *Annunciation* is preserved in the prepositural church of Aliforni. Il Moroni and other authors also recall an *Alexander VII who deposes two prelates to instruct Christine of Sweden in the Roman faith*.

In 1854 the cav. Romualdo Gentilucci, of Fabriano, publisher in Rome, had entrusted to Bigioli the design of twenty-seven large canvases (m 6 × 4) like tapestries (plant extracts were used for the colors) that were to represent salient episodes of the *Divine Comedy*. Bigioli, with the help of some Dantists, chose the episodes and devised the compositions: he painted, however, only four (*Paolo and Francesca*, *Strazio di Filippo Argenti*, *Dante dreams of the Golden Eagle*, *Matelda in the earthly paradise*); after seven years of work the canvases were exhibited in Rome and in other Italian and foreign cities, and finally, after various vicissitudes, presented in Florence (Italian Ars Company), together with the original sketches. The current location could not be established; the only document left is a bibliographical indication: *The Dante Gallery, reproduction of XXVII large paintings painted in fake tapestry...*, Terni 1912. For these canvases a comment was also published: *The Divine Comedy summarized in the narrative and descriptive part to illustrate the Dante Gallery*, Rome 1860, and in the appendix: *Galleria Dante or more interesting episodes of the Divine Comedy expressed in XXVII large paintings of prof. cavalier F. Bigioli, paintings by the same and by other professors and distinguished artists*. In 1863 the same publisher Gentilucci published in Rome the *Opinions issued by skilled artists and writers on the Galleria Dantesca*.

The collaboration of Bigioli with the Gentilucci had already begun in the previous years: *The perfect legendary or lives of the Saints for each day of the year ornate and enriched with as many tables acquarella*, I, Rome 1841, where the three hundred and sixty-six tables drawn from Bigioli and engraved by the Wenzel they were divided into twelve volumes, each one dedicated to a cardinal; they were carried out with the collaboration of numerous other authors and were also used for subsequent editions. A few years later, Bigioli invented and designed, and several authors engraved, fifty-four tables for *The Perfect Legendary, Stories of the Life of Mary Most Holy*, Rome 1848, and again in 1851 the Gentilucci published *La Via della Croce or the XIV stations of Nostro Lord Jesus Christ drawn by the cav. F. Bigioli*, Rome 1851, dedicated to card. Antonelli, with sonnets by various authors (also the engravings are by various authors). Bigioli also illustrated *Inventions of a hundred Sacred Families*, the original drawings were purchased by Ferdinand II of Naples (in the Biblical Naz. Of Florence, *Fondo Palatino*, a copy is preserved, without a title page: therefore it is impossible to establish the date); there are a hundred tables all designed by Bigioli and engraved, as well as by him, by various artists.

Bigioli died in Rome on 17 January. 1878, member of the Fine Arts Academies of Milan, Bologna, Naples, Arcadia, etc., and having received many honors. But the success achieved does not spare him a severe judgment of limitation of invention and style. As Chiocci correctly defines him, he was "a shy imitator of great models" and, even if in *the Dante Gallery* he sought spectacular effects, he was first of all a draftsman, adhering to that particular aspect of the taste of his time that manifested itself in the purist current.

from Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 10 (1968)

Translated from:

