TURNER

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

G. F. WATTS
BY J. E. PHYTHIAN

BURNE-JONES
BY J. E. PHYTHIAN

RODIN
BY FREDK. LAWTON

WHISTLER
BY FRANK RUTTER

ROSSETTI
BY FRANK RUTTER

CROSSING THE BROOK

TURNER

BY

J. E. PHYTHIAN

AUTHOR OF

"FIFTY YEARS OF MODERN PAINTING," "G. F. WATTS,"

"BURNE-JONES," ETC.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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I

ART, LIFE AND NATURE

THERE is a story, one that might be difficult to authenticate, of a mediæval monk, who, having departed this life, and being asked in his next stage of existence how he had enjoyed the beautiful world he had just left, replied that he had never seen its beauty. Had such a question been asked, under such conditions, this might well have been the reply, for Ruskin tells us that a monk of the Grande Chartreuse, when asked why the windows of the monastery faced inwards on a courtyard, instead of outwards over the valley, replied that he and his fellows had not gone there to look at the mountains. Browning, in 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' sets talking a monk who was alive to the beauty of the world, and its wonder and power, 'the shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades, changes, surprises,' and who asked the captain of the guard, a man who had seen the world, if he felt thankful

> For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
> The mountain round it and the sky above,
> Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
> These are the frame to ?

And though Lippi was a very unmonkish monk, and, in his keen enjoyment of the beauty around him, in advance, as the artist must needs be, of most of his contemporaries, yet he and the other artists of his time were but the harbingers of a day when men would have a much deeper and wider appreciation of the beauty of their dwelling-place than had been possible in earlier ages. The story of how mankind has gradually come into enjoyment of this priceless source of happiness, which yet may be free to all, has often been told, and need not be formally repeated here. It will inevitably come up incidentally as we discuss the art of Turner in the following pages; but it is to our immediate purpose to notice that, since Fra Lippo Lippi's day, landscape, after occupying a merely subordinate position in the art of painting, has completely achieved its independence.

Browning recognises the old subordination in the words he puts into the Frate's mouth. The fair town's face, the river's line, the mountain and the sky, are the frame to the figures of man, woman and child; and in the pictorial art of that time they were

never more than this. The beauty of nature, and of nature as modified by the hand of man for his own use, was never painted alone, entirely for its own sake. To-day, the pictures in which there is only landscape, or in which the figures are wholly subordinate to the landscape, form, perhaps, the greater number of all the pictures painted. Probably the word artist, which is really one of very general significance, would at once suggest to ninety-nine out of every hundred people a landscape painter.

The word landscape is a very unsatisfactory one for the purpose it has to serve. Its inadequacy is obvious when we consider that writers, not unfrequently, but not always without an apology, use the word seascape. And if seascape, why not skyscape also? Even land, sea and sky do not in themselves exhaust the landscape painter's subject-matter. Nor do we reach the end when we have included all easily visible, natural objects, living and lifeless. Just as when cattle occupy an entirely subordinate place in a picture, we do not think it necessary to catalogue it as 'a 'landscape with cattle'; so, if human figures occupy only such place, we are content with the term landscape. Yet no hard and fast line can be drawn. That dear old pedant Polonius had all the divisions and subdivisions of dramatic art at his tongue's end. We make land-

scape cover not only the world of earth, air and water, with living things, including man, if they be merely incidents in the general scene, but also, if similarly incidental, the objects that are man's handiwork, cottages, houses, churches, castles, boats and ships on the sea—in short, anything that is to be seen; so that, in common acceptation, a street-scene, in which all of untouched nature that is in evidence may be a mere vestige of sky above the house-roofs, is a landscape.

All these considerations, it may be said, are but so much commonplace. Yet it is necessary not merely to have them in mind, but to insist upon them, when we are approaching the art of Turner; for if we are to call him a landscape painter we must give a very catholic interpretation of the range of the subject-matter to be included within the term. The inadequacy of the word becomes so obvious when we consider his life-work, even if we exclude the pictures and drawings that come clearly or doubtfully under other recognised categories, that we cannot accept it as descriptive of the content of his art, and hardly even as a label negatively to mark off its content from that of works that must strictly be classed as portraiture, genre, history or what else. That Turner himself recognised this is evident from the titles of some of his pictures,

such as *The Bay of Baiæ*, *Apollo and the Sibyl*, and *The Sun rising in a Mist*, *Fishermen cleaning and selling Fish*. If we generalised such titles, and the contents of the pictures, we should use such phrases as *Landscape and Mythology*, *Landscape and History*, *Landscape and Genre*, and very often the word landscape would not be entitled to precedence.

Referring to an earlier volume of this series, the one on G. F. Watts, I find myself repeating here, with little more change than some elaboration and variation of phrase, what was said there in the course of a comparison of Turner with Watts. The latter desired to paint, and his desire was in the main accomplished, an epic of humanity. It is obvious from Turner's works, and from his literary efforts, that, in his own way, he had the same purpose, with the difference—I quote from the earlier volume—that what 'Turner looked on and showed us from a distance, Watts looked at and showed us from close at hand; nay, we may say, from within.' Elsewhere I have had occasion to compare Watts' landscapes with the descriptive language of the Psalmist, and the same comparison holds good for Turner's pictures. His subject was essentially the world as the dwelling-place of man. Was the thought of God as within humanity and all the phenomena of life and nature as constant with

Turner as it certainly was with Watts? I cannot say. With this possible reservation, the words of the great hymn of praise are an exact literary parallel to many if not most of Turner's paintings, and I will not merely refer to the words, but will quote them, because they will arouse the thought and feeling that are needed for a fully sympathetic appreciation of Turner's work. 'He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are

Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.'

The drawing *Datur Hora Quieti*, reproduced as an illustration to Rogers' *Poems*, may be instanced as one of the great number of Turner's works that justify this comparison. In fact, it should be said that the comparison ought not to have been given such prominence unless his work as a whole justified it. But we need not do more at the moment than take this single illustration. The drawing is only a small one, but the impressiveness of Turner's works is far from being dependent on their size. He could express in inches a sense of space and grandeur that artists of no mean capacity could not give with feet of canvas to work upon. The means by which he did this will be considered later. Just now it is enough for us to observe that this little drawing gives us rather a vision than a vista; and this not merely in the purely landscape elements, in the stretching away of hill and vale and gleaming river to the faint, far-off horizon, with the majesty above them of the setting sun among the myriad cloudlets that owe to him their splendour of varied colour, but also in the visible evidences of man's life and activity. The ruined castle on the hill calls up the thought of the coming and going of the generations of men. How many feet have trod the

bridge, where in earlier days would be a ford, the castle guarding its passage? The church spire reminds us that man has ever been a worshipper, however various may have been the gods he has worshipped. The boats by the river-bank bid us think of commerce between city and city, between country and country, between continent and continent, and of adventure and discovery. The windmill tells of the gathering in and use of harvest; and, lastly, we have one pulse-beat of this incalculable length of life, the close of the single day, the ploughmen going homeward with their horses, leaving idle till the morrow the implement of which the invention preceded all written history; for, once again, the night is coming in which no man can work, and there is given once more the hour of rest which is both a fulfilment and a promise.

All Turner's work, when he had passed through his apprenticeship—his many apprenticeships, one ought rather to say—and when both the man and his art had matured, was wrought in a mood of exaltation that was not merely æsthetic. Can it be said that there was a spiritual element in his art? The reader may have winced—or smiled—when I said that perhaps the thought of God was not as constant with Turner as it was with Watts. But whether we can find a name for it or not, there was a thought, that quickened

ever into emotion, other than the mere sensuous feeling for visible beauty. Men have ever been worshippers, we have just said, however various have been the objects of their worship. Again and again Turner shows in his work that he recognised this enduring human trait. Did he worship, and if so, what? The cynic may answer that he worshipped fame, and money as an earnest of fame. Those who do not mistake a man's weakness for his strength will look to his life-work, and some of them may say that Turner worshipped the sun, that the worship grew upon him with growing years, till at last he sacrificed everything to the endeavour through his art to pay tribute to the splendour of the sunlight. It is surely best not to limit and define. Who would trust any man's power so to sound the depths of his own nature, so to explore and map them out, as to be able to set forth in formal terms that which he truly worships, that in which, the mighty complex in which, he lives and moves and has his being? Here, at the moment, all we need is to affirm that Turner, the artist, was a worshipper, that he bowed down before, and therefore exalted himself in the contemplation of, the invisible within the visible. This is why there is in his work a beauty that nature cannot show; a beauty, one must hasten to say, not surpassing, but different from that of nature, no

mere imitation of what nature sets before us, but, like music, a new creation.

This is true of all art, and of every artist, I may be told. The reply is, yes, and pre-eminently true of Turner. Is not every artist, consciously or unconsciously, a Platonist, seeking everywhere the types of which visible things are but the imperfect forms? Could Plato have seen a Turner landscape would he not at once have given to painting a place in his Republic? Art is infinitely more than imitation. It begins, indeed, with departure from imitation; so that truth to nature, in the sense of a record, as exact as possible, of visible things, is precisely the wrong criterion by which to judge it. I have been trying to keep away from it, have substituted for it just now poor words of my own, but it must come for its own sake and for the authority it bears. The artist, to be worthy the name, must make to shine

> The light that never was on land or sea,

he must have

> The consecration and the poet's dream.

Here I can see myself being charged with emphasising at the very beginning of this little book the 'literary' element in Turner's pictures. Such emphasis I at once admit, but take objection to the

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epithet 'literary.' Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse describes Turner as 'the great composer of chromatic harmonies in forms of sea and sky, hills and plains, sunshine and storm, towns and shipping, castles and cathedrals.' Some of the forms rarely wanting in Turner's works are omitted here, though named elsewhere. There is no mention of men, women, children and animals. The final significance of the *Datur Hora Quieti*, we have seen, depends on the ploughmen going home from their day's work. And if we interest ourselves in these 'forms,' as well as in the chromatic harmonies, are we confusing art with literature?

Let us answer this last question by reference to a literary counterpart of the *Datur Hora Quieti*—the opening verse of Gray's 'Elegy.' Here we have the work of a composer of verbal, of literary harmonies. The mere sound of the words would be harmonious even if they had no meaning. How often one reads aloud or recites both prose and verse merely for the sake of the beauty of sound! This is one purely literary element in both prose and poetry. But beyond this there is the meaning of the words; and the choice of the best words to express the meaning is another literary element. But still there is the meaning. Is the meaning literature? The chief value of the verse we are considering is that it calls up

sights and sounds that we have seen and heard and that stir our emotions. The words are idle words unless they evoke a picture; they would be meaningless to one who had never heard the evening bell or the cattle lowing as they returned to the farm at milking-time; or who had never seen—as in Turner's drawing—the weary ploughman going homewards as the darkness settled down. These things could be seen and heard, and the emotion evoked by them be felt without any translation into words. That is to say, literature does but give expression to what exists independently of it. Ruskin, in one of his Oxford lectures, half regrets that we cannot use such a word as 'spiriture' or 'animature' to denote that which exists as thought or feeling before literary expression is given to it, and to a large part of which, painting, just as well as literature, and often better than literature, can also give expression.

The spheres of literature and painting in this respect are not identical, they do not exactly coincide—in fact they are very far from coinciding—but they do overlap. We are not concerned here to attempt a delimitation of their respective spheres; but only to protest against painting being accused of trespassing on the domain of literature whenever it does not content itself with creating the visible harmonies which are

the counterpart of the harmonies of sound created by literature.

That Turner sought to express through painting such things as Virgil and Ovid, Scott, Byron and many another had expressed in words is obvious; and no criticism of his life-work can be complete that does not take account of his success or failure in this respect; and the success or failure is not to be measured by merely quantitative comparison. Hamerton says that all the meaning in the *Liber Studiorum*, which was the subject of some of Ruskin's most eloquent passages, could be packed into a couple of sonnets, and then would not be worth much. Here is the literary fallacy at work. We do not want Turner's glowing art turned into even the most glowing of words. A poem translated from one language into another loses much of its value; how much greater must be the loss involved in translation from one art to another! Even if there be gain there is also loss. We do not wish to break the Grecian urn after reading Keats' ode to it.

To one of the best known of his imaginative Italian landscapes, *Lake Avernus*, Turner gave the sub-title *The Golden Bough*. Searching the picture for an explanation of it, we find a female figure holding up in her left hand a bough which she has

evidently cut down with the sickle in her right hand. I can well recollect the time when, as a boy, I used to look at the engraving of this picture without any knowledge of the mythological significance of this figure, and yet was vaguely moved by it, and felt that somehow it deepened the beauty of the landscape. Even then it had an emotional value. How much greater is that value now after one has read and read again Dr. Frazer's 'Golden Bough,' in which the meaning of the figure is explained with such fulness of erudition. Dr. Frazer gives a reproduction of this picture as a frontispiece to his book. Would he have done so had he not felt that the picture had an emotional value that no verbal poetry, that no learned research, could supersede? The figure bearing the Golden Bough, the other figures dancing round a fire, the others, again, seated with the classical vases near them, the temples overlooking the lake, the fragments of masonry—all these are not to be dismissed as 'literary' intruders in the landscape, out of place in a painting because their emotional effect upon us largely depends upon our knowledge of the history of the changing beliefs of mankind; nor is that emotional effect to be measured by estimating the amount of information of the kind we get from books, they immediately, by our merely looking at them, convey to us.

With mythological interest of this kind, with historical interest, and with the interest we derive from scenes of everyday life, Turner's work is replete. Writers who have emphasised these elements in his works, such as Ruskin and Mr. Stopford Brooke, have been called subjective critics, presumably because they interest themselves in the subjects of the pictures—is there also a suggestion that they read into Turner something that is not there, but only exists in their inner consciousness? Turner, however, was a subjective painter, in the sense both of putting in his pictures records of human doings that he had observed, or heard or read about, and of endeavouring to express through his art his own thoughts and feelings with regard to the significance of human life. It is open to a critic to deal only with the pictorial element in Turner's work, with that which corresponds to the purely literary element in prose and poetry, and to ignore what we will call the spiritual element. But in so doing he will criticise, not Turner's work, not the whole of what the artist set himself to do, but only a part of it; and often the pictorial and the spiritual elements are so completely fused that neither can be adequately appreciated and discussed without reference to the other. The subjective critics may not succeed in exactly interpreting Turner's meaning, just as

hearers may misinterpret preachers, and readers, poets; but they may be trusted to correct each other; at least they will be having regard to the artist's obvious purpose; and, after all, the proper function of prophet, poet or poet-painter is not to impose his own thought upon others as absolute truth, but to make his individual, and therefore fallible contribution, to the thought of mankind. Ruskin may have read things into Turner; the things themselves may be none the worse for that. We owe more to him than to those who have read nothing, of the same kind, *in* Turner; even though he have at times misinterpreted his author—we shall find Turner thus describing himself—and though his own interpretations of life be not as certainly right as he himself was inclined to think them.

Cosmo Monkhouse speaks of Turner's art as full of feeling for his fellow-creatures, and as showing men at work in the fields, on the seas, in the mines, in the battle, bargaining in the market, and carousing at the fair. But he adds that the note of domesticity is wanting, that we are never shown men at home, and he thinks that this is attributable to his never himself having experienced the charm of home. The lack of this note in Turner's work, he says, is one of the principal reasons why his

art has never been truly popular in home-loving, domestic England.

I have talked with many people who do not care for Turner's art, but I have never once heard this reason given for their indifference to it, or active dislike of it. The reasons almost unfailingly given are the indistinctness, the lack of reality, the exaggeration amounting to positive untruthfulness in his works. Nor does one hear the works of Constable, Cox, De Wint, and others of our landscape painters praised on account of the incidents of home-life given in them, but for their naturalness, for their reminding people of what they themselves have seen. This, however, is, after all, not very far away from what Monkhouse says. It is not the lack of homely incident in Turner's work that makes it unpopular—there is, indeed, not a little of it—but the lack of a sense of the homely, familiar, natural look of things. The story of the lady who said to Turner that she never saw in nature such skies as he put in his pictures, and of his reply, 'No, ma'am, but don't you wish you could?' has not lost, nor is likely for long enough to lose, its significance. Am I the only Turner enthusiast who feels it at times a relief to turn away from his chromatic harmonies to more simply rendered landscape? One feels at times, with regard to Turner's work, somewhat as Dean Hole

must have felt when, in a gorgeous flower-garden, he took a friend by the arm and said, 'Let us go into the kitchen-garden and cool our eyes on the lettuces!'

But can we not turn away from pictures by Turner that are stimulating and exciting to others by him that are perfectly restful, and so find relief without going to other artists? Ruskin says, in 'The Harbours of England,' that nothing is so perfectly calm as Turner's calmness, and instances the drawing of Scarborough, engraved in that work. He shows that the effect of tranquillity is obtained by elaborate artifices of reflection and repetition, natural forms being modified, and various objects being introduced, for the especial purpose. 'Observe,' he says, 'the anxious *doubling* of every object by a visible echo or shadow throughout this picture.' He tells us further that 'the highest art is full of these little cunnings, and it is only by the help of them that it can succeed in at all equalling the force of the natural impression.' This last sentence may be open to discussion; but it is enough for us to note here that it was by such elaborate artistry that Turner sought to record the impressions he had received from nature, that the artistry is felt by the spectator—even if he do not give detailed account of it himself, such as Ruskin gives for his benefit—with the result that he says he never saw anything like this, nor, he is sure, did Turner himself.

Does not this really mean—for the spectator is assuredly right—that the effect produced is one of art, not of nature, though it was suggested by nature? We are right in calling it a record of an impression received from nature; but the terms in which it is recorded are not natural ones—it is not a record of observed facts, either of form, or light, or colour. Turner's art is not merely full of artifice, it abounds in rhetorical eloquence —like the language of Ruskin, who, in his later years, could poke fun at some of the purple passages of 'Modern Painters.' W. D. Howells says that the only time he ever doubted the existence of St. Mark's at Venice was when he read Ruskin's description of it!

It is not only that 'numerous person,' the man in the street, who raises objection to what he feels to be an excess of art in Turner's pictures. Mr. A. C. Benson, in his Life of Rossetti, says that among the papers of that poet and painter was recorded a condemnation of Turner by Whistler on the ground that he did not meet either the simply natural or the decorative requirements of landscape art which to Whistler appeared to be the only alternatives. Is not this really the position also of the man in the street, who is quite willing that Turner or anyone else should see visions and dream dreams, even though he himself is incredulous of the light that never was on land or sea, but is

offended because the names of places that he knows are given to pictures that bear only a very visionary resemblance to such places? It is evident that Turner mingled too much fact with his dreams for Whistler's liking. The critics of Turner who called forth Ruskin's passionate, youthful defence of him said that Turner was not truthful. Ruskin showed how much more truth there was in his works than in those of any other landscape painter, among either his predecessors or his contemporaries. The fact remains that Turner was not truthful; and the truth in his works does but emphasise their lapse from truth—to put the matter paradoxically. They would have been better, from the point of view of Whistler, of some other critics and of the man in the street, if they had lacked the truth which, with such copious reference to geology, botany and meteorology, Ruskin proved them to possess.

We cannot but feel that in not a few of Turner's works, nature has been subjected to very formal design, and arrayed in very obvious colour-schemes, and we are inclined to say either that art will not bear so much of nature or that nature will not bear so much of art. Hamerton says that Turner was never enslaved to nature. But should he not either have served her somewhat more faithfully, or have more fully emanci-

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pated himself from her? Of course, the objection that is here admitted is felt more in some of his works than in others; but I want frankly to admit that it can legitimately be taken, in order to say at once that those who give too much weight to it, and let it hinder them from attentive study of Turner's work, suffer an incalculable loss. From no other landscape painter is there so much to be learned about nature as from Turner, nor has any other landscape painter given to us such wonderful art.

It has often been said that Turner did himself everything that had been done by all other painters of landscape. Redgrave, for example, in 'A Century of Painters of the English School,' says, 'Turner's water-colour paintings, indeed, epitomize the whole mystery of landscape art. Other painters have arrived at excellence in one treatment of nature. Thus Cozens in grand and solemn effects of mountain scenery; Robson in simple breadth and masses; De Wint in tone and colour; Glover in sun-gleams thrown across the picture, and tipping with golden light the hills and trees; Cox in his breezy freshness; and Barret in his classical compositions, lighted by the setting sun. These were men that played in one key, often making the rarest melody. But Turner's art compassed all they did collectively, and more than equalled each in his own way.' In one

at least of the instances here given—and this is the only one that for our immediate purpose we need to consider—Redgrave is assuredly wrong: Turner not only did not more than equal, he never so much as nearly approached, the breezy freshness of Cox; and this is but one instance of a general limitation in his art: in by far the greater portion of his work he does not make us feel as if we were among the things he paints; we are merely looking, from the outside, at representations of them. Are we right in calling this a limitation, or is the feeling of reality only to be sought face to face with nature herself, art having quite another function? If we answer this question by reference to what art has done and is doing, we shall decide that to convey the feeling of reality is one function of art, and that failure to convey it is a limitation in the art of Turner. It is conveyed in the art of Constable, Cox, Millet, Corot, the Impressionist School of Monet, and more and more by living painters in all countries. This question is one of the very greatest importance, with reference both to Turner's art and to art in general; and we must give to it the most careful consideration.

The pleasure we derive immediately from nature does not come to us solely through the sense of sight, but through hearing, touch and smell also. It is rarely,

perhaps, that a picture even faintly suggests the last-named sense. The most deceptively realistic painting of flowers would hardly do it; but I think the salty freshness of the sea air is not unfrequently recalled—this, however, is a question of individual experience. Sounds, such as those of breaking waves and running water, of thunder and of the wind, of human and animal noises, of the traffic of streets, are constantly suggested by pictures; and more regularly still is the sense of touch awakened. The tread of the feet on rock, soil, grass, carpeted room or what else, wind, rain or sun on the face, the feeling to the hand of the hardness or softness, roughness or smoothness, of all the varied texture of different objects—one need not seek to enumerate in how many ways pictures can call up the sense of touch. When Fuseli, going to see Constable's pictures in his studio, asked Stroulger, the Academy porter, for his umbrella, this meant, one thinks, not merely that he knew he would see a picture of a shower, but that he would feel as if the rain would wet him.

Mr. Bernhard Berenson sums up the pleasure we take in actual landscape as 'only to a limited extent an affair of the eye, and to a great extent one of unusually intense well-being'; and says that 'the painter's problem, therefore, is not merely to render the tactile value

of the visible objects, but to convey, more rapidly and unfailingly than nature would do, the *consciousness* of an unusually intense degree of well-being.' This means, he says, 'the communication by means purely visual of feelings occasioned by sensations non-visual,' and he thinks that art is only at the beginning of systematic success in this endeavour, but that such success is at hand and that 'perhaps we are already at the dawn of an art which will have to what has hitherto been called landscape the relation of our music to the music of the Greeks or of the Middle Ages.'

It is in his book on the Florentine Painters of the Renaissance that Mr. Berenson thus discusses the function of landscape painting, with particular reference to the treatment of landscape in the works of Verrocchio; and where we are to look for the dawn of a fuller art of landscape we learn when he says that 'Verrocchio was, among Florentines at least, the first to feel that a faithful reproduction of the contours is not landscape, that the painting of nature is an art distinct from the painting of the figure. He scarcely knew where the difference lay, but felt that light and atmosphere play an entirely different part in each, and that in landscape these have at least as much importance as tactile values. A vision of *plein air*, vague I must grant, seems to have hovered before

him.' That is to say, the promise of a fuller art lies in what has been done by, and under the inspiration of, the French Impressionist painters. Elsewhere, in 'The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance,' Mr. Berenson refers definitely to two of the Impressionists, praising Cézanne for his exquisite modelling of the sky, and Monet for communicating the very pulse-beat of the sun's warmth over fields and trees, but alleging that they lack the feeling for space, 'the bone and marrow of the art of landscape,' of which Poussin, Claude and Turner had so much that, though inferior in other respects to some of the painters of our own day, they are still the greatest European landscape painters.

The greatest contribution to art made by the Impressionist painters is that they are the first who have systematically, of set purpose, made us feel that we could breathe in their pictures. Of course this feeling is aroused occasionally and to a limited extent in the works of earlier painters, just as there was brotherly love in the world before Christianity declared it to be the very soul of religion. Burne-Jones, who thought but little of the Impressionists, admitted that they gave atmosphere, and atmosphere means breathing-space; but he said that this did not amount to much. It counts for very much indeed in the sense of general

well-being. The breathing of pure air is not only one of the cheapest—unless made artificially dear by competitive manufacture and commerce—but one of the greatest of the pleasures of life to a healthy individual. To most people it is probably a sub-conscious pleasure. Some people enjoy it consciously, and give it abundant exercise, with incalculable gain to health and happiness. And an art that reflects this pleasure inevitably gives pleasure to those who are alive to it.

It is instructive for our present purpose to refer to what Ruskin says in 'Modern Painters' about the landscapes of David Cox. He refuses to be offended by Cox's loose and blotted handling, though elsewhere he pours contempt on the 'modern blottesque' style of tree drawing. He would not have Cox's trees drawn better than they are; yet from Ruskin's main point of view they are badly enough drawn, lacking, as they do, individuality of form. No one but Cox, he says, has so fully recorded the looseness, coolness and moisture of herbage, the rustling, crumpled freshness of broad-leaved weeds, the play of pleasant light across deep-heathered moor or plashing sand, the melting of fragments of white mist into the dropping blue above. He says further that what is accidental in Cox's methods of reaching his ends answers gracefully to what is accidental in nature. By the accidental in

nature we may understand Ruskin to mean the play of light and shade that disguises form; since form, to him, was the all-important thing. Perhaps to Cox—certainly to the Impressionists—what to Ruskin was accidental was the essential thing. The disguising of form is as much a result of light and atmosphere as the display of it. A full sense of the presence of light and atmosphere can only be rendered in art by the partial disguise of form; art, in this, following nature; and much that Ruskin praises in Cox's paintings, which to him is only a record broken by accidents, resolves itself really into such a subtle, illusive rendering of light and air that we feel we could live and breathe in his pictures; that is to say, Cox, in Mr. Berenson's phrase, communicates by means purely visual feelings occasioned by sensations non-visual.

In 'Modern Painters' Ruskin, after giving moderate praise to Constable, handled him severely, because Leslie had brought him forward as a great artist, comparable in some sort to Turner. His reputation is said to have been 'most mischievous, in giving countenance to the blotting and blundering of Modernism.' Constable, we are told, is a bad painter, giving a cheap deceptive resemblance to nature. He 'perceives in a landscape that the grass is wet, the meadows flat, and the boughs shady; that is to say, about as much as, I

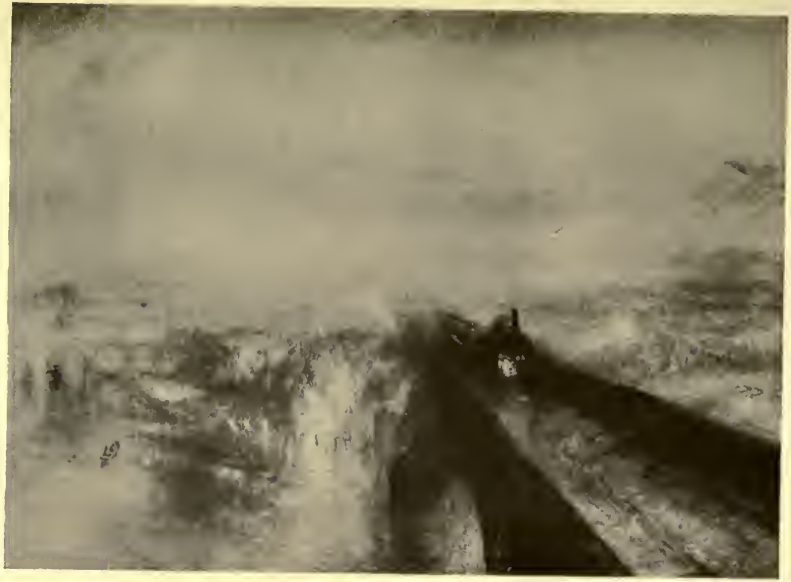
suppose, might in general be apprehended, between them, by an intelligent fawn and a skylark.' On the other hand, 'Turner perceives at a glance the whole sum of visible truth open to human intelligence.' He is the good painter who 'gives the precious non-deceptive resemblance.' These two classes of truth, the cheaply deceptive and the precious non-deceptive, cannot be given, we are told, together; choice must be made between them.

We can often appeal from one Ruskin to another. The Ruskin condemning Constable is not the one that praises Cox; and the Ruskin of over thirty years after the first volume of 'Modern Painters' was written, could praise a picture by Mr. H. W. B. Davis 'which in last year's Academy carried us out, at the end of the first room, into sudden solitude among the hills.' What is this but deception—undeceitful deception? And such pictures as this he traced to the influence of Mr. Holman Hunt's *Strayed Sheep*, of which he says in the same place—the lecture on Rossetti and Holman Hunt in 'The Art of England'—'it showed to us, for the first time in the history of art, the absolutely faithful balances of colour and shade by which actual sunshine might be transposed into a key in which the harmonies possible with material pigments should yet produce the same impressions

upon the mind which were caused by the light itself.' He particularly mentions the 'natural green and tufted gold of the herbage' in this picture, and says that he could not in any articulate manner explain 'what a deep element of life, for me, is in the sight merely of pure sunshine on a bank of living grass.' This is different in wording only from what Mr. Berenson has been quoted as saying of Monet, that he communicates 'the very pulse-beat of the sun's warmth over fields and trees.' And now we can appeal to this later Ruskin to fix for us the limitation, in this respect, of Turner's art, for he says, 'all previous work whatever had been either subdued into narrow truth, or only by convention suggestive of the greater. Claude's sunshine is colourless,—only the golden haze of a quiet afternoon;—so also that of Cuyp: Turner's, so bold in conventionalism that it is credible to few of you, and offensive to many.'

A brief reference to the course of landscape painting after Constable and Turner, to the progress that has led up to the Impressionist movement, and the developments now succeeding it and in part made possible by it, will help us further to realise what was Turner's contribution to art. Constable's immediate influence was greater in France than in his own

country. The exhibition of pictures by him in the Paris *Salon*, during his own lifetime, stimulated the French landscape painters to greater freshness and naturalism; and the indebtedness of the Barbizon school to him is freely admitted across the Channel. The forceful realism of Courbet, the broad, simple realism of Millet, and the tender, poetic realism of Corot, were immediately followed by that of such men as Boudin, Jongkind, and Lépine, which again and again reminds us of the water-colour drawings of David Cox. I have just put side by side a sea-piece by Cox and one by Boudin. A casual glance would suggest that they were the work of the same artist; but it is soon felt that there is more atmospheric truth in the Boudin than in the Cox; one could breathe more freely in the former than in the latter. Then came Monet and Pissarro, both of whom were accustomed to paint in the open air. In 1871, during the Franco-German War, they were fellow-exiles in England, where they painted on the Thames and in the London suburbs, and studied carefully the works of Constable and Turner. French landscape had already learned what the former had to teach. But what would these open-air painters, endeavouring, as they already were, to paint light and air, have to do with Turner? It would be chiefly his oil paintings that they would



RAIN, STEAM, AND SPEED—THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

study, we may conclude. There would be little to their purpose in the heavy, sombre earlier paintings. Much in the Italy series would interest them; but among those to which they would go again and again would assuredly be *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, *The Fighting Téméraire* and *Rain, Steam and Speed;* and the last-named would probably be the one from which they would have most to learn; for it is in the very forefront of the pictures by Turner in which there is the minimum of conventionalism in both design and colour; in which one can really breathe freely, because everything has been subordinated to the endeavour so to represent misty, rainy atmosphere, fleeting gleams of light and swift movement, that we have the feeling of being within the picture, in the rain, and that the engine, with its burden of carriages, before which the hare is fleeing for its life, will soon thunder past us. In Ruskin's phraseology, the material pigments produce the same impressions upon the mind which would be caused by the scene itself. Alas! Unless the indexer be at fault, there is in 'Modern Painters' not so much as a passing reference to this picture!

Monet and Pissarro, after painting for a time in our English climate, where atmospheric effect counts for so much, and after studying such pictures as this and others, painted by men who were native to that

climate, went back to France, there to paint direct from nature, and to develop a technique that enabled them to render effects of light and atmosphere with a truth of impression that none before them had approached. They carried further—one avoids saying completed—what Turner in his last years had begun, when he made the endeavour to render sunlight illusively almost the be-all and end-all of his art.

In one particular Impressionism is widely different from the art of Turner. Its colour is natural; Turner's colour was conventional to the last. Working direct from nature, the Impressionists have recorded not the exact, unrelated colour of each individual object, which Holman Hunt tended to do, working up his picture bit by bit, but the natural colours as they modify each other by juxtaposition. Accurate observation of this kind was quite foreign to Turner's art. His colour was not descriptive of nature, it was visible music for which nature provided only the suggestion. The Impressionists, one should say, have not been content with a mere record, they have selected, harmonised, composed; but record is at the base of their work. It is often difficult to realise, when looking at Turner's sketches in colour, that all he did upon the spot was to make outlines and notes in pencil, and that the colour was added after-

wards. They look like memoranda rapidly made with the scene or effect visible to the artist. The colour is clearly conventional; but, if we had no knowledge to the contrary, we should take it to be merely a convention into which the artist unconsciously fell even when working from nature. There is no question, however, that this was not the case. His finished drawings, done from the sketches after a lapse of time, are still more elaborately conventional, and have lost entirely the freshness, the sense of reality, the 'accidental' quality, of the sketches. They have gained in elaboration of form and colour-music, while they still give us an often wonderful sense of light, of vast spaciousness, of vistas stretching away into the far distance. Their power impresses us, or their loveliness charms us. Their colour thrills us, not merely as if it were music, but because it is music. Their masterly design gives to us a satisfying sense of unity, of completeness; they are visions; such, we feel, are nature, life, the universe, could we but see the whole.

Another difficulty that many people feel with regard to Turner's work should be mentioned here—his exaggerations. He is no more literally true to nature in form than in colour. He exaggerates the steepness and height of mountains, the size of buildings, the

straining of masts in the wind, and much else. Here the answer has to be that it is only by such exaggeration—emphasis might sometimes be the better word—that the artist, with a tiny area of paper or canvas at his disposal, with the impossibility of including all that the eye can see as it ranges over the actual scene, able only to hint at atmosphere and distance, by which we instinctively gauge the height of objects, and to suggest, not to give, movement, can make any approach to impressing us as we are impressed by nature herself. The artist would therefore be entitled to a certain exaggeration were his function only thus to impress us; and complaint on this score, even by those who ask from art nothing more than record of how nature looks to us, merely shows lack of knowledge of the terms upon which alone art can accomplish this limited aim. If, however, we grant that art has ends of its own to serve, then complaint, so long as the exaggeration serves those ends, is out of the question. We might as well object to chairs and tables because nature has not provided them, and we have to cut down trees to make them.

What has been said here about all these questions makes no pretence to be an exhaustive study of them. Nor is it supposed that no reader will remain unconvinced by the arguments adopted. But such discussion

is a necessary preliminary to the study of Turner's art. It will suffice if it enable the reader to approach Turner knowing what he has to expect. It is for this reason that I have let this discussion precede even an account of Turner's life and of his development as an artist, which is given in the following chapter. The significance of the particulars there set forth will, I think, be more easily grasped, with a general notion of the relation of his art to life and nature already in mind.

II

LIFE AND LIFE-WORK

The date of Turner's birth is believed to have been the 23rd of April, 1775; though there is no really trustworthy evidence that this was actually the day. What is certain is that he was baptized three weeks after this date. The 23rd of April is St. George's day, and also, traditionally, Shakespeare's birthday; and the coincidence has been commented on as such coincidences often are. Ruskin compares Turner, opening out to us the aspects of nature, with Francis Bacon revealing to us the laws of nature, and Shakespeare revealing those of human nature. To make things complete, Bacon ought to have been born on the same date; but, unfortunately, he made the mistake of being born on the 22nd of January. Happily it is not possible to suggest that Turner wrote Shakespeare's plays, or that Shakespeare painted Turner's pictures—unless, indeed, we suppose Turner to be a reincarnation of Shakespeare! One parallel between the two may

usefully be drawn. Shakespeare came into the world when the genius of the nation was ready to find expression in dramatic art; and Turner when the time was ripe for the rise of a school of landscape art that can without exaggeration be called national. Wilson, Gainsborough, and painters of lesser name had shown the way. Paul Sandby, the father of water-colour art, was their younger contemporary. John Cozens, to whom in this branch of art Turner admitted his great indebtedness, was born in 1752. Thomas Girtin, of whom as a landscape painter in water-colour Turner thought so much as to say that had he not died young, he himself would have starved, was born in 1775. Constable came but one year later than Turner. John Crome, the founder of the Norwich School, was born earlier than these three, in 1768. David Cox and Samuel Prout came in 1783; De Wint in 1784; Copley Fielding three years, and Robson four years, later. These are but some of the chief of a numerous company of English landscape painters who were Turner's younger or older contemporaries. There is nothing that we know of in his ancestry and parentage to account for his genius; but, granted the genius, he could not have come into the world at a time more propitious for its full flowering and glorious display. It has been suggested that a taint of insanity in his

mother became genius in him. If we are to think thus, we must look for a similar taint in the Shakespeare and Bacon families, and many others; and we who have not genius must lament that our mothers were sane. Doubtless everything has its explanation, including the genius of Turner. All we can do, however, in his case, is to say that his genius is less explicable by us than are now the varying courses of the wind.

Joseph Mallord William were the Christian names chosen for him by his parents. They were people of humble circumstances; his father being a barber, carrying on business at No. 26 Maiden Lane, in the parish of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, in which house the future painter was born. A barber meets and talks with people who, in diverse ways, move in, and are conversant with, the great world; and the very occupation of Turner's father may have made it possible for him to entertain a high ambition for his son, when once his genius had begun to make itself evident. The neighbourhood of Maiden Lane was at that time quite an artists' quarter; and Stothard, the painter, was one of the barber's customers. There might well be no paternal objection in this case to a boy's developing an evident faculty for drawing, such as so often has had to be overcome by the sons of men of greater wealth

and higher position. Indeed, it is clear that this was so; for the elder Turner used proudly to declare that his son was going to be an artist.

The father appears to have been cheery and chatty. His son always showed sincere affection for him. The mother's affliction must have robbed the home of much of the best that the word home implies. But that Turner regularly spoke of his father as 'Dad,' suggests that the essentials of home were not wholly wanting. Probably Turner would not have been 'at home' in a conventionally orderly household.

Turner's earliest attempts at art do not seem to have been more remarkable than those of many a child who has not in later years proved to be a genius. Not everyone who bites his bread and butter into the shapes of animals, or turns wall-paper patterns into faces, is destined to become a famous sculptor or painter. Turner's first recorded work of art had a tea-tray for canvas, spilt milk for pigment, and his finger for a brush. The copying of a coat-of-arms that he saw at the house of one of his father's customers seems to have influenced the determination of a career for him; and the persistence and growth of his fondness for drawing clearly showed the way he was to go.

That the greatest of imaginative landscape painters should be born and spend his early years in Maiden

Lane, Covent Garden, has often been referred to as if this were one of the cases in which what would not have been expected beforehand had happened nevertheless. Let us not forget that the river and its shipping, with their inexhaustible interest for a boy, were close at hand. So were the parks, which certainly must not be left out of account when we are considering what might stimulate the child's powers of observation ; and the open country was then within easy walking distance. Also, he was by no means confined to the city. At least as early as at the age of nine he had seen the sea ; for there exists a drawing of Margate Church made by him at that age. He had an uncle at New Brentford, and was sent to school there that he might have the benefit of country air. Early in life, therefore, he knew town, country, river and sea. The things with which he was most familiar in early years never lost their hold upon him ; indeed, they profoundly influenced his art. Witness his unfailing interest in rivers and bridges and shipping ; if a town he visited had a river flowing through it, he evidently speedily made his way to its side. Ruskin traces to his life in London his fondness for introducing a large number of figures into his pictures. We certainly feel oftener in the case of Turner than of any other painter that we should get unpleasantly jostled if we could step into the

SUN RISING IN A MIST

busy scenes he has pictured. It is significant that he never made his home anywhere but in London or its immediate vicinity. Hamerton notes this in connexion with the observation already quoted, which Turner's life-work abundantly justifies, that his art faculty was too strong for him ever to be enslaved to nature : that his mind had never been overwhelmed by nature to the point of sacrificing its human liberty and individuality.

His early years were, in fact, a forecast of what his after years were to be : life in London with frequent visits to—we may say—the greater world outside the world of London ; and always early in life and all through life, whether he was in the one world or the other, he was busy drawing and painting. While at school at New Brentford, he drew and drew and drew. Trees, flowers, animals, birds, poultry, were wonderful new things to him ; they must be drawn ; and drawn they were, while his delighted schoolfellows did his lessons for him! To see—as Fra Lippo Lippi saw—and to put down—in his own way—what he saw, was the overmastering passion of his life ; and it prevented him from acquiring even what would ordinarily be considered the minimum of the kind of knowledge that is imparted by schoolmasters. His father taught him to read. He was at school for a few months at New Brentford when he was ten or eleven years old, and

again for a few months at Margate, and he learned to write. Doubtless a modicum of the third of the three r's was also conveyed to him—though the New Brentford schoolfellows are said to have done his sums for him—and with this scanty apparatus of learning, so scanty that he could never easily express himself in either speech or writing, he was sent forth upon his way through life.

Whether Turner would have lost or gained had his educational outfit been less slender it may be idle to conjecture. More time given to books would have meant less time given to observation and drawing and painting; and one of Ruskin's points about the truth in his pictures is that with no knowledge of science he was yet scientifically accurate—when, and so far as he cared to be accurate, it is necessary to add. More reading might have made his mythological and historical pictures more learned; but would it have made them more imaginative? Could classical scholarship have bettered by one jot or tittle *Apollo and the Python* and *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*? All the same, it may be admitted that more learning might have saved him from some conspicuous failures in pictures of this kind. Had he done his own sums at school, and proceeded to the scientific study of geometry and perspective, his lectures as Professor of

Perspective at the Royal Academy might have been more coherent and more scientific; but would there have been in them so much to see, as one of his colleagues, who happened to be deaf, said of them? It may be mentioned here that, lacking any exact knowledge of his own language, he tried, and failed, to learn Greek. He clearly read sufficient about classical mythology, chiefly in Ovid and sufficient history and poetry, for his imagination to be kindled, for him to have a vision of the coming and going of the generations of mankind, in the light of which, as well as in that of the sun, he painted his pictures. His attempts to write poetry may or may not mean that more study of language in early years would have led to his doing less of what he could do supremely well in order to do more of what he could only have done less well than many who though they have striven earnestly have yet no name among the poets. It is all mere matter for conjecture; and there we must leave it. That he had little Latin and less Greek did not lessen Shakespeare's insight into human nature and power to give it supreme dramatic expression; and Turner had far less, and needed less, of the learning that can be got from books, to take him to the very highest achievement in his own art.

Let us turn now to his early training in that art,

and consider it, not merely in the way of record, but in relation to the life-work for which it prepared the way. In doing this we shall find it useful to begin with a reference to a famous passage in 'Modern Painters.'

This passage is the one in which Ruskin gives advice to young artists, advice that Holman Hunt found to correspond closely with the theory he was working out of the relation of art to nature, and that Hamerton tells us he followed for a time, and then abandoned, because he found it to be wholly mistaken. 'From young artists,' says the young Ruskin, 'nothing ought to be tolerated but simple *bonâ fide imitation* of nature.' They are not to ape the execution of masters; they are not to compose, not to seek after the Beautiful or the Sublime. 'They should keep to quiet colours, greys and browns; and, making the early works of Turner their example, as his latest are to be their objects of emulation, should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.'

One would naturally conclude from this that Turner began with *bonâ fide* imitation of nature. The fact is

that, alike in boyhood, youth and early manhood, he did not do this, that he was constantly copying and imitating the works of older artists; and that when he worked from nature, he selected, rejected and composed. His progress was not from nature to art; there was, in fact, more truth to nature, even if also more art, in his later than in his early work. Art mingled with nature in his work from the very first; and nature was always expressed in terms of art.

The record of his early work substantiates what has just been said. It might seem idle to take into account what he did between the ages of nine and fourteen; but he had only reached the latter age when he was sufficiently advanced to become a student in the Royal Academy. At and soon after the earlier age he was copying and colouring prints of old buildings, an anticipation of some of the most important of his after work, and he also sketched by the river-side and in the country. When eleven or twelve years old, he had lessons from a Soho drawing-master, with whom flowers were a specialty. The brief spell of schooling at Margate, already mentioned, was followed by lessons in perspective. These would help to qualify him to execute drawings for an architect, Mr. Hardwick, into whose employ he entered in 1789, the year that he entered the Academy Schools. The story of his

putting in the reflected light in the windows of a building in an architectural drawing he was colouring, and of his refusal to alter the colouring to the stereotyped monotonous grey leading to a breach between one employer, Mr. Dobson, an architect, and himself, suggests that he had already become keenly observant, and was not likely for long passively to accept the conventions of other artists.

He very early began to make money by his art. His father, if he had the keen business instinct that is attributed to him, would see that this consideration was not overlooked. The boy's drawings were exhibited for sale in the paternal shop-window; and here again the child was father to the man, for Turner's later business dealings were keen to something more than a fault. Colouring prints for John Raphael Smith, engraver, miniature painter and printseller, and washing in backgrounds for Mr. Porden, another architect who employed him, were also occupations of this period. When someone at a later date spoke of the drudgery he had thus gone through, he replied that he could not have had better practice.

Of the greatest importance for Turner's art were the evenings spent at the house of Dr. Monro, physician to the Bridewell and Bethlehem Hospitals, whose town-house was in the Adelphi. Really, a better

place than Maiden Lane for Turner's early home could hardly have been deliberately chosen for him. Two or three minutes' walk down to and across the Strand towards the much-loved river would bring him to the doctor's house, where that enthusiastic patron of art was wont to gather young painters of an evening and give them half-a-crown and a supper to make copies of water-colour drawings for him. Sketches made near the doctor's country-house at Bushey obtained a like reward; and, in making the sketches in the country, Turner looked at nature in the light of the drawings by Sandby, Cozens and others, that he copied at the town-house. Hence, when Redgrave tells us that Turner began his art by sketching from nature, we must not think of him as going to nature in the way in which Holman Hunt did in his youth, laboriously to set down, with the minimum of composition, exactly what he saw, but as reshaping nature to make it fit in with certain well-established conventions of art, determined in part by a very limited knowledge of the capabilities of the materials used by the artist.

As an example of his work at this time we may take the first water-colour drawing, a view of the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, which he exhibited at the Royal Academy, in 1790, when he was fifteen years old. It is very clever for a boy of that age. It

proves the truth of what he himself said, that what others thought drudgery was indeed the best of practice for him, for there is perfect sureness in the use of the materials within the conventional limits then inevitable. Yet there is nothing but convention. The sky, the tree-drawing, the colour, the light and shade, the composition, are not learned from nature, but from art as practised by his seniors. In due time Turner was to develop the art of water-colour drawing until it became something undreamed of by the teachers of his youth; he was to establish his own conventions; he was to fill his mind with an inexhaustible store of closely observed, natural facts, and to bring this store into the service of his art; but art and nature were never to change the relative places they held in his early work. The difference was to be that an imperfect language quickly acquired by a brilliantly gifted boy was to become a medium of self-expression such as art had not previously known.

Among the young painters whom Turner met at Dr. Monro's house—Francia, Varley, Edridge, John Linnell and others being also of the number—was Thomas Girtin, whose brief career has great artistic and not a little pathetic interest. There is no reason to think that Girtin could ever have been the rival of Turner; but the saying of the latter, already

quoted, that he would have starved had Girtin lived, was only a well-deserved tribute over-generously expressed. Girtin had more than talent, he had genius; and his death in 1802, at the early age of twenty-seven, leaving the field clear for Turner, who had learned not a little from him, touches us the more by reason of the great achievement of his friend. There was only about two months between them in age, Girtin having been born in February, 1775; and both were natives of London, Girtin's father being a rope and cordage manufacturer in Southwark. Girtin's first teacher was an Aldersgate Street drawing-master named Fisher; and he afterwards studied under Edward Dayes, a water-colour painter and engraver, who appears to have been jealous of his pupil's skill, and actually had him imprisoned for refusing to serve out his indentures. There certainly was room for jealousy, for Girtin surpassed all his predecessors in water-colour art, being the first to abandon mere tinting for a fuller use of colour. In this he was Turner's instructor. For a time they ran an even race, the works of the one in general features closely resembling those of the other. Some say that by the time of Girtin's death Turner had outdistanced him; others that the race was still a dead heat. At least there were signs of development in Turner that were lacking in Girtin; and we may

well attribute the difference to the robust constitution of the former and the declining strength and failing spirits of the latter under the insidious advance of pulmonary disease. In what did the difference consist? The answer is clearly important to us, for it must show the direction in which Turner was advancing.

The earlier English water-colour artists of the eighteenth century, such men as Alexander Cozens, Paul Sandby and J. R. Cozens, were draftsmen rather than painters. When they worked in pure water-colour—they also used tempera—they outlined their subjects, laid in the shadows with Indian ink or some other neutral tint, and then added colour in pale, transparent washes. Their work had a modest aim; it was mainly mere illustration, intended to show the look of places and buildings at home and abroad. Imagination had little scope in what was expected of the artist by his public, nor did the varying moods of nature, her beauty or grandeur, her quietude or the putting forth of her power in storm, enter into the bargain. Places of antiquarian interest, ruined temples, abbeys, cathedrals, castles; the country-seats of the English nobility and squirearchy; picturesque views; such were the subjects in demand; and the drawings were often intended for reproduction in aquatint, and as illustrations to such publications as Walker's

ABINGDON

'Itinerant' and Byrne's 'Antiquities of Great Britain,' the titles of which sufficiently indicate their character. This was the art that Girtin and Turner learned from their teachers; such were the drawings they copied for Dr. Monro; when they worked direct from nature these were the methods they used. Dayes, the teacher of Girtin, who has already been mentioned, published 'Instructions for Drawing and Colouring Landscapes,' in which he bids the student to lay in the sky with Prussian blue and Indian ink, the middle tints and shadows of the 'terrestrial part of the drawing in grey, and only when this has been done is colour to be added. Even then, 'great caution will be required not to disturb the shadows with colour, otherwise the harmony of the whole will be destroyed, or at any rate, not to do more than gently to colour the reflections.' Girtin and Turner, the former leading the way, practically revolutionised the art by at once painting the middle tints and shadows in colour, instead of in the neutral tint, which was a pure convention, for when objects in nature are in shade or shadow their colour is only a variation of that which they reflect in pure sunlight, with a tendency, as recent observation has shown, to appear to the human eye somewhat purple in hue in contrast with the colour of highly illumined objects.

In this way, then, Girtin and Turner worked in water-colour. But, as time went on, while Girtin's colouring remained broad and sober, and while he seemed to take the greatest pleasure in effects of gloom and grandeur, Turner began to show that strong feeling for light and colour which was to become one of the most remarkable features of his art, nay, in his interpretation of nature, its very essence, the master-light of all his seeing. Thus, while his genius was expanding, that of Girtin seemed to be reaching its limit. It may be, as already suggested, that the ebbing away of Girtin's life sufficiently accounts for this. However this may be, as Redgrave says of him, 'he had but one manner, and that he had nearly perfected when he died.' His companion, stronger, and always more strenuous, lived on to do things that none had done before him, and that no successor has, in the same kind, even nearly approached.

This comparison between Turner and Girtin has taken us to the year 1802, but there are details of Turner's life and progress before this time that must not be overlooked. We have seen him exhibiting a drawing at the Royal Academy in 1790, when only fifteen years old. It should be noted here that he began as a painter in water-colour only; oil painting

was to come later, his first work in this medium not being exhibited until 1797.

About 1793 he made the first of his many sketching tours. He would be accurately described as a supertramp. He was a hard-working one. When, like the common or highway tramp, he returned to his workhouse, it was to work, not at mechanical tasks, but at that which was the delight of his life: converting into works of art what he had seen and noted during his tramping. He preferred to be alone on these expeditions. From early days he was little if anything less than secretive in his life and work; and when the time came for him to die, he hid himself from his friends. The barest necessaries, tied in a bundle, were his *impedimenta;* his sketching materials would not suffice the most bungling of amateurs for doing nothing worth looking at. He took the coach, or rode a horse, or walked, as best served his purpose. The simplest accommodation satisfied him. He had learned to rough it at home, where his bedroom was his studio, jealously forbidden to all would-be visitors. We shall find him later having himself lashed to a mast in order that he may watch the storm that is threatening him with death. This makes it but a simple thing that when in Devonshire with Mr. Cyrus Redding and others, he should prefer to spend the

night in a country inn rather than seek more comfortable quarters in Tavistock. Bread and cheese and beer served him for dinner and supper in one, says Mr. Redding, who stayed with him at the inn, and secured for himself the luxury of bacon and eggs. They talked till midnight, by the light of an 'attenuated' candle. Then Turner went to sleep with his head on the table, while his companion stretched himself on a line of chairs. As soon as the sun was up they were out exploring the neighbourhood; and it was then that Turner made a sketch for one of his finest early oil paintings, *Crossing the Brook*. Many are the stories told of his persistence in work, in season and out of season; such as that once, when a *diligence* in which he was travelling stopped, he began to make a sketch from the window, and stormed at the conductor because the vehicle started again before the sketch was finished. We can well believe in the literal accuracy of the story that when a salute was fired from a battery immediately beneath which he was sketching, the line he was drawing at the moment pursued exactly its intended way!

There is much in Turner's work that will be most keenly enjoyed by the sketching tramp. Such an one, however humble, will feel again and again as he looks at Turner's works that, despite the vast disparity

between them, the great artist and he are brothers in enjoyment. The daft organ-blower who threatened to blow his favourite tune if the musician would not play it had the soul of an artist. Turner tramped in England, Wales and Scotland, in France, Switzerland and Italy, and fully to enjoy his work one must tramp also—and, it should be said also, fully to enjoy tramping, to get from it all that can be got, one should study Turner.

From what has been said on earlier pages it will be gathered that the tramp will learn from Turner to cultivate a wide catholicity of interest. We shall see in a later chapter—it has been hinted at already—how keenly Turner was interested in what he saw his fellow-human manikins doing under the sun. Such interest comes naturally to any order of tramp. He has no need to learn it. But from Turner we can learn to see it in relation to the beauty and splendour of nature, as material for great epic art.

There are landscape painters who think that they can best interpret nature by minimising or excluding all human interest. But solitude is not solitude if there be no one all alone. Robinson Crusoe's island was fully peopled until he was cast upon it. That there is

> Water, water every where
> Nor any drop to drink

is without meaning for an ocean that no mariner ever crosses. Not that we always need figures or signs of human life in pictures, which sometimes may be meant to impress upon us the vast periods of geologic time. Turner puts no figure when he shows us the waves dashing against the basaltic columns of Fingal's Cave; yet surely the sense of the stupendous forces of nature is enormously increased in his drawing of Loch Coruisk by the tiny figures perched, insecurely as it seems, on the rock immediately below the spectator.

When he was in the places where man lives and works, Turner noted, and put in his pictures of them, just such incidents as the passing tramp would note: wayside happenings, other travellers, the carrier's waggon, the stage-coach, droves of cattle, market-people entering or leaving a town, idlers on the bridge —we shall say more of this hereafter; sufficient at the moment to note that Turner was a genuine and therefore a happy tramp.

Then, also, he shows himself a tramp in his treatment of landscape, and this not merely in that he was fond of the prospects that open out from a turn in the road or the brow of a hill, but also in that, because he merely made pencil notes as he went along, generally adding afterwards the colour in even his sketches, he was free to observe and store his mind with an endless

multiplicity of varying atmospheric effects and of details of landscape. He saw everything, and nothing came amiss to him. His tramps were really collecting expeditions as much as those of the botanist and the geologist; and as they, in their inn at night, or when they return home, arrange their specimens scientifically, so he arranged his specimens—the word is a hateful one, but how avoid it here?—artistically. This accounts for the immense range of Turner's records that makes Ruskin's comparison of him to Shakespeare and Bacon not only a possible but a justifiable one. Only a sketching tramp could have done all in this way that Turner did. The Pre-Raphaelites could not do it, nor can the *plein air* painters. The late Walter Severn told the present writer—it was at Coniston, on the day of Ruskin's funeral—that Ruskin was once watching him paint a landscape, and said to him, 'Severn, you try to do too much; you cannot paint rapidly moving clouds. I never paint anything that is moving. I am always nervous when I am painting anything that can move, lest it should move on!' Happily Turner had a wonderful visual memory.

Turner, then, to continue our biographical narrative, began his tramping about 1793, aged, therefore, let us remember, about eighteen. He set out to make

drawings for Walker's 'Copper-plate Magazine.' They were to be from nature; and he was to receive two guineas each for them, with a modest allowance for travelling expenses. He journeyed into Kent, to Wales, and, the next year, to Shropshire and Cheshire, returning by way of the Midlands. Shortly after this he was away again to make drawings for Harrison's 'Pocket Magazine.' This was the kind of thing, as we have already seen, that the water-colour draftsmen were set to do, and Turner, to begin with, did it with no very great departure from orthodox topography. He had his orders, a certain pattern was required, and he supplied it. But he was both eager and quick to learn, and thus early he had assimilated much of the best in the art of his teachers, of the men whose works he copied, and of those who were working alongside him. These early drawings show surprising skill in treatment and considerable range of effect. His developing imagination is to be seen in some of them, and was acknowledged in contemporary criticism. He felt already that his art had a higher mission than merely to give skilfully composed, recognisable views of places, sufficient to satisfy country squires and their dames and daughters, and townsfolk who liked to be pleasantly reminded of the country. Nature and life were beginning to speak to

him in deeper tones, and to say to him more intimate things than most men could hear.

Thus early, also, we find a wide range of subject. His training in architectural draftsmanship now stood him in good stead, as it did also in later years. By the year 1797, when he was twenty-two years old, he had drawn many of the cathedrals, including Salisbury, Canterbury, Rochester, Worcester, Ely, Lincoln, Peterborough and York, the abbeys of Bath, Tintern, Llanthony, Malvern and others, and many ruined castles. The graceful forms and intricately beautiful detail of Gothic architecture are sympathetically rendered, and from the boyish experiment of light reflected from windows he had passed to the subtle play of light and shade that is part of the calculated effect of architecture, and also goes far beyond calculation, enriching buildings, whether in ruin, or still intact though weather-beaten, with endlessly changeful beauty. Buildings, whether great cathedrals, abbeys and castles, or the humbler churches, and the picturesque houses of quiet old towns, count for much in Turner's early, as in his later work. We shall see that when, late on in life, he undertook to illustrate the rivers of France, and only succeeded in illustrating two of them, he rarely strayed away from the towns, or the immediate neighbourhood of the towns, on their banks.

In these early days he also anticipated his later work, in that if he drew a stream flowing through the country, he almost invariably introduced a bridge. The fascination of the Thames bridges he had known from childhood seems always to have remained with him. Ships and shipping, again, he was to paint early and late, and the foundation of his accurate knowledge of all kinds of craft, and of his ability to draw them, was laid in these early years.

In 1797, during a journey that extended to Cumberland, Northumberland and the South of Scotland, he first found his way to scenery that ever afterwards was to mean so much to him: the hill-country of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Even now, when railways have been carried along the dales, what a feeling of remoteness there is in the upper reaches of the Ribble and the Lune, of the Wharfe, the Swale and the Tees! What tiny objects are both the viaduct at Ribblehead and the train that crosses it, as one looks down upon them from the summit of Ingleborough! Is it possible, we ask ourselves, that there are human beings in what looks less than even a toy? Cosmo Monkhouse rebukes Ruskin for saying of this first visit of Turner's to the North, 'For the first time the silence of Nature round him, her freedom sealed to him, her glory opened to him. Peace at last; no roll of cart-

SHIP IN DISTRESS OFF YARMOUTH

wheel, nor mutter of sullen voices in the back shop; but curlew-cry in space of heaven, and welling of bell-toned streamlet by its shadowy rock. Freedom at last. Dead-wall, dark railing, fenced field, gated garden, all passed away like the dream of a prisoner; and behold, far as foot or eye can race or range, the moor and cloud. Loveliness at last. It is here then, among these deserted vales! Not among men. Those pale, poverty-struck, or cruel faces;—that multitudinous marred humanity—are not the only things that God has made. Here is something He has made which no one has marred. Pride of purple rocks, and river pools of blue, and tender wilderness of glittering trees, and misty lights of evening on immeasurable hills.' This is the pessimistic view of human nature, and the optimistic view of nature other than human in which Ruskin was brought up, and which he attributes to Turner here, and as we shall see later, elsewhere. There is no evidence that Turner held it; his work, indeed, with the unfailing interest it shows in human life, as already mentioned here, gives abundant evidence to the contrary. And Mr. Monkhouse asks quite rightly, 'Can his experience of mankind, of Dr. Monro, of Girtin, of Mr. Hardwick, of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of Mr. Henderson, have left upon him such an impression of the failure

of God's handiwork in making men, that a mountain seems to him in comparison as a revelation of unexpected success?' Turner showed no desire to live apart from 'that multitudinous marred humanity,' indeed, as Hamerton points out, he preferred to make his home where it was most multitudinous.

Yet, after all, the impression produced upon Turner by the Yorkshire Dales and the Cumberland Fells would surely be very much what Ruskin's words suggest. Though man be not marred, he is a long way from perfection, and though nature may not be quiet to other ears than ours—and not always to ours—and though she may be red in tooth and claw with ravine, yet, generally, unless we examine her closely, she is quiet and innocent and beautiful to us. It may be a fallacy to think her perfect because she lacks the particular imperfections of human nature; yet escape from those imperfections, so far as we can escape from them without escaping from ourselves, does soothe and strengthen us; so that even though there may be fallacy in the process, nature, in the phrase that Matthew Arnold applied to Wordsworth's poetry, has for us a healing power; and nowhere more so, surely, than on those Northern moorlands, whose vast spaciousness, which seems to mingle with the sky above them, uplifts us, without ever threatening or

oppressing us, as so often does the awful, impending majesty of the precipitously towering mountains up which man presses only at the peril of his life.

Both the writers just referred to are agreed as to the influence of these scenes on Turner's art. Says Monkhouse, 'The pictures of 1797–99 confirmed beyond any doubt that a great artist had arisen, who was not only a painter but a poet—a poet, not so much of the pathos of ruin, though so many of his pictures had ruins in them, nor of the chequered fate of mankind, though there is something of the "Fallacies of Hope" indicated in the quotations to his pictures—as of the mystery and beauty of light, of the power of nature, her inexhaustible variety and energy, her infinite complexity and fulness. . . . Altogether it is difficult to over-estimate the influence of the first journey to the North upon Turner's mind and art, although he had almost perfected his skill and shown unmistakable signs of genius before.' Add to the quotation from Ruskin given above the following lines and we have very much what Monkhouse says: 'I am in the habit of looking to the Yorkshire drawings as indicating one of the culminating points of Turner's career. In these he attained the highest degree of what he had up to that time attempted, namely finish and quantity

of form united with expression of atmosphere, and light without colour.'

The last words in this quotation from Ruskin are significant. Beginning as a draftsman, for whom painting meant only tinting drawings, Turner had now reached a middle point between the art that he had merely adopted from his predecessors and his later dreams of glowing light and colour. His power of design, which is really an instinct for visible music, becomes increasingly manifest; into the design he was able to bring a surprising wealth of the detail for which he had such keen sight, and which he greatly enjoyed; both the design and the detail received a deeper significance from all-pervading effects of light, and the colour, though far from what it was yet to become, was both warmer and wider in range.

Ruskin speaks of the Yorkshire Dales as deserted. They were not deserted, but merely sparsely populated; and doubtless Turner found their humbler inhabitants by no means to be avoided as only so much marred humanity. Certainly among the wealthy and cultured people of the Yorkshire and Lancashire hill-country he found some of his best friends, men who not only recognised his genius, but gave him the help that freed him from material cares, and made it possible for him to go where he would to find in nature inspiration for

his art. From first to last Turner was singularly happy in his friends. He had nothing to complain of in them; though, as one of them whom he first met in these days, Dr. Whitaker of Whalley, soon found out, he himself could inflict upon others the irritability of genius.

Dr. Whitaker, who was the Vicar of Whalley, in Ribblesdale, was a man of means, and also a learned antiquary, and was preparing at this time a history of his parish, for which he wished to have illustrations. It is probable that Turner was recommended to him for this purpose by a Mr. Edwards, a publisher and bookseller at Halifax. Anyhow, they met, and Turner made three drawings, *Whalley Abbey*, *Clitheroe* and *Browsholme*, for the Doctor's book. After this the Doctor published a 'History of Craven,' for which Turner did an architectural drawing; and these commissions were followed, at a later date, by another for drawings to illustrate the same writer's 'History of Richmondshire,' which was the occasion of Turner's doing some of his very finest work. Hamerton, who was a native of the Lancashire hill-country near Burnley, with which the present writer happens to be very familiar, writes with particular enthusiasm about this part of Turner's life, which makes it permissible and interesting to quote the following passage from his 'Life of Turner.' 'The old mansion of the Whitakers,

the Holme (familiar to the present biographer from his infancy) is situated in one of the most beautiful scenes of Lancashire which still remain unspoiled by the manufacturers. Near Burnley the vale is broad, and is occupied by the noble demesne of Towneley, which sweeps up the great waves of land before and behind the Hall, and fills all the hollow between them with rich meadows and a park full of sylvan beauty; but as you go from Towneley to the Holme the valley rapidly narrows, till at last it becomes a gorge or defile, with bold steep slopes which end in rugged cliffs of perpendicular rock, as high as the sea-cliffs on the wild Yorkshire coast. On each side of the glen there are gullies or ravines formed by the watercourses, and at the foot of one of these ravines stands the old house yet, much altered and enriched, but still preserving its main features. It is just one of those regions which Turner would have illustrated nobly in his maturity.'

Alas! since Hamerton penned this description, thirty years ago, Burnley has not only encroached upon, but appropriated the Towneley demesne. The park is giving place to brick houses; the once noble trees that surround the Hall are dying; and it is little more than a melancholy satisfaction that the Hall—once the home of the famous Towneley marbles—is now used as the Art Gallery of the Burnley Corpora-

tion; and that the dwellers in the smoky manufacturing town have the enjoyment of what is left of the beauty of the grounds immediately around it. Sooner or later, one fears, the Holme will also be enveloped and then disappear.

In 1799, Turner, then twenty-four years old, was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. Many an artist who has been elected first to associateship and then to membership of the Academy has ceased to be even a name except to laborious students of records, talent, by no means always great, having been quite sufficient qualification for academic recognition. It does not follow, therefore, that because Turner received these honours his genius was fully recognised by his contemporaries. He might still have been the man born out of due time that Ruskin made him out to be. But, certainly, election to associateship at the age of twenty-four, and election that must have been based chiefly upon his work in water-colour, shows the Academicians to have realised that this ex-student in their schools had proved himself so early to be at least a painter of very considerable talent. It may be assumed that they had observed the remarkable advance in his water-colour drawings during the previous two or three years, to which reference has just been made. One of these drawings was of Norham Castle, a subject

to which he returned again and again. Many years after this time, when he was in Scotland making drawings to illustrate Sir Walter Scott's poems, he and the publisher Cadell, who had commissioned the drawings, were walking along Tweedside, and Turner raised his hat to Norham Castle. Cadell asked him why he did so, and his reply was a reference to the early drawing of it : 'That picture made me.'

Turner's diploma picture, *Dolbadern Castle*, one result of a visit to Wales in the previous year, was an oil painting of the Wilson type. Hitherto, we have seen Turner only as a painter in water-colour ; and have found him, after his prentice days, during which he imitated the art of other men, attaining the freedom of self-expression. His work in oil followed the same course, only he was much longer in coming to his own in it than in water-colour. He began by seeking to beat earlier landscape painters, both of his own and of other countries ; and then there came the confident sense of triumph, and he went on in his own way ; although, as is shown by his leaving to the nation by his will two of his own oil paintings and two by Claude, on condition that they should hang side by side, he never forgot that he had triumphed.

Is this the right way to speak about these things ? I have been trying to show Turner's point of view. It

cannot be said to have been wholly a generous one. The men with whom he entered into rivalry might very well have done greater things, due regard being had to their time and opportunity, than did Turner, and yet he might have excelled them. This is not the place to attempt an estimate of the relative contributions to art of such men as the Poussins, Claude, the Dutch landscape painters, Wilson and Turner; but the generations of artists ought not to be regarded as standing one on the shoulders of another so that the topmost of them may finally shout, and wave his hand in triumph. There was something too much of this in Turner's attitude towards his predecessors, and in Ruskin's comparative estimates of them all. Turner started from a vantage-ground his predecessors had won for him. He would have been less than they if in some ways he had not done greater things than they did.

Conversely, it may be said that he might in some ways do less things than they and yet be greater. There is a serene mastership in the works of many of the earlier painters, a doing with perfection of accomplishment that which they set themselves to do, that is often lacking in Turner's work. We are reminded of what Browning makes Andrea del Sarto say—

> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?

What Ruskin chiefly insists upon to prove Turner's superiority over all his predecessors is the greater truthfulness to nature of his works, his more imaginative interpretation of her beauty and power. He only turned to oil painting when he had learned to interpret nature for himself in water-colour. *Moonlight, a study at Millbank*, which was in the Academy Exhibition of 1797, appears to have been his first exhibited picture in oil. From the first there is evident the endeavour more fully to interpret nature than any of his predecessors had done; and the endeavour, the struggle we might well call it, was continued to the end. Turner's reach ever exceeded his grasp. He was never long content with any formula. He did not repeat, over and over again, one particular thing that the critics and the public had acclaimed, and continued to acclaim. It was against the onslaught of the critics on his latest pictures that Ruskin came out to defend him. What is it that makes Turner's pictures, as we see them at the National Gallery of British Art, so widely different from all earlier landscapes, to whatever school they may belong? It is that whereas all other landscape painters had been content to take just so much from nature as was well within the compass of their art, Turner flung himself upon nature with the splendid daring of the patriarch wrestling with the messenger of God,

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE: ITALY

resolute not to let her go until she yielded up to him her every secret. And if, as must be, not even a Turner could win a final victory, so that nothing should be left for others to achieve, how splendidly he wrestled, and how many a fall he won!

The oil paintings in the Turner rooms are hung approximately in order of date. The difference between the early ones and the late ones is so great that they might easily be taken for the work of two different artists. The early ones are heavy and sombre-looking; the late ones are brilliant in the extreme. There is a middle period, a time of transition, between the two. Confining ourselves at the moment to the early ones, among which may be mentioned, *Jason in Search of the Golden Fleece*, *Calais Pier*, *The Shipwreck*, *The Goddess of Discord in the Garden of the Hesperides*, *The Death of Nelson*, *The Sun rising in a Mist*, and *Apollo killing the Python*, we note that, in them, Turner, having the old masters in mind, painting in rivalry with them, and not having yet begun, even in water-colour, to attempt to rival the brilliant colour of nature, was content with but little colour and with low, even sombre tones. The pictures are impressive, but we do not think of them as beautiful.

These early oil paintings were soundly painted, and have stood the test of time much better than the later

ones, in which his endeavour to obtain the greatest possible brilliance led him, as we shall see hereafter, to make many rash, even fatal, experiments. Redgrave instances the early works to refute Ruskin's saying that 'The Academy taught Turner nothing, not even the one thing it might have done—the mechanical process of safe oil painting, sure vehicles, and permanent colours.' It is certainly hard on the Academy to blame it because Turner departed from a safe, academic technique in trying new ventures. One might as well blame the cartographers, if travellers lose their way in hitherto unexplored countries.

In 1801, Turner made his first extensive tour in Scotland, going to Edinburgh, and then by way of Loch Lomond into the Western Highlands. The following year is memorable for several reasons. It was the year, as we have already seen, of Girtin's death. It was the year of Turner's election to full membership of the Royal Academy. In it, also, he made his first Continental journey. By his sketch-books and his completed and exhibited works, we can follow him to Calais, where, clearly, he was as keenly interested in his new experiences as any schoolboy would have been : witness the varied incidents of the people and the shipping in *Calais Pier, with French Poissards preparing for Sea—an English Packet arriving*,

one of the finest of his early oil paintings. It was exhibited in the following year. From Calais he travelled into the south-east of France, and made studies for the beautiful *Festival upon the Opening of the Vintage at Macon*. Bonneville and Grenoble, Geneva, Chamounix, the Val d'Aosta, the Grand St. Bernard, the St. Gothard Pass, the Bernese Oberland, Lucerne and the Rhine are some of the principal items of this tour. He had now only to see Italy—but how much that means!—and he would have seen all the various types of scenery, and of cities and people, from which the material for his pictures was to be taken, except, of course, those for which his sources were other men's records.

Become full R.A., Turner evidently felt that he was now a person of some importance. He had already found the Maiden Lane bedroom an inadequate studio, and had taken one in Hand's Court, quite close by. Another change had followed his associateship. He went to the house No. 75 Morton Street, Portland Road. Full membership demanded still greater things. He took a house for himself, No. 64 Harley Street; and his father, now an elderly man, gave up the Maiden Lane business and went to live with his son. Removal to a fashionable quarter did not mean, however, that Turner purposed to enter into the world of fashion.

Nothing could be farther from our tramp's intentions. He entered into no social relations even with those who were now his fellow-Academicians. They had elected him, so he put the matter, because he had done good work as a painter; and he intended to go on doing good work, and still better work. He did not even trouble to thank them for doing the thing they so obviously ought to do. He said to his father's old customer Stothard, 'If they had not been satisfied with my pictures they would not have elected me. Why then should I thank them? Why thank a man for performing a simple duty?' Clearly Turner was not equipped for the social amenities, for the ordinary politenesses, that residence in Harley Street would usually imply; nor did his residence there in any degree strengthen his equipment. He felt that an R.A. must have his headquarters in a fashionable street; but he was quite contented with this one outward, visible sign of his greatness, and refused to trouble himself about any of the others, to the advantage, in most respects, we may say, of his art. It was all-essential that he should not cease to be a tramp.

During the next few years he did not wander very far afield. He was now at work upon the large, early oil paintings already mentioned. Between 1803 and 1807, his sketch-books show him to have been to

Chester, in Sussex, and on the Thames, from Reading down to the sea. We may mention here that the exhaustive catalogue of the drawings in the Turner bequest, prepared by direction of the Trustees of the National Gallery, and going through the press while these pages are being written, will enable the Turner student closely to follow his wanderings from year to year. All that is needful, and indeed possible, in such a book as this, is to give a general account of those wanderings by means of which Turner was ever increasing his stores of knowledge, and of memoranda which he could afterwards work up into paintings and water-colour drawings.

In the year 1808 he was appointed Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy, and greatly amused his colleagues by adding for a time P.P. as well as R.A. to the signature on his paintings. His early draftsman's work in architects' offices was now standing him in good stead.

In the year previous to this appointment he had commenced an undertaking that was destined to have a very distinct place of its own in his life-work. This was the series of pen and wash drawings in brown, prepared for reproduction by the process of mezzotint engraving, to which he gave the title *Liber Studiorum*. His great French predecessor Claude

had made a practice of reproducing his pictures in brown as he finished them. These drawings he kept by him as memoranda of his work, and on them he noted for whom the picture had been painted. By this means he was able easily to detect fraudulent imitations of his works. As these drawings accumulated, they formed a portfolio or book, to which he gave the title *Libro d' Invenzioni* or *Libro di Verità*. The book passed through various hands into the Chatsworth collection, and about the year 1774—the year previous to that of Turner's birth—it was lent by the then Duke of Devonshire to Richard Earlom, an engraver, who reproduced the drawings in brown, by means of etching and mezzotint. These reproductions were published under the title *Liber Veritatis*.

This was the work with which Turner entered into rivalry. It is obvious that the conditions of the contest were utterly unfair to Claude. We have not to take into account merely that Turner held the advantage of a large unearned increment both in art and in the study of nature. Claude's drawings were, as we have just seen, mere memoranda of pictures; and he had been dead nearly a hundred years before they passed into the hands of the engraver. Turner made for his work special drawings into which he threw all his strength; and, beyond this, he himself

etched some of the plates made from the drawings, selected his own mezzotint engravers, and superintended their work. Is it too much to say that he chose his own ground for a contest in which a dead man was represented by a self-elected substitute?

It is impossible to clear Turner of the charge of some lack of generosity, even of justice, in this rivalry with Claude. At the same time it must be borne in mind that Claude's merit was very much over-rated by critics of Sir George Beaumont's type, whereby not only was there a risk of artists going to him, and not to nature, for inspiration, but the work of living artists, based upon a richer interpretation of nature than was possible in Claude's day, was apt to be depreciated.

It is significant also that the project of the *Liber* did not wholly, or even, perhaps, mainly, originate with Turner. It was discussed by him with a brother-artist, William Frederick Wells, a member of the Water Colour Society, whose daughter says that Turner took up the scheme entirely on her father's persuasion. It is possible therefore to emphasise, not the rivalry with Claude, but the over-estimation of him by the critics, which was felt by other artists than Turner to be an injustice to themselves.

Mr. Wells' daughter also states that her father

suggested the six divisions of subjects that Turner adopted for the work : Historical, Pastoral, Elegant Pastoral, Mountain, Marine and Architectural. Whether this be so or not, it is clear that Turner knew his work to include something more than landscape, in the usual acceptation of the word. It is also clear that he knew himself to be issuing to the public a definite *apologia* for the art of his own day, and his own art in particular.

The way in which the business part of the scheme was carried out is not very pleasant reading. Turner had sundry quarrels with his engravers, in which he appears often to have been in fault. He was his own publisher, and he would have done better to put the job out, as the working-man said to the parliamentary candidate who introduced himself as a self-made man. The first number of the work appeared in 1807. Others were issued at irregular intervals until 1819, seventy-one plates being published in all; and then the publication came to an end for lack of the public support that Turner had not taken the best means to obtain—had rather acted so as certainly not extensively to obtain. There were to have been one hundred plates in the complete work; and most of the remainder, after those actually published, had been carried far towards completion. Probably lack of

appreciation was not the only reason for the stoppage of the work. On this point Mr. Frank Short says, 'It must be borne in mind that during the twelve years the *Liber* was being produced (1807–19) Turner matured his art rapidly. At the time it was begun he painted with a very limited range of colour, and it is conceivable that at this stage of his career he was more satisfied with "black and white" than later, when he was beginning to feel his strength in powerful colour. Black and white skilfully managed can be made to suggest a good deal of colour, but to a strong colourist it must always be a very restricted mode of expression. So I think it is fair to suppose that in straining its resources very hard Turner lost patience, and thought how much better he could employ his time with painting; and this, I think, would be a very strong reason for not carrying out his entire plan.' Another reason that has been suggested is that by 1819 Turner found a much readier sale for his pictures than he had done in 1807; so that there was no pecuniary inducement to complete the *Liber*.

He spared no pains to secure the best results in the engravings; and, in the pursuit of excellence, of the most subtle rendering of effects, the resources of the art were, as Mr. Short says, strained to the utmost. There are notes by Turner in the margin of some

of the engraver's proofs which show that he was not satisfied until exactly the effect he wanted had been obtained. We may quote one of them to show to what minute details his care extended. It is on a proof of *The Little Devil's Bridge*. 'A slight indication of a ray of bursting light under the bridge would improve that part, and a few sharp white touches upon the leaves marked **X**, because they are now two black spots without connection with the stems of the trees.' Here is a sensibility almost fit to be compared with that of the princess in the fairy tale, who could not sleep because of the lump made by a pea placed under seven feather beds. We have only to think of this fine musical sense as coming into play instinctively in the water-colour drawings to understand why they are so delicately beautiful.

There is a solemn tone in the *Liber* plates, to which, it may be said, the dark monochrome lent itself. Here again a true artistic instinct asserts itself. Ruskin saw in this solemnity evidence of Turner's pessimistic view of human life and labour. 'Observe,' he says, in the course of an often quoted passage, 'the two disordered and poor farm-yards, cart and ploughshare, and harrow rotting away; note the pastoral by the brookside, with its neglected stream, and haggard trees, and bridge with the broken rail; and decrepit children, fever-

struck, one sitting stupidly by the stagnant stream, the other in rags and with an old man's hat on, and lame, leaning on a stick. Then the *Hedging and Ditching*, with its bleak sky and blighted trees, hacked and bitten, and starved by the clay soil into something between trees and fire-wood; its meanly faced, sickly labourers, pollard labourers, like the willow trunk they hew; and the slatternly peasant woman, with worn cloak and battered bonnet—an English dryad.' If this were really what Turner recorded we might take the plates to be a comment on the effect of Napoleonic wars on the English peasantry. But Ruskin will not let us off so easily as that. Because Turner painted the mill, and not the convent, of the Grande Chartreuse, it must be because he had 'no sympathy with the hope, no mercy for the indolence of the monk.' 'Such are the lessons of the *Liber Studiorum*,' we are told. We want a footnote by the later Ruskin withdrawing this pessimism. There is plenty of cheerfulness in the *Liber*. The fisherman near Blair Athol looks quite sprightly; the only melancholy in the *Sheepwashing* is that of the washed sheep—quite temporary; the bathers in the pool below the Falls of Clyde may be set off against the child sitting by the stagnant pool; Mr. Stopford Brooke, who shares to some extent Ruskin's view of the general melan-

choly of the *Liber*, saying that it is rare to find Turner dwelling on the joy rather than the sorrow of man, nevertheless admits that '*The Castle above the Meadows* is a pretty plate, gracious and cheerful, and the herd-boy who pipes on the grass, so much for his own pleasure and absorbed in his music, gives the key-note to the warm and happy place, and tells us what Turner felt.' May we recall, in order finally to reassure ourselves, that the later Ruskin, the Ruskin of *Fors Clavigera*, could say that there was more joy than sorrow in the world if we knew where to look for it?

Taken together, with the variety of subject suggested by the six divisions already mentioned, the *Liber* plates are a compendium of Turner's outlook upon life and nature. It was more probably of this, than of any idea of their being taken as a jeremiad, that he was thinking when, on hearing of anyone's trying to get one or other of the subjects as especially beautiful, he said, 'What is the use of them but together?' Certainly, with reference to the criticism of life in them, we shall give the right answer to his question by taking the gay along with the grave. To some of the subjects we shall have to refer hereafter. In this little book we cannot discuss the beauty and the meaning of all the plates; but we can say that the *Liber* is worth study as a whole, for the sake of its art,

BOLTON ABBEY

of its interpretation of nature, and, whether we may think it has little or much to teach us, of the interest it shows in the joys and sorrows of human life.

Returning to the years immediately following the initiation of the *Liber*, we find Turner, in 1811, going for the first time to Devon, where he made his notes for the *Ivy Bridge*, and, as already mentioned, for *Crossing the Brook*. Shortly afterwards he was again in Derbyshire and the North, and, a little later, in Devon again. About this time we also find sketches in Wharfedale, mention of which suggests a reference to his friendship with Mr. Walter Fawkes of Farnley Hall. They appear to have become acquainted through the medium of Dr. Whitaker.

All Turner enthusiasts must, sooner or later, find their way to Farnley. One seems to understand Turner better after a visit there. And assuredly the best way to make the visit, the most Turnerian way, is to tramp there over the moors, as the writer has done, getting a simple meal in a hamlet, and then going down through the trees to where the hall stands part way up the hillside above the left bank of the Wharfe. The drawing of Farnley and the moors beyond it, as seen from the hillside above Otley on the other side of the river, hurts the lover of Wharfedale just a little, perhaps, because Turner, we hope only with the

aim of giving in a small drawing some sense of the wide spaciousness of the scene, has made us think of Switzerland as well as of Yorkshire. We do not really want the fir-trees and the goats; and there is rather more exaggeration of height than is necessary for a true impression. Apart from these things it is Wharfedale that we see.

Turner was always happy at Farnley, where he was a frequent visitor, for Mr. Fawkes understood him, and let him have his own way. He was fond of fishing, and the Wharfe gave him plenty of sport. We have already seen how much he delighted in the scenery of the Dales. On such good terms were he and his host, that the latter could even venture to ask to see him at work on a drawing—a request that perhaps not another who knew him would have ventured to make. The drawing that was the outcome of this request is one of the things that have made me say one understands Turner better after going to Farnley. I have sat in a room in a house in Paris, in which were impressionist pictures of the room itself, and have found a comparison of the pictures with the room and its contents a useful study in the methods of impressionism. But the drawing that Turner did for Mr. Fawkes was not of anything immediately to be seen at Farnley or in the neighbourhood. Its subject

was a first-rate man-of-war taking in stores; and Turner had no memoranda to guide him in making it. In about two hours and a half, according to Mr. Fawkes' account of what he saw, after numerous washings in and washings out, after, indeed, total immersion of the paper in water, and then sundry scrapings, there came into view a subtle drawing of the great hull and the lower part of the masts and rigging of the warship, with lighters in attendance on her, and crisp wavelets playing about her bow, other vessels away in the distance, and the whole scene bathed in shimmering light. After seeing this drawing, in the place where it was made, so far away from sea and ships, one understands better—though it still remains somewhat in the regions of faith—when looking at the numerous sketches and finished drawings in colour, at the National Gallery and elsewhere, that all Turner usually did on the spot was to make outlines and notes in pencil.

Dr. Whitaker and Mr. Fawkes were far from being the only people from whom Turner obtained commissions. The Marquis of Stafford, Sir John Leicester, afterwards Lord de Tabley, the Earls of Yarborough, Egremont, Essex and Lonsdale, and Sir John Soane were among those who gave him commissions or bought pictures from him. At a

later date he had a staunch friend in Mr. Munro of Novar. Turner never lacked those very useful friends, people who were ready to exchange their money for the products of his art, from the days when his earliest drawings were sold out of his father's shop-window. The fact that he left £140,000 at his death is often quoted to refute Ruskin's statement that his genius had not been appreciated. Even those who value most Ruskin's interpretation of Turner's art will admit that the young 'Graduate of Oxford' did not discover him.

We must pass lightly here over biographical details that do not materially affect Turner's art. In 1812 he left Harley Street for a house in Queen Anne Street, which continued to be his headquarters during the rest of his life. In 1814 he built a villa at Twickenham, to which he gave the significant name Solus Lodge, afterwards changed to Sandycombe Lodge. Perhaps the alteration was made because, while at Twickenham, he became quite surprisingly sociable, particularly with a vicar in the neighbourhood, the Rev. Mr. Trimmer, whom he afterwards made one of his executors.

Thornbury tells amusing stories of Turner's father at this time: how he took shillings from visitors to the studio, which he went to open every day, saving

the cost of conveyance between Twickenham and town by walking or by getting free lifts on a market gardener's cart. Father and son were always on good terms. The old man used to prepare the painter's canvases and varnish the finished pictures, which drew from Turner the jocular saying that his father began and completed his works. Their home-life was of the simplest—deal table, horn-handled knives, mugs, figure in the accounts of it. Talent now, and perhaps then, would scorn what was quite good enough for genius.

The Napoleonic wars alone would prevent Turner for several years from travelling on the Continent; but even had this obstacle not been in the way, he had plenty of work to keep him fully occupied at home. He had many drawings to make for the *Liber* and other publications, and the engraving of them to superintend. His work in water-colour was much more extensive than that in oil; though, between 1811 and 1818, he produced a number of oil paintings, including one or two of the very finest. To the first-named year, in which we have seen that he painted *Apollo Killing the Python*, belongs also the beautiful *Mercury and Herse*. Themes so diverse as *Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, *Cottage Destroyed by an Avalanche*, and *Ivy Bridge, Devonshire*, were treated

in the following year. To 1813 belong the sympathetic, almost realistic pictures *A Frosty Morning*, *Sunrise* and *The Deluge*. A Carthage picture, *Dido and Æneas leaving Carthage*, and a classical composition *Apuleia in search of Apuleius*, appeared in 1814. In the following year came *Crossing the Brook* and *Dido building Carthage*. The former has already been incidentally mentioned. The morning after Turner and his friend Cyrus Redding had slept in the inn, the latter pointed out to Turner a view along the valley of the Tamar as a good subject for a picture. A few pencil notes served at the moment, and the picture was painted afterwards in London. It is a beautiful, if slightly idealised and conventional rendering of a typical English scene; and the gradations of tone by means of which the landscape is made to fade away into the far-off, hazy distance are marvellously subtle. It is remarkable also for the stateliness of its design, and its quietly harmonious colour. The *Dido building Carthage* is hung beside a Claude, according to the direction in Turner's will. It has a fine sky, full of hazy light, and much classical architecture of a scenic description. A companion picture, *The Decline of Carthage*, painted in 1817, has also a glowing sky. They both show that Turner's mastery of light was increasing. But they are only melodrama. Ruskin

roundly condemned them as 'nonsense pictures,' and said of the latter, 'It is, in fact, little more than an accumulation of Academy students' outlines, coloured brown.' Still, though these pictures be not the best 'Turner,' no one but Turner could have painted them.

Between 1816 and 1818, he was still working chiefly at home; and we find him in Sussex, Yorkshire and southern Scotland. In 1817 he made a tour that included Waterloo and the Rhine, one outcome of which was that grandiose failure, *The Field of Waterloo*. We have always reason to be thankful if Turner escapes from a figure-subject without meeting disaster. *Apollo and the Python* is an oasis in the wilderness. In 1819 he found time for a journey to Italy, and, in his sketch-books and drawings, we can follow him to Turin, the lakes of Como, Lugano and Maggiore, and Venice, Ancona, Rimini, Rome, Albano, Nemi, Tivoli, Naples, Pompeii. On his return journey he passed through Florence, and crossed the Alps by the Simplon Pass.

The date of this journey marks a critical point in Turner's career: the abandonment of reserved colour for colour continually increasing in brilliance. The change is immediately seen in the oil paintings of 1820, *Rome from the Vatican* and *Rome: the Arch of Titus*, and again in the glowing *Bay of Baiæ*, *Apollo and the Sibyl* of 1823.

We may conveniently describe here Turner's later method of oil painting. Going forward from the point that Girtin and he had reached together, Turner had learned to obtain in water-colour such delicately beautiful colour and such subtle effects of light and atmosphere that he became ill-content with the lack of scope afforded in these respects by the method of oil painting which he had employed hitherto. He had done with rivalling the old masters on their own ground, and set himself to rival in oil his own great achievement in water-colour. He covered his canvas with a white ground, over which he scumbled and glazed his pigments so thinly that they were almost transparent, and the white ground told beneath them like the white paper over which the transparent washes of colour are taken in a water-colour drawing. He ran the utmost risks in the endeavour to rival the effect of nature's brilliant light and colour. He used together media of quite different drying quality, and even used water-colour along with oil. By such means as these he obtained marvellous effects of colour and light; but there could be no permanence for pictures so painted, and we can only guess at what many of them were when they left his easel, or after he had worked on them at the Academy on varnishing day, as to which Redgrave says, 'At these

times such was his love of colour that any rich tint on a brother painter's palette so tempted him that he would jokingly remove a large portion of it to his own and immediately apply it to his picture, irrespective of the medium with which it was made up. From our own palette he has whisked off, on more occasions than one, a luscious knob of orange vermilion, or ultramarine, tempered with copal, and at once used it on a picture he was at work upon with a mastic magylph. Such a practice, productive of no mischief at the moment, would break up a picture when the harder drier began to act on that which was of a less contractile nature.' As was said on an earlier page, the Academy cannot be blamed because Turner did such things as these. He was simply flying in the face of well-understood elementary facts as to the nature of pigments, and any student could have told him what the effect would be.

In the unfinished oil paintings now exhibited at the National Gallery of British Art we can see exactly what was his method. In some of them, such as *Sunrise with a Boat between Headlands* and *Norham Castle, Sunrise*, the white ground is barely covered. In the former, filmy blue and gold are playing over the surface, with a touch of scarlet to suggest how the colour-scheme is to be completed. In the latter there are blue, gold, and delicate rose and green, while a

touch of dark brown on the cow in the river secures by contrast the feeling of glowing light. From paintings thus just begun we can pass through others more complete to those in which the final effect is practically obtained, such as the beautiful *Evening Star*, a solemn harmony of blue-grey, faded gold and rose in the sky, a dark blue tone in the sea, and greyish brown in the sand of the foreground. Ruskin put aside these works because they were unfinished. Every student of Turner is grateful for their having been brought to light. We have now to all intents and purposes the privilege that his contemporaries desired in vain: we can see the painter at work in his studio, the colour-musician composing—it is hardly too much to say that we can see the magician weaving his spell.

His drawings in these years were nearly all made to be handed over to the engraver, and he was occupied not merely with the drawings themselves, but in superintending their reproduction. We have already seen, in connexion with the *Liber Studiorum*, how minutely critical he was of the engraver's work, and all the engraver's proofs in connexion with the numerous series of his drawings that were reproduced, had to be submitted to him to receive his notes and corrections often many times before he was satisfied and would pass them. This, of course, necessitated

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his working on the proofs themselves. Turner was, indeed, not merely doing his own painter's work, but was training a whole school of engravers in the interpretation of works in colour in terms of black and white. Clearly, he had little leisure for the exacting pleasures of London society, even if he had any inclination for them.

In 1824 began the publication of the 'Rivers of England' series, Turner's drawings for which include some of his finest works, such as *Totnes on the Dart*, *Kirkstall Abbey*, and *Norham Castle*. Drawings by Girtin and other artists were included in the series, and Turner's own work in it did not wholly belong to the period of publication. In 1826 he commenced the 'Picturesque Views in England and Wales,' for which he made over a hundred drawings. The scheme was an ambitious one, like others upon which he entered, far too ambitious to be adequately carried through. What Turner accomplished is wonderful enough. It is difficult to realise that it was the work of one man's lifetime. What he desired to do was more wonderful still. He wanted to make this series an exhaustive Turnerian record of every variety of English and Welsh scenery—mountain, moor, river, lake, and sea-coast were to be included, so were towns and buildings, cathedral cities, country

towns, ruined castles and abbeys, and all these not in any merely topographical way, but the various drawings were to illustrate all the varieties of effect produced by differences of time and weather. Hamerton takes trouble to show how little of all this programme Turner actually carried out, that there are so many abbeys and castles to so few cathedrals, only one mountain, and neither a forest nor a trout-stream. This is true enough. Turner set out upon his task as if he had several lifetimes at disposal. He could not have hoped to complete it except in the limited form of studious selection, and this was not his way. His reach was ever exceeding his grasp. The work remains a fragment. But, when we patch together all Turner's fragments of this kind, if even then they do not prove a whole, they afford a wealth of illustration of British scenery such as has hardly entered into the waking dreams of any other artist.

In 1826, Turner announced the publication of a series of mezzotint engravings by Thomas Lupton, from original drawings of his own of the ports of England. Twelve plates only were completed. In the preface to the republication of the plates thirty years later, with his introduction and notes, under the title, 'The Harbours of England,' Ruskin says, 'Had one of the parties in the arrangement been a

mere plodding man of business the work would have proceeded, but between the two men of talent it came very naturally to a stand.' Even so, we do not get twelve ports illustrated, for places that cannot even by courtesy be considered ports or harbours are included, the series being Dover, Ramsgate, Plymouth, Catwater, Sheerness, Margate, Portsmouth, Falmouth, Sidmouth, Whitby, Deal and Scarborough. The colour, in the drawings, was restrained, but beautifully modulated, as in the *Whitby*, in which we have a harmony in blue and pearly grey, green, rose and orange.

In 1828 Turner was in Italy again, travelling by way of the South of France, Genoa and Florence, to Rome. He indulged so little in correspondence, doubtless because it was difficult to him, and also because his pen and pencil were always so busily occupied, that when there are letters of his that show us the man as we cannot see him through his paintings, they are not to be passed over in any biography of him. Two such letters belong to this tour. They are both dated from Rome. One is to his fellow-Academician Jones, and in it he says, 'Two months nearly in getting to this terra pictura, *and at work;* but the length of time is my own fault. I must see the South of France, which almost knocked me up, the heat was so intense, particularly at Nismes and

Avignon; and until I got a plunge into the sea at Marseilles, I felt so weak that nothing but the change of scene kept me onwards to my distant point. Genoa, and all the sea-coast from Nice to Spezzia, is remarkably rugged and fine; so is Massa. Tell that fat fellow Chantrey that I did think of him, then (but not the first or the last time) of the thousands he had made out of those marble crags which only afforded me a sour bottle of wine and a sketch; but he deserves everything that is good, though he did give me a fit of the spleen at Carrara.'

The second letter is to Chantrey, and must be quoted in full:—

'My dear Chantrey,—I intended long before this (but you will say Fudge!) to have written; but even now very little information have I to give you in matters of Art, for I have confined myself to the painting department at Corso; and having finished *one*, am about the second, and getting on with Lord E.'s; but as the folk here talked that I would show them *not*, I finished a small three feet four to stop their gabbling. So now to business. Sculpture, of course, first; for it carries away all the patronage in Rome; but all seem to share in the goodwill of the patrons of the day. Gott's studio is full. Wyatt and Rennie, Ewing, Buxton all employed.

Gibson has two groups in hand, *Venus and Cupid*, and *The Rape of Hylas*, three figures, very forward, though I doubt much if it will be in time (taking the long voyage into the scale) for the Exhibition, though it is for England. Its style is something like the *Psyche*, being two standing figures of nymphs leaning, enamoured, over the young Hylas, with his pitcher. The Venus is a sitting figure, with Cupid in attendance; and if it had wings like a dove, to flee away and be at rest, the rest would not be the worse for the change. Thorwalsden is closely engaged on the late Pope's (Pius VII) monument. Portraits of the superior animal, man, is to be found in all. In some, the inferior—viz., greyhounds and poodles, cats and monkeys, etc. etc.

'Pray give my remembrances to Jones and Stokes, and tell *him* I have not seen a bit of coal stratum for months. My love to Mrs. Chantrey, and take the same and good wishes of

'Yours most truly,
'J. M. W. Turner.'

There are several interesting things in these letters apart from their faulty grammar. There was plenty of the boy left in Turner even at fifty-three. He wants bracing up, so he has a swim in the sea at

Marseilles! Both letters are brimming over with fun. Some ordinary people may be glad to find that genius is not above making puns. Evidently a very friendly, really affectionate feeling subsisted between him and some of his colleagues. He was particularly attached to Chantrey, of whose bequest to the nation it is impossible not to think when he and Turner are mentioned together. The second letter brings vividly before us the kind of *entourage* that Turner would have in Rome at that time: Gibson's *Hylas and the Nymphs* perhaps not going to be ready for the next Academy Exhibition! Turner did well to free himself as much as he did from classical influence. It is because he came and remained so much under it, and because Constable never came under it, that the latter seems to us so much more modern than Turner. Would it have been better for Turner if he had never seen more of Italy than Venice? We should not like to be without the beautiful topographical drawings of Rome. The big oil paintings of Italy, with their classical allusions, he might have painted as well 'out of his head,' with the help of other people's sketches. They are not Italy—that is to say, they are idealised Italy. It was another matter with his Venetian drawings and paintings, as we shall see later.

Lastly, the second letter shows that no more in

Rome than in London or on a sketching-tour did he let people see him at work. He painted a picture, three feet by four, apparently the *View of Orvieto*, now in the National Gallery, and showed it to appease those who would fain have obtained access to his studio to see what he was doing.

That this journey set him dreaming again, and that he continued to dream, of legendary and romantic Italy, the following list of oil paintings sufficiently shows. In 1829 came *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus* and the *Loretto Necklace*. Though the subject of the former picture is Greek, the landscape is an idealised Italian scene. In 1832 he exhibited *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Italy*, that splendid work of romantic art, through which he poured out what, but for some mode of expression, would be pent-up feeling, almost unbearable, at once so sweet and so sad. To the next year belongs *Venice: The Dogana, Campanile of San Marco*, followed in 1834 by *Lake Avernus: The Golden Bough;* in 1836 came the beautiful *Mercury and Argus*. Still the emotion was not exhausted, though now he transferred the scene to Greece, where, however, he had not been; and the landscape is the same as that of his ideal Italy in *Apollo and Daphne: The Vale of Tempe* and *The Parting of Hero and Leander*, exhibited in 1837, and

in the *Phryne going to the Public Baths as Venus*, of the following year. I must not compile a catalogue; but after these came *Agrippina landing with the Ashes of Germanicus*, *Proserpine: the Plains of Enna*, and *Bacchus and Ariadne*.

Other oil paintings of this period show that he lived in England, in 'Actuality'—to quote Ruskin's phrase, as well as in the Dreamland of Italy. Such are the fine *Line Fishing off Hastings*, *A Ship in Distress off Yarmouth*, *St. Michael's Mount*, the great *Fighting Téméraire*—a splendid apotheosis of *England's Sea-power*—and *Off the Nore: Wind and Water*, all of which, and others, came between 1835 and 1840.

All through this time he was also hard at work on his water-colours, continuing series of drawings for reproduction already begun, and beginning and carrying on others, in addition to numerous independent drawings.

In 1830 appeared the illustrated edition of Rogers' 'Italy,' and in 1834 the 'Poems.' Thinking of the exquisitely delicate and interpretative engravings from Turner's works that these volumes contain, one regrets that in such a book as this the subject of Turner's engravers could only be so inadequately treated that it is best left with the statement already made that we are

largely indebted to him for the training of a great school of workers in this art. Turner's own drawings are very delicately beautiful, though unequal in colour. Of the *Datur Hora Quieti*, discussed in our first chapter, Monkhouse says it 'is not in illustration of any of the poet's verses, but is a more beautiful poem than ever Rogers wrote.' Ruskin tells us, it will be recollected, that after, when a boy, he had spent an evening at Rogers' house, he was dismayed when it flashed upon him that in conversation with the poet, he had praised enthusiastically the illustrations to the poems, but had said never a word about the poems themselves! Perhaps we may add, 'The least said, the soonest mended.'

In 1831 Turner was in Scotland again, to fulfil a commission given him by Mr. Cadell, the publisher, to make twenty-four drawings for an illustrated edition of Scott's Poetical Works. The outline of his tour can be traced: Rokeby, Appleby, Berwick, Abbotsford—where he met Sir Walter—Edinburgh, Stirling, Loch Long, Long Ard, Staffa, the Sound of Mull, the Isle of Skye, Fort Augustus, Inverness. The hat-raising incident on Tweedside, when Turner saw Norham, has already been mentioned. Another story of this journey is that when Turner was in the Isle of Skye he saved himself from slipping down a steep slope by

clinging to a tuft of grass. I have previously mentioned the figures perched on a rock, in what looks like a dangerous position, in the Loch Coruisk drawing. Perhaps Turner's narrow escape partly accounts for them. They certainly, as I have said, add to the wild, dangerous-looking character of the scene. It should be mentioned that before doing the illustrations for Scott's poems, Turner had made drawings for his 'Provincial Antiquities,' which was published in 1826.

Within the period 1826 to 1835 he was engaged upon the drawings which were engraved for the book published under the title 'The Rivers of France,' containing letterpress by Mr. Leitch Ritchie. We are told that though they both visited the scenes to be illustrated, they travelled little together, as their tastes in everything but art were exceedingly dissimilar. Knowing what we do of Turner's faculty for roughing it, to say nothing of his lack of sociability, this occasions no surprise. Mr. Ritchie did, however, see something of Turner's work, and says, 'I was curious in observing what he made of the objects he selected for his sketches, and was frequently surprised to find what a forcible idea he conveyed of a place with scarcely a correct detail. His exaggerations, when it suited his purpose to exaggerate, were wonderful, lifting up, for example, by two or three stories, the

steeple, or rather stunted cone, of a village church.' It is interesting to note that Mr. Ritchie felt the idea given of the places they did visit together to be forcible, the want of correct detail and the exaggerations notwithstanding.

He used body-colour on grey paper for the drawings he made; and stayed his hand when he had given a broad impression of the scene. The colour was conventional, by no means true to nature, much less to the particular locality in which he was painting; but effects of light and atmosphere were suggested with all his wonderful skill. He never forgot that he was working for the engraver, who, however, was left to deal in his own way with detail at which the painter had only deftly hinted; but the drawings were always designed in broad, simple masses, making easy their reproduction in black and white. They are effective in this way even when they are seen from across a moderately-sized gallery, and when it is barely possible to tell what they represent. They are, as Hamerton says of them, colour-music in orange and purple, red and green, with washes of cool grey to refresh the eye, and touches of burning scarlet to excite it. But those who know France will agree with the same writer, who knew it well, that the colour brings to mind not France, but Turner. In many cases the

principal motive of the drawing seems to be its remarkably beautiful, particular effect of light.

The title given to the book was misleading, for only two French rivers, the Seine and the Loire, and these always in or in the neighbourhood of the towns upon their banks, are illustrated in it. There is not a single drawing in which the river is seen flowing through entirely open country.

Between 1833 and 1845 Turner made several Continental journeys; he sketched on the Meuse, the Moselle, and the Rhine, he went again to Switzerland, the Italian Lakes, and Venice, to Switzerland and the Rhine once more; and his last journey abroad was to the north of France in 1845.

From the work that was the result of these journeys I single out the Venetian sketches and pictures, which are among the most distinctively 'Turnerian' things—the very climax of what was most individual in his art. The unfinished Venetian sketches are brilliant in light and colour, and in their effect of atmosphere, perhaps the most impressionistic—using the word in a general, not a limited, technical sense—of all his works. How one lingers before the brilliant sunlight in *Venice, the Giudecca, looking out to Fusina;* before the lovely morning light in the *Suburb towards Murano;* before the *Venice from Fusina*, with the rose,

APPROACH TO VENICE

gold and orange in the sky made intensely luminous by the deep purple cloudlet dashed into the still wet wash of colour; before a drawing named simply *Venice, Suburb*, with the faintly gleaming light of the rising moon, the fading sunlight, and the darkness beginning to steal over the waters! Such impressions as these are what we bring away from scores of Turner's latest sketches, not only of Venice, but of the Rhine, the Italian Lakes, Switzerland, and elsewhere.

The fine Venetian oil paintings belong to the same time; the sketches, indeed, supplied the material for them, as in the *Approach to Venice, looking towards Fusina*. The joyously radiant '*Sun of Venice*' *going to Sea*, *Venice, Evening—Going to the Ball*, and *Venice, Morning—Coming from the Ball*, are odes to the sun. In others of the Venetian oil paintings there is more definite portraiture of the city; but they are all, if not all in the same degree, light and colour poems.

In Turner's last years his strength became stronger, and his weakness more clearly showed itself. We are puzzled when first we have to face the fact that while he was doing the great things just mentioned, and such other great things as *Rain, Steam and Speed* and the *Snowstorm*—which is great notwithstanding the 'soapsuds and whitewash' of contemporary criticism—

he could produce such lamentable things as *War: the Exile and the Rock Limpet*, and before this, in 1831, *Watteau Painting* and *Lord Percy under Attainder*. One is almost inclined to accuse the authorities of malice in exhibiting these pictures. Soon, however, we say to ourselves that genius is exceptional development in a particular direction; the indisputably great things that Turner did come upon us like a flood; and we know it to be only the certainty of his genius that makes possible the exhibition of these figure paintings, which are as futile as his attempts at poetry.

In 1842 he painted *Peace: the Burial of Wilkie*. Other friends, who did not receive such memorial, but were none the less missed, went one by one. His father had died years before in 1829, and his life became a lonelier one than ever. The glowing pictures that have just been mentioned were the sunset of his art, flaming up at the close of his own day. The time was coming when he would ask to be taken to the window to look for the last time at the sun going down over the well and long loved river.

We need not go over again at any length the controversy with regard to the closing scenes of his life. Ruskin says that Turner was abandoned by his friends. Hamerton replies that it was Turner who abandoned them. He had gone to live in a house by the river-

side at Chelsea. His fellow-Academicians tried to find out where he was hiding himself—he was asked once where the cabman should be told to drive him; but he was too sharp to do more than give a preliminary direction, accompanied by a knowing wink. Redgrave thinks that it was to enjoy solitude and his lonely studies that he was accustomed to lodge in this house under an assumed name; and when we think of the exclusiveness and secretiveness that marked his life all through, we can readily believe that he was happiest so.

We have seen him to be always a solitary, without the qualifications of a society man; and it may be that if he had had them he would not have cared to put them to much use. He was a prophet, if not a Jeremiah: a prophet of the beauty and grandeur of nature, and he also kept watch, not always overcheerfully it must be said, on man's mortality. Prophets and seers are not usually clubbable men; and to pity Turner would be to wish, in effect, that he had been more commonplace. As Mrs. Browning says, not without cost and pain are poets made out of men. We need not therefore construe too sadly the story of Turner's death as told by his biographer Thornbury. 'One day, as she—his old housekeeper Mrs. Danby —was brushing an old coat of Turner's, she found

and pounced on a letter directed to him, and written by a friend who lived at Chelsea. Mrs. Danby, it appears, came to the conclusion that Turner himself was probably at Chelsea, and went there to seek for him, in company with another infirm old woman. From inquiries in a place by the riverside, where gingerbread was sold, they came to the conclusion that Turner was living in a certain small house close by, and informed a Mr. Harper, whom she and Turner knew. He went to the place and found the painter sinking. This was on the 18th of December, 1851, and on the following day Turner died.' It reads like evidence given at an inquest. The mere externals of his death hurt us for a moment. Then we remember that he died thinking of the sun, if not with his eyes fixed upon it.

The fate of Turner's will may be described as a leading case on the maxim that a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client. He made it himself; and he also made codicils to it. The law had its revenge, getting a vastly larger sum in costs of litigation than the testator would have had to pay to get his will properly drawn. He saved guineas at the cost, after his death, of thousands of guineas, and of the defeat of a considerable part of his purpose. He wanted his finished pictures to go to the nation to form a Turner

gallery. He wanted to found an institution for decayed artists, and to institute a Turner medal at the Academy. He left money for a monument to himself in St. Paul's Cathedral. All these things have been construed somewhat ungenerously, as being tainted with selfishness; and we may find it difficult to avoid wincing at the provision for a monument. Could he doubt that his work was memorial enough; and that anything else might well have been left to others? Paid for by himself, the monument has little value. He has been blamed because he revoked bequests of money previously made to uncles and cousins; but surely this was a matter for him to decide; and Mr. Monkhouse makes himself another man's judge in saying, 'We think the next of kin should have had a great deal of his money.' As a matter of fact they got it, as the outcome of litigation that ended in a compromise. The nation got all the pictures, both finished and unfinished, the Royal Academy got £20,000, the Turner medal was provided for; but his desire to found an institution for decayed artists was unfulfilled.

If we are to hold inquest upon the benevolence or selfishness of his motives, surely not merely generosity but justice demands that we should credit him with much goodwill to his fellows, and, on the other side of the account, make allowance for an upbringing

not calculated to draw out some of the best things that are latent in all men, and for a life almost perforce solitary and, in a measure, self-centred.

We have seen that it is possible to put a kindlier interpretation on Turner's rivalry with some of the earlier landscape painters than it has sometimes been made to bear. He may have been jealous for the reputation of contemporary art as well as for his own; and this is not incompatible with a consciousness of his own high rank among his fellows, and eagerness that it should be recognised. They do not seem to have borne him any ill will. Mr. Monkhouse says that 'many of his fellow-artists and admirers followed him to the grave; nor amongst the crowd were wanting a few old friends who in their hearts still cherished him as "dear old Turner."' Redgrave, who says that Turner was quite aware of the greatness of his own powers, and jealous of their recognition, records also the help he gave to young artists, and instances one interesting experience of his own when he was a young associate of the Academy. Howard told him frigidly that some of the members thought the bosom of a figure in one of his pictures to be indelicately naked and that he had better paint the dress higher. Turner, seeing him at work taking a hint that was equivalent to a command, asked what he was

doing, and on being told, said, 'Pooh, pooh, paint it lower.' This puzzled Redgrave, and then Turner added, 'You want white,' and turned away. 'What could he mean?' the story proceeds, 'I pondered over his words, and after a while the truth struck me. The coloured dress came harshly on the flesh and no linen intervened. I painted at once, over a portion of the bosom of the *dress*, a peep of the chemise. Howard came round soon after, and said, with a little more warmth, "Ah! you have covered it up—it is far better now—it will do." It was no higher, however; there was just as much of the flesh seen, but the sense of nakedness and display was gone. Turner also came round again, and gave his gratified grunt at my docility and appreciativeness, which he often rewarded afterwards by like hints. Now this was not a mere incidental change, but it was a truth, always available in the future, the value of linen near the flesh—a hint I never forgot—and continually found useful. Many such have I heard and seen him give to his brother landscape painters—either by word of mouth or with a dash of his brush.' Here we see Turner, not only showing incidentally his genius, but behaving more kindly to one of his younger brethren than did Howard, a man of only mediocre talent. The narrator of this story also says that the Academy schools 'were

usually better attended during his—Turner's—visitorships than during those of most other members, from which it may be inferred that the students appreciated his teaching.'

The little tricks he played on his equals in nominal rank on varnishing days need hardly be quoted against him, such as making his own pictures more brilliant after the hanging had been completed. These are the commonplaces of not unkindly rivalry. One of these tricks was played upon Constable—and reference to it suggests the remark that in all the biographies of Turner we read little or nothing of any intercourse between these two contemporary landscape painters, so different in their aims and methods, yet each destined to take a high place in the history of the art, Turner, we may say, the higher place, but Constable to be more generally influential hitherto. The story is that a sea-piece by Turner, a grey picture with no positive colour in it, was hung next to Constable's brilliant *Opening of Waterloo Bridge*. Turner came along and put on his grey sea a dab of red lead which he afterwards glazed and shaped into a buoy. This took the colour out of Constable's picture, and he exclaimed, when he saw it, 'Turner has been here and fired a gun.' Thornbury says that there was not much love lost between the two men;

"THE SUN OF VENICE" GOING TO SEA

yet Constable could speak of one of Turner's pictures as the most complete work of genius he ever saw.

If the question of Turner's relations with the other sex be raised, we will say that if there must be blame, there may well be more pity. I have not told hitherto a story of his young days, how that he was engaged to be married to the sister of a school friend at Margate, that her stepmother disapproved of the match, intercepted letters written to the girl by Turner, and persuaded her that he had forsaken her, that she gave her hand to another, and when Turner appeared again, just before the time fixed for her marriage, and proved his faithfulness, she refused to take back the promise to the new suitor, thinking herself bound to him, although Turner still had her affection. In this, and in other things, Turner was sinned against, which may palliate if it cannot excuse his sinning. He is said to have had another disappointment later in life. We need not think too hardly of him. Let us put to his credit that he was fond of children, and that they were fond of him.

Turner the man has been only less discussed than Turner the artist, as the little already said here will suggest; and his very personal appearance may be made a matter of controversy. Hamerton says that 'he was a person of unprepossessing appearance, short and thick-

set, with coarse features and the general appearance of the skipper of some small merchant craft living on shore in the interval between two voyages.' So far as one can judge from actual portraits, and the description of those who knew him, this particular description is very near to caricature—to which, indeed, the pencil subjected Turner along with most people of note. Redgrave says that 'in person Turner had little of the outward appearance that we love to attribute to the possessors of genius. In the last twenty years of his life, during which he knew him well, his short figure had become corpulent—his face, perhaps from continual exposure to the air, was unusually red, and a little inclined to blotches. His dark eye was bright and restless—his nose, aquiline. He generally wore what is called a black dress-coat, which would have been the better for brushing—the sleeves were mostly too long, coming over his fat and not over clean hands. He wore his hat while painting on the varnishing days—or otherwise a large wrapper over his head, while on the warmest days he generally had another wrapper or comforter round his throat—though occasionally he would unloose it and allow the two ends to dangle down in front and pick up a little of the colour from his ample palette. This, together with his ruddy face, his rollicking eye, and his continuous, although, except to

himself, unintelligible jokes, gave him the appearance of one of that now wholly extinct race—a long-stage coachman.' Except that we cannot see the colour and the dirt, this description tallies closely with Sir John Gilbert's sketch of Turner. Redgrave's comparison to a coachman is far better than Hamerton's comparison to a skipper, which the sketch does not in the least suggest, though it is said the Chelsea people took him for a retired admiral. Turner has distinctly what is called a 'horsy look' in the sketch. The expression of sly, good-humoured cunning would not be unworthy of a horse-dealer.

Putting Redgrave's description and Gilbert's sketch together again, we see that Hamerton is quite wrong in describing Turner's features as coarse. He had regular features, of the kind that is indicative of strength of character. The aquiline nose might be called Jewish, and certainly he had much of the persistence that marks that long-suffering race. George Dance's sketch of 1800 shows a pensive-looking, distinctly handsome youth, not unstudious in the matter of dress; while in an early portrait by an unknown artist, we see a really pretty boy, with features and expression almost girlish. His own early portrait of himself by no means suggests an unprepossessing appearance. In all the portraits the well-formed mouth suggests

determination; while the lips are ready for a smile, and the eyes for a twinkle. What Hamerton calls coarseness is not in the features, but in the stoutness, and in the red and blotchy skin, for which Redgrave accounts by Turner's spending so much time in the open air.

What has been said and quoted about his appearance fitly leads up to what follows, which, with the untidiness and lack of cleanliness in dress and person, fully justifies our description of him as a tramp. His house was in keeping with his person. Here is Redgrave's description of it: 'The scene in his rooms on the occasion of his funeral would have saddened any lover of art, for the works left behind, almost as much as for the genius that had passed away. The gallery seemed as if broom or dusting-brush had never troubled it. The carpet or matting (its texture was undistinguishable from dirt) was worn and musty; the hangings, which had once been a gay amber colour, showed a dingy yellow hue where the colour was not washed out by the drippings from the ceiling; for the cove and the glass sky-lights were in a most dilapidated state, many panes broken and patched with old newspapers. From these places the wet had run down the walls, and loosened the plaster, so that it had actually fallen behind the canvas of one picture, *The Bay of*

Baiæ, which, hanging over the bottom of the frame, bagged outwards, with the mass of accumulated mortar and rubbish it upheld. Many of the pictures—*Crossing the Brook*, among others—had large pieces chipped or scaled off; while others were so fast going to decay, that the gold first, and then the ground, had perished from the very frames, and the bare fir-wood beneath was exposed.' Turner's home was out-of-doors. His house was his workshop; and though he did not keep his workshop tidy, he did work both good and great.

III

TURNER'S READING OF EARTH

Sir Walter Armstrong ranks Turner higher as an illustrator, a meditator, an interpreter of nature to his fellows than as a creator. He points out what we have already seen, that Turner valued his work rather as a means to an end than as an end in itself. He was careless about the use of materials, careless about the preservation of his pictures. He left his oil paintings to rot in the damp, literally in the rain that came through the studio-roof; he sketched on both sides of his paper, crumpled up drawings in his pockets, crammed them into drawers. How different is all this from the scrupulous care that possessors of his drawings now take of them! A gentleman was once introduced to the present writer as 'Mr. ——, who keeps Turner water-colours in his wardrobe'; that is to say, the drawings were kept in the dark, so that they might not fade, and were only brought out when their owner wished to look at them or to show them to

others. Had Turner been above all things a creator, it is argued, he could not have been so indifferent to the fate of much of his work.

This line of argument is perhaps not convincing, but let us gladly admit that Turner *was* a great illustrator: that he made such a comprehensive record, expressed in terms of art, of the look of heaven, earth and sea, as far exceeds anything of the same kind done by any other artist. With this, indeed, we have seen that he is credited by everyone.

We have also noted the diversity of interest in his pictures. The mingling in one work of such purely artistic considerations as design, tone, colour, of record of natural phenomena, often remarkably detailed, and of figures interesting on their own account as well as for purely pictorial reasons, is more common with him than with any other painter. In the preceding chapters I have had much to say about his art; in the next one I shall discuss separately the human incidents in his pictures, which, if we bring them together mentally, we find to amount to nothing less than a human epic. In the present chapter I wish to give such idea as I can in a few pages of the immense range of Turner's study and interpretation of the visible universe.

The title 'The Pageant of Nature' suggested itself for this chapter; but though there is much

pageantry, much brilliant display in nature, and though Turner delighted in it, and left many a marvellous record of it, both nature and Turner's interpretation of it go far deeper than pageantry. The simplest words, those that are most pregnant with meaning to the imagination, those that the Hebrew writer used when he told the story of Creation, are not too simple and large for our immediate purpose.

George Meredith used the word Earth in such deep, imaginative way. For literary parallels to Turner's paintings we might go to him, as well, at least, as to Ruskin's purple passages written to express his sense of Turner's power. It would take a succession of Turner drawings to follow the Venetian sunrise that Beauchamp and Renée watched after the night on the lagoon; and such a succession of drawings could be brought together. Turning to Meredith's 'Reading of Earth'—which includes an 'Appeasement of Demeter'—we find, in the 'Hymn to Colour,' a verse that is the equivalent in words of many a Turner drawing.

Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.
To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,
In knotting arms, yet boundless: him beside,
She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power
Brings heaven to the flower.

The admiring friends of Eugène Boudin, one of the forerunners of the Impressionist School, praised him as the Master of the Skies. The title was not undeserved; yet how much more fully it was deserved by Turner! Boudin mastered little more than the almost illusive expression of vast, luminous spaciousness. One asks, not what of all the sky has to show did Turner master, as far as art could master it, but what did he leave unmastered? to show that the question so put would not be a foolish one, I may quote once more one of the sanest of writers upon art, himself also a painter. Redgrave says of Turner, 'Nature revealed to him a flood of atmospheric light, a world of infinitely tender gradations of tint and colour, gradations so minute as to be almost inappreciable by other men, and such as it seemed hopeless to realise by the practice which then prevailed; he had, therefore, to invent his own methods. . . . Water-colour seemed to lend itself most readily to the imitation of those effects in nature he so much loved to represent—nature lost in a blaze of light, rather than dimmed with a twilight gloom—and thus it happens that his works in this medium mostly embody some evanescent effect, be it flood of sunshine bursting forth after storms, or careering in gleams over the plain, the mountain, or the sea; or some wrack of clouds, some passing shower or rainbow

of promise refreshing the gladdened and glistening earth.' It is going far to say that he saw gradations so minute as to be almost unappreciable by other men; and yet it is but sober truth.

What a wide range of atmospheric effect there is even in his oil paintings alone! The heavy threatening gloom of the *Calais Pier*, the driving cloud and misty rain of the *Shipwreck*, the vast aerial expanse of changeful light and shade of the *London from Greenwich*, the palpitating gleams of light through the rain-veil in *Rain, Steam and Speed*, the tender morning light of the *Frosty Morning*, the golden morning haze of the *Abingdon*, the glorious sunrise of *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, the joyous, exhilarating splendour of the morning in *The Sun of Venice going to Sea*, the symbolic magnificence of the sunset sky, with its glowing sun and softly shining crescent moon in *The Fighting Téméraire*, the fading sunlight and steady shining of the full moon in the *Agrippina landing with the Ashes of Germanicus*. I take but a few examples, the list might be made a long one; and Ruskin's eloquence, describing the infinity of detail within the unity of effect in any of these and other skies, could not exhaust the wonder of them.

One faces the task of saying something about the skies and atmospheric effects of the water-colour

drawings with diffidence that falls little short of despair. Not a few who have written about Turner, and have maintained a critical attitude, alleging, as does Hamerton, that Ruskin was less a critic than an artist in words, have given warnings against Turner worship. Yet no artist but Turner could have called forth Ruskin's eloquence, uncritical though it may be held to be; and no warnings have ever been given against the worship of any of his contemporaries, or any of his successors, from which it may be implied that there was that in Turner, but not in the others, that might well induce something at least akin to worship. And this feeling comes over us chiefly when we look at, or recall, or turn over pages of reproductions of, his water-colour drawings. 'The more reproductions we can have of the master's drawings,' Sir Charles Holroyd has said recently, 'the more will it be possible to study properly his great message, and the more will his genius be recognized. I would like to see every one of his nineteen thousand water-colour sketches and lead pencil drawings reproduced, so that we could all hold them in our hands and carry them about with us; for in them there is an unfailing beauty of composition, and a glorious truth of effect and detail, by which Turner managed to make complete pictures out of even the fewest touches.' Among these thousands of

drawings and sketches how many are there in which the scene depicted is shown under some remarkable atmospheric effect; and no effect was too magnificent, or too subtly beautiful, for Turner to shrink from the attempt to translate it into the terms of his art. Hence, both his faculty of sight and his power to interpret what he saw were developed until, as we have quoted Redgrave's saying of him, nature revealed to him a world of gradations of tint and colour so minute as to be almost inappreciable by other men, and his water-colour paintings epitomised the whole mystery of landscape art.

Before anything is said of particular drawings, there are some general considerations to which reference should be made. There is in nature infinite gradation of light and colour, and there is also infinite variety of form. If clouds actually the same in form are spread over the sky, their varying position in relation to our point of view gives to each an apparent shape different from that of any of its fellows. Parallel lines of cloud, and parallel lines of movement, appear to converge; and, though space be a vast abyss, the belt of atmosphere that surrounds the earth and the vapours within it follow the curve of the earth. What wonderful rhythm of line and curve this means! How subtle the variations inevitably are! There is

no confusion amid it all. We are conscious of this as we watch the clouds. Their movement is visible music. We see that it is ordered, and yet the apparent variety of movement is so great that it would be truer to say that we feel rather than see its orderliness. Such variety in unity, of light, colour, form and movement, means, for us, beauty, and more than beauty—or, if anyone will have it so, the fullest meaning for which the word beauty can be used: awe-inspiring power and majesty, magnificence, splendour, dazzling brilliance, radiance, serenity. I need not seek to exhaust the categories. Those of us who have watched the skies have more or less vague, visual recollections of the music they have played for us. In Turner's works we have the recollections, aided by notes taken at the moment, of a man with a pre-eminent gift of observation, studiously trained and developed through a lifetime; and while we look at them we are thrilled as our vague remembrances, one after another, are made definite.

The *Liber Studiorum* alone, apart from colour, would furnish us with all the examples we need to give. Here are heavy rain-clouds which soon will cover the sky from horizon to horizon, and wholly shut out the higher heavens; here a belt of them, obscuring the summit of Criffel, and seeming to wage war

against the setting sun behind him, drives across the Solway; here as the sun goes down his beams shoot out into a quiet sky behind the massive keep of Norham Castle, and light the flanks of a bank of cumulus cloud and the undersides of the long lines of cirrus in the higher regions of the air; here, again, the sun goes down, his light only softly veiled, not hidden, by filmy vapour, so that his orb shows perfectly, while the trees that rise in the foreground, by their blackness against the light, intensify its glowing radiance; the tones fade away imperceptibly to and beyond 'the bridge in the middle distance'—we may as well identify the plate—until land and sky melt into one another; here, again, the brilliant sunshine fills the spray-laden air above the Falls of Clyde, and plays in and out of the overhanging trees; night is passing into day, the dawn-light will soon reach and dim the brightness of the waning moon, while Rizpah watches over the bones of her children.

The limited scale between the utmost light and the utmost dark at the disposal of art, as compared with nature's scale, is often cited as being enormously to the disadvantage of art. One of the glories of art, however, consists in this limitation; for, great though it be, she can still awaken within us emotions as strong as those we have felt when face to face with

THE BRIDGE IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE

nature; nay, she can even, by selection and emphasis, intensify those emotions. The *Liber Studiorum* plates, even though they lack colour, almost produce upon us an impression of reality.

If we pass from Turner's monochromes to his drawings in colour, will the impression of reality be greater? This by no means follows of necessity. The crudest colour is nearer to the fact of nature than is mere black-and-white, but it is not so near to the impression nature makes upon us. The crudity lessens or even destroys all impression. Turner's colour is never crude; but it is always so conventional, so obviously arranged, harmonised, as we do not find it in nature, that while there is an increase of beauty as compared with the monochrome, the feeling of actuality is not heightened, but lessened. Frequently we have to consider one drawing from the two standpoints of decoration and actuality. This was Whistler's difficulty, referred to in the first chapter. I mention it here in order to say that actuality and decoration seem to me to be more generally combined in his skies, both in form and colour, than in the rest of the landscape. It is as if he threw the whole of his power into the sky, and fell back upon certain conventions — albeit beautiful conventions — for the rest. We may take the National Gallery drawing

of Arundel Castle for example. It is a showery day. Masses of cumulus cloud are travelling over the distant sea. There is some convention in the colour of the clouds, but they give a strong impression of light, atmosphere, and movement, whereas the castle, the trees in the middle distance, the grass on the hillsides, and the deer in the foreground, though beautiful in colour, are yet so conventional as to give far less impression of actuality than the sky.

One cannot if one would make of these chapters water-tight compartments, so that what is the main subject of one shall not be partly considered in the others ; and in this and the preceding chapter I have said so much about Turner's 'reading' of the sky, that little more need be added. And what can be said—where saying must mean so little except as an incentive to seeing—but that now with utmost delicacy and now with utmost intensity of colour, with the most subtle rendering of form, when form tells in the scene, with suggestion of the countlessness of the cloudlets that sometimes cover the sky, with almost illusive opening out of the depths of space, with tenderest veiling of haze, with power to recall, what to give is impossible, a sense of the full splendour of the sun from which man must turn away his eyes, with what is almost a realisation of 'the hiding of his power,' and of the

short-lived triumph of the storm-clouds, with skill beyond words to suggest the slow awakening of day and the silent coming on of night, Turner showed himself to be the master of the skies?

One often asks oneself also if anyone but Turner has ever painted the mountains. Let the question stand, not to be answered in any absolute way in his favour, but as a witness to the strength of the impression his mountain work makes upon us. The majesty of the mountains, their effect of giant power in repose, their solemn grandeur when darkened by the clouds, their glorious beauty when the sun illumines them, how at one time they seem to threaten us with a crushing weight that will annihilate our very being, and at another they draw our spirits up towards God and heaven—surely all this has never been expressed as fully by anyone as by Turner. And, beyond this, he has seen and made record of what, even if the feeling be, and be known to be but a pathetic fallacy, we still feel to be the age-long brave but hopeless struggle of the mountains against an inevitable fate.

The sight of distant mountains had a strong fascination for Turner, as it must have for all except those who are wholly devoid of imagination. The reason is not far to seek. We know that were we close to those filmy undulations that break the level of the

horizon line, and look as if we could step over them as over children's sand-castles on the shore, they would rise high above us in rocky strength that incalculable ages have not sufficed to wear away. We know they are this, though they look so small. How vast therefore is the earth, of whose great round the fraction that divides us from those far-off mountains is little more than minute, while they themselves are not high enough materially to roughen its surface! Seen close to, the mountains carry our thoughts upward. Seen far away, they carry our thoughts to what is beyond them. Often one has looked long and long from Dover at the French cliffs gleaming across the Channel, and thought that, once landed there, no sea would divide us from three of the great continents of the world!

None of our English coasts is less romantic in itself than that of Lancashire. Yet what poetry it has in the sight it affords of distant hills and mountains! Inland are to be seen the massive forms, like couchant lions, of Rivington and Pendle; while the summit of Ingleborough—Turner's Ingleborough we might almost call it—can be seen over the shoulder of one of the nearer hills. Away to the south-west rise the Welsh mountains, beginning with those that flank the Vale of Clwyd, and ending with the stately forms of those

LANCASTER SANDS

that lie to the north of Snowdon and the Carnedds, and nearly rival them in height. In clear weather, we may look for the summits of the hills in that Celtic outpost, the Isle of Man; away to the north-west, oftener than not, we can see Wordsworth's Black Combe, like an ever-watchful sentinel of the land, and more northward still, the Old Man of Coniston, Helvellyn, and the ranges that stretch eastward till we come to Ingleborough again.

Has not all this its place in the Reading of Earth? Turner found it so; and though distant hills may have always filled us with a deep, inexpressible longing, the feeling has been intensified in some of us by Turner's subtle rendering of the far-away sight of not a few of those we have mentioned. Engravings of the two *Lancaster Sands* drawings are before me. In one of them a heavy shower has blotted out the distance; in the other the clouds have risen high above the mountains as the sun goes down, and range after range discloses itself. The literalist in one may complain that behind the Coniston range, which is drawn with near approach to accuracy, Turner's imagination has seen another and vastly higher range. Yet, after all, we do just see the Scawfell mountains behind Coniston, and imagine a grandeur we know to be there. It is rather hard on Helvellyn that this magnified Scawfell

should reduce him to insignificance, and those lofty peaks to the eastward, beyond the limestones of Arnside and Carnforth, do make the literalist to shake his head! But let the literalist be unhesitatingly suppressed, for this is the very spirit of the scene; and the letter, when art would interpret nature, does most surely kill, as sketches of my own, made on the shore of Morecambe Bay, are proof positive to me at least! Yet Ruskin can praise the *Heysham* drawing as not 'losing for a moment the sincere simplicity of the wild country and homely people, in any morbid or strained idealisation'; and I am fain to confess that the more literal rendering of the hills in this drawing—though even here there has been no merely slavish adherence to the letter—gets right home to me.

Such drawings as these Ruskin classed as 'Actuality, England at Rest.' In another group, which he called 'Dreamland, Italy,' comes the drawing *Turin, from the Church of the Superga*. Again we have a view of distant mountains: this time of the Alps. It is they, far away beyond Turin, not the city itself, that arrest and hold our gaze. Italy *is* dreamland to the Englishman. M. de la Sizeranne, in the course of an essay on Turner's oil paintings, says that 'the English are a race for whom the Continent is a sort of

Promised Land, the home of the Ideal, a Canaan with its gigantic grapes, somewhat akin to what in art and poetry China was for a long time to Japan, that other satellite-isle gravitating around that other continent. The English do not tell you this—in perfect good faith they believe the contrary. But their art, their works, betray their secret thoughts by showing where their imagination lies—Italy, the shores of Provence, Spain, the mountains of Switzerland and the Tyrol, the lands of the olive, the orange and the grape. All that England does not possess haunts the Englishman's spirit.' There is truth here, if also overstatement. Turner, indeed, went to France, to Switzerland and to Italy, and painted there; but he painted most at home. Gainsborough, Constable, Cox, Crome, and many another of our landscape painters, never cared to leave home; and was it not by Constable's loving portraiture of England that the French landscape painters were helped sympathetically to interpret their own land? Ought we to be so full of insular self-satisfaction that the different beauty, the romance, the venerable civilisations of other lands, should make no appeal to our imagination? Surely it was not as M. de la Sizeranne says, a sure mark of the Englishman that Turner dreamed of Carthage and of imperial Rome.

Any man, of any nation, would be dull indeed, if he looked at Turner's drawing of the Alps as seen from the Superga and remained unmoved—how much more so if he looked upon the scene itself. What history has been made on that plain, stretching away to the foot of the mountains! It may be that Hannibal entered Italy by the valley we see; perhaps his advance was watched from the hill where we are standing. We may be sure that Turner thought of this. A thunderstorm in Wharfedale made him think of the great Carthaginian crossing the Alps. It is with the mountains themselves, however, not with the history that has been made upon and about them, that we are concerned just now. Let us see how Turner has interpreted them so wonderfully that one hardly tires of looking at the drawing. Two columns of the church show little more than half their length before they reach the top of the picture. At once we get an impression of great height. The sunlight falls steeply down on them, but part of one of them is in shadow. Hence comes a feeling of the vast sunlit space above and around us, part of which, showing intervals of blue sky between white fleecy clouds, illumined with quivering light, is seen between the columns. The diamond pattern on the pavement, the figures, the balustrades that flank the unseen steps, the loop in the

river as it passes through the city, the long line of road, all lead the eye towards the distant mountains. The columns, hewn from them, or from such as they, seem like an echo of their strength. Fold upon fold they rise, after starting—as the Alps do on the southern side—abruptly from the plain. Sunlight and shade, softly veiled by the distance, play amongst them with a subtlety that goes far to equal anything that our visual memory can recall in nature itself—should we, had we been with Turner, have seen a tithe of the beauty of form and light and colour that is in the drawing, and more than which he saw? On the highest part of the range, stretching from end to end of the picture, lies the snow, exquisitely gradated with the most delicate touches of bluish grey. It is as if a garment were being bleached to utmost purity for a goddess to wear. The tenderness of the light and colour in the landscape is enhanced by the vigorous colour of the figures—the Turnerian figures, we must say—within the porch. We need not criticise the drawing of them; they are there, not so much to be looked at, as that we may pass from them to the splendour and solemnity of the mountains that have seen the coming and the going of countless generations of men, and teach us to regard the brief lives and dubious deeds of individual men in the light of the long, slow progress of humanity.

Travelling in the old, slow way, Turner had many chances of sketching in the outskirts of the Alps, where veteran travellers often rebuke those of this hurrying age for not lingering. He made sketches in pencil and chalk, and in water-colour, at Macon, Grenoble, the Grande Chartreuse, Bonneville, and elsewhere. In the *Liber* plate, *The Alps from Grenoble*, we have another distant view of the mountains over a level plain, but this time with a hill-side vineyard, not a church porch, for foreground, and with a totally different effect of light. The sun is now before us, not behind us, and instead of lighting up the mountains throws them into varying depths of solemn shade. The sky, also, is more clouded, and two filmy beams of light shining down upon the valley deepen the sombreness and emphasise the strength of the mountains behind them. A few inches of stained paper suffice to give an impression of nature's vastness.

The drawings that Turner made among the Swiss lakes are legion, and are remarkable for their beauty of light and colour. The Central Alps are not far away, are indeed often within sight, but their terror and grandeur are either hidden or softened into beauty by distance. The lower, tree-clad mountains that enclose the lakes and are reflected in their waters are beautiful in themselves, and lend their beauty to

THE ALPS FROM GRENOBLE

the lakes, which are, indeed, usually only a feature of the softer mountain scenery. It seems almost too simple a thing to say that a lake, unless it had beautiful surroundings, would be merely a natural reservoir, and when we speak of the comparative beauty of lakes it is really their surroundings that are in question. How different it is with the sea! It has beauty and grandeur wholly independent of surroundings, due only to itself and the skies above it. Vast expanse, knowing no limit to the sight but the horizon, and boundless to the imagination, and ceaseless movement, culminating in the great storm-waves and the breakers thundering on the beach or against the rocks, are what the sea means to us. The lakes we love the best are the exact opposite of this. We see the hills encircling them, and they are best when they are calm—with, at the most, only the ripples that lightly break the reflections from their surface. Storms on such lakes are not without danger, but they are so feeble compared with those of the sea that the name seems hardly applicable to them in comparison.

It was thus that Turner interpreted the lakes of Switzerland—and, we may add, those of Italy, as in the beautiful *Lake of Nemi*, with the water in the deep hollow peacefully reflecting the tree-clad slopes that descend steeply to its margin. What lovely dreams

of Constance, Zürich, Zug, Lucerne, Geneva, he has left us! To these lake drawings he gave the utmost witchery of light and colour. He clothed Lucerne in mystery, now of rose, and now of blue, now of pearly grey. He gave his utmost range of colour to a Constance sunset, and swathed the city of Zürich, stretching away into the hazy distance, in luminous vesture of blue and gold. How gloriously beautiful is the sunrise, in stronger tones of blue and gold, in the *Arth from the Lake of Zug*! Again we see the light of the rising moon reflected in the still water of Geneva beneath the towers of Lausanne, and again, mysterious play of light and shade in the gently rippling water of Lucerne, as the moon shines brokenly through night-clouds weird in form behind the precipices of the Seelisberg.

From the lakes we may follow Turner to the final grandeur and solemnity of the Central Alps.

There are few more impressive drawings by him than those of the narrow Alpine gorges, just as than such gorges there are few more impressive things in nature. In them we are only less within the mountains than when, now standing upright in caverns of which we cannot see the roof, now bent double under huge masses of shelving rock, we follow the course of streams that have flowed for ages in the utter darkness

THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

underground. Where the St. Gothard Pass narrows from the meadows of Andermatt into the gloom of the Schollenen gorge, and over the roaring waters in the chasm below, the wind blows cold, and wraiths, not wreaths, of cloud drive along, though we know that those mighty walls of rock have stood apart for ages, yet we can almost imagine that we see them closing in upon us. Well may the legend have arisen that only by Satanic help could the chasm have been bridged! Turner's drawings of the Pass and its frail-looking bridge are full of this sense of impending horror. In Mr. Rawlinson's unpublished *Liber* plate the curves of the rocks, of which, as it seems, little more than the bases are seen in the picture, might be curves of movement. One huge, partly detached mass might even now be leaning to its fall over the roadway, and we wonder at the temerity of the mule drivers who linger beneath it. There is no danger, we know; but what an awful sense of vast, impersonal power!

Stupendous mass and energy are realised in the glacier drawings. In the Farnley drawing of the *Mer de Glace*, and the *Liber* plate, *Source of the Arveiron*, the firs into which masses of falling rock have crashed look as if they were being worsted in a futile assault on a stronghold of giants—or to take them simply for what they are, the obvious precariousness of their

existence, the ruin that has come upon some of them and sooner or later must come upon them all, emphasises the immeasurable unseen force that slowly yet certainly is bringing down the mountains, fractured and riven by the ever returning frost. Was not the summit of Snowdon once a valley in a mountain range mighty as are the Alps to-day! The Alps are only *nouveaux riches;* our mountains are a grand, old, but impoverished aristocracy. In my Cheshire garden is a granite boulder, borne whence, and how long ago, on a great, moving mass of ice, the geologist perhaps can say. We go to Switzerland to learn what our own land has been, as well as what Switzerland now is. Many lifetimes may see no change in the mountains; the movement of the glacier is imperceptible; none the less the mighty forces of nature are doing their work. Turner's drawings give us a sense of their activity. It is as if we were shown in a moment that which it takes them long years to do. They are studies in dynamics, not in statics. In the water-colour sketch high up on the *Mer de Glace*, the hummocks of ice might be waves passing behind each other down into the unseen reaches of the steeply descending valley. Such, indeed, they are; but not waves raised by the wind, and how incredibly slow in movement! The crack in one of the peaks of ice almost makes us expect to see

the distant aiguilles more deeply fractured while we look at them.

The clouds that gloom the scene in places, and by contrast gift the sunlit heights with greater brightness, do not merely visibly increase its grandeur ; they always carry with them the thought of danger and of death. And, mere vapour though they be, they are the chief agents in the slow destruction of the mountains. They are the armies of the sea sent to humble its proud neighbour the earth. They come from the sea, return to it, and come again. They let fall the disintegrating rain, which, hardening into ice, rends apart the rocks with resistless force. They form the torrents which carry down the debris. They pass, and leave great fields of snow behind them, which form the swiftly descending avalanches, or the slow-moving glaciers. It is of this constant warfare of nature's forces that we inevitably think as we look at Turner's Alpine drawings.

At times, indeed, he sounds a truce. Such is the *Superga* drawing. In the illustration to Rogers' poem 'The Alps at Daybreak,' we can think only of the glorious beauty, not of the latent terror of the scene. Ruskin says that if he wanted to give the most faithful idea possible of a certain geological structure he should take up this drawing. He rightly condemns the

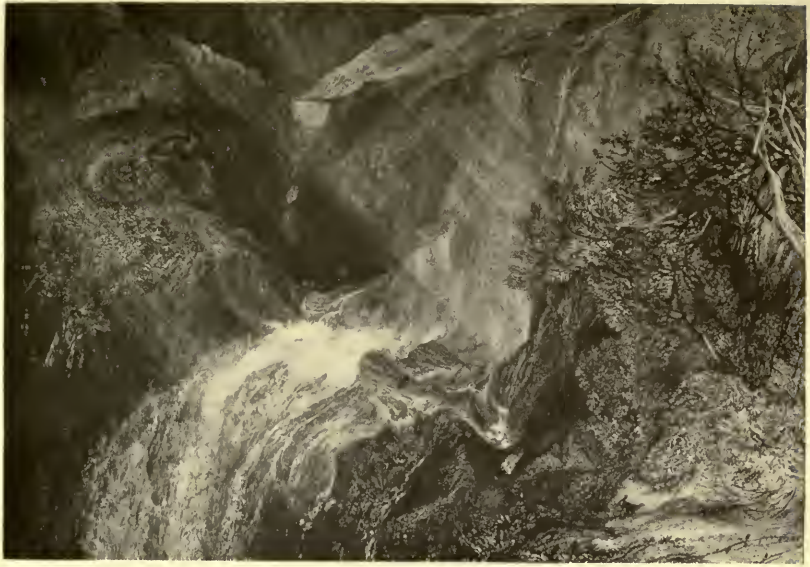
absurd figures: men and hounds chasing the chamois over the great snow-fields with as little hesitation or difficulty as if they were on level ground. Turner has construed too literally in this instance his duty as an illustrator. These hunters, who run and leap where mere men would tread with utmost care, should be spirits of the mountains. Let the absurdity pass; for how exhilarating it makes the scene! Who would not exclaim that the sun is rejoicing as a strong man to run a race! At once, as he rises into view, he floods the scene with glory; and so exquisitely is the light rendered, that we imagine more than we actually see: we credit the sparkle where only the gleam is given; we feel the invigorating freshness of the morning air!

Let us return to our own land. We have seen that Turner was moved by the sight of the Lake Mountains across Morecambe Bay. We might follow him all over the island — some of us have literally done so—and find him stirred here by its beauty and there by its grandeur. Leaving the grandeur for a moment, we may surely say that even he could hardly exaggerate the beauty. He could but use the means an artist has for lessening the gap there must be between any fixed, literal rendering of nature on paper or canvas, and her vastness of

space, fullness of light, and ceaseless movement and change. Not that one wishes to claim for his 'reading' of our land a complete and exclusive truthfulness. It always bears the stamp of his idiosyncrasy; it has not only his manner but his mannerisms. We are always wise if we call in more than one expert; and, finally, not all the experts, in these things, are to see for us; their function is to teach us to see for ourselves. And has not Turner helped us to see the beauty of the hills and valleys of Devonshire, as in *Crossing the Brook* and such drawings as the *Totnes*? In the *Arundel* and the *Brightling Observatory*, we have all the broad spaciousness of the Sussex Downs with the wide expanse of sky above and around them. There is fine rendering of impression in such drawings of the more robust landscape of the hill-country of Lancashire and Yorkshire, as the *Crook of Lune*, the *Kirkby Lonsdale Churchyard*, and the *Richmond from the Moors*. One can find no words to express the sense that is conveyed by the first of these three drawings of beauty of colour and contour, of tenderest play of light and shade in the warm afternoon sunshine, of subtlest gradations of tone that carry our sight by insensible degrees, as in nature itself, from the river rushing tumultuously through the narrow gorge im-

mediately below us, along its course under the receding hills, or over the valley, with its infinite suggestiveness of trees and homesteads, to the distance mingled of grey and blue and purple where Whernside shows clear over the nearer fells, while the summit of Ingleborough is veiled by glowing clouds! As with this drawing, so it is with others, with numbers of these drawings of Lonsdale and Ribblesdale, of Wharfedale, Swaledale, Teesdale, and the rest; one sits and looks long even at mere reproductions of them, divided between the keenest enjoyment of their beauty and an insatiable desire to be away in the dales and upon the moors, where one has wandered for days together with Turner often in mind.

So much alone we must say about Turner's rendering of the hill-country, which is beautiful, if often spaciously and therefore solemnly beautiful, rather than grand. We might seem to be making for an anticlimax in turning to the grandeur of Britain after that of Switzerland. Happily, for those who must needs stay at home, impressiveness does not increase in mathematical ratio to increase in size. We must take form, colour, and atmospheric effect into account. The vast antiquity of our mountains, also, makes a strong appeal to us. By as much lower than the Alps as they are, by so much longer have they resisted



THE CHAIN BRIDGE OVER THE TEES

fate. And how much of power is left to them! Look at Turner's *Gordale Scar* and *Hardraw Fall*, his sketch of *Great End and Scawfell Pikes*—do we not hear the murmur of 'Glaramara's inmost caves'?—his *Langdale Pikes*, or the *Ben Arthur* of the *Liber Studiorum*, and say if we need leave our island to realise the power of the hills and of the forces that war against them!

We must not forget also, if we do no more than mention it, that Turner follows the English river—than which, what is more beautiful?—from source to sea, as well as showing us the greater Rhine, and something of the rivers of France.

Hamerton, in summing up his estimate of Turner as a landscape painter, says that he was 'a student of nature whose range was vast indeed . . . yet not universal, for he never adequately illustrated the familiar forest trees, and had not the sentiment of the forest, neither had he the rustic sentiment in its perfection.' On the whole this is true, though some of the drawings recently exhibited to the public for the first time might have modified somewhat Hamerton's saying as to the forest trees. Turner's travels hardly gave him the chance of acquiring the sentiment of the forest, of the fear-compelling loneliness and silence which Boecklin,

familiar with the forests of Germany, called in the aid of a strange monster to express. Yet the landscape in *Rizpah* does not fall far short of this. That Turner had not the rustic sentiment in perfection we may readily grant. Even Ruskin did not maintain that Turner had no limitations. Without crossing the border between landscape and genre painting Constable got into intimate touch with the daily round and common task of simple country-life in such pictures as *The Hay-Wain*, *The Cornfield* and *The Valley Farm*. We are far removed in them from the bustle and turmoil of life; we are where men work slowly, steadily, quietly, as the seed germinates and the corn and the fruit ripen. We think of soil and stones, of damp houses and of sudden showers from trees when the wind stirs them after rain. How plainly we should hear the ticking of the clock were we in the house of *The Glebe Farm!* Of all this there is nothing in Turner, except in some unfinished drawings and paintings, such as are now to be seen in the national collections, and here and there in smaller finished works. And these exceptions—reminding us of Constable, and even of De Wint—seem to show that Turner was not devoid of the rustic sentiment, but that it was overwhelmed by his feeling for the epic grandeur and the idyllic beauty of nature.

Of his sense of the idyllic beauty of nature, and, which concerns us now, particularly of the idyllic beauty of the English lowlands and of the borderland, where the hills are dying down into the plains, there is no lack of evidence.

I must say little, but yet something, about Turner's rendering of trees. It may seem a trifling subject after mountains, lakes and rivers. But one brief word shows them to have a significance that these do not possess, and of a wholly different, a higher kind—they have *life*. And if the reader will look over the illustrations in this book he will find that, although Turner may often have treated trees conventionally, he none the less interpreted their life sympathetically, almost to the extent of animisim, or of the pathetic fallacy again. He was carefully observant of their vital structure, he showed them in peaceful youth, in vigorous maturity, in dismembered and decaying age, in the stark aspect of their death.

M. de la Sizeranne says, somewhat self-contradictorily, that all that England does not possess haunts the Englishman's spirit, and yet that Turner is English in his passion for the sea, 'the great highway by which England communicates with the world's immensity, and through which the British Empire is in touch with its colonies.' Only an Englishman, he thinks, could

have conceived the idea of painting *The Fighting Téméraire;* yet Turner had been familiar from childhood with the Thames and its shipping. Evidently, in this particular at least, the common never became the commonplace to Turner; the passion for the sea lasted to the end of his life. Is it exaggeration to say that in his paintings, his drawings and his sketches he interpreted its every mood from perfect calm to the utmost fury of the storm, that he studied it under every phase of light and colour, at all hours of the day from earliest dawn until the coming of the deep blackness of night that ends all seeing? In the next chapter I have something to say about Turner's interest in shipping and the life of the sailor, and, inevitably, at the same time, about his rendering of the sea in storm. I will only say further here that as with the mountains, so with the sea, it was with a sense of its dynamic power, when driven to action by the wind, that Turner was most impressed. So often does he represent it thus, that even when he shows it in what looks like playful mood, lightly toying with the ships and boats that venture on it, or when it is in perfect calm, we feel as if there were deception, or but a brief interval of quiet in a nature given to sudden outbursts of ungovernable rage. The calm of the *Scarborough*, in the 'Harbours of England,' and the

exhilarating mood of the sea in the *Whitby*, only presage the wrath of the *Liber* plate, *The Yorkshire Coast*, or of the *Wreck off Hastings*.

I have endeavoured in this chapter to hint in words at the range and beauty and power of Turner's picture-reading of the earth. We have now to follow his reading of the life of man, of whom the earth is the dwelling-place.

IV

AN EPIC OF HUMANITY

I HAVE given in the first chapter of this book the reasons for my writing this, the last chapter of it. Not only in Turner's illustrations of poetry and history, but again and again, almost invariably, in pictures that are primarily landscapes, there is a human interest that, when we consider it cumulatively, linking all the pictures together, forms itself into a great epic of humanity. The figures may be insignificant in size—they usually are; they may be badly drawn, they are often ludicrously badly drawn; in many cases we might, if we were so minded, ignoring any further meaning, regard them, as we should sheep or cattle, as being introduced merely for purely pictorial purposes, as patches of colour and so forth. We may often, for such purposes, wish them away. But in many instances, figures, and ships or buildings in connexion with the figures, count for so much in the picture, that it is impossible to think of them as merely incidental. Separate

consideration of what obviously meant so much to Turner himself seems to me essential to an adequate study of his life-work.

We may well begin with instances of his interest in mythology. The landscape painter cannot fail to wonder what is the source of the power and life and beauty that confront him in the visible universe. Turner's mere learning in mythology was slight enough. This has already been said. But beyond the little he learned from books there was his own communing with nature and life ; and this is the stuff out of which all mythologies have been made, and are still being made. How the great sun-myth of Apollo must have appealed to one who so often watched the morning victory of the sun, and his defeat at nightfall ! Mr. Monkhouse makes a slip, remarkable for him, in writing of *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, when he says that the sun is dying. In the picture itself the heads of the horses of Apollo can be seen as they draw his chariot above the sea-horizon. *Apollo and the Python* is one of the pictures in which the figures absolutely dominate the scene, and give to the landscape its significance. Here is the old-time personification of the daily phenomena that formed the subject-matter of many if not the greater number of Turner's pictures and drawings. In a rock-encumbered valley, flanked by precipitous

mountains, the conflict between the spirit of light and the spirit of darkness is being waged. Were it not that victory has plainly declared itself for the former, we might well think the combatants unequally matched. We should have trembled for this youth when his huge and horrible foe advanced upon him, as the Israelites must have trembled for David when Goliath came forth to meet him. But this is a god, there is a circle of light around his head; he has no fear of defeat. He has sent arrow after arrow into the monster's coiling body, a great gaping wound has opened out, and he is writhing in his death-agony. His jaws are widely opened, but if they close it will not be upon his foe. Calmly the god watches him, with his bow in his left hand, and another arrow in his right, to see if aught more be needed to complete his victory. No, it is complete! The monster that in his struggles breaks down the trees, sends great masses of rock hurtling through the air, and from whose jaws foul vapours arise, has fallen helplessly into a crevasse, and a pool of his poisonous black blood is spreading over the ground. Yet this victory has to be won again and again; as the huge worm dies another of the brood, small as yet, issues from his body!

This great picture has compelled universal admiration; it has literally inspired with awe. Though

Turner went to literature for his subject, it was but for the form of it that he went. He found in Ovid, and what other poets he read, only their version of what he had already learned from nature and life. It has been pointed out that he made free use of his literary material; he shaped it, as he shaped the phenomena of nature, to suit the needs of his own imagination. To the title of the picture in the Academy catalogue he appended lines of his own composing, which combine two of the dragon-stories of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' the one of Apollo and the other of Cadmus:

> Envenom'd by thy darts, the monster coil'd,
> Portentous, horrible, and vast, his snake-like form:
> Rent the huge portal of his rocky den,
> And in his throes of death, he tore
> His many wounds in one, while earth
> Absorbing, blacken'd with his gore.

The figure of the youthful god shows not only that Turner could draw the figure quite competently if he wished to do so, but that he could also make it finely expressive. The frame and limbs of the archer are relaxed after the strain they have just undergone, but the head is thrown forward as he closely watches the movements of his dying foe. M. Chesneau well says that the strangely imaginative French painter, Gustave Moreau, would have recognised in this figure the work

of a genius akin to his own. And while the god visibly embodies all that is bright and pure—and yet, we may well say, he is a Greek god, and by no means a St. George of Christian legend—the dragon has perhaps no rival in art as an embodiment of all that is dark and loathsomely evil.

Ulysses deriding Polyphemus, is, in the significance of its subject, a close companion to *Apollo and the Python*, and no less wonderful in imagination. There were eighteen years between the painting of the two pictures, 1811 being the date of the latter, and 1829 that of the former, which shows to the full the magnificent rendering of light and colour to which Turner had then attained. To the splendour of the sky at sunrise in this picture reference has already been made. The arrows of Apollo are shooting out in every direction and driving back the forces of darkness which still linger along the sea, and behind the ships and the mountains. After what a night, upon that rocky isle, is the sun rising again! Ulysses the wanderer, and his companions, seeking hospitality, had been imprisoned by the one-eyed monster, Polyphemus the Cyclops, within his cave; two of the company he had killed and devoured; and threatened Ulysses and the remainder with a like fate. But Ulysses, having made him drunk with wine, drove a blazing bar of wood into his eye

ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS

and blinded him, and though he sat in the doorway of the cave, Ulysses and his companions escaped by hanging under the Cyclops' sheep as they passed out of it. When they had reached their ships, Ulysses cried out in derision of the monster whom he had outwitted, and twice Polyphemus hurled a vast rock which all but struck the ship of the derider. This last scene is the one chosen by Turner for his picture. Ulysses, waving the still blazing brand with which he has blinded the monster, and loudly taunting him, stands on the high poop of his vessel, a splendid galley, furnished with both oars and lofty sails, but such an one as the Greeks never built. Turner was no plodding antiquary; he has ever to be judged by the letter, not by the spirit. Round the prow of the ship water-nymphs are disporting themselves, while the rays of the rising sun are reflected from them as if flashed from sparkling jewels. High on the flank of one of the island mountains is the vast, shadowy form of Polyphemus, hardly distinguishable from the mountains themselves. In the Odyssey, Ulysses says that he was a man 'of monstrous size, who shepherded his flocks alone and afar, and was not conversant with others, but dwelt apart in lawlessness of mind. Yea, for he was a monstrous thing and fashioned marvellously, nor was he like to any man that lives by bread, but like a wooded

peak of the towering hills, which stands out apart and alone from others.' Turner's Polyphemus falls nothing short of this description. It is as if the 'Theseus' of the Parthenon, increased a hundred times in size, were beside himself with rage, for the monster, as he hears the taunts of Ulysses, grips his head with one hand, and raises high the other with impotently threatening gesture. This is what Apollo looks out upon from his chariot, as his horses—those whose heads faced the 'Theseus' on the Parthenon pediment—bring him up above the sea-horizon, and we may well think of him as rejoicing to see brute force outwitted by cunning intelligence.

These are the two finest of Turner's mythological pictures, the ones in which his art showed itself easily able to give to myth and legend pictorial expression that, as the Greeks said the Zeus of Phidias added something to the existing conception of him, adds something to our sense of the wonder of the old tales in which men expressed their sense of the wonder of the universe.

Among other pictures of mythological purport, *The Goddess of Discord in the Garden of the Hesperides* is one that asks for more than mere mention, if only for the terrible monster in it. The picture, painted in 1806, was done in rivalry of Poussin. Its geology is

THE GODDESS OF DISCORD: THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES

faulty, and Ruskin had much to say against the picture, his bias against classical landscape making him somewhat unjust to it. In the fifth volume of 'Modern Painters' he corrected one erroneous opinion about it that he had written in his earlier notes on Turner's works. Faulty geology notwithstanding—or aiding?—it is a magnificently impressive composition. Into this gloomy mountain valley the sun only obtains a scanty, grudged admission. Ate, the goddess of discord, is receiving from one of the Hesperides the golden apple which she will throw among the guests at the wedding-feast of Peleus, angered because she alone among the deities has been uninvited, and will thus create jealousy between Hera and Athene and Aphrodite, with direful result in the ten years' siege of Troy. The Hesperides, the Maidens of the West, personified the westerly winds and sunshine that filled the earth with fruitfulness; and the Dragon, Ladon, personified the dry south wind, blowing off the Sahara, and denying fruitfulness to lands unsheltered from it. The maidens in Turner's picture look as if they had been nurtured in a land of healthfulness and plenty; the dragon looks as harsh and dry as the wind he personifies. It is as if life had been given to a petrified skeleton. A jagged edge of rock might be slowly crawling towards an overhanging

precipice. The bony thinness of his jaws and the empty eye-socket have led to the suggestion that Turner had studied the fossil remains of some extinct monster; but whatever basis in fact there may be, to the imagination of the artist it is due that here is a creature to which we can easily credit such blighting malignancy that nothing could live where he had dragged his scaly length, and in air into which he had exhaled his poisonous breath.

The number of paintings into which mythological figures are introduced is quite considerable. In most of them, as in *The Golden Bough*, referred to on an earlier page, the figures are small in size and merely vivify the landscape. Yet, as was said with reference to the picture just mentioned, we cannot feel the same about the landscape, knowing what the figures signify, as we should were they absent or without their particular significance. It is so with such large oil paintings as *The Bay of Baiæ*, with *Apollo and the Sibyl*, *Apollo and Daphne*, *The Vale of Tempe*, *Mercury and Argus*, *Jason in search of the Golden Fleece*, and others. To an ideal rendering of Tivoli is given a title, *The Rape of Proserpine*, that is perplexing until we have discovered that what at first glance seems to be a bonfire or a burning of leaves and rubbish in one corner of the picture is meant to repre-

BAY OF BAIÆ: APOLLO AND THE SIBYL

sent the god of the underworld carrying off in his chariot the terrified maiden amid the cries and gesticulations of her companions. We need not catalogue all these pictures, or dwell upon the myths they rather call to our minds than illustrate. It is enough to show how constantly these things were in Turner's mind. They evidence that exalted view of nature which makes a great part of his landscape painting describable as pageantry.

That misnamed work the *Liber Studiorum* includes several mythological subjects. One of the plates repeats the *Jason* oil painting; and here, where we have another dragon-contest, one huge coil of the monster suddenly rising above the thicket so that Jason can see it, not only the bones on the ground, but the hollow, riven trees, are in sympathy with the 'literary' subject; for, as Ruskin says, 'the painter addresses thereby that morbid and fearful condition of mind which he has endeavoured to excite in the spectator, and which in reality would have seen in every trunk and bough, as it penetrated into the deeper thicket, the object of its terror.' The figure of Jason is very expressive. His back is towards us, yet we can see that his movement has been arrested by the sudden sight of his foe, that he is ready at need to slip back into hiding, or, if he find an opportunity, to rush

forward and deliver an unexpected blow. In the *Procris and Cephalus* the landscape is tenderly beautiful, and, as Mr. Stopford Brooke says, the trees seem to be leaning as if in mute sympathy over the lover and the dying maiden whom he has unwittingly slain. We need only note that *Syrinx fleeing from Pan*, *Æsacus and Hesperie*, *Narcissus and Echo* and *Glaucus and Scylla* are other similar subjects among the *Liber* plates.

Some of the narratives of the Old Testament could not fail to stir Turner's imagination; they have epic grandeur, and whenever we think of them we inevitably give them a landscape setting, among the bare hills of Judæa, or the mountains of the southern wilderness, or the pyramids and temples that flanked the ebbing and flowing waters of the Nile. The history and legends of the Jewish people, often so scenically dramatic, could not fail to appeal to his imagination, and lent themselves to pictures in which the figures could be subordinated pictorially to the landscape. Two of his latest works are *Shade and Darkness—The Evening of the Deluge*, and *Light and Colour—The Morning after the Deluge*. We might have been sure beforehand that he would not, as he did not, pass by the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Sodom. Rizpah watching the bones of her children

is a subject finely treated in both the oil painting and the *Liber* plate. Illustration of the New Testament was outside the scope of his genius. When he painted a Holy Family he produced merely a poor Reynolds, just as when he treated classical subjects with figures filling a large part of the canvas he produced merely weak imitations of Titian. The temptation in the wilderness accounts for a small drawing in which a figure perched high on a slender Gothic pinnacle shows that Turner was either wholly ignorant of Syrian architecture or was sublimely indifferent to archæological accuracy—indeed, he was both. *Pilate Washing his Hands* is a picture that must be written down a failure. The Apocalyptic Vision was sure to appeal to his imagination, and he painted an *Angel Standing in the Sun*, again without success. Such pictures as these are interesting, not for their art, but as showing how widely Turner's imagination ranged and how high it soared.

Two quotations, appended by Turner to the titles of pictures, will show how we ought to understand the many architectural compositions, in which also some actual historical incident is often introduced, taken from Greece, Carthage, Rome or Venice. From Byron's 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' he quotes for the picture bearing that title the lines :—

And now, fair Italy,
Thou art the garden of the world, the home
Of all art yields and nature can decree—
Even in thy desert what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility,
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin grac'd
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.

For *Caligula's Palace and Bridge* he gives lines of his own writing, from the mysterious *Fallacies of Hope*, which, if lacking the Byronic beauty and power, are yet Byronic in spirit:—

What now remains of all the mighty bridge
Which made the Lucrine like an inner pool,
Caligula, but massy fragments left
As monuments of doubt and ruined hopes,
Yet gleaming in the morning's ray, that tell
How Baiæ's shore was loved in times gone by.

Is the burden of all these pictures of Turner's the cry, 'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever'? The rise of cities and nations, followed by their inevitable decline and downfall, seems to have oppressed Turner. But that he had no vision of an ultimate goal to be

reached by humanity—nothing like the prophecy with which the English historian of the Holy Roman Empire closes his book, calmly anticipating that in the future will prevail 'the love of peace, the sense of the brotherhood of mankind, the recognition of the sacredness and supremacy of the spiritual life'—who can say?

Among the plates of the *Liber Studiorum* is one entitled *The Temple of Jupiter in the Island of Aegina.* Mr. Frank Short, who has so faithfully reproduced some of the *Liber* plates, regrets that such a beautiful composition should have in it the incident of a girl dancing and beating a tambourine for the amusement of a group of reclining Turks. The temple is in ruins. In another version of the same subject the temple is still intact. Again there is a dance: but this time, as the title tells us, the people are dancing the national dance, the Romaika. It is unnecessary to point the moral of this contrast.

It was upon Carthage and Rome rather than upon Greece that Turner drew for these historical compositions. Greece was to him rather the land of myth and legend; and while Italy also meant this to him, the splendid achievements of Rome, of the Rome the ruins of which he had seen and drawn and painted, were at least equally dominant in his thoughts of Italy.

And while the vision of the triumphs of Rome rose up before him, he saw also, and felt the tragedy of, the fall of the great Phœnician colony in Africa, over whose ruins Rome callously passed on to empire that included well-nigh all of the world that was within her knowledge.

There is quite a series of Carthage pictures, about twenty in all. Several of them transport us to the legendary days of Dido and Æneas. Then we come to the fateful struggle with Rome. There was no room for both these great cities in the basin of the Mediterranean Sea. Turner painted a *Hannibal crossing the Alps*. A picture by J. Cozens of the same subject seems to have suggested it to him ; and a magnificent thunderstorm that he and Mr. Fawkes watched at Farnley gave him the effect that he required. He had painted the building of Carthage ; afterwards came a companion picture of the decline of the city, with hostages being sent to Rome. There are several Rome pictures, including a wonderful dream of the splendour of the imperial city, *Agrippina landing with the Ashes of Germanicus*. None of the large pictures, however, shows perhaps as well how Turner felt the great pulse-beatings of history as one of the illustrations to Rogers' 'Italy.' He was no scholar, acquainted with all the sequences of events ;

but the great issues of history moved him as a man, and called forth his imaginative genius. There have been several Romes. There is more than one legendary Rome. Then comes the Republic; then the Empire; then the Rome of the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Since Turner's day there has come into being still another: Rome the capital of reunited Italy. The illustration to Rogers' 'Italy' is a vista through the Arch of Titus of the Forum, with the three columns and fragment of entablature of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Arch of Septimius Severus, the temples at the base of the Capitoline Hill, and, closing the distance, the modern buildings of the Capitol. A funeral procession is crossing the line of the ancient Via Sacra, accompanied by monks and members of the *Confraternità*. In the immediate foreground, on a block of masonry which we may suppose to have fallen from the Arch of Titus, is inscribed, in huge letters, the magic name *Roma!* Is it presumptuous to think that Turner might do as one has often done oneself, speak out the name, the very sound of which evokes vast indefinite dreams of purpose pursued, of power gained and extended, of splendour increased, through century after century, followed first by decay, then by a marvellous rebirth, and claim to hold for all mankind the keys of heaven

and hell? 'I am in Rome,' are the words over which the engraving from Turner's drawing stands :—

> Oft as the morning ray
> Visits these eyes, waking at once I cry,
> Whence this excess of joy? What has befallen me?
> And from within a thrilling voice replies,
> Thou art in Rome! A thousand busy thoughts
> Rush on my mind, a thousand images;
> And I spring up as girt to run a race.

A third great historic city, Venice, counts for more in the art of Turner than either Rome or Carthage. He might well, and did, turn to her again and again for the sake of her marvellous beauty, to which both nature and art contribute; the former in the glorious light and colour of her skies reflected from the so often tranquil waters of the lagoons, and the latter in her multitude of palaces and churches. Of this beauty Turner gave many an imaginative rendering; but he also looked at the present for evidence of a splendid past. He, in his art, apostrophised Venice as did Shelley in his verse :—

> Sun-girt City! thou hast been
> Ocean's child, and then his queen.
> Now is come a darker day;
> And thou soon must be his prey,
> If the power that raised thee here
> Hallow so thy watery bier.

VENICE

Though his sketches may only present to us, in Turner's way of presenting things, the Venice that he knew, it is impossible, before more than one of the oil paintings, such as the one where he has introduced Canaletto painting, with the crowded shipping and bustle of strenuous life, not to think of the Venice whose argosies linked east and west in mutually gainful commerce.

Incidentally, in the course of travel, Turner made sketches of many other cities, and, whether this was intentional or not, they appeal to our sense of history, of the passing of the generations. Cathedrals, churches, palaces, fortified bridges, city walls and gates, in Turner's drawings as in themselves, speak to us of the past. In one drawing of Lucerne, for example, he forces the defensive walls and towers of the city into such prominence that more than at the place itself we are reminded of the heroic history of the little, mountainous land. And what is more eloquent of the troublous Middle Ages than are the two drawings of Château Gaillard?

Mention of this English fortress in France leads us naturally to point out that the interest Turner's own country had for him, as evidenced in his many English paintings and drawings, was hardly if any less historic than picturesque. Let us test this statement first by

further reference to what is perhaps the most popular, and certainly one of the finest, of Turner's oil paintings, *The Fighting Téméraire*, of which Mr. Monkhouse says, 'This is in many ways the finest of all his pictures. Light and brilliant yet solemn in colour; penetrated with a sentiment which finds an echo in every heart; appealing to national feeling and to that larger sympathy with the fate of all created things; symbolic by its contrast between the old three-decker and the little steam-tug, of the "old order," which "changeth, yielding place to new"—was and always will be as popular as it deserves.' Mr. Monkhouse has already been quoted as calling Turner 'the great composer of chromatic harmonies in forms of sea and sky, hills and plains, sunshine and storm, towns and shipping, castles and cathedrals'; and the description is perfectly true. His works tell as chromatic harmonies, and cause a thrill of pleasure, when we are too far from them to see what they represent. But the above eloquent appreciation of *The Fighting Téméraire* shows that even where Turner's art, both in setting forth the splendour of the sunset and in composing a glowing colour harmony, is at its highest, the appeal of the picture to other than the sensuous emotions may be so overwhelmingly strong as to make the beauty of art and nature subordinate, as

in truth they ever must be, in final estimate, to human remembrance and hope, sorrow and joy, clinging affection and self-sacrificing love.

Of the Cyclops and the sails and flags in *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, Ruskin could say that he wished them out of the way so that the landscape might be better seen. He does not say this of the old ship in this picture. And yet how he is moved by the natural part of the scene, at which indeed one can look and continue to look, as one looks over the sea at sundown and on until the twilight and the dark! 'In this picture,' he says, 'under the blazing veil of vaulted fire, which lights the vessel on her last path, there is a blue, deep, desolate horror of darkness out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea; the cold deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form.' Yet for him, as for Mr. Monkhouse, and surely for all who see the picture, this slowly dying glory of the day is but a solemn requiem for the noble vessel passing to her end; for he says again, 'Of all pictures of subjects not visibly involving human pain, this is, I believe, the most pathetic that was ever painted.

The utmost pensiveness which can ordinarily be given to a landscape depends on adjuncts of ruin; but no ruin was ever so affecting as this gliding of the vessel to her grave.'

Charles Kingsley said that if he wished to know if anyone were an English gentleman he would ask, 'Does he know his Bewick?' Without making an absolute test, one can unhesitatingly affirm, and, after what has just been said and quoted about *The Fighting Téméraire*, no reader is likely hastily to question the saying, that one great help to making an English boy into a patriot would be to bring him up on Turner, whose pictures again and again echo the noble adjuration, 'Love thou thy Land!'

That part of patriotism which consists in a resolve to hold our land inviolate by the invader has surely been stimulated in many, has been, as it were, set visibly before them, by his pictures of our great naval ports, with the warships entering or leaving them, and by many a picture in which, looking out from the shore, we see the great hulls and lofty masts of what was in Turner's day a so much more picturesque, if less appallingly destructive, first line of defence than that which we have to-day. Can one ever look at the grim monsters of our modern navy, lying in the Medway or off Margate, or slowly steaming up the

Channel beneath the guns of Dover Castle, without thinking of Turner? Or, without thinking of him, can one look at the long line of martello towers stretching from Beachy Head by Pevensey Level—where William the Norman landed—on towards the cliffs at Hastings? One almost expects to see, as in Turner's drawings, a regiment of soldiers on the march, or a horse-soldier riding at full speed. For Turner painted along our shores when the risk of invasion was, or just had been, no slight one; when only the power of this island-kingdom stood between Napoleon and the dominion of Europe, which was the goal of his ambition. Two of Turner's oil paintings, *The Battle of Trafalgar* and *The Field of Waterloo*, celebrate two of the victories that enabled the nations to breathe freely again.

But the greater and the better part of patriotism consists in neither defence nor defiance, nor even in any but the most generous rivalry. If ever the day comes when both the war of the sword and the war of competitive commerce shall be but hateful memories, when the unity of the nation shall be merged in 'the parliament of man, the federation of the world,' there will still be good reason for the call 'Love thou thy Land!' And so long as our land remains sea-surrounded, the sea must fascinate its people; for it

can never be but that the thought of danger will be connected with those that go down to the sea in ships. What room for patriotism is there! To the landscape painter two kinds of industry, of work in which men are mutually serviceable, are necessarily most in evidence: that of the farmer and that of the fisherman—one must add that Turner often showed his interest in the work of the builder. He sees also the various ways in which both men and merchandise are carried from place to place, from land to land, from continent to continent. The toil of the sea, in both its forms, was endlessly interesting to Turner. He studied and drew and painted boats and ships with the zest of a boy. Is there anything to tell of the life of fisher-folk that he has not told? He showed them putting off to sea, with wives and children bidding them farewell; he showed them toiling at their nets, battling with the storm, running home for safety, landing their catch, cleaning and selling the fish, mending their boats and nets, patching their sails. He painted also the ships of commerce, from the small coasting vessel that is beached in the bay for the landing of its cargo, to the great merchantmen that go voyaging to distant lands. He knew them all, and loved them, as the sailor knows and loves them. He had models of ships in his studio. All sorts of

THE FIGHTING "TÉMÉRAIRE"

craft, under all conditions of sailing and weather, can be studied in his pictures. When the sailing ship, except for pleasure's sake, has for ever disappeared, what a store of antiquarian knowledge about it Turner's works will be!

In *The Fighting Téméraire* there is pathos; but there is that which goes deeper than pathos. For those that go down to the sea there are storm and danger and the agony of death; and these are never absent from our thought of it. Out of what depth of human feeling came the Apocalyptic vision, 'and there was no more sea'! It is with a sense of vast, immeasurable, impersonal power that the sea affects us. If it could be cruel, implacable, vengeful, it would be less terrible. It brings man to death with a blank unconsciousness that is infinitely colder than indifference. To this horror Turner in many a picture has given the most powerful expression. We see ships helplessly huddled together in the storm, the frantic effort to beat up against the wind on a lee shore, the lifeboat pulling out to the vessel that is throwing up signals of distress, the vessel breaking up at the foot of the cliffs upon which stand spectators powerless to help, fishing-boats hurled against the rocks upon which their occupants leap, only, as seems well-nigh certain, to be washed off again by the next

incoming wave. Of this last scene, the *Coast of Yorkshire*, in the *Liber Studiorum*, Mr. Stopford Brooke says, 'The cliffs are lias, and drawn so well that it would be possible for a geologist to name them, and the highest of them, fronting the sea like a fortress, has the haughty air of a defier of the storm. On it, set a little inland, and in a space of clearer sky, where the gale is for a moment less violent—for Turner knew the gusty nature of a north-east tempest on that coast—stands the lighthouse: the one witness of the watchful struggle of man with nature and of his monarchy over it. It dominates all the scene. But it could not save the fisher folk from ruin, and we are left by Turner to muse upon the helplessness of man and on the sorrow of his toil.' If ever anyone feels that Ruskin's eloquence adds to what Turner saw and reported, it assuredly is not so with reference to the description of what the sea finally meant to him, that it was 'a very incalculable and unhorizontal thing, setting its "water-mark" sometimes on the highest heavens, as well as on sides of ships;—very breakable in pieces; half of a wave separable from the other half, and on the instant carriageable miles inland;—not in any wise limiting itself to a state of apparent liquidity, but now striking like a steel gauntlet, and now becoming a cloud, and vanishing, no eye could

THE COAST OF YORKSHIRE

tell whither; one moment a flint cave, the next a marble pillar, the next a mere white fleece thickening the thundery rain. He never forgot those facts; never afterwards was able to recover the idea of positive distinction between sea and sky, or sea and land. Steel gauntlet, black rock, white cloud, and men and masts gnashed to pieces and disappearing in a few breaths and splinters among them;—a little blood on the rock angle, like red sea-weed, sponged away by the next splash of the foam, and the glistening granite and green water all pure again in vacant wrath. So stayed by him, for ever, the Image of the Sea.'

There are two stories, each connected with one of Turner's pictures, that serve to show what intensity of emotion was in him and obtained expression in his work. The first is told of the picture, exhibited in 1842, and bearing, in the Academy catalogue, the title *Snowstorm. Steamboat off the harbour mouth making signals, and going by the lead. The author was in this storm the night the 'Ariel' left Harwich.* The critics contemptuously dismissed it as 'soapsuds and whitewash.' Ruskin relates that Turner was spending the evening at his father's house on the day this criticism came out; and says, 'After dinner, sitting in his armchair by the fire, I heard him muttering low to himself at intervals, "Soapsuds

and whitewash!" again, and again, and again. At last I went to him, asking "why he minded what they said?" Then he burst out, "Soapsuds and whitewash! what would they have? I wonder what they think the sea's like? I wish they'd been in it."' This was no outburst of mere mortified vanity; it expressed a bitter feeling that a deeply solemn purpose had failed of comprehension.

This becomes clear from the story that Ruskin repeats as given to him by the Rev. W. Kingsley, who had taken his mother and a cousin to see Turner's pictures, and could hardly get her to look at any other picture than the *Snowstorm*, she having been in such a scene off the coast of Holland. 'When, some time afterwards,' says Mr. Kingsley, 'I thanked Turner for his permission for her to see his pictures, I told him that he would not guess which had caught my mother's fancy, and then named the picture; and he then said, "I did not paint it to be understood, but I wished to show what such a scene was like; I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it; I was lashed for four hours, and I did not expect to escape, but I felt bound to record it if I did. But no one had any business to like the picture.' "But," said I, "my mother once went through just such a scene, and it brought it all back

to her." "Is your mother a painter?" "No." "Then she ought to have been thinking of something else." These were nearly his words; I observed at the time he used "record" and "painting," as the title "author" had struck me before.' Ruskin also notes the significance of the use of the word 'author,' instead of 'artist.' It shows that Turner felt such a scene to be no mere subject for a colour harmony, but a deeply solemn experience, to be faithfully recorded if to do such things were one's life-work; but by no means to be regarded merely as a magnificent spectacle by anyone whose work lay elsewhere, and was almost certain within a period, measurable in moments, to be ended by death. Are there no other pictures before which we think of Turner rather as author than as artist?

The other story is the equally well-known but equally significant one of his replying, when Stanfield said that the sails in his *Peace*, *The Burial of Wilkie*, were too black, 'If I could find anything blacker I'd use it!' Again we may take the hint. This is not the only one of Turner's pictures in which the artist expressed the full feelings of a man. In the details of the magnificent *Slave Ship* no fear of becoming melodramatic restrained him from expressing to the utmost his horror of man's inhumanity to man.

Leaving the sea now, and travelling inland, we have already noted that, were we with Turner, we should not be allowed to ignore those whom we met, or passed, or who passed us along the road : the carrier's waggon and the stage-coach, travellers on foot and on horseback, cattle and sheep being driven to the great cities ; merry-makings in the villages ; crowds of people if the journey ended in the town. In Turner's day whole counties were not overhung with smoke ; those places, which, as Matthew Arnold said, 'Mr. Bright calls centres of industry and Mr. Cobbett, hell-holes,' had not yet the unmanageable size and unexampled hideousness to which we have become accustomed ; but to the worse than folly of which we seem already to be awakening. Turner's England was not our England ; though the *Dudley* drawing, with its sullen furnace-glare, was a forecast of what was to become so widely spread.

But, as already said, the industry of which Turner, painting almost exclusively what could be seen in the open air, inevitably chiefly took cognisance was that of the farmer. It is instructive to contrast the way in which Turner would represent a scene of village life from Wilkie's treatment of the same kind of subject. Turner on one occasion seems actually to have entered into rivalry with Wilkie, somewhat to the annoyance

of the younger painter, who might well have expected Turner, with such great resources to leave to him the subjects he had made peculiarly his own. In 1806 Wilkie had exhibited *Village Politicians;* and in the following year Turner produced a picture which he called *A Country Blacksmith disputing upon the Price of Iron and the Price charged to the Butcher for shoeing his Pony.* Another oil painting, *A Harvest Home*, is also reminiscent of Wilkie, of such pictures as *Blind Man's Buff* and *The Penny Wedding*—but with what a difference! In Wilkie's picture there are people in a room, people whom we easily see individually—in fact, we are close to them, amongst them; and if we turn our eyes away for a moment from them to their surroundings, it is to see the contents of the room, chairs, tables, cupboards, dishes, represented with minute fidelity. In Turner's picture also we can interest ourselves in what the people who have gathered for the Harvest Home are doing, and we can see also the preparations that have been made for feasting; but although we are in the barn where the rejoicing country folk are assembled, we are looking down upon them and see them collectively rather than individually, while what really dominates the scene is the great entrance to the barn, with its double doors thrown back, and looking vast as the western

entrance to St. Paul's Cathedral when its doors are opened wide to admit some solemn procession. Each side of the huge doorway and the upper part of the barn are in deep shade, so that wherever we look we are still conscious of this opening into the world outside. Many of us probably have indelibly fixed in our memories from childhood the impressiveness of the great space of light seen from the dark interior of a barn. I am writing now with full consciousness that this picture is intensifying such a recollection. Surely this means that Turner has seized upon what is of deepest significance in his subject. The picture is not mere genre painting. It is epical. The building we are in seems vast—the ordinary room of a house being our unit of measurement. Here is space for an abundant harvest to be garnered. Such as this must have been, one thinks, the storehouses that Joseph caused to be built for the harvests of the years of plenty. But outside there, and vaster far, are the fields and the hillsides on which the harvest grows, and above them the sky from which come the life-giving rain and sunshine. Some of those within the barn wave to the children mounted high on the precious freight of the harvest waggon out in the open. The intimate life of man and the great life of nature, of which man's life is part, are vividly linked together.

It is thus with all the incidents of rural industry in Turner's pictures. They do not lose, but gain, significance by being so small in relation to their surroundings. They gain in epical significance, that is. Pictorially, they may be quite insignificant, or mere useful points of colour—we may even wish them away. They may at times help to lessen Turner's reputation as an artist, in the most narrow acceptation of the word; but they are of the essence of his outlook upon life, and of the thoughts and feelings under the impulse of which he painted his pictures. The thread of smoke through the trees, the sheep on the broad uplands, the cattle or horses returning to the farm, the woodman felling trees, the quarryman working with his pick, or rather—this is in the *Crook of Lune* drawing—not working, but resting or idling, and watching the farmer on horseback, on the road below, driving his sheep to Lancaster market—take all these things out of Turner's pictures, and—well—he would be another and a less humanly interesting Turner.

Turner's fondness for incident is to be seen in the animals in his pictures; nay, it is surely more than this: a sympathetic interest, a fellow-feeling for all life that knows labour and suffering. It has already been observed that almost as if they were sentient, and called for our sympathy, he records the graceful

youth, the proud maturity, the pathetic decline and death of the trees. His biographers have not failed to note his kindliness to children. We may therefore say a word here about his sympathy with the creatures 'whose pains are hardly less than our's, though he was, like many who have such sympathy, a sportsman.

The dog and the cow are the animals most frequently introduced; though horses returning to the farm, with heads hanging low after a hard day's toil, figure in many an evening scene. The delight a dog takes in barking at cows, and the preparations for defence made by the great clumsy animals by facing the tormentor head down, are noted in several pictures. In the *Colchester* drawing a hare has been started, and man, woman and child are scurrying the poor thing out of its wits. A little short-limbed dog takes up the chase, and makes a brave show, though left hopelessly in the rear. Evidently conscious of its inferior powers of speed, it runs with reserve, keeping something in hand, as who should say, 'we could an' if we would.' In one of the Richmond drawings two dogs are scampering along side by side, and may be expected at any moment to snap at each other, roll over and over, and dash off again.

The varied intelligence of animals is well shown in

STONEHENGE

a Stonehenge drawing, where the shepherd and several of the sheep lie killed by the lightning. The other sheep continue browsing; but the dog stands by his dead master, and barks at the storm. Anyone who has been at a sheepwashing or sheepshearing must have noticed how exceptionally sheepish the victims of these proceedings look. Turner has exactly hit this off in the *Sheepwashing;* just as, in another instance, he has given to the life the struggles of a crowd of sheep to get down to the river to drink. One of the latest and most finely imaginative of Turner's drawings is *Dawn after the Wreck.* The darkness lingers under the clouds out at sea, while in the east the growing light of day is rising up towards the waning moon. The clouds are drawn out along their edges into forms as of ghostly, grasping or beckoning hands. The tide is going down, leaving long reaches of gleaming sand, but a ground-swell still troubles the sea. On the wet sand, half-sinking into it, and well-nigh exhausted, is a dog, the only survivor from the wreck. He faces the waves and the darkness into which his master has vanished from his sight, and barks, all for which he has strength, in vain hope that this may bring his master back to him.

It is no exaggeration to say that Turner painted over and over again the full count of the seven ages of man.

He begins our life-story as early as is usually possible in the open air, for in the *Rochester, Strood, and Chatham* drawing, a woman who has come out from London with the hop-pickers is feeding her child at the breast, and is taking the usual precaution to prevent the youngster from flattening its nose against the rounded surface! Only literature, as in Tennyson's 'De Profundis,' can begin our history much earlier than this. In the *Mildmay Sea-piece*, the little child almost leaps from its mother's arms to welcome its father home from his day's fishing; while, in the youngsters sailing toy boats in the *Dido building Carthage* and the *Marine Dabblers*, we have the innocent children of but few years' growth playing with what to their parents are symbols of a hardly won livelihood in the night and the storm.

Leaving the days of childhood for those of youth, we find that Turner did ample justice to that remarkable creature the boy. His *chef d'œuvre* as a limner of one of nature's most irresponsible productions is in the beautiful drawing *Kirkby Lonsdale Churchyard*. Here the painter has found time to manifest his appreciation of the utterly philistine nature of the boy by showing a number of lads who, just released from school, have piled their books on a tombstone, made a dome for the edifice with a hat, steadying and

crowning the whole with a stone, and have then retired a few yards to bombard the structure! What the apostle said of the race is true also of the individual: not that which is spiritual comes first, but that which is natural. Perhaps the youth who is leaning against a tree and watching but taking no part in the proceedings may be taken as a prophecy that the spiritual will manifest itself in these urchins in the due course of evolution.

Another picture that runs the Kirkby Lonsdale one very close as a study of boy-life is the *Juvenile Tricks* plate in the *Liber;* and, in another some boys have been sailing a toy boat in a stream; wind and current have carried the little bark to the opposite bank, where other boys are proceeding to capture and appropriate it, with great manifestations of delight, while hatred, malice and uncharitableness are having it entirely to themselves among the despoiled youngsters, apparently hardly to be prevented, by the energetic actions of a man and a woman, from flinging themselves into the stream and pursuing the thieves.

In one of the illustrations to Rogers' poems, a party of gipsies have lighted their fire behind a copse-covered hillock. In the foreground clothes are drying. In the distance is a windmill, suggesting a neighbouring village or hamlet. Two boys have ventured over the

intervening lengths of field to see the gipsies' camp. They have just arrived at a point whence they can see the gipsies, and know sufficient of the facts, if not of the laws, of the transmission of light, to be aware that the gipsies, should they look up from their fire, can see them. One of the boys timorously advances a step for a still better view, and stands with legs outstretched and hand on the arm of his companion, who is evidently ready to bolt for any reason or none. In the *Brignall Church*, a boy has adventurously climbed a dangerous tree to recover his kite ; and, in the *Old Oak*, in which we see the villagers dancing at May-time, the village boys are risking their necks among the branches of the ancient tree.

So much for the boys. Now for some of Turner's girls. He had evidently noticed that girls of a certain age, and dogs, made very good playmates. In the *Richmond from the Moors*, a girl is relieving the tedium of tending the sheep by making her dog sit up on its hind legs while she puts her hat on its head ; and a girl with a dog appears in another Richmond drawing. In the *Château d'Arc* drawing, a girl and a boy have made a dog sit up, and have put a sheaf of corn on his head.

The large oil painting, *Crossing the Brook*, one of the finest of Turner's earlier landscapes, owes its title to

two girls, one of whom is wading through the stream in the foreground, while a dog carries her hat across, and the other, on the farther bank, is making preparations to cross. My favourite among Turner's girls, however, is one in a Seine-side drawing in the 'Rivers of France' series. A carriage is coming up a hill, steep enough to induce the occupants to get out and walk. A gentleman and his little girl are ahead of the other passengers; she holds his hand, and he bends down towards her to listen to her prattle, the hill, perhaps by reason of his help, not interfering with her girlish capacity for talk. They are just passing a table, laid out in the open air under the shade of the trees; and she is evidently saying how delightful it would be to stay and have refreshment there, while the sun sank lower in the west, and is half inclined to stop her father so that the suggestion may be carried into effect; but he will not consent; they must measure so many miles by nightfall, and have no time to spare.

It may be that the boy who stands with his back to the tree in Kirkby Lonsdale churchyard will meet the girl with the dog when he goes over the moor some day to fetch cattle from Richmond. Who knows? Anyhow, boys and girls do attract each other, as also do older people; and this, also, Turner saw under the

sun, and appears to have found it mightily amusing; also ubiquitous, and often unblushingly manifested in the open air, affecting with particular force soldiers and sailors, whether at Plymouth, Schaffhausen, or the Lanterne at St. Cloud. In the *Bay of Baiæ* love-making is going on between a boy and a girl who apparently are not too old to bowl a hoop! Sometimes there is a desire for secrecy, and then what delight for chance observers who see John the labourer with his arm round Mary the milkmaid, and her head slowly declining to his shoulder, or coyly turned away from him, as in the *Malmesbury Abbey*, where a woman and a boy, motionless and breathless, are watching such a scene from the other side of a hedge!

The proper sequel to this kind of thing is marriage, which may or may not be a success, according to the behaviour of the contracting parties. A *sine qua non* of success is observance of the principle of give and take—not, however, of give as little and take as much as you can, of which we see an example in the *Calais Pier*. Just as a fishing-boat is putting off to sea, one of the men discovers that his wife has not given him his fair share of brandy, and shows her the bottle with threatening gestures. She, safe on the pier, holds her bottle firmly and gazes calmly on her spouse, beside himself with rage made impotent by the gradually

widening interval of troubled waters. What will happen when he returns home? Let us hope that he has a short memory!

Of the latest years of life also Turner was not unmindful, as in the *Château de Nantes*, where an old man, careless himself of such things, holds a little boy on a wall so that he may better see some passing pageant, while a decrepit beggarman does not so much as try to see the show, but bends down to the ground, leaning heavily upon his crutches. In the *Crowhurst* plate of the *Liber Studiorum*, the mood of the landscape—a snow-shower has quickly whitened all the country-side—is emphasised by the tree-felling that is in progress, and even more by the old woman who is picking up for firewood the twigs that have no value for the woodmen. At Caudebec Turner saw a funeral, and must needs tell us so, and show us the long procession of mourners climbing the hillside and passing with ranks broken by the long and toilful ascent, and heads reverently bowed, through the cemetery doorway. The river is dotted with boats, and the steamer sends its long grey thread of smoke into the sky; the vintagers are busy among the vines. But there are harvests reaped by other reapers; there is a last voyage that all must take; and here, on the hillside, away from the busy world, there are many headstones within the

cemetery walls. The sun is setting. Our life, like our every day, is rounded with a sleep.

By discussing apart from each other the landscape element and the figures and incidents in Turner's work, one might be said to have taken his pictures to pieces. But those who are familiar with them will always think of each of them as a whole; and there is an advantage in taking separately the human interest, especially for those who are not familiar with more than a few of his works, in that it can readily be seen how constant was Turner's interest, not only in a past that he imagined, but in the life of his fellow-men in his own time.

The complexity of interest in Turner's work, art and nature and human life, is at once its strength and its weakness. We may say, if we like, that he attempted too much. It remains almost incredible that what we are certain he did is the work of one man's lifetime. We have seen him entering upon schemes that he could not possibly bring to completion. From first to last he was ever experimenting. He would have had a great name had he ceased to develop after painting *Crossing the Brook*, but he went on to *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, and then to *'The Sun of Venice' going to Sea*. Did ever Design seek to bring into subjection such a complex of Fact as we see in his pictures? His life-work is an evolution.

He establishes one order, and then another, and yet another. The critics praised, then blamed, then praised again. What phrase would have replaced 'soapsuds and whitewash' could he have lived on to become an Impressionist?

I have tried in this little volume to set before the reader a tramping artist; to tell the story of his life, and, in telling it, to dwell upon his virtues, and, for their sake, to say little of his faults; to give some hint of his genius, of his sensitiveness to the power and beauty of nature, of the imaginative power, and the sense of colour and design by which what he saw was transformed as he conveyed it to paper or canvas; to show his sympathy with his fellow-men, and his wonder at the passing of the generations of men and the mystery that surrounds our being, which make his life-work as well a solemn epic of humanity, as a revelation of the beauty and splendour of the visible universe.

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The titles of pictures are printed in italics. In several instances they are abbreviated

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